

*We are pleased to present the following book reviews from the IPAC
NWT Regional Group's monthly Book Review Forum.*



Coates, Ken. (2015). *#IdleNoMore And the Remaking of Canada*. Regina: University of Regina Press.

Over the past two hundred years, “Indigenous peoples have been marginalized, mistreated, controlled, manipulated, and impoverished....” This is but

one of many views that Ken Coates includes in his book, *#Idlenomore and the Remaking of Canada*. He imposes this timeline on the reader to reinforce the reasons for the peaceful protests that occurred as part of the Idle No More (INM) movement, contrasting them with the violent conflicts that have occurred in Canada’s past, such as Ipperwash Provincial Park, Ontario and Oka, Quebec, to name a few. Coates opines on the few violent protests that have occurred, noting that Indigenous Peoples have often internalized their anger, “taking it out on themselves, their families, and their communities.” He suggests that INM provided an outlet for this internalization.

Coates provides insight into the intentions that four women had in initiating INM: to shift the pain and focus on self-abuse and community frustration, to one of sustained Indigenous demonstrations of culture, identity, and determination. Coates emphasizes the movement’s collective desire to steer a different path for Indigenous Peoples.

Writing this book from a non-Aboriginal perspective, Coates provides great insight into INM’s grassroots beginnings, its protests and gatherings that brought light to issues faced by Indigenous Canadians. Coates emphasizes the misunderstanding that non-Aboriginal peoples had of the movement and provides awareness of INM that any non-Aboriginal person can follow. He notes the disconnect non-Aboriginal people have, coming from the few experiences that non-Aboriginal people share with Indigenous peoples. Coates’ book attempts to shed light on these experiences through personal stories.

Research and discussion of the use of social media in the advancement of the movement is central to Coates’ thesis, of sorts. Coates admits, at the beginning

of the book, that he writes his own views on INM, rather than putting forward a sound academic argument. Using a different approach to be sure, Coates examines INM and the use of technologies in spurring mass mobilization. I felt in this regard that the last chapter, which provides the reader with a basic understanding of the use of social media and how it impacts movements generally, may have been better served if it had appeared earlier in Coates’ work. It provided me with a good understanding of the use of social media and how it assisted in the success of INM.

Following INM in the south and being present in Yellowknife at the height of the movement, I wondered what INM represented and how it would impact the public and government. Being a few years wiser, following the election coverage, and the makings of a new federal, municipal, and territorial government religiously, I can now appreciate the influence of INM.

Coates’ book provides the reader with context that allows one to appreciate the impact that Indigenous Peoples have had on shaping government, the public service, and the public generally. Coates believes that the movement represented “an assertion of cultural survival and political determination.” INM unleashed new power and confidence amongst Indigenous peoples in Canada. The reality of this movement, and the change it had on Indigenous Peoples, can be witnessed in the high turnout of Indigenous Peoples in the most recent federal election and how the federal government’s mandate is structured. It focuses on murdered and missing Indigenous women and girls, over representation of Indigenous Peoples in prison, and social and economic improvements on reserves, including drinking water, housing, and education. We can also see a similar framework with the new territorial government here in Yellowknife and the changes being made, including the GNWT’s response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions’ (TRC) Calls to Action.

This movement has initiated change in non-Indigenous people, as well, seeing a high voter turnout across the country in October with individuals looking for change. The argument could be made that the catalyst for changing Canadian public policy was firmly entrenched in INM. The movement had a clear goal – to articulate frustrations with the current government’s legislative strategy.

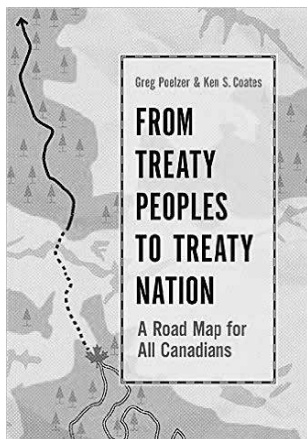
Coates admits, however, that the full social im-

pact and influence of INM on both Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations in Canada has yet to be seen. He suggests that it may take decades to understand this impact. However, we are starting to see a new “normal” in Canada, where governments are quickly realizing that Indigenous assertiveness is now the reality going forward. The way in which public policy is designed now has to change. This observation comes at an opportune time, with the TRC releasing their final report and Calls to Action for Indigenous and non-Indigenous relationship building, as well as the multitude of legal gains coming out of the Supreme Court of Canada dealing with Aboriginal and Treaty rights, cultural revitalization, and modern treaties.

