Book Review


By Christopher Alcantara & Jen Nelles

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The discussion of Aboriginal self-government in Canada customarily focuses on state-Indigenous interactions at the federal and provincial/territorial level. Municipal-Indigenous intergovernmental interface has however more recently begun to attract scholarly attention, and Chris Alcantara and Jen Nelles’s *A Quiet Evolution* offers an impressive contribution to the evolving dialogue.

Drawing from over 300 formal agreements this short monograph analyzes four cases of Indigenous-municipal intergovernmental interface to establish a relationship typology. Looking to construct a theory of municipal-Indigenous intergovernmental interface, the authors hone in on the conditions that lead to cooperation and collaboration developing between local governments and neighbouring Indigenous communities. The quantitative measures developed confirm that the presence of strong community capital (shared civic identity) “blurs ... jurisdictional boundaries to unite these groups of residents of a unique and shared—if politically fragmented—territorial space.” Strong community capital thus “creates the necessary space for all other factors to line up to produce cooperation” (p. 141). (p. 45) setting the stage for collaborative relationships.

*A Quiet Evolution* signals that Indigenous-municipal political relationships are in many ways more progressive than those that continue to develop at higher governmental levels. It hints also at the fact that local governments lack the necessary knowledge, expertise, and resources to successfully engage Indigenous issues, partners, and constituents. As such, Alcantara and Nelles’ insights have the potential to inform municipal and Indigenous agents in overcoming existing constraints to collaboration and of the importance of pursuing additional research to advance our understanding of similar transformative political initiatives occurring at the local government level.

*A Quiet Evolution*’s intended audience is academic. The calibre of scholarship is significant and is presented in an accessible manner. The book would be of particular interest to graduate students, upper division students and specialists exploring Aboriginal self-government and the specifics of municipal-Indigenous intergovernmental relations.