

... the places where the poor people drink ...

Many Laws

Metis Association of Alberta; Canindis Foundation

In our alienated Alberta society it is possible to pick out a few groups that are floating in an especially frightening limbo. One such group has to be comprised of those few white people who have decided that they have had enough of the exploitative, therefore affluent white culture, and so spent their lives seeking out other groups with whom to identify. In most cases, these groups reject them.

One such person is Ron Christiansen, the person who illustrated, and helped edit the civil rights manual for Indians, *Many Laws*. When Ron was back east, he was in the bourgeois pink of things, playing football, getting more than his share of chicks, going to his pick of parties. But then he got sick of it all, and left Thunder Bay to work with the Company of Young Canadians in the North. He lasted until the infamous C.Y.C. witch hunt that got rid of all com symps and subversives.

Now married and with one child, Ron lived on the red side of poverty for a couple of years and in absolute despair. It was during this period that he did his work on *Many Laws*.

Another especially alienated group in Alberta has to be the Metis. Neither white nor Indian—they are not legally identified as Indians, and white man certainly does not accept them into his society.

Many Laws is produced as a project of the Metis Association of Alberta. It was written by Christine Daniels, the wife of Stan Daniels, who was for the longest time the President of the Association. Also helping were Brian Thompson, Dorothy Daniels and June Stifle. It was published under a grant from the Canindis Foundation, and all proceeds from its sale go to the Metis Association.

For the Indian or Metis who comes into the large city, the book is eminently practical; It explains in very few, simple words and with the help of appropriate pictures what they should do when arrested, or asked to sign their life away at the hands of some white bureaucrat. It also smashes some of the white myths about Indians with which Indians have been propagandized. These include such lies as Indians are naturally promiscuous, drunken, dishonest, theiving, and nauseum.

Besides the above practical aspect, the book is beautifully done. Every page of a few simple poetic sentences is opposed to a colourful picture that illustrates the point. The two combine to make powerful poetry.

It is very skimpy on printed word—the Indians don't have legal minds that come from long associations with print and the linear thought it produces. The pictures tell the whole story. One page, for instance, has the words "There are rich people who drink..." and shows well dressed businessmen in expensive surroundings engaged in a brawl. You flip the page to see the words "Then there are

the places where poor people drink..." accompanied by a picture of a dingy bar with its surly bar tender and of course, an Indian grabbing a poor labourer by the shirt.

The whole book offers an enjoyable reading experience and is well worth the purchase price of about \$2.50.

The Unjust Society
Harold Cardinal;
M. G. Hurtig Ltd.

The Only Good Indian
ed. Waubageshig;
new press

by Dennis Zomerschoe

The two books here are a plea and a warning; a plea to let the Indian go his own way, and a warning of what will happen if the white man continues to discuss the Indians' future in terms of, "Indian people must be persuaded..."

The books (*The Unjust Society*, *The Only Good Indian*) are a decidedly angry revolt against this paternalistic attitude. How, one of the

authors postulates, can we accept the white man's guidance on the basis of his past record? Police brutality, incompetent bureaucrats, legal incongruities, destructive educational systems, racial discrimination, ignorant politicians, and a largely ignorant white population are among the more specific problems with which the Indian has to contend.

The Only Good Indian is an attempt to outline the directions toward which the Indian is moving. One of the primary issues that arises out of this (also *The Unjust Society*) is that of identity. It is understandable that the Indian is in search of something more desirable than white culture; yet he also seeks to escape the myopic confines of reservation culture.

Why, one might ask, is the Indian so insistently against assimilation? Why will he not define his identity in terms of white culture?

After all, is modern technological civilization not the wave of future? Perhaps if we examined more closely the workings of our own society, we might understand the Indians' reluctance to join it.

The way of life for the Indian is culture and religion. White society, with its penchant for commercializing all that can be commercialized, treads down the human values of native religion and replaces these with profit-making based on greed, competition, and discrimination. For the Indian, this means that often he has had to subvert any sense of being Indian that he had except the knowledge that he had to justify his existence on the white man's terms.

After all, we superior white people must convince the Indian that we know what's best for him. He must be persuaded that technocratic civilization is very desirable. Therefore, the Indian must learn to be 'desirable', to maximize his 'exchange value' (at the cost, mind you, of use value for himself except what white society approves of), to learn to become a 'nice package', and so on. We somehow are disturbed at his refusal to conform, become hostile, demand conformity, etc.

Critics of these books have been critical of the 'unrepresentative' nature of their content, the lack of 'balance'.

This is rather odd, considering the constant wailing by Canadians about the need to preserve the richness of our ethnic heritage.

Perhaps the white man needs to stop and realize that he, too, can learn from the "noble savage".

more bibliography

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16. Report of the First Interprovincial Conference on the Schools in the Forest. Edmonton, Alta. Jan. 3 & 4.

made by the "Schools in the Forest"—Northern Land School Div. There is special emphasis placed on issues that must be solved before the schools can become effective.

17. Vernon, P.E. *Educational and Intellectual Development among Canadian Indians and Eskimos*. Taken from "Educational Review" vol. 18, No. 3, June 1966.

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18. "The Western Canadian Journal of Anthropology "Cree Studies", Vol. 1, No. 1, 1969.

-----anthropological study of the Alta Cree Indians—primitive value structure, custom & tradition, & language.

19. "Athabaskan Studies" Vol. 2 No. 1

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20. "Fur Trade, the Gov., and the Central Canadian Indian" *Arctic Anthropology* vol. 2., No. 2., 1964.

21. "Trapped in the Ghetto" *Canadian Magazine*, May 24, 1969.

-----Analysis of the integration of Indian people into Winnipeg. Description of the poverty and general alienation of Urban Indians.

22. Frum, B. "Canadian Indians 1968" *Chatelaine*. Nov. 1968. pp. 48-55.

-----The "reserve mentality" described with its inherent values. Various interviews resulted in article dealing with reserve life, life as an Integrated Urban Indian, and the loss of Indian Reserve values upon entering the city.



credit: Ron Christiansen

On Wed. Nov. 3, Edmonton Highschool students will leave their classes and assemble at 2:00 p.m. at the Federal Bldg. Campus students will rally in

Tues., Nov. 2 at 12:30 p.m. in S.U.B. Theatre and 8:00 p.m. in Tory LB1 Ben Metcalfe, Green peace crew member will speak. Admission free. The forums are sponsored by the Coalition to Stop the Amchitka Blast.