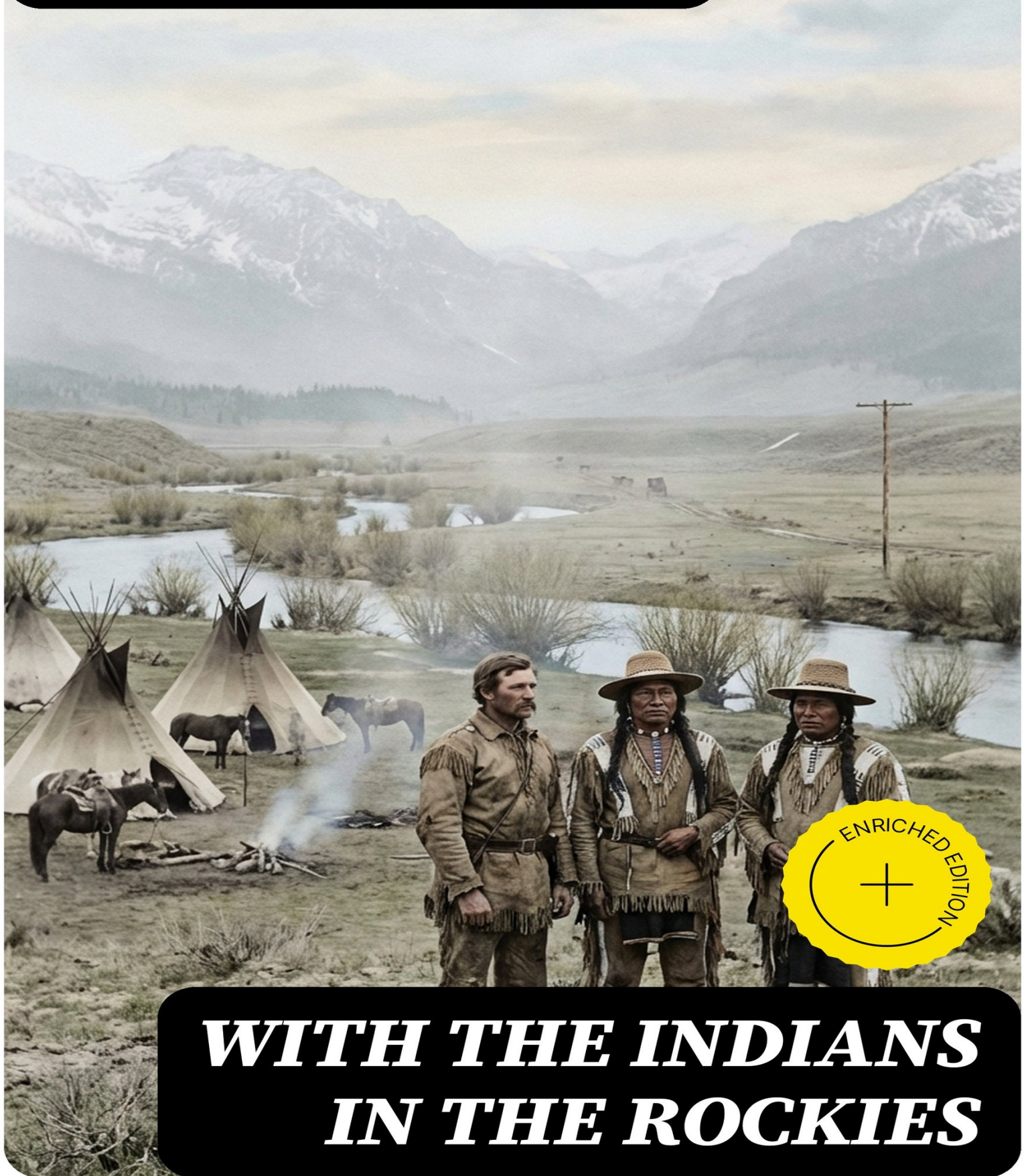


***JAMES WILLARD
SCHULTZ***



***WITH THE INDIANS
IN THE ROCKIES***

James Willard Schultz

With the Indians in the Rockies

Enriched edition.

