

Looking for Indians: Indigenous People & the Environment

Suggested Articles & Texts on Traditional Indigenous Knowledge and Decolonizing Pedagogies for Fall 2009

ARTICLES

Augustine, Stephen J.

“Traditional Aboriginal Knowledge and Science Versus Occidental Science” Paper for the Biodiversity Convention Office of Environment Canada, October 1997

Abstract: Stephen Augustine is a Hereditary Chief on the Mi’kmaq Grand Council, a Curator of Ethnology at the Canadian Museum of Civilization, and a member of the Premier’s Round Table on Environmental and Sustainable Development in New Brunswick. The intent of this paper is to stimulate enlightened discussion about the definition, mechanisms and purpose of traditional knowledge (TK) and occidental science. It aims to provide both a clearer understanding of TK from an Aboriginal perspective and a more objective view of modern science. At best, it will create a renewed approach to the environment—and possibly combine the best of both sources of knowledge—by helping to forge a new sensitivity to Native American world views.

Demetriou, Cynthia

“Beyond the Degree Checklist: What’s the Real Point of College?” in *About Campus*, 12(4):27-29 September-October 2007

Abstract: Natasha is a nursing student with a 4.0 grade point average, a first-generation East Indian American, and the first woman in her family to go to college. Lugging a twenty-five-pound book bag of texts that cause her slight frame to slump forward under the weight, she carries a far heavier burden of familial expectation and pride. She has expressed fears of wasting her family’s hard-earned money if she is unsuccessful in school or if she makes the wrong academic decisions. Natasha’s challenges are shared by students on college campuses across the country. She represents many of today’s students and their families, who see college course selection as the checking off of items on a to-do list. These students often feel pressure to take only required courses in order to graduate within four years and minimize tuition costs. In this article, the author describes the challenge that she faces with Natasha, which is a challenge that educators face with the majority of students in college today: showing the value of a liberal arts education and, particularly, conveying how nonrequired courses enhance learning by creating connections between diverse subjects and by encouraging personal growth.

Kidwell, Clara Sue

“American Indian Studies: Intellectual Navel Gazing or Academic Discipline?” in *American Indian Quarterly*, 33(1):1-17 Winter 2009

Abstract: The academic field of Native American/American Indian studies (NAS/AIS) has been and largely remains a product of political forces at the national level and now at the tribal level. The very recognition of American Indians as a unique group by the U.S. government is a political statement of survival. In this article, the author revisits the political dimensions of NAS/AIS. The underlying theoretical question in Native American studies is, What constitutes truly indigenous knowledge? Its corollaries are, What constitutes Native American identity in contemporary society? Who is an Indian? These questions are both political and epistemological ones. If American Indians constitute populations with distinctive cultures and values and epistemologies that can be studied, what are those distinguishing characteristics? Indians as cultural groups have interacted with foreign cultures since the sixteenth century. They have been subject to policies of the U.S. government designed to assimilate them into American society. What is their basis for distinctiveness in contemporary society? In the case of Native American studies, scholars have challenged the basic premises of other disciplines such as history and anthropology, but the most significant theoretical questions remain. What characterizes the distinctiveness of Native American identity? Why study Indians?

King, C. Richard

“Teaching Intolerance: Anti-Indian Imagery, Racial Politics, and (Anti)Racist Pedagogy” in *Review of Education, Pedagogy & Cultural Studies*, 30(5):420-436 November 2008

Abstract: In this article, the author explored the increasingly complex articulations of race and education associated with Native American mascots and the struggles over them. The author demonstrates that cultural symbols not only (mis)educate, strengthening racial ideologies and hierarchies, but that they also play a fundamental role in the creation of hostile learning environments. Moreover, the author suggests that rhetoric about education and learning clears a space to depoliticize and re-racialize signifying practices.

