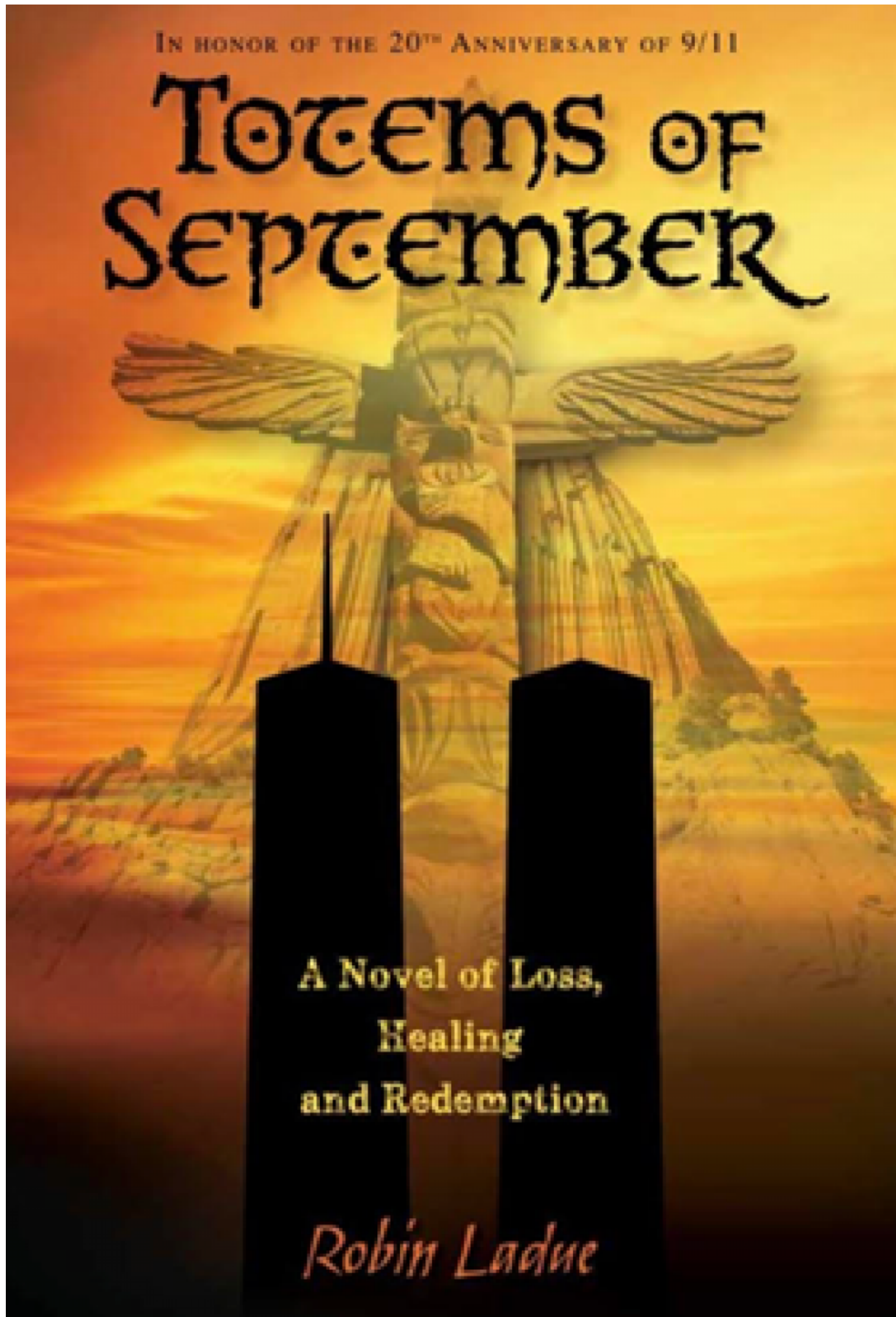


Robin Ladue’s “Totems of September” Explores the Ongoing Toll of Tragedy and the Search for Hope and Healing

Two decades after 9/11, a groundbreaking novel interprets the tragedy through stories of indigenous characters haunted by their own tragedies—including the Indian boarding school abuses, genocide, and loss—ending as a tale of healing and redemption

IN HONOR OF THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF 9/11

TOTEMS OF SEPTEMBER

The background of the book cover is a painting of a large, ancient wooden totem pole standing on a rocky, hilly landscape. The totem pole features several carved figures, including a large, central figure with a human face and outstretched wings. The sky is a warm, golden-orange color, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. In the foreground, two black, rectangular shapes resembling the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center are superimposed over the lower part of the totem pole.