Introduction, Studies and Commentaries by Eric Baylor

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Introduction

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Between the indifferent immensities of the northern Rockies and the fragile resilience of two young companions, James Willard Schultz's *With the Indians in the Rockies* turns survival into a quiet test of knowledge, trust, and endurance, where winter's severity presses against the lessons of elders, landscape demands patience rather than glory, and the promise of return depends less on daring feats than on a steadfast alliance across cultures, a disciplined attention to the smallest work of hands and senses, and a moral recognition that the mountain world yields only to those who meet it with humility, gratitude, and care.

First published in the early twentieth century, this work belongs to the tradition of American adventure and survival fiction for young readers, yet it draws its texture from the specific geographies and lifeways of the northern Rocky Mountains. Schultz, an American writer known for his books about the Blackfeet and the northern Plains, sets the narrative in high country where winter travel and hunting measure every decision. The novel blends the brisk momentum of peril with the patient detailing of mountain craft, situating its trials within Indigenous homelands and seasonal rhythms rather than against a generic wilderness backdrop, and thereby grounding excitement in place-based knowledge.

At the story's outset, two youths journey into the mountains and are unexpectedly forced to remain there through deep winter, separated from their families and the

familiar resources of camp life. Their predicament sets a course of learning and improvisation rather than spectacle: finding food, preserving warmth, navigating storms, avoiding unnecessary risks, and reading the land's signs. The plot advances through successive challenges that reveal how much they have absorbed from elders and how much they must still earn through trial. Rivals, villains, and sweeping battles recede; companionship, skill, and the slow mastery of tasks come to the fore.

Schultz's prose is clear, steady, and attentive to concrete action, favoring exact descriptions of tools, shelters, clothing, and routes over melodrama. The pacing alternates moments of danger with long passages of watchfulness and work, creating an immersive rhythm that feels as much like a journal of applied knowledge as an adventure tale. Dialogue and incident are sparsely handled so that landscape and labor remain central. The tone is respectful rather than swaggering, inviting readers to consider how patience and accuracy can mean the difference between safety and disaster, and how culture and environment shape both the questions asked and the answers attempted.

Among the book's abiding themes are interdependence and transmission of knowledge. Survival is inseparable from teachings shared across generations and cultures, and the narrative insists that expertise belongs not to solitary heroes but to communities that observe, memorize, and practice. The mountains become a proving ground for humility, where thrift, foresight, and gratitude are as vital as bravery. The novel also explores coming-of-age without ceremony: responsibility grows quietly in the routine of gathering wood, drying meat, shaping snowshoes, and caring for a companion. Courage, in this account, is less an

outburst than a habit formed by daily discipline and mutual regard.

For contemporary readers, the book offers a counterpoint to frontier myths that prize conquest over connection. Its power rests in demonstrating how Indigenous knowledge—tracking, reading weather, using every part of a resource, moving with the land's tempos—makes survival possible and ethical. In an era attentive to sustainability, outdoor education, and respectful cultural exchange, the narrative's emphasis on learning from those who know a place best feels urgent. It invites readers to value repair over waste, listening over haste, and cooperation over bravado, lessons that resonate beyond the mountains in classrooms, communities, and any endeavor where resilience must be earned.

Because it is a product of its era, the book also benefits from a thoughtful, critical reading of representation and language. Early twentieth-century adventure writing can carry assumptions of its time, and recognizing that context clarifies both the limits and the strengths of Schultz's approach. What endures is the sustained attention to place-based skill, the portrayal of cross-cultural partnership as the cornerstone of endurance, and the quiet dignity accorded to careful work. Read on those terms, *With the Indians in the Rockies* remains a compelling, instructive journey whose stakes are practical and moral alike, and whose lessons continue to travel well.

Synopsis

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With the Indians in the Rockies is a classic early-twentieth-century adventure novel by James Willard Schultz, an author known for first-hand knowledge of Plains life and the Rocky Mountain frontier. The book follows two adolescents—one of settler background and one Indigenous—who enter the high country on a late-season hunting and trapping excursion. What begins as a test of skill and independence soon confronts them with the magnitude of the wilderness. As weather worsens and the mountains close in, the boys' partnership and training become the foundation of a narrative that is at once a survival story and a study in cultural exchange.

