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dry enough that a good water hole is often likened to a womb. The growth of a deer's antlers is understood as an index of ecological health and human prosperity (152). All of this and more are celebrated by the Huichols as part of a life cycle of renewal.

All told, Fikes's account is a fascinating and instructive journey whether or not one accepts his premises. It will surely reignite some intellectual brushfires within anthropology and Native American studies.

Bruce E. Johansen

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Urban Indians in Phoenix Schools, 1940–2000. By Stephen Kent Amerman. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010. 280 pages. \$40.00 cloth.

An often-forgotten perspective in the range of American Indian education literature is the experiences of those Natives who attend school in large cities. Traditionally, scholarship in the area of urban Indian education has been slim and slanted toward a non-Indian perspective. Part of the notable Indigenous Education Series by the University of Nebraska Press, the book *Urban Indians in Phoenix Schools* attempts to fill this qualitative gap in urban Indian education literature. Focusing on the educational experiences of American Indian populations in Phoenix, Arizona between the 1940s through the 2000s, Stephen Kent Amerman frames an intimate look into the opinions and beliefs of Native families resident in and attending school in this large urban area. The author quietly juxtaposes the common conceptual understanding of reservation boarding schools with the structure and goals of the urban public school system using comparative references. The work maintains a clear focus on the intricacies of the local politics in Phoenix schools and historical discrimination toward minority groups, together with the agency and social and cultural resilience of American Indian students and parents.

The oral histories of the participants form the foundation and guide the book's parameters as the author delves into the life experiences of twelve members of the Phoenix Indian community, interweaving issues of urbanization, multicultural classrooms, off-reservation educational pedagogy, Southwest tribes, and Indian activism. Dynamic and diverse in personal and professional experiences, age and tribal citizenship, the interviewees provide a stratified understanding of Phoenix schools and urban Indian issues across six decades and from multiple perspectives.

Although the oral histories of the interviewees add rich content, the historical research methodologies of the book frequently pose unique challenges.

Given the inconsistency of federal documentation on Natives leaving reservations, the “printed evidence on the history of Indians in urban public schools is somewhat more scattered” (5). Unfortunately, the lack of historical records and sources authored by Natives results in Amerman’s heavy reliance on the records and documentation provided by a handful of the interviewees, and, as listed, evidence is skewed according to the documents kept by, selected by, or available to those particular interviewees. The book also lacks some broad reference points to foundational political and social issues related to American Indians. In order to fully appreciate the ethnographic content, the reader must have a general knowledge of Native activism and the history of federal Indian programming and policy. A modest inclusion of general American Indian policy eras and political movements would add clarity as well as provide a less expert reader with the appropriate tools to make further theoretical connections in the text. Still, the book openly discusses its limitations, and despite these methodological and organizational difficulties, moves forward with a fairly well documented history of educational systems and events in the Phoenix area.

In the context of the socially and racially diverse student population of Phoenix educational institutions, which serve multiple interests, the central theme is to understand the personal journeys and educational needs, goals, experiences, and differences of urban Natives. Although Phoenix has one of the largest urban Native populations in the nation, frequently American Indians comprised only a small percentage of their school population. It was not unusual for students to express that they were the only Natives in their class. Classroom demographics were diverse, and many of the interviewees found themselves sharing their school experience with Latino, African American, Asian, and other minority groups. The contact of American Indians with other marginalized populations posed new and unique challenges and differences that did not exist in the majority of reservation schools. Assimilation continued to be a strong component of the urban education provided to marginalized populations. However, given the inherent diversity of the city, the techniques of acculturation in these schools were different than those in reservation schools.

A good portion of Amerman’s book discusses the birth and growth of the Phoenix American Indian community through the refinement of defined social connections, group collaborations, activism, and the development of an American Indian–managed organization. However, for many interviewees, discussion of progressive urbanization continually gave way to discussions of American Indian identity and cultural maintenance. Individuals addressed identity directly and indirectly by discussing their own personal understandings and struggles with “feeling and being Native” in an urban and off-reservation setting. Participation in activities that fostered a sense of a collective Native

community were valued cultural experiences. Retaining tribal culture, language, and a connection to a respective community also were highly valued by the majority of interviewees. Without question, Native culture remained vibrant and a focal point for the personal and professional paths of many of them.

The infiltration of federal policy into local politics also had an immense impact on the professional and personal development of many of the participants. A large component of the book is an indirect discussion of how the 1960s civil rights movement and the 1960s educational equity policy addressed the learning opportunities available to minority students in the Phoenix area. Both grassroots movements and shifts in social attitudes regarding poverty eventually increased the number of political and social organizations serving marginalized and disenfranchised populations in the city. This posed a unique challenge to Phoenix Indian activists: interviewees serving as community organizers were continually forced to fight for a say in local politics and schools. Even with the difficulties of maintaining a voice among the many groups demanding attention, the American Indian grassroots movements provided some individuals with a focus and an outlet that strengthened the visibility and intergenerational cohesiveness of the Phoenix Native community (109).

Urban Indians in Phoenix Schools is an important contribution to the limited body of ethnographic research speaking to the educational experiences of Natives living in urban areas. In its examination of oral histories spanning sixty years, Amerman's book illuminates the differences, similarities, and unique obstacles present for American Indians living off reservation in the Phoenix area. The qualitative data and local historic documentation brings to life the trajectory of institutions and the agency and cultural resiliency of urban Natives. Although "culturally transformative elements existed" for many urban Natives, the interviewees displayed a clear desire to maintain community, values, language, worldviews, and tribal ties (3). The work is presented in a refreshing and personal manner that is completely driven by a Native perspective. The depth and quality of the book provides an academic voice and further research validation to the experiences of urban American Indian populations.

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