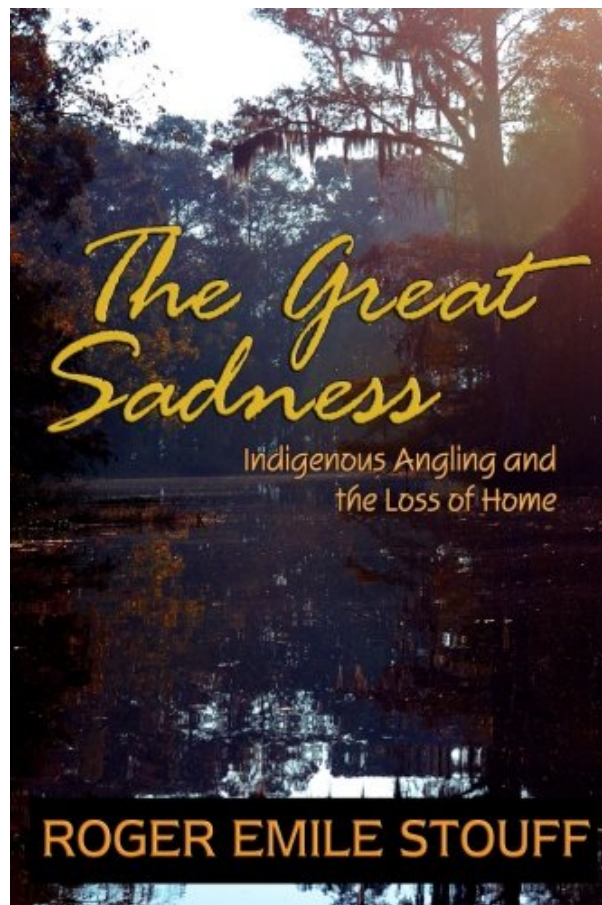
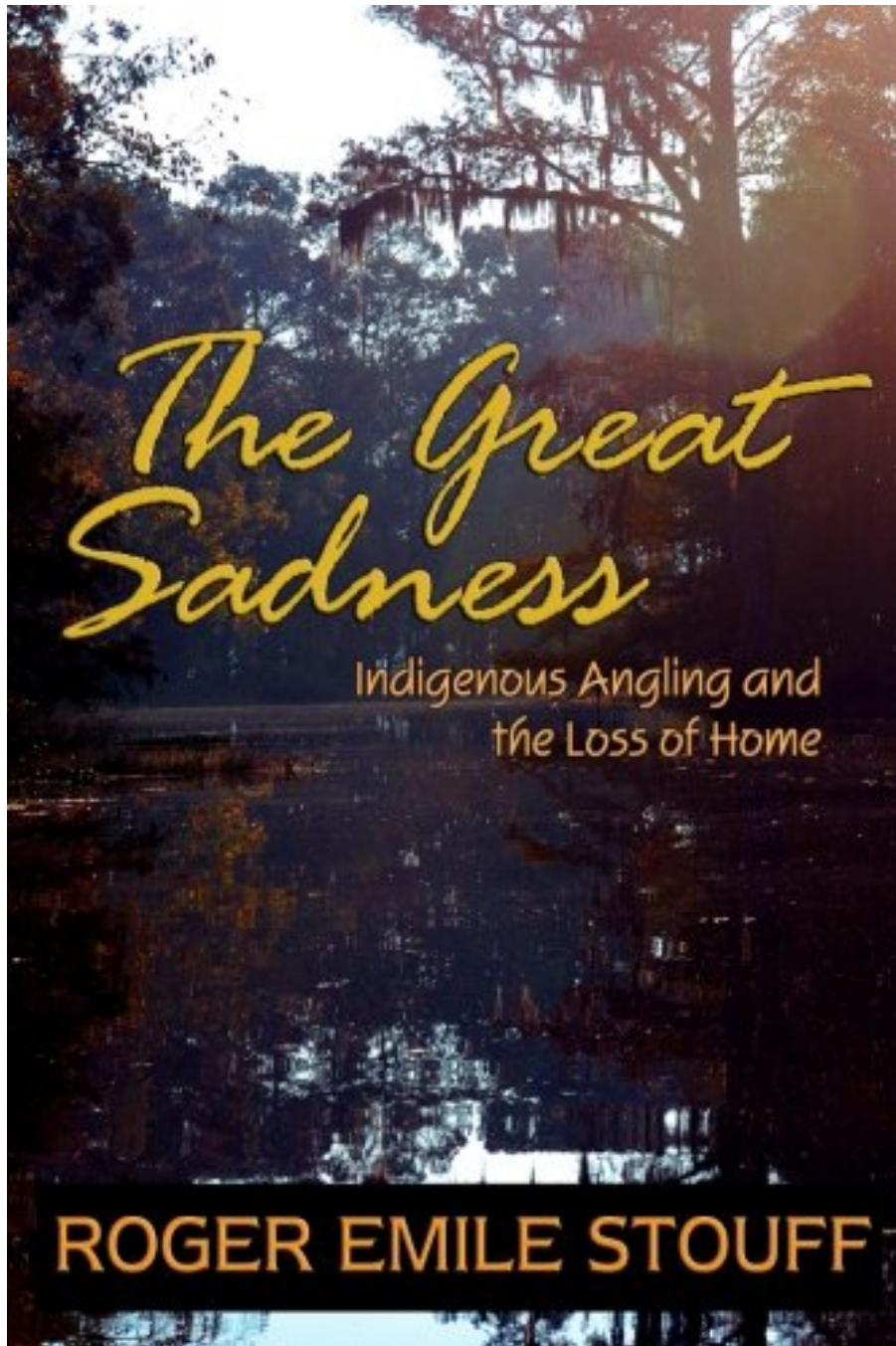


