

means simply acknowledging that students have an inner life that needs nourishment. (p. 143)

These statements would be just as appropriate (if not more so) beginning with the phrases "In the humanistic/holistic school..." and "Integrating a humanistic/holistic orientation into the life of the school...." Ultimately, *Education and the Soul: Toward a Spiritual Curriculum*, fails to fulfill the promise of its title because the words *Soul* and *Spiritual* are superfluous to what it has to say about education and curriculum.

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What Is Indigenous Knowledge? Voices from the Academy

Ladislaus M. Semali and Joe L. Kincheloe (Eds.).

Published by Falmer Press, New York & London. 1999, 381 pp, Softbound, \$30.

Reviewed by Josef Proglar

One of the dubious claims underlying Western civilization's colonization of the world is that Western man possesses the ability to define and delimit all knowledge. Apart from the effective use of murder and bribery, a lasting impact of the Western incursion is in the area of epistemology. In a two-pronged effort to dominate the world, Western missionaries, explorers, traders, soldiers, and academics worked to systematically destroy local knowledge systems and replace them with Western-derived knowledge systems. Losing their knowledge base, non-Western peoples fell pray to Western designs and perpetuated their own subjugation. However, this process was not complete, and there is an ongoing struggle to redefine knowledge according to the needs and views of different cultures and civilizations. The Western knowledge systems, once reigning supreme with a

vener of objectivity and universality, are being seriously questioned. This process of questioning is taking place within the West itself, but the major challenges to Western knowledges are coming from non-Western peoples who have begun to rethink their dependencies and allegiances.

This struggle over normative definitions of what constitutes knowledge is taking place on a variety of fronts. *What is Indigenous Knowledge?*, edited by Ladislaus Semali and Joe L. Kincheloe, brings together an international cohort of voices in a volume intended to introduce a series of books that will explore different aspects of the debates on indigenous knowledge both in the West and elsewhere. Since this discussion is being initiated by Western academics, it is fitting that they lay out their intentions and goals for the volume and the series.

According to the editors, the volume intends to explore the "benefits to be derived from the inclusion of indigenous knowledge in the academy" (p. 3). They urge caution and care with respect to who should be talking about indigenous knowledge, and in the introduction set out to "map our positionalities and the reasons we have chosen to undertake this work" (p. 7). Thus, according to Kincheloe, "I understand my privilege as a white male and the potential for the appropriation of indigeneity that such a position possesses. Employing such a reflective awareness, I attempt to monitor my relationship with indigenous culture and indigenous knowledge" (p. 15). With this self-awareness as a baseline, studying indigenous knowledge can "foster empowerment and justice in a variety of culture contexts" and develop transformative power by seeking "epistemologies that move in ways unimagined by most Western academic impulses" (p. 15).

The project seeks to recover knowledge systems deemed irrelevant and denigrated by the Western colonial system, primarily through its educational institutions. In a sense, the editors and contributing authors seem to want to colonize the Western academy with non-Western knowledges, in full awareness of the political implications of such an endeavor. The resulting appreciation of indigenous epistemology can provide Western peoples with "another view of knowledge production in diverse cultural sites" (p. 17), while at the same time situat-

JOSEF PROGLAR is Assistant Professor of Social Studies and Secondary Education in the School of Education at Brooklyn College of the City University of New York. His forthcoming book, *Islamic Knowledges and the West*, explores issues of indigeneity, colonization, and rejuvenation in a Muslim context.

ing Western knowledge in its own cultural setting, not as a universal.

Studying indigenous knowledge fosters “greater awareness of neo-colonialism and other Western social practices that harm indigenous peoples” (p. 18), and serves as a reminder that “traditional knowledge has been lost and worldviews have been shattered” (p. 19). At the same time, the collection is not naïve, nor does it seek to provide Western recipes for reclaiming lost epistemologies. The authors recognize that “questions of cultural renewal and indigenous knowledge are not as easy as some represent them to be” (p. 19), warning against essentialist notions of purified indigenous knowledges. In this framework, indigenous knowledge studies can “facilitate indigenous peoples’ struggle against the ravages of colonialism, especially its neocolonialist articulation in the domains of the political, economic, and pedagogical” (p. 19), which can also “facilitate their fight against further neo-colonial encroachments,” and help in “solving their problems in their own ways” (p. 19). Nevertheless, the authors know that using indigenous knowledge studies to understand and evaluate local problems and strategies “will always have to deal with the reality of colonization” (p. 19).

The authors address the political aspects of academic work, and encourage Western intellectuals to see themselves as agents of justice, putting their studies to beneficial use. They suggest three goals of studying indigenous knowledge in the Western academy: 1) help Western peoples to relate to their habitat in ways that are more harmonious, 2) liberate peoples who have been conquered by a modernist nation state system, and 3) provide a perspective on human experience that differs from Western empirical science. The authors also offer an outline of more specific educational benefits of studying indigenous knowledges as subjugated knowledges, noting that the study of such knowledges: 1) promotes a rethinking of our purposes as educators, 2) focuses attention on the ways that knowledge is produced and legitimated, 3) encourages the construction of just and inclusive academic spheres, 4) produces new levels of insight, and 5) demands that educators at all academic levels become researchers (pp. 33-39).

