



Fools Crow

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Frank Fools Crow, a spiritual and civic leader of the Teton Sioux, spent nearly a century helping those of every race. A disciplined, gentle man who upheld the old ways, he was aggrieved by the social ills he saw besetting his own people and forthright in denouncing them. When he died in 1989 at the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota, he was widely loved and respected. *Fools Crow* is based on interviews conducted in the 1970s. The holy man tells Thomas E. Mails about his eventful life, from early reservation days when the Sioux were learning to farm, to later times when alcoholism, the cash economy, and World War II were fast eroding the old customs. He describes his vision quests and his becoming a medicine man. His spiritual life—the Yuwipi and sweatlodge ceremonies, the Sun Dance, and instances of physical healing—is related in memorable detail. And because Fools Crow lived joyfully in this world, he also recounts his travels abroad and with Buffalo Bill's Wild West show, his happy marriages, his movie work, and his tribal leadership. He lived long enough to mediate between the U.S. government and Indian activists at Wounded Knee in 1973 and to plead before a congressional subcommittee for the return of the Black Hills to his people.

Fools Crow Details

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Phillip says

This book would go well with "Autobiography of a Yogi". The voice of Frank Fools Crow provides an positive example of a man who remained steadfast to life despite its hardships.

Esther-maria Lindner says

In this recollection of memories and stories from the powerful elder and medicine Frank Fools Crow, one can connect deeply with the power of the mysteries inherent in the lakota traditions and their spirituality. Frank Fools Crow gifts the reader a rare insight into the life and mysteries of the lakota people. This is a book that needs to be honored and his wisdom respected.

Bob Wolniak says

A bit of history of the Lakota peoples after Wounded Knee and up to mid-70s. The first person account includes many stories of vision quests, explanation of many customs, dances and healing ceremonies, and perspective on sad conditions for those in Pine Ridge Reservation.

Carolyn says

Another really valuable first-hand account of an extraordinary person in a strange and difficult time. Fools Crow was born in 1890, was kept out of the missionary schools, never learned to read, write, or speak English, a traditionalist who somehow managed to retain hold of his identity as well as bridge the old, the new, the Indian, the White worlds.

Brent Werner says

This compelling account of a Lakota holy man, healer, and civic leader offers profound insight into the social and spiritual realities of the Lakota nation. Insights range from the early reservation period to the time around the Wounded Knee siege of the 1970's, in particular. Fools Crow's story touches the heart with his warmth and love for all people, and his profound dedication to Wakan Tanka (God), Tunkashila (Grandfather), Grandmother earth, and to goodness itself. I would definitely recommend this book to those seeking to understand more of the traditional way of life of the Lakota people and nation. The concluding section, where Fools Crow speaks to the nature of the Black Hills as Lakota land, remains a compelling issue where the traditional view of men like Fools Crow can not be ignored or neglected.

Don Watkins says

In my personal library...

Kathy Petersen says

Fools Crow's life and philosophy is truly interesting. It was a pleasure and a privilege to become acquainted with his story, especially since I know few American Indians but am sympathetic to their plight and to what I know of their spirituality.

I was mildly annoyed by a certain tendency toward repetition in the book, generally and understandably about issues and events that deeply concerned him; and frankly the writing was rather nondescript. I admit to being relieved to get to the final pages! yet I am enriched for having read it.

Wendy says

If I had to grab my favorite books to take to an island with me, this would be one of them. Grandfather Fools Crow is genuine, sincere, and open about the life of a holy man.

There are so few books that give you a first-hand account of the kind of life Grandfather Fools Crow lived. He talks about eliminating negative, violent, or evil things from his life. He talks about the importance of daily prayer. And he never preaches. He is simply relating the way he felt compelled to live in order to be a healer.

Simple, eloquent, and genuine.

Lauren says

A must read for those interested in Native culture.

Vincent Louis says

Beautiful.

Adam Centurione says

Fools Crow is a medicine man of the Lakota. This book is filled with some of the most genuine advice i've received. I am grateful to be able to read it, and to have Fools Crow as a teacher. I am grateful that Wakan Tanka told him to shares his visions with us, and that he did so in such a sincere manner.

