
review by Jack Smith

Boldt critically evaluates Canadian and Indian perspectives concerning the future of Indians in Canada. The author proposes to engage the reader “to envision alternative and better worlds for Indians “ (p. xiv). Better worlds are needed because it had been Boldt’s experience that, by all accounts, Indians in Canada experience a tragic existence. Motivated by this fact and the lack of current practices and policies to remedy the tragedy, the author offers a social platform on which to develop solutions other than those presently pursued by Canadians and Indians. The author is

for whatever will make life better (and against what doesn’t for the mass of Indians who live in conditions of degrading dependence, destitution, and powerlessness; who are psychologically defeated; and who feel spurned and abandoned even by their own leadership. [pp. xvi, xvii]

Boldt cites this platform as “a moral commitment to justice for Indians” (p. xvi), which would ensure the cultural and social well being of Indians.

The first of the book’s five chapters provides a justice paradigm that has the potential to reverse the effects of a history of Canadian injustice to Indian people. Against this backdrop, the remaining chapters critically evaluate Canada’s Indian policy, Indian leadership and politics, the future of Indian cultures, and present designs for Indian economic development. Together the chapters’ conclusions establish five imperatives necessary to “promote the survival and well being of Indians as Indians” (p. 265). These include

moral justice for Indians; Canadian policies that treat Indian rights, interests, aspirations, and needs co-equally to the “national interest”; Indian leadership that is committed to Indian government “of, by, and for” the people; revitalized Indian cultures, languages, social systems that are adapted and developed within the framework of traditional philosophies and principles; and economic self sufficiency and independence achieved through employment in the Canadian mainstream. [p. 265]

In support of these conclusions the author suggests that moral justice for
Indians will not be achieved through recognition of Aboriginal rights in a Canadian Constitution that continues to support colonial legal views; rather, recognition of Indian rights as embodied in the spirit and intent of the treaties ought to be pursued through international charters that guarantee peoples’ rights. The author also suggests that Canada’s current Indian policies, shaped as they are by the national interest, seek to eliminate special status for Indians and provide a framework of institutional assimilation. Thus the pursuit of moral justice for Indians calls for a move away from the paramountcy of the “national interest” over Indian interests. National policy should reflect Canada’s role as trustee for Indians and should therefore consider Indian interests as being co-equal with the national interest.

Moral justice also means that Indian leaders must discard the principles and structures of Canadian political institutions and “relearn how to govern themselves according to Indian traditional philosophies and principles” (p. 266). Boldt suggests that this would afford the Indian leaders control that would be responsive to Indian people rather than to the Canadian government. Leaders therefore must envision a culturally-based nationhood founded on revitalized traditional values adapted to today’s social and political environment.

The final chapter on economic issues maintains that economic self-sufficiency will be required to achieve a moral justice for Indians and Indian independence. The pursuit of traditional economies, on-reserve economic development and government grants can only perpetuate a “culture of dependence.” Moral justice calls for the pursuit of sustainable economic development, obtained by having Indians participate in the Canadian economy. In the author’s model, productively employed reserve and off-reserve Indians become portable economic zones whose revenues become sources of taxation. This tax base would then provide the foundation for sustainable economic self-sufficiency.

Surviving as Indians is a welcome addition to the literature concerning the future of Indians in Canada. The book does offer an alternative to the stated perspectives of Indians and Canadians alike. While the reality of Canada’s injustice to Indians is often acknowledged, seldom has an author so critically questioned the approaches of both government and Indian leadership to correcting injustice. In the chapter on leadership, Boldt raises issues of Indian leadership seldom publicly expressed. For instance, he suggests that Indian leaders often constitute a ruling class elite and that classism has emerged from the imposed colonial political and administrative structures. Elitism and classism counter traditional structures of communalism and the attendant empowerment of the people. The author suggests that leaders should focus on
empowering the people rather than maintaining power among the ruling elite. Such suggestions are provocative.

Reserve and off-reserve Indians will also take exception to such suggestions as the taxation/participation model of sustainable economic development. Full participation in the Canadian economy and the taxation of Indians are abhorrent to those who discourse on self-government. The model is an appealing conjecture, but as presented here it ignores many associated issues. Do all Indians wish to contribute to an Indian government in which they have no participatory rights, as is currently the case for off-reserve Indians? Can this situation be remedied to the satisfaction of all concerned to make the model feasible? Are there jobs in an arguably racist Canadian economy for Indian people? Boldt provides no answers to fundamental questions like these and leaves the reader to speculate on the detail.