Pember, Mary Annette

“Diversifying Pedagogy” in *Diverse: Issues in Higher Education*, 25(5):18-20 April 2008

Abstract: Indigenous or native ways of knowing, indigenous knowledge, indigenous science, traditional ecological knowledge are terms that have been making their way out of tribal colleges and into mainstream universities in recent years. According to Dr. Dawn Adrian Adams, Choctaw, founder of Tapestry Institute, these terms refer to two separate, yet intertwined endeavors, epistemology or types of knowledge and pedagogy, methods of teaching and learning. Indigenous ways of knowing (IWOK) often uses stories to engage learners and emphasizes the notion of community in the process. Strictly speaking, IWOK is focused on the process of learning rather than the outcome and emphasizes the holistic understanding of a topic or situation. Critics of such knowledge systems claim that they conflict with the positivist heritage of science. However, those working within indigenous knowledge frameworks maintain that there are far more commonalities with Western science than differences. IWOK proponents claim that this learning style helps all students as they face an increasingly multicultural and complex world. The process of IWOK, Adams claims, changes the way one looks at the world and our relationship in it. The way an indigenous person looks at the world includes the full range of understanding and response; part of the knowing is how one responds. IWOK encourages students to develop inner authority and helps them to connect the dots and relate to other information.

Schweninger, Lee

“Claiming Europe: Native American Literary Responses to the Old World” in *American Indian Culture and Research Journal*, 27(2):61-76 2003

Abstract: In Osage writer Carter Revard's short story, "Report to the Nation: Claiming Europe," the narrator claims much of England, France, Spain, Italy, and Greece for the Osage Nation. After asserting his claim, the narrator questions whether or not the French actually understood that their country therefore belonged to the Osage Nation. When he talks of the Osage people actually settling in Europe, he echoes the words of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century European colonists in the New World. In a sense, then, Revard as a Native conquistador leads the way into Europe. He is followed by Gerald Vizenor ("Heirs of Columbus", 1991), James Welch ("The Heartsong of Charging Elk", 2000), Leslie Marmon Silko ("Gardens in the Dunes", 1999), and Louise Erdrich ("The Master Butcher's Singing Club", 2002). All four well-known authors send their characters to Europe, compelling the former colonial powers to deal with this insurgence of Native writers and characters.... Despite (or perhaps because of) critical attention to a character's coming to terms with his or her Native American place and identity, scholars have paid relatively little attention to writers and characters investigating Europe or their European heritage. Similarly, only a handful of critics and/or authors have addressed the issue of Native American literary responses to being in Europe ... By claiming Europe, this community of well-established and by-now-canonized writers has chosen to challenge mainstream conceptions of what constitutes Indian literature by offering Native American critiques of Europe. They're writing from positions of privilege and choice--and thus of power. By defying cultural and historical roles imposed by the dominant culture they are emancipating themselves. To choose to claim or not to claim a European heritage is a declaration of sovereignty and a form of liberation that these authors are prepared to make.

Smith, Linda Tuhiwai

“Building a Research Agenda for Indigenous Epistemologies and Education” in *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 36(1):93-95 March 2005

Abstract: One emergent issue in relation to research on Indigenous epistemologies and education concerns the extent to which Indigenous epistemologies lead to new kinds of educational experiences and outcomes and pose new research questions. This commentary responds to the sense of limits and possibilities for Indigenous education that are raised by the research in this theme issue, and suggests that there are indeed new questions to be asked and answered through research.

Van Eijck, Michiel; Roth, Wolff-Michael

“Keeping the Local Local: Recalibrating the Status of Science and Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) in Education” in *Science Education*, 91(6):926-947 November 2007

Abstract: The debate on the status of traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) in science curricula is currently centered on a juxtaposition of two incompatible frameworks: multiculturalism and universalism. The aim of this paper is to establish a framework that overcomes this opposition between multiculturalism and universalism in science education, so that they become but one-sided expressions of an integrated unit. To be able to do so, we abandon the concept of "truth." Instead, we adopt a contemporary epistemology that (a) entails both the cultural and material aspects of human, intersubjective reality; (b) concerns the usefulness of knowledge; and (c) highlights the dynamic, heterogeneous, and plural nature of products of human being and understanding. Drawing on narratives of scientists and aboriginal people explaining a comparable natural phenomenon (a salmon run), we show that both TEK and scientific knowledge, though simultaneously available, are incommensurable and irreducible to each other, as are the different processes of knowledge construction/ evolution inherent to the constituting artifacts. Drawing on social studies of science, we point out that the transcendent nature of scientific knowledge implies absence of local heterogeneity, dynamic, and plurality making it useless in local contexts other than itself. We discuss the educational implications of this recalibration.

