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Review by *Aboriginal Peoples in Canadian Cities:  
Transformations and Continuities* edited by Heather  
A. Howard and Craig Proulx

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**Aboriginal Peoples in Canadian Cities: Transformations and Continuities.** Edited by Heather A. Howard and Craig Proulx. Waterloo, ON: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2011. viii + 253 pp. Notes, bibliography, photographs, index. \$38.95 paper.

In some respects, this comprehensive anthology represents the cutting edge in a growing field of study related to urban Aboriginal communities in Canada. With a focus ranging from Toronto to Vancouver, the book contains fascinating new studies, including the experiences of Aboriginal employees at Ontario's Casino Rama, the rebuilding of Papaschase First Nation in Edmonton, and how Plains culture has been adopted as a form of healing in Vancouver. While the authors acknowledge the absence of voices addressing the Atlantic provinces and Quebec, this is offset by the strength of offerings from the Prairies, which include a textual analysis of media racism, a focus on Aboriginal youth gangs, and an exploration of hip-hop culture. Notably, in a context in which Inuit communities are often ignored, the book includes a study of Inuit communities in Ottawa.

While the introduction covers a range of issues relating to urban Aboriginality, this book is refreshing in its view of urban Aboriginal communities as normative, rather than exceptions to a reserve norm. Indeed, the opening essay by David Newhouse, "Urban Life: Reflections of a Middle-Class Indian," offers an unapologetic choice to be urban and highlights what cities have to offer urban Aboriginal people, particularly those who are culturally sure of their identities and economically in a position to enjoy the benefits of urban life.

Perhaps this choice to establish urbanity as normative to Native experience is the reason for the lack of focus on the role of residential schooling, the Sixties Scoop (the mass removal of Aboriginal children from their families into the child welfare system beginning in the 1960s), or loss of Indian status in shaping some aspects of urban Native life. Indeed, while the role of class in urban Native experience is well articulated, Indian status to some extent is presented as normative to the urban experience.

Overall, the book's only real weakness is its tendency to privilege academic voices not rooted in Native communities. Unquestionably, the articles written by Native people about their own communities are among the strongest, while the articles that overemphasize academic disciplinary categories in discussing identity and community-building are the most

disappointing, in general providing us with little opportunity to actually hear the subtle distinctions in how the Native people under discussion understand their own identities. Otherwise, this is a highly recommended collection.

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