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## Review of *With My Own Eyes: A Lakota Woman Tells Her People's History* By Susan Bordeaux Bettelyoun and Josephine Waggoner

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*With My Own Eyes: A Lakota Woman Tells Her People's History.* By Susan Bordeaux Bettelyoun and Josephine Waggoner. Edited with an introduction by Emily Levine. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998. Illustrations, appendices, notes, index. xl + 187 pp. \$35.00.

*With My Own Eyes* represents an historic event for this reviewer, who grew up on Standing Rock reservation in South Dakota where the name Josephine Waggoner was known and

remembered. In my view, she represented a local Native intellectual who had a great interest in the history of the reservation. It was known by my father's generation that she had interviewed local headmen (*itančan* or "chiefs"). She also represents the companionship of Lakota women as they aged. Her literary partnership with Susan Bordeaux Bettelyoun was a fortuitous and productive bonding.

It is amazing that this history is finally published. I admire the persistence of these women who were committed to presenting oral history accounts and their feminine perceptions of life. The obstacles blocking the path to publication should be seen as shameful, but often true with Native writers. One man—Sheldon of the Nebraska State Historical Society—was helpful. Subsequent encounters with the publishing world, however, were discouraging—putting Native thought and writing into acceptable prose indicates the complete ethnocentrism of whites in that era of paternalism and intellectual arrogance. Some of this still persists in editors—despite lip service to Native interpretations and viewpoints.

These courageous women viewed their work "as recording the history of *our* people." They literally were *iye* (speaking) *ska* ("white" or *wa/vicu*). They were mixed blood but they identified with their Lakota heritage. It is evident that Waggoner was the scribe writing Bettelyoun interpretations. This aspect of sharing the representation of events is the value of the book. It reflects an era of Lakota-*wa/vicu* (white) early contract that enriches our understanding of Lakota history.

Examining the quality of their collaborative efforts is rewarding. The Lone Dog family dynamic is indicative of the succinct but richly grained texture of Lakota life, in which the war exploits and comradeship of warriors (*blota hunka*) is presented. This Lakota phrase is puzzling. If it refers to warrior bonding or adoption of war partners, would it not be *bloka* (ultimately masculinity), and *hunka* (adoption)? Within the text are references to enemy tribes whose raiding to obtain valued

animals—horses and mules—rendered the Lakota horse-poor. Moreover, within two and a half pages the authors relate the expectations of women, band affiliation, the loss of an intended bridegroom, the pledge of his *kola* friend to marry his chosen bride, her abduction, and the return to her band and subsequent marriage to her promised protector. Included in this written framework are such customs as mourning, honoring an outstanding warrior, and scaffold burial practices. Fortunately, such richly textured narrative can still be heard in contemporary discussions in Lakota. Yet, who is writing them?

When some of us "Elderlies" harangue the younger generation to "know your family histories," the narratives of Bettelyoun and Waggoner might serve as models. Certainly, each account in the book's chapters can be used to reinforce the richness of Lakota history. Accounts of "chiefs" are new interpretations from a feminine perspective.

In the writings of Native life stories or texts, reviewers often ask "Whose voice is it?" This book, in my view, represents the best example of dual literacy production. Having seen Josephine Waggoner's writing in archives, I feel that she has done remarkable service to her friend's oral accounts. Mutuality in production of a literary gem evidences a sharing and caring relationship between two Lakota females in an environment far from their natal reservations. Reliving such a culture of memories must have been enriching to both.

This book should be in every library of the tribally-controlled community colleges on the Lakota reservations, read by Native Lakota professionals, and used as a source of feminine perceptions of our history.

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