



Society & Natural Resources

An International Journal

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: <https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/usnr20>

Research and Reconciliation: Unsettling Ways of Knowing Through Indigenous Relationships

by Wilson, S., Breen, A. V., and Lindsay Dupré, Toronto, ON: Canadian Scholars, 2019. 254 pp., \$59.99 (paper), ISBN: 9781773381152.

John Schelhas

To cite this article: John Schelhas (2020): *Research and Reconciliation: Unsettling Ways of Knowing Through Indigenous Relationships*, Society & Natural Resources, DOI: [10.1080/08941920.2020.1789795](https://doi.org/10.1080/08941920.2020.1789795)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/08941920.2020.1789795>



Published online: 08 Jul 2020.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

BOOK REVIEW

Research and Reconciliation: Unsettling Ways of Knowing Through Indigenous Relationships, by Wilson, S., Breen, A. V., and Dupré, L., Toronto, ON: Canadian Scholars, 2019. 254 pp., \$59.99 (paper), ISBN: 9781773381152.

This unique and remarkable volume brings together multiple voices and nuanced perspectives to convey a broad understanding of the processes and importance of research that is aligned with Indigenous worldviews and reconciliation in relation to colonial histories. Responding to the 2016 report of Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, it focuses on Canadian stories but will be of interest to anyone who conducts research with Indigenous communities, and perhaps other marginalized groups. The topic of research and reconciliation is approached through stories and conversations that fully embody the multivocality and the complex reality of our present-day interconnected and interdependent world, and truly unsettle our ways of knowing. While often focusing on differences between Indigenous people and "settlers," the authors find themselves grappling with their own connections to multiple identities and institutions. More often than not, the authors themselves are situated across multiple Indigenous heritages; represent unique mixes of Indigenous, European, Latin American, African, and Iranian perspectives; and are located in both Indigenous communities and Western institutions.

First and foremost, the book asks what reconciliation can mean to different people given their individual histories of exploitation and colonialism. It can mean improved social relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, specific actions by governments and universities, and processes internal to families and individuals. It is a process deeply rooted in experiences and meanings, and not simply a checklist, new committee, or a report. Most importantly, simplistic and hurried approaches can crowd out the very experiences through which reconciliation really does its work. The volume allows the authors to use diverse styles and language, eschewing consistency to allow a patchwork understanding to emerge.

The contributions in the book describe many experiences, often from several perspectives. Part I of the book addresses Indigenous identities, and the many complex ways they are interwoven with other identities. Storytelling and story-sharing feature prominently as mechanisms to involve and empower people with complex identities, but also, as gizabethaessigae jen meunier eloquently describes in Chapter 2, as a way to open up cracks in institutions for Indigenous people to hold on to and pull others through. Stories of Indigenous-Black and Indigenous-Latin American identities, treaty and non-status Indigenous people, and the telling of a research experience from multiple participant researcher perspectives convey the nuance and complexity of Indigenous experiences. Part II of the book takes on a sharper edge, emphasizing the assertion of Indigenous identity in opposition to the oppression of colonization, including in the modern university. As in so much of the book, I appreciated the fragments of experience that resisted neat packaging but inspired reflection and thought. The chapters in Part III reflect on research and reconciliation experiences, emphasizing how humility and respect can gradually move us forward. I particularly recommend Anjali Helferty's description of navigating the crosscurrents of practice and academics in developing her Ph.D. research, telling about her journey through idealism and practicality that ends up in a more humble hope and renewed commitment. Interspersed among the three parts of the book are stories from a satirical Indigenous newspaper, *Walking Eagle News*, that

help us understand Indigenous perspectives and the ironies that emerge when we engage them.

This book does not look like any academic writing I have previously encountered. Coauthors retain their individual identities within chapters to share perspectives and engage in conversations. Tricksters appear and unsettle narratives and efforts to develop simple explanations. Stories and satires are blended with research experiences. Art and poetry make unique contributions to our understanding. Yet somehow in its reading, it flows together and creates a feeling or vibe comparable to that of working as a researcher in the complex social, political, and cultural space of an Indigenous community. This is a book to read in one sitting, to give yourself over to and see where it takes you.

As natural resource managers and researchers direct their attention to a greater diversity of histories and perspectives, this volume has an extraordinary ability to convey examples of the social landscapes and challenges involved. That can be attributed to the honest reflection of the authors, but perhaps even more to the flexible form of the book and the many avenues of creative expression that are allowed in. Through honest and compelling storytelling, poetry, art, and research experiences, it helps us understand the task before us as we seek to conduct research with and involve diverse Indigenous communities in natural resource management in ways that honor their experiences and foster future collaboration. This volume could be interesting and useful to many researchers, but I think it would be particularly helpful as a companion for researchers working in Indigenous communities, as it may help them make sense of their experiences of long term engagement and collaboration as new complexities unfold and easy answers seem elusive. Beyond that, it may also foreshadow new scholarly approaches to research that seek to move beyond colonial histories in ways that are empowering and uplifting to all involved.

John Schelhas
USDA Forest Service, Athens, GA USA
 john.schelhas@usda.gov

© 2020 Taylor & Francis Group, LLC
<https://doi.org/10.1080/08941920.2020.1789795>

