

# Book Review/Recension d'ouvrage

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## **Trickster Chases the Tale of Education**

by Sylvia Moore

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## **Reviewed by / Revu par**

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As academics across our lands seek to honour the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action, those leading Canadian initiatives in educational reform often struggle with the residue of colonial practice and policy. In a recent study, Sylvia Moore, along with Mi'kmaw community members and local educators, help us come to an understanding of research grounded in a Mi'kmaw worldview—this which contributes to emancipatory scholarship and a collaborative educational vision dissolving both colonialist representation and its reinforcement of euro-centric learning and teaching. Central to *Trickster Chases the Tale of Education* is the Wabanaki knowledge system and the value of story presented by way of trickster Crow and his tales, and Moore's reflective and responsive dialogue in the understanding of Mi'kmaw teachings. Her voice, and that of Crow's, highlights a convergence of two worldviews—one Indigenous and the other western. Moore's place within this research also becomes central as it aids educators in recognizing how

statements of location, positionality, and authenticity are vital to the integrity and life-blood of Indigenous research, teaching, and learning.

In this storywork (Archibald, 2008), trickster Crow helps Moore weave her way through Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing (Martin, 2003), simply by sharing his stories and those of other beings. Although Crow spreads both confusion and clarity, Moore keeps pace with him as she begins to recognize the juxtaposed reality of a Canadian education. She draws upon the wise ones, Indigenous scholars, educators and elders, to share her growing knowledge of Indigenous story as a research methodology (Archibald, 2008). Coupled within the dialogues of Crow and Moore is the unfolding of a collaborative project that brought school and community members together in a vital journey of learning from and honouring salmon. Together, these learners and teachers, young and old, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, begin to understand how salmon is life-being and becoming, as are humans, and all other life forms; and further how being in relationship defines the obligation and responsibility of those who are known as the two-legged—to respect, protect, and honour those with scales and gills whose lives are dependent upon the waters of these lands. In this intricate presentation of six Crow stories, Moore's reflexivity aids the reader in a collective and attentive listening so the voices of Indigenous scholars, co-researchers, traditional peoples and community members are truly heard. Together, as we read, reflect upon, and dissect this important work, we begin the journey of coming to an understanding of Mi'kmaw values and ethics, and the criticality of listening to and honouring all our relations—this is an important first step to help us recognize the holism of an Indigenous or Mi'kmaw education, and of life itself.

At the inception, we are introduced to Crow and the circle of life, and through conversational story, we see how Indigenous research methodologies are intricately connected to a web of relations. Moore's personal challenge of "decolonizing self" is uncovered in her narrative, and we see how she attempts to authentically engage with Indigenous research methodologies while simultaneously learning how to be respectfully situated within community, and with her relations. Her exploration in learning about, engaging with, and truly learning from and honouring salmon to ensure the reparation of Indigenous relations, including those of the salmon, the rivers, the lands, and the kinships of these lands, is an off spring of her research, and becomes the centrality of her and Crow's dialogue. Crow helps Moore come to understand that the salmon

themselves—their eggs and their spawn—have agency and place. She discovers that in order for one to be in this research process, and to learn from salmon, permission must be sought and salmon must be honoured. In this way, she shows the reader how engagement in Indigenous research methodologies becomes an accountable and sacred initiative, one of tradition and ceremony, which requires deep understanding of learning and protocol, reciprocity and long term acknowledgment—all parts of what we have come to know as the weaving within Indigenous research methodologies (Kovach, 2009).

Through Crow's second story, despite her trepidation and some grave personal worry, Moore discovers that ceremony and spirit are a collective part of learning within Indigenous research, and throughout her journey she is required to voice this reality. The stories Crow offers are inner and outer realms found within the circle of life, and through them, Moore develops a deep reflection of story that helps educators grasp the concept of "all my relations" (Wilson, 2008). Crow's stories of Weasel help Moore see how the copious colonial mess of western education has undermined Mi'kmaw peoples, and consequently, why the salmon "went away." It is within these conversations with Crow, and through subsequent reflections of these narratives, that Moore consciously sees her previous teaching actions, and just how colonized her headway was.

In discovering the inside and outer realms of the circle, Moore learns more about the life passages of heart and mind, and her own attraction to energy, both negative and positive. She recognizes the passage to transformation is a long and arduous journey, and that nothing is resolved without deep self-reflection and change. As she draws from the knowledges of Battiste (1998), Battiste and Henderson (2000), Ermine (1995), Grave-line (1998), Hodgeon-Smith (1997), Wilson (2008) and Vizenor (in Blaeser, 1996) she begins to dissect her internalization of eurocentric teaching, understanding and being, in a recognition of trickster consciousness. This consciousness—that of liberation and new seeing—helps her understand how ceremony, elder teachings, dreams, stories, and intuition, all have a role to play within the developmental relationship found in Indigenous research methodologies (Kovach, 2009; Wilson, 2008). In conclusion, Crow's sixth and final tale centres the story of teacher and Weasel, along with the winged ones, the four-legged, the swimmers, the rock peoples and all others, in the woven dance of life. In this finale Moore signifies how the elevation of relationality precedes all eurocentric understandings of education and schooling, and how she is certain that a Mi'kmaw knowledge

system will not only resume its centrality within research and pedagogy, it will shine for all learners.

Trickster Chases the Tale of Education considers the work of educator decolonization and the embracement of Indigenous knowledge as two essential pieces of acknowledgment, change, and transformation. As the teachings of the trickster characters are situated as grand catalysts in the transformation of an education, teachers and researchers gain insight on the value of story itself, and how storywork (Archibald, 2008) has a significant impact on pedagogical evolution and revitalizing practice. The intricate connection of these pieces assist educators as they begin to see how Indigenous research methodologies are relational and required in a process of educational transformation for Indigenous children, youth and families. Through multiple voices and truths, educators are shown how an embracement of Indigenous knowledge, culture, and ceremony imply accountability, reciprocity and responsibility, and how learning from Indigenous peoples, and exchanging knowledges among peoples, not only builds a new order in this restoration of relationships, it sets the stage for a society of hope, love, and peace. As Elder Marshall indicates, both Indigenous and western worldviews must be considered for significant social change to occur; however, it is very clear that Mi'kmaw traditional knowledge and worldview exists as the cornerstone of life—that which is responsible for the direction and weave of future Mi'kmaw and Wabanaki initiatives along with the nation sisterhoods of the Eastern Door—the Wolastoqiyik, Passamaquoddy, Penobscot, and Abenaki. Together, with others of the Wabanaki nation, the Mi'kmaq will create the change that all educators need to see, embrace, and adopt.

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