

tatouages? Que leur repas principal était le soir? Que les clans iroquois, hurons et algonquins s'identifiaient selon la lignée maternelle? Ce fascicule, intitulé *Ekahotan — la semeuse de maïs*, vous donnera une belle introduction à la vie ancienne des Amérindiens. Il fait partie de la collection "Les peuples autochtones du Canada" des Editions Etudes Vivantes.

De belles illustrations en couleur et des photographies d'artéfacts se trouvent à chaque page. Le texte est clairement écrit, le style facile à lire. On y trouve de la documentation sur le territoire et les mode de vie des autochtones. Il y a des sections consacrées au vêtement, à l'habitation et la communauté, au partage du travail, à l'agriculture, à la chasse, à la cueillette, à la préparation des repas, aux déplacements, aux artisans et aux croyances et aux rites. A la fin, un glossaire explique les termes qui sont en caractère gras dans le texte. Aussi, la section "Pour en savoir plus" décrit d'une façon plus détaillée certains aspects de la vie des Amérindiens des forêts de l'Est et présente une de leurs légendes.

On y parle très peu des Amérindiens d'aujourd'hui. L'accent est plutôt mis sur la vie ancienne et les changements que les méthodes et les produits européens ont apportés à leur vie .

Ekahotan la semeuse de maïs est une introduction approfondie à la vie des autochtones. Le fascicule répond bien à son rôle principal de présenter la vie amérindienne. Pourtant, si le lecteur veut compléter ses connaissances il faudrait faire des recherches supplémentaires. Ce fascicule bien écrit et en belles couleurs servira de point de départ et donnera à l'enseignant aussi bien qu'à l'élève l'envie de continuer l'étude des peuples autochtones. **Janet Salt** enseigne le français à *Fergus en Ontario*.

THE NORTH AND ITS ARTISTIC IMAGES: A PROVOCATIVE VIEW

Ice swords: an undersea adventure, James Houston. Illus. author. McClelland and Stewart, 1985. 149 pp. \$12.95 cloth. ISBN 0-7710-4255-8.

Like the helicopter "Waltzing Matilda," perhaps the most affectionately regarded entity in James Houston's *Ice swords*, this novel for early teenagers rattles and roars and sags to a mechanical end early on. Unlike the chopper, *Ice swords* never manages a revival: it is a wreck from start to finish — the finish, indeed, of a trilogy of adventure novels. Although *Ice swords'* dust jacket repeats critical praise for *Frozen fire* (1977) and *Black*

diamond (1981), the first two in the series, — *School Library Journal* calls the latter, for instance, “a darn good adventure” — I think the vapidness between the reviewers’ lines is more telling than their praise.

For the third time, then, in *Ice swords* the central characters are Kayak, an Inuk boy, and Mattoosie (“as Kayak called his best friend Matt”). Mattoosie, as in the previous books, is still “tall, with lean, narrow hips and widening shoulders,” and Kayak is still “short and handsome, with wide cheekbones, square white teeth, and a smooth, tanned face” (10). The book is loaded with bland description to the extent that not only the novel’s characters are flat and lifeless, but also the Arctic setting, so much beloved by the author, could be Anywhere, USA.

On recovering from their adventure in *Black diamonds*, Mattoosie (the tall one “with lean, narrow hips and widening shoulders”) and Kayak are caught up in an American scientist’s project of observing narwhals, a rare type of whale with a unicorn-like tusk: an “ice sword.” Since Dr. Lunan, the researcher, has broken his arm, he summons his fifteen-year-old daughter, Jill (“she was smoothly tanned and had perfect teeth” [27]), from her San Diego home to do some scuba diving for him. Jill teaches Mattoosie and Kayak to dive in Arctic water in two weeks flat; Kayak did not swim at all previously. The quest for knowledge about the narwhals and their fabled tusks, however, is displaced as the centre of the plot’s interest by another sequence of events which one might term “pure adventure,” as opposed to adventure with any significance beyond mere physical exertion. But, on further reflection, perhaps, the goring of Kayak by a Greenland Shark’s rough skin is more revealing than one might at first think.

Jill and Mattoosie play nurse and doctor for Kayak while they wait to be rescued by Mattoosie’s father in the revived helicopter. Isn’t that a sickening emblem? The Inuk, wise, we have been told often, with his grandfather’s knowledge of Arctic life, lies stricken between the infatuated southerners. My revulsion here is precipitated by the glaring absence of a moral dimension to Houston’s work. A nearby DEW Line base is “one of these sites that would warn us if a missile attack came across the pole” (13). Who is “us”? Is there no more to this installation than that? Jill, the California jet-setter, wears “knee-high Apache moccasins” and tells the boys about her father’s “always studying some kind of whale.” Mattoosie’s father, he says, is “always hunting for gold or copper, oil or silver, somewhere, anywhere, anywhere in the world.” Kayak responds to them:

“My dad’s a hunter too...He hunts seals and caribou to feed our family. So that makes the three of us all the kids of hunters. It’s kind of like being brothers and sisters from far-off places. Right?”

“I like that idea,” said Jill (31).

I do not like that idea — or more accurately, I do not like the glib sugary

way Houston coats the fascinating intricacies of cultural interface, particularly in this case, when there are definitely unasked, troubling questions about the legitimacy of the southerners' "hunting." The fulsomeness of the quoted dialogue is typical of the book, and it also illustrates by its superficiality why the facility of these children's relationship is so unbelievable.

I can't help returning to the image of the injured Inuk boy, *Kayak* — not the first time it appears in these books, by the way — and seeing in the image a more worthy topic to explore with young readers than the hackneyed Man-Against-Nature theme. But Houston, it is pertinent to recall, is the original commercializer of the Eskimos' sculpture, mass-marketing it to the South; he introduced Japanese print-making techniques to the Arctic-dwellers, then distributed the products like so many cultured pearls. *Kayak's* major contribution to *Ice swords* is to be a victim. Under the book's stupefyingly trivial surface lurk some deeply disturbing consistencies, and the happy ending is unspeakably banal. The book is propaganda, suitable for use by those wishing to fudge the issues of culture and resource exploitation.

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PLUS ADULTE QUE LES ADULTES

Ani Croche, Bertrand Gauthier. Illus. Gérard Frischeteau. Collection Roman-jeunesse. Montréal, La courte échelle, 1985. 96 pp. 5,95\$ broché. ISBN 2-89021-054-5.

Bertrand Gauthier est le fondateur de la collection Roman-jeunesse. Il est aussi l'auteur de cette *Ani Croche* destinée aux lecteurs âgés d'au moins neuf ans.

Il s'agit ici d'un roman-confession rédigé soi-disant par une fillette de dix ans dont le nom est celui du titre, La teneur du récit se veut résolument féministe. Ani y affirme la supériorité de son jugement, de ses idées et de ses activités sur tout un chacun et plus particulièrement sur ses camarades garçons de l'école. Atteinte, dès la naissance, du "virus" de la bande dessinée, elle défend âprement l'héroïne Chu Tan Hée contre Laurent Outan, héros préféré de son camarade Simon. Bénéficiaire d'un enseignement non sexiste, elle n'hésite pas à rimer sur les astronautes et les galaxies.

Le pathétique point cependant au milieu de ces rodomontades. Ani, comme beaucoup d'enfants de sa génération, n'a pas de foyer stable. Ses