Wane, Njoki Nathani

“Mapping the Field of Indigenous Knowledges in Anti-Colonial Discourse: A Transformative Journey in Education” in *Race, Ethnicity and Education*, 11(2):183-197 July 2008

Abstract: This paper interrogates Indigenous knowledge and practices a crucial form of anti-colonial resistance. It aims to capture the fluidity between the past and present, recognizing that the former cannot be quarantined from the latter. In this exploratory discussion, I argue that Indigenous knowledge is a living experience that is informed by ancestral voices. Within this context, I examine anti-colonial discourses as articulated by scholars in the 1960s and as they are taken up today. Discourses are ways of referring to, or constructing knowledge about, a particular topic, practice, social activity or institutional site in society. In doing so, I aim to share with the reader my struggle with colonial education and to elicit a dialogue on questions about how we, individually and collectively, can disrupt the entrenchment of this type of education. These questions include: How did colonial systems of education disrupt the spiritual and cultural beliefs and traditional ways of life of African peoples? How have colonized peoples, especially African women, resisted, and how do they continue to resist, colonial education? And how can the engagement of Indigenous Knowledge transform pedagogical approaches, curriculum, and learning in the academy? In exploring these questions, I will examine the concept of knowledge production: who controls knowledge and whose knowledge is valid. My reflections are grounded in my experiences as an African woman caught between a European education system and a traditional knowledge base.

TEXTS

Taiake Alfred. *Wasáse: Indigenous Pathways of Action and Freedom*. Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Broadview Press Ltd. 2005.

Review: What would a politics of contention rooted in an anarcho-indigenous perspective look like? What would such a political philosophy even mean? ... Alfred undertakes the provocative, challenging, and hopeful task of envisioning and articulating just such a politics and in what follows I will attempt to do justice to this vision in a spirit of solidarity and constructive engagement. As Alfred explains, "Wasáse" is a Rotinoshonni (Six Nations) war ritual, the Thunder Dance (2005, 19). In the context in which he uses it, "Wasáse" is a new way of thinking about an Indigenous politics of contention and resurgence. This radically contentious and hopeful spirit is what animates Alfred's text and his vision of socio-political struggle and possibility. Wasáse is a challenging and provocative text, its aims are no less than the development of a politics of contention rooted in the regeneration and resurgence of Onkwehonwe (first peoples) existences and the destruction of colonial realities and imperial desires... As Alfred notes in his opening pages, "If non-indigenous readers are capable of listening, they will learn from these shared words, and they will discover that while we are envisioning a new relationship between Onkwehonwe and the land, we are at the same time offering a decolonized alternative to the Settler society by inviting them to share our vision of respect and peaceful coexistence" (ibid., 35). The de-centering of the so often assumed normative subject (white, male, heterosexual) makes this text experientially as well as politically challenging and revelatory – can non-Indigenous but politically sympathetic individuals learn to listen and value radically different perspectives that challenge the very foundations of our contemporary social existences, particularly in the Americas? More importantly, can we find ways to take up Alfred's offer and move toward building new relationships not premised on colonial histories and domination and not built upon a politics which privileges Euroamerican traditions (often without even acknowledging that there might be other traditions)? The fact that engaging with this text generates these questions in the attentive reader is itself a success I believe.

From review by Khasnabish in *Politics and Culture*, on-line at: <http://aspen.conncoll.edu/politicsandculture/printer_page.cfm?key=519>.

Gregory Cajete. *Native Science: Natural Laws of Interdependence*. Santa Fe, NM: Clear Light Publishers 2000.

