

BOOK REVIEWS

Yale Belanger (ed.). *Aboriginal Self-Government in Canada: Current Trends and Issues, 3rd Edition*. Saskatoon: Purich Publishing, 2008. 464 pages. ISBN 978-895830-323. \$45.00 CDN.

A hefty tome, the perusal of Aboriginal self-government in Canada by this august group of authors provides a vast range of approaches to governance with immense, if somewhat inaccessible, potential for use in the new millennium. The dialogue on governance has shifted over the course of time like sands through an hour glass, except that the sands rapidly flowing through this particular bottleneck purport to represent the diverse interests and goals of Aboriginal Canada. One problem is the continuing “what if” nature of the dialogue. What if the resolution of land claims actually met the needs of Aboriginal peoples; what if proper water and sewage treatment was affected in northern Canada; what if Canada understood the needs and aspirations of this original population; what if mining interests were inclusive of Native interests; and what if the Aboriginal world gone wrong could actually be made right in the twenty-first century? Would resolution of these long-standing questions contribute to resolving what has become the “Indian problem” now firmly entrenched in the Canadian mind? Would it promote Aboriginal land/fiscal partnerships within the consciousness of the Canadian State? Realistically, self-determination and self-sufficiency for Aboriginal Canada cannot be realized, no matter how well articulated, when Canada has no will to respond in the affirmative.

To a multitude of historical grievances, the text provides informative and high level solutions that could enable functional and efficient forms of governance at the community level if properly funded through at least another decade of internal and external implementation. First Nation leadership have contributed to the discussion of what self-government means, and in principle, much of the resulting literature is an accurate representation of what good government might look like through their eyes. There is recognition by Slowy (215) and others throughout the text that Native people cannot live solely through land-based economies, and that participation in the larger Canadian State as full and productive partners is not only fiscally necessary, but imperative to the cultural survival of Native peoples. However, these very terms for substantive en-

gagement sustain resistance.

Native people are still left looking through the lens of the “other” to define routes to take to self-government and to explicate obstacles at the community level. And, rather than providing methodology that speaks to how people might put into practice those elusive acts of self-governance, the barriers are analyzed away as resolvable through negotiation and constitutional recognition. The red tape that winds insidiously through the lived experience of Aboriginal peoples can no longer be explained away by those operating in spheres of external privilege. In truth, virtually none of the Native people I know at the reserve level would have the verve or temperament to read this text, which does not negate as much as render it moot to their aspirations.

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Ted Binnema and Susan Neylan (eds.). *New Histories for Old: Changing Perspectives on Canada's Native Past*s. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007.
304 pages. ISBN 978-0-7748-1414-0. \$34.95 pbk.

On the whole, it is remarkable how little the “postmodern turn,” so influential in some historical fields, has affected the writing of Aboriginal history in Canada. While many Aboriginal history scholars are well-read in cognate, more theoretically-informed fields such as postcolonial history, much of their writing remains fundamentally empiricist and materialist in orientation. In *New Histories for Old*, editors Ted Binnema and Susan Neylan offer an explanation for Arthur (Skip) Ray’s lifelong empiricism that may be more widely applicable. They suggest that Ray’s work as an expert in land claims cases has shaped his overall view of what is important and “reinforced his commitment to detailed research, an empirical approach, and an economic focus” (10). More broadly, they place the book within the framework of Aboriginal history’s contemporary political impact. The introduction opens with the words, “Interpretations and perceptions of history can have an immediate and ‘real world’ impact when it comes to Canada’s Aboriginal peoples.” This recognition is

palpable in many of the contributions to this volume.

New Histories for Old is a festschrift in honor of Arthur J. Ray, one of Canada's most prominent scholars of Aboriginal and fur trade history. Edited by two of his former doctoral students, the collection brings together nine historical essays from Ray's colleagues, former students, and fellow land claim researchers, plus two essays that discuss Ray's work. The collection has a western and predominantly local orientation, with five essays on British Columbia and three others covering various areas from the Great Lakes westward. Jim Miller's article on the meaning of treaties is alone in its *longue-durée*, nationwide focus.

The large themes of the volume are familiar: the colonial appropriation of Aboriginal space is an overriding theme that runs through almost all the essays. Whether considering naming practices or more direct acts of dispossession, most of the authors show a concern with the processes of land transfer, the assertion of European supremacy, and Aboriginal efforts to defend their territory. Of course, these processes are certainly the dominant feature of Native-newcomer interaction in Canada. But this is well-trodden ground. As a group, the essays do not move beyond the classic forms of analysis. The "Native pasts" of the subtitle are discussed only in the context of encounters with non-Aboriginal people. There is little attention to race as an analytical category or to gender as a factor in Native-newcomer relations. Apart from Robert Galois' intriguing juxtaposition of oral and written accounts of the misnamed "Skeena Uprising" of 1888, oral history does not find much place. There are also no Aboriginal scholars in the collection. In places, investigations of Aboriginal resistance break some new ground: Paige Raibmon's analysis of Aboriginal mobility demonstrates that First Nations often understood their seasonal movements as statements of multiple site ownership, rather than the "abandonment" that Euro-Canadians read in them. Keith Carlson investigates Coast Salish people's struggles over fishing sites to suggest that Aboriginal use of Canadian courts should not be read necessarily as a sign of assimilation, but rather (sometimes, at least) as an assertion of tradition through new means. Overall, what readers will find in this collection is solid historical work that largely sticks to well-known paths of inquiry and analysis.

