



Sacred Encounters: Father De Smet and the Indians of the Rocky Mountain West

Dr. Jacqueline Peterson Ph.D

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For nearly 350 years after Columbus's landing, the remote Northern Rocky mountain homeland of the Flathead and Coeur d'Alene tribes remained a safe haven, virtually unmapped and unexplored by whites. But heralded by Indian prophecies and a request for missionaries, in 1841, the Belgian-born Jesuit Pierre-Jean De Smet arrived among the Flathead, or Salish, in western Montana. His dream of founding an empire of Christian Indians sparked instead a confrontation and dialogue between two sacred worlds: an invasion of the heart.

In full color, with two hundred illustrations, *Sacred Encounters* captures on the page the emotional tension, drama, and multiple voices of the exhibition of the same title. With the collaboration of more than one hundred Native American, Jesuit, curatorial, and academic consultants, *Sacred Encounters* bridges the fine arts, history, and ethnography to evoke the ongoing dialogue between Christianity and traditional Indian belief that produced new ways of life and new ways of believing for native and newcomer alike.

Among the illustrations are photographs of newly discovered drawings and watercolors by Jesuit artist Nicolas Point; maps by De Smet and Indian mapmakers; rare battle drawings by the Salish warrior Five Crows; and mid nineteenth-century Plateau and Plains Indian artifacts associated with the travels of De Smet, the Audubon expedition, fur trader Robert Campbell, and Canadian artist Paul Kane.

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