

Michael Robert Evans. *Isuma: Inuit Video Art* (Montreal/Kingston: McGill-Queen's, 2008).

Review by Willow Scobie, University of Ottawa

Michael Robert Evans' *Isuma: Inuit Video Art* is a substantial contribution to analyses of indigenous media in general and to studies of Isuma Productions in particular. It details the independent production house's filmmaking process, its films' content and language, and its role as an employer and training facilitator in and around Igloolik. Evans profiles three of Isuma's video artists—Zacharias Kunuk, Norman Cohn, and Paulossie Qulitalik (he missed a chance to interview Isuma's fourth founding artist, Paul Apak Angilirq, who died in 1998)—and traces each one's trajectory into and through filmmaking. From Evans we gain insight into some of the limits of working with the Inuit Broadcasting Corporation (IBC), and learn about Isuma's negotiations with institutional cultural production agencies, such as Telefilm Canada. More broadly, the author identifies Inuit video art as an emergent and important phenomenon, within both the context of the production of art and the politics of Arctic people's cultural preservation efforts.

Evans' analysis stems from ethnographic work (he spent nine months in Igloolik) that involved in-depth, formal interviews with each artist, as well as more informal conversations. He also describes his reading of the films, from which he drew symbolic and narrative conclusions. Based on this research, Evans locates Inuit video art, first and foremost, as a communicative tool for cultural expression, but also argues that there is a secondary objective—to archive traditional Inuit knowledge. As an art form, video has a capacity to reveal through aesthetic context and by re-telling events, stories, and histories.

Evans poses four questions: How do the Isuma videographers use, negotiate, and manipulate cultural symbols to tell stories from an Inuit perspective? How do the videographers bring together the realms of visual art, narrative, material culture, and folk life? How do they work in harmony with facets of modern Inuit culture? And, finally, how do their videos contribute to a dialogue about Inuit culture and its role in the Arctic, Canada, and the world?

Evans is an attentive and descriptive scholar, and answers the first three questions in satisfying detail. As a reader, however, I wanted him to elaborate further on the fourth theme, concerning a dialogue about Inuit culture, particularly with so many new voices being added to Inuit and

other indigenous filmmaking. Although it appeared after the preparation of Evans' book, the launch of the Isuma.tv website is just one component of a quickly transforming landscape of Inuit- and indigenous-produced media in the context of Web 2.0.

As Evans makes clear, Isuma is one of a few independent Inuit voices in the domain of video art production. Amidst other important contributions to a growing literature that documents these activities and the relationships in which they are embedded, scholars are identifying aspects of a multi-vocal participation in the intersection between contemporary Inuit art and politics.

An under-theorized aspect of Evans' project is the depiction of historical periods in Isuma's films. Beyond the aesthetic value of retrieving and showing historical events and conditions of everyday life, what is the ontological significance of bringing the past into the present? Isuma's films play a part in the negotiation of Inuit culture and, as Santo (2004) argues, connect contemporary audiences to a period before colonialism transformed everyday lives in the Arctic. This can reify again the experience of freedom for the Inuit. Further research is demanded into the impact of these films on the ontological narratives that comprise being and becoming Inuk.

Someone once recounted to me the experience of being at an Arctic community showing of an Isuma film. A few minutes into the film, some young people sitting in the front rows in the community centre yelled, "Boring!" Who is in Isuma's audience, what kinds of conversations are happening there, and what meanings are derived from Isuma's projects (both film and web-based)? By looking across all generations, particularly Inuit children, youth, and young adults who are inundated with video games, television and American films, we see that ontological negotiations have become especially complex in a context where one is more familiar with the intimate details of Hollywood actors than one's own people and history. As Evans points out, Isuma Productions' films bring Inuktitut, Inuit stories, and thus Inuit voices to the screen and web. But we also want to know, who is watching and listening, and how is independent Inuit video art transforming ontological narratives in the North?

### *Reference*

Santo, Avi. (2004). Nunavut: Inuit television and cultural citizenship. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 7(4): 379–397.

Thomas Flanagan, Christopher Alcantara, and André Le Dressay. *Beyond the Indian Act: Restoring Aboriginal Property Rights* (Montreal / Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010).

Review by Brian Egan, University of Victoria

In *Beyond the Indian Act*, Thomas Flanagan, Chris Alcantara, and André Le Dressay argue that existing landholding systems on Indian reserves in Canada are dysfunctional and hinder economic and social progress in Aboriginal communities. The reform of these property systems, it follows, is critical to facilitating Aboriginal peoples' "escape" from their current state of deprivation and dependence. What Aboriginal people need, they assert, is an opportunity to draw upon the capital "locked up" in existing landholdings in order to spur economic development and wealth creation. The establishment of secure individual private property on reserves, in the form of land held in fee simple title, is seen as the key to unlocking this capital. The authors propose a new federal law to make this possible.

The book begins with a brief account of Aboriginal property rights and how these have changed over time. Prior to the arrival of Europeans, the authors argue, Aboriginal peoples held land in different forms, including as individual private property. However, colonial and Canadian authorities failed to properly recognize Aboriginal landholding systems, seeing Indigenous peoples as having no property at all or as holding all property in common, and encouraged the adoption of Western forms of individual property on Indian reserves. At the same time, to protect Aboriginal lands from settler alienation, the Crown retained underlying title of Indian reserves. The result, the authors contend, is that current property systems on reserves are anachronistic, neither politically democratic nor economically efficient.