This points to another shortcoming of Surviving as Indians. Detail could be provided through the use of existing examples of Indian communities that have taken control and prospered under their own philosophies and initiatives. Surely these exist. Examples that illustrate the applicability of Boldt’s ideas would add credibility to his arguments. Examples would also assist the reader in understanding the substance of the suggestions and to visualize the outcome of the author’s proposals. Providing examples would further the author’s goal of reaching “the broadest readership possible” (p. xx). As it stands, even with comprehensive appendices, the book requires careful reading. Issues arising from Canadian-Indian relations, past and present, are conceptually difficult at the best of times and some questions may remain unanswered.

Still, to the audience to which it does speak, Surviving as Indians reaches its intended objective. It will spark debate on several fronts, including whether a justice paradigm is too idyllic, whether Indians and Indian leaders can revitalize and adapt traditional philosophies, and whether Canadians and their leaders will acknowledge Indian rights inherent in the spirit and intent of the treaties. At the very least, Menno Boldt has effectively questioned the adequacy of present Canadian and Indian perspectives on the future of Indians.

Alan B. Anderson

During the past several years the literature on the common experience of Aboriginal peoples constituting a “Fourth World” has grown incessantly. Particularly noteworthy are the following six volumes:


• Among the most recent books is Augie Fleras and Jean Leonard Elliott, *The “Nations Within “: Aboriginal-State Relations in Canada, the United States, and New Zealand* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1992), 267 pp. In actuality, most (eight out of twelve) chapters focus on Canada; the United States and New Zealand receive scant attention in only a single chapter each. Nonetheless, this book, if highly selective, is a useful contribution to comparative literature on the relationship between Aboriginal peoples and political states.

• Finally, most recently published is Marc S. Miler (ed., with the staff of Cultural Survival), *State of the Peoples: A Global Human Rights Report on Societies in Danger* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993), 262 pp. This is an ambitious and quite successful attempt to provide a comprehensive survey of a vast array of Indigenous peoples worldwide from up-to-date field data. Clearly this, like the GAIA Atlas, is an advocacy volume, an attempt by Cultural Survival (an activist research organization and journal concerned with the human rights of Indigenous minorities), together with a major American publisher, to draw attention to the fate of Indigenous peoples. Among the appealing features of this book are its contemporary timeliness and thorough documentation.

It is still problematic how a “Fourth World” is to be defined. Presumably the concept has been derived from the work of George Manuel and M. Posluns (*The Fourth World: An Indian Reality*. Toronto: Collier-Macmillan, 1974) and Nelson Graburn (“1,2,3,4: Anthropology and the Fourth World,” *Culture* 1, no. 1: 66-70), among others. As George Manuel put it, when he headed the World Council of Indigenous Peoples, “The Fourth World is the name given to Indigenous peoples descended from a country’s Aboriginal population and who today are completely or partly deprived of the right to their own territory and its riches. … The peoples of the Fourth World have only limited influence or none at all in the national state to which they belong” (cited in the GAIA Atlas, p. 19). Noel Dyck has more elaborately explained that it is “politically weak, economically marginal and culturally stigmatized” Aboriginal populations, “struggling variously to retain traditional lands, to cope with government administration of their affairs and to survive as culturally distinct peoples within nation-states, “ who collectively comprise what has come to be known as the Fourth World. Thus, “Fourth World peoples are not immigrants but the original inhabitants of lands that today form the territories of nation-states” (Dyck, p.1).

Herein lie several problems. Nation-states, strictly defined as at least purporting to be relatively homogeneous in ethnic composition, rarely exist today, although admittedly many countries do tend to base policies on this pretence. But where, exactly, should the line be drawn on a global scale in defining “Aboriginal, “ “Indigenous “ or “Native” peoples; “First Nations”
or “First Peoples”; etc.? It hardly needs to be pointed out again that there are myriad thousands (GAIA grandly suggests 250 million!) of Indigenous, in the sense of non-immigrant, peoples worldwide. But this would include, for example, Basques, Bretons, Catalans, Frisians, Ladins, Sorbs, Serbs and hundreds of other ethnic groups in Europe who have resided in their own territories for centuries.

Nonetheless, one does find some interesting attempts to define such terms in this most recent literature. The ICIHI volume begins with an informative chapter titled simply “The People.” Dyck expounds, as we have indicated, on the notion of the Fourth World but uses “aboriginal,” “Native” and “indigenous” peoples interchangeably (chapter 1). The GAIA Atlas has sections answering the questions “Who Are the First Peoples?” and “Where are the First Peoples?” and also provides a useful “Index of Peoples.” Similarly, although very briefly, Goehring’s first chapter (“Background”) discusses definitions and global distributions.

