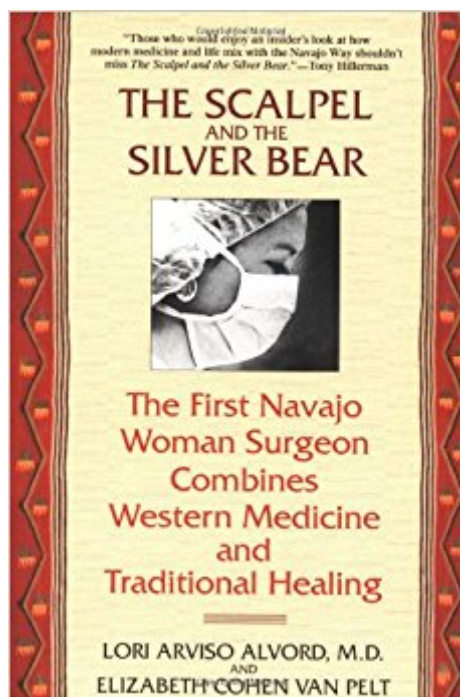




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# The Scalpel And The Silver Bear: The First Navajo Woman Surgeon Combines Western Medicine And Traditional Healing



## Synopsis

The first Navajo woman surgeon combines western medicine and traditional healing. A spellbinding journey between two worlds, this remarkable book describes surgeon Lori Arviso Alvord's struggles to bring modern medicine to the Navajo reservation in Gallup, New Mexico—and to bring the values of her people to a medical care system in danger of losing its heart. Dr. Alvord left a dusty reservation in New Mexico for Stanford University Medical School, becoming the first Navajo woman surgeon. Rising above the odds presented by her own culture and the male-dominated world of surgeons, she returned to the reservation to find a new challenge. In dramatic encounters, Dr. Alvord witnessed the power of belief to influence health, for good or for ill. She came to merge the latest breakthroughs of medical science with the ancient tribal paths to recovery and wellness, following the Navajo philosophy of a balanced and harmonious life, called Walking in Beauty. And now, in bringing these principles to the world of medicine, *The Scalpel and the Silver Bear* joins those few rare works, such as *Healing and the Mind*, whose ideas have changed medical practices—and our understanding of the world.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"If you're in the market for a captivating autobiography, look no further."—South Carolina Herald  
"Sheer pleasure to read from the very first page... Absorbing."—Booklist  
"Movingly details her quest to unify two cultures and two healing traditions."—The Dallas Morning News  
"Those who would enjoy an insider's look at how modern medicine and life mix with the

Navajo Way shouldn't miss The Scalpel and the Silver Bear." – Tony Hillerman

The first Navajo woman surgeon combines western medicine and traditional healing. A spellbinding journey between two worlds, this remarkable book describes surgeon Lori Arviso Alvord's struggles to bring modern medicine to the Navajo reservation in Gallup, New Mexico--and to bring the values of her people to a medical care system in danger of losing its heart. Dr. Alvord left a dusty reservation in New Mexico for Stanford University Medical School, becoming the first Navajo woman surgeon. Rising above the odds presented by her own culture and the male-dominated world of surgeons, she returned to the reservation to find a new challenge. In dramatic encounters, Dr. Alvord witnessed the power of belief to influence health, for good or for ill. She came to merge the latest breakthroughs of medical science with the ancient tribal paths to recovery and wellness, following the Navajo philosophy of a balanced and harmonious life, called Walking in Beauty. And now, in bringing these principles to the world of medicine, *The Scalpel and the Silver Bear* joins those few rare works, such as *Healing and the Mind*, whose ideas have changed medical practices-and our understanding of the world.

An amazing book giving insight into a Navajo woman who defied tradition and became a renown surgeon. She has also set-up programs around the country at different colleges to encourage the enrollment and retention of Native Americans. The story is well-written and with insight into the Navajo world. The author has combined the learning of western medicine with Navajo culture and traditions in a most-positive way and offers suggestions as to how physicians can combine traditional medicine with western medicine.

I was very encouraged by *The Scalpel and the Silver Bear*. I've often felt as a patient that our healthcare system does not treat us as whole people, but rather as conditions or symptoms. And I've sometimes felt that the cures are worse than the illness. Mrs. Alvord clearly understands and appreciates that a sickness in either the mind, body or spirit will affect the whole person. I appreciate her views and how she worked to blend the two cultures in which she was raised and in which she lives. It would be wonderful if all physicians would see and treat patients in this professional, respectful way.

Wow! What a great book. If you wanted to learn about how cultures conflict and how a person was able to utilize the differences into becoming a better physician, this is the book to show you. I am

very, very pleased with this purchase. Thank you Dr. Arviso for a wonderful book and a great learning experience.

It is always a pleasure to read about women's determination to work in fields of their choice, regardless of the negativity that might currently exist in that area. The idea of modern medical science being blended with traditional American Indian cures is fascinating. Add to that some of the personal medical problems encountered by Dr. Alvord and her experiences and success with helping to alleviate the situation, and you have a truly exciting report. All of us can benefit from the idea of living a balanced life in harmony with the environment around us.

Good read. Informative, and interesting.

This book was an unexpected joy to read. I read it first several years ago and have since made gifts of it to several of my colleagues as well as to most of the medical students I teach in my practice. A beautifully done story of one young surgeon's experience learning how modern medicine blends in with traditional experiences in unique demographic in the American Southwest. This is applicable to trying to become a healing professional in any culture different from your own. John Lenihan Jr. MD, Tacoma WA

--Dr Alvord writes about her journeys as a Native American student and physician. The book seems clearly designed for non-technical readers rather than the professional medical community, and there's little medical jargon. She uses her own difficult pregnancy and the death of a beloved grandmother as case studies in integrating Western medicine and Navajo ideas.--On the one hand, it's worth reading this book just to hear such an inspirational story from such a decent role model. Dr Alvord tells her story with dignity and courage and has many good ideas about listening to patients while integrating Balance and Harmony in our profession (although these ideas don't seem as radical or as rare within the medical community as she seems to imply, and I don't think she does anyone a great service by implying they are).--On the other hand, the book seems disappointingly abstract, even given the limitations of confidentiality and space. The stories of Navajo healing barely scratched the surface and the book was pretty scanty with practical advice that would help non-Native healers understand Native American patients. I'd love to have heard her perspectives on the magnitude of Native American health problems, how she handled the constant pressures of time and funding, how she motivated patients, or how she successfully used traditional Native American

methods to help manage serious medical-social problems (i.e. alcohol use, diabetogenic diets, family pressures, basic compliance and responsibility issues, etc). In short, I'd like to have heard more about her successes.--The book adds perspective to all those who criticize Western medicine as too impersonal/sterile/uncaring/whatever, but seems to fail in demonstrating how to predictably improve things and still efficiently deliver technically competent health care to people with different levels of motivation and understanding. Western medicine works beautifully in its own niche, but it can be made to work less efficiently if we mess around with the wrong things.--Perhaps medicine will improve if we balance the responsibilities of patients to live a healthy lifestyle with the responsibilities of healers to carefully listen to patients and then help them heal. This book did not practically help me to do this, so I cannot give it five stars despite my respect for her credentials. I do look forward to a sequel.--Other books which may be of interest include Blessings (by Dr. A. Organick), The Dancing Healers, and Primary Care of Native American Patients.

wonderful story about a Navajo physician and her experiences with being both a Navajo and a doctor and trying to deal with the conflicts of modern medicine and cultural believes while trying to give her patients the best medical care. I took a class in Holism and Healthcare and this is one of the books that we used. Great book.

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