



## Subduction

**Kristen Millares Young**

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Kristen Millares Young's novel *Subduction* is rife with personal struggles, confrontations, and the pain of memory.

Claudia, a Latinx anthropology professor, escapes a barren marriage and the life that she built in Seattle after learning that her husband had an affair with her sister. She heads to Neah Bay, the home of the Makah Tribe, to continue her research into the Makah's rites, rituals, and songs. Meanwhile, Peter returns to his Makah home after a decades-long absence.

Claudia's Makah guide is Maggie, an elder who's in the initial stages of dementia and a hoarder. Peter is her only child, and he's haunted by the mysterious circumstances surrounding his father's death. Peter returns not because he's intent on staying with his mother, but because he wants to help her clear away her clutter and get her the care that she needs. As Peter and Claudia heal, they find emotional resonance with one another.

Chapters alternate between Claudia and Peter's perspectives, helping delineate how each approaches their own misery. Yet the prose is most evocative when it's describing the eerie and alluring nature of Neah Bay and of its particular settings, including Maggie's cluttered trailer.

The characters soften toward one another as the novel progresses, their depth becoming apparent and their stories becoming more and more compelling. They touch on misunderstandings about, and prejudicial attitudes toward, Native Americans and Latinx people; Claudia and Peter's initial views of each other evanesce.

Relationships dissolve and coalesce; the book places literary emphasis on the importance of passing family traditions on. *Subduction* is a gritty novel in which floundering people find hope and understanding where they least expect it.

MONICA CARTER (March / April 2020)

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