
Aboriginal-state relations have entered an exciting and dynamic if somewhat unsettled phase. There is, of course, no illusion that the re-structuring of relations between a people, an administrative structure that governs them and the larger collectivity that the government represents is ever a smooth process. Any redefinition of the relationship between an administered and regulated people and the mechanisms or means of their administration clearly involves important changes in values and world view. Given that social structures are seldom in harmony with the value system(s) that are their ideological underpinning and foundation anyway, there nevertheless comes a time when the discrepancy between structure and values is so great that the integrity of the entire social order is undermined and the well-being of its citizens greatly diminished—none more so than those who are marginalized to begin with. In fact, as political, economic and social circumstances change, as they inevitably do, so must the rationale for and the means of administration and regulation as the basis of mature statehood be seriously reconsidered and redefined. The marginalized position of Aboriginal peoples can no longer be tolerated; the values and perspectives of a “new world order” demand more enlightened approaches to nation-building and state-craft.

Canadian, American as well as New Zealand Aboriginal-state relations are clearly at a crossroads, as Fleras and Elliott point out in their book. Of course, there is no guarantee that a redefined set of relations will be satisfactory to all because the process of nation-building is necessarily a perpetual, “organic” and evolving one. But perhaps the most important thing is the process and not the outcome. Also important is that a colonized and marginalized people can become involved in redefining the social order in which they see themselves as actors and in which they are acknowledged stake-holders. In fact, it is the act of self-definition and recognition on the part of Aboriginal people and the acknowledgment that they are true participants in the ongoing process of nation-building that would define a healthy and revitalized democratic state. At the same time, there should be no expectation that there be unanimity in regards to the process, even among the colonized and disenfranchised; this, too, is to be expected in a healthy democratic state.
What is problematic are the structural and other conditions that can either constrain or enable the self-consciousness, self-definition and thus self-determination of Aboriginal people.

The Nations Within goes a long way towards explaining what is involved in the process to end the internal colonization of Aboriginal peoples in Canada and elsewhere, and towards outlining the initiatives Aboriginal peoples have taken “to reverse the theft” of their history. The book combines an ever-useful historical review and analysis of past policy, ideology and bureaucracy of American and Canadian Indian, Métis, Inuit and Maori administration that would be familiar to most readers (Chapters 1-4, 6, 10-11), with an exploration of the fundamental value assumptions that are the bases for a “paradigm shift” in Aboriginal-government relations (Chapters 5-9, 12). The purpose of the book is to describe several closely related concepts, to show how they are nested in one another, and how they relate to the Realpolitik of Aboriginal affairs in three countries. The key concepts (“first principles”) include the principle of aboriginality, self-determination, self-government, sovereignty and nationhood. The authors state:

Aboriginality provides the “theory” for redefining aboriginal-state relations; self-government is the practical expression of this “theory.” Self-government implies self-determination with regard to relevant agendas. … The principle of aboriginality legitimizes the restoration of this sovereignty over internal affairs. [p. 30, emphasis added]

Understanding what these concepts mean is critical if we are to appreciate the idea of a “new order” or a paradigm shift in Aboriginal state relations. Clarifying and sorting out some of the terms is in order, however. Fundamental to any theory of aboriginality, to the exercising of sovereignty and to the practice of self-government is, in fact, the notion of self-determination. It refers to the inherent human will to autonomy of action, and to the acknowledgement that all people (as individuals and as collectivities) intrinsically strive to realize their potentialities and develop their talents and capabilities. The notion of self-determination has its counterpart in humanistic psychology, human rights law as well as in economics. An idea born during the French Revolution, the right to self-determination was one of the earliest fundamental human rights to later gain universal recognition (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948). The exercise of this basic right extends to decision-making in all spheres of life: home and family, work, school, church and even choice of lifestyle. Beyond these, the right extends to political power and full participation in the political process—if the right of decision-making and
participation is denied, then this constitutes oppression.

Thus, Aboriginal sovereignty is rooted in a universally recognized humanistic-philosophical principle. The idea of sovereignty is interpreted as the fundamental ability and authority of individuals or a collectivity to exercise their rights without being subservient to any outside authority. The right of decision-making and full participation necessarily extends to the (re)creation of political and other institutions that reflect the Aboriginal people’s will to autonomy of action. Aboriginal sovereignty is therefore a term that describes the totality of powers and responsibilities necessary to maintain Aboriginal identity, social organization and forms of community. The principle of aboriginality, in turn, constitutes a set of claims directed against outside authority with respect to the redistribution of power and control; the principle furthermore rejects the validity of non-Aboriginal social, cultural and political values as relevant for Aboriginal needs and aspirations. The principle of aboriginality, moreover, combines collective rights and identity, and institutional autonomy, with the idea of sovereignty over a territorial base. Aboriginal peoples constitute a collectivity whose rights are now guaranteed on the basis of their status as original occupants of a territory; their collective rights are enshrined in the Canadian Constitution. What remains problematic is of course title, ownership and access to a land base and resources. Hence the importance of land claims and the comprehensive and specific claims process (the latter for those whose title has been extinguished).

