



Celia's Song

Lee Maracle

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Mink is a witness, a shape shifter, compelled to follow the story that has ensnared Celia and her village, on the West coast of Vancouver Island in Nu: Chahlnuth territory. Celia is a seer who - despite being convinced she's a little "off" - must heal her village with the assistance of her sister, her mother and father, and her nephews. While mink is visiting, a double-headed sea serpent falls off the house front during a fierce storm. The old snake, ostracized from the village decades earlier, has left his terrible influence on Amos, a residential school survivor. The occurrence signals the unfolding of an ordeal that pulls Celia out of her reveries and into the tragedy of her cousin's granddaughter. Each one of Celia's family becomes involved in creating a greater solution than merely attending to her cousin's granddaughter. Celia's Song relates one Nu: Chahlnuth family's harrowing experiences over several generations, after the brutality, interference, and neglect resulting from contact with European

Celia's Song Details

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From Reader Review Celia's Song for online ebook

Dawn says

What a compelling story. I read another review that mentioned how 'white' they felt by the time they read the end and I have to agree. This is a whole other culture that I've ignored for years, even though it's in my own backyard, so to speak. I've only recently started to take any notice of the terrible consequences colonialism and religion has had on this community. It often amazes me what they've survived as a people and I'm impressed with their resilience and forgiveness.

This book relates some of that history and some of those consequences, often in a poignant way and more often in a terrible way. This story is heart breaking and hopeful, beautiful despite the terrible tragedy it contains.

Mary Anne says

This is a beautiful book, full of spirit and hope. It can be read on its own or after reading Ravensong.

Magdelanye says

Can you care too much for small things? p67

This is an imaginative, profound tale, that requires imagination and some effort to get into. It may seem like a small book, but it contains worlds.

You don't need to know why anything happens. You only need know what to do is all. p 169

We are not lost. We are traveling in the wrong direction. p213

Nicole says

I was not emotionally prepared for this book. I thought Imaginative, profound, bold storytelling with compelling characters. Absolutely gut-wrenching, raw. Part tale of myth, part epic family saga, part crime novel, fantasy, and 100% a story of resilience...I can't quite put my finger on just *what* this book is, but it feels like a new thing. It took me quite awhile to read because it demands you stop, and reflect. Utterly absorbing. The way the story unfolds is a thing to behold. It feels fresh, non-linear and deeply rooted in the Sto:lo culture. An extremely challenging read, thematically, emotionally, spiritually. As many other reviewers noted, this book made me, as a Settler, very aware of my whiteness and privilege, and requires reflection on the part of the reader.

Mridula says

This was a beautifully crafted book from start to finish and deserving of 4.5 stars. The characters are rich and the story is compelling. Maracle expertly weaves together multiple her-stories across generations and demonstrates the living scars of colonial struggle. Worth a read and re-read in order to fully glean the richness of Maracle's writing.

Sarah says

This is in some ways a complicated book. There is a lovely back and forth flow between an animal spirit whose job is to witness, and the human participants in the story. I loved the way the spiritual world is shown to influence 'real life'. I loved the emphasis on the power and ability of women. I learned so much from reading this.

There is a truly horrible scene in the middle of the novel that shocked me with its brutality and unexpectedness, as an event of that type should. I think it really furthered some of the points of the story, but I still wish something less awful could have been used.

Through large parts of the story I felt very connected to the women, and felt my own self understood in a way that seldom happens, but by the end I felt very white, and like I have a mountain of things yet to learn about white privilege and that I've only just begun to tap into what we have done to our first nations.

Kathy says

We along with Mink are witnesses to pain, love, growth, healing. Peoples with few choices move in dangerous directions. Connections in ceremony lead to healing ways. "We are not lost. We are travelling in the wrong direction. Song moves us towards our humanity and right now we are moving away from it." Celia's Song allows me to see possibilities through kindness and reconnection. Lee Maracle is masterful.

Rod Endacott says

Having read, I am feeling enriched. My soul is relieved now knowing there is a solid line of connection -- man to the natural world -- through some in the first nations peoples of British Columbia. There is hope. From one of the final lines, "They had a choice: join the Christians or be who they were and always should be. Under the hum of an old song, Celia could hear Momma say there was always more than one choice." Using a Mink as a narrator . . . perfect. Using a serpent as the embodiment of that which is seeking those humans to inhabit so it can destroy . . . perfect. Ancient knowledge as a way through this mess we as "white people on the other side of the bridge" have created . . . perfect. Thank-you Lee Maracle.

