



Onigamiising: Seasons of an Ojibwe Year

Linda LeGarde Grover

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Long before it came to be known as Duluth, the land at the western tip of Lake Superior was known to the Ojibwe as Onigamiising, “the place of the small portage.” There the Ojibwe lived in keeping with the seasons, moving among different camps for hunting and fishing, for cultivating and gathering, for harvesting wild rice and maple sugar. In Onigamiising Linda LeGarde Grover accompanies us through this cycle of the seasons, one year in a lifelong journey on the path to Mino Bimaadiziwin, the living of a good life.

In fifty short essays, Grover reflects on the spiritual beliefs and everyday practices that carry the Ojibwe through the year and connect them to this northern land of rugged splendor. As the four seasons unfold—from Ziigwan (Spring) through Niibin and Dagwaagin to the silent, snowy promise of Biboon—the award-winning author writes eloquently of the landscape and the weather, work and play, ceremony and tradition and family ways, from the homey moments shared over meals to the celebrations that mark life’s great events. Now a grandmother, a Nokomis, beginning the fourth season of her life, Grover draws on a wealth of stories and knowledge accumulated over the years to evoke the Ojibwe experience of Onigamiising, past and present, for all time.

Onigamiising: Seasons of an Ojibwe Year Details

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From Reader Review Onigamiising: Seasons of an Ojibwe Year for online ebook

Eric Chandler says

This was a pleasure to read. Read more about it at the link to my short book review:
<http://www.startribune.com/readers-re...>

Nostalgia Reader says

3.5 stars.

Although this can be a relatively quick read, it's the type of book that benefits from being dipped in and out of, slowly working your way through the stories, and giving yourself time to reflect and think about some of the lessons that Grover shares.

Grover shares a variety of stories that she has compiled over the years. Some are funny recollections of childhood, some are traditional Ojibwe lessons and stories, some are simple reflections on the small things in life and how she has come to appreciate them. There are no sad stories in here, but so many of them reflect on how important it is to appreciate all things in life, from friends and relatives, to the tiniest, seemingly mundane things. They can all teach you things at some point and it's important to embrace these lessons, as well as to pass them on to younger generations.

While some of the stories did feel repetitive, since many of them were written as newspaper vignettes, I never got tired of "listening" to Grover's stories and style. Although I was unable to relate to many of the stories personally, the main reason for rounding this down to 3 stars, it didn't detract from my enjoyment and appreciation of the book.

Thank you to NetGalley for providing me with a free copy to review!

(Cross posted on my blog.)

Kristine says

Onigamiising: Seasons of an Ojibwe Year by Linda LeGarde Grover is a free NetGalley ebook that I read in early October.

Onigamiising - the Ojibwe name for Duluth, Minnesota. This book is about the beauty and the changing of the seasons in the "place of the small portage." It's also about history (Native school teachers vs the trauma of Indian schools), having respect for knowledge, elders, and the Creator, acknowledging and being in tune with nature's occurrences, the difficulty conveying Ojibwe terms into an adequate/matching meaning in English (a term having a full spectrum of intent), as well as Ojibwe culture (use of craft, garments, and art; celebrations and holidays; storytelling, lore, daily life, roles of children within families, and the importance of cooking and food preparation).

Gwen says

Grover short, little chapters read like newspaper columns from your favorite auntie. Sometimes very light and sweet, sometimes serious stories of Ojibwe history, and always with Ojibwe words and culture (historical and contemporary) mixed it. I pick it up and read a few at a time, and always learn something new.

Enjoyable reading to have on the shelf and pick up as the seasons change.

Katie says

A series of memories loosely arranged into seasons. Interesting because it shows some Ojibwe traditions and values.

Anne Nerison says

Onigamiising is a lovely collection of essays about Duluth, Ojibwe culture and history, and navigating the seasons as an Ojibwe woman. Linda LeGarde Grover weaves history and her own memories into these essays, teaching us how to "live the good life" and be thankful for the opportunities given to us.

