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FOREWORD REVIEW ♥♥♥♥♥ POETRY

When the Rain Sings: Poems by Young Native Americans

National Museum of the American Indian / Smithsonian
National Museum of the American Indian/Smithsonian (Sep 30, 2008)
Unknown $14.95 (80pp)
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Maybe we expect too little of children. Some adults write simple sing-song rhyming verse for kids that is painful to review. In contrast, this book puts the pen into the childrens hands, and the poems they write are small, clear windows through which we can see the world. This anthology first appeared in 1999, published (and printed twice) by Simon and Schuster. The book was conceived in 1996 by the Wordcraft Circle of Native Writers and Storytellers as an opportunity for native children to interact with photographs of native artifacts. Children were given photos and asked to write in response; some poems were matched with a photograph later. Arranged by tribe, the childrens poems appear with beautiful photographs of people and artifacts. This edition corrects the first and adds additional illustrations. The poems weave a bridge between the artifacts of culture with the childrens current experience of it. “Im a rough / and tough buffalo / and I am really cool, too,” writes Dewayne Mix (Pima). Davina Valencia (Yaqui) writes, “It looked like / lightning beside me / when my mom and dad / got divorced.” Generously illustrated and filled with the honest voices of the young, this book may be “the words to the song of life, / the past, and tomorrow.” (Patrick Lewis-Jose, Tohono Oodham)

The Sunrise
Sometimes I feel like
the sun rising over
the mountain looking
down on the
houses and
when I am
shining down
I am giving
a great big
smile.—Juan Jose (Tohono Oodham)

TERESA SCOLLON (June 15, 2009)

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