What is it that keeps so much of Aboriginal history on these wide thoroughfares and hinders the adoption of new questions and approaches? I wonder if the dominance of non-Aboriginal scholars is a factor, fostering a climate of particular caution in order to avoid incidentally harming Aboriginal causes or well-being. It is a sad fact that Julie Cruikshank's insightful and sophisticated theorizing about Aboriginal storytelling can be used in courts of law to bolster the argument that

oral histories have no factual basis or evidential validity. Non-Aboriginal scholars, who are mostly anti-colonial and supportive of Aboriginal self-determination, understand the contradictions and potential consequences of our academic knowledge production. Yet we do need some fresh ideas to reinvigorate our research and carry us in new directions. Why can we not generate some ways to take intellectual risks for our own discipline's benefit, without incurring political risks for the people whose pasts we study?

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Jack W. Brink. *Imagining Head-Smashed-In: Aboriginal Buffalo Hunting on the Northern Plains*. Edmonton: Athabasca University Press, 2008. 360 pages. ISBN 978-8974-2504-6. \$35.95 pbk.

This is a rather remarkable book, written for a wide audience. It is scholarly in content but free of the jargon that usually limits reading audiences for such a volume. The exceptional photos that illustrate the story add greatly to the narrative. The referencing of sources is effective, using a page-identified sources listing at the end that refers the interested reader to a subsequent, conventional References Cited list. In this way the non-professional reader is not burdened with cumbersome citation lists within the text and the more serious readers have all the source information readily accessible to them.

In *Imagining Head-Smashed-In*, Brink synthesizes the “hard” data gleaned from archaeological digs and the published literature with the early-contact-period observations of the first Europeans to travel through the Northern and Great Plains regions. Added to this is the wealth of information that has been preserved by Aboriginal Elders and tribal historians. By drawing information from these diverse sources Brink has accurately related what we know about Head-Smashed-In, the Northern Plains region and the magnificent herds of bison that sustained the “Real People.”

Brink has gone well beyond the often dry facts in the course of his “imagining” of this buffalo jump site and the necessary activities and the spiritual realm of the people who employed the jump as a part of their

subsistence strategy over many generations. He clearly acknowledges that there is much that is not known and much that can never be known about the people and their activities at the jump site, and the activities that they conducted elsewhere during the year. In his twenty-five year association with Head-Smashed-In, his experiences in archaeological excavation there, interacting with White and Aboriginal excavators, and his extended interaction with elders and tribal historians, he has achieved an understanding of this site and the descendants of the people that used it. This understanding has fed and extended his imagining of this site.

In his own words, "...the pages that follow document a personal journey – one of exploration, bewilderment, and exhilaration. In an academic sense the journey is unconventional; it is filled with my own experiences, many of them a part of my own process of discovery. And it begs the reader to traverse the vastness of the Great Plains and the cultures of its Aboriginal inhabitants along with me."

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Leslie Dawn. *National Visions, National Blindness: Canadian Art and Identities in the 1920s*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007. 465 pages. ISBN 978-0-7748-1218-4. \$34.95 pbk.

Leslie Dawn's first book is a remarkable achievement, one borne of his prodigious knowledge of and passion for his subject. Doubtless, the book's most striking feature is its author's seamless fusion of a wide range of disciplinary perspectives—including biographical, legal, art historical, literary, archival, political, and anthropological—in an ambitious attempt to build a complex portrait of the 1920s. That scholars have examined this decade *ad infinitum* does not deter him. He examines, exposes to critique, and then reworks conventional accounts of the era, which identify the Group of Seven's images of empty, uncontested landscapes as synonymous with, and constitutive of, Canada's modern visual identity. In forging alternate narratives he rejects received wisdom, incorporates unpublished research, and synthesizes a staggering array of primary and secondary sources.

The book takes the form of eleven distinct but inter-related case studies connected by three principal themes. The first is the cultural elites' drive to develop and articulate a key tenet of nationhood, namely a distinctive national art. This was to be accomplished in the absence of an ancestral *völk* (folk) tradition while accounting for the presence of the First Nations, a fragile, conflicted position that Dawn scrutinizes closely. The second is the "discourse of disappearance" that evolved to support the assertion of new cultural forms. Not only did Aboriginal peoples not vanish, their appearance in paintings and literature (and newspapers and courts) rather bore witness to their survival. The third is the individual's role in devising the ways and means by which First Nations would be contained and represented. Dawn's analysis of the main players—Eric Brown, Duncan Campbell Scott, and Marius Barbeau—is founded on his scrupulous investigation of their published writing, personal correspondence, and government records.

