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Beyond the Lodge of the Sun: Inner Mysteries of the Native American Way. By Chokeycherry Gall Eagle.

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## REVIEWS

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**Beyond the Lodge of the Sun: Inner Mysteries of the Native American Way.** By Chokecherry Gall Eagle. Rockport, MA: Element Books, 1997. 176 pages. \$15.95 paper.

Euramericans have long regarded Native Americans as if they possessed mystical powers beyond those of urban dwellers. The Noble Red Man exemplified a life in tune with nature. So during their summer vacations, nineteenth century Europeans, especially Germans, gathered in forest clearings to live in tipis and gain psychic wellbeing; while in spiritualist seances adepts claimed to be obtaining messages via Indian guides. Further confirmation was then shown through the publication of works deriving from John G. Neihardt's conversations with Black Elk, as well as the writings of Carl Jung and his disciples. More recently, the global environmental movement has cultivated a linkage to Native American thought. In counterpoint, Native Americans (writing without the benefit of Neihardtian interpreters) have adopted ecological language to present their spiritual messages (see, for example, Ed McGaa, *Mother Earth Spirituality: Native American Paths to Healing Ourselves and the World* by Eagle Man, 1990).

Despite the mythos of spiritual harmony, many reservation communities are similar to urban zones in that they contain significant numbers of alcoholics, substance abusers, suicidogenics, and other folk in profound psychic and physical distress. Medicine men and women are respected and their help is sought. That the help can indeed be significant is witnessed by the biographical accounts of Anglo physicians, who, in their reservation service, found that deeper and more reliable healing could be achieved when they worked with indigenous counterparts (see, for example, Thomas H. Lewis, *The Medicine Men: Oglala Sioux Ceremony and Healing*, 1990).

The sober and inescapable limitation of spiritual healing is that it tends to be specific to a local community and its language, tradition, and rituals. It is precisely because of the profundity of this intuitive understanding that the indigenous healer can achieve so much. Disregarding this basic limitation, a small cluster of persons have been representing themselves to the external world as mystical Indian therapists, able to assist deracinated others achieve inner tranquility. All that is required of the client is faith—and a monetary

contribution. Whether actual or fictive, traditional or instant, these persons have been journeying about North America conducting ceremonial sweat-baths and offering therapeutic guidance to troubled urbanites. Their ministrations and hortations are compounded of Indian lore and the new ecology.

Given the foregoing, I approach books such as this with basic skepticism. I would have been tempted to dismiss it, except for its tone. It offers no panacea, no instant guide to healing, but rather constitutes a record of how one individual has attempted to heal himself with the assistance of several friends and counselors, notably Frank Fools Crow, Oglala spiritual leader.

Moreover the author explicitly disclaims any request for financial payment, for as he wisely writes:

When you ask someone for guidance, or spiritual help, they cannot ask you for money, or even hint for gifts. This is spiritual law. Spiritual power is given to help others, and one cannot make a condition of that help to be any personal gain. (p. 39)

The book is no monograph. By academic standards it is chaotic, sounding as if narrated in free-associational style. The author is self-taught, and his interpretations of biblical passages far from conventional. At moments, the reader perceives an individual who has had a difficult life and has struggled mightily to find equilibrium as a decent, moral, responsible individual. Having arrived at this plateau, he wishes to share his insights with a receptive public.

Chokecherry Gall Eagle makes it clear that the process of healing is extraordinarily difficult and requires years of devout work. Ritual gear—pipes, eagle feathers—may be helpful to the novice, but in the long run will be discarded. His text, therefore, echoes the experiences of the mystics of other faiths who have emptied their lives of belongings and their souls of attachment to all save the divine. Despite the simplicity of phrasing, the text is not for everyone.

*Murray L. Wax*

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**Chippewa Families: A Social Study of White Earth Reservation, 1938.** By. M. Inez Hilger. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Press, 1998. 189 pages. \$12.95 paper.

In 1926, twelve years before Sister M. Inez Hilger published her research on housing and living conditions of the Chippewa people at White Earth Reservation, Congress commissioned the Meriam Committee to survey conditions among the American Indians nationally and to make recommendations for new policy. In February 1928, the Meriam Report emerged, a scathing expose of the sub-standard living situation of the Indian peoples. Seven months of fieldwork by Director Louis Meriam and his staff took them to ninety-five reservations, agencies, hospitals, and schools. They found