

Books n Brunch
***Between Earth and Sky* by Amanda Skenandore**
Saturday May 18, 2019
Registration Required

1. When the story opens and Alma first meets the Indian children, she realizes they look nothing like the 'strange and fearsome' drawings in her father's old color-plate books. In what ways do we continue to exoticize Native Americans and their cultures today?
2. Colonel Pratt, founder of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School, famously said, "Kill the Indian in him, and save the man." In what ways does Stover embody this principle?
3. When Alma first meets Asku in his prison cell, she defends her father's actions at Stover saying that he "meant well." Do you agree? Are his good intentions enough to exonerate him?
4. Consider Asku and Tshikwa'set's perceptions of Stover and the changing world at large. Tshikwa'set calls Asku "the white Man's pet," while Asku maintains Tshikwa'set lives in the past. Who was right? In the end, did either perspective serve them?
5. Tshikwa'set describes his and Alma's worlds as being "like the sky and earth... They get very close, but never touch." To Alma, they share the same world. Who was right? How does this relate to the title of the book?
6. Several types of love are portrayed in the novel—familial love, the platonic love of friendship, as well as romantic love. Consider the impetuous, consuming love Alma felt for Tshikwa'set and the steady love she felt for Stewart. Which, if either, was stronger? If Tshikwa'set had lived would his and Alma's love have endured the racial hardships of the day?
7. Names play an important role in the story, mirroring the way the Indian children are forced to straddle two different cultures. Was it difficult to keep track of characters' names? In the end, Asku reveals why he gave Alma the name Azaadiins. Do you think it a fitting name for her?
8. When Minowe first learns of Alma's love for Tshikwa'set, she calls Alma *giiwanaadizi*--crazy. Why is this her reaction? Did you foresee her larger motives as she later describes them to Alma, saying, "You stole everything!...I couldn't let you steal him, too." As girls, why did neither notice the other's affection for Tshikwa'set? Is their friendship healed in the end?

9. What did you think of Alma's father's reaction to her plans to marry Tshikwa'set? Did it surprise you?
10. Midway through the novel Alma thinks back to visiting her father's gravesite and wishes "she'd left the flower to decorate his grave." Do you think Alma fully forgave him for what happened to Tshikwa'set? Would you have forgiven him?
11. Much of Native American history is compressed and omitted in the K-12 curriculum. Did you learn about the Indian boarding schools in any of your classes? What other topics, time periods, or perspectives do you feel are eschewed?