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Indigenous Perspectives of North America. A Collection of Studies

János Kenyeres, Judit Nagy, Enikő Sepsi and Miklós Vassányi (eds.)

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Franciska Kövi

Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, Hungary

The volume *Indigenous Perspectives of North America* is an international collection of studies which aims at representing how the different social sciences and philological disciplines see the culture and the cultural role of indigenous peoples in North America. The volume consists of four main sections, namely: 1. Wider Perspectives, 2. The Representation of Aborigines in Literature, Fine Arts and Cinema, 3. Culture and Identity, 4. History and Policy Making.

Nathan Kowalsky's article, entitled "Between Relativism and Romanticism: Traditional Ecological Knowledge as Social Critique" (2–31), opens the volume. This study deals with environmental issues concerning the life of native Canadians. According to Kowalsky, a good model is absolutely necessary for us to understand the knowledge of the native people – which is why the article focuses on the so-called Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK), which the author construes and presents as an important aspect of Canadian conservation management

The following paper, entitled "GLIFWC: The Founding and Early Years of the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission" (32–50) and written by James W. Oberly, explores the role of the GLIFWC in American native life. The author combines law, science and some aspects of spirituality, presenting a cogently argued and very detailed overview of this organization. Furthermore, Oberly shows the social and economic progress of different tribes and the history of wildlife committees, thus highlighting value.

The next paper, written by Helmut Lutz, surveys in three steps the historical development of aboriginal literature in Canada. "Aboriginal Literatures in Canada: Multiculturalism and Fourth World Decolonization" (51–76) focuses on the impact of multiculturalism on literature, stating that Canada had been multicultural long before the arrival of the Europeans, thereby questioning a popular modern Canadian identity myth.

Augustín Cadena's article, "Representaciones del mundo indígena en la literatura Mexicana del siglo XX" (77–86) moves us away from Canada but also reminds us of



a pre-contact North America. Cadena investigates the case of Mexico, the country with the second largest indigenous population (after Peru) in the Americas. It is thanks to this fact that the world of native people has always been an important part of the Mexican collective consciousness. The author reviews literary texts and he also examines the issue of the indigenous presence in the work of the contemporary writers and poets.

The first main section closes with Brian Ebel's "Prospects for Aboriginal Languages in Canada" (87–101). As its title declares, the topic of this article is similar to that of Helmut Lutz's essay as it outlines the role of language communities and aboriginal languages in Canada, and the country's extremely rich linguistic profile. The examination is based on the newly-available 2011 Census data which promote the present viability of these languages.

The following section entitled "The Representation of Aboriginals in Literature, Fine Arts and Cinema"; opens with Martin Kuester's essay: "From Remote Reserves to the Global Indian Village: Daniel David Moses's *Kyotopolis* as Postmodern Native Canadian Drama." The article is based on the play *Kyotopolis*, written at the end of the 20th century. The author focuses on the role modern technology played in transforming the fragmented world into a Global Indian Village.

In "L'intrusion des 'codes' amérindiens dans le théâtre québécois", Marija Paprašarovski presents the mythological theatre of Huron author, director and producer, Yves Sioui Durand. Durand is the creator of an original kind of theatre that is nurtured by "Pan-American" history and mythologies.

The next study is Cristina-Georgiana Voicu's "Aboriginal Versus the Métis Between Race and Ethnicity: Contexts in Canadian Fiction." This essay explores the relationship between colonizer and colonized as it is mirrored in the Native Canadian literary experience as the author discusses the concept of postcolonialism.

Fátima Susana Amante's paper, titled "Much of What We Learn About Indians, We Learn as Children': Counter-Images to Biased and Distorted Perceptions of First Nations in Native Canadian Juvenile Literature," is based on a children's picture book which displays deliberate efforts on the part of its author, Thomas King, to correct the different stereotypes which concern American Aboriginals.

Anna Mongibello, in her contribution "Tracking the Land/Memory: Healing and Reterritorializations in Jeannette Armstrong's *Breath Tracks*," explains, through the notion of reappropriation, how Armstrong's verses try to remap the landscape of British Columbia from the perspective of a member of the Okanagan nation, focusing on the importance of the harmony between the people and the land.

The following study carries the title "In-Between Western and Indigeneous: Thomas King's *The Truth About Stories*." Like Fátima Susana Amante, Éva Zsizsmann, the author of this paper, offers a survey of another work of the Canadian Native author



Thomas King. King's book includes lots of stories from King's personal life experience as well as quotations from American Aboriginal literature and sources of American and Canadian history.

