



REVIEW ESSAY

Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiik Stark, Aimée Craft, and Hōkūlani K. Aikau, editors. *Indigenous Resurgence in an Age of Reconciliation*. University of Toronto Press, 2023. 263pp. ISBN: 978-1-4875-4460-7

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Ey Sweyal Si:yá:ye. Ts'qwelemót shxwelméxwelh skwix qas te Qwi:qwelstom tel skwix. Te litsel kwa Ts'elxwéyeqw (skwxō:mexw). In upriver Halq'eméylem language, I am saying: Good day, my dear loved ones; my ancestral name is Ts'qwelemót, and I also carry the name Qwi:qwelstom for the Stó:lō People. I am a member of the Sq'ewqéyl First Nation located in Ts'elxwéyeqw (Chilliwack) territory. My father is Bob Hall Sr., the oldest son of Gordon and Blossom Hall. My mother is Donna Kickbush who was a settler and the oldest daughter of Don and Margaret Kickbush. My English name is Wenona Hall, and I am the oldest daughter and the oldest granddaughter. Through my ancestral name, I carry the responsibility of walking on my own two feet and to always speak my truth. Through my gifted name, I carry the responsibility of learning to live in balance, harmony, and to be caring, giving, and kind. My PhD research was focused on Indigenous Governance and my master's thesis was focused on Indigenous

Justice; my current research interests are in Indigenous Resurgence and Processes of Decolonization. I share this introduction of myself so the reader can place me within my territory, know my kinship ties, and hopefully understand me better. My birth order, my family ties, my name-carrying responsibilities, my academic interests, and my ancestry have shaped and do shape how I move in the world and how I come to make sense of and try to understand the impacts of colonization, the necessary processes of decolonization, and, most importantly, transformations and space and place for Indigenous resurgence.

I am currently an Associate Professor in Indigenous Studies at Simon Fraser University (SFU) and, in September 2023, I began chairing the SFU Indigenous Studies Department. Prior to this, for ten years I was a full-time faculty member at the University of the Fraser Valley (UFV) where I was founding chair of their Indigenous Studies program. I am mentioning this because UFV is a teaching-intensive university so, while employed there, I really did not have much time to read, write, and research. My time was completely consumed with teaching five to seven courses a year, chairing a new program which included new course development and numerous committees along with my community work, all while single-parenting three children.

Once I moved to SFU, my teaching load was drastically reduced, my children are now young adults, and time was made available for me to read, write, and research. I quickly devoured a stack of books that had piled up on my desk. This stack included recently published books on Indigenous governance, treaty, Indigenous research methods, Indigenous child welfare, MMIWG, Indigenous Legal Traditions, and Indigenous Justice. I was wonderfully surprised and inspired by all that I read. Many advances in Indigenous Resurgence were evident; as I read, I was revitalized, intrigued, perplexed, and proud. So, when a request came asking if I would be able to write a book review for this current book, I was an avid yes. Not only because of its title—*Indigenous Resurgence in an Age of Reconciliation*—but also because of the editors, Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiik (Turtle Mountain Ojibwe), Aimée Craft (Anishinaabe-Métis), and Hōkūlani K. Aikau (Kanaka), all of whom are Indigenous women.

To say I devoured this textbook would be an understatement. I read the majority of it as I flew from Atlanta, Georgia to Seattle, Washington, and I think this lent to my ability to appreciate the bird's-eye-view this book provides. As a Stó:lō woman working within western institutions within my own territory, I often wonder how much I may be missing.



As I read through the text, I felt I was being given an opportunity to explore new territories, new ideas, new ways of coming to understand, new terms, and new ways of relating; this book held my mind captive and challenged me in good ways. I could not stop reading and, more importantly, re-reading, as my current understandings were being shifted and re-shaped in very de-colonial ways!

I open with these words as I write knowing we still live under a colonial regime: the Indian Act is still in effect, I still live on a “reserve,” Indigenous Peoples are still oppressed with “status card” systems and other colonial trappings of who belongs and who does not, Indigenous Peoples are still grossly over-represented within colonial prisons, and Indigenous children are still grossly over-represented within the colonial child welfare system. We can no longer blame Indigenous Peoples for this current, colonial state of affairs without being racist and furthering white supremacy. These current, colonial states of affair are acts of genocide. I know this is a bold statement, but, thanks to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, we are now in an era of truth-telling. I also know that such bold statements may alienate certain readers. Yet, we cannot fix something if we are not willing to be honest, truthful, and authentic.

This is where this text works decolonizing magic. Whether you are from the original Indigenous Resurgence school of thought, new to this school of thought, or a seasoned or an inchoate Settler Ally just coming to awareness, there is something in this book for you; its accessibility to all is one of its major strengths. This book addresses colonial impediments and the resultant Indigenous issues and struggles. It does so from Indigenous perspective(s) and/or Allied perspectives and, as a result, it is not only intimate and personable, it is also reliable, credible, and valid. It is also current, providing the reader with analyses that address contemporary problems even when discussing “old” or “older” issues and does so in a manner that is careful yet still truthful.

