

Gregory H. Bigler. 2024. *Rabbit Decolonizes the Forest: Stories from the Euchee Reservation*. University of Oklahoma Press. 193 pages.

Rabbit Decolonizes the Forest is a collection of stories that combine personal and family memoirs, traditional *di'i'le* (Euchee tales) recorded from elders, and modern stories told in the style of *di'i'le*. In the Euchee language, *di'i'le* refers to stories or legends, generally featuring animals, which were often told to children. Traditional *di'i'le* often begin and end with a phrase such as “*gae-sthaw-la aw-ha-e-ha*.” The meaning of this phrase is to convey that the stories came from “ones who have gone on” and were not created by the teller. In many Native American communities, including Euchee, stories are used not only for entertaining children but are also used to pass down information, teach traditions, inform identities, and convey ideas. In this book, Bigler uses these different forms of stories to provide a unique and important glimpse into Euchee life as well as provide commentary on contemporary Native American issues.

Gregory H. Bigler is a lawyer, Tribal court judge, Native American Law scholar, and perhaps most central to his identity, Euchee (enrolled through Muscogee Nation). Bigler, along with his law partner, the late G. William Rice, won *Oklahoma Tax Commission v. Sac and Fox Nation*, 508 U.S. 114 (1993), a landmark Native American Sovereignty case in the United States Supreme Court. As part of this collection of tales, Bigler shares his experiences fighting for Tribal sovereignty in the Supreme Court along with other personal experiences. The reader will experience accounts of late-night brief writing and Supreme Court arguments alongside descriptions of attending wild onion dinners, participating in Stomp Dance, and learning Euchee from family members. The interweaving of these experiences illustrate that all of these stories are equally important and impactful in Bigler’s life.

Some stories in this collection are traditional *di'i'le* recorded from

Euchee elders such as “How Rabbit Gets His Short Tail.” Another traditional *di’i’lie* in the collection titled “*Sahiwane and Gojithlah* (Rabbit and Monster).” In this story, *Sahjwane* (Rabbit) kills the monster who has been terrorizing the woodland animals. *Sahjwane* comes to this conclusion after a meeting of a council of the animals to discuss solutions to the *Gojithlah* (Monster) problem. This story, as Bigler explains, would traditionally be told to children at bedtime but it also served a purpose of teaching how Euchee people address societal problems through council meetings, punishment, and relational expectations.

In addition to traditional tales, this book also contains contemporary stories often written in the style of traditional *di’i’le*, providing clever commentary on current topics of Indigenous policy discussions. The title story, “Rabbit Decolonizes the Forest,” tells of Rabbit who decides to decolonize the forest by stripping away all new growth. Another modern *di’i’le* featuring Rabbit depicts him visiting his friend Bear. Bear spends his time in the forest, checking in on family members and helping out with ceremonies. Rabbit on the other hand, regales Bear with his experiences at the United League of Rabbits, talking with other rabbits and passing resolutions about how to be better animals. The final tale, “The Last Old Woman” shares the story of Rabbit in a disappearing forest meeting with an elderly storyteller. This story has two endings as Rabbit has a choice on how to proceed in the changing world he is facing.

Rabbit Decolonizes the Forest provides a captivating look into the two worlds in which Bigler walks. Readers experience heartwarming family stories, entertaining commentary on current issues, traditional tales, and challenging narratives on unresolved injustices.

Jacintha Webster
East Central University