BKLYN BOOK CLUB KIT

CALLING FOR A BLANKET DANCE

OSCAR HOKEAH

CALLING FOR A BLANKET DANCE

a novel

“STUNNING.”
—Susan Power, author of The Grass Dancer

OSCAR HOKEAH

2023 BROOKLYN PUBLIC LIBRARY BOOK PRIZE FINALIST
BOOK SYNOPSIS

A moving and deeply engaging novel about a young Native American man as he learns to find strength in his familial identity.

Oscar Hokeah’s electric debut takes us into the life of Ever Geimausaddle, whose family—part Mexican, part Native American—is determined to hold onto their community despite obstacles everywhere they turn. Ever’s father is injured at the hands of corrupt police on the border when he goes to visit family in Mexico, while his mother struggles both to keep her job and care for her husband. And young Ever is lost and angry at all that he doesn’t understand, at this world that seems to undermine his sense of safety. Ever’s relatives all have ideas about who he is and who he should be. His Cherokee grandmother, knowing the importance of proximity, urges the family to move across Oklahoma to be near her, while his grandfather, watching their traditions slip away, tries to reunite Ever with his heritage through traditional gourd dances. Through it all, every relative wants the same: to remind Ever of the rich and supportive communities that surround him, there to hold him tight, and for Ever to learn to take the strength given to him to save not only himself but also the next generation.

How will this young man visualize a place for himself when the world hasn’t made room for him to start with? Honest, heartbreaking, and ultimately uplifting, Calling for a Blanket Dance is the story of how Ever Geimausaddle finds his way home.
Oscar Hokeah is a citizen of Cherokee Nation and the Kiowa Tribe of Oklahoma from his mother's side and has Mexican heritage through his father. He holds an MA in English with a concentration in Native American Literature from the University of Oklahoma, as well as a BFA in Creative Writing from the Institute of American Indian Arts (IAIA), with a minor in Indigenous Liberal Studies. He is a recipient of the Truman Capote Scholarship Award through IAIA and is also a winner of the Native Writer Award through the Taos Summer Writers Conference. His short stories have been published in *South Dakota Review, American Short Fiction, Yellow Medicine Review, Surreal South,* and *Red Ink Magazine.* He works with Indian Child Welfare in Tahlequah.

LEARN MORE ABOUT OSCAR AT OSCARHOKEAH.COM.
LISTEN TO HOKEAH SPEAK ABOUT HIS WORK IN SELECT RADIO, PODCAST & VIDEO INTERVIEWS:

- **MPR News** – Debut novelist Oscar Hokeah highlights the pain and healing power of Indigenous communities
- **Kirkus / Fully Booked podcast** – Oscar Hokeah
- **KOSU (Oklahoma NPR) / Indigenous Affairs** – Oklahoma author Oscar Hokeah's debut novel comes from a decolonized perspective
- **WBUR (Boston NPR) / Here & Now** – Author Oscar Hokeah showcases Cherokee, Kiowa and Mexican heritage in 'Calling for a Blanket Dance'
- **Harvard Bookstore** – Oscar Hokeah discusses "Calling for a Blanket Dance" with Gabriel Bump

Oscar Hokeah discusses "Calling for a Blanket Dance" with Gabriel Bump

YouTube / Harvard Book Store
BOOK CLUB DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

WARNING: DISCUSSION QUESTIONS INCLUDE SPOILERS!

1. How does Lena’s quilt tie into Ever Geimausaddle’s identity?

2. What are the similarities between Ever Geimausaddle and his grandfather, Vincent? How do Ever’s choices propel his life in a different direction than his grandfather?

3. How does Vincent’s last attempt to heal his grandsons relate to living with honor?

4. Why is Ever so aggressive?

5. What are the subtle and obvious ways in which toxic masculinity play out in Ever’s life? And what does each narrator do to alter Ever’s identity as a man?

6. What do the time jumps in the novel say about memory? What aspects of Ever’s life have you as the reader inserted in lieu of the missing time?

7. Why does Sissy tell Lonnie’s story?

8. How does Lonnie serve as a foil?

THESE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS WERE CREATED BY THE PUBLISHER ALGONQUIN BOOKS AND ARE NOT AFFILIATED WITH BROOKLYN PUBLIC LIBRARY.

