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Review of *On Behalf of the Wolf and the First Peoples* By Joseph Marshall III

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BOOK REVIEWS

On Behalf of the Wolf and the First Peoples. By Joseph Marshall III. Santa Fe: Red Crane Books, 1995. xvii + 235 pp. \$13.95 paper.

Much of what has been written about Native Americans has been written by Euro-Americans. It is very important that the peoples write about aspects of their culture that they consider to be most important about themselves. *On Behalf of the Wolf and the First Peoples* by Joseph Marshall III is, I hope, the first of many such works.

In his book Marshall demonstrates a relationship between Native Americans and the wolf. That humans are a part of nature and not in control of nature is an idea that has begun to resonate throughout Anglo culture in the form of the environmental movement. The author sees the re-introduction of the wolf in Yellowstone as a hopeful sign that Anglo culture may yet prove able to understand the natural world and perhaps also the first peoples.

For Euro-Americans, there is generally little awareness or interest in what preceded the European expansion into the American West. Marshall very politely explains that the Oregon Trail was a route earlier used by the Lakota. His stories about the first peoples helping the settlers run counter to the Anglo versions of being attacked and these stories may help reformulate how we interpret the resettlement of the West.

Some of the difficulties that Euro-American culture and Native American culture have are based in the western preference for the written word. That these words were written by those who had political and economic power should be obvious. Native cultures are based

on oral tradition. For example, oral tradition told a different account of the Battle of Little Bighorn than was recorded by historians. When archaeologists re-excavated the battlefield in the 1980s the old Lakota stories were proved true.

This book may help Euro-American culture better understand traditional peoples. It will help dispel some of the myths about them. The chapter "Not All Indians Dance" expresses the tolerance for individual preference that is so characteristic of Indian peoples. While there may be some benefit gained from observations by outsiders, an insider view is absolutely vital to truly understand another culture. We have not had many insider views.

I hope that *On Behalf of the Wolf and the First Peoples* is just the beginning of the storytelling for which Euro-American culture is in desperate need.

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