ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The repatriation stories that are recounted in this book could not have taken place without the help and support of many people. A great debt is owed to the Old People, many of whom have long passed away, who took the time to teach Blackfoot traditions to a younger generation with the hope that the culture would be preserved. Many of these people continued with their traditions in the face of harsh reprimandings from government officials. The ongoing vitality of the ceremonies and sacred societies today attests to the strength of their teachings and the belief they had in the importance of their culture.

The impetus for this project began during a conversation among Allan Pard, Narcisse Blood, and me in a restaurant in Fort Macleod, Alberta, in the summer of 2009. We realized that repatriation had been ongoing for almost two decades, but no one was documenting this important undertaking. Ryan Heavy Head later joined the discussions and, when Allan secured funding for a publication, Ryan brought the funds to Red Crow Community College, where they were held until the project was complete. Allan, Ryan, and Narcisse have continued to offer advice, encouragement, and direction.

The repatriation of sacred material requires considerable financial and moral support. The chiefs and councils from the Kainai, Piikani, and Siksika nations have been generous with their assistance in the efforts to bring sacred bundles home. They continue to play important roles. The repatriation of those sacred objects that were dispersed to museums in the United States required special help from the Blackfeet Council in Montana. Earl Old Person, Joyce
Spoonhunter, John Murray, Carol Murray, and Howard Doore were especially supportive.

What was at the time the Department of Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs of the Alberta government (now Alberta Aboriginal Relations) provided funds for the publication of this book. The Honourable Gene Zwozdesky, who served as minister for the department during the period when it was called Aboriginal Affairs, has been especially supportive of this project and of First Nations in general. Red Crow Community College managed these funds, and we wish to thank Marie Smallface-Marule, president, and Ryan Heavy Head, Kainai Studies coordinator, for their support. The Glenbow Museum generously supported my work on this project and also provided the images. I wish to extend my thanks to Kirstin Evenden, former president and CEO; Melanie Kjorlein, vice-president of Access, Collections, and Exhibitions; and Doug Cass, director of the Library and Archives. Owen Melenka demonstrated his usual patience and helpfulness as I gathered images. Sharon Girard was extremely helpful in making the maps accessible. Janelle Tang worked through the use agreements for the images.

Finally, I would like to thank all those who contributed their stories. This is a significant record of cultural survival and persistence. It also demonstrates the capacity of individuals to achieve important things when they work together and when they believe in the importance of their goals. These are profound lessons for all of us.

Gerald T. Conaty
January 2013