

UCLA

American Indian Culture and Research Journal

Title

First Nations in Canada: The Circle Unfolds. Edited by Marie Battiste and Jean Barman.

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/9hb0d4hk>

Journal

American Indian Culture and Research Journal , 19(4)

ISSN

0161-6463

Author

Friesen, John W.

Publication Date

1995-09-01

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/>

Finally, *Dreaming History* gives the reader an almost visceral sense of the spirit-of-place of Wisconsin and the Upper Great Lakes. Through allusions to the internal landscape of this holy ground, we are introduced to the Creator's power to endure in an aboriginal guise, no matter how the physical world is molded to humans' whims. Gitchie Manito, Tunkashila, Moon Bear, Earth Mother, and others people Green Bay, Lake Superior, Red Earth, and Turtle Island, existing simultaneously in the timeless past and the present day too focused on the lack of time. Beneath the veneer of modern-day Chicago, Milwaukee, Marquette, and Vermillion, we are able to glimpse these lands as they were and as they continue to be in the native heart. Readers will grasp the authors' insistence that a spirit survives that animates these lands, even in the face of antitreaty fishing protestors, civic organizations ignorant of American history, and stereotype-spewing yuppies. In this context, it is easy to see why this book often portrays "the reservation" as a place of asylum, despite poverty, despair, and lost traditions.

Dreaming History: A Collection of Wisconsin Native-American Writing is well-written, the editing is balanced, and the overall coherence is intact, despite an eclectic mix of topic and style. As a vehicle for the introduction of "new" writers to the native literature audience, it is sure to alert us to watch for the future work of these authors. The relevance of themes is particularly poignant for Native American readers, but the presentation is easily understandable for a more general readership.

I highly recommend this anthology. The spirit-of-place of the Great Lakes region is intrinsic throughout, as is the strength and courage of native peoples and native cultures that continue to revere this land as sacred ground.

Cynthia R. Kasee
University of South Florida

First Nations in Canada: The Circle Unfolds. Edited by Marie Battiste and Jean Barman. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1995, 355 pages. \$24.95 paper.

This book essentially comprises a worthy "progress report" on native education in Canada. Its contents pretty well cover developments across the nation, albeit from a distinctly western Cana-

dian perspective. Only four of the nineteen contributors work outside this region.

A variety of themes familiar to those who work in the area of native education emerge from the various discussions: local control of First Nations education, teaching and learning in a native context, relevance of school curricula, past historical arrangements, and legal stipulations pertaining to First Nations education. There is considerable overlap with several of the submissions, possibly because specificity in designating writing topics may have been lacking or because the writers share many of the same concerns. Discussions pertaining to the nature of aboriginal philosophy are contained in several chapters, and references to the medicine wheel as a paradigm for native education are quite frequent. Several Plains Indian tribes have revived the medicine wheel as particularly relevant to delineating aspects of traditional aboriginal values systems, although not all tribes have used this device.

Following the composition of the medicine wheel, *First Nations Education in Canada* is presented in four parts, each indicative of one of the four teaching directions of the wheel—(part one) Eastern Door: Reconceptualizing First Nations Education; (part two) Southern Door: Connecting with and Maintaining Our Relations; (part three) Western Door: Meeting the Challenge of Incoherence; and (part four) Northern Door: Transforming First Nations Education. It may be useful to comment on the intent of the editors in choosing this particular form of presentation.

The essence of the eastern door of the medicine wheel (part one) implies connectedness, and the writers have tried to capture this by suggesting that First Nations education must be reconnected to its past roots. The first contribution, by Eber Hampton, is particularly useful, Hampton suggesting that the concept "Indian education" has five distinct meanings: Indian education for traditional purposes, for self-determination, and for assimilation, and by Indians and as a "thing of its own kind." The latter is obviously the preferred form, implying that First Nations prefer to formulate their own methods, content, and structure, and select their own personnel. Hence, the utilization of the medicine wheel as a pedagogical framework. Two other articles complete this section, one (Calliou) outlining the structure and function of the medicine wheel, and the other (MacIvor) dealing with science education for aboriginal students. The purpose of including this piece is not immediately clear, although it probably originated in previous graduate work.

