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The Great Canoes: Reviving a Northwest Coast Tradition. By David Neel. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995. 135 pages. $27.95 paper.

With extraordinary color photographs and personal interviews, *The Great Canoes* documents the canoe-building revival occurring among the "cedar and salmon people" of the Northwest Coast. The combination of photos and interviews allows the reader to visualize this renaissance and appreciate the cultural and emotional background of the participants.

Canoes, in practical terms, were as important to the old way of life on the coast as cars are to modern North Americans. In their revival among the modern First Nations people, canoes have taken on even greater symbolic value. They are "vessels of knowledge," "healing vessels," and "metaphors for community." The roots of this resurgence lie in the longevity of ancient cedars, with their wide grain and abundant oil, and in the inner strength of a people who have adjusted to the complexities of the modern world while retaining an understanding of who they are.

Author David Neel, a member of the Fort Rupert Kwagiutl Nation, is a fine photographer and artist who currently is finishing building a canoe for the planned 1997 paddle to La Push, Washington. Neel's previous book, *Our Chiefs and Elders: Words and Photographs of Native Leaders* (UBC/University of Washington Press, 1992) followed a similar collaborative format, using interviews and black-and-white photographs of Northwest Coast native leaders to illustrate how their lives straddle the past and the future, and bridge the native and nonnative worlds. This collaborative format effectively imparts the knowledge and worldviews of elders and canoe-makers while allowing the reader to share Neel's vision of his culture through his photographs. An underlying theme of Neel's work is that, contrary to the anthropological wisdom of the late 1800s and early 1900s, Northwest Coast tribes or linguistic groups (more correctly termed *nations* or *First Nations*—a term elegantly explained in the author's note) never were a "vanishing race." Cultural practices such as canoe-making may have gone through a winter phase due to decades of social ills, but, as Victoria Wells of the Ehattehsaht Nation states, "[I]t's coming into spring now" (p. 82). The revival of canoe building and the "paddles" (maritime canoe trips) that have taken place over the past decade confirm that the nations are growing and that they retain unique ties to the land, the water, and each other.

Prior to European contact, it would have been unheard of for a nation's canoes to enter peacefully into their enemies' towns or territories. Relationships among the nations have changed in modern times, along with many other aspects of life on the coast. The Heiltsuk people paddled from Bella Bella, B.C., to the world's fair in Vancouver in 1986. The 1989 "Paddle to Seattle" marked Washington State's one hundredth anniversary paddle, when canoes from Washington and British Columbia nations came together outside Seattle. The Qatuwas Festival was born during that gathering, (*Qatuwas,* in the Kwakwala language, means "people gathered together in one place"), when a member of the Heiltsuk canoe invited canoe nations to gather in Bella Bella in four years.

For the first time in more than one hundred years, many First Nations groups began to build canoes in preparation for Qatuwas. Twenty-three canoes from all over the coast congregated in Bella Bella in the summer of 1993, and nearly two thousand people attended. In 1994, the Tribal Journeys paddle began in Oweekeno, B.C., and brought canoes from many different nations to Victoria, B.C., for the opening of the Commonwealth Games. The interviews and photographs contained in *The Great Canoes* document the communal and personal aspects of these journeys. The next paddle in the four-year cycle will be the 1997 paddle to La Push, Washington, at the invitation of the Quilieute Nation.

The voyages cover long distances between villages along the coast, and bonds form between the "pullers" and the water and land. Paddles involve teamwork, camaraderie, physical and mental exertion, proper etiquette, ritual preparation, and socializing at coastal villages. In the afterword entitled "The Canoe Way of Knowledge," Tom Heidlebaugh describes the mental attitude and fitness required for paddling long distances as he recounts the 1993 paddle to Bella Bella.

In the succinct introduction, David Neel describes both the origin of the "paddles" and his own method of canoe-building. The practical and emotional assistance provided by friends and family is apparent in Neel's canoe-building story, as well as in interviews with other canoe-builders, which, together with the photographs, form the body of the text. The canoe is set apart from other types of craft by the nature of its construction: It is sculpted and steamed from an ancient cedar log. The canoe's form "has no beginning and no end but it is simply a series of sophisticated sweeps with its roots in the past" (p. 9). Guujaaw, of Masset, B.C., describes the complexity of the steaming process whereby water is put into the hollowed-out cavity of the canoe and heated with hot rocks and covered with mats: "[A]bout twelve things happen all in one movement during steaming, resulting in a graceful sight to behold and one of the finest and most ingenious maritime vessels of all time" (p. 30).

