

## Culture



**David YOUNG, Grant INGRAM, Lise SWARTZ, *Cry of the Eagle: Encounters with a Cree Healer*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989. 145 pp.**

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ers in a different pose are identified as "Haida". (The dancers are Haida in Klinkwan, a Kaigani Haida village). Again, the portrait of *Man on a Cloud* (page 85) clearly shows him wearing a 'whiteman' shirt while the caption describes him as wearing a "scalp shirt". One further minor criticism has to do with the book's dust jacket. The combination of the book's size - 13 1/4" by 10 1/4" - allied to the cover's cliché illustration of a photographic portrait of a Plains Indian superimposed upon a painting of a buffalo hunt, tends to give the appearance of a book designed for children. When are publishers of general surveys of North American Indians going to be courageous enough to give the over-worked Plains images a sabbatical, and allow a Tsimshian, or Muskogee, or Delaware the opportunity to represent the North American Native people on book covers? (To add insult to injury, the book's endpapers portray a traditional Plains war pictograph, and its two front title pages, a Plains warrior on each!)

In summary, *The Native Americans* provides a pleasing harmony of text and illustration such that its potential 'reference work' style does not inhibit it from being in itself a 'good read'. Neither has its outward appearance detracted from its ability to present a very sound, well-researched introduction to the continent's Native peoples, while its fine collection of illustrative material will lure the reader back time and time again to discover previously unseen gems of native art.

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David YOUNG, Grant INGRAM, Lise SWARTZ, *Cry of the Eagle: Encounters with a Cree Healer*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989. 145 pp.

by Antonia Mills,  
University of Virginia

*Cry of the Eagle: Encounters with a Cree Healer* recounts the encounter of University of Alberta anthropologist David young and two of his graduate students (Grant Ingram and Lise Swartz) with Russell Willier, a Woods Cree healer and medicine man. "Encounter" is the key word and a new concept to be highlighted in anthropological literature. Like an "encounter group," the interaction in *Cry of the Eagle* is mutualistic, the product of a two-way dialogue in which the strengths and weaknesses of the participants and their world views are revealed.

In a sense, every and any interaction between an anthropologist and the Native is an encounter. This book, however, focuses on the mutual impact of Russell Willier on Young, Ingram and Swartz and of these three people on Russell Willier. What is new in this encounter is having a member of a traditional society conversant with English and filled with enthusiasm to demonstrate the efficacy of his spiritual world and healing techniques on people outside the sphere of his culture. What is new on Young, Ingram and Swartz's part is their willingness to help Willier do so and their clear, honest report of the encounter between them.

The encounter began in a manner typical of many contacts between anthropologist and Native healer: Young came to know Willier while conducting research on the endangered crafts of the Woods Cree. It did not take long for Willier to shift the emphasis to spiritual concepts that are very much alive and well. The book begins with Young's description of the spiritual world of the Woods Cree as dramatized by Willier, portrayed through conversations with him, and through condensations of what he said.

Young's second chapter includes a description of a ceremony akin to a shaking tent ceremony performed by a friend of Willier's to which Willier invited Young and his family. The depiction of the experience of the ceremony sets the tone for the rest of the book: the reporting is clear, first person and engaging. Young describes the unusual events (a mouse appearing at his wife's feet when she was sitting in the midst of a large crowd) to convey the power of the experience.

The third and pivotal chapter, written by Ingram, describes the good and bad uses of medicine. The chapter gives a candid portrayal of the double bind of the Native healer and the concept that ill health and bad luck are the result of curses or attacks from rivals or enemies. In this world view, to have power is also to invite attack. Willier distinguishes between good and bad healers, maintaining that the good ones only heal, although they must sometimes parry the attacks of others in ways that at the very least make them suspect of having harmed an adversary. While Ingram and Willier describe the good healer as walking the "Sweetgrass trail" in integrity, the chapter reveals through numerous examples that even the best men, such as Willier's late father (portrayed with touching reverence), are attacked and killed by others.

The fourth chapter, written by Swartz, describes the manner in which Willier gathers healing herbs from "Mother Earth" and the importance he places on taking medicine plants in a spirit of reverence. The chapter goes on to extend the concept to hunting practices and ends with an appeal for the world at large to learn from the wisdom of those such as Willier to preserve an ecological balance.

The fifth chapter, written by Ingram, recounts how Willier doctored and healed an East Indian child who was afflicted by psoriasis. The chapter then describes the sweat lodge ceremonies in which Ingram participated and their impact on him, and ends with a poignant description of living with the Willier family and recording notes which they then asked to see. As Ingram points out, anthropologists are not used to having the subjects of one's study seek an active and equal part in the encounter.

Chapter Six by Swartz describes Willier's treatment of Western patients with psoriasis. However, the experiment was not conducted in such a way that one can be sure the patients who improved did so because of the specifics of Willier's methods. In the following chapter, Young describes two further case histories. The first is a Native woman treated simultaneously by Willier and an acupuncturist. The second case, which provides the dramatic climax of the book, involves Young's wife who was hospitalized with a critical illness and treated by Willier without the knowledge of the Western medical authorities.

The final chapter describes the impact of this mutual encounter, and plans for Willier to open a healing center. His wife opposes the idea: nothing could focus attacks on Willier more strongly. Should anthropologists advocate setting one man up for such a non-Native position? One hopes there will be an equally open and revealing sequel to this book to inform us of the outcome.

The book contains a wealth of information and examples which echo knowledge portrayed with less interest in many sources. It is perhaps because it is such good reading that the book is already in its second printing. Although *Cry of the Eagle* is naive in its attempts to study how or why Cree medicine works, it is an important expression of the fact that cross-cultural encounters can inform us in significant ways.

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Fraser TAYLOR, *Standing Alone; A Contemporary Blackfoot Indian*, Halfmoon Bay, B. C.: Arbutus Bay Publications, 1989. 332 pp., illus., paper.

by Hugh A. Dempsey,  
Calgary.

Pete Standing Alone is a man who has successfully bridged two worlds. A traditionalist, he has embraced native religion and is knowledgeable about the traditions and customs of his people, the Bloods of southern Alberta. At the same time, he is very much a part of the modern world. He has served on the tribal council, stressed the importance of education, and travelled extensively. He came to national attention when he provided much of the narration for the National Film Board production *Circle of the Sun* (1961), and the later production *Standing Alone* (1984).

The author, Fraser Taylor, met Standing Alone at a United Nations conference in the mid-1970s and a short time later he initiated a long series of interviews which carried over into the 1980s. The results are presented in the third person, with Standing Alone's first-person comments appearing as quotations which are scattered throughout the book.

Broadly speaking, the book deals with three aspects of Standing Alone's life. The longest is an account of his own experiences' another is his observations on the contemporary lifeways of his people; and the third provides an historical overview.

Of these, Standing Alone's personal biography is certainly the strongest part of the book. After his birth in 1928, Pete's early years at home and his experiences in the residential school are related in a matter-of-fact fashion, without probing too deeply into the positive or negative aspects of school life. When Standing Alone graduated, he began travelling, first to the sugar beet fields and then into the United States where he did everything from picking apples to working in the oil fields. Like many Bloods, he has a keen interest in rodeo and when he returned he competed in a few local events near his reserve. The author then discusses Standing Alone's involvement with the National Film Board, his participation in the sacred Horn Society and other religious groups, and his duties and activities as a tribal councillor. Scattered throughout the biography are sidelights on everything from education to oil and gas leases, and irrigation.