The book's contributions are numerous. Dawn builds a convincing case for the "Britishness" of Group painting, viewing it in the context of Brown's drive to establish a mono-cultural (i.e., British and non-Native) Canadian art and his ceaseless advocacy of the Group at home and abroad. His astute "behind-the-scenes" analysis of major exhibitions of the period yields innovative perspectives on much-studied topics. His incorporation of new research on the potlatch ban in the context of parallel projects such as totem pole restoration and the invasion of tourists and artists results in a brilliantly integrated account of a complex era. And his comparison of the Canadian to the American scene is particularly perceptive. Dawn's assessment of Langdon Kihm's Stoney and Gitxsan portraits as dynamic records of cultural continuity is persuasive – unlike his argument that "Canadian interests" bought Kihm's oeuvre in order to control its framing and presentation.

I don't agree with all Dawn's conclusions, and found off-putting the occasionally conspiratorial tone of his writing and sporadic dogmatism. He often writes, for example, of Barbeau's or Brown's need to control the interpretation of images of the Indian, but then rigidly and relentlessly disciplines his own reading of A.Y. Jackson's *Indian House*. His textual analysis of Barbeau's book *The Downfall of Temlaham* is excellent but his keenness to accord negative motivation to its author results in a superfluous and dubious argument about the placement of its illustrations. He deems Barbeau's work with artists in Gitxsan territory a failure, but isn't it possible that some Gitxsan might today value Jackson's documentary drawings of their material culture? Every position, including Dawn's, is open to question.

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Michael Robert Evans. *Isuma: Inuit Video Art*. Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2008. 256 pages. ISBN 9780773533783. \$32.95 pbk.

Isuma: Inuit Video Art chronicles the development of the Igloolik Isuma Productions. Michael Evans builds the context of its flowering with reference to the rise of Inuit art and the revitalization of folk ways. Evans contrasts Isuma with the work of the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network and the Inuit Broadcasting Corporation, and charts their differing paths through popular culture, public funding and community interactions.

Starting with a base in folklore theory, Evans quickly moves to a historical focus on the development of Isuma's ideas and goals. Evans discusses the best known productions of Isuma, especially its *Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner* which won the Camera d'Or Award at Cannes in 2001. His work is rich with interviews from people involved in the Inuit film industry, but also with interviews of people in Igloolik which both establish Isuma's work as community oriented and give readers a sense of what life is like in an arctic Inuit community. Evans is concerned with how such art functions to redefine culture and redirect the flow of post-colonial forces. However, Evans is not overly optimistic about the success of such an endeavor because "the dominant society remains in ultimate control of the product" (139).

Evans eventually circles back to Zacharius Kunuk, the colorful driving force behind Isuma. For Kunuk, filmmaking is not just documentation or expression, but an attempt "to grasp more fully the Inuit way of understanding" (13). Kunuk sees himself as a video storyteller, as a creator of images that counter popular images of the Inuit as victims, and as an artist creating a position in a complex socio-political negotiation about cultural continuance and colonialism. Kunuk's wide-ranging goals are, of course, difficult to attain, as is any project of Indigenous self-representation. Evans does not forego evaluation of such projects and concludes that the current work of Inuit filmmakers does not present "unfiltered expressions of Inuit culture. The filters are still there; only the perspective has changed. Rather than presenting Inuit life as filtered

through the mind of a Southern filmmaker, the videos coming out of Igloolik present Inuit life as filtered through the quite distinct political circumstances and aspiration of the IBC, Igloolik Isuma and the Tariagsuk Video Centre" (203). Yet it is clear that such positioning is vital in an internal Inuit dialogue and one with the South.

Information about Igloolik Isuma is also available on their web site. This book is highly recommended for those interested in Inuit culture and in new developments in filmmaking. A significant contribution to film scholarship and a must for every library concerned with contemporary Inuit culture and art.

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Anita Heiss and Peter Minter (eds.). *Anthology of Australian Aboriginal Literature*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2008. 268 pages. ISBN 9780773534599. \$29.95 pbk.

Inclusiveness or quality? The question hounds every literary anthologist. Is it best to include non-literary essays, to sample widely, and thereby to be sociologically generous, or should one favor aesthetic criteria and risk an unrepresentative sample? I'd choose quality; Anita Heiss and Peter Minter, in their *Anthology of Australian Aboriginal Literature*, choose inclusiveness.

Their approach offers the advantages of a wide variety of writers, geographic areas, and styles. Political context looms large, and we are allowed entry into the worlds of early writers whose English is labored, but whose experience is complex and highly significant. In 1796, Bennelong, an elder of the Wangal people, writes an evocative letter to Lord Sydney's steward in England. After describing how another Aboriginal speared him in the back and took his wife, Bennelong begs the steward for handkerchiefs, stockings, and shoes. Fourteen-year-old Thomas Brune, writing the *Flinders Island Chronicle* in 1837 on behalf of the English Commandant, exhorts his compatriots, "And now my friends, let us love the Commandant and let him not be growling at us for our greed and let us love him..." (sic). A century later, in the manifesto "Ab-

origines Claim Citizen Rights!" prepared for the Aborigines' 1938 Day of Mourning, William Ferguson and John Patten note that governmental Protection Boards could prevent any Aboriginal from leaving New South Wales, and non-Aborigines from "lodging or wandering in company" with Aboriginals. Under such "protection," Ferguson and Patten comment, it's no surprise that Aboriginal societies are strongest in the northern parts of the country, where the boards were weakest.

