



WONIYA THIBEAULT

The first female winner of an Alone® solitary survival challenge tells her story

"I came here to lay myself on the altar of wildness—to surrender to the deep wisdom of the land around me."

"How do you return to the human-created world, when you've known what it is to live in the wild like a creature that belongs there and is part of it?"

"In the arms of that benevolent wilderness and the life-altering process of integrating the wisdom it gave me, I was finally able to shrug off the caterpillar form of the girl who never quite believed in herself, unfurl the colorful wings of a stronger, wiser, more confident woman, and fly."



In Woniya's debut memoir about her experience on Season 6 of the HISTORY Channel's hit survival show Alone®, Woniya shares the deeper story, not seen by its viewers. She illustrates how the beauty kept her fed when hunting failed, how the magic she experienced outweighed the challenges, and months of living solo in the Arctic Wilderness brought more healing than suffering.

WONIYA'S SURVIVAL STATS FROM ALONE SEASON 6

- Dropped alone in an unknown wilderness with only 10 items
- Total isolation on a self-filmed survival challenge
- 10 weeks with only handfuls of cranberries, 10 rabbits and 10 squirrels
- 50 pounds lost (1/3 of her body weight)
- 73 days just below the Arctic Circle with temps down to -40°F (with windchill)
- Runner-up of the most challenging of the first six seasons of Alone
- 2 years to fully recover

DEBUTING JUNE 13, 2023

Woniya Thibeault never felt at home in the modern world. As a lonely only child she always found comfort and companionship in nature. By the time she was 19, she was not only studying biology and environmental studies, she was also throwing herself into mastering the skills our ancestors used to thrive in the wild—foraging for food, skinning animals and tanning their hides for clothing, weaving baskets from wild harvested willow, and making her own bows and arrows. Before long she was making a name for herself as an instructor of many of these skills. Even so, she was shocked when The HISTORY Channel’s hit survival TV show *Alone*® came calling and invited her to be a participant on Season 6.

“There are few things as transformative as feeling seen and held by an intact wild place, merging with the natural world around you, and coming to see yourself not as separate but as an important and valued part of it, feeling a belonging so deep that there’s no such thing as loneliness.”

Never Alone: A Solo Arctic Survival Journey (Timeless Ways, June 13, 2023, ISBN: 978-1-960303-01-1, paperback), told mostly in first-person, present-tense draws the reader right into the story to experience the pain and deprivation as well as the beauty and wonder. Its message is one of inspiration and learning to trust in ourselves and the land around us—embracing the wild and being wholly and beautifully human, flaws and all.



A portion of the proceeds from the sale of this book will be donated to the native people in whose homeland the adventure took place.

AUTHOR BIO

WONIYA THIBEAULT has always been drawn to wild places and the skills our ancestors used to thrive there. While she never considered herself a survivalist, her master's degree in Environmental Science and decades spent honing land-based living skills taught her how to live long-term in the wilderness. Her passion is sharing ecological knowledge, ancestral, and wilderness skills to help people to live wilder, freer, more bountiful and connected lives. She splits her time between her own wilder living pursuits and teaching, writing and speaking via her business Buckskin Revolution.

In 2018 Woniya's reputation in the ancestral skills world and her love of adventure led to her participation in the solo challenge chronicled in *Never Alone*, seen on Season 6 of the *Alone* series on THE HISTORY CHANNEL. Three years after that challenge, she was invited to compete in a spin-off series, *Alone: Frozen*, to face the most extreme conditions on any season of the series. With this second *Alone* journey, Woniya made history in two ways: across her two stints in the wild, she set a new record for cumulative days on an *Alone* solo wilderness survival challenge, and she became the first woman to win one. Another memoir, about that journey, is in the works.



CLASSES & EVENTS

Please visit [BuckskinRevolution.com](https://www.buckskinrevolution.com) for a full list of course offerings & upcoming public appearances by Woniya.

