

UCLA

American Indian Culture and Research Journal

Title

Indigenous Educational Models for Contemporary Practice: In Our Mother's Voice, Volume II. Edited by Maenette Kape'ahiokalani Padeken Ah Nee-Benham.

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/6qq907hm>

Journal

American Indian Culture and Research Journal , 33(2)

ISSN

0161-6463

Author

Fox, Mary Jo Tippeconnic

Publication Date

2009-03-01

DOI

10.17953

Copyright Information

This work is made available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial License, available at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>

a welcome critique within the literature that is long overdue and, one would hope, will stimulate further deconstruction, analysis, and model making in indigenous policy studies.

This book is part of a recent surge of sovereignty studies within Native studies and political science and so will find a readership in these areas. In its attention to the fiduciary component to indigenous sovereignty this book should be read with Jessica Cattelino's single-nation ethnography, *High Stakes: Florida Seminole Gaming and Sovereignty* (2008). Scholars will want to put the notion of forced federalism into conversation with Cattelino's "sovereign interdependency"—both analytics and epochal designations for early-twenty-first-century indigenous-state relations. Corntassel and Witmer's book should be read with Deborah Rosen's meticulously researched legal history of state sovereignty, *American Indians and State Law: Sovereignty Race and Citizenship 1780–1890* (2008). Rosen's book is an exhaustive examination of assertions of state sovereignty in indigenous, national, and (settler) state contexts—contexts framed through the space of law but precipitating politics that scholars of indigenous politics will understand are not entirely limited by that law. In its methodological breadth the book may be read alongside Stephen Cornell's classic study of indigenous politics in the United States, *The Return of the Native: American Indian Political Resurgence* (1988), for their attention to the underexamined element of participation in formal, settler politics. As well, their book augments and complements in empirically robust ways the arguments of Taiiaki Alfred regarding the importance of nationhood and the perils of co-optation in *Peace, Power and Righteousness: An Indigenous Manifesto*. Scholars will also want to read Renee Cramer's *Cash, Color and Colonialism: The Politics of Tribal Acknowledgement* (2005) for the politics of authenticity as well as Kevin Bruyneel's *Third Space of Sovereignty* (2008) for related analysis of California gaming anxiety.

With the exception of minor problems with editing and footnoting (one appendix, "H," is missing from the text and footnotes in chapter 2 are a bit out of order), Corntassel and Witmer have made an empirically sound and critical contribution to scholarly and, one will hope, popular understandings of the new era of indigenous politics today.

Audra Simpson
Columbia University

Indigenous Educational Models for Contemporary Practice: In Our Mother's Voice, Volume II. Edited by Maenette Kape'ahiokalani Padeken Ah Nee-Benham. New York: Routledge, 2008. 304 pages. \$140.00 cloth; \$41.95 paper.

Material for *Indigenous Educational Models for Contemporary Practice: In Our Mother's Voice, Volume II* is gathered from three days of dialogue at the 2005 World Indigenous Peoples Conference on Education held in Hamilton, Aotearoa, New Zealand. The topics discussed by the two hundred-plus

indigenous scholars and practitioners in attendance were educational leadership, research and inquiry, and learning and teaching. Transcripts of the conference dialogue and stories from participants are the basis for this volume. The objective is to provide models of indigenous forms of education to establish an appropriate and meaningful learning environment for contemporary indigenous students.

The book is divided into a four major themes: language and culture; leadership, accountability, and assessment; partnerships; and challenges to scholars and practitioners. Samuel Suina, a Cochiti Pueblo elder, introduces the sections by using a basket as a metaphor, thus providing a visual image of weaving around the core of love for children and families. An added benefit to the reader is that four of the five segments conclude with a list of recommended resources. This volume is written for a broad audience including Native and non-Native teachers, future teachers, current and future school leaders, policy makers, and parents. The task of providing useful information on indigenous education to a diverse global population is extremely difficult, and the degree of practicality will vary from one indigenous community to another. However, the discourse collected here is inspirational and represents a global perspective with real-life situations and cases that are often hard to find in one book. One strong point of this book is the participation by respected indigenous scholars, established and emerging, such as the editor, Ah Nee-Benham, Tarajeon Yazzie-Mintz, Michael Pavel, Wayne Stein, and Susan Fairchild.

Comparing this book to other works on indigenous education is difficult because of its scope and format. An obvious comparison is the first volume of this series published in 2000. Although the initial publication revolves around the sharing of educational ideas and models from fourteen invited indigenous practitioners and scholars, the second is much broader. Both volumes are beneficial and build upon each other, though each can stand on its own. *The Renaissance of American Indian Higher Education: Capturing the Dream* (2002) edited by Maenette K. P. Benham and Wayne J. Stein is another book on the topic. Other scholars such as Gregory Cajete are also researching and writing on indigenous education issues.

