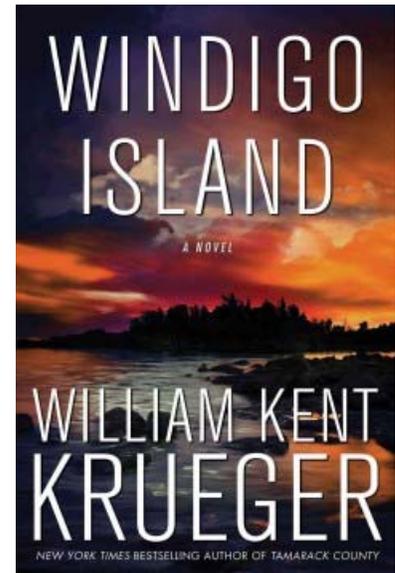


By AMBER MULLEN
STAFF WRITER

This Sunday, New York Times bestselling author William Kent Krueger will be at Big Water Coffee Roasters in Bayfield at 3:30 p.m. to discuss his 14th book in the Cork O'Connor series, "Windigo Island."

Demaris Brinton, Apostle Islands Booksellers owner and event host, is excited to host an author of Krueger's stature. Brinton enjoyed reading "Windigo Island" because it takes place on the shores of Lake Superior and reading the book encouraged her to do more research about sensitive issues in the novel such as underground sex trafficking on Native America reservations.

"Windigo Island" follows Cork O'Connor in his investigation to crack the mystery behind the death of a young Ojibwe girl and the disappearance of her friend, Mariah Arceneaux. The residents of Bad Bluff Reservation in Wisconsin believe these tragedies are the work of the mythical beings such as the Windigo and Michi Peshu, but O'Connor discovers a different possibility.



O'Connor learns from an Ojibwe social worker that Duluth and the Twin Cities are active areas in the United States for sex trafficking of vulnerable young Native American women. Throughout the book, O'Connor must battle those who control the underground sex enterprise and passive government agencies in order to get to the truth.

"Krueger paints a vivid picture of the sordid cycle of poverty, abuse, alcoholism, and runaway (or throwaway) children on the reservation, and reminds us of the evil of men all too willing to exploit the innocent," book reviewers at Publisher's Weekly said of Krueger's most recent book.

"Until I read his book, I didn't even realize that this was an issue in the north," Brinton said. "Even though it's a work of fiction, it brought these issues to my attention. That's one of the reasons I love books because they fuel my curiosity to learn more."

Brinton believes all people, even those who did not read the book, will enjoy Krueger's discussion. Many of Krueger's novels are set in the North Country, therefore making the topics and characters relatable to people in the area.

"I am very impressed with his ability to tackle interesting, troubling and enlightening topics," Brinton said. "Kent also always gives an honest and fair representation of difficult issues. He's sensitive about the topics and the communities he writes about."

"Windigo Island" begins on a fictional Native American reservation on the Bayfield peninsula. Krueger said the events in his story are not based on events that have actually

occurred in Wisconsin. However, sex trafficking and kidnapping on Native American reservations is a very real issue in Minnesota.

“It was a story various folks in the native community in the Twin Cities asked me to write,” Krueger said. “They asked me if I would be willing to write a story that would make this situation more broadly known so that we can rally all of our forces together and get it changed.”

When gathering information for the book, Krueger worked with a number of tribal organizations in the Twin Cities such as the Minnesota Indian Women’s Resource Center and the Ain Dah Yung Center.

“Both of these are organizations that take homeless women off of the streets and give them homes, food and give them the wherewithal to get back on their feet and create good, productive lives for themselves,” Krueger said.

Krueger did not interview tribal officials in Red Cliff or Bad River about sex trafficking in the region.

“I didn’t want the reservation I created to be in Minnesota,” Krueger said. “Wisconsin has a significant native population so it was a really good second choice. I did my best to create my own reservation.”

According to Bad River Tribal chairman Mike Wiggins Jr., sex trafficking and kidnapping is not a concern on the Bad River reservation. However, Wiggins said sex trafficking is something to always “be vigilant against.”

“Sometimes it’s hard taking a look at some of those negative kind of areas like that, but in order to get them to light there has to be a little struggle and a little bit of hardship,” Wiggins said.

Krueger said he loves visiting Bayfield and feels very connected to the area and people here. This will be his fifth book discussion event hosted by the Apostle Islands Booksellers.

“I think every author ought to do everything he or she can to make sure that our local, independently owned bookstores thrive,” Krueger said.

Krueger was awarded the 2014 Edgar Award for best novel his book “Ordinary Grace” and is currently working on its companion novel.

(Material from www.williamkentkrueger.com was used in the preparation of this report)

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