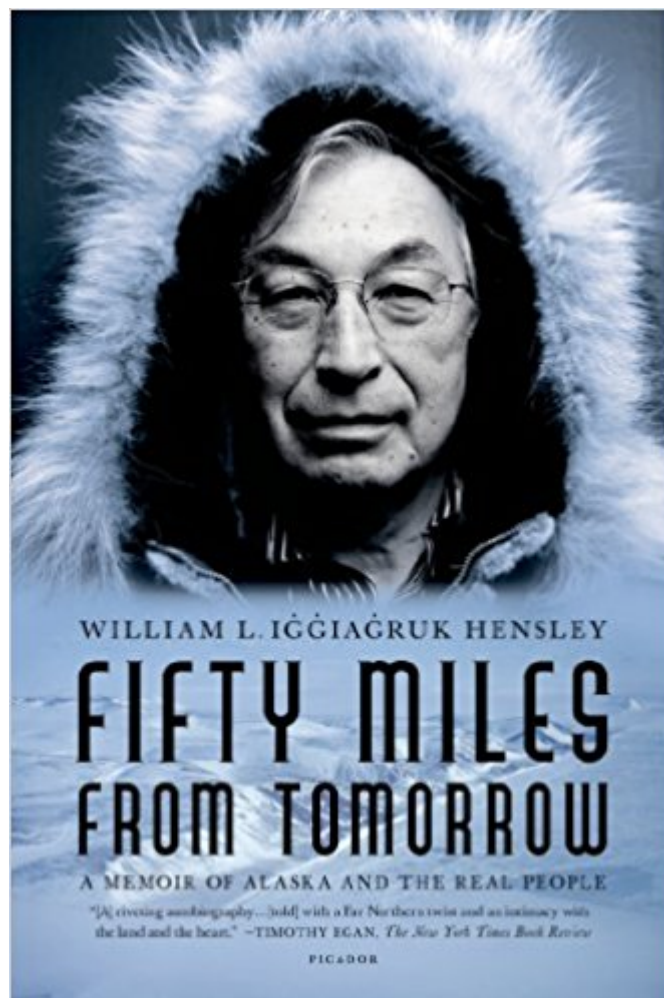




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Fifty Miles From Tomorrow: A Memoir Of Alaska And The Real People



Synopsis

A NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW EDITORS' CHOICE Born twenty-nine miles north of the arctic circle, William L. Iggiagruk Hensley was raised to live the seminomadic life that his Inupiat ancestors had lived for thousands of years. In this stirring memoir, he offers us a rare firsthand account of growing up Native Alaskan, and later, in the lower forty-eight, as a fearless advocate for Native land rights. In 1971, after years of tirelessly lobbying the United States government, he played a key role in a landmark victory that enabled the Inupiat to take charge of their economic and political destiny. *Fifty Miles from Tomorrow* is "a joyous celebration of Hensley's life among the Inupiat people and of fighting for their rights" (Library Journal).

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Customer Reviews

Although this fascinating memoir is set hundreds of miles from where most Americans have ever dared to travel, Hensley brings to life this little-known part of America through myriad tales of toil, triumph and the Inupiat spirit. Growing up in what he calls the twilight of the Stone Age, Hensley grew up without what many would consider basic necessities; in his homeland on the Kotzebue Sound in rural Alaska, survival was the primary concern. But even through the illness and hardships that plagued his and other families, the life lessons learned as a child stayed with him for decades. As such, despite attending high school and college in the Lower 48, he found himself always drawn back to his homeland, like a salmon heading for the waters where he was spawned. Hensley became a crusader for the Inupiat people, starting as a

fresh-out-of-college activist, then his tenure as a state representative, and later his work in the corporate sector. Through his entire adult life, Hensley's mission has been simple: to ensure the Inupiat are allowed to keep their rights and their land. There are rich details of hunting adventures and typical childhood struggles, but the deep-rooted values and strength of the Inupiat people are what make this work truly sing. (Jan.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Adult/High School — Hensley grew up in a remote Alaskan village in the early 1940s and eventually became a politician and lobbyist for Native affairs. He tells of living in a sod house with no electricity, running water, bed of his own, or medical or dental care, but of being lovingly cared for by his adoptive parents and the whole village. His early education, conveyed through oral tradition and imbued with a deep reverence for nature, taught him the hunting and fishing skills needed for survival. In contrast, his education at the Bureau of Indian Affairs school endeavored to Americanize the students and to denigrate their heritage. Hensley later attended a Baptist boarding school in Tennessee where he was encouraged to assimilate into the Southern teen lifestyle of the time, further removing him from his beloved Inupiat heritage. With humor and pathos, the author describes his youthful experiences straddling two cultures. At George Washington University, he became interested in civil rights and advocated for Native causes. The frustrations of his people as they tried to maneuver the domestic, political, and corporate complexities of modern life in the then newly formed state are passionately revealed as Hensley details his membership in the National Congress of American Indians and the Alaskan House of Representatives. Students interested in civil rights and Alaskan history and culture will appreciate this work, as will readers of Sherman Alexie's *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* (Little, Brown, 2007). — Jackie Gropman, formerly at Fairfax County Public Library System, Fairfax, VA Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

