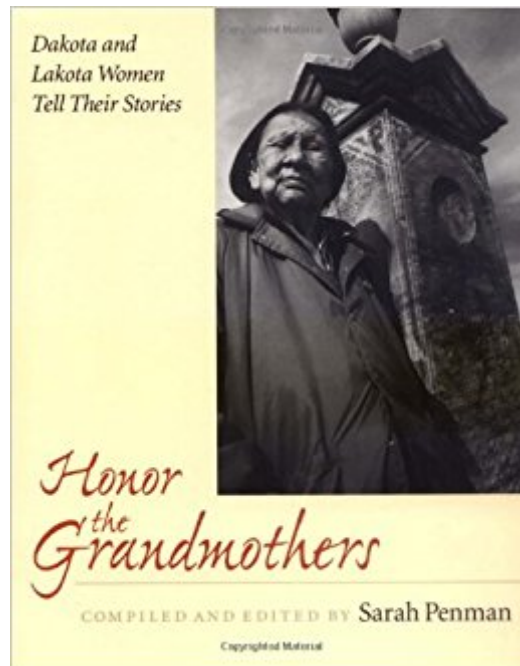


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# Honor The Grandmothers: Dakota And Lakota Women Tell Their Stories



## Synopsis

In this poignant collection of oral histories, four Indian elders recount their life stories in their own quiet but uncompromising words. Growing up and living in Minnesota and the Dakotas, Stella Pretty Sounding Flute and Lola Columbus (Dakota) and Celane Not Help Him and Cecelia Hernandez Montgomery (Lakota) share recollections of early family life interrupted by years at government boarding schools designed to eradicate tribal culture. Recounting their complex lives, the grandmothers reveal how they survived difficult circumstances to become activists in Indian politics, reconciling urban with reservation life and Christianity with native spirituality. Particularly memorable is one grandmother's detailed family account of the tragic events and consequences of the Wounded Knee Massacre of 1890. Defying stereotypes, these clear and forthright voices are unforgettable. As the traditional teachers and bearers of culture, the grandmothers also share their concern for future generations.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In *Honor the Grandmothers: Dakota and Lakota Women Tell Their Stories*, editor Sarah Penman, a journalist who reports on the experiences of Native Americans, preserves four oral histories that contribute to our understanding of Indian life past and present. According to tradition, it is the responsibility of Dakota and Lakota grandmothers to teach tribal history. During the course of their long lives, the four women--Celane Not Help Him, Stella Pretty Sounding Flute, Cecilia Hernandez Montgomery and Lola Columbus--witnessed tremendous change in the circumstances of their

peoples (e.g., Celane Not Help Him recalls the Wounded Knee Massacre of 1890), which Penman presents with grace and respect. Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc.

The four oral histories presented in this attractive volume pay homage to elder women who quietly serve as community and political activists within the Lakota-Dakota Nation. The book tells their stories of service in the grandmother's traditional role of cultural carrierDimbuing children with respect for the language, medicinal lore, and spiritual beliefs of the people. Thoughtfully edited by photographer/reporter Penman, these accounts were originally broadcast as a 1993 radio documentary. The result is an excellent companion to Mary Brave Bird's American Book Award-winning Ohitika Woman (Harperperennial, 1994. reprint). Recommended for most public and academic libraries.DNancy Turner, New Mexico State Univ. Lib., Las Cruces Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Being a Native American woman born and raised in the Eastern part of South Dakota I'm learning. I never knew anything of my heritage growing up. I never knew their hardships existed yet they remained a proud women and proud people. My mother always said my grandma was a full blood, but she didn't look like any of the beautiful women in this book. She was petite, black curly hair (not african frizzy), She wore heels and dresses and jewelry (not Native American style) and perfume. My mom didn't didn't fit any Native American profile. She's a ginger headed woman who could easily pass for a Caucasian woman walking down the street. I've not met any of the prejudices these women told abt so i find their stories intriguing and want to learn more. Those were great stories and look forward to more. Thank you for the history.

