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The Cypress Hills: An Island by Itself. By Walter Hildebrandt and Brian Hubner. Foreword by Sharon Butala. Saskatoon, SK: Purich Publishing, 2007. 184 pp. Maps, photographs, notes, bibliography, index. $25.00 paper.

The Cypress Hills, rising as outliers in the northern portion of the Missouri Coteau and dominating the mixed xeric grasslands of southwestern Saskatchewan and southeastern Alberta, have a vast human story of their own. They are certainly worthy of their own history book. This new edition of Hildebrandt and Hubner's 1994 book has been "rewritten and reshaped" to retell the story of the prehistory, aboriginal, early trade, and mounted police history of the region. Originally serving as historians and guides of the Fort Walsh National Historic Site, the authors were well placed to provide it. *The Cypress Hills* presents a systematic overview of the archaeology of the region, its history in the context of the buffalo hunt, the brief but tumultuous whiskey trade in the hills, and the arrival of the North West Mounted Police (NWMP) in 1874. A new chapter has been added on the experience of the Nakoda who frequented these hills, later adhered to Treaty 4, and were subsequently relocated from their chosen reserve by the apparent double-dealings of the Canadian federal government.

The book has strengths and weaknesses. It can certainly provide an introduction to the history of this fascinating region. The numerous aboriginal groups that seasonally came and went from these hills are described, as well as the buffalo robes and provisions they pursued nearby. The commercialized fur and pemmican trade organized by the Hudson's Bay Company and Montreal companies are also covered. There is very good detail on the expanding merchant capital and whiskey trading in "Whoop-Up Country" organized out of Fort Benton. One of the book's best chapters is devoted to the 1873 massacre of a Nakoda camp perpetrated by Benton wolf hunters near Abe Farewell's whiskey post, the famous "Cypress Hills Massacre." Another overviews the arrival of the NWMP shortly after the massacre and the founding of Fort Walsh. A chapter on the treaty era includes the protracted negotiations that took place between the NWMP and Sitting Bull's Wood Mountain camp.

These hills were spiritual spaces, however, as much as locations for winter hunting and for gathering berries, herbs, and lodgepole pine. Anyone standing atop some of their vantage points and looking down over the vast flat Saskatchewan prairie beyond has felt these outliers' power. Their majesty and geographic uniqueness are not well communicated in the book's dry, albeit informative, text. The chapter on the Nakoda reads like a legal representation to a treaty commission rather than history, and the "modern era" chapter gives surprising short shrift to nonaboriginal history: a scant page and a half deals with the ranching and pioneer history of the hills. That said, the book offers valuable primary research, along with fine detail in its strong chapters, and can certainly introduce the uninitiated to the fascinating story of this historical space, which the Nakoda called "an island by itself."

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