The idea of an inherent right to self-government is likewise derived from the humanistic-philosophical principle of self-determination (in humanistic terms, making the inherent will to autonomy of human action contingent would be repugnant; therefore, the right to self-government cannot be contingent). Self-government, regardless of the forms it may take, is the primary means by which Aboriginal identity, social organization and community are maintained and sustained. There are several key elements relevant to Aboriginal thinking on self-government that are crucial with respect to identity- and community-formation; namely, protection and retention of Aboriginal languages and culture, promotion of social and economic development (including education and health), and the preservation and stewardship of a territorial base and its resources. These elements are derived from the unique socio-cultural characteristics of Aboriginal people, which include cultural attachment to place, a fundamental and unique ecological view, a unique system of economy and exchange, an extended kinship system and dependence on a co-operative system of enterprise.

With self-government defined this way, all the pieces are in place for
a definition of *nationhood*. Fleras and Elliott define a “nation” as a sovereign people with the right to self-government; indeed, the theme of their study “is the process of loss and retrieval of nationhood” (p. xi). A nation may also be defined as a community of people whose members are bound together by a sense of solidarity, a common culture or a shared consciousness. Beyond the ideational criteria, however, the existence of a distinct population, a territorial base, a form of government and a capacity to enter into relations with other nations serve as more practical and important criteria. In fact, it appears that the struggle of retrieving nationhood by First Nations might be best described as the strategic and methodical satisfaction of each element (as a kind of building block) of the latter definition, as is implied by Fleras and Elliott’s analyses throughout the book. Conversely, one cannot help but wonder if the intent of state Aboriginal policy and administration has been to actively hinder and interfere with this process (Chapter 4, esp. pp. 49ff, 80-83, 224-27). In that regard, the history and current policy of Aboriginal-state relations in Canada seems relatively more progressive than that in the United States or New Zealand (Chapters 10 and 11).

Recognition of Aboriginal status, as original occupants of this land, as well as recognition of collective rights fulfils the criteria of “population.” The existence of reservations, dispute over Aboriginal title and comprehensive land claims where title has never been extinguished fulfils the criteria of “territory”—or at least demonstrate that Aboriginal people indeed have a recognized and proven historical and cultural attachment to place. Land is therefore important for symbolic reasons, beyond its economic meaning. Fulfilling the criteria of “government” is a little more problematic, since it is best fulfilled in practice. It is noteworthy, however, that the 28 August 1992 Charlottetown constitutional accord did have within it a provision recognizing the inherent right to Aboriginal self-government. Notwithstanding the accord’s rejection by Canadians and opposition to the accord by some Aboriginal peoples themselves, opinion polls revealed that the concept of Aboriginal self-government was strongly supported by a majority of Canadians (*Globe and Mail*, 17/Oct./92, 27/Oct./92). This acknowledges that Aboriginal people do not only have an inherent right to govern themselves, but have the cultural capacity to do so. Finally, the Royal Proclamation of 1763, the Pakeha/Aotearoa [New Zealand]-Maori Treaty of Waitangi (1840) and the treaties Aboriginal peoples signed or verbally agreed to are generally considered proof of their “capacity to enter into relations with other nations,” in that they were indeed dealt with as nations at the time the treaties were entered into.
No other peoples living within the confines of the nation-states of Canada, the United States or New Zealand can satisfy these criteria. It is therefore tempting to conclude that Aboriginal peoples possess nationhood status. Unfortunately, this status remains to be truly institutionalized; reforms have been largely symbolic. The so-called building blocks (the elements of the definition of nationhood) are not all equally “in place” for all Aboriginal peoples; nor, for that matter, does each building block or element mean qualitatively the same thing for each Aboriginal nation.

