

# Radical Human Ecology: Intercultural and Indigenous Approaches

Lewis Williams, Rose Roberts and Alastair McIntosh (Editors) *Ashgate Publishing Limited, Surrey, 2012, 452 pp, ISBN 9780754677680*

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doi 10.1017/jie.2013.3

Echoing H.G. Wells' 1934 call for a more interdisciplinary approach to the study of human ecology, editors Lewis Williams, Rose Roberts, and Alastair McIntosh offer readers an ambitious volume of essays, in part to champion this cause. *Radical Human Ecology*, a weighty collection related to Indigenous and intercultural topics, serves as a sort of 'call to arms' in their stated effort to move Human Ecology beyond its scientific shackles to 'reclaim the unitive, depth dimension of being — the Life World that so interconnects us' (p. 1). Arguing that the discipline has been caught in a paradigm driven by Cartesian dualism, with this volume, Williams, Roberts, and McIntosh aim to reclaim Indigenous knowledge implicitly related to the study of humans and reorient Human Ecology.

The text is organised into three main sections, symbolically named for the body — Head, Heart and Hand — inspired by a model designed by Patrick Geddes and referenced in Chapter 2. Each section relates to the topic differently and thus the bodily connection is a smart one that aligns the head with reason, the heart with feelings, and the hand with management and activism, making the work accessible to students and scholars interested only in certain aspects of this topic. The text connects closely to the body in another way, in that each of the essays is written from an autobiographical perspective that welcomes personal narratives and perspectives into the collection. The tangible links made between research and personal experience is not new in many scholarly disciplines such as educational research, though for Human Ecology such forms of research dissemination remain somewhat unique. For example, *Panarchy: Understanding Transformation in Human and Natural Systems* (Gunderson & Holling, 2001) another collection of essays edited by human ecologists that also argues for a more interdisciplinary approach, remains firmly entrenched within a scientific discourse despite stated efforts to move beyond scientific analyses. *Radical Human Ecology*, according to the editors, and supported by the foreword contributor Richard J. Borden, the Rachel Carson Chair in Human Ecology, thus signals a fresh and much needed direction for the discipline.

The first section, 'Head: Theories of Human Ecology', includes four essays closely related to specific theoretical issues and the discipline's place in the academy. Each essay presents a theoretical argument for change. Concluding that new directions of study within the discipline can in-

spire creative solutions to global crises, Ulrich Loening, molecular biologist and human ecologist, contends in his contribution that scientific attitudes must change in order to better fit human activity into nature's rhythms. Alastair McIntosh shares his long experience of teaching Human Ecology, maintaining that a 'premodern' (p. 31) approach that equally combines scientific investigation and metaphysics remains key to the discipline's future. In his argument for holism, McIntosh discredits Modernism and Post-Modernism. Focusing his ire most directly at Post-Modern theory, for McIntosh, is a stark either/or argument with no acknowledgment of the positive aspects of critical theory, which leads him to describe it as a soulless academic pursuit. A realignment with pre-modern indigenous epistemologies makes better sense and he persuasively argues this point. Ethnology scholar Ullrich Kockel follows up on McIntosh's challenge by advancing another aspect of an indigenous approach to the study of culture known in German as *Volkskunde*, or knowledge of the people. The role of the sacred has been ignored in all academic disciplines outside religious studies, in Kockel's estimation, and argues this component must be reinserted into the discourse. Makere Stewart-Harawira combines Maori worldview with global citizenship in her scholarship, and her essay, the last in this section, 'Returning to the Sacred: Indigenous Ontologies in Perilous Times', concisely repositions the arguments of the first three authors to assert that Indigenous ontologies offer a radical new direction forward and therefore cannot be dismissed by human ecologists.

The second section of the text, 'Heart: Radical Epistemologies of Relationship', offers seven essays that shift the discussion to more specific intuitive and emotive ways in which to relate the theoretical premises of the discipline to indigenous ways of knowing. Maori scholar Lewis William's essay, 'The Human Ecologist as Alchemist', introduces this section by utilising intuitive inquiry, arguing that life and our lifework remain part of a transformative process that should continually question our existence and place in the world. Each of the essays in this section fix the concept of inquiry to personal experience in an effort to demonstrate the global importance of this paradigm shift. Scholars from New Zealand, Scotland, Pakistan, Canada and the United States contribute diverse yet similar conceptions in their essays to more fully articulate this

epistemological direction, which the editors argue is necessary in order to solidify the premise that elements of indigeneity exist in all cultures.

The final section of the text amounts to the largest grouping of essays. 'Hand: Human Ecology in Practice' offers readers a broad range of specific cases of Human Ecology at work through nine exemplars. Examples of theory into practice: each essay in this part of the text maintains an autobiographical voice to share specific experiences and examples that reference the diversity of Human Ecology pursuits. The editors of this text believe that indigeneity offers Human Ecology a framework for the future of the discipline. Yet, many indigenous researchers straddle the borders and boundaries of academia, keenly aware that their research does not fit neatly into any single discipline. The holistic nature of such studies often demands that we sit outside the confines of Western-style silos of academia, yet this also allows us to more easily access directions of inquiry from a variety of disciplines. Indigenous researchers, especially those working within the area of educational research, have long embraced indigenous epistemologies, autobiographical, and narrative methodologies that mesh

with traditional ways of knowing and learning. *Radical Human Ecology* clearly celebrates the complexity and diversity of the varied research it assembles in making a contribution to the literature. While one strength of this text lies in its acknowledgement of the importance and application of indigenous ontologies and epistemologies to academic inquiry, its weakness lies in its effort, mostly early on in the text, to maintain links to the established scientific discipline of Human Ecology rather than moving on. Researchers from all disciplines should embrace the advice of contributor Makere Stewart-Harawira, who asks readers to take the 'next great evolutionary leap forward' (p. 85) in considering ways of thinking and researching that embrace empathic and hopeful human relationships to both the sacred and the earth.

### Reference

Gunderson, L., & Holling, C.S. (Eds.), (2001). *Panarchy: Understanding transformation in human and natural systems*. Washington, DC: Island Press.

