

Lodge the Dutch explorer and nature writer [W.G.N. van der Sleen] listened to his new friend. 'He spoke freely, without scruples, intuitively sensing how I as fellow [*sic*] nature lover, stood closer to him than the majority of my race living in the cities.' Few of Grey Owl's visitors in the early 1930s met Anahareo at Beaver Lodge." (p. 112) The connection between the last two sentences is remote if it exists at all. Elsewhere, the index is nearly complete, but the job of tracing references to Belaney's children grows very difficult because, while the text refers to them only by their first names once they have been introduced, they are indexed only by surname. These instances amount to regrettable frustrations for the reader, but not to insurmountable obstacles. Certainly, no one will fault Smith for his impressive research, only for aspects of its presentation.

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Wolverine Myths and Visions: Dene Traditions from Northern Alberta, compiled by the Dene Wodih Society, edited by Patrick Moore and Angela Wheelock. Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1990. Pp. 259.

This bilingual collection of traditional stories from the Dene Dháa, Athapaskan-speaking people of northwestern Alberta also known as the Slavey, represents a true collaboration of scholars and community members, especially Native elders. Many stories were originally translated by an elder from Assumption, Alberta, who wanted young people to know and value their traditional heritage. The stories are dominated by two figures central to Dene Dháa oral tradition: Wolf and Wolverine. Wolverine appears as a trickster figure; Wolf, more often as a human helper in these stories intended "to help people live." They also figure prominently in the teachings of Nógħa, or "Wolverine," a Dene Dháa prophet who led the Messianic Tea Dance religion in northwestern Alberta during the fur-trade period. In addition to the stories, the book includes a brief history of the Dene Dháa, analysis of context and performance of the narratives, an introduction of the Dene prophets and the Tea Dance religion, linguistic notes, and an examination of how myth and history interrelate in the contemporary use of traditional stories.

The book is divided into an introduction and two main sections, the English and Dene texts. Each is then subdivided into "Traditional Stories" and "Accounts of the Prophet Nógħa." The introduction offers necessary background on the Dene and cultural change in the twentieth century as well as a thorough analysis of the storytellers, narrative genres, performance, and translation. All stories are based upon shared traditions, though individual tellers who have learned from expert elders innovate in both content and style of performance. Repertoires of the best tellers often include over one hundred stories. Wolf and Wolverine stories are part of a larger genre of *tonht' onh wodihé* or "stories of long ago," a time when animals lived and talked like human beings. The stories about animal people are often told to

prepare children to receive a vision about life and survival in the bush. Most of the stories collected here were told to children in school settings. The subclass of stories about animal people and culture heroes, often marked by the centrality of one character such as Wolverine, establish relations between humans and animals that are revealed in visions. A further genre breakdown distinguishes *wodih*, "messages," spoken to a human audience, from *shin*, "songs," which are always prayers directed towards spirits. Storytellers' comments are included to illuminate the intended messages.

The editors thoroughly address the complex issues of representation and the thorny questions surrounding oral versus written texts. In using notes sparingly, they attempt to respect the assumption that a listener never knows more than the original teller, thus honouring the integrity of the oral tradition. They discuss questions of style and presentation of narratives, citing Dell Hymes's argument for verse format based on structural repetition and Dennis Tedlock's advocacy of line breaks to indicate speakers' pauses. While the authors respect the intent of both positions, they explain their use of prose format as the choice of Dene Dháa translators who found the verse format disruptive to the flow of thought. Though stories are presented in prose form, pauses and repetition of discourse markers are noted throughout in an attempt to translate the style and structure of the original performance.

Part One includes two sections. The first presents ten traditional stories in English in which Wolverine is the central character. Some are followed by the storyteller's commentary. For example, the first story, "Two Sisters," is a vision which occurs in a dream, and the storytellers explicate its meaning for the intended school audience. Children are directed to seek visions in order to "make something of yourself — that's how you survive to become an elder. Then someday you'll be able to tell stories about the past and tell your children to go look for a vision in the bush." (p. 6)

The second segment of English texts are accounts of the Prophet Nógħa, largely prophecies of the destructive influence white society would have on the Dene Dháa after Nógħa's death in the 1930s. "Nógħa's Prophecies," for example, recount his warnings about the central place government cheques will come to have: "Strange people will lie to us with a yellow paper." (p. 79) The prophecies are introduced by background on the Dene prophets and the Tea Dance religion. The Dene prophets, or "dreamers," receive the stories recounted here in visions. As the editors describe this process, "For the Dene Dháa prophets, stories provided the landscape in which visions could occur, and the songs provided the trail through that landscape." (p. 59) While visions are a common experience among adult Dene Dháa, it is the ability to direct the dreaming that marks one as a prophet or "dreamer." These prophets in turn direct the religious celebration which is known in English as a "Tea Dance." This central ritual dance, which is held for diverse reasons including marking a death, giving thanks for a moose, and preventing misfortune, combines indigenous elements with aspects of Christian practice introduced in the last century. The Tea Dance is compared with other widespread Dene ceremonies such as the Potlatch, characterized by

more elaborate gift giving. Types of songs, styles of dancing, and ritual sequences among different Dene groups in Alaska, the Yukon, and British Columbia are examined in both historical and contemporary context to explore the relationship between indigenous beliefs and Christian borrowings in these complex ceremonial practices. The editors point to the difficulty of reconstructing this relationship between tradition and cultural borrowing, noting the influence of conflicting ideologies.

Part Two presents the same texts and prophecies in Dene Dháa. This section is introduced by a very helpful explanation of the phonetic characteristics of the vowel and consonant systems. The editors also explore the three major dialect differences which represent former settlement and marriage patterns in northern Alberta and the development of the current orthography.

This is an important and carefully presented collection. Its existence is testimony to the continued vitality of traditional texts among the Dene Dháa. The editors note that many traditions continue and are being revitalized, and that people of all ages continue to speak the Dene language. The Tea Dance religion is practiced in Assumption and Meander River by several prophets and singers, some trained within the last few years. Yet there lingers the sense that imminent potential loss and the realization of many of Nógá's prophecies inspired the collection. In the words of one elder that conclude the English texts, "We are becoming like white people ... I am afraid our children are slipping away from us." (p. 86) The need to preserve and balance the traditional knowledge of the pre-fur trade era from which these stories come with the inexorable and immediate power of media culture render this excellent collection an extremely valuable contribution.

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Writing the Circle: Native Women of Western Canada, edited by Jeanne Perreault and Sylvia Vance. Edmonton: NeWest, 1990. Pp. 294.

This collection joins a growing body of Native writing published in Canada. Established Native writers such as Maria Campbell, Thomas King and Emma Laroque have praised it for breaking through still-powerful barriers of silence, convention and ignorance. The writing in this volume testifies to a new confidence and self-reliance which now characterizes Native women. If "writing the circle" entails loyalty to traditional values, (p. 294) this circle has been enlarged by a richness of experience not available to previous generations.

Fifty-two writers have contributed to this anthology. They range in age from twelve to seventy-one; most live in the prairie provinces. With few exceptions they are mothers who have had some postsecondary education. Most have not previously published. Their writing includes poems, short stories, essays and brief reflections. Some themes recur and thus dominate: