UCLA

American Indian Culture and Research Journal

Title

Native Americans and Energy Development 11. Edited by Joseph G. Jorgensen

Permalink

https://escholarship.org/uc/item/5m2180fh

Journal

American Indian Culture and Research Journal, 9(4)

ISSN

0161-6463

Author

Reed, Gerard

Publication Date

1985-09-01

DOI

10.17953

Copyright Information

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

provide the valuable insights and awareness of nuances present in fine examples of Southwestern pottery and help develop a perspective all serious collectors should strive to achieve. In that aspect it would be an asset for this book to provide provenance along with the photo credits.

While this is not a monumental work, it is a nice addition to ongoing chronicles about contemporary Native American arts

and is a nice supplement to other brief works.

Ben Stone

Skiatook Public Schools

Native Americans and Energy Development II. Edited by Joseph G. Jorgensen. Boston: Anthropology Resource Center, and Forestville, CA: Seventh Generation Fund, 1984.

This is a revised, expanded, updated edition of *Native Americans* and Energy Development, published in 1978. It seeks both to describe what is happening and to prescribe proper Native American responses to economic threats which endanger tribal lands and futures.

In his foreword, Daniel Bomberry enunciates the book's guiding concern: "There is a war going on right now over Indian resources-a war not too different from the Indian wars of the 1700s or 1800s. The motivation for such wars has always been the same: the exploitation of this continent's resources' (p. 7). For nearly 500 years Indians have struggled to preserve their lands. Today's struggle has shifted from the battlefields to the boardrooms of corporate America. Today's foes are not guntoting frontiersmen and U.S. cavalrymen but contract-wielding businessmen and BIA solicitors.

"The motivation for the new Indian wars," Bomberry says, "is very similar to old wars. Indians sit on resources that America wants. America has reached a point of economic stagnation from which tribal resources may offer some relief. Corporations want to exploit the resources at the lowest possible cost in order to maximize profit. This sets up a situation fraught with difficulties for the energy tribes and their members" (p. 9), and it is this situation addressed by the articles in this book.

Native Americans own one-third of the low-sulfur, easilymineable coal west of the Mississippi. They own forty per cent of the uranium under private control. They own four per cent of the oil in the West. They obviously have valuable resources. In some ways they are wealthy. But natural resources in the modern world must be "developed" in order to generate "wealth," and corporate America has devised ways to do so without necessarily benefitting those who even the resources.

ily benefitting those who own the resources.

In "The Political Economy of the Native American Energy Business," Joseph Jorgenson illustrates such corporate strategies. Peabody Coal Company extracted coal from Navajo land and exported it for \$70 a ton; at the same time Peabody paid the Navajo 15¢ to 37¢ a ton! Leases negotiated 25 years ago between BIA officials and corporation executives legally bind the Navajo to contracts which simply sacrifice Black Mesa for Peabody profits. Energy-based corporations such as Peabody routinely refuse to re-negotiate such contracts.

Though details differ from tribe to tribe, the picture remains rather constant throughout Indian country: corporations have maneuvered government agencies and tribal officials (some of whom had little awareness of what was actually happening) into contracts which would return few if any dividends to Indians. Minerals flow from Indian country, but money rarely returns

from their sale.

In response to this problem, the Council of Energy Resource Tribes (CERT) was formed. Articles by Lynn Robbins, Winona LaDuke, and Marjane Ambler assess CERT's role and influence in trying to unite Indian response to corporate initiatives. While conceptually attractive, CERT has, in fact, accomplished little apart from meetings and discussions, conducted by such Indian leaders as Peter MacDonald (Navajo Tribal Council Chairman) and business leaders. Some CERT staff efforts, such as advising individual tribes, have been valuable. The organization vaguely aspired to imitate OPEC but never attained much power or influence. In the second half of the 1980's, when OPEC has fallen on hard times, CERT has even less potential. Any hope that Indians could unite and use their resources to influence America's energy policies has waned.

