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Review of *Telling Stories the Kiowa Way* By Gus Palmer, Jr.

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Telling Stories the Kiowa Way. By Gus Palmer, Jr. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2003. xxx + 145 pp. Appendix, notes, bibliographical references, index. \$35.00 cloth, \$17.95 paper.

Telling Stories the Kiowa Way is an enlightening and enjoyable book composed in the easygoing, down-to-earth “voice” of Gus Palmer Jr., an enrolled member of the Kiowa tribe. Written from an insider’s perspective, *Telling Stories* relates how oral traditions are maintained in daily conversations throughout the Kiowa community in southwestern Oklahoma. In the opening pages, readers are immediately immersed in Kiowa culture as Palmer visits with his mother in her kitchen while she stirs a pot of boiling meat. Then he delineates the Kiowa storytelling environment among Kiowas who are related to one another “in one way or another.” Since the objective of his research is to engage in “collaborative ethnography” with his friends and relatives, Palmer relates the importance of gift giving and showing respect to his elderly consultants. Supported by his parents, he has successfully worked with several Kiowa elders, including the late Oscar Tsoodle and John Tofpi.

Kiowa storytelling adheres to the overall trends in American Indian oral traditions: the storyteller uses multiple voices representing the different characters in the story; pauses or gaps of silence invite listeners to comment or disagree; some stories are left “unclear or unfinished,” allowing listeners to draw their own conclusions; gestures and non-verbal behavior accompany storytelling; and old stories or “prior texts” are repeated or integrated into new stories. All these techniques are designed to maintain interest in the stories and to ensure that listeners understand what is happening; hence oral traditions are successfully transmitted to subsequent generations since members of the Kiowa storytelling community share the same cultural context. Outsiders unacquainted with these circumstances might miss critical ethnographic information.

Having conducted ethnographic fieldwork with the Kiowas, I particularly appreciate *Telling Stories* because I know some of its characters, including Palmer’s parents, who come to life in the narratives. I have heard Gus Palmer Sr. lament the decline of the Kiowa language and how some younger Kiowas are out of touch with traditions and protocol, especially in the sacrosanct rites of the Native American Church. Moreover, I have always enjoyed Kiowa humor and its ability to poke fun at Kiowas themselves, particularly through *bót* (cow intestines) stories depicting how non-Indians are repulsed by this Kiowa culinary delicacy.

Overall, this book is a major contribution to postmodern ethnographies written by indigenous scholars. **Benjamin R. Kracht**, *Native American Studies Program, Northeastern State University*.