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National Parks, Native Sovereignty: Experiments in Collaboration. Edited by Christina Gish Hill, Matthew J. Hill, and Brooke Neely. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2024. 290 pages. \$29.95 paperback.

The collection of essays in *National Parks, Native Sovereignty: Experiments in Collaboration* highlights the tensions, successes, and possibilities involved in building collaborative relationships among the National Park Service (NPS), research institutions, and Native peoples. Using a case study methodology, the editors explore “the concept of strategic collaboration to make sense of the complex process by which project participants come together with sometimes conflicting interests and find ways to strategically engage with one another across these differences” (9). The editors suggest that such collaborative relationships can be approached through a simplified three-step process: “1) initiating relationships; 2) engaging in difficult conversations; and 3) building sustained collaborations through formal agreement” (5). This is not to say that these three steps are simple, linear, or that the process does not sometimes repeat, double back, or stall. Rather, the framework offers readers a useful guide for where collaborative work might begin.

Reflecting this three-step process, the volume is organized into three parts. Part one, “Entry Points: Emerging Partnerships, Mutual Benefits,” centers on the need for NPS staff to begin collaborative partnerships through tribal consultation and by framing interpretive projects through Indigenous ontologies and epistemologies. This section reminds readers that “reaching out is the first step” (48). Part two, “Headwinds: Challenging Cases, Painful Histories,” turns to the importance of addressing painful and contested histories alongside the Native communities affected by them. This section asks readers, in the words of Gerard Baker, to learn “how to listen to Indians tell their stories” (109). In the third and final section, “Sustained Collaborations: Maintaining Agreements, Successful Comanagement,” contributors examine the importance of creating “shared governance arrangements” that have been successfully instantiated to shape park comanagement (10).

The book is framed as a talking book: each section opens with an interview with an Indigenous leader or change-maker who has been intimately involved in the processes and case studies discussed thereafter. These interviewees include Max Bear, citizen of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma, tribal historic preservation officer, and culture and language program overseer for his nation; Gerard Baker, former National Park Service assistant director of American Indian relations and citizen of the Mandan and Hidatsa Tribes; and Lance Michael Foster, citizen of the Iowa Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska, who has served as vice chairman and tribal historic preservation officer, and also was a former NPS employee (35, 105, 183). Each reflects

on their experiences working with and within the NPS system, the projects they have collaborated on or spearheaded, the most important elements of strategic collaboration, and the significance of tribal sovereignty. These interviews situate the reader by imbuing each section with relationality, emotional connection, and proximity before the chapters move into deeper case-study analysis.

In keeping with the goals of the book, the contributors critically assess the colonial structures that continue to shape national parks and their relationships with Native communities. As contributor Rani-Henrick Anderson reminds readers, national parks are “colonial constructs that, to the Indigenous people who previously inhabited these now bordered spaces of nature, can represent loss of traditional homelands and cultural heritage” (197). The contributors take care to explain the painful and overlapping histories of dispossession, removal, and the exercise of Native sovereignty, as well as the continuing relationships Native nations maintain with the lands, waters, plants, and animal life now contained within national park boundaries. One limitation of the volume, however, is that it remains largely human-centered. Although several chapters acknowledge Indigenous ontologies that explain the sacred nature of these places and their fundamental importance to Indigenous nations, less attention is given to nonhuman relatives beyond their relation to land and people.

The book is at its strongest when it dwells on the difficulty of collaboration. Hard conversations, including those surrounding concepts such as cultural affiliation, memorandums of understanding, and the federal acknowledgment process, give the book a great degree of depth while also revealing the limits of collaboration when Native sovereignty must be articulated through settler legal and bureaucratic frameworks. Although the book is primarily centered on national parks within the boundaries of the United States, it also looks northward to Canada to consider how collaborations with First Nations have leveraged international conventions such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to protect homelands, history, and efforts to “reindigenize” space. Yet, as Anderson notes, such work is only possible when “there is mutual political will, ability to seek respectful and cultural understanding, and, most importantly, common goals” (209).

One particularly powerful example of the hard-won struggle for agreements to be honored appears in the history of Grand Portage National Monument. As contributor Timothy Cochrane explains, “The Grand Portage band [of Chippewa Indians] and the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe donated roughly half of the land to make up the 710-acre park unit [Grand Portage National Monument]” in 1958, only for the NPS to fail to uphold its agreement for decades (241). While this case eventually turned toward a more mutually beneficial relationship through the use of the Tribal Self-Governance Act, the contributors are honest about the past mistakes that were made—not only by the National Park Service but by tribes as well. Tribes have sometimes given up land in exchange for opportunities for economic development during periods of financial hardship, trusting the NPS and other federal institutions to honor their agreements. When these agreements fail, the road to rebuilding respectful relations can feel nearly impossible. In this way, the book succeeds in its mission of honoring Indigenous

perspectives while opening the door to conversations that require honesty, discomfort, and respect on all sides.

This book is well suited for undergraduate and graduate courses, as well as for readers interested in overlapping jurisdiction, Native sovereignty, collaborative governance, and the historical and contemporary impacts of national parks. At this critical juncture in national policy—marked by divestment from the National Park Service, layoffs, attempts to silence less-than-positive aspects of United States history, and attacks on research—this book offers insightful stories and potential strategies for creating, managing, and sustaining strategic collaboration. As the editors remind readers in the introduction, “Collaborative work often depends on developing strong personal relationships, which can be difficult to maintain as people change jobs and retire” (5). This observation highlights the importance of building relationships that extend beyond individuals and discrete projects. Lasting collaboration requires structures, agreements, and commitments that can endure beyond any single moment and benefit generations yet to come.

While continuously naming the uneven power relations inherent in the NPS, the authors ultimately demonstrate that “meaningful collaborations between Native peoples and US national parks present a possible route for reckoning with our shared histories and for working to remedy the injuries of the past” (2). Through strategic collaboration, shared governance agreements, and a recognition that many parks will remain contested spaces, *National Parks, Native Sovereignty* offers a thoughtful, timely, and hopeful contribution to ongoing conversations about Native sovereignty, land, and the future of national parks.

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