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tion and short fiction. Penn's mannered, authorial personae resemble the well-wrought narrators of short stories, and he often presents his arguments at least partially through the voices of characters such as Tonto, borrowed from *The Lone Ranger*, and "Uncle Gyro" (Penn's academic "Head Indian," perhaps modeled on the wacky genius from Donald Duck comics, Gyro Gearloose). Penn's humor also recalls Thomas King's, where reconstructed versions of the Lone Ranger, Tonto, John Wayne, and other popular culture icons are subject to whatever indignities Coyote can inflict. With *Feathering Custer*, Penn maintains his well-earned place among these first-rate Indian humorists as he plays adeptly the dual role of storyteller and critic, entertaining and instructing his readers in ways that strengthen our connections to the vibrant heart of literary expression. Eschewing the utilization of words such as *problematic* or *thematicizationalize* (p. 135) Penn's witty, sophisticated essays expose, at best, the silliness and, at worst, the viciousness of some of the most self-righteously defended "positionalities" of our times.

*Catherine Rainwater*

St. Edward's University

**In the Words of Elders: Aboriginal Cultures in Transition.** Edited by Peter Kulchyski, Don McCaskill, and David Newhouse. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999. 458 pages. \$70.00 cloth; \$29.99 paper.

As this volume's editors state in the introduction, works that present the collected experiences of First Nations/Native American elders come rarely in the form of an anthropological study or a general presentation of indigenous wisdom. For those looking for either one can certainly find both, but the reader will find no index in this book and, consequently, no fast and easy answers or references, which is as it should be. As this book presents the words of elders it should be read as if you were in the presence of one of these elders, listening.

In structure, the book is divided into eight broad Canadian culture regions: Eastern Canada, Central/Great Lakes, Anishinabe, Mid-north, Inuit, Plains, Dene, and Pacific Coast. It presents the commentary and experiences of sixteen elders, two from cultures within each region, on a variety of topics related to the experiences and issues relevant to their particular communities. Subjects range from the telling of portions of life histories, offering aspects of traditional life and knowledge, to modern issues such as treaties, the relationship between Natives and non-Natives, and traditional and Christian beliefs. While there was a structure to the interviews conducted with each elder, they only commented on topics of their own choosing. As a result, there is broad variation in each elder's narratives and there is never a complete picture of a particular culture provided. Moreover, while the elders come from a variety of different cultures, they also come from a variety of different social backgrounds. For instance, Margarat Paul, a Passmoquady elder from Nova Scotia, is a traditional singer in her community, while Wilf Tootosis, a Saulteau elder from Saskatchewan, spent a great deal of his life working in the

transportation and tourist industry. Several of the elders were deeply involved in the political arena as well, such as Elizabeth Penashue, an Innu elder from Labrador, and George Blondin, a Slavey/Dogrib elder from the Northwest Territories. In terms of traditional religious perspectives, some elders are Christian, such as Rachel Uyarasuk, an Inuit elder from Nunavut, while others, such as Alex Snead, an Ojibwa elder from Ontario, pursue their traditional religious beliefs.

For some readers interested in learning cultures in depth, this lack of a complete picture might be disappointing or even discouraging. Part of the problem, as admitted by the editors, is the relatively short period of time spent doing interviews, only a few days when months or even years would have been more appropriate. However, the importance of this text is not diminished by this revelation in any way. Part of the purpose underlying this volume is to serve as an introductory text for indigenous cultures from a knowledgeable insider's perspective rather than from the standard outsider, or anthropological perspective. As such, this text exceeds expectations. While the statements of these elders are sometimes brief and somewhat disjointed, the accounts, particularly their life histories, often emphasize issues important to each one. Readers will see a great deal of similarities in several of the narratives, such as attendance at residential schools, problems of alcoholism, religious and cultural conflict with the dominant society, etcetera. However, the life experiences and cultural explanations are all quite different, and it is this that is perhaps the most important aspect of this volume.

There remains an inherent need in Native studies to move from a general expression of some single indigenous perspective to recognition of the diversity of indigenous experiences, and this volume presents just that. While by no means representative of all indigenous communities in Canada, let alone North America, it illustrates in sixteen short chapters the differences inherent in the communities and lifeways of these elders. In addition, the narratives are a blend of personal history, observation, and oral tradition, giving the reader a complex picture of who elders are and the importance of learning from them. As the editors and several elders state in this volume, without these people and the knowledge they possess, there is no language, no history and, as a result, no culture. The importance of this book cannot be overstated, as it serves as a valuable resource not only for the classroom but also for Native communities and even the general public.

This said there are a few concerns to be observed. While the editors emphasize the value of this volume as a resource on the diversity of Native lifeways in the introduction, they also manage to undermine this position. The editors offer a summation of what an elder is, a harmonious individual that promotes balance with others and with Mother Earth (p. xvi). Such an image immediately sets up elders as deeply spiritual individuals whose lives have been lived in a traditional manner, a classic romanticized image that a lot of modern texts written from the perspective of Native Americans try to avoid. To add to this sort of romanticism, the editors offer their own bit of Native wisdom, complete with a diagram (p. xx), presenting the importance of the circle in traditional aboriginal belief systems. There are several reasons for

presenting such generic indigenous knowledge, but in this particular forum it is not entirely appropriate. The importance of this book is in its diversity and such homogenizing statements only serve to set up expectations and pre-judgments that the readers should be able to make for themselves.

For those interested in other volumes of this type, see Joseph Cash and Herbert Hoover's *To Be an Indian: An Oral History* (1995), Rita Kohn et al.'s *Always a People: Oral Histories of Contemporary Woodland Indians* (1997), and Joseph Bruchac's *Lasting Echoes: An Oral History of Native American People* (1999).

*John Norder*

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**Indian Nations of Wisconsin: Histories of Endurance and Renewal.** By Patty Loew. Madison: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2001. 148 pages. \$39.95 cloth; \$21.95 paper.

Patty Loew has written a compact, useful, and innovative book about the eleven federally recognized American Indian tribes in Wisconsin, and has also included a would-be twelfth, the Brothertown Nation, which at this writing is awaiting a recognition decision from the Interior Department. The book is compact because she covers a diverse history in 126 pages of text. It is a useful book because she extends her chronological coverage from precontact to the present. And, most importantly, it is an innovative book, because she explicitly makes use of oral history interviews with tribal elders and tribal historians whenever possible. For those wanting to make a classroom selection for an introductory text on the subject, Loew's book gets this reviewer's nod over the older, but still valuable, *Wisconsin Indians* by Nancy O. Lurie, and the more recent *Native American Communities in Wisconsin* by Robert Bieder.

Loew begins her book with a chapter on the precontact history of Native people in present-day Wisconsin. She is particularly interested in the material culture of the burial mounds in southern and southwestern Wisconsin. In this regard, she has been aided considerably by the research of the Ho-Chunk (formerly Winnebago) Nation's Historic Preservation Department. The tribal archaeologists have done excellent work with ground-penetrating radar devices to locate burial mounds and link their shapes to the emerging clan system. Next Loew presents a chapter on European contact and the effects of the fur trade. Here she sees the origins of Indian dependency in the involvement in the world fur market.

The following six chapters take up the histories of the Menominees, Ho-Chunks, Ojibwes, Potawatomis, Oneidas, Stockbridge-Munsees, and Brothertowners. Her treatment of Menominee history is strong, particularly on the aboriginal history of the tribe in Wisconsin. It is less clear, in her handling, how the Menominees made the transition in the late nineteenth century from a hunting-fishing-ricing-berrying band to a timber-cutting and wood-products band. Too bad that Loew finished her work before the 2000