The drawback of Heiss and Minter's approach is that we receive only snippets of the best writing, while inclusiveness dictates that readers must submit to lines such as Samuel Wagan Watson's pretentious, open season on chaos theory
and retirement eternal for the dreamtime Dostoyevsky.

In contrast stands Oodgeroo's "No More Boomerang," a sharp and witty valediction to the old ways, including to the bunyip, a potentially evil spirit:

Bunyip he finish,
Now got instead
White fella Bunyip,
Call him Red.

"Aborigines Claim Citizen Rights!" at six pages is the *Anthology*'s longest piece. The longest "literary" pieces are even shorter: Bruce Pascoe's little sheep-killing mystery, "The Slaughters of the Bulumwaal Butcher" and an intriguing extract from Kim Scott's novel, *Benang*.

The most compelling writing often rests on the authority of experience. The story of a forced Bidjaraher relocation told by Rita and Jackie Huggins makes compelling and uncomfortable reading, as does Stephen Hagan's account of his attempt to force a name-change to the "Nigger Brown Stand," a restaurant/bar at the Toowoomba football stadium. As the *Anthology* nears the present day, the themes and concerns broaden out. Melissa Lukashenko and Larissa Behrendt tell, respectively, of an Aboriginal woman who awakens to male mistreatment and another who negotiates the unwritten social codes that emerge because she possesses a cocoa rather than black skin.

Despite its faults, the *Anthology* is a worthwhile and interesting introduction to the lives and writing of Australia's First Peoples.

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Karl Hele (ed.). *Lines Drawn Upon the Water: First Nations and the Great Lakes Borders and Borderlands*. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2008. 378 pages. ISBN 978-1-55458-004-0. \$85.

A cartoon on the cover of this book depicts a First Nation character surreptitiously erasing, by using the Jay Treaty of 1792, the border created by cheerful representatives of the Canadian-American Boundary Commission. If this does not catch the reader's interest, then the title should. As Hele articulates in the introduction, so varied are the cultures of the original inhabitants of the territory bordering the Great Lakes region of North America that "to address the history of the...region beyond national frameworks, a differently conceived and more dynamic approach is needed."

A workshop held at the University of Western Ontario in London, Ontario, suitably situated within the geographic parameters of the borderlands being discussed, provided the basis for the volume. The variety of articles allows but a glimpse into the rich diversity of the First Nations' homelands which stretch from the rugged western tip of Lake Superior to the wide reaches of the St. Lawrence River as it flows eastward from Lake Ontario, thereby encompassing central and southern Ontario as well as eight American states, the entire Great Lakes region.

The subject of the first two chapters involves the adaptability of the First Nations living in what would eventually form both Canada and the United States and how they maintained their nationhood while still accommodating the new political realities of the nineteenth century. More specific situations are studied in the following four chapters: Mohawks in New York state confront the intrusions of the French in the mid-seventeenth century; the Anishinabeg and Métis people near Sault Ste. Marie attempt to deal with the competition among the British, American and Canadian governments in creating new and artificial borders in their homelands; the Métis of the same region use family connections to their benefit when dealing with the realities of their dual citizenship; and the citizens of Walpole Island, in the southwest corner of Ontario, struggle to maintain the integrity of their homelands situated on a natural and well-used passageway between the growing Canadian and American communities. Two chapters are devoted to the Baldoon community near Walpole Island, designed to accommodate dispossessed Scots in the early 1800s but which survived only for a few decades, assessing its heritage of "fear associated with cross-cultural communications, land appropriation and resistance." The final four chapters, according to the editor, "continue the exploration of metaphysical and epistemological borderlands." Studied are the spiritual borderlands created when

Anishinabeg and Christian practices and beliefs collide in the Methodist missions located where Lake Huron meets Lake Erie; the cultural borderlands of the Grand River Haudenosaunee people when they interact with anthropologists studying their identity; legal borderlands resulting when the Ojibwa, Odawa and Potawatomi react to the alien laws established by the British-Canadian government creating new distinctions in First Nation society as a result of marriage practices; and literary borderlands arising when First Nation authors write about their resistance and determination to "maintain their sense of identity, cultural continuity and political sovereignty" in the face of foreign incursions.

The book is a masterful collection of articles that stretches one's concept of borders far beyond the restrictions conjured by notions of geography. Each chapter has the potential to invite further study of individual situations where the interaction of divergent cultures provides a microcosm with wide-ranging implications. When one considers the range of First Nation configurations existing within the Great Lakes region before and since the arrival of Europeans, the opportunity to study the resilience and farsightedness of the original inhabitants seems endless.

