

Review of *Seminal Years: Federal Multicultural Policies and the Politics of Indigeneity in Canada and Australia between 1988-1992* by Gabriella T. Espák (Debrecen University Press, 2020, ISBN 978-963-318-897-2)

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Contemporary modern societies are ever more concerned with matters of inclusion, multiculturalism, and the upkeep and preservation of minority cultures. Nevertheless, such matters are not easily achieved, as is demonstrated in *Seminal Years* by Gabriella T. Espák. The book tackles federal multicultural policies and the general politics surrounding indigeneity, focusing on a number of semi-contemporary major examples and events in late-20th-century Canada and Australia.

Placing itself at the intersection of history, law, politics, and cultural studies, *Seminal Years* serves as an excellent point of entry for a multitude of potential research avenues into the field. Future researchers are very likely to regard the author's discussion as an opportune basis on which to plan further work.

From a structural and logical standpoint, *Seminal Years* follows a very clear-cut and well-structured system; the book is divided into five chapters, with two chapters dedicated to each country and the discussion of their relevant policies, while the 5th and final chapter serves as a summary of the discussed data. The author does a splendid job at explaining seemingly impenetrable legislative literature and jargon, making the information accessible to readers who are not necessarily well versed in the relevant fields of study. The following few paragraphs will endeavour to provide a very brief explanation of the various chapters' contents.

Chapter 1, titled "Why Meech Lake Failed," is concerned with explaining Canada's identity crisis in the 1980s, and the resulting failure of the aforementioned accord. Despite being only loosely related, the topics of federalism, legislative negotiations, indigenous and human rights are brought together in a cohesive and easy-to-understand context and narrative structure.

Chapter 2, titled "Identity and National Priorities in Australia," examines the potential downfall of seemingly impervious, unified interests, providing discourse on how these notions might become vulnerable should the unifying social aspects behind them were to falter. The end of the 1980s represented a solidification and popularisation of Australian national identity, followed by a 'nationalisation' of certain socio-cultural political matters – this being only one side of the debate, as Aboriginal views differed greatly from those of the 'national' narrative, thus leading to a series of hitherto unseen debates and challenges, which arose from this difference in viewpoint.

Chapter 3, titled "The Charlottetown Accord," examines the 1992 incident that further deepened Canada's identity crisis, devoting extra attention to the model of government meant to further reinforce the country's identity, or lack of, as other governing models have been proposed, none of which have managed to maintain legitimacy. Despite its shortcomings, the Charlottetown Accord would nonetheless play a crucial role in the policies and methods of later governments.

Chapter 4, titled “Mabo and the Native Title Legislation,” once again shifts the perspective towards Australia. The author describes in great detail the long-lasting implications regarding the Mabo v. Queensland legal case of 1992, which served as a paradigm-shift for Australian linguistic policies and general attitude towards indigenous and refugee human and linguistic rights.

Chapter 5, “Consolidation,” serves as a method to tie all the previous threads together in a comprehensive and cohesive manner with a view to helping the reader understand the linguistic policies of the times. This is achieved by drawing conclusions based on a thorough analysis of written policies, laws, acts, agreements, legislative statements, etc.

In summary, *Seminal Years* serves as an outstanding introduction for all those interested in linguistic policies and indigenous rights. Such topics are discussed with precision and great detail, but despite this, the author’s line of thinking never becomes too tedious to follow. The logical structure of the publication is also clear-cut and efficient, with no great leaps between ideas and topics; as a result, the readers are never forced to stop and collect themselves due to failed understanding.

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