

Book Notes

Finding Dasha: Self-Government, Social Suffering, and Aboriginal Policy in Canada by Stephanie Irlbacher-Fox. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2009. 174 pp., \$32.95 pb.

Finding Dasha is an exploration of Canadian aboriginal policy as it is expressed in the context of self-governance negotiations. Using case studies from the Northwest Territories, the book provides an intricate examination of the myriad techniques, tensions and interests that play out in the process of self-governance negotiations between First Nations and the government. By delving into the historical, political and social forces at work during negotiations the author gleans the characteristic differences of perspective held by parties to the process, differences which often lead to unsatisfactory results.

As both a participant and observer in negotiations, the author provides a unique window into these diverging perspectives of aboriginal and governmental negotiators. One of the major differences posited as separating the two parties from sharing common ground is the governmental belief in the injustices suffered by indigenous peoples as being in the past. Since, from this perspective, the injustice has long since passed the best that can be done is to symbolically embark on restitution for such injustices today through, among other things, land-claims agreements. In contrast, the aboriginal perspective sees injustice as a continual process merely beginning in the past but played out to the present in a number of ways. From the First Nations perspective the continual suffering of aboriginal peoples is specifically because of the lack of substantive restitution for past and current injustices.

Through the use of a number of negotiating examples the author effectively illustrates the way that such differences of perspective lead to less than optimal resolutions.

When discussing resource revenue sharing, the perspective of the government leads it to desire control and parity with other similar First Nation agreements. This perspective fundamentally undercuts the views of First Nations who feel the need for independence and the ability to be able to live on their own terms rather than "as Aboriginals determined by the Canadian state."

When discussing potential Aboriginal control over child and family services for their people, First Nations people consider their competence in managing this aspect of their society competently for 2000 years prior to government control and also the damage and suffering incurred as a result of assimilation encouraged after government control. In contrast, the government uses the above damage and suffering of aboriginals as a rationale for the continued existence of government intervention and management.

These examples tellingly illuminate the contrasting perspectives as a means of understanding and coming to terms with the self-governance negotiation scheme currently in place, and with an eye to improving the process, recognizing that while there are currently major issues to be addressed, the potential is there.

Interwoven into the discussion of self-governance negotiations are the author's field notes which were compiled during first-hand experiences of moose-hide tanning alongside aboriginal peoples in the Northwest Territories. The incorporation of field notes serves to give experiential meaning to aboriginal culture and way of life. Moreover, it is urged that the activity reflects fundamental values such as co-operation, responsibility and tenacity which might enable positive progress in relation to aboriginal self-governance. The inclusion of such experiences complements the picture of the Aboriginal perspective which the author has strived to portray.

After what is often a negative consideration of all of the forces at play in any self-governance negotiation, the author does not call for an abandonment of such processes, but rather asks the question where are we to go from here? In what is not an attempt to exhaust all the possible solutions, the author calls for a shift in policy recognizing continuous aboriginal suffering and also greater regard for the knowledge and wisdom possessed by aboriginal people.

The thoughtful and extensive consideration of the aboriginal perspective is the hallmark of this work. The author's experience as a non-aboriginal living and working alongside First Nations people has given her a deep understanding of the values held by aboriginals which enables her to uniquely construe the issues affecting First Nations. Through revealing use of aboriginal experiences of suffering, paired with the governmental negotiation effects of silencing such suffering the defects of the current system are exposed.

Finding Dasha is an effective examination of the self-governance scheme, focused chiefly on the aboriginal perspective. It provides important insights which, if acknowledged by government, will be crucial to improving and moving the self-governance scheme forward. A quote by the author succinctly captures what a more effective self-government might look like: "indigenous peoples...connected to each other and their lands and resources through indigenous ways of being, values and worldviews."

- Kelly Bray

Impersonations: Troubling the Person in Law and Culture by Sheryl N. Hamilton. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009. 290 pp., \$55.00 hc.

Sheryl Hamilton's book studies five of what she considers to be, liminal beings, namely corporations, women, clones, computers, and