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Shepherd: *In My Own Words: Stories, Songs, and Memories of Grace McKibbin, Wintu*

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syncretic Christian elements (pp. 274-278). They are declared "conservative" forces that "supported traditional values and identity" (p. 70).

The most frustrating feature of this volume is its chronic underanalysis. When reporting one man's death in 1946, Young says, the "healing ceremonies of the medicine men began to disappear, and with no new Sun Dance chief taking Cloud's place, this annual dance of great spiritual importance faded from the scene" (p. 168; see also pp. 226, 268). But why had no successor sought training? He tells how Ute Mountain Utes rejected forming a tribal constitution under the Wheeler-Howard Act and then, without discussion of what changed, they show up with a draft in the next paragraph (p. 116). Again, after a long and fascinating description of a Southern Ute recall drive in 1990, replete with accusations of witchcraft and a curiously small voter turnout, the author simply notes anticlimactically that the tribal council had survived (pp. 249-250). There is no explanation.

On the whole, this is a disappointing volume. The author has recruited enormous quantities of data, but he seriously underanalyzes them. Despite obvious familiarity with current leaders and occasional flashes of insight, the piecemeal recitation of facts lacks an interpretive paradigm that would help the reader make sense of Utes' actions in the larger context of the historical past and the continuing present.

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In My Own Words: Stories, Songs, and Memories of Grace McKibbin, Wintu. Alice Shepherd. Berkeley: Heyday Books, 1997, 240 pp., pronunciation guide, references, phonology, photograph, \$14.00 (paper).

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In My Own Words is a small but powerful, engaging, and rewarding book in which Shepherd skillfully presents 19 Wintu texts in the original Wintu, along with both interlineal translation (Wintu/English) and English translation. It is one of several results of Shepherd's many years of research in the 1970s and 1980s with Grace McKibbin, a much-respected Wintu elder who lived in Hayfork, Trinity County.

Before starting to read this book, it is essential to take a long, careful look at the photograph of "Gracie," as she is fondly referred to by relatives and friends, for the full strength of her character as a capable, confident, kindly woman of wisdom and good humor is readily apparent. One can easily imagine listening to her as she recounts the stories that follow. It is equally important to read the forward by Frank LaPena, also of Wintu heritage, in order to understand the significance of language for native groups and the ways in which stories in the original language provide a sense of history of the people, a history that has been passed verbally through the generations.

Shepherd acquaints the readers with both Gracie and Wintu culture with a brief, friendly, and intimate introduction, thus establishing the context for the texts, which are the focus of the book. She also provides an informative and useful sketch of the Wintu language that contributes greatly to the appreciation of the texts, particularly in regard to Wintu notions of time and how Wintu speakers indicate the basis of their knowledge about persons or events, an aspect that Shepherd call "evidentials"; moreover, it is a good lesson in linguistics. Finally,



Shepherd discusses the texts in terms of types, internal structure, and rhetoric. For Shepherd, "tales" refer to those texts recounting the mythological time when the earth was created and animals were the people, while legends are about real people in contact with supernatural forces and beings. Her deft review of the structure, style, poetics, and alliteration of the texts greatly enhances the reader's understanding and appreciation of Wintu oral literature.

Of the 19 texts Shepherd presents, 10 of them are "tales," including four about Coyote, a frequent and often humorous character found throughout Native American oral literature. One of the selections here, "Coyote and the Bird from Heaven" (pp. 117-120), is an excellent example of Coyote's foolish, overreaching behavior. Other tales have important lessons to teach, as, for example, the importance of family relationships and the value of persistence in "The Turtles" (pp. 99-116). The selection of tales is well balanced, providing a good perspective of the content and variety expressed within

Wintu myth. In addition to the several levels of translation, Shepherd also accompanies each tale with cultural explanations and insights that augment the more overt information revealed by the text; this is an essential contribution, because Wintu tales (along with the oral literatures of most indigenous peoples) contain much that is implicit and rather opaque for those of another culture.

In addition to the tales, Shepherd renders two legends, two songs, three real incidents or historical events, and two cultural descriptions. These all add important dimensions to our understanding of Wintu culture. It is clear throughout that Shepherd has developed a rich sense of both the language and culture through her linguistic research, and she effectively passes that on in this volume. This book is valuable to professionals as well as anyone interested in Native American language and culture. Undoubtedly, Gracie's friends and relatives are most pleased to have her tales preserved and available to them in her own words.