## Reform and Resistance in Aboriginal Education

Quentin Beresford, Gary Partington and Graeme Gower (Editors) *University of Western Australia Press, Perth, 2012, Second Edition, ISBN 9781742583891*

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doi 10.1017/jie.2013.4

*Reform and Resistance in Aboriginal Education* provides a highly accessible review of current approaches and agendas in Aboriginal education. Its accessibility means that it will have extensive appeal to pre-service teachers. The text is indeed aimed at teachers, educational administrators and policy-makers, with the objective of developing best practice in the field. It is the second edition of a text that was first published in 2003.

The first chapter should be compulsory reading for pre-service teachers across Australia. It documents the experiences of a beginning teacher, Helen McCarthy, on Anindilyakwa country in the Northern Territory, where she lived and worked as a teacher for 12 years. It is beautifully written; the suspense and intrigue associated with the experiences that Helen relates through the privilege of living in an Aboriginal community are a delight to read. After reading a chapter like this, I was left wondering why a young beginning teacher would consider the monotony of a city placement.

Beresford and Gray present an invaluable overview of Aboriginal policy development in Australia. The various

models presented will provide the student reader with a method of interpreting previous government approaches to Aboriginal education, and the ways in which policy development so easily returns to where it began 30 years before, with only slight adjustments to the original model. Indeed, the authors reveal how we have returned to compensatory education. They include the government's *Closing the Gap* policy and Noel Pearson's interpretation of *Direct Instruction* in a compensatory skills model of education. I was also interested by a note from the authors that 9% of Indigenous students do not sit the NAPLAN tests.

Issues of standardising Aboriginal student outcomes against the national benchmark of non-Aboriginal students, and governing by numbers are not explored. Chapter 5 starts with a restrained letter from a mother who is writing to her son's teacher requesting that the teacher 'think carefully about 'how and why you read a Dreaming story to the children ... and why you must ensure it doesn't become a token effort'. This is a pertinent observation of widespread practice, where so many children

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Publisher: Taylor & Francis

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## Australasian Journal of Environmental Management

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/tjem20>

### Radical human ecology: intercultural and indigenous approaches

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Published online: 29 May 2013.

To cite this article: Lau Saili (2013) Radical human ecology: intercultural and indigenous approaches, Australasian Journal of Environmental Management, 20:2, 170-172, DOI:

[10.1080/14486563.2013.793645](https://doi.org/10.1080/14486563.2013.793645)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14486563.2013.793645>

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**Radical human ecology: intercultural and indigenous approaches**, edited by L Williams, R Roberts and A McIntosh, Ashgate Publishing, Surrey, UK, 2012, 452 pp, ISBN 9780754677680, AU\$105.20

Human ecology is about the relationships between humans and their environments, including natural, social, cultural and built. The field of study takes a holistic approach to interrelations between these components as parts of a system and so crosses a wide variety of disciplines. As broad as that is, *Radical human ecology: intercultural and indigenous approaches* challenges prevailing orthodoxy in the field, arguing that current approaches to human ecology still fundamentally fail to see humans as an integral part of nature. The book contends these failings are a historical hangover of the Western scientific worldview, focused on materialism, rationality and reductionism. The editors offer up a radical definition of human ecology as ‘the study and practice of community: community with others (Society), community with the earth (Soil) and community with the divine (Soul)’ (p. 3). Through this lens our environmental crises are seen as having their origin in our collective crisis of spirit. The response is to tap into Indigenous and traditional peoples’ beliefs and ways of thinking about existence, reality and knowledge. The hope is that we can learn how to reconnect on an older, deeper level with one another, our environments and our place in the world. On this basis the book proposes an alternative way of thinking about, learning, teaching and practising human ecology which aspires to a more authentic form of sustainable development.

The book is divided into three parts – ‘Head’, ‘Heart’ and ‘Hand’ – corresponding respectively to ‘Theories of human ecology’, ‘Radical epistemologies of relationship’ (radical ways of approaching the relationships between humans and their environments) and ‘Human ecology practice’.

Part I, ‘Head: theories of human ecology’ is set against the backdrop of the ‘historical hangover’ described above. It opens with Loening questioning how, where and why we live as we do. He counterpoints industrial society against nature to develop criteria to illustrate what is wrong with the way we live and by which to judge future progress. MacIntosh follows by highlighting how modernity and post-modernity have dislocated the metaphysical or spiritual foundations of human ecology. He argues that human ecology demands an approach that calls back the soul: otherwise ‘we are as good as dead’ (p. 52). In this vein, focusing particularly on the displacement of old Europe, Kocknel calls for a renewed reconnection with our sense of place and belonging through ‘Heimatkunde’, deep knowledge of the place to which we belong. We can do this, he says, by ‘liv[ing] ourselves into it’ (p. 60). Armed with this perspective human ecology may derive a more authentic understanding of peoples, places and the relationships between them. Stewart-Harawira\* rounds out Part I of the book with the rise of civilisation which marked a ‘fatal rift between human beings and the earth’ (p. 73). For her, the collective heritage of Indigenous peoples is a repository of some of what has been lost in the chasm of human progress. She argues that traditional Indigenous knowledge and ways of understanding being, existence and reality are critical to overcoming our environmental crises and furthering human development – a great leap forward that requires genuine partnership with Indigenous peoples.

Part II, ‘Heart: radical epistemologies of relationship’, offers a variety of, often quite autobiographical, cultural-spiritual perspectives of human ecology including

Māori, Celtic, Sufi Islam, Orthodox Christian and Canadian First Nations. These range from radical human ecology offering the alchemy to catalyse our innate capacity to be Indigenous (Williams – Māori); to being a vehicle for reclaiming personal, community and place identity through the contemporary ‘transition town’ movement (Smyth – Celtic) or old land tenure practice of crofting (MacKinnon – Celtic); to a means of decolonising and defragmenting community and personal identity by recognising the essential oneness of all creation and divine essence of the relationships between humans and their environments (Javed – Sufi Islam), and uncovering insights of non-Western ‘Old World’ traditions on why and how fixation with technology can and must be avoided and overcome (Morrison – Orthodox Christian); to paralleling the Cherokee/Lakota (Mehl-Madrona and Mainguy) worldviews that knowledge stems from the flow of energy that animates and connects all things, and healing wisdom from the stories constructed from experience of their interactions, and Northern Cree (Roberts) sensibilities regarding sustainability honed from survival in a harsh environment.

