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The Cultural Toolbox: Traditional Ojibwe Living in the Modern World. By Anton Treuer. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2021. 224 pages. $18.95 paper.

The Ojibwe are one of twenty-nine Algonquian-speaking tribes self-identifying as Anishinaabe, "Indigenous people." Today, approximately 250,000 Ojibwes are dispersed across five states from the Great Lakes to the Northern Plains, and, north of the border, live in 141 First Nations communities. Despite geographic and cultural differences, and culture change precipitated by colonization and the multicultural world surrounding them, Ojibwes have maintained a worldview distinctively their own. Told in Anton Treuer's engaging autobiographical prose, *The Cultural Toolbox* shares both family stories and what is permissible to know of the author's worldview, because he feels that "Ojibwe culture is under stress right now" and his people need "access to reliable, approachable, usable cultural information and experience" (9). Hence this book is inspired by the belief that learning one's cultural heritage is a healing process, an act of decolonization.

Treuer's cultural toolbox illustrates how ancient Ojibwe traditions alive today provide practical guidance for his people and others who respect Native beliefs. An author steeped in the metaphor of connected life stages, seasons, and cardinal directions—east/spring/new life; south/summer/coming of age; west/autumn/adulthood; north/winter/elderhood)—Treuer devotes four chapters to the stages of life and the cultural practices associated with them. Framing the chapters are stories of how the cultural toolbox provided guidance to a family member involved in crisis moments in each life stage, youth, adolescence, adulthood, and elderhood. A portrayal of Ojibwe beliefs and customs connected to each stage of life and its respective direction and season then follows each story.

Born and raised in Bemidji, a small town due west of the Leech Lake Reservation in northern Minnesota, Treuer graduated from Princeton University, then returned home. His real education, however, began in 1991 after meeting Archie Mosay, a culture carrier who officiated drum ceremonies, gave names, and spoke at funerals. At ninety years old, Mosay spent his remaining years as Treuer's teacher, guiding him through an "immersive experience" in Ojibwe language and culture "that few Ojibwe are privileged to see" (8, 2). In addition to praying with tobacco, perhaps the most important lesson he learned was to "respect all things" (22, 24). Mosay passed away in 1996 and a year later Treuer was asked to speak at the bundle breaking ceremony to honor Archie's spirit and end the mourning period. Since then, Treuer has assumed the role of officiating funerals, giving Indian names, and offering songs and prayers at ceremonial drums. I have heard Treuer pray. After he was asked, he warned that his prayers are lengthy. It is not untrue that "Ojibwe prayers are notoriously long-winded," because approximately thirty spirit helpers are summoned for helping and healing.

Chapter 2 opens with the birth of Treuer's ninth and last child, describing how Indigenous practices and therapies were employed to ensure Luella's long life and well-being, as well as treating child development issues. The placenta is buried north of a maple; a first bath is given in warm *namewashk*, catnip tea; tobacco is offered and prayers said; and, most importantly, a namesake is given at six months. One name giver at the ceremony, Anna Gibbs, had dreamt about a strong, spiritual woman with eagles perched on her body, so she gave Luella a powerful healing name—Big Boss Eagle Woman. Thus, the story of Luella's blossoming into an "utterly dauntless" child, a metaphor for spring and new life, segues into Ojibwe stories of creation, tribal origins, migrations, and prophesies of newcomers—the French and English, who inevitably arrived, bringing diseases and disrupting the environment.

Many of the chapter's subsequent teachings parallel beliefs of other tribes, such as the philosophy of the seven generations similar to the Iroquois (Haudenosaunee) concept of seven-generation sustainability. The Seven Grandfather Teachings—truth, humility, respect, love, honesty, courage, and wisdom—overlap with the twelve core qualities central to Lakota culture, as described in Joseph M. Marshall III's *The Lakota Way. Stories and Lessons for Living* (2001). Notably, Treuer acknowledges that Ojibwes, Lakotas, and other tribes share the metaphor of the circle that signifies the cycle of life, as well as medicine wheels, four cardinal directions, four seasons, and four stages of life, which demonstrates common cultural values among Native peoples. Because spring represents new life, Treuer and his family offer prayers where his children's placentas are buried in the sugarbush, which marks the beginning of sugar maple harvest, fishing, spring water ceremonies, and harvesting the inner bark of red willow, Treuer's preferred "tobacco."

In following the life cycle and associated seasons, the stories framing other chapters concern the disciplinary problems of Treuer's son Isaac (coming of age); his own marriages and failed relationships (adulthood); and his mother's final years (elderhood). Teachings from the cultural toolbox provide strategies that guide family members through the difficulties of each stage. For instance, Isaac was mischievous, stubborn, and sometimes taciturn, but quickly became a skilled hunter and killed his first deer at age twelve. Because Ojibwes believe there is "a spirit in all things," Isaac knew to thank the spirit of the slain buck with tobacco offerings and promised to share the venison with those in need (90). During the kill feast that followed, he learned that manhood involves the transition from dependency to self-reliance, providing for family and community. Isaac's experience was "truly transformative" because he applied his teachings and became a man (75). Like other young men, Isaac also went on a vision quest and had the right to own a ceremonial pipe, whereas young women participate in different rites of passage. For example, they follow certain restrictions for a year after their first menses, followed by a feast and then further tutelage from namesakes who teach them about female procreative powers and their right to be respected by men.

Treuer courageously recounts painful memories of adulthood: divorce, the ensuing death of a companion, life as a single parent, remarriage, and creating a blended family. Although joyful winter activities include ice fishing, trapping, autumn harvest feasting, and storytelling, this season of elderhood reminds Treuer of his mother's final months

and the grieving and mourning customs that followed. Such stressful times evoke the Ojibwe metaphor of the ax: "If there is ever a bramble in your life, use your ax." In other words, "when things get hard, we pick up our ways," like praying with tobacco or attending a drum ceremony (33). Thus, winter isn't the final season of life, for death is replenished by new life; the circle remains unbroken because the cycle of life is a continuous spiral. Treuer is grateful for his cultural toolbox that allows him to survive in a postmodern world. Significantly, he believes every society in the world should consult its own cultural toolbox.

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