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Assu of Cape Mudge: Recollections of a Coastal Indian Chief. By Harry Assu, with Joy Inglis. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1989. 163 pages. \$29.95 Cloth. \$19.95 Paper.

The repatriation of native history is the motivation for the writing of this excellent autobiography of Harry Assu. Michael Ames notes in the foreword:

When Europeans first settled this country they not only took lands from aboriginal people but also took them out of their own histories. History was written from the point of view of the newcomers. . . . What Chief Harry Assu has done with this book is to bring history back to his own people.

Although co-author Inglis begins the book without citing other native autobiographies or life histories, and thus misses the chance to put the work into a wider context, she notes that the book is significant because it is the first published inside view of the Lekwiltok tribe of Kwagulth people from Cape Mudge, Vancouver Island, British Columbia. A striking photograph of Harry Assu's father, Chief Billy Assu (1867-1965), begins the autobiography and made this reviewer wish there were a prior or companion volume on Billy Assu's life.

The historic-era migrations of the We-Wai-Kai band that eventually settled at Cape Mudge are treated in the opening chapter. The lack of dates associated with the movements of cultural groups creates confusion, although the maps provide very good visual orientation. Precontact history is largely ignored, except for a passing reference to the fact that the Kwakwala-speaking people originated in the Queen Charlotte Strait area on the north and northwest end of Vancouver Island.

Although the ancient history of the Kwakwala-speaking people is not the subject of the book, a fine legend associated with a totem pole that once stood in front of Billy Assu's house gives the autobiography an ethnohistoric context, and probably says as much about Kwakwala culture as a full-blown ethnohistoric summary could. Two themes in this legend elucidate traditional Kwakwala worldview: the life-preserving power of cedar, and the ability of whales and birds to transform themselves into men. These are not just themes found in old stories. Throughout the

book, comments such as "Oh, the fish used to run up those little creeks. No more! Very few get up since they logged" (p. 27), and "Whenever we heard those awful sounds of the storm, we always said . . . the Thunderbird!" (p. 37) illustrate that a close personal bond with the rainforest and its creatures is the essence of Kwakwaka'wakw culture.

Assu of Cape Mudge documents the transformation of Kwakwaka'wakw material and social culture throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries through the eyes of Harry Assu. The principal truth that Harry Assu's story imparts is that Kwakwaka'wakw cultural survival depends on the survival of the worldview of individual Kwakwaka'wakw culture bearers. People such as Harry Assu learn a unique cultural perspective from their ancestors and then perpetuate it by teaching succeeding generations. The technological world of the Kwakwaka'wakw has been transformed through the gasoline engine and television, and the world of the Kwakwaka'wakw senses has been transformed by the de-emphasis of oral culture and a new emphasis on the visual (reading, writing, etc.). Kwakwaka'wakw culture has survived these technological and sensory transformations because individuals like Harry Assu absorbed their elders' worldview and went on to manipulate new technologies and interpret new sensory experiences from a uniquely Kwakwaka'wakw perspective.

The chapter on social organization describes the amalgamation of formerly autonomous Kwagwaka'wakw societies on the British Columbia Indian reserves in the late nineteenth century. The importance of various fishing locales and salmon processing strategies is described, including mention of *'kawas*, a smoke-dried dog salmon that is served with bread and wine for Holy Communion in the United Church at Cape Mudge.

Harry's earliest memory is of Billy's great potlatch of 1911. His father gave away more than \$10,000 in goods and money: "My father . . . worked for that money to give that potlatch for many years" (p. 39). Native labor was the backbone of British Columbia's economic and social development in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Logging, fishing, and fish processing provided the climate for native people to accumulate monetary wealth. Ironically, the industrial institutions that provided native people with employment opportunities denied natives the freedom of cultural expression when bigoted antipotlatch laws were

enforced in the 1920s and natives could no longer distribute their wealth ritually.

The discussion of life in Cape Mudge village includes an assessment of the ups and downs of the local relationship with the Methodist church. Chief Assu sums up the syncretism that developed over the years: "It's really nice the way the native and non-native way of life fits together in our church. We are not so narrow minded anymore. People learn from each other" (p. 94). His discussion of local education, sports, and politics is very short, reflecting the emphasis placed on fishing and potlatching in Kwagulth culture.

The two most interesting and provocative topics discussed are native commercial fishing and the potlatch. Harry Assu's intimate knowledge of fish behavior and fishing policy is evident, and his feelings about what should be done to protect the rights of native fishermen are controversial but understandable, given the Kwagulth worldview. Assu's description of the modern, revitalized potlatch includes mention of the way native people practically had to beg to have their sacred ceremonial objects returned in the mid-1970s. Masks, costumes, and other sacred ritual objects were bought by museums from Indian agents who had taken them from native people while enforcing the anti-potlatch laws of the early 1900s. Native people lobbied successfully to have the objects returned to their communities. Native fishing and the potlatch ceremonial are topics that Chief Harry Assu discusses with great knowledge and passion. His story is an elegant memoir of Kwakwala life and culture.

To summarize, the first part of the book is a bit sketchy, but it establishes a good background for the body of the book—Billy Assu's memoirs. The notes provide further depth, and Hillary Stewart's excellent sketches are everything that readers have come to expect from her. The work is certainly not an academic thesis, but what is lacking in organization, depth, and detail is more than made up for in the book's originality. *Assu of Cape Mudge* confirms that the genre of the native autobiography is a window into the heart of native culture and history. This work is a local history, a Kwakwala culture lesson, and an inside view of the most misunderstood cultural activity on the Northwest Coast—the potlatch. It should be read not only by Kwakwala people and anthropologists, but also by anyone interested in the history of Pacific salmon fishing, especially the tourists who flock

to the central British Columbia coast every summer to fish and enjoy the spectacular scenery.

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The Huron: Great Lakes. By Nancy Bonvillain. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1989. 112 pages. \$17.95 Paper.

In an effort to promote "a greater comprehension of the issues and conflicts involving American Indians today," the *Indians of North America* series, of which this book is a part, seeks to have scholars portray for young adults the "significant place that American Indians have had in our society." In this volume, Nancy Bonvillain, who has written a grammar and dictionary of the Mohawk language and has explored the role of Christian missionaries in Iroquoian history in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, describes the history and culture of the Wendat, or Huron, people who originated in southern Ontario. They are the best-described North American native people from the first half of the seventeenth century; their descendants continue to live in Quebec and Oklahoma.

The book begins with a general statement about Indian-white relations by the general editor, Frank W. Porter III. I presume that this essay is intended to serve as an introduction for all of the volumes in this series. Porter stresses conflict for control of power, land, and resources and the tenacious struggle of Native American groups to retain their freedom and identity as perennial issues in the relations between American Indians and Euro-Americans. He hopes that as all Americans acquire a deeper appreciation of the spiritual, cultural, and intellectual riches of Indians, the just resolution of these conflicts will become easier. I wish I felt equally confident that ideals will triumph over material interests.

I also find Porter's account of relations between North American Indians and the United States a curious beginning for a book about native people who originated in what is now Canada and many of whom continue to live there. The current treatment of native people in Canada is certainly no better than it is in the