On one hand, disputes over title, unsettled claims, unmet treaty obligations, the reality of the Indian Act in Canada and narrowly interpreted/permitted models of self-government reflect the persistent “old” paradigm with its emphasis on legalism, control, assimilation and the desire to maintain the status quo. True accommodation and power-sharing remains stubbornly outside the reach of the majority of Aboriginal peoples. On the other hand, choices and solutions selected by some First Nations (in Canada) are not acceptable to others: the Sechelt arrangement and the Cree-Naskapi experiment are not attractive models for everyone. The 1990 Alberta-Métis Settlements Accord (not discussed by Fleras and Elliott in the chapter on Métis and Inuit nationalism) with its attendant legislation (the Métis Settlements Land Protection Act; the Métis Settlements Act) has been hailed as a landmark of Aboriginal-state relations by some, and as a sell-out of Aboriginal interests by others. The 12 November 1992 final signing of the Nunavut land deal by the Inuit represents the largest land claim in Canada’s history, and gives the Inuit de facto self-government over Canada’s third territory without constitutional entrenchment (Globe and Mail, 13/Nov./92). The creation of Nunavut, which has been anticipated for a number of years (Fleras and Elliott, pp. 113-16), is scheduled for 1999. Nunavut may be unique, however, given that the Inuit make up the vast majority of the Eastern Arctic’s residents.

Fleras and Elliott note that “no one can predict where recent developments in Aboriginal-government relations will lead” (p. 125). In Canada, as elsewhere, policy responses to Aboriginal demands have been ambiguous. Indeed, advances in Métis- and Inuit-government relations are at odds with the way the Mohawk, Lubicon, Innu and Gitksan-Wet’suwet’en (among others) have fared in recent months. First Nations peoples are themselves not united over certain issues, such as leadership and representation. Importantly, they are united in their politicized demands for the restructuring of society along the lines of a “nations within” framework. Parallel struggles by Aboriginal peoples in other countries serve to highlight this recurrent theme, as Fleras and Elliott have documented. The acknowledgement and
institutionalization of the principle of aboriginality and its attendant values as a basis for nation-building would certainly be a measure of the vitality and maturity of the liberal-democratic state. A mature statehood is imperative as we enter the next millennium.

René R. Gadacz


George Wenzel describes *Animal Rights, Human Rights* as advocacy anthropology, an effort to intercede on the side of Indigenous groups. However, where other advocacy anthropologists might rail against the pernicious efforts of national governments and industrial interests, Wenzel seeks to defend the Inuit against the misplaced efforts of the animal rights movement. The essence of Wenzel’s argument is that the animal rights movement, by portraying the sole motivation of Inuit sealers as monetary profit, has denied the Inuit not only the material basis of their daily sustenance, but their cultural heritage as well.

Wenzel does not make the error of presenting Inuit culture as a static and unchanging relic of the past despite the title of his first chapter, “Traditional People in the Modern World.” He is able to avoid that error by arguing that Inuit culture has been and continues to be based on adaptation to a changing natural environment. For Wenzel, the Inuit continuation as hunters in the modern world represents a further adaptation, but this time an adaptation to a human intrusion into their world.

Wenzel recounts the recent history of the Inuit, examining the effects of fur-trade dependence, disease and institutional interference from churches and trading companies. Through it all, argues Wenzel, the Inuit maintained a pattern of customary subsistence. The fifteen years following World War II, however, were the most disruptive. The fox-pelt market collapsed, disease continued to ravage the Inuit, and most importantly for Wenzel’s argument, the Canadian government relocated nearly all Inuit from their home villages to planned settlements.

In their struggle to continue the process of adaptation to the new reality, the Inuit turned to the artifacts of southern civilization. The greater distances to the hunting areas created by resettlement required the use of the snowmobile and the increased use of guns and ammunition. These, in turn, had to be paid for with cash, and greater participation in the cash economy was possible only through the sale of sealskins.
Wenzel provides an historical overview of the seal protest, describing two phases of what he calls the seal war. The first phase was conducted by men against seals on a global scale beginning in the middle 1800s; industrial sealing methods resulted in the near depletion of the stocks by the 1940s. The second phase, according to Wenzel, was initiated in the mid-1950s by activists who found the renewed seal hunt repellent. Both phases receive a fairly even-handed recounting by Wenzel.

Having set the stage for the collision of interests between the Inuit hunting culture and the animal rights movement, Wenzel’s advocacy stance comes to the forefront. The reader winces no less the second time than the first when Wenzel repeats again Stephen Best of the International Wildlife Coalition claiming ownership of Inuit culture because his tax dollars paid for it. Tables of data are presented showing the negative effects of the seal protest on Inuit income. The link between seal hunting and Inuit culture is stressed, with the animal rights movement described as “at best, grudging” in its appreciation of that link.

