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# Press Release

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## *Blue Ravens*

Historical Novel

by Gerald Vizenor

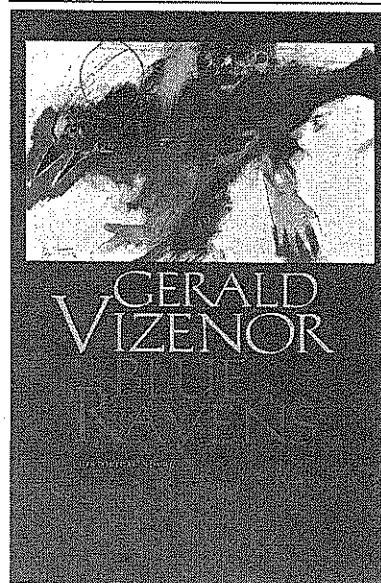
296 pp. 6 x 9"

\$27.95 Hardcover, 978-0-8195-7416-9

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Publication Date: February 11, 2014

A historical novel of WWI,  
based on true events.



“With *Blue Ravens*, Gerald Vizenor has written what I believe to be his most powerful book to date in what continues to be a brilliant career. Wise and funny and so gorgeously human, this novel, and this man, are extraordinary.”

—Joseph Boyden, author of *Three Day Road*

“What I want to say about this book is a picture. You’ll see it too, and for a long time after.”

—Stephen Graham Jones, author of *The Bird Is Gone*

Gerald Vizenor retells his uncles’ stories in this fact-based portrayal of Native American soldiers in World War I. *Blue Ravens* begins at the start of the twentieth century in the days leading up to the Great War in France, and continues in combat scenes at Château-Thierry, Montbréhain, and Bois de Fays. After their service in the American Expeditionary Forces, his uncles returned to the White Earth Reservation, where they grew up. They eventually leave for a second time to live in Paris and lead successful, creative lives.

The novel contains many of Vizenor’s recurrent cultural themes—the power and irony of trickster

stories, the privilege of *survivance* over *victimry*, natural reason, and resistance. It is a treasure-trove of Anishinaabe history, and an examination of life for Native people during a period of great change.

With a spirited sense of “chance, totemic connections, and the tricky stories of our natural transience in the world,” Vizenor creates an expression of presence commonly denied Native Americans. *Blue Ravens* is a true story of courage in poverty and war, a human story of art and literature from a recognized master of the postwar American novel and one of the most original and outspoken Native voices writing today. An online reader’s companion is coming soon, at <http://blueravens.site.wesleyan.edu>.

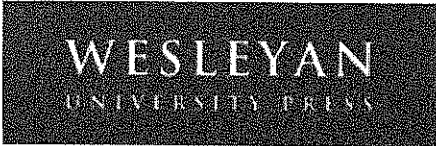
**Gerald Vizenor** is a prolific novelist, poet, literary critic, and citizen of the White Earth Nation of the Anishinaabeg in Minnesota. He is Professor Emeritus of American Studies at the University of California, Berkeley. His novel *Griever: An American Monkey King in China*, won the American Book Award and the New York Fiction Collective Award.

*We would appreciate receiving a copy of any review of this book that appears in your publication.*

### *White Earth Nation and Anishinaabe Factsheet*

- White Earth Reservation of Minnesota was formally established in 1867. White Earth citizens are part of a larger indigenous group known as the Anishinaabe.
- The Anishinaabe, “the original people,” were called the Ojibwe (or, Chippewa) by Euro-Americans. The moniker is probably a derivative of the word “ojib,” a style of moccasin.
- There are nearly 150 bands of Chippewa in the United States, mostly in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan.
- The Anishinaabe have a unique written language.
- In 1886, a reservation newspaper called *The Progress* was established. It was succeeded by *The Tomahawk*. The Vizenor family operated these newspapers.
- KKWE-Nijji Radio is the White Earth Nation’s radio station. Their mission is “to provide news and information that promotes social, environmental, and economic justice” as well as “to assure that the arts, history, and culture thrive in and throughout our listening community.”
- Wild rice, one of two cereal grains native to North America, is an important crop for the Anishinaabe. It is high in protein, dietary fiber, and amino acids while low in fat. You can purchase this delicious product straight from the White Earth Nation at [www.realwildrice.com](http://www.realwildrice.com).
- Winona LaDuke, a former United States vice-presidential candidate on the Green Party ticket, is a member of the White Earth Nation. A graduate of Harvard University and Antioch University, she founded the White Earth Land Recovery Project whose goal is to buy back land within the White Earth Reservation that had been sold to non-Natives.
- Since 2003, the Tribe has engaged, with help from the US Department of Energy, in assessing wind resources on the reservation as well as developing implementation strategies. They also received a \$3 million grant, from the US Department of Labor, to train reservation residents in green technology.
- On November 19, 2013 The White Earth Nation elected to adopt a new constitution. This new document changed enrollment requirements, based on family lineage rather than blood quantum. White Earth Tribal Chairperson Erma Vizenor called this event “the most monumental, historic moment” in White Earth Nation history.





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### *Native Americans, Military Service, and World War I*

- World War I, also known as the Great War, the World War, the War of the Nations, and the War to End all Wars, was fought from 1914–1918 on every ocean and on almost every continent.
- It is estimated that more than 12,000 American Indians served in World War I. More than 44,000 American Indians served during WWII. Military officials acknowledge that Native Americans have the highest record of service per capita of any ethnic group.
- The Indian Citizenship Act of 1924 was enacted, in part, to recognize the service of thousands of Indians in WWI. Citizenship had been offered to Oklahoma Natives in 1890 and 1901.
- Native Americans were not placed in segregated units, as African-American soldiers were.
- The United States entered WWI on April 6, 1917, declaring war on Germany. The action was precipitated by the sinking of the *Lusitania*.
- Native Americans who were US citizens were eligible for the draft. However, 2,000 Native American citizens had already volunteered to fight by April of 1917.
- More than 65 million men from 30 countries fought in WWI. Nearly 10 million died.
- There were over 35 million civilian and military casualties in WWI. Over 15 million died.
- During WWI, the Spanish flu was responsible for about 1/3 of total military deaths. Illness was the cause of the majority of military deaths in previous human conflicts.
- During WWI, dogs were used as messengers. Capsules were attached to their bodies, to carry orders to the front lines.
- Tanks were initially called landships. The name tank was adopted as an attempt to disguise the vehicles as water storage tanks.
- The trench network of WWI stretched nearly 25,000 miles, from the English Channel to Switzerland.
- Approximately 30 different poisonous gases were used during WWI. At the end of the war, many countries signed agreements to outlaw chemical weapons.
- Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland emerged as independent nations after the war's end.

