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Readings in Aboriginal Studies I: Human Services. Edited by Samuel W. Corrigan. Brandon, Manitoba: Brandon University, Bearpaw Publishing, 1991. 319 pages. \$24.00 (Canadian) cloth; \$18.75 paper.

The eighteen essays in this collection, written by even more authors (several of the essays being collaborative efforts), are connected by a common theme: Canada's aboriginal peoples have not been well served by mainstream social welfare systems. Until the 1960s, formal child and family services were not even available on reserves, and, when they were established, they were substandard. In 1980, when American Indians made up 1.3 percent of Canada's population, 20 percent of the children under care were aboriginal. Practices such as placing such children with white families either for foster care or for adoption were justified on the unfounded claim that there were not enough aboriginal families capable of filling the need. That is only the beginning of the litany, described in these essays, of inadequacies, wrongheadedness, and downright insensitivity that has characterized Canadian social services for aboriginals.

Lack of authoritative statistical information concerning native populations has compounded the difficulties. As Jeremy Hull points out (pp. 8–16), identifying nonstatus Indians and Métis can be problematic, particularly if individuals do not wish to declare themselves. But even with status Indians, there can be significant undercounts; in the 1981 census, six reserves were not enumerated at all, and remote areas, in general, were inadequately dealt with. Even in urban centers, aboriginals often were reluctant to fill out questionnaires, the purpose of which they sometimes did not understand. It is not yet known how successful the 1991 census was in overcoming these obstacles.

Most of the workable initiatives to improve conditions have come from the aboriginals themselves. In 1970, Alberta's Saddle Lake band was the first to take over control of its school system; by 1980, eleven of forty-two native schools in the province had come under local control, and student attendance had improved. Still, as Reinhild Rodrigues indicates (pp. 113–22), the number of native students completing grade 12 is depressingly low—only 3 percent. Bands see the problem as one of developing cultural identity, so they are working on curricula that reflect native history and philosophy; another major element is the encouragement of native languages. However, the demands of family and community can

conflict with requirements for school attendance, a circumstance that makes such terms as *school skipping* and *absenteeism* inappropriate. While the problems are being tackled, there is a long way to go.

Improvements have also been noted in health administration that has been taken over by the bands. For example, at Montreal Lake, Saskatchewan, the immediate result of the band takeover was that services became more comprehensive and also more efficient, especially in the case of emergencies. However, as authors Meredith A. Moore et al. acknowledge (pp. 101–112), it is not yet clear that this initial momentum can be maintained; at the time of writing, confirming statistics remained to be compiled.

Some of the most widely publicized lapses recently have been in the justice system. The spectacular case of Donald Marshall, the Micmac who served eleven years for a murder he did not commit, has done much to expose widespread inequities. Throughout the North, workable local systems have been replaced by white society's laws, not only expensive but usually not suited to the situations involved. The practice of flying accused persons to distant centers for their trials has meant that community conditions and concerns have been generally disregarded, to the disservice of justice. Carol LaPrairie describes (pp. 259–74) how such social dislocations have resulted in an increase in violence against women and, consequently, in female criminality. In 1982, in Canada's Federal Prison for Women, 70 percent of the aboriginal inmates were incarcerated for violent offenses, as compared to 32 percent of nonaboriginals.

What all this indicates, of course, is that not only have aboriginals been devalued as persons, but their social systems have been devalued as well. The dominant society, which considers aboriginals and their way of life inferior, also considers it acceptable to treat them in a substandard way. In all the situations referred to here, natives could not expect to receive the same level of treatment as whites. A consequence of such attitudes has been that the natives are blamed for their own social problems. Recent events, such as revelations of abuse of students (particularly if they were native) in educational institutions, have done much to make the public aware that the situation involves whites as much as natives. This has also been demonstrated for the justice system. These are only two examples of the effects of devaluation, a problem that extends throughout the social relationships between whites and aboriginals.

In addressing various aspects of this phenomenon, these essays

do not make for cheering reading. It should be pointed out, however, that much of the information is dated. This is not to say that the conditions described no longer exist, but today there is, at least, less tendency to sweep them under the rug. There is a growing awareness that, in spite of all of Canada's social achievements, no grounds for complacency exist, nor are they ever likely to exist. Changing conditions give rise to new challenges, a process to which all human societies are subject. One can hope, however, that someday the famous "level playing field" will be as available for aboriginals as it is for whites.

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Sweet Promises: A Reader on Indian/White Relations in Canada.
Edited by J. R. Miller. Toronto, Ontario: University of Toronto Press, 1991. \$24.95 (Canadian) paper.

J. R. Miller has edited and assembled twenty-five essays on Indian-white relations in Canada, mostly by historians. They are reprints of previous publications. In his introduction, Miller claims, "Readers of the following essays . . . can learn a great deal, both about the evolution of Indian-white relations in Canada, and about the ways in which anthropologists, historians and others have interpreted that pattern." As a reviewer, however, I did not find this to be the case. Instead, most of the essays were written from a strictly Eurocentric viewpoint and with traditional distortions of aboriginal history. According to Miller, "studies of Indian-white relations after Confederation have thus far proved largely resistant to reinterpretation. It is now time for another look at Canada's (history)." Hence, interpretation is the emphasis of the text. The reader expects revised, if not new, interpretations. However, the book is a disappointment in this respect. It is not surprising when one examines the names of the authors of the essays; with few exceptions, they are traditional, white supremacy academics who make liberal use of stereotypes and distortions.

Most of the essays have the tone of attempting to justify European conquest, dispossession of Indians and their land and resources, and the early atrocities. Josephy states, "The European conquest of the Americas has been termed one of the darkest chapters of human history . . . No one will ever know how many