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major scholarly contribution that should be widely read and studied. Hunn's understanding of Plateau Indians is keen, perceptive, and analytical. He has authored an important book, one of the finest ever written about the native people living near the banks of Nch'i-wána.

Clifford E. Trafzer
University of California, Riverside

The Ojibwa of Western Canada, 1780 to 1870. By Laura Peers. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press and Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1994. 288 pages. \$32.95 cloth; \$15.95 paper.

Those who have studied the descendants of the groups of Ojibwa who migrated west of Lake Superior beginning in the late seventeenth century have generally dealt, in one way or another, with a common set of issues. One major issue involves the motivation for the continuing migration that led some of these Ojibwa to venture westward, ultimately arriving onto the Plains of Canada and the United States. For many people, the fur trade was the crucial factor. In this view, Ojibwa people were tied to the fur trade as suppliers, middlemen, and consumers, dependent on European material goods for their survival. They went west because of declining numbers of fur animals and their desire to fill a crucial need. Once on the Plains, they were transformed by environment to become a Plains people in clothing, housing, and society. Such a simplistic view is not that of Laura Peers in this major new study of the Ojibwa who began arriving in the region west of the Red River of the north in the late eighteenth century.

A historian who has gone on to study anthropology since writing the ambitious master's thesis on which this book is based, Peers approaches her topic with an eye for historical detail and an anthropological methodology. She uses written records, oral history, archaeological data, photography, and other evidence in a variety of imaginative ways to document the migration of the Ojibwa and their adjustment to the area west of the Red River in what would become the Canadian provinces of Manitoba and Saskatchewan.

Early in her study, Peers makes clear the misleading nature of the idea of "culture area," which is often used to suggest that groups can be typified by their natural environment. Many of the

communities of Ojibwa that Peers describes followed neither a classic Woodland nor Plains lifestyle. She argues that these regions were permeable. Groups such as the Ojibwa lived in both environments, hunting buffalo from horseback and fishing in birchbark canoes when the occasion called for it. Peers suggests that the Ojibwa were rational individuals who made choices for survival, layering new cultural patterns next to old ones when necessary, in the process creating a mixture that does not fit the simplistic models of earlier scholars. Even those who were most oriented toward the Plains, Peers writes, "continued use of canoes, Great Lakes-style artifacts and decorative styles, the clan system, and ritual and belief brought with them from the Western Great Lakes" (p. 154).

While Peers discusses a great many themes in the book, a major emphasis is on subsistence patterns and their relationship to other cultural features. While she documents in detail the importance of the fur trade to these Western Ojibwa, Peers shows how the trade fit into wider subsistence activities. Plentiful food sources were important to Ojibwa trappers and their families. When large game or other food sources were not plentiful, trapping had to be abandoned for a time in the search for food. On occasions like this, Ojibwa were sometimes seen at the trading post complaining of starvation and asking for food from the trader. Peers adds to the discussion begun by other scholars on the importance of deciphering such requests in terms of cultural meaning and trade pattern and language. She also notes that such incidents did not indicate a complete failure in the relationship between the community and their environment. Describing one period of Ojibwa history, Peers notes, "In effect, the post became another gathering site, like the sugar bush or a fish weir: one got fish at the weir in spring and fall, and pemmican at the post in winter" (p. 195). The trading post was never, at any period, the sole source of survival. It was merely a resource to be incorporated into a flexible, seasonal round in the same way that the buffalo herds and gardens were incorporated at various times. As documented from the many Hudson's Bay Company post journals that Peers used for this study, the problem with the Ojibwa from the trader's point of view was simply that they were too independent, always focused on their own needs and willing to alter their subsistence patterns to survive.

Another important theme discussed in this book is the variety of religious patterns of these Ojibwa. Residing in communities

that also included Plains Cree and Assiniboine, many western Ojibwa took up the Sun or Thirst Dance. But, as Peers notes, this was an addition to rather than a replacement of earlier beliefs. There was no incompatibility with the Woodland Midewiwin ceremony or other religious forms. In these cross-cultural communities, Ojibwa were often sought out for their special powers, useful in hunting, for example.

Given the broad range of issues that Peers deals with in her study, it is inevitable that there would be a few points on which the reader might wish more detailed discussion. Despite the generous emphasis in this book on subsistence patterns, there is not enough made of the social organization used by the Ojibwa in specific activities. Peers does make frequent references to pounding and other methods of hunting buffalo. But, given the elaborate nature of buffalo hunting among a variety of groups in contrast to the nature of Ojibwa woodland hunting as a solitary or small-group activity, it would have been helpful to see in more detail the ways in which the Ojibwa adjusted to hunting an animal that is not optimally hunted in small groups. Such aspects of the social organization of hunting have widespread implications for social organization in general.

Also, although it is understandable why the author would have confined herself to the Ojibwa in the Canadian West, except for occasional references to similar groups in adjacent regions of Minnesota and the Dakotas there are some drawbacks to the study's being confined in this way. For example, she makes repeated reference to people who ventured west at certain times of the year and returned to communities in more easterly regions at other times, but she includes little discussion of specific communities. In another topic with implications outside her region, Peers writes that "fur trade waned on the border after its heyday in the 1840s" (p. 179). This appears to ignore the extensive fur trade carried on from the Red River through St. Paul by oxcart in the 1850s.

More detailed use of sources on Southwestern Ojibwa in the United States might have helped Peers at several points in the narrative. For example, in a discussion of a puzzling painting that George Catlin claimed was of "The Six, Chief of the Plains Ojibwa," Peers makes the point that the chief's name, Sha-co-pay, was Dakota and that this fact, along with the man's Siouan clothing, suggests that Catlin was mistaken in his identification. She asks, "Why would an Ojibwa have a Dakota name?" (p. 118) In fact,

there were several Ojibwa men with a similar name in Minnesota along the St. Croix River and at Mille Lacs in the nineteenth century. One of these men was portrayed in the famed McKenney and Hall Indian portrait gallery. Many Ojibwa in this region were members of a wolf clan that consisted of descendants of marriages that took place between Dakota men and Ojibwa women in the many peaceful times among the two peoples. Although there are still many puzzling aspects about Catlin's painting, the fact that the man had a Dakota name does not preclude his being Ojibwa.

Otherwise, Peers's discussion of the changes in clothing and their implications for an understanding of broader cultural choices is a demonstration of the best of this kind of analysis. Using paintings, drawings, and photographs, Peers points out that changes to the Plains styles of clothing appear to have arrived quicker among Ojibwa men than women. This fits into her broader discussion of the role of women in Ojibwa society and the implications of the adoption of the Sun Dance and men's warrior societies by the Ojibwa. Peers effectively deals with the stereotypical view of Ojibwa women as drudges, in a discussion of the available roles for Ojibwa women and the power they had in Woodland communities, but she notes that many groups in the Plains environment tended to emphasize the power of men. As in other cases, Peers does not provide the final answer to such questions but explores the issues in creative ways.

As a whole, Laura Peers's book is a valuable study, one that counters many stereotypes of native history and fulfills a key need to delineate important topics for future discussion. Any future work in the field will have to be measured against the impressive range of Peers's work.

Bruce M. White

Returning the Gift: Poetry and Prose from the First North American Native Writers' Festival. Edited by Joseph Bruchac. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1994. 369 pages. \$45.00 cloth; \$19.95 paper.

Commemorating an unprecedented gathering of more than three hundred North American native writers at the University of Oklahoma in July 1992, the *Returning the Gift* anthology culls from that festival poetry and prose by nearly one hundred authors.