The book finishes with Part III, ‘Hand: human ecology practice’, which looks at putting radical human ecology into practice. Goodman outlines her efforts to employ radical human ecology’s understanding of relationships to build peace in the context of politico-tribal violence in Africa. Weiss describes the success of naturalisation programmes for non-English speaking migrants to Australia based on an ecology of culture rooted in Indigenous and post-colonial expression. White illustrates the potential for similar approaches to migration policy in Canada, emphasising the critical role immigrant women have to play. The rural–urban dichotomy in rapidly developing China is the subject of Zhang and Lovrod’s chapter. They highlight how the gendered and age-based division of labour in the great transition from peasant to city worker has ruptured extended families and communities, and point to full ‘life-cycle’ analysis for better policy making. By a similar token, Vaga and Moreno examine the public health challenges of Indigenous peoples and rural workers in the development of the Amazon, and the need to redesign environmental, agrarian and health policies and institutional arrangements according to radical human ecological principles. O’Neill applies the approach to trauma, healing through creative expression rooted in one’s origins and shared with one’s community. Wilding shares the community of practice developed to build community resilience in the UK and Ireland employing radical human ecological methods. Finally, Williams tells of a similar initiative in Canada, New Zealand and Australia that fosters cultural diversity in support of biodiversity through the revitalisation of Indigenous worldviews or literacies within all peoples.

Given its radical agenda to challenge human ecology’s Western scientific ‘exteriority’, much of the book is concerned with ‘interiority’ – the metaphysical, the personal and the spiritual. This could make it hard going for readers unused to or unfamiliar with post-modern and post-colonial narrative, particularly of the continental European variety. Some of the more autobiographical and spiritual writing is certainly quite ‘out there’, giving the impression that there are many characters in this field! This also means the text is most united and successful in its elucidation of theory; it becomes more disparate in its discussion of practice – perhaps a consequence of the radical preoccupation with subverting the status quo. The obvious care that has been taken by the editors to ensure balanced representation and contributions from around the world is also admirable. However,

the grouping of the Indigenous (colonised ‘New World’ peoples), the traditional (marginalised ‘Old World’ peoples) and the religious/spiritual under the banner of ‘radical’ creates an uncertain marriage whose underlying tensions are glossed over by the text – for now the close-knit academic radical human ecology fraternity appears to be holding it together. Nonetheless, aside from challenging one’s thinking, the book is worth dipping into by academics and practitioners alike just to get a sense of the alternatives to compartmentalising and ‘dehumanising’ the environment through conventional techno-scientific approaches to environmental problems. With Indigenous self-determination ascendant domestically since Mabo and ‘free, prior and informed consent’ internationally since the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Indigenous perspectives are no longer an anthropological curiosity but increasingly an integral part of environmental and natural resources management.

\*The reviewer wishes to acknowledge Stewart-Harawira is a distant aunt who, unbeknown to him, has become a leading figure in this field.

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14486563.2013.793645>

**Visualising climate change: a guide to visual communication of climate change and developing local solutions**, by SRJ Sheppard, Routledge, Abingdon, UK, 2012, 514 pp, ISBN 9781844078202, US\$79.95

Stephen Sheppard’s *Visualising climate change: a guide to visual communication of climate change and developing local solutions* is a comprehensive effort to generate a societal response to top-down inaction on changing climate. With the premise that local action may be the best hope for positive change and climate action, Sheppard addresses the ‘gaping hole’ (p. 50) between the scientific literature and local climate knowledge. Sheppard sees solutions to the climate information asymmetry and inaction on climate change as potentially being rooted in the visual. Taking his inspiration from human nature, ‘...as visually oriented beings we change our hearts and minds when we see for ourselves what is or what could be’ (p. vi), Sheppard’s idea is to make carbon and climate change visible where we care the most, in our local communities and metaphorical and literal backyards.

The means of addressing the gap between scientific and local knowledge on climate change is summarised early in the book with three straightforward points: 1) make it local; 2) make it visual; and 3) make it connected. The latter point is described as the big picture including cause, effects and impacts. The approach taken by Sheppard is to divide the book into four main parts: setting the scene; knowing, seeing and acting on community carbon and climate change; changing minds with visual learning tools; and what the future looks like with climate change.

Part I, ‘Setting the scene’, provides a synoptic discussion of the current state of climate knowledge including anthropogenic causes, the link between carbon and climate change, and an argument for the urgency of action. Sheppard sets the tone of the book at the beginning of chapters with vignettes of his life that convey both

what is killing us. The stresses on our planet and our personal and collective pathology are deeply connected".

Being unfamiliar with nearly all the (mainly Australian) contributors to this book, I turned first to a chapter near the end, 'The Religion of Economics' by John Seed, an environmental activist and a singer-songwriter I first met in 1993 when I spent a year in Queensland. Like many of us, John is "troubled by the irrationality, perhaps even insanity, that is destroying the biological fabric from which our lives are woven". After 30 years of campaigning for conservation, especially of rainforests, he's clear that "there is no way to save the planet one forest at a time. We need now to address the underlying psychological or spiritual disease that allows humankind to imagine that we can profit from the destruction of our own life support systems... only a deeply religious faith allows us to ignore the absurdity of perpetual growth on a finite planet. The market is the tool of that faith".

One chilling example John uses is the way deregulation of food market prices in the 1990s allowed "The world's wealthiest speculators set up a casino where the chips were the stomachs of hundreds of millions of innocent people. They gambled on increasing starvation, and won" (quoting journalist Johann Hari of *The Independent*). Things will only change if we acknowledge what is really going on, and cease to be complicit; John sees Deep Ecology as the best approach for individuals to develop the necessary understanding of the environmental crisis. Based on the writings of Arne Naess in 1973, this movement encourages us to examine and question our behaviour in relation to all other beings, living and inanimate, on earth.

