"ancient rock constructions charged with magic." In the end, however, civilization triumphs, as the author, perhaps unconscious of the symbolic implications, teaches her hosts the art of photographic processing.

Building an igloo, by Ulli Stelzer, is a photographic essay which simply and clearly depicts the Inuit art which perhaps best symbolizes the people's perfect adaptation to the environment. Living for three weeks in -40 degrees celsius weather on Ellesmere Island, Stelzer accompanied her hosts on a hunting expedition and watched the igloo building operations, filled with admiration at their great skill, a skill which is evident in the clear and well organized pictures. But even this ancient art has been influenced by the forces of civilization. Although in her introduction she notes that "the only tool needed was a knife of bone, antler or walrus tusk," the pictures reveal that the builder has availed himself of a carpenter's saw to cut and trim the blocks of snow! While the subject of the book is the building an igloo, one would also have liked to have seen some pictures of life inside the complete dwelling, pictures of the incredibly utilitarian quality of the snowhouse.

Each of the books considered here is an invaluable tool for helping children and adults come closer to understanding that wonderful and wonderfully different way of life north of the Arctic Circle. From the words, and more important, from the photographs comes a sense of a beautiful but harsh environment and a courageous, ingenious, and joyous people. If the books do lack anything, it is a portrayal of the complex, rich, and sometimes terrifying spiritual dimensions of this life, dimensions which informed everything the Inuit did or thought. But perhaps this life, intangible as it is, cannot be captured, not only because photographs cannot depict the spirit, but also because the spirit world of the Inuit is uniquely their own, something the white man can never fully understand even if the Inuit should want him to.

Jon C. Stott, *Professor of English at the University of Alberta, has recently given a series of workshops in Western Canada dealing with Native and Inuit peoples in Children's Literature. He is now completing a book length study,* Native realities and narrative structures in children's fiction.

PROMISES TO KEEP

The shaman's evil eye, Lyn Harrington. Illus. Dyane Harpe. Highway Book Shop, 1979. 98 pp. $9.95 cloth, $4.95 paper. ISBN 0-88954-209-0; 0-88954-207-4. ***Red paddles,*** Isabel M. Reekie. Illus. Dennis Hutchins. Mitchell Press, 1968. 99 pp. $1.95 paper. No ISBN. ***Eagle feathers in the dust,*** W.P. Stewart. Butterfly Books, 1979. 167 pp. $12.95 cloth. No ISBN.

The shaman's evil eye, Red paddles, and *Eagle feathers in the dust* all offer

positive portrayals of Canadian woodland, coastal and plain Indians. Yet I found reading these three books for review to be a disturbing experience.

In thirteen years as a reviewer for some eight publications, I have reviewed more than one hundred different books. During that time, I have always taken the task seriously, believing that I have an obligation to the author, publisher, the book buyer, and the reader to write the best review I can, to consider each work objectively, evaluating it on its own merits and in comparison to the greater body of writing. Because an author has irretrievably given over part of a lifetime to write a book, no matter how tempted I may be, I do not see myself as having the right to dismiss a bad book superficially with a few flip phrases.

In my reviewer's role though, I am aware I am becoming increasingly angry and frustrated, two emotions which impinge upon a reviewer's objectivity. The cause of my emotional upheaval is a number of broken promises. The goal of the entire reviewing process, as I envisage it, is ultimately to place the best books into the hands of readers. The reviewing system accomplishes this task in two ways. Theoretically, potential purchasers of books who have neither access to the nation's publishing output nor the time to read it make the majority of their purchase decisions from reviewing tools. In turn, publishers whose products are consistently unfavorably reviewed and which, therefore, do not sell either improve their products or go out of business. That is the promise, but not what happens.

Research I have conducted in Manitoba shows that junior and senior high school librarians depend upon publishers' catalogs as their principal means of identifying books for purchase. These results were confirmed nationally by the 1982 report of the Canadian Book Publishers' Council entitled *School Libraries in Canada* which also identified publishers' catalogs as being the most important book selection device used by the nation's schools. The absence of a national protest when *In Review: Canadian Books for Young People* discontinued publication is understandable then as are the continuing subscription difficulties of *CM: Canadian Materials for Schools and Libraries.* As the single largest institutional purchaser, school libraries could play a vital qualitative role in Canadian publishing. Oddly enough though, many of the very same schools which bypass review sources to buy via publishers' catalogs lament the poor quality of Canadian juvenile materials while their uncritically spent dollars contribute to the continued publication of the very type of book they are criticizing.

The broken promise of the reviewing system thus comes at the conclusion of the publishing process. There is another promise, albeit unstated, which is made at the outset of the writing process by the author and the editor wherein these individuals promise to produce a product which will entertain and/or inform the reader. Because this latter promise is broken by *The shaman's evil eye, Red paddles* and *Eagle feathers in the dust,* none of them can be recommended for purchase.

