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author. It is interesting to note that the tone changes in these chapters, reflecting the change in the poets' gender. Now the reader feels an edge in Wilson's reference to "Hogan's confrontation with nuclear power" (p. 92) in her book, *Daughters, I Love You*, and Wendy Rose's "angry, ironic, and pan-Indian voice in *Academic Squaw*," which was a "direct result of [Rose's] study of anthropology" (p. 102). Wilson's commentary also becomes more definitive, which can be seen when she claims, "Harjo's use of anaphora, balanced phrasing, and inclusive language, and the woman's appreciation of the natural word echo the style of traditional oral songs" (p. 113). Wilson is much more specific and confident in these chapters.

Wilson concludes her analysis with a quick view of "The New Generation" of indigenous poets. She briefly offers insight to poets such as Elizabeth Woody, Sherman Alexie, and Tiffany Midge, among others. Wilson ends strongly with the statement that "Native poets are sounding a powerful voice, one that will be heard long into the new millennium" (p. 134).

Norma C. Wilson has succeeded in introducing readers to Native American poetry, specifically to those poets who have made a lasting impact on the literary world. Though at times Wilson overwhelms the reader with information, she takes time to clarify her points, establishing a trust with the novice reader. This is clearly an introduction to Native American poetry and not meant to be a detailed analysis. Previously, Wilson had coedited the book, *One Room Country School: South Dakota Stories* with Charles L. Woodard. *The Nature of Native American Poetry* is a deviation from that format, yet Wilson succeeds in her new venture.

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The People of Denendeh: Ethnohistory of the Indians of Canada's Northwest Territories. By June Helm with contributions by Teresa S. Carterette and Nancy O. Lurie. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2000. 412 pages. \$39.95 cloth.

The First Nations peoples known as the Dene, or the People, are Athapaskan speakers living in the Mackenzie River drainage region in the western subarctic of present-day Canada. Historically, the Dene have been referred to by the assigned group names of Chipewyan, Slavey, Dogrib, Mountain, Bearlake, Hare, and Kutchin. *Denendeh* means "Land of the Dene" and June Helm, an anthropologist, carried out field research at various locations between 1951 and 1979. Her "self-appointed task here is to offer what my research can speak to in the Dene experience from the time of earliest contact with the white world to the last quarter of the twentieth century" (p. xii).

Helm does not aspire to comprehensive coverage; the omission of "an" or "the" before *ethnohistory* in the subtitle is intentional. Not a collection of independent papers, the volume is uniquely constructed as a pastiche of writings with the majority taken from works by Helm (some coauthored), composed

at different times and for different purposes. Other entries are drawn from Helm's unpublished field notes; unpublished writings by her field companions, Lurie and Carterette; oral testimony given by Helm at a judicial inquiry; translated recordings of narrations by several Dene individuals; a few selections of archival material by "explorers," missionaries, and fur traders; and excerpts from letters sent to Helm around and after the time of her field research. Sections and chapters are prefaced by relatively short commentaries intended to provide context and establish connections. Helm expresses hope that the "contrastive styles" associated with the different types of writings would "provide a change of pace" (p. xiii). She further suggests that readers "approach this volume somewhat in the way I assembled it, piece by piece," initially sampling from pieces that "seem most immediately interesting" and then "at some later time read[ing] the book through" (p. xiii). I concur that reading it through may not be the best approach. The end result of all the cutting and pasting is that the volume does not have an integrated feel. Still, there is much to value in this book; the translated recordings, letters, updates, and archival material do enliven the text as do the wonderful photographs. Stronger transitions, a more extensive introduction and/or personal retrospective, and a more inclusive index (unfortunately, the current index is most helpful for individual names and is of little assistance in relating similar topics) may have helped to better hold the disparate sections together.

In the preface, Helm raises the question, Why should this volume be published since most of the writings could be retrieved from other publications? She replies: "More and more, however, I began to think of such a compilation not just as an offering to North American Indian studies, hunter-gatherer research, or subarctic ethnohistory but also as a historical resource for the people of all ethnicities who live in Denendeh, and especially a resource for the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of Dene whom I first came to know fifty years ago. My main aim is to offer a record of ways of life that, for all of us, grow dimmer as they recede year by year into the past. From this stance, except for chapter one, I gladly ignore anthropological 'theory'" (p. xi).

This caveat notwithstanding, the selection of the first piece seemed puzzling. This essay, written in 1987 and, like the other pieces, not revised for this volume, is dominated by a historical overview of theoretical constructs about the social organization of foraging societies. Interspersing the stretches of anthropological theory, the persevering reader encounters passages providing a historical perspective on Helm's field research and the Dene. Helm describes the period of the 1950s when she carried out field research in the hamlets of Jean Marie River (Slavey, identified by the pseudonym Lynx Point in earlier writings) and Lac la Martre (Dogrib, known today as Wha Ti) as the end of a long-enduring "contact-traditional" era characterized by relatively minimal contact with "the Euro-Canadian world except through the narrow and selective channels offered by the fur trader and the missionary" (p. 8). Claiming a "substantial degree of confidence that my reconstruction of groups in the contact-traditional era holds in basic outline and principles for aboriginal socioterritorial organization as well" (p. 9), Helm examines evidence for social groups of different types and sizes, up to the named "tribal

groupings” like Hare and Bearlake Indian, and concludes such societal groupings are “potentially evanescent” and mutable within a broad and relatively open-ended areal network (p. 20).

