

Karrmen Crey, *Producing Sovereignty: The Rise of Indigenous Media in Canada*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2024. 224 pages. ISBN 9781452970486. \$37.99 Paperback.

Producing Sovereignty could not have come at a more important time in the history of media in Canada. As both mainstream and Indigenous alternative media outlets struggle for survival, author Karrmen Crey reminds us how powerful Indigenous voices can be when they are shared authentically and unfiltered. Crey's look at the intersection between sovereignty, media, and policy demonstrates how critical it is to have Indigenous voices sharing Indigenous experiences in spaces where the general public can watch, listen, and learn. Crey takes the reader on journey through some of the most important moments in the 1990s to 2000s, as Indigenous-led media and Indigenous voices were thrust into both the mainstream and alternative media spheres. Today, as we see the loss and/or shrinking of so many Indigenous film companies, newspapers, and alternative media publications, Crey's book perfectly illustrates what is lost when the spaces to share this content struggle and eventually cease to exist.

Karrmen Crey is Sto:lo and a member of the Cheam Band. As an Associate Professor in Simon Fraser University's School of Communication, Crey understands firsthand how important Indigenous spaces in media are to success in public spaces. Her work on narrative shaping through media spaces is key to understanding the connection between Indigenous voices sharing Indigenous realities and how these change the mainstream narrative about what Indigenous peoples need and why we should all support these sovereignty movements. *Producing Sovereignty*, which is based on her work on Indigenous-led and created media, is the first of its kind to really connect these sovereignty movements to the Indigenous-led media and storytelling in Canada. It also provides an important starting point for the next even larger conversation about the role newer digital platforms are now having these same movements and efforts to become sovereign nations within Canada.

In *Producing Sovereignty*, Crey tries to demonstrate the connection between Indigenous sovereignty movements and relations with the federal government to the rise of Indigenous media institutions in Canada. However, Crey does not limit this to a study of mainstream broadcasters and an examination of the role of the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN). She also includes the role documentary film and storytelling through the arts contributes to these movements. The inclusion of these arts-based spaces incorporates an important intersection between authentic Indigenous stories, culture, and mainstream Canadian media spaces where both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people were for the first time exposed to Indigenous peoples, leaders, and others working toward sovereignty and change. These spaces also provided critical platforms for explaining the issues in Indigenous communities through Indigenous peoples facing these challenges first hand and in real time.

Crey's unique approach to production studies is perhaps the most interesting new development in media, production, and historical/ethnographic studies. Crey uses this lens to examine specific case studies in each chapter. Her method provides an opportunity to look more closely at what was happening in Canada at the time when these Indigenous sovereignty movements of the 1990s were landing on the national political stage. Crey's then use case studies

of the specific media projects (i.e., documentaries) as well as the emergence of Indigenous-led media and arts institutions to map the connections between the issues, movements, and emergence of media institutions to share these issues and talk about these movements with greater accuracy and most importantly, with distinct Indigenous perspectives. This then allows Crey to delve into specific case studies that perfectly demonstrate her main thesis.

An excellent example of this kicks off the book in Chapter One, *Prairie Voices: Doug Cuthand, Provincial Television, and the National Film Board of Canada*. Doug Cuthand is a well-known documentary filmmaker and newspaper columnist in Saskatchewan. As Crey notes, documentary culture in Canada has long played a role in sharing Indigenous voices and stories, as well as working to solidify the Canadian identity. However, diversity envelopes of funding, that were designed to support Indigenous producers and filmmakers to share Indigenous stories, created an entirely new opportunity for influencing the political landscape. In Chapter One, Crey takes a closer look at two films produced by the nationally acclaimed producer Doug Cuthand, *Stay in School* and *Donna's Story*. It's here that Crey asserts one of her most important points in this work, that "'documentary culture', has played a key role in debates around provincial sovereignties," and this impacts conversations and relationships with these organizations. Unlike our American counterparts, documentary film in Canada, particularly through the National Film Board (NFB), has always been appealing both economically and ideologically. This format has also been linked to efforts to create a nationalist sentiment in Canada. But by subverting this, Cuthand uses documentary to instead assert Indigenous identity, understanding of Indigenous political issues, and creates support for Indigenous movements in Canada.

For Indigenous producers of the 1990s, as Crey argues, a new space opened up, one where Indigenous producers were now being given the reins to create their own documentaries that reflected their own Indigenous realities and perspectives. Moreover, since these new funding envelopes were directed at Indigenous producers, the old colonial structure of story format approval and construction through non-Indigenous producers slowly ended. These documentaries were now being produced by Indigenous peoples themselves, and were no longer filtered through non-Indigenous producers using mainstream documentary production techniques. Instead, Indigenous stories were being told from distinctly Indigenous perspectives and the very structure of the films were based on Indigenous ways of storytelling. In *Donna's Story*, producer Doug Cuthand creates a portrait documentary of a woman who faces struggles and challenges ranging from addiction to the loss of some of her children in the child welfare system. Until this point, Indigenous women who worked in the sex trade were either ignored or had violence against them naturalized. Through Cuthand's production of *Donna's Story* and other documentaries, Crey argues an important change can be explored.

As Crey explains, "Indigenous production at the NFB therefore exhibits interactions of political discourses of different stakeholders: those of the NFB, as a public film agency, seeking to adapt to and reflect a shifting social and political landscape through its programs, documentary genres, and production practices; and those of Indigenous producers who engage with these institutional practices to create space to represent Indigenous social realities and priorities." And

once these stories were shared, in a truly Indigenous style of production, these realities could not be unseen. In the case of *Donna's Story*, Cuthand ends the piece without a conclusion. As Crey explains, this was contrary to most documentaries and productions that sought to tie up all loose ends. Cuthand refused to tie up all the loose ends because it was not possible and this would reflect neither Donna's reality, nor the reality of Indigenous peoples. Through portrait documentaries like these, the viewer encounters Indigenous peoples in the present day, dealing with the legacy of colonial histories like residential schools and the Sixties Scoop, and sees firsthand the legacy left for Indigenous peoples. Through avoiding a neat and tidy ending, Cuthand forces the viewer to accept that things are uncertain. However, it also connects this story to the larger Canadian political narrative and Indigenous sovereignty movements, helping to shape those conversations about what Indigenous people need and how the general public might be able to help.

While Cuthand's work and connection to national conversations really stands out in Crey's book as some of the most poignant, and his legacy as a trailblazer really takes center stage, subsequent chapters also bring in the work of many more filmmakers and producers. Crey also delves quite deeply into the methods of filmmakers such as Arlene Bowman, Tasha Hubbard, and Lisa Jackson. There she explores the challenges these filmmakers face, from the clash between culture and filmmaking processes, to the intense nature of first-person and deeply raw films about the lives of Indigenous peoples. In each, Crey demonstrates, "that Indigenous artists have developed sophisticated techniques for navigating and transforming colonial discourses that undergird media technologies and inform screen aesthetics."

When academic research makes its way into books for public consumption the question is often asked, 'what can the average person get out of these studies?'. In Crey's case the answer is quite obvious. The average person often does not see the connections between the content they consume and how our country works. This often leads them to believe that it doesn't really matter if they are not engaged in the news or documentaries about Canadian life. This book, however, shows that when you are engaged you become an informed public. That information leads to richer national conversations. We should all thank Crey for making those connections so easy for us to follow.

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