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**“We Are Still Didene”: Stories of Hunting and History from Northern British Columbia.** By Thomas McIlwraith. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012. 172 pages. \$50.00 cloth; \$21.95 paper.

Native communities often find themselves in a paradox when it comes to representing and protecting indigenous knowledge. While United States and Canadian societies in the twenty-first century have come to value and appreciate indigenous knowledge, especially as it coalesces with environmental and conservation efforts, they often define this knowledge in terms more characteristic of late-nineteenth century understandings than practices within contemporary communities. To be recognizable to dominant societies, indigenous understandings about the relation of human interaction with the natural world have to appear to be unchanged since the advent of settler colonialism. What this all means is, that to be visible, indigenous communities still have to conform to categories and terms set by the western epistemologies of dominant society. This paradox is at the center of Thomas McIlwraith’s lively and insightful ethnography, *“We are Still Didene”: Stories of Hunting and History from Northern British Columbia*, an example of innovative research that pulls together disparate literatures regarding everyday talk, studies of labor and work, and environmental knowledge. In a larger sense, the book addresses problems of misrecognition of indigenous knowledge and proposes a way of appreciating local forms of knowledge that do not conform to stereotyped notions of what it means to be indigenous in the twenty-first century.

McIlwraith begins by addressing traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) and the ways that it has been defined and used. He notes that bureaucrats often employ the term to demonstrate cultural awareness in evaluating proposals for either development on, or extraction from, tribally held lands. Local community members also use TEK in their attempts to influence these decisions. According to McIlwraith, while TEK supposedly validates indigenous knowledge, it also privileges an objectified form of knowledge that is counter to the way that this type of information is both produced and circulated within the community. His involvement in a traditional use study (TUS) within the Iskut community in British Columbia in the late 1990s that focused on recording and mapping hunting and fishing territories reinforced his growing awareness that these types of activities limited indigenous expertise to a rather narrow field. In these types of studies, knowledge was seen as an extractable resource that lost meaning when divorced from a larger cultural context. As an alternative to these studies, McIlwraith employs an analytic framework derived from the literature associated with the ethnography of speaking to see how local stories about hunting were used and circulated within the Iskut community. Importantly, he focuses on how these narratives help structure and sustain

social relations rather than for the ecological content they contain.

After some introductory discussion that locates the Iskut community in the Stikine Country of northwestern British Columbia, the main chapters offer analyses of different types of narratives that concern animals, both food animals such as moose and work animals such as horses. He also includes a chapter on everyday talk about hunting. In each of these chapters, McIlwraith presents the stories and then discusses how they link to other social practices and systems of knowledge. He deftly describes both the people and place of the Iskut community and allows for the multivalent stories to largely stand by themselves. This is particularly the case in his discussion of the speech by Chief Louie, which is the center of chapter 5, and addresses the history of the community as well as articulating present political concerns. By offering the narratives in an easy to follow transcript form, he prioritizes both the speakers and the speaking context that is the key to his scholarly analysis.

Importantly, most of the stories are in English and McIlwraith makes the critical observation that English as well as the local language is a way of constructing indigenous subjectivity. This is a key argument and has the potential of engaging current scholarly discourse regarding the role of English *vis-à-vis* indigenous languages in the United States and Canada in productive ways. McIlwraith's discussion demonstrates that hunting stories do not have to look a certain way, including being recited in the indigenous language, in order to serve as a marker of Iskut identity. English is not only an acceptable way of communicating these stories, but its use is part of the larger story of the community and its history.

Overall, a larger discussion of language ideologies and language use within the contemporary community would have been beneficial. While language use is briefly alluded to in the introductory chapter, a larger discussion that introduced the speaking environment, including the current status of indigenous language and attempts at revitalization, would have better contextualized the use of English. The focus on TEK also demands more of an engagement with the issues surrounding indigenous language use, the structure and form of knowledge, and the problems of translation. This is especially important in understanding generational shift, and reference and linkages to works such as Barbra Meek's *We Are Our Language: An Ethnography of Language Revitalization in a Northern Athabaskan Community* would help sharpen the claims made in the book. While not a study in indigenous language maintenance or revitalization, a more thorough discussion of the various registers and codes that are part of the linguistic repertoire using an ethnography of speaking approach would strengthen the analysis offered.

What does become apparent throughout the book is that these are not just stories about hunting and subsistence, but rather a discussion of labor and

how the community has participated in various forms over the past hundred years. Many of these stories link hunting and subsistence activities with the guiding work for non-Native outfitters. These stories emphasize community transformation through this participation in guide work, as well as the maintenance of community values and practices regarding animals. This discussion is particularly reminiscent of recent work such as Jessica Cattelino's *High Stakes: Florida Seminole Gaming and Sovereignty* and Paige Raibmon's *Authentic Indians: Episodes of Encounter from the Late-Nineteenth Century Northwest Coast*. Both of these works discuss the historical relationship between indigenous communities and wage labor throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and how practices such as cattle ranching and hop-picking not only became indelibly linked to the Native communities, but also continue to serve as markers of identity and belonging in the twenty-first century. Curiously, McIlwraith does not position his work within this larger literature, but his discussion of labor would have been strengthened with a discussion of these works as well as the edited work *Native Pathways: American Indian Culture and Economic Development in the Twentieth Century*, which also examines how wage labor has become part of the larger indigenous experience in the United States and Canada.

Despite these limitations, McIlwraith should be commended for his weaving together of the various environmental, economic, and linguistic perspectives. In doing so, he clearly demonstrates why this type of talk matters; it matters within the community and it matters in the ways in which the community deals with outsiders. In the final chapter where he discusses political activism against continued encroachment of gas and mining companies into Iskut territories, McIlwraith demonstrates how discussions of hunting are really about control of and respect for the environment. According to the Iskut community, proper relationships must be maintained between the social and natural world, and the narratives are the keys to understanding the rules for maintaining balance and the consequences of ignoring them. Ultimately, the most important aspect of the study is to show how communities themselves are both positioning and articulating their histories in a rapidly changing landscape. The hunting narratives simultaneously reference the continuity of the community as well as chronicle the changes that the community has had to endure. The stories also demonstrate the conscious awareness that the community has about its need to control its own historical narratives within a hostile political environment in which its claims to place are questioned. This is a story of both resistance and persistence; importantly, it reminds the reader that those two impulses are always inextricably intertwined.

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