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Another problem area can be assigned to the author. The Mashantucket Pequots' successful pursuit of federal recognition, development of Foxwoods Casino, and the Indians' rise to major political and economic prominence in the state of Connecticut is a very controversial subject, both inside and outside of Indian Country. Unfortunately, Pasquaretta's coverage of the story is both incomplete and somewhat dated in that his profile of the Pequots relies too heavily on historical and other material largely provided by the tribe and is supplemented by a limited assortment of additional secondary sources.

The problem here isn't that the tribe's account of things is incomplete or inaccurate. It may, in fact, be correct. Nevertheless, it needs additional support. There are a host of hostile accounts of the Pequots' resurgence that need to be acknowledged, challenged, and, if feasible, refuted. In addition to numerous articles, and even a website specifically designed to combat the existence of Foxwoods Casino (see <http://www.tribalnation.com/>), three significant books are conspicuously overlooked by the author: *Without Reservation: How a Controversial Indian Tribe Rose to Power and Built the World's Largest Casino* (2000), by Jeff Benedict; *Revenge of the Pequots: How a Small Native American Tribe Created the World's Most Profitable Casino* (2001), by Kim Eisler; and *Hitting the Jackpot: The Inside Story of the Richest Indian Tribe in History* (2003), by Brett Fromson. The titles alone indicate why they should not have been neglected. Only Eisler's book is noted and then only in the author's bibliography.

Pasquaretta concludes with an assertion that Indians must remain true to their own cultural traditions if they are to stay in the game and survive as sovereign Native nations. He argues that Indian writers have an important role to play in this process. By supplementing oral traditions with their own written works, they can help to keep the central defining metaphors and essential cultural traditions alive in the memory of Native peoples. That is an incredible weight to put on the shoulders of American Indian writers. One can only hope that they are, and remain, widely enough read to make good on such an important responsibility.

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Irene Avaalaaqiaq: Myth and Reality. By Judith Nasby. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002. 128 pages. \$28.95 paper.

Guelph University Professor Judith Nasby has produced a fascinating account of the life and art of Irene Avaalaaqiaq. As background, Nasby paints a vivid word picture of the harsh world of the twentieth-century Canadian-Arctic Inuit. She describes how a profound cultural shift, from nomadic hunting to living in government settlements, permanently altered the Inuits' way of life at mid-century. But in the relative security of Baker Lake settlement an astonishing and innovative body of artistic work was created by both men and women.

Avaalaaqiaq's work is defined by original interpretations of traditional themes using innovative materials, to produce her unique and dramatic hand-

sewn wall hangings. At the request of the author, Irene Avaalaaqiaq tape-recorded her life story during 1999 to 2001, with translation provided by Lucy Evo, assistant manager of the Inuit Heritage Centre at Baker Lake (now Qamanittuaq in Inuktitut language), and by Ruby Mautarinaak. Every attempt was made to maintain the character of Avaalaaqiaq's speech, according to the author. Along with interviews translated earlier, Nasby assembles a historic, factual, and artistic commentary but allows the artist's voice to be heard describing her life events and her art.

Hers is a powerful story of survival, depicted in art in terms of the myths and oral traditions of the Caribou Inuit. Orphaned soon after birth, about 1941, as a member of the Harvaqtormium group, one of five known collectively as the Caribou Inuit of the Barren Grounds west of Baker Lake, Avaalaaqiaq was raised by her grandparents until the death of Grandfather Pukiqtuk while she was very young. Often she would be left alone in the caribou-skin tent while Grandmother Arngnasungaaq hunted caribou, since food was always scarce.

Starvation killed many in other Inuit groups at this time, and Avaalaaqiaq recalls enduring three-day periods without food. Much of her young life was spent in complete isolation with only her grandmother's companionship. Avaalaaqiaq's grandmother taught the youngster to preserve caribou hides (for tent making) and many other survival skills out of Inuit lore. But more important to her life as an artist, Avaalaaqiaq listened avidly as her grandmother told of their people's past and the myths and beliefs that make the Inuit unique.

