



Indigenous Leadership in Higher Education

Minthorn, Robin; and Chavez, Alicia Fedelina, eds.
Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2015

Book Review

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Excellence is seldom achieved alone. These words express one of the major themes of *Indigenous Leadership in Higher Education*, edited by Robin Starr Minthorn and Alicia Fedelina Chávez. Consisting of autobiographical narratives, the editors and contributors weave a blanket of experiences and guiding principles which illustrate and encourage the involvement of Indigenous leaders throughout the academy. Many of the narratives begin in the traditional manner with the authors situating themselves within their maternal and paternal lines, recognizing the interconnectedness of the present to the past in order to lead future generations well. That sense of community permeates the various narratives, weaving a thread into the blanket of colors that blends the experiences and insights into what constitutes Indigenous leadership.

This blend of narratives is most evident in the second and the final chapters, in which the editors succinctly gather individual contributors' words and correlate them to particular themes that serve as a wheel of knowledge in chapter two and summarize potential methods for incorporation into higher education in the final chapter. In chapter two, "Collected Insights," the editors provide a wheel of four major components of what constitutes Indigenous leadership. The last chapter highlights approaches and philosophies, strategies, academics, and means of working with students to promote and encourage leadership for Indigenous peoples. While it may be tempting to read just these two chapters because of the breadth contained therein, the narratives themselves expand on one or more of the dimensions discussed in these two chapters.

One of the major themes is that Indigenous leadership is communal rather than a solo

endeavor; Bryan McKinley Jones Brayboy writes that “Indigenous leadership requires individuals to see themselves as part of a unified whole” (53). In chapter two, the editors provide other examples that demonstrate the importance of connection to the community through its elders and the people for whom one serves.

Even though most of the narratives are directed toward Indigenous leadership in higher education, many of the principles can be applied to all persons in the academy. The narratives help educators rethink how to provide opportunities for all students to grow in wholeness and wisdom, not just knowledge of facts.

Among the qualities the editors describe as “what we strive to embody,” (17) qualities that may resonate with all Indigenous persons, for me, one is clearly lacking. As a Native Hawaiian, I would include gratefulness. While this quality may be imbedded in the concepts of generosity, humility with confidence, and spirituality, I found few expressions of gratitude within the narratives. This disconcerted me because it is inconsistent with what I learned from my *kupuna*, my Elders. I would hope that, while this embodiment is not expressly evident in the narratives, it is part of their respect for the Elders who have wrapped them in the blankets of experience and provided them with the warmth that enabled them to be Indigenous leaders.

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