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Review of *Teaching Spirits: Understanding Native American Religious Traditions* By Joseph Epes Brown with Emily Cousins

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BOOK REVIEWS

Teaching Spirits: Understanding Native American Religious Traditions. By Joseph Epes Brown with Emily Cousins. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001. Black-and-white photographs, notes, index. xvi + 140 pp. \$22.00.

This volume passes on to readers some of the teachings of the late scholar and educator Joseph Epes Brown. In consultation with Brown's wife Elenita Brown and daughter Marina Brown Weatherly, writer and editor Emily Cousins has produced a clear and succinct synthesis of what Brown taught his classes at the University of Montana about Native American concepts of the sacred. She accomplishes this through the complex task of blending some of his class lecture notes, published articles, and conference talks with recollections from his students and quotations from published Native American sources.

Following Brown's example in his lectures, Cousins has arranged the book into thematic chapters according to Native American concepts of time, sacred geography, language and song, art, animals and nature, and ritual. This arrangement stresses shared themes across all of Native North America, but the ideas are illustrated with tribally—and often individually—specific examples, including several from the Lakota holy man Nicholas Black Elk, the source of Brown's most famous work, *The*

Sacred Pipe: Black Elk's Account of the Seven Rites of the Oglala Sioux (1953).

In addition to source notes and an index, the volume offers a useful introduction in which Cousins traces Brown's life and describes the process by which the book was written. There is also a moving foreword by Don Good Voice, Chippewa-Cree, about Brown's accomplishments as a teacher and friend of Native American students.

This is a valuable work, conveying not only Brown's profound understanding of the subject matter, but also his love and respect for Native American people and beliefs. Providing both a lucid introduction for general readers and insights for scholars and teachers, it reflects Brown's conviction that "Native American traditions should be understood as Native Americans themselves experience them" and should promote his "hope that a true and open dialogue will emerge from the dual search of Native Americans and non-Natives in which neither attempts to imitate the other but through which both may ultimately regain and enrich the sacred dimensions of their own respective traditions."

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