Of particular concern here are customary property rights, the most common form of private landholding on Indian reserves in Canada. Lacking both formality and legal recognition, Flanagan et al. argue, these landholdings are subject to the vagaries of local band governance and politics, and thus provide little security of tenure. Customary property systems, which often reflect long-standing local understandings of individual and small group (e.g., family) rights to land, are described as "probably the least economically efficient property rights system available to aboriginal peoples in Canada," (p. 90) and, as such, are clearly the authors' prime target for reform. The proposed new law—the First

Nations Property Ownership Act—is designed to allow for the transformation of such problematic properties into secure fee simple title. Aware of the disastrous effects of previous attempts to privatize Aboriginal lands, the authors suggest that this new law should be enabling, allowing Aboriginal communities to opt in on a voluntary basis, and that underlying (or reversionary) title to fee simple lands on Indian reserves be held by the First Nation.

Consistent with the authors' previous work on Aboriginal property, *Beyond the Indian Act* draws on a familiar set of liberal ideas and principles.<sup>1</sup> Foremost is the emphasis on individual private property as the ideal vehicle for social and economic advancement in Aboriginal communities. While there is a nod to the value of other forms of property in Aboriginal communities, such as customary and collective landholdings, these are not explored in any depth. Nor is there any serious consideration of the limitations and drawbacks of individual private property in this context.

The selective historical narrative provided by Flanagan et al. seeks to represent the adoption of fee simple title on Indian reserves as somehow natural and culturally appropriate. Because First Nations have always had private property, they argue, the Aboriginal subject is not the stereotypical “primitive communist of Marxist fantasy,” but more closely resembles “the worker, owner, and investor of the modern global economy” (p. 41). Introducing fee simple to Indian reserves, then, constitutes “restoring Aboriginal property rights,” and the authors construct their own idealized subject, the Aboriginal “market hero” who pulls his community out of misery through the mobilization of market forces. Equally problematic is the lack any serious engagement with colonial histories of dispossession and marginalization, and how these continue to shape life and property in Aboriginal communities. This absence is particularly glaring in a book that is centrally concerned with Aboriginal peoples and property. Western property law was a key tool in the dispossession process and the denial of Aboriginal property rights was, and remains, key to the establishment of Canada as a modern settler state.<sup>2</sup>

By passing over such troubling histories, the authors largely limit consideration of Aboriginal property reform to Indian reserves, which

1 T. Flanagan and C. Alcantara, *Individual Property Rights on Canadian Indian Reserves* (Vancouver: The Fraser Institute, 2002).

2 C. Harris, “How Did Colonialism Dispossession? Comments from an Edge of Empire,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 94 (2004): 165–182.

constitute only a small portion of Aboriginal peoples' ancestral territories. The authors downplay ongoing Aboriginal efforts to expand their land and resource base, such as through modern treaty making, arguing that such "comprehensive" strategies are expensive, time-consuming, and subject to "public concerns." Furthermore, they conclude, such strategies fail to provide the same kinds of ingredients for economic success that can be found in "incremental" approaches, such as the adoption of private property regimes. The authors fail to consider that comprehensive approaches like treaty making are so difficult in large part because federal and provincial governments make them so, wishing to limit discussion of land reform within narrow spatial limits.

While the option of establishing fee simple title will no doubt be attractive to a number of Aboriginal groups, particularly those holding land in or near urban areas, serious concerns have been raised about the proposal advanced by Flanagan et al. Of central concern is the possible sell-off of what little land Aboriginal communities currently possess, as impoverished communities seek to meet short-term material needs. The retention of some form of underlying title in such cases would be of little comfort. Another concern is that the introduction of fee simple may erode collective forms of property, such as Aboriginal title, which provide important political leverage for Aboriginal groups.<sup>3</sup> More broadly, as Pamela Palmater notes, *Beyond the Indian Act* continues to imply that the only way forward for Aboriginal peoples is to assimilate into the cultural, political, and economic mainstream of Canadian society.<sup>4</sup>

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Calvin Helin. *Dances with Dependency: Out of Poverty through Self-Reliance* (Woodland Hills, CA: Ravencrest Publishing, 2008).

Review by Liam Haggarty

Calvin Helin's *Dances with Dependency* is an ambitious attempt to disentangle the issue of Aboriginal welfare dependency in North America. Citing the negatives effects of European colonialism, and the destructive

3 E. Feltes and N. Manuel, "World Bank Darling Promotes Privatization of Reserves," *The Dominion*, 3 November 2010, <<http://www.dominionpaper.ca/articles/3715>>

4 P. Palmater, "Opportunity or Temptation?" *Literary Review of Canada*, April 2010, <<http://reviewcanada.ca/reviews/2010/04/01/opportunity-or-temptation/>>

legacy of the “welfare trap,” Helin advocates a new course of action predicated on economic growth that may appeal to some members of both the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal business community. However, the book’s fragile scholarship seriously detracts from its usefulness, thereby potentially undermining its positive message that stresses a need for Aboriginal economic independence.

Published in 2006 with the subtitle *Indigenous Success Through Self-Reliance*, this second edition provides additional contextual information about United States reservation communities. Comprised of sixteen chapters and a preface, it is organized into five sections. The first and second sections introduce readers to the author, his family, and his Tsimshian homeland on British Columbia’s northwest coast, and help contextualize why he wrote the book. As Chapter Two demonstrates, however, there is a practical purpose to his writing. Utilizing statistics, graphs, and other quantitative evidence, Helin warns of an impending “demographic tsunami” that has the potential to “swamp the finances of America” (p. 49). His argument is this: combined with the retirement of Baby Boomers and a rapidly expanding Aboriginal population who are increasingly reliant on welfare and other transfer payments, Canada and the U.S. face a significant fiscal threat unless Aboriginal welfare dependency is terminated. To do so, Helin calls on Aboriginal leaders to integrate their communities economically with mainstream Canada so as to generate localized wealth and regain their lost independence (p. 39).