An early storm overturns their plans, cutting off trails and burying familiar landmarks beneath deep snow. Separated from help and mindful of dwindling daylight, they determine to stay put and endure the winter rather than risk a reckless flight. The Indigenous youth's teachings and memories of elders shape their response: choosing a defensible campsite near water, assessing wind and avalanche zones, and rationing the few supplies on hand. The decision marks a pivot from youthful adventure to measured survival, setting the pace for months of small victories and constant vigilance as they learn to read the country with sharpened attention.

Through patient labor, they raise a sturdy shelter, line it against drafts, and organize a cache for fuel and food. Mobility becomes essential, so they craft winter gear and tools from available materials, including footwear suited to

deep drifts and poles for treacherous traverses. Hunting shifts from chance encounters to careful tracking, while trapping and fishing through ice diversify their stores. They render fat, dry strips of meat, and manage a fire with extreme economy. Each task, from boiling snow to mending garments, is embedded in practical knowledge learned from Indigenous lifeways, turning necessity into a structured routine.

The mountains press back. Storm cycles test the shelter, and the cold exacts a toll on fingers and breath. Predators circle the margins of their camp, forcing the youths to balance boldness with restraint. They navigate unstable slopes, skirt cornices, and listen for the hollow warning beneath crusted snow. When injuries and sickness threaten progress, home remedies and proven techniques—steam, poultices, careful rest—help them recover without wasting scarce provisions. The routine of chores acquires a rhythm, yet the margin for error remains narrow. The narrative emphasizes observation, patience, and humility, linking survival to an ethical relationship with place.

In the long midwinter evenings, companionship grows into mutual respect. Storytelling, songs, and recollections of camp instruction animate the darkness, giving shape to values that extend beyond technique: courage without rashness, gratitude for animals taken, and generosity when resources allow. The settler youth learns to see the land as animate and legible, while his friend wrestles with responsibility as teacher and equal. Occasional signs of distant travelers or old camps remind them of broader human currents, yet their world remains intimate—firelight, frost, and the tracks outside the door—where judgment and character are tested in small, steady increments.

As winter light lengthens and the crust firms underfoot, new possibilities open. They chart a route toward known valleys, gauging passes and river corridors against the risk of late storms. The boys debate what to carry, what to leave cached, and how to signal for help without inviting danger. Encounters with wildlife grow more frequent, and the thaw complicates travel with swollen streams and rotting snow. The narrative quickens around preparation and choice, tracing how the skills refined in isolation might serve a bid for home. The outcome turns on judgment as much as endurance, keeping suspense taut.

Schultz shapes the tale as both gripping wilderness adventure and quiet account of Indigenous knowledge in practice, written for young readers yet attentive to realistic detail. Without relying on melodrama, the book foregrounds interdependence, careful observation, and respect for the land as the means to meet hardship. Its portrayal reflects the author's long association with Plains communities, while modern audiences may read it with awareness of period attitudes and terminology. Enduringly, the novel invites reflection on how cultural teaching, discipline, and friendship can transform peril into learning, leaving the broader journey's implications intact without disclosing its final turns.

Historical Context

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With the Indians in the Rockies, first published by Houghton Mifflin in 1912, draws on James Willard Schultz's long residence among the Blackfeet of northern Montana. Schultz (1859–1947) arrived in Montana Territory in 1877, worked as a trader and guide, and married Natahki (Fine Shield Woman), a Blackfeet woman. He wrote widely about Plains lifeways for magazines and books, often recounting experiences in the mountainous country along the Montana–Alberta border. The novel situates its youthful protagonists in the northern Rocky Mountains, where Indigenous knowledge and frontier skills determine survival. Its descriptive precision reflects years Schultz spent guiding and writing near what became Glacier National Park.

