

based, are disappearing.

As a whole, the book gives the impression that the James Bay hydro-electric project has some serious environmental and human health impacts, and that the social impacts of the project on the Cree stem more from the unkept promises of the James Bay Agreement than from the development itself. However, the picture it gives of the social and environmental impacts is different, and more complex, than the picture typically presented by "anti-dam" environmental groups.

•

Winona LaDuke. *All Our Relations: Native Struggles for Land and Life*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 1999.

Reviewed by Deborah McGregor, University of Toronto

*All Our Relations* is a collection of stories surveying many of the environmental challenges faced by Native communities in North America. It describes the tireless work of those who resist assimilation and who strive to renew and restore the land and traditions upon which their communities depend. Some of the activists are professionals and scientists, while others are moms, Elders, and traditionalists. All are angry at the continuing onslaught on the Earth and its impact in particular on babies, children and families.

The struggles recounted in the book range in topic from nuclear waste to militarization, from water contamination to treaty rights in Northern Labrador, the U.S. southwest and Hawaii. Books have been written about Native environmental issues before, but not many from the perspective of the people themselves. What is unique about LaDuke's book is way she chose to tell these stories and the insight she provides as an Indigenous woman whose environmental activism has spanned decades.

Major themes in LaDuke's past work have been social and environmental justice, and this is true of her latest book. LaDuke has presented each of the struggles as a story, an ancient indigenous method of communication. She is a good story teller, and by applying this method she contextualizes the stories she tells. Through the structure of the book, she brings to life the traditional philosophies of life of Pimaatisiwin or Minobimaatisiwin which can both be translated as the "the good life" or

"continuous rebirth". It is these concepts which describe the people's balanced relation to the Creation. "There is no way to quantify a way of life" LaDuke says, "only a way to live it".

Minobimaatisiwwin, a concept dealing with responsibilities and rebirth, is used in blessings, thanksgivings, and ceremonies. In each story, the struggle each Nation faces in fulfilling its responsibilities and contributing to the continuous rebirth is emphasized. The first story LaDuke tells relates to the topic of birth and rebirth. The work of the Haudenosaunee people to clean up contamination in the St. Lawrence River is inspired by the desire to rebuild or "rebirth" their nation. Using the Haudenosaunee approach, traditional midwife Kasti Cook emphasizes the importance of the first environment: the womb and the change which must occur there in order to rebuild a nation.

LaDuke's book thus begins with the story of birth and life. It ends, however, by honouring the work of the late Walt Bressette, a Chippewa. Mr. Bressette left a legacy of honor and respect, expressed through the prophesy of the Seventh Generation. This circle of life, death, and rebirth expressed in the book illustrates the fact that Native society is in a constant state of change. It is a time of choice, a time to transform and further the rebirth of Indigenous Nations by restoring and reclaiming traditions and responsibilities. In death there is life, and thus Minobimaatisiwwin.

This book is more than a collection of stories about North American Native people and the environmental struggles they face. It is also a book about Indigenous worldview, philosophies, traditions and values, and how these are relied upon to meet such challenges. One of the least understood aspects of Indigenous life is how First Nations have managed to survive the holocaust of European colonization, how they continue to resist and have moved toward the restoration and rebuilding of Nations. LaDuke does not dwell on the holocaust and the impact it has had on Aboriginal people and their lands. What is of interest to LaDuke in this text is how Aboriginal people have managed to survive. She sheds light on this through highlighting in each story the ancient Aboriginal traditions of caring for the earth. These traditions, still expressed in many Native communities, provide a direct link between the spiritual origins of Native people, the challenges they face and the formulation of appropriate approaches to the resolution of such challenges. LaDuke thus understands the relevance of traditional culture and brings this knowledge

to life in the stories she tells. She states:

North American teachings describe the relations all around—animals, fish, trees, and rocks—as our brothers, sisters, uncles, and grandpas. Our relations to each other, our prayers whispered across generations to our relatives, are what bind our cultures together. The protection, teachings, and gifts of our relatives have for generations preserved our families. These relations are honored in ceremony, song, story, and life that keep relations close—to buffalo, sturgeon, salmon, turtles, bears, wolves, and panthers. These are our older relatives—the ones who came before and taught us how to live. (p.2)

