Women Elders' Life Stories of the Omaha Tribe

Macy, Nebraska, 2004–2005

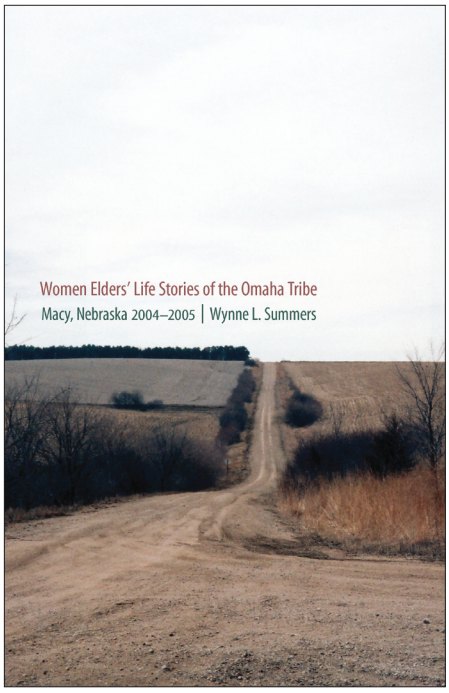
Wynne L. Summers

Eleanor Baxter, Alice Saunsoci, and Hawate (Wenona Caramony) are female elders of the Omaha Tribe in Macy, in the northeast corner of Nebraska. All three grew up on the Omaha reservation, moved away in later life, and held careers outside the reservation. Yet all returned to their community, bringing the skills they learned in the "white world" and the knowledge they gained as children from their own elders to contribute to the well-being of the Omaha people.

Eleanor Baxter was formerly the Omaha tribal chair, the first woman to serve in this capacity, and continues to be politically active; Alice Saunsoci is a language teacher at the Nebraska Indian Community College; and Hawate assists the Omaha community as an educator and language teacher. With a balanced focus on traditional culture and modern success, each of these three women guides the tribe in her own way toward a better understanding of what it means to be Omaha.

In this poetic account, Wynne L. Summers presents these women's lives in their own voices, giving agency to their experiences both on and off the reservation.

Wynne L. Summers is an assistant professor of English at Southern Utah University.



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