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‘Crystal Gail Fraser and Sara Komarnisky, Talk Treaty to Me: Understanding the Basics of Treaties and Land in Canada’

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Crystal Gail Fraser and Sara Komarnisky, *Talk Treaty to Me: Understanding the Basics of Treaties and Land in Canada* (HarperCollins Canada, 2026), 320pp. Paperback. C\$24.99. ISBN: 978-1-4434-7116-9.

This book is both timely and significant. Fraser and Komarnisky take up the challenge of explaining the basics of treaties and land in Canada to a broad audience, including settler-Canadians, Indigenous peoples (First Nations, Inuit, and Metis) and immigrants to Canada. The book is a direct response to the 94 Calls for Action by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in Canada in 2015. The TRC explored the destructive impact and legacy of the Indian Residential School System and settler-colonialism in general on Indigenous peoples in what is now Canada. Fraser and Komarnisky quite rightly emphasise that governments (both federal and provincial), church groups, and others have been very slow to implement the TRC's Calls for Action. The book also builds on the authors' previous '150 Acts of Reconciliation' viral campaign which itself was a reaction to the incredibly celebratory and triumphant nature of the 150th anniversary of Canadian Confederation in 2017.

The book is structured thematically and explores several themes including Treaty making since time immemorial; When things began to change; Written treaties, falsehoods, and oral histories; Refusal, unceded territory, Metis scrip, and modern treaties; The ongoing fight for Indigenous rights; The (dis)honouring of treaties and Canadian settler colonialism; Gendering and queering treaties; interrupting movement and mobility; Toward shared solidarities; and Land defenders from way back to land back.

Fraser and Komarnisky importantly highlight at the outset of the book that Indigenous peoples in what is now Canada had entered into treaties amongst themselves long before European settlers arrived in what is now Canada. It was not something that Europeans introduced to them. Furthermore, they also illustrate the way in which treaties with First Nations were often used by the settler-Canadian state to extract resources and/or facilitate mass immigration of European settlers on land to be cultivated for agricultural purposes. Moreover, the limited commitments made by the settler-Canadian state were even frequently dishonoured once it obtained what it wanted. Therefore, the settler-Canadian state very often acted in bad faith and in the opinion of the authors continues to do so to this day.

The book especially in its last substantive chapter charts the struggle Indigenous peoples in what is now Canada have fought since the arrival of the first European settlers to defend their land, to after centuries of dispossession in some cases, calling for it to be returned to them. The latter 'land back' campaign is growing in force and momentum and is becoming increasingly difficult for the settler-Canadian state to ignore.

I very much enjoyed reading this book, despite its sometimes quite difficult subject matter. I wholeheartedly recommend it to readers, although it will appeal more to general readers rather than specialist. Fraser and Komarnisky have truly done an immeasurable public service in writing this book, especially in such an accessible style. Every Canadian should have a copy of it or at least read it, as the authors illustrate understanding treaties and land in Canada is at the core of understanding Canada as a nation today.

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