

Book Reviews/Comptes rendus

COLE HARRIS, *Making Native Space: Colonialism, Resistance, and Reserves in British Columbia*. Vancouver, BC: UBC Press. 2002, xxxi + 416 pp., Index.

Making Native Space is the result of four years of research into the dispossession of Native lands and the creation of so-called "Indian reserves" in British Columbia. More than this, it reflects Cole Harris's long engagement with the geographic consequences of colonialism for Native and non-Native peoples in the province, which is also the subject of his 1997 collection of essays, *The Resettlement of British Columbia*. In this sense, *Making Native Space* is the cumulative achievement of a scholar's dedication to his subject matter. It is also one of the finest books ever written on the topic of the Native "land question" in British Columbia.

Harris approaches the Native land question from the perspective of a historical geographer. He asks: How is it that these lines on the map that separate Native from non-Native space came into existence? His answer is both simple and complex. It is simple in that a powerful group of non-Native settlers was able to push less powerful Native communities off of their lands. But, it is a complex issue in that the burgeoning settler society was not a monolith; rather, it consisted of diverse voices negotiating the creation of Native Space. Harris provides us with a view into this negotiative process between 1850 and 1938, highlighting the patterns of inclusion and exclusion that culminated in the imposition of the reserve system on Native peoples in B.C.

Harris's meticulous archival research provides the reader with a vivid picture of the colonial project of reserve-making. However, the intricate historical detail of the book is balanced by Harris's skillful storytelling. For example, Joint Indian Reserve Commissioner and amateur ethnologist Gilbert Malcolm Sproat is delicately rendered so as to illustrate his complex position as both a settler possessed of culturally specific views of land and "civilization" and as someone open to the viewpoint of the Native "other" and willing to provide Natives with the resources they required for subsistence. Similarly, Harris avoids demonizing the often-maligned chief commissioner of land and works, Joseph Trutch, who vocally defended a vision of settler society that marginalized Native peoples, or his brother-in-law, Peter O'Reilly, who was responsible for mapping most of the insubstantial Native reserves in British Columbia. Instead, Harris presents these individuals as products of their time, who were brought to power

because they reflected the broader values and interests of white settlers and businesses in the province.

Harris does a remarkable job of detailing the machinations of colonialism in British Columbia. The other key ingredient in the book's subtitle, "resistance," receives less attention, although Harris is effective when he discusses Native attempts to redirect or reject colonial land policy. In particular, Harris'overview of the McKenna-McBride Commission (Chapter 8), which operated in British Columbia between 1912 and 1916 with the goal of settling the Native land question once and for all, is beautifully written and evokes the frustration of the Native leaders who attempted to communicate their sense of Aboriginal title to the Commission. Harris has clearly spent numerous hours with the countless transcripts produced by this Commission, and he effectively portrays Native sentiments that went unheard in this "theatre of power" (231), where Native "needs" were judged primarily on the Commissioners' cultural biases and a somewhat arbitrary assemblage of demographic statistics.

Making Native Space illustrates the unwillingness of government officials in British Columbia to hear the voices of the Native "other." In response to this pattern of exclusion, he attempts to revive the spirit of Gilbert Sproat in his concluding chapter by recommending that a "politics of difference" be employed in modern land claims negotiations. For Harris, a politics of difference in B.C. should rest on pragmatic foundations; that is, the situation in the province requires "a considerably more generous allocation of resources to Native people, and a fair measure of collective Native control over them" (316). However, this argument, although well reasoned and gracefully presented, appears to ignore the symbolic dimensions of the struggle over Native lands claims in British Columbia. Harris suggests that the quest for a broad acknowledgement of Native title in B.C. is impractical and an obstacle to creating "conditions in which Native economies can thrive and Native people can regain the dignity and cultural confidence that colonialism largely destroyed" (320). This was one of the few places in the text where I found where I found myself in disagreement with Harris. While the goal of resource redistribution is undoubtedly important, Native and non-Native reconciliation in B.C. will also necessarily involve an element of recognition for past harms, which is evidenced in the demands made by several First Nations engaged in the B.C. Treaty Process that monies paid to them by the federal and provincial governments be labeled "compensation" so as to recognize the harm done to Native peoples through the denial of their title to the land. To put it simply, if a politics of difference is to succeed in British Columbia, it will need to provide Native peoples both redistribution *and* recognition.

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