



## Glass Beads

*Dawn Dumont*

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These short stories interconnect the friendships of four First Nations people — Everett Kaiswatim, Nellie Gordon, Julie Papequash, and Nathan (Taz) Mosquito — as the collection evolves over two decades against the cultural, political, and historical backdrop of the 90s and early 2000s.

These young people are among the first of their families to live off the reserve for most of their adult lives, and must adapt and evolve. In stories like "Stranger Danger", we watch how shy Julie, though supported by her roomies, is filled with apprehension as she goes on her first white-guy date, while years later in "Two Years Less A Day" we witness her change as her worries and vulnerability are put to the real test when she is unjustly convicted in a violent melee and must serve some jail time. "The House and Things That Can Be Taken" establishes how the move from the city both excites and intimidate reserve youth respectively, how a young man finds a job or a young woman becomes vulnerable in the bar scene. As well as developing her characters experientially, Dumont carefully contrasts them, as we see in the fragile and uncertain Everett and the culturally strong and independent but reckless Taz.

As the four friends experience family catastrophes, broken friendships, travel to Mexico, and the aftermath of the great tragedy of 9/11, readers are intimately connected with each struggle, whether it is with racism, isolation, finding their cultural identity, or repairing the wounds of their upbringing.

## Glass Beads Details

Date : Published May 1st 2017 by Thistledown Press (first published 2017)

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Author : Dawn Dumont

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## From Reader Review Glass Beads for online ebook

### Kate says

omg this COVER.

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### Kimberley says

I really enjoyed this book. There were quite a few spelling and grammatical errors to be fixed for the next printing, but the story is engaging, the characters interesting and I kept turning the pages.

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### Kristal says

This is Dawn Dumont's third book and I have read all of them. I enjoy her character building (at least at the start) but still feel like this book is lacking. The four friends (mostly Everett and Taz) are just as dysfunctional at the end of the book as at the beginning. There is no growth nor closure in many ways with their relationships. I understand in life people often don't learn from their mistakes and I don't expect that from all the characters, but there are many loose ends. Does Everett talk to his mom ever? What is Nellie's job really like? Sorry, was Julie sleeping with both Everett and Taz? Is this baby she carrying Taz's?

I think the problem is that Dawn is trying to do too much- she keeps changing the focus between the 4 characters (frequently I had to re read pages to figure out who was talking) and this book will skip YEARS at a time so the story has to constantly catch up on what these 4 people are up to. This book mostly covers 1993-2008 (15 years) and is only 266 pages (as a comparison, The Help by Kathryn Stockett covers 3 main characters over about a year, was 450 pages and the characters were extremely well developed). It is simply not big enough to deeply explore 4 characters over that broad of a time period. Overall I felt like each of the 4 were stock characters: Nellie the businesswoman, Taz the abusive drunken chief, Everett the deadbeat (cheating?) dad, and Julie the submissive, misunderstood beauty.

Overall Glass Beads started out good but it faltered in the end (much like her book, Rose's Run). To date I still prefer "Nobody Cries at Bingo" as my favorite of her books.

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### CaseyTheCanadianLesbrarian says

This book was not at all what I expected. I loved her first two books, both of which are very funny. Glass Beads, however, is not funny at all (except maybe a handful of times)-- it's sad and dark. Beautiful character development of two Cree women from the same reserve in Saskatchewan. Lovely turns of phrase, too. The structure is odd: the cover declares it's a book of stories, but they don't stand alone. It feels more like a disjointed novel that skips ahead in time. Overall I did appreciate this book and was fascinated by the characters, but it's definitely my least favourite of her books. Content warnings for intimate partner violence and miscarriage.

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## **Doug Lewars says**

\*\*\* Possible Spoilers \*\*\*

I was probably generous in giving this book a three. The first third warrants a one but after that it improves and some of the stories are really quite enjoyable.

This book consists of a series of themed short stories, each one dealing with one of four closely related characters. It covers a time span of about 15 years. I can't really tell but I think the author has done a pretty good job of characterizing these individuals and developing their characters as they grow and mature. That said, the bar is set pretty low to start with. In the first few sorties the characters are so unlikable that I'm surprised I was able to continue reading and not give up in disgust. Even when they are adults they are still less than impressive.

By the time we get to the end, one individual has become a lawyer and is proceeding nicely in her career while a second has gone into politics and has a six-figure salary. Now that's impressive by any means but the latter has a drinking problem and beats his significant other. The former is still utterly lacking in self confidence.

