



# Three Day Road

*By Joseph Boyden*

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Set in Canada and the battlefields of France and Belgium, **Three-Day Road** is a mesmerizing novel told through the eyes of Niska—a Canadian Oji-Cree woman living off the land who is the last of a line of healers and diviners—and her nephew Xavier.

At the urging of his friend Elijah, a Cree boy raised in reserve schools, Xavier joins the war effort. Shipped off to Europe when they are nineteen, the boys are marginalized from the Canadian soldiers not only by their native appearance but also by the fine marksmanship that years of hunting in the bush has taught them. Both become snipers renowned for their uncanny accuracy. But while Xavier struggles to understand the purpose of the war and to come to terms with his conscience for the many lives he has ended, Elijah becomes obsessed with killing, taking great risks to become the most accomplished sniper in the army. Eventually the harrowing and bloody truth of war takes its toll on the two friends in different, profound ways. Intertwined with this account is the story of Niska, who herself has borne witness to a lifetime of death—the death of her people.

In part inspired by the legend of Francis Pegahmagabow, the great Indian sniper of World War I, **Three-Day Road** is an impeccably researched and beautifully written story that offers a searing reminder about the cost of war.

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## Three Day Road By Joseph Boyden Bibliography

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## Editorial Review

### Amazon.com Review

Joseph Boyden's first novel is the story of two Cree friends, Xavier and Elijah, who leave their pristine northern country to end up in the horrific trenches of World War I. Loosely based on the real life of a famous Canadian sniper, the story is told from two first-person views: those of Xavier and his old aunt and only living relative, Niska. After the war, Niska is taking her wounded nephew back home north to the bush in a canoe. Their trip is the three-day road of the title, which also refers to the journey taken after death. The story of the war is told in flashbacks on this journey as Xavier recovers from morphine addiction. Niska also relates various stories to Xavier, believing there is "medicine in the tale."

Boyden is a natural storyteller. Both the Native tales of the north and the grim accounts of the war in France and Belgium have the ring of truth. His images can be subtly appropriate--raiders who go over the top are "eaten by the night"--and his characterizations are excellent, especially the three main players and Xavier's Canadian trenchmates. Eventually, Elijah seems to feed on the death all around him, becoming a "windigo," while Xavier begins to question the sanity of the war and his friend's growing madness, realizing "we all fight on two fronts, the one facing the enemy, the one facing what we do to the enemy." Not for the squeamish reader, this is a powerful novel that takes a new angle on a popular subject, "the war to end all wars." --Mark Frutkin, *Amazon.ca*

### From Publishers Weekly

Starred Review. When Cree Indians Xavier Bird and Elijah Whiskeyjack join the Canadian Army in 1915, they expect to go to France, become warriors and kill Germans. What they don't expect is that the war will drive one of them mad and make the other a morphine-addicted cripple. This is Boyden's first novel (after the story collection *Born with a Tooth*), a powerful tale of two young men numbed by the horrors and brutality of trench warfare. Boyden vividly portrays the chaos, fear, cowardice and courage of infantrymen condemned to wallow in the mud and blood of the Western Front. Best friends Xavier and Elijah are both expert sharpshooters and, using the field craft they learned hunting in the forests of Hudson Bay, quickly become accomplished snipers. Elijah is outgoing and boastful, while Xavier is quiet and reserved, but both are deadly efficient soldiers. A parallel story line tells of Niska, Xavier's aunt, a Cree Indian prophet and healer, as she tells of the sad decline of Cree culture and waits for her nephew to come home. As the war drags on, one of the men's addiction to drugs and killing causes him to take extreme risks; when he finally commits murder to hide the ugly truth, his friend sees only one solution to save his own soul. Friendship is riven with resentment and war is stripped of glory in this remarkable, wrenching novel, the work of a gifted storyteller. *Agent, Nicole Winstanley at Westwood Creative Artists (Toronto). 6-city author tour. (May 9)* Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

### From [Booklist](#)

This first novel is set in Canada and Europe during the First World War. When Xavier, a Cree boy raised on a reserve, enlists in the army with his friend Elijah, the boys abruptly enter a modern world in which their ethnic appearance is a signal to others that they are to be treated differently. Even as the boys become expert marksmen, they are ostracized by their comrades. Xavier reacts by turning inward, grappling with the meaning of the war and with guilt over the killing he has done; Elijah, meanwhile, turns outward, becomes consumed with killing, and dedicates himself to being the world's best sniper. Loosely based on the life of Francis Pegamahgabow, a real-life World War I sniper, this is a delicately written, almost poetic novel. Neither pro- nor antiwar, it posits that war is something that will always exist, and all we can control is our

own place in it. Ultimately, Boyden writes about life, not war. The novel can be very slow moving, but it will prove rewarding for patient readers. *David Pitt*

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## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

#### **Angela Gagne:**

The book Three Day Road make one feel enjoy for your spare time. You can utilize to make your capable much more increase. Book can to become your best friend when you getting pressure or having big problem along with your subject. If you can make examining a book Three Day Road for being your habit, you can get considerably more advantages, like add your own personal capable, increase your knowledge about some or all subjects. You could know everything if you like available and read a publication Three Day Road. Kinds of book are several. It means that, science book or encyclopedia or some others. So , how do you think about this book?

#### **Helen Johnson:**

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#### **Eunice Huynh:**

This Three Day Road is great guide for you because the content and that is full of information for you who also always deal with world and get to make decision every minute. This kind of book reveal it data accurately using great coordinate word or we can say no rambling sentences in it. So if you are read that hurriedly you can have whole details in it. Doesn't mean it only offers you straight forward sentences but tricky core information with splendid delivering sentences. Having Three Day Road in your hand like getting the world in your arm, info in it is not ridiculous just one. We can say that no guide that offer you world with ten or fifteen small right but this guide already do that. So , this is certainly good reading book. Hey Mr. and Mrs. stressful do you still doubt that?

#### **Richard Dean:**

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