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Review of *Women of the First Nations: Power, Wisdom, and Strength* Edited by Christine Miller and Patricia Chuchryk, with Maria Smallface Marule, Brenda Manyfingers, and Cheryl Deering

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Women of the First Nations: Power, Wisdom, and Strength. Edited by Christine Miller and Patricia Chuchryk, with Maria Smallface Marule, Brenda Manyfingers, and Cheryl Deering. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1996. Bibliographical references, index. xii + 204 pp. \$39.95 cloth, \$18.95 paper.

This book fulfills one of two purposes emerging from the first National Symposium

on Aboriginal Women of Canada: Past, Present, and Future, held in 1989 at the University of Lethbridge, Alberta: to bring together a collection of talks—as oral texts—and academic papers about various aspects of Aboriginal women's lives written by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women. Even though Aboriginal women point out the importance of traditional teachings about land, family, and community, they also raise economic, academic, social, and identity issues that spring from traditional and colonial frameworks. Emma LaRocque says it better:

We are being asked to confront some of our own traditions at a time when there seems to be a great need for a recall of traditions to help us retain our identities as Aboriginal people. But there is no choice—as women we must be circumspect in our recall of tradition. We must ask ourselves whether and to what extent tradition is liberating to us as women. We must ask ourselves wherein lies (lie) our source(s) of empowerment. We know enough about human history that we cannot assume that all Aboriginal traditions universally respected and honoured women. (And is “respect” and “honour” all that we can ask for?) (14)

The range of topics and issues makes this book a practical reader for introductory courses on First Nations studies and gender. Diane P. Payment, Laura Peers, and Sarah Carter discuss the influence of women's roles in Métis, Saulteaux, and prairie Indian groups during the fur trade, the Riel rebellion, and other events, and show how women's survival skills helped their families and communities. Jo-Anne Fiske emphasizes Carrier women's ways of adapting and developing leadership skills despite the detrimental era of residential schooling. Rosemary Brown, Jennifer Blythe, and Peggy McGuire examine the impact of environmental, economic, and political changes upon women's lives and work. Kathy M'Closkey's, Vicky Parashak's, and Julia

Emberley's articles center on art, sport, and literature, and how women's work in these fields has been dominated by patriarchal and colonial images. Betty Bastien, Beverly Hungry Wolf, Jeannette Armstrong, and Emma LaRocque speak against mystical stereotypes of Aboriginal women and against academic frameworks that perpetuate a colonial mentality. They speak *for* traditional teachings, values, and responsibilities that develop strong Aboriginal identities.

The historically based articles (by Payment, Peers, Carter, Emberley, Brown, and Fiske) examine culturally specific contexts in which Aboriginal women's roles, challenges, and contributions were previously ignored or diminished. Some of these are either based on interviews with Aboriginal women or use interviews as one methodology (Blythe and McGuire, Fiske, and Payment). Reading them, I found I wanted to hear more of the participants' words, views, and stories.

The oral texts and papers presented in *Women of the First Nations* provide solid information, setting forth and re-examining enduring issues regarding culture, family, and community. The editors and authors have prepared an important research guide for additional oral histories and culturally specific case studies focusing on the concerns and contributions of Aboriginal women.

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