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Book Review: Indigenizing the Academy: Transforming Scholarship and Empowering Communities

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Indigenizing the Academy: Transforming Scholarship and Empowering Communities. Edited by Devon Abbott Mihesuah and Angela Cavender Wilson. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press. 2004. xi + 245 pp. Reference, index. \$50.00 cloth, \$19.95 paper.

Indigenizing the Academy is a thought-provoking collection of articles by Native American scholars regarding the intellectual and psychological environments they encountered as students, university faculty, researchers, and authors. It reviews whether their knowledge, their scholarship, their professional understandings, and their personal priorities were understood, accepted, ignored, or trivialized by faculty with whom, and institutions in which, they were associated. The authors also address issues of colonialism, ethnic fraud, research, university curricula, international partnerships, and sovereignty.

The book's major concern is whether it is possible to awaken existing university faculty and administrators to recognize and understand Native community priorities necessary for the development and well being of Native America. While this issue will be resolved to some extent as racial and ethnic population ratios change and as minority groups assume more control over institutions of higher education, there may be an exception for Native American faculty members primarily because

communities are also changing. Our task, then, it seems to me, is to help provide direction for that change—in what the “academy” becomes and in what we mean when we address “service to our Nations and people.”

Jerome Bruner once told a group of us attending the Harvard Graduate School of Education that if we wanted the school as an institution to meet our interests in Native language and culture, we would have to control the school and create our own institutions, or our priorities as Native people would not be realized. If he was correct in assessing the ability of public schools to adjust to Native priorities in their curricula, does this carry over to institutions of higher education? Does this mean that an expansion of the movement for creating tribal community colleges on or near reservations is the only way to “indigenize the academy?”

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