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CLARION REVIEW ★★★☆☆ GENERAL FICTION

Lakota Dreams

A.P. Greenwood
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Some time after the storied California Gold Rush of the early 1850s, a similar excitement occurred when precious metal was found in the Black Hills of what is now South Dakota. As European-American miners flocked to the region, they clashed with the Lakota Sioux tribe of Native Americans, who had settled there after conquering the Cheyenne in the 1770s. Bloody conflict escalated, and after the Battle of Little Bighorn in 1876, where the Lakota killed over 250 U.S. soldiers, the Lakota were increasingly shoved onto small reservations in western South Dakota.

Lakota Dreams by A.P. Greenwood is set during this dangerous time. It follows the Henderson family as they strike out from Texas to the Black Hills, determined to sneak onto Indian land in search of gold. All but one of the Hendersons die, though, and teenaged Nate Henderson vows to complete his father's dream and establish himself as a rich man.

Before Nate begins to mine, however, he is taken hostage by Lakota Sioux and given a choice: either be taken in by the band and live as one of them or be killed. Choosing the former, Nate falls in love with an Indian woman and learns to care for his adopted people. Because the Lakota are menaced on all sides by gold-hungry white people, Nate forms a plan to secure the tribe's freedom and land once again.

Greenwood interviewed professors from the Universities of Texas and South Dakota in preparation for *Lakota Dreams*. This is Greenwood's first work of historical fiction; he is the author of several detective novels.

Lakota Dreams has its strong points. Well-researched, it teems with details both of white settler life during the 1870s and the lives of the Sioux during that time. While the white characters distrust and look down on the Indian characters, Greenwood writes about Native Americans without exoticizing or infantilizing them. The book's modern sensitivity is noticeable and welcome, but not intrusive.

At the same time, the book has its flaws. It is sluggishly paced, with more than a hundred pages taken up with the Hendersons' journey to the Black Hills. Since Nate's time among the Sioux is the focus of the story, much of this beginning section seems tedious and useless. Additionally, the characters are rather flat, distinguished more by their habits (Nate's mother's of praying all the time, Nate's father's of fetishizing his gun) rather than their personalities.

This is a difficult book to get into. However, *Lakota Dreams* picks up steam once Nate is among the Sioux and the alternate history adventures begin in earnest. Persistent readers may enjoy an original take on this historical period.

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