BOOK REVIEW


Reviewed by **S. J. Adrienna Joyce**, PhD Candidate, McGill University

*Research and Reconciliation*, edited by Shawn Wilson, Andrea V. Breen, and Lindsay DuPré, was published in 2019 to explore the ongoing work of Indigenist researchers and to present a range of perspectives on what reconciliation means in action. The resulting volume is a thoughtful collection about reconciliation and its complicated, sometimes contradictory relationships with research methodologies. This book would be helpful reading for a wide range of academic and professional audiences alike.

The volume is divided into three sections. Throughout the first section, the authors explore aspects of positionality and the complexities of identity and belonging. In the words of editor Lindsay DuPré, the stories shared in this section “indicate how closely tangled our longing to belong and individual identities are within larger systems of power” (p. 1). The second section looks more closely at changing existing power relationships and interrogating the emotions associated with this shift, including anger, fear, and some potential awkwardness. Each contribution demands accountability of white settlers for past and present injustices while also emphasizing the importance of centering genuine relationships rather than superficial ones. In the third section, the chapters share stories of researchers in action and the challenges and possibilities that they encounter along the way. The resulting volume helps contextualize the important work of researchers who strive for deep community accountability in their work, sometimes at the cost of academic norms and timelines.

Throughout the book, the focus on storytelling is apparent. Most chapters offer highly accessible storytelling formats with clear author’s voices and the resulting text feels conversational in tone. The reader is invited into relationship with each storyteller through their writing. Many of the contributors use strong metaphors that also become reconciliation in action – the reconnection to Indigenous identities in Nicaragua as frozen jocote fruit (Ramírez, pp. 61-72), for example, or the Anishinaabe fish fry through which researchers
connected teachings from the Land with their research praxis (Ray, Cormier & Desmoulins, pp. 73-85). This focus on storytelling supports the editors’ overall purpose of sharing multiple perspectives on reconciliation and reinforces the centrality of relationships throughout.

As a white settler Canadian myself, I found the volume particularly insightful in helping me to think through my personal role in the reconciliation process and the deeper politics involved with that participation. I was invited to listen to many peoples’ different experiences, and at times I witnessed conversations that reminded me of my positional limitations. DuPré’s “love letter to Indigenous youth” (pp. 95-100) was of particular importance. She reminded Indigenous youth that in an age of reconciliation, they will likely receive many requests to share their stories, but the potential for exploitation in these relationships remains (see also Dhillon, 2017; Tuck & Yang, 2014). In her letter, DuPré acknowledged the need to “think carefully about when, where, and why this is taking place” (p. 97) and to consider whether the pressures to share will lead to any material change. As a reader, I was invited to overhear DuPré’s conversation with Indigenous youth. I was reminded of the accountability required for me to participate in this work. I have the responsibility to think critically about the impact of my requests as a researcher, no matter how well intentioned they might be.

Another strength of this volume was in its positioning of colonialism as a global project. The editors included several pieces outside of a Canadian context, which helped the reader to think further about the related struggles of Indigenous peoples across the globe. Importantly, the volume explicitly considered the role of anti-Blackness in and beyond Indigenous communities, particularly through Wilson and Beal’s contribution about Indigenous-Black identities (pp. 29-45). While Indigenous and Black diaspora studies are often separated in academic work, Wilson and Beal’s contribution challenges overly delineated identities and understands both the differences and relationships between Black and Indigenous experiences of oppression (see also King, 2019).

Further, Research and Reconciliation pushes the traditional boundaries of the supremacy of academic writing. Several pieces in the book drew from the arts, among them a chapter written through an Instagram feed (Stewart, pp. 101-115), a spoken word poem (redvers, pp. 91-93), and a chapter about song and ceremony around the globe (Aluli-Meyer et al., pp. 157-178). In a further stroke of brilliance, the inclusion of several witty excerpts from Tim Fontaine’s website Walking Eagle News speaks to the creative ongoing resistances of Indigenous peoples while also satirizing Canadian mainstream politics. Fontaine’s pointed commentary helps the reader to see the most superficial iterations of reconciliation at work in Canada today and provides a contrast to the relational work done by other authors in the volume.

Although there are likely specific articles that speak directly to a reader’s research interests, I would recommend reading the volume from cover to cover, particularly for those who are dominantly positioned like myself. Taking the time to listen and build relationship is crucial.
to reconciliation in action; the opportunity to begin this process through reading lies within these pages.

**REFERENCES**


**BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE:**

__________________________________________________________

* S. J. Adrienna Joyce is a dominantly positioned white cis-gender settler Canadian K-12 teacher from Winnipeg. She is also a PhD candidate and has worked as a course lecturer in the Department of Integrated Studies in Education at McGill University. Her ongoing research considers the implications of settler colonial structures for Canadian educators, both personally and professionally.

__________________________________________________________