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Patrick J. Daley, Beverley A. James. *Cultural Politics and the Mass Media: Alaska Native Voices.* Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004. x + 235 pp. $35.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-252-02938-7.

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Published on H-AmIndian (March, 2006)

What a great book this is! It details in both a knowledgeable and entertaining manner the advent of contemporary mass media in Alaska and its role in the native land claims and native cultural revitalization processes.

The main concept of the book is "resistance as cultural persistence." This concept explains how indigenous societies have learned to use both the written and electronic media as a way to maintain their traditional cultures. The stories the authors tell are fascinating illustrations of this concept.

The authors illustrate their thesis of the powerful combination of media and native/local people by using a number of case studies. The book begins with the arrival of various missionaries in Alaska and analyzes the missionaries' often misguided attempts at assimilating the native peoples. The fascinating story of how greed and capitalistic entrepreneurship almost ruined the West Coast and Alaskan Salmon fishery in the 1920s and 30s offers insights that are applicable to many other places where native/local and non-native interests run afoul of each other. For years the salmon fishery had been operated according to native and local customs on a small scale and very sustainable basis until outside fishing companies from California and Washington state implemented larger operations that destroyed much of the livelihood of the natives and local fishermen and almost destroyed the fish stock by constructing large salmon traps on the rivers as well as canneries. The newspaper Alaska Fisherman led the fight against these outside interests and was instrumental in saving at least some of the fisheries.

The book describes the interconnectedness of native culture and politics, persistence, Washington politics, Alaskan non-native politics, the start of the oil rich days, environmental concerns, and the media — all strands in the rich Alaskan tapestry. The focus is on Alaskan natives.

The book shows the reader how the Inupiaq, the Yupiq, various Indian tribes, politicians, business people and the media were and are interconnected, sometimes quite covertly, sometimes quite overtly. The process was certainly never boring and it had a significant impact on the lives of Alaskans.

Alaska used to be a place distant from Washington, a place that Washington bureaucrats considered practically uninhabited. Therefore some east coast bureaucrats and nuclear scientists thought it was a great place to try out a little social engineering, possibly even with the aid of a nuclear bomb or two. The story about Edmund Teller and his Project Chariot is an amazing one. Teller's idea was to show that nuclear bombs were "user- friendly" by using such a bomb to create a natural harbor near Kotzebue. This is a story that ought to be widely known for it is one that illustrates how power and culture-blind policymakers tried their best to destroy an indigenous way of life, not to mention other negative impacts of exploding an atomic bomb in Alaska. It is the story of how heroic people, native and non-native, were able to use the power of the mass media, particularly the *Tundra Times*, to stop this ill-conceived and dangerous project.

Equally riveting is the story about how the construction of the potentially largest hydro-electrical dam in the United States was stopped. Media, natives, and environmentalists combined forces to stop the proposed construction of the Rampart Dam in Alaska and thereby saved large parts of the Alaskan interior and several native villages from being flooded.

Many of the stories that Daley and James include are what may be called David and Goliath stories. The success of the underdog, the Inupiaq, the Yupiq and the Indians, is made possible by their use of the mass media, which became one of their main weapons in their persistence to safeguard their culture and their land. The authors also deal with the influence of the media in the land claims settlements.

Cultural Politics and the Mass Media uses this case study approach to look at these events and the manner in which newspapers, radio, and television were able to

express the native and local perspective. The book advances an interesting paradigm of native and local people's control over their own media. It is a useful book for anyone who wants to understand the role of the media in cultural resistance and persistence. The lessons learned in Alaska may apply to many indigenous and minority groups around the world.

When the Alaskan natives decided to become masters of their own media and thereby, at least to some extent, become masters of their own fate, they indirectly created a model of indigenous ownership that may serve as a model for other indigenous communities. Though there is not yet one in Alaska, the book underlines the need for a future indigenous model of news broadcasting.

It is a book well suited for a reader interested in understanding a crucial period in Alaskan (and American) history: the development of the native desire to retain and revitalize their culture and language and the beginnings of native politics. It offers insights as well for communications/mass media scholars interested in native and minority groups' use of the media. However, it is also a book that will appeal to the general reader interested in native issues and/or the media.

The final chapter looks toward a future where native peoples consistently play a much more active role and create their own societies and media. This is the story of how Alaskan natives learned to find their own voice and to speak about their own concerns (be it in English or a native language) according to their culture. If you want to understand something about the rise and affirmation of Alaskan natives, the case stories in this book are an excellent introduction. It is also a unique introduction to many relatively unknown stories that have certainly never before been presented in such a comprehensive manner.

The only shortcoming of the book is some slight repetition, but nothing that detracts from the overall interest of the book. The bibliography is extensive and provides an excellent introduction to aboriginal communication and culture. The index is very thorough. Cultural Politics and the Mass Media offers a fascinating story and I highly recommend it.

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Citation: Marianne Stenbaek. Review of Daley, Patrick J.; James, Beverley A., *Cultural Politics and the Mass Media: Alaska Native Voices*. H-AmIndian, H-Net Reviews. March, 2006.
URL: http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=11594

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