

Nation-states, including Canada, are disparate and unconnected places; it is only through the greatest feats of ongoing imagination and myth-making that we continue to see them as concrete, existing entities.

This book is recommended reading for anyone who wishes to develop an understanding of what Canada is today and how important the years 1945–75 were in its formation. It is a must for any course in Canadian studies both here in Canada and in other nation-states.

No place to go: Local histories of the battered women's shelter movement

N. Janovicek

Reviewed by Kendra Nixon, PhD

No Place To Go is a useful and informative account of women's organizing for transition homes in small towns and cities across Canada in the 1970s and 1980s. By focusing on women's organizing in four communities — Thunder Bay and Kenora, Ontario; Nelson, British Columbia; and Moncton, New Brunswick — Janovicek deepens our understanding of the history of the Canadian women's movement. This is the first Canadian study that examines the battered women's shelter movement within rural and small communities. Each case study illustrates how regional disparities and complex, local politics have shaped the conceptualization of violence against women, and consequently, the delivery of services to victims of violent men. Furthermore, the book demonstrates the various struggles that organizers encountered with many of their stakeholders, including other community organizations, municipal and provincial governments, community members, and other women's and feminist advocates. By providing thick, rich description of each case study, Janovicek shows how these struggles, and the strategies adopted, varied across jurisdictions. Janovicek clearly proves her point when she asserts that the understanding of local histories "demonstrate[s] that strategies for change can work only if people who are strategizing pay attention to local politics and circumstances" (p. 18).

The book opens with an overview of the historical developments of violence against women, most notably wife battering and rape, as a serious social problem in Canada. Janovicek traces the important touchstones of the Canadian's battered women's shelter movement, noting that very little is known about women's transition house organizing in rural or small communities. Early feminist theorizing of violence against women is described, along with the important linkages to women's

oppression overall. What is especially helpful, particularly for readers with little background in family violence in Canada, is the discussion on Aboriginal family violence and the relationship to Canadian social welfare policy, most notably federal Indian policy.

Although the overview is relatively brief, it provides a rich context that is necessary for readers to contextualize the experiences of organizers of small-town transition homes. Janovicek describes the challenges that the violence against women movement in Canada encountered as a whole, enabling the reader to understand and appreciate the complex challenges that women's groups in both small communities and metropolitan centres have experienced. By doing so, the reader gains a greater appreciation of the overwhelming task of developing programs and services for abused women in small towns across Canada.

One of the main purposes of the book is to dispute the claim that transition homes were slower to develop in smaller communities than those in larger, urban cities because of the strong conservative ideology that is believed to dominate small communities. Janovicek challenges this simplistic assumption and successfully demonstrates that the development of transition homes is much more complex. By examining the development of transition houses in four small communities, Janovicek reveals how the "local manifestation of patriarchal relations, colonization, and hinterland economies limited women's influence in their communities" and "accounts for the uneven development of the battered women's shelter movement in Canada" (p. 8).

Throughout the chapters, readers are made aware of the challenges and barriers with which feminist organizers and violence against women advocates were continuously confronted. These include: the opposition from government and community service providers who wanted wife battering to be assumed under the broader, degendered framework of "family violence"; divisions among organizers within the violence against women movement; vehement opposition to a feminist analysis of violence in the home; being marginalized in local decision-making processes; scrambling for limited resources; and the lack of adequate pay and undervaluation of the work done by shelter staff (read: women).

Indeed, shelters in larger, urban centres have also experienced similar struggles; however, Janovicek suggests that these common struggles have been confounded by additional barriers unique to rural and small communities. For example, in many jurisdictions, organizers were tasked with having to change people's views that intimate partner violence was an urban phenomenon and, therefore, resources for women were not necessary. Janovicek notes that organizers were further challenged by the lack of adequate and stable funding and often had to compete with other social services for scarce resources. Although urban shelters also had to compete for limited resources, Janovicek argues that the government's neglect and undervaluation of women's shelters is perhaps more profound in smaller communities.

An interesting theme that was evident throughout the book was the incredible resistance and opposition from government officials. Although it is not surprising to learn that organizers in small communities had to contend with anti-feminist and perhaps misogynistic government bureaucrats, the case studies poignantly reveal how formidable this opposition was. But despite this resistance, organizers were able to craft creative solutions, ultimately providing the much-needed services for battered women.

Janovicek also does an excellent job of portraying the reality that women's advocates were often tasked with having to meet the basic survival and protection needs of abused women, delaying their plans of political organizing and consciousness-raising. This serves as an important reminder to the reader about the urgency and complexity of the work involved in ending men's violence against women.

A book on family violence in Canada is not complete without a discussion of the experiences of the Indigenous community. A major strength of the book is the author's analysis of the interaction between Aboriginal women and feminists in the development of local services for battered women. Although Janovicek discusses this throughout the entire book, it is especially evident in Chapter One, which provides a rich description of the Native women's movement in Thunder Bay, Ontario. Specifically, the chapter discusses the ways in which organizers within the Native women's movement developed an analysis of family violence based on gendered racial violence and colonialism, and how they worked with non-Aboriginal feminists and male leaders with the Aboriginal community. Janovicek argues that although Aboriginal women and feminists shared the same goal of helping abused women, and both groups conceptualized the problem of wife battering as a social problem rather than an individual one, they diverged in their analysis of violence. Feminists argued that violence against wives and female partners is primarily a gender issue — that violence is an extension of men's power and control over women. On the other hand, Aboriginal organizers argued that issues of race, colonization and discrimination, as well as gender, are paramount in contributing to violence in families. Furthermore, Aboriginal women campaigned for services that would strengthen and heal all members of violent families, including abusive husbands. Because the battered women's movement, led by non-Aboriginal feminists, did not incorporate Aboriginal women's theorizing of violence into strategies for change, the two sectors often worked separately in their attempts to end domestic violence.

The reader also gains an acute understanding that the values and beliefs that make it difficult for women to leave violent relationships are entrenched in social welfare policies and practices (Chapter 3). This is especially evident in organizers' interactions with social assistance workers and policymakers who were frequently reluctant to provide assistance to abused women living outside of their geographic

jurisdiction. Janovicek also discusses how federal Indian policy has served as an insurmountable barrier for abused Aboriginal women leaving violent relationships.

No Place to Go is an interesting, well-written book that is readable and accessible for both undergraduate and graduate students. The book would make a good supplementary text in courses on violence against women, women's organizing, and community development. It does not, however, discuss in great detail the theoretical underpinnings of men's violence against women. But this is not the purpose of the book. Although this book is certainly accessible for readers unfamiliar with the literature on men's violence against women, it is not recommended that it be used if the intent is to learn about the dynamics or theory behind men's use of violence against women. Instead, the book's strength is its detailed account of women's organizing in small communities across Canada as a means to end men's violence against women. Although the author's specific focus is on violence, readers who are interested in women's organizing and/or the development of feminist services would find the book enlightening. The case studies of the four communities certainly illuminate the struggles, disappointments, and achievements of women's organizing. Overall, the book adds to the scholarship on women's organizing in Canada. It is a worthwhile read for anyone interested in the areas of violence against women, women's organizing, and the battered women's shelter movement.