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Book Review: *Natives and Settlers Now and Then:
Historical Issues and Current Perspectives on Treaties
and Land Claims in Canada* Edited by Paul W.
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Natives and Settlers Now and Then: Historical Issues and Current Perspectives on Treaties and Land Claims in Canada. Edited by Paul W. DePasquale. Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2007. xxxiii + 119 pp. Figures, notes, appendices, works cited, index. \$39.95 paper.

Natives and Settlers Now and Then is a slim volume that will be of great interest to scholars of Indigenous Studies and Native-Newcomer relations. Its primary focus is on the Canadian Great Plains, but it also touches on broader Indigenous issues in the United States and New Zealand. Edited by Paul W. DePasquale, the collection

contains five essays based on presentations delivered by academic scholars, activists, and legal experts at a conference of the same name held at the University of Alberta in 2000. Its organizers sought to place “Natives and Native issues at the centre of the event,” and the presentations were intended as a form of dialogue about the challenges facing Native peoples today and the historical processes that have produced them. The various essays tackle issues of European-Indigenous contact; treaty making; Native rights and title; land claims; and the processes of colonization, decolonization, and nation building—from all Aboriginal perspectives.

DePasquale’s introduction provides some historical background on the meeting of various Native and settler groups, including encounters in the area where the city of Winnipeg is now situated. This is the author’s current home, and he expresses surprise that very few white Winnipeggers understand that they live on land previously occupied and owned by Native people or appreciate the processes that made that land available for settler peoples to occupy. He concludes that the colonial past remains refracted in many current relationships.

Sharon Venne brings a Cree perspective to treaty making, specifically Treaty Six in Saskatchewan and Alberta, and explores the traditional diplomatic processes used by Aboriginal groups to negotiate agreements before the arrival of Europeans. She asserts that the Cree Elders did not see signing the treaty as an agreement on their part to surrender land, but rather as an undertaking to share it with the newcomers. She also offers an interesting discussion of the ways in which international mechanisms, especially at the United Nations level, are contributing to enhanced understanding of the importance of the historic treaty process in Canada.

Patricia Seed offers a comparative international perspective on the British colonial approach to the issue of Aboriginal land rights by contrasting the treaty-making process in Canada, the United States, and New Zealand. Seed suggests that Canadian treaties occupy a midpoint between agreements in the United States and New Zealand and is optimistic that the treaties provide mechanisms for the restoration of land ownership and control of resources for Aboriginal peoples in all three countries today. Frank Tough and Erin McGregor break significant new ground in their analysis of the land claim launched by the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan in the northwestern corner of the province. By interrogating archival documents the authors reconstruct the saga of one Métis individual, Eli Roy, who was granted scrip entitling him to 240 acres of land in 1906 but never received title to that land. This case

study illustrates the difficulties encountered by a great many Métis in attempting to secure actual possession of the lands they were legally entitled to and forms the basis of the current Métis land claim.

The final essay in the volume by Harold Cardinal (1945-2005) is based on this legendary activist and respected Cree scholar’s concluding comments at the conference and his musings on colonization and nation building. Acknowledging the diversity among the various peoples of European origin who constitute the settler population in western Canada, he also remarked that since Canada only gained full independence from Great Britain in 1982 with the patriation of the Constitution, the process of decolonization for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples is a recent and ongoing one. His reflections on Canadian colonization focus on the impact of historic Indian Act definitions on the identity of Aboriginal peoples today and the discord that this still sows within modern First Nation communities.

Published conference proceedings are often disappointing, but the essays reproduced here resonate with the flavor and passion of the original spoken presentations. Less successful is the “Questions and Discussion” segment included here as an appendix which does not really convey the quality of the original exchanges. This caveat aside, I would recommend the volume to anyone with an interest in the treaty process in Canada and elsewhere. Most significantly the conference and these published proceedings represent a significant installment in the ongoing process of incorporating Aboriginal oral knowledge and perspectives, the Indigenous *voice*, into the evolving written academic discourse in Canada and elsewhere. **Michael Cottrell**, *College of Education, University of Saskatchewan*.