Sections Three and Four describe the “waves” that have preceded the impending tsunami. Based on anthropological and historical analyses of “traditional” Aboriginal society, politics, philosophy, religion, and economics, Helin argues for a return to a pre-contact Aboriginal political economy of self-reliance that he describes as the “golden age” of Aboriginal history (p. 255). This golden age ended with the arrival of Europeans, who, in addition to introducing diseases, implemented restrictive government policies and laws, and developed residential schools and other oppressive measures that “completely undermined the ability of Aboriginal people to be economically self-reliant” (p. 122). This was the beginning of widespread Aboriginal welfare dependency, which expanded rapidly during the twentieth century as the “welfare trap,” or third wave, that ensnared entire communities. Accordingly, First Nations, lacking a private sector, became wholly reliant on federal transfer payments for their localized wealth, leading to the emergence of a “culture of expectancy” that promoted laziness, entitlement, envy, and jealousy. Helin argues that

these developments led to soaring rates of suicide, disease, incarceration, unemployment, and other social pathologies.

The fifth and longest section focuses on ending the welfare trap, something that will not be easy. As Helin notes, Aboriginal people, and their leaders in particular, must stop dwelling on past injustices and start focusing on development. Aboriginal people must end the welfare trap if they are to combat the social, political, and economic problems plaguing their communities. In doing so they must exploit current assets, such as land, access to capital, and a deep labour pool, to take advantage of recent policy changes and court rulings. Citing successful Aboriginal-run businesses in Canada, the U.S., and New Zealand, Helin calls for greater emphasis on education, more resources for off-reserve Aboriginal people, and, above all, sweeping changes to Aboriginal governance so as to foster greater accountability, self-discipline, and ethical leadership. This, in the author's opinion, will promote economic growth through foreign investment, partnership with industry, and economic integration into mainstream Canada, thus enabling North American Aboriginal people to reclaim the economic independence and self-reliance once characteristic of their cultures.

*Dances with Dependency's* original edition generated positive reviews, and a second printing suggests that Helin's message has been well-received, especially in business circles. For many, the solutions he advocates may prove inspiring, even empowering. The book's shortcomings, however, markedly compromise its aims. Some of these are relatively minor, such as Helin's extensive use of quotes drawn from such disparate sources as Sun-Tzu, Winston Churchill, Martin Luther King Jr., and *Alice in Wonderland's* Cheshire Cat. These passages do little to strengthen his argument. Numerous observations that critique reserve politics soon become redundant, and the U.S. data tagged on at the end of each chapter are poorly integrated into the main text.

Other problems are more serious. Helin's haphazard multidisciplinary approach lacks a coherent methodology. Similarly, parts of Helin's discussion that examine the history of North American Aboriginal groups and European colonialism fail to engage relevant scholarship. Moreover, despite conceding cultural heterogeneity, Helin's narrative consistently stresses the similarity of Aboriginal experiences, which, in his mind, encourage singular strategies to combat dependency despite cultural and regional variances. The solutions themselves, namely the economic integration/assimilation of Aboriginal people into mainstream Canada,

are not critically analyzed. Although current governance and economic practices require reform, the social and cultural consequences of Helin's proposed changes require additional contemplation. Despite Helin's potentially positive message, these weaknesses significantly detract from the book's effectiveness and undermine its purpose.

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John Sutton Lutz. *Makuk: A New History of Aboriginal-White Relations* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008).

Review by Karine Renée Duhamel, University of Manitoba

John Sutton Lutz's *Makuk: A New History of Aboriginal-White Relations* is a valuable recent addition to the mostly understudied field of Aboriginal wage labour and economies, as Lutz attempts to deconstruct and engage Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal notions of trade and exchange in nineteenth- and twentieth-century British Columbia. The volume purports to offer a more general history of Aboriginal-white relations, but Lutz centres squarely on a relatively small area of British Columbia and studies two groups in particular, the Tsilhqot'in and the Straits Salish. For those familiar with the labour debate between Lutz and Robin Fisher, *Makuk* offers evidence that post gold-rush era Aboriginal people remain economically and socially relevant. Similar to Knight's seminal *Indians at Work*, *Makuk* reinforces the idea of continuity of cultural and economic exchange, as well as the notion of Aboriginal people as decisive interveners in their own economic history.

*Makuk* is divided into seven chapters, along with an introduction, conclusion, and postscript. Richly detailed and researched, Lutz's study surpasses traditional studies of economy by considering the relationship between wage labour, race, and community. Chapter One identifies how the first European settlers' preconceived notions about "Indians" led to an impoverished understanding of Aboriginal labour. Chapter Two introduces Lutz's broader argument of exchange, followed by a chapter that explores how the immigrant belief in what constituted proper work contributed to the creation of the enduring stereotype of the "lazy Indian." Chapters Four and Five rely on regional histories to tease out the importance of work-for-pay among the Tsilhqot'in and the Straits Salish, and the differences inherent in each system. The Straits Salish participated in the late

nineteenth-century wage economy, whereas the Tsilhqot'in aggressively rejected European incursion into their territory and economic lives. The Salish's economic and cultural fortunes thus became more intimately tied to those of the broader economy, while the Tsilhqot'in people successfully kept European immigrants away from the core of their territory into the 1920s. Chapters Six through Eight set these histories within the wider British Columbia context, while the conclusion examines the past thirty years of economic exchange and work-for-pay. The postscript provides some important insights into the continuing legacy of government policies and Aboriginal welfare dependence.

