

Postsecondary Education for American Indian  
and Alaska Natives: Higher Education for  
Nation Building and Self-Determination by  
Bryan McKinley Jones Brayboy.

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 ***Postsecondary Education for American Indian and Alaska Natives: Higher Education for Nation Building and Self-Determination* by Bryan McKinley Jones Brayboy, Amy J. Fann, Angelina E. Castagno, and Jessica A. Solyom, and: *Beyond the Asterisk: Understanding Native Students in Higher Education* edited by Heather J. Shotton, Shelly C. Lowe, and Stephanie J. Waterman (review)**

Maricela Oliva

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REVIEW

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## In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:

### Reviewed by:

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*Maricela Oliva*

**Bryan McKinley Jones Brayboy, Amy J. Fann, Angelina E. Castagno, and Jessica A. Solyom.** *Postsecondary Education for American Indian and Alaska Natives: Higher Education for Nation Building and Self-Determination.* ASHE Higher Education Report, 37( 5). New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2012. 152 pp. Paperback: \$29.00. ISBN 978-1-118-33883-4.

**Heather J. Shotton, Shelly C. Lowe, and Stephanie J. Waterman (Eds.).** *Beyond the Asterisk: Understanding Native Students in Higher Education.* Sterling, VA: Stylus, 2013. 204 pp. Paperback: \$37.50. ISBN 978-1-57922-624-4.

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These two publications—the first co-authored and the second co-edited—are a necessary exhortation for higher education scholars, administrators, and student affairs professionals to consider the needs of Native American/Alaska Native/Indigenous students as a unique constituency among diverse student groups on school and college campuses. Just as many of us believe, the authors and editors of these books argue that institutional responsiveness and support for diverse students must continue and improve, even for those who attend higher education in numbers that might only be noted by an “asterisk.”

However, the texts go beyond traditional considerations of multiculturalism and student affairs scholarship in that they also help non-Native educators understand how Native American/Indigenous students are different from other diverse students in higher education. We learn that beyond grouping Native/Indigenous students with other non-Whites as “diverse,” educators have much to understand and be sensitive to in effectively supporting student success. Unique issues like tribal sovereignty and oppressive U.S. practices aimed at eradicating or controlling Native/Indigenous communities make traditional conceptualizations of multicultural competence and student affairs useful; but by themselves, such issues are inadequate and insufficient.

More knowledge and awareness are necessary to contextualize students' needs and to consider how they might best be addressed. In addition to other multicultural competence strategies from scholarship, for example, one issue that both texts highlight as important is nation-building as a goal of Native/Indigenous communities and their tribal pre-K-16 institutions.

In *Postsecondary Education for American Indian and Alaska Natives*, Brayboy, Fann, Castagno, and Solyom “explore the importance of Indigenous knowledge systems, tribal nation-building, and culturally responsive schooling and their implications for American Indian success in institutions of higher education” (p. vii). This volume can be viewed as an integrated scholarly primer on Native American/indigenous students in higher education that integrates information from research articles, book chapters, and other works.

The second text, *Beyond the Asterisk*, edited by Shotton, Lowe, and Waterman, builds on the first in at least two ways. First, it more explicitly articulates an indigenous epistemology in perspective and form, as seen in an opening “Thanksgiving” from Freida J. Jacques (Onondaga Turtle Clan) and a “Foreword” by Dr. John L. Garland (Choctaw). Second, the edited text is conceptualized as a tool for action in that it provides examples of successful student support practices and illustrations of responsive programming for Native American/Alaska Native/Indigenous students in higher education. In this sense, *Beyond the Asterisk* moves beyond *Postsecondary Education for American Indian and Alaska Natives*'s scholarly consideration of Native American/Indigenous students in higher education and what we know of their needs to articulate culturally responsive programming that educators have successfully implemented in response to those needs. The programs for Native American/Indigenous students thus serve as examples of actions that, theoretically, many other institutions could also undertake.

*Postsecondary Education for American Indian and Alaska Natives* is divided into seven main sections: “Introduction,” “Framing the

Conversation,” “Postsecondary Access for Indigenous Students,” “American Indian and Alaska Native College Students,” “American Indian and Alaska Native **[End Page 419]**Graduate Students,” “American Indian and Alaska Native Faculty,” and “Where Do We Go from Here?” The authors note that a consideration of Native American/Indigenous students is often missing in higher education, even in conversations about diverse students. Given this situation, “the college pipeline for American Indian and Alaska Native students remains largely unaddressed. As a result, little is known and even less is understood about the critical issues, conditions, and postsecondary transitions of this incredibly diverse group of students” (p. 1).

The authors address this lack of...

individuals in these positions pay only selective attention to such evidence.

Although generally well-balanced, the volume is colored by its primary focus on the responsibilities of higher education institutions to address the completion problem. This focus is established at the onset when the editors describe the issue as one of declining productivity. Even though they note that the expansion in participation is primarily due to the enrollment of larger proportions of traditionally underrepresented and underprepared students, they do not recognize that even stagnant completion rates would represent an increase in productivity under these conditions (that is, producing similar levels of output with lower quality inputs). Despite some modest limitations, the book provides a useful synthesis of policy, practice and perhaps, most importantly, standards for rigorous research to assess the viability and prospective mechanisms for achieving ambitious policy goals.

Bryan McKinley Jones Brayboy, Amy J. Fann, Angelina E. Castagno, and Jessica A. Solym. *Postsecondary Education for American Indian and Alaska Natives: Higher Education for Nation Building and Self-Determination*. ASHE Higher Education Report, 37(5). New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2012. 152 pp. Paperback: \$29.00. ISBN 978-1-118-33883-4.

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REVIEWED BY MARCELA OLIVA, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND POLICY STUDIES, THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT SAN ANTONIO

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