At first I was a little annoyed by the repetition of some phrases and elements, such as defining the same Ojibwe words throughout and telling the history of the Indian boarding schools (I wonder if these were originally written as newspaper columns), but after a while I began to enjoy the rhythm of it. It's soothing, in some ways, the beat of ending some essays with "Onishishin" (a word for which there is no direct English translation but roughly means "it's pretty"), or being reminded of "Mino-bimaaadiziwin," "the good life." Less of a comfort but no less important are the reminders of the US and Canada's policies of termination of the Native American people. Throughout, we are confronted with the reality of children sent away from their parents and forced to give up important aspects of their culture, and the inter-generational trauma that has resulted. Even so, LeGarde Grover paints an optimistic picture for the future of Ojibwe people, telling of powwows, the winter tradition of storytelling, making ribbon skirts with teenage girls, and teaching younger generations traditional ways of acting and being.

I recommend taking your time with this book, letting the stories sit with you. It's sort of a calming book, and perfect to read as we change seasons from summer into fall.

Alex Westenhaver-Loretz says

This book is not an action book. In fact there is not a lot of action at all. It provides a glimpse at the author's world and the path her people have taken and have been forced to take. It is a remembrance of past traditions and passing them to the next generation. It is a slow moving, heartfelt short stories. The author highlights similarities to present days and to her past. How her memories connect to the current generation.

John Benson says

This book includes many short essays (more like newspaper columns) that follow the seasons around Duluth (Onigamiising in the Ojibwe language). The short essays are generally gentle, slices of life from an Ojibwe grandmother living in Duluth. I am not used to Native American writing that is as gentle as this, but most Native Americans that I have met and dealt with in Minnesota, have this same gentle spirit that Linda LeGarde Grover writes in in these essays. She deals with some very hard parts of Ojibwe history here in Minnesota, including the boarding school years, but does it with such gentleness that it sometimes loses its impact. I have liked all her books, but this one has a little bit different flavor than her other two books, that were maybe a little bit more hard-hitting.

Larissa Harris says

Not a single story in this book did I hate reading. Even the stories that touch on difficult subjects like blood quantum and Indian identity came back around to hope, an important perspective for Indigenous people to have in today's world. I will pick this book up again and again.

Michaela says

Quiet little book with a soft, lyrical reminiscing in cultural context. Loved learning the significance, not just literal translation, of the Ojibwa words.

Sherri Anderson says

Reading this book was like sitting around the kitchen table with the author having a great conversation with her. I was moving, informative and funny.

Robin says

I grew up in New Mexico learning about Navajo, Pueblo, and Apache Indians. Now, living in Minnesota it was interesting to me to read the reflections of this Ojibwe Indian woman. She makes me appreciate the Ojibwe culture in modern-day life. Her series of vignettes would have been more meaningful if accompanied by pictures of the ribbon dresses, rabbit skin baby blankets, and moccasins she describes. I was struck by her tone when she mentioned the Indian boarding school era because although she expressed sadness she did not come across as bitter or angry at what the US government did that caused what she referred to as "intergenerational trauma." I loved her use of Ojibwe phrases throughout the book. I picked this up as part of the library's summer reading challenge to read a book by a Minnesota author and I'm glad I read it.

Jessica says

This book was a calm, moving look at Ojibwe culture and traditions. It made me want to sit and talk with the author over a cup of coffee. One of the other reviews I saw mentioned the word lovely and I think that fits this book perfectly.

Deb says

There is a calmness to Linda LeGarde Grover's writing. Her recollections and insights into Ojibwa life in northern Minnesota gives the reader pause to reflect and enjoy the beauty of nature, family, and tradition.

Betharie says

Really enjoyed this book by Ojibwa woman growing up in Duluth-wonder if Elsa went to school with her. Very gentle narrative, lovely sharing of perspective, traditions of family as well as recounting the harm done to Indians by federal government policy that separated and displaced families. A series of essays written over a year, so some redundancy, but enjoyable.
