

The Spaces in Between: Indigenous Sovereignty within the Canadian State. By Tim Schouls. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2024. 436 pages. \$100.00 cloth; \$74.95 paper; \$59.95 ebook.

In *The Spaces in Between*, Tim Schouls provides an ambitious and comprehensive exploration of how Indigenous nations assert their sovereignty within the contemporary Canadian state. Schouls combines a presentation of the conceptual, historical, legal, and political framework for Indigenous peoples in Canada along with an exploration of wide-ranging and nuanced examples of current Indigenous practices of self-government and autonomy. Schouls also advocates for further reconciliation and restoration of Indigenous self-determination moving forward.

The book's use of case studies is a real contribution to current scholarship on Indigenous politics. Schouls states that one of the book's main goals "is to show where the tight political grip that the Canadian state has held over Indigenous peoples is loosening" and goes on to provide many examples of how Indigenous peoples in Canada have acted to assert their sovereignty in this opening space (16). The inclusion of case studies throughout the work illustrates the diversity of situations, strengths, and challenges of the many different Indigenous peoples in Canada. These examples show the wide breadth of Indigenous nations' experiences, even as they operate within the same institutional framework.

Schouls writes that the book is "intended to serve as a primer into a range of topics that are of central concern to the conduct of political relations between Indigenous peoples and the Canadian state" (19). The book is organized as a textbook, with features such as learning objectives, discussion questions, and suggested readings in each chapter. The book is thematic in structure, moving from broadly defined topic to topic, such as "identity politics," "policy," and "treaties." *The Spaces In Between* has particularly strong coverage and discussions of sovereignty and self-government in relation to identity and citizenship, land claims, and treaties and treaty rights. Another strength of the book is the recurring attention to the gendered dynamics of the Indigenous experience under the Canadian government.

The book's central conceptual frame of the practice and expansion of Indigenous sovereignty is that it happens in "the spaces in between," inside the framework of the Canadian state. This builds on concepts used by Kevin Bruyneel in *The Third Spaces of Sovereignty: The Postcolonial Politics of US–Indigenous Relations* (2007) and in Audra Simpson's *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life across the Borders of Settler States* (2014). Bruyneel and Simpson used slightly different language ("third spaces" and "nested" sovereignty), but both have written on ways that Indigenous peoples push back against the constraints of the dominant states and assert their sovereignty as inherent. Their works also explore how these assertions challenge conventional understandings of

settler state sovereignty. Schouls's idea of "spaces in between" as an expanding location for Indigenous self-determination within the Canadian state builds on and modifies these earlier conceptual frames and is used throughout the book.

The book does not provide an impartial presentation, nor does it pretend to. There is an openly normative approach and arguments throughout the book advocating for a substantive commitment to reconciliation and a further reordering of state-Indigenous relations. The book has an optimistic tone in the presentation of case studies and explanations of how Indigenous activism and pressure have created openings for the practice of Indigenous sovereignty. The writing emphasizes different ways that legal and political structures have shifted over time in response to Indigenous resistance to create more space for autonomy, encouraging more of this movement.

There are passages where some readers might find the book overly optimistic, such as in the coverage of pledges of the Trudeau administration in support of Indigenous sovereignty. Critics argue that these promises are mere words, not actions, and point to a lack of resources and substantive changes to back them up. Indeed, some would argue that true Indigenous sovereignty can never be recognized within the colonial construct of the Canadian state at all. Schouls does acknowledge and cover these critiques at various points. As a whole, the book presents a range of perspectives and approaches, even as it counters some and endorses others. There are also reflections on challenges as well as successes in many of the case study examples offered. The inclusion of varied viewpoints and more critical views throughout the book does offer balance and a comprehensive introduction to some of the key perspectives and questions on the contemporary practice of Indigenous sovereignty.

There are many positive aspects of this very thoughtful, rich book. As a course textbook there may be some minor challenges. The specific choices in the book's progression and organization are at times hard to follow and not always clearly explained. Certainly, the breadth of topics and themes to address related to the practice of sovereignty requires any author to select specific issues to cover. No book could cover it all, but more discussion of what issues were covered here (or not), why, and in what order would be helpful. The thematic organization of the book also means that, at times, specific government actions or agreements are referenced before they are comprehensively explained. For example, the 1969 White Paper is referenced early in the book, but not fully explained until almost 100 pages later. Readers or students without comprehensive background knowledge might find some of these references harder to understand. The thematic rather than chronological approach also means a great deal of back and forth in terms of historical timelines. The multitude of case study examples might also get overwhelming for more novice students. Additional visual aids or organizational resources (comprehensive timelines, maps, or lists of examples, whether in boxes in each chapter or as appendices, etc.) would have been helpful. Other than the thoughtfully designed cover art, there are no visual elements or features to the book other than text. These are not major problems at all. However, given that the book is clearly intended to be used as a textbook, potential instructors should be aware that it does not have these additional features.

The Spaces In Between brings valuable contributions to the literature on Canadian politics and Indigenous politics. The book provides a wealth of examples and case studies on how Indigenous nations have asserted their rights to sovereignty and self-government within the Canadian framework. Schouls offers a nuanced exploration of various concepts as well as practical components important for understanding Indigenous governance in Canada. The book provides a strong background for students and scholars as it builds a case for “what better relations between Indigenous peoples and the Canadian state should look like” (20).

Anne Flaherty
Merrimack College