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Review of *Braiding Histories: Learning from  
Aboriginal Peoples' Experiences and Perspectives* by  
Susan Dion

Lynne Davis  
*Trent University*

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*Braiding Histories: Learning from Aboriginal Peoples' Experiences and Perspectives.* By Susan Dion. Including the Braiding Histories stories co-written with Michael R. Dion. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2009. xi + 227 pp. Illustrations, appendices, notes, references, index. C\$85.00 cloth, C\$32.95 paper.

In its final report in 1996, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples observed that Canadians have little knowledge of Aboriginal people, the issues of importance to them, and the history that underlies Aboriginal–non-Aboriginal relationships today. How can this be changed? In *Braiding Histories*, Susan Dion takes up the complexities of transforming the consciousness of non-Aboriginal people through education.

The book is organized around three focal points. First, the author and her brother Michael Dion (re)write and (re)tell the life stories of several Aboriginal people, including Beothuk survivor Shanawdithit, the Plains Cree leader Mistahimaskwa, and the writers' mother, Audrey Dion, who grew up on the Moravian of the Thames Reserve in Ontario. The stories are rigorously constructed to challenge common stereotypes and to create possibilities of discovery for the reader. The particular concerns of the storytellers are to reveal the humanity and agency of Aboriginal people and to encourage non-Aboriginal readers to recognize their own connection as Canadians to the historical and continuing oppression of Aboriginal people. Second, Dion outlines in detail her "Braiding Histories Project." In this study, she analyzes the teaching of two of the stories by three intermediate-grade non-Aboriginal teachers. Third, Dion shares her own efforts to teach a graduate course called "Teaching and Learning from Indigenous Ways of Knowing" to teachers.

For anyone involved in the education of non-Aboriginal people in the areas of Aboriginal issues and history, Dion's work must be taken very seriously. Grounding it in Indigenous decolonization, cultural studies, and critical pedagogy theories, she painstakingly looks

at the microdynamics of the educational encounter. Dion dissects how teachers' understandings of what constitutes "good teaching" served to structure interactions in the classroom and drew teachers away from the more difficult task of engaging the student's own positionality in Aboriginal–non-Aboriginal relationships. Rather, teachers unwittingly reached towards familiar interpretive frames positioning Aboriginal people as victims and objects of pity, rather than as active agents and sovereign peoples. Hegemonic discourses were reproduced through the erasure of the stories' social-political context.

There is much at stake in Dion's work. She demonstrates the complexities of transforming the knowledge and affective landscape of Canadians in relation to Aboriginal peoples, issues, and shared history. For educators ready to take up the challenge of deeply understanding their own teaching practices, Dion offers analytical tools and illuminating practical exercises. Overall, the contribution of this work lies not only in her findings, but in the probing questions that guide the inquiry. *Braiding Histories* is a skilful weave of theory, practice, and personal reflection, making this book quite accessible.

Lynne Davis  
Department of Indigenous Studies  
Trent University  
Peterborough, Ontario