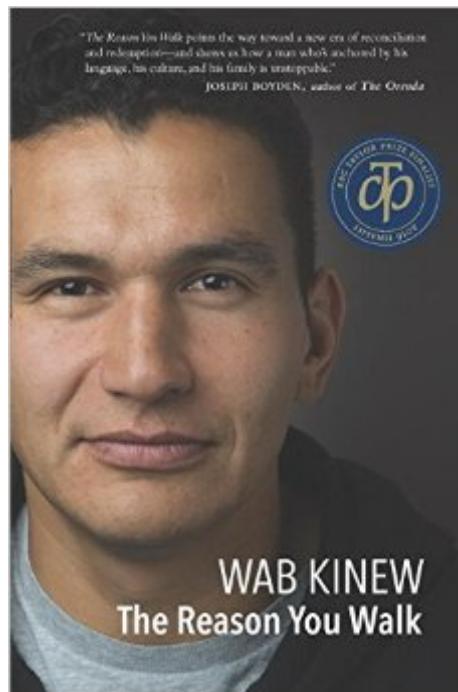


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The Reason You Walk: A Memoir



Synopsis

A moving father-son reconciliation told by a charismatic First Nations broadcaster, musician and activist. When his father was given a diagnosis of terminal cancer, Winnipeg broadcaster and musician Wab Kinew decided to spend a year reconnecting with the accomplished but distant aboriginal man who'd raised him. The Reason You Walk spans the year 2012, chronicling painful moments in the past and celebrating renewed hopes and dreams for the future. As Kinew revisits his own childhood in Winnipeg and on a reserve in Northern Ontario, he learns more about his father's traumatic childhood at residential school. An intriguing doubleness marks The Reason You Walk, a reference to an Anishinaabe ceremonial song. Born to an Anishinaabe father and a non-native mother, he has a foot in both cultures. He is a Sundancer, an academic, a former rapper, a hereditary chief, and an urban activist. His father, Tobasonakwut, was both a beloved traditional chief and a respected elected leader who engaged directly with Ottawa. Internally divided, his father embraced both traditional native religion and Catholicism, the religion that was inculcated into him at the residential school where he was physically and sexually abused. In a grand gesture of reconciliation, Kinew's father invited the Roman Catholic bishop of Winnipeg to a Sundance ceremony in which he adopted him as his brother. Kinew writes affectingly of his own struggles in his twenties to find the right path, eventually giving up a self-destructive lifestyle to passionately pursue music and martial arts. From his unique vantage point, he offers an inside view of what it means to be an educated aboriginal living in a country that is just beginning to wake up to its aboriginal history and living presence. Invoking hope, healing and forgiveness, The Reason You Walk is a poignant story of a towering but damaged father and his son as they embark on a journey to repair their family bond. By turns lighthearted and solemn, Kinew gives us an inspiring vision for family and cross-cultural reconciliation, and a wider conversation about the future of aboriginal peoples.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The author's name, Wab Kinew, as used here and on radio is a shortened version of his true Anishinaabe name. All First Nations writers talk of residential schools it seems. Government policy at the time supported by the church was aimed at assimilating Native Children by seizing them from their parents and depositing them in church-run schools. As his fellow writer Thomas King would say policy was aimed at either annihilation or assimilation. This book is autobiographical. Whether or not it is exactly true in all its details it documents the myths of the author's life. The writing style is very readable. I particularly like that he always provides an English translation for Native languages. In telling his story the author documents many traditional Native rituals including the Lakota Sundance and fasting which some have called a vision quest. Many of these seem strange to those of us who share European Ancestry and even the author shares his doubts. In concluding Kinew decides that holding on to grievances allows them to claim he who holds the grudge. Healing will come through reconciliation, not separation; understanding, not suspicion; and most powerfully love, not hate. It is these principles that underlie his writing style and make this book so appealing.

Thank you Wab Kinew for such a beautiful experience in reading this book. As a father, son, sundance supporter and community leader and puertorican I cherish this time spent reflecting through this book and these words. I am truly thankful.

Although an eloquent speaker, some of his written prose didn't present in this manner. Thoroughly enjoyed being edified in the life, philosophy and rituals of these peoples. Very moving at times.

Wab shares the wonderful story of his life so far. Real insight into the culture and life of a modern First Nations man.

Very revealing look at the North American native way of life, attitudes and meshing with the rest of society.

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