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## Book Review: Indian Country: Essays on Contemporary Native Culture

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*Indian Country: Essays on Contemporary Native Culture.* By Gail Guthrie Valaskakis. Waterloo, ON: Wilfred Laurier Press, 2005 x + 293 pp. Illustrations, references, index. \$28.95 paper.

Academic writing has long recognized narratives as a window on who we are, what we experience and how we understand and enact ourselves and others.

— Gail Guthrie Valaskakis

In examining this volume, I came to realize very quickly that Valaskakis is following the style of a traditional North American Indigenous person whom we are meeting for the first time. By way of introduction, she speaks about her family and family life, in a narrative style, in chapter 1. She finishes the book by going full circle and returning to how we are “all related.”

The remaining chapters—“Rights and Warriors,” “Postcards of My Past,” “Indian

Country," "Sacajawea and Her Sisters," "Dance Me Inside," "Drumming the Past," "Blood Borders," and "Conclusion: All My Relations"—all follow this narrative style, focusing on an aspect of Indian Country from both historic and contemporary interactions between Indian people and outsiders.

Each chapter can easily be considered as a stand-alone essay about specific topics on which Indian people have had an impact and, in a cyclic manner, have affected Indian people. Each traverses circles within circles, which can lead to confusion for those lacking experience with Indian narrative. A reader may need to go through this volume several times before coming to an understanding regarding how "us Indians" view our world.

One of the volume's strong points is its elimination of the artificial border we call the 49th parallel dividing Turtle Island into Canada and the United States. Another is that throughout the volume Valaskakis continually gives examples of the relationships between Indian people and non-Indian people (others)—relationships spanning the whole of Turtle Island—in a well-balanced manner. She tackles issues of intermingling of Indian people and others in the Plains and in eastern Canada, Spiritual and Secular ceremonies, the roles Indian women have played, warriors—such as Sitting Bull and Tecumseh—and their leadership. Each chapter is infused with the contemporary writings of Indian people such as Paula Gunn Allan, Scott Momaday, Thomas King, and Rayna Green.

I recommend this volume highly to anyone who wishes to learn, in a general manner, about the worldview of Indian people on Turtle Island (North America). It is a very readable text and should be useful for introductory courses in the upper grades of secondary schools as well as first-year university and college courses.

As Valaskakis reminds us, we are the Seventh Generation and we are all related.

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