

points out at the onset, that the records that Burgess chose to leave behind deal entirely with his professional, not with his personal life, making an in-depth personal history impossible.

Burgess's long life and the nearly 50-year time span of his essays, allow the reader to discern his position in relation to the most important development in 20th-century architecture: modernism. Although it appears that the decline of the British Empire may not have been as disturbing as the onset of the depression combined with the arrival of modernist architecture, Burgess frames it in a way consistent with his earlier work. He presents mainly British examples and he emphasizes the technical aspects over modernism's social underpinnings and stylistic qualities. Wetherell's own explanation of Modernism, especially in relation to the 1932 International Style exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York is limiting as it does not seem to connect well to Burgess's own thoughts on the subject or his roots in the Arts and Crafts movement, a precursor of modernism. It also does not adequately highlight the work of Burgess's students nor consider the richness and diversity of modernism that is only now being appreciated.

Wetherell's writing style deals with the subject in an even and consistent way, but does not put enough emphasis on what appears to have been Burgess's greatest achievement, his role as head of the University Of Alberta School of architecture. One can imagine that his instruction was thorough and focused on technical issues, yet Burgess must have also created an open-minded environment that allowed his students stylistic freedom. Every one of the small number of graduates embraced modernism in their work and the group included some of the first women in the architectural profession in Canada. It is perhaps in this light the work of Burgess, as presented in *Architecture, Town Planning and Community*, is most interesting and deserving of this important historical publication.

Bernard Flaman, SAA, MRAIC
Regina, Saskatchewan



Historical Perspectives on the Ojibwa Midewiwin: Preserving the Sacred, by Michael Angel. Winnipeg: University of Winnipeg Press, 2002.

Michael Angel cautiously approaches the delicate subject matter of Anishinaabe spiritual traditions in *Historical Perspectives on the Ojibwa Midewiwin: Preserving the Sacred*. Angel convincingly challenges the mischaracterization of the Midewiwin as a post-contact "crisis-cult" and, in the process, provides an impressive historiography of its ethnographic study. Angel's subjects are the first ethnographers of the Anishinaabeg (Ojibwa) and their spiritual ceremonies known as Midewiwin or the "Grand Medicine Society." The Midewiwin ceremonies are described in some detail in the book through the eyes of mostly non-native observers. The author assumes

the near-impossible task of filtering out the ethnocentrism of these early accounts to approach a true understanding of the spiritual life of Anishinaabeg in the early post-contact era (16).

Angel's primary original contribution is a methodical dismantling of ethnohistorian Harold Hickerson's hypothesis that the Midewiwin was a nativistic "crisis cult" that was a reaction to post-contact chaos in the 18th and 19th centuries (68–74). Aside from this contribution, which Anishinaabeg themselves already knew, *Preserving the Sacred*'s most valuable contribution is its summary of previous ethnographies accompanied by insightful biographies of each ethnographer. Although a reader will spend much of his or her time in its endnotes to access this information, the book is a useful resource for scholars of Anishinaabe studies and Ethnography.

Based on Angel's doctoral dissertation, the book uses only written historical texts for source material. By choosing to rely only on written sources, Angel circumvents the now common custom of seeking permission from the affected community. The failure to conduct interviews with living practitioners disappoints because it restricts the results of Angel's research to a rehashing of what scholars already know about the Anishinaabeg. His research design prevents us from learning much that is new about the past or present spiritual life of Anishinaabeg and the reader is left with the impression that Angel's doctoral research was constructed in such a way as to avoid ethical issues of cultural appropriation. A more appropriate title might use the phrase "Historical Literature" rather than "Historical Perspectives." In other words, this book's title is only accurate if one limits "history" narrowly enough to include only written sources. As a result, Anishinaabeg are forced to watch their most sacred institution be poked and prodded by outsiders without their approval or input.

There are some contradictions. For example, on page 11, Angel condemns previous efforts to understand the Midewiwin when he acknowledges "the difficulties that arise when members of a literate culture attempt to understand an oral culture, particularly when they restrict their search for evidence to written materials," despite his own refusal to draw upon anything other than written material. Angel also, rightly in my view, critiques the language proficiency of previous scholars in this area yet never discloses his level of proficiency in Anishinaabemowin. From the standpoint of one who researches and teaches in Indigenous Studies, it is frustrating that those who lack Indigenous language proficiency conduct most scholarship in this field. It is considered unacceptable for someone to write a doctoral dissertation on a core aspect of French, German, or Japanese history without being able to read, speak and write those languages. Yet when scholarship involves Indigenous peoples, the drop in standards hints that ethnocentrism has yet to be rooted out...

The major flaw in *Preserving the Sacred* is that Angel writes authoritatively on Anishinaabe worldview at fixed points in the past without consulting

Anishinaabeg. Furthermore, Angel decides against contemporizing his study by declining to look at the current revival of the Midewiwin. For readers who wish to learn more about Anishinaabe spirituality, other authors such as Basil Johnston or Eddie Benton-Banai provide an Anishinaabe perspective that reminds us that the Midewiwin continues and will continue to be a powerful force in our communities.

Brock Pitawanakwat
Assistant Professor of Indigenous Studies
First Nations University of Canada
Regina, Saskatchewan



The Destructive Power of Myth—review of *False Expectations: Politics and the Pursuit of the Saskatchewan Myth*, by Dale Eisler. Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 2006.

"Agriculture settlement can make very slender progress in any portion of that region." – British scientist J.H. Lefroy, 1857

"It is not easy to forecast the future of wheat in Saskatchewan because the extent of the country adaptable to wheat growing is so vast that when it comes into production...the output cannot fail to run into figures both of quantity and money that imagination can hardly reach." – CPR pamphlet

These two quotes succinctly express the gap between reality and myth that is the subject of Dale Eisler's new book *False Expectations: Politics and the Pursuit of the Saskatchewan Myth*. Myth is, in many ways, necessary to stimulate human progress. Whether it is the myth of "the new Jerusalem," "the just society," or "a chicken in every pot," these myths articulate an ideal of who we want to be as a society; they give us a vision of something better that is worth striving for in a world in which imperfection and injustice is too often the norm. We know, however, that all human endeavour is inherently imperfect; we must understand, then, that myths are ideals which we will never be able to achieve fully. We must judge our success as a society, and the success of those we ask to govern on our behalf, not on whether the myth has been achieved or not but on how much progress we have made toward the ideal. If we insist on believing that the myth can be achieved and that falling short of its achievement is a moral or political failing, rather than the reality of an imperfect world governed by imperfect people, myth can come to destroy motivation and social cohesion. Instead, we gradually devolve into a culture of defeatism in which even society's significant accomplishments and progress go unrecognized and ignored.

As Eisler, a well-known former Saskatchewan journalist who is now a senior federal public servant, cogently points out, the "Saskatchewan myth" of a land of boundless potential is a conscious product of political propaganda,