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Fur War: The Political, Economic, Cultural and Ecological Impacts of the Western Fur Trade 1765-1840

David A Bainbridge



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Fur War: The Political, Economic, Cultural and Ecological Impacts of the Western Fur Trade 1765-1840 by David A. Bainbridge published October 2020
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Fur War examines the critical impacts of the Western fur trade on the cultures and environment. "The fur trade played a key role in the development and ultimate ownership of lands and resources on the West Coast of North America," explains Bainbridge, an environmental historian with degrees in Earth Sciences and Ecology. "Yet it is often neglected in histories and understanding of the west. In California classrooms, it is skipped almost entirely."

In his new book, readers will discover how Russia, Great Britain, America, France, Spain, Mexico, and Hawaii were involved in the quest for furs and power, and how the many First Nations fought to maintain their communities. The book reveals how - with just a few minor changes in government response or markets - the North Americans on the West Coast might speak Spanish or Russian and how Tlingit, Haida, and Mowachat Nations might dominate the North Coast.

"Much like the *Narco traficantes* today, the fur trade was risky and often illegal, but could be incredibly profitable," says Bainbridge. The catastrophic impacts have been severe for the First Nations whose lands were invaded, and for the ecosystems that were stripped of wildlife such as sea otter and beaver. The remarkable Steller's sea cow, a 20-30 foot long relative of the manatee, was driven to extinction in just 30 years." The sea otter almost followed suit, but it took longer. And the beaver was wiped out in many areas as part of the British effort to create a "fur desert."

Fur War explains how abuse and conflicts led to resistance and warfare. Natives succumbed to violence and diseases brought by foreign fur traders and interlopers that at times killed 50-90% of the people in tribal groups. Later visitors often found only skulls and bones. Many tribes and tribelets were gone before they were placed on a map. Against all odds, some tribal members survived, and they have recovered in population and spirit. The fur trade's impacts are still evident today along the coast and rivers of Alaska, Canada and the American west. Many groups and institutions are working to restore the Fur Coast. This compelling book makes it clear that everyone can play a part and introduces the groups and programs you can join and support.

About the Author

David A. Bainbridge grew up in the US West, spending his formative years in northern Washington and Colorado. He earned degrees in Earth Sciences and Ecology and worked on environmental restoration throughout the West. He later won awards for teaching environmental history, cultural geography, resource management, and ethics at Alliant International University. Several of his previous books have won awards, including the Silver Nautilus for sustainability. He spent many years visiting fur trade outposts and paddling the lakes and rivers of the fur trade. He was certified as an archeological surveyor for the California Department of Forestry, and is a member of the California Historical Society, California Society for Ecological Restoration and the US Society for Ecological Economics.

Lesson plans and supplemental materials at www.furwar.com