In addition to *The shaman's evil eye,* Lyn Harrington has authored some sixteen books since 1951, many of them juvenile nonfiction. In *The shaman's evil eye,* the central character is Kinusi, an eleven-year-old Muskegon or Swampy Cree who lived on the Sachigo River in Northern Ontario some four hundred years ago. Harrington follows Kinusi, his sister Sky-Girl, and their parents, plus a few other members of the nomadic Cree tribe through almost a year of their lives. The word "follows" was used quite deliberately for despite the promise of the title, the book really has no plot and just meanders from one event to another with the sequence of the events being largely dictated by the chronology of the tribe's food-gathering practices.

Several times Harrington introduces a conflict around which it appears a plot is going to be built. For example, on the second page the reader learns that Kinusi has not had his "Growing-up vision". The plot possibilities are obvious, but Harrington abandons the promise of this plot line though Kinusi is periodically reminded in taunting terms that he still has not sought his vision. At the end of the book, Kinusi has accidentally "spent a whole night alone in the bush, and without panic. He knew he would never again feel his old dread of the forest. Had it been a pretext to put off his vigil?" Kinusi and the reader are left with the question unanswered for the book concludes without the boy's having undertaken his vigil or even having resolved to do so.

In the first chapter, Kinusi disturbs a huge black bear which with "one powerful paw raked Kinusi's left arm from shoulder to wrist." While Kinusi's mother tends his wound, she admonishes him. "You must exercise that left arm, or you may never pull a bow again, never be able to hunt." Later that night Kinusi anguishes, "Would his arm ever heal properly? Or would he go through life a cripple? What good was a hunter who couldn't pull a bow or paddle a canoe?" Once more Harrington has created a promising plot possibility, but within a few pages the potentially life-changing wound has seemingly healed without Kinusi's experiencing any lasting ill effects and entirely without the need for any rehabilitative efforts on his part.

The book's title is not indicative of the book's contents. Kinusi's enemy is Piminik, the shaman, who makes a number of cameo-like appearances, first a third of the way through the book, secondly some twenty pages later, and finally at the book's conclusion. Early in the book, the reader might have thought that Kinusi's questioning his society's practices and beliefs might lead to a confrontation with Piminik in his role as a shaman and, therefore, might give substance to the title; however, like the promise of so many other plot possibilities, the theme of "ill wishing" has gone nowhere.

To give Harrington her due, she has obviously researched the customs and life style of the ancient Muskegons. Unfortunately the large time period covered by the book coupled with the book's relatively short length prevent Harrington from providing more than a cursory look at such aspects of the Swampy Cree life as methods of hunting or building a canoe. While Harrington incorporate

a number of Cree legends into the book, again the book's brevity leads to very truncated tellings of these tales. Harpe's nine full paged sepia toned illustrations appear amateurish and will do little to entice the intended audience of grade three to five readers.

Reekie's *Red paddles* begins in 1885 and concludes less than a year later, after the newly incorporated city of Vancouver was completely destroyed by fire. The central character is twelve-year-old Dave Henderson, who lives in the little logging settlement of Granville on the shore of Burrard Inlet. As with *The shaman's evil eye,* the plot of *Red paddles* wanders. The book's culminating event is Dave's involvement in the big Vancouver fire, and Reekie's task is what to do with Dave until then. Like Harrington, Reekie fills up the pages with promising plot possibilities but does not develop them.

On the first page, Dave announces his intention to build a dugout canoe like those constructed by the local Indians. Page two includes his declaration, "I'll have red paddles!" The building of the canoe and the obtaining of the paddles get pushed aside as Dave fetches a cow from New Westminster, visits an Indian Village, hunts an elk with his friend Little Bear, sneaks into an Indian Cannibal initiation ceremony, and gets trapped on a canyon ledge with another friend, while being menaced by a cougar. The red paddles arrive half way through the book as a gift to Dave at a potlatch. The canoe reaches completion some fifteen pages later, but it remains a background object as Dave catches the year's first salmon, goes duck hunting with the Indians, and watches an Indian lantern parade. The dugout canoe and red paddles finally get some use when the Vancouver fire breaks out: Dave escapes the burning city by taking to the water in the dugout. The book ends optimistically with Dave's family safe and Dave recognizing "he was a lucky boy to have a dugout, . . . friends like . . . Little Bear, and a chance to help in the re-building of Vancouver."

Like Harrington, Reekie weaves the threads of a few Native legends and rituals into the book. Daves mother reflects the prejudice of her society when, in response to Dave's request to attend the initiation ceremony, she says, "If what I've heard of some of the Indian societies is true, it's no place for decent people." Dave's father counters, "Sometimes I wonder what they really think of this invasion by white men. Or do they realize that slowly but surely they are being asked to give up their rights in this beautiful country? And they are not always being asked." At the same time, Reekie reinforces some Indian stereotypes. For example, Little Bear's speech consists of simple sentences which often lack articles or subjects and which are constructed in the present tense when the future is demanded. Instead of saying, "I will show you the tools and canoes" Little Bear says, "I show you tools. I show you canoes."

