

American Indian Law Review

Volume 4 | Number 2

1-1-1976

Book Review: Plains Indian Mythology

Richard J. LaFromboise

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.law.ou.edu/air>



Part of the [Indian and Aboriginal Law Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Richard J. LaFromboise, *Book Review: Plains Indian Mythology*, 4 AM. INDIAN L. REV. 359 (1976),
<https://digitalcommons.law.ou.edu/air/vol4/iss2/13>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by University of Oklahoma College of Law Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in American Indian Law Review by an authorized editor of University of Oklahoma College of Law Digital Commons. For more information, please contact darinfox@ou.edu.

BOOK REVIEW

Plains Indian Mythology, by Alice Marriott and Carol K. Rachlin. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1975. Pp. xiii-194.

It is said in Indian circles that "being Indian is meeting twelve Anthro's (anthropologists) by the time you are ten." One of the greatest justices these anthropologist-authors can put forth to the public is not another fast-buck Indian production with a catchy title and glossy cover page, but a scholarly and truthful depiction of the Indian and his existence. *Plains Indian Mythology* can be cherished by non-Indians as an informative and clear discussion of today's western Oklahoma Indian. The dedication of the book to the "teller of tales who are gone" may, however, turn Indians away immediately because the Indian knows that the teller is still around and if he wants to hear a tale, all he has to do is go home and listen to grandpa or some other elder. There is a wide presumption that since the artifacts and remnants of the Indians are making their way into museums, all that remains is to put the Indian there also. But the Indian does not have to go to the museum because he can still go and have a "tale told" to him.

The authors have, however, chosen an excellent subject and have condensed the materials to cover a large segment of the Indian society. Perhaps the best place for this book would be in a classroom where there is a Title IV program, in a state such as Oklahoma. The book should have a strong attraction for Oklahomans because most of the tribes mentioned are from that state and Oklahoma possesses the largest Indian population of any state. By placing the book in the classroom, the state would be countering the age-old "*Deer-Slayer, Mohican*" depiction of an Indian.

Marriott and Rachlin have completed a detailed study of Plains Indian myths. The Indian people who have contributed and shared their ancestral backgrounds are to be commended. But the authors should be challenged for printing Indian myths by anonymous persons leading the reader to believe that an Indian has told the myth. The chapter, "The Little Stories," could probably enlighten educators about the different types of Indian legends and the way the Indian lives. In doing so, educators might develop the awareness needed to educate those who profess to have a little Indian blood somewhere in the family. The chapter, "Horseback Days," can only be depicted as the Indian's "Iliad," with the previous chapter demonstrating just how western Oklahoma was perceived by the Indian.

An old problem comes back to haunt the authors in the last seg-

ment of the book. In choosing the title of “Freedom’s End” for their last chapter and depicting the forty-niners as an end to freedom, the authors show that they are not tuned in to Indian ways. The forty-niners are today’s “caught-in-between-two-worlds” Indian. They do not depict the end of freedom, but the everlasting “go away BIA, I ain’t your Indian anymore” attitude, rebellious, with the self-determinative goal of today’s Indian. They do not want to be separated, isolated, terminated, or set in a book or museum, but to make decisions determining their own *Indian* destiny.

Richard J. LaFromboise (Chippewa)

National President, American Indian Law Student Association
Third Year Law Student, University of Oklahoma