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Taking Control: Power and Contradiction in First Nations Adult Education. By Celia Haig-Brown.

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ment of the photo of the Canada geese is confusing. Is this small black-and-white photo meant to communicate some sense of landscape? Why, referentially, is it placed in the glossary? (Another, almost imperceptibly dark miniature photo of Kootenay Lake can be found between the final two references in the bibliography.) Like the stories an anthropologist will attempt to present, perhaps, these Canada geese take on numerous postures, some safely near what appears to be a sand bar, others at various distances out into the stream, some gingerly, some bravely. The camera eye, unfortunately, allows their portrayal only in this static, single moment. The geese are fixed in their positions, in a location not clearly communicated, presented from a perspective that, due to the medium involved, must remain the photographer's own. The same, unfortunately, can be said of these stories.

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**Taking Control: Power and Contradiction in First Nations Adult Education.** By Celia Haig-Brown. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1995. 288 pages. \$45.95 (Canadian) cloth; \$24.95 (Canadian) paper.

Celia Haig-Brown has written an ethnography of the Native Education Centre (NEC) in Vancouver, British Columbia, based on fieldwork done in 1988–89. Thus, the scope of this book appears to be far less general than its title implies. However, taking a stance compatible with Foucauldian critical ethnography, Haig-Brown makes it clear that knowledge emerges from struggles at or over particular institutional sites. Certainly many of the issues that arise at NEC will be familiar to those involved in First Nations adult education elsewhere. Throughout, as the book's title suggests, the author focuses on the degree to which the NEC's programs can be said to demonstrate "Indian control of Indian education."

"Indian Control of Indian Education" is the title of a groundbreaking report on native education in Canada produced in 1972 by the National Indian Brotherhood (now the Assembly of First Nations). The notorious failures of the residential school system and of mainstream public education for native children and adults could be addressed only, the brotherhood argued, if the

First Nations had control of their own education system. Unlike the majority, for whom the education system was designed, most aboriginal people know through bitter personal experience that "education is not a neutral activity. It is profoundly political" (Michael W. Apple in the preface, p. ix).

Haig-Brown's approach reflects a sensitivity to this principle, and thus this study cannot be seen as an "objective analysis" by an "outside expert." Both Haig-Brown's theory and her methodology reflect her skepticism about the possibility of the disinterestedness implied by these terms (p. 15). She is fully aware of "the apparent irony of a non-Native person talking about 'Indian control of Indian education'" (p. 28). She admits that she has produced a necessarily incomplete picture of the NEC but does not thereby admit that it is purely subjective: I have done all I can to understand our work together and to express that understanding in a way that is acceptable to the people with whom I interacted. I have done this so that I can claim some truth for what I present: so that I can show the reader that it is not just I who say these things. Other people involved with the center either concur with my view or, at least, accept to some degree the interpretations presented here (pp. xiv-xv).

Haig-Brown takes care to interview many members of the NEC community at all levels: the board of directors, the staff, and the students. This is not only to attempt to get as complete a picture as possible, but also to reveal the center as a site of struggle in itself, rather than, say, a template for other programs. The reader looking for over-arching solutions will be reminded that every community works differently.

Thus the book's initial focus on the building and grounds does not seem strange; I first visited the center in 1987; the beauty of its design, its totem pole, its ceremonial door, and the huge copper hood over the fire pit must surely impress on everyone. This is native territory. Here visitors are welcome, but the students are at home.

Most of the book is devoted to contextualizing, quoting, and discussing the words of the interviewees. Out of this come several contentious issues. First, who is native? Categories such as "reserve Indian," "street people," "half-breeds," "normal Indian" emerge from the interviews. One student's poem catches the experiences of some mixed-blood people perfectly: "Some call me Indian and others call me White, / Some go by feeling; some go by sight" (p. 129). The difficulties in identifying "native" extended to

Haig-Brown herself, who worried that some interviewees had pulled their punches with her, only to discover that at least one of them thought she “was of First Nations origin” (p. 210). Another interviewee comments that “the administrator is native although some people say he isn’t” (p. 220). Here we encounter definitions of *native* that include behavior, appearance, and political position, some of which find full expression only, paradoxically, in an institution that is primarily native.

Of course, where scarce resources are at stake, such definition is not left to the individual or even the community. The state also gets involved. The center has no guaranteed core funding; funding is negotiated from year to year with the federal Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND) and other funding groups (including bands and tribal councils). In a recent cutback, DIAND interpreted First Nations control as band control with near-disastrous results for the NEC, since, “In the urban centre, students come from a variety of bands from across the country, many may not be legally recognized as ‘Indians’ under the Indian Act, and many are not directly linked to a band-sponsored institution” (pp. 287–88). The NEC weathered this particular cut, but clearly the degree of Indian control is limited by its dependence on federal money. Here I think that the Australian aboriginal slogan “It’s time to pay the rent” might be useful in reminding the federal government and nonnative taxpayers that this money is not a handout or welfare—a point that, at this stage in First Nations history, cannot be stressed enough. One might argue from another perspective that Indian control is hampered by reliance on divisive definitions of who qualifies as native. Whatever the tensions felt by those NEC students perceived as “not native,” one thing did not seem to be an issue: The students at the center self-identified as native.