Life with relatives after the death of her grandmother was very difficult, and she suffered beatings and other abuse. She was married at fifteen to Tiktaalaaq and spent her days hunting meat and caring for relatives in her husband's camp. A difficult life was made more precarious at that time by Western diseases, a dramatic decline in the caribou herds, and the Inuits' lack of barter power for goods on which the people depended. Famine and starvation killed many. Slow to react, the Canadian government eventually moved the suffering people into trading stations such as Baker Lake, where Avaalaaqiaq and her husband settled. There they had seven children who survived, and they adopted two others. There it was that art became important to Avaalaaqiaq's life.

For thousands of years the Arctic people had nourished an aesthetic appetite expressed in stone, bone, ivory, sewn skins, and driftwood. Remarkable works of art remain from the pre-Dorset (2000–1600 BC), Dorset (800–500 BC), and Thule peoples (AD 1000–1300). Through the work of the legendary James Houston and government-sponsored art programs, the Canadian Guild of Crafts in Montreal enabled the Inuit to shift to a cash economy and find outlet for their artistic expressions. Avaalaaqiaq recalls that she carved soapstone for the first time in 1969 or 1970. A government-sponsored program at Baker Lake under craft officer Gabriel Gely introduced the women to the idea of pictures made of cloth and thread. Although she continues to make remarkable stencil prints, Avaalaaqiaq has flourished as an artist with cloth. Her very first attempt was made with black thread on plain cloth.

According to Nasby, the craft officers at Baker Lake in 1970 were the US couple Jack and Sheila Butler, who supervised printmaking and the "stitched

and appliquéd pictures that they called *neeingatah*, meaning “something to hang” (32). Inuit women were provided with wool stroud, embroidery floss, wool duffle, felt, and cotton embroidery thread. Avaalaaqiaq turned the materials into artworks—wall hangings that depicted her grandmother’s stories. These hangings reflect the bold and dramatic shamanistic transformation scenes and spirit themes, reflecting Avaalaaqiaq’s life of isolation and her closeness to the birds and animals and to the lands wherein she dwelt. A stunning example is plate 12, “Woman Alone” (1999; 152.5 cm by 186.75 cm). This wool duffle, felt, and cotton embroidery-thread hanging is symmetrical and filled with bold reds, yellows, and blues. Nasby points out that this piece is perhaps a response to the fear and solitude of Avaalaaqiaq’s early life. It may depict the duality of belief that the Inuit experience between the spiritual and the physical, as reported by her grandmother. Animals and people transform from one into the other. A solitary female figure sees her companions become shamans with wolves’ heads. As they and their spirit helpers try to attack the lone woman, she grows wings and flies away. Rounded, human-headed fish and birds are enclosed in a strong, tight border of birds’ heads.

Other women artists used iconography of Inuit culture, as opposed to these shamanistic characteristics. Another master artist from Baker Lake, Jessie Oonark (1906–85), also worked on a large scale with human figures and everyday motifs such as igloos or lines for fish drying. She used simple geometric shapes but in complicated arrangements with extremely fine stitching. An exhibition at the Baltimore Museum of Art in 1994 entitled “Northern Lights: Inuit Textile Art from the Canadian Arctic” featured the work of twelve Inuit women, including Oonark and Avaalaaqiaq.

As an aid to the reader, a current map of the Caribou Inuits’ arctic region provides place names in both Inuktitut and English. All individuals mentioned in the book are listed as well in the preface. These names in an unfamiliar tongue emphasize the importance of family and friends in the artist’s life.

The text “Where Myth and Reality Intersect” includes twenty-eight color plates of the artist’s works. Photographs of the Baker Lake settlement, of the artist with her children, and of community activities bring life to the verbal descriptions. In an appendix the author and the artist provide critical details and commentary on the plates. Another appendix lists Avaalaaqiaq’s many awards, acknowledgments, and exhibits, and a third appendix reproduces the address she delivered on being awarded an honorary doctorate at the University of Guelph.

Nasby has provided an in-depth view of Avaalaaqiaq and her works, inspiring awe and respect for this artist. That survival itself should be so perilous, and that out of it should come such a body of enduring art, moves the reader to a deep appreciation for this inherent aesthetic genius.

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