

in the United States" (Caplan *et al.* 1992:131). Second, the authors suggest that the common perception of a dismal American educational system, against which the refugees' successes seem so remarkable, results from an overreliance on schools to solve their students' social problems, and a distancing of school from home life. In contrast, Caplan *et al.* write that the 'Boat People' often encourage a strong sense of interdependence amongst household and family members, and a love for learning, thus bridging the home-school gap.

In conclusion, the authors call for a more culturally responsive educational system which would allow teachers to "harness the press for achievement that exists in all cultures, however differentially defined or expressed" (Caplan *et al.* 1992:174). This would in effect lead to a constructive family-school partnership, working towards the mutual goal of academic, and hence economic betterment of young people of all cultures.

While I found this book to be well-written, complete with helpful graphs and maps, further study is required on the interaction between refugee families and schools, and between parents and children. Although the authors have conducted a valuable large-scale study, the text does not provide much attention to qualitative data, especially to the life stories which are mentioned throughout the book. Further small-scale qualitative research on various segments of this population is necessary in order to begin to get a sense of the intimate interactions between parents and children which are so central to the authors' theory.

**Tim Epp**

*Department of Anthropology  
McMaster University*

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**Marie Anik Gagne**

1994 *A Nation Within a Nation: Dependency and the Cree*  
Montreal: Black Rose Books.  
[149 pp., maps, bibliography, index]

Useful, short and clearly written texts on political and social issues facing Aboriginal nations in Canada are rare, but find a ready market (consider the success of York's *The Dispossessed*, 1989). Small and alternative presses have produced books that make complicated political struggles clear and available to a wide audience, and the best of these describe specific struggles in the appropriate historical, social and legal contexts: books such as Knockwood's *Out of the Depths* (1992), Wadden's *Nitassinan* (1991) and Furniss' *Victims of Benevolence* (1992). It is unfortunate then that a volume like *Nation within a Nation* comes from a small press, Black Rose, with such potential to mislead an otherwise interested and well known sensitive readership.

Gagne's argument throughout is to demonstrate the ultimate dependency of the Crees of Quebec on the government and economy of Canada, a dependency that she argues has led to the underdevelopment of the region. Unfortunately, a promised analysis of specific

economic marginalization and domination merely glosses the WHOLE economy of the region as 'sick'. What is missed is any understanding of the strengths of the contemporary economy, mostly because the author won't acknowledge the role of negotiation and innovation on the part of Cree people: that is, the James Bay Cree's agency in their own history and change, their nationally and internationally known political will and mobilization.

Gagne depends on sweeping generalizations throughout the book, each of which leaves the other side of the equation empty. In the opening chapters, the author explores the fur trade as creating dependency in the James Bay region:

*Europeans introduced the Cree into a capitalist world economy when they were not even at a feudal stage, even if this was not the direction in which they were necessarily heading. Once in this world economy, the Natives were "swallowed" up and forced to take on a role of a periphery sustaining the core (pg.38).*

Gagne unerringly misses the complexity of economic change, and presents the Cree as a homogenous body of victims to the influence of the world market. Such arguments conform to the earliest histories of the Hudson's Bay Company, especially E.E. Rich's, arguments that have been thoroughly refuted in the past twenty years (see Morantz and Francis 1983).

In fact, Gagne's argument depends so heavily on an idea of one economy changing into another, that totalizing statements like the following appear:

*It is clear that the James Bay natives did tailor their economies. They altered their hunting patterns to suit the HBC, and many gave up hunting altogether to take up year-round employment with the company. Many others took seasonal employment with the HBC as "delivery" personnel (pg.42).*

This argument misses the crucial fact that all relationships between trappers and traders, post personnel and employed families were flexible to a great degree. This is not a question of proving the harsh realities of exploitation: it is a question of understanding how people countered their exploitation in ways that expressed their interests and supported their own futures. An analysis that misses these aspects of economic practices will not be able to see any continuity in the economy of the Cree Nation today.

