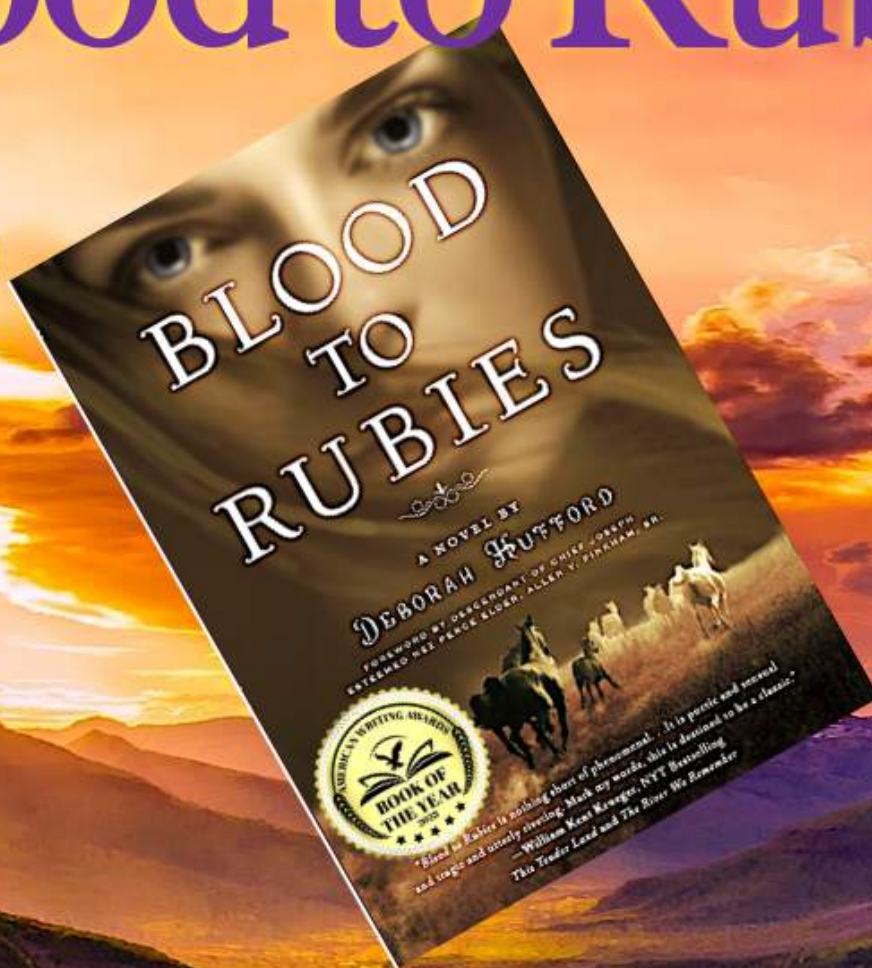


Blood to Rubies



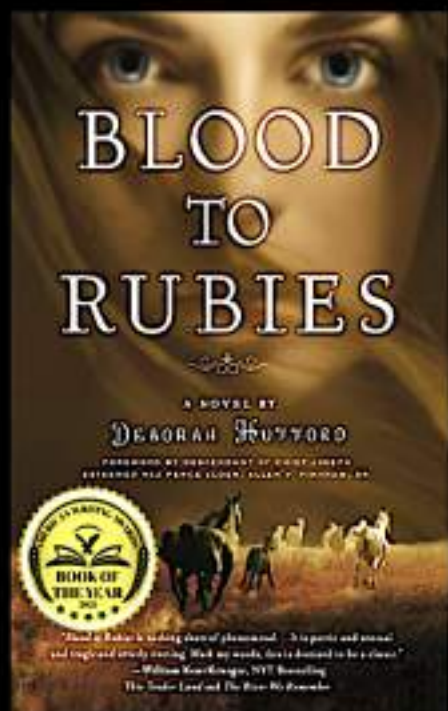
Book Club Discussion Guide

BOOK OF THE YEAR

AMERICAN WRITING AWARDS

GOLD MEDAL

IBPA'S PRESTIGIOUS BENJAMIN FRANKLIN AWARD FOR LITERARY EXCELLENCE



"Blood to Rubies is nothing short of phenomenal. It is poetic and sensual and tragic and utterly riveting. Mark my words, it is destined to be a classic."

- **WILLIAM KENT KRUEGER**
#1 New York Times Bestselling
Author of *This Tender Land*,
The River We Remember,
and 25 other novels

AMAZON



TOP 10

OTHER LITERARY AWARDS:

BEST DEBUT. BEST LITERARY. BEST MULTICULTURAL. BEST WESTERN.



This reading group guide for *Blood to Rubies* includes (1) Book Discussion Questions, (2) Endorsement Questions, (3) Q & A with Author, Deborah Hufford, (4) Nez Perce Menu & C(m)ocktails, (5) Enhancing Your Book Club Experience, and (6) How to Make Your Own Spirit Stick.

The book discussion portion is divided into sections: Fund Warm-Up Questions, The Plot & The Characters, Chief Joseph & The Nez Perce, The Woman Warrior Theme, Nature, Animals & Wildlife, The Images in *Blood to Rubies*, The Relevance of *Blood to Rubies*' Themes Today, and Some Philosophical Questions.

Infused throughout all these sections are suggestions for further reading of related posts from the author's popular historical blog, *Notes from the Frontier*, that has more than 100,000 readers and includes nearly 400 posts. These posts are heavily researched and include many images with photo captions that will shed light on scenes and issues in *Blood to Rubies*.

Happy Reading & Book Clubbing!❤

Blood to Rubies

Topics & Questions for Discussion

Fun Warm-Up Questions

1. How thought-provoking did you find BLOOD TO RUBIES? What surprised you most about the book? What was the most fascinating fact you learned?
2. In your opinion, what were the most important themes in BLOOD TO RUBIES? What were some minor themes?
3. Who was your favorite character? What character did you identify with most? What characters did you most dislike?
4. In Chapter 36, *cloven tongues of fire*, a young Fire Bear goes on his spirit quest to seek his wyakin. What would you like your own wyakin name to be?
5. Did any parts of the book make you cry? Did any make you laugh out loud?
6. Do you think this book would make a good movie? Who would you cast in the various roles?

