



## The New Penguin History of Canada

*Robert Bothwell*

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### **The New Penguin History of Canada Details**

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## **From Reader Review The New Penguin History of Canada for online ebook**

### **Javier says**

Thorough yet concise. Enjoyable read and gladly not dry. I wish there was more native perspective shown (but that goes for most books). All in all would recommend to anyone who would like to have a better understanding of Canada and its history. I found it particularly interesting to read about the evolution of the government and its structure.

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### **Sarah says**

nothing to do with penguins (ongoing joke -- my children repeatedly asked me why I was reading about penguins in Canada). Excellent overview, good place to start...

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### **Alexis says**

I only read the last section of this for some research that I'm doing, but I would highly recommend this book.

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### **Elle Druskin says**

I truly enjoy history books and I wanted to know more about Canada's history. This is really a very good comprehensive book. It may bog down in areas such as tariff and governmental policy that may make it difficult for some readers but it is worth persevering. It gave me an excellent overall understanding of the issues and people who shaped Canada. I knew a fair amount about the colonial history but not much after early 19th century and this helped to fill that gap. It enlightened me in a deeper way on the particular issue of Quebec and the separatist movement.

One impression is the vastly different experiences compared to American history as well as some parallels. I can also recommend a companion piece--get on youtube and watch the CBC series Canada: History of a People. You can watch in conjunction with the sections of the book while reading or after you have finished the book and will gain more insight in a different medium.

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### **Nathan says**

I'm working on diving back into Canadian history, and this provided a great macro-summary of Canadian history. As my primary interest is politics, I very-much appreciated the focus on the movement of the parties. Of course, there were many major events that had to be skimmed or left out entirely, but that is the nature of a project like this trying to concisely contain the entirety of a nation's history.

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## Roger Burk says

I picked this up as prep for a Canada vacation. It's a smooth and easy read, though long. It covers the history of Canada up to 2007 in a straightforward, matter-of-fact fashion. Lots of interesting tidbits that were new to this Yank. Did you know that the Gulf of St. Lawrence used to abound in walruses, until they were hunted to extinction around 1800? That the Iroquois made war on the Hurons, defeating and dispersing them in the 17th century? That a second wave of Americans (after the post-Revolution Loyalists) helped settle southern Ontario, attracted by the offer of free land to whoever would clear and work it, decades before the American Homestead Act? That there were small rebellions in Canada in the 1830s and 1870s, with shots fired and people killed? That the Metis (mixed-race French-Indian folks, trappers and other backwoods sorts) remained an important component of the prairie provinces into the late 1800s? The story gets a little duller in the 20th century, degenerating into a blow-by-blow account of Canadian national politics, Quebec separatism and so forth. (Honestly, guys, you live in the middle of one of the nicest countries in the world and you just want to bust it up to show how special you are. Avez-vous une vie.) The focus is mostly on Ontario and Quebec. The prairies come up seldom, BC and the Maritimes rarely.

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## James Violand says

As the Roman Lucian said, "An historian's mind should be a mirror - clear, gleaming-bright, accurately centered, displaying the shape of things just as he receives them, free from distortion, false coloring and misrepresentation."

This work is insipid. The author, Robet Bothwell, calls himself an historian. But he is an insufferable apologist to the ultra-sensitive, ignorant, politically correct. As to an expedition in 1604 fixed on the Bay of Fundy he writes: "Remarkably, some Frenchmen (for they were all *male*) survived the winter." He downplays the recorded chronicles of Indian brutality during Queen Anne's War - *"Sometimes the English were massacred, or killed after torture. The torture was spectacularly gruesome, of a kind that by the eighteenth century in Europe was performed behind the walls of fortresses or prisons. There was also cannibalism, which in Europe was regarded with utmost horror and aversion. Many prisoners, probably most, were more kindly treated, and were marched away to Indian settlements and adopted into Indian families. Many were later ransomed, but may others remained with their captors, absorbed into the culture and society that had kidnapped them. Despite a requirement in the eventual peace treaty to secure the return of captives, some never came back."* @ p. 67 Having just finished the seminal work by Parkman on the French and English in North America, where incident upon incident - all verified by letters, proclamations and official documents - of Indian atrocities are displayed, it is inexplicable to me that Bothwell could write this garbage without fearing the dead would call him to account.

He uses a cartoon describing collateral damage from a 1759 periodical of British General Wolfe lecturing a pleading couple in a *misogynistic* fashion!

I'm on page 67 of this 600 page book and am struggling to keep my temper in check. I must confront the question: "Is it worth continuing?"

Update: I cannot continue. This is too much BS for me to tolerate. The massacre at Fort William Henry - validated by both combatants approach two hundred butchered victims after a surrender - he claims to be "some." And this pathetic excuse for an historian denigrates Wolfe and Montcalm.

Bothwell, your obviously liberal agenda is to tear down history. I'm sure you will hear the applause of your sycophantic peers, who you quote for authorities. You are a pathetic armchair historian.

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## **Paul Nelson says**

I read this hoping to receive a good overview of Canadian history, which this book does very well up until about World War II. It's a fairly enjoyable read (the author is fond of dry humor), but it's not for historical amateurs.

