

# Knowing the Past, Facing the Future: Indigenous Education in Canada by Sheila Carr-Stewart

Jocelyne Vogt

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***Knowing the Past, Facing the Future: Indigenous Education in Canada*** by Sheila Carr-Stewart (ed.) 2019. UBC Press. Vancouver, BC. 303pp. ISBN 978-0-7748-8035-0.

In her edited collection *Knowing the Past, Facing the Future Indigenous Education in Canada*, Sheila Carr-Stewart compiles a series of essays, including some of her own, that discuss the past, present, and future of Indigenous education in Canada. The book is divided into three sections. Part one, “First Promises and Colonial Practices,” offers three essays on the history of colonialism and education in Canada. The second section, “Racism, Trauma and Survivance,” discusses the impact of labelling Indigenous students. Lastly, the third section looks ahead to the future. “Truth, Reconciliation, and Decolonization” includes a series of five essays that offer information on what is currently being done for Indigenous students and the outlook for Indigenous education in Canada.

In her introduction, Carr-Stewart points to the need for reform in Indigenous education: “The provision of a quality education for Indigenous people remains an ongoing struggle” (p. 4). By including several authors experienced in the field of education, such as herself, Carr-Stewart’s book is an important professional development tool for any teacher, especially in Western Canada. The contributors to the collection are varied and well-educated in the field of Indigenous studies. The choice and placement of the essays within the book provide an excellent chronological overview of Indigenous education across, primarily, Western Canada. However, there is a lack of Inuit perspectives on education and their residential schools experience. By providing an Inuk author on Inuit education in Canada, Carr-Stewart would strengthen the discussion of Indigenous education in Canada.

The Canadian prairie provinces have implemented Treaty education and include Indigenous perspectives throughout all curricula. For teachers not familiar with the history of residential schools, the origins and the impact on Indigenous people in Canada are all provided in the first section. Carr-Stewart divulges this history in her essay, “‘One School for Every Reserve’: Chief Thunderchild’s Defence of Treaty Rights and Resistance to Separate Schools 1880-1925,” by providing a specific example of how Chief Thunderchild continually fought for his people’s treaty rights to education by having a single day school on reserve, yet in the end was not successful in his goal. Reading the first section, the average teacher would be able to educate themselves very quickly, as well as be provided with a starting point of information to better teaching practices. As the title of the book states, *Knowing the Past*—i.e., the history and origin of Indigenous education—only serves to better the understanding for the teacher in the classroom.

The second section highlights preconceived notions of students that teachers need to consider and address in the classroom. This second series of essays is especially pertinent in education, since many teachers are not Indigenous, yet are asked to teach Indigenous viewpoints and perspectives. Being aware of potential bias and societal racism is integral for educators to better their teaching practices for the benefit of all students. Because the essays broach and educate teachers of the prejudice placed on many Indigenous students, all three essays included in the

section are a must-read for any educator. The fifth essay of the book, “Laying the Foundations for Success Recognizing Manifestations of Racism in First Nations Education,” by Noella Steinhauer, provides real-life examples of internal and social racism throughout First Nations communities. Steinhauer effectively explains intergenerational trauma and difficulties in First Nations education by studying real people of all ages. As Steinhauer states, “changing the future will require a concerted effort by all parties” (p. 119), and by providing an explanation of the manifestation of racism in Indigenous communities, her essay is able to inform and educate teachers who are unaware of their potential bias in the classroom.

The final and longest section of the book discusses the current and future possibilities of Indigenous education in Canada. As is suggested by Lafond and Hunter in, “Curriculum After the Truth and Reconciliation Commission,” the future of reconciliation and education is “... to begin a journey towards a curriculum based on a shared [settler and Indigenous] future” (p. 173). The final section is an excellent tool for any educator to see the injustices of Indigenous education in the past, such as the forced implementation of residential schools, and the steps being taken to rectify those injustices, such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Reconciliation and self-determination are integral to the future of Indigenous education in Canada, and the articles in this section emphasize the importance of Indigenous views and input into education, especially of Indigenous content in curricula. The final essays of the book provide Indigenous perspectives in education in three provinces, British Columbia, Alberta, and Saskatchewan, thus providing a variety of ideas from across Western Canada.

As a Métis educator in the school system, it is refreshing to see the inclusion of an entire article that explores the difficulties the Métis face not only in education, but also in society. As Pratt and Lalonde share in “The Alberta Métis Education Council, Realizing Self-Determination in Education,” “in the present moment, our quest for self-determination takes place in a political context that situates the Métis perspective with education as a largely unexplored realm, with the exception of a few rare studies” (p. 268). Pratt and Lalonde’s article is significant since it not only highlights the history and importance of self-determination for the Métis, but explains in detail the steps taken towards “mapping out a journey towards self-determination” (p. 274), thus providing insight for other Indigenous groups, since “we are all learners” (p. 274). The inclusion of Métis perspectives in a book discussing Indigenous Education in Canada is integral for the resurgence and education of a previously hidden, and still marginalized, people.

Studies including the Indigenous perspective can sometimes be critiqued for utilizing a solely settler lens. The methods and research of western Europe are the foundation of studies in education, humanities, and languages, as is proven by Prochner in “Placing a School at the Tail of a Plough: The European Roots of Indian Industrial Schools in Canada.” Carr-Stewart, by including several Indigenous authors, is successful in establishing an Indigenous lens in her book. Furthermore, the essay “Iskotew and Crow: (Re)igniting Narratives of Indigenous Survivance and Honouring Trauma Wisdom in the Classroom,” by Fellner, adds to the Indigenous perspective by utilizing the traditional storytelling method. By explaining trauma through a narrative of “crowgirl,” Fellner further exemplifies the Indigenous view of education in the classroom.

In *Knowing the Past, Facing the Future* Carr-Stewart includes a concise and informative revision on Indigenous education with a primary focus on Western Canada. It is a book that succeeds in strengthening the knowledge of educators on Indigenous education in Canada. The book is an excellent addition to any teacher's resource library and should be included in the classroom of post-secondary teacher education.

Jocelyne Vogt  
Métis teacher  
Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, Canada  
Email: [jocelynevogt@cefsk.ca](mailto:jocelynevogt@cefsk.ca)