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Review of *For an Amerindian Autohistory: An Essay on the Foundations of a Social Ethic* by Georges E. Sioui

Lisa E. Emmerich
California State University, Chico

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For an Amerindian Autohistory: An Essay on the Foundations of a Social Ethic. Georges E. Sioui. Translated from the French by Sheila Fischman. Foreword by Bruce G. Trigger. Montreal, Quebec: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992. xxiv + 125 pp. \$29.95 cloth.

For an Amerindian Autohistory is a provocative, intensely personal appeal for the development of a "new" history grounded in Amerindian cultures and intellectual traditions. Georges Sioui argues that the only way to get at North American Indian history is to go to the people themselves. He challenges those working in the field to develop intellectual and professional partnerships with native peoples, to engage in "autohistory." Intercultural collaboration via this paradigm can, he believes, help map a new, good, and decidedly "red" road into historical territory long considered off-limits to its very own residents.

Georges Sioui dismisses most scholars working on North American Indian history and ethnohistory as "less able than Amerindian researchers or traditionalists to comprehend the cultural modes specific to Amerindian societies" (p. 37). Here, *For an Amerindian Autohistory* advocates transculturation as a corrective for scholarship hopelessly mired in Euroamerican biases and scholars largely divorced from native historical and contemporary realities. "Americization," the process by which non-natives become aware of and attuned to the social, ethical, and ecological values that have survived five hundred years of colonization and attempted genocide, is the author's solution to both these problems. In an inversion of assimilationist rhetoric that nine-

teenth-century Indians would have relished, Sioui encourages scholars to escape from the bonds of their European and Euroamerican ancestry.

To facilitate this liberation process, *For an Amerindian Autohistory* presents explicitly remedial discussions of the "Sacred Circle of Life" and the "Amerindian Idea of Being Human." Written, presumably, for ethnocentric non-natives, they tend to trivialize distinct and complex Indian belief systems. The author's sound thesis, that historians must come to grips with the fundamental character of North American Indian peoples and cultures before they can write meaningfully about them, gets lost in truisms about native life that are vaguely "New Age" in tone and content.

Of course, the ultimate test of Georges Sioui's methodology is the quality of the scholarship it generates. The author applies his strategy close to home, examining the Iroquois' destruction of Huronia. Relying heavily on his perspective as a member of the Huron-Wendat nation, he contends that the conflict ultimately reflected Iroquois concerns with the preservation of their cultural integrity. This highly idiosyncratic interpretation justifies the destruction of Huronia as a North American Indian version of "ethnic cleansing." "With extraordinary strength of character," Sioui writes, "they [the Iroquois] had to eliminate a part of their own race to save it" (p. 44). Bruce Trigger, author of *The Children of Aataentsic* and this volume's foreword, characterizes this argument as "significantly different from any known to me" (pp. xiii-xiv). One can only wonder how the seventeenth century Hurons would have responded to it.

For an Amerindian Autohistory does establish Georges Sioui as a passionate advocate for intercultural collaboration in the field of North American Indian history. This book does not, however, offer sufficient proof of the methodology he so ardently tries to promote. **Lisa E. Emmerich**, *Department of History/ American Indian Studies Program, California State University, Chico*.