A Novel of Loss,
Healing
and Redemption

Robin Ladue

Seattle, Washington Sep 22, 2022 ([IssueWire.com](https://www.issuewire.com)) - Emmy-nominated author **Robin Ladue**'s brilliant and timely novel ***Totems of September*** tells the interwoven stories of several indigenous characters across the tapestry and tragedy of a single century. With drama, humor, and rich and evocative language, Ladue's novel ranges from the tragedies of the Indian Boarding Schools of the early 1900s to the horrors of war, loss, genocide, and terrorism. Newly released by **Book House Publishing** in September 2022 in its revised and updated wide release edition two decades after the 9/11 attacks, the book is a timely opportunity to come to terms with one shattering modern American disaster while also examining and honoring the impacts of Native American tragedies too often unremembered.

Through a poignant and evocative series of stories and vignettes, *Totems of September* tells the intersecting stories of three main characters—Geronimo Barse, Billy Hawk, and Lola LeFleur, whose stories interweave with others to create an unforgettable tapestry of strength, warmth, humor, resilience, and healing. From the harrowing abuses of the Indian boarding schools in the early 1900s to the horrors of World War II, the battles against racism and loss, the struggles of veterans and first responders in the aftermath of war and tragedy, to the fateful day the World Trade Center towers fell on September 11, 2001, *Totems of September* is ultimately an examination of tragedy as seen on both the largest and smallest scales—from the genocides and abuses suffered by Native American peoples, to the shattering events of 9/11, to the painful and lingering impacts of those losses on the individual and personal scale. Yet it is also a story of healing, redemption, rebirth, and acceptance in which each thread of story and history also lead to moments of greater human connection and compassion.

An acclaimed writer whose work has always celebrated her Salish/Sahaptin and Cowlitz heritage, Robin Ladue's storytelling in *Totems of September* seamlessly combines the language, history, and spirituality of the Northwest and Plains tribes through the poetic and imaginative use of animal guardians, legends, stories, and imagery as each of the tales progresses the larger story. The tribulations and triumphs of the story's main characters are sharply and indelibly drawn, but always circle and echo back to larger memories and ideas of lineage, family, history, and memory, always navigating back to the reminders of hope and healing. The book's vivid and beautiful illustrations by Rhys Haug (and the inside cover illustration by Donald Voss) echo this same sense of spiritual uplift.

Robin Ladue finished her first draft of *Totems of September* in September 2009, and a version of that book was published in 2013. Yet despite the passage of time, the stories and characters she had brought to life continued to haunt and speak to her. Now, just past another anniversary of 9/11, she is delighted to announce the revised version of *Totems of September* she had always wanted to release.

"There are events that change the world, like 9/11," comments Robin Ladue. "And there are events that change worlds within worlds, like the sufferings of the indigenous and Native American peoples across the past several centuries. *Totems of September* is my attempt to reconcile and understand both while doing so using the storytelling techniques, spiritual symbols, and settings of my friends, family, and people."

Ladue notes that *Totems* was a story that refused to leave her alone. "My characters kept speaking to me," she adds, "telling me it was time to answer questions that my readers had raised when the first edition ended. Now, more than two decades later, my horses and I still converse in the cool mornings and warm summer evenings of our mountain home. I think of my grandfather and great-uncles who

survived the hell of the Cushman Boarding School, only now finally acknowledged as truth even as more and more bodies are found. Once again, the intergenerational trauma for all of us who were survivors, the children of survivors, and grandchildren of survivors have become almost overwhelming.”

While some of its stories are heartbreaking, Ladue emphasizes that, ultimately, *Totems of September* is about the healing powers of love, tradition, and storytelling. “It is time for my characters, my ancestors, and my friends within the covers of *Totems of September* to speak again. They are once again coming forward to help us learn, honor, and redeem our own lives through traditions, spiritual healing, and hope. I hope readers will come to join us and share in our stories—circles on circles, time over time—with love and faith conquering all.”

