

Book Reviews/Comptes rendus

COLIN SAMSON, *A Way of Life that does not Exist: Canada and the Extinguishment of the Innu*. St. John's, Newfoundland: ISER Books. 2003. 388 p.

The author spent approximately one year in Davis Inlet over the 1994-2001 period. During these periodic visits the author notes that his time was spent "visiting and socializing?" However, later he notes that during 1999, he worked for the Sheshatshiu Innu Band Council on an education project that required him to interview 60 people (both Innu and non-Innu) in the community with regard to their experiences of schooling. Later the author reveals that during his time in Davis Inlet, he carried out interviews, engaged in participant observation, and completed ethnographic fieldwork. However, in the end, he acknowledges that none of this was systematic. In the end, we are treated to a good piece of journalistic work but one that should not be seen as scholarly or as subject to the rules of data collection, data analysis, and generalization. In short, the book gives an interesting description of the historical and contemporary events in Davis Inlet, but its reliability and validity remain unconfirmed. The book is unique in that each chapter is a self-contained essay on some specific aspect of Innu life, e.g., education, health, justice. This format was adopted since nearly one third of the book has already been published in previous outlets. Nevertheless, the author feels that when all of the essays are read as a "whole", they provide the reader with a glimpse of Innu life, the forces that are impinging upon them, and the resultant consequences of living in a colonialized world.

Chapter one deals with the history of sedentarization of the Innu and their eventual location at Davis Inlet. The following chapters (2 and 3) build on this history and look at Canadian policy with regard to land claims and Aboriginal rights as impacting Innu. The recent land issues for Innu are discussed and the Churchill Falls hydroelectric generating project (1960's) is presented as a "case study." Chapter 4 is a bit of an anomaly in terms of the structure of the book as it focuses on stereotypes and images of Innu utilized by Government and its agencies when dealing with them. Chapter 5 and 6 discuss "the linked projects of christianization and education." He argues that the resultant forces of government and religion have produced a community that has no faith in education and as a result, few people ever complete their secondary education. This information is followed (chapters 7 & 8) by a discussion the health of the community from both a medical, e.g., disease, hospitals, health care, and social perspective, e.g., alcohol abuse, gas sniffing, sexual abuse. The last chapter deals with the justice system and details how the alien concept of justice is applied to Innu.

Is this a cutting edge ethnography of Davis Inlet? Is it an insightful assessment of Canadian colonialization? Is it an analysis of the structures and processes of

Canadian society upon a community? Unfortunately it is none of the above. At the same time you will find it easy reading, mixing in historical and secondary data with some primary data obtained by the author in his trips to the community. Yet there are no insights or analytical aspects that give the reader a sense of how the community operates, how it thinks and where it is going. Moreover there are sections of the book that are outright hostile to the social sciences involvement in the community. Again, one is not able to assess the veracity of such an attack since the author chooses not to provide either structural or historical context for the attack. For example, there is no information about the history of the community, how it operates today and its linkages to outside forces, e.g., government agencies. Even when it focuses on education, health or justice, one is not provided with information that shows how the community and its residents are linked to these outside agencies. In the end, the book provides a good descriptive read of many events that have impacted the Innu over the past century. Moreover, it also gives the reader a sense of how alien Toronto/Ottawa corporate-bureaucratic culture must be to the residents of Davis Inlet. Unfortunately it does not yield any sociological or anthropological insights as to how a colonized people deal with intruders into their lives.

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