

### **Blue Saltwater**

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Published by Dan Green

## ABOUT THE BOOK

Revenge turns a homecoming celebration into tragedy, when fire kills the family of sixteen year old aboriginal Blue Saltwater, destroying his boyhood dreams and forcing his relocation from the pristine islands of Haida Gwaii to the St. Ignatius Residential School for Boys. Exiled and forgotten within this predatory cauldron of thugs and pedophiles, Blue executes a daring escape and reveals the abusive underworld of Brother Denny Boyle.

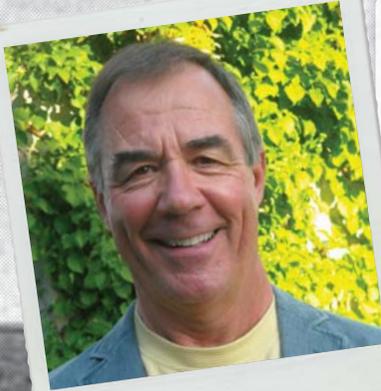
A harrowing trip through the wild back-country of British Columbia leads Blue to Vancouver where he is overwhelmed by the rush and false glitter of the notorious downtown east-side, extinguishing his desire to return home and leading to his descent into addiction. A chance encounter with a remnant of his past brings rehabilitation and a journey by sail along the rugged northwest coast to return Blue to his island home so that he may regain his ancestral birthright. Disaster strikes off the rocky shoals of Cape St. James and presents Blue with the ultimate challenge to his survival and the reclamation of the life that was stolen from him years before.

**Blue Saltwater** is an historical drama set in British Columbia in the late seventies that intertwines the mystic legends of Haida Gwaii with those of the Virgin of Guadalupe and traces the lives of two men- Blue Saltwater, a restless teenager from the Queen Charlotte Islands and Father Joe Murphy, a youthful priest from Ontario, whose destinies collide as they try to escape the social boundaries that bind them to lives of adversity.

"The implosion sent a starburst of cinders and glass out through the front windows. Blue wrestled to hold Ellie back from the house but she scratched and bit until she was able to twist away from him. She reached the porch at the same instant as the flames touched the dripping contents of Blue's overturned gasoline container." - page 21, *Blue Saltwater*

"Who asked you to talk?" McNabb said, choking out the words. He fumbled through the names on his chart. "Louis Lupituck. Okay, big man. If you want to be a hero you can go with him. Any more noise from the rest of you and you'll get the same." Page 67, *Blue Saltwater*

**Blue Saltwater** For more information visit [www.dangreen.ca](http://www.dangreen.ca)  
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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dan Green grew up in Saskatchewan and received his education in Prince Albert and Regina. He graduated from the Faculty of Dentistry at the University of Manitoba in 1969 and practiced for thirty-four years in West Vancouver before retiring in 2003. Since that time he has studied with the University of British Columbia Writing Centre in Vancouver and *Blue Saltwater* is his first novel. Dr. Green and his wife make their home in West Vancouver and Arizona.

"Most films, books, documentaries about the residential school system show groups of anonymous students staring out from a picture. You look into the eyes of those kids and you wonder what they might have been experiencing. My idea was to reveal the courage and determination behind those stoic expressions and portray an individual who would stand up and fight back and go through whatever it took to get back to where he was taken from."  
*Dan Green on his inspiration*

## Q & A with Dan Green

### 1. Why did you write this story?

Being educated within the Catholic school system in Saskatchewan, I was troubled by the revelations of sexual abuse in the Canadian Indian Residential School System that began to surface over 25 years ago, even though I had never personally witnessed or experienced such abuse myself. In writing the story of *Blue Saltwater*, I tried to imagine how a strong, proud, resilient character such as Blue might react when forced into such an environment.

### 2. Why is this story newsworthy?

The story took six years to complete but the subject matter is as relevant today as it was then, especially now that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission on Indian Residential Schools is in the second year of its five year mandate to acknowledge the consequences of the IRS and to promote awareness amongst Canadians about its impacts. The rediscovery of historic cultural values amongst First Nations after a long period of darkness is turning the tide and I hope that *Blue Saltwater* will help encourage this process going forward.

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## **2. What audience is this story aimed at?**

This story is aimed at anyone interested in understanding the dysfunction of the IRS in the late seventies in Canada. It is appropriate for a mature adolescents and adults.

## **4. Does the story deal with other subject matter besides the IRS?**

It also explores the emergence of AIDs in the late seventies in North America and the misinformation and bigotry that surrounded the disease. This aspect of the story was inspired through the efforts of Dr. Peter-Jepson Young and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation with the 1990 telecast of the Dr. Peter Diaries which did more to bring an informed and non-judgemental perspective to this condition than anything else had up to that time.

## **5. What roles do women play in this story?**

Although the story deals with a residential school for boys, the spiritual drivers of the plot are feminine embodiments which direct the actions of the two main characters. The first is the Creek Mother, the Haida Spirit at the source of every river and stream, and a salutation bestowed upon women of respect. The second is the Virgin of Guadalupe, the Madonna of Mexico, who is revered for her unconditional love and miracles of healing. Although these icons come from dissimilar traditions, they reveal the common themes binding religions and cultures which often go unrecognized. In the second half of the story, Luci is portrayed as a positive influence who offers her love to Blue as he begins to self-destruct.

## **6. What is the primary message of the story?**

Where there is courage, reconciliation, and trust, there is hope.

## **7. What visual images of British Columbia did you draw upon for this story?**

The pristine nature of Haida Gwaii, the arid mountain fortress of the Columbia Valley, the granite shadow of the St. Ignatius Residential School, the escape through the backcountry of BC, the false glitter and brutality of Vancouver's downtown eastside, and the rugged beauty of British Columbia's west coast.

## **8. What qualifies you to write this story since you are not of aboriginal descent?**

I have a personal background with Catholicism and with residential schooling and therefore some of my ideas were coloured by that. However, this story should not be confused as a personal memoir. It is an alchemy of experience, observation, and imagination, meant to stand on its own.