FURTHER READING: See www.NotesfromtheFrontier.com, the author's historical blog, to find the following related posts: Dances with Wolves (Parts I, II, III), The Revenant, Old Yeller, Girls with Guns, The True Story of Katie Elder, Westerns for Dads, Earliest Indians on Film, Gunfight at O.K. Corral, The Real Josey Whales, The Real Jeremiah Johnson, Westerns Roaring Back, Daniel Boone, Jamestown, Wes Studi, Horses in Hollywood Westerns, Yakima Canutt (Hollywood's Greatest Stuntman), The First Black Frontier Filmmaker, and more

The Plot & The Characters

1. Did you find the structure of the book in vignettes alternating between characters and plot to be effective? Why or why not?
2. Much of BLOOD TO RUBIES revolves around the young frontier photographer, Frederick Cortland, and his experiences. Did you like Frederick? What were his strongest qualities? His weakest?
3. What was the most surprising aspect of frontier photography you learned about in BLOOD TO RUBIES?
4. Can you see any ironies in Frederick's work as a photographer in his personal life?
5. Most immigrants and refugees who came to America were fleeing poverty, war, persecution, and injustice. How is the 1800s migration to America similar to the influx of migrants and refugees coming to America today? Would you have risked your family and the dangerous journey immigrants and westering pioneers risked?

FURTHER READING: See www.NotesfromtheFrontier.com, to find these related posts: Death on the Trail, The First Wagon Trains West, A Pioneer Diary, Pioneer Christmas Diaries, What Pioneers Packed to Go West, Pioneer Survival Guides in the 1800s, What Pioneers Ate, Tools Pioneers Needed to Survive, Parting of the Ways, Frontier Quilts, Quilting on the Oregon Trail, Pioneer Cemeteries, Sod Houses--Humble Homes of the Prairie, How to Build a Log Cabin, Rabies on the Frontier, The Heartbreaking Tale of Orphan Trains, 1880s Human Hair Funeral Art, 1880s Funeral Technology

6. Likewise, many city-dwellers on the East Coast in the 1800s were escaping unthinkable work conditions and tenement life to go West, as were ex-slaves escaping their former lives in the South. Do you think you would have been one of those to go West?

FURTHER READING: Go to www.NotesfromtheFrontier.com, to view these related posts: Child Labor in the 1800s, Labor Day--Why We Celebrate It, The Triangle Shirtwaist Fire, In Praise of the Working Man & Woman, Ship of the Damned, The Iroquois Theater Fire.

7. What similar personality traits did Sorrel and Flying Horse share? What do you think motivated their relationship?
8. There are several references to "two spirits" in BLOOD TO RUBIES. What differences were there in the way white and Native cultures regarded homosexuality and gender identity? Do you think there is a spectrum of sexuality and gender identity in humans?

FURTHER READING: Go to www.NotesfromtheFrontier.com, to see the following related posts: Queer Tales of the Old West, Gay-iety on the Frontier, Homo(sexuality) on the Range, The Sad Saga of George and Libby Custer's Laundress (Coming Soon!)

9. What character traits do Ransom and Fire Bear share?
10. How did you feel about Ransom's duplicity regarding Sylvia and Sorrel? Do you think it's possible to be in love with two people romantically at one time?
11. The depictions of frontier prostitutes in many movies and series depict often present them as coquettish and glamorous. The reality was far more grim. Did you know much about prostitution in the frontier of the 1800s? What surprised you most?

FURTHER READING: Go to www.NotesfromtheFrontier.com, for the following related posts: Soiled Doves, 1800s Birth Control, Foot Binding & Prostitution in the 1800s, Sex Myths of the 1800s (Part I & II)

12. Do you think that Sorrel's actions at the end of the book were justified? Why or why not? What would you have done, were you in her situation?
13. What do you think motivated Ransom's actions at the end of the book?

Chief Joseph & The Nez Perce

1. Did you know Chief Joseph's story before reading BLOOD TO RUBIES? What did you learn of his saga from the book?

FURTHER READING: Go to www.NotesfromtheFrontier.com, to see the following related posts: In Honor of Chief Joseph, The Day the Earth Wept, In the Steps of Chief Joseph, Chief Joseph's Terrible Dilemma, Ancient Nez Perce Art Still Flourishes, Angela's Awesome Art & Her Appy, Cappy, Honor Chief Joseph's Legacy: The Chief Joseph Foundation

2. Did you know the significance of the Nez Perce in American history and their relationship to Lewis and Clark? What makes the Nez Perce story especially ironic given their history with Lewis and Clark? Were you surprised to learn of Daytime Smoke, the Nez Perce son of William Clark and his fate?
3. How did the prediction of ancient Nez Perce oracles affect the tribe's regard for change in their world?
4. How did smoking the peace pipe with Lewis and Clark affect Nez Perce history as more and more whites came to their land?
5. Horses, especially Appaloosas, had a big role in Nez Perce life and in their 1,500-mile exodus. Did you know about the Nez Perce and their Appaloosas before reading BLOOD TO RUBIES?

FURTHER READING: Go to www.NotesfromtheFrontier.com, to see the following related posts: The Origin of Appaloosas, In the Steps of Chief Joseph, For the Love of Horses (& Mules!), In Honor of a Magnificent Warhorse, The Most Famous Mustang, Angela's Awesome Art & Her Appy, Cappy, The Comanche and The Horse, Horses in Hollywood Westerns

6. How did the Nez Perce demonstrate that they were an innovative tribe?
7. The brilliant fighting tactics of the Nez Perce in the 1877 War are taught at West Point today. How did the Nez Perce use the land and guerilla tactics to repeatedly outsmart the U.S. Army?
8. What technological and military advantages did the U.S. Cavalry have over the Nez Perce?
9. During the arduous 1,500-mile exodus of Joseph and the Nez Perce, what scenes did you find most powerful? Most upsetting?
10. In Chapter 63, *land of my father's bones*, Frederick notices a very young Nez Perce warrior, Earth Left by the Setting Sun, leaving the Bear Paw Battlefield late at night for Canada. He is badly burned from battle and carries a King Arthur flour sack on his saddle that holds the hooves of a mighty warhorse. Although this particular scene is fictional, that young man and the mysterious flour sack that contained the hooves of a warhorse did indeed exist.

Earth Left by the Setting Sun was Chief Joseph's nephew. He later recreated himself and became world famous as Jackson Sundown. Read more about his extraordinary life and the hooves he carried in the flour sack.

FURTHER READING: Go to www.NotesfromtheFrontier.com, to see the following related posts: The Saga of Jackson Sundown, The Mystery of Custer's Horse Vic, The Saga of Victory, The Continuing Mystery of a Warhorse's Missing Hooves Continues Today (Coming Soon!)