Public servants will now have to look at their work from a different perspective; they must look to nation-to-nation building and developing policies that incorporate Indigenous consultation from the ground-up. Similarly, governments, like the GNWT, will have to begin developing programs for public servants that provide ongoing cultural awareness training.

Although, there is some repetition in the book on the use and importance of social media, overall it is a great read for someone trying to understand the movement. It acts as a good tool for looking back on INM and the changes that have taken place within Canada since 2013. Coates states that it is unfortunate that more non-Aboriginal people did not see and understand what was going on with INM at its height. This book provides that insight, even if after the fact. ●

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Poelzer, Greg & Coates, Ken S. (2015). *From Treaty Peoples to Treaty Nation: A Road Map for All Canadians*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press.

There is a future. It’s a future Canada in which Indigenous Peoples’ founding role in the federation is widely recog-

nized and celebrated by a new Royal Proclamation. It’s a future where the Indigenous Peoples of Canada are a source of cultural richness for Canadian identity rather than a reminder of state failure. It’s a future where most non-Indigenous and Indigenous Peoples have come together and, through joint compromise, agreed on a common path forward for our country. It’s a future that stands before us. It’s a future that can be achieved.

It is perhaps wisest to start at the beginning: We Canadians are treaty peoples. However, this is a reality that Poelzer and Coates assert is not sufficiently realized nor reflected in our country. Indeed, part of the challenge stems from the fact that a great many Canadians simply don’t know much about our shared history and the obligations it entails.

The treaties were entered into in order to impose British sovereignty over lands that would later become modern Canada and to help peoples “coexist in friendship [...] and [...] flourish culturally, socially, economically, and politically.” (xiii) Yet this original intent of the treaties has not been fully achieved. Accordingly, the authors urge that “it is about time all Canadians began to live as treaty peoples” (viii) and perhaps in so doing learn to become “strong like two people.” This wise *chq* concept can cut both ways.

For those unfamiliar with political thinkers on Indigenous matters across the spectrum of thought in Canada, the authors offer a balanced review that identifies both the potential and limits of the various views and philosophies at play. Importantly, they readily admit that it is particularly difficult to determine just how much support there is for the various thinkers across that spectrum. To this, I suggest this is precisely the reason why all Canadians need to seize this moment and ensure that we not approach a breaking point but rather, as the authors suggest, “a breakthrough point” (ix).

With respect to the competing philosophies, Poelzer and Coates are careful to point out that “the Canadian debate has been conducted too much in the context of colonialism and the need to develop coherent responses to colonial realities. Colonialism may be a very good way of understanding Canada’s past, but it does not provide a useful analytical tool for building Canada’s future” (188). A joint future will demand a different and practical theoretical framework – one that works with the Canadian state.

It’s clear that Canada’s current predicament will not easily be remedied. There are many difficult questions and few easy answers. And while the best avenues to move forward should come from joint discussion, it appears that, on the face of it, some elements critical to traversing the road ahead include:

- *Revisiting commonly held conceptions:* On matters of land

and environment, sharing of authorities, reconciliation, redress, options for bringing Indigenous Peoples further into the federal fold (e.g., Indigenous representation at first ministers meetings, a third order of government, Métis policy following the Daniels case, etc.) or Indigenous Peoples' management of their affairs (e.g., the authors' innovative concept of a Commonwealth of Aboriginal Peoples as a replacement of Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada), Poelzer and Coates are correct to say that "continued and thoughtful change is still required" (173).