The next paper, written by Eszter Szenczi, discusses the topic of racial identity but also includes issues of gender. In "Cultural Hybridity in Twentieth Century Métis Autobiographies: Maria Campbell's *Halfbreed* and Beatrice Culleton's *In Search of April Raintree*," Ms Szenczi presents the Métis as a new ethnic group as she also describes the two Métis women authors and their respective stories, and delves into how Métis women can find themselves in a patriarchal society where white people are dominant.

Katalin Kürtösi in her study entitled "Indians and Their Art: Emily Carr's Imagery in Painting and in Writing" analyses how Indigenous art forms influenced the literary and artistic career of the famous Canadian modernist writer and painter. The author surveys the early representation of the Natives in Canada from the 16th century and draws a complex picture of the story and the evolution of modern art.

Mária Palla's article entitled "From Legend to the Big Screen: Kunuk's *Atanarjuat*" focuses on Inuit identity at three levels: the film itself, the Inuit community in Canada, and last but not least, the community of the filmmakers. This research is important because of the fact that *Atanarjuat* is the first film in the world to have been written, acted, directed, and produced by Inuit persons.

The following study is "Memory, Totem and Taboo in Jim Jarmusch's *Dead Man*" by Tamás Juhász. The author gives a summary of the artistic world of Jim Jarmusch, presents how the director uses the motif of totemism and establishes a link between the Freudian concept of denial and the cultural memory of a very important historical event: the extermination of the Native population of North America.

Katalin Kállay's essay "The Bark-Peelers of the North: Ernest Hemingway's 'Indian Camp'" follows. The article examines Hemingway's well-known short story, which presents a group of Native Americans and their way of life. We come to know the story of a young white boy who accompanies his doctor father to an "Indian" camp to heal a Native American; through the text we get a critical view of the Native and of the white cultures as Ms Kállay gives an analysis of the intercultural communication represented in the story.

Emma Sánchez's paper, entitled "Representaciones de nativos de la Costa Noroeste de América del Norte en los dibujos de la expedición Malaspina (1791–1792). Realidad y ficción," investigates 18th-century paintings representing Northwest American indigenous peoples. The Malaspina expedition drawings are interesting because the artists of the expedition produced pictures illustrating different aspects of the traditional culture of the Natives. Ms Sánchez's work is an ethnographic study based on these illustrations.



The second section closes with Mónika Szente's paper "Los indios del istmo de Tehuantepec en los escritos de Károly László." This study is based on the diaries – which offer a colorful picture of the native habits in the region – of an Hungarian engineer who worked in East Mexico in the 19th century. The text focuses on the references that this diary includes about the traditions of the Acayucan, Minatitlán and Oteapan.

The third main section carries the title "Culture and Identity." The first study in this chapter, written by János Kenyeres, is entitled "I Was the One Who Should Have Been Related to Big Bear: Identification with the Indigenous Other in Recent Canadian Art and Literature" (264–280). The author describes a new phenomenon in Canadian art, through the example of some representative works, asserting that Native peoples' cultures have strongly influenced Canadian art and this connection must be understood in the context of multiculturalism.

Krisztina Kodó, in her paper titled "The Creation of the Stereotypical Indian within Native Canadian Culture," discusses the question of the term *Indian* as she puts the question of who the Indians are and what the origins and different uses of this term are. Furthermore, her study also presents images and stereotypes linked to the terms 'First Peoples' and 'Aboriginals.'

The next article, written by Albert Rau, carries the title "Canadian Native Peoples: 'We Are Still Here.' Suggestions for Classroom Activities." This paper presents the potentials of Native peoples of Canada as an EFL subject. It argues that Native literatures are useful for the students to learn about Aboriginal peoples and their cultures and they can be helpful in breaking down stereotypes in the classroom. The author presents the three distinct indigenous peoples of Canada: the First Nations, the Métis and the Inuit.

The following essay, "A Cultural Reader on Aboriginal Perspectives in Canada" (306–321), is written by two authors, Mátyás Bánhegyi and Judit Nagy. They provide a very detailed description of this pioneer project and provide an exact characterization of this significant teaching resource pack for any student and teacher who might be interested in Canadian aboriginal cultures. The authors attach illustrative pictures and tables to their paper, making their work an ideal and convenient addition to Canadian Studies in the classroom.

Andrea Bölcskei's study, entitled "Indigenous Perspectives on the Landscape of North America," comes next. The essay analyses how Amerindian toponyms enhance spatial and cultural orientation among American Natives. It gives valuable insight into how natives processed the geographical entities in their surroundings.