The Woman Warrior Theme

1. Both Sorrel and Flying Horse had warrior spirits and did not fit into the gender norms of their respective cultures. More and more archeological evidence is being unearthed around the world today that indicates women warriors existed in far greater numbers and in far more cultures than we have been led to believe. How has Hollywood and the chroniclers of history written women warriors out of history?

FURTHER READING: Go to www.NotesfromtheFrontier.com, to see the following related posts: Native Warrior Women, Warrior Women Rising from The Dust of History, Woman Chief, Who Killed Custer? It May Surprise You! PART 1, Who Killed Custer? It May Surprise You! PART 2, Women Homesteaders, and more

2. What movies and books can you cite in recent decades that began to recognize women warriors?

Animals & Wildlife

1. Horses, dogs, cats, pioneer livestock, and wildlife show up often in the book. What were some of your favorite scenes in the book involving animals? What were some upsetting scenes?

FURTHER READING: Go to www.NotesfromtheFrontier.com, to see the following related posts: Creature Comforts, Raising Chickens, Yellowstone's Keystone Wolves, Old Yeller, Wild Burros of the West, Grizzlies: Lords of the Frontier, Civil War Animal Mascots, Sally—The Famous Civil War Mascot, The Magical Bond Between the Badger & The Coyote, Americas First Animal Shelter, Leave It To Beavers, Rabies on the Frontier, Indian Dogs, Buffalo & Indians, Custer's Black Hills Expedition, Veterinary Care on Custer's Expedition, Custer's Dogs, Easter Surprise, Grizzly Adams, How Much Wood Can a Woodchuck Chuck? Bear Whisperer — Spikehorn Meyers, Where Bucking Broncs Go To Die, The Buck Stops Here!, The Strange Tale of the Red Ghosts of the West, The Endangered Black-Footed Ferret, America's Goat-Gonad Guru. **SEE ALSO POSTS ABOUT HORSES UNDER CHIEF JOSEPH & THE NEZ PERCE listed on page 6.**

2. How were animals important to the Nez Perce? Can you cite examples?

FURTHER READING: Go to www.NotesfromtheFrontier.com, to see the following related posts: Buffalo & Indians, Every Dead Buffalo Is An Indian Gone, War Bonnets, Magnificent Animal Headdresses, Warhorse Paint, How to Make a Tipi,

3. What differences do you think there were in the regard for animals and for Nature generally between White and Native cultures?

The Images in BLOOD TO RUBIES

1. Do you think the images enhance the narrative or detract from it?

2. What images did you find most powerful? The most troubling?

3. Did the images propel you in reading the story?

4. Did the images contribute to Frederick's persona as a frontier photographer?

5. Did you learn anything from the images? Did the images every help you in understanding the action or narrative in the story?

6. Do you feel archival images are helpful in historical fiction?

7. How important do you feel photography and frontier photographers were in telling the western frontier story?

FURTHER READING: Go to www.NotesfromtheFrontier.com, to see the following related posts: Death Photography, Ansel Adams, George Catlin, Earliest Indians on Film, Wild West Mystery Photography, Bawdy Stereoscopes, Vanishing Americans, Alphonse Bertillon (Pioneer in Early Forensic Science), much more

The Relevance of Blood to Rubies' Themes Today

1. What parallels can you draw between the events of the 1870s and today, especially regarding refugees and diasporas, the environment, species decimation, the rights of women, racial strife, land rights, and the price of "progress"?
2. Native Americans share a general belief in The Seventh Generation Principle, that decisions made today should leave a sustainable world seven generations into the future. How is that principle relevant today?

FURTHER READING: Go to www.NotesfromtheFrontier.com, to see the following related posts: They Were Giants, Every Buffalo Gone is An Indian Dead, Yellowstone's Keystone Wolves, Leave It to Beavers

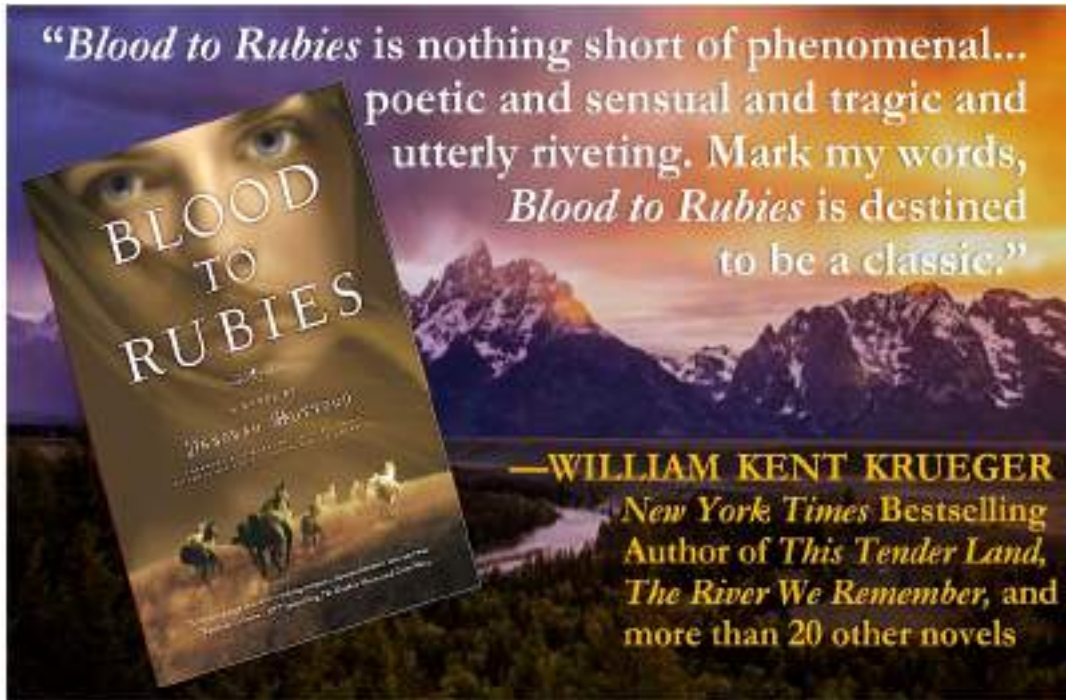
Some Philosophical Questions

1. There are several scenes in the book of spiritual mysticism. Do you believe in a "spirit world" or spiritual mysticism?
2. Do you believe the genocide and diaspora of Native American tribes during Manifest Destiny were inevitable? Why or why not?
3. Do you feel a person who is cruel to animals can still be a good person? Do you feel that animals have souls?
4. Can vigilante justice sometimes be justified? Why or why not?
5. Do you feel that ethnic groups of people who have suffered genocide in the past or present by a populace or government should be compensated today? Why or why not?
6. The Judeo-Christian philosophy for thousands of years has held that human beings are the masters of the natural world? Do you believe this? What passages in the book and excerpts from the media in the 1870s purported this philosophy as a justification for Manifest Destiny? How does this philosophy differ from the Nez Perce regard for the earth and the natural world?

