

## Interview with Author Heidi Skarie

Writer D.G. Larson recently spoke with Heidi about how her latest book *Red Willow's Quest* came to be. They met in her home while she was taking a break from visiting bookstores around the country recently.

**DGL:** Your home has a wonderful log cabin feeling inside. I understand as well there is something special about the area around your home that relates to *Red Willow's Quest*.

**Heidi:** That's true. We are not far from Lake Minnetonka, and the land surrounding the lake has been sacred burial ground to many Native Americans.

**DGL:** [The Bloomsbury Review](#) said that *Red Willow's Quest* was "... talent(ed) mystical and spiritual writing.... action, adventure, and romance (brought) together into one powerful epic."

So, obviously, your technique for writing this book was a success! But great reviews aside, what interests me is that I know you've written several books, and I understand this one started a little differently for you. How did *Red Willow's Quest* come about?

**Heidi:** Each book I write comes to me in a unique way. My first one came to me in a series of six dreams; it was like watching a movie over a period of six nights and writing down what I saw. I ended up with a 90-page dream journal that became a novel.

In writing *Red Willow's Quest*, at first ideas just kept coming about a young woman going through a spiritual quest. As I continued to write I realized that the story was based on my own past life as a Native American woman studying to be a medicine woman. But out of respect for Native American spirituality, I wasn't sure if I wanted to write it from the perspective of a Native American woman.

**DGL:** But then you received a spiritual sign from out of the blue.

**Heidi:** It was quite special - I had just read the first page of a manuscript about a woman who remembered her past life as a Native American woman and was walking to my mailbox when I found a hawk feather in perfect condition. Then, on each of the next two days I found another hawk feather. For me finding three hawk feathers was a very significant spiritual sign that I should write the book as a Native American story, as to some Native Americans the hawk's cry means clear spiritual vision and flying above the mundane world.

**DGL:** How were you able to offer the reader such a deep insight into what it was like to live as a Native American living in the early 1800's?

**Heidi:** As the story of my past life unfolded I did extensive research to figure out what tribe I had lived in and where I had lived based on what I remembered about that life. To make this as vivid a glimpse into history as possible, I traveled to visit places near the area where the book takes place.

**DGL:** I noticed that one of the reviews at [Amazon.com](#) said "The author does not flinch at (showing the) rigors of the old west, yet the book is uplifting throughout thanks to *Red Willow's* ability to rise to her higher purpose." The realistic writing really transported me back to *Red Willow's* time while I was reading the book.

**Heidi:** Well, as I traveled and researched the history of this time and area, it became more and more clear that this was a rugged time and place to set out on a vision quest!

When *Red Willow* sets out alone into the Rocky Mountains on her vision quest in the beginning of the book, she faces tribal opposition, wild animals, enemy warriors, and dangerous white trappers. Red

Willow's only companion was Wind Chaser, her dog-wolf companion, until the Kootenai warrior Masheka is guided to protect her.

**DGL:** I heard you had another interesting confirmation early on in your research as well.

**Heidi:** Yes, as part of my research for the story I traveled to the Rocky Mountains in Montana. After purchasing a book at a store in the area, I flipped it over and saw on the back that it was about a Kootenai Indian girl.

Although I had never before heard of the Kootenai Indians, I had used the name Kootenai for one of the tribes in the story. I took this as another sign that I was on the right track and writing about my own past life. But whether or not you believe in past lives, this book will give you a glimpse into life in a Shoshoni tribe just a year after Lewis and Clark completed the first American expedition to explore the territories between the Mississippi River and the Pacific Ocean.

**DGL:** Interesting you should mention that, because I've learned there is another, surprising connection between the Shoshoni, Lewis and Clark and the recent publication of your book.

**Heidi:** Yes, it's a good example of the synchronicity that can take place when you are committed to something for spiritual purposes.

