

The History of Minnesota's Ojibwe People Comes Alive in New Historic Novel

By Rachel M. Anderson, Contributing Writer

(Twin Cities) – Minnesota is known as the Land of Ten Thousand Lakes and its people are said to be “Minnesota Nice,” meaning they are friendly, polite and have a tendency toward understatement. They also tend to have an aversion to confrontation.

But it wasn't always this way. Are you aware of the not so nice thing that happened to the indigenous people who called the land home before Minnesota became a state? If not, Colin Mustful of Roseville, Minn., a suburb of St. Paul, says you should be; and he's on a mission to make sure the wrongs of the past are not forgotten.

In his latest novel, ***Resisting Removal***, the author and historian writes about the history of the Ojibwe people of Northern Wisconsin and Minnesota and how they came to be forced onto the reservations where they live today.

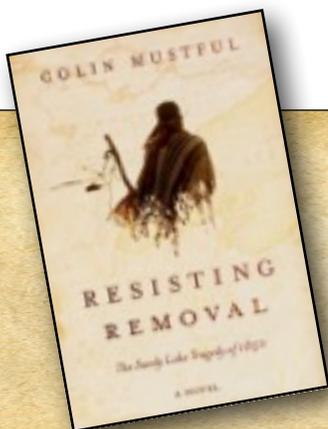
Resisting Removal is a fictional account of the life of Benjamin Green Armstrong, whose memoir, *Early Life Among the Indians*, was published in 1892. The story begins with Benjamin walking into the office of Thomas Wentworth, a reporter at the A.W. Bowron Press in Ashland, Wisc. Benjamin tells Thomas he has a story to tell he wants distributed throughout the country, then goes on to share intimate details of the harrowing journey he went to in an attempt to right a wrong.

In the process of telling Benjamin's story, Mustful shares the history of the Ojibwe people, who first settled in the Midwest hundreds of years ago—before European migration—and lived off the land, fishing in the summer, harvesting wild rice in the fall, hunting, trapping and ice fishing in the winter, and tapping maple syrup in the spring.

“They maintained peaceful trading relationships until about 200 years later when the United States decided the time had come to annex the land they called home,” explains Mustful.

According to the treaty the Lake Superior Ojibwe signed in 1842 that sold their lands in Wisconsin, the Ojibwe maintained the right to live upon and use the land for the next 50 to 100 years. Yet, eight years later, that promise was broken.

When the U.S. Government learned of the Ojibwe's reluctance to give up their land, its agents forced the issue by requiring the Ojibwe to travel 150 miles from their home in La Pointe, Wisc., to Sandy Lake, Minn., to receive their annuities and provision of supplies. The Ojibwe set off on their journey in late Oct. When they arrived, the payment was delayed. The government supplied rations set aside for them spoiled. Hunger and disease set in quickly.



RESISTING REMOVAL COLIN MUSTFUL

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“About 150 Ojibwe died at Sandy Lake. More than 200 more who had decided to turn around and return home died along the way. I didn’t find out about what had happened at Sandy Lake until I was in my 30s, and was surprised by how intentional it was, and that there were no consequences.”

While working on his manuscript, Mustful relied heavily on the notes historian and anthropologist Bruce White had prepared for the Supreme Court in the 1999 case, “Minnesota vs. Mille Lacs Band of Chippewa Indians,” in which they were arguing over treaty rights. The ruling went in the Chippewa’s favor.

Resisting Removal is Mustful’s fourth historic novel about Indian affairs. He has also written *Ceding Contempt: Minnesota’s Most Significant Historical Event* (Apr. 6, 2016), *Fate of the Dakotas: A Novel and Resource on the U.S. Dakota War of 1862* (Jan. 20, 2016) and *Grace at Spirit Lake* (Jun. 30, 2014).

“I’ve always had an interest in the genocide of Western indigenous people. My master’s thesis (at Minnesota State University, Mankato), is actually about The Conquest of the Desert, the military defeat and expulsion of the Pampas Indians living throughout the Pampas region of Argentina,” says Mustful, who first began researching and writing about the wrongs suffered by the Natives who settled in North and South America while attending classes at Minnesota State in Mankato.

“I found out about the hanging of 38 Dakota on Dec. 26, 1862, which they say was the largest execution in U.S. history, while in grad school (at Minnesota State University in Mankato) because there’s a statue in Downtown Mankato at Reconciliation Park that commemorates the event,” says Mustful.

Shocked by what he learned, and because he has always had an interest in history, he researched and wrote about the U.S. Dakota War. He also began studying the treaty system. “After learning about what had happened to the Ojibwe I decided it would be interesting to write about them too,” says Mustful.

The early reviews for the book have been very favorable. Historian John Haymond, who has published several books about the U.S. Military says, “Resisting Removal is the account of a nearly-forgotten tragedy of American history. Colin Mustful’s unique approach to historical narrative and thorough research brings to life a story of political intrigue and bitter betrayal in this moving depiction of a people’s desperate struggle to adapt to a changing, hostile world. Resisting Removal is captivating and engaging for all the right reasons; talented historical storytelling at its finest.”

Since the release of his first book in 2013, Mustful has become a sought-after speaker in Minnesota schools. “I’m really impressed by the perspective of young people and their ability to look at history through multiple perspectives,” he says.

More information about Colin Mustful and his books can be found at Historythroughfiction.com.



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About the Author

Colin Mustful is a Minnesota author and historian with a unique story-telling style that tells History Through Fiction. His work focuses on Minnesota and surrounding regions during the complex transitional period as land was transferred from Native peoples to American hands. Mustful strives to create compelling stories about the real-life people and events of a tumultuous and forgotten past.

Currently, Colin Mustful is studying for his Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing from Augsburg University. In addition to writing and research, his interests include soccer, travel, hiking and fantasy football.

Colin Mustful lives in Roseville, Minn., a suburb of St. Paul.



EDITOR'S NOTE: This feature article and the accompanying photography are available for your use copyright free and cost free. To arrange an interview of your own with Colin Mustful, contact Rachel M. Anderson, Publicist, at 952-240-2513 or rachel@rmapublicity.com.

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