Description: Cajete "tells the story" of Indigenous science as a way of understanding, experiencing, and feeling the natural world. He points to parallels and differences between the paradigms of Indigenous science and Western science, with special emphasis on environmental/ecological studies. After discussing philosophical foundations, Cajete addresses such topics as history and myth, primal elements, social ecology, animals in myth and reality, plants and human health, and cosmology and astronomy. In the Indigenous view, we human observers need to live in a manner that is based on an understanding that all things are interconnected, that we are in no way separate from the world and its creatures and natural forces. Because all creatures and forces are related and thus bear responsibility to and for one another, all are co-creators... Europeans arrived on the American continent, but they did not listen to the people who had lived for millennia in spiritual and physical harmony with this land. In a time of global environmental degradation, the science and worldview of Indigenous people offers perspectives and irreplaceable knowledge that suggest a possible alternative to the technology-driven processes that threaten the survival of us all. Excerpt: "One of the most fundamental areas in which Indigenous science and Western science really differ is in the importance of spirit in life and human endeavor in general, and even whether spirit exists. According to the Indigenous view, spirit is that intangible energy or force that affects everything, that causes things to happen, and is understood as being the field in which events occur. The advent of quantum physics and subsequent developments in astrophysics have resulted in knowledge of how energy unfolds in space and time, opening the door to an understanding that parallels the Native view of spirit. Western science has at least begun to use the same kinds of metaphors."

From catalogue description on-line at: <http://www.clearlightbooks.com/detail.asp?PRODUCT_ID=1574160419>.

bell hooks. *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*. New York, NY: Routledge Press 1994.

Review: Rereading bell hooks' *Teaching to Transgress* jarred Karl into reflecting how little progress has been made in transforming higher education since his days as a graduate student in educational psychology where he read Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Herb Kohl's *36 Children*, John Dewey's *Education and Experience* and so many other books that hooks refers to...hooks proposes that there is a serious crisis in education. She states that "Students often do not want to learn and teachers do not want to teach." Student motivation (or lack thereof) is a common comment and concern of the faculty we work with. hooks is optimistic and passionate as indicated in the following: "The classroom remains the most radical space of possibility in the academy... With these essays, I add my voice to the collective call for renewal and rejuvenation in our teaching practices... I celebrate teaching that enables transgressions movement against and beyond boundaries. It is a movement which makes education the practice of freedom.(p. 12)." *Teaching to Transgress* covers a lot of territory, beginning with an essay on Engaged Pedagogy. hooks adopts Thich Nhat Hanh's philosophy of engaged Buddhism, the focus on practice in conjunction with contemplation, and notes its similarity to Freire's emphasis on "praxis"-action and reflection upon the world in order to change it. ...In chapter 3, *Embracing Change: Teaching in a Multicultural World*, hooks advocates that "Making the classroom a democratic setting where everyone feels a responsibility to contribute is a central goal of transformative pedagogy (p. 39)." She claims that students are much more willing to surrender their dependency on the banking system of education than are faculty...bell hooks is one of the clearest theorists about race as it impacts education at all levels within American society. She lets no one escape unchallenged about the barrenness that lies at the heart of a received educational system or the peril that accompanies resistance to changing pedagogical strategy to accommodate the realities of today's student body and to respond to 100 years of educational research about what makes for effective education.

From review by Karl A. Smith and Toni A. McNaron, on-line at: <http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3886/is_200007/ai_n8907517/>.

Duncan Ivison, Paul Patton, and Will Sanders, eds. *Political Theory and the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. London: Cambridge University Press. 2001.

Description: This book focuses on the problem of justice for indigenous peoples and the ways in which this poses key questions for political theory: the nature of sovereignty, the grounds of national identity and the limits of democratic theory. It includes chapters by leading political theorists and indigenous scholars from Australia, Aotearoa/New Zealand, Canada and the United States. One of the strengths of this book is the manner in which it shows how the different historical circumstances of colonization in these countries nevertheless raise common problems and questions for contemporary political theory. It examines ways in which political theory has contributed to the past subjugation and continuing disadvantage faced by indigenous peoples, while also seeking to identify resources in contemporary political thought that can assist the 'decolonisation' of relations between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples...Approaches the issue of Aboriginal rights from the perspective of key issues in contemporary political theory...Brings together leading contemporary political theorists...Focuses on three key concepts: sovereignty, identity, democracy and the nation. "In a short review I can only hint at the riches of a book that both exhibits and challenges the many different ways that we can reflect theoretically on the indigenous project to assert and review their jurisdictions. For thinking about Australia, it offers the stimuli of theory and of comparative history. The standard of writing is clear throughout, and the editors' introduction offers a clear view, not binding on any reader, of its main concerns." Tim Rose, Centre of Aboriginal Economic Policy Research... "This is a thought-provoking volume ... Its stated objective is to foster an 'intercultural conversation between indigenous and non-indigenous theorists' and in this regard it is a model for others to follow." *Contemporary Political Theory*.

