

A Song over Miskwaa Rapids

Linda LeGarde Grover

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Linda LeGarde Grover's graceful novel *A Song over Miskwaa Rapids*, set on Ojibwe land in Minnesota, pairs a sordid mystery with supernatural influences.

Mozhay Point, a recurring locale from Grover's two previous novels, hosts an ensemble cast. In 2022, Margie plans a statement to the tribal council, refusing to sell allotment land to be paved. Her friend Theresa is undergoing chemotherapy. Theresa's husband, Michael, is a representative on the council. Even after death, the tribe's elders' presence is felt. Their intervention leads to the discovery of human remains from 1972; a historical section explains how they got there.

The mindimooyenyag-iban, or those "who although unseen are still with us," have dedicated sections in italics. The ghosts' playful contributions are a highlight. They touch, and comment on the actions of, the living. The belief in spirits extends to something akin to resurrection ("sometimes when one person dies another is born to take their place"). Also at play is the malicious behavior of a windigo, an evil creature of legend.

The sandwiching of the 1972 story line between two segments taking place in 2022 has the effect of collapsing time. Michael has a turn at narration, breaking up its omniscient perspective. Untranslated passages of Indigenous language pose a challenge, and the long prefatory list of characters seems daunting, though the latter soon become familiar. Accounts of the seasons' turning, and of rituals related to death and remembrance, flesh out the community, which is in tune with nature and in contact with its ancestors. Newspaper articles and a scene structured like a play are innovative touches.

With its powerful, atmospheric descriptions of the natural world, *A Song over Miskwaa Rapids* resembles an Indigenous family saga in miniature, couching memory and mystery in a potent spirit world.

REBECCA FOSTER (November / December 2023)

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