What happened is that Native Americans gained more recognition recently when Sacajewea was chosen to be on the new US golden dollar coin. This is significant because both Sacajewea and Red Willow were Shoshoni living in the identical time period. Sacajewea was a young [Lemhi Shoshoni](#) woman who was vital to the Lewis and Clark expedition exploring the western United States.

Sacajewea translated, tracked, gathered plants and her presence showed Native Americans in the area that Lewis and Clark's party came in peace. She carried a baby on her back the whole time, and Clark later adopted her son after she died. Many public schools, especially in the Northwest, are named for Sacagawea (alternative spelling), as are mountain peaks, streams and lakes.

**DGL:** Red Willow calls upon her inner strength and shows great determination to fulfill her destiny in the story, something I'm sure Sacajewea could have related to. But you have written her story in way that seemed would be accessible and inspiring to anyone. Who is your book popular among?

**Heidi:** The story is popular with people of all ages, and although there are moderately adult themes, Red Willow herself is quite young at the time the story takes place, and so there are also exciting issues for younger readers.

In fact, the book has been popular recently with both mothers and daughters in a mother-daughter book club! They love the story, and it provides a chance to talk about values in an indirect way and relate them to their own lives, to talk about issues that they normally wouldn't. Of course, the action-adventure part has been important in the discussions about making a movie of the book.

**DGL:** A movie! That sounds exciting! Are things really moving that fast?

**Heidi:** Some discussions have taken place, and I've drafted a movie script of the book. A fairly well-known director has expressed interest in directing, and there are actors who have expressed an interest in playing some of the roles.

But movies are much more of a collaboration than writing a book, so you never know what the future holds! But I wouldn't be surprised if Red Willow reaches the big screen one day.

**DGL:** There certainly is a lot that movie audiences would love. I saw another reviewer on [Amazon.com](#) say it was "Refreshing to find a book (where) mysticism is more than just a prop and love is more than just a feeling." Despite the challenges Red Willow faces in this life and death action-adventure, there's a wonderful love story in the book as well, isn't there?

**Heidi:** That's true, but of course I don't want to give away the ending!

Red Willow is a strong heroine with a golden heart who loves her family, friends and tribe, and is willing to sacrifice herself for them if necessary. Yet the rewards of love are tremendous for Red Willow and for all of us.

As one of my favorite authors, [Harold Klemp](#), the spiritual leader of [Eckankar](#) says, "The highest truth is not written in any book. It's written in your heart. All the books in the world are useless unless they can help open your heart." As an author, my mission is to write books that help to open the reader's heart.

**DGL:** I would expect no less from a long-time clergy member such as yourself! I realize you've also taken a step beyond your books by giving workshops to help people follow their own spiritual quest.

**Heidi:** Yes, in my workshops, my mission is to help the attendees take the next step spiritually on their own personal spiritual mission or quest. I remind people of what Mark Twain once said:

"Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things you didn't do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover."

I share the idea that we are soul and give people an insight into their purpose in life and some tools to help them achieve them. The workshop usually includes at least one exercise, a discussion, and short readings from the book as appropriate.

For example, at the recent Women's Spirituality Conference we discussed listening to your inner voice and how dreams and past lives can help you find your path. A guided visualization exercise to go on an inner quest was just one of the tools I shared for overcoming fear and bringing more joy into your life.

**DGL:** I noticed that Red Willow sings a sacred song that helps her meet with her Spirit Guide, among other benefits: "Hu-nai-yiee." This is similar to a sacred song you sing in this lifetime too, isn't it?

**Heidi:** Yes, I sing the sound "[HU](#)" in a long, drawn out "u" vowel sound as a love song to God, and part of my spiritual practice in this lifetime. I have discovered that HU really is an [ancient name for God](#). Red Willow first learns she is to become a Medicine Woman when she sings it. I believe that regardless of your beliefs or religion, you can sing HU to become happier and more secure in your life.