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## **Eric says**

Bothwell gives a good general overview of the big events of Canadian history, but the book suffers from too much assumption of knowledge of Canadian culture. No events ever feel weightier than any others, and I had trouble telling what were the big events of Canadian history. The book also exhibits the tendency of one-volume histories of grossly overcovering the modern period--something like 130 pages on the years 1960-2000.

Still, the book has whetted my appetite for further histories of Canada, so I'll be on the lookout for ones with more personality.

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## **Brad says**

My opinion of Robert Bothwell is based off of this one book, so if there are other works that disprove what I am about to say I am more than willing to stand corrected. From what I can see, however, Bothwell is a bit of an anomaly when it comes to historians: he is actually a good writer (shock of shocks) -- too bad he is such a poor historian.

Now I know this man is Harvard educated, has a significant body of work, heads up a department at a well respected Canadian university, and in our Voltaire's Bastards culture of venerating "expertise" these qualifications put him above reproach or criticism, but fuck all that. He deserves criticism.

I came to The New Penguin History of Canada looking for a decent overview to help direct my more in depth future reading. I got what I came for, but because Bothwell's voice was compelling I let my expectations rise, and early on those raised expectations seemed warranted, but by the books end I was deeply disappointed. Now to the point: it is not what Bothwell chooses to discuss but what he omits that most taint his History of Canada.

Yes, he does go on and on about tariffs and Canada's complex economic relationships with first England then the US, and there are times when he drifts away from Canada's boundaries to talk about other leaders and other places, but the former is surely an expected bias of an economic historian, and the latter can be forgiven because those he chooses to talk about have a direct influence at what is happening in Canada.

The problem is that while Bothwell spends his languorous time on these topics he completely fails to address important issues at home, and I mean completely. Not a single mention anywhere of the Japanese Internment. No mention. Not one. But there is plenty of discussion of WWII. There is plenty of discussion about economics during WWII as well, but the removal of property (economics anyone?) and liberty of a significant section of the Canadian population -- the entirely innocent Japanese-Canadians -- is nowhere to be found.

Another glaring omission: the Aboriginal people. They are rarely spoken of, and when they are spoken of they are even more rarely named, and then Bothwell is mute when it comes to Canada's disgusting Residential School policy -- another non-event in the Canada of Bothwell's History of Canada. He says nothing. Not even an aside to suggest that the provinces and territories might have done something not so nice at some point somewhere in our history. The omission is despicable.

And there are plenty of other omissions, although the others are much more forgivable and far less disgusting than the omission of Japanese Internment and Indigenous Residential Schools. For instance, not once does Bothwell name a leader of Canada's NDP party (unless one counts his mention of Tommy Douglas before Tommy was NDP). He talks about the party when he has to, especially when they become the official opposition in Parliament, but he never names Ed Broadbent, never names Audrey McLaughlin, never names Alexa McDonough, and since it would have taken only a few extra characters after "the NDP leader" one can only imagine this is his own personal bias showing through. And there are plenty of other omissions of this lesser offensiveness.

If you are Canadian and you know of the things Bothwell is omitting, you will probably still enjoy the way Bothwell writes despite his dubious choices; if, however, you are not Canadian and you are looking for a place to start your journey through Canada's past, I don't know that I can recommend Bothwell's History of Canada. His vision is skewed and riddled with holes, and I fear that you will come away thinking Canada is something it is not.

But if you must read this first, make sure you go searching for more depth elsewhere.

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### **Ed says**

I have always seen Canada as a sort of control group experiment paralleling the United States and in some ways more successful and thus an object lesson for open minded Americans. This detailed history of Canada corrected some of my over simplified takes on its history and indeed clarified how recent Canada's quality of life move forward has been. An extremely well written and interesting general history, sometimes a bit flawed but generally first class.

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### **Jeremy says**

I liked the dry humor. It's an incomplete overview but educational nonetheless.

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### **Erik Ryberg says**

It is covering the history of Canada up until today so to expect a variety of interesting perspectives was perhaps expecting too much. It is mainly a survey of Canadian domestic politics. There is not much focus on class or Native Americans. Depth into relationships between the US and Canada and GB/France and Canada are rather unbalanced. But again, it is a general survey and certainly would be a good place to start when knowing nothing. I still feel like I did not gain much knowledge though.

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### **Jen Sparks says**

This well-written book provided a good background on the history of Canada. I learned much more than I remember learning in school on this subject and found some surprising tidbits along the way. The only topic that I would've liked to see covered more fully was how the First Nation groups and the Canadian government came to agree upon the various land claim settlements over the past few decades. Outside of that omission I would highly recommend this book to anyone that is interested in knowing more about Canadian history.

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### **Beth says**

This book should be more correctly named the Political History of (Central) Canada. Most of it is concerned with political leaders and their actions as well as their relation to Britain and the United States. Most of the material covered is very Ontario and Quebec-centric. The prairie provinces are almost always referred to as "the West" if spoken of at all, and the Maritimes covered even less so.

Also, tariff seems to be the word most mentioned. Apparently Canadian history is all about the tariffs. Who knew?

I picked this up at the library to brush up on the history of our beautiful country but this long diatribe about tariffs and politics wasn't exactly what I had in mind.

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