Lutz effectively utilizes oral histories, newspaper accounts, biographies, traditional manuscripts, and statistical information to detail the nature and extent of Aboriginal involvement in work-for-pay. The inclusion of archival photos, as well as anecdotes and quotes from First Nations individuals, helps draw the reader into what could otherwise be a fairly staid account of economic development. The inclusion of these sources is meant to shed light on the way that the government pushed Aboriginal people out of the capitalist wage economy by the 1950s, yet simultaneously curtailed their success in the subsistence economy.

Lutz argues that the shift in government policy that forced Aboriginal people out of the wage economy led to the relatively recent phenomenon of Aboriginal welfare dependency. At the same time, Lutz includes the welfare system in his concept of the modal economy, an idea that combines both traditional subsistence pursuits with modern opportunities and structures such as social assistance. This volume stresses the concept of Aboriginal agency and adaptation to changing circumstances, including the response to welfare. These ideas, in turn, contribute to what the author characterizes as the process of exchange, signified by an exchange of meanings as well as goods.

*Makuk* cannot be criticized on the basis of its impressive research, although readers might quibble with editorial and organizational choices. For example, Lutz's decision to place his theoretical linguistic and postmodern intervention apart from the rest of the book in Chapter Two makes it seem like a sidebar, but he himself maintains that the analytical strands are implicit to his overarching analysis. Some readers might also allege that the decision to place the microhistories ahead of the contextual chapters—going from micro to macro, rather than the other way around—takes away from the actions and motivations of the Straits Salish and of the Tsilhqot'in people. Others might also bristle at the implication

that the moditional economy's social assistance aspect is a choice rather than a necessity. Lutz could do more to ensure that the volume reflects its actual title by explaining more thoroughly how his ideas and arguments might extend beyond what is a rather narrow geographical range.

*Makuk* has many more strengths than weaknesses, however, including its use of innovative sources, its emphasis on Aboriginal action rather than reaction, and its focus on wage earning as a central element of Aboriginal identity and community development. Lutz's prose is vigorous and captivating, and his direct style of writing makes this work accessible to non-specialists, policy makers, and even the general public. Given that Aboriginal wage earners in Canada still make, on average, much less than non-Aboriginal Canadians, Lutz's project is a historical study with contemporary relevance, providing insight into a continuing phenomenon that is too often written off as simply a modern manifestation of "the lazy Indian."

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Herb Nabigon. *The Hollow Tree: Fighting Addiction with Traditional Native Healing* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006).

Review by Lynn Gehl

Indigenous people understand health and wellness through broader parameters that include spiritual and emotional elements. Within this broader understanding, role modeling and personal storytelling are harnessed as powerful ways of knowing and being well. It is within this tradition that Herb Nabigon's *The Hollow Tree: Fighting Addiction with Traditional Native Healing* offers a valuable contribution to indigenous knowledge and health. Nabigon, an Anishinaabe from northern Ontario, identifies European-introduced patriarchy as the perpetrator of his pain, and recounts for readers his journey from the depths of despair. His story serves as a path for others to follow.

Nabigon's story begins with reflections of being taken away from his parents and being sent to residential school. He writes of growing up without the wisdom of an elder and his struggles with the burden of feeling that he had to be a hero to everyone else. He was in high school when he experienced his first alcoholic drink, seeking to mask the hollowness that he felt. He was fourteen years old when his mother died, which added to

the emptiness exacerbated by alcohol. At nineteen, he worked briefly for a railway company, but was eventually fired. During one of his drunken stupors, he lost his right arm after a train ran over it. Despite this turmoil, he finished high school, met a woman, had a family, and attended university. However, he continued to abuse alcohol while ignoring his feelings and spiritual self, which led to the failure of his marriage.

Nabigon eventually obtained a position with the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, and it was here that he faced an ultimatum—quit drinking or be fired. Finding meaning at Poundmaker’s Lodge in Alberta, he began a journey that he admits was a struggle, for lacking alcohol he could no longer deny his feelings—he soon found that he resented and envied happiness in others. A group of elders with “generous hearts” became Nabigon’s helpers (p. 35). They introduced him to indigenous healing ceremonies and rituals such as prayer, the sweat lodge, sweetgrass, and the sacred pipe. Along this journey toward wellness, he was also taught about the importance of good food and its role in maintaining a clear mind and good feelings, and about respect and the need to “look twice” (p. 52).

The elders also introduced Nabigon to a spiritual tool, a model called “the hub,” and the ancient teachings of the Cree medicine wheel (p. 45). The hub contains three circles: the outer circle represents the negative side of life; the middle circle represents the positive side; and the centre circle represents one’s inner fire. He explains that the hub is, in essence, a personality theory where, through personal reflection and subsequent action, a person is able to live a balanced life by reflecting on how the inner self is manifested as the outer self. Nabigon also discusses the “five little rascals” of human weakness: inferiority; envy; resentment; not caring; and jealousy, all feelings with which he was familiar, as well as the fear that they can manifest (p. 54). With constant reflection through the window that the hub provides, Nabigon redirects fear energy in opposite directions, thereby allowing kindness, honesty, and goodness to emerge. Furthermore, through indigenous teachings the hollowness that he felt in his chest began to subside, while deeper spiritual meanings directed him forward.

