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***Blonde Indian: An Alaska Native Memoir***

By Ernestine Hayes

ISBN 978-0-8165-2537-9, \$16.95 paper; Electronic edition available

200 pages, 6 x 9, 2006

A fresh and compelling voice who has earned recognition in Native oratory and storytelling, Ernestine Hayes's writing has appeared in *Travelers' Tales Alaska*, *The Anchorage Press*, and the *Juneau Empire*. In *Blonde Indian*—a beautiful evocation of the enduring power of heritage and landscape through generations—Hayes traces her life through richly textured vivid dialogue. 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 groundbreaking memoir traces the author's life from her childhood growing up in the Tlingit community through her adulthood, during which she lived for some time in Seattle and San Francisco, and eventually 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 struggle 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.

**ERNESTINE HAYES** is an assistant professor of English at the University of Alaska Southeast. She received the Fiction Writer's Award from the *Anchorage Daily News* and the Explorations Alaska Native Writers Award in 2002.

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