

# *HUNTERS AND BUREAUCRATS: POWER, KNOWLEDGE, AND ABORIGINAL-STATE RELATIONS IN THE SOUTHWEST YUKON.*

BY PAUL NADASDY. UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA PRESS, VANCOUVER, 2003. 360 PAGES, INDEX, ILLUSTRATIONS. \$80.00 HARDBACK, \$29.95 PAPERBACK [PB ISBN: 0774809841]

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Based on three years of research with the Kluane First Nation (KFN) in the southern Yukon, Paul Nadasdy provides an insightful and accessible analysis of the ways in which 'state' power is manifested through the bureaucratization of resource co-management and land claims negotiations. Challenging many of the existing premises supporting Aboriginal land claims – the principle institutions by which the rights of Aboriginal peoples are exercised in Canada – Nadasdy shows that the colonial legacies that were present prior to land claims remain present and deeply embedded in many of the new institutions that have been designed to reverse the colonial process. This book will be of considerable interest to scholars, practitioners and Aboriginal leaders who are involved in these processes and will be informative to students studying Aboriginal-state relations in Canada and elsewhere.

Following an introductory chapter that provides an overview of the geographical and cultural landscape of the southern Yukon, Nadasdy goes on to examine the political implications of contemporary efforts to integrate the knowledge of Kluane people with that of European 'experts' in a number of contexts, including wildlife management, property rights, and land claims negotiations. Throughout the text, Nadasdy argues effectively that European institutions – specifically co-management and comprehensive land claims – are undermining the social relations, practices, beliefs and values that inform Kluane people's empirical knowledge about the land and animals. By drawing attention to the difficulties of applying Aboriginal cultural ideals into a management process that continues to be derived from non-indigenous values and principles, Nadasdy questions whether or not there is a place for Aboriginal culture in Yukon resource management. More broadly Nadasdy questions whether Aboriginal land claims can result in true autonomy for Yukon First Nations or merely represent a political maneuver used by government to capitalize on the popular discourse of Aboriginal self-determination.

Because the concept of land claims and co-management originate from a western conception of organization and management, these institutions now function in the language and ideology of the dominant culture. Owing to the ideological structure by which these processes occur, Nadasdy argues that First Nation representatives are now being forced to participate in a process that is in many ways culturally inappropriate. As a result, First Nation members find themselves participating in ways that conform to the institutions and practices of state management rather than their own beliefs, values, and practices. By imposing concepts that originate in the 'western' management paradigm, Nadasdy argues that the actual relationship that exists between First Nations and the world in which they reside is greatly misrepresented. In such cases, the imposition of management concepts that are at odds with the way in which Kluane people view the world places some of their most fundamental values at risk. Thus, despite the purported benefits of co-management, efforts to conform the knowledge and experiences of First Nation members into western conceptions have actually perpetuated rather than transformed the unequal power relations that exist between the KFN and Yukon government representatives. Under these conditions, government has proven successful at furthering its own hegemonic control over the KFN by embedding western institutional norms and colonial behaviors into the resource management process. Believing that co-management would resolve many of the perceived shortcomings associated with state wildlife management, Nadasdy shows that such institutions have in practice led neither to ideological nor structural reform in the Yukon. As a result, the concept of co-management remains obscure, if not meaningless to many Kluane members, and the management of natural resources continues to represent one of the most pervasive remnants of the colonial experience facing the KFN. Although Nadasdy acknowledges that land claims provides a framework by which to begin the decolonization of state imposed institutions, he demonstrates through numerous

examples that the resource management model that continues to be applied in the Yukon has in many ways reinforced the colonial encounter.

In general it is Nadasdy's position that if we are to understand the role that knowledge plays in processes like co-management and land claims, we must not only examine the assumptions underlying the process of knowledge integration but also the power relations that derive from and reinforce pre-existing colonial relations. This, I believe is the real strength of the book. While the articulation of power can involve the control of financial, institutional, and political resources, Nadasdy points out that the articulation of power in the resource co-management contexts more often involves the determination of whose knowledge is of most value to the management process and how such knowledge is or is not used in decision-making. This includes the representation of reality and the particular ways of legitimizing and delegitimizing systems of knowing. Owing to the structure and formal organization of co-management arrangements, government representatives tend to define the expectations and norms by which management activities are conducted. This form of power produces a discourse of 'truth' that subjugates the knowledge and experiences of Kluane members. Because the knowledge held by First Nation representatives often lacks written codification, the contributions (knowledge, experience, insights) of KFN representatives are not easily packaged or transferred through formal procedural channels. When KFN members do make recommendations based on personal experiences, as presented in some detail in Chapter 4 that discusses the Ruby Ridge Sheep Steering Committee, First Nation contributions are most often treated as anecdotal accounts, while perhaps interesting, are believed by government managers to have little relevance to the contemporary management process. From a participatory perspective this often results in the muting of KFN representatives because their knowledge and experiences do not conform to the conceptual categories of government managers. In such cases the relational aspects between ethnicity and power have rendered Kluane knowledge irrelevant in the management process. Because ethnicity and power are related directly to the visibility of knowledge and its holder, Nadasdy shows that the application of 'local' or 'traditional' knowledge of Kluane members is most often subjugated against western knowledge systems. Owing to these conditions, Nadasdy argues that government wildlife managers have to a large extent failed to capitalize on the cultural experiences of Kluane members and at best have expressed mixed messages about the degree to which the contributions of First Nation members are actually valued.

Despite the recent changes in government-First Nation relations in the Yukon, Nadasdy shows that many of the purported benefits associated with land claims have actually increased the role of government at the local level. While the discourse associated with Aboriginal land claims asserts local control and autonomy, the new institutional structures that have been introduced afford few, if any, local benefits. As a result, KFN members continue to find themselves relegated to a carefully circumscribed set of roles where little autonomy has been created and few benefits are derived. The theoretical advantages of land claims are certainly convincing, and the impetus for administrative transfer strong, but as Nadasdy shows the actual outcome in the Yukon has yet to live up to First Nation expectations. Although the settlement of comprehensive land claims offers some opportunities to implement new forms of management that are consistent with First Nation traditions and beliefs, the entrenchment of the state system continues to limit the extent to which the KFN is empowered to propose change. Thus KFN continues to find itself subservient to the state system of management. Owing to the continued pervasiveness of state management, Nadasdy shows convincingly that the involvement of First Nation members in land and resource management remains limited even in the aftermath of land claims settlement.

As of April 11, 2003 the KFN came to terms with the Canadian government over the settlement of their land claims. Through this settlement the KFN has secured rights and title to over 350 square miles of settlement land. This also includes the right to enact laws and wildlife management regulations for gathering, hunting, trapping and fishing for both First Nation and non-First Nation residents. However, the question remains as to how the KFN will exercise this responsibility. Can the KFN, after decades of colonial administration, depart from western forms of resource management and implement institutions that are more consistent with Kluane values and culture? Or will they adopt the same institutional structures and management bureaucracies that have been imposed from the state? This will certainly be an important test for Kluane leadership and will no doubt require a committed effort from all First Nation members. If the KFN choose the former, it will be important to remember that change will not occur overnight or by simple prescription. Because the traditional institutions of the KFN have to a large extent been undermined by decades of colonial administration, many elements of Kluane culture have changed and in some cases been weakened by government control. As such, one cannot expect traditional institutions to resurface automatically in the wake of government withdrawal, or as the colonial experience has

shown, to be imposed from above. It is my hope that Nadasdy and the KFN continue to share their experiences with others in order to extend this very important dialogue.