Although Nabigon admits that his struggle continues, it is through these ancient indigenous teachings and practices that he is better able to address his twenty-six year, self-imposed prison, a prison that colonialism facilitated. He ends by giving thanks to his teachers, the elders, and others, such as the Tree Nation. *The Hollow Tree* is accessible for the un-

dergraduate student, those interested in indigenous wellness, and scholars and medical professionals interested in indigenous models of health.

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Ronald Niezen. *The Rediscovered Self: Indigenous Identity and Cultural Justice* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009).

Review by Mark K. Watson, Concordia University

Historic moves have accompanied the passing of the United Nations' International Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 2007: Bolivia's integration of the declaration within its constitution; the (fragile) precedent set in northeast Asia by the Japanese government's recognition of the Ainu as indigenous to the nation's archipelago; and an emergent, if politically tentative, African position on indigenous presence on the continent. At the time of this writing, New Zealand has just revised its opposition to a declaration to join Australia in endorsing the document, and Canada and the U.S. have announced reviews of their original positions. As raw headlines, such moves have promised much with regard to changes in government policies, recognition of indigenous claims to land and culture, and reclamation of indigenous lives, histories, and identities. Yet it is all too evident that as a non-binding agreement the declaration does not represent an end in itself, but, for all intents and purposes, constitutes a sense of renewal for the international indigenous movement. It is against this background that Ronald Niezen's *The Rediscovered Self* turns an analytical eye to the assertion of indigenous difference. He articulates a need to better interrogate, assess, and understand, particularly within legal contexts, the local complexities of indigenous expressions of culture, identity, and belonging.

This book is a confident, erudite, and insightful work that, for the purposes of this review, I would situate alongside other stand-out volumes in recent years—such as Stern and Stevenson's *Critical Inuit Studies* (2006) or Starn and De La Cadena's *Indigenous Experience Today* (2007)—as key texts of, for want of a much better term, critical indigenous studies. While its global focus and theoretical concern for the politics of indigenous identity formation and cultural reproduction will be familiar to readers

acquainted with two of Niezen's previous works, *Origins of Indigenism* (2003) and *A World of Difference* (2004), this book is still very much its own project. The author's approach succeeds in accommodating a "shift of view from public policy and the immediate goals of transnational activism to a perspective that considers new dynamics in the politics of identity and processes of collective self-representation" (p. 21). This rationale informs each chapter and frames (inter)national issues ranging from hydro development protest (Chapter Five) and Internet presence (Chapter Three) to the indigenous rights movement (Chapter Two) and the politics of suicide (Chapter Six). For me, the book reads like a praxis-oriented examination of contemporary indigenous politics and lifeways. It is an undertaking that capably negotiates and balances support for indigenous peoples and their claims to legal recognition and collective rights with sustained critical attention to the practicalities, histories, and suppositions that underpin indigenous articulations of identity and assertions to international justice.

To briefly discuss the flow of the book is to unpack its title. As Niezen explains in the preface, the term "rediscovered self" refers to the "articulation of collective being that has been brought back from an imposed condition of oblivion and forgetting" (p. xvi). Inspired in part by the writings of Charles Taylor, this rediscovery, Niezen states, intensifies the significance of group identities, thereby highlighting the salience of emergent contradictions and paradoxes, particularly as they appear in legal and institutional contexts. Chapter One clarifies this approach, as Niezen establishes a range of foundational themes—what he calls the "lessons of indigenous peoples" (p. 8)—that illustrate the lived tensions and moral ambiguities of today's world: the complexities, for example, of affirming collective justice based on fluid concepts like culture or tradition; the longing for local distinctiveness in a cosmopolitan, mobile world; and the contradiction between indigenous immutability and the relational histories of indigenous identity construction.

Chapter Two explores the broader context of these issues by focusing on the history and regional politics of the international indigenous peoples' movement. This chapter is, in part, a review of Niezen's previous work—on Deskaheh and the institutional history of the international movement for instance—but it also explores the status of indigeneity in Africa, as well as questions of subjecthood vis-à-vis indigenous rights. This approach is welcome, for it provides analytical depth to some of the

most prescient cultural and legal issues. Chapter Three examines the online presence of indigenous communities and the capacity of the Internet to facilitate new modes of indigenous self-expression. Here, further attention is drawn to the paradoxical dynamics of modernity, including the propensity of groups to network globally while solidifying local social, cultural, and political boundaries.

Chapter Four takes up the politics of “unstable culture” within legal systems, and is one of the book’s highlights. It provides an assessment of how the judiciary negotiates its predilection for culture as a static, definable noun when faced with the indeterminacy of indigenous culture as it is lived. Using as a central theme the Supreme Court of Canada’s assertion of Aboriginal rights in *R. v. Van der Peet*, Niezen expertly picks apart the ambiguities implicit to the provision of differentiated rights within a liberal state, highlighting along the way international contexts and the role of anthropological knowledge within legal proceedings.

Chapters Five and Six are both derived from fieldwork that Niezen undertook with Cree from Cross Lake in northern Manitoba. Chapter Five is a detailed case study of the strategies of resistance employed by Cree in their protest against Manitoba Hydro and the Churchill-Nelson River project. Chapter Six takes up what Niezen recognizes to be the “largely neglected political dimension to self-destruction and resilience” (p. 148) in his discussion of cluster suicides in the Cross Lake community. Another excellent and insightful piece of scholarship, Niezen’s espousal of politico-economic etiology to interpret such events commands attention and invites focused debate. Chapter Seven draws the book to a close with reflections on “the therapeutic value of the rediscovered self” (p. 153), valourizing the capacity of movements for social justice to not only redraw and fortify collective indigenous identities, but also to critique Western imperialism through the promotion of indigenous virtues.

