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**Rice, Waubgeshig. *Legacy*. Pendicton: Theytus, 2014. 192 pp.**

<http://www.theytus.com/Book-List/Legacy>

At once both heartbreakingly devastating and breathtakingly hopeful, Waubgeshig Rice truly gifts his readers a *Legacy* with his debut novel. Published by Indigenous-owned and operated Theytus Books, this work acknowledges the hardships facing today's Indigenous communities, while simultaneously affirming the resilience of Indigenous, and specifically Anishinaabe, identity.

*Legacy* opens with the story of Eva, a young Anishinaabe woman who has left her home on the Birchbark Indian reservation to attend university in Toronto. With his first chapter, Rice captures the uncomfortable reality of Indigenous students leaving the close-knit communities of home and being thrust into the urban world of Academia where our Indigeneity is an unavoidable reality. Being Indian becomes a badge that Rice's characters struggle to wear proudly in the face of institutional and individual racism. As an example of this, Eva is challenged by an ignorant professor in her Intro to Canadian Politics class who essentially tells her to "get over it," in regard to issues of "poverty and despair" on Native reserves. While non-Indigenous readers may be surprised at the tone this professor takes, or may accept it based on the fact that *Legacy*'s first chapter is set in 1989, Indigenous Academics will see all too familiar echoes of our own experiences in university as we read Eva's frustration.

Though much of the novel is set in Ontario cities, shown as dark and dangerous places where the Indigenous characters struggle (with some failing) to survive, the heart of the book lies in the Birchbark Indian Reservation, a fictional community located on the beautiful north shore of Lake Huron. Between tragic and sometimes violent moments, Rice weaves intricate details depicting the beauty of the land, helping to transform the stereotypical images of a reserve life setting into something deeper—an acknowledgement of the spiritual connection that his Anishinaabe characters hold with this place. We see Eva reflecting on her favorite memories of the beach she grew up on, remembering her mother asking, "You see all the sand on the beach here? This is all ours to share, but it's yours to use however you want." In moments like these, Rice gives us insight into Anishinaabe ways of knowing—concepts about how land connects us as a community.

Notably, *Legacy* does not solely subsist on celebrating the beauty that can and does exist in reserve life. There is a consistent undercurrent of suffering and the desire to numb the pain throughout Rice's novel that points to the complexities behind Indigenous issues in Canada. We learn within the first few pages that Eva's parents have been killed by a drunk driver, and without giving too much away, later on, how death continues to ravage the family. Rice masterfully illustrates the suffocating and never-ending affects of grief in the way he formats the novel—every chapter following Eva's gives us a different perspective from one of her four siblings, Stanley, Maria, Norman, and Edgar, and simultaneously moves us through time, each story beginning two years from where the last chapter has left us. Even as years pass through every chapter, propelling the story forward, the reader is consistently brought back to the vivid moments of each character experiencing the news that their parents had been killed as if it had just happened. We see each sibling grappling with various reactions to grieving: Stanley heading

off to school to try and follow in his sister Eva's footsteps; Norman and Maria stumbling their way through, numbing the pain with alcohol and drugs; Edgar, the eldest, trying to raise his younger siblings, as well as a family of his own, after dropping out of university himself.

Rice courageously gives us an honest picture of Indigenous life in Ontario, from alcoholism, violence, racism, and tragedy, to the uplifting connections with language and land, honouring important Anishinaabe teachings by sharing them with his reader. In the end, what allows each of these siblings to come through their darkness is a strong connection to Anishinaabe tradition and ceremony. Culture is celebrated in Rice's book as we see both Maria and Norman healing from their alcoholism through learning about sacred medicines and sweat lodge teachings. Far from painting a bleak future for Indigenous peoples, Rice illustrates the power of reconnecting with Indigenous traditions as we see this family begin to overcome their haunting past and strengthen their bonds with each other by learning the teachings of their ancestors.

If there is one thing I can say as a criticism of *Legacy*, it would be that there are a few moments where pronoun use can get a little choppy. While this may be a deliberate choice to create a dream-like quality (especially in chapters where we see characters under the influence of alcohol) there were some moments where it was simply distracting having to go back and re-read more than once to understand which "he" was "him." Also, on a personal note, Rice sets up his final chapter with an agonizing feeling of dread, which left me almost wishing he had left the ending out so as to save me from a harsh dose of reality. That being said, the finale of this novel carries on the distinct honesty found throughout Rice's work, which illustrates the author's in depth understanding of Anishinaabe thought, where truth and honesty are highly valued. Therefore, Rice's ending lends to the authenticity of his voice, and without it the story would be left unbearably incomplete.

Overall, *Legacy* is an important read for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous readers alike. For Anishinaabe readers, it is a celebration of Indigenous identity: a look at the resilience of our communities and the power of connecting to our traditional languages, homelands and cultures. For non-Indigenous readers, Rice allows a window into Indigenous life that resists stereotypes by actively acknowledging the inescapable truths of colonialism. On the surface, Rice gives us a story of tragic deaths in an individual Anishinaabe family, but this work goes much deeper than that in examining the larger legacy of Canada's colonial history and the continued effects of it on our communities, broken only by reconnection to our truths as Indigenous peoples.

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