Furthermore, the text provides the reader with an opportunity to learn from decolonized, Indigenous ways of knowing that are rooted in Indigeneity so to promote and demand the reader to think deeply about challenging and unlearning colonial propaganda. This text requires the reader to be brave, to be willing to make important paradigm shifts. To be willing to think about things in a “new” way of thought that

acknowledges Eurocentric mistakes (see O’Bonswawin’s chapter on Olympism as one example) and Indigenous genius (as shown throughout the text).

For example, Mishuana Goeman (Tonawanda Band of Seneca) introduces us to Indigenous forms of mapping that reclaim “urban” spaces as Indigenous spaces, and Dian Million (Tanana Athabascan) shows us how the reclamation of landscape remembers “urban” Indigenous Peoples. Hōkūlani K. Aikau (Kanaka) cements these Indigenous reclamations by using the metaphor of removing “invasive species” of plants. Hōkūlani challenges us to think of why non-native plants are framed as always invasive and in need of eradication: she argues that “undergirding this metaphor are racial logics of purity and authenticity that work against Indigenous resurgence” (55). I am sure many of us walk our lands and wonder about these “new” species and how we come to call them “invasive.” This chapter had me making one of a few paradigm shifts I was pleased to make.

Gina Starblanket (Cree, Saulteaux, and member of the Star Blanket Cree Nation) and Aimée Craft (Anishinaabe-Métis) challenge our Eurocentric views of “treaties” in Canada and the colonial court system’s reliance on the self-serving frozen rights argument, respectively, an argument that somehow ONLY applies to Indigenous Peoples and not Europeans. Gina provides us with an Indigenous perspective of what “treaty” means to Indigenous Peoples and how “treaty-making follows from a deep respect for and appreciation of the value of difference” (84). From Indigenous perspectives, we come to see how “the relational world view expressed in treaties defies the antagonism inherent in settler colonial logics, allowing for a vision of the future based on multiplicity and balance, not hierarchy or domination” (84).

Then there is the chapter written by Sarah Hunt (Kwakwaka’wakw Nation) and Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg). I have two daughters (one I birthed, Jade Victor, and one my sister, Dilah Hall, birthed, Tsandlia Van Ry) both working on their Masters’ degrees and all I had to say to them was I am currently reading a chapter that is a dialogue between Sarah Hunt and Leanne Betasamosake Simpson and this book was immediately sold to them. I did not need to say anything more.

The best part is, my daughters will read this chapter and gain an understanding of how



Robyn Maynard's work on *Policing Black Lives: State Violence in Canada from Slavery to the Present* nourished Leanne (one of their heroes) and made her feel seen and affirmed even though her struggle is different (136). From Leanne and Sarah's conversation, we are encouraged to find ways to deepen the relationship between Black and Indigenous communities (136). At the same time, as academics, my daughters will be made aware of the possibility that, as "issues gain currency within academia, there is a danger in generating theoretical momentum that separates out discourse from the lived realities those discourses seek to represent" (137). This is something they both grapple with in their Masters' research as they aspire to lend voice to the pitfalls of "indigenization" within the K-12 education system.

Juxtaposed to this reality are chapters that have us think critically about reconciliation and the ways in which we can make it work in our (Indigenous) favor. For example, Corey Snelgrove (Settler) and Matthew Wildcat (Ermineskin Cree Nation) suggest we use the vulnerability exposed by uniformed acts of reconciliation by employing political action that works against colonial domination: "colonial power is constantly in need of new strategies to reproduce itself, and the reconciliation project represents a vulnerability that signals opening within colonial power structures" (161). Snelgrove and Wildcat suggest that a "trick of reconciliation is in the ways in which it downplays and depoliticizes non-state actors through a historical narration that replaces the actual history of political struggle with a story of progressive enlightenment" (169). They then cite the Maskwacis Education Authority and its ability to use political action in an opportune time to not only assert their right to self-determination, but to also deliver immediate and long-term gains for their Nations (169).

Contiguously, Darcy Lindberg's (Nehiyaw) chapter on hunting helps the reader understand that abiding by Nehiyaw hunting protocols and obligations is a means to ensure that hunting is embodied in Indigenous legal traditions. Lindberg shares that abiding by Indigenous protocol, including hunting protocol, ensures that "law remains intertwined with other social institutions such as stories, songs, ceremonies, bundles, artistic renderings, kinship ordering, land/water relationships and elders" (115). He carries his metaphor further by arguing that the colonial legal mentality of "taking only the best meat," as seen in the modified case-brief method, means important pieces of

the puzzle are being overlooked (117).

This text exemplifies the power of “story” as not only a legitimate and reliable means to make sense of our world, but also as a means to ensure our hearts are being educated as well (see, for example, Archibald 2008). Jeff Corntassel (Cherokee) shares his and his daughter’s experience attending ceremony for the Witness Blanket and does so in a way that involves the reader’s mind, body, and spirit. He shares his conversations with the Blanket’s maker, Carry Newman (Kwakwaka’wakw and Stó:lō), who shared his relationship-story of the little child’s shoe from Carcross residential school. This layered story telling gives a glimpse into how deeply and profoundly story can challenge and change the colonial regime: “just as with witnessing, stories also shape who we are. They shape our relationships, our forms of governance, and even our legal traditions. Reclaiming our stories...is about land-based resurgence” (144).

