

Book Review

Indigenous and Decolonizing Studies in Education: Mapping the Long View

Book by Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Eve Tuck, and K. Wayne Yang (Editors)

Review by Renee Dumaresque

In this review, I detail the edited anthology, *Indigenous and Decolonizing Studies in Education: Mapping the Long View*, as a vital resource that offers diverse frameworks and raises critical questions for scholars and educators attending to the intersections of Indigenous, social justice, and decolonizing education.

From first encounter with the cover art and corresponding artist statement by Lisa Boivin (Deninu Kue First Nation), readers are oriented to the depth and range taken by Linda Tuhiwai Smith (Ngāti Awa, Ngāti Porou), Eve Tuck (Unanga), and K. Wayne Yang (2019) in composing this edited anthology. An assemblage of flowers appears on the cover to represent the network of knowledges, nations, praxis, and philosophies that are woven throughout an introduction, 12 chapters, and an afterword to form a dialogic and urgent intervention into Indigenous and decolonizing education. This book is the first in a larger series, edited by Tuck and Yang, dedicated to advancing conversation and praxis at the intersection of Indigenous worldviews, decolonial theory, and social justice education. In the series introduction, Tuck and Yang survey the field, highlighting both generative shifts and challenges posed by the appropriation of Indigenous knowledges, tokenism, and failure to support Indigenous faculty toward transformative change. This anthology constitutes a critical resource for scholars and educators across communities, geographies, disciplines, and strategies, offering diverse frameworks for Indigenous educators, as well as for settlers committed to Indigenous and decolonizing sites of education.

Scholars, activists, educators, and organizers present an intersectional assessment across pedagogy, curriculum, community education, and language resurgence. The collection is curated with discernment and range, spanning subjects including embodied Land- and water-based pedagogies, resurgence through language immersion and grassroots approaches to education, the impact of globalized and imposed notions of social justice on cultural understandings of disability in Samoan culture, the material and discursive reach of colonialism and settler colonialism, and the necessity for harm reduction as a model, not only for addiction but also for relationality and resurgence.

The series editors assert that the layout represents no hierarchy, a move to intentionally (dis)organize and disrupt reductive categorization standards of colonial epistemologies and approaches to education. The introduction contextualizes the collection within the rootedness, knowledges, and histories of Land, as well as the relationality, fluidity, and multiplicity of water, forming a model from which to

interpret the layout and a call to heed the nuanced teachings of “water is life, land is first teacher.” In Chapter 1, Sandra Styres (Kanien’kehá:ka) proposes that Land “expresses a duality that refers not only to place as a physical geographic space but also to the underlying conceptual principles, philosophies, and ontologies of that space” (p. 27). While the Land offers a situated analysis, we learn that water, although always connected to Land, represents movement, multiplicity, and change.

The lessons of Land and water run through the anthology, manifesting in the structural layout, which generally reflects these sets of qualities, as well as in chapters that explicitly detail practices and pedagogies of Land and water. The overall effect is one of cumulative and intersecting knowledges, which consciously deconstruct linear and colonialist methods of learning to, instead, generate knowledge and decolonial praxis that defies categorization. In reviewing this collection, I look to the role of embodied methodologies in disrupting colonial onto-epistemologies, Indigenous education initiatives in relation to decolonization within institutions, the place of Land and water praxis in movements toward futurity, and considerations on discarding essentialism.

