***Tipi: Heritage of the Great Plains*. Nancy B. Rosoff and Susan Kennedy Zeller, eds. Seattle: University of Washington Press. 239 pp.**[*]

Reviewed by Linea Sundstrom

An exhibition at the Brooklyn Museum inspired this lavishly illustrated volume, but like a well-constructed tipi it stands solidly on its own. The book aims to present Plains Indian culture, with the tipi as a central symbol, not as a relic, but as a living, dynamic part of Native American life today. This eclectic collection of 12 essays and scholarly papers lets the reader peep inside the tipi from a variety of angles. The contributions are divided, somewhat arbitrarily, into two sections, "The Quintessential American Architectural Form" and "The Center of Family Life"; however, the topics presented go well beyond material culture. Most of the contributors are themselves Plains Indians, which lends the volume a tone of ease and familiarity deriving from people who have known tipi life in some form since childhood.

As would be expected of an exhibit-related publication, the book has wonderful color plates throughout. Rather than appearing as exhibit specimens, these are fully integrated into the text. The University of Washington Press should be applauded for producing a book that is a delightful visual experience. Some of the most interesting and beautiful plates are not of tipis, but of the clothing, parfleche bags, tipi liners, and toys created within the sphere of the tipi and contemporary works of art and architecture inspired by the Plains Indian way of life.

Following an overview of the history and importance of tipis in Plains societies by exhibit organizer Nancy B. Rosoff, the art of tipi living—past and present—is detailed in an overview by Emma Hansen. This chapter describes how various Plains peoples created, decorated, and furnished tipis, with an emphasis on women's primary role in these activities. A generous helping of first-hand accounts of tipi life enlivens this overview. Hansen concludes with the difficult transition from tipi to log cabin and "government" houses, noting that for many Plains Indians the tipi thereafter came to symbolize their tribal origins and old traditions.

The following chapter, by architect Dennis Sun Rhodes, follows seamlessly with a description of how he, as a young child and teenager, experienced space within and without his grandmother's one-room log house on the Wind River Indian Reservation, and how that modern "tipi" as well as the traditional ones influenced his designs for houses and public buildings. As an anthropologist, I found this essay to be one of the most informative. For example, Sun Rhodes relates that his grandmother taught the children to turn left on entering the house and to move "sunwise" around the central stove, just as is done in a tipi. Of particular value are his observations of how his grandmother arranged and used her log house like a tipi and his analysis of the problems introduced by multi-room government houses.

The next chapter is co-editor Susan Kennedy Zeller's interview with Heywood and Mary Lou Big Day concerning Crow tipi traditions and their continuing relevance to their community. The Big Days provide important details about doorway songs, rules concerning use of decorations on

tipi covers, Crow Fair, and teaching new members of the family tipi etiquette. This is followed by Zeller's analysis of the Rain-in-the-Face tipi liner, a sort of screen extending around the inside wall of the tipi to provide insulation and privacy, in this instance the decorated lines also illustrate Rain-in-the-Face's accomplishments as warrior. She uses historical documents and other studies of warrior art to explore the narrative encoded in the pictographic tipi liner. In the same vein, Cheyenne-Arapaho tribal member Harvey Pratt presents his own painted tipi liner recording his accomplishments as a US Marine in Vietnam. His vivid, sparse drawings follow in the forceful narrative art tradition of earlier warrior art, comprising visual cues for the more detailed spoken accounts of his adventures.

In the next essay, Northern Cheyenne artist and educator Bently Spang takes on the difficult topic of stereotypes. He targets the use of tipis in novelty architecture such as "wigwam motels" as an example of non-Indians expropriating and trivializing Indian culture for commercial gain. As yet another caricature, he finds the roadside tipi symptomatic of white ignorance or disrespect of Native culture. In other realms, however, the situation is not so clear-cut. He wants Native people to reclaim the tipi as a symbol of cultural identity and the importance of family and community values, yet one guesses that he is not pleased when a stranger's first question is "are you an Indian?" and their second question is "do you live in a tipi?"

The next chapter is Barbara Hail's well researched overview of the women's arts and their connection to family life. She extends this to the present with examples of beading and quilts by modern artists. Award-winning Kiowa artist Teri Greeves continues that theme with an essay about how she learned beadwork from her elder relatives and now uses it to create highly original, yet recognizably Native American artworks.

From the male side of the tipi, Daniel C. Swan and Michael P. Jordon explore the importance of tipis in the warrior tradition. Tipi covers, clothing, robes, and furnishings reflected the importance of men's war deeds in Plains societies. Early reservation period drawings on paper illustrate the use of tipis for meetings of leaders, for ceremonies, and for the meetings and rites of warrior societies. These authors focus on today's Black Leggings Warrior Society tipi as emblematic of adaptation of an old tradition to modern Kiowa society. Two members of that group were interviewed for the following essay, which relates how they designed and created the current Black Legging tipi.

The final chapter focuses on child and family life in Plains Indian societies. Anthropologist Christina Burke shows how children's surroundings and possessions expressed and reinforced cultural values in old times and today. Today there are many occasions for setting up the tipi: ritual adoptions and graduations powwows, and cultural summer camps for children.

Overall, this book is a fine introduction to Plains Indian culture. Its wealth of photographs, straightforward prose, and contemporary Native voices are an effective antidote for those who know Plains cultures only through plastic toy tipis, chicken feather headdresses, cartoons, and old Westerns, and for that matter, those who know it only through New Age dreamcatchers and kokopellis. For museum professionals, the book shows the value of enlivening old collections with new materials and perspectives, as well as the fruitfulness of a true collaboration between the experts in the museum and those other experts: the people whose lives are most directly

represented by the objects in an exhibit. The scholar of anthropology or Native American studies is likely to discover unexpected details, patterns, and connections. The information is not perfect. For example, the term "culture heroine" is an odd one to apply to the Lakota being Double Woman, and the dates given for the origin of the tipi are perhaps too early. To my knowledge, gypsum rather than mica was applied as a sizing to the tipi cover. I would liked to have found somewhere in the volume the oft-stated comparison of the tipi to a woman sheltering her family. These are minor problems that in no way hinder the book's message that the tipi is a unique, culturally important, and ongoing influence in Indian country and beyond.

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