Great Canadian Books & Activities for Kids & Teens

TD Canadian Children’s Book Week
May 2 – 9, 2015

Hear Our Stories
Celebrating First Nations, Métis & Inuit Literature

Semaine canadienne TD du livre jeunesse
du 2 au 9 mai 2015

Partager nos histoires
Célébrer la littérature des Premières nations, Métis et Inuit

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A program of The Canadian Children’s Book Centre www.bookweek.ca
This year’s theme guide celebrates the remarkable variety of topics, genres and voices being published by and about members of Canada’s First Nations, Métis and Inuit (FNMI) communities. In the last few years the number of books written by members of FNMI communities has been on the rise and so has the awareness of these books. Authors, illustrators and publishers in many parts of Canada are creating vibrant, authentic and powerful books that speak to readers through their words and pictures, offering a wide variety of opportunities to engage with the culture and language of Canada’s indigenous peoples.

These books will allow students to explore Native art, indigenous languages and northern landscapes; develop an appreciation of cultural diversity, traditional ways and family rituals; learn about the role of elders in Native communities; discover the amazing inventions and innovations of Canada’s indigenous peoples; read eloquent poetry and fascinating creation myths; gain a better understanding of racism and prejudice; learn about the role of residential schools in Canadian history and about life on reserves; and be inspired to write their own stories. The books in the theme guide cover historical and contemporary issues and include board books, picture books, fiction for junior, intermediate and senior students and non-fiction, too.

The books in this guide are listed alphabetically by title and grouped according to category (e.g., picture books, junior & intermediate fiction, YA fiction, non-fiction, etc.). Thematic links are included at the end of each annotation to help you select appropriate books by subject. Each section also includes activities that will make the books come alive in your classroom or library.

It is our hope that the books in this guide will help all students respect and appreciate the rich culture of Canada’s First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples. In the words of Chief Dr. Robert Joseph, “Let us find a way to belong to this time and place together. Our future and the well-being of all our children rest with the kind of relationships we build today.”

We would also like to thank Sheila Staats, Aboriginal Collection Consultant at GoodMinds.com for her advice and support in the creation of this theme guide. GoodMinds.com is a leading source for purchasing bias-free teaching and educational resources related to Native American, First Nations, Indigenous and Aboriginal studies. GoodMinds.com now provides easy access to the best in library books for schools, public libraries and the general public.
Ancient Thunder

Written and illustrated by Leo Yerxa
Groundwood Books, 2012
ISBN: 978-1-55498-127-4
Kindergarten – Grade 4 (Ages 5-9)

In this stunning tribute to the horse and its central role in the lives of many First Peoples, Ojibway author-artist Leo Yerxa uses an extraordinary technique that makes paper look like leather. His stunning illustrations appear to be painted on leather shirts and dresses that integrate traditional Native clothing designs. Against the backdrop of this vivid artwork is sparse poetic text celebrating wild horses and the natural world of the prairies. Preschoolers will delight in the horses galloping across the pages, hiding in tall grass, chasing buffalo and antelope and resting in the moonlight. The possibilities for matching, seeking and counting activities are numerous. Older readers may be inspired by the possibilities of verse and artistry. This book won the 2006 Governor General’s Literary Award for Children’s Literature (Illustration) and was the 2008 First Nation Communities READ selection.

Thematic Links: Horses | Plains | Traditional Native Design

Counting Wild Bears of the Native Northwest Coast

Written and illustrated by Gryn White
Native Northwest, 2012
Preschool – Grade 1 (Ages 3-6)

In this striking board book, Haida artist Gryn White introduces young readers to the wild bears of Haida culture. Bears are a respected and honoured part of Haida traditions. To acknowledge the close relationship they have with bears, the Haida feature images of bears in their regalia and art. Early childhood teachers will find this bold, colourful book a useful resource as it uses numbers from one to 10 as well as colours to introduce young readers to Native Northwest Coast culture.

Thematic Links: Haida | Pacific Northwest | Counting | Colours | Bears

Dipnetting with Dad

Written by Willie Sellars
Illustrated by Kevin Easthope
Caitlin Press, 2014
ISBN: 978-1-927575-53-6
Kindergarten – Grade 3 (Ages 4-8)

Set in the beautiful landscape of the Cariboo Chilcotin region of British Columbia, this book is a delightful and exuberant story of a boy’s initiation into the Secwepemc method of fishing known as dipnetting. Together, the boy, his father and his grandfather mend the nets and visit the sweat lodge for a traditional ceremony before heading down to the river on a trail used for generations. After his grandfather makes an offering to the Creator, the boy watches his father net the sockeye salmon with practised skill. Then it’s his turn, and after three tries, something bumps his net! His first salmon! The boy nets more fish until they have enough to take home, where the whole family helps prepare the fish for drying and freezing. A great story of handing down family rituals and the pride children feel in taking part in adult traditions in a meaningful way.

