

TALES OF TICASUK — ESKIMO LEGENDS & STORIES. Collected and written by EMILY IVANOFF BROWN "TICASUK." Illustrated by EUGENE C. and MARY LOU TOTTEN. Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press, 1987. i-xxv, 133 p., 21 illus. Hardbound. Price not indicated.

Tales of Ticasuk will prove to be a worthwhile addition to the library or book collection of all who have an interest in arctic folklore, legends and stories of the past. Canadian readers will immediately note the apparent happy acceptance of the term Eskimo used throughout to identify Alaska's most northern inhabitants, a fact which this reviewer rather hopes will prompt some serious reflection in this country!

It is always difficult to assess the value and importance of the legendary history of other cultures, but Emily Ivanoff Brown (Ticasuk's married name), in this collection of these traditional stories, has displayed all the skills of a dedicated educator in her work. The volume's frontpiece dedication to "schoolchildren" declares the target section of today's generation, but adult readers may well wonder whether the appellations of Mr. and Mrs. to various animal characters, not to speak of according ancient meals (historically taken whenever there happened to be food) the modern time slots of breakfast, lunch and supper are just a wee bit too anachronistic. But Ticasuk (lamentably no longer with us) could well argue that such niceties may well be sacrificed if indeed the young of this generation are ever to be excited about their ancestry and its story.

For Canadians who have some knowledge of the Eskimo language there will be appreciation that some of the Eskimo vocabulary is expressed in the north Alaskan Inupiaq dialect, that which has so close an affinity with every dialect in the same linguistic family eastward as far as Greenland. But what may present difficulties to the general reader is coping with the orthography. Both in the Publisher's Note and the Word about Spelling (in the introductory material) there is a spirited attempt to introduce the reader to the intricacies of linguistics. However, the guidelines for correct pronunciation may not be enough to enable classroom teachers, for instance, to negotiate names like Ihlliaqaq or Qweexoxok, at least not without a very deep breath first!

But in the collecting of these stories and legends, Ticasuk reveals a very deep and sincere commitment to the task of salvaging what is left of the traditions and culture of her Eskimo ancestry. The recorded stories offer an insight into the past with a wide variety of vivid imagery. In the reading one gets an appreciation of a people whose history was so intertwined with their relationships to the animal world from which their very survival depended. In these recorded epics just what is fact or myth can never be precisely known, but the footnotes the author offers at the conclusion of each story serve to interpret the thrust of each tale. If, indeed, fear does act as a source of motivation, one can well imagine, for instance, that the story of the "Ogre baby" would keep successive generations of children well in line. In her footnote Ticasuk asserts that the awesome cries of this terrifying creature could be heard among the caribou herds, that is, "until the Gospel came . . ." — a fact that this reviewer considers a rather positive deliverance.

Tales of Ticasuk is enhanced by an unusually lengthy prefatory section, which includes a Publisher's Note, Notes on the Author, a Foreword and, finally, an Introduction and Acknowledgements from the author herself. What this introduction does is to introduce the reader to a very courageous and concerned lady who obviously has had, somewhat painfully, to deal with the reality of her own Eskimo identity and roots. After early years of enforced immersion in the dominant culture of her state, she gave all she had to the study and preservation of the rich heritage of her maternal ancestry. These insights into the person and character of Ticasuk add to the authority of the tales and give the reader a special sense of sympathy for the life work of this gallant lady.

There are in this book 24 chapters, each recording a self-contained legend. Transmigration of souls takes place; birds and animals change into humans and back again; a shaman visits the moon; the cruel treatment of a ptarmigan brings swift retribution, and hunters and hunted, heroes and villains, all have their place. These epics are the

fruit of a thousand thousand retellings, all by word of mouth — and became the stuff of which honoured traditions are made.

Tales of Ticasuk is a hardcovered volume, attractively produced. Its 21 illustrations are striking and in complete harmony with the subject material. The unfortunate absence of a map of the area concerned is a disservice to the reader, who either has to have an atlas on hand or else just allow the geographical locations to slip by in his mind. But despite this, arctic region enthusiasts of all ages will find much profit from these pages, and educational institutions in Canada's North may well find that by adding it to their school libraries some stimulation may result in inspiring the collection and attractive production of legends and folklore from their own rich cultural heritage.

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PART OF THE LAND, PART OF THE WATER: A HISTORY OF THE YUKON INDIANS. By CATHARINE MCCLELLAN. Toronto: Douglas & McIntyre, 1987. 328 p., maps, illus., index. Hardbound. Cdn \$40.00.

Catharine McClellan is eminently qualified to write about the Yukon Indians. With four decades of fieldwork in the Territory to her credit, past editor of *Arctic Anthropology*, and author of the important study *My Old People Say*, she has made a notable contribution to our understanding of the Yukon's native people. In this book she has written not merely about, but for her subjects. *Part of the Land, Part of the Water* is aimed not only at a general audience, but at schoolchildren, for McClellan has written a text as well as a book of more general interest.

As would be expected from the author's academic qualifications — she is professor emerita from the University of Wisconsin — and her experience in the Yukon, the book is a treatment of the subject from an anthropological point of view. The languages, life cycles, traditions, and world view of the Indians are described with an authority that leaves no doubt that McClellan is master of her subject. The style is suited to both a school and a general audience. McClellan has taken pains to define a number of technical terms — geology, paleontology, archaeology (and for some reason, the word "rodent"), but not words such as "omnivorous," which might give schoolchildren difficulty.

There are some wonderfully evocative passages in the book. Drawing on the latest work of archaeologists and anthropologists, McClellan in the first chapter paints eight vignettes of the life of the Yukon Indians over the past 25 000 years, from the days of mammoth-hunting to the era of contemporary land claims. An account of life on the Porcupine River 11 000 years ago is particularly realistic:

Six families are camped in the shelter of some small poplar and spruce that have managed to grow in a sunny, south-facing spot along a branch of a river which later will be called the Porcupine. Not far from here, men hunted mammoth 15,000 years earlier. Nowadays, hunters hardly ever see mammoths; they seem, in fact, to be disappearing. . . . The old men and the women gather just enough dry willow twigs to set ablaze the few cakes of dried bison dung they have been hoarding for a cooking fire. One man puts meat, fat and snow into the bison's paunch, while one of the women brings out her store of dried berries to add to the mixture. Tying the bag-like paunch closed with rawhide, they hang it from a pole, so that it twists over the low flame. Ladles of musk-ox and bison horn are brought out: one for each person to eat the bison stew. . . . they have been without food for four days.

McClellan seems here to accept the controversial suggestion that there were people living in the Yukon 25 000 years ago, though later, in an excellent section on Ice Age archaeology, she admits that definite proof on the matter is still lacking.

Perhaps the book's greatest strength, and what should make it most useful for a northern audience, is that McClellan has used her material