

Preface to the 1992 Edition

In this book, the spoken word is written down in the hope that the life experiences of Cree grandmothers will reach a wider audience if printed. In presenting the original Cree texts – in both roman and syllabic orthography and accompanied by a careful translation into English – told by seven women, we want to make sure that they are heard speaking to us in their own words.

The personal reminiscences which make up this book give voice to the daily struggle of Indian women during a century of fundamental changes. They represent the collective experience of a small group of Cree women who have lived their entire lives in or near the places in western Canada where they were born. While far from comprehensive, their recollections range from the practical to the spiritual and from childhood memories to prophetic visions. Their presentation is informal and intimate, spanning simple narratives and sharply focussed stories, detached contemplation and anguished outcry.

We want to thank Glecia Bear, Irene Calliou, Janet Feitz, the late Minnie Fraser, Alpha Lafond, Rosa Longneck, and Mary Wells who gave their texts to Freda Ahenakew to record and publish – above all, but by no means exclusively, for the benefit of their granddaughters, who sometimes seem to live in another world entirely.

The texts were recorded, transcribed, analysed, translated, annotated, and prepared for publication with the support of the

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Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada under the auspices of the Saskatchewan Indian Languages Institute and the Cree Language Project at the University of Manitoba. We are also grateful to our colleagues in both Saskatoon and Winnipeg who encouraged and helped us in many ways during the long process of getting speech into type.

F.A. & H.C.W.