This was a good place to start the book, going straight to the heart of the underlying causes and challenges of our current situation. I continued to read it in reverse, so by the time I reached the introductory, more academic chapters defining social ecology and documenting its development, it was with keen interest, having read about many creative and innovative approaches to teaching and exploring the subject. The case studies demonstrate that using art, drama, creative writing, story telling, journeys into wild land and time spent simply listening to each other, trying to understand cultures and perspectives that differ from our own, can nurture transformative learning experiences, leading to the increased awareness and understanding necessary for behaviour to change.

Co-editor Stuart Hill explains why this subject has great appeal for me: "Social ecology brings together so many poles that rarely meet: the arts and sciences; critical thinking, reflexivity, passion and intuition; rationality and spirituality; the stories of the ancients, systems theory and chaos theory". The editors anticipate random readers like myself in declaring that: "Both the book and the subject matter encourage an eclectic, intuitive and wandering engagement... Issues of creativity, transformation and sustainability form the spine, and the future teases with learning". Social Ecology is rooted in lived experience, practical action and critical reflection, in the context of our social and ecological responsibilities.

This book left me feeling hopeful. I fear it may be too little, too late, but we need a lot more of the kind of teaching, action and reflective learning described here. In the words of contributor Bruce Fell, to counteract the pervasive 'Buy

Now Pay Later' pressure to consume 24/7, we need "to be embossed with flourishing reminders of the Earth's centrality to our existence".

Tess Darwin

### **RADICAL HUMAN ECOLOGY Intercultural and Indigenous Approaches**

Lewis Williams, Rose Roberts & Alastair McIntosh (Eds)  
Ashgate Publishing, 2012, 424 pages  
Hbk, £80, ISBN: 978-0-7546-7768-0

The appeal of a radical human ecology is in the questions it raises about human life and in the ways it sets about investigating them. The questions start with the philosophical and pragmatic: how, where and whether humans can continue to live on the earth. The means for addressing them combine myriad disciplines, approaches, methodologies, practices and human capabilities. Grappling with the relations between these varied forms of knowledge and experience, like the scientific, poetic, academic, political, psychological and spiritual, distinguishes a human ecological approach from that of, for example, environmental and economic resource management.

The editors have focussed on the way human ecology reflects on inter-cultural experience, on the spiritual aspects of ecological interdependence, on the trauma of colonisation and on indigenous knowledge as transformative. This focus is reflected in the definition offered by Alastair McIntosh, that human ecology is the study and practice of community with others, community with the earth, and community with the divine. As an approach to knowledge-making, and as a life practice, human ecology is

motivated towards problem-solving and creative action to support the flourishing of community life, human and other-than-human.

This combination of practical action with metaphysical and ethical concerns is evident in each of the 20 essays. The historical and theoretical background is set by Ulrich Leoning. Other theoretical bases are provided by Makere Stewart-Harawira writing about indigenous ontologies and Ullrich Kockel writing about 'place'.

Most of the book's essays are narratives or case studies offering an insight into how a human ecology approach changes the course of a project, or the methodology of research or the workings of an organisation. The praxis of human ecology is seen in projects as varied as international peacebuilding; the development of a community of practice supporting rural resilience in the UK; the Scotland-based MSc in Human Ecology; a public health project in the Amazonian region; generational migration studies in China; teaching marginalised aboriginal youth in Australia; and the Transition movement in the UK.

Many chapters tell of lives caught between cultures. Indigenous cosmologies and knowledges, primarily from peoples in Canada, Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand, as well as the Sufi path and Orthodox Christianity are shown as possibilities for remaking more enduring relations between humans and with the other-than-human.

The auto-ethnographical approach is a familiar academic method. Over many chapters, though, the narrative of personal experience

begins to read as formulaic and not as revelatory as it could be. More critical perspectives on cross-cultural views of knowledge would have sat well with the contributions from writers from indigenous communities. In addition, there is a tendency to set a human ecological approach in opposition to another approach, institution, political condition. This is a helpful marker, but can become repetitive, and the oppositions can get locked into defining each other.

I benefited greatly from the Masters programme at Edinburgh University, and have found in academia subsequently how, even within a disciplinary structure, the ideas, actions and calling of these approaches open up new knowledge. This collection is one configuration of what a radical human ecology looks like as it deepens and evolves.

*Wallace Heim*

### **ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE Renewing damaged ecosystems**

Stuart K Allison  
Earthscan (Routledge) 2012, 252 pages  
Hbk £49.99 ISBN 1849712859

This is a helpful review of the issues that arise when pursuing ecological restoration projects. The author is obviously passionate about the subject and as well as having an academic approach (he is a Professor of Biology) he has hands-on experience which gives life to his arguments.

Throughout the book he asks and attempts to answer important questions such as "how can we manage our desire to manage and restore Nature without

mucking it up?" The book starts with the premise that human choice is always going to be a part of decision making in ecological restoration – a theme that reoccurs through the book, with cultural, scientific and conservation traditions all considered. There follows a brief history of ecological restoration with an impassioned argument for restoration, concluding that we "have a duty to clean up our mess is a powerful argument in favour of ecological restoration".

Chapters on the impact of climate change and novel ecosystems caused by invasive species follow, with interesting consideration of how much we will have to incorporate environmental change and how we cannot try and impose static ecosystems. Throughout the book the themes of ecosystem services and resilience reoccur. The author then looks at his experience of geographical variance in attitudes to ecological restoration and the pivotal reasons for significance or "why it matters". The human element is considered and throughout the book examples are given from both the author's native North America but also across Europe where he has obviously travelled extensively. The concept of what is 'wild' is also discussed and while it is acknowledged that people will be an integral part of any restored ecosystem a more hands-off approach is considered.

There follows a section on 'renewed restoration' which includes a useful discussion on the tensions between academic and practical approaches and the need to bridge the gap between humans and the environment – we need to re-engage people with Nature if we are to enlist them in the massive task of restoring damaged ecosystems.

This section also makes the important point that "each ecosystem is unique. Solutions that apply in one may not apply in another" - a lesson that those who impose tick-box agri-environment prescriptions in the UK need to learn.

