

Calvin Martin. *The Way of the Human Being*. New Haven & London, 1999.

Review by Neal McLeod, Saskatchewan Indian Federated College

Calvin Martin throughout *The Way of the Human Being* discusses the importance of Indigenous stories and world-views in the context of contemporary life. Early on in the book, Martin discusses the methodology of his first book, *The Keepers of the Game*, which was based primarily on archival sources. However, in the present volume, Martin seeks to engage the beliefs of Indigenous people on their own terms through their own words. Martin credits the shift in his methodology due to some of the time that he has spent with various groups, including the Yupi'it Natives of Alaska. The result of his approach throughout the book is an indispensable aid to anyone teaching and studying Indigenous narratives, religions and philosophies.

The book has an easy flow and is richly layered with various narrative dimensions. While Martin articulates some of his own experiences throughout, he does refer to other accounts of Indigenous narratives. The result is a dynamic and thoughtful account of the manner in which Indigenous peoples have struggled to maintain their identities in the pressures of modernity. Particularly striking are the narratives of some of the people from whom he has recorded stories, including those found in chapters 5 and 6.

*The Way of Being Human* raises central philosophical questions about the relationship between various world-views. Being a historian of Indian-white relations, Martin is conscious of the impact of European material culture and beliefs upon the life-world of the first peoples of North America. In chapter 2, "...to the skin of the world," Martin attempts to demonstrate the manner in which reality is constructed as series of interrelated narratives and perspectives. In chapter 4, Martin poetically describes the use of "myth" as a way of passing "through the membrane" (p. 45) of our everyday conceptions. Thus, Martin is extending some of the ideas from his earlier book, but he also suggests that Indigenous narratives may describe layers

of reality that are not evident in a more empirical examination.

Throughout the book, Martin also discusses the relationship between Indigenous peoples, their lands and their stories. There is much in the book that complements contemporary studies such as TEK (Traditional Ecological Knowledge). Martin discusses the conflict between government agencies who are trying to keep track of various species and the beliefs and practices of the Yupi'it people of Alaska. The descriptions of Martin's own experience in this regard are quite helpful. Through his discussion of his friend Robert's narrative, the importance of hunting and living off the land are stressed (p. 125).

Martin provides many lush descriptions of the manner in which Indigenous people cited throughout the book voiced themselves. For example, he describes an old man at a meeting in Alaska in the following manner: "as though he we saying something sacred and somehow fragile—like a spider's web in its inclusiveness" (p. 110). In another passage, Martin notes: "Spoken words were articulated by dancing hands and intricate finger movements" (p. 133). However, one of his friends, Harold, notes that words themselves have declined in the dislocation of Indigenous people from their land and their livelihoods: "Words themselves have died in the great die-off" (p. 130). Martin throughout the narratives he has collected tackles the very difficult and important question: how does a group of people remember something that they cannot explain? In the case of the Indigenous people of Alaska, this change was the transformation of their lives in a relatively short period of time.

However, some questions linger in my mind after reading the book: did Martin get permission to record the stories that he writes in his book? Were the people from whom he received the stories aware of how their narratives would be used? Also, I wondered if Martin had actually changed their names in order to protect the privacy of those who was writing about, particularly when he was discussing the effects of alcohol and other difficulties.

The book is a powerful and creative dialogue with Indigenous stories. In discussing the work of Barry Lopez, Martin subtly urges us to see Indigenous cultures as dynamic and organic. In discussing

Lopez, Martin notes that many of the papers at a particularly conference were dull because they did not deal with real Indians but rather "anthropological Indians" (p. 211). The challenge in research and writing is to not ossify a culture (as many ethnographic approaches tend to do), but rather to see cultures as a dynamic living force in the present. On this score, Martin's narrative offers us a highly successful template on how this could be done. The book is poignant, powerful and reflective. The book points to the possibilities of an alternative paradigm for understanding Indigenous history and experience.

Ian S. McIntosh. *Aboriginal Reconciliation and the Dreaming: Warramiri Yolngu and the Quest for Equality*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2000

Review by Suzi Hutchings, University of Adelaide, Australia

McIntosh presents a powerful and passionate argument for postcolonial governments to listen to the voices of wisdom of Indigenous peoples if meaningful reconciliation between the two is to be achieved. He reveals important information about the cultural mechanisms that these people have developed in order to cope with the escalation of encroachment from government workers and development companies into their lives. In so doing McIntosh has fulfilled a major criteria of the philosophy behind the series of which this book is a part. *Cultural Studies in Ethnicity and Change* is a set of volumes edited by anthropologists Maybury-Lewis and Macdonald. The studies have been sponsored by the organization Cultural Survival, which according to the forward is aimed at "promot[ing] multiethnic solutions to otherwise conflictive situations" (p. ix), particularly for Indigenous peoples in their ongoing relations with the state.

It cannot be denied that the intentions behind the philosophy of this organization, and in turn the studies, are noble in providing a space for Indigenous and minority voices on the international stage. However, there is also a danger that they may actually mask a