- *Compromise by all parties:* The authors argue that "a pragmatic, realistic, and moderate approach – one that is founded on real change to the status quo, and built on clear and public respect for Aboriginal cultures and communities, yet saleable to the country at large – could transform the place of Aboriginal people within Canada and create optimism and hope" (281). Compromise is a self-evident part of achieving a shared future.
- *Formalized sharing mechanisms:* Embedded in the treaties is the notion of sharing. While not fully realized, institutionalized sharing of the country's wealth offers us a means of moving forward. The Government of the Northwest Territories' *Resource Revenue Sharing Agreement* is an excellent case in point.
- *Respect and recognition:* Part of the solution is recognizing and celebrating Indigenous traditions in Canada. As John Ralston Saul has argued, until we collectively acknowledge the formative nature of Indigenous traditions in Canada, we will never fully achieve our potential as a nation. Indeed, the authors are correct when they argue "the country will be stronger and richer when Aboriginal Peoples are celebrated as a key element of Canadian society" (269). The Vancouver 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games' approach to celebrating Indigenous cultures across the country offers us a road map on how other dignified initiatives might be undertaken. No country can ever reach its fullest potential without dignity for all.
- *Putting our best selves forward:* Poelzer and Coates underscore that "the path towards common ground will require openness and creativity" (174). The predicament we face and the intractable challenges that lie before us are such that only by putting our best selves forward – both Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike – can we hope to find creative solutions and achieve progress. Putting our best selves forward will also mean a shared commitment by all to transparency and accountability, both to one another and the shared future we seek to create (274).
- *An act of commitment to the new Canada and a shared future:* Critically, a majority of us need to formally commit to a new future. While not everyone will get on board, an act of commitment is key because we must

collectively bear the responsibility and undertake this important work in partnership – which is the only way progress will be achieved. Such efforts could culminate in a new Royal Proclamation outlining "a new Canada, one founded on treaty principles and offering a partnership between Indigenous and other Canadians" (279) (as called for by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission).

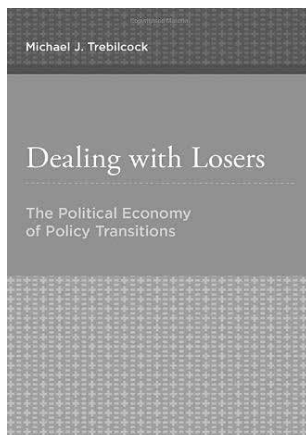
Poelzer and Coates' recommendation to have the relevant parliamentary committees return to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) report would be a useful first step in honouring and reviving its work (190) and charting a new collective future.

While Poelzer and Coates can be criticized for favouring a middle-of-the-road approach to charting a path out of our current predicament, we must recognize that this country has changed tremendously since the signing of the historical treaties. As such, any future solution must obtain the support and involvement of a broad segment of the country, some of whom have fewer and fewer ties to Canada's historical origins. The authors' pragmatic approach reflects this reality and does so in order to work within the possible. Furthermore, they underscore that Indigenous Peoples will naturally play the key role in defining and determining their cultural survival and dynamism in the 21st century (268).

Given the current and significant turn in the political discourse on the Indigenous Peoples of Canada, those who wish for change need to harness this moment. When such moments aren't seized, history has shown that stasis can be an all too reliable result.

With the 150th anniversary of Confederation upon us, there is no time better than the present to put our minds towards creating a future we can be proud of. Poelzer and Coates are absolutely correct when they urge: "It is time to build the country we want, not simply to accept the country we inherited" (205). I agree deeply with them and know that, on the horizon of the future, "a better Canada awaits us" (279). Let us each seize this moment to make it so. ●

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Trebilcock, Michael J. (2014). *Dealing with Losers: The Political Economy of Policy Transitions*. Toronto: Oxford University Press.

“All we need is the political will to change” is an oft-heard phrase of activists and advocates on subjects ranging

from global warming to income inequality. This simple slogan belies the complexity of policy transitions. Determining who wants what, who has the power to get it and who benefits, is crucial to understanding the prospect for change and how to accomplish it.

