ForeWord Reviews
Clarion Review

GENERAL

An Indian Legacy
John Dragstra
JW Dragstra
978-1-4184-8185-8
Four Stars (out of Five)

In *An Indian Legacy*, J.W. Dragstra's debut novel, computer specialist Grant Somerset, retired from the US Navy, confronts his Indian heritage. Grant has long ignored this part of his past, but when a doctor diagnoses him with cancer and gives him six months to live, Grant's soul searching begins.

In his attic, he finds the artifacts left to him by an ancestor: a peace pipe, a few small bones, a stone tomahawk, and some feathers. These pieces of his history now seem important. When he dies, his past will be thrown away, and he knows he needs to reconnect with this little known family legacy.

Fate offers Grant an opportunity to stand up for his heritage and he grabs it. Katherine, his successful corporate attorney wife, secures a spot for Grant to speak at the Senate hearing on the proposed Bureau of Indian Affairs budget cut.

The Chief, an elderly leader among the Navajo Indians who keeps tabs on Indian affairs, has needed someone to unite hundreds of separate tribes for a common cause. In Grant, the Chief has found the person the Indians needed, and calls him to New Mexico. Even as his life runs out, Grant becomes the unifying force for the Indians to make their stand.

The novel's plot is well-conceived and based on the reality that Native Americans have suffered the loss of their identity and culture at the hands of progress. Dragstra's characters successfully cover the broad range of human response—from the white man whose best friend is Indian to the soldier who hates everyone who is not white. The Indians range from the Chief who understands the reality of today's world and the needs of his people to his young son who is eaten up with anger at the white man. Dragstra allows his characters to live, learn, and grow.

The author is a retired Vietnam-era Air Force officer who specialized in Space Systems operations. Since his retirement he has served as the senior lead member of a system test team for government software applications. The book's plot development attests to his organizational skills and knowledge of logistics and government.

The characters are well-developed and the plot is interesting, but the book requires editing. Grammatical errors and typos are distracting and take away from the story.

Despite this, *An Indian Legacy* speaks to the human issue of a culture that seeks to remember and honor its legacy while living in a different world.