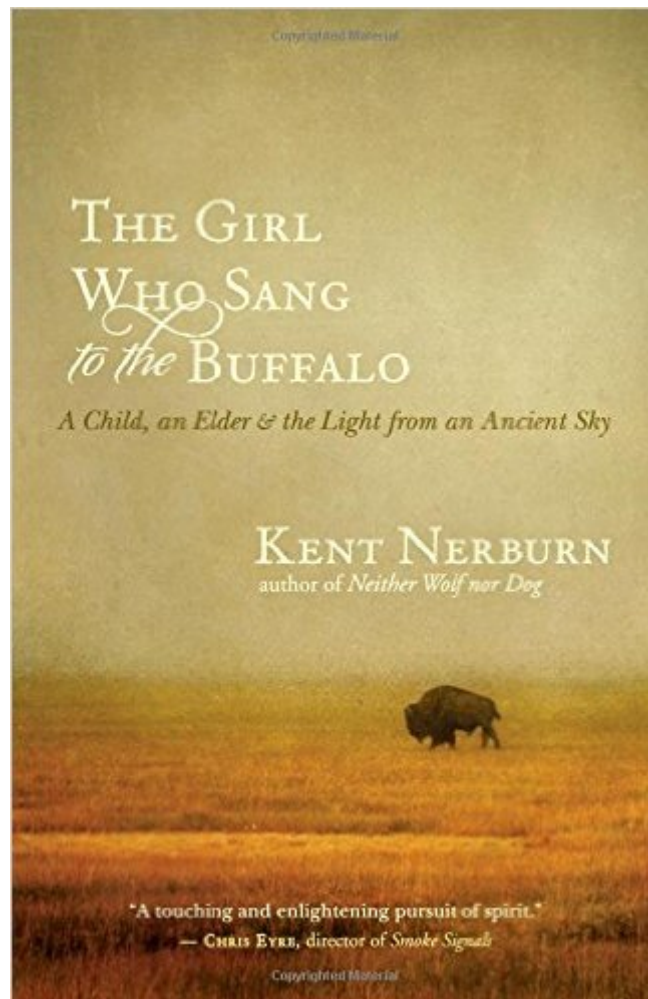


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The Girl Who Sang To The Buffalo: A Child, An Elder, And The Light From An Ancient Sky



Synopsis

A haunting dream that will not relent pulls author Kent Nerburn back into the hidden world of Native America, where dreams have meaning, animals are teachers, and the "old ones" still have powers beyond our understanding. In this moving narrative, we travel through the lands of the Lakota and the Ojibwe, where we encounter a strange little girl with an unnerving connection to the past, a forgotten asylum that history has tried to hide, and the complex, unforgettable characters we have come to know from *Neither Wolf nor Dog* and *The Wolf at Twilight*. Part history, part mystery, part spiritual journey and teaching story, *The Girl Who Sang to the Buffalo* is filled with the profound insight into humanity and Native American culture we have come to expect from Nerburn's journeys. As the American Indian College Fund has stated, once you have encountered Nerburn's stirring evocations of America's high plains and incisive insights into the human heart, "you can never look at the world, or at people, the same way again."

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This time Nerburn starts having vivid dreams. They're relentless, confounding, and ominous. Eventually, they propel him into his third encounter with the American Indian world of Dan the Elder; Grover the grouch; Jumbo the gentle giant; a slobbery orphan dog; a wistful, young girl with an old soul; a woodland Anishinaabe man known by Dan as one of "the old ones" who raises buffalo; and a gruesome Indian insane asylum in South Dakota. Of the three books Nerburn has written on his experiences with the Indian people of "Dan the Elder's" world, *"The Girl Who Sang to the Buffalo."* is

the most fleshed-out, mysterious, awe-inspiring, sad, humorous, suspenseful, and courageous. Nerburn walks to the edge of a deep precipice of human understanding and shows us the terror and magnitude of things Western Europeans may never fully understand. In the framework of indigenous spirituality, cosmology, and culture all things are connected. In the hands of the literary master craftsman Kent Nerburn, the disparate landscapes, personalities and situations in his book are also connected and profoundly meaningful. Nerburn has an understanding of the Native culture that transcends the best efforts of theologians, anthropologists, sociologists, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, American government, and zealot do-gooders. He puts himself in situations he knows will pummel his ego but lead him to a place of knowledge and understanding. To be available for these teachings, he is lead across axel-busting-back-country roads, greasy roadhouses, a senior citizens home, deep forests, encounters with a menacing buffalo bull, and a historically suppressed Indian insane asylum.

The best way I can describe this book is to liken it to an avalanche that begins with a tiny ball of snow dislodged on the upper slopes and eventually turns into an awesome force. Nerburn begins by describing in simple and somewhat spare language a recurrent dream that sends him out to revisit an earlier quest that he fears he didn't adequately complete. It ends with a mystical experience of profound power and beauty, played out under a truly awesome display of Northern Lights and amidst a herd of buffalo. Along the way, Nerburn provides vivid characterizations, significant humor, and deep spirituality. He also gives an almost unendurably painful view of the viciousness of the methodical destruction of Indian culture perpetrated by the boarding school system and other interventions of white society's style of "pacification by intimidation and domination". Let me emphasize that the awareness of the incredible predations of white culture upon the indigenous inhabitants of the Western Hemisphere is not new to me. From a purely personal viewpoint, I have two Navajo sons-in-law and five grandchildren who are members of the Navajo tribe. Before that, I grew up in New Mexico, and my father, as an artist, was deeply in touch not only with the Pueblo culture in the Rio Grande River valley, but also was deeply in tune with the natural world in the "Land of Enchantment". I have read extensively, including the works of Victor Villaseñor, whose book "Beyond Rain of Gold" was actually the first book I reviewed for Vine. However, I am, like Nerburn, unavoidably "white" (or Anglo, as we preferred to say in the Southwest), which makes it essentially impossible to be other than an interloper to some extent. I have to add one other vital point in my review of this book.

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