

A. Irving Hallowell, with Jennifer S.H. Brown. *The Ojibwa of Berens River, Manitoba: Ethnography into History*. Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1992.

This well-written, brief account is a wonderful learning and teaching book. It presents what the title claims, and more. It summarizes what Hallowell has written in longer form, adds an historical context, and begins and ends with Brown's personable and sophisticated historical criticism. So we have three distinct, major perspectives on ethnography, with a common focus. Each perspective is important, and each tells us something about the people, their experience of life and their history.

"Pete" Hallowell was one of the first anthropologists to write of culture bi-focally – as the typical patterns of life that *characterized a group* of people, and then as the culture *as it was experienced* by the people. He wrote this slim volume in the mid-1960s, thirty years after his field-work, and put it away, perhaps feeling it was not good enough. Then he wrote another draft and sent it in 1967 to the Spindlers for their series, and it was lost en route. I knew him then, and he told me that he was very distressed at the loss, and skeptical that he would try again. I do not know why he did not go back to his files for this version, or rewrite the lost one. Certainly I was impressed with his keen intellectual quality and energy at the time.

Jennifer Brown is an ethnohistorian who found this version among Hallowell's papers in the archives of the American Philosophical Society, gently edited it, and added a preface and afterword to clarify her subtitle of ethnography as history. She has done a very worthwhile job of salvaging a lost book, and at last we can read what Hallowell had to say, late in his career, on the culture and experience of the people he sojourned with in the early part of his career. He had thought about this very carefully for many years, and we can benefit by knowing what he had to say.

I share with Hallowell a long interest in people of the eastern subarctic region, and the privilege of an extended mentoring friendship with a Native authority, early in my career. Hallowell learned Berens River Ojibwa culture and experience from and through William Berens during the 1930s; I learned eastern James Bay Cree culture and experience from and through John Blackned during the 1960s. Reading Hallowell's writing and talking with him during the late 1960s helped me very much in writing about the Cree "old ways." There is much similarity in what we were taught about, and now it is my deep pleasure to honour old friendships.

The first three chapters describe the “slow but continuing process of cultural readaptation and personal readjustment” (p. 14) as the 18th and 19th century brought technological, economic, religious and political changes to the Berens River region. Chapter 1 does this in terms of the changes in life experiences of William Berens and his father, Jacob Berens. Chapter 2 surveys the effects of the fur trade period for the region, including historical, archaeological and genealogical evidence. Chapter 3 covers the missionaries, the advent of Treaty 5 and of chiefs (Jacob Berens was the first) and bands. The changes experienced by the people of the Berens River were very great, but the classic Ojibwa culture persisted, and this is what especially interested Hallowell.

The persistence of Ojibwa culture and people’s experience of these continuities is the focus of the remaining three chapters. Here the text is familiar Hallowell – interpretive psychological reconstruction. This is where the difficulties of understanding are greatest, and so it is here that he may have made significant interpretive changes that were in the lost manuscript. I recognize that this must continue to be a mystery, but would like to share a few clues. He told me that he was not satisfied with his 1966 chapter on dreams; perhaps he would have tried to differentiate their significance more precisely. In an American Anthropological Association address he emphasized the potential for our understanding, of following through the ways that experience is projected into new behaviour, and then having the environment provide feedback for personal adaptation (p. 60), a point that might have been developed in his discussion of the processes of acculturation. His differentiation between grammatical and semantic categories of animate and inanimate might have been better developed (p. 61). These are a few of the things that were on his mind at the time.

Depicting the psychology of culture is hard to do well, and Hallowell is one of the very best. But it is only fair to say that he would have liked to do better, to discern with more precision the experience of the world and the persons that inhabit it, notions of the causes of misfortune and the personal costs of misconduct, which were underestimated in A.M. Shkilnyk, *A Poison Stronger than Love: The Destruction of an Ojibwa Community* (New Haven: Yale, 1985). Criticism and negative judgement will probably be levelled at some of his interpretations, but we would do well to recognize that he was informed by Elders who spoke with authority. Pete Hallowell knew he was on to something important, and we can build on his insights for a deeper understanding of the past and the present.