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Biocultural Diversity and Indigenous Ways of Knowing: Human Ecology in the Arctic. Karim-Aly S. Kassam

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wind, or air). The cosmological significance of literacy in this regard remains unclear from Morgan's analysis.

Despite these weaknesses, however, Morgan offers an engaging, accessible, and richly contextualized account of language literacy on a single reservation that contributes substantially to scholarship about these timely matters.

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Biocultural Diversity and Indigenous Ways of Knowing: Human Ecology in the Arctic. Karim-Aly S. Kassam. Calgary, AB: University of Calgary Press, 2009. 288 pages. \$34.95 cloth.

This book is an interesting assessment of the intellectual state of the discipline of human ecology and the use of traditional knowledge to document human ecology in the Arctic. In chapter 2, Karim-Aly Kassam discusses human ecology as a social science, its development and future. Chapter 3 attempts to "reconceptualize" human ecological relations, which the author asserts is a lens for understanding the relationship between biological and cultural diversity. He dives into an epistemological discussion, citing the Aristotelian notion of "phronesis," and then declares that "human ecological understanding, in the context of communities in the circumpolar north, is best achieved through sensitivity to indigenous knowledge" (13).

The first three chapters contain insights into Arctic indigenous human/biological relations and interactions, although they are fragmented and overly dense in places. Kassam argues that the discipline of human ecology should be regarded as an academic force (the third way), but instead of delivering a sharp outline or clear vision of the discipline's future and application in the real world, he indulges in ideological and theoretical discussions of diversity and knowing. Nevertheless, the case studies in chapters 4 and 5 contribute important data that further a broad understanding of the interwoven lives of Arctic animals and the people who hunt them. The last two chapters add additional commentary regarding the use of traditional area maps and their importance in the process of maintaining, using, and passing on traditional knowledge.

Kassam begins by discussing the north as homeland as a concept that fits the indigenous self-understanding, which he characterizes as featuring diversity, complexity, and the source of local knowledge. He sharply contrasts this against the north as a frontier, which he characterizes as simply a resource vault for imperialistic southern markets. The latter vision, which he attributes to industrial capitalism, is "exogenous," whereas the former is shaped by relationships within the natural ecology.

This stark ideological contrast frames Kassam's vision of Native life in the Arctic at the expense of a more complicated reality. Alaska Native corporations provide North Slope oil and gas support services, local governments administer local land-use regulations, many Inupiat support drilling in the

Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, and indigenous people are involved in Nunavik mining projects. The author beats the straw dog of industrial capitalism harshly throughout, yet, ironically, its benefits permeate contemporary village life from four-stroke outboard motors to satellite television. Granted, this is not the central theme of the book, but the underlying ideology tends to color the author's general views of the discipline and his presentation of the data.

Kassam provides the most memorable line in the book when discussing the outmoded southern view of indigenous people as "primitive" when he quips that stereotypical images are the ones that are frozen. Those who know northern indigenous history, particularly the history of still and moving images in the Arctic, will appreciate this intentional jab at those who use stereotypes in order to justify attempts at subjugating and marginalizing indigenous people. His discussion of a fetish for averages is also cleverly written.

The bulk of the data in the book is well researched and presented clearly and, particularly in chapter 4, the human ecology of Ulukhaktok (formerly Holman) is described in detail within its historical and environmental context. The human and the natural environments are moving targets, and Kassam notes correctly that historical changes clearly affect how people and animals interacted. The author cites the nineteenth-century "collapse" of Native communities but understates the impact of demographic and territorial changes on human and environmental interactions. Before the collapse, people related to the environment and to each other very differently, and this is obvious when comparing nineteenth- and twentieth-century community territories and demographics with available archaeological data from the precontact era. Admittedly, archaeology is not the author's focus, but it does provide a broader and deeper understanding of precontact human and animal interactions that the author neglects to acknowledge. Kassam correctly emphasizes the adaptive ability of the people to maintain a complex connectivity to each other, as well as the essential aspects of food sharing and cooperative hunting that have been, and continue to be, hallmarks of Inupiat/Inuit society despite extensive cultural change.

Kassam discussed the application of traditional knowledge regarding the future of oil development in the Wainwright area and concluded that "the values of human ecological maps of the Inupiat community of Wainwright still remain to be discovered. At this time it is unclear if the community will be able to communicate their subsistence land and marine use concerns to corporate interest in the National Petroleum Reserve on the North Slope of Alaska in an effective manner. . . . Concrete evidence of sensitivity on the part of government agents and corporate representatives to Inupiat concerns still remains to be seen" (219).

Although the author may be correct in concluding that the future details of subsistence impacts in the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska (NPR-A) are unknown, there is ample evidence of sensitivity on the part of government and industry to local issues and values. For example, many hundreds of thousands of dollars of NPR-A Impact Mitigation Grants have been awarded to the Wainwright community through the North Slope Borough for local

government operations, for a boat launch for subsistence and rescue activities, for youth programs and softball fields, and so forth. Also, an industry Subsistence Advisory Panel holds meetings in Wainwright in order to solicit input on any subsistence-related NPR-A impacts. Resource extraction and related government policies can be polarizing and controversial, but in Alaskan villages, more shades of gray exist than the author acknowledges.

Some of Kassam's map data have been included in a collaborative project related to potential oil development in the NPR-A near the village of Wainwright. The effort combined biological data gathered by the Nature Conservancy with the cultural and ecological knowledge and maps of the Wainwright community, including data the author compiled. The local community, the Nature Conservancy, the North Slope Borough, and other state and federal agencies use traditional knowledge to implement a cooperative strategy in order to manage traditional use areas and protect local access to subsistence areas (see *Wainwright Traditional Use Area Conservation Plan Map Book*, 2008).

This book is an interesting summary of the discipline of cultural ecology and can also serve as a point of departure for conversations about future development in the Arctic. Kassam is attuned to the essential importance that hunting and gathering retain for Arctic communities and is correct in asserting that these are not relics of a bygone era but important ways of knowing and relating to the land. The theoretical treatment of cultural ecology as a discipline may be valuable in academic circles, but the traditional knowledge that the author has collected in cooperation with the communities of Wainwright and Ulukhaktok is an even more valuable commodity as an enduring source of applied sociocultural data.

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Contemporary Native American Literature. By Rebecca Tillett. Edinburgh, Scotland: Edinburgh University Press, 2008. 184 pages. \$34.00 paper.

British Association for American Studies paperbacks are, by definition, encyclopedic introductions designed for use by neophyte students. As such, Rebecca Tillett's overview of contemporary Native American literature fills an important place in the series. Following a broad review of early American Indian writing from its beginnings in the eighteenth century through the 1930s, the author's subsequent chapters provide biographical data, brief plot outlines, and short summaries of key critical issues in major works by nine late-twentieth-century Native writers: N. Scott Momaday (Kiowa/Cherokee), Leslie Marmon Silko (Laguna/mixed blood), James Welch (Blackfeet/Gros Ventre), Louise Erdrich (Turtle Mountain Ojibwe/mixed blood), Anna Lee Walters (Pawnee/Otoe/Missouria), Luci Tapahonso (Navajo), Simon Ortiz (Acoma), Louis Owens (Choctaw/Cherokee), and Gerald Vizenor (Chippewa). Her final chapter, "Extending the Canon," considers new directions in Native writing