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**Joseph Nicolar**. *The Life and Traditions of the Red Man.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2007. Edited by Annette Kolodny. xv + 222 pp. $69.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8223-4009-6; $19.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8223-4028-7.

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## A Tribal Leader's Commitment to Self-Representation and Cultural Persistence

In his preface to *The Life and Traditions of the Red Man*, Charles Norma Shay, the author's grandson, explains that reprinting Joseph Nicolar's book is necessary because "the state of Maine has legislated that Native American history and culture comprise part of every young person's education" (p. xi). It was, in part, for this reason that University of Arizona professor Annette Kolodny, with the Penobscot Nation's endorsement, took up the project of republishing Nicolar's story cycle. Originally published in 1893, the book offers an account of Penobscot traditional stories. Although the author is far too modest about his literary achievement, he does mention that his work is the product of forty years of research. His stated purpose in producing the text was to address the general desire to see these stories in print, as well as "to remove the fear, that the life of the red man will pass away unwritten" (p. 95).

Indeed, Nicolar's retelling of Penobscot origin stories and the journeys of Klos-kur-beh, a traditional "Wabanaki culture-bringer," exhibit Penobscot epistemology, and, therefore, indigenous cultural persistence (p. 42). Furthermore, by interweaving renderings of Penobscot stories of creation and prophecy with aspects of Catholic theology, the text exemplifies how colonized and indigenous peoples appropriated and adapted outsider cultural resources to shape reality to their own designs. As Kolodny argues, "over time, his people had incorporated Christian teachings into their prior belief systems and, in the process, modified the spiritual meanings of their longtime Catholicism" (p. 43).

Just as Nicolar's re-envisioning of the Klos-kur-beh story cycles lists the effects of colonial encounters, the textual language legitimizes the Penobscots' rights to their ancestral lands. Frequent references to Penobscot land holdings as "the land the Great Spirit gave you" serve not only as affirmations of his people's traditional land rights, but also as evidence of his people's worldview (p. 115).

In publishing the reprint, Kolodny followed Nicolar's lead by producing a collaborative text. As Bonnie D. Newsome, director of Cultural and Historic Preservation for the Penobscot Nation, points out in her afterword, Kolodny sent drafts of her introduction to members of the Penobscot Nation to solicit their comments, suggestions, and reviews. This method has served the reprint well. It was at Shay's suggestion that Kolodny included a history of the Penobscot Nation, and, without her comprehensive introductory materials–the history as well as her own close reading of Nicolar's text–much of what is represented in Nicolar's book might be lost on modern readers. Kolodny's contextualization makes apparent the exigency of Nicolar's text; *The Life and Traditions of the Red Man* was both a challenge to centuries of humiliating, paternalistic treatment by whites and a rebuttal to the prevailing conception that Indians were fast-vanishing historical relics. This text is a testament to native people's ability to "hold onto the sustainable aspects of their traditional cultures," and, in that testament, the text exhibits how natives refused to allow colonial powers to assert sovereignty over them (p. 40).

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