The remainder of the book is organized into three main sections. The first part, containing four chapters of “mainly flat-footed descriptions of kinds of community, daily life, and livelihood among the Mackenzie Dene” (p. 269), is entitled “Community and Livelihood at Midcentury.” Helm introduces the two kinds of settlements: two “bush communities”—Jean Marie River and Lac la Martre—and the trading settlement of Rae (primarily Dogrib with some Euro-Canadians). A portrait of a mixed subsistence and money economy emerges through descriptions of the yearly round of living off the land, detailed information about technologies and strategies associated with fishing and some forms of hunting, and the incessant “security quest” given the capriciousness of the fur market and the harshness of the subarctic environment.

Part two, “Looking Back in Time,” is less easy to summarize. After moving forward in time to the 1970s and highlighting change since the 1950s in chapter six, Helm and her students outline stages in the contact history of subarctic Athapaskans in chapter seven. The following chapter is an edited transcript of oral testimony given in 1975 by Helm at the overview hearing at the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry (MVPI). As an introduction to the people and history of Denendeh, this chapter is a good place to start reading the book, followed by the preceding chapter, which covers some of the same ground but expands the historical summary. Some readers, however, may be left wondering just what the MVPI was (it is not in the index and almost no commentary accompanies the testimony). The MVPI in the context of self-determination is addressed in chapter fourteen, “Looking to the Future.” This chapter works surprisingly well given that it blends a review of a book containing essays on the material presented by a political organization, the Indian Brotherhood of the Northwest Territories, to the MVPI with another paper that presents a number of powerful quotations taken from testimony given at community hearings across Denendeh.

The five remaining interpolated chapters move progressively further back in time, introducing selected topics and providing insight into how ethnohistorical research progresses. Tellings about the past by Dene individuals are fascinating and range widely, including the influenza epidemic of 1928, the “old days” around the turn of the century, the first treaty, and the arrival of the first “pale men” with trading goods. In one compelling chapter, Helm relates existing archival documentation from the 1820s to the oral tradition relying on testimony from Naedzo, the Bear Lake Prophet (though what it means to be a prophet is not covered anywhere), about a confrontation between the Dogribs and another group. In another chapter, Helm shows how photographs taken in 1913 serve to elicit new details in 1979 about old forms of watercraft and categories of social ranking and prestige associated with economic activities. The chapter on traditional forms of leadership among the Dene, which later informs the commentary on self-determination, is grounded in the writings of fur traders and explorers and brought to life by oral testimony as well as ethnographic observation of a chiefly transition in

Rae. The chapter on population fluctuations in light of female infanticide and European diseases is described as a “dense, tightly argued research paper,” reprinted without its footnotes which “are necessary for full documentation and assessment of data” (p. 192). In my opinion, it would have been more appropriate to either rewrite the piece for this volume or simply include a summary with a citation to the easily available journal article.

The final section, “Being Dene,” comprises four chapters. The title of chapter fifteen, “Traditional Knowledge and Belief,” is rightly characterized as “a gross exaggeration” in that the chapter “barely touches on what Dene culture holds and once held as measures of meaning and understanding” (p. 271). Four legends are recounted accompanied by brief, but intriguing, discussions of “power” and “blood and femaleness.” A fine description of the Dogrib hand game, accompanied by photographs, forms another chapter. A third chapter on “Enjoyments and Special Times” explores Dene values and recurring and informal pleasurable activities before the advent of cars, radio, and television. The book closes with accounts of the lives of two persons. The first life history narrative, constructed using interview transcripts, is quite rich and stands in contrast with Helm’s “personality analysis” of the second individual, which lacks the insight and convincing feel of a first person narrative. Helm expresses regret that she recorded “almost no consistent life history materials” (p. 340), a sentiment that one cannot help but share.

As a historical resource for people in Denendeh, this book provides many captivating glimpses that will hopefully stimulate further ethnohistorical explorations. The book as a whole would likely have been even more valuable with more material specifically prepared for this volume.

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Political Principles and Indian Sovereignty. By Thurman Lee Hester Jr. New York: Routledge, 2001. 142 pages. \$55.00 cloth.

The story of the United States government’s treatment of American Indians is well known, but its retelling by Thurman Hester shocks and angers. He aims not only to describe American Indian policy but also come up with a meaningful answer to its decimation of Indian culture. Upon closing the book, the reader is left with a feeling of frustration.

Hester’s argument is what he calls “a philosophical examination of the Indian ‘plight’” (p. 1). The obvious strength of this approach is his thoughtful use of sources and clear statement of assumptions and relationships. There is a weakness in argument, though, especially apparent in the conclusions about sovereignty. Here Hester is unable to escape his craft’s love of abstraction. Lacking practical and concrete ideas about sovereignty, he ends with little more than familiar rhetoric.

The book’s philosophical method is syllogistic. Hester convincingly lays out his major and minor premises but less compellingly deduces his conclu-