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Sing: Poetry From The Indigenous Americas (Sun Tracks)



Synopsis

Editor and poet Allison Hedge Coke assembles this multilingual collection of Indigenous American poetry, joining voices old and new in songs of witness and reclamation. Unprecedented in scope, *Sing* gathers more than eighty poets from across the Americas, covering territory that stretches from Alaska to Chile, and features familiar names like Sherwin Bitsui, Louise Erdrich, Joy Harjo, Lee Maracle, and Simon Ortiz alongside international poets—both emerging and acclaimed—from regions underrepresented in anthologies. They write from disparate zones and parallel experience, from lands of mounded earthwork long-since paved, from lands of ancient ball courts and the first great cities on the continents, from places of cold, from places of volcanic loam, from zones of erased history and ongoing armed conflict, where *postcolonial* is not an academic concept but a lived reality. As befits a volume of such geographical inclusivity, many poems here appear in multiple languages, translated by fellow poets and writers like Juan Felipe Herrera and Cristina Eisenberg. Hedge Coke's thematic organization of the poems gives them an added resonance and continuity, and readers will appreciate the story of the genesis of this project related in Hedge Coke's deeply felt introduction, which details her experiences as an invited performer at several international poetry festivals. *Sing* is a journey compelled by the exploration of kinship and the desire for songs that open pathways of return.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The first anthology of Indigenous poetry from all the Americas, *Sing: Poetry from the Indigenous Americas* offers the multilingual work of 81 poets from Canada, the United States, Mexico, and Central and South America, used twelve translators (poets and writers themselves), and took eight years to become a reality. It will be difficult to do justice to this phenomenal achievement in this limited space, but I will try. *Sing* was the cherished brainchild of editor Hedge Coke, who spent eight years tracking down poets, making connections, gathering poems, writing an introduction, formatting, and organizing the work with substantial assistance from her son, poet Travis Hedge Coke. Since all the travel and work of those years was at her own expense, Hedge Coke laments in her introduction her inability to include as wide a variety of poetry from all the Indigenous traditions in the Americas as she desired. What she has brought together, however, is more inclusive and more diverse than any previous anthology and is a flood of riches for the reader. Those who teach Indigenous Literature or Native Studies courses will find this book a necessity. Nowhere else can you find such a plethora of Indigenous voices speaking to their contemporary truths and to their heritage and cultural traditions. It will make a wonderful introduction to studies of culture, literature, and song. As you turn the pages in *Sing*, you repeatedly encounter sharp blasts of truth, songs of celebration and of mourning, warnings of danger, hauntings, memorials, invocations, and paeans from such a cultural variety that it becomes difficult to stop reading, to tear yourself from the lives and hearts shared in this book. This anthology includes highly acclaimed, well-known (in the United States) Indigenous poets, such as Sherwin Bitsui, Joseph Bruchac, Heid and Louise Erdrich, Santee Frazier, Diane Glancy, Joy Harjo, Linda Hogan, Simon Ortiz, and Hedge Coke herself. It also includes emerging poets we may not all know and poets who are highly acclaimed and well-known in other parts of the Americas--Hilario Chacin (Colombia), Rosa ChÁvez (Guatemala), Fredy Romero Campo Chicanga (Colombia), Hugo Jamióy (Colombia), Ariruma Kowii (Ecuador), Leonel Lienlaf (Chile), Lee Maracle (Canada), Jorge Miguel Cocom Pech (Mexico), and Morela Del Valle Maeiro Poyo (Venezuela). Known in U.S. literary circles or not, the poets in *Sing* uniformly offer high-quality work. Sherwin Bitsui's opening poem, "Calyx," protects, presents, and prepares to open the bud that will become this book's bloom. Bitsui submerges us in vibrant images that evoke the sacred within the everyday--"at zero hour/ the poem spilling its seeds into your mouth"--in an effort to give a hint of the power behind a childhood memory--"How do I describe her daubing my face with cornhusk?" Duane Niatum's poem, "Riding the Wake of the Paddle Journey," ends the volume with the deepest return to the beginning, to the home from which we sprang, whether we have known it before or not, as Niatum sings us "... to this path to be servants of our ghosts,/ the family keeping the storytelling stone// that shows our flesh's formed by tide and stump...", "closing the

circle of flight, escape, and migration with the deepest state of belonging. Along the journey, you will find stepping stones of words and image, and depending on the direction you follow, you will have two or three or more journeys before your circle closes in the song of home, of place, of the land and the people that sing within your blood. Below is one short, quick trip through the beauties of this book. "My brother's shadow flutters from his shoulders, a magician's cape." Natalie Diaz (U.S. in English) "The child-sun skitters adolescent/ It desires to touch the moon..." Hugo Jamióy (Colombia in Kamsa, Spanish, and English) "I'm coming home leaving home finding home..." Tenille Campbell (Canada in English) "Glow-worm, you whisper into the moon's ear." Morela Del Valle Maeiro Poyo (Venezuela in Kará-Áa, Spanish, and English) "... dark feathers of the old way's pride/ mixed in with blessed Kateri's/ pale dreams of sacred water." Joseph Bruchac (U.S. in English) "With our arms of volcanic warmth..." Ariruma Kowii (Ecuador in Quechua, Spanish, and English) "Finally, reaching across feather-light and closing the distance/ Your face gently cupped in wings..." Al Hunter (Canada in English) "The ripe fruit/ is the sweet eye of the tree." Jorge Miguel Cocom Pech (Mexico in Mayan, Spanish, and English) In the end, the abundant treasures of *Sing* defeat me. This review offers such a tiny taste of its bounty that the reality of its riches evades capture. You will have to pick up the book and open it for yourself. When you do, be sure you have plenty of time to wander lost in its many worlds.

Good. Needed it for a class.

wonderful

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