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REVIEWS

Aboriginal Peoples and Politics: The Indian Land Question in British Columbia, 1849-1989. By Paul Tennant. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1991 (reprint). 305 pages. \$39.95 cloth; \$19.95 paper.

What has been happening in native affairs across the border in Canada has not generally piqued the interest of many scholars in this country. Certainly in recent years, we have become aware of the movement for autonomy (sovereignty?) in the Northwest Territories, that is, in the eastern Arctic known as Nunavut. At times, discerning scholars have pointed to parallels in history—i. e., ethnohistory—for, indeed, in native affairs, Canadian and United States institutions stem from a common source in British colonial practices. However, each country has traveled a somewhat different route in dealing with Indians and other indigenous peoples. Yet both nations have employed treaties of land cession, established reservations, and created trusteeships over indigenous peoples and their lands; both have attempted termination policies and have engaged in the land claims process. One significant difference does emerge: The provinces have long played a far greater role in native affairs than have the states.

This focus on provincial involvement in Indian issues is one fundamental value of Paul Tennant's carefully constructed and documented political study—one that is often belabored in its detail of personal interactions, political machinations, and the like. I know of no parallel in the published literature of the Indian in the

United States; our preoccupation has led us to write about tribes, the federal presence in Indian affairs, and pan-Indian activities. This also is a more remarkable work because it has been penned by a political scientist who is highly versed in history and ethnography. Few of his American colleagues have developed a comparable capacity.

Aboriginal Peoples focuses on the numerous tribes and bands of both Vancouver Island and mainland British Columbia, which were separate British colonies that merged prior to the establishment of the Canadian confederation. This is a detailed historic reconstruction of personalities—Indian leaders; colonial, provincial, and federal officials, both as proponents of the Indians' cause and as antagonists; and residents—policies, and events that constitute the antecedents to the long struggle of the native population to secure governmental acknowledgment of land claims. So long and embittered were the steps to federal recognition of aboriginal title that Tennant needed fifteen chapters to bring us to the contemporary claims process; as the book ends (early 1990), the process is still ongoing. The machinations of government, particularly the interface of colony and Great Britain, then province and federal government, form an important arena of discussion throughout the book. In essence, provincial leaders were adamantly opposed to native land claims, having rejected the idea that the Indians had a preexisting claim to territory or that it was ever necessary to extinguish such a title. Tennant demonstrates how the tribes, separately and collectively, sought to overcome this imposing resistance to land claims. The background to our own land claims process reports similar official opposition until the 1940s; for Canada, it stretched into the 1960s and necessitated a change in the Canadian constitution. To be sure, Tennant does reveal that the tribes themselves were not always unified in this effort and that perhaps their vacillation and divisiveness must account for some of the slow progress toward acknowledgment of land claims.

For students interested in the inner workings of indigenous politics and in the analysis of how tribes, encouraged by non-Indian supporters, come together for a common goal and create a native brotherhood or other organization, and how they, at different junctures, divide and go their own ways, this is a bold yet reflective study. It required detailed archival research as well as close contact with native communities. While one finds considerable parallels in United States Indian affairs, it is the uniqueness of the provincial involvement that offers few parallels for scholars of

United States Indian affairs. We can point to some experiences in New England, New York, and the eastern United States in general, where the dominant role of colonies diminished only subsequent to statehood, except for the legacy of claims litigation resulting from newer interpretations of the Trade and Non-Intercourse Acts and to some surviving co-authority over contemporary tribes. Oklahoma also represents a special case. It is true in this country that, at times, states have intervened, as in California, to check the ratification of treaties of land cession or have dealt directly in native land purchases, as in New England. Generally, the states have been subordinate to the federal government in our national experience. Also, it becomes apparent that, as with the tribes in the United States, it is the Supreme Court of Canada (read United States) that ultimately has sustained native rights and claims against local residents and provincial authorities.

Although Tennant's objective is to develop a study of the land claims of British Columbian tribes, one should not expect a detailed analysis of the claims themselves. The volume ends just as the claims process is getting underway; the author reviews the critical litigation that resulted in national recognition of Indian land claims in British Columbia. There are no maps of claims, not even an ethnogeographic map of the concerned tribes. This is a political ethnohistory that seeks to identify, report, and evaluate the salient issues, events, laws, and cases, as well as the various persona. Tennant admits that he has not attempted a comparative study, nor is he so interested in theory; he has a focused concern to remedy the dismally limited literature that has inadequately examined indigenous British Columbian politics. Perhaps we can look forward to a revised edition that updates us as to the final resolution. A final thought: More detailed studies of this sort should be written about other provinces of Canada and certainly for many states of this country. Perhaps the paucity of interested political scientists accounts most for our ignoring or bypassing so much that is vital in indigenous politics in the United States; Tennant has shown us how to deal with such matters.

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