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A Seat at the Table: Huston Smith in Conversation with Native Americans on Religious Freedom. Edited by Huston Smith. Edited and with a preface by Phil Cousineau. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006. 266 pages. $24.95 cloth.

In December 1999, seven thousand religious leaders met in Cape Town, South Africa, for the Third Parliament of World Religions. During the eight-day parliament, a delegation of ten American Indians met with world-renowned religion historian Huston Smith. Smith, a strong proponent of interfaith dialogue, urged the parliament to learn how to listen to Native peoples in their struggle for indigenous religious freedom. Smith is professor emeritus of philosophy at Syracuse University and the author of *The World's Religions* (1991) and *Why Religion Matters* (2001). *A Seat at the Table* grew out of a documentary film of the sessions called *A Seat at the Table: Struggling for American Indian Religious Freedom,* which premiered at the Amnesty International Film Festival in March 2004.

The American Indian delegates included the recently deceased Vine Deloria Jr. (Lakota), Walter Echo-Hawk (Pawnee), Winona LaDuke (Anishinaabe), Charlotte Black Elk (Lakota), Douglas George-Kanentiio (Mohawk), Frank Dayish Jr. (Navajo), Lenny Foster (Diné), Tonya Gonnella Frichner (Onondaga), Anthony Guy Lopez (Lakota), and Oren Lyons (Onondaga). A University of California press release describes their contributions in the following way: "Their ideas about spirituality, politics, relations with the U.S. government, their place in American society, and the continuing vitality of their communities give voice to a population that is all too often ignored in contemporary discourse." In his dialogues with the delegates, Smith skillfully helps to reveal the depth of the Indian contributors' knowledge and experience by guiding the discussion across a range of important topics. Unlike other works on American Indian religion, the conversations take place within the context of Smith's considerable knowledge of comparative religion.

Walter Echo-Hawk set the theme for the American Indian participation and intervention. It was, he said, the effort by indigenous peoples to try to get *a seat at the table* with the recognized religions of the world; otherwise, the gathering would not be representative of a real world parliament. Spirituality is a way of life for at least seventy-two nation-states with 350 million indigenous peoples within their borders.

In Smith's conversation with Vine Deloria Jr., the latter called attention to the "spiritual malaise" of contemporary American culture and pointed out that "religion cannot be kept within the bounds of sermons and scriptures. It is a force in and of itself and it calls for an integration of lands and peoples in harmonious unity" (7). Unlike Western religions, which are based on the solitary individual, Indian spirituality is community based and includes sacred lands, animals, and spirits.

Winona LaDuke shared her eco-spiritual perspective (the interconnectedness of spirituality with the environment) and the role of cultural memory in the spiritual heritage. She emphasized the spiritual importance of

nonhuman "relatives," such as the sturgeon for the Anishinaabeg, and sacred foods, such as wild rice. "The Creator didn't say, 'Have macaroni soup for all your ceremonies.' There are sacred foods you are supposed to use to feed the spirits" (48). When the ecosystem is destroyed, the relatives and sacred foods are not available to Native people for their religious practices.

Charlotte Black Elk is the great-granddaughter of Lakota medicine man Nicholas Black Elk and cultural historian for the Oglala Lakota Nation. She spoke eloquently about the sacredness of the Black Hills, "the heart of everything that is," and the importance of ceremony in indigenous religion. Smith responds, "I'm getting the impression that worship in your tradition of prayer is really *inseparable* from place" (62). "Absolutely," she replies.

Douglas George-Kanentiio discussed the importance of preserving Native languages. He explained the critical religious role of the oral tradition among the Haudenosaunee, citing the one-thousand-year-old Great Law of Peace, which established their ancient confederacy and was later supplemented by "the Good Word" of Handsome Lake in 1799.

Frank Dayish Jr. recounted the history of the Native American Church of North America and its members' legal challenges in exercising their religious practices. A 1990 decision by the Supreme Court denied church members the right to practice their religion because of the sacramental use of peyote. This was reversed when President Clinton signed into law the American Indian Religious Freedom Act Amendments of 1994. The peyote road is embraced by a quarter of a million Native people.

