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Blonde Indian: An Alaska Native Memoir (Sun Tracks)

Ernestine Hayes

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Blonde Indian: An Alaska Native Memoir (Sun Tracks) Ernestine Hayes
In the spring, the bear returns to the forest, the glacier returns to its source, and the salmon returns to the fresh water where it was spawned. Drawing on the special relationship that the Native people of southeastern Alaska have always had with nature, *Blonde Indian* is a story about returning. Told in eloquent layers that blend Native stories and metaphor with social and spiritual journeys, this enchanting memoir traces the author's life from her difficult childhood growing up in the Tlingit community, through her adulthood, during which she lived for some time in Seattle and San Francisco, and eventually to her return home. Neither fully Native American nor Euro-American, Hayes encounters a unique sense of alienation from both her Native community and the dominant culture. We witness her struggles alongside other Tlingit men and women—many of whom never left their Native community but wrestle with their own challenges, including unemployment, prejudice, alcoholism, and poverty. The author's personal journey, the symbolic stories of contemporary Natives, and the tales and legends that have circulated among the Tlingit people for centuries are all woven together, making Blonde Indian much more than the story of one woman's life. Filled with anecdotes, descriptions, and histories that are unique to the Tlingit community, this book is a document of cultural heritage, a tribute to the Alaskan landscape, and a moving testament to how going back—in nature and in life—allows movement forward.

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