In Chapters 2, 3, and 4, Indigenous scholars engage with the nuanced onto-epistemologies and philosophies situated within cultural practice, engaging story and other forms of embodied, oral, and collective methodologies as tools for decolonial praxis. Naadli Todd Lee Ormiston (Northern Tutchone, Tlingit) reflects on knowledges gained from a 55-day canoe trip across the Northwest Territories, Yukon, and Alaska to articulate “paddling as pedagogy” (p. 38); Kelsey Dayle John (Diné) traces colonial and cultural histories as well as critical knowledges through an “ontology of horses” (p. 50); Marissa Muñoz (Xicana Tejana) invokes the tensions of Land and river to narrativize the Rio Grande and Rio Bravo through a walking tour along the Frontera. Ormiston, Dayle, and Muñoz implicate the body, memory, and relationality within Land-based knowledge production to yield a reading of the self and of history as relational, as housing contradiction and lineages, and as connected to the human and “more-than-human” (p. 22). Collectively, they demonstrate, in varying proximity to the academy, “holistic, embodied, and emplaced approaches for understanding” (p. 64) and advance a layered understanding of the processes through which colonization and settler colonialism infect memory, story, and relationships. By mobilizing the situated knowledges of cultural practice and everyday life, they perform acts of “epistemic disobedience” (Mignolo, 2011, as cited by Muñoz on p. 65) that pierce the totalizing character of settler colonial narratives.

Indigenous resurgence through community-governed education initiatives are featured throughout the anthology. The range of approaches reflects Smith’s (1999) analysis that “the context of change, instability, and uncertainty faced by post-industrial societies positions indigenous peoples and indigenous issues in different sorts of spaces with different possibilities” (p. 104). Diverse approaches to structure, pedagogy, priorities, and external relationship are presented from The Ixil University in Guatemala (Giovanni Batz [K’iche’ Maya], Chapter 6); urban Native women’s education initiatives of Detroit and South Carolina (Kyle T. Mays [Saginaw Chippewa] and Kevin Whalen, Chapter 7); Māori tertiary educational institutes in

Aotearoa/New Zealand (Kim McBreen [Waitaha, Kāti Mamoe, Ngāi Tahu], Chapter 11); the LÁU, WELNEW Tribal School of WŚÁNEĆ/Vancouver Island (Nicholas XEMFOLTW Claxton [Tsawout] and Carmen Rodríguez de France [Kickapoo], Chapter 14); and the language, Land, and spirit-based education on ʰiškʷiiʔath land (chuutsqa Layla Rorick [Hesquiaht], Chapter 15).

Although each project is culturally specific, they have in common a framework and curriculum tethered to the particulars of Land, language, community needs, knowledge, and relationships. The chapters offer grounded case studies that disrupt the abstraction of Indigenous life and enable a nuanced analysis of the role that education plays in both colonization and resurgence. For example, in centring Native feminist theories, Mays and Whalen address the ways in which “places like Detroit and the Inland Empire both shape Indigenous women’s experiences, and they also shape it; it becomes a part of their identity” (p. 116). They demonstrate the necessity for education that is developed through intersectional theorizing that responds to the co-constitution of place and people.

The anthology is also ripe with dialogue dedicated to advancing decolonization through shifts to institutional ethics, curricular content, and administration, with emphasis placed on Land and water as praxis. Chapters 9, 10, and 13 all emphasize the multiplicity of student identities and the importance of praxis that is developed by centring Indigenous students, not the learning needs of settler students. Madeline Whetung (Nishnaabeg) and Sarah Wakefield, reflecting on the Tri-Council Policy Statement on Research Ethics: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans, offers a critical and practical critique of research ethics processes. They make visible the exclusion of Indigenous scholar students and suggest revisions to the process based on relationships to Land, community, and a responsibility to the next seven generations. I suspect the changes proposed by Whetung and Wakefield reflect the substantive shifts Adam Gaudry (Métis) and Danielle E. Lorenz call for when stating that engagement with Indigenous content must be approached, not as an add-on, but as an infusion of Indigenous and decolonial theorizing in all material. Given the co-constitution of systems of power, the transdisciplinary approach to climate change education, proposed by Teresa Newberry and Octaviana V. Trujillo (Yaqui) in Chapter 13 provides a useful framework for sites of education to look to in addressing decolonization across disciplines, as well as within faculty and administration.

In “Literacies of Land: Decolonizing Narratives, Stories, and Literature,” Styres outlines a framework for decolonial praxis that necessitates attention to the histories embedded in occupied Land, the constitution of self in relation to Land, and the role of education in shaping how stories of Land re-enforce and naturalize colonization. As Muñoz articulates in Chapter 4, the process of disrupting deeply entrenched colonial narratives is, although necessary, challenging for many people. Styres offers not only an analysis of student emotions, such as fear and discomfort, but a directive that praxis must necessarily attend to difficult emotions. Educators can take direction from Styres’ attempt to write a pedagogical intervention with potential to identify and address the affective manifestations of colonization in classrooms.