**THE GREAT SADNESS: INDIGENOUS
ANGLING AND THE LOSS OF HOME BY
ROGER EMILE STOUFF**



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From the Author

This memoir takes place in 2005 and early 2006. The environmental nightmare that is the destruction of the Atchafalaya Basin continues. The title refers to a Native American term for the arrival of the Europeans in 1492 and beyond, which many refer to as "the great sadness." The thin places grow thinner, and author must come to grips with a thing none of his forefathers could have ever imagined: There are endings. There is finality.

The Louisiana Public Broadcasting documentary "Native Waters: A Chitimacha Recollection" was based on this book and its predecessor, "Native Waters: An Indigenous Fly Fisher's Journey Across Water and Time." It is now being broadcast nationwide on public broadcasting stations everywhere, and was an Emmy nominee and recipient of a Bronze Telly Award.

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Roger Emile Stouff is the son of Nicholas Leonard Stouff Jr., last chief of the Chitimacha Tribe of Louisiana, and Lydia Marie Gaudet Stouff, daughter of a Cajun farmer. He has been a journalist for more than thirty years and writer of the award-winning column "From the Other Side" in the St. Mary and Franklin Banner-Tribune. He was featured on the television show "Fly Fishing America" in 2006, and was writer and narrator of the documentary "Native Waters: A Chitimacha Recollection" on Louisiana Public Broadcasting in 2010.

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In the autobiography 'Native Waters,' Roger Emile Stouff celebrated the Native American world of the Chitimacha, created by Crawfish at the command of the Creator of All Things. Growing up in a small wooden boat built by his father, and fly fishing for erudition as well as fish, this place has been more than a home: it is family. But behind the glory and solace of those ancient swamps and the voices of ancestral ghosts there was a growing dread. 'The Great Sadness' takes up after the close of 'Native Waters,' and the world is changing, the face of that expanse of home waters is fading and growing thin. The thin places, he calls them: the margin between this world and the next. After eight thousand years of intimacy, the native waters of his people are going the way of memory. And he is not sure if he can continue to be Chitimacha, 'people of the many waters,' without them. The creel of home waters is filled with sadness, as well as joy.