Some of the Stories are very sad. That was and still is how life on the Resverations is. I love the way they tell how to respect, It is a wonderful word. The stories are very simple and easy to understand. If you are looking to understand the Native American Woman this is another book to help you.The Grandmother's are still getting together, and hopefully opening the eyes of the world.

very good book, and came in a timely fashion, thanks

"Honoring the Grandmothers" is a slim book, barely bigger than your average sized pamphlet. Edited by Sarah Penman, a video and radio commentator living in Minnesota, the book is a collection of musings by four Dakota/Lakota grandmothers about traditional Indian knowledge and

customs and how they relate to today's fast paced world. Penman captured the stories on tape over a period of years, working hard to overcome many obstacles to get the stories to us, the reader. There is little commentary on the stories; Penman allows them to speak for themselves. Two of the grandmothers have since passed away, but their words do continue to speak about maintaining dignity and culture in a world that likes to forget about the Indians and their way of life. Celane Not Help Him is the first speaker presented in the book. Celane did not have an easy life; she lived in poverty for most of her life, with little formal education. Her family lost their property when the United States Air Force confiscated it during WWII for use as an artillery range. Celane is the granddaughter of Iron Hail, a Lakota who survived the Battle of Little Big Horn and the Wounded Knee massacre of 1890. Celane provides an oral history of Wounded Knee that is both enlightening in historical terms and depressing in an emotional sense. It is hard to read Celane's account, as her speaking skills do not land easily on an English-speaking ear. It is best to read the account straight through, and then think about it for a time. When this is done, Celane comes across as clear as a star in the sky. The next set of stories comes from Stella Pretty Sounding Flute, a Wahpekute-Hunkpati Dakota. The Dakota people, like most Indians, had difficulties dealing with the burgeoning white population of America in the 19th century. After years of declining fortunes, an 1862 uprising in Minnesota brought down every bit of force the American government could muster on the Dakotas. The Dakota did not disappear, but scattered throughout Missouri, Nebraska, South Dakota, and Minnesota. Stella does not concern herself with these events as much as she does with the traditions she learned from her own grandparents. Her grandmother passed on skills and knowledge that no school can teach. Stella discusses the loss of the Black Hills, the traditions of pipe carrying, and spiritual beliefs. The third storyteller is Cecilia Hernandez Montgomery. Cecilia is part Mexican, part Oglala Sioux, and part firecracker. This is one tough dame. Cecilia spent time in a Catholic school (back when they REALLY used the ruler), studied music, and worked herself dizzy at a series of low paying jobs. Cecilia really came into her own when she started a career as an activist in South Dakota, working hard to improve the living conditions of poor people (all poor people, not just Indians). She sits on many boards, committees, and still pounds the pavement when problems arise. She did all of this into her seventies and beyond, not only exploding the myth of the lazy Indian but also causing irreparable harm to the conception that old people cannot do anything of value. The last narrative comes from Lola Columbus, a Sisseton-Wahpeton Dakota. Like many other Indians, Columbus spent time in an Indian boarding school, where military discipline combined with strict adherence to corporeal punishment attempted to erase the "Indian" from the Indians. Columbus's story is different from the others because she went on to become the first

woman elected to tribal chair in the state of Minnesota. She later founded a grandmother's society, where women elders can gather to share traditional knowledge with new generations."Honoring the Grandmothers" is really a book about the elderly and their marginalized role in American society. This is occurring not only in white society but in Indian society as well. A couple of the grandmothers lament the fact that their knowledge is not passed on, but disappearing as older members of Indian tribes pass away. In short, the same mentality (of the doddering old fool who is well past his/her prime) that leads whites to toss the elderly into nursing homes happens in Indian society as well. The elderly are rich sources of knowledge and culture in every society. We ignore them at our own peril.

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