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Anna J. Willow. *Strong Hearts, Native Lands: The Cultural and Political Landscape of Anishinaabe Anti-Clearcutting Activism.* Albany: State University of New York Press, 2012. xiv + 252 pp. $75.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-4384-4203-7.

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Between December 3, 2002, and June 3, 2008, the Anishinaabe residents of Grassy Narrows First Nation and their Native and non-Native allies engaged in the single longest direct action protest by indigenous peoples in Canadian history. They forced Abitibi-Consolidated to cease logging operations at Slant Lake, which is adjacent to the First Nation and within the traditional territories of Grassy Narrows, locally known as Asubpeeschoseewagong Netum Anishinabek. The blockade was an important episode of ongoing Aboriginal-government-industry relations. Anna J. Willow's *Strong Hearts, Native Lands* is a theoretically informed work that assesses the impact of the blockade and the meanings it held for the groups involved.

Willow's study is based on participant observation at the blockade, itself beginning in May 2003, and is supplemented with documentary and archival research, all of which she conducted while completing her PhD. She argues that to understand anti-clearcutting activism we must move beyond the simplistic label of "environmentalism" and appreciate the complex and sometimes contradictory relationships between peoples and the environment (p. 3). She notes that the blockade was an avenue through which Grassy Narrows' residents built on a longstanding tradition of political activism while consciously engaging in cultural revitalization. Willow concludes that environmental issues are simultaneously social and political issues, that the blockade can only be understood through a cosmology where human beings are part of nature, and that the future of Native and non-Native residents are shared. While it is tempting to view the blockade as a conflict between the residents of Grassy Narrows and Abitibi-Consolidated, the blockade was part of a "multigenerational struggle to endure in the face of political, cultural, and environmental domination" (p. 17).

Strong Hearts, Native Lands is built on the concept of "landscape." Landscape, as a theoretical concept, moves beyond false binaries of nature-culture or civilization-wilderness to consider the processes that underpin anthropogenic perspectives of the land itself. Of particular importance to this theoretical orientation is the issue of "positionality," which illustrates that an individual's perspective on the land and issues surrounding it change the meaning of the land. An effective illustration of the positionality of landscape is the differing definitions of the land; whereas government and industry defined the land as a resource to be utilized, Grassy Narrows residents viewed the same land as holding a vital part of their cultural identity. This difference is made explicit when government and industry named the land the "Whiskey Jack Forest," while supporters of the blockade defined the territory as the "Grassy Narrows Traditional Land Use Area" (GNTLUA). While the theoretical concept of "landscape" used by Willow is useful, the author notes its limitations, namely, that associating identity with the environment can lead to disturbing charges of authenticity when Native peoples are expected to match the ecological saints of the non-Native imagination.

The book is divided into two parts. Chapters 1 through 3 introduce important concepts and contextualize the blockade within the longer history of Native-government-industry relationships both nationally and specifically in northwestern Ontario, while chapters 4 through 8 narrate the blockade itself. The introductory chapters contextualize the Grassy Narrows blockade within dynamic Anishinaabe cultures and identities, the longer history of environmental degradation, and government-indigenous relations both in northwestern Ontario and across Canada. Mercury poisoning of the English-Wabigoon river system and the protests against that process, which began in the 1970s, situate the later anti-clearcutting activism in the local context. Nationally, land claims cases, especially in British Columbia, and concerns over rights to the land provide a backdrop to the protests. One area that the author misses is the political debates surrounding the 1969 *White Paper* by the

Trudeau government and the Aboriginal response to it, which would have added nuance to her discussion of Annishinabe attitudes toward the Indian Act.

The second part of the book outlines the history of the blockade at the Slant Lake site and within the expanding network of activists. The blockade took place in four distinct phases and each receives its own chapter in the book, with the exception of the second phase, which is analyzed in two separate chapters. Phase one took place in the 1990s when awareness and anger at the environmental degradation wrought by industrial developments increased at Grassy Narrows. Direct action protests began the second phase with the first iteration of the blockade in the fall of 2002. The winter of 2003 and the lull in activity at the Slant Lake blockade represent a third phase. The final phase witnessed an expanding network of external supporters who advocated on behalf of Grassy Narrows.

For the Annishinaabe protesters, preserving the land and preserving their cultural identity were never presented as distinct goals. Willow emphasizes that, while land-based sustenance activities were no longer viable as the primary source of livelihoods or caloric intake for most individuals at Grassy, the importance of hunting and trapping remain vital for Anishinaabe cultural identity. By placing the human-environment relationship within discourses of identity rather than resource-use, Willow illuminates the important distinction between "western" environmentalism rooted in a dichotomous view of nature and culture and the Anishinaabe whose world views reject what they perceive as a false binary.

The blockade was never an entirely localized struggle, even if the direct cause of protest was focused on northwestern Ontario. The author uses the concept of "indigenism" to frame the blockade and its network of supporters within a global context. Indigenism, writes the author, is a new phase in indigenous protest movements that is rooted, paradoxically, in a notion of rootedness and cultural connections to the land that when paired with recent advances in globalization and communication form a "twenty-first-century model for resisting state marginalization and domination" (p. 64).

One of the greatest insights from this particular work is the difference between interest groups who often attributed different meanings of the blockade, which is made most clear in chapter 8. The Grassy Narrows Tribal Council and the Grassy Narrows Environmental Group (GNEG) both had separate interests in the blockade. Indeed, one major problem facing negotiations regarding logging was the lack of consensus within Grassy Narrows First Nation. Outside of Grassy Narrows, the Friends of Grassy Narrows (FGN), Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT), and Rainforest Action Network (RAN) all held contrasting views of the meanings behind activism and the proper course of action, though the "western" organizations considered the blockade as an environmental movement rather than one that defended Aboriginal identities. Willow is at her best when outlining some of the disagreements between different organizations that supported the blockaders.

Willow makes no attempt to hide her political and social support for the blockaders, a decision that should encourage some debates concerning the distance of the researcher from his or her subject. The author defends her position pragmatically, noting that without offering support the blockaders would justifiably not speak seriously with her. This decision is a valid one, though in attempting to "give back" to the community at Grassy she avoids sustained discussions of very real social, political, and economic ramifications of the colonial context that face Grassy Narrows First Nation today. The resulting picture of Grassy Narrows is therefore incomplete.

Strong Hearts, Native Lands is an intriguing study of the meaning of both the land and the protest as identity-shaping forces. Situated in a longer historical context and theoretically informed, it sheds light on the complex nature of twenty-first-century indigenous activism and engages in a number of historical and anthropological debates. This study should be of interest to any scholar considering research in a First Nations setting because of the ethical and methodological musings that inform her work. Finally, and most important, this work records an important achievement through nonviolent means by activists at Grassy Narrows while offering a hopeful vision for the youth of Grassy for whom Willow endeavored to write this work.

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