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## Review of The Plains Cree: Trade, Diplomacy and War, 1790- 1870.

James Dempsey

*Saskatchewan Indian Federated College*

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*The Plains Cree: Trade, Diplomacy and War, 1790-1870.* By John S. Milloy. Winnipeg: The University of Manitoba Press, 1988. Maps, photographs, tables, preface, notes, bibliography, index. xviii + 159 pp. \$24.95.

John Milloy's examination of the Plains Cree fits in with the growing concern for presenting histories that are not based on the European perspective but focus on events and issues relevant to a particular group's past. Although he is not a native, Milloy's portrayal of the Plains Cree's political and economic relations with neighboring tribes is a good example of how a "native" perspective can give new insight into historical events. For example, he points out that while the Red River area is important to fur trade historians, at other places in the West "significant events were occurring in the course of Indian history and, in particular, Cree history."

Milloy uses the Plains Cree as a prime example for dispelling the popularly held view that the Plains Indians were simply wandering nomads, when in fact their movements followed a logical and structured pattern. As he states, "the history of the Cree nation was not one of undirected control but in fact their movements did not just follow opportunity, but also created it." The period 1790-1870 was one of the most dynamic and important times for the Cree. Milloy concentrates on the Cree's diplomatic and military life as well as trade relations with the Blackfoot to the southwest and with the Mandans to the southeast. To suggest that the Cree, in their favored trade position, simply blocked other tribes from gaining access to the benefits of the fur trade is to suggest incorrectly that the Cree did not know how to maximize the benefits of their geographic position.

Milloy dispels the idea that the Cree were in a state of constant war with their neighbors when in fact economics and diplomatic actions such as peace treaties and war alliances dictated much of their action. He states that the Cree were not just pushed onto the Plains by the fur trade; their move was the result of a conscious decision. He also emphasizes the importance of the acquisition of the horse, a necessary element for year-round survival on the Plains. Milloy believes that much of the movement and relations between the various tribes came as a result of the rise in the importance of the fur trade and the influx of European goods. Unlike Arthur Ray in his book on the fur trade, which contends that guns were not very important, Milloy makes much of the significance of guns.

One criticism of this book is that the author tends to oversimplify the role of bands and gives the impression that all bands were party to a Cree treaty with an enemy tribe, when, in fact, there may have been only a few bands of Cree and a few bands of the enemy.

Milloy has used a wide range of sources, including Hudson's Bay Company records and many published sources, but in addition, he has made good use of native recollections. His book is a solid academic work with the added advantage of being very readable and enjoyable.

JAMES DEMPSEY  
Department of Indian Studies  
Saskatchewan Indian Federated College