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Review of *American Indian Grandmothers: Traditions and Transitions* Edited by Marjorie M. Schweitzer

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American Indian Grandmothers: Traditions and Transitions. Edited by Marjorie M. Schweitzer. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1999. viii+239 pp. Photographs, figures, notes, references, index. \$49.95 cloth (ISBN 0826320775), \$19.95 paper (ISBN 0826320783).

This well-researched and deeply warm series of essays is intended to acquaint readers with twentieth-century Indian grandmothers as familial bridges between past cultural embeddedness and an increasingly dismembered culture stretched from its roots in myth and practice. The essays range from sociological monographs replete with statistics to intimate first-hand interpretive accounts from the grandmothers themselves. The historical, geographic, and psychological breadth of the vignettes assures their appeal to a wide range of scholars and ethno-elderphiles.

Schweitzer emphasizes that even when biology is the triggering event for becoming a grandmother, the context of Indian grandmotherhood is culturally construed. Kinship patterns determine who is called Grandmother and how the grandmother relates distinctively to her grandchildren. Further variations on the role and conceptualization of Grandmother come from mythical portrayals, cultural ideologies, status, individual disposition, family connections, clan distinctions, and gender-related worldviews. All differentiations pale, however, before the ultimate common denominator of grandmothers—childcare and child-rearing, a relationship lasting from first motherhood to death.

Karen Benally provides a lively, personal account of Navaho grandmothers whose lives were upended by a governmental stock reduction program that stripped them of a holistic subsistence based on sheep. Multi-generational first-hand accounts of family members draw the reader into their world, bright with flavor and nuance. Emphasizing the role of grandmother as teacher, Benally offers vivid portraits of the good, the bad, and the ugly extremes of grandmotherly behavior.

Ann Hedlund examines the role of Navajo grandmothers as craftswomen whose weaving intertwines the fibers of social and economic traditions. As grandchildren passively observe grandmother's skills with clay and loom, they learn through imitative informal training the ideal standards for traditional women, including dignity, self-sufficiency, and primacy in the hogan and family.

Pamela Amoss and Bruce Miller take the reader on a journey to Puget Sound, where each examines the Grandmother image from a different perspective—Amoss from lively mythical templates, Miller from the components of status over time. Along with her three narrator grandmothers, Amoss laments the loss of Native language through which the true nuance of the oral tradition can be transmitted while recognizing the enhanced standing of elders because of the knowledge only they now hold. Miller underscores the status of elders as culture-bearers, enumerating other status-endowing agents such as capacity for reciprocity and family preeminence.

A kaleidoscope pattern of grandmothering enlarges with each essay: Red Clay Basket's stewardship of her Tewa family in New Mexico's San Juan Pueblo; sexual teasing, wedding mud fights, and birth practices that transport the reader into intimate life among the Hopi; memories, traditions, wisdom, and anguish of Otoe-Missouria grandmothers at Red Rock, Oklahoma; Powwow Princesses and Gosomelettes—innovative enculturation from the Pine Ridge Lakota Sioux to the Creek, Seminole, Choctaw, and Chickasaw people of southeastern Oklahoma, embodied in the stories of Mrs. Big Buffalo and Mrs. Bokchito.

This entrancing book concludes with a poem by Patricia McCabe in which she encapsulates in a full circle the story of her grandmother and herself as transitional figures in the story of twentieth-century enculturation. It begins, "My grandmother remembers the first whiteman she ever saw. She hid behind a bush and watched. Was he terribly sick? What was it that made his seemingly healthy body turn White?" and ends, "I saw Church Rock the other day. On a visit. I was thinking I could remember the first time I ever knew I saw a Navajo."

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