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Mary Jane Miller. *Outside Looking In: Viewing First Nations Peoples in Canadian Dramatic Television Series*. Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2008. 494 pages. ISBN 9780773533677. \$32.95 pbk.

Mary Jane Miller's title, *Outside Looking In*, makes clear from the very beginning the position and approach she assumes in her study of First Nations peoples on Canadian television: she asks how the writers, directors, producers and others creating shows—almost always White and usually male—imagined Native peoples. "What are the stories we tell ourselves about Indians?" (31) she asks, and to answer the question, she explores television drama series created since the 1950s. Miller is conscious of her own position as a White Canadian standing outside Native cultures, and, clearly aware of the debates about cultural appropriation and authenticity, she tries to tread carefully, avoiding categori-

cal statements about what is and is not “authentic.” Indeed, she spends considerable time outlining these issues, offering different points of view, including those of Native artists and writers. This is an empirical study with some discussion of cultural theory; however, the latter does not weigh down her narrative. Perhaps most important, this is a comprehensive, extensively researched book that offers new material on Native peoples in the dramatic television genre, and the result is a fascinating, detailed, almost encyclopedic study that will remain a reference point for those interested in this topic for many years to come.

Miller’s research was painstaking, in part because not all episodes of earlier series are even available. Not one copy of the children’s series, *Radisson*, for example, seems to exist, but Miller pieces together missing material from websites, production notes and other archival material. She tries to put each series in its own historical and social context, describing and assessing them in relation to the dominant ideas and aesthetics of the time. The earliest series, such as *Radisson*, *The Forest Rangers* and *Rainbow Country*, suggest that White storytellers did not want to write Native peoples out of Canadian history entirely; indeed, they saw Natives peoples as part of the “authentic” (and sometimes exotic and heroic) story of Canadian history. The problem, of course, is not only that White actors were routinely used, but that White writers wrote Native characters into historical tales using their preconceived images of “Indians,” creating a history that often celebrated Canada while erasing the history of colonialism.

In one sense, the author finds it difficult to escape a White view of history, since she tends to portray progress over time, though it would be wrong to see these changes as simply the product of an enlightened TV establishment; they were also shaped by the political and artistic responses of Native peoples to the distorted images that had been used to define them for some time. In this line of progress, for example, *The Beachcombers* moved beyond some of the prevailing stereotypes by creating a Native character in Jesse who changed over time, and was portrayed as a human character rather than an allegorical type. With the advent of *Spirit Bay*, she suggests, television producers had the first glimmer of understanding that Native peoples should be telling their own stories: the problem was that Native artists might supply the story treatments, but others stepped in to do the writing, directing and producing. Moreover, Native writers, she argues, found that television was not necessarily the best medium through which to tell their stories as it had become formulaic; “entertaining” scripts were those in which a dramatic climax and resolution occurred, and in which confrontations were “aggressive and dramatic” whereas some Native storytellers might write

in exactly the opposite manner (167). However, over time, she suggests, some series, like *The Rez*, used more Native actors and also made more attempts to address issues such as racism and avoid the always-pat ending.

It is clearly *North of 60*, however, that fascinates Miller, who portrays this series as the most successful one to date in its treatment of Native peoples, in part because, more than any other series, Native actors, crew, story editors, writers and consultants were involved – though she also acknowledges that White producers and directors were still those with the most power. While Miller does not want to be the one to decide exactly what is “authentic,” she does, in the end, inevitably engage in this discussion, offering a positive view of *North of 60*. She is careful, of course, to provide some countervailing views from critics. Indeed, the section of the book on *North of 60* is massive, entailing five chapters that deal with the set up and framing of the show, setting and character, themes covered, actual episodes, and responses from fans and critics. This attention to detail, and the descriptions of many themes, episodes and responses to these television series, indicates the strength, but also the weakness of this book. While Miller has done us a great service by drawing many of these sources together and relaying so much research and information, one doubts that many non-academics will pick up the book, despite the fact that the subject matter should appeal to a broader audience. The book is long, and the analysis can get lost in the multitude of lists and descriptive material. Miller’s book, however, will be an invaluable resource for others, a starting point for debates that will follow.

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David C. Nather (ed.). *Seeing Beyond the Trees: The Social Dimensions of Aboriginal Forest Management*. Concord, ON: Captus Press, 2008. 262 pages. ISBN 9781553221784. \$33.50

Seeing Beyond the Trees, edited by David C. Nather, brings together an eclectic array of research-based studies that address many of the central issues associated with Aboriginal forest management. The fo-

cus of this apparently disparate mixture of research paradigms, theoretical frameworks and cultural perspectives is described by the authors as “not trying to weave individual threads into a single multi-colored picture, but rather arrange discrete and unique puzzle pieces into a recognizable and coherent picture.” The research articles and reports diversely examine the complex relationships between the Little Red River Cree Nation (LRRCN) and contemporary forestry. Commercial methods developed for the efficient extraction of timber, oil and mineral resources from the lands historically occupied by the LRRCN present major threats to the future stability of their communities. Opportunities to mediate these threats incorporate LRRCN representatives as equal partners in decision-making.

