

BOOK REVIEW/COMPTE RENDU

Coburn, Elaine, editor. *More Will Sing Their Way to Freedom: Indigenous Resistance and Resurgence*. Nova Scotia: Fernwood Publishing. 2015. 276 pp., \$29.95 paper (9781552667804)

The politics of Indigenous recognition are taken to task in this anthology on the importance of resistance and resurgence. While there are several empirical chapters, the book is primarily theoretical in scope. The title, *More Will Sing Their Way to Freedom* (borrowed from a poem by Cree poet Beth Cuthand), evokes the political implication embedded within the cultural and spiritual mandate of Indigenous Peoples in Canada. Organized as a collection of chapters by various authors, the book explores topics such as intellectual/theoretical flexibility within academia, legal and political accommodation, resistance through art and language, economic and political sovereignty, and the legacy of Idle No More. The themes of Indigenous recognition, resistance, or resurgence underpin each chapter. The authors draw on varied theoretical perspectives, and come from diverse fields within academia and policy analysis; they include professors and students in sociology, social work, law, Native studies, political science, Indigenous governance, and addiction services.

While politics of recognition are heavily critiqued by many authors throughout the collection, its role in maintaining and creating rights for Aboriginal people in Canada is the focal point in several chapters. Such chapters deal with immediate and tangible problems for Indigenous people, which explains the slight departure from the book's overall critique of the politics of recognition. In Chapter 1, James (Sa'ke'j) Youngblood Henderson (Chickasaw Nation research director for the Native Law Centre of Canada) writes of Indigenous lawyers working to procure rights for Indigenous peoples within the legal system, wrestling them away despite its genocidal history and mandate. Several authors interrogate the relevance of recognition for hyper-marginalized groups, ultimately accepting its utility. For instance, in Chapter 2, Christine A. Walsh (a professor of social work at the University of Calgary) and Shirley A. Aarrestad (a First Nations woman, addictions services counselling student, and advocate for incarcerated Aboriginal women) inter-

view incarcerated Indigenous women navigating their resistance in an institution designed to break them, demanding to be recognized not as stereotypes, but as proud Indigenous women and arbiters of change. In Chapter 3, Douglas Durst (professor of social work at the University of Regina) and Elaine Coburn (assistant professor at the American University of Paris, researcher, and editor of this book) discuss strategies to ensure the recognition of Indigenous persons with disabilities.

Several chapters explore Indigenous resistance in academia, research, art, and international law. Emma LaRocque, an historian and a University of Manitoba professor of Native Studies, discusses the exclusionary techniques of colonial knowledge production. She highlights the role of critical resistance scholarship in dismantling both the privileged position of Western academic thought that confines Native Studies to the margins, and the pervasive notion that Indigenous scholarship must remain “traditional” and static, or “assimilate” and lose authenticity (17). In Chapter 4, Rima Wilkes, a University of British Columbia professor of Sociology and editor of the *Canadian Review of Sociology*, demonstrates how her privileged position permeates even the most well-intentioned research, offering her “Resistance Database” as an example of a project that simultaneously catalogued and placed Indigenous resistance events at its forefront, and failed to account for the ways in which language and geographic essentialism limited the data and its interpretation. In Chapter 5, Jennifer Adese, a Carleton University Métis Canadian Studies professor, examines resistance through the lens of visual and performative art and emphasizes the importance of Indigenous sovereignty via the rejection of Euro-normative depictions of Canadian and Indigenous life and history. In his scathing rejection of the politics of recognition in Chapter 7, Hayden King, (a Ryerson University professor and Anishinaabe director of the Centre of Indigenous Governance) argues that Indigenous activism centered around rights discourse and inhibited by state authorization will ultimately not extricate Indigenous peoples from the colonialist grasp. On the contrary, he suggests that resurgence will be made possible by political relations between Indigenous nations that center their unique “politics and imaginations” (181). As in much of the book, resistance and resurgence is inextricably linked and perhaps is best exemplified through Idle No More.

If there is one resistance event capable of sustaining an era of resurgence, the authors agree it is Idle No More. In Chapter 8, Kelly Aguirre, a University of Victoria political science Ph.D. student, discusses how traditional practices (story telling in particular) sustain and help re-

affirm “Indigenous lifeworlds” (191). *Idle No More* is the medium through which stories and experiences are told and retold: “Resurgence is about a reorientation to living from within our own stories once again” (203). Jeff Denis, a McMaster University professor of Sociology, develops a conceptual framework through which to examine the intellectual, material, spiritual, and emotional conditions that primed and informed *Idle No More*, using the four-directions model of the medicine wheel (Chapter 9). He highlights the importance of Indigenous resurgence and self-determination not only for Indigenous peoples, but for settlers as well. Despite *Idle No More*’s expeditious beginning, aided largely by the use of social media for organizing and consciousness building, strategies soon needed to be adapted in order for the movement to continue. In Chapter 10, Jarrett Martineau, Nêhiyaw/Dene Suline scholar and artist, chronicles how *Idle No More* organizers switched tactics, forming the Indigenous Nationhood Movement and engaging in the reclamation of PKOLS, the symbolic renaming of Mount Helen, a sacred mountain of the WSANEC nation. This reclamation of land and tradition is reminiscent of Clifford (Kam’ayaam/Chachim’multhnii) Atleo’s (a Tsimshian and Nuuchahnulth Ph.D. candidate in political science at the University of Alberta) Chapter 6 on Aboriginal economic development, wherein he writes of his experience trying to live ‘Nuuchahnulth-aht’ in present-day times, in line with the values of his people. Key to resurgence here is being able to match tradition with innovation, given the limitations imposed via colonial land theft and degradation.

Thematically, many of the chapters complement each other, despite varying academic backgrounds between authors. A highlight is the later chapters dealing primarily with resurgence. The discussions of *Idle No More* illustrate how colonialism is not an immutable spectre; Indigenous resistance has never disappeared, despite the inference in the name *Idle No More*. With the exception of several earlier chapters, most authors reject the politics of recognition, to varying degrees. While an anthology should not be expected to be homogenous, the dichotomy between those advocating and rejecting recognition is at times stark, compromising one of the main takeaway points.

This book is a good introduction to theoretical concepts in Indigenous governance and autonomy. In the afterward, Alex Wilson (Opaskwaya Cree Nation director of the Aboriginal Education Research Centre at the University of Saskatchewan) writes about her grandmother’s definition of leadership as being manifested through spirituality, respect, and love: “These terms refer to principles and practices that focus on

sustaining the continuity of life by caring for our relationships through the past, present and future” (256). Indigenous resurgence is rooted in the past and tradition, tailored for contemporary communities, with an eye fixed firmly on the future. This collection offers some valuable contributions to Native studies, as well as political science and sociological studies of social movements and Indigenous sovereignty.

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