A seminal new work by Michael J. Trebilcock demonstrates that the forces that enable or block policy transitions are even more complex than is currently portrayed, but that, ultimately, change is possible. Perhaps only a scholar with the tenure and cross-disciplinary expertise of Trebilcock could have produced this Donner Prize award-winning book; as Professor of Law and Economics at the University of Toronto since 1972, Trebilcock presents a learned arrangement of political economy, policy studies, legal analysis, and behavioral psychology. Make no mistake, this book is theoretically rigorous and thus, at times, daunting. A representative passage from the book reads: “Although reversibility provisions can reduce unexpected and inequitable adjustment costs, an excessively expansive approach to reversibility regimes is likely to erode the significance of treaty obligations” (74). Those with the tenacity to push through the complexity of the arguments made in this book will be rewarded with a remarkably practical and insightful study of policy change.

Although Trebilcock is primarily making a contribution to the theoretical literature, the majority of this book is an examination of real and contemporary policy cases. The cases explored include pensions, agricultural supply management, trade, immigration and climate change. These are hardly abstract concepts, especially when one takes into account recent fights over the age of mandatory retirement, the existence of the Canadian Wheat Board, ratification of the Trans-Pacific Partnership agreement, temporary foreign workers, and carbon taxes.

Trebilcock centres his book between two competing and diametric views dominating the literature on policy transitions. One school characterizes the costs of policy transitions as yet one element

in a constellation of political risks to be managed in order to advance policy change; another school affords considerable deference to the role of courts and the awarding of compensation proportionate to the level of disruption caused. Neither approach is satisfactory to the author because the former assigns too little weight to potential barriers to change and the latter narrowly focuses on mostly monetary losses with only a single venue for resolution, post hoc.

Ultimately, in their most simple forms, the suite of options available to aide policy transitions is generally limited to approaches such as direct compensation, grandfathering, phased implementation, or delayed implementation. However, getting to the right choice of option is far more complex.

The cases examined reveal that “the political economy of policy transitions is not easily generalizable across polities with very different institutional structures and histories” (157). Shorthand: It depends. This conclusion may prove unsatisfactory to the policy advisor looking for guidance on how to shepherd policy change through the system. However, sound policy analysis is not often easy.

There is wisdom in Trebilcock demonstrating why it is important to examine different factors at play in any particular case in order to determine what type of policy change one is dealing with and what range of options might be best suited to mitigating anticipated opposition to change. Foremost, such examination in itself is proof that an advisor is taking policy transitions seriously as “an essential feature of their political strategies” (152). That’s a good start. Secondly, there are lessons that can be drawn about what approaches are most suitable under a given set of circumstances.

In each case, Trebilcock examines the policy context from a variety of perspectives, including: defining the problem, reviewing previous and current policy responses along with attendant successes or failures, describing the institutional context and the incentives generated by those structures, and understanding the beliefs of key actors.

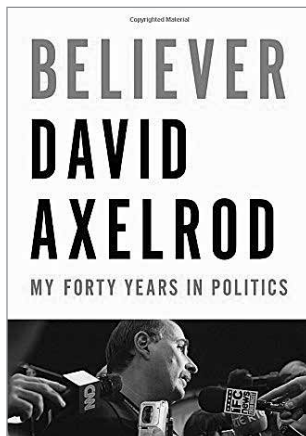
For example, in the chapter on agricultural supply management, he demonstrates what makes milk so expensive and dairy farming so profitable; shows why political geography and product marketing reinforce the subsidies regime; introduces potential reforms such as more inclusive regulatory bodies or a complete move to a free market and discusses how different policy choices could be accompanied by transition aides such as financial assistance or export tax adjustments in order to mitigate anticipated opposition to change. There are threads between these various points of analysis that need to be logically sequenced in order to understand potential political

responses to various policy options and the overall probability for enacting change successfully.

Readers looking for practical instruction on how to “deal with losers” may be frustrated by the absence of uniformity in the way Trebilcock draws out these threads. To wit, whereas the chapter on pensions primarily uses public choice theory to explore the political risks of various reform options, the chapter on climate change looks more broadly at the structural, institutional, ideational, and psychological elements at work.

This book is a dissertation, not a manual. It has elevated attention to the politics and mechanics of policy transitions. Policy advisors in any government would do well to read this book or even just the concluding chapter, before recommending or advising how to achieve policy change. ●

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Axelrod, David. (2015). *Believer*. Toronto: Penguin Press.