LaDuke goes beyond solely promoting the rebirth and continuation of Indigenous traditions to advocating a bringing together of such knowledge and western science as a way to address the problems that all of humanity face. She observes that:

Somewhere between the teachings of western science and those of the Native community there is some agreement on the state of the world. Ecosystems are collapsing, species are going extinct, the polar icecaps are melting, and nuclear bombings and accidents have contaminated the land. (p.197)

International protocols such as the *Convention on Biodiversity*, along with statements from assemblies such as the World Commission on Environment and Development, have increasingly recognized that Indigenous people have lived sustainably on their territories for thousands of years on various territories and have something to offer in resolving global issues. A growing field of study in North America has emerged around how western and Aboriginal systems might work together. LaDuke contributes to this discussion. She brings it to the grassroots community level, concentrating her work on those who actually possess the knowledge so desperately sought.

LaDuke's is thus a unique and important approach. Current discourse around these issues is dominated by academics and other external interests. Such parties focus on specific aspects of "Traditional Ecological Knowledge", or TEK, and then attempt to determine ways to integrate or



assimilate this knowledge into dominant systems. This model is rarely questioned, and international covenants encourage its application. However, it is often criticized by Native people as another form of colonialism. Aboriginal views are not afforded their own standing, they are only seen as relevant in relation to the dominant discourse and to resolving those environmental challenges to which dominant society has assigned priority. LaDuke's book presents the other end of the spectrum. She demonstrates that Native people are already doing what dominant society seeks to do. Native people are drawing on their traditions and spirituality (that which has sustained them, even through the holocaust) and are building on this knowledge to deal with the challenges they continue to face. Out of necessity, science and the legalities of the dominant system come into play as part of Indigenous strategies. However, LaDuke is able to describe what is important from a Native perspective, through the eyes of the people who live in the communities.

One story that highlights this point involves the Hopi as part of the NativeSun project. The Hopi deal with external knowledge on their terms. The creation of NativeSun, a solar energy project, is part of the Hopi's resistance to electrification by utility companies. The strength of the community, its resilience through the continuation of cultural traditions, is what makes the project a success. LaDuke quotes one Hopi spokesperson as follows:

We've been taught through western models for a long, long time, that the answers come from the outside. When you focus on the deficiencies of people, then the perception is that the people are weak and that they're unable to do things for their own conditions. ... Our approach is that the strengths are inherent in communities. (Minkler in LaDuke, p.189)

Practical examples of the interaction of the two knowledge systems, including how they both clash and converge, are contained in the stories. LaDuke's focus remains on the communities and the critical importance of their being able to choose their own path of self-reliance based on cultural, spiritual and economic values. The NativeSun project highlights the value of Indigenous community control over "... the process of evaluating technologies, deciding which are of value to Hopis—or to any community—and which aren't. By deliberating before acting,

NativeSun is making an example of working with one's own hands, heart, and determination."

LaDuke's interweaving of traditional and spiritual elements into the descriptions of contemporary struggles is one of main strengths of this work. Native traditions are not separated out and analyzed like some "object of study". These traditions and ways of life are simply "the way it is" for Native people who defend the earth.

The book expresses LaDuke's vision of hope and action. One of her main challenges in this book was to take the reader beyond the romanticized "environmentalist" version of Native people. She notes that:

The broader environmental movement often misses the depth of the Native environmental struggle. Although it has been romanticized historically and is often considered in some New Age context, the ongoing relationship between Indigenous culture and the land is central to most Native environmental struggles. (p.88)

She expresses the hardships endured by Native people who choose to live this way. It is not an easy path to take; the odds against being able to continue are often formidable. LaDuke does not shy away from controversial issues such as the anti-Indian movement. She indicates that colonialism and environmental racism are alive and well in North America.

In writing these stories, LaDuke has relied upon more than conventional academic research. She has visited many of the communities herself and spoken with grassroots activists in each. As a well known and respected environmental activist herself, LaDuke has many contacts which she has utilized throughout her book.

