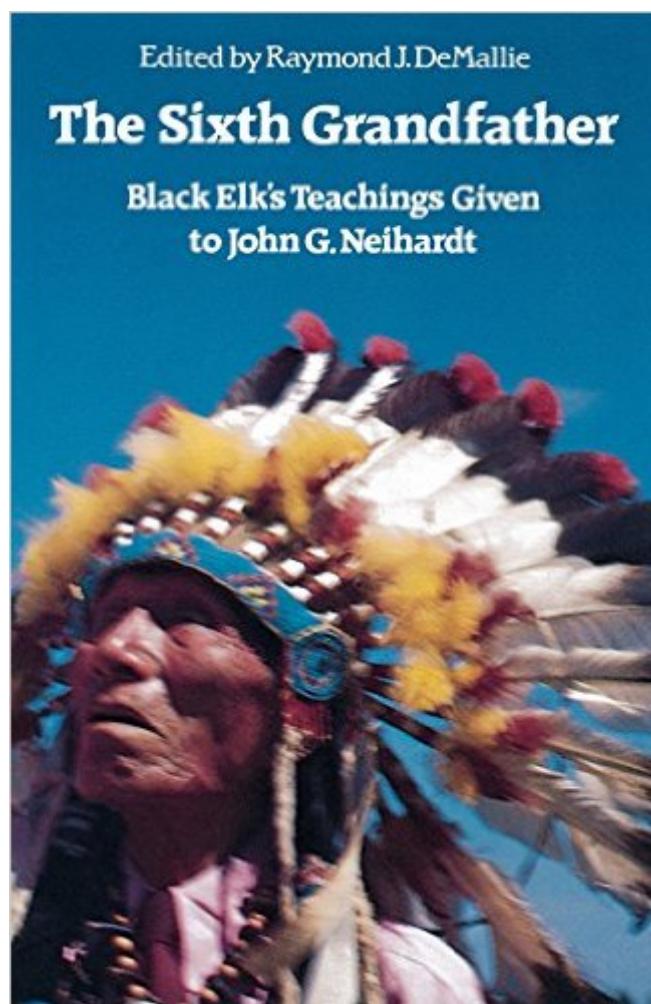


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The Sixth Grandfather: Black Elk's Teachings Given To John G. Neihardt



Synopsis

In *Black Elk Speaks* and *When the Tree Flowered*, John C. Neihardt recorded the teachings of the Oglala holy man Black Elk, who had, in a vision, seen himself as the "sixth grandfather," the spiritual representative of the earth and of mankind. Raymond J. DeMallie makes available for the first time the transcripts from Neihardt's interviews with Black Elk in 1931 and 1944, which formed the basis for the two books. His introduction offers new insights into the life of Black Elk.

Book Information

Paperback: 452 pages

Publisher: Bison Books (October 1, 1985)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0803265646

ISBN-13: 978-0803265646

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 1 x 8.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.2 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

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Best Sellers Rank: #287,545 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #86 inÂ Books > History > World > Religious > Ethnic & Tribal #184 inÂ Books > Religion & Spirituality > Other Religions, Practices & Sacred Texts > Tribal & Ethnic > Native American #597 inÂ Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Social Sciences > Specific Demographics > Native American Studies

Customer Reviews

"The Sixth Grandfather" offers an annotated presentation of the raw transcripts of the testimony of the Lakota medicine man Black Elk to the poet and amateur ethnographer John Neihardt. These dialogs are better known by Neihardt's poeticized rendition in the book "Black Elk Speaks."

However, the well-intentioned Neihardt introduced serious distortions into his version, and should be regarded with extreme caution. Black Elk lived the kind of life that no one would believe, if it were made up. Born to an Oglala Lakota family in Wyoming in the late nineteenth century, Black Elk lived a traditional life in camps pitched with tipis on the forests and plains, hunting buffalo and resisting the encroachment of white settlers in the region. At the age of nine, he fell into a coma for twelve days, during which time he experienced what he would subsequently call his "Great Vision," in which he traveled up into the sky and met with the Six Grandfathers, partial personifications of the Great Spirit who dwell in the six directions (north, south, east, west, up, and down). As he took leave of the Grandfathers, he gradually realized that the sixth grandfather, the lord of the earth below, was

he himself. He awoke with the conviction that he had a sacred mandate and duty to restore his people to health and power, and spent the rest of his life with that vision as a spiritual and moral reference point, asking himself at various points along the way how important experiences fit into his vision, and filling him with the frequent anxiety that he was not fulfilling his charge.

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