Original research based on qualitative and quantitative studies provide well-developed explanations for a variety of issues that directly and indirectly impact LRRCN communities. The qualitative studies establish a clear connection between the ability of community members to actively engage in forest related activities and the social and cultural well being of the LRRCN communities. These activities typically encompass cultural, economic, educational, social and other community dimensions which contribute to the overall health and sustainability of the LRRCN. In-depth studies and analyses of Cree traditional environmental knowledge illustrate the complexity and sophistication of cultural understandings about hunting and other non-timber uses of forest resources. Examples of traditional knowledge offer intriguing insights and important details necessary for consistently successful hunts and valuable information about stewardship and sustainable use of non-timber forest resources. The quantitative studies effectively analyze some of the long-term outcomes of proposals to bring LRRCN communities into mainstream commercial forestry. The impact of changing economic lifestyles, erosion of intergenerational communication and loss of connections to the land present serious challenges to community stability.

Conclusions about the potential benefits associated with incorporating Cree environmental knowledge and cultural perspectives into mainstream forestry methods and economics are less than optimistic. Each section of the text provides examples of the multiplicity of barriers that inhibit a true participatory planning process that values the culture and knowledge of the LRRCN. Indeed, commercial forestry policies seem in significant conflict with their goals. Industry and government commitments to address the social and ecological implications inherent in the commercial extraction of natural resources are presented throughout; however, a thorough recording of achievements since the research began remains one of the unanswered questions raised in this informative

volume. The weaving of multiple perspectives in this text leads the reader to a clearer understanding of the complex and interconnected relationships between Aboriginal social dynamics and contemporary developments associated with industrial forestry.

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Leanne Simpson (ed.). *Lighting the Eighth Fire: The Liberation, Resurgence, and Protection of Indigenous Nations*. Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring Publishing, 2008. 232 pages. ISBN 9781894037334. \$21.95.

Lighting the Eighth Fire is a collection of seventeen insightful essays. The sixteen contributors are emerging doctoral students, elders, experienced tacticians, and established researchers. All of them demonstrate the sensitivity and respect that is fast becoming the hallmark of Aboriginal scholarship. As Taiaiake Alfred notes in the book's foreword, "these emerging scholars are serving a crucial role for Indigenous people and for society as a whole because they are doing something no one else can. As Indigenous scholars who are culturally rooted and connected to their communities, they are doing what Euroamerican scholars simply cannot do for us: they are giving us forms of thought and pathways of action that are beyond the boundaries of colonial mentality" (10).

Few books provide readers with the kind of insight on environmental matters that is generously offered here.

The textual strength of this book is its application of Indigenous languages and concepts. Rather than give primacy to English, Indigenous words foreground and anchor discussion of Indigenous ecology, liberation, resurgence and protection. For example, Renée Elizabeth Mzinegiizhigo-kwe Bédard contributes an inspiring treatise on water issues in Canada today with a focus on how "zibii'ganan (rivers), zaagiganan (lakes), bog'tingoон (rapids), wiikwedoон (bays), dkibiin (natural springs), biiltooshk-biisenyenin (swamps), and ziigiinsan (streams) have sustained the Nishnaabe people on these traditional territorial lands for thousands of years" (89). The arguments and experience of Nishnaabe-kwewag are equally relevant to Athabaskans and others who are work-

ing to keep watersheds safe and clean. It is imperative that Indigenous concepts and teachings enter the discourse about land use and inform final decisions about industrial development in Canada.

This book argues that the language of the discourse matters. We can ill afford to speak about the environment separate from governance and ethics, like abstract concepts only grounded in economics or the English language. Instead we need to learn, re-learn, and talk about samuqann (*Mi'gma'gi* for waters) and the origins of laws not from wi'gatignmual (written traditions), but as it is passed down from the Creator (Metallic 60).

The war against Aboriginal people and nature that began during the colonial period has been accelerating since the industrial revolution, and never more intensively than it has over the last thirty years. While one might argue it is not a cultural act, it has undeniably racist roots and overtones that continue to resonate. We see corporations of all nations, disconnecting people from land, disenfranchising communities, polluting and contaminating ecosystems to remove valuable commodities, regardless of the consequences. The march of progress offered by governments and universities the world over as the panacea to poverty, oppression, and fear continues to result in devastating effects.

This anthology will upset some readers, regardless of their politics, identities and intellects because these essays take strong positions on liberation, resurgence and protection of Indigenous knowledge(s), nations, institutions, environments, ethics, and communities. For the moderates and others there is no apology. For those who still believe nations and cultures are islands that will be forever untouched, and can go back in time to the innocent past, there is little hope offered. These essays are about the strength and resiliency of both lands and cultures in the face of monumental change. They point toward new means to bridge the gap between Canadians and Indigenous peoples.

