

THE WINONA LADUKE
Chronicles

**STORIES FROM THE FRONT LINES
IN THE BATTLE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE**

by Winona LaDuke

Edited by Sean Aaron Cruz



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Cover Photo by Sean Aaron Cruz:

Heavy Haul equipment meets its fate on its way to the Tar Sands, Niimiipu Territory

Years of work, covering untold thousands of miles of travel in all sorts of weather, all led up to this moment, Winona standing up in front of the Beast, deep in Nez Perce country, an hour or so after meeting with the tribal council, and then she reached out her hands.... Two guards were watching us, but they didn't tell her not to touch the truck....

— Sean Aaron Cruz

I would like to acknowledge the Kindle Project (kindleproject.org) for supporting my writing time for this book. I am grateful. — Winona

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Introduction

AFTER THE BURN...

What we know is that, after the fields, the forest floor, and the prairies are burned, new growth comes. There is new life. That is what happens after the burn. That is this book.

In November of 2008, my home burned. This happens. This happened to our family, and our family consisted of myself and eight dependents under 20 years of age. My community, and many people who I did not know and had never seen came to support us. People sent clothing, blankets, books, money, prayers and love. Solar Energy International gave our family a solar photovoltaic system. Many, many people helped us. Women sent me jewelry and old beadwork. People told me that they loved me and respected my family and myself. Someone even sent me a navy blue bra from Victoria's Secret which fit nicely. That was funny. That's what I will say. And I am tremendously grateful. We are all grateful, this family of mine.

It is seven years later. In the interim, many days, I could not write. Many nights I could not sleep. Many days I could not remember what day it was, and amidst it all, I had many losses. I lost those who I loved the most: my father, the father of my children, and my sister. I continued to spin in despair and, frankly, had a hard time breathing and getting a grip. I became a casualty of the PTSD of the modern Indian Wars.... And in my spin, I lost my love, my heart, and some of my closest friends. Sort of the rock-bottom thing.

Yet, amidst all of this, it seems that one must go on. I found solace in writing, when it came back, and found myself more in love with the words, and with the story. In a way I began a new life as a modern day bard... someone who is able to travel across the land and share stories from other lands.

And, then I began to rebuild. I built a home for my family; a home almost completely of salvage and from Craig's List, and I became a bit of a Craig's List junkie. It's worked out pretty well. And one day it will be done, and perfect. Maybe. But through it all, the stories carried me. They became my escape from my depression, from my fears, and they became the way to help others, maybe.

I also began to write for Forum Communications, which is a very large regional news service in our territory, and this opened a new genre, the short story, written for those who, well, let us say, have never had these discussions. This is some of this writing. Other stories are the long form—my favorite form of journalism—and one which is lacking in most media today, but is the only way to tell a story often, moving backwards and forwards between history and present, characters dead, and those yet to come. It is a love of the word. That is this gift to the reader, I hope.

So, having said all of this, I hope you understand and accept my apologies if I cannot remember something, or you. For those who choose to read this writing...is that in the traumatic stress which I have suffered during these past years, I could not remember what I wrote, and sometimes I could not remember what I did , and I sometimes do not remember people. This is not uncommon. So it is that, I decided to look at myself, look at my writing and look through my computers to see if I could remember my journey. That is this book. It is a chronicle of my past years of writing, and it is a thanksgiving to all of those who supported our family. It is a recognition that your mind returns and so does your heart. Love returns. It is also a tribute to our ability to recover and be reborn after the burn.

Winona LaDuke
August 12, 2015



On Place



I have wandered this world. That is what I am able to do. In that, there are many stories to be told and shared. In my favorite form, the long form of writing, I attempt to share these stories. Here are some.

AKIING BIIBOONONG

As I came to write and read these stories (and this I had hoped to do from some other place on this land), yet, my land did not wish to let me go. That is all I know. The deepest of colds had come to *Anishinaabe Akiing*, carried by *Giüwedimong*, the most daunting of winds, that from the North.

A ground blizzard removed the world all around on any road, and to leave would be impossible. So we retreated, back to our lake, to our woods. We retreated and returned to our plans for approaching the world, our plans to approach, and our plans to send back to where they had come from, the forces of the Monsters.

I was trying to leave my land for another world, for another place and all I knew was this, that the land calls us, it calls us home, and it makes us to be the People who our ancestors wish us to be.

We are Thunder Beings, Wolves, Eagles of War, Feathered Heroes, Spirits which Stand in the Middle, Those who Fly Upward, Star Beings, and Those who Shift the Wind.

That is who we are, our Names, our Clans, of Bear, Caribou, Sturgeon and Wolf. All of this ties us to this place and we know only that. We know that because it comes from a Place, it comes from a Story and we tell all of that.

We watched the Others from our place. They came towards us with mining picks in hand, carrying buckets to take our water and saws

for our trees. They came singularly, tentatively in ships, and then they came in more and many more. They come, they take and then they retreat. And then they return to take again. We remain. Those who are told of here are those who have remained.

Our world exists only on one plane, for the others are occupied by Beings in the deep, *Ishpeming* the sky world and in worlds unseen. It is readily apparent to us how our worlds would exist in—it is told—eight different worlds.

One must only look at our *Anishinaabe Akiing*, the land to which the People belong, from the eye of a Thunderbeing or an Eagle. There are lakes, rivers and land. The land is surrounded, undulating between the water bodies and the Water Beings. And the sky is endless, full of mystery and—we hope—full of mercy.

This we know. And this is what we live. The stories and people of this book are the People of this land. I have been blessed to know many of them and—to me—in the midst of this, is this question of how it is that we are *Anishinaabeg, Potawatami, Odawa, Ho-Chunk*, in this world of jackhammer noise which surrounds us, the constant din, the loss of Beings and Memories, the ecological, spiritual and cultural amnesia which can be so contagious.

We live as these beings because we are from one of the most powerful places in the world, where Earth, Sky and Water are a constant, underlain with Spirit Beings and copper, food which grows on the water, and a language which places us here and no where else.

We live because our Ancient Beings, the *gete Anishinaabeg* or our ancestral Beings shine in lights in the forest or torches in the lake, and they come to us, in this plane, the one which is in the Middle between the Eight.

This is the plane of *Anishinaabeg*, and those of us who are indigenous in the present.

This is the plane of the stories of Heroic Beings in this book, stories well told.