The remaining essays in the volume focus upon specific tribes' energy situations and concerns. Richard O. Clemmer deals with the "Effects of the Energy Economy on Pueblo Peoples," recounting the damage wrought by mining coal and uranium in New Mexico. Though some employment has been created, the

ultimate impact has been dislocating and harmful.

The Navajo too have suffered as their resources have been developed In "Energy Developments and the Navajo Nation: An Update," Lynn A. Robbins discusses the health hazards of uranium mining, coal lease dilemmas, and the Navajo's political failure to deal with corporate America. The tribe's 1982 election placed Peterson Zah in the position of Tribal Council Chairman, so some shifts in policy are anticipated but not evident when the

essay was written.

Jean Maxwell discusses the Colvilles; Al Gedicks the Chippewa; Marjorie Ambler the Three Affiliated Tribes at Fort Berthold; Nancy Evans the California tribes; Joseph P. Boggs the Northern Chevenne. Details differ, but the essential plot remains: wherever tribal peoples have resources they are being threatened and exploited by commercial interests. Unfortunately, neither CERT nor tribal governments have effectively controlled or invested their own resources. As John Mohawk's "Afterword" declares: "The Indian people are the victims of the most horrible crimes in history. Today many are being manipulated by a process which promises to leave them the victims of the most startling abuses in corporate history" (p. 241).

The essays in this volume mainly report problems. Though written to somehow help tribal leaders deal more effectively with the problems, the essays seem to offer little hope that solutions can be found. Given the wealth underlying Indian lands, given the past exploitation of those lands and their owners by corporate giants, little change can be anticipated. In this respect, like historical accounts of the Indian wars, this volume simply adds to the

litany of abuses suffered by Native Americans.

It is always hard to evaluate a collection of essays, for they differ in focus and quality. This collection's primary value, it seems to me, is the information gathered which enables the reader to see how things were in the early 1980's. In some ways the essays are journalistic and now quite dated, except for their value in giving a historical context. One may assume conditions remain as they were, though that is not a necessarily true assumption. It is also difficult to determine this volume's real focus, for some essays tend to encompass all of Indian country while others treat only certain tribes which may have nonrepresentative experiences.

Several of the essays have extensive endnotes, which enable one to pursue the questions raised in government documents,

periodicals, and books. Given the importance of the subject, such bibliographical guidance is a valuable contribution to Indian studies. The contributors represent a healthy mixture of academicians, tribal activists, and journalists; they seem united in their concern to defend Native American rights. By and large, the writing is clear and understandable to people without technical training in economics or energy development or history.

Given the paucity of easily-obtainable published materials, given the extraordinary importance of the subject, this is certainly a valuable collection which should be studied by all concerned

with the economic future of Indian peoples.

Gerard Reed

Point Loma Nazarene College

North Dakota Quarterly (Special Indian Literary Issue, Volume 53, Number 2). Guest edited by Mary Jane Schneider. Grand Forks: University of North Dakota, Spring 1985. 308 pp.

Diversity is the greatest strength of a journal. Since it is published often, a journal may present a wide variety of ideas and perceptions, and this is the power one finds in the Spring 1985 issue of the North Dakota Quarterly. A special issue focusing on Indian literature, this voluem contains works that—as the guest editor, Mary Jane Schneider, explains in her introduction-"are all related by a common theme, the renaissance of Indian presence and the multi-dimensionality of this new life" (1). One may initially challenge Schneider's belief that this presence is "new," and effectively argue that it is new only in the sense that within the last twenty years a growing number of Anglos are finally recognizing the cultural traditions that have endured centuries of exploitative and aggressive policies intended to destroy them. This initial challenge to Schneider's credibility, however, is immediately lost in her insightful presentation of the works chosen for the volume. Fiction, photographs, poetry, criticism, drawings, and interviews are thoughtfully interspersed to demonstrate both "Indian presence" in contemporary literature and the "multidimensionality" that is the heart and the power of this presence. Much like Silko's Storyteller and Momaday's The Way to Rainy Mountain, this collage of insights is a mighty celebration of native ways.