The concluding chapter pulls together the many themes of the book. It looks at the concept of 'integrity' of ecosystems – which means the system has to work properly with all its components in place. There is a discussion of ethics, steps we need to take and finally an upbeat final section called 'Reasons to be cheerful' suggesting that ecological restoration will be one of our most effective tools to address the environmental challenges of the 21st century. Indeed he concludes "it is the only sensible choice".

The whole text is well argued and contains many quotable lines and is well referenced. It deserves a wide readership from all those trying to restore Nature.

*Mick Green*

### **ANIMALS ERASED Discourse, ecology, and reconnection with the natural world**

Arran Stibbe  
Wesleyan University Press, 2012, 194 pages  
Pbk, £22.50, ISBN 978-0-8195-7232-5

The difference between the animal as it lives its life, full with sentience, intentions and agency, and the animal as it lives in the human imagination finds expression in art, philosophy and everyday customs. Arran Stibbe discloses how, when human representations and language reduce the animal to commodity, to only the collective species, and when this combines with human technological and social power, the effect is to erase

the animal as it lives its life from human consciousness, and to make cruelty and the extinguishing of life possible.

Critical discourse analysis exposes how commonplace, unquestioned clusters of words and discourses carry and enforce ideological meanings that may be oppressive. The analysis is not a neutral investigation. Stibbe holds an eco-philosophical view centred on the intrinsic value of the individual animal, on allowing the animal to maintain its own well-being and agency during the course of its life. Against this view, the discourses that Stibbe critiques elide the experience of the human with the individual animal, objectify the animal as a component of a production process, or use the species as a signature representation. For counter examples Stibbe offers the writing of Rachel Carson, but more fully, the representations of animal-human relations found in Japanese traditional haiku.

The discourses critiqued are those in publications by industry, organisations and the media. The discourse of the pork industry objectifies the animal as if industrial machinery, to be 'processed', extending the derogatory patterns of associations for the pig found in everyday speech, 'to pig out'. Similarly, the fishing industry aggregates the individual salmon into an indistinguishable mass for whom the degradation of habitat is a hazard to profits, not to the animals' lives. The metaphors of 'war' and 'fire' served the interests of those who benefited economically from the mass slaughter of cattle during the 2001 Foot and Mouth outbreak.

Environmental and ecological economics discourses represent the animal as separate from humans, as species, resource, and stock. Conservation discourse,



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## Global Change, Peace & Security: formerly Pacifica Review: Peace, Security & Global Change

Publication details, including instructions for authors and  
subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/cpar20>

### Radical human ecology: intercultural and indigenous approaches

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Published online: 18 Oct 2013.

To cite this article: Alberto Gomes (2013) Radical human ecology: intercultural and indigenous approaches, *Global Change, Peace & Security: formerly Pacifica Review: Peace, Security & Global Change*, 25:3, 363-364, DOI: [10.1080/14781158.2013.831821](https://doi.org/10.1080/14781158.2013.831821)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14781158.2013.831821>

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## BOOK REVIEWS

**Radical human ecology: intercultural and indigenous approaches**, edited by L. Williams, R. Roberts and A. McIntosh, Surrey, UK, Ashgate Publishing, 2012, 452 pp., £30 (Hardback), ISBN 978-0-7546-7768-0.

It is without any doubt that the greatest challenge to humankind is the increasing degradation of the natural environment. Global warming has become one of the most pressing concerns as its effects on climate and the rise of sea levels are being felt around the world and are predicted to intensify in the years to come. Such concerns have stimulated critical reflections on the relations between humans and the environment and a growing number of scholars have stressed the need for a ‘paradigm change’ from the current ecologically damaging growth-focused economic model to one that is ecologically sensitive or environmentally friendly. It is in this context that *Radical Human Ecology* makes a significant contribution through its critique of conventional approaches to ecology and environmental degradation and through its narratives of alternative epistemologies. The editors lament that ‘we stick like glue to our worn-out story line of exponential growth, as the earth bleeds oil, ice caps melt, rivers shrink and life recedes’ (p. 1) and plead for new ecologically sound ontologies and epistemologies. Offering what the editors have so aptly termed a ‘pedagogy of hope’, this anthology consists of several finely crafted chapters, many of them by Indigenous scholars who have translated the ecological wisdom of their people for the benefit of humanity at large. In a sense, the authors return to the old and time-honoured Indigenous onto-epistemologies (which have been ignored, neglected and displaced by dominant and hegemonic discourses of modernity but are still practised in receding pockets of the world) to develop new and refreshing solutions to the myriad problems confronting humanity. The key message of the book is simple and clear: a ‘pedagogy of hope’ designed to meet global ecological challenges and to create sustainable futures must be ‘grounded’ on the onto-epistemologies of Indigenous peoples.

The book is divided into three parts, creatively titled ‘Head’, ‘Heart’ and ‘Hand’, each representing the different approaches in efforts to radicalize human ecology. In the first part, ‘Head’, the four contributors (Loening, McIntosh, Kockel, and Stewart-Harawira) provide the theoretical basis for this anthology. Elaborating on the idea that ‘our ecological predicament is essentially a crisis of epistemology and relationship’ (p. 5), the authors in this section critique Cartesian ontology and conventional human ecology that is deemed to be monocultural, overwhelmingly materialist, and reductionist. It is contended that the focus in human ecology on PRED, that is ‘the study of the interactions between population, resources, environment and development’, is far too restrictive and limiting. However, as McIntosh emphasizes, a radical human ecology is not anti-science; it articulates in a refreshing and imaginative manner the metaphysical with the physical, the spirit with rationality. Kockel’s discussion of the concept of ‘Heimatkunde’ (deep knowledge of place) is indeed interesting and it is offered as one possible onto-epistemological perspective drawn from Germanic tradition. This is a concept that is by no means alien to Indigenous peoples, as revealed in Stewart-Harawira’s contribution on the positive role that Indigenous onto-epistemologies can play in dealing with the ‘perilous times’ of impending ecological and economic disasters.