Some of the writing in this book may be misunderstood as self-righteous. For example, Paula Sherman writes “Ardock, as an Omàmiwinini community, certainly seems to have a lot going for it –our autonomy and jurisdiction are still intact, and we continue to maintain a traditional governance system long after most other Omàmiwinini communities in Ontario misplaced theirs” (112). If we read these essays for the loss they represent, readers will find a fair representation of years of marginalization and anger. Sherman elaborates, “we are not working to find our way back to what we once were in the past, but are, instead, diligently struggling to bring forward those teachings, ceremonies, practices, and ways of relating that can help to rebuild a strong cultural base from which to resist contemporary colonialism and the cognitive elimination that ac-

companies the physical changes to our territories and bodies" (112). It can be difficult to work through the rhetoric, to clear the smoke from those bridges being burned in the wholesale rejection of mainstream Western or Canadian versions of Indigenous relations, but the effort is well worth it when in the end we are wiser and healthier for it. This is good scholarship because it challenges us not of the culture to go beyond what we assume we know; to consider a plurality of views, some of which trace their origins to oral tradition and privileged/protected (sacred) knowledge.

My only criticism of this book is aimed at the publishers. This is a valuable book that should be read for many, many years. By page 69 my copy was already falling apart. The binding on this book is so poor that it should be re-published. I ended up reading the book with a rubber band holding the pages between the covers.

Criticism aside, the stunning high school drop-out rate and low educational attainments of Aboriginal Canadians are persistent and extremely troubling. Some would argue that they are a result of the many issues raised by Simpson and the other contributors. The solution to the deficit is, as pointed out by Simpson, that "we must recover...our own Indigenous ways of knowing, our own Indigenous ways of protecting and sharing and transmitting knowledge, our own Indigenous intellectual traditions. And we must begin to practice and to live these traditions on our own terms" (74).

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Andrea Smith. *Native Americans and the Christian Right: The Gendered Politics of Unlikely Alliances*. Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2008. 356 pages. ISBN 978-0-8223-4163-5. \$23.95 U.S. pbk.

A cursory glance at the front cover of this book might persuade a potential reader into thinking that its main topic is the relationship between Native Americans and Christian fundamentalists, and how this association is influenced by the politics of gender. You would be only partly correct. In fact, this volume goes far beyond the rather narrow boundaries of religion and spirituality, and explores the intersections of religion with critical social theory, feminism, the politics of race, Native sovereignty, prison reform...the list goes on and on.

What this book is *really* about is partnerships, particularly the building of activist coalitions. The primary thesis of Andrea Smith's book is that Native Americans (and especially Native American women) constitute too small a minority in the United States to be able to enact social and political change independently, thus they need to establish strategic partnerships with like-minded allies from other "communities of interest."

The difficulty in establishing workable alliances, however, is that while these ethnic, religious, racial, political, and gender groups may have one or two issues in common, they are likely to clash ideologically on a host of other concerns. Moreover, these special-interest minorities may demonstrate a frustrating lack of internal consistency in terms of their own philosophies and belief systems, which makes it even more difficult to establish partnerships with other minority interests.

Take, for example, the Christian Right – a sociopolitical special interest group with whom Smith has a long familiarity. Chapter One of her book deals with the difficulties faced by evangelicals in negotiating a unified political stance in regard to government policies and programs. For example, the clash between biblical teachings and individual rights often prompts the Christian Right to adopt reactionary policies in regard to abortion and gay civil rights. On the other hand, there are evangelicals such as ex-Watergate conspirator Charles Colson, who promote very progressive prison reforms, recommendations which resonate with minority groups whose members are often overrepresented in prison populations. Christian reformers support decarceration of the addicted, the mentally ill, and the non-violent offender. They also advocate community sentencing programs and abolition of the death penalty. Unfortunately, the articulation of these ideas by the Christian Right is undermined by racial, ethnic and gender biases that operate against Aboriginal people.

The concepts of "restorative justice" or "community sentencing" have Aboriginal roots, but these ideas, as appropriated by non-Aboriginal Christian reformers, fail to recognize the gendered problems of sexual and domestic violence that also exist in Native American communities. So while a sentencing circle may be appropriate for certain kinds of wrongdoing, a mild punishment meted out for a violent crime against an Aboriginal woman may actually sabotage the healing and the accountability that are supposed to take place.

Subsequent chapters echo similar concerns, but focus on different themes. Chapter Two considers the tenet of "race reconciliation," that is, the idea that all people are equal in the eyes of God in the modern Christian church. While this idea has some obvious appeal to racial mi-

norities, there is also a tendency to view “equality” in an apolitical and ahistorical way. They ignore the fact that people of color join Christian churches from a position of inequality, a status that was created and promulgated by church doctrine itself until very recently. So while the pan-racial stance of some Christian denominations may attract new members of color, it may also undermine the political, social, and economic struggles of these minorities in the secular environment they occupy for the six other days they are not in church.

