



The Manitous: The Spiritual World of the Ojibway (Native Voices)

By Basil Johnston

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Manitous lived in human form among the Ojibway in the early days, after Kitchi-Manitou (the Great Mystery) created all things and Muzzu-Kummik-Quae (Mother Earth) revealed the natural order of the world. With depth and humor, Johnston tells how lasting tradition was brought to the Ojibway by four half-human brothers, including Nana'b'oozoo, the beloved archetypal being who means well but often blunders. He also relates how people are helped and hindered by other entities, such as the manitous of the forests and meadows, personal manitous and totems, mermen and merwomen, Pauguk (the cursed Flying Skeleton), and the Weendigoes, famed and terrifying giant cannibals.

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Editorial Review

From Library Journal

In this latest effort, Ojibway scholar and writer Johnston continues his fine series of writings about his people (Ojibway Tales, Univ. of Nebraska Pr., 1993) and his experiences (Indian School Days, Univ. of Toronto Pr., 1988). Manitous are spiritual beings who have aided the Ojibway people since the world was created. Working roughly chronologically according to when the various manitous appeared in Ojibway history, Johnston begins with the creators, then follows the exploits of the half-human, half-manitou spiritual helpers of the Ojibway people. Each helper was the originator of a key aspect of Ojibway culture, such as strength, dancing, and music. Other categories of manitous prey upon evil-doing humans who disrespect the natural world. While his book is readable in the manner of mythology, giving a glimpse of these important beings, Johnston warns that this is only a sampling of their activities. A preface and introduction put these stories in historical and cultural context, and a detailed glossary is handy to keep the many manitous straight. Recommended for public libraries. ?Lisa A. Mitten, Univ. of Pittsburgh Lib.
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From [Booklist](#)

Ethnologist Johnston bridges several worlds in this book that is both exemplary original scholarship and a delightfully, even charmingly written set of stories that, although written for adults, can be appreciated by those of any age, for, based in oral tradition, they read as if they have voices. From his own cultural heritage, that of the Ojibway (who are called, by themselves, Anishiaubae, and by later American settlers, Chippewa), Johnston has gathered scores of tales of manitous, the spirits that are both elemental forces and divinities. In these pages we encounter Kitchi-Manitou, the genderless divine force, and Muzu-Kummik-Quae, the earth-mother, as well as the fearsome cannibal Weendigo. Many of their stories are recorded here for the first time, which by itself makes this a valuable addition to collections of Native American spirituality. Meanwhile, the wit and ease with which Johnston writes make it a good selection for general reading collections, too.

Patricia Monaghan

Review

"An extraordinary glimpse into a rich and meaningful mythology."--Kirkus Reviews"

Users Review

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Kathryn Richardson:

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