If you've ever wanted to know what it is like to be a native Alaskan and to live the subsistence lifestyle in Alaska, this book is for you. 'Fifty Miles from Tomorrow' is an outstanding account of this, as written by William Hensely. The book covers the author's life, but isn't a typical autobiography, because it goes into so much detail about the inner workings of the Alaskan people. It covers (particularly well) the battle by the natives to recapture some of their land upon discovery that

Alaska was rich in oil. It also describes in vivid detail intimate details about the subsistence lifestyle, including how the natives track and capture animals, and how they use every part of the animal for food or other use. This is a relatively short book but it is packed with interesting action. It is a great start to those who want to learn about native Alaskan life and I would highly recommend it. It's a great read which draws you in and doesn't let go. Excellent book!

I had the opportunity to read *Fifty Miles from Tomorrow* by William L. Hensley for one of my classes as an engineering major and I learned a lot about the native Alaskan or Iñupiat culture and life style. The story is about how his upbringing gave him a unique perspective on the issue and how he became an integral part of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA), signed in 1971. I especially enjoyed Hensley's humbleness and ability to focus on what matters most. He could have gotten swept up in the political world, but he stayed grounded and fought for what he valued most. In a time where politics so rarely seen in a positive light, it is a refreshing story about good being done through the political system. In the end this is an excellent story about humble beginnings and the path to success through hard work and a little luck. Hensley does a wonderful job painting the story of his life and I loved reading about his tale. William Hensley is an inspiring person and shows that even in the most desperate of times it is important to keep your head up and soldier on. I would suggest this book to anybody who is interested in Alaska, Native American struggles, or just a good story about perseverance and success.

The minus one star is mainly for formatting issues in the Kindle edition. This mostly-biography was a great introduction to the struggle for cultural survival that's been going on in Alaska-- not just among the Inupiat, but in all the Alaska Native tribes. I came away from this with a much better understanding of how the land settlement worked. The book also gives a great account of Native subsistence living -- The author spent part of his childhood living a very traditional lifestyle for much of the year with his family. If you have any interest in Alaska native cultures, or the Inuit in particular, I highly recommend this book.

When I originally purchased this book, I was bogged down in other writings, so I just quickly perused it. How unfortunate. It is an EXCELLENT chronology of life lived initially above the Arctic Circle. Mr. Hensley has a way of describing the simplest, yet most intricate elements of living in the harshness of Alaska - the culture, food, medical treatment and family existence. That he rose to national prominence is remarkable given his birth circumstances, yet it demonstrates what fortitude and

determination - and help of loving family members - can do against incredible odds. This is a remarkable and important book. It should be read in all secondary schools and be a must for every college person interested in Anthropology, Social Work or similar subjects. There is so much to be learned by Mr. Hensley's work. Congratulations to Mr. Hensley for telling the world how it was and what it took to protect Native lands.

Hensley does a wonderful job of describing the clash of two cultures in a way where non natives can relate (or natives who never lived a subsistence lifestyle). The "Old Ways" or subsistence lifestyle are described in beautiful text that allow the reader to feel some of the spiritual belonging that Native Alaskans felt to their land. Long humorous discussion with the people of Kotzebue, the clean crisp air of the arctic, riding in a skiff across Kotzebue Sound.....Essentially, he clearly made the reader understand the "emotional attachment" one feels to the traditional lifestyle and what he was so passionately defending.

This book tells the story of modern day Alaska, with its native people taking part in a meaningful way. Willie Hensley led that fight as a very young man, coming from a most remote native community, gaining a college education in the lower 48, and seeing the opportunity to make the native communities real partners as Alaska moved through statehood and energy exploration. A humble man, his story is very inspiring nonetheless. I am happy to have met him, been inspired by him, and been able to share his story with others through this book.

This non-fiction book reveals the lives of the Eskimos as the traditional customs and life styles run head first into the modern world. The author grew up in a community of family that did not necessarily include his parents. The group traveled as necessary for hunting and fishing, making ice block homes for protection. The author was ripped from his relatives and customs and sent to mission school. Because he was a good student, he was also sent to college. This book documents his life and at the same time documents the aboriginal Eskimo life. The author becomes politically savvy and tries to get benefits for his people using the system. The story is riveting, in part sad/tragic and in part amazing/uplifting.

Hensley grew up in the wilds of Alaska in the mid twentieth century, learning the traditional ways and culture of his people. But then he was pulled from this and sent to a high school in the South. Not only did he adapt but he learned what he had to do to make the Natives' inevitable transition to

"modern" living smoother and he became a guide and leader in the movement. He provides a stark look at what it took to survive and how even statehood did not begin to solve the Natives' problems.

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