Rebecca says

Unlike another reader, I found the beginning of this book the most difficult to read. It was challenging for me to stay interested but I kept reading. For me, the latter half of the novel is what makes the book. Throughout the novel, we are given a first hand look into a family who has been broken by many tragedies, both old and recent. The family must learn to mend the wounds by looking to each other and their own tradition. Near the end, we see the stories come to a close and we see the powerful effects of healing, tradition, culture, and family. This book leaves you with a feeling that is something like a mix of inspiration and hope.

April says

"Without song wind cannot play in our bodies....Songs are about light....Breath across vocal cords, rendered melodic and rhythmic, can inspire humans to resist the most terrible tyranny. Breath across vocal cords, uttered softly, can settle the fears of a child...Song's breath across vocal cords can heal the sick, raise the dead, and encourage the living to go on in the face of terror"

DeadWeight says

Reads like Margaret Atwood. I don't much like Margaret Atwood.

This feels... incoherent. Draft-like. And not in the sense that, say, Daphne Marlatt's *Ana Historic* (which has a similar tone and attention to perspective and locality) feels fragmentary and draft-like, or like Herman Melville's own "*nay but a draught of a draught*" *Moby-Dick* feels fragmentary and draft-like, or even some Atwood, this feels unedited. And not in a "raw" or "visceral" kind of way, not like an early Minor Threat live-recording kind of way, or Coil's *Ambulance...* kind of way, or like the fragments of Byron, or the poetry of Walt Whitman, or, or, or, or. The problem with *Celia's Song* is that it's very self-assured in the kind of way that any criticism I might levy at it can easily be met by a claim that Maracle "meant" to do that. Whether or not Maracle "meant" to do anything is not the issue. I have considered it. It didn't work for me. Two stars is the most I can muster for what was still some pretty striking imagery and some terrific passages, but the dialogue is so painfully *awful* (see: my reading updates), the pacing felt somehow both haphazard and forced.

I wonder how much of this is because I so much *want* a competent work that deals with indigenous issues, myself *being* one (that is, "indigenous," though I'm also partial to being considered an "issue"), and perhaps part of why I have spent so long avoiding reading indigenous fiction, and why I've taken so criminally long at the task of getting around to Richard Wagamese. But I mean, I waited on Joseph Boyden, and look what happened to *him*, so maybe procrastination is a virtue.

Chris Harrison says

This year, I am reading CBC's "12 Books by Indigenous Women You Should Read". This is one of them.

Celia's Song was a challenging book for me. I had difficulty getting into it. There were diverse story lines that I had trouble reconciling at first. After I started to understand the connections among the seemingly disparate episodes, I started to enjoy the book immensely.

There is a horrible account of abuse near the middle of the book. It shook me. Celia's Song is about Celia and some of her family members helping to heal their community from the effects of colonialism, in the midst of the abusive situation.

I struggled with the way justice was presented in the book. I found that I needed to actively suspend judgement at how this situation was handled. The conclusion left me unsettled, and I struggled with whether my concerns were valid, or if I was imposing my value system on Celia's community. I finished the book a few weeks ago, and I'm still troubled and unsure about my reaction.

Christine says

This is a complex and beautiful and disturbing and redeeming book. It took me awhile to learn the characters, and the story reveals itself gradually, but when it explodes open, it really explodes. Parts are hard to read as they are horrific and graphic, but other parts cry out to be read over and over again. Not an easy read, but a very good one!

Bill Brydon says

Celia's Song is dedicated "to all those children who were removed from our homes and who did not survive residential school." Lee Maracle tells the tale of a two-headed sea-serpent, Restless and Loyal, who pull against each other, creating devastation because the people have failed to feed them through honouring the dead. The balance between the two has been destroyed and the restless, voracious, destructive serpent head runs rampant until the villagers learn to stop feeding it and begin to heal themselves. Each story is directed first of all to an indigenous readership but creates space for a widening circle of reception and engagement.

Jacquelyn says

The first hundred pages of this book are amazing. The story follows a shape-shifting witness who usually takes the form of a mink observing Celia and her family deal with the horrific effects of colonialism and a two headed spirit-serpent who tries to feed upon and tear apart the community. The beginning of the book is filled with interesting characters, thoughtful meditations, and a unique form of magic realism. Towards the end of the story, the framing device of the witness falls away much to the detriment of the quality of the book. The end of the book is also very hurried and doesn't seem to quite fit with the rest of the book.

I still really loved reading this, and I think it's an important book in spite of the writing toward the end.