BTR

Blood to Rubies

Endorsement Questions



New York Times best-selling author Kent Krueger called *Blood to Rubies* "poetic and sensual." Can you site any passages or scenes that are poetic or sensual? Do you find any similarities in writing styles between Kent's new novel, *The River We Remember*, and *Blood to Rubies*?

NYT bestselling historical fiction author Kathleen Grissom's new book, *Crow Mary*, is also about a brave Native woman named "Goes First," later referred to as "Crow Mary." Did you find any similarities in content or writing style between *Blood to Rubies* and *Crow Mary*? Between the challenges that *Crow Mary* and *Flying Horse* faced?





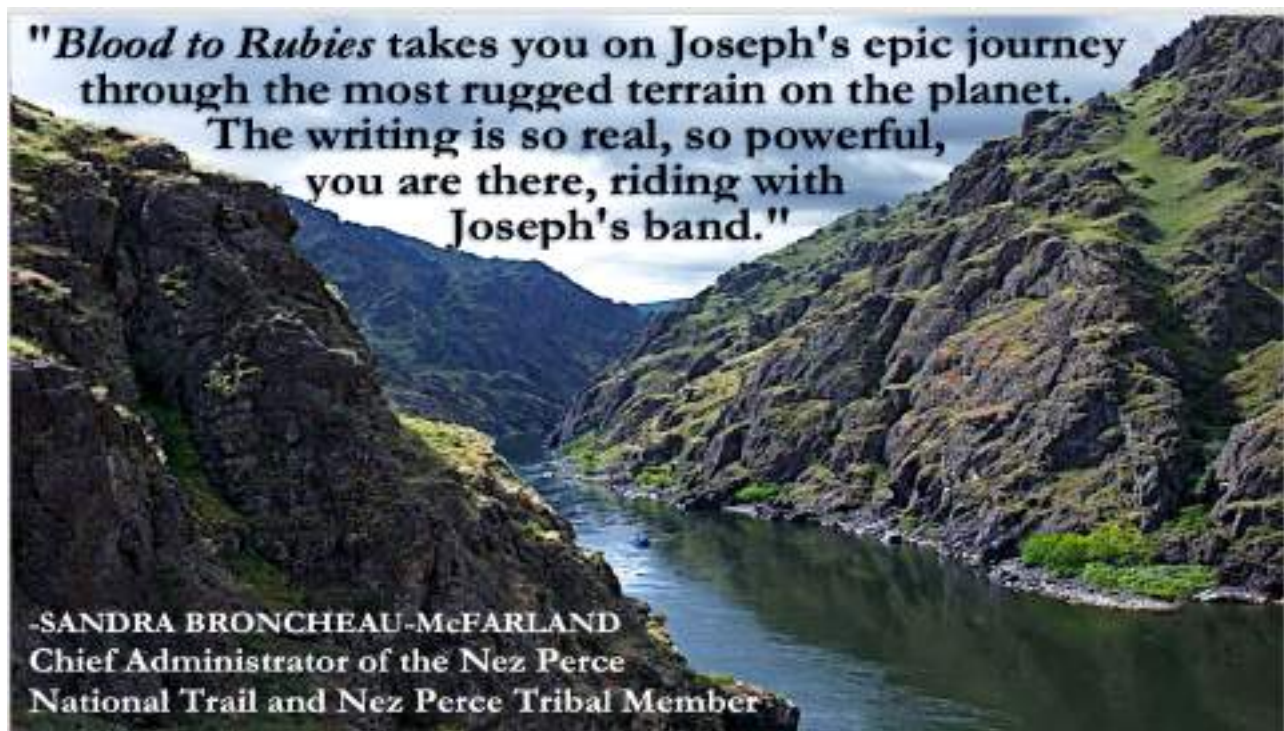
New York Time bestselling historical fiction author, Lesley Kagen, described *Blood to Rubies* as "gritty and lush." Can you find examples of such passages in the book? Did you find the juxtaposition of the contrast effective? Why or why not? What photographs did you find most shocking? Most heartwarming?



USA Today bestselling author of the powerful novel, *You Belong Here Now*, Dianna Rodstad, called the writing in *Blood to Rubies* "blindingly honest" and "raw." In fact, two reviewers have independent of each other have described *Blood to Rubies* writing style as "honest" and "raw." Why do you think that is?



Peter Buffett, the famous composer of *Dances with Wolves* and *500 Nations*, calls *Blood to Rubies* a "powerful story" that "the world needs to know." The founding South Dakota Film Commissioner and scout for both *DWW* and *500 Nations*, Gary Keller, sees striking parallels between *Dances with Wolves* and *Blood to Rubies*, as well. What similarities do you see?



Chief Joseph's excruciating exodus and the legacy he left behind are legend among the Nez Perce and many history lovers. Did *Blood to Rubies* give you a clearer understanding of the clash between Native and white?

Q & A with Author Deborah Hufford



Q: What inspired you to write *Blood to Rubies*?

A: I grew up as an Iowa farm girl with lots of critters, loving the land and Nature. My childhood horse, Sundance, was my world. I rode him bareback on Iowa country roads and in the river valleys, exploring old stagecoach traces, pioneer graveyards, abandoned mines, buffalo wallows. Because I loved horses I knew about Appaloosas. One of my favorite places to ride was a winding

country road that spilled into a vast river valley. Across the expanse on the sweeping hills, a band of Appaloosas grazed, led by a spirited leopard stallion. Even though I was in Iowa, not Idaho, my child's imagination was not limited by geography. The horses, I imagined, belonged to Chief Joseph and the Nez Perce. That was the seed of my future novel.

Q: What is your writing process?

A: I remember the first sentence I wrote of my novel, although at the time, I didn't know what it would become. I wrote first in vignettes—character sketches, scenes, landscapes. As with many writers, characters began to take shape and, miraculous as it sounds, they began to write themselves. It truly felt as if I was channeling a muse. Dynamics between vaguely sketched characters began to crop up. I knew I wanted to write about Chief Joseph and his struggle, about Appaloosas, about the frontier and the land. So, to sum it up, I didn't have a process. Haha!



