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Review of *New Indians, Old Wars* By Elizabeth Cook-Lynn

Bruce E. Johansen

University of Nebraska at Omaha

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New Indians, Old Wars. By Elizabeth Cook-Lynn. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007. xiii + 226 pp. Notes. \$32.95.

In *New Indians, Old Wars*, Elizabeth Cook-Lynn delivers a sometimes scorching critique not only of the United States' pursuit of colonization through warfare (comparing it, in Iraq, to the Plains Indian wars), but also of superficial thinking and fuzzy argumentation that prevents scholars of Native American Studies from drawing a tight focus on the central issues of their discipline.

Cook-Lynn, professor emerita of Native American Studies at Eastern Washington University, argues that the central focus of study in Native law, history, and literature should be colonialism and exploitation of resources. Hailing from a warrior family that reaches to the Battle of the Little Bighorn, Cook-Lynn also sears the rubric of "trust" and "wardship" as a precursor of later wars far from the Great

Plains. "We continue to lose our resources and riches stolen from us by our greedy benefactor," she writes, "the very thieves who have given us the reputation in history as being beggars."

New Indians, Old Wars argues that while many scholars of the Middle East (she mentions Edward Said, among others) have made colonialism the center of their analysis, some in Native American Studies have become sidetracked. "What is the present inquiry about?" she asks. "Is it Dennis Banks? Is it AIM trials and sensation? Is it writing third-rate novels and staging film festivals in Utah? Is it telling personal stories of historical grief? I don't think so. Rather, it is a question of finding ways for forming decent [reservation] governments; it is the development of appropriate health systems and economic systems for native populations. . . ."

Cook-Lynn favors literature that engages reservation reality, such as the works of D'Arcy McNickle, whose words often foreshadowed Vine Deloria Jr.'s. She also would have students read Craig Womack (who began his professorial career at the University of Nebraska at Omaha), who has given us, according to Cook-Lynn, "perhaps the most important anti-colonial literary criticism . . . so far from native scholars." The works of McNickle and Womack (among others) are an antidote, writes Cook-Lynn, to "major American Indian fictionalists [who] submit to the old fictions [two she cites most often are James Welch and Sherman Alexie], still writing the same story taught by the oppressors . . . [of] a population ripe for colonial rule."

Cook-Lynn's message will make some scholars squirm, as she insists that the American West is stolen land and that American Indian Studies must achieve scholarly definition in its own terms, not as an adjunct of other fields, such as English, history, or anthropology. "To examine the ongoing and perennial . . . conflict between Indians and others," she writes, "one must start with the land."

BRUCE E. JOHANSEN
School of Communication
University of Nebraska at Omaha