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**Review of Being Lakota: Identity and Tradition on Pine Ridge Reservation.**

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Identity everywhere is complicated, but, in my experience, nowhere as complicated as on the contemporary Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. This book is about one family “down East” in the small town of Allen, South Dakota, just over the Bennett County line. Petrillo does not seek to give an exhaustive picture of identity on Pine Ridge, focusing instead primarily on one married couple, Melda and Lupe Trejo and their narrative of their life together. Their lives are not necessarily emblematic of all the residents of Pine Ridge, but illustrate the ways in which personal, family, and religious identities are intertwined, flexible, and syncretic. Melda is from an old Pine Ridge family, while Lupe, a Mexican man, identifies closely with his Aztec roots—his Indian ones—knowing that for him one drop of Indian blood is significant.

One area in which this narrative speaks for all Lakotas is the feeling of an intense and never-ending sense of the land. The Trejos express their deeply rooted connection to their small piece of the Great Plains through medicines
and native plants, the small comforts of life “down East,” and through the practice of the Sun Dance. As their connection to their place on the Great Plains deepens, the wisdom of elders is sought, often as one becomes an elder. Lupe found his spirituality through personal revelations and the Sun Dance, which, as is not the case in all Sun Dances on Pine Ridge, is open to anyone who comes in a good way—Indian, white, black, and brown.

*Being Lakota* can most fruitfully be read as two books interwoven by the author into one. The Trejos speak in an unredacted narrative, followed by a chapter in which the author interprets their narrative in terms of academic theories of ethnicity, identity, and religion. The effect can sometimes be jarring to the reader who has become lost in the simply spoken narrative of the Trejos only to emerge in the middle of an explication of collaborative research and academic theory. Yet the author’s intent is heard. She makes clear to her readers that there are two worlds in play in her book and that these worlds are sometimes impossible to reconcile seamlessly on the printed page.

I highly recommend *Being Lakota* to anyone interested in life on the edge of the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, contemporary Lakota lives, oral histories, assimilation, religion, and culture change. **Paula L. Waggoner**, Program in Anthropology, Juniata College.