In conclusion, *The Rediscovered Self* is an outstanding book from one of Canada’s leading anthropologists. It stands in solidarity with indigenous peoples while questioning and probing the security and stability of emergent social formations. As such, it demands to be read by Native Studies students and professors, but it also raises examples and case studies of relevance for anyone who lives, advocates, or is otherwise predisposed to indigenous issues, social movements, or studies in legal anthropology.

Deborah Bird Rose. *Reports from a Wild Country: Ethics for Decolonization* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2004).

Review by Nathaniel Pollock, Memorial University

In *Reports from a Wild Country*, anthropologist and Indigenous rights advocate Deborah Bird Rose seeks to refashion and rejuvenate contemporary Indigenous/non-Indigenous relations. After living and working with Aboriginal people in Australia for three decades, Rose has developed a decolonized ethical framework that challenges the ecological, spiritual, and social destruction borne of the West's occupation of Indigenous lands. In sum, Rose presents stories and analyses that compel the reader to acknowledge colonialism's persistence while seeking opportunities for reconciliation and connection.

Rose situates herself by making some of her assumptions known: there is no correct or single path that will lead us towards decolonization; ethics are embodied and contextualized, and precede ontology; relationships between peoples, ancestors, and country are integral; configurations of time and space are culturally embedded; and knowledge begets responsibility. In doing so, she implicates both herself and her audience in the projects of disrupting "regimes of violence" and "inscribing a moral presence."

The book is organized into three sections that examine past, present, and future settler-Aboriginal relations. Drawing significantly from her work with various Indigenous communities, she attempts to center Indigenous experiences and teachings as privileged knowledge. Stories of conquest are used to explore the systematic exploitation and extermination of Aboriginal land, language, spirituality, and people. Rose argues that conquest has not ended, but rather persists on a global scale through the ongoing marginalization and structural violence faced by many Indigenous peoples. Rose proclaims that we have a moral obligation to counter violence with benevolence through actions that advocate establishing connections between people and environments.

*Reports from a Wild Country* proposes a model described as "ethics for decolonisation," which proves to be a difficult concept to articulate. For example, we are never quite sure what "ethical dialogue" looks like in practice, which is a pitfall of Rose's analysis. Like many writers, perhaps, the moral stance she advocates is elusive even to her. Rose's ambiguity may be intentional in so far as it provides the reader with an opportunity to personally define reconciliation and "decolonizing ethics." This, in turn, may be designed to promote the creation of knowledge.

With this book, Rose calls for a new legacy of reconciliation of peoples and land, as well as the protection of the sacred. Fortunately, she manages to do so without forfeiting credibility. One could easily dismiss her work as new age memoir about “going native” and the perils of Western domination, but Rose is neither reductionist nor trite. She appears to understand the complexity that arises when cultures and worlds collide. The author gently extends discussions about the “realities” of colonized, Indigenous lives to include attention to the less obvious stories and opportunities that fill the space between “facts.”

In the end, Rose fulfills her objectives. She connects the reader to a compelling story and provides them, hopefully, a bit more connection to their responsibilities. Principally, that understanding and acknowledging of the past can help us to act in the present and future in ways that do not deny knowledge of violence. Instead, this can aid us to embrace a collective moral obligation to attend to and end others’ suffering. Rose holds that her framework can lead us to claim ethical positions in infinitely more peaceful relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, and, more broadly, between humans and the natural world. This is an ambitious but promising offer.

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Gregory E. Smoak. *Ghost Dances and Identity: Prophetic Religion and American Indian Ethnogenesis in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2006).

Reviewed by Hendrika H. Beaulieu, University of Lethbridge

*Ghost Dances and Identity* is a valuable addition to ethnohistorical accounts of religion, politics, and identity formation and re-formation among the Shoshone and Bannock (Newe) First Nations. Although Gregory Smoak’s focus is decidedly more historical than the “ethnohistorical approach” touted on the jacket, and includes neither oral traditions regarding his subject matter nor the voices of contemporary Shoshone and Bannock peoples on that same topic, the depth of his documentary research, and his ability to weave together disparate data sources, provide a formidable foundation that will prove invaluable to other researchers working in any aspect of this field.

Smoak sets out to re-conceptualize the widely held understanding of “Ghost Dances simply as a heartbreaking delusion,” (p. 2) noting the importance of the fact that the religion survived long after Wounded Knee, and underlining the religion’s links to the complex “issues of ethnic and racial identity raised by such movements” (p. 2). Observing that the Ghost Dance religion—Shoshone *nazánga*—was not a fantasy-based spiritual movement that flared up quickly and died just as suddenly when it failed to provoke the desired results, Smoak compellingly illustrates instead that the Ghost Dance emerged naturally from a traditional ceremony practiced by the Newe peoples. As colonization became an increasingly critical aspect of Shoshone and Bannock life, ceremony responded to colonization and was transformed. While “rooted in preexisting cultural practices,” it was “shaped by the emergence of racial and ethnic identity” (p. 3).

