

about the “sausage making” of higher education policy, or want insight as to how to direct policy decision streams, this book comes highly recommended. ♣

## REFERENCES

Heller, D. E. (2002). State merit scholarship programs: An introduction. In Heller, D.E. and Marin, P. (Eds.) *Who should we help? The negative social consequences of merit scholarships*, pp. 15-24. Cambridge, MA: The Civil Rights Project at Harvard University.

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Stonechild, Blair. (2006). *The New Buffalo: The Struggle for Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education in Canada*. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press. Pages: 190. Price: \$24.95 CAD (paper).

Reviewed by John R. Minnis, Faculty of Arts, University College of the North.

At a time when post-secondary education has perhaps never been more significant in the lives and future welfare of Canada’s First Nations, Stonechild’s book is a cause for celebration on the one hand, but a cautionary tale on the other. *New Buffalo* is a critical examination of Aboriginal post-secondary education history and policy beginning with the late 1800s to the present. The term “new buffalo” symbolizes the importance of higher education; it is seen by the author as the key to Aboriginal survival in the 21<sup>st</sup> century just as the buffalo was for the people of Western Plains in times past.

In Chapter One, we learn that education was narrowly conceived as a tool for assimilation from the late 1800s until the mid 1940s. It is interesting to discover that Aboriginal social policy under John A. McDonald’s government was influenced by Social Darwinism, notably the ideas espoused by the English philosopher and sociologist, Herbert Spencer. However, Stonechild fails to mention the degree to which social policy in general was influenced by Social Darwinist ideas. Newly-arrived immigrants, for example, were not thought of differently than Aboriginals.

Because the government’s major task during the late 1800s was to negotiate the numbered treaties in the newly acquired Northwest Territories, the education of Aboriginal children became inextricably linked with a policy of “aggressive assimilation.” The clear aim of early schooling was to assimilate children into mainstream Canada via the residential schools. The latter remained integral to this policy until 1965 when government decided to shut the schools down – without consulting the Aboriginal community. This change in policy left the Aboriginal community in limbo leaving no clear alternative. Nonetheless, the eradication of these schools, notwithstanding the formidable legacy of abuse and distrust they created, had the positive effect of politically

mobilizing Aboriginals which eventually led to increased demands for control over their children's education.

In Chapter Two the author traces the evolution of education policy from the mid 1940s to the early 1960s, a period characterized by "one step forward, two steps backward." It was simultaneously a period of policy stagnation and confusion caused by the economic and social disruption of World War II, but also a time of modest progress reflected in government's understanding that the socio-economic and political challenges faced by the Aboriginal community required immediate attention. This result was the Hawthorne Report of 1963 and the establishment of the Indian Claims Commission. While both developments outwardly reflected a more pro-active and inclusive social policy, few Aboriginals were encouraged to participate in policy deliberations, a clear reflection of continuing bureaucratic arrogance and ignorance – themes which henceforth characterized Aboriginal-government policy discussions. The period 1940-1960 was also a time when few Aboriginals found their way to post-secondary institutions because federal funding was virtually non-existent. Aboriginal communities also suffered from high rates of adult illiteracy and low educational attainment at the elementary/secondary level.

Chapter Three and Four focus on policy changes from 1970 to the late 1990s, a critical period characterized by increasing demands by Aboriginal leaders to participate in the policy-making process. The big payoff was in 1973 when Aboriginals gained control over on-reserve elementary/secondary education. Positive advances came in swift succession but not without difficulty. Notable was the creation of the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College in 1976. This opened up federal funding that increased Aboriginal participation in post-secondary and adult education. By 1989, Aboriginal postsecondary enrolments alone had increased to 15,000 -- from 2,500 in 1975.

Chapters Five and Six revolve around current policy debates and political infighting regarding funding and whether or not postsecondary education is a treaty right. Stonechild argues that this is unequivocally the case. However, the political reality is that successive federal governments have successfully maintained that postsecondary education is a provincial responsibility, not a federal one. Neither does the recognition of the "existing Aboriginal and treaty rights of the Aboriginal peoples of Canada" in section 35 (1) of the Constitution Act, 1982, imply that Aboriginal rights so defined refer to postsecondary education or, more importantly, to self government. The operative word in the constitutional phrase is "existing"; from a constitutional perspective neither Aboriginal postsecondary education nor self government is an existing right.

The primacy of Aboriginal rights and entitlements inherent in the author's assertion leads him to ignore present, well-documented problems faced by post-secondary students such as inadequate academic preparation provided by on-reserve schools, inadequate funding or low priority placed on funding by First Nations Bands, and persistently high levels of adult illiteracy. These are the issues that continue to plague First Nations, and unless taken more seriously

by government and First Nations alike, will do more to undermine political and economic development than anything else.

The author also fails to examine some of the “sacred cows” of Aboriginal education policy, such as “cultural appropriateness,” and to ask whether a continued adherence to such notions will lead to further marginalization of Aboriginals from mainstream Canada. It is unfortunate that he and other eminent Aboriginal scholars and activists have ignored the reasons for particular patterns of Aboriginal under-achievement. They have uncritically assumed that “cultural discontinuity,” “colonization,” and “racism” are the root causes of Aboriginal educational failure when little empirical research indicates as much. Stonechild is on solid ground when he blames government for its intransigence and stonewalling in the early days of Aboriginal-state relations, but he is on less solid ground when he blames government for present day educational failure. Constantly blaming government may have its political rewards, but it also prevents Aboriginal scholars from critically examining how their own world views, epistemologies, and policies may hinder educational progress. Nonetheless, this book is an important milestone in Canadian education policy discourse and should be read by scholars and the public alike. ♣

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McVeigh, Brian J. (2006). *The state bearing gifts: Deception and disaffection in Japanese higher education*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. Pages: 297. Price: \$63.00 USD (hardcover).

Reviewed by LeRoy Whitehead, Associate Professor, Faculty of Education, Queen’s University

*The State Bearing Gifts* begins with a brief re-telling of Virgil’s ancient story of the Trojan horse. The Greeks, weary of their long siege of Troy, burn their camp and feign retreat, leaving behind a huge wooden horse. The Trojans, assuming the Greeks have left in defeat, take the horse into their walled city. But as the Trojans sleep, Greek soldiers hidden inside the horse come out, kill the sentries and open the city gates, allowing the rest of their army into the city. The Greeks overpower the Trojans and take the city. The story is the source of the old adage, “Beware of [people] bearing gifts,” and hence, the ultimate source of this book’s title.

This book is an ethnographic, participant-observer study based on the author’s extensive experience (beginning in 1987) with ten post-secondary institutions in Japan, in a variety of roles including graduate student, researcher, professor and department chair. The analysis also makes extensive use of print media, much of it translated from the Japanese. It is the fifth in a series of books about of Japanese higher education by the same author, and presents a fascinating, but disturbing, case study of undergraduate education in Japan. As the title suggests, the author has declined traditional analytical frameworks based