In her article, "Inuit Mental Health and Indigenous Psychology," Zsuzsanna Kövi looks into the statistics of mental health problems among the Inuit and also describes the types of the traditional Aboriginal psychological therapy. This survey is significant



because statistics indicate that Aboriginal peoples have more health problems than the general Canadian population. The author presents the types, causes and consequences of Aboriginal mental health problems (for instance, alcohol and substance abuse, domestic violence and suicide).

The last two studies of this section investigate the aspects and roles of the Christian missions and present how these have related to the Native identity. Tibor Fabinyi's paper, "Jonathan Edwards and the Indians," focuses on the relationship between the missionaries and the indigenous peoples as it discusses how the opinion of Edwards about the Natives changed as he spent more time among them.

The section's final article, entitled "I'll be the Indian, and You Guys the Cowboys': Mission-in-Reverse among Lakota People in Our Days," was written by Eszter Kodácsy-Simon. This paper, partly built on personal experience, explores how American Natives may help us change our religious attitudes. The author draws attention to the fact that if we genuinely learn about Native Americans, we can be helped to look deeper into our own culture and religion also.

The last section, "History and Policy Making," begins with Miklós Vassányi's study "Arctic America through Medieval European Eyes: North-East America in the Old Icelandic Annals and Greenland Deeds" (374–386). The central sources of this historical inquiry are the Icelandic Annals. The author analyzes these works, i.e., a group of late medieval documents written in Old Icelandic and partially in Latin. After that, he presents the evidence for the pre-Columbian discovery of America.

The following article is Magdalena Paluszkiewicz-Misiaczek's "Aboriginal Peoples in the Canadian Military." The author presents the historical perspectives of the aboriginal military in Canada, and focuses attention to the fact that the Canadian indigenous peoples have a long history within Canada's armed forces.

Elvira Nurieva's politically-inclined article goes under the title "A Separate Indigenous Parliament as a Model to Improve Aboriginal Political Representation in Canada." The article presents the effect of a separate indigenous parliament as the best model for Canada to increase political input of the Natives at the federal level.

The next paper, written by Dariana Maximova, presents how minority policies are made in the Canadian and in the Russian Arctic. "La politique sur les questions des peuples autochtones: analyse comparative des régions nordiques du Canada et de la Russie" investigates an interesting topic: the similarities and dissimilarities the Sakha Republic (Yakutia) has with the Nordic regions of Canada.

Palágyi Tivadar in his paper entitled "Indigènes ou allochtones – minorités linguistiques à multiples identités: les Indiens Houmas francophones de Louisiane et les Turcs Gagaouzes russophones de Moldavie" shows how differently the term "Indigenous" is understood in the American as opposed to the European context and touches upon the problem of multilingualism and that of indigenous identities.



Enikő Sepsi and Csaba Pákozdi's study is entitled "L'Inconscient littéraire québécois et hongrois ou les droits linguistiques au Canada et en Europe Centrale" (438–458). In this paper, literary analysis merges with political considerations. The authors show the similarities and differences in the Canadian and Central European linguistic situation, thereby drawing parallels between vastly different geo-political contexts. In the conclusion of the article, they argue that in Central Europe, the "bigger nations" have laws protecting their language use, while in Canada, the "smaller nation" has.

The following study, "Francisco de Vitoria y la conquista de América: los comienzos del derecho internacional," was written by Dezső Csejtei. In this paper, the author presents the role of the philosopher, theologian and jurist of Salamanca, Francisco de Vitoria in establishing the beginnings of international law.

In "Derechos de los indios en las constituciones, decretos y manifiestos políticos de México (1810–1824)", Viktória Semsey describes a short but very important period of Mexican law history concerning the native peoples. Her research concerns the degree to which the legislation of the time dealt with the codification of the rights of indigenous peoples.

Izaskun Álvarez Cuartero's study is entitled "Muerte a los que lleven camisa: acciones civilizadoras y conflicto étnico maya durante el siglo XIX." The author analyzes the reasons and the political background of the 19th-century Maya rebellion in the Yucatán peninsula.

The last article of the volume is José Del Val's work, entitled "Perspectivas de los Pueblos Indígenas en el Proceso de Globalización: Multiculturalismo y Despojo." This paper analyzes the actual political situation of the Mexican Natives in a wider, global economic context and refers to the multicultural integration of the Mexican Nation.

To conclude this overview with a final word of appreciation, I would like to say that this collection of studies offers a detailed overview of the general situation of Native North American people and, as this brief assessment shows, also updates quite a few important themes which are connected to the Native world. This multilingual (English, French and Spanish) collection of articles presents a fresh and diverse outlook on this wide topic. I think that reading the papers of the volume introduces us into this fascinating world and helps us understand the Native peoples' present-day social and cultural position in North America: Canada, the United States and Mexico.