UCLA
American Indian Culture and Research Journal

Title
Keeping Heart on Pine Ridge: Family Ties, Warrior Culture, Commodity Foods, Rez Dogs, and the Sacred. By Vic Glover.

Permalink
https://escholarship.org/uc/item/17q1d238

Journal
American Indian Culture and Research Journal , 29(3)

ISSN
0161-6463

Author
Katanski, Amelia V.

Publication Date
2005-06-01

DOI
10.17953

Copyright Information
This work is made available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial License, availalbe at https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/

eScholarship.org Powered by the California Digital Library
University of California

Variation in cultural practices also raises the important issue of change and continuity in Native society during this tumultuous period. Given the central importance of the material world in any archaeological study, we must examine the conditions that led Native peoples to acquire foreign objects and the consequences of these adoptions for social structure. It is apparent that metals were used for adornment among the Illinois; this is not inconsistent with earlier notions that some metals were technologically superior to, or served as replacements for, their Native counterparts. European tools such as scissors, knives, and chisels likely made the adoption and expansion of a copper-alloy industry feasible, if not desirable. Elsewhere in New England we see traditional Native media such as stone and shell elaborated with the introduction of iron files and drills in the seventeenth century, particularly in the production of smoking pipes and wampum. Changes in the allocation of labor brought about by the introduction of foreign technologies, the increased demand for commodities, and their new patterns of distribution likely had a profound impact on social relations that are worthy of further study.

Understanding the social and historical context of Native adoptions is arguably an intellectual agenda that will long generate smoke, heat, and fire. Ehrhardt's study is valuable because she underscores many of the crucial issues surrounding future debates in the field. Of course, it will remain important to place Native peoples at center stage as agents who negotiated their positions in a complex and rapidly changing world. It is incumbent upon researchers to exhibit greater self-reflexivity and a critical appreciation of the relationship between our reconstructions of the past and contemporary political action.

The book's subtitle, "Rethinking Technological Change," is a poignant metaphor that gently prods the reader to rethink Native history: who wrote it, what they wrote, how they said it, and how we have learned it. It opens up new possibilities for envisioning the past by bringing together theory, method, and data. *European Metals in Native Hands* is nicely produced and clearly written in a style that is accessible to historians, anthropologists, archaeologists, and students with an interest in technological transfer, colonialism, material analysis, and Native Americans.

Michael S. Nassaney
Western Michigan University

Keeping Heart on Pine Ridge: Family Ties, Warrior Culture, Commodity Foods, Rez Dogs, and the Sacred. By Vic Glover. Summertown, Tennessee: Native Voices, 2004. 159 pages. $9.95 paper.

The long subtitle to Vic Glover's collection of forty-three short essays indicates the wide range of his commentary on contemporary daily life among the Lakota of the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. Glover has made the Slim Buttes community in the southwest corner of Pine Ridge his home for the past several years, living among the Afraid of Bear *tiospaye* (extended family). He is not Lakota himself (he is elsewhere identified as Siksika, or

Blackfoot, and Tsalagi, or Cherokee), but his writing clearly demonstrates the respect he holds for the Lakota spiritual traditions at the heart of life on Pine Ridge, one of the most monetarily impoverished communities in the United States. As Glover explains: "One could maybe get close to finding the heart of America in Native America. Indian people are the most giving people you'll find. Indian people have given everything to America, but they hold the heart. Within that heart lies the ceremonial life, spirit, and ways of the people, and within 'The Ways' lies the essential nature of helping others" (13). Glover notes, in an essay titled "Feeling About Writing," that it is much easier to write when you aren't worried about survival. And yet, he points out, living on Pine Ridge is often about riding the line between security and homelessness, between feast and famine. This book tells stories from the edge of that line, emphasizing how much the People take care of one another despite their economic difficulties—from feeding one another and sharing ceremonial knowledge and life wisdom, to pulling cars out of ditches and snowbanks on a fairly regular basis due to the horrible condition of Slim Buttes Road. It is this caring, and the sense of spiritual connection behind it, that assures Glover of the community's survival and enables him to write these stories about poverty, too-frequent death, and the harshness and beauty of life on the reservation.

Many of Glover's essays first appeared in the newspaper *Indian Country Today,* and their journalistic origin is reflected in their staccato pacing and episodic quality. Glover relates that "a good story or good joke never gets old around here. It's told repeatedly, usually teasingly, often distorted and stretched, in the presence of the person at whom it's aimed," and this storytelling sensibility permeates *Keeping Heart* (12). Readers are quickly introduced to the many people who constitute Glover's community at Slim Buttes, and the narratives wind around their day-to-day lives, eventually returning to stories told in earlier essays, or to people mentioned only in passing, and adding new details and significance. This book is, as Glover makes clear, "only a fragment of that small piece" of the historical richness of Lakota culture that remains alive today, and his essays present these stories in interconnected fragments and vignettes without a strict chronological progression or narrative line (13). This technique gives readers the feeling of attending an ongoing storytelling session, though there are times when the disjointedness might have been usefully smoothed over through additional editing.