Dennis Hutchins' four full-paged illustrations in black and white with orange highlights are quite acceptable, and it is unfortunate that there are not more of them. The inclusion of a map would have allowed those unfamiliar with B.C. geography to follow where events were occurring. The exterior appearance

of the book is most unappealing: on a plain brown cloth cover, the book title, author's surname and publisher's name are printed in black only on the spine. Though written for a middle elementary school audience, the promise of adventure and excitement in *Red paddles* is not achieved.

An Indian warrior armed with a lance sits astride a galloping horse on the cover of W.P. Stewart's *Eagle feathers in the dust.* The promise of action suggested by this illustration is not met in the body of the book. According to the foreword, "This book is written in the style of the historical novel. Except for the fabrication of the story, all the relevant historical facts, statements and descriptions are accurate, reflecting in-depth [sic] research." The historical happenings about which the book revolves occurred during the last years of The Teton Sioux, members of the Dakota nation, and focus in particular on the involvement of the Sioux's great chief, Sitting Bull, as he fought to maintain his people's traditional way of life.

Stewart uses Sitting Bull's war horse, Parabola, to tell the story of the man and his tribe. At the beginning of the book in 1860, Sioux warriors capture the white colt and, at the book's end, as Sitting Bull and the surviving Sioux go into captivity, the now old horse is released to the wilds where he dies a natural death. Though Parabola is a participant in or a spectator at many of the book's major happenings, Stewart very frequently forgets or completely ignores the horse for large sections of the book while relating the incidents solely from the Indians' perspective. The reason Parabola may be omitted so often is that Stewart appears to overlook the fact that an historical novel should have a plot which is independent of the actual historical events. Instead Stewart writes a fact-filled history with occasional story elements. Names of historical figures abound but, apart from Sitting Bull, none become continuing and developed characters. Stewart also seems unwilling to omit any of his "in-depth research". Having noted that the Santee branch of the Sioux tribe had massacred hundreds of white settlers in New Ulm, Minnesota, in 1862, Stewart unnecessarily digresses for two paragraphs to provide a history of the Santees. At another point, Jumping Bull, the adopted son of Sitting Bull, was described as riding a buckskin horse which his father had given him. Even though the information contributes absolutely nothing to the story's development, Stewart adds, in brackets, that the horse "was later stolen on the Montana Trail."

Though the book may have been written for an upper elementary/junior high audience, Stewart's writing style is too complex and obtuse for such a readership. Again and again he utilizes a complex sentence structure loaded with words that are more formal than the audience or context would seem to demand. When the mares have their colts taken away from them by the Sioux, Stewart describes the scene thus: "Perhaps they [the mares] were relieved of the burden, or perhaps the mares felt an inert trust for the humans to which they were now returned, for they were Sioux mares and always had been, allowed this limited freedom in the wild for the bearing of those new assets to communal

property." Surely the meaning could have been delivered in a more simple and straightforward fashion!

Butterfly Books Ltd. is described on the dust jacket as "a Canadian prairie book publishing company which originated in 1976 as the Publishing Division of 'Walter P. Stewart Consultant Limited'." *Canadian Books in Print* indicates that Stewart has used Butterfly Books to publish seven titles. *Eagle feathers in the dust* reveals evidence of sloppy editing: spelling errors, inappropriate use of the hyphen in compound words as well as words beginning with a prefix, e.g. "hill-side, out-right, over-work, pre-occupation, age-less and re-assuring", and vagueness in antecedents of pronouns. An editor needed to tighten Stewart's writing. On page 134, for instance the reader finds that "in the battle at Little Big Horn he [Sitting Bull] had confronted one of its prime generals (Custer of Civil War fame)." Given that some thirty-five pages before, Stewart had devoted four pages to the battle and two pages to Custer, the parenthetical information appears redundant.

In addition to having a Canadian author and publishing house, the book's connection to this country comes about because Sitting Bull and approximately 3,000 Sioux came to the land of the Grandmother in 1877 after defeating the 7th Cavalry. Stewart devotes only one-third of the book's length to this period of Sitting Bull's life. While Stewart is obviously most sympathetic toward Sitting Bull and the Sioux, the failure to produce either a good story or a good history book will prevent juvenile readers from remaining with his writing long enough to share his feelings.

The image of the historical Indian has often been distorted into that of the uncivilized, ignorant, bloodthirsty savage by motion pictures, television, and even school textbooks. The works by Harrington, Reekie and Stewart generally presented portrayals of the Canadian woodland, coastal and plains Indian which could have provided needed counterbalances to the negative stereotypes, had only each author met the promise of telling a good story.

Dave Jenkinson, *who teaches courses in children's and adolescent literature in the Faculty of Education, the University of Manitoba, is also a member of the Editorial Board of the national reviewing journal* CM: Canadian Materials for Schools and Libraries.

CONSTRUCTING A CANOE

The Canoe: a history of the craft from Panama to the Arctic, Kenneth G. Roberts and Philip Shackleton. Macmillan, 1983. 280 pp. $50.00 cloth. ISBN 0-7715-9582-4.

"The Canoe." The subject of the book under consideration is, as the authors