Within this holistic methodological and political framework, the collection bring together a cohort of

scholars and academics from a range of backgrounds and disciplines. While all are more or less working from within Western-oriented academic institutions, they represent voices from Africa, Australia, Central and South America, and the Caribbean, as well as Europe and the United States. Topics include ecological literacy from indigenous perspectives, steps toward decolonizing education, reflections on non-Western math and science, indigenous approaches to agriculture and farming, connections between intellectual and spiritual work, views on indigenous music and languages, and moves toward deconstructing Western academic representations of non-Western knowledges.

What Is Indigenous Knowledge acknowledges the role of religion and spirituality in defining knowledge, but it leaves open the question of who defines and validates them. Relying on the usual suspicion toward Judeo-Christian religion in secular academic circles may cause such a project to marginalize the role of other world religions in discussions of indigenous knowledge systems. In fact, the book begs the question of whether or not indigenous knowledges can include revealed knowledges, those forms of sacred knowledge which arise out of communication from and communion with the Divine. To accept, for example, Islamic knowledge systems in such a scheme would entail broadening the definition of indigeneity beyond the current model that seems intertwined with nationalism and cultures that are based in specific bioregions and ecosystems. In the Islamic tradition, much of what is called indigenous knowledge would be understood as revealed knowledge, since the Divine—in this case Allah—is the source of all knowledge (Nasr 1989). While opposition to Judeo-Christian religion as the foundation of modernist Western civilization with its science and colonialism seems defensible (i.e., Merchant 1983, Noble 1992, Spretnak 1999), it remains to be seen if the project can develop a coherent vision of knowledge that includes other world religious traditions, and which avoids seeing those religions through the lens of Western religions, even those that appear similar.

While the volume has promise, as does the book series, it is geared almost entirely toward a Western academic audience. The scope of the work is limited

to voices from the academy, but the series seems to be attempting to attract thinkers and activists whose legitimacy is not filtered through the subjugating lens of Western academia. To truly colonize the Western academy with indigenous knowledge will require setting in place the administrative structures to assure that people whose legitimacy and validation come from a variety of sources and settings have a meaningful voice in the academy (Churchill 1995). This may entail the rather ambitious project of rethinking the hierarchical structure of rewards and certificates currently in place in a Western-oriented system of knowledge production and validation, and may even mean abandoning the Ph.D. as the sole license to speak for academics. In a climate of faddish cooptation of exotica, and without meaningful administrative support, the present project may fall short and end up providing little more than local color to an overarchingly Western academic institutional system. This, of course, is no fault of the authors, who are aware of the complexities and challenges of their project, and so the book and subsequent series should be widely read and can serve as a useful and important introduction to restructuring Western education, along with rejuvenating indigenous knowledges for the peoples who still rely on them.

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Growing Up Green: Education for Ecological Renewal

David Hutchison

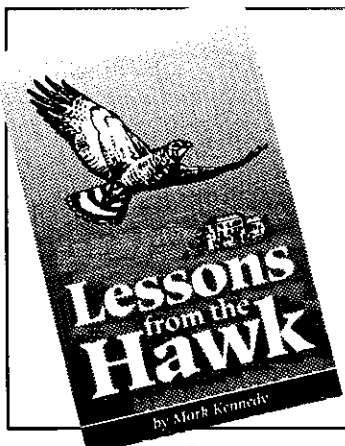
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Reviewed by Peter Blaze Corcoran
and Richard Tchen

Growing Up Green: Education for Ecological Renewal is a noble attempt to construct a case for what Hutchison calls "ecologically sensitive change in schools." He argues for changes in infrastructure, ideology, and methodology, and concludes that

each of these efforts ultimately rests within the context of a much larger environmental reform movement which is just now beginning to address the important role of schools in securing a sustainable future world for adults, children, and the wider earth community. Our task for the immediate future must be to continue to articulate such a vision for education and build a curricular framework for schools that can best help us recover an authentic human mode of relatedness to the natural world and squarely face up to the ecological challenges which now confront us. (p. 156)

He articulates the purpose of the book by stating that "this book explores the relationship of environmental advocacy to the philosophy of education [particularly, technocratic, progressive, and holistic



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PETER BLAZE CORCORAN is Professor of Environmental Studies and Environmental Education at Florida Gulf Coast University, where he coordinates an environmental education course required of all students. He began his career as a naturalist and teaching principal of "middle childhood" students. He has taught teachers-to-be at College of the Atlantic, Bates College, and Swarthmore College.

RICHARD TCHEN is a project coordinator at the Math Forum, a K-12 math education center on the Internet. Richard graduated from Swarthmore College with a major in mathematics and a concentration in environmental studies. He earned secondary-level mathematics teacher certification student-teaching with the Radnor Middle School Watershed Program.

Tchen and Corcoran often collaborate, especially on environmental education in higher education.