Part 2 of the anthology, the 'Heart', takes the articulation of the spiritual and ecology further and deeper, invoking the notion of radical as 'getting to the roots' (p. 31). The chapters in this section cover a wide range of cultural practices, social movements, and Indigenous epistemologies: Maori cosmology and shamanism (Williams), Sufism (Nayyar Javed), Transition movement (Smyth), Gaelic human ecology movement (MacKinnon), Orthodox Christianity (Morrison), Lakota philosophy and shamanism (Nehl-Madrone and Mainguy), and Cree of Saskatchewan (Roberts). What is particularly noteworthy of the chapters in this part is the auto-biographical approach. Human ecology, to the authors, is 'a living, breathing, post-colonial activist movement' (p. 7).

This autobiographical approach is carried through into the third part of the book, the 'Hand', which consists of chapters focused on the application of radical human ecology. McIntosh begins this part with his reflection on his experiences in teaching radical human ecology, providing very useful pedagogical tips. Taking a similar reflexive approach, Goodman narrates her experiences in her peace-building work through InterChange, an international community-based peace movement, while Weiss and White in separate chapters focus on their involvement with marginalized migrant communities in Australia and Canada respectively. The role that radical human ecology can play in the formulation of culturally appropriate state policies, institutions, public health interventions, and research methodologies is addressed in the context of rural China (Zhang and Lovrod), rural Brazil (Varga and Moreno), UK and Ireland (O'Neill, Wilding) and Indigenous peoples in Canada, New Zealand and Australia (Williams). The Koru International Network (KIN) which is featured as a case study in Williams' chapter is indeed one with great potential for the enhancement of Indigenous activism and the 'pedagogy of hope'.

This is a book of scholarly and practical importance that deserves a wider audience. The key strengths of the book are its autobiographical approach and activist orientation. Since about half of the contributors are Indigenous and an equal number are women, this anthology offers a rich diversity of voices and narratives, not readily found in conventional human ecology. I would, however, have liked an engagement with political ecology which has arisen from the intellectual ruins of human ecology. *Radical Human Ecology* will make a good university course text as well as a useful activist manual. It is a book with lots to offer to anyone who is concerned about building a better future for humanity and the planet.

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14781158.2013.831821>

**A liberal peace? The problems and practices of peacebuilding**, edited by Susanna Campbell, David Chandler and Meera Sabaratnam, London and New York, Zed Books, 2011, 272 pp., £19.99 (paperback), ISBN 978-1-7803-2002-1

Following the collapse of the Berlin Wall, then the implosion of the Soviet Union two years later, there was an enthusiastic hope among liberal International Relations scholars that 'a new "liberal" epoch ... had emerged, based on a consensus that democracy, the rule of law and market economies would create sustainable peace in post-conflict and transitional states and societies' (p. 1). However, according to the editors and most of the contributors to *A Liberal Peace? The Problems and Practices of Peacebuilding*, not only have such enthusiasms failed to materialize, but, as a

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## **Book Review**

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**Reviewed by Luc Hens\* and  
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**Radical Human Ecology: Intercultural and Indigenous Approaches  
by: Lewis Williams, Rose Roberts and Alastair McIntosh (Editors)  
Published 2012**

**by Ashgate Publishing Ltd.**

**Wey Court East, Union Road, Farnham, Surrey, GU9 7PT, UK, 433pp**

**ISBN: 978-0-7546-7769-0 (hardback)**

**ISBN: 978-0-7546-9516-5 (ebook)**

Human ecology is traditionally understood as an academic discipline that deals with the relationships between humans and their natural, social and created environments. Thus, human ecology has faced a remarkable counter diction for a long time: while hardly anyone doubts that major environmental problems necessitate trans-disciplinary approaches that combine evidence and insights from fundamental, human and applied sciences, none of the human ecological research teams of last century contributed in a significant way to the analysis, prediction and problem-solving of major environmental problems that emerged during that period. This resulted in a continuous introspection about 'who are we, human ecologists?' and 'what is the core and the scope of our field?'

This book is the most recent and original addition to this discussion. It is about what indigenous and traditional peoples' epistemologies contribute to insights from modern and post-modern human ecology. It is about inter-culturality on environmental questions, indigenous approaches to fundamental questions on life and the Earth, and shows a sincere concern about the future of humanity. The book is organised in three parts.

Part 1, 'Theories of human ecology', opens with a lucid and erudite description of the background and the main characteristics of human ecology. It further analyses how ethno-ecological contributions anchor in this field.

Part 2, 'Radical epistemologies of relationships', invites the reader to integrate indigenous ontologies into ecological praxis from a range of cultural and philosophical perspectives. It entails seven chapters, with contributions on Ngai Te Rangi cosmology, indigenous knowledge, transcending identity, orthodox Christianity and sustainable development, environmental thinking by North American Indians, and the Canadian Woodland Cree culture in Northern Saskatchewan.

Part 3 collects nine chapters under the heading 'Human ecology in practice'. It is about a wide variety of subjects ranging from teaching human ecology, over the contribution of rural family labour in China to the development of the country, to human ecology as militant practice in the Brazilian Amazon region.

The postscript by the editors points to a main driver behind this book: it has arisen out of criticisms of mainstream human ecology.

The 21 authors of this book constitute an international mix of academics and environmental activists of four continents. They are guided by colleagues from the University of Saskatchewan and the Scottish Centre for Human Ecology in Edinburgh. This latter was for many years driven by Ulrich Loening. Ulrich is a brilliant academic, professor and builder of violins, who was restlessly looking for defining new paradigms that could embrace the complexity of current environmental problems faced by humanity. This book is part of his intellectual heritage.

There can be no doubt about the academic value of this book: formulating criticisms to mainstream human ecology is part of the dialectic process in which science is rooted; the multiple philosophical, epistemological and intercultural considerations of this book contribute to the human ecological paradigm; the discussion on traditional indigenous approaches to environmental problems opens new pathways of thinking. However, the reader should not expect traditional quantitative research results organised in a 'problem formulation, materials and methods, results and discussion' format. The approach of the chapters is merely narrative, with many text citations, and the conclusions are often too engaged in activism, and consequently far from the objectivity that science attempts. This alienation of the scientific approach becomes uncomfortable when the vast literature on traditional (environmental) knowledge is largely overlooked by the authors. It becomes disturbing once the publications that belong to the human ecological literature on the subject are not mentioned. This applies, for example, to the published papers of the workshop on local and traditional knowledge that was part of the International Conference of the Society of Human Ecology held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (Hens and Begossi, 2008).

