



Death Along the Spirit Road

C.M. Wendelboe

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First in a new series featuring FBI agent Manny Tanno- a Native American returning to the reservation home he thought he left behind.

The body of local Native American land developer Jason Red Cloud is found on the site for his new resort on the Pine Ridge Reservation. A war club is lodged in his skull-appearing as if someone may have performed a ritual at the crime scene.

FBI Special Agent Manny Tanno arrives in Pine Ridge to find that not everything has changed since he left. His former rival, now in charge of the Tribal Police, is just as bitter as ever, and has no intention of making Manny's life easy. And the spirit of Red Cloud haunting Manny's dreams is not much help either, leaving him on his own in hunting down a cold-blooded killer-and one misstep could send him down the spirit road as well..

Death Along the Spirit Road Details

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From Reader Review Death Along the Spirit Road for online ebook

Stephanross says

Great mystery. I really didn't have it figured out until the end. The characters are a little bit flat. Even the protagonist, Manny, seems pretty simplistic in his motivations - no Joe Leaphorn for sure.

Elizabeth says

FBI agent Manny Tanno goes back to the area where he grew up, back to very poor Pine Ridge Reservation reservation which is a fraction of the area where the Sioux and Lakota roamed free. It is close to the sacred Wounded Knee territory where so many helpless innocents were slaughtered. His mission is to find the murderer of local land developer Jason Red Cloud.

What I liked about this book was the character development, the history, the locality and the story.

What I didn't like, because it made no sense was the fact that although Manny had a reputation for solving cases his boss was harassing him and threatening him on a daily basis to get the job done or else. In addition to this after several attempts on Manny's life no backup was provided by the FBI, just further harangues. This detracted from my enjoyment of the book.

Sheila says

very good, couldn't put it down!

Cathy Cole says

Being a fan of such mystery writers as Craig Johnson, Patrick F. McManus, and Peter Bowen, it's easy to see that I like crime fiction with a strong sense of the western United States. I also enjoy mysteries with a strong Native American element, so when I found *Death Along the Spirit Road* while browsing in a bookstore, I knew I had to bring it home with me. It was the right decision.

The residents of the Pine Ridge Reservation inhabit the poorest county in the US, and Wendelboe captures the bleakness and despair. There are so many undercurrents-- both historic and personal-- the Massacre at Wounded Knee, the American Indian Movement, distrust of the FBI, alcoholism, joblessness, Manny's own background.... Manny and his brother Reuben went to live with their uncle when their parents died. Manny idolized his older brother, who became involved in AIM and was eventually found guilty of murder and sent to prison. Reuben is now a free man living on the reservation, and along with the murder of Jason Red Cloud, Manny intends to find some way to prove that Reuben is innocent. As you can see, Wendelboe has sunk the shaft of his pen deep into ore-rich ground.

Manny Tanno is self-deprecating, but don't let that fool you. The man knows what he's doing and has a keen

eye for detail. He also counts on his appearance to give him an edge: "It was his plainness that dropped people's guard. His plainness allowed them to trust him even when they shouldn't, and people often trusted him with that small piece of information that would convict them." With so much animosity towards him, it's often difficult to tell if the cooperative people are telling everything they know, or if they're holding back vital information. I found that all this ill will and the reasons behind it made the mystery even more intriguing.

From what I've said so far, most of you are probably thinking that this mystery may be too dark and depressing for you. Think again. There are bright spots of laugh-out-loud humor throughout the book. In fact, I think I've finally found a character who's worse on cars than Stephanie Plum. Yes, if you work for a car rental place and Manny Tanno signs on the dotted line, you may as well kiss that vehicle goodbye. When he gets into yet another rental car and reads the note left for him, I cracked up laughing.

If you enjoy mysteries with a strong main character, humor, and brain-teasing plots as well as ones set in the West or ones with a strong Native American element, you can get all those and more by picking up C.M. Wendelboe's *Death Along the Spirit Road*.

Doug says

FBI agent Manny Tamno thought he had left Pine Ridge reservation but now he is assigned to investigate the murder of a native Land Developer Jason Red Cloud. This story takes place on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation with trips to White Clay & Rapid City. Wendelboe looks a life on the Reservation and the life styles of the residents without being preachy. He also explores the religion and the values of the Lakota Sioux and the mixing of the Lakota and Christian religions.

The story was good and in some ways reminded me of Hillerman's writings.

Thomas says

I enjoyed reading this library book and give it 4 out of 5 stars. It is the first in a series featuring Manny Tanno, a Native American from the Lakota tribe, Pine Ridge Reservation, South Dakota.