In the GAIA Atlas, the introductory definitions are included within a larger context, the Indigenous way of life, comprising the first of three general parts of the book. In fact, the Atlas is the only one of the land. “ In focusing, then, on Indigenous people still “living on the land,” the Atlas thereby tends to neglect the far-ranging urbanization of these peoples throughout the world. Nonetheless, this volume does initially recognize the diversity of their culture, religion and socio-economic organization.

Of course, much has been written on the historical victimization of Native peoples. However, relatively little history is found in these most recent books. The GAIA Atlas merely touches briefly on “first contact” (p. 76), while Goehring has devoted a short chapter (chapter 2) to the “Past,” concisely discussing—on a global scale—common threats, impacts, disease, warfare, loss of land and marginalization. Both the ICIHI volume (chapter 2, “Victims”) and Goehring (chapter 3, “Present”) have brief chapters devoted to a summation of contemporary victimization.

More specifically, quite a lot of attention has been devoted to present-day colonization and resettlement. In a chapter titled “Struggle for Survival” (chapter 6), the ICIHI first describes various relocations of Indigenous peoples, particularly in Brazil, Nicaragua, Indonesia and Bangladesh. Similarly, the GAIA Atlas features sections on “Modern Colonialism” and “Invasions,” as well as focuses on transmigration in Indonesia.

While the effect of urbanization on Native cultures tends to be largely
ignored, the toll of assimilation and genocide is not. Chapter 6 also includes an account of genocide directed against Indigenous peoples in several countries, notably Guatemala, Brazil, Paraguay, Bangladesh and Indonesia. And the first part of the Cultural Survival volume, “Societies in Danger,” provides case studies that include Burma, Malaysia, Namibia, Honduras and the Anishinabe (Chippewa or Ojibwa) people in Canada and the United States. The GAIA Atlas has a pertinent section on “Cultural Collapse,” ranging over such diverse topics as the drug trade in Thailand, deaths of Australian Aborigines held in police custody, “dead-end jobs” (tourism in Hawaii) and missionary zeal (evangelism in Paraguay).

The struggles of Aboriginal peoples for survival have, more often than not, been closely linked to environmental issues. There is much interesting information on this intimate relationship in these books. The ICIHI devotes a chapter (chapter 5, “Mother Earth”) to the effect of mining, hydroelectric projects and deforestation on Indigenous peoples. In the Dyck collection, Harvey Feit describes “Legitimation and Autonomy in James Bay Cree Responses to Hydro-Electric Development” (chapter 2). The GAIA Atlas pays ample attention to environmental issues, such as the traditional Aboriginal relationship to the land (with sketches of the Venezuelan Sanema, the Inuit, South Pacific Islanders) and knowledge of nature (e.g., the Brazilian Tukano and Kayapo, and tribal peoples of India); resource management (among Indians of the Pacific Northwest, the Karen of Thailand, the Mbuti Pygmies, the Tuareg); hydroelectric dams (in India and Quebec); mining (e.g., in Australia and Brazil); and the environmental threat. While far briefer, Goehring does discuss the problem of resource extraction (pp. 40-42). And the Cultural Survival volume relates environmental issues to the question of human rights for a wide variety of Aboriginal peoples; for example, one such selection is Wade Davis’s description of “Death of a People: Logging in the Penan Homeland” in Sarawak (Eastern Malaysia).

How governments treat Aboriginal peoples is another dominant theme in these sources. The ICIHI volume features separate chapters on “National Action” (chapter 7, describing governments and corporations) and “International Action” (chapter 8, describing international financial institutions and organizations). In the volume edited by Noel Dyck, Jeremy Beckett describes the politics of representation among Torres Strait Islanders in Australia (chapter 4); Sally Weaver discusses political representativity among Indigenous minorities in Australia and Canada (chapter 5); and Dyck himself writes more generally about representation in the “Fourth World.” The GAIA Atlas includes sections on “Government Reactions” and “The International Arena.” Again, the Cultural Survival volume relates politics to human rights issues in a broad variety of case studies. Finally, Fleras and
Elliott make the governing of Native peoples the dominant theme of their book, with Canadian chapters on “Unfinished Business: Reconstructing Aboriginal-State Relations” (chapter 2); “The Social Context” (chapter 3); “Aboriginal Policy” (chapter 4); “The Department of Indian Affairs: From Bureaucracy Towards Empowerment” (chapter 6); a chapter on the United States (chapter 10); and one on “Devolving Maori-State Relations” in New Zealand (chapter 11).