I sort of backed into it. I will say that I had a strange avoidance regarding writing fiction. I attended grad school at the University of Iowa and taught Writer's Workshop students at the Center for the Book letterpress printing and designed and hand-printed Writer's Workshop posters. I was exposed to the greatest authors in the world and read many of them. But it was such a rarefied world, writing fiction was like Shangri-la, beyond me. I became a career magazine writer, editor and publisher with very good credits. But I didn't have the courage to try fiction. Then, when I had my daughter and was diagnosed with kidney failure, I began writing snippets. Nothing like the threat of mortality to force you toward your dreams!

Q: Your writing journey has been a very long, hard struggle, especially with kidney failure and a resulting heart attack? What kept you going?

A: I wrote haphazardly at first, letting my muse inspire me toward a vague goal. I remember the day I realized I had accumulated 100 pages of writing, disjointed as they were. That was at least a third of a novel! That's when I began writing in earnest, organizing my writing, plotting out the story, researching dates, events.

At one point I laid out hundreds of pieces of paper on the living room floor, trying to piece together a sequence and double checking dates for historical accuracy. I think historical fiction is one of the most challenging genres, so much research and diligence is required to braid narrative and characters together within a factual framework. I did nearly two decades of research, writing, and rewriting.

Then about two years ago, my kidney disease degraded to end-stage kidney failure. I was put on a donor list. Four family members volunteered to donate and did testing but all were rejected. At that point, I was worried that I wouldn't make it. So many people die of kidney failure before they find a donor.

I made my husband and daughter promise me that if I didn't make it, they would still try to get my novel published. Then, in October 2022, my husband was finally approved, after making a Herculean effort to change his lifestyle and diet for nearly a year to lower his blood pressure. The very same day my husband was approved as my kidney donor, I also found a publisher. Miracles do happen!



Q: Why did you choose to include archival images in your novel?

A: My research was exhaustive and many of the books I purchased or checked out at the library had so many wonderful archival images. Those images became an organic part of the story for me and made the nonfiction books and the facts I researched come alive. Today, using images in fiction is practically unheard of. Very, very rare. But I began to question why that should be, especially for historical fiction, when there is a wealth of images from at least the last two centuries.

Also, my main character was a frontier photographer who goes West to escape the Civil War draft and finds himself in the middle of another conflict—the Nez Perce War of 1877, the nation's last Indian war. I had looked at so many stunning photographs by frontier photographers, from William Henry Jackson to Edward Curtis to Timothy Sullivan to Ansel Adams. Also, Chief Joseph plays a major role in my book. He was one of the most photographed Native Americans in our history, and his integrity and dignity just glow from the page and go straight to your heart. I wanted readers to enjoy the images as part of the story as I had, to absorb their power.

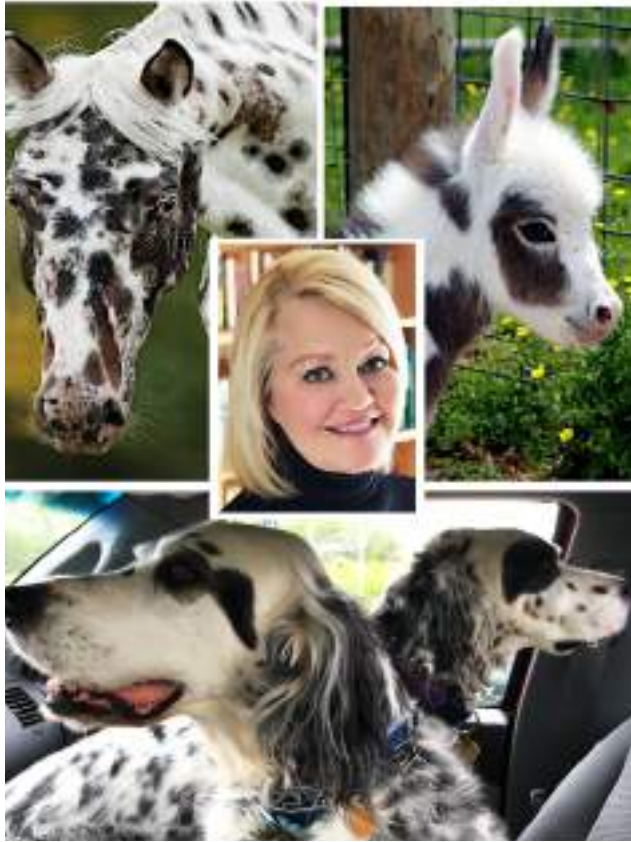
I also hope that the images in my novel might attract new readers to the historical fiction genre. Each of my 65 chapters features a poignant or surprising black and white image as a chapter header that is illustrative of that chapter's narrative. For those who have never considered reading fiction, maybe the photographs will serve as accessible and interesting entrée points to the writing? I'm anxious to hear from readers, to see if they are as affected by the images as I am. And if the images enhance their reading experience? 🙏👍



Read more about my images in my article for *Historical Times Magazine*, at: www.DeborahHufford.com/IntheNews/HistoricalTimesMagazine

Q: Blood to Rubies includes many animals as minor characters? Why?

A: I love animals is the short answer! And I think most historical fiction readers love animals, too. I grew up an Iowa farm girl with all kinds of critters and was always bringing home injured wildlife. I've always had horses, dogs and cats.



Now, I live out in the country near the shores of Lake Michigan, where we have so much wildlife. I feed our resident crows, wild turkeys, deer and their fawns, squirrels, chipmunks, rabbits, mink, raccoons, fox, turtles, snakes, coyotes, bobcats, opossums and many, many types of birds. We have a frog pond and an ancient back woods that have old-growth oak that were never cut down by pioneers. So much wildlife reside there.

We live on a road that was once a major Native American path along the shores of Lake Michigan. We've found arrowheads in our back woods. Within a quarter of a mile of our home are three log-and-stone pioneer cabins and stone fences that date back to the 1850s. I'm

immersed in Nature and wildlife and pioneer and Native American history and the spirits of those who tread on the land long before me.

All my animal characters just trotted into my story and stayed. Wildlife and pets were so much a part of Native and pioneer life on the frontier, I had to include them. They are essential to the story.

I owe a lot to the animals in my life, especially my childhood horse, Sundance. While I was writing *Blood to Rubies*, my dogs and cats were always with me, sleeping at my feet or on them. They've brought me great comfort.



The top image is of my two rescue English setters, Howie and Reggie. The gorgeous Appaloosa and darling donkey foal are not mine, but I wish they were. I hope someday—if I sell enough books — to have a spotted donkey and another dream horse, a leopard Appaloosa-Arab mix I will ride on the Chief Joseph Trail Ride. At right is my "dogged" editor, Reggie, pointing out a typo in *Blood to Rubies*.