Chapter Three focuses on the ideological clash between Aboriginal women activists and mainstream feminists. Some Aboriginal activists argue that Native women are not feminists, and to call themselves feminists would be to undermine the political struggle of all Native Americans against American imperial hegemony. Basically, they argue that Native American women are Native first, and feminist second. However, as Smith points out, this view in reality is less monolithic and far more complex. Feminism as a concept carries the baggage of “Whiteness” and therein lies the problem. Despite the fact that Native American women suffer from sexism in their own communities and have had to organize to combat it, many of the values of mainstream feminism do not resonate with Aboriginal women. The fact that feminism’s proponents are usually White women does not help.

Chapter Four addresses the challenges of forming alliances with groups that may only have tangential issues in common. How does a Native American group identify compatible allies in such a fractured political environment? One strategy is to partner with other groups of Native American origin, even if it is the only characteristic that all parties have in common. Not surprisingly, this approach also has its shortcomings. There is a huge gulf between Natives “from the Rez” and those “Urban Natives” who have been raised outside of Aboriginal communities. The cultural disparities between these groups will often create conflict, despite the fact that their common need is access to, and control over, resources.

The final chapters of the book promote a new approach to activism: mindful coalition-building based on continuous interrogation of social movements that Smith argues “reinscribe the sexism, racism, and other forms of oppression they ostensibly try to resist.” She also issues a challenge to Aboriginal scholars who support the decolonization struggle but are rarely visible in, or accountable to, grassroots activist movements.

While this book deals primarily with the American sociopolitical milieu, much of what Andrea Smith has to say is relevant to the Canadian environment. It is an intellectually-challenging volume, but well worth

the time it takes to digest and evaluate the ideas of a leading Native American feminist and political theorist.

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Ulli Steltzer. *The Spirit of Haida Gwaii: Bill Reid's Masterpiece*. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre. 1997. 64 pages. ISBN 9781550545791. \$15.95 CDN.

Many people make significant contributions to established fields of art. But few create a new beginning, even as they pursue yet the ancestors as they catalyze other competent artists to follow in their footsteps. Steltzer's book is a pictorial representation of the Master, Bill Reid and his masterpiece, *The Spirit of Haida Gwaii*. Bill Reid, the Haida artist, is known for his deeply carved totem poles, his beautiful jewellery, and particularly this masterpiece known also as The Black Canoe (located in the Canadian Embassy in Washington), The Jade Canoe (found in the Vancouver Airport), and The White Canoe (the original white plaster on display in the Canadian Museum of Civilization, Hull). In any of its three manifestations it is well worth a visit. However, if our journeys do not go there, Ulli Steltzer can, like Raven, guide us pictorially. Four years in the making, Steltzer's book documents the whole voyage.

There is certainly no lack of pictures – views of Bear Mother, Mouse Woman, Frog, Wolf, Ancient Reluctant Conscript, and more. The black and white photographs guide us, forever, like Bill Reid, like the boat, to the Spirit. A people will be remembered for its Elders, philosophers, heroes and artists. Ulli Steltzer allows us to see Bill Reid in all four of these roles.

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Richard Wagamese. *One Native Life*. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2008. 272 pages. ISBN 978-1-55365-364-6. \$29.95 CDN.

How often does one get to invoke the term “wisdom literature” without the least cynicism? Richard Wagamese’s *One Native Life* provides the opportunity to do just that. There is no pretense here, no anger, no politics, and no formula. There is, however, a wonderfully penetrating and clear self-understanding. Wagamese, the author of five novels and two books of nonfiction, is not only a writer of great charm and sophistication—one of the most amazing stories in the collection is his tale of gritty commitment to finding a way through the forest of Joyce’s *Finnegan’s Wake!*—but also a born writer who understands how ideas, words and lines flow to find their own rhythm.

Wagamese has not confined himself to thinking about writing or thinking about himself. He addresses “all of us,” both the “all of us” from which he was excluded in his formative years and the “all of us” into which he was born only to be rendered mute and disengaged by tragic circumstance. An Ojibway from Wabasseemoong (Whitedog), he has learned through alienation the meaning and value of community.

The work is not so much autobiography as spiritual journey, accumulating to a self-portrait in three to five-page vignettes. Drawn from his newspaper columns in the *Calgary Herald*, the sixty-five vignettes are grouped into four “books” – *Ahki* (*Earth*), *Ishskwaday* (*Fire*), *Nibi* (*Water*), and *Ishpiming* (*Universe*). Together, they traverse an enormous breadth of territory from appreciations of individuals as diverse as Johnny Cash, P.E. Trudeau and Native healers, to the struggle to find his own “Aboriginal self” through reconnection with family, the way of the bush, Native spirituality and language, to poignant reflections on living in and learning from nature.

But his ultimate message is about hope. Wagamese has found his way from abuse and desperation to peace and an abiding faith in the potential of people. He has passed through “difference” to arrive at a deep commitment to the bonds that join people together. He’s a poet, a learner, a dreamer, a teacher. But, most of all, he’s practical. How else to describe a man who, as he puts it, “learn[s] a lot by looking into the eyes of folks”?

An inspiring book from one of Canada’s leading Native writers.

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