Controversy certainly arose over the fact that the NEC has “four Native and eleven non-Native instructors” (p. 135). Most felt that, although qualified nonnative instructors were acceptable at NEC, more qualified native instructors should be hired whenever possible. Haig-Brown herself seems of two minds here: “Although I still argue that the teaching approaches I experienced are not limited to First Nations teachers, and that First Nations people are not genetically determined to teach in a particular way, I had never before experienced this kind of teaching” (p. 165). It seems possible to suggest that native pedagogy can develop, even flourish, in places like the NEC, and thus it is crucial for the center

to employ teachers who have these skills or who are devoted to learning them, whatever their background.

In several interviews, contradictions arise “between being a centre for First Nations people in general and a centre for no First Nation in particular” (p. 98). Although the center’s programs contain a good deal of cultural content, often this content is not local. Similarly, no aboriginal languages are taught at the center. Although the two local possibilities are Halkomelem and Salish, the students come from other language groups (and most speak no aboriginal language at all). Clearly, this is a problem, even for those who do not buy the idea of cultural purity.

What does Indian control mean to those interviewed? Many stressed personnel: all or mostly native teachers—but with the right skills and attitudes—and all native policymakers/board members. Also important was control of curriculum, stable funding from a variety of sources, and student involvement and responsibility. Procedures, too, became an issue: Should the board work by consensus or majority vote, use Robert’s Rules of Order or the talking stick? Mixed feelings were expressed about the power of the administrator, a commonplace at most educational institutions. Here, however, one could see that the ideals and politics that were required for the institution to succeed in its early, precarious history might not necessarily be those that would hold sway once the NEC became part of the educational landscape. The administrator comments that “people feel that this is a college and it isn’t. It’s a community-based education centre” (p. 244). Clearly, if the NEC were assimilated to the mainstream institution it most resembles—the community college—some “Indian control” would be lost, since it would inevitably become distanced from the large urban and regional First Nations community. For Haig-Brown, the principal contradiction of the NEC is that it is “an institution which prepares First Nations people to participate in an exclusionary, majority non-Native society, while at the same time attempting to enhance their awareness and appreciation of their own cultures and heritages” (p. 237). Of course, such a study cannot have a neat conclusion, since struggle over these issues will continue within and without the NEC. But as Haig-Brown points out, the important thing is that these differences and struggles are recognized and discussed so that new forms of knowledge can emerge.

This book provides a comprehensive picture of an institution devoted to community-based adult education that will add depth

to the shorter accounts in such journals as the *Journal of American Indian Education* and the *Canadian Journal of Native Education* and the many bureaucratic reports with their heavy reliance on statistics. Such interdisciplinary work, combining history, ethnography, and education, is sorely needed in rethinking those institutions, such as adult and higher education, that have so often proved sites of oppression rather than liberation.

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**They Call Me Agnes: A Crow Narrative Based on the Life of Agnes Yellowtail Deernose.** By Fred W. Voget. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995. 256 pages. \$24.95 cloth.

Not since *Pretty Shield* (Frank Linderman) has the voice of a Crow woman been so strongly heard as Agnes Yellowtail Deernose's voice is in *They Call Me Agnes*, by Fred W. Voget (assisted by Mary K. Mee). Like *Pretty Shield* a generation before, Agnes, an elderly Crow woman, contributes firsthand knowledge of the ways and customs of the Crow people and, particularly, the place of Crow women in that society, a topic that has been seriously neglected.

Voget has proven himself an able student of Crow culture and history. He is a respected anthropologist and an adopted member of the Crow tribe who has published extensively on the Crow. A previously published book, *The Shoshoni-Crow Sun Dance* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985), is a valuable text on Crow ceremony.

*They Call Me Agnes* is an account of life on the Crow Reservation (Montana) between 1910 and the present. The original project, begun in 1977, was to be a narrative of the personal experiences of Donnie and Agnes Deernose, a remarkable Crow couple with whom Voget first became acquainted in 1939 when he came to the Crow Reservation to conduct research. Following Donnie's death in 1978, the narrative continued with Agnes providing the principle voice.

Voget's interest in these two particular people is understandable. Their collective knowledge of Crow culture and Agnes's sharp memory give life to the early 1900s, the Depression era and post-World War II reservation life, often ignored periods in Native American history. This text provides important personal