Thanks to what I like to call “colonial mayhem,” being Indigenous can be a complicated and misunderstood way of being and relating, and perhaps even more so for Métis Peoples. Daniel Voth (Red River Métis) uses story-telling to share the heart of what it means to be Métis. He shares the Original Lords of the Soil story and the Woman Who Jiggged on Sunday story; in doing so, he provides both an important gender analysis inherent to Métis identity and an even more important analysis of Métis identity as integral to “historical interconnections to land and women” (Macdougall, as cited in Voth 217). Not surprising, it turns out the Lords of the Soil were actually Ladies of the Soil, that is Indigenous women (sorry for the spoiler alert). Daniel relies almost entirely on women sources for his analysis. Both Métis women (for example, Brenda Macdougall and Kim Anderson) and established Allied-Scholars (for example, Nathalie Kermaal) along with other Indigenous female scholars such as Dawn Martin-Hill, Lina Sunseri, and Lee Maracle are referenced in this work. I mention this because I think re-centering woman’s work and our contributions to history, academia, and society, along with the ways in which colonialism has impacted us differently based upon gender, is everybody’s work. I am not patting Daniel on the back for doing something he is responsible to do; I am simply taking away excuses for some who chose not to engage in this important work.

Isabel Altamirano-Jiménez (Zapotec) shares the experiences of the Zapotec community of Calpulalpan in Oaxaca, Mexico, in particular, that of the women in



response to resource extraction. Isabel refers to their resistance as “body landing practices” as she focuses on the concept of body-land (181). Isabel understands body-land as the “ontological relationships between people and territory, which combine with collective histories and experiences to shape Indigenous peoples’ present day social practices” (181). She acknowledges that these responses and relationships are not static and will change with the “active and conscious practice of making relatives, of landing relationships in place” (181).

These concepts bring me to yet another strength of this book: its ability to highlight and address important current colonial arguments such as Indigenous feminism and Indigenous masculinities. I describe them as “colonial arguments” because, as far as I have come to understand so far, most, if not all, Indigenous Peoples of Turtle Island respect individual autonomy and hold ALL life in high regard, including a rock. At the very same time, and at first glance what seems to be a complete contradiction, I agree with Dallas Hunt (Cree) that if we “continue to defer or relegate the issues of (toxic) masculinity to an external imposition, a white supremacist outside, then we will fail to account for its wild permutations within our communities” (69). Dallas’s chapter and my own contradictory thoughts had me re-thinking and re-shaping my understanding of toxic masculinity (not my understanding of healthy masculinity).

Dallas’s chapter is one I had to re-read a few times, not so I could find a way to hang on to my own understandings, but so I could understand his. As an Indigenous woman I have experienced toxic masculinities both personally and professionally. In my own experience, I had blamed both the inter-generational impacts of Residential School and the patriarchal imposition of the Indian Act for these toxic traits. After reading Dallas’s chapter, I came to think that maybe in blaming external factors I was actually contradicting my own original understanding of the importance in respecting individual autonomy. This was an important paradigm shift for me. However, I do not think or believe in an “homogenizing view of masculinity,” just as there is no homogenizing view of femininity. But I hope this inspires you to read this chapter and think for yourself.

I honestly do not like having favorites as it lends to a competitive worldview that

sustains capitalism and eurocentrism. I do, however, have experiences that move me more than others and reading Billy-Ray Belcourt's chapter on "Red Utopia" did just that. Reading his chapter was an experience I have never had before, and I read a lot! His writing style is...ineffable; it's truly a gift. He had me at "Native joy is a conspiracy" (231). For example, Belcourt explains that it is the "image-making quality and the feeling power of the poem allow us to envision and to feel what we theorize" (239) and he certainly accomplished this with me as a reader. This chapter took me on a unique journey that ebbed and flowed and had me continually engaged. During this journey, I felt validated, I felt seen, I felt inspired, I felt hopeful, I felt real: "to be in the world is to be fleshy and to be fleshy is to be susceptible to a form of social power that occurs at a level the naked eye cannot apprehend" (235). I challenge you to read this chapter and stay within the confines of "the cannibalism of the normative" (236); I do not think you will succeed.

Maybe it's true what the Dixie Chicks said: we aren't ready to make nice. And for good reason. Fact remains, whether we like it or not: we have entered the age of reconciliation and many, albeit mostly settlers, have latched onto this concept in hopes that we can move past the hard work and just be "nice" and move on. This text provides the reader with an opportunity to engage in the hard work, to think Indigenous, to decolonize our landscapes, our minds, bodies, and spirit, to think critically, and to grasp new concepts and new ways of relating. As my Aunty Amy taught me, "there must be a reason our two worlds collided"; maybe we can take the best of both and create a new world order, as George Manuel (1974) intimated, and light that eighth fire (Simpson, 2008). This text from start to finish lights a path in the right direction.

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