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2006

Book Review: Coyote Warrior: One Man, Three Tribes, and the Trial That Forged a Nation

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Coyote Warrior: One Man, Three Tribes, and the Trial That Forged a Nation. By Paul VanDevellder. New York: Little, Brown, 2004; Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005. vii + 321 pp. Map, photograph, appendixes, notes, bibliography, index. \$25.95 cloth, \$19.95 paper.

A citizen of the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara Nations (MHA Nation), Raymond Cross has carried out unparalleled work as an Indian lawyer, a tribal advocate, and an Indian law scholar. *Coyote Warrior* chronicles Cross's incredible journey from youngest child of a prominent Indian family to American Indian rights crusader, to his two triumphant appearances before the United States Supreme Court, to his lobbying efforts to secure compensation for the lost homelands of his nations. Paul VanDevellder's journalistic style lends much to these tales that appeared before only in the oft-stale pages of the *United States Reporter* and Congressional hearing transcripts.

Ray Cross's childhood, as VanDevellder recounts, occurred when the national forces of Termination-era federal Indian policy mixed with American Congressional and military attempts to control the natural world. The Garrison Dam project, intended to regulate the Missouri River and provide pork-barrel assistance to constituent farmers, destroyed the homelands of the MHA Nation. VanDevellder's gripping story of the days when water climbed over Indian homes and villages and cemeteries is highlighted by the tale of the rescue of the community's sports trophies from a flooded high school. Today, the MHA Nation sits on the highlands dominated by hostile non-Indian border towns, their fertile and beautiful river-bank lands engulfed by American hubris.

Young Ray escaped reservation despair and urban relocation to become an Indian lawyer, working first for the nascent Native American Rights Fund. Even as an inexperienced lawyer, Cross won important victories in federal court for treaty rights in *United States v. Adair* and in Congress for recognition of the Pascua Yaqui Tribe. But it was Cross's decision to return home to represent his own Nations that came to establish his enduring legacy. Cross twice won important victories in favor of the Nations' sovereignty before a skeptical Supreme Court in *Wold Engineering I* and *II*, declaring a North Dakota statute depriving Indian tribes of the right to sue in state court to be preempted by federal law. In the same time frame, Cross led the lobbying effort to secure monetary compensation from Congress for the federal taking of tribal lands in the Garrison Dam debacle. Nothing short of decommissioning the dams can bring back the lands to the Nations, and it appears that Ray Cross, now an influential and thoughtful legal scholar, like his people, will not stop until their lands are returned.

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