Once the reader is prepared for this alienation from the Western-scientific and techno-rationality approach, this book becomes an interesting contribution to thinking about environmental problems. It looks over the edge, and ventures outside established lines.

## Reference

- Hens, L. and Begossi, A. (Eds.) (2008) 'Diversity and management of extractive farming systems', *Environment, Development and Sustainability*, Vol. 10, No. 5, pp.559–695.

being. Eileen's analysis is informed by an impressive range of examples and situations, so that the reader becomes more aware of the synergy of many different initiatives: the charter for compassion, positive psychology and even Slow Food. All this enhances community and connection and represents an evolution of consciousness and empathy. Social networks and activist sites also have the capacity to mobilise people to transformative action.

Economic and politics are also due for an overhaul. Eileen sees the necessity for a number of major issues to be addressed, including reform of the financial system, restructuring laws governing corporations and markets, reduction of global imbalances, achievement of sustainability (also in terms of lifestyles) and the development of new economic indicators. There is a great deal of new thinking going on, but little of it has yet reached the mainstream. At a local level, the transition town movement and local exchange trading systems have had a considerable impact and indicate a shift towards more sharing, caring and cooperative behaviour. In terms of politics, Eileen suggests that we need to seek the highest common and a rebirth of participatory democracy. This involves dialogue and empowering leadership. Finally, Eileen proposes ten wisdom keys: vision, courage, optimism, forgiveness, trust, attention, gratitude, compassion, service and simplicity. She elaborates on each of these, enabling readers to reflect on how they themselves might apply such principles. Ultimately it is a question of changing our mental and emotional habits so that we can create new relationships and a new culture. This is a visionary and deeply humane book, informed by a lifetime of reading, reflection and spiritual practice.

## Indigenous Human Experience

Elisabet Sahtouris

## RADICAL HUMAN ECOLOGY: INTERCULTURAL AND INDIGENOUS APPROACHES

Editors Lewis Williams, Rose Roberts, Alastair McIntosh

Ashgate, 2012, 452 pp., £80 - ISBN - 978-0-754677-680 (hbk) 978-0-754695-165 (ebk)

Human Ecology is a very broad inclusive academic field with a large literature. However much it has been marginalised and circumscribed within the academic camp, Kansas State University's College of Human



Ecology's short definition of HE is: "It's about Us." In its best sense, Human Ecology is about the wellbeing of people and planet.

That is indeed the mission of this remarkable Radical Human Ecology compendium. Its subtitle *Intercultural and Indigenous Approaches* distinguishes its content, at least in identifying its 22 contributors as representing our human root cultures and our human need now for cross-cultural outlooks. Pitting pre-modern indigenous worldviews and social ecological practices against those of modernity and post-modernity, the contributors persuasively make the case that to save ourselves now we must recognise our indigenous heritage as our deepest, longest, most ensouled and holistic human experience on Earth.

The contributors argue that modernity and post-modernity (the latter as *Koyaanisqatsi*, the Hopi term for a disordered life out of balance) have so focused on the outer material world that nature's non-material inner aspect of spirit has been denied and lost as consumer cultures devastated ecosystems and indigenous human connections to our own spirit, destroying our natural communion with each other and all other beings, devolving even philosophy into a meaningless fragmented jumble of deconstruction. This book is a heroic effort to restore balance by offering us healing indigenous perspectives and showing their vital relevance today.

Two of the three editors are indigenous women—Lewis Williams a Maori and Rose Roberts a Lac la Ronge Indian, both teaching at the University of Saskatchewan in Canada. The third, Alastair McIntosh of the Centre for Human Ecology in Strathclyde, counts himself indigenous to the Outer Hebrides and well documents his 20-year struggle as a professor of Radical Human Ecology in post-graduate academia, where the "iceberg-like structures of money, power and epistemology" forced Human Ecology into their acceptable areas of "population, resources, environment and development."

*Radical Human Ecology* from this reviewer's perspective is fighting for its life in academia by conforming to the latter's demand for journalistic language. One has to wade through academic argument for the deeply human stories, not only of the struggle for legitimacy but of that ensouled indigenous human experience we so need to save ourselves. I wish there

were a book half as long, for less than half the price, that would bring these invaluable messages to a far wider audience than that to which this book's price alone will limit it.

Chief editor Lewis Williams calls the book "an unconventional and timely pedagogy of hope." She is donating all royalties to fund scholarships for underprivileged youth on intergenerational healing and deep ecology. [www.kinincommon.com](http://www.kinincommon.com) So do convince whatever organisation you are involved in that can afford it to get a lending copy and donate one yourself to wherever it would be read if you can!

A review by **Elisabet Sahtouris, PhD**, Evolution biologist and futurist; author of *EarthDance: Living Systems in Evolution and Biology Revisited* with Willis Harman; co-founder of the Worldwide Indigenous Science Network

## general

### Music and Philosophy: Strange Bedfellows?

Edi Bilimoria

## THE ROUTLEDGE COMPANION TO PHILOSOPHY AND MUSIC

Edited by Theodore Gracyk and Andrew Kania

Routledge, 2011, 654 pp., £34.99, p/b ISBN 978-0-415-85839-7 (Ebk).

On the bookshelves behind my grand piano rest my old favourite musical reference books: *The Larousse Encyclopædia of Music*, *Man And His Music* and *The New Penguin Opera Guide* amongst others; and now a most welcome addition – *The Routledge Companion to Philosophy and Music*.

A hallmark of the greatest musicians is their deep philosophical and spiritual conviction. One has only to recall Bach's profound words on deity and humanity, or Beethoven's pronouncements on art, life and philosophy, or Liszt's philosophical and religious idealism, to name but three titans whose entire life's work was driven by their philosophy and inner conviction. But philosophy, let alone spirituality, hardly figures in the curricula of our musical schools and academies, nor do they form the backbone of education in general. So an erudite 654 page tome such as this, and the first of its kind, that seeks to marry these two disciplines is long overdue.