Q: What advice do you have for aspiring writers?

A: Don't be a coward like I was for too long. And don't wait to start. You never know how much time you have.

If it all intimidates you, start with snippets and vignettes like I did. And don't be intimidated by all the books and blogs and podcasts and writing groups that tell you how to write, or worse yet, how to write a best-selling novel. There is so much noise out there, you'll get lost in the cacophony. I'm not saying there aren't good books and writing coaches and blogs out there. But the amount of advice can be overwhelming. The most important thing is to start...put words on paper.

Another caveat about writing: if you want to write a book simply because the notion is romantic to you and you think it's a way to fame and immortality (or—god forbid!—fortune), just forget it. Write because you love it. No other reason.

Since Hemingway and Fitzgerald and Harper Lee and Willa Cather, Americans have fantasized about writing the Great American Novel. It's in the American zeitgeist. And many people think it's such a romantic idea. But newsflash! Gone are the days of sending a manuscript off to your editor & publisher, sitting back with your feet on the desk, smoking a cigar and sipping a bourbon, waiting for the world to shower you with literary accolades.

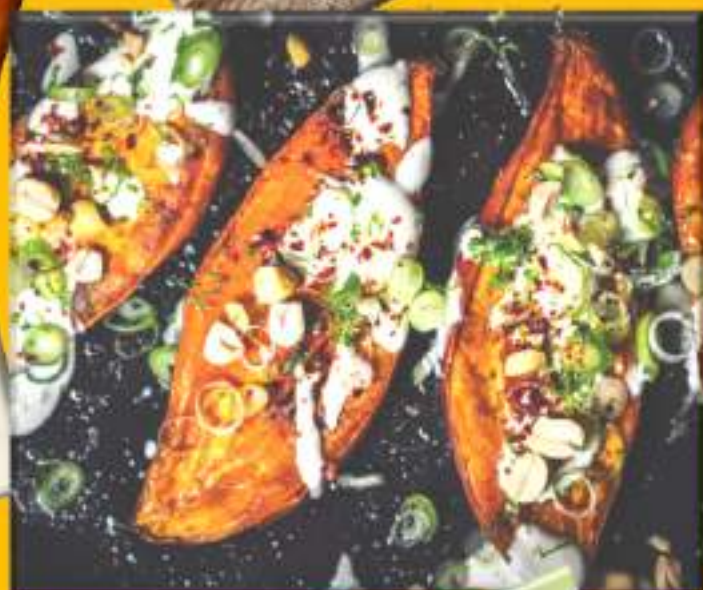
Today, two million books are published a year. And, according to many reputable sources, more than 90% of those titles never sell more than 100 copies. Add to that the fact that book publishing today is in such turmoil, the majority of books never find a literary agent or a publisher. If you are lucky enough to find either and do complete a book, don't think the hardest part is over. Not by a long shot. I have been gob smacked by how much work marketing a book is. And, from what I've observed, the bigger the author, the harder they work!

But there's good news for aspiring authors today too. There are many types of publishers sprouting up today, university presses, small and medium-size independent publishers, hybrid publishers, and self-publishing. They provide all sorts of options for getting your book published.

But I always go back to the reason you write. Write because you love it. And don't let the noise of others and the outside world make you cower. Then the hours, years, life you spend writing will be worth it. As Shakespeare wrote (and he was a guy who knew a thing or two about writing!):

*"Our doubts are traitors and make us lose the good we oft might win,
by fearing to attempt."*

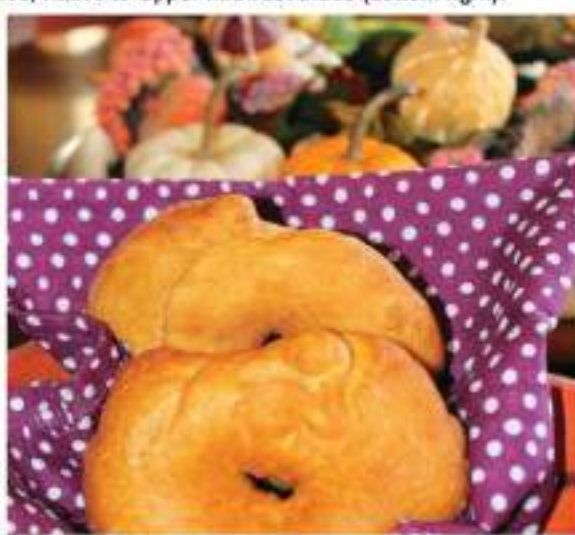
**TRY THIS DELICIOUS
NEZ PERCE-INSPIRED MENU
FOR YOUR BOOK CLUB
MEETING!**



Make these Nez Perce-inspired dishes (with cocktails) for your book club meeting!



The Nez Perce tribe was known as "The Salmon People." Try this delicious, traditional roasted cedar maple salmon entree! (Above left) Elderberry is a main staple of the Plateau Indians. This yummy elderberry ginger cocktail also has tons of health benefits. See special note in recipe below. (Top right) Dishes with rice, mushrooms, garlic, onion and nuts were common Nez Perce foods. The type of rice the Nez Perce ate is not commonly available, so this savory dish uses wild rice, native to Upper Midwest tribes (bottom right).



Many Native American dishes are central to our national palate; most notably the "three sisters," squash, corn and beans, as well as potatoes, garlic and onions. The Nez Perce ate a special tuber called "camas," which is not widely available. So, we use sweet potatoes in this recipe, which is similar in taste. (Top left) Frybread, very easy to make, is universal among most North America tribes, including the Nez Perce. (Above) This Nez Perce recipe is from the *Lewiston Tribune* in Idaho. Slather with your favorite topping! Plateau tribes ate wild clover, some ferns and other greens for sustenance. We substitute spinach for this salad recipe with nuts and berries and an elderberry dressing. Healthy and delicious too!

