

for the survival of nations by minimizing crisis and providing the necessary leadership and guidance. At the very least, leaders tried to minimize crises and work through difficulties without exacerbating the problems of colonialism. The fact that self-determination was a factor in community wellness and communities in crisis at the time can be seen in the negotiations of both Treaty Six and Treaty Seven, wherein both the Cree and the Blackfoot leadership agreed to sign the treaties (to share territory without ceding sovereignty) in so far as the Crown would assist them in keeping whiskey traders out. Since their relationship with these American traders were seen as destructive to the nation and the root of much of the crisis within, being rid of them was viewed as a way of facilitating the reestablishment of good governance and community wellness (Carter, 1993; Johnson, 2007).

Even subsequent to the establishment of reserves, and the consequent upheaval that was caused in the lives of individuals, communities and nations, many indigenous leaders and/or systems of governance were having some success in their efforts to help their communities cope. For instance, through the efforts of leaders and/or governments, the Haudenosaunee experienced a cultural revival during the early years of reserve life, while others such as Kainai (the Blood nation of the Blackfoot Confederacy) successfully defended their cultural and spiritual autonomy from the Canadian government's efforts to shut down the Sundance (Hill, 2006; Ladner, 2003a). Further, much to the credit of their systems of governance, many communities achieved great economic success in the early reserve years, largely due to the development of a highly competitive agriculture industry on reserves throughout Canada. Not surprisingly, this was an industry that was stifled by the Canadian government as it pursued policies that limited economic competition with non-native farmers, limited agricultural production on reserve and limited the amount of reserve lands that were being used for farming to facilitate the sale and/or lease of "surplus" lands (Carter, 1993; Hill, 2006).

Despite this early success in facilitating adaptation and in steering communities through the turmoils of life under a colonial regime defined by the whims of a foreign occupier (first the colonial administrators, then the Canadian state), and despite the treaties (as well as international and domestic law) which protected the sovereignty of indigenous nations (and thus their systems of governance and constitutional orders) (Henderson, 2000; Ladner, 2003c), the Canadian government set forth on a mission of political genocide. By political genocide I am referring to the federal government's policies and practices which were designed to eliminate indigenous sovereignty, indigenous governments and indigenous constitutional orders (Ladner, 2003b).

However one chooses to look at, or candy coat this practice of regime replacement, the fact remains that the Canadian government (and its colonial predecessor) chose to impose their own system of governance over both indigenous nations and their lands.

Governance: A Determining Factor

Regime replacement did not provide for better government or governments that were more capable of dealing with the situations/crises that were being confronted in indigenous communities as they confronted the reserve system, loss of their territories, loss of their sovereignty, the elimination of historic economies (and thus, "job markets" and their associated remunerations), residential schools, mass unemployment, the destruction of their culture, the destruction of their communities by means of violence, alcoholism, and starvation (among other "issues" communities were confronting). Instead, regime replacement was designed to provide for easier federal control and administration. That is, band councils were created primarily to serve as puppets of the federal government and were charged with the responsibility of providing local administration for Indian Affairs.

It is also very important to understand that the band council system of government was designed as a temporary measure to provide Indigenous peoples with the opportunity to familiarize themselves with "civilized" government and to practice governing themselves (Ladner, 2003b; Tobias, 1991). The original plan was that once enough experience had been gained, Indigenous peoples would cease being Indians under the terms of the Indian Act and would be granted "self-government" by way of remodeling band councils as regular municipal governments (Ladner & Orsini, 2005). Thus band councils were not provided with the tools, jurisdictions and structures of accountability that are typically associated with government. Such that band councils have no decision-making ability that is not subject to the authority of the federal government,² no inherent or constitutionally defined jurisdictions or responsibilities and no ability to generate revenue (delegated or otherwise) or to create the financial capacity to operate as a government aside from government transfers and income from band owned businesses (Canada, 1989). Therefore, even though band councils have been delegated much administrative responsibility for federal programs, Indian Affairs still exercises control through financial transfers, departmental administrative and accountability requirements, the use of third party management, and its ability to override all by-laws (Canada, 1985; Elias, 1991).