The Blackfoot Confederacy—Siksika (Blackfoot), Kainai (Blood), and Piikani (Piegan)—traditionally occupied the plains and foothills east of the Rockies from present-day Alberta to Montana. By the late nineteenth century, their homeland spanned an international boundary the nations called the “Medicine Line,” yet kinship networks and seasonal movements persisted across it. Their horse-centered hunting economy, ceremonies, and camp politics adapted to pressures from traders, soldiers, and missionaries. Treaties and agreements in 1855 and afterward confined U.S. Blackfeet to a reservation in northwestern Montana, reshaping travel routes into the mountains for hunting, berrying, and trade that Schultz depicts as integral to regional lifeways.

Ecologically, the northern Rockies presented steep relief, deep snowpacks, and thin winter forage, factors that shaped Indigenous and settler strategies. Wildlife such as elk, mule deer, bighorn sheep, mountain goats, and grizzly bears ranged between timbered valleys and alpine basins. After the catastrophic commercial slaughter of the American bison in the 1870s and early 1880s, peoples of the region increasingly relied on diversified hunting, fishing, and trapping. Technologies like snowshoes, skin tents or tipis, sinew-backed bows, repeating rifles, and steel traps coexisted. Schultz's narrative draws authority from practical woodcraft and travel techniques learned in this demanding environment and shared across cultures.

State power and transportation also reconfigured the region. On the U.S. side, army posts such as Fort Shaw (established 1867) and forts along the Missouri anchored federal authority; north of the border, the North-West Mounted Police founded posts including Fort Macleod (1874) to stabilize the plains. The Great Northern Railway surveyed Marias Pass and completed its transcontinental line across northern Montana in 1891, accelerating settlement and tourism near the Rocky Mountain Front. Despite these incursions, high valleys and passes remained difficult to access in winter, preserving spaces where traditional subsistence, guiding, and trapping knowledge like that portrayed by Schultz continued to matter.

Policy changes directly affected the mountain corridor that frames the novel's travel. After the 1888 agreement adjusted reservation boundaries, the 1895 Blackfeet cession transferred much of the eastern slope of the Rockies—the future “ceded strip”—to the United States. These lands became part of forest reserves and, in 1910, Glacier National Park. Schultz guided conservationist George Bird

Grinnell in this country, and both promoted park creation. In the 1910s the Great Northern Railway marketed Glacier using Blackfeet imagery and seasonal employment, embedding Indigenous presence in a tourist economy even as legal control shifted. The book's landscapes anticipate that public designation.

The novel also belongs to a Progressive Era literary moment that valorized outdoor education and conservation. The Boone and Crockett Club (1887), federal forest policy reforms, and Theodore Roosevelt's advocacy popularized wildlife protection and regulated hunting. Ernest Thompson Seton's woodcraft movement and the Boy Scouts of America (founded 1910) framed nature as a moral classroom for youth. Schultz, who published both ethnographic reminiscence and juvenile adventure, wrote within this milieu. His instruction in camp craft and respect for animal life align with contemporary magazines and guidebooks, offering readers practical knowledge while advancing a conservation-minded ethic consistent with early park ideals.

Economic and material contexts underwrite the story's scenes of provisioning. Fort Benton on the upper Missouri had long served as an entry point for trade goods; by the late nineteenth century, local posts and merchants supplied ammunition, traps, cloth, and tools to Native and non-Native communities. Steel traps, pack animals, and simple shelters made high-country trapping possible, while markets for beaver, marten, and fox persisted even after buffalo robes vanished. Exchange relationships and multilingual mediation were routine on the Montana frontier. The novel's attention to gear, barter, and route-finding reflects these practical realities without foregrounding the political institutions behind them.

Taken together, these contexts explain the book's blend of reverence for Indigenous expertise, fascination with rugged landscapes, and anxiety over a disappearing frontier. Schultz's sympathetic portrayals draw on firsthand relationships with Blackfeet people while employing period terminology and romantic framing common to early twentieth-century popular writing. The narrative privileges cooperation, observation, and patience over conquest, echoing conservation ideals and questioning the costs of rapid development along the Rocky Mountain Front. By teaching readers to see the mountains as both homeland and shared public treasure, the work mirrors its era's hopes and contradictions regarding Native sovereignty, wilderness, and national identity.

With the Indians in the Rockies

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The shale began sliding under my feet