



**NOVEL**

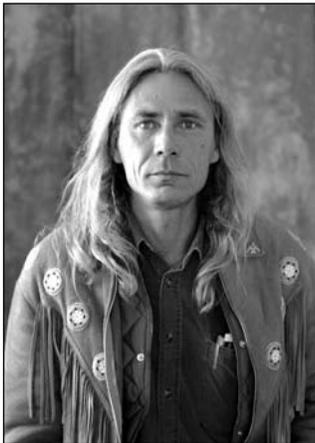
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**Harold Johnson**

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## THE CAST STONE

HAROLD JOHNSON

**A dystopian novel in which a First Nations professor confronts and addresses the impact of the US annexation of Canada.**

Ben Robe is a retired political science professor who has returned to his reserve at Moccasin Lake to live out his life in relative peace and solitude. But the complications of a sudden and intense US annexation of Canada change his plans. Cued into a Canadian resistance movement by his former student and lover, Monica, Ben soon learns that the layers of political and military activity go far beyond his careful social conscience in this dystopian world. Radical young women like Monica, Betsy Chance, and Joan Lightning post one face of the resistance, while farmers like Abe Friesen, and Mennonite Mary Wiens post another. Paralleled with characters like these are the reserve's citizens who remain sheltered from the immediate troubles down south, but must accept that they cannot remain passive forever.

*The Cast Stone's* themes emerge slowly from within the narratives as Ben encounters the players in the Canadian resistance and must balance his call to civil action with the call to defend Canada amid the discovery of a son he never knew he had, his friendship with his neighbours, and the community elders with their long-standing knowledge of Treaties, history, and racial oppression conflict. The novel accents Ben's struggles with his own desire for independence, love, and forgiveness, but at its core it remains a telling and passionate portrait of First Nations community life, the value and safety of family, and the need for friendship. It achieves an understanding of what an individual's responsibilities are when civil liberty, order and stability are jeopardized by an occupying power, but shows that solitary acts of defiance that champion family trust and the individual's capacity to love are their own agents of resistance.

Born and raised in Northern Saskatchewan, HAROLD JOHNSON has a Master of Law degree from Harvard University. Johnson is the author of three novels, *Billy Tinker* (Thistledown Press 2001), *Back Track* (Thistledown Press 2005), and *Charlie Muskrat* (Thistledown Press 2008), all set against a background of traditional Cree mythology and all shortlisted for Saskatchewan Book Awards. Johnson practices law in La Ronge, Saskatchewan, and balances this with operating his family's traditional trap line using a dog team. He is of Swedish and Cree descent.



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