From catalogue description on-line at: <<http://www.cambridge.org/uk/catalogue/catalogue.asp?isbn=0521779375>>.

David Maybury-Lewis. *Indigenous Peoples, Ethnic Groups, and the State*. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon. 1997.

Review: A very timely book on an extremely important and much misunderstood topic: the nature and relations of ethnic groups and the disastrous political processes that are sometimes set into motion between such groups within larger polities. He writes candidly about past genocides in the Americas and elsewhere that have left their conflicted legacies of subordinate and marginalized indigenous peoples in many contemporary states, not only the US. He reviews the relations of ethnic groups within large multiethnic states, especially the former Soviet Union, China, Indonesia, and Spain, and tries to extract some lessons from their various policies of dominance and coexistence. He looks closely at two contemporary tragedies in genocide and ethnic cleansing in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia. Finally, he clarifies concepts and issues regarding statehood, nationhood, and cultural coexistence... The widely held idea that inter-ethnic violence is somehow an expression of peoples' "primordial" identities and passions is soundly rebutted: in each case, he finds that such outbreaks have approximate and specific historical causes and are not, at least not initially, expressions of popular will or desire. Other simplistic and pernicious ideas are similarly undermined by the cumulative discussion of clearly analyzed materials. Although the background and context for ethnic conflicts are carefully laid out, the processes that precipitate the violence are less clearly delineated.

From review by Frederik Barth, *Cultural Survival Quarterly* 21.3 (Fall 1997). On-line at: <<http://www.culturalsurvival.org/ourpublications/csq/article/book-review-indigenous-peoples-ethnic-groups-and-state>>.

Devon A. Mihesuah. *American Indians: Stereotypes & Realities*. Atlanta, GA: Clarity 1996.

Review: Published in 1996, Mihesuah's book, *American Indians: Stereotypes & Realities* has, fortunately, been reprinted several times. Studying its listings in WorldCat, it looks like universities throughout the country have the book, but, not many public or school libraries. I urge you to get a copy for your library. It is a very reader-friendly book and will help teachers, librarians, and parents spot stereotypes and counter them in their conversations with children and adults. And, it will be helpful to, in book selection and lesson planning. In her Introduction, Mihesuah notes that old movies such as *The Searchers*, *The Unforgiven*, and *White Comanche* were filled with blatant racism, but more recent films such as *Dances With Wolves* miss the mark, too. Specifically, she says this about *Dances With Wolves*: "...the Lakotas, a tribe popular among hobbyists and New Agers, are positively portrayed as people with human emotions, values, and spirituality, whereas Pawnees, whose culture is no less humane than that of the Lakotas, were insultingly characterized as barbaric. As so few movies portray Indians in their current circumstances, a movie so widely popular as this one tends to perpetuate the image of Indians as living in the world of the past, and however inadvertently, reinforces the belief that all Indians were just like the Lakotas of the northern Plains" (p. 10).

From review by Debbie Reese, on her blog *American Indians in Children's Literature: Critical Perspectives of Indigenous Peoples in Children's Books, the School Curriculum, Popular Culture, and Society-at-Large*. On-line at: <<http://americanindiansinchildrensliterature.blogspot.com/2007/12/devon-mihesuahs-american-indians.html>>.

Also see: Encyclopedia Smithsonian. *Native Americans: Stereotype vs. Reality*, on-line at: <http://www.si.edu/encyclopedia_Si/nmai/naster.htm>.

Thomas C. Patterson. *Inventing Western Civilization*. New York, NY: Monthly Review Press 1997.

