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**Jan Peter Laurens Looovers. *Reading Life with Gwich'in: An Educational Approach*. Routledge, 2020. 264 pp. ISBN: 9781138616691.**

<https://www.crcpress.com/Reading-Life-with-Gwichin-An-Educational-Approach/Looovers/p/book/9781138616691>

In *Reading Life with Gwich'in: An Educational Approach*, Jan Peter Laurens Looovers revisits two years of ethnographic fieldwork and historical research that he undertook with Teetł'it Gwich'in people living in Fort McPherson, in Canada's Northwest Territories. This book makes contributions to ethnographic and historical anthropological work with and about Gwich'in people and their lives historically and presently. The ethnographic component of Looovers' discussion focuses, and reflects, on his own experiences of learning from Teetł'it Gwich'in people on and through the land. Looovers frames his discussion by introducing two concepts he developed based on his own observations and his engagement with relevant scholarly literature. The first he terms an "educational approach towards life" that embodies both (Gwich'in) knowledge transmission and the process of learning and being taught where "you have to live it" (3). The second concept he terms "reading life," where he expands the definition of "reading" to include reading the land and reading texts as "ways of conversing" (emphasis in original; 3). Both these concepts make an appearance in the book's title, *Reading Life with Gwich'in: An Educational Approach*.

Structurally, this 264-page book is divided into four thematic parts titled: "Introduction to an Educational Approach," "A Sentient History," "Losing Elders, Keeping Life Going," and "Life on the Land." Each part is comprised of either two or three chapters that fall within the section theme. At the end of the book there are two appendices. Appendix A ("Dramatis Personae") details the names and descriptions of Teetł'it Gwich'in community members and other people mentioned in the book and is followed by Appendix B ("Note on Gwich'in Topology") which details Gwich'in place name meanings, spellings, and translations taken from the Gwich'in Online Atlas. The book ends with a bibliography and an index.

The Prologue opens with a vignette of a chilly (and ultimately educational) snowmobile trip into the "bush" that Looovers took with Neil Colin during his dissertation research (xv). Looovers explains that this account illustrates five themes he addresses in this book: knowing, reading, travelling, the land, and Gwich'in teachers. Based on these themes, Looovers writes that the following pages of the book will "outline an educational approach towards life and (indirectly) exemplify what methodological-theoretical implications this has on writing scholarly books and doing anthropological

research" (xvii). In a footnote, Loovers briefly discusses his "inner debate" about whether to call this approach "pedagogical" instead of "educational," and that regardless of what terminology he uses, his "intention is to underscore that the approach is processual and incorporates the practices of learning, teaching and being taught, and becoming knowledgeable", all in a culturally-grounded context (xxii).

After reading the Prologue, I was keenly interested to know more about the specific methodological aspects of the "methodological-theoretical implications" Loovers mentions and how he himself is (indirectly) exemplifying them. Loovers does not include a conventional methodology section where he explicitly outlines his research methodology and/or his methodology for writing about his research. In the first chapter, "Ecology, Education, Collaboration," Loovers orients his work in relevant theoretical and scholarly literature and briefly explains several of his methodological choices, such as to do few formal interviews and to share drafts of his written work with concerned Teet'it community members in order to incorporate their feedback. As such, I would have welcomed and enjoyed a discussion of the specific "methodological-theoretical" decisions Loovers made in structuring his text and in how he presents his research, his arguments, and his claims.

With the exception of the Introduction and Conclusion, each chapter in this book either focuses on elements of Teet'it Gwich'in history or Loovers' own fieldwork. In the history chapters, Loovers weaves together different historical records and shared memories to give a history of Teet'it Gwich'in people and their histories with, and connections to, their land and place. He also addresses the history of literacy and change within the community. In the chapters where Loovers discusses his own fieldwork, he focuses on his experience of learning with and from Teet'it Gwich'in people both on the land and through the close relationships he built while an engaged participant in daily community life. Throughout the book, Loovers includes Teet'it Gwich'in words, phrases, and place names in Gwich'in first and English second, which both foregrounds Gwich'in language and knowledge systems and regularly reminds the reader of the physical, cultural, and historical space being discussed. With regards to language, in different chapters and footnotes, Loovers briefly discusses the history of Gwich'in language documentation, particularly as it pertains to the different orthographies (writing systems) that have been used to write the language historically and presently. As such, and as a linguistic anthropologist, I would have appreciated a section where Loovers explains and reflects on his own orthographic decisions, particularly in relation to why he generally chooses not to mark tone in the Gwich'in words he includes.

Each chapter of this book is uniquely engaging and informative, but, at times, I found it difficult to identify the ways in which the chapters individually, and as a whole, come together to support Loovers' central arguments for "an educational approach towards life" and "reading life." At first, I wondered whether there was a specific, and not immediately transparent, motivation behind the way that Loovers chose to structure each chapter and the book as a whole. About a third of the way through reading, I started contemplating whether this opacity was in fact a methodological decision on Loovers' part, where he set out to use a sort of Indigenous pedagogy that entails "teaching" the reader through example and stories rather than through direct explanation as a way of supporting and illustrating his central arguments. I wondered whether in the conclusion he might explain how the teachings from each chapter work together to indirectly exemplify and illustrate his observations and claims. This type of explanation was not the focus of the Conclusion or Epilogue. However, in a footnote to the Conclusion title, Loovers explains that "the conclusion has been very much a collaborative and *edited writing* with Tim Ingold as we were trying to piece together different chapters in my postgraduate thesis" (emphasis in original; 231). It seems that the relatively individual nature of each chapter and section of the text may not reflect a methodological or stylistic decision on Loovers' part, but is more likely a product of the fact that the book is comprised of sections previously published separately and other sections adapted from Loovers' dissertation. This does not detract from the relevance or importance of the work Loovers has done or the claims he makes; rather, it means that, for the most part, each chapter in the book operates well as a somewhat standalone piece which contributes in different ways to further ethnographic and historical knowledge about Teet'it Gwich'in people, their lives, and their pedagogies.

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