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Surviving As Indians: The Challenge of Self-Government. By Menno Boldt. Toronto: University of Toronto Press Incorporated, 1993. 384 pages. \$19.95 paper.

More than two decades have passed since the term *native self-determination* was used in opposition to the 1969 White Paper presented by the Canadian federal government. Self-determination has evolved into "the aboriginal inherent right to self-government," a concept that is promoted by the Canadian aboriginal leadership. Many Canadians, aboriginal and nonaboriginal alike, are not certain about what aboriginal self-government means, and about how it will co-exist in the Canadian intergovernmental system. A study conducted by The Angus Reid Group (*Canadians' Views and Attitudes Regarding Issues Associated with Aboriginal Peoples*, 1990) indicates that some Canadians are in support of the idea of aboriginal self-government, but many oppose it. It appears that preconceptions about what aboriginal self-government entails have generated some of that opposition.

A proliferation of literature has been produced, particularly in anticipation of the 1992 constitutional referendum. This body of work offers numerous analyses and arguments that support the concept of aboriginal self-government, as well as how and why the "inherent right" ought to receive constitutional recognition. Some of the literature suggest models of self-government that either appease the aboriginal leaders or the leaders of nonaboriginal governments; as a result, the models cannot endure the critical scrutiny of either assembly. It is evident that to develop a definitive work that categorically illustrates aboriginal self-government is impossible because of the diversity of political culture and the perceptions held, by both aboriginal and nonaboriginal people, about aboriginal self-government.

In *Surviving as Indians: The Challenge of Self-Government*, Menno Boldt presents a thought substructure in which the structure of self-government can be articulated without misconceptions. His discussion may prove to be invaluable, because, if the constitutional referendum fails, the federal government must reconsider the question of constituting aboriginal self-government and expediting settlement of the outstanding aboriginal land claims, if Canada is to solve "the Indian problem." The discussion indicates an ability to create an informed dialogue by promoting a fresh discourse in the wake of the failed attempt at constitutional reform. Boldt has methodically organized his discussion

into chapters that present specific issues with a purpose "to engage not only the 'experts' in the field of Indian affairs but all Indians and Canadians, on the basis of a shared sense of humanity" (p. xvii).

The intriguing distinction of Boldt's presentation is that he resists the pressure to be "politically correct"; thus he avoids inhibiting scholarly discussion of the realities that shape aboriginal issues. He charges the Canadian government with using dissimulative rhetoric and the aboriginal leaders with using extravagant rhetoric; these methods make it difficult for both sides to comprehend each other's agenda. Yet Boldt avoids the pitfall of responding to either camp's rhetoric, which would obscure the purpose of his discussion. He rejects the idea that the development of critical analysis of minority issues should be reserved for members of the minority group; this, he feels, would keep the majority of scholars outside the discourse because of their identity. However, he does encourage scholars who are members of the affected minority group to propose critical analysis, despite possible charges of conforming to paternalism. Boldt stimulates the reader into accepting, rejecting, or improving on his ideas. Further, he offers a pertinent bibliographic reference section for the reader who wishes to study, in greater depth, the issues raised in the chapters. The reference section also serves to satisfy the academic demand to produce knowledge.

The purpose of most other literature seems to be the contribution to the mounting discipline-based pool of academic research and theory, which generally appeals to a specific intellectual group. Since the arguments and discussions are focused on complex aboriginal issues, their structure is generally long and complicated and does not appeal to those who will be most affected by aboriginal self-government or to the political grassroots in Canadian society.

Boldt has successfully constructed his discussion in a "framework of social action, not research and theory" (p. xvi). He begins with a reflection on the issue of justice, but without making poignant statements about the injustices suffered by aboriginal people. The opening chapter about justice is a logical introduction, since aboriginal society is an anomaly within Western-liberal ideology. It is important to explain that the foundation of aboriginal rights is based in spiritual ground, with those rights originating from the Creator, whereas Western bias denies the existence of rights derived from the Creator. Boldt suggests that "to render

justice to Indians [will be done] by honouring the spirit and intent of the treaties" (p. 63).

The second chapter deals with government policy toward Indians. The Indian Acts have given Indians a special status; at the same time, they have imposed a set of liberal-democratic political institutions that work against traditional participatory democratic forms and create a dilemma for aboriginal people as they attempt to use self-government for community development. Government policy can be simply described as a clever design for institutional assimilation and termination of the special status for Indian people; in short, it serves the "national interest." Aboriginal people have welcomed every new era of Indian policy with cheers of hope, only to find the ideals lost in the myriad of red tape and bureaucratic side-stepping. This chapter of Boldt's book should be of particular interest to the aboriginal leadership, who may find themselves being seduced into accepting the Canadian government's terminology for selective and limited local self-administration. Although it is possible to summarize government policy in a simple statement, Boldt has provided an overview that illustrates how the policy can be described in such a manner.

As aboriginal leaders have begun to negotiate the inherent right of self-government, they have been reluctant to specify the operational features of self-government, such as jurisdiction, functions, and structures. The notion of aboriginal self-government remains at the level of value notion that has yet to be articulated. There is a tendency to generalize in terms of sovereignty, retention of culture, land claims, and so on. In the third chapter, Boldt assesses the role of the leadership and politics within aboriginal communities. He considers the effects of a leadership structure imposed by the Indian Acts. The Acts have created an Indian elitist class and have fostered a passive attitude toward politics in general. The leadership must empower their people to develop a sense of political participation in constitutional development.

The aboriginal leaders have held to the argument that aboriginal peoples are distinct, with particular traditional and cultural values. It was the cultural values that maintained a social order within the communities; however, the social order is undergoing a breakdown linked to cultural erosion. Members of the aboriginal communities themselves have expressed concern about cultural decline. Their concern has led to a retraditionalization effort, but the traditional norms and values such as communalism, kinship, sharing, mutual aid, equality, and decision by consensus no

longer form a basis for common values. In the fourth chapter, Boldt suggests that Indian cultures are in a state of crisis; if Indian peoples are to survive as Indians, they must revitalize their traditional philosophies and principles to develop a clear direction and consensus about who they want to be culturally.

The last chapter evaluates the design of economic development. It has become evident that a new strategy must be developed to address Indian economic issues, since previous government policy to initiate economic development has not been a success. Community development has become just as important as economic self-sufficiency. Boldt emphasizes the importance of economic self-sufficiency and independence for Indian political autonomy and social health.

Menno Boldt's *Surviving as Indians: The Challenge of Self-Government* is the culmination of twenty-five years of study in the field of aboriginal issues and is the most thought-provoking publication to date. It suggests to both aboriginal and nonaboriginal people that the Indian future will eventually be worked out with Canadians; however, to succeed in reaching an understanding, the two societies will need to discuss the harsh realities facing them both. Even though Boldt did not intend this discussion to contribute to academic research and theory, academics who are researching aboriginal self-government, and those who are in the field of political analysis and policy development, should put this text on their "to read" list.

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Tales of a Shaman's Apprentice: An Ethnobotanist Searches for New Medicines in the Amazonian Rain Forest. By Mark J. Plotkin. New York: Viking Penguin, 1993. 320 pages. \$22.00 cloth.

Rarely does a book come along that deserves to be devoured in one reading, and even more rarely is that book a work of nonfiction, but this is one of those times. Plotkin's work is both fascinating and important. The story he tells rolls along at a rapid pace without ever becoming bogged down in scientific analysis—although much analysis is provided. The reason this work is important, however, is that he proves that indigenous cultures have a vital