

## Culture



**Samuel W. CORRIGAN (ed.), *Readings in Aboriginal Studies, Vol. 1: Human Services*, Brandon, Manitoba: Bearpaw Publishing, 1991. 319 pages, \$24.00 (cloth), \$18.75 (paper)**

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kin and other members of the community are prepared to intervene as a significant constraint in structuring domestic violence. The extent to which violence is socially sanctioned, and the availability of sanctuary (hence the book's title) are crucial constraints in the social organisation of domestic violence. Here too are some important lessons for North Americans from the people in the communities documented in this collection.

Overall women emerge from this collection in a positive light, as active agents in constructing their own lives (Lateef, p. 192), their cultural and social networks and the complex patterns of violence embedded within them.

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By Fraser J. Pakes  
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Anyone who has attended human service inter-agency meetings in aboriginal communities will attest to the increasing importance given to this process by Native peoples. Even in their simplest form such meetings demonstrate the potential of an holistic approach to address contemporary problems. It is perhaps fitting then that this first volume of a projected series of readers on aboriginal studies, is devoted to this area. Directed towards undergraduate introductory studies as well as related courses in human services training, the book contains some eighteen papers drawn from a wide variety of journals on the major areas of human services, housing, health, education, child and family services and justice. The sections of the book are all prefaced by an introductory background. While this is the classic "reader" approach it still relies on good editing to make it work well. This is certainly the case here: Samuel Corrigan has provided a smooth transition from one section to the next so that the text may be read in sequence as a narrative. His introductions are reasoned and evenly balanced, critical but fair. They also provide a good background to the particular theme covered, an important factor because the

papers themselves are in many cases not introductory but rather detailed analyses of situations.

Ranging from statistical studies to case histories the papers have a good geographic coverage across Canada and are as current as can be expected in publishing. A number of the papers are described by their authors as "exploratory" introductory studies with no firm answers found to the problems dealt with. These are particularly suited to the undergraduate classroom where open-ended questions provide the necessary class debates and themes for assignment papers.

Because this reader is designed for the student at the introductory level there is of course a reiteration of data that has become rather familiar to the general public — that aboriginal people have a shorter life-span and a higher infant mortality rate, are the most poorly housed, and the most misclassified from culturally-biased WISC-R-type intelligence tests. Depressing facts such as these emerge again and again in the papers. Yet at the same time a number of the papers provide optimism. These include Moore, Forbes and Henderson's study of the health care service among the Montreal Lake Band, and Gardner's paper on the Seabird Island Community School. It should be noted both these successful examples involve band-controlled operations, a fact that most of the authors and the editor clearly see as part of the solution. The common thread running through virtually all the papers is the view that there is a fundamental problem in agencies designed by, implemented by, and run by non-aboriginal organizations. The Native people appear to have had little input in the design, implementation or running of the system, but are certainly being asked to be willing clients.

The authors' message is for Native people to take over their own affairs and change the format as needed, particularly in housing, health and justice. The damaging effect of current non-aboriginal systems emerges most poignantly in the sections on children. The accounts of children taken away, often out of the country and into oblivion, have received wide publicity in the media. While these accounts are repeated here the authors draw attention to the attitudes that survive from the past such as are exemplified by the almost generic remark "He's not in enough trouble yet to justify our agency taking action" (during a request for action on a Metis child, p. 166). The inappropriateness of much of what has been set up outside Native control is thrown into

sharp relief in the final paper of the book. Doug Daniels and his Cree teacher trainees produced a tongue-in-cheek view of the intelligence test, entitled the "James Smith Reserve Cree Counterbalance I.Q. Test". It is a salutary lesson that reminds us that even under strong duress and depressing conditions the Native person can still laugh at the earnestness with which some of the more ridiculously unsuitable non-Native policies continue to be offered aboriginal peoples for their "betterment".

If succeeding volumes in this series maintain the standard set by this one students will have an extremely useful and comprehensive background of what is going on in the aboriginal world today.

Y. Georg LITHMAN, Rick R. RIEWE, Raymond E. WIEST and Robert E. WRIGLEY (Eds), *People and Land in Northern Manitoba*, University of Manitoba Anthropology Papers 32, Winnipeg: University of Manitoba, Department of Anthropology, 1992; 270 pages (paper).

Rick RIEWE and Jill OAKES (Eds), *Human Ecology: Issues in the North*, Occasional Publication Series No. 30, Canadian Circumpolar Institute, Edmonton: University of Alberta, 1992; 135 pages (paper).

*By Peter Douglas Elias*  
*University of Lethbridge*

The first book contains 25 papers from the proceedings of a conference held in Winnipeg, Manitoba, in May of 1990 on the theme of contemporary issues in northern Manitoba. The participants represented interests that traditionally have competed for land, resources, influence and public attention in the north, and one might expect this volume to reveal sources and sentiments of conflict. In fact, what is more striking is the extent of agreement, although at least two main players in the affairs of northern Manitoba are not represented in this volume — the government of Manitoba and Manitoba Hydro. Several papers contain quite pointed criticism of Manitoba Hydro's role in the north. Perhaps conflict would have been more apparent had the volume included the words of Premier Gary Filmon and Manitoba Hydro's representative.

This volume contains interesting examples of how players in Canada's north have begun to reassess their views of vital issues and to bring their thinking and their actions into line with contemporary reality. On some issues, for example, Phil Fontaine of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, and Oscar Lathlin, then Chief of the Pas Band and now Member of the Manitoba Legislature, seem to be in agreement with spokespersons representing northern Manitoba's major industrial entities including Paul Richards of Repap Manitoba and Alastair Walker of Hudson Bay Mining and Smelting. For the two chiefs, the north is no longer home to sparse and remote populations who mostly want to preserve lands and resources for hunters and gatherers. For the two industrialists, the north is no longer a warehouse of riches for the taking nor an endless sink for waste. All seem to be seeking new opportunities and accepting new responsibilities in the north, and gradually policy positions are changing and merging. The article by Chief Harvey Nepinak of the Waterhen Band in Manitoba and Harvey Payne of the Manitoba Department of Natural Resources is an excellent description of a pioneer experiment in wildlife co-management and serves as an example of how competing interests can each serve their purposes through institutionalized mechanisms for sharing environmental opportunities and responsibilities.

This volume suffers a flaw often found in volumes reporting conference proceedings. Each contribution is only a few pages long and can be read out loud in about 20 minutes. Most are quite general and some are superficial, but others are so tightly focused that considerable knowledge must be in hand for the reader to appreciate what is being said. For example, William O. Pruitt, Jr. sets out a radical agenda for environmental protection, but in a few pages he cannot fully develop the linkages between observable environmental problems and the solutions he proposes. Pruitt's dozen pages in this volume contain the distilled essence of a long and distinguished career in the biological sciences. Scholars familiar with his contributions to northern knowledge are aware that Pruitt can mount a formidable and even convincing defense of his ideas, but this is not apparent in his few pages. For similar reasons, academic papers by John Loxley, Jean Friesen, Gerald Friesen, George Churchman and Paul Chartrand, all of the University of Manitoba, fail to adequately represent the state of knowledge in their disciplines.