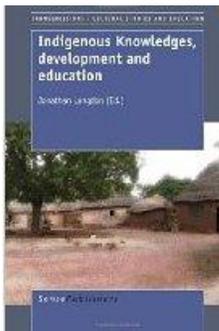


Professional Book Review

Langdon, J. (Ed.). (2009). *Indigenous Knowledges, Development and Education*. Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Sense Publishers. 150 pp., ISBN: 978-9087906979 (pbk). \$39.00.

Reviewed by Debora Joy Nodelman, Chapman University, U. S. A.



Indigenous Knowledges, Development and Education explores the interconnection between Indigenous knowledges and the fields of developmental studies and education. Edited by Jonathan Langdon, doctoral student in the Department of Integrated Studies at McGill University in Quebec, Canada, the introduction (Chapter 1) outlines the purpose of the book's eight chapters. Written by doctoral students, Indigenous authors, professors, and field practitioners, the book presents a diverse look at how Indigenous people understand their world. Inspired by each author's experiences with Indigenous communities in different settings, the book broadly defines Indigenous knowledges. Each contributor describes how he or she views the subtle and multiple meanings of the term. Generally, Indigenous knowledges do not maintain one central truth but rather integrate identity, tradition, and experience to create different paths to knowledge. The chapters remain independent of each other, yet manage to work together to create an overall collaborative and integrative effort to address Indigenous issues. In this way, the authors respect the philosophy embedded in Indigenous knowledges that there are many ways to know.

Written for teachers, teacher educators, students, and those in academia, *Indigenous Knowledges, Development and Education* appeals to those who hope to start a conversation that will create positive change towards developmental studies and education that respects diverse ways of knowing. The authors maintain that if teachers are to make a difference as critical pedagogues, "Knowledge production that reflects diverse ways of knowing and contests a singular global design" (p. 11) is needed.

Chapter 2, written by Professor George Sefa Dei, a Chief of the Adumakwashene of the town of Asokore, Ghana, and Marlon Simmons, McGill University Ph.D. student, calls for an anti-colonial approach to educating African people. Identifying the current situation in Africa as "Eurocentric, hegemonic, miseducation" (p. 33), the authors promote the reestablishment of African languages, knowledges, communities, and spiritualism in the hopes of involving local peoples in their own development. The authors ask that African education in

modern times be viewed differently than in the past when Western knowledge systems took precedence over Indigenous pedagogies.

In Chapter 3, Jonathan Langdon exposes the gaps in developmental studies programs, calling for a reframing of the definition of developmental studies with a focus on the voices of those who have previously been silenced, particularly those of Indigenous peoples. Unlike other fields, developmental studies remain steeped in Western ways of thinking about development, complicated by the colonial and post-colonial history and the role of power. Langdon relates narratives in which developmental studies' long history of subjugating subaltern groups persists in contemporary programs. He maintains that it is time to challenge the systems of classification and thinking perpetuated by Western models of development and to enter a new direction for developmental studies.

Blane Harvey, author of Chapter 4, discusses "ecological consciousness" (p.57) in an effort to create systems that support sustainable development in the Southern hemisphere, which have long been subject to Western/Modernistic viewpoints. He asserts that it is necessary to make a deeper change, a change whereby Western solutions to environmental problems should not draw from Indigenous practices as an additive measure to solving problems. Rather, we must rethink how humans and non-humans fit into the greater worldview.

Chapter 5 explores the collaboration of two individuals, Christine Stoczek, doctoral student, and Rodney Mark, Chief of Wemindji's Band Council. They worked together for the past 10 years in the Cree Nation of Canada to inform the research process with the goal of improving community collaborative projects. The authors maintain that research in Indigenous communities works best when it is local, respects the community's value systems, and encourages and supports self-reliance. Stoczek and Mark collaborated with the community Elders to develop a core values diagram, creating a unique visual conception of the Cree Nation's cultural, spiritual, and intellectual value system. The Elders of the Cree Nation served as consultants for Stoczek and Mark's work, thereby exemplifying the Indigenous practice of respecting the community's elderly leaders as well as its scholars.

Janine Metallic, a Mi'gnaq from the Listuguj First Nation and McGill University doctoral student, discusses how science and culture are intertwined in Chapter 6. Her article compares and contrasts Western science knowledge with Indigenous science knowledge. In classrooms where different kinds of knowing are respected, students develop culturally relevant ways of being. She explores how Indigenous science knowledge can form a theoretical framework for the development of a cross-cultural science curriculum.

Chapter 7 is written from a mother's perspective. Mela Sarkar, a McGill University professor in the Faculty of Education, relates how her White, non-Indigenous daughter's life was positively impacted by learning abroad in a Mayan village in Guatemala. In this engaging narrative, Sarkar discusses her young daughter's transformative experience after meeting an elderly, Indigenous

healer-midwife-shaman. The meeting was so powerful that upon returning to Canada Sarkar's daughter applied and was accepted to medical school. By relating this personal story, the author hopes to relate that one need not be Indigenous or have years of experience working in Indigenous settings in order to learn from and be impacted by Indigenous knowledges.

Coleman Agyeyomah, the Executive Director of Venceramos Consulting, and Jonathan Langdon collaborate to write the final chapter of the book. Agyeyomah, with over 20 years of experience working with local development, and Jonathan Langdon, with 10 years of experience in Ghana, write about the country's health care system. Two different approaches to health care, Western "allopathic" (p.136) practices and Ghana's village bonesetters, are compared and contrasted. Avoiding an analysis that places one type of practice in a hierarchal fashion above the other, the two health care systems are both treated respectfully. Again, in the spirit of a major theme of the book's total content, a unified, synthesized view is not achieved. Instead, the authors tell a story of how these two systems work together to address the health care concerns in Indigenous communities.

In this book, the authors have brought together an eclectic collection of articles and narratives that garners the reader's respect for diverse epistemologies. As a doctoral student in cultural and curricular studies, I found this work to be significant because it gave me insight into the complexities of working with Indigenous communities. In the spirit of community and Indigenous ways of caring, the editor, Jonathan Langdon, is generously donating all his earnings from the sale of this book to the Loagri community in Ghana photographed for the book's cover. *Indigenous Knowledges, Development, and Education* will serve to open readers' minds to different ways of knowing, to inspire dialogue about ways in which development and education can work together and to respect and honor Indigenous communities and their knowledges.