**DGL:** Tell me a little about your study of past lives before writing this book.

**Heidi:** I studied esoteric subjects for many years. I first started studying them when I was in college. I was searching for the greater meaning in life. I had been raised Christian but Christianity didn't seem to answer all my questions. The idea of reincarnation made a lot of sense to me. It explained why some people were born handicapped or poor while others were brilliant or rich.

Basically we as Soul need to have many different kinds of experiences and it is impossible to get them all in one life, so we are born many times in all different countries and in all different circumstances. We're all been rich and poor, beautiful and ugly, had hard lives and easy lives. Red Willow's story is a parable that inspires each of us to have the courage to follow our dreams and inner guidance, and to discover our special purpose or quest in life. The story is to inspire and compel the reader to partake of life's opportunities, which is part of our purpose in every lifetime

**DGL:** Why is it beneficial to remember a past life?

**Heidi:** We gain a deeper understanding of who we are in this life. We may have a fear of heights based on an experience from a past life. Just remembering this past life can help us overcome this fear. We can also have an affinity for people or places based on a past life or a dislike from a past life. Many talents that we have are things we developed in a past life. For example, a child who is a good artist or

musician might have learned this talent from a past life.

Understanding that we live many lives helps us to be less fearful of dying. We can accept death as a natural part of life. A friend of mine's brother died and within a year he was reborn as her child. She had many signs that he was her brother and a close bond with him. There are numerous other stories about people remembering their past lives.

**DGL:** If a person is interested in learning about their own past lives how would they go about it?

**Heidi:** I would recommend starting with what you have an strong attraction for or dislike of. It could be a person or a place. Ask for inner guidance to help you remember why this place or person is familiar to you. Go and visit the place as this will often bring up past life memories. Pay attention to your dreams. Often you will get glimpses of past lives in your dreams. I have had very vivid dreams of my past life during World War 2 and helping smuggling Jewish people out of Germany.

**DGL:** What should your readers look for from you next?

**Heidi:** I've written a science fiction/fantasy series of books and am planning the publication of the first of the books in the series (Star Rider on the Razor's Edge) soon. Also, I traveled to Scandanavia recently researching another historical novel, this time about the Norwegian Vikings for teens and adults. It's tentatively titled "Dragon Ships."

**DGL:** It certainly sounds like your are following your own dreams as a writer. I know a favorite author of yours who also follows her dreams is Lynn V. Andrews, who called *Red Willow's Quest* "A powerful spiritually invocative story about a woman taking her power." You have a favorite book of hers, don't you?

**Heidi:** Yes, my favorite book of Lynn's is *Love & Power: Awakening to Mastery*. But if you just want to sit down with a great story I recommend *Winged Pharaoh* by Joan Grant. It's the story of a girl who becomes both priestess and Pharaoh in ancient Egypt. My own favorite titles are *Autobiography of a Modern Prophet*, and *A Modern Prophet Answers Your Key Questions About Life*, both by the current spiritual leader of Eckankar, Sri Harold Klemp.

**DGL:** How about some of your other favorite books?

**Heidi:** One of the few books I can say is absolutely essential for ALL spiritual seekers is *Journey of Souls*. *The Art of Spiritual Dreaming* is another terrific book for all seekers. In the health field, probably everyone, whether a spiritual seeker or not, should read *Your Body's Many Cries for Water*. Other good health titles are *Eat Right for your Type* and *Energy Medicine*.

**DGL:** It's been a real pleasure reading your book, and talking with you today. Any parting thoughts?

**Heidi:** I value personal experiences as the most natural way back to God, and encourage people to realize they can actively explore the spiritual worlds in this lifetime. You don't have to wait until after you die to learn about heaven!

Our lives are so much more than what we see here in the physical world. Don't be afraid to go after your dreams and take the next step. There is pain in not following our quest or using our talents. There is joy in becoming all that you have the potential to be, so don't hold back.

To be able to put daily concerns into loving perspective and lead a happy, balanced, and productive life is our birthright – if we are willing to work for it spiritually. You are a spark of God, rich in potential and powerful beyond measure. You are here – we are all here – because God loves us.