

**Inuit, Oblate Missionaries, and Grey Nuns in the Keewatin, 1865–1965.** By Frédéric B. Laugrand and Jarich G. Oosten. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2019. 520 pages. \$125 cloth; \$39.95 paper; \$31.96 ebook.

In *Inuit, Oblate Missionaries, and Grey Nuns in the Keewatin, 1865–1965*, Frédéric B. Laugrand and Jarich G. Oosten tell detailed stories of the history of the Oblate missionaries and Grey Nuns in the Chesterfield Inlet (Igluligaarjuk) in the northern region of Hudson Bay. The work reflects the authors' expertise, extensive research in the religious orders' archives, and numerous interviews of nuns, priests, and various Inuit individuals. Although Inuit voices appear throughout the book, the general orientation is that of the Oblates. The authors divide the volume into four parts, "reflecting the goals of the Oblates": conversion, medical care, education, and vocation (7). The dates in the title are less a factor in the organization of the book. The beginning date, 1865, does not appear in the book's chronology in the introductory materials, and 1965 does not appear to be a turning point, as the two Inuit studying for the priesthood left before then, and Sister Pelagie, who was a Grey Nun for about twenty years, left the order in 1970.

The four sections of the book overlap in time, place, and people involved, which means the reader grapples with learning about and integrating the three through to the end. The first part, about the beginning of the Catholic Oblate mission in the Keewatin region, includes the slow start, the competition among Anglican missionaries for converts, and the priests' struggles with the shamans (angakkuit). The reader learns about Inuit life and culture, especially the importance of the shamans to the priests. Challenges, such as learning a new language and adapting to an unfamiliar environment, are common in mission histories. Winning over powerful shamans is also a familiar turning point for establishing a mission. That the Oblates themselves replaced shamans in the community of converts is also a familiar development. Reflecting on reasons for Inuit to become Catholic, the authors raise the attraction of fewer, less strict rules and heaven as a happy place of reunion with relatives. The authors rightly highlight the Inuits' active integration of Christianity into their traditions. In an interesting turn, the section ends with the Catholic Inuits disapproving of the changes Vatican II called for in the liturgy.

The second part, on the hospital in Chesterfield, provides the authors an opportunity to talk about the series of epidemic diseases that diminished and stressed the Inuit population. The Grey Nuns arrived to staff the hospital in 1931, providing care during these medical emergencies. Although the authors say most of the Inuit of the area were Christian when the nuns arrived, the nuns' work of caring for the ill and indigent earned the Catholics good will and furthered the mission. This section contains much information about the hospital building and renovations and the individuals cared for

at the hospital and their ailments, including specific epidemics. The nuns reveal their difficulties living in what they perceived to be a harsh environment. Most of them did not learn the Indigenous language, nor appreciate the local cuisine. The authors see the hospital as an agent for change and modernization. However, the nuns' concentration on healing put them in competition with the shamans. The nuns' mission of caring for the destitute attracted many elderly unable to care for themselves and even made nuns adoptive parents of unwanted daughters. Peculiarly, the nuns encouraged women to give birth in the hospital. The first hospital birth happened in 1932, and, while the number increased over subsequent years, there never seemed to be a large number.

The third part of the book, on the residential school, shows the nuns and priests attempting to create a Catholic elite without forcing "total assimilation." In contrast, the Ottawa government appears as the foil for forcing the children to speak English and adopt the Canadian culture from the south. The government's goal was to create good Canadian citizens integrated into the larger society. The book contains much detail about the school building (which lasted from 1954 to 1969), the daily schedule, and how kids arrived and departed each year. Despite the authors' attempt to present the missionaries as affectionate and caring, the voices of the children who were interviewed later in life bring up the trauma of abuse, both physical and mental. Many former students have a voice in this section; some appreciated a good education and the holiday gifts and sweets; others had memories of isolation and loneliness. There are many testimonials, so many that they become repetitive and tedious, and it is hard to draw conclusions from the presentation. The final chapter in this section, on sexual abuse, is difficult to read despite the included Indigenous testimonials doubting it ever happened or suggesting that everything worked out in the end and that the former students, now elders, have overcome their anger.

The fourth and final part of the book is on vocations, specifically Pelagie Inuk, who became a Grey Nun for an extended period, and the brothers Anthony Manernaluk and Nick Sikkuaq, who spent time in the Oblate order but decided to leave it before ordination into the priesthood. Pelagie receives more attention as she spent from 1946 to 1970 with the Grey Nuns. The authors are interested in why she joined the Grey Nuns, what she did as a nun, and why she left the order when she did. We are fortunate that she was made a celebrity in Canada and left records in her own words about her life as a nun, though she became reticent to talk about her departure. Pelagie appears to be an endearing person, sincerely committed to helping people, which she saw the nuns do daily. The two brothers, Manernaluk and Sikkuaq, were orphaned and then adopted by an Oblate priest. There is less information about their experience in the Oblates, and they seem reluctant to add anything. The stories of these converts who accepted the orders' recruitment offer valuable insights into possible motives to join and to leave. The authors hesitate to offer answers, but the challenge of celibacy, the lack of a family, the loneliness of being the only Inuit among the nuns, who spoke primarily French and seemed to always treat her as a subordinate, were powerful factors in Pelagie's separation from the Grey Nuns and subsequent marriage. She continued to work at the hospital, maintained her position in the Inuit community, and opted for traditional Inuit social values.

The last line in the book—"we have endeavoured to preserve the complexity of these conflicting views and various voices of those who lived through the period we describe in the North" (390)—draws attention to both the strength and weakness of this mission history, which descends from a decision by the authors. In their desire to give voice to the priests, nuns, and Inuits, the authors include long quotes from publications, letters, and interviews. Historians of missions in earlier eras will inevitably envy this access to the actual words of Inuit elders, men and women, shamans (*angakkuit*), critics, residential school students, and converts, and so on. This collection of materials is a gold mine for leads to primary sources and Indigenous voices, but the readers less familiar with the people and places would appreciate more context. We hear from many voices in this history, but readers do not know the speakers well enough to interpret what might be influencing the persons when their voices were recorded. "Conversion" is a lifelong process, and it helps to know where people are in that process when their views are written.

Those interested in missiology and Inuit anthropology will find this book valuable, as will those interested in the history of Catholicism among the Inuit of the northern Hudson Bay region.

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