Most writings concerning Aboriginal people and their environmental philosophies tend to depict the people and their knowledge as a "subject" suitable for study. Native people are constantly "explained" or forced to explain themselves. What is refreshing and so desperately needed about LaDuke's book is that she simply tells it like it is. Each story relates to a specific Nation and their territory and describes the environmental challenges they face. LaDuke utilizes a dual approach in her storytelling, where the words of community people themselves are punctuated by statistical and other information that provide historical and contextual relevance. What becomes clear is that each community has or is

experiencing environmental colonialism in various forms. The focus of the struggle may be different in each case but the source of it is common to all. LaDuke writes in an open style, accessible to any interested reader, though researchers would no doubt prefer a more extensive bibliography. What comes across clearly, however, is that this is a topic she knows well. The book is meant to stand alone, with the words of her informants being the credible "voice" in the collection. LaDuke asks each community to describe "how they have approached resolution of the environmental challenge they face". Each chapter contains a map showing the location of the Nation currently being referred to. In every chapter she also provides a brief history of the community itself including environmental aspects. She describes the local culture and relationship to the land. In so doing, she deconstructs a longstanding myth about Native people: that they are all the same. She reveals the diversity of Indigenous nations and seems to thoroughly enjoy experiencing and learning from the people in the communities she visits.

The major challenge LaDuke leaves us with is the need to consider that:

The underlying problem is quite basic, revolving around historic views of who should control land, perceptions of Native people, and ideas about how now endangered ecosystems should be managed. Most disturbing is the wide-spread absence of any historic knowledge of traditional Native tenure and the demise of Native ecological and economic systems. (p.131)

Her book attempts to contribute to the understanding of Native systems and points out the inherent unsustainability of the dominant systems.

One of the most poignant stories LaDuke offers is that of the Seventh Generation, in honor of Walt Bressette. According to the story, we are in a time of transformation, and the time has come to consider our options and choose a path of spirituality or technology. The Seventh Generation prophesy foretells of these times. With their spiritual traditions to support them, Native nations have something substantial to offer during this time. The example left by Bressette is that "we must support self-reliance and the recovery of Indigenous systems of knowledge, jurisdiction, practice and governance" (p.200).

LaDuke emphasizes that we are changing; we are at the time of the



Seventh Fire and we have choices. We must make these choices based on our traditions. The resolutions to the issues we face will not come easy and the struggles will continue; this is clear from LaDuke's stories. However, returning to the teachings provides hope and vision for the future.

Ralph Maud. *Transmission Difficulties: Franz Boas and Tsimshian Mythology*. Burnaby, B.C.: Talonbooks, 2000.

Reviewed by Paige Raibmon, Simon Fraser University

In the introduction to *Transmission Difficulties*, Ralph Maud states that he has undertaken to write a "small book." The book is indeed short, but the issues it raises are many. The core of the book is Maud's exegesis of Franz Boas's 1916 study, *Tsimshian Mythology*. *Tsimshian Mythology* presents texts collected by Port Simpson Tsimshian Henry Tate, whom Boas hired as ethnographic assistant in 1903. From the moment of contact between these men, a plethora of "transmission difficulties" ensued.

Each chapter of Maud's book examines one of these difficulties. It is worth noting that the word "difficulties" fails to convey fully Maud's view. He sees them less as transmission difficulties than transmission travesties: deliberate and self-interested breaches of ethical and professional standards by Boas. Maud's "outrage... at the charade that passes for scientific truth" (9) comes through on every page.

In chapter 1, Maud tell us that, contrary to Boas's instructions and to the assumptions of subsequent readers, Tate wrote the texts in English and translated them into Tsimshian afterwards. Maud then moves on in chapters 2 and 3 to tell us that Boas excised sexual and Christian references from Tate's texts. In chapter 4 we learn that Tate did not always provide Boas with original material, and instead often sent Boas stories that Tate had copied from Boas's earlier publication on the Nass River. Chapter 5 charges that Boas elicited specific stories from Tate. Chapter 6 addresses what Maud considers to be Boas's inadequate response to a critical review of the work by Marius Barbeau. Maud critiques Boas's skills as a literary critic in chapter 7, and Boas's theory of myth and culture in chapter 8.