Roasted Cedar Salmon with Maple & Pecan Glaze

INGREDIENTS

- salmon fillets with skin on one side – 3/4-1 pound (1-1.5 inch thick)
- chopped parsley for garnish
- sea salt for finishing

GLAZE

- 3 tablespoon butter
- 3 tablespoon pure Maple Syrup (or brown sugar)
- 1/4 C. pecans, chopped
- 2 tablespoon grainy or old-fashioned mustard
- 2 tablespoon balsamic vinegar
- 1 teaspoon minced garlic (1 large clove)
- 1 teaspoon cornstarch (this will help glaze adhere to salmon)

THE CEDAR PLANK

Soak a cedar plank in cold water, 10 minutes for a 1/4-inch plank, 30-60 minutes for 1/2-inch plank. Cedar planks are great for salmon as they provide a gentle smoky taste.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Prepare the glaze:** Place all glaze ingredients in a microwaveable bowl or measuring cup. Stir. Microwave for **1 minute** on high. Glaze will be slightly thickened. Or place ingredients in a small saucepan and simmer on medium heat for a few minutes until thickened. Let stand 5 minutes.
- 2. Heat the oven to 450F.**
- 3. Grill planked salmon:** After soaking, pat plank dry. Spray with oil. Place salmon on top of plank, skin side down. Brush salmon with 1/3 of glaze. Place plank on middle grate and grill for 3 minutes for thinner plank (a little longer if using a thicker plank) until plank starts charring and smoking. *Have a glass of water on hand in case of flare ups.*
- 4. Brush 1/3 more glaze on top of salmon fillets.** Turn heat down to 425F.
- 5. Cook for another 7 minutes** or until salmon just begins to turn opaque. Instant thermometer will show an internal core temperature of 130-135F/54.4-57C (temp will rise while resting). Salmon should be a warm pink in the thickest part. Drizzle with remaining glaze. Rest salmon for **5 minutes** loosely covered with a foil.

SERVE

Slide a spatula between the skin and the salmon. The salmon will lift right off leaving the skin on the charred wood plank. Transfer to a plate. Sprinkle with chopped parsley if desired and some good sea salt and/or lemon zest.



Elderberry & Ginger Cocktail (or Mocktail)

INGREDIENTS

- 2 oz. elderberry syrup (or crushed & pressed elderberries) (NOTE: elderberries and elderberry syrup are readily available on Amazon and at health food stores)
- 1 oz. bourbon, your choice (for mocktail use sparkling water or ginger ale)
- 1 dropper of ginger extract
- a few slices of fresh ginger
- cinnamon stick & twist of orange peel for garnish

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Add elderberry syrup, bourbon, and ginger slices to a shaker. Shake for 15 seconds
2. Add crushed ice and shake another 5 seconds
3. Pour into a glass and add a dropper of ginger extract. Garnish with cinnamon stick and orange peel



Wild Rice, Mushrooms, Chestnuts & Cranberry Pilaf



INGREDIENTS

- 2 T. walnut oil
- 1 lb. assorted fresh mushrooms, cleaned
- 1 T. chopped fresh sage
- 1/2 c. chopped wild onion or shallots
- 1 T. minced garlic cloves
- 1/2 c. mushroom stock
- 2 c. wild rice, cooked according to directions
- 1/2 c. dried cranberries
- 1 c. roasted, peeled, chopped chestnuts
- 1 T. maple syrup or to taste
- 1/2 t. smoked salt or to taste
- 2 T. butter
- sprigs of fresh sage for garnish

ROASTING & PEELING CHESTNUTS

Score an X on the flat side of each chestnut with a sharp knife and place on a baking sheet. Roast in a 350°F oven until the skins begin to peel back, between 10-25 minutes, depending on size and freshness of the chestnuts. Let cool, peel & quarter.

INSTRUCTIONS

In a large skillet, heat the oil and butter over medium-high heat. Add mushrooms, sage, onion and garlic. Cook, stirring, until the mushrooms are nicely browned and the onion is soft, about 5 minutes. Stir in the mushroom stock, wild rice, and cranberries and cook until the liquid is nearly evaporated. Stir in the roasted chestnuts. Season with maple syrup and smoked salt to taste. Garnish with fresh sage sprigs and serve.

Sweet Potatoes, Roasted Pecans & Maple Crème Fraîche



INGREDIENTS FOR SWEET POTATOES:

- 4 sweet potatoes (each 7 ounces), Garnet or Jewel
- 4 T. unsalted butter, as room temperature
- Fine sea salt
- olive oil to coat potatoes

FOR THE DRESSING:

- 1/2 cup crème fraîche or sour cream
- 1 T. maple syrup or honey
- 1 T. fresh lime juice
- 2 t. fish sauce (optional)
- 1/2 t. ground black pepper
- Fine sea salt to taste

FOR GARNISH:

- 2 T thinly sliced scallions, both green & white parts
- 1/4 c. pecan pieces, roasted in butter
- 1 t. red chili flakes or paprika
- 2 t. chives, chopped
- 1 t. paprika

INSTRUCTIONS

Preheat the oven to 400°F. Wash, scrub, and dry the potatoes, then brush them with olive oil and sprinkle with salt. Poke 6-7 holes in each potato with a sharp knife, then place them on a baking sheet lined with foil or parchment. Bake in hot oven for 45-60 minutes, turning once halfway through cooking time.

Mix the ingredients for the dressing together.

When the potatoes are soft, remove from the oven and allow them to cool slightly. Cut an incision across the top of each potato, but don't cut them all the way in half. Place a tablespoon of butter in the pocket. Then, fill with a few spoonfuls of crème fraîche, sprinkle with paprika or chili powder, roasted pecan pieces, scallions, and chives. Serve immediately.



Nez Perce Fry Bread

INGREDIENTS

- 1/2 c. warm (not hot) tap water
- 1/2 C. warm milk (whole or 2%)
- 1/2 to 1 tablespoon active yeast
- 2 cups flour
- 1 tablespoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil

INSTRUCTIONS

Mix 1/2 cup of the water and yeast in a large measuring cup, and let it sit until the yeast activates or bubbles. Mix the dry ingredients in a large bowl with a fork and make a

well in the center. Add the oil and 1/2 cup warm milk to the yeast mixture. Fold the liquid into the dry mixture and mix until sticky. Place in oven on "proof" setting (100F) for an hour or more. After dough has risen, knead it slightly. Place in the refrigerator for another hour or so.

Heat about one inch of oil in a skillet or a deep fat fryer on high or 350 degrees. While the oil heats, prepare the fry bread pieces. Oil hands and make individual pieces, stretching the dough to about the size of a bagel. Poke a hole in the center, like a doughnut, so heat disperses evenly. Lower into oil until golden brown. Flip and repeat. This process usually takes about 2 to 3 minutes on each side. Place on paper towel to drain. Continue until all pieces are fried. Serve with butter, honey (or huckleberry honey), jam. Makes 5 or 6 pieces.