In fact, Gagne goes to great lengths to demonstrate that the Crees of Quebec are, through the influence of the fur trade, a blank slate in relation to Hydro-Quebec's plans:

*The Cree were stripped of their status, of their organisational process, and of their language, among other things. The perfect example of the systematic stripping of the James Bay area, the James Bay Hydroelectric Project, will be discussed later in this book (pg.47).*

Most disturbing about such an argument is that Hydro Quebec has also gone to great lengths to demonstrate that this region was empty: no people, no economy, no culture, no language. With this view, they proposed hydro-electric development as an answer.

Unfortunately, Hydro-Quebec and Gagne refuse to account for certain facts of Cree life. For example, the Cree school board educates primary students in Cree; harvesting, though constantly threatened by exogenous interests, endures as a vital segment of economic, social and cultural life. And the Cree people have an enduring tradition of literacy in this region. All of this indicates both resistance to oppression and an ability to protect and foster the interests of Cree communities.

The problem of overgeneralization continues to become terribly clear in the section of Gagne's book, "The Effects of Dependency". To be more precise, the whole of James Bay is represented solely as the sum of the 'social problems' by the author. Each of the identified social conditions stereotypically associated with Native communities in Canada is rallied for this chapter, including high unemployment, alcoholism, violence (to oneself and others), solvent abuse, and cultural conflict. Throughout this chapter, Gagne tries to 'explain' these problems as caused by the ultimate dependency she has constructed, a tactic used extensively in some of the worst material written about social conditions in reserve communities in Canada (e.g., Robertson's 1991 *Reservations are For Indians*). Gagne depends on other social analysts who make the error of locating social problems too thoroughly in the notion of 'difference', as when she quotes the following:

*Gasoline sniffing is a serious problem for First Nations Citizens, and according to Dr. Juis Fornazzari, "a neurologist at the Addiction Research Foundation in Toronto and an expert on inhalant abuse", it is a problem that only afflicts the members of minority groups (p.80).*

In my reading of Gagne, and others who use this tactic, 'difference' becomes 'stigma', 'difference' comes to stand in for the problem itself. Consider the confusing links between 'difference', 'dependency' and 'social crisis' in the following:

*"[First Nations people/communities] are underdeveloped because their basic human rights are not met, and because they lack many of the basic institutions to render their society healthy" (p.81).*

Gagne's line of argument certainly leads here, but characterizing any group of people only through their problems is simply irresponsible, and disregards the real social, cultural and linguistic structures that Cree communities maintain today.

As an antidote, consider Matthew Coon Come's analysis of contemporary economic relations that hinges on Cree agency, and that might come under the title "understanding the Cree economy":

*Hydro Quebec will...tell you that the La Grande project has somehow been a benefit to the Cree people as half the Cree population are now involved in administrative and private business activities. What is true, is that our population has grown and continues to grow today at a very fast rate. Moreover, the business activities of the Crees have increased, as they have among other indigenous peoples in Canada. Also, as elsewhere in Canada, the Crees control and have improved education and health services in the Cree*

*communities. What is false is for Hydro Quebec to claim that it is somehow due to their efforts and to their project that this has come about (1991:7).*

Gagne and Coon Come are allies, to some degree, in their understanding of the role that Hydro Quebec takes in exploiting Cree lands. Where they part, however, is in their understanding of the role of Cree people in their own history.

The sections of Gagne's book that deal specifically with Hydro-Quebec' development have already been written, by Boyce Richardson and Sean McCutcheon. If the reader is seeking a new interpretation of Hydro development in the James Bay region, Gagne does not provide it.

It remains a terrible disappointment that Gagne could ignore public materials that explore the role of Cree people in their own history, their role in envisioning and fighting for their own future.

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**Wendy Russell**

*Department of Anthropology*

*McMaster University*

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