CONNECT WITH WONIYA



MEDIA APPEARANCES *hyperlinked*

ARTICLES

- The Guardian (2021)
- The New Yorker (2021)
- Outside (2022)

PODCASTS

- Green Light with Chris Long (2020)
- Anchored Outdoor Podcast - Ep 171
- The Rewilding Podcast - Ep 7
- The Alone Podcast - Ep 22

TELEVISION

- The History Channel - *Alone* Season 6 (2019)
- The History Channel - *Alone Frozen* (2022)

CONTACT

To schedule an interview, speaking engagement, or request a copy

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BOOK EXCERPTS

Woniya's Departure From Her Beloved Land

As the helicopter settles down and the deep rumble of the rotors pounds in my chest, I let the raw mix of emotions pour through me—excitement and fear, joy and grief—all tumbled on top of one another. For a moment, my primal animal nervous system wrestles for dominance with my modern human sensibilities. I force my feet to remain planted as the urge to run away tugs at my legs.

Eventually, jacketed forms approach me along the snowy path, and even as I let myself feel the longing for human connection for the first time in months, a flood of tears at what I'm leaving behind engulfs me.

There are cameras trained on my face, but there's no way to staunch my tears, and I don't want to. I want to feel this, all of it, and I want the world out there to feel it too because as painful as it is, it's also beautiful.

I'm laughing even as the tears pool in the rabbit furs around my neck, making them clammy against my throat. I try to find words for the joy and the heartbreak, the gratitude and the wonder but, "Hi, everyone," is all I can manage.

The crew is as stunned as I am that I called them here. There has been zero indication from day one that I would ever leave of my own volition.

"I have loved being here with every fiber of my being," I explain to Dan, the producer. "And I don't really want to leave, but my body is done and I'm more and more aware of that."

I look out over his head to the swaying trees, the craggy rocks, and the flat expanse of ice stretching into the distance beyond them. How can I put into words that which, just like this vista, feels infinite? What has been so primal and visceral and beyond the realm of spoken language?

"I have looked into the void, touched its very rim, and come out whole," I could tell him.

"I have held hands with my ancestors, heard them whispering in my ear, and over time, become one of them."

"I have learned what it is to be an animal—to live and die by my skill and my wits and what the land has to offer me—and it is the most real and important thing I have ever done. If you would just leave me, if no one was out there watching, I would probably choose to stay out here and let my flesh become fox and lynx and let my bones melt back into the earth."

But I know they can't leave me, and the end of this journey is not mine alone to decide.

Instead, I look into his eyes and put it in terms that are easy to understand. "Today is my birthday," I say. "And it feels like the most amazing gift I can give myself to go somewhere where I have warmth, and food, and the ability to care for myself."

Woniya's Return to Civilization

My skin is so cracked and dry that I beg Jessie to take me somewhere to get lotions and salves, plus a real notebook to write in, so we go to a local bookstore and then a drugstore. The bookstore is wonderful, but the pharmacy is all fluorescent lights, too many things on the shelves, and an assault of bright colors everywhere. I keep it together fairly well as I pick out my bottles of personal care products, but as we head to the checkout, I accidentally walk through the Christmas aisle. The shelves are lined with gingerbread house kits, candy canes, and boxes of cheap chocolates. I don't truly want any of them, but they're the first food of this kind I've seen in months of intense deprivation.

My chest gets tight and palms start to sweat at the sight, and I have to fight down the starved animal inside of me that wants to tear the packages off the shelves and rip into them with my teeth.

"You have to get me out of here," I tell Jessie, turning my face away from the junk food.

I don't ask to be taken to town again.



Woniya's "Refeeding Program"

Eventually, about a week into my refeeding program, a day comes when I can look at a full plate of food without crying over it. It feels like a loss, not a victory.

I don't want to lose the sense of magic that comes with food. I don't want to eat a meal without feeling it pulse with life and hearing its calories singing to me. But it wouldn't be sustainable to stay in transcendental realms forever, so eventually the mundane seeps back in through the cracks, even though the memory of what it is to be so raw and transformed will live with me forever.