This emergence of racial and ethnic identities represents the second prong of Smoak’s analysis. He proposes that Bannock and Shoshone ethnic and racial identity was formulated in response to colonization, a process that included not only a formulation of an ethnic self, but the notion that a Shoshone or Newe individual or nation shared a larger American Indian racial identity. I find his assertions that the pre-colonial “ethnic” identity—the idea of “us”—was “amorphous” and that the essential basis for social organization was village or kinship ties to be both sweeping and flawed. To write off the identity formation of all First Nations in these terms—dismissing sophisticated agriculturalists, wealthy chiefdoms, and highly developed eco-band practices as perceiving “self” only in confrontation with Europeans—seems to me absurd. First Nations were fully capable of defining “us and them” in light of vast differences between nations. One only has to look at the example of Europe itself to acknowledge that minor divergences can lead to major delineations of (national) difference. I would agree, however, with Smoak’s contention that “American Indian” as an identity arises from the threat to the existence of all American Indians in the face of colonization and intended assimilation or complete erasure, and that this commonality—we have been designated for assimilation/death—revealed to First Nations that colonialists discerned them as *a* people, and as undifferentiated Other.

Smoak also seeks to understand why Bannock peoples can be described as the principal Ghost Dancers and, significantly, why they were more active than the Shoshone. The Newe and Shoshone shared both kinship bonds and a reservation, so what in their past or present, Smoak queries, led to responses to colonialism most poignantly expressed in their

(at times divergent) traditional and transformational spiritualities? This question later leads Smoak to introduce a cultural discussion of subsistence strategies that proved critical to emerging Bannock and Shoshone identities. In the face of colonization and increasing attempts at assimilation, individuals in each nation were forced to draw their line in the sand and articulate, even if only in terms of emerging self-formation, what defines “me” or “us.” The Bannocks for example, regularly “went to Buffalo,” and the inability to continue to do so represented, for them, a violation that they were not prepared to accept.

From a colonial perspective, the Bannock always appeared far more threatening, although they were originally lauded as the more independent of the nations, while the Shoshone, usually referred to as “Diggers,” were miserable people without horses.<sup>5</sup> As is common with colonial stereotyping, this description of *all* Shoshone and *all* Bannocks was deeply flawed. Smoak decisively demonstrates the diversity of subsistence and economic systems, and their emergence and transformations over time, within each of the sub-groups. Yet there is no doubt that critical differences emerged between Shoshone and Bannock peoples, even when we take these sub-groups into account. Those differences were attenuated through divergent subsistence practices that led to disparate perceptions of self, compellingly demonstrated in Shoshone and Bannock responses to reserve life.

Smoak’s argument for cultural continuity—that the Ghost Dance emerged naturally from traditional spirituality and continues to respond and even, at times, assist in defining cultural change—and the Bannock/Shoshone approaches to forced assimilation practices, and their confrontation with the deliberate destruction of their ways of life, does prompt a regret that he did not talk to Shoshone or Bannock elders and traditionalists. His own stress on continuity suggests that Newe traditional spirituality as it is expressed today would incorporate, at minimum, Ghost Dance elements, for it is difficult to imagine that Shoshone or Bannock religion does not continue to grapple with ethnicity and identity. Neither issue is a dead one. First Nations are not assimilated relics of a past that once expressed resistance/acceptance of a colonial presence, nor have the issues of American Indian or specific First Nations ethnic and racial identities been resolved. Identities and spiritualities are not frozen in stone; they are in constant flux. Hopefully this work will provoke a Shoshone/

1 Here he draws on Nathaniel Wyeth’s 1848 description: “the few whites then in that region called the more miserable bands Diggers, or Shoshones. . . . Bonacks [are] better supplied with all the means of independence; horses, lodges, guns, knives, and form bands annually to hunt in the buffalo country” (p. 15).

Bannock oral history or analytic account from their perspective, and will continue, on a more personal note, the story told by Smoak.

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Marc Stevenson and David Natcher, eds. *Changing the Culture of Forestry in Canada: Building Effective Institutions for Aboriginal Engagement in Sustainable Forest Management* (Edmonton: CCI Press, 2009).

Review by Ryan Bowie, York University

*Changing the Culture of Forestry in Canada* is the first of two projected volumes by the Sustainable Forest Management Network (SFMN) that presents research related to Aboriginal peoples. Editors Marc Stevenson and David Natcher note that the intention of this volume is to highlight some of the most current research insights of the SFMN. Defined as a “community of practice” (p. 3), the SFMN has expanded considerably and reframed its research efforts with Aboriginal communities over its fourteen years of existence. Thus, this volume is as much about the academic community engaging with Aboriginal communities in collaborative research as it is about Aboriginal interactions with the institutions of forest management.

The editors’ central purpose is to demonstrate that Aboriginal peoples are “changing the culture of forestry” by seeking out and negotiating new institutional arrangements that better represent their concerns, and that the inclusive dialogue nurtured by the network, which emphasizes collaboration rather than resistance, plays a key role in resolving long-standing conflicts.

The editors situate the topics thematically, but the book is not divided into specific sections. Following an introductory chapter, the next three focus on traditional Aboriginal values, management, and governance institutions to demonstrate their continuing relevance to forestry management. The three chapters after these provide case studies of the Pikangikum Anishinaabe, Moose Cree, and Little Red River Cree First Nations and their efforts to bring their traditions into forest management processes. The next set of three chapters evaluates the institutional options available to Aboriginal peoples for engaging in forestry at the provincial level (in British Columbia) and national level. The final two chapters examine the issues of Aboriginal and treaty rights and the role of Aboriginal peoples

in research, which the editors claim reflect complementary approaches necessary for building effective institutions.