After reading this book, and then re-reading, I have found that I identify with what Fools Crow teaches more than my own people. this man is a leader for other men, and I would hope that my brothers would take the time to read this, and consider his words. Not only is Fools Crow giving instruction on sacred ceremonies, sharing the details of his vision, but he also has received insight in the future...Fools Crow has powers from the divine. these powers can be attained by anyone, that is a part of spiritual practice. What is special is that, the Hollow Bone requires a man's humility to be his most treasured gift, and so no person who brags or uses others for fulfilment will have much power. In fact, if someone needs others for spiritual power, they might not have any at all and may even become sick.

I'd recommend we all read this, it is a small remnant of an ancient tradition that is beautiful. It is a small remnant of something sacred which was lost- stolen and destroyed by people who were severely deluded, but it presents to us possibilities to make right choices, and to work together in way that the world has nearly forgotten of...

Cal Thunder Hawk says

When looking for useful solutions to apply to ones life, based on Lakhota traditions, it's sometimes helpful to be willing to examine aspects of it from a critical perspective in order to get a clearer picture of it. The spiritual aspects of the traditional Lakhota culture provide a rich heritage which the Lakhota preserve primarily through the Lakhota language.

At the risk of appearing contentious, I focus on the spiritual aspect of the Lakhota from a perspective that neither accommodates the beliefs of popular non-Lakhota religions, such as Islam, Bahai, Buddhism, Hindu, Judaism, Christianity and etc. nor encourages beliefs about a supernatural dimension: After all, the Lakhota are practical people who not only survived in the wilderness but flourished within it. The Lakhota relied on facts of the natural world: Entertaining speculative ideas not based on observation was courting potential disaster and dangerous -- not just from threats to ones physical well-being but from potential psychological disorders as well.

Still, popular culture sometimes produces things that represent challenges to the Lakhota, such as the book "Fools Crow, pub. 1990."

There are some obvious problems with this book. Mails is a graphic artist not a writer. The difference between the two is that a graphic artist manipulates media and a writer relies on written words. In this case, Fools Crow uses Mails -- a non-indigenous graphic artist -- in much the same way that John Fire ("Chief Lame Deer") used Richard Erdoes, another non-indigenous graphic artist, to write a book about themselves. If Fools Crow and John Fire had the two non-indigenous graphic artists write only about them, as individuals, that would have been an entirely different matter. But Fools Crow and Fire's claims to prominent roles within the most intimate aspects of the Lakhota culture -- its spirituality -- are quite another matter. Those kinds of claims involve the rest of us Lakhota, i.e., those of us who do not share a fascination with their self-absorbed narratives exploiting the collective heritage of the Lakhota people in order to promote their self-interests. The Lakhota who do not object may be mistaken for those who uncritically endorse the claims made by them.

I am only up to p. 54, so far, but here are a couple of problems:

The problem on p.52 is that the guy's name is Ed McGaa. References to him can be found at <http://www.newagefraud.org/>. According to an acquaintance who was at the Pine Ridge sundance in 1971, Ed is the reason that, thereafter, cameras were prohibited from sundances in the region. He was being filmed during that sundance. I heard about it when I went there the following year, in '72. The Pine Ridge sundance was peculiar in many ways but the thing that really got my attention was the fact that the sundance was surrounded by vendors selling carnival food. I don't recall if there was actually a carnival there or not.

Anyway, according to McGaa, he was a Marine Corps, not Air Force, pilot during the Viet Nam war not WWII.

p. 52

"At the beginning of World War II, a young part-Sioux by the name of Ed Magaw came to my house to tell me that he was going to join the Air Force. ... He was sent to Europe, and made 110 flying missions, returning from all of them without a scratch. On his last flight he saw a huge American flag wrapped around his airplane. ... When he landed at his home airfield after that last flight, he was so happy he jumped up and down, shouting with joy. Then when he got back to Pine Ridge he vowed he would give thanks by participating in four Sun Dances over a period of four successive years. He did, and I think they were the dances of 1968, '69, '70, and '71. Later on, I asked for the return of his sacred stone to see what he would say, but he said, "No, uncle, it has brought me great luck. I want that to continue the rest of my life, and if I can, I'd like to keep it." So I let him. The last I heard he was an attorney, and if I remember correctly, the head of the Indian Studies Department at the University of Minnesota."

"Moose Camp" is actually "Moves Camp" ("Igláka" in Lakhota)

p. 54

" ... included among the great holy men were Horn Chips and Moose Camp. I mention all of these because I feel everyone should know who the true Sioux holy men of this century have been. They not only did amazing things in their ceremonies, but also their manner of life measured up to the high standards of what a holy man's life should be."

Aaron says

I read this some time ago but I do remember it being very entertaining and inspirational.