Over the course of the last few presidential elections in the United States, there’s certainly one thing that can be said about them: They are anything but boring.

For the author, David Axelrod, who was instrumental in getting Barack Obama elected back in 2008, politics are all about the rush. From the day he heard John F. Kennedy speak during a campaign stop in 1960, Axelrod was hooked. And inspired.

For anyone who has politics running through their veins, this is a must-read. The author’s stories cover more than 50 years of a life spent working in journalism and behind the scenes on the inside of American politics and numerous political campaigns that have ultimately shaped it. The author takes the reader on an adventurous ride through an astonishing list of political achievements – and the names that appear in this tome of nearly 500 pages include a list of some of the most compelling figures

in contemporary politics.

The political landscape of the United States is as diverse and unique as anywhere else in the world, and Chicago politics in particular – where the early parts of Axelrod’s career were spent – are an animal unto themselves. Weaving story after story of life in Chicago, through the Daley years and right up until the time a young upstart named Barack saw his opportunity to make a difference, the book covers an array of characters, of historic events, and elections from the vantage point of someone who not only witnessed these events for himself, but in many cases was instrumental in shaping them.

It is uniquely fascinating to be provided with an insider’s take on the first campaign of Barack Obama. To be given a deep analysis of the mistakes and the small victories that paved the way to his historic presidential election — a victory that many people never thought they would see happen in their lifetimes and one that filled so many with so much hope for the future. To the outsider, the challenges were vast, but in reading Axelrod’s account of the many stages, decisions and choices along the way the reader gets a better sense of just how difficult and hard-fought the battle was to get Obama to the White House.

The reader also gets an opportunity to find out a little bit more about Barack Obama and the type of person he was behind the facade. Not to say there was an entirely different persona in private from the one we saw on a regular basis when he was the President, but it is clear from the pages of *Believer* that there was a much tougher guy underneath the warm, collegial exterior. There we find a street fighter; a man who is more than ready to take action when needed, and one who wasn’t afraid to get into a scuffle. We see a man who did not allow his mistakes to limit him in anyway, and a man who engendered deep-seeded loyalty and commitment from all of those people that that surrounded him and helped him get to where he stood as President.

Politics aside, *Believer* is also the story of the author. Of a husband. Of a father. Of someone who was simply trying to earn a living to support his family in the best way he knew how. Of someone torn between wanting to stay with his family and take care of them on a daily basis and working on a campaign for the Presidency – which involves, time, travel, and extended absences from the home front. Axelrod is candid when describing the sacrifices of his career; the many trials and tribulations that he faced along the way. Axelrod succeeds in doing so in a way that pulls the reader in and allows them to realize that, as hard as one might think an election is on the people who are involved, it’s so much harder than an outsider could ever even imagine.

For Axelrod, it's been a life well lived; a life he is more than willing to celebrate now that he has pulled himself from the game completely. Not that he doesn't miss the chase, mind you – he's simply moved onto a new chapter in his life. But he is not without his regrets, such as his hope of bringing a new era of politics to Washington (similar to what John F. Kennedy had done for many of Axelrod's generation), nor is he ignorant of his own failings and mistakes.

And that is what makes this book even that much more compelling. It's the story of a political animal, laid bare for the entire world to see.

Granted, *Believer* may not speak equally to all sides of the political spectrum, but it's clear from the very first words of the introduction that if you're looking for that kind of book, this might not be your kind of read; however, if you're a political junkie

(like myself) and looking for a compelling page-turner, this is definitely a worthy addition to your bookshelf. While its sheer size and number of pages may give it a menacing appearance when it's sitting on your night table, this reviewer can assure you that shortly after you open its cover, you won't find it sitting unread for long. ●

This review was authored by Anne-Marie Jennings, who is currently with the Registrar of the Petroleum Resources Division of the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT). This review was prepared for Northern Public Affairs magazine by the Institute of Public Administration of Canada's (IPAC) NWT Regional Group. Please note the views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the policy or position of IPAC or the GNWT.

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