Greens with Nuts & Berries & Elderberry Dressing



INGREDIENTS

- greens such as watercress, arugula, purslane, or spinach can be used for this recipe
- Nuts roasted in butter, such as walnuts, hazelnuts, piñon nuts, or pecans
- Berries such as blackberries, blueberries, raspberries and dried cranberries
- minced onion, to taste
- minced garlic clove, to taste

DRESSING

- walnut oil
- elderberry syrup

INSTRUCTIONS

- Wash all greens and berries thoroughly. Roast nuts in butter. Add greens, berries and nuts together, then toss in walnut oil and elderberry syrup.

SPECIAL NOTE: It is important to note that these recipes are "inspired" by Nez Perce cooking but not necessarily culturally accurate, as many traditional Nez Perce ingredients are native to their particular geography and are not commonly available in grocery stores. Some traditional ingredients have been substituted with those more readily available. These offerings are intended only to give readers a taste of traditional Nez Perce native foods in a modern context.



Enhance Your Book Club Experience!

Book clubs have been very creative in making their gatherings unique, sometimes echoing the themes, costumes, characters, or food featured in the book they are discussing. Here are just a few ideas your group can try:

1. **INVESTIGATE WHO THE ORIGINAL INDIGENOUS INHABITANTS OF YOUR LOCALE WERE** There is a movement across the North and South American continent to recognize the original indigenous inhabitants of the land we live on today. Some municipalities, companies, schools, and universities are acknowledging the original inhabitants of the land they occupy today. With a little help from your local historical society or librarians, you can discover who the original inhabitants were of your locale. Do independent research and discuss your findings with your group. (Refer to the Author Q&A section about my own fascinating experience with this research!)

2. **CHOOSE YOUR FAVORITE WARRIOR WOMAN!**

Blood to Rubies in part is about a young Nez Perce woman who becomes a warrior to help save her people. For the *Blood to Rubies* discussion session, each book club member can choose a little-known historical female character or story to share briefly with the group as a way of celebrating female bravery and women warriors, so often overlooked by historians. (See my blog post, *Warrior Women Rise from the Ashes of History*, at www.NotesfromtheFrontier.com for some ideas.)

3. **CRAFT A SPIRIT STICK TO SHARE WITH YOUR BOOK CLUB**

Blood to Rubies mentions the exquisite beading of the Nez Perce and their beaded umbilical pouches created for their infants. Like many Native tribes, the Nez Perce decorated items to be used as talismans or to conjure strength and seek spiritual guidance. "Spirit sticks" were and are used in Native and Nez Perce cultures as talking sticks to aid in council, walking sticks to find the way, medicine sticks for healing, prayer sticks for spiritual guidance, water sticks to find spring water, shaman sticks, and as markers for sacred places. They petition the spirit world, make offerings, allay bad spirits, request strength, bring peace.

Book club members can try their hands at creating their own spirit sticks, then share them with the group. Explain why you used the materials you did and what significance they have to you personally. Your spirit sticks can also double as decorative book markers! See below for ideas and the Nez Perce spirit stick I was inspired to make for my dear friends who helped me on my writing journey.

About Spirit Sticks

In the 1960s, during the Pan-Indian Movement, dreamcatchers became extremely popular. Other young people across the continent who were seeking their own spiritual awakening often looked to Native cultures in their quest. And they adopted dreamcatchers as well.

Today, spirit sticks are gaining popularity among non-Natives and teachers who incorporate a craft project for their children to teach them about Native American spiritualism. On the next page are examples of spirit sticks made by children that are wonderful.



Spirit sticks can be made of any materials—beads, buttons, shells, yarn, paints, old jewelry, findings. Often materials are chosen for their spiritual or experiential meaning and are very personal. See below a spirit stick design I created as a bookmark and to give to my dear friends and literary colleagues who have helped me on my writing journey. I explain the symbolism behind the materials I used and their meaning in Nez Perce culture.



About This Handmade Spirit Stick/Bookmark

I fashioned these spirit sticks as humble gifts for dear friends and writing colleagues who were gracious enough to help me on my writing journey to publish *Blood to Rubies*. To make them, I chose natural materials that had special cultural meaning among the Nez Perce.

DOGWOOD Spirit sticks are usually made of wood chosen for its spiritual qualities. This stick is dogwood from my own backwoods in Wisconsin near the shores of Lake Michigan. Dogwood is used by the Nez Perce to show respect, provide spiritual protection, and to promote peace and kinship.

LEATHER Leather was integral in Native life. The cow leather I am using is definitely NOT culturally correct! It's made from an old sofa we retired after our two huge English Setter rescues wore it out. (The sofa was too large to fit out the door, so my husband chain sawed it down to size, accidentally shortening my drapes!) I couldn't bear to waste the sofa back's pristine leather and saved it. Who knew I would someday be making bookmarks for my author friends to celebrate the publication of my debut novel!

SWEETGRASS Sweetgrass is considered sacred in the Nez Perce culture, known as "Mother Earth's Hair." It has deep spiritual, medicinal, and ceremonial properties and is used in smudge pots, in purifying and healing ceremonies, chewed in talking circles to aid honesty, or as a talisman to ward off evil or negative spirits. Sweetgrass is often braided to signify body, mind and soul. (I was so inspired by *Braiding Sweetgrass*, by Potawatomi author, Robin Kimmerer.) I attached a sweetgrass smudge stick that can be burned to enjoy its calming aroma. Or keep it on the spirit stick and enjoy its glorious natural balm.

FEATHERS Feathers are considered gifts from the heavens, bridging earth and sky of the Great Creator. They bring with them the power and virtue of the creatures from whence they came and a connectedness to the earth.

SHELLS The Nez Perce lived in the rich Northwest Columbian plateau that emptied into the Pacific. Shells were favored Nez Perce ornamentation. The most famous Chief Joseph portrait, by Edward Curtis (one of 70 archival images in *Blood to Rubies*) shows Joseph with large shell earrings.

BEADS Nez Perce women and some two-spirit men were known for exquisite beaded tribal designs. They used natural materials originally, then seed beads and pony beads traded with white fur traders.

PAINTED SPOTS ON STICK The spots on the dogwood stick signify the pride of the Nez Perce, their Appaloosa horses.

I hope you use this spirit stick bookmark and the sweetgrass smudge in peace and good health. Your help was so precious to me on my writing journey. Now, with a new kidney, a publisher and the help of so many generous folks like you, I can realize my life dream.

Thank you again. Deborah

Examples of Genuine Native American Spirit Sticks

(Including Talking Sticks, Prayer Sticks, Dance Sticks, Medicine Sticks, others)



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*Thank you
so much for reading
Blood to Rubies
&
for joining me in
my writing journey* ❤️



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