Manny is now an FBI agent instructor at the FBI academy at Quantico. His boss orders him to go back to Pine Ridge to investigate a murder on the Reservation, which he does not want to do--too many bad memories of violence during the AIM(American Indian Movement) takeover of the Reservation.

Militant Indians on the Rez hate him and call him "Apple Indian-Red on the outside and White on the inside." The murdered man was Jason Red Cloud, a high flying developer putting together an impressive money making building project on the Rez. There were several suspects and twists and turns in the plot.

Manny does solve the case, but he is attacked and almost killed several times. You have to suspend belief in reality a bit as he keeps leaving the hospital against doctor's orders while still recovering.

The author has done a very good job of portraying Lakota beliefs and traditions, reminding me of Tony Hillerman and Craig Johnson. He acknowledges Johnson as a mentor. The author is a Sheriff's deputy in Wyoming. He previously worked in South Dakota towns bordering Pine Ridge Reservation. I am counting this for South Dakota in my US state challenge.

Some quotes: "If eye candy were real calories, Manny could get fat just watching her."

"...the specter in his vision was a wandering soul, destined to roam eternity, destined never to find the Spirit Road without Manny's help."

Diane says

There are a better mysteries to read.

Mary says

I like Native American mysteries...and this was no exception. While I still prefer Hillerman and Doss, I will continue to read others in this series and see how it progresses.

The inclusion of Native American traditions and customs adds an extra appeal to the story. The protagonist here is Manny Tanno, a Lakota FBI agent. Very good at what he does, but don't lend him your car! While not quite as rough on vehicles as the infamous Stephanie Plum, he does go through 3 rental cars in this outing.

Tanno is sent back to his home reservation to solve a murder. He is not happy about being back there, and meets with some resistance from the head of the tribal police (yes, they do have a history!). Although I was able to spot the killer early on, the characters and the writing made this quite enjoyable.

Definitely an author that fans of Native American/Western crime series should try.

Albert says

Death Along the Spirit Road is as much a novel of self re-discovery for FBI agen Manny Tanno as it is a murder mystery. Wendelboe delves deep into Native lore and the current state of the American Indian as he does in the lives of his characters.

A well written and stunning debut into this genre.

Sarah Batchelder says

I think the thing I like most about this book is the setting. I can't say I really got into the characters or writing - the story is plot driven and I hope that the writing improves as the series progresses. At times, it felt like the author was trying too hard to give a history lesson rather than just telling this story. I was mildly surprised by part of the ending, but most of it was rather predictable.

Olivia says

The body of local Native American land developer Jason Red Cloud is found on the site for his new resort on

the Pine Ridge Reservation. A war club is lodged in his skull-appearing as if someone may have performed a ritual at the crime scene.

The mystery in this book is followed closely by a sense of drama because the FBI agent has some unfinished business on this reservation and it spirals out of control when he returns. The questioning of the witnesses and the suspects are very relatable to life experiences and for some reason I could always tell when someone was lying because the tone of voice was very descriptive. The overall expression I got of this book was that a boy left his home town because of a bully and came back as an FBI agent to solve his disputes. The FBI agent character is very strong and manly and he scared most of the citizens on this reservation. The imagery in this book makes you feel like you are really there finding clues to this murder along side the FBI agents. This book could be read by younger readers but it is probably best for only young adults.

Jackie says

I'll admit that, let to my own devices, this book would have never hit my radar. But I recently had the opportunity to meet this author at a trade show, and talk to him about the mystery series he was writing, and I was hooked. This is the first book in a series (Spirit Road Mysteries; the next comes out in Summer 2012) and it sets a pace for the series that is bound to be a hit with Tony Hillerman or Margaret Coel fans, and really any mystery reader who likes a little bit of grizzle and humor in their heroes.

Manny Tanno grew up on the Pine Ridge Reservation. He stayed for awhile, becoming part of the tribal police force, before moving on and east to the FBI where he gained fame by solving every murder case that came his way. While he'd often worked on other cases involving Native Americans, this was first time he'd been sent to his old stomping grounds as an agent. As he suspected, his welcome was a rather cold one that quickly becomes brutal as he is attacked over and over again (and sets a record for demolishing Hertz rental cars). But the most painful part is the fact that the killer that he is looking for just might be his own estranged brother.

Wendelboe knows about what he speaks--he's a retired law man who worked in an area of South Dakota that covered three reservations, including Pine Ridge. His explanations, and his clear respect, of native lore and beliefs add a depth to the book that makes it rise above being a "mere" mystery. Step into the world of Manny Tanno--I truly think you'll enjoy the trip.

Mark Stevens says

Manny Tanno is a piece of work. He's an FBI agent sent back to his roots to work on a murder investigation on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in Wyoming. There's plenty of work to do and Manny digs right in. It's not long before he's stirred the bees off the nest and he gets repeatedly stung, battered, bruised and beaten. To sort things out, he likes to go out for a jog and "enter his zone, where thoughts came fast at him like arrows on steroids. The zone slowed down those arrows just enough that he could catch each one and analyze it."