The southern door of the medicine wheel (part two) suggests power and innocence, featuring the earth as the primary element. Here the focus is on aboriginal culture, philosophy, and language, with more than a little redundancy in elaborating the topic. Four papers make up this section and deal with aboriginal epistemology (Ermine), grandmother models for teaching (Sterling), language and cultural content (Leavitt), and learning processes and teaching roles (Stairs). None of the pieces was written specifically for this collection, and, to some extent, their content reflects this. Ermine leans heavily on the medicine wheel in outlining First Nations philosophy, and Sterling appears to build on this by explicating how it works in the teaching of two First Nations grandmothers. Leavitt explicates some of the subtle differences between First Nations and English languages, and Stairs more or less parallels this discussion by elaborating what is labeled two "radically different" concepts of education. It would have been valuable if these writers could have collaborated on the topic beforehand in order to avoid elements of recapitulation.

The western door (section three) includes four papers premised on looking within—introspection. This harder look targets such challenges as school dropouts, teacher education, university challenges in First Nations education and nonnative teachers working in native communities. Mackay and Myles, whose work is based on a contract study for the Ontario Ministry of Education, offer an intriguing look at the phenomenon of school dropouts. The authors cite forty-two factors that contribute to dropping out and suggest that educational success is dependent upon a number of factors requiring parental and band support, school adjustment, and improved home-school connections.

The fourth and final door (north) implies the need for models of wisdom for learning. The papers in this section allude to Indian treaties as a basis for First Nations education, and analyze local control of education, native curriculum, and use of the sacred circle as an aboriginal approach to healing education. Archibald's piece on school curriculum elaborates familiar objectives: positive self-image, increased awareness of cultural history, and opportunities to compare (and, hopefully, to inculcate) traditional and contemporary aboriginal cultures. Regnier concludes the section with a unique case study about a high school that incorporated a sacred circle model into its teaching—featuring the medicine wheel. And thus we come full circle in this volume.

Despite its few shortcomings *First Nations Education in Canada* constitutes a contribution to the field of First Nations education by fulfilling a bibliographic function, not so much as a referenced work but because of its comprehensive content. Increasingly First Nations philosophy is being perceived in its rightful place alongside other world philosophies. In this volume, valuable additional insights of that epistemology are shared and applied. In addition, the language of the book is lucid, the type is visually pleasing, and the cover is rather attractive. To educators who have any kind of contact with First Nations education, I would say, "Buy this book!"

John W. Friesen

The University of Calgary

The Forgotten Centuries: Indians and Europeans in the American South, 1521–1704. Edited by Charles Hudson and Carmen Chaves Tesser. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1994. 472 pages. \$50.00 cloth; \$25.00 paper.

Ethnohistorians have realized for a long time that to understand the Southeast in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, we were going to have to put the work of archaeologists and historians together in a systematic way. The opportunity to do so occurred in 1989, thanks to an NEH summer institute for college teachers at the University of Georgia entitled "Spanish Explorers and Indian Chiefdoms." Directed by editors Charles Hudson and Carmen Chaves Tesser, the institute invited many of the leading students of the early Southeast to present papers and engage in discussion with participants. This book of seventeen essays grew out of that institute. While each essay stands on its own, together they form a remarkably coherent and comprehensive record of a very dimly understood period in Southern history.

The early sixteenth-century beginnings of the Spanish penetration of the Southeast were followed in 1539–43 by the spectacular march of Hernando de Soto and an accompanying army of close to one thousand Europeans and Indians. The three eyewitness accounts of the De Soto *entrada*, plus the reports of a handful of other, less ambitious Spanish explorations, combine to tantalize with their descriptions of native chiefdoms and to frustrate with their brevity and incompleteness. Furthermore, the descriptions