Jeffrey S. Denis, *Canada at a Crossroads: Boundaries, Bridges, and Laissez-Faire Racism in Indigenous-Settler Relations* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2020). 384pp. Paperback. \$39.95. ISBN: 978-1-4426-1447-5.

Jeffrey S. Denis's *Canada at a Crossroads* delivers a comprehensive and illuminating examination of settler-Indigenous relations in the Rainy River District of Northwestern Ontario. Through conducting a number of interviews with white settlers, Anishanaabe, and Métis individuals the book investigates the symbolic and social boundaries and bridges that exist between the two communities. The book argues that although more explicit racism may be less prevalent in the district there are existing ideological frameworks that underpin group position behaviours in the region that can be described as 'laissez-faire racism.' (9)

The book is separated broadly into three parts. The first of which gives a detailed history of the region and the colonial policies that steadily eroded the rights of the Indigenous Nations that live there, including violations of treaty agreements and land disputes as they continue today. In doing so it emphasises the importance of contemporary land claims in the region and provides context to the line of questioning concerning community relations conducted in the interviews.

The second and third parts of the book consist of the 'boundaries' and 'bridges' that Jeffrey's interviewees identify as existing between the settler and Indigenous communities. Chapters two through to five focus on defining the state of relations in Rainy River and delving deeply into the specific boundaries put forth by the interviewees. These chapters emphasise that what was often identified in positive terms by settlers were described as boundaries by Indigenous interviewees. For instance, white participants praised integration and assimilation as contributing towards good relations, whereas unsurprisingly this was identified as a boundary for Indigenous interviewees. Such a conflict pinpoints the complexity in overcoming these boundaries on a local level, as group interests and concepts of 'good relations' are often incompatible.

To demonstrate this and develop this analysis beyond a theoretical level and to see the types of ideologies expressed in interview in real life, the book focuses on a local dispute – the Alberton Group Home controversy. In doing so Jeffrey demonstrates the conflicting interests of the districts' communities and the types of obstacles that settler communities actively construct to prevent Indigenous community projects when they appear to threaten the settler group position and sense of superiority. Such a controversy reinforces that contact between communities, which was raised as both a boundary and a bridge by different participants, in that many residents felt the mixing of (or lack of) settler and Indigenous communities contributed to the extent to which they were able to build positive relations, in itself is not enough to overcome the strength of group position that Jeffrey identified in his interviews. The Alberton Group Home controversy highlights the way in which the settler community is still very much the dominant power in coordinating contact between the communities and in deciding who is able to purchase particular plots of land, reinforcing the types of land claim issues that Indigenous nations are facing on a local level.

Chapters six through to nine examine the bridges in Indigenous-settler relations put forth by the residents. Jeffrey's intention is not to suggest that these bridges are the means through which to overcome the boundaries, but rather to emphasise that the processes of reproducing group position runs so deeply that the white residents interviewed tended to conceive of bridges as being things that upheld their sense of superiority. Through his interviews, Jeffrey demonstrates that conventional notions of bridges, such as education, do not appear to have influenced relations in Rainy River. Laissez-faire racism is seemingly entrenched in the settler community in part because this community refuse to confront it.

The flair and originality of this book lies in its local focus. It is evident that Jeffrey has made an invested effort to familiarise himself with local residents and to engage with all of the communities that he interviewed participants from over an extended period of time. Furthermore, by examining Indigenous-settler relations on a local level the book offers a critique that is useful in imagining broader frameworks. It proves that contact on a local level is not enough to overcome the rigidity of group positions and the sense of superiority that underpins settler ideologies. To really overcome boundaries and build bridges, settlers need to address laissez-faire racism by working to understand the history of settler colonialism, Indigenous treaty rights and land claims of the region, and to address white supremacy and privilege. Furthermore, settlers must move away from conceiving of reconciliation as connected to assimilation and rather recognise that reconciliation is an on-going process of rebuilding trust that involves acknowledging Indigenous autonomy.

Alice Higgs, University of Sheffield