

welfare activity, and even party political organization. Even today, a European-model state seems appealing to Canadians who seek an alternative to American practice.

In the end, we can understand very little about local government unless we set it in context. At issue is the disposition and organization of the state itself. We have to ask exactly how people are governed in any particular region. What tasks do the senior governments reserve to themselves, and how do they exercise their authority in relation to the local population? To what extent are there autonomous institutions of local government, and how do these institutions relate with one another and to the senior governments? Which services and facilities have been left to private provision? To what extent do local or other governmental authorities regulate business or non-profit activity? What is the relationship between governmental and non-governmental organizations in common fields of activity? How and why has the pattern of governmental organization changed over the years? In answering questions like these, we have to look not only at what municipalities and other elected local governments are doing, but also at the pattern of activity around them. This is not an easy thing, but once we pose the issues in such terms it becomes clear that most of what passes as political science, political sociology, and political economy actually tells us little about the way we are governed. Analysts shy away from the patterns of everyday life, because these patterns are too hard to understand, and we are left with explanations that float over the realities of our lives. Masson at least makes an honest effort to deal with the dense reality of local government and politics in Alberta, but what he offers us is only a beginning. A much more ambitious study would be required to get us past the current ideological posturing and enable us to see what is actually happening in our lives.

Warren Magnusson
Department of Political Science
University of Victoria



Surviving as Indians: The Challenge of Self-Government, by Menno Boldt. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993. Pp. 384.

Surviving as Indians is one of the best books ever written about aboriginal politics in Canada. In an era when many academics lack the courage to tackle the social and political implications of aboriginal self-government in a forthright and intellectually honest manner, *Surviving as Indians* stands out as a bold endeavour. The sophistication of the thought and insight presented in this work reflects the vantage point of a scholar who has spent the better part of his career studying the problems confronting aboriginal peoples within the Canadian state. It is also written from the perspective of a person who cares passionately about the future survival of aboriginal

peoples in Canada. Whether readers agree or disagree with Boldt, the arguments developed in this provocative book cannot be dismissed easily.

The central theme that runs through the book is the tension between the notion of Indians and *Indians*. Indian refers to the Indian Act definition of a person of Indian ancestry. *Indian* refers to traditional Indian peoples. Thus, Indian is a legal-political construct, *Indian* is a cultural construct. Boldt, fundamentally, is concerned with Indians surviving as *Indians*.

Within this Indian-*Indian* conceptual framework, Boldt addresses five dimensions of aboriginal-state relations and their particular implications for aboriginal self-government. Chapter 1 addresses the question of justice (or perhaps more accurately, injustice) that underlies aboriginal-state relations in Canada, from the time of first contact to the present day. While thoughtful and comprehensive, there is little new here that has not been stated before. Chapter 2 examines the basis of Indian policy in Canada within a "national interest" paradigm and explains why the state has pursued assimilationist policies toward aboriginal peoples and why so little progress toward self-government has been accomplished to date. Boldt's "national interest" paradigm is firmly rooted in *elite theory* approaches to the study of politics and society, which holds that the policies pursued by the state are to preserve or enhance the power of the political, economic and social elite of a country. Thus, Indian policy is a reflection of the broader logic of "national interest" as opposed to an instance of specific design. On this score, Boldt is very persuasive.

Boldt prefaces his discussion by stating that it will be "distasteful to some readers because, unavoidably, it carries paternalistic overtones" (pp. 117-18). To the contrary, because Boldt "calls a spade a spade," by discussing both the virtues and the shortcomings of aboriginal communities and, thus, treats aboriginal peoples as equals, he is *not* paternalistic. Boldt argues that current Indian government, imposed by the Canadian state, is a radical departure from traditional *Indian* forms of political organization. Current forms of government are hierarchical, traditional forms were not. As a consequence, Indian communities that were once egalitarian have experienced the emergence of ruling elite classes. Boldt argues that unless aboriginal leaders and communities come to terms with the implications of current structures of governance, self-government will simply mean a transfer of power from the Canadian government to an aboriginal elite. He challenges those who sincerely care about the well-being of aboriginal peoples: "Concerned Canadians cannot close their eyes to the possibility that 'Indian self-government' may serve to cloak or to legitimate an indigenous tyranny that harms the mass of band / tribal members" (p. 118). This challenge must not go unheeded.

Boldt's chapter on culture is both extremely engaging and very sobering. Boldt argues that without a revitalization of traditional *Indian* philosophies and values, Indians will cease to exist as *Indians*. In this connection, Boldt observes that without the maintenance of aboriginal languages, Indians cannot fully survive as *Indians*. As Boldt states, "When a language dies a

world-view is lost" (p. 187). Given the current state of aboriginal language retention, it is difficult to be optimistic. However, Boldt underestimates the role that traditional economic activities can play in the survival of Indians as *Indians*. Much of Boldt's own experience is with the Indian communities of southern Alberta, where settler populations and agricultural development have significantly eroded, if not eliminated, the possibility of traditional economies serving as a basis for cultural revival. By contrast, in the northern half of Alberta, hunting, fishing, and berry picking remain very important activities, for many — not a few — Indians families and communities. Thus, it may be true for many aboriginal communities that traditional economies cannot serve as a basis for cultural survival, but it is certainly not true for all.

The final chapter is devoted to aboriginal economic development. It is an excellent starting point for the discussion of the economic future of aboriginal peoples in Canada. Boldt accounts for the economic dependence of contemporary Indian communities and offers alternatives to overcome this dependence. The two key alternatives Boldt recommends are the integration of Indian people into the Canadian mainstream economy and the taxation of Indians both on and off reserve. Boldt argues this can be done without compromising the fundamental elements of *Indian* culture. Moreover, without economic self-sufficiency, self-government will hold little meaning. These alternatives are controversial, but Boldt should be commended for putting these perspectives into the debate on aboriginal self-government.

Unfortunately, today many academics are concerned more about being seen as "cheerleaders" for the Indian movement, rather than offering frank, critical assessments (both the good and the bad) of aboriginal communities and aboriginal leaders, as well as of Canadian people and Canadian governments. It is only by dealing with the key issues surrounding aboriginal self-government in a candid manner that meaningful solutions can be achieved. *Surviving as Indians* is an extremely important book to head debate in Canada in the right direction.

Greg Poelzer
Political Science Programme
University of Northern British Columbia



Alberta's Metis Settlements Legislation: An Overview of Ownership and Management of Settlement Lands, by Catherine E. Bell. Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1994. Pp 144.

Of all the Canadian provinces, Alberta has occupied the vanguard in recognizing and entrenching land-base rights for the Metis in the Canadian Constitution as a prelude to self-government. Until 1982 the precise constitutional status of the Metis was uncertain and political responsibility for the community remains uncertain to this day. Although they are not "Indians" for the purposes of the Indian Act,¹ the Supreme Court of Canada had ruled