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BOOK CLUB DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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What are the similarities between Ever, Sissy, and Turtle in how they engage with Lonnie?

Why does Ever become obsessed with finding the person who broke the bench at the powwow?

How do honor and dishonor play out in Ever's relationship with Lonnie? How does the death of Ever's daughter change the course of his life?

Why does Ever rescue Leander?

What is the cultural significance of adoption in plains tribe culture?

Why are Lena’s quilts so important to Opbee?

What did Opbee learn from Lena? And what does Opbee want to teach Ever?

What has each narrator taught Ever about family and community? At what lengths does Ever go to obtain his home?

How do you think each narrator would have acted differently than Ever in the final scene?

These discussion questions were created by the publisher Algonquin Books and are not affiliated with Brooklyn Public Library.

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RECIPE: RABBIT STEW WITH CORN DUMPLINGS

This recipe comes from the Southeastern Cherokees of northern Georgia and the Carolinas, though it’s not specific to the region. Corn dumpling soups are popular among many Native communities. If you’ve eaten chicken and dumplings or hush puppies, you’re already familiar with the basic idea—but rabbit will offer a slightly more intense, rich, and savory taste. Chicken is a fine substitute. Try not to think of this recipe as a new version of something you already love, but rather a centuries-old tradition that’s inspired dozens of now-familiar American recipes. (And for good reason—it’s incredibly tasty.)

Serves 6-8

⅓ cup (75 ml) canola oil
4 skin-on bone-in rabbit legs
4 skin-on bone-in rabbit thighs
1 tablespoon salt
1 tablespoon freshly cracked black pepper
1 medium onion, peeled and diced
2 carrots, diced
2 stalks celery, diced
2 bay leaves
5 sprigs fresh thyme
2 quarts (2 L) chicken stock
Corn Dumplings, recipe follows
20 ramp bulbs, cleaned and trimmed
2 cups (40 g) loosely packed spinach leaves

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE
RABBIT STEW (CONT.)

In a large, heavy-bottom pot over high heat, add the oil. Season the rabbit with salt and pepper. Once the oil is hot, carefully add the rabbit to the pot. Sear until brown on all sides. *Note: Do not overcrowd the pot, or you will not achieve a nice sear; you may need to sear the rabbit in batches.* After all the rabbit is seared, remove from the pot and set aside. Reduce the heat to low. Add the onion, carrots, celery, bay leaves, and thyme to the pot and cook until the onion is soft, about 10 minutes. Deglaze the pot with 2 cups (480 ml) of the stock, scraping up any brown bits from the bottom. Return the seared rabbit to the pot and add the dumplings, ramps, spinach, and the remaining stock. Increase the temperature to high and bring to a boil. Once boiling, reduce the temperature to medium, cover, and allow to simmer for 25 to 30 minutes, or until the rabbit and vegetables are tender. Adjust the seasoning if necessary and remove and discard the bay leaves and thyme sprigs. Remove from the heat and serve immediately. This soup can be refrigerated for four to six months.

**CORN DUMPLINGS**
Makes 20-24 dumplings

- 4 ears corn, kernels removed
- 1 cup (125 g) all-purpose flour
- ½ cup (60 g) yellow cornmeal
- ½ teaspoon salt

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE
In the bowl of a food processor fitted with the dough blade, add the corn kernels, flour, cornmeal, salt, and 1 cup (240 ml) of water and process until a dough is formed. If the dough seems dry, add a little more water. (Note: If you do not have a processor, a mortar and pestle will work. Grind the corn first before adding flour, cornmeal, salt, and water.) Next, knead the dough into a smooth ball, then place the dough ball into a bowl and cover with a kitchen towel for 15 minutes. To form the dumplings, roll out the dough on a floured surface as thin as you can. Then using a knife or a pizza cutter, slice the dough into thin strips, about ½ inch (12 mm) wide and 3 inches (7.5 cm) long. Set pieces aside until ready to use.
BKLYN BOOKMATCH READALIKES

Did you enjoy *Calling for a Blanket Dance*? Want to read something similar? Check out these readalike titles below.

- *Time’s Mouth* by Edan Lepucki
- *Woman of Light* by Kali Fajardo-Anstine
- *There, There* by Tommy Orange
- *A Council of Dolls* by Mona Susan Power
- *Night of the Living Rez* by Morgan Talty

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