

issue with the idea that traditional governance practices should be incorporated into modern governance frameworks, dismissing this emerging tenet of modern Indigenous nation-building as “inappropriately limiting when imagined as citizenship requirements or aspects of national structure, though they are frequently a central aspect of what constitutes international notions of belonging” (p. 99).

While Dennison’s sentiment accurately reflects the conclusions reached by Osage voters in the 2006 constitutional referendum (p. 98), her criticism of decades of field work among Indian policy and development experts will demand further scrutiny in the years to come. For example, even after the 2006 referendum, the Osage Nation has already become embroiled in a governmental standoff between the executive and legislative branches of its government with each side accusing the other of various political machinations (Krehbiel-Burton, 2013). Given the governmental structure adopted by Osage voters and its marked resemblance to the institutions enshrined in the United States Constitution, reasonable minds can question whether a governance structure that better reflects the institutions of Osage culture might be more enduring.

Ultimately, such debates and questions make Dennison’s work an engaging read. The book will have obvious resonance with those interested in American Indian governance and

constitutional reform. But the work also highlights a number of questions for Indigenous peoples around the world to consider—particularly those questions related to collective tribal identity, discussions about Indigenous sovereignty vis-à-vis the nation-state, and the recurring themes of resource management that are at the forefront of issues here in Aotearoa New Zealand. In sum, *Colonial Entanglement* raises a number of important questions for those interested in the field of Indigenous rights, while managing to provide an appropriate mix of opinion and analysis.

References

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Yakama rising: Indigenous cultural revitalization, activism, and healing. Jacob, Michelle M. (2013). Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press. 139 pp. ISBN: 978-0-8165-3049-6.

Yakama Rising: Indigenous Cultural Revitalization, Activism, and Healing is an accessibly written ethnography that positions Indigenous peoples as the experts in our own lives, and it successfully demonstrates “that the power needed to heal our soul wounds already exists within our people and traditions” (p. 12). The author, Michelle M. Jacob, uses

a combination of methods including one-on-one interviews, participant observation and auto-ethnographic reflections to expose the ways Yakama peoples have responded to social change. In examining three cultural revitalization movements involving dance, language and food, this book highlights the peoples and processes involved in conceptualizing and

implementing a Yakama-specific decolonizing praxis. As a cultural case study of an under-represented community, this book should be of interest to Indigenous studies scholars, especially those who study ethnic studies, history, educational studies, sociolinguistics or anthropology.

Nowadays, many scholars are challenging Western epistemologies that render Indigenous cultures as knowable, and Indigenous peoples as invisible. Yet still, it is a rare opportunity to consume knowledge about Indigenous peoples that is produced with, by and for Indigenous peoples. As a Yakama person, and as an Indigenous scholar, Jacob is intimately positioned to comment on the unique needs, priorities and values of her people, including their history and their lived social realities. By taking an emic approach to research, Jacob and her research partners are helping to ensure that Yakama culture, society and people will now be understood with greater clarity and complexity. This is achievable because Jacob has centred the voices and analyses of contemporary peoples throughout the text. There is something special about being able to read the voices of peoples who are typically deemed “subjects” in research. It is important to have transparency of the peoples and processes involved rather than simply reading a report back of the results communicated from a single voice. This is what makes this book a community-based ethnography, and a good example of an emic approach to research.

Yakama Rising is organized in five chapters, three of which offer case studies that tell stories about persistence, change and adaptation on the Yakama Reservation in present-day Washington State. Written in just under 130 pages, the three case studies of dance, language and food are not necessarily the focus of the book. Rather, it is the peoples within each case study who are featured in honour of their resilience, vision, dedication and resourcefulness. Their knowledge and experiences are also utilized to articulate models of place-based decolonizing praxis at

the end of each case study. In this way, Jacob prioritizes a grounded methodological analysis of the *peoples* and *processes* of decolonizing work, straying away from any metaphorical discursive articulation of decolonization as a static theory. This is a considerable achievement for distinguishing between decolonization as a theory and decolonization as a theory-method. How do peoples—from communities, or the academy—turn decolonization as a theory into praxis? As Jacob notes, “theoretical work is important only to the extent that it makes sense, and matters, on the ground—the grassroots level on which indigenous peoples are working” (p. 115). Jacob’s activist research agenda thus represents a commitment to implementing community-based theory-methods, evidenced by the development of a Yakama decolonizing praxis.

As Indigenous studies scholars, like Jacob, attempt to challenge Western epistemologies that render Indigenous peoples knowable as static objects, but invisible as active subjects, there is a tendency to present the Indigenous position as simplistic colonial critique—as if reclaiming Indigenous traditions and asserting Indigenous epistemologies is all that is needed to dismantle colonial logics and norms. As Nakata, Nakata, Keech, & Bolt (2012) have written, this form of colonial critique runs the risk of “moving from ‘epistemic disobedience’ of the Western to ‘epistemic obedience’ of the regenerated Indigenous” (p. 129), thus reifying colonial binaries. This is not to negate Indigenous resurgence or political resistance. In fact, these are central to decolonial goals and must continue, as Jacob argues, at the grassroots level. However, the risk of reifying colonial boundaries, which do not accurately reflect Indigenous contemporary social space, is more likely to occur if we do not situate our decolonization theory-methods in the multiple contexts of knowledge production, and in terms of their real and imagined effects.

In consideration of this cautionary advice, Jacob could have situated a more robust colonial

critique in relationship to the politics of knowing to aid her decolonization theory-building. This engagement would have been of particular value in undergraduate and graduate social theory classes where the Indigenous position is often represented as oppositional and predictable, and where Indigenous standpoints that theorize our contemporary engagement with knowledge production are not as readily available. Towards these ends, an expansion of the brief 15 pages of text in Chapter 4, “Building a Theory of Yakama Decolonizing Praxis”, into a comprehensive essay that responds to the imperative of equipping non-Indigenous peoples, and Indigenous peoples, with the analytical tools and skills to further comprehend, critique, explore and navigate the implication of knowledge production for decolonizing goals (Nakata et al., 2012) would have been beneficial. This shortcoming is perhaps a result of the fact that Jacob does not engage current debates in Indigenous studies in any depth, nor is there much attention paid to the body of literature on decolonization. I can only deduce that this is because Jacob is more interested in offering a theory-method before engaging theoretical critique, which is an honourable and necessary pursuit.

Despite the noted shortcoming, Jacob is successful in conceptualizing her Yakama decolonizing praxis, which derives from the unique

needs, priorities and values of her peoples. Situating the peoples and processes involved in decolonizing work aids further development of comprehensive theory-methods that can help to ensure that research is conducted with, by and for Indigenous peoples. As a contribution to Indigenous studies, this ethnography represents an emic approach to research, from which we can all draw lessons about the strategies of Indigenous peoples to respond to social change, and about the centrality of cultural revitalization, activism and healing for Indigenous decolonization efforts.

References

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