Lenny Foster spoke of the struggle for religious freedom by the thousands of American Indian inmates in US prisons and federal penitentiaries. Twenty-five years of counseling Indian prisoners had taught him "the healing power of sacred rites such as the pipe ceremony and the sweat lodge," yet not all penal institutions respect the cultural and religious rights of Native Americans (115).

Attorney Tonya Gonnella Frichner has been an active participant in international forums for indigenous rights at the United Nations and the Organization of American States. In her conversation with Professor Smith, she directed her remarks to indigenous concerns regarding the Human Genome Diversity Project (HGDP). What is the purpose for the secret gathering of blood, hair, and tissue samples from indigenous peoples worldwide without their consent? The HGDP, dubbed "the vampire project," violates the spiritual dimension of Native communities. Among indigenous peoples, one's genetic material and "life spirit" are inseparable. The targeting of Native peoples as unique, cultural isolates to patent indigenous DNA also violates cultural property rights.

The exchange between Smith and Anthony Guy Lopez centered on the issue of sacred lands, specifically the controversy surrounding Mt. Graham in Arizona. The mountain is home to the mountain spirits and sacred to the Apache Indians, but the University of Arizona, the Vatican, and other powerful "scientific" institutions are ignoring its religious significance by building a $200 million telescope complex on its peak. On the positive side, a campaign initiated by American Indian organizations has caused several universities and the Smithsonian Institution to withhold their support. Smith interjects that

the Mt. Graham case illustrates the ethical distinction between good science and bad science, the difference between science and "scientism."

Oren Lyons, faith keeper of the Onondaga Nation, heads up the Native American studies program at the State University of New York at Buffalo. Chief Lyons described his people's ceremonies as a way of life that is very old. "Our first duty," he emphasized, "was to see that the ceremonies were carried on at the proper time, and in the proper way, and in the proper places." The second duty "is to sit in council for the welfare of the people" (167). Spiritual law is primary for traditional Haudenosaunee government.

Throughout the book, Huston Smith carries on a dialogue with the Indian participants reflective of his vast knowledge of comparative religion and the important contributions of indigenous spirituality on the world stage. At one point, he stated that "the historical religions are only six thousand years old, whereas the primal [indigenous] religions stretch back to the misty human origins on this planet" (164).

In the book's closing section, Vine Deloria concludes his conversation with Professor Smith by pinpointing "several profound themes at the heart of the Indian struggle for religious freedom" (185). Among these are Native epistemology, the Seven Generations concept, Indians and Christianity, and Indian icons (stereotypes). Deloria emphasized that the healing of Indian Country will occur through spirituality, observing kinship and clan responsibilities, and a return and redevelopment of Indian oratory.

Although most of the information contained in this work will not be new to many Native Americans, it is nevertheless a worthwhile "read." More importantly, it can serve as an important resource for non–Native Americans who wish to become informed about indigenous spiritual concerns, and who are seeking answers to the spiritual malaise of the contemporary Christian world.

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Something New in the Air: The Story of First Peoples Television Broadcasting in Canada. By Lorna Roth. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005. 300 pages. $29.95 paper.

Near Jerry Mander's desk where he wrote the popular work, *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television*, hangs a compelling photo of a performance piece. A big-finned Cadillac rams a console television pyramid that looks like a squad of cyborg cheerleaders. The spectacular crash is a hilarious representation of the combustibility of two of the most stalwart status symbols of the West. Are they merely disposable artifacts of occidental culture; are their combined properties the end of culture; or are they the Big Bang all over again with all of its unimaginable possibilities? If it is the Big Bang initiated by the artist's anarchist gesture, you get a sense of the space that Lorna Roth's fine work traverses. Her multidisciplinary study of the development of First Peoples broadcasting in Canada is a compelling story of Native perseverance, innovation, will, and