

# UCLA

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Of Sacred Lands and Strip Malls: The Battle for Puvungna. By Ronald Loewe.

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additionally connects legible sovereignty to the financial resources and federal support received by Haskell. As she discovered in her 2014 site visit, twelve years after the center opened, “financial sovereignty” directly impacted the ability of a cultural center to make “rhetorically sovereign statement[s]” (98). For the Haskell Cultural Center and Museum, “sustaining legible sovereignties for its audiences lie primarily in efforts to keep its doors open regularly, to revitalize the space, and to support its continued relevance on campus” (85).

*Legible Sovereignties* offers readers an opportunity to see what choices these three museums and cultural centers made in creating their inaugural exhibits, the varied reactions each received by their audiences, and the changes that the ensuing years brought to each institution as inaugural exhibits were rotated out in response to visitor expectations and reactions. Moreover, King’s introduction provides a literature review of relevant scholarship that traces the history and growth of tribal museums and museums that privilege Indigenous collaboration. Most notably, she includes Mary Lawlor’s *Public Native America* (2006), two special issues of the *American Indian Quarterly* (2005), Amanda Cobb-Greetham’s *The National Museum of the American Indian: Critical Perspectives* (2008), Susan Sleeper-Smith’s *Contesting Knowledge: Museums and Indigenous Perspectives* (2009), and Amy Lonetree’s *Decolonizing Museums* (2012). Her review of these contributions is helpful, as a reader can become familiar with significant developments concerning museums within Native American and Indigenous studies and museum studies.

This monograph not only reminds us that scholarship about museums and cultural centers focused on Indigenous peoples continues to be relevant, but also offers another way of studying and understanding these important public spaces.

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**Of Sacred Lands and Strip Malls: The Battle for Puvungna.** By Ronald Loewe. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016. 246 pages. \$89.00 cloth.

*Of Sacred Lands and Strip Malls: The Battle for Puvungna* concerns the six-year battle between the administration of California State University, Long Beach (CSULB) and the Save Puvungna Committee, a coalition of students, faculty, staff, and community activists, including Southern California Indians, over the development of a twenty-two-acre site on the west side of campus that remains sacred to several Southern California tribes, the Tongva/Gabrieliño and Acjachemen/Juaneño. In its three parts, the book provides a historical context of Puvungna, explains the land dispute and documents events occurring from 1992 through 1998 between the Save Puvungna Committee and CSULB administration; and presents life after the battle. While noting the methodological limitations, to tell the story of Puvungna, author Ronald Loewe employs rich archives, personal communications, interviews with key “well-informed informants,” and participant observations. Loewe’s work aptly contextualizes and chronicles multiple perspectives in the “battle for

Puvungna” and joins a select group of case studies examining tribal-institutional relationships. However, this work also reveals tensions in its inclusion of Native perspectives when narrating events concerning Indigenous communities.

Loewe’s intent in part 1 is to contextualize the book within California Indian history. Chapter 1 outlines the precontact history of California, documents ancestral lifeways and early contact experience during colonization, and provides a general background on Tongva social organization, subsistence activities, ethnogeography, cosmology, and more (7). Chapter 2 offers readers historical context regarding the establishment of the California mission system. Loewe focuses on Mission San Gabriel, built in 1771, sharing accounts of a Tongva rebellion lead by Nicolas Jose and Toypurina. This context is linked to the 1990s clash with CSULB over Puvungna: under Mexican rule, when the missions were secularized and divided into ranchos, Rancho Los Alamitos eventually became part of the present CSULB campus. Chapter 3 discusses the establishment of CSULB and the “49er” culture, which challenges the existence of California Indians in general, and, in this case, specifically the Tongva. Loewe also discusses the development of American Indian studies at CSULB, including initial challenges experienced by American Indian students and staff at the university.

