

# BOOK REVIEW

## PATHWAYS FOR REMEMBERING AND RECOGNIZING INDIGENOUS THOUGHT IN EDUCATION: PHILOSOPHIES OF IETHI'NIHSTÉNHA OHWENTSIA'KÉKHA (LAND)

REVIEWED BY

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Styres, Sandra (2017). *Pathways for Remembering and Recognizing Indigenous Thought in Education: Philosophies of Iethi'nihesténha Ohwentsia'kékha (Land)*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. Pages: 234. Price: 28.95 CDN (paper), 67.91 CDN (hardcover).

In *Pathways for Remembering and Recognizing Indigenous Thought in Education: Philosophies of Iethi'nihesténha Ohwentsia'kékha (Land)*, Dr. Sandra Styres sets out to frame a circular and storied conversation about the ways in which Indigenous philosophies are formed and informed by connections to land, and understanding of self-in-representation. Dr. Styres is an Assistant Professor in the Curriculum, Teaching and Learning Department, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto (OISE/UT) and a well published scholar.

Styres' intentions are "to open up opportunities for creating bridges between two distinct world views" that she contends, "can coexist and work together in egalitarian and mutually respectful relationships" (p. 19). She proceeds to do so in a grounded and clearly articulated manner, as she has done in other publications over the past ten years. The results of her coming to know and understand Iethi'nihesténha Ohwentsia'kékha is a well-researched body of work focused on Land-centered Indigenous philosophies that "are continually being (re)cognized, and (re)generated within contemporary educational landscapes" (p. 4). Iethi'nihesténha Ohwentsia'kékha is a Kanien'kehá:ka7 (Mohawk) word that translates as "our Mother Earth" and conveys the ways in which she, as a sentient and conscious being, is honoured and respected and why the author chose to capitalize "Land" in this context (p. 38).

Throughout this work Styres exhibits her thoroughness as a researcher. As a pedagogue she illuminates

a spiritual pathway into the protocols of ceremony and as an entry point in coming to understand the conceptual framework of iterative circularity. Imagine a circle in which the four cardinal directions are placed. The first cardinal direction is the East where Section 1 VISION-(Re)centering is situated, as described by the author:

Section 1 enters the circle from the east - the east is where we enter this world from the spirit world. With this spiritual understanding and sacred connection to Land, I lay down my tobacco, the first of the sacred medicines that the Creator gave to the people. Tobacco is offered before all the other sacred medicines, and its smoke carries our prayers to the Creator. The smoke is the place of visioning - where we imagine what is or could be possible, where we identify and articulate the importance of doing this work, why now - here - in this time. Visioning opens opportunities for deep and profound insight and introspection as we explore and examine the ways we engage with natural, spiritual, and built worlds (p. 5).

At the start of each of the five sections of the book Styres includes ceremony, along with a summary of what was discussed in the previous section as well as an overview of what will be the focus of the section. In reading this book one needs to be prepared to delve into very detailed and dense discussions that put the reader in

touch with Styres' extensive and relevant research in coming to understand the philosophies of Iethi'nihtsténha Ohwentsia'kékha (Land) and in (re)centering and (re)actualizing Indigenous thought. As one reads through each section of the text, it becomes clearer that this complex, invigorating, and layered journey of unearthing is an opportunity for the reader to experience iterative circularity as both a method and a theoretical framework and to be immersed fully in themes that include: how Land informs constructions of the self; influences on dominant Western thought in relation to education and educational practices; and opportunities for exploring collaborative, collective, and individual knowledge building in which people can come to know old knowledges in contemporary contexts (p. 81).

Styres also demonstrates how this English language text can be brought into an active state of being by employing semantic devices that are effective in fashioning a dynamic theoretical framework:

Throughout this book, you will see parentheses used as a stylistic way to emphasize the prefix *re*, which means once more, afresh, and anew. The parentheses are visually and linguistically aligned with the concept of circularity, which is a key theoretical framework used throughout the book. Note, too, the suffix *-ing* in section titles, indicating fluidity, movement, and progressive action (p. 4).

One finds, in each of the five sections of the book, how Styres takes the concept of iterative circularity and organizes it around the four elements of Vision, Relationships, Knowledge, Action, and Iethi'nihtsténha Ohwentsia'kékha (Land), each paired with a word that is made iterative and dynamic through the use of affixes (Re) and 'ing,' as exemplified here:

Section One:	Vision	(Re)centring
Section Two:	Relationships	(Re)membering
Section Three:	Knowledge	(Re)cognizing
Section Four:	Action	(Re)generating
Section Five:	Iethi'nihtsténha Ohwentsia'kékha	(Re)actualizing

In using these two affixes, *re* and *ing*, each English word is transformed into an active state of "doing," as

one might find in words rooted in Indigenous verb-oriented languages.

Three different lands have significant roles in grounding Styres' ideas: the Six Nations of the Grand River in Southern Ontario, her home community; the Northern Nishnawbe Aski Nation Territory; and Te Papa-i-Oea (City of Palmerston North) in Aotearoa (New Zealand). The peoples of each of these lands are referenced throughout this text, as the author acknowledges their importance and what she has learned through binding and reciprocal relationships with them.

Dr. Styres' book chapters and peer-reviewed articles, as well as her conference presentations, some of which the reviewer has witnessed, are a testament to her perseverance in bringing forth the concept that she raises in the introductory chapter of the book. That concept is "Iethi'nihtsténha Ohwentsia'kékha," a wampum philosophy of education created from the tangled strings and chipped beads of (re)membering, (re)cognizing, and (re)generating ancient knowledges and very old pedagogies within contemporary contexts" (p. 195).

Initially it seemed that K-12 educators and teacher educators who adhere to provincial mandates and the TRC Calls to Action would readily take up this text; yet, in my discussions with colleagues in the field who have read parts of this book, I find that they have viewed it as "unwieldy", "too much content to read," and "not accessible." Perhaps this speaks to what some of our teachers have been conditioned to expect from the "tool-kit" and "quick-fix" approach of workshops. But Styres offers a hopeful view when she (re)minds us that "Land-centered approaches to education and other forms of inquiry may open up opportunities for educators and students, regardless of cultural positioning, to effectively build bridges between various perspectives that acknowledge but (de)centre colonial relations and (re)centre Indigenous knowledges and pedagogies" (p. 133). We, collectively, as educators, need to work on building these bridges.