The relationship between water and Land is deepened in Chapter 5, “Indigenous Oceanic Futures: Challenging Settler Colonialism and Militarization” by Goodyear-Ka’ōpua (Kanaka Maoli), who meditates on the histories, onto-epistemologies, knowledge, and artistic and cultural practices of water in the context of Oceania and the Pacific Islands. Goodyear-Ka’ōpua’s analysis enrolls all people in decolonial projects, providing a contemplation through which to grapple with how engagement should manifest across sites and situations. Informed by the relational logics situated in the Hawaiian concept *Kuleana* and the Native Carolinian navigational practice of *Etak*, Goodyear-Ka’ōpua models a framework for education and engagement that considers “where you are in relation to where you’ve been...[and] what responsibilities a person has given their positionality in a particular location and time” (p. 95). Goodyear-Ka’ōpua insists that wading in the tensions of positionality and directionality, necessary to disrupt capitalist neo-liberal settler colonial advances toward Indigenous futurities, must involve feminist attention to everyday spaces, acts, and practices, as well as movement toward demilitarization. When read together, the cultural practices and logics of water and Land can guide readers to integrate the material within the anthology from a place that is grounded in the present and accountable to relations of the past and future.

Perhaps the most potent contribution comes from Erin Marie Konsmo (Métis), who is first referenced in the introduction and who authored the afterword with Karyn Recollet (Urban Cree). There, they challenge discourses of purity and essentialism as implicated in the disposability of those most marginalized by colonial and environmental violence. Tethering community relations to water and Land to a reflection of community relations to Indigenous peoples, Konsmo and Recollet confront the impact whiteness, hetero-patriarchy, and ableism have on urban Indigenous life, disability, illness, and queer, trans, and two-spirit relations. In Chapter 8, Alex Wilson (Opaskwayak Cree Nation) and Marie Laing (Kanyen’kehá:ka) also call for the prioritization of queer, trans, and two-spirit youth in community and educational settings, drawing attention to the impact of Christianity and settler colonialism on memory of tradition, manifesting in sites of Indigenous education. Insisting cosmologies are in motion and emergent, Wilson and Laing assert a position of return to the Land as capable of loosening the grip of social constructs. An analysis offered by Konsmo and Recollet can be recognized as adding nuance to this statement, in that “advocating harm reduction is critical to the ways we theorize going ‘back to the land and water’” (p. 242). By mobilizing the onto-epistemologies of water as fluid and generative, and claiming “misogyny is a bad land practice” (p. 250), Konsmo and Recollet proffer a transformative praxis from which to be in connection and care for one another. The afterword seamlessly weaves queerness, disability, addiction, sexual violence, and urban care to Land defense and environmental justice, advancing an impossible-to-ignore position, relevant across sites of scholarship and community activism, that all of our futures are entangled and urgently relational.

This book enacts a deeply intersectional analysis that, while escaping the limits of rigid identity categories, details colonization as co-constituted with anti-Blackness, hetero-patriarchy, medicalization, ableism, and extractionist neo-liberalism.

Prescriptive logics are replaced with grounded ways of knowing and localized methods of refusal that trouble globalized notions of social justice. This anthology successfully suggests methods to disrupt linear, colonialist systems of education by presenting intersectional approaches and onto-epistemological considerations situated in concepts of Land–water duality. As Smith, Tuck, and Yang proclaim in the introduction, “It is powerful to consider, at a baseline, that this millennium will be one of decolonization” (p. 22). Social work, however, as a crucial player in colonial and imperial projects, is faced with a reckoning: a call to grapple with the logics, frameworks, systems, institutions, and subjectivities from which social work is performed and the potential for the profession to support decolonizing futures.

References

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Reviewer Note

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