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## Review of *First Nations Education Policy in Canada: Progress or Gridlock?* By Jerry Paquette and Gerald Fallon.

Mark Aquash  
*University of British Columbia*

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**First Nations Education Policy in Canada: Progress or Gridlock?** By Jerry Paquette and Gérald Fallon. University of Toronto Press, 2010. xxii + 420 pp. Illustrations, tables, charts, notes, reference list, index. \$85.00 cloth, \$39.95 paper.

It is a daunting challenge to identify, define, and make sense of First Nations education in Canada. Much of our understanding of current First Nations education is determined by mainstream media. First Nation citizens are continuously reported to be in a deficit compared to their dominant Canadian counterparts. When we take a deeper look into First Nations education, however, we find a great diversity of both successes and challenges, based largely on the fact that there are 614 First Nation communities in Canada. Policies regarding First Nations education have blanketed all regions of Canada from the Maritimes to the Woodlands, Great Plains, and the Northwest Coast. It is the interpretation of policy that drives the procedures and practices that differ from region to region. Each First Nation community has a unique experience with education as each bureaucracy interprets policy and implements programs.

Although it tends to be an elusive topic, Paquette and Fallon provide an excellent primer on First Nations educational policy, while offering as well important conceptual thoughts and concrete understandings on how First Nations have been positioned within the social and cultural context of Canada. The text provides a basic history of First Nations education in contrast to public education in Canada. The diverse paradigms used in framing First Nations education aid us in understanding the diversity of education in First Nation communities.

Past and present policy directed at First Nations education is so surreal it is hard to believe it is actually a part of Canadian history. Right from the beginning, as First Nations people were seen as being less than human or always in a state of dependency, their communities have never been asked for their input or given the opportunity to address their own educational needs. Paquette and Fallon provide insight into how the basis of education policy has been initiated through the mechanism of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC).

Readers will find this book an excellent resource for fathoming First Nations education. I would particularly recommend it for Aboriginal education courses. Policy can become stagnant, which is the case in Canada through the Indian Act. Improving education policy for First Nations must recognize basic human rights and the right to self-determination. **Mark Aquash**, *Department of Education Studies, University of British Columbia*.