

*Without Surrender Without Consent: A History of the Nishga Land Claims*, by Daniel Raunet. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1984. Pp. 244.

The political geography of British Columbia has always been the ally of the Nishga people. Before European contact the compact nature of their territory and the ease of year-round communication within it allowed them to develop stable social and political patterns extending throughout the whole tribal group. In addition, and unlike the few other coastal tribal groups which did attain domestic political order, the Nishga had as the heartland of their territory an estuary so rich in resources that Nishga and neighbouring groups alike could share in its abundance. In allocating and defending these resources the Nishga leaders became accomplished traders and skilled diplomats.

After contact the Nishga were among the last of the large tribal groups in the province to come under white control, and until 1958, when a logging road was pushed into their Nass Valley, they remained the most isolated of such groups. Nishga political unity and diplomatic skills could thus be preserved to a substantial extent — and also put to use; for, despite the isolation, Nishga lands, rights and resources were under continual attack. The modern history of the Nishga centres upon their response to this attack. In mounting their response the Nishga extended their actions far beyond the Nass, to Victoria, Ottawa and London, and in so doing were frequently at the forefront of aboriginal legal and political activism in both the province and the nation.

Daniel Raunet's *Without Surrender Without Consent* presents the modern history of the Nishga. It is the account that the Nishga themselves would wish to have presented — and indeed have been presenting as their history has evolved. Much of Raunet's account is given in the Nishgas' own words. Raunet appears to have combed through virtually every archival and published source relating to the Nishga, and he has interviewed a number of Nishga leaders. Oddly, one source which he seems not to have used, and does not cite, is Edwin May's MA thesis "The Nishga Land Claim, 1873-1973" (Simon Fraser University, Department of History, 1979). May's work remains the more scholarly examination of events and issues to 1973.

Even those who already know something of the Nishga history cannot fail to be impressed anew by the energy, tenacity, consistency and patience which Raunet's account reveals. For more than a century, year by year, decade by decade, the Nishga have sought out ways to present

their case. What James Gosnell stated to the constitutional conference on aboriginal rights in March 1984 in Ottawa is what his grandfather stated to a federal-provincial royal commission in 1886 in Kincolith. Above all else, Raunet's book is ample antidote to any lingering notion that aboriginal land claims are a recent development in this province. Land claims remain a fundamental public issue precisely because they are so rooted in the aboriginal and modern history of British Columbia.

Raunet's chapters are generally chronological. The first few describe European contact and entry into the Nass, while the subsequent ones are entitled "Gospel Road," "Theft of the Land," "Theft of the Resources," "Assault on Culture," "The Nishga Go To London," "Nishga Land Is Not For Sale," "Canadian Apartheid," "Era of the Multinationals," "Amax — Dollars v. People" and "Nationalism Rising." While these titles indicate some degree of shrillness, the book is informative and well written — and it is completely up to date.

Errors are few and minor. There never was a time "when the mere mention of the land issue was unlawful" (p. 15), although the fact that land claims fund-raising by Indians was illegal makes the point a rather fine one. The only other error worth mention has formation of the Nishga provincial school district as a Social Credit reward to Frank Calder in 1976 for having crossed the floor of the Legislature from the New Democratic Party (p. 163). In fact Eileen Dailly, NDP Minister of Education, and her officials began the process, in response to Nishga proposals (made at about the time Gosnell replaced Calder as Chairman of the Nishga Tribal Council); the process was willingly carried to completion by Pat McGeer, Socred Minister of Education, and his officials.

Raunet tells us that his book is not intended "to pay tribute to the folklore of the far west," much less to treat the Nishga as "the last of the Mohicans." His aim, rather, is to examine the Nishga pursuit of their land claims as a modern issue of relevance wherever peoples seek to remain "masters in their own houses, and on their own lands" (p. 16). Raunet largely accomplishes this objective. If he does fall short, it is as the advocate who rarely pauses to provide perspective for those (presumably the majority among his non-Indian readers) who are not already sympathetic to aboriginal concerns. But this is small criticism. The book is a substantial contribution which provides much information about a vigorous modern people whose claims and activities remain vital aspects of public affairs in British Columbia.