

The Canadian Field-Naturalist

Book Reviews

Book Review Editor's Note: *The Canadian Field-Naturalist* is a peer-reviewed scientific journal publishing papers on ecology, behaviour, taxonomy, conservation, and other topics relevant to Canadian natural history. In line with this mandate, we review books with a Canadian connection, including those on any species (native or non-native) that inhabits Canada, as well as books covering topics of global relevance, including climate change, biodiversity, species extinction, habitat loss, evolution, and field research experiences.

Currency Codes: CAD Canadian Dollars, USD United States Dollars, EUR Euros, AUD Australian Dollars, GBP British Pounds.

BOTANY

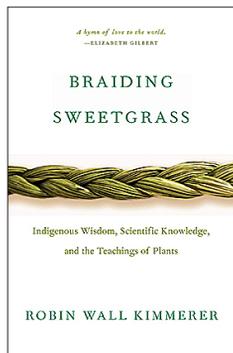
Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants

By Robin Wall Kimmerer. 2013. Milkweed Editions. 408 pages, 23.89 CAD, Paper. Also available as an E-book and Audio-book. Hardcover Special Edition published in 2020.

Reviewing this incredible book is difficult, not because I disagree with the praise that others have laid upon it—I agree entirely—but due to the depth of this book and its message. Dr. Kimmerer is a trained botanist and enrolled member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation. *Braiding Sweetgrass* weaves together Western scientific knowledge with Indigenous ways of knowing through the lens of an Indigenous woman navigating these sometimes disparate realms.

With a narrative based primarily in her own life and experiences, Dr. Kimmerer employs her poetic and eminently readable writing style to explore relationships with non-human elements of the natural world. Each chapter is a more or less self-contained story, with the central theme of reciprocity woven throughout. This book is at once deeply personal and broadly relevant. Justified critiques of the modern Western scientific perspective are accompanied by positive and forward-looking ways of using science to address current challenges.

This book encourages readers to develop a deeper



appreciation for and close observation of natural processes and seasonal changes, and to consider different ways of knowing the world around us. I read this book in winter, and it made me ache for spring and summer when I could get my hands in the soil and feel the thrum of life around me.

I have both read this book and listened to the audiobook, which is narrated by the author, and I will be reading it again. *Braiding Sweetgrass* is a book that you come back to, reflect on, and find new knowledge in each time. Will you learn plant facts? Yes, absolutely. And they are excellent plant facts. The value of this book is expansive; when you read it—and you should, or listen to it, or possibly do both—you will take something different away than I did, and likely find something different again when you read it a second time. I recommend this book to anyone and everyone. For younger readers, there is also a 2022 adaptation by Monique Gray Smith, *Braiding Sweetgrass for Young Adults* (Zest Books). It includes additional information and illustrations by Nicole Neidhardt.

Ultimately, *Braiding Sweetgrass* and its messages are hopeful and necessary. If you've been looking for a reason to read this book, take this as your sign.

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