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Review of *Uniting the Tribes: The Rise and Fall of Pan-Indian Community on the Crow Reservation* By Frank Rzeczkowski.

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Uniting the Tribes: The Rise and Fall of Pan-Indian Community on the Crow Reservation. By Frank Rzeckowski. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2012. x + 292 pp. Maps, photographs, notes, bibliography, index. \$39.95.

With a thorough grasp of the historical record of the Crow people of Montana, Frank Rzeckowski presents a thoughtful and perceptive rendering of an Indigenous community that perseveres, in the face of overwhelming hegemonic forces, by adapting and reinventing itself, continually redefining its own identity as tribal, as Indian, as Crow. He seeks to understand the changing meaning of

these constructs from the perspective of Indigenous people themselves.

Joining the discussion with other anthropologists and historians who have been wrestling with the definition of “tribal,” Rzeczkowski challenges the position some have maintained that the concept of “tribal” is of totally Euro-American origin, designed to facilitate colonial control over Indigenous populations. Rzeczkowski recognizes this position as a reaction to the legacy of nineteenth-century notions of “evolutionary anthropology,” which established a false hierarchical dichotomy between “tribal”—as something static, rigid, primitive, and constrained by tradition—and “modern”—as fluid, diverse, complex, and open. However, he points out that abandoning the concept of “tribe” implies that “Indian” identity requires the surrender of tribal identities.

Anchored in a wealth of historical record from the Crow and other Northern Plains reservation communities (Blackfeet and Lakota), Rzeczkowski eloquently demonstrates a dynamic interplay of continuous Indigenous initiative and creativity unfolding within federally imposed restrictions. Providing examples from both individual lives and social groupings, he establishes that the Crow and other Indigenous communities were anything but passive. “Tribe” becomes a dynamic term, continually redesigned by the Crow people to meet their needs and form their changing identity over time.

While reservations—designed to be “hermetically sealed, isolated islands”—sought to constrain, they provided the Crow and other communities, ironically, a setting in which to continue conducting various Indigenous means of social, cultural, and political exchanges and alliances, helping to facilitate inclusive and dynamic community identities. Through the initiatives of the Crow people, reservations fostered a sense of social solidarity, as well as a new sense of “Indianness,” intertribalism, and a pan-Indian identity. The Crows of the late nineteenth century were a multiethnic, inclusive community. Despite the efforts of reservation administrators, many of the forms of exchange that flourished prior to reservations continued unabated during the reservation period.

But by the early twentieth century, as various reservation resources dwindled, access to land contracted, and jobs became scarce, the motivations of the Crow and other communities to spawn inclusive ties with other tribes diminished, to be replaced by much more exclusive, fixed, and impermeable tribal identities. Reliance on the Euro-American-derived “blood quantum,” this racially based and externally imposed criterion was incorporated by the Crow and other communities, becoming the basis for their new, narrowly defined, divided tribal identities. This has resulted in the Crow and other tribes “reinventing” their sense of past identities, viewing the past and “tradition” through the lens of current identities.

Rzeczkowski has presented an accessible, well-documented, and insightful critique of the meanings of “tribal” and “identity,” certain to contribute to the ongoing discussions of these constructs by historians and anthropologists, and by the Crow people themselves.

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