The arguments raised by Animal Rights, Human Rights about this particular confrontation over resource use and/or abuse have wide-ranging implications, echoing as they do conflicts between sports hunters, traditional Aboriginal resource users, animal rights advocates and commercial interests. That the issues are raised in a partisan and emotional manner does not detract from their overall importance, though some of the presentation of data seems at least questionable; figure 4.4, for example, shows seal skin prices plummeting before major protests despite Wenzel’s claim of the essential culpability of such protests. In a similar sceptical vein, one might be led to wonder of Wenzel’s adaptation thesis just what constitutes adaptation, and what constitutes forced acceptance of activities because of lack of available alternatives. One can only make so many silk purses out of sow’s ears. But with its empathetic description of Inuit life, its unresolved arguments and its incomplete data, Animal Rights, Human Rights is practically guaranteed to raise heated arguments in academic, social and political circles when read for the sake of further discussion.

John Thornton


John Goddard is one of several journalists who have recently produced accounts of Indian controversies. These books, if widely read by the
public, may be of great significance by informing people about why there are court cases, blockades and occupations occurring in Indian country. The potential for misinformation and poor communication within Canada is immense, and accounts like *Last Stand of the Lubicon* should be commended for opening the door a little for better understanding.

Goddard’s account of the struggles of the Lubicon Lake First Nation over the past century is well-written, blending a strict accounting of history with crafted portraits of the leading personalities. By putting a personal face on events, Goddard holds the reader’s interest. Some of his previous magazine and newspaper articles about the Lubicon have been noteworthy in bringing the background of the struggle to public attention—something often omitted in media accounts. Goddard scrupulously recounts the difficulties faced by the band in getting government recognition after they were missed by the Treaty 8 delegation in 1899. In doing so he brings to light one of the most widespread continuing controversies between Indian bands and federal and provincial governments: the control over status and membership.

Once the treaties were signed, the Department of Indian Affairs took over the guardianship of Indian status through the *Indian Act*. Treaty Indians who had signed treaty or taken annuities became “status” Indians under the strict rules of the *Act* and the field policies of individual Indian agents. In a region where people of full and mixed ancestry hunted and trapped together, and lived similar life-styles, the arbitrary designation of status and non-status categories by blood-line created longstanding rifts that continue to plague Indian populations. The long delay faced by the Lubicon between finally being recognized as a treaty band and getting reserve lands—still not obtained—can largely be attributed to attempts by agents to rearrange band lists and deny treaty and Aboriginal entitlements to large numbers of people.

Goddard moves chronologically through Lubicon history, documenting their fights through the courts, through negotiations, through blockades and boycotts. As he does so, he demonstrates that the membership issue is part of a larger political struggle between Indian bands and the federal government that is their “protector.” Land claims and treaty rights disputes are highly adversarial, with lawyers and others advising the two sides over both principles of the federal trust role and the interpretation of these principles.

In this instance, Goddard’s account of the conflict centres on the role of two individuals, Chief Bernard Ominayak and his advisor Fred Lennarson. The story as related is really theirs; Goddard gives the readers
insights into how they work, separately and together. The backdrop is the myriad of federal and provincial officials who parade through the story, each playing a small role in a giant industry of battle through court and boardroom.

The story of the Lubicon people is one that every Canadian should know about; its tragedy is everyone’s tragedy, as is its spirit. There is a tendency for people to read books like this and confirm some existing negative perceptions of Indian people, particularly perceptions of poverty and destitution. Goddard tries to show the causes of poverty and how groups of people fight it. His story is openly biased toward Ominayak’s and Lennarson’s story; he does not give us many insights into what the community behind the men would say if their story was being told. Nor do we know the full story behind Indian Affairs’ version of events; this was not Goddard’s purpose. Yet, we know from the reaction to the book by Indian Affairs that there is, as in all controversies, another side. It would be interesting, someday, to have a book that does attempt to show both sides, their principles, beliefs, actions, strategies. Only then can we better understand the legacy of colonialism in fostering the “Great Divide,” the cowboys and Indians of the modern age.

Perhaps the greatest drawback of the book is not the bias, which Goddard does not hide, but his failure to document his sources. Although there is a section on sources that reveals Goddard’s use of primary and secondary materials, specific bits of information are not referenced. A story as significant as this deserves ongoing investigation and cross-checking, and readers would find it difficult to do so given the lack of citations.

The next chapter in the story of the Lubicon Lake people will also have to be written someday. Since the publication of the book, the story has not yet yielded a reserve or the promised economic development. The federal government and the Lubicon remain divided over the nature and size of compensation to the band for oil revenues retained, from their lands by other governments. A recent federal offer was rejected by the Lubicon in the summer of 1992, partly because inflation has undermined the real value of the offer. Disputes over band size continue, as do those with logging and oil companies moving onto Lubicon territory. The band continues to assert sovereignty by will alone. Hopefully, the next time, they will tell the story themselves.

