

The Story Behind the Book by J. A. Hunsinger

In 986 about five hundred medieval Norse people settled the island of Greenland. Over the five hundred year history of the two known settlements on the island's southwestern coast the population increased to as many as four thousand people. We know little about the people or their settlements because they wrote nothing down for posterity. All we know about them comes to us from the Greenland Saga and the Saga of Eirik the Red, both written about two centuries after the facts they pretend to convey. In about the mid-fifteenth century they abandoned their last remaining settlement, Eiriksfiord. Wherever they went, they took their ships, tools, and every useful item they possessed. Nobody knows their destination for they left not a clue. Their disappearance is the premise for my *Axe of Iron* series.

Axe of Iron: The Settlers is a character-driven, historical fiction novel, the first of a five book continuing series about the Greenland Norse people. The series tells a fictional tale about what I believe happened to them based on my extensive research over the years. Although the people I write about share the Viking heritage with their European counterparts, when they sailed to Greenland and North America in the tenth and eleventh centuries they were no longer Vikings in the strict sense of the word and I do not refer to them as such.

The unknown aspects of their disappearance gives me the opportunity to use fiction to tell a tale about them that answers many of the questions about certain North American Indian tribes who exhibited characteristics, customs, and mannerisms that early explorers—eighteenth century—attributed to pre-historical European contact. The dates when these facts came to light reinforce my contention that the European contact alluded to could only have been the Greenland Norse people. My series will deal, in a fictional sense, with why tribal members of some pre-historical Indian tribes looked like white people, had customs like white people—including religious beliefs—were completely different from other tribes encountered, and welcomed the earliest white explorers with open arms.

The Greenland Norse did not disappear; they assimilated with the pre-historical North American Indians that they encountered. I believe this assimilation process was well underway by the early years of the eleventh century in the Canadian Arctic and moved south as the Medieval Warm Period gave way to the

onslaught of the Mini-Ice Age. This natural climate cycle caused native peoples—including the last holdouts of Greenland Norse people remaining in Eiriksfjord—to migrate with the animals on which they subsisted.

Conventional brick and mortar archaeologists have largely ignored this controversial aspect of our pre-historical past. The path to discovery remains blurred by the passage of one thousand years of time. There are no ruins or pyramids to create entire cultures around, and few artifacts to discover. The presence of the Greenland Norse people on this continent is but an echo from the dim past, but it is here nonetheless.

Scientists have found Norse DNA in Greenland and Baffin Island Inuit people. If somebody will look, perhaps Norse DNA will be found in members of contemporary Indian tribes in northeastern and north central North America. Only then will we know their fate.

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