The militarization of Aboriginal peoples is another recurrent theme in several of these books. The ICIHI volume, in a section of chapter 6 on the “Struggle for Survival,” probes into Indigenous involvement in militarism in the South Pacific, Southeast Asia, Namibia, Nicaragua, Burma and West Papua, among other areas. In a section on militarization, the GAIA Atlas focuses on five case studies: the Chinese seizure of Tibet as an example of “imperial materialism”; the Innu dispute with NATO in Labrador; the South Pacific; refugees from Bangladesh; and overlapping territorial claims in Ethiopia. Goehring also devotes two or three pages of chapter 3 to a discussion of military activity.

But perhaps one of the most important contributions that most of these books make is toward an understanding of the politicization of Aboriginal peoples; toward an analysis of or guide to Indigenous political movements. Thus, the fourth chapter of the ICIHI volume describes “Indigenous Movements and Aspirations.” In Dyck’s collection, two case studies (interesting yet now rather dated) are D.E. Sanders’ account of “The Indian Lobby and the Canadian Constitution, 1978-1982” and Robert Paine’s of “Ethnodrama and the ‘Fourth World’: The Saami Action Group in Norway, 1979-81.” All of the third part of the GAIA Atlas, “Alternative Visions,” is concerned with various aspects of Indigenous politicization: resistance (for example, the Mapuche in Chile and the Chipko in India); Indigenous movements (e.g., Australian Aborigines); aims, hopes and demands (e.g., self-determination struggles); local action (e.g., Mohawks, the Ecuadorian Shuar, the Bodong in the Philippines, fishing rights of Pacific Northwest Indians, Aborigines’ self-determination); government reactions; and international support for Indigenous movements (e.g., the Kayapo of Brazil, the peace movement in the Pacific, the Matsingenga of Peru, Inuit survival strategy and the changing status of Indigenous women). Similarly, the Cultural Survival volume, in examining myriad case studies, covers many aspects of Indigenous politicization, albeit within a human rights theme. The Canadian part (Part 1) of Fleras and Elliott contributes to an understanding of political movements of Canadian Native peoples. This is particularly true of chapters five (“The Politics of Self-Government”), seven (“Aboriginal Protest, Symbolic Politics, and Political Reform”), eight (“Metis and Inuit...
Nationalism”) and nine (“Conclusion: from Periphery to Centre”). Closely related to Aboriginal politicization and “Native rights” is the question of land claims. While mentioned in passim in virtually all of these books, only the ICIHI book specifically focuses on this issue, in chapter 3 (“Invasion”), although the GAIA Atlas does stress, as we have already noted, the land-rootedness of Indigenous cultures.

The central theme of the comprehensive Cultural Survival volume is human rights. While all the other books obviously share a concern for Indigenous rights, this particular volume is essentially a collection of case studies on human rights issues. The second part of this book, “Resources for Action,” provides notes, charts and tables on Indigenous rights and reality; ethnocide; nuclear waste and uranium mining on Indigenous lands; exploitation of natural resources; displacement of population; as well as an interesting and up-to-date collection of selected documents (notably including the Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples). The third part of the book, a “Global Rights Summary,” provides a succinct analysis of human (particularly Indigenous) rights in all world regions.

A unique aspect of the Dyck book is a commentary, from an Indigenous viewpoint, on what it is like to be studied (i.e., by outside academics such as anthropologists). In chapter 3, Basil Sansom (himself an Australian anthropologist) writes perceptively on “Aborigines, Anthropologists and Leviathan.” This rather begs the question: how much of this collective analysis and description, amounting to more than 1200 pages in all six books, is written by Aboriginal people themselves? The answer must be none to very little; but, to be fair, a consistent attempt has been made throughout these books to honestly represent Indigenous viewpoints and interests. Moreover, the GAIA Atlas, the ICIHI volume and the Cultural Survival book have drawn liberally on Indigenous documentation.

A final consideration is this: What will be, as the subtitle to the GAIA Atlas puts it, “A Future for the Indigenous World,” or for what Cultural Survival calls “Societies in Danger”? Fleeras and Elliott, in their conclusion (chapter 12), suggest that for Aboriginal peoples in North America and New Zealand—for “nations within”—what is needed is a thorough restructuring of Aboriginal-state relations. And in the fourth and final chapter of his short book, Goehring discusses prospects for the future, and perceptively relates this discussion to a comparison of Indigenous and industrial dichotomies.

But let us give the final word to GAIA (p. 176):

The experiences and values of indigenous peoples may well take on a special significance. Their struggle for self-determination is part of a larger struggle for freedom; their beliefs about nature offer insights into how the whole environment should be protected;
their social organizations may throw into question our own fragmented communities. … Indigenous peoples ask no more than the right to determine their own development and future. We all wish no less for ourselves. As a violent century draws to a close, it is time to listen to those saner voices which stretch back to the birth of human society.