Description: Drawing on his extensive knowledge of early societies, Thomas C. Patterson shows how class, sexism, and racism have been integral to the appearance of "civilized" societies in Western Europe. He lays out clearly and simply how civilization, with its designs of "civilizing" and "being civilized," has been closely tied to the rise of capitalism in Western Europe and the development of social classes.

From catalogue description on-line at: <<http://search.barnesandnoble.com/Inventing-Western-Civilization/Thomas-C-Patterson/e/9780853459613>>

Linda Tuhiwai Smith. *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. London: Zed Books and New Zealand: University of Otago Press 1999.

Description: From the vantage point of the colonized, the term 'research' is inextricably linked with European colonialism; the ways in which scientific research has been implicated in the worst excesses of imperialism remains a powerful remembered history for many of the world's colonized peoples. Here, an indigenous researcher issues a clarion call for the decolonization of research methods. The book is divided into two parts. In the first, the author critically examines the historical and philosophical base of Western research. Extending the work of Foucault, she explores the intersections of imperialism, knowledge and research, and the different ways in which imperialism is embedded in disciplines of knowledge and methodologies as 'regimes of truth'. Providing a history of knowledge from the Enlightenment to Postcoloniality, she also discusses the fate of concepts such as 'discovery', 'claiming' and 'naming' through which the west has incorporated and continues to incorporate the indigenous world within its own web. The second part of the book meets the urgent need for people who are carrying out their own research projects, for literature which validates their frustrations in dealing with various western paradigms, academic traditions and methodologies, which continue to position the indigenous as 'Other'. In setting an agenda for planning and implementing indigenous research, the author shows how such programmes are part of the wider project of reclaiming control over indigenous ways of knowing and being...this book also sets a standard for truly emancipatory research. It brilliantly demonstrates that 'when indigenous peoples become the researchers and not merely the researched, the activity of research is transformed.'

From catalogue description on-line at: <<http://www.palgrave-usa.com/Catalog/product.aspx?isbn=1856496244>>.

Karen C. Swisher and John W. Tippeconnic, eds. *Next Steps: Research and Practices to Advance American Indian Education*. Charlestown, WV: Clearinghouse on Education 1999.

Review: *Next Steps* provides essential and current information for not only students in teacher education programs but anyone concerned about the welfare of American Indian children...The book has four parts: The Past and Present Foundations of Indian Education; Curriculum Issues, Thoughts and Practice; The College and University Experience; and The Next Steps...The writings of fourteen American Indian scholars are featured...Unlike most information on American Indian education, the book is enriched with chapters on social work and federal education case law and legislation. To reinforce this holistic approach, Swisher and Tippeconnic, in their chapter "Research to Support Improved Practice in Indian Education," note that "Schooling is often viewed as separate from other institutions that impact us daily. More connections need to be made between schooling and the other critical settings in daily life."(p. 305) This book does exactly that by drawing together the various connections associated with contemporary American Indian education.

From review by Kathryn D. Manuelito. *Journal of American Indian Education*. Vol. 38 No. 2 Winter 1999.

Paulo Freire and Donaldo Macedo. 1997. *Ideology Matters*. Rowan and Littlefield.

Abstract: With the fall of the Berlin Wall many conservatives proclaimed the end of ideology. Others, like Boston University President John Silber, publicly pride themselves for keeping ideology out of the university. In *Ideology Matters*, Paulo Freire and Donaldo Macedo challenge the denial of ideology in the construction of race, gender, ethnicity, class, language, and other derisive social categories. Refusals to acknowledge the central role of ideology are an ideological act in themselves, part of a web of lies that not only distorts reality but also robs individuals of the necessary critical tools to become full participants in our fragile democracy. Discussing social complexities at the end of this century, including ethnic cleansing, culture wars, hegemony, human sufferings, and intensified xenophobia, Freire and Macedo explain why it is essential that we gain a nuanced understanding of how ideology underlies all social and political discourse and actions. Consequently, it is imperative that we appreciate what it means to educate for critical citizenry in the ever increasing multiracial and multi-cultural world of the twenty-first century.

From catalogue description on-line at: <<http://www.politicos.co.uk/books/192486/Paulo-Freire-and-Donaldo-Macedo/Ideology-Matters/>>.