Front and center in the investigation is Manny's brother, Reuben. Reuben has his own troubled past and it's just not clear if Manny has managed to stay out of trouble. Manny has his doubts, but also his soft side. But the overriding concern for Manny is to do good work and to sort out his relationship with the tribe, with his heritage. "The FBI had hired him, trained him, and made him one of the nation's premier investigators. He had given back far more than he had received, however, and had forsaken his heritage for his position. Duty wasn't one of the four Lakota virtues. Even before he thought of excuses not to maintain his loyalty to the bureau, he had his answer: Uncle Marion. Duty, Uncle told him, was as important as the traditional virtues. Duty is what kept a man walking when he should be crawling, crawling when he should be lying on his deathbed. Generosity, fortitude, bravery, and wisdom were the four Lakota virtues. Duty was Manny's virtue."

It's the undertow to Manny Tanno's character that gives "Death Along the Spirit Road" its high level of readability. Along the way, Wendelboe weaves in plenty of insights into reservation culture and language; it's no wonder Margaret Coel offered a ringing endorsement. The plot bobs and weaves nicely at the end. Suspects emerge, fade and ... well, I won't say. Don't overlook any detail in the opening scenes as characters are introduced and the layout is described. A rich, satisfying story.

Wendy says

A FBI agent who is also a Dakota Indian is chosen to investigate a murder. It is the Reservation he grew up on, and fled from years ago. There is a good amount of soul searching, along with solving the murder. I liked Manny because he is not the stereotypical agent. The mystery and Lakota history lessons kept me going. Another State off my Challenge: South Dakota

Cornerofmadness says

It took me three tries to read this, not because it was bad by any means but because it brought up emotions I didn't think I would feel this strongly about. I did my medical residency on Pine Ridge reservation (in part) and left South Dakota full of promise and anticipation of my medical career only to have it ended by injury in five years. I look back on Pine Ridge and remember all that and I thought I was over it until this brought it up. This evokes a fairly good sense of the reservation. I shopped at Big Bat's convenience store and when Prairie Edge comes into it (Up in Rapid City) I struggled (I was taught to weave beads by my Lakota patients and bought them here. I still have many hanks, unable to do that any more but unable to part with them).

I did struggle with what to star this. 3.5 is about right but I upgraded it because I did like it a lot (though some of it bugged me). Manny Tanno is a 50ish FBI agent whose boss (who apparently dislikes him and I hate that cop trope) has sent him to Pine Ridge to solve the homicide of Jason Red Clouds and only gives him a few weeks to get it done or he's giving away Manny's teaching position at the academy (this is part of what bugged me).

Manny has to work with "Lumpy" an old high school rival who also hates him. Lumpy assigns him Willie With Horn, a young tribal cop whose Aunt Lizzy is Manny's sister in law. She was married to his brother, Reuben, who spent 20 years in jail for killing Billy Two Moons years before. They have a daughter, Erica, who is Harvard educated working with Jason as is her mother, Elizabeth (Lizzy). Reuben and Elizabeth were

part of A.I.M. in the 60s and a lot like the Black Panthers, they had good ideals but overly violent if not murderous ways of working toward them.

Either I missed it or it was just a bit of poor writing, but I have no idea why Manny instantly hones in on his brother for the murder of Jason. In fact he really doesn't try to develop any other suspects though does find some later as multiple attempts on Manny's life happen. Reuben is out of jail and is now a *wicasa Wakan*, a holy man and has a bunch of juvenile delinquents working for him dosing brick laying.

Jason was trying to build a resort uncomfortably close to Wounded Knee (another thing that evoked memories for me). With him dead, the tribe stands to lose millions. However, as Manny begins to investigate he does learn that his family is really intertwined with Jason. (but he suspected Reuben before he learned this which annoyed me). Elizabeth had argued with him and thinks his personal assistant, Clara, is inept.

One thing that really did annoy me was the women. Manny is 50 something, getting paunchy and bald but three women are throwing themselves at him. Two make sense. Sophia is a reporter looking for an exclusive, Desiree is a former would-be girlfriend who married and divorced Lumpy and Clara who makes no sense (I thought she was a suspect). In fact, Manny is so unprofessional with her, ignoring his sister in law's warning about her, never even thinking about them after he meets Clara, and he tells her more than she tells him. It comes off as middle-aged man fantasy and drags down the whole story. If there had been any more of it my star rating would be lower.

I enjoyed it. I was a bit disappointed with the end. It brought up memories, good and bad for me.