One topic to which Glover returns several times is rez dogs; his stories about these "desperado mutts" demonstrate how he blends toughness, compassion, and humor. A piece entitled "Rez Dogs" chronicles the "defeatist mentality" of the canines, who scrounge for food; struggle with ticks, mange, and other ailments; and live without much hope of receiving human affection. People laugh at rez dogs because their lives are more pitiful than the poorest, most disenfranchised human member of the community, Glover reports. And yet, this seemingly dismissive attitude toward the dogs is complicated by Glover's identification with them. Their poor conditions reflect the challenges that face the human community on Pine Ridge. Glover drives this point home as he concludes his essay: "I don't think there's a Humane Society up here. If we had a Humane Society, they'd probably be more concerned about the

owners" (59). Yet, while it seems hard to spare compassion for a dog when human survival on the reservation is so difficult, Glover's later references to a rez dog he takes in (named Mr. Fuzz) attest to his connection to the animal. When Mr. Fuzz is mortally wounded by a gunshot and put down, Glover lays him out in a field with tobacco and prays for his spirit, honoring him. Mr. Fuzz makes one more appearance in the book, however, as a frozen corpse "guarding" Glover's front porch in the aftermath of a blizzard that dropped a foot of snow and left the frozen ground impenetrable, preventing him from digging the dog's grave. Glover takes us from the touching image of tending to the spirit of the dog to his humorous return, trickster-like, as a carcass. This movement from pain to laughter is one of the survival strategies of Glover's community. Persevering like a rez dog himself, Glover—with his ability to interweave humor, the quiet detail of daily routine, and the spiritual—creates stories that are themselves a means of physical and cultural survival.

Cultural survival is one of the book's central concerns, and several essays focus on an important issue related to the persistence of Lakota culture—the distinction between cultural insiders and outsiders. Glover explores the complexity of what it means to belong to a community, addressing topics such as non-Native participation in ceremonies (particularly the Sun Dance), the role of philanthropic organizations on the rez, and the variation in spiritual commitment and community responsibility even within a tiospaye. The essay "People Rolling Through" explains how people from all over the world, with a variety of motives, seek out Pine Ridge. Whether they are wannabes, missionaries, or filmmakers, all of these outsiders bring their own demands and desires to the people of Pine Ridge. Even as he warns the outsiders, "Don't wait for the star quilt. Don't wait for an eagle feather. Don't wait to be adopted into the tribe," Glover quite consciously writes to share his community's life with them and yet still values and affirms insiders as an important part of his audience (28). The line between inside and outside is complex and shifting, Glover argues, and identity—even of those known as "traditional"—is therefore situational and negotiated rather than essential and static, as is Glover's own position within the community. "Some days the outside world is the reservation line," he explains. "Other days it's my skin" (24). The most destructive outsiders, as Glover explains, are those who take from the reservation community without offering anything in return. In part, his essays are written out of a desire to change the dynamic of Indians giving and whites taking and depleting by offering a model for intercultural spiritual sharing. His many stories about the Sun Dance denounce those who do not make a long-term commitment to preparing their bodies and minds spiritually for the ritual, and they celebrate those who do enter the circle humble and steadfast, regardless of their ethnicity, age, or gender. Glover describes the role of the committed dancers, who share their talents and resources with the community as they receive spiritual guidance. By carrying out the ceremonies, they maintain—and revitalize—the Lakota worldview.

Glover portrays himself as nearly unflinching when he cuts a mole off his own face with an ice cube for anesthesia and a box cutter, toenail clippers, and a scalpel for surgical tools. As a writer, he is just as dogged in his determination

to report the hardship experienced on Pine Ridge. But neither does he omit the quiet pleasures of being part of this community, from preparing the dancers' sweat lodge to feeling the earth turning in the silence of the night at Slim Buttes. Honest and gritty, *Keeping Heart on Pine Ridge* turns a thoughtful eye on a way of life that people just "rolling through" the reservation would not be able to see.

Amelia V. Katanski
Kalamazoo College

Memories of Lac du Flambeau Elders. Edited by Elizabeth M. Tornes, with a brief history of Waaswaagoning Ojibweg by Leon Valliere Jr. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004. 284 pages. $24.95 paper.

This collection of interviews with fifteen elders of the Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa is the first publication by the University of Wisconsin-Madison's Center for the Study of Upper Midwestern Culture. It is a provocative anthology and a promising start to the center's mission of studying and preserving the history and cultural diversity of the Great Lakes.

Memories of Lac du Flambeau Elders is richly illustrated with twenty-five historical and contemporary photographs, and a portrait accompanies each elder interview. There are also two maps showing the location of the reservation in Wisconsin. These maps inspire my only criticism: I wished for a better representation of the space in which the elders lived. A town plan locating the places mentioned would have been exceedingly helpful, as would a larger map of the region showing the various schools, hospitals, and Native communities that are frequently mentioned in the interviews and accompanying footnotes. The footnotes themselves are useful in explaining and contextualizing the many people and places referred to, but again would have benefited from a more detailed spatial reference.

The text opens with a brief introduction from Elizabeth M. Tornes, a community member who coordinated the 1996 Lac du Flambeau Oral History Project that resulted in the book. Tornes conducted workshops for tribal members in Lac du Flambeau that taught basic interviewing techniques, and together they devised the set of questions used for each interview. Tornes herself did not conduct the interviews; instead, most of the elders spoke with family members and friends, allowing for the sense of openness and trust that is reflected in their individual stories. The template of questions used in each interview is included in an appendix, a useful reference for readers, as well as a starting point for others wishing to conduct similar projects.

Following Tornes's introduction, tribal member and coordinator of the Lac du Flambeau Ojibwe Language Program Leon Valliere Jr. provides a brief cultural and historical overview of the community. Unlike the bulk of the volume, this section isn't narrative. It's a descriptive list highlighting the main events in the band's history, places of significance in the community, seasonal subsistence practices, and modern battles over treaty rights, concluding with a two-page lesson in "Ojibwe sounds" designed to assist in pronouncing Ojibwe