

Cis Dideen Kat (When the Plume Rises): The Way of the Lake Babine Nation. By Jo-Anne Fiske and Betty Patrick. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2000. 261 pages. \$85.00 cloth; \$26.95 paper.

In a Northwest Coast Native art exhibit that traveled from Seattle to Alaska several years ago, a beautiful headdress from the seventeenth-century Northwest Coast dominated the second room of the exhibit. Interspersed between the top of the headdress were visible pieces of down, remnants of an age-old peace ceremony in which the chiefs would shake down on the visitors as part of a welcoming dance in the potlatch. These are the “plumes” of the title of this book, because throughout the Northwest Coast and in interior British Columbia, Native communities have practiced different types of potlatch for a variety of purposes. “When the plumes rise” permeates the region as a symbol and representation of the peacemaking and resolution capacities of these ceremonies, and reminds us that the ceremonies are concrete legal orderings that must be recognized. While potlatch has received much attention for its ceremonial and religious roles, this text focuses on the legal aspects of these rich events, “that which has previously been interpreted as ‘oral tradition,’ ‘economic practice,’ and ‘ceremonial custom’ is presented here as an evolving legal order” (p. 15). Following on Sergei Kan and Christopher Bracken, Fiske and Patrick do a complete and effective comparison to other Northwest Coast potlatch ceremonies and place the Lake Babine Nation’s experience in the theoretical contexts of legal pluralism (rendered as legal pluralisms) and sites of contesting state power.

In this down-to-earth and evocative book, Fiske and Patrick bring to life both the historical and modern incarnations of these complex and rich processes, relating them to contemporary justice issues and the dynamic process that is law. The book fits squarely within and fills a gap in legal anthropology literature by presenting a full description of a group of communities and the problems they face as they attempt to reconcile modern social issues with traditional means of resolving them. As a research project, the method is challenging and appropriate, following the tradition of action research: the authors, an anthropologist and hereditary chief working together write for the community, the academy, and the policy world that interacts with both. While there is, at times, a more superficial treatment of sensitive issues, this treatment is perhaps necessary in order to respect the community and fulfill the authors’ goals to allow the community to define the project. The book explains that the project started as research into the impact of restorative justice experiments on First Nations women. As the authors explain, however, the research quickly turned to the undermining and disruption of traditional legal orders generally, as a product of colonialism, which was the primary concern for Lake Babine women and men. The role and concerns of women figure prominently throughout the text, a welcome remedy for the ethnography that has ignored or misinterpreted women in the past.

Fiske and Patrick write a detailed and perceptive ethnography of socio-legal issues in the interior of British Columbia, where Athabaskan Carriers live in three small communities: Fort Babine, Tachet, and Woyenne (Burns Lake).

Their traditional lands surround the villages and they have experienced the typical influx of missionaries, trappers and traders, industries (timber, mining, and fishing), and governmental agencies of other Native communities in the north. Fiske and Patrick use an interesting combination of ethnographic written material and oral interviews to cross check these older descriptions. Through them emerges an image of a people strong and proud, suffering the colonial imperialism that results in social disruption, but taking stands on traditional lands and fishing grounds as well as withstanding the denigration of the *balhats* (potlatch) itself in the face of considerable religious and political pressure.

Although the people have migrated from their traditional lands to spend more time in the three villages, and especially in the largest of the three, Woyenne, located nearest the non-Native town, and they have lost their rights to fish in their traditional manner, the Lake Babine people continue to practice cultural traditions that link modern Lake Babine to the past. Four matrilineal clans constitute the nation, with hereditary chiefs, traditional fishing and hunting grounds, and names carrying responsibility and status. The first part of the book focuses on the most important ordering of the nation, the *balhats*, or the “way of the Babine Lake Nation.”

The Lake Babine word for potlatch, *balhats*, has survived in interior British Columbia in spite of missionaries, anti-potlatch laws, and modern social and governmental encroachments. The *balhats*, like potlatch elsewhere, involves a public ceremonial exchange of goods and money that ratifies hereditary titles, rights to land usage, and other rites of passage. Respect is the dominant theme of *balhats* and substitutes in the language for the word *law*, because there is no word for law in the Lake Babine language. Fiske and Patrick inform us that the “legal authority of the hereditary chiefs is derived from and exercised through the *balhats*” (p. 57). Although many choose not to participate in the *balhats*, those who do believe it to carry the weight of legal authority and to hold the potential for being a source of governance. It would have been interesting to also learn more about those who have rejected the *balhats*, particularly how their perceptions reflect the theoretical and pragmatic limitations of plural legalisms.

In order to place the ceremony of the *balhats* in a frame of reference, the authors do a compelling comparison of the rituals of the Canadian legal system with its formal dress and its designated places to sit and times to speak, to those of the *balhats*, where behavior is similarly regulated and controlled by ritual. They describe the various purposes and manifestations of *balhats*, its origin and history, and the legal rules that inhere. They go on to place the *balhats* into the context of colonial legal orders (religious, economic, and political) with which it came in contact between 1822 and 1960. Finally, two recent Canadian cases recognizing in part Aboriginal authority to define itself bring us to the present. Here, the description of the limitations on the provision of justice, both because of geography and the ineffectiveness of the Canadian justice system to deal with the interpersonal problems of First Nations peoples presents a familiar picture to northern readers. Attempts to innovate local police powers or to reinstitute village watchmen (originally created by the Church) reflect increasing frustration with the current system.