Part 1, "New Horizons for Language and Culture," reintroduces the "Go to the Source model" from the first volume. This model has the learner or student at the center and relies on the four principles of Native spiritual wisdom; critical development of the intellect; healthy body and environment; and preservation and revitalization of Native languages, arts, and traditions. It bridges individuals, institutions, and community in order to create opportunity for regeneration of ritual, responsibility, and reciprocity. Also reintroduced is the premise, "Contemporary Is Native," which weaves the past, present, and future (10). The chapters that follow actualize the model for the reader. The essay by Yazzie-Mintz, "Creating Culture in the Here and Now: Regenerating Rituals in Purposeful Epistemologies" (chapter 2) skillfully demonstrates the point that culture is dynamic and re-created in the here and now. By using examples from her cultural background (Diné), Tarajeon shows how Native educators can re-create opportunities for cultures to be generated

and renewed. Teresa Magnuson and Jeremy Garcia add to the dialogue by actualizing culture and language in their lives, and the final two chapters address teaching and teachers.

“Leadership Is Living Indigenous in a New Way,” part 2, is grounded in stories, self-determination, place, family, community, and nature. In this section, stories of leadership with challenges and dilemmas are shared through the voices of personal experiences. A good illustration is the narrative by Edyael Casaperalta, who challenges the reader to look at stories within each person and use these stories to communicate. She demonstrates this with her personal story of coming across the border from Mexico, adjusting to a new life, and becoming involved in digital storytelling. Casaperalta urges the reader to write history by using the stories inside you (63). More insightful stories on leadership follow by emerging and established leaders, such as Lynette Stein-Chandler, Noelani Lee, Malia Villegas, Lawrence E. Wheeler, Theresa Jackson, Garcia, Matthew Van Alstine, and Magnuson, who discuss struggles to embrace language; the importance of community, models, and reciprocal relationships; the examination and definition of leadership; leadership by action; returning home; identity; and assuming and passing the torch of leadership. Ah Nee-Benham concludes with what comprises indigenous leadership for educational systems. All of these stories are empowering and encourage the reader to work for indigenous students, communities, and education.

In part 3, “Indigenizing Accountability and Assessment,” indigenous assessment is presented as having the principles of rigor, respectful relations, relevance, and reciprocity. Scholars including Villegas and Wheeler speak to these principles through personal experiences and stories. In concluding the chapter, Fairchild and Katherine Tibbets summarize the key points by emphasizing the importance of local communities practicing sovereignty and self-determination. Local communities need to determine the direction and method of delivery of education, including accountability and assessment practices, for their students and communities whether in mainstream public or tribally controlled schools. It is welcoming to include Native students in mainstream public schools in the dialogue because this was not always the case.

The format of part 4, “The Promise and Joys of Partnerships,” is notable for utilizing five case studies, each with interrelated reflections and commentaries. Authors of the case studies are paired with senior scholars, a mentoring relationship (or partnership), to understand and present the complexities of the situations. Following this are commentaries by invited scholars exploring alternative ways to examine the cases, lessons to learn, and next steps. Next, critical perspectives in the form of questions and answers by the author and scholar-mentor are presented. In chapter 23, the reader is given stories that illustrate the complexities of partnerships that encourage further dialogue. Whether this format is effective depends upon the readers because it tends to get laborious and confusing at times. Yet the teaching cases are excellent learning examples to encourage dialogue about the intricacies of forming and maintaining partnerships, which is this section’s overall objective. The case

study by Van Alstine and Stein is particularly enlightening because it deals with higher education, which is often given less attention when discussing indigenous education.

The volume closes with “Challenges to All Indigenous Scholar-Practitioners” by Henrietta Mann. “A peaceful revolution” is how Mann describes the actions of educators and researchers at the conference (259). She eloquently challenges the participants and readers to regenerate old knowledge from traditions and repatriate themselves by revitalizing our cultures and languages, listening and hearing the voices of elders and children, bridging the gap between research and theory, adding the dimension of culture to research, and conducting research that benefits indigenous communities and families.

Indigenous Educational Models for Contemporary Practice is a valuable resource and tool for scholars and practitioners who want to make education meaningful and culturally relevant to indigenous communities and children. The models, stories, and case studies presented are impressive and inspiring and provide the basis for furthering the dialogue and practice in this area.

Mary Jo Tuppeconnic Fox
University of Arizona

Joe Feddersen: Vital Signs. By Rebecca J. Dobkins with contributions by Barbara Earl Thomas and Gail Tremblay. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008. 128 pages, 95 color illustrations. \$29.95 paper.

A contribution to the Jacob Lawrence series on American artists published by the University of Washington Press, *Vital Signs* includes a biographical essay of the artist by Rebecca J. Dobkins, an introduction by artist Barbara Earl Thomas, and a critical essay by artist/writer Gail Tremblay. This catalog, released in conjunction with an exhibit by the same name, covers the last decade of the artist’s work. The book makes clear that Feddersen is a significant artist mixing a multiplicity of Native and non-Native mediums, iconographies, and messages.

John Olbrantz, the Maribeth Collins Director at the Hallie Ford Museum of Art at Willamette University, outlines a brief biographical sketch of Feddersen in a preface. Each subsequent author offers biographical sketches as well, which is a bit repetitive. Olbrantz begins by asserting that Feddersen’s art explores the binaries of indigenous landscapes and urban spaces while using contemporary mediums with Native imagery. It is unclear why such distinctions are necessary; indigenous landscapes have included urban spaces long before contact with Europeans, and the idea that the traditional and the contemporary can be readily distinguished from one another is problematic. Feddersen seems to be placed, in this preface, in the context of the rural and traditional first, and then evaluated on his ability to think outside of these paradigms. The binaries are distracting, and it would have been better to omit them.