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Book Review: 'Coyote Warrior'

UM professor's family tied to a crucial event in Indian Law

News from UM's Jameson Law Library

By **Stacey L. Gordon**
Reference & Acquisition librarian

Coyote Warrior, by Paul VanDevelder
(Little, Brown & Co. 2004).



It is rare to read the family history of a colleague, perhaps because it is rare to have a colleague whose family history and whose own life story are as important as the story of Coyote Warrior.

Garrison Dam was built on the upper Missouri River in North Dakota to provide irrigation water and to control downstream flooding. Half the land

including the fight to win compensation for the farmland, towns and villages that the Three Affiliated Tribes of North Dakota were promised when they were forced to give up to the lake when the dam was built anyway.

"Coyote Warrior" tells the Cross family's story. Paul VanDevelder suggests that Raymond Cross does not talk much about himself. Even if you know Ray Cross, who teaches at the University of Montana

School of Law, you may not know this story and will be glad to have heard it at the same time you are saddened by the events.

"Coyote Warrior" is more than a biography and more than Western history.

It is not much of a legal thriller because it is too sad, though there are interesting questions left unresolved for a time and you hope throughout that it ends right. The story has tragic elements, but heroic elements also.

Above all, it is a compelling and sometimes maddening legal story that encompasses the development of Indian law and how the federal government has

created, changed, played with and sometimes danced around Indian law issues and the lives of Native Americans. The legal concepts — such as treaties and treaty obligations, the Marshall Trilogy that defined the tribes as "domestic dependent sovereign nations," federalism, federal trusteeship, allotment, ple-

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Professor Raymond Cross, left, and author Paul VanDevelder hold up a work of Native American Art presented to Mr. VanDevelder at a UM Law School reception.

flooded by Lake Sakakawea behind the dam belonged to the Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara people. As tribal chairman, Martin Cross fought political battles with the federal government including the fight to prevent the dam from ever being built. His son, Raymond Cross, later fought important legal battles,

nary power, termination, and 5th Amendment takings — are complicated, but explained honestly and clearly. VanDevelder does not pull any punches in his carefully and extensively researched discussions of the law and politics and the people involved.

The life and the land the Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara tribes lost behind Garrison dam can never be replaced. Nevertheless, "Coyote Warrior" and the part of the Cross family's story it tells ends in strength. Raymond Cross is a legal warrior with wisdom, humility, determination, intellectual power, and legal knowledge.

In the end it is clear that Indian law fights still remain and that Raymond Cross is not done fighting. ○

UM bringing back the Barristers Ball

The Student Bar Association (SBA) of the University of Montana is resurrecting the Barristers' Ball to raise money for the Montana Legal Services Association. It will be held on Feb. 11 in Missoula.

The SBA wants more law-student interaction with the judiciary, the Montana law community, and the faculty and staff of the UM School of Law. The group thinks a return to a mid-winter Barristers' Ball will help.

"We are asking the Montana legal community to assist us in making this event a success," said Heather McDougall, Student Bar Association president, in a letter to Montana attorneys.

"Your attendance would not only honor the students who are working to make this happen, but would promote our efforts to benefit the community."

The Feb. 11 ball will be held at the Missoula Children's Theatre. Cocktail hour will be from 7:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. and the band "Cash for Junkers" will play from 8:30 p.m. until 12:30 a.m. Professor Martin Burke has agreed to play the piano for one of the band breaks, Ms. McDougall said.

"We will have a wine, cheese and chocolate theme while also serving beer. The dress will be elegant/casual," she said.

All proceeds from the event will be given to the Montana Legal Services Association. If you want more information, please call (406) 239-9002.

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