

Prophecy of the Eagle I: The Story of a Native American Boy and Lacrosse

Mike Celeste

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Prophecy of the Eagle is an ambitious blend of history and fiction, and it succeeds at both.

In *Prophecy of the Eagle I*, Mike Celeste weaves a captivating coming-of-age story made richer by a strong connection to the protagonist's ancestral past. The book's balanced blend of history and fiction makes it both educational and highly entertaining.

The story begins with the retelling of a famous game of lacrosse, called *Bagadowe* by the local First Nations people, who view it as a rite of passage for young warriors. In this game played in 1763, Chief Pontiac leads the Ottawa nation against their allies, the Ojibway, outside an English fort while the Europeans drink and bet on the score. The more they drink, the less they are aware of their imminent doom as the players prepare to massacre the English and French. This is the beginning of Pontiac's Uprising, which killed hundreds on both sides before a treaty was established. Pontiac is guided in his victory by a prophetic dream, which shows him a path to removing the white men from his people's land.

In the fourth chapter, a descendant of Pontiac named Fallen Tree continues the story, describing what has happened to First Nations people in the intervening centuries. The jump between time periods is explained clearly, though Fallen Tree's character must use heavy exposition in the chapter's opening pages to bring the reader up to speed. Using his grandson Jake as a muse, he explains the creation of the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the rise of the reservation system. After sharing his ancestor's prophetic dream, Jake prepares for his own ascension to manhood. But growing into those shoes is more difficult than it seems, and he faces a hard road before he can truly be considered a warrior.

Though jarring at first, the first-person storytelling provides a personal and intimate perspective, and also allows for some omniscient narration as Pontiac, and later Fallen Tree, show both their own experience and that of their people. This allows Pontiac to express the importance of lacrosse, including details such as the symbolism of the ball's colors. The downside is that as the story moves away from the documented events of Pontiac's Uprising, it is difficult at times to parse out which details are from the historical record and which are added for narrative purposes. In some places, the narrator speaks directly to the reader, which can be awkward because it is done so rarely, and thus feels forced. However, the writing style brings more good than bad, and helps give the story an added dimension and personal touch. In fact, at times the narration evokes the comfortable feeling of being read to by one's grandfather.

Prophecy of the Eagle I is an ambitious blend of history and fiction, and it succeeds at both. It is an excellent read, recommended for anyone interested in learning more about the history of colonization and First Nations in North America.

ERIC ANDERSON (January 15, 2015)

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