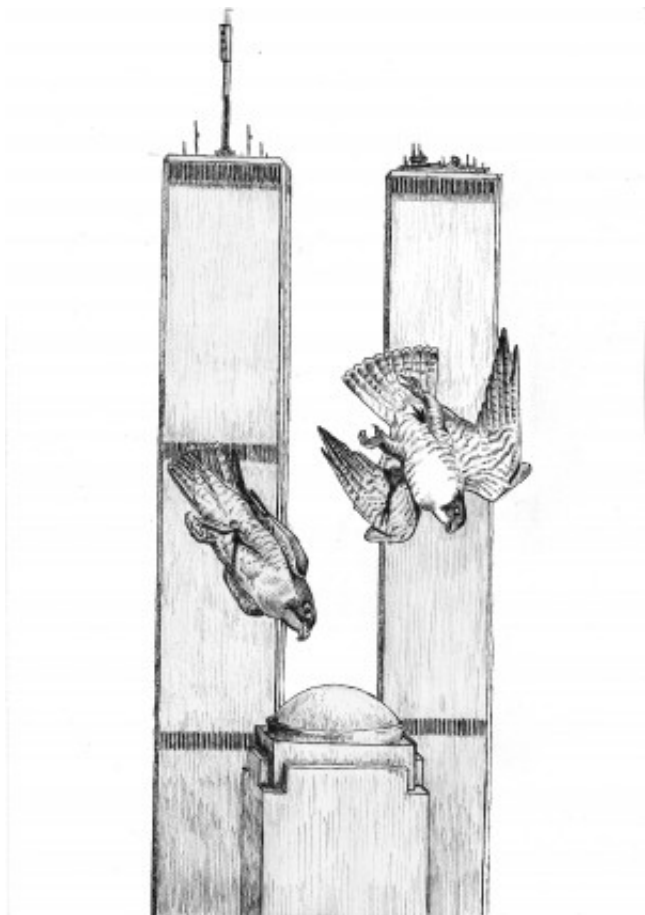
Totems have been hailed with praise from Juanita Lahurreau of the Potawatomi Tribe, who called it a “must-read” and noted its “riveting and heartbreaking stories of deep, ongoing racism in America at the hands of the privileged” and that it is “a story about war and finding peace in the souls of our ancestors.” Critic Sheila Koenig, meanwhile, called it “wonderfully engaging,” and noted that it is now one of her favorite “feel-good” book titles.

Totems of September will be released in October 2022 from Book House Publishing, with advance review copies available now upon request. The book is priced at \$24.95 for trade paperback format, and \$8.99 for Kindle/eBook format, and will be available for purchase via [Amazon](#), [Barnes and Noble](#), and [Indiebound](#).

About Author Robin Ladue

Dr. Robin Ladue is a retired clinical psychologist formerly in private practice in Washington State. She is an enrolled member of the Cowlitz Indian Tribe of Washington, with an affiliation with both the Taynapum and Cowlitz bands of the Cowlitz Tribe. She received her master’s and doctorate degrees from Washington State University, has previously served on the Cowlitz Tribal Council, and has been active as an Indigenous writer for the ***Tribal Business Journal*** and ***Native News Online***. She is the author of the award-winning and Emmy-nominated book and video series ***Journey Through the Healing Circle***, and she has also written and taught on historical trauma in Indigenous communities around the world. She served on the faculty of the University of Washington Medical School and was a visiting professor at Waikato University in Hamilton, New Zealand (Aotearoa.) Robin is the granddaughter and great-niece of survivors of the Cushman Indian Boarding School in Puyallup, Washington, and she acknowledges that the only reason she has been allowed to walk this earth is that her grandfather survived the horrors of Cushman Boarding School.

To celebrate the launch of *Totems of September* in its revised anniversary edition, Robin Ladue will be available for interviews, media appearances, speaking engagements, and book signing events at bookstores and other venues throughout the fall of 2022 across the Pacific Northwest. She will also be making limited appearances elsewhere in the late fall months of 2022.



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