



An Interview with David Matheson

- Q You have written a moving memoir of the Schi'tsu'umsh Indians, now called the Coeur d'Alene Tribe in Northern Idaho. Why did you decide to write the story?
- A I am a member of the Coeur d'Alene Indian Tribe. Over the years, I've served as a Council Leader and the Tribal Chairman and manager of various tribal operations. I practice the teachings of my tribe in my everyday life as the owner of a successful business. I feel that our tribal practices have served me well and I would like to share this knowledge with others in the hopes of fostering stronger faith, courage and togetherness. The deep and sincere feelings with which our ancestors conducted their lives, tradition and culture is the story within me that was crying to be written. The functional aspects of our native ceremonial life can only be truly understood through appreciation of the great degree of kindness, humility and faith with which our ancestors lived their everyday lives.
- Q So, why did you decide to write your story in novel form?
- A I wanted to capture the essence of our authentic traditions and customs, our principles and teachings. Our tribe has a

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long-standing oral tradition and thus I felt the most effective way to bring these teachings to life was through the power of story. The backdrop to the story is part of our genuine oral history regarding the life and times of our great prophet chief, Circling Raven.

Q What is RED THUNDER about?

A The book is a story of harmony: man's harmony with the natural world; peace and unity of purpose with a Higher Power; and understanding all of life and oneself in it. I feel it is a story much of the world is ready for - even yearning for.

Q Is that why you feel it is so important to share this story with people outside your tribe?

A Yes. And also I realize that even 500 years after Columbus, many Americans still do not know who America's first inhabitants were or are. They know so little about our unique, beautiful culture. The world could learn from it.

Q How is this story, set in the 1700's, relevant to today's world?

A In RED THUNDER, I follow several generations of this family band from birth and youth to adulthood, old age, and death - not necessarily in that order. These four cycles of the circle of life are clearly depicted by telling their stories. Life is not certain, or even promised to anyone. The characters live life, laugh, and learn. But, also, they struggle,

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they work, and they confront life's tragedies. They do this with tears like any human being may, but also with hope, faith, and courage.

In this way, the reader comes closer to the true meaning of life according to our Native cultural understandings. These meanings are not spelled out for the reader. But, they are between the lines to be deciphered by individuals as they contemplate the book and their own lives

- Q This is such an important story that is of value to so many people the world over. Why has this story never been told before?
- A Those who really knew kept it to themselves; and most all who knew are gone now from this earth. Much of our tradition has been guarded secret for many reasons, partly from fear and partly from a deep feeling to protect what we have left.

At one time, we were prohibited from talking our language or practicing our traditional ceremonies and customs. This instilled a deep fear in our grandparents, who as little, defenseless children, bore the brunt of ignorant acts to assimilate them by stomping out our culture.

- Q What kind of research did you do to prepare for this book?
- A I have spent a lifetime learning and living the teachings depicted in the book, talking to many of our elders and

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practicing our culture and traditions in everyday life. Hunting, root digging and berry picking/camping are a major part of my wife's and my regular routine, as are traditions and ceremonial dances and events.

The miracles that are depicted in this story and the teachings of Chief Circling Raven are actual accounts told by all our grand parents of most every family band in the tribe.