

Rez Salute: The Real Healer Dealer

Jim Northrup

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Jim Northrup is the most insightful and humorous person on the Fond du Lac reservation in northern Minnesota. And Fond du Lac is to Northrup what Lake Wobegon is to Garrison Keillor or Yoknapatawpha County was to William Faulkner.

Fond du Lac is the author's universe, but instead of being populated by Norwegian bachelor farmers, it is filled with Chippewa, Ojibwe, Northrups, a cantankerous 1964 Corvette Stingray, and the occasional bear.

Jim Northrup is a journalist, poet, ex-Marine, birch bark basket maker, and member of the Fond du Lac band of Lake Superior Chippewa, in no particular order. *Rez Salute* is a collection of his best Fond du Lac Follies columns from 2002 to 2012, stitched together with observations, jokes, puns, and anything else that enters his fertile mind.

In Northrup's world wealth is a concept, not a goal. ("How much did your 401(K) lose?" "Same as my 401(A),(B),(C),(D),(E),(F),(G),(H),(I) and (J) lost—nothing.") Fond du Lac folks are, like the rest of us, wise and silly, lofty and earthy, observant and very often, hilarious. One of Northrup's friends, complaining about the no-name generic toilet paper sold at the reservation store, suggests it should be called John Wayne Toilet Paper because "it's rough, it's tough, and it don't take no crap off Indians."

Northrup can be serious when he writes about the things he loves, like sugar-bush season and the unexpectedly complicated process of ricing. And then there is the language—the double-vowel Ojibwe words that seem to run on forever. He teaches his grandson how to count *ojibwemo agindaasod*. "I will teach him what comes next," Northrup writes. "With the language, you are Anishinaabe; without it you are descendants of the Anishinaabe."

But Northrup can't stay serious for long. His year is broken into four seasons, he says: sugar bush, driving the Corvette, ricing, and buying parts for the Corvette (winter). Welcome to Jim Northrup's world with its jingle dance dresses and ribbon shirts, its fire pits and powwows, its gentle humor and genuine love of life.

JACK SHAKELY (Winter 2013)

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