In presenting a coherent and sympathetic view, Fiske and Patrick white-wash the different voices of what is traditional and what is needed in the community. They use a single voice throughout, and have combined their material into one representation of Lake Babine ancient and modern history. While this voice makes a synchronized and easy read, it diffuses any disagreement in the material. Therefore, when there is not consensus on the meaning or form of certain aspects of ceremony, directions for the future, and the like, the text does not accommodate them well. For example, on page 64 they describe the seating of chiefs at the *balhats*, and how it has changed over time. Mention of “contention” does not lead to a full discussion of the pragmatic and theoretical limitations of what these different views of the word *traditional* implicate for legal pluralisms. Similarly, reference to “continuing tensions within Babine society” does not lead to a full presentation of those tensions. While one does not doubt that these tensions exist, a full analysis would have contributed to our understanding of the forces operating to stimulate and undermine resumption of legal responsibility within the nation. Rather, what emerges is a sanguine picture of continuity and persistence of powerful traditions adapted and modified to social change in the modern world. Although this is a necessity and precondition for survival in the contemporary north, it is also more complex and conflicted than sometimes presented in the text.

Fiske and Patrick face the same problem that others do who work in the contemporary north: culture is everywhere apparent and influential, but potentially overwhelmed by outside influences that have significant impacts on people’s expression and participation in culture. Thus, they give a complete description of both historical *balhats* and its checkered history as well as the modern incarnations. However, when the book starts to address justice issues and the legal order, *balhats* falls out of the picture altogether. This appears to be because, while still vital and in current use for funerals, the payment of debts and exchange of services as well as the giving and taking of names and all that that involves, *balhats* is not currently used to resolve disputes, promote safety, or allocate natural resources.

Importantly, there is not consensus in the village to use the *balhats* for these purposes. The lack of consensus, based on democratic and feminist concerns about the power of hereditary chiefs, demonstrate the infusion of Canadian values into the Lake Babine Nation. Thus, one daughter of hereditary chiefs did not want to speak in *balhats* for fear of shaming her parents or losing her ability to take the name she wishes, but she does not want to give up her “democratic right to state her position” on matters related to natural resource distribution (p. 208). In social issues, the Lake Babine were able to synchronize the Catholic influences they chose to absorb into their *balhats*, both funerals and others. However, the economic and political influences seem more difficult to synchronize. Therefore, the book does not capitalize on its opportunity to interweave the potential power of the *balhats* with the social issues presented by the legal conflicts, especially with regard to alcohol and substance abuse. The treatment of contemporary justice issues and their resolution is not as strong as the historical section and the section on the *balhats* itself.

What is startling about the material is how closely it tracks current experience in other parts of the north, in spite of political and cultural differences between Canada and the United States, Athabaskan, and Tlingit, Tsimshian or Haida, and the particular incarnations of colonialism and cultural imperialism that Native peoples experience. Thus the trend toward decentralization, restoring autonomy at the local level, and neo-traditionalism occur in Alaska and the Northwest United States as well as in Interior British Columbia and the Yukon. Simultaneously, the conflict with well-imbued Western ideals of democracy, capitalism, and the provision of social services undermines these efforts in other areas as well. However Fiske and Patrick see hopefulness in the recognition of the plumes during current treaty negotiations. They, and we, clearly see the plumes rising again, and with it the respect and responsibility between differing groups that might lead to more positive relations.

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A Dictionary of Creek/Muskogee, with Notes on the Florida and Oklahoma Seminole Dialects of Creek. By Jack B. Martin and Margaret McKane Mauldin. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000. 359 pages. \$60.00 cloth.

The retention and maintenance of tribal languages and culture is a survival issue in Indian Country. *A Dictionary of Creek/Muskogee* underlines the loss of mastery in Native languages. The Creek language in its present form may well disappear within this century.

This dictionary was compiled by a linguist and a native speaker to promote accurate spellings and translations of the Creek language. Jack B. Martin is an associate professor of English at the College of William and Mary. He is a linguist, specializing in southeastern Native languages. Coauthor Margaret McKane Mauldin is an adjunct instructor of Creek at the University of Oklahoma. She is a native speaker and teacher of the Creek language.

Historically, Creek is a member of the Muskogean language family indigenous to Alabama and Georgia. Currently it is a Native language of Oklahoma, since the removal of the Muskogean peoples over the Trail of Tears in the 1830s to Indian Territory. It is one of the Five Civilized Tribes (Cherokee, Creek, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Seminole) and one of five language families (Muskogean, Algonquian, Caddoan, Iroquoian, Siouan) indigenous to the southeastern United States.

The Creek language is now spoken by several thousand members of the Muskogee and Seminole nations of Oklahoma, and less than one hundred Seminoles of Florida. Few Indian children use Creek as their home language and there is no regular access to a vibrant language community. This dictionary is a standard print reference for the maintenance of the Creek/Muskogee language in Indian Country.

Fifty or so California Native languages are currently involved in a similar struggle to survive. Ninety percent or more of the California languages may dis-