

NEITHER BUFFALO NOR TOTEM POLE: INTERIOR SALISH STORIES

Enwhisteetkwa — Walk in Water, Jeannette C. Armstrong. Penticton: Okanagan Indian Curriculum Project, 1982. 44 pp. \$5.95 paper. ISBN 0-919441-12-1; *Shuswap stories*. Trans. Aimee August and Charles Draney. Ed. Randy Bouchard and Dorothy I.D. Kennedy. Vancouver: CommCept Publishing, 1979. 152 pp. \$5.95 paper. ISBN 0-88829-048-9.

To grow up in the B.C. Interior twenty years ago was to live in a community with a native Indian population, but at least in my experience, it was to grow up ignorant of the characteristics of Interior Salish culture. Indians were at the periphery of our predominantly white community; the reserve on the edge of town was an area we drove through to reach the ski hill or fishing lake. School lessons on Indians were a mishmash of buffaloes, totem poles and birch bark canoes. I was nearly an adult before I realized that the Interior Salish groups — the Okanagan, Shuswap, Thompson, and Lilloet tribes — have traditions radically different from those of the Northwest Coast or Plains Indians. Judging from the kind of information I see children seeking in the public library now, I know the schools are teaching more respect for the uniqueness of each cultural group. Teachers and others working with children, particularly in the B.C. Interior, will welcome two new works on an often-overlooked people, the Interior Salish.

Enwhisteetkwa — Walk in Water is the first book published by the Okanagan Indian Curriculum Project — a co-operative venture between six school districts and seven Indian bands in the Okanagan and Similkameen valleys. The Project was set up to develop supplemental social studies units on Okanagan Indian history and culture to be taught to all children, Indian and non-Indian in the area. *Enwhisteetkwa — Walk in Water* was designed as an intermediate level reader, and was written and illustrated by Jeannette Armstrong, a member of the Penticton Indian Band. It is a fictional account of one year in the life of Enwhisteetkwa, a young Okanagan girl, and takes place in the mid-1800's, the time when white missionaries and traders were beginning to settle in the valley. The seasonal activities of the Okanagan people are told from Enwhisteetkwa's perspective; she describes at length the ordinary stuff of life: food, housing, toys and other entertainment. The story is well-researched; historical references were corroborated with Okanagan elders.

Enwhisteetkwa — Walk in Water is intended for distribution beyond its use as a textbook in the Okanagan Valley. Unfortunately, when reading the story I could not forget that it was designed for use in the schools. Although we are given Enwhisteetkwa's reactions to events, her personality is not deeply developed, and we are whisked too quickly back to the ethnographic facts. Still, the perspective of the young girl and the social minutiae of her people are interesting, particularly when compared with alternative sources of information

about the Okanagan, such as the dry publications of local historical societies and early ethnographic accounts.

The Shuswap live to the north of the Okanagan people. *Shuswap stories* is a collection of thirty-one legends and five descriptions of traditional activities related by elderly storytellers in the Shuswap language, and recorded under the auspices of the B.C. Indian Language Project. These were later translated into English by two of the storytellers, Aimee August and Charles Draney, and finally edited by Randy Bouchard and Dorothy I.D. Kennedy. I enter into this extensive genealogy of the book not only because great care is taken in the book's preface with acknowledgements, but also because I am puzzled by the information that this is considered "Folk-lore, Indian-Juvenile literature" — or so the imprint assures me. But were these stories popularized for the young? Did the storytellers intend their stories for children? Were the stories changed in any way during the translating or editing processes?

This is an important book collected "on the inside" — unlike most ethnographies — by individuals who are committed to the preservation of their language and culture. The interwoven series of stories show the Shuswap have a full and coherent mythology. Told in chronological order, the stories begin with events from the Shuswap mythical age which show the beginning of the world and humans, and how the Shuswap world-view was formed. Later stories explain characteristics of the landscape, animals, and the sustenance activities of the Shuswap. Many of the legends concern Coyote, as wonderful a trickster as Glooscap or Raven.

The language in *Shuswap stories* is simple, but the stories are far from simple; they have a density which makes me doubt that the book is for children alone. The accounts of Shuswap traditional activities are personal reminiscences by the elderly storytellers; these are particularly interesting and also help increase understanding of the stories' significance.

The editors have included many fine historical and contemporary photographs of the Shuswap area, and an useful introduction. *Shuswap stories* will not draw a lot of interest as recreational reading for children or adults, but it is a significant book for anyone wanting to learn more about this unique people.

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Siksika': a Blackfoot legacy, Ben Calf Robe with Adolf & Beverly Hungry Wolf. Good Medicine Books, 1961. 107 pp. \$7.95 paper. ISBN 0-020698-30-1; ***My Cree people: a tribal handbook***. Fine Day. Good Medicine Books, 1973. 64 pp. \$3.00 paper. No ISBN; ***Good Medicine traditional dress issue***.