

Stored in the Bones: Safeguarding Indigenous Living Heritages. By Agnieszka Pawłowska-Mainville. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2023. 299 pages. \$27.95 paper; \$22.50 e-book.

The history of UNESCO's approaches to cultural heritage chronicles evolving Euro-American attitudes and ethics toward heritage and cultural rights. The suite of conventions and declarations, as well as which states have ratified or distanced themselves from these documents, warrants critique. There is much to be admired about a global effort to preserve human heritage; there is also much about the universalizing and state-oriented mechanics that deserves careful examination.

Agnieszka Pawłowska-Mainville's *Stored in the Bones: Safeguarding Indigenous Living Heritages* takes up UNESCO's 2003 Convention on the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage and advocates for the use of its principles, processes, and commitments by Indigenous nations, especially as they work to resist incursions by colonial governments and extractive resource industries. The book considers how intangible cultural heritage (ICH) is missing from existing consultative processes, with the result being an impoverished ability for settler colonial governments and industry to register, acknowledge, and mitigate the impact of their decisions and actions on Indigenous livelihoods, heritage, sovereignty, and governance. Pawłowska-Mainville is primarily concerned with Anishinaabeg/Ojibwe and Inninuwak/Cree communities whose home is the boreal forest in Northern Manitoba and Ontario, and whose well-being is connected to trapping and land-based subsistence. The book draws on interviews, participant-observation and fieldwork methods, employment experiences within environmental impact assessments, and primary documents to convey the intimate connections among land, knowledge, and cultural identity of *akiwenziyagzi* and *kitayatisuk* (men of the land). It is the men's expert knowledge of the environment, the relations between the beings who inhabit it, and the practices of sustainable care that combine to form the ICH at the heart of the story. Safeguarding this ICH, Pawłowska-Mainville argues, can, by extension, protect the beings, lands, and waters so integral to Anishinaabeg and Cree cultural existences. Unlike museum preservation practices that sequester cultural objects away from human observation, safeguarding ICH requires active, daily involvement; ICH is lived, embodied, and, especially in this instance, emplaced.

Pawłowska-Mainville offers encouraging case studies from around the globe, and provides techniques and tools generated by UNESCO to inventory ICH and strategize for its safeguarding. She makes clear that she sees these as powerful tools for communities; the work of ICH is only meaningful when determined and enacted at the local level. The book, then, offers Indigenous nations a globally recognized tool to articulate culturally specific knowledge practices, skills, ontologies, and cosmologies.

But herein lies a major tension within the book. While ICH safeguarding may start at the grassroots or community level, it requires state recognition—and Canada has not ratified the 2003 Convention. Pawłowska-Mainville spends time building two parallel cases: first, that ICH presents a meaningful and effective tool for Indigenous nations in their ongoing struggle to express and affirm their sovereignty; and second, that Canada should ratify and “catch up” to other countries in the efforts to safeguard ICH. However, the second case is left underdeveloped, which calls into question the efficacy of the first pursuit. *Stored in the Bones* frequently reads as though written for an Indigenous audience, yet my sense is that Canadian policymakers would benefit most from—and arguably need to be convinced of—the arguments Pawłowska-Mainville is making.

This tension manifests in interesting ways in Pawłowska-Mainville’s discussion of Pimachiowin Aki, a remarkable World Heritage Site that deserves scholarly (and public) attention. One of the few World Heritage Sites globally whose designation is based on both its cultural and its natural heritage features, Pimachiowin Aki is comanaged by multiple First Nations and straddles the Northern Manitoba–Ontario border. If it is a “pristine” boreal forest environment, it is only so because of the enduring relationships among the Indigenous nations who live there and their practices of care for their other-than-human relations. It is not “untouched” but, rather, well-known, well-travelled, and well-cared for by Indigenous peoples. World Heritage Site status, a feat only possible with the endorsement of the Canadian government, is a means of protecting the forest and all who live there from extractive industries. Without question, documenting the ICH of the region contributed to the success of the dual designation, however the successful tool here was not the 2003 Convention but a much earlier UNESCO designation originating in physical, material spaces. In the example that closes out the book—the highly compelling but ultimately unsuccessful fight to protect traplines from Manitoba Hydro flooding—ICH was not compelling enough to overcome the materialist focus of capitalism. Across both of these examples, I sought greater critical interrogation of the relationship between state recognition—as required by UNESCO mechanisms—and the role of ICH in expressions of Indigenous sovereignty, governance, and land claims.

The other aspect of ICH, sovereignty, and governance requiring greater discussion is that of women’s knowledge and contributions. Pawłowska-Mainville is upfront about the male-centered knowledge shared in the book and the need for gender to be acknowledged as a facet of ICH. Pawłowska-Mainville urges other scholars to take up this task, but it is challenging to parse how Pawłowska-Mainville’s fifteen years of research has not enabled the inclusion of women’s ICH regarding subsistence, sustainability, and environmental stewardship. In neighboring areas, Indigenous women worked traplines with their spouses (and children) in the twentieth century, with scholars such as Naomi Adelson, for example, tracing the ways Cree females and males know, internalize, and transmit changing relationships to the land. Moreover, Pimachiowin Aki itself was championed by Sophia Rabliauskas, recipient of the Goldman Environmental Prize in 2007, a member of Poplar River First Nation (a community of focus in the book), and has written about the site for the *Journal of*

World Heritage Studies' 2020 special issue on mixed natural and cultural heritage. Given the importance of women's activities and knowledge to governance, subsistence, and environmental stewardship, the absence of women in the narrative is striking.

In contrast, Pawłowska-Mainville's linguistic adeptness—working across Anishinaabemowin, Polish, English, and Inninumowin—is a real strength of the work. Moreover, her global comparative approach does important work in affirming the international engagements Indigenous nations have always had. Rather than only, or primarily, characterizing Indigenous nations as being in a relationship with settler colonial powers, using the lens of international ICH efforts enables Pawłowska-Mainville to create a narrative in which Indigenous nations are (or could be) interlocutors with nations around the globe. A powerful message within the book is that, when it comes to ICH, the Canadian state is not the status quo; it is behind the times.

Stored in the Bones is at its best when it grapples with the very real, unromantic, compromise-laden spheres in which people live, and when Pawłowska-Mainville interrogates what it takes to safeguard cultures and relationships with the land that are incompatible with capitalism.

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