Part 2, “Dispute over Puvungna,” addresses the political, legal, and academic conflicts and struggles at CSULB. One conflict, dubbed the “Garden War,” initially surfaced in 1992 between the university and a group of organic gardeners who cultivated the site in the 1970s (79). In December of 1992, when CSULB approved the construction of a mini-mall at the site, which would include residential housing, a shopping center, a childcare center, restaurants, and retail businesses—thus eliminating a known burial ground and California Indian sacred site that is the birth place of Chinigchinich—the gardeners aligned themselves with the Gabrieliño Nation of Southern California. Loewe maps out a series of events occurring between the university, gardeners, Tongva, Native American Heritage Commission, and archeological researchers. Chapter 5 highlights the role of campus leadership and discusses at length the temporary injunction filed by the tribe, which ultimately the university petitioned the California Supreme Court to lift.

Part 3, “A History of the Present Moment,” discusses life for the Tongva community following the Battle for Puvungna. Loewe chronicles the Ancestor Walk, first led by Lilian Robles, which leads Tongva, Luiseño/Payómkwichum, and Acjachemen community members and community allies through sacred sites in Southern California, culminating at Puvungna. In addition, Loewe discusses the repatriation of human remains at CSULB. A shift in the campus climate toward American Indians is given brief attention, with an article in the *Daily Forty-Niner*, the campus newspaper, questioning the “university’s celebration of the California gold rush and prospectors” (152).

Concerns arise regarding the representation of Tongva perspectives, as Tongva voices are infrequently presented. The lack of Native perspective in *Of Sacred Lands and Strip Malls* illuminates a continued tension in academia and offers an important lesson for non-Indigenous and Indigenous scholars on including Native voices when authoring stories about Native issues, particularly California Indian scholars who conduct research with Indigenous communities. As such, this book presents an opportunity to (re)learn,

(re)visit, and remember the responsibilities of narrating stories for, with, and about Indigenous communities. While Loewe suitably writes about the “battle for Puvungna,” Native and non-Native readers must be critical of and how individuals write Native histories and stories. Given the contemporary nature of the event, involvement of Tongva community members to protect Puvungna, and stated relationships between Loewe and local community members, the author should have given greater attention to capturing these perspectives, include Native voices, and offer a greater voice to the Tongva community by incorporating interviews with tribal representatives, many of whom are local to the area. Loewe writes “someone had to tell the story”; however, who should have authored this narrative? Should Native people, in this case Tongva scholars, author their own stories? Can Tongva people be authors, subjects, and players in such narratives, and will such stories carry the same credence or authority in academia?

In closing, Loewe writes about lessons that can be learned from the conflict over this sacred site for academics and activists, which proves to be fruitful for Native and non-Native educators working to transform postsecondary institutions, specifically tribal-university relationships. Loewe suggests that timing, long-standing relationships with CSLUB alumni, staff, and faculty, nonviolent direct action, a multiethnic coalition, and good luck can be attributed to the success at Puvungna. For educators concerned with the ways in which institutions demonstrate responsibility and accountability to local American Indian tribes, this book serves as an excellent case study. The relationships between CSULB, Tongva Nations, and community activists was not picturesque, but rather tense. Loewe illustrates the tendency of universities and campus leadership to react to issues that result in hostile and reactionary relationships. Moreover, the “battle for Puvungna” reflects the ongoing efforts by universities to eliminate and marginalize American Indians, specifically the Tongva and Acjachemen. Thusly, this book reflects possibilities that emerge at colleges and universities when coalitions work together to protect meaningful and sacred sites.

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**Ohiyesa: The Soul of an Indian (documentary film).** Dakota Eastman Productions/Vision Maker Media, 2018. 57 mins. \$9.99 Amazon digital download; \$29.95 home edition; \$168.75 educational edition with performance rights.

Ohiyesa (Dr. Charles A. Eastman) was first introduced to a viewing audience in the 2007 Home Box Office cable television docudrama *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*. This depiction took too many liberties to be termed accurate, as reviewers in *The New York Times* and *Indian Country Today* noted when the program first aired. The producers of *Ohiyesa: The Soul of an Indian* are descendants of Ohiyesa who were motivated by his portrayal in *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* to provide a better one. The narrator of this documentary is Dr. Kate Beane, a Flandreau Santee Sioux and a public historian at the Minnesota Historical Society. Ohiyesa (1858–1939)