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in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Roger Spielmann. *Anishnaabe World: A Survival Guide for Building Bridges between Canada and First Nations.* Sudbury, Ontario: Your Scrivener Press, 2009. x + 205 pp. $18.95 (paper), ISBN 978-1-896350-37-0.

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Commissioned by Jonathan Anuik

Roger Spielmann has written a short and humorous cross-cultural guide for nonindigenous Canadians to better understand First Nations in Canada. His book is sprinkled with illustrative experiences from his eleven years of living in an Anishinaabe community, where he learned their language, and is an outgrowth of his later experiences teaching undergraduates in the Native Studies program at the University of Sudbury, in Sudbury, Ontario, Canada. Spielmann's goal in this admittedly "non-academic book" is to develop "a level of cross cultural awareness and sophistication" in readers who are unfamiliar with the history of the indigenous population in the country (pp. ix, 15).

After an introductory chapter, chapter 2, "Three Pretty Big Misconceptions," addresses three misconceptions under the headings "We Are All Canadians," "First Nations People Are an 'Ethnic Group,' " and "All First Nations Are the Same." Subsequent chapters, all short, focus on a variety of topics, including indigenous values, languages, storytelling, and humor. Chapter 10, "Everything You Always Want to Know about Treaties (But Were Afraid to Ask…)," gives a brief overview of Canadian treaties, between the queen and First Nations, and an example of the misunderstandings that existed between the parties making these treaties which continue to have repercussions today.

This book is not for anyone who has much knowledge of First Nations in Canada and their experiences at the hands of the Canadian government, but for those who do not, this book provides an easy-to-read introduction. Spielmann makes many valid points, such as the fact that "what is polite in one culture can be rude in another," a lesson that more sophisticated readers may already be aware of (p. 63). He describes Canada as "the only western nation left with a system of Apartheid," with its indigenous population only getting the vote in 1960, through revisions to the Indian Act (p. 18). Considering a somewhat similar history in the United States that still has hundreds of Indian nations with lands usually classified as "Indian reservations," some much larger than Canada's "reserves," this claim needs more documentation.

Despite the book's 2009 copyright date, there is no discussion of the United Nation's 2007 Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Therefore, Spielmann does not consider the Canadian government's initial opposition to it, along with the federal governments of Australia, New Zealand, and the United States. Spielmann, with his focus on the Anishinaabe, also does not have much to say about regional issues faced by First Nations in western Canada and the advances in self-government being made by the Inuit in Canada's north.

The last chapter contains a call for First Nations self-government by Ovide Mercredi, former National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, who endorses Spielmann's book on its back cover. The book concludes with references and annotated suggested readings but has no index. Throughout, Spielmann's book is a plea for mutual respect between nonindigenous and indigenous peoples that resonates today. However, an educational historian is not likely to find anything in this book that cannot be found in far greater detail in some of Spielmann's references.

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