The author grew up in Okanese First Nation in southern Saskatchewan and if what she writes is reflective of aboriginal culture then count me out. The characters are unpleasant. Their lives are unpleasant. Pretty much everything about them is unpleasant. We are told that aborigines are close to the land. I get the impression that these individuals never encountered a fish that didn't come out of a tin or cello wrap and, it is possible, that cooking anything more than take-out is beyond them.

This particular book is a nominee for the Evergreen Award, part of the Forest of Reading program from the Toronto Public Library. From the press release, "The Evergreen Award reading program is comprised of the best titles in Canadian fiction and non-fiction for adults of any age". My God! This is it? This is the best Canada can do?! It appears that writing has fallen on hard times in Canada. Of course this is a carefully selected collection of Canadian books by - again from the press release - "A committee of library professionals". Now I've always been a big fan of librarians and I'm certain that there are plenty of rational individuals among them; however, by the time you get to selection committees it appears that rationality has been replaced by a desire to conform to current societal catch phrases - you know - inclusiveness, diversity, self-empowerment (provided that doesn't lead to individuality but conforms to the first two). Most of the names of committee members were sufficiently generic so that positive identification was impossible but the one I was able to track down was a millennial and that possibly explains some guiding principles behind the selection. In any event, it's pretty clear that this book is targeted at rather young demographic and is probably a waste of time for older folk.

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## **Marsha says**

It was only OK, but I'm glad I read it.

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### **Deborah Sowery-Quinn says**

This is an Evergreen Nominee (Ontario Library Association Forest of Reading Program) for 2018. It is described as a collection of short stories that are connected but to me it read like a novel. There are 4 main characters, all First Nations Canadians, & it follows their friendships & lives over several decades. I was very interested in the characters & their stories & thought it was a great read.

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### **Carrol says**

short stories , the second of the evergreen books i have read this year. I usually can't really get into short stories but these were all connected by the characters in them. good stories but over all rather sad

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### **Katie says**

I enjoyed this book. It's out of my normal range of reading interests, but that is why I like participating in a book club and why I wanted to complete the Evergreen reading program this year because you do get a chance to read outside of your normal realm. I definitely wouldn't have read this book, or even known about it, had it not been for this program.

Glass Beads is a very character-driven book. You get to know the four friends' personalities and traits more so than having descriptions of their surroundings or writing that is lyrical and literary. I find the short stories read more like chapters though. There is a linear path with each chapter occurring in a disjointed manner throughout the time span and the focus may be a different character each time. It's a fast read, but you do get drawn into each character and I found that I was rooting for one or more at a time as they went through certain periods of their lives. I was also not liking each character at times too! It's a serious novel that gives you a peek into how life differs for Aboriginal Canadians and what some of the unique challenges they face are that may not even cross our minds or be relatable to Canadians of white heritage.

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### **Kelsey says**

This was one of my favourite books of 2017. I personally wouldn't call it short stories though -- to me it was absolutely a novel in the way that it took us through several years in the lives of four friends.

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### **Kerry Clare says**

An absolutely incredible book.

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### **Jolynne says**

The life and loves of two Indigenous women.

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### **Shokolit says**

A beautiful book, telling the story of a friendship between two girls and their boyfriends, spanning over about 25 years. The four are Canadian aborigines.

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### **Cherop says**

Half way through this book I was ready to call it quits and rank it within the bottom 5 of my lifetime reads. Two thirds through the book I liked it better and it ended up being a satisfactory read ~ just.

Perhaps my expectations were too high. I had read fairly good reviews of the book which consists of interwoven short stories. In addition I have seen the author on television numerous times and she has a terrific comedic talent. I guess I was expecting the book to be funny. It isn't. I do intend to read another work by this author entitled, "Nobody Cries at Bingo". Perhaps I will enjoy it more.

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### **Louise says**

This book of interconnected stories with the same four characters throughout, is neither a novel, nor a book of short stories. It's somewhere in between. A choppy novel? There are gaps in time between each chapter/story which broke the flow and left me somewhat frustrated. But to call this a collection of short stories is wrong. None of these stories are stand alone; they are part of the whole.

That aside, it's a sad book, nothing like this author's previous novels (Nobody Cries at Bingo being one of my favorite Indigenous books). It's also poignant and touching and certainly worth reading.

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