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## Review of *The Indian Association of Alberta: A History of Political Action* By Laurie Meijer Drees

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*The Indian Association of Alberta: A History of Political Action.* By Laurie Meijer Drees. Vancouver: University of Vancouver Press, 2002. xix + 246 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes index. \$85.00 cloth, \$29.95 paper.

Native political organizations occupy a unique and important place in the Canadian political arena, whether on the national, provincial, or regional level. They offer a forum where both Native leaders and mainstream politicians can confer and, perhaps even more importantly, *be seen* to be conferring. This book is a study of one of the most influential of these organizations, the Indian Association of Alberta (IAA), from its beginning in 1939 as an organization devoted to regional and community issues to the 1960s, when it led the fight against the Trudeau government's "White Paper."

One of the volume's strengths is the special effort Meijer Drees has made to locate the development of the IAA in the political milieu of the 1930s and 1940s. She masterfully demonstrates how different provincial political parties, government acts, the development of farmers' unions, and other social political and economic factors contributed to the IAA's

founding and growth. She also illustrates how current thought in the 1940s regarding social welfare programs was translated into Indian policy. Along the way she challenges many commonly-held preconceptions about early influences on the organization, such as the supposed impact of Native World War II veterans.

Perhaps one of the most enlightening aspects of her study involves the role non-Natives played in the IAA's development. Drees pays particular attention to John Laurie, IAA secretary from 1944 to 1956. Through the IAA, Laurie was able to promote his personal view of what would benefit Indian peoples. His paternalistic and integrationist ideas played counterpoint to the ideas and interests of the organization's Native leaders. Along with discussing the effects of white liberal organizations such as the Friends of the Indian Society and the Indian Rights Association, Drees offers important and perceptive analyses of the motivations and political thought of Native leaders like John Calihoo, John Tootoosis, Harold Cardinal, and others.

Drees's work shines as an historical study shedding light on evolving and current conditions. Her analysis makes it clear, for example, that the government's massive funding of Native organizations that began in the 1960s and continues to this day, which most observers suggest grew out of issues strictly unique to the 1960s, was actually a logical extension of earlier policies from the 1940s and 1950s. *The Indian Association of Alberta* is an important and useful contribution to the study of the history and development of Native political organizations in Canada.

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