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Most helpful customer reviews

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful.

The Great Sadness Is A Great Joy

By Ron Begnaud

Roger Stouff does an exceptional job of sharing the Culture of the Chitimacha by weaving tales of his

experience as an Indian man watching his ancestral waters fade away while hanging on to as much tradition as he can. The book is at times poignant but always heartwarming because Stouff's love of his ancestry and of the waters of the Atchafalaya Basin always shine through.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

Kurt Vonnegut and Robert Pirsig go fly-fishing

By Eric P. Duplantis

Roger Emile Stouff has delivered another gift to us folks who, because we are chained to conventions of time and space, inhabit only our safe world we can see and hear. In *The Great Sadness*, Mr. Stouff guides us through his "thin" place, where, as he so eloquently writes: "There are places where the boundaries between this world and the next, the separations of the seen and the unseen, are not so substantial."

This is a work of non-fiction. At times you have to remind oneself of this fact. He teaches you about his near Luddite obsession with handcrafted wooden boats and bamboo fly-fishing rods. But the most moving prose of this follow-up to his fine book, *Native Waters*, is when Mr. Stouff takes your head in his remarkable writing hand and opens doors into the world of his Native American ancestors where you would not venture without such a guide. I offer a few examples of his guidebook and if these do not strike a chord you may want to go see a neurologist to check your wiring.

The following describes his father's death.

"I keep his medicine bag close by. It's a small leather satchel, with buckskin fringe, no bigger than a thick trade paperback book. I don't know what's in it because it's his medicine bag. I have never opened it. It's full of the things that made him strong, kept him close to the water and protected him from the bad in the world. I can't possess his magic, but I can borrow from it because the same blood flows in my veins."

"Someday I'll have my own. Full of the things that strengthen and protect me. I haven't started to collect it. I'm a little lost over it, because I don't know what should be in there. He died before he could teach me. I thought of putting it in his coffin with him, but he had his abalone bolo tie on and the eagle feather in his hands, both full of power, and when I thought of placing the bag at his side, the resonance of a tuning fork spoke in a deep voice slightly tinged with the accent of a man raised in Texas:
Keep it. I know the way.

"Perhaps there's a piece of flint, so if he ever found himself in a dark place off the edge of a map he could strike a spark off the blade of his knife and bring fire. I'll bet there's a fish hook in there, not for catching, but for remembering.

"It's too small. It can't hold all the things I imagine if I think with the non-indigenous part of me. But the Indian man knows that the whole universe could fit in that bag, because so-called "laws" of time and space are only valid if you believe in them."

"I don't know what's in there, but it nourishes me, keeps me whole. It remains unopened. I don't know what's in there. I don't want to know what's in there. Maybe it's the last mystery I have. The last map-edge. If I opened it, I'd have nothing left."

Mr. Stouff is a gifted writer. If you enjoy reading Kurt Vonnegut, his ability to become unstuck in time, and communicate with his ancient Native American ancestors, will remind you of Billy Pilgrim. If you, like me, are a recurrent visitor to Robert Pirsig's *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, you will revel in his devotion to Quality. One need not be a devotee of the intricacies of the handmade bamboo fly-fishing rods he so admires to appreciate that the rod is an instrument by which the Quality of a man can be judged.

The Great Sadness is a work of Quality. It is highly recommended.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

like "*The Great Sadness*" the writing is profound and thought ...

By Ron Eagle Elk

Roger Stouff's books in the mystery and sci-fi/fantasy genre are always fast paced, hard to put down tales. However, when he takes on matters close to his heart, like "*The Great Sadness*" the writing is profound and thought provoking. Like sitting with an elder listening to them speak of the old days. Always enjoyable reading.

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