The volume's major contributions are to demonstrate the continued relevance of Aboriginal governance systems and values to forestry management, and how recognizing and respecting Aboriginal knowledge would enhance sustainable forestry practices. A major theme to emerge is that of greater communication and respectful relationships to be fostered between Aboriginal communities, governments, industry, and researchers involved in forest management. Adaptive management concepts form the theoretical base of many of the chapters, such as social learning through broad inclusive processes, but the focus remains on Aboriginal issues and contributions. Aboriginal challenges to ideas informing state management practices—such as the notion that forests and wildlife can be managed in predictable ways (p. 31), and that Aboriginal interests can be protected by segregated “dots on a map” (p. 122) approaches to land-use planning—are exposed as insufficiently representative of complex relationships. Learning and adaptation are argued as necessary for dealing with unpredictability, that more nuanced understandings of forest ecosystems are required. Several authors note how Aboriginal participation is key to broadening perspectives on the functioning and importance of forests. The authors successfully demonstrate that forging positive relationships is the first step in producing new institutions of forestry management that move away from the more typical “command-and-control” or “top-down” style of bureaucratic management in Canada.

A weakness of the volume, however, is its failure to illuminate how Aboriginal attempts to engage in resource management or collaborate with other interests are constrained. While not ignored, the focus on efforts at collaboration and on what proper institutional relationships with Aboriginal communities should look like tend to ignore the question of which circumstances or actions compel governments and industry to effectively include Aboriginal peoples in decision-making processes. Thus, some chapters give a sense of depoliticized deliberations, rather than the significant structural transformation that the volume seeks to demonstrate.

*Changing the Culture of Forestry in Canada* makes a compelling argument for moving beyond the idea that the purpose of Aboriginal participation is simply to serve as input into externally driven research agendas. This volume suggests significant changes as to how governments, industry, and researchers work with Aboriginal communities in resource

management and development issues. Aimed primarily at widening the SFMN “community of practice,” this book makes a valuable contribution to furthering respectful dialogue between government and industry representatives and Aboriginal communities in pursuit of sustainable relationships.

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Annis May Timpson, ed. *First Nations, First Thoughts: The Impact of Indigenous Thought in Canada* (University of British Columbia Press, 2009).

Review by Priscilla Settee, University of Saskatchewan

*First Nations, First Thoughts* is a timely piece of scholarship that provides insightful and thought-provoking perspectives on contemporary issues that face Indigenous communities. Privatization, governance, language preservation, museums, public policy, and official knowledge are some of the issues that are tackled. This book is written by a range of seasoned and emerging scholars, and is organized into five subject areas, including challenging dominant discourses, oral histories, cultural representation governance, and political self-determination. Each section contains two or three articles on the particular subject areas. These essays were originally presented at a conference in Edinburgh organized by the Canadian Studies Department at Edinburgh University, and authored by Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars who speak to the need for giving voice to the Indigenous experience in research, writing, and policy. The title is a clever response to an earlier book entitled *First Nations, Second Thoughts*, and one article specifically rebuts the content of that infamous and rather anti-Indigenous sovereignty book by Thomas Flanagan. Indigenous peoples feel that it is important to counter Flanagan’s proposals as conservative-leaning governments regularly consult with him on issues of public policy. Throughout, the concepts of reclamation, revision, returning, reconstitution, and resistance come to mind.

In Part 1, Brownlie and Kovach describe the isolation and challenges of working in a non-Indigenous university. Aboriginal professors have dual roles, serving as both roles models and challenging and changing institutional barriers for their students. Non-Aboriginal researchers can assist and take leadership by being open to Aboriginal narrative structures

and epistemologies. Part 2 convincingly encourages the reader to consider the oral history of Indigenous communities, a topic that continues to challenge educators. Often the bane of Indigenous peoples, museum issues and appropriate representation are tackled by Bolton, Peers, and Brown in Part 3. Rather than be regarded as historical curiosities, Indigenous peoples represent culturally dynamic communities capable of partnering to improve shared communities. The authors describe a museum project that provided the researcher and researched an opportunity to work together to develop a creative and community inclusive methodology. Part 4 is a timely contribution to the issue of governance and the experience of our northern relatives. Feona MacDonald offers some lessons learned after First Nations took over child welfare services. Sovereignty can often mean letting the state off the hook by expecting First Nations communities to provide services with fewer resources and without any of the benefits that mainstream services provide, such as infrastructure, greater funding, and trade union gains. Once public services are privatized, it is an extremely difficult process to reestablish them back into the public domain. Institutional design, language promotion, and cultural recognition must be considered when developing an Indigenous-oriented public service. Elder consultation would ensure that cultural knowledge and thought bridges future generations to the source. Long-term strategies and investment in Aboriginal education are necessary prerequisites to the “browning of the civil service,” as the Nunavut example proposes. Development must mean more than just the accumulation of profits, but rather must also include Indigenous peoples’ rights to a land base that remains intact in order to provide for future generations. Throughout the globe, these principles are being fought for through such documents as the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, an action platform that has been endorsed by some four hundred million Indigenous peoples across the globe. Slowey reminds us to question neoliberal conservative policies of many developed regions’ governments.

The book’s final two chapters nicely summarize Indigenous willingness to build bridges with non-Indigenous citizens so that all Canadians can realize the benefits of full citizenship. This will become a reality only when non-Indigenous Canadians truly understand the unique history, contributions, and constitutional rights that have been fought for and gained by Indigenous peoples. It is essential to create working relationships built on mutual respect and accommodation.

One area that is not covered, but that exhibits related power and control, is the media and its role and impact in public discourse and policy. Such an analysis would significantly add to the critical nature of the book. *First Nations, First Thoughts* is an excellent book in the field of Native Studies as it raises current issues that First Nations, Metis, and mainstream governments grapple with and will continue to do so well into the future.