

**Braided Learning: Illuminating Indigenous Presence through Art and Story.** By Susan Dion. University of Chicago Press, 2022. 260 pages. \$89.95 cloth; \$32.95 paper.

“I want to help, but I do not know what to do. I am afraid of doing it wrong because I feel like I do not know enough.” I hear this or a combination of these sentences in my work living in a settler society and working at a primarily white institution in the United States. The author, Susan Dion (Potawatomi, Lenape, Irish, and French), says she’s heard similar statements during her thirty years working in the field of Indigenous education in Canada. Using the Indigenous methodological and pedagogical practice of storytelling, Dion and her brother, Michael, share stories and artwork from Native perspectives because they “aim to expand and deepen readers’ understanding of Indigenous peoples, of themselves, and of themselves in relationship with Indigenous peoples” (13). The contemporary stories and artwork in this book demonstrate Native permanence in Canada as well as affirm the Native community’s continued presence in society.

Because of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada’s calls to action, there have been multiple publications that address the ways in which Canadians may proceed. Shawn Wilson, Andrea Breen, and Lindsay DuPré’s edited book *Research and Reconciliation: Unsettling Ways of Knowing through Indigenous Relationships* (2019) offers research scholars an introduction to reconciliatory frameworks. It is a valuable resource on Indigenous research methods for those engaged in social justice research and education. Bob and Cynthia Joseph’s *Indigenous Relations: Insights, Tips, and Suggestions to Make Reconciliation a Reality* is useful in business relations with Indigenous peoples. Although Dion wrote *Braided Learning* for educators in Canada, it applies to educators in the United States as well. For US scholars, it might be a good starting place to learn about their relation to contemporary Native issues and nations in a context not so close to home. The use of storytelling and the accessibility of the writing style allows the reader to approach complex topics such as settler colonialism, treaties, and residential schools. The book closes with a valuable section for readers to share the same language and definitions as the storyteller-author, describing critical terms and concepts, their use in the text, and additional resources to learn about the topic.

The author expands on the concept used in her previous book, *Braiding Histories*. In that book, she viewed settler Canadians from a position as a “perfect stranger” to settler Canadians as the “not-so-perfect stranger” in *Braided Learning*. She explains that the shift is due to her observations with many Canadians ameliorating their connection with the Indigenous peoples of Canada. The transition is progressing from settler Canadian apathy and indifference to their recognizing the responsibilities to advocate for justice for Native peoples and nations. *Braided Learning* is Dion’s response

to the Canadians who “are turning toward, wanting to know, wanting to understand, and asking, ‘If this has something to do with me, how do I make sense of it, what do I need to know, what am I to do?’” (19). Dion beautifully exemplifies through the telling of lived and embodied experiences the question that many Native educators get asked: how to build and sustain relationships between Native and non-Native peoples. The authors illustrate a path from apathy to action by providing examples moving from theory to practice.

The Native stories and artwork featured in the book portray how settler Canadians can understand the complexities of whiteness and settlement to confront settler colonialism. She writes that in the last 500-plus years since whites first made contact with Indigenous societies, Indigenous peoples have been talking about our perspectives. Dion asks a profound question: “What do they hear about us?” This book is another way for settlers, particularly Canadians, to understand the complicated histories of settler-Native entanglements. Telling these stories is another way to create “new, better, more equitable and just relationships” (7).

*Braided Learning* is an essential book for educators or others who want to learn about Native history and determine ways for a just Native futurity. Although I work in what is known as the United States, I plan to use this book as part of the core curriculum for the interdisciplinary graduate certificate “Working with Native Communities.”

Cynthia Benally  
University of Utah