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Great Plains Studies, Center for

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2006

## Book Review: Powwow

Clifford E. Trafzer  
*University of California*

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Trafzer, Clifford E., "Book Review: Powwow" (2006). *Great Plains Quarterly*. 81.  
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*Powwow*. Edited by Clyde Ellis, Luke Eric Lassiter, and Gary H. Dunham. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005. xv + 309 pp. Notes, index. \$45.00 cloth, \$19.95 paper.

*Powwow* invites readers into the dancing circle where a cornucopia of information, analysis, and interpretation vibrates, telling us about the popular intertribal celebration. The topic of American Indian powwows creates strong emotions and colorful stories, and the editors invite several authors into the “dance arena” of this book to share their research and experiences. As a result, readers will hear the drum, see traditional and fancy dancers, smell the sizzling fry bread, and feel the spirit that is the American Indian powwow. The editors point out that powwows vary in size from the larger Red Earth gathering on the Great Plains with its big money prizes for dancers and drummers to smaller family and social powwow celebrations. The editors and authors point out the common characteristics of powwows, including the grand entry, prayers, flag songs, intertribal dances, giveaways, honors, and specials, but they also argue that powwows are not static but “ever-changing, evolving, and negotiated.” Some of the authors view the powwow as a pan-Indian phenomenon, while others point out tribal and group nuances that make powwows unique.

Patricia Albers and Bea Medicine demonstrate that some powwows are intertribal while others are “in-group” or smaller affairs sponsored by families who honor people, name children, or celebrate special occasions like birth, puberty, or honoring of elders. Grant Arndt details changes in the Ho-Chunk powwow tradition, while Loretta Fowler points out the symbolism and rituals found within powwows. All of the authors emphasize Native identity, spirit, and the good medicine generally connected to powwows—without denying that sometimes negative rivalries surface at the celebrations. The chapter “The Songs of Our Elders” is purposely placed in the center of the volume where the authors emphasize the way powwows are prayers of

thanksgiving and remembrance. Of particular note are the original chapters on Indian princesses, gay powwows, German powwows, and the development and growth of the powwow tradition among the Indian peoples of Virginia and North Carolina. The critique of New Age participants who collect "Indians and Wolves" is superb and equaled in quality by the discussion of the meeting of the Stomp Dance of the Eastern Woodlands with the powwow tradition of the Great Plains.

These essays, tied together by the powwow theme, create a book whose words dance off the page. Readers should be delighted by their increased understanding of the American Indian powwow at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

CLIFFORD E. TRAFZER  
Department of History  
University of California, Riverside