

considering them as having lived tragic lives, victims of European greed" (8).

This is not your average historical biography, however. Allen warns us from the beginning that she will create a narrative based on Native oral tradition that encompasses magic, stories from other Nations, and ways of knowing that we seldom have access to in more academic writing. What happens is that the biography unfolds like a story woven with facts and figures from history, while encouraging the reader to use her imagination.

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Rock, Ghost, Willow, Deer: A Story of Survival.

Allison Adelle Hedge Coke. Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2004; illustrations; ISBN 0-8032-1527-4; 198 pages; \$24.95 US.

When the phrase "truth is stranger than fiction" was coined, they could have had this book in mind. Hedge Coke is truly a resilient soul who endured more hardships than any one person should have to, and has survived to write about those experiences today. This heartbreaking memoir includes surviving a household where her mother was schizophrenic and her brother was a bully; repeated rapings; drug and alcohol addictions; physical and sexual abuse by her husbands; and enduring life threatening health issues. Hedge Coke writes an honest, straightforward account as she retells the stories of how she got to be where she is today and the strength she drew from her family and herself to survive.

The actions of Hedge Coke's mother had catastrophic effects on her children, including forcing Allison to start staying away from home by the age of nine. She said the one stabilizing factor in her life was her father, who created a normal home life for his family and instilled them with stories of their *Tsa-la-gi* heritage. These people and their stories are what kept Hedge Coke alive.

This book examines some very tough subjects, such as domestic violence, drug and alcohol abuse, and rape. Through each episode Hedge Coke recounts the facts simply, truthfully, without embellishment, and with just enough emotion to allow the reader to be there, feeling her pain, yet without recounting all the horrors that would cause the reader to abandon the book without finishing it. Once accused by her sister Pumpkin of being uneducated and backward because her language was not sophisticated enough, Hedge Coke here does an excellent job of keeping the language real and accessible.

Although the atrocities faced by Hedge Coke seemed insurmountable at times, she persevered

nonetheless, earned an MFA, raised two sons, and worked as an activist for many Native-related causes. This book takes a hard look at how police and other authorities fail to respond to women and to Native people's concerns by ignoring what has happened or making light of what has taken place. Hedge Coke provided examples of how people don't listen to women, such as giving her Novocain for dental work, and the near-death results she suffered because of others' refusal to listen.

Hedge Coke tells her life like it was. No stranger to hard work, she writes in depth about being poor, working as a migrant laborer, handling horses, trolling for fish, and making something out of nothing. Her family was an important support system, but mainly she relied on herself. This memoir stands as an inspiration to others who have lead a hard life and shows that if you have a determination to survive, you can overcome just about every obstacle.

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Skins: Contemporary Indigenous Writing.

Compiled and edited by Kateri Akiwenzie-Damm & Josie Douglas. Cape Croker Reserve, Ontario & Australia: Kegeдонce Press and Jukurpa Books, 2000; ISBN 1-86465-032-X; vix + 172 pges; \$24.95.

There were times I sat with Dora Rouge in the little room with the antlers and turtle shell rattles and the box I snooped in. We would breathe together the way wolves do with their kith and kin, the way they nurture relations by breathing. This breath was alive. It joined us as we were joined in so many other ways.

This passage into American Indian author Linda Hogan's "Dora Rouge's Bones" emphasizes and describes the Indigenous experience in this collection of stories from 19 Indigenous authors from Canada, the USA, Australia and New Zealand.

Compiled and edited by one of Canada's recognized Indigenous authors, Kateri Akewenzie-Damm and Josie Douglas, coordinator of the Australian collection, the book introduces a stimulating and riveting collection of short stories that can be appreciated by the student, the novice, and seasoned reader and would be especially relevant in Indigenous studies programs. Under the soft burnt-umber cover is a rich collection of short stories pulsing with action, drama, romance, tragedy and humor.

Metis writer Maria Campbell, one of Canada's most outstanding authors, utilizes distinct language and dialect to reflect a unique style of storytelling in "Dah Teef" which was first published in *Stories of the Road Allowance People* (Theytus Books, 1995).

An dah stories you know
 Dats da bes treasure of all to leave your family
 Everything else on dis eart
 He gets los or worn out.
 But dah stories dey las forever.

Each character is fundamentally connected to a time and place that reflects a struggle for survival, recognition and identity as in author Thomas King's "Borders," an inspiring and humorous story, as told through the eyes of a child about his mother who dares to take her stand at the Canada/US border when questioned about her identity.

This volume speaks of the relationship the people of the land have with nature, with each other and with Spirit; as in Inuk author Alootook Ipellie's "Love Triangle," a comedic legend about survival in the harsh unforgiving north. The author uses explicit scenes to connect the reader to a way of life that is almost extinct, as in this excerpt.

The carcass steamed. Its blood was indeed still quite warm. Nalikkaaq crouched over the seal, cupped his palms and sunk them into the warm blood and sucked the blood with fervour. Such a heavenly drink. Nalikkaaq looked up toward the sky and put his arms up to acknowledge the Creator and said, "This is food for the gods. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you."

These selected stories are fundamentally rooted in the meaning of "home." It's about leaving home, finding home, defining home, coming home or never leaving home. Richard Van Camp, member of the Dogrib Nation (NWT), in a tragic but inspiring story about a little girl, an old medicine man and a bag full of money, will have you crying one minute and rolling with laughter the next.

Palyku (Australia) author Sally Morgan's heart wrenching story "The Letter" reminds us of the sad effects of government policies on generations of Indigenous families as in this account: "By the time I found you, you were grown up with a family of your own. When you get this letter I will be gone but you will have the special things in my tin. I hope one day you will wonder who you really are."

This collection serves up a mean helping of raw authentic humor as in Maori-Aotearoa (New Zealand)

author Patricia Grace's hilariously funny "It Used to Be Green Once."

This story is mainly about the car and about Mum and how she shamed us all the time. The shame of rainbow darns and cut-up togs and holey fruit was nothing we suffered because of the car. Uncle Raz gave us the car because he couldn't fix it up any more.

These stories reflect the experience of the past as much as that of the present and contain historical content, glimpses of imagery into the legends of the past and plunges us into the cold reality of today. Therefore they ought to be read slowly so that each story can be savored and appreciated for its unique contribution to this exquisite compilation of Indigenous writings. A list of authors' biographies at the end of the back of the book complete an outstanding feast of exceptional Indigenous writings.

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Indigenizing the Academy: Transforming Scholarship and Empowering Communities.

Mihesuah & Wilson, eds. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004; 245 pgs; ISBN 0-8032-8292-3; \$19.95US.

One of the main lessons of the dominant society is that individual Indigenous people are too isolated and too few to challenge any colonial institution. As the contributors to *Indigenizing the Academy* explain very clearly, academic institutions have well-developed, insulating practices that keep Indigenous scholars marginalized and ignored. But what these authors know, and what we understand as Indigenous communities and nations, is that we gain strength by gathering, and by sharing stories. These are academics who have made it past the well-guarded hiring gateways, who work with commitment to meet the needs of Indigenous students, and who maintain respect for themselves and the wisdom of their communities. As they are gathered in this circle, sharing their experiences and successes, they provide a valuable resource for Indigenous scholars to come. *Indigenizing the Academy* is full of validation and strategies for change. I encourage each of us to sell a copy of this book to the non-Native "Indian experts" in our fields of study, and then to sit with them while they read.

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