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According to the Yup'ik Eskimo of Alaska, fish are not to be played with. It's an adage instilled in children that's as basic as looking both ways before crossing the street, but at its heart lies a concern for nature. Yup'ik traditions are tested each generation by this people's struggle for survival, the admonition not to play with fish has been further tested by the arrival of sport fishing from the south. Worlds are colliding_ whose will emerge unscathed? Robert J. Wolfe, a cultural anthropologist from California, spent twenty years in Alaska documenting the traditional hunting and fishing practices of Alaska Natives. During that northern sojourn he discovered much about sustainable relationships between people and nature and about the basis of meaningful communities. In *Playing with Fish* he has crafted a series of thought-provoking essays on nature, culture, and the human condition that convey unsuspected lessons from the North. In contrasting California and Alaska_worlds far apart yet connected by peoples, cultural traditions, and ecology_Wolfe not only draws distinctions between compass points, he also conveys memorable stories about nature and life. He depicts bears and humans as both neighbors and ancient adversaries, and how cultural views about bears can destroy or preserve those relationships.