Peggy Brizinski

One could not hope for a more timely book than this introduction to the dual strategy by which the Inuit of Canada’s central and eastern Arctic hope to gain control of their future. The November 1992, ratification of the Inuit Aboriginal claim and the approval six months earlier of the boundary for dividing the present Northwest Territories to create Nunavut represent very major steps toward a territory that the Inuit will control by virtue of comprising four-fifths of the population.

In *The Inuit and Their Land,* Donald Purich presents a highly readable, if occasionally inflated, account of the claim settlement and division of the NWT by which the Inuit hope to face their future with confidence. Byway of background, Purich, a strong supporter of the Inuit strategy, briefly but cogently explains the rationale for Nunavut, presents the history of Inuit occupation of the North and describes contemporary social conditions among the Inuit. He emphasizes the arrival of non-Inuit and, in particular, non-Inuit government as having disrupted Inuit life and having contributed to the social problems, such as unemployment, poverty and lack of education. Purich describes these problems frankly, arguing that they are obstacles that the new territory of Nunavut will have to confront, and that the Inuit are confident that the new arrangements they seek will equip them to meet these challenges. His willingness to leave the matter at that may be congenial, but it inflates the prospects for Nunavut. He would be more convincing if he argued that, while the challenge is daunting and the outcome uncertain, division and the claim settlement deserve support because they offer the best chance of overcoming the problems whose difficulty he so powerfully describes.

Purich opens his discussion of division by reviewing its history from the 1960s to the present. This narrative is an excellent thumbnail sketch of the commissions, reports, debates and policies over the last thirty years that have defined the context within which Nunavut is taking shape today. Purich also identifies and argues against several objections to Nunavut. In the end he judges the financial cost to be the greatest problem facing the architects of division.

This discussion offers a great many valuable insights. However, it fails to clearly and correctly relate the creation of Nunavut to the national progress of Aboriginal self-government. As the author notes, Nunavut will empower an Aboriginal people to govern itself. Inuit success will add to the credibility with which other Aboriginal peoples pursue self-government for themselves. However, Nunavut will not in a constitutional sense be an instance of Aboriginal self-government. The sovereignty it will
ultimately exercise will derive from the Crown, not from any inherent Aboriginal right. The process by which the relationship between Nunavut and Ottawa will be negotiated will involve a legally subordinate Nunavut against a legally dominant Ottawa. The Inuit can point to the political accord they and Ottawa signed as a prerequisite to their ratifying the claim settlement. They can argue that this accord holds some kind of constitutional status by virtue of its connection to a claim settlement that enjoys constitutional entrenchment. However, this is likely to be a more indirect and less powerful claim on Ottawa than could be advanced by an Aboriginal government based on an inherent right. The author does describe Nunavut as a public government, but tends to emphasize the benefits of this status and understate its potential shortcomings.

Readers unfamiliar with Inuit Aboriginal claims will find the middle section of *The Inuit and Their Land* an excellent introduction that effectively places the claims in their historical context and details the recent Tungavik Federation of Nunavut settlement.

The concluding chapter muses “Nunavut and Canada’s Future.” The overstatement that intermittently mars the rest of the book reappears here when the author suggests that the new government of Nunavut might come to represent Inuit throughout Canada, in the same way that “Quebec [has] assumed that role for the French language and culture in North America.” Leaving aside the fact that Quebec has spurned this role, viewing francophone life outside Quebec as doomed, Nunavut will provide a focus for Inuit life and culture but would be very ill-advised to intervene in the affairs of provinces or to claim to speak for their people. In contrast, the chapter takes a more realistic position in arguing that Inuit success in the future will depend on the goodwill with which non-Inuit respond to it.

It is on this plane that *The Inuit and Their Land* will make its greatest contribution. It is clearly addressed to a popular audience. In place of the footnotes found in scholarly publications, the book offers a helpful essay on sources to guide novices to the topic in their search for supplementary materials. Moreover, the book’s accessible style makes for an attractive presentation of a wealth of detail and insight. While the author’s enthusiasm for his subject leads to the occasional overblown observation, he has struck a better balance between the problems and prospects of Nunavut than most other authors have managed. *The Inuit and Their Land* will enlighten readers and, by fostering informed national sympathy for the Inuit project, will make a genuine contribution to the progress of Nunavut. It is a welcome addition to the literature.

Gurston Dacks