As is the case with other serious avocations, finding time is one of the biggest challenges currently associated with carving a canoe. Another challenge is locating a suitable tree. Although cedars are getting harder to come by because of recent cutting of old growth, logging companies have donated some trees to canoe builders. Carvers describe how time-consuming it is to create a canoe, but the activity brings people close together. Communities are strengthened when a handful of people put aside their personal needs to support shared tradition.

Old clues have provided modern carvers with canoe-building knowledge. For example, Guujaaw describes how he learned aspects of canoe-building from finding old canoes that had been abandoned in the forest at different stages in the process. Calvin Hunt, a Kwakwaka'wakw of Fort Rupert, cites his good friend anthropologist Eugene Arima and research at the Royal B.C. Museum as the sources of valuable canoe-building information. Some knowledge never really died out. Sam Woss, a Haisla man in his eighties, learned from an old master and is keeping tradition alive by teaching his nephew, Robert Stewart of Kitimat, B.C. Fred Peters, a member of the Ditidaht Nation from Nitinat Lake, B.C., learned from his father, Kelly Peters, who used to gill-net with canoes, with a roller on the back, out on Nitinat Lake. During an archaeological survey on Vancouver Island in 1981, I watched elder Mike Thompson use a similar canoe near the outlet of Nitinat Lake, an unforgettable scene of tradition and change.

One notable omission in the book is the lack of contextual information about the nature of the interviews, the relationship between the author and the interviewees, and the methods of recording, transcribing, and editing the interviews. Also, although Alaska Tlingit artists recently have carved canoes, they are not mentioned. The selected bibliography lacks reference to art historian Bill Holm's documentation of late 1700s stylistic changes in Northwest Coast canoes, but the bibliography provides excellent sources of Northwest Coast canoe lore. Anthropologists and historians may notice these minor flaws; however, the author clearly is intent on portraying and giving voice to the participants in the "paddles."

The rebirth of Northwest Coast cedar canoe travel has brought tears to the eyes of elders who never thought they would see canoes arrive on the beaches in front of their villages. David Neel has made an important contribution to First Nations people and to all who love the ocean by documenting the return of the great canoes.

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Issues in Native American Cultural Identity. Edited by Michael K. Green. New York: Peter Lang, 1995.

We live in a time period marked by a federal statute that makes it a crime, punishable by a fine of up to $1 million and fifteen years imprisonment, to identify oneself without government sanction, "for purposes of selling arts and crafts," as an American Indian. Exceedingly marginal types such as lobbyist Suzanne Shown Harjo, federally funded professional "radical" Vernon Bellecourt, Santa Fe hobbyist David Bradley, and Colorado's jeweler *cum* Republican Senator Ben "Nightmare" Campbell, sponsor of the above legislation—each of them bearing an official pedigree slip attesting to his or her "Indianness." They have annointed themselves as a quasi-official "purity police" whose sole purpose is to impose a vaguely defined and woefully self-contradictory set of "racial/cultural standards" on Indians everywhere.

Tim Giago, partly Oglala, mostly Hispanic publisher of *Indian Country Today,* the most widely circulated native newspaper in the U.S., has devoted feature after feature to "exposing" the "fact" that any Indian writer who disagrees with his own peculiarly reactionary viewpoint is, apparently on that basis alone, an "ethnic fraud." Paul DeMain, heading up the second-ranked *News from Indian Country,* has gone Giago one better, publishing a series of his own op-ed pieces in the guise of "news reportage," insinuating that not only are his targets "imposters" but probably FBI agents provocateurs as well. As Giago editor Avis Little Eagle has put it, the ancestry of authors and activists identifying as native should be "the single most important issue" for Indians in the 1990s.

The internet has been abuzz with such trash for the past several years. Ditto the telephone lines, as the "legitimacy" of just about