The book is edited by two professors of philosophy with contributions from

# Radical Human Ecology: A Path of Hope

by Edmund O'Sullivan



Edmund O'Sullivan reviews a selection of readings on inter-cultural and transdisciplinary approaches to human ecology.

*"This Book has a clear and compelling aim. The underlying message resonates in the voice of every contributor and throughout the entire volume - from beginning to end. Hope is always about the future. But the path that we are on points increasingly toward a future of peril. If the world is to reclaim a path of hope - and a future that is hope-full - truly fundamental changes are needed."*

The paragraph above is the opening of the foreword to this book of readings by Richard Borden. For the reader it gives a sense of deep structural concerns that will occupy the authors of the 20 chapters that have been compiled for this richly textured book of readings.

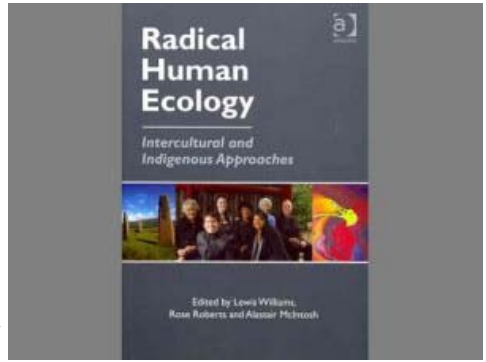
The readers of this review must be appraised in advance that this offering of readings on the topic of radical ecology is a very sophisticated text that operates at the paradigm level. It is not a work for the fainthearted. This is a text that will find its readers at a university level and beyond.

There are three editors involved in this work. Lewis Williams, who defines herself as an eco-activist, social innovator and academic is the Founding Director of the Koru International Network, an emerging community of practice which aims to address ecological issues through the revitalisation of indigenous worldviews within all cultures.

Born in New Zealand, she is of Scottish and Ngai Te Rangī descent. Rose Roberts is a Woodland Cree Women from the Lac La Ronge Indian Band in Saskatchewan, Canada. She is Assistant Professor at the College of Nursing, University of Saskatchewan, who at present is Executive Director, Northern Intertribal Health Authority, Saskatchewan. Her research interests include cancer among aboriginal peoples, residential school survivorship, and indigenous ways of healing.

Finally, Alastair McIntoch the former Director and current Fellow of Scotland's Centre for Human Ecology, is the author of several books including "Soil and Soul and Hell and High Water: Climate Change, Hope and the Human Condition".

It is the intention of the editors of this book to (1) bring about a radical reintegration of indigenous ways of knowing, (2) to locate greater onto-epistemological agency within the human ecology researcher and scholar, (3) to provide a number of practical interdisciplinary and intercultural applications of human ecology praxis throughout the world and finally, (4) to provoke conversations on how one might engage with human ecology not simply as a theoretical enterprise;



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more so as a living, breathing, post-colonial activist movement. A tall order indeed and well worth the effort.

With the above intentions in mind, the text is organised into three sections under the levels of Head, Heart and Hand;

Part I Head: Theories of Human Ecology: The attitude of human ecology, Ulrich Loening; The challenge of radical human ecology to the academy, Alastair McIntosh; Being from and coming to: outline of an ethno-ecological framework, Ullrich Kockel; Returning the sacred: indigenous ontologies in perilous times, Makere Stewart-Harawira.

Part II Heart: Radical Epistemologies of Relationship: The human ecologist as alchemist: an inquiry into Ngai Te Rangi cosmology, human agency and well-being in a time of ecological peril, Lewis Williams; Exploring identity, belonging and place-making as a transition activist, Gerri Smyth; Education for life: human ecology pedagogy as a bridge to indigenous knowing, Iain McKinnon; Sufi path: possibilities of transcending limited and limiting identity, Nayyar Javed; The promise of Orthodox Christianity for sustainable community development, Keith Morrison; North American Indians, connectivity and human ecology, Lewis Mehl-Madrona and Barbara J. Mainguy; Living in respect: traditional knowledge of the Woodland Cree in Northern Saskatchewan, Rose Roberts.

Part III Hand: Human Ecology in Practice: Teaching radical human ecology in the academy, Alastair McIntosh; Human ecology as peacebuilding, Anne Goodman; Migration, aboriginality and acculturation, Ben-Zion Weiss; The immigration experience: losses and gains for immigrant and refugee women, Judy White; Rebuilding China's economy on gendered rural family labour: a case study of generational migration stasia and ecological degradation, Yongmei Zhang and Marie Lovrod; Human ecology: from conceptual exercise to militant practice in Maranhão, István van Deursen Varga and Cristina Moreno; The place of creation: transformation, trauma and re-rooting creative praxis, Eimear O'Neill; Experiments in action research and human ecology: developing a community of practice for rural resilience pioneers, Nick Wilding; He whanaunga tera: the politics and practice of an indigenous and intercultural approach to ecological well-being.

At its present pricing in hardback, this book will be mostly within the range of university libraries and advanced university courses. To make it more available to the ordinary reader, it is hoped that this work could be offered as a paperback or in eBook form to garnish a more popular market. Because of its depth and range I would wish for it a wide audience.

*Edmund O'Sullivan is Professor Emeritus at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto, Canada.*

Radical Human Ecology: Intercultural and indigenous Approaches

Lewis Williams, Rose Roberts and Alastair McIntoch (Editors)

Available from [Ashgate Publishing Company](#) £72



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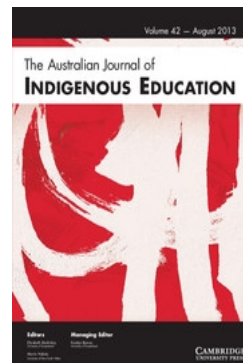
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Carmen Robertson

The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education / Volume 42 / Issue 01 / August 2013, pp 80 - 81

DOI: 10.1017/jie.2013.3, Published online: 18 October 2013

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### **How to cite this article:**

Carmen Robertson (2013). The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education, 42, pp 80-81 doi:10.1017/jie.2013.3

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