Thematic Links: Dipnet Fishing | Salmon | Cultural Traditions | Family

Grandpa’s Girls

Written by Nicola I. Campbell
Illustrated by Kim La Fave
Groundwood Books, 2011
ISBN: 978-1-55498-084-0
Kindergarten – Grade 2 (Ages 4-7)

“Once a soldier, now a veteran, Grandpa is our everything – elder, gardener, chef, businessman, rancher, cowboy... But best of all, he’s Grandpa.” A young Interior Salish girl delights in a visit to her grandpa’s British Columbia farm. She and her cousins run through the fields, explore the root cellar with its jars of cherries, huckleberries and sockeye salmon, swing on a rope out the barn-loft window, feed crab apples to the Appaloosa in the corral and tease the neighbour’s pig. The visit is also an opportunity to ask...
Grandpa about her grandmother, Yayah, and to explore the “secret room” to look at mementoes from the past. Nicola Campbell does a wonderful job of blending joy and family history in this visit to a grandparent, and Kim La Fave’s raucous watercolour illustrations will delight young readers. This is a wonderful story about connections to the past and how children can experience those connections through everyday events.

**Thematic Links:** Family | History | Interior Salish | Farm

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**Little You**

Written by Richard Van Camp
Illustrated by Julie Flett
Orca Book Publishers, 2013
ISBN: 978-1-4598-0248-3
Preschool (Ages 0-3)

“Little you little wonder, Little wish gentle thunder” is how this beautifully written board book begins. In it, we watch as a family celebrates the joy their young child breathes into their world. The gorgeous illustrations are the perfect accompaniment to the poetic text and bring it to life for the reader. The story shows us the incredible bond these parents and their child experience as they explore the world together. Children will want to hear this book read over and over again — at nap time, bedtime or any time at all. This title is published in Bush Cree, Dene, South Slavey and Braille.

**Thematic Links:** Family | Children | Poetry

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**The Littlest Sled Dog**

Written by Michael Kusugak
Illustrated by Vladyana Krykorka
Orca Book Publishers, 2008
Kindergarten – Grade 2 (Ages 4-7)

Igvillu is a little dog with big dreams of being a sled dog. She is adopted by an Inuit storyteller and sent to live in Nunavut. When winter comes, Igvillu discovers that the snow is cold and deep. Her master buys her booties so she can romp outside. Then Igvillu finally comes face to face with real sled dogs. When she approaches, one sled dog lunges at her and warns her that he will eat her and her little booties! Igvillu runs all the way home. She curls up to watch her favourite movie with her master and falls asleep. And in her sleep she dreams, not about being a sled dog, but about being a movie star! Told in a storytelling cadence, this tale is sure to appeal to young readers who will identify with Igvillu’s big dreams and her competing desire for the safety and comfort of home.

**Thematic Links:** Nurses | Inuit | Inuktitut

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**Moe & Malaya Visit the Nurse**

Written by Odile Nelson
Inuktitut translation by Louise Flaherty
Illustrated by Peggy Collins
Inhabit Media, 2010
ISBN: 978-1-926569-10-9
Kindergarten – Grade 2 (Ages 4-7)

Moe and Malaya are on an adventure to their community health centre to visit the nurse. Malaya has been sick and she is getting a checkup to make sure she is ready to go out and play. On their visit, the two children see their community nurse and also meet a man from Iqaluit who is studying to become a nurse. When Malaya is declared “all better,” the two friends wrap up in their parkas and boots and go out to play. Written in both English and Inuktitut, with bright, fun illustrations that will captivate young readers, this book teaches children about nurses and their odd instruments, including that funny-looking necklace – the stethoscope. Children will discover how amazing nursing can be, the many different types of nurses, and how they can become nurses, too!

**Thematic Links:** Nurses | Inuit | Inuktitut
The Old Ways
Written by Susan Margaret Chapman
Illustrated by John Mantha
Fifth House Publishers, 2014
ISBN: 978-1-92708-316-1
Preschool – Grade 2 (Ages 3-7)

Simon enjoys school, TV, pizza and video games, and is not interested in his grandmother’s stories or in building an igloo with his grandfather. Secretly, he thinks his grandparents are stuck in their old ways. When he and his grandparents prepare to visit relatives in Igloolik, Simon thinks it is ridiculous to heap oil lamps, extra fuel, tools, food, snowshoes and caribou skins onto their sled. But when a blizzard closes in, and the snowmobile breaks down, Simon begins to understand the value of traditional ways. When they are finally rescued, Simon decides he would like to learn more about the old ways. Carefully researched and beautifully illustrated, this book helps children understand the traditional wisdom of the elders.

Thematic Links: Inuit | Northern Canada | Traditional Ways | Storytelling | Intergenerational Relationships

Owls See Clearly at Night: A Michif Alphabet
Written and illustrated by Julie Flett
Simply Read Books, 2010
ISBN: 978-1-897476-28-4
Preschool – Kindergarten (Ages 3-5)

From Atayookee! (tell a story!) to Lii Zyeu (eyes), this simple, elegantly illustrated ABC picture book introduces young and old alike to the Michif language. A celebration of language and its vital role in sustaining a culture, it is written in both Michif — a Métis language once spoken by thousands of people across the Canadian Prairies and the Northern US — and English. Flett’s stark, yet beautiful, paintings eloquently illuminate each letter of the Michif alphabet with a thought-provoking depiction of the natural world. Readers of all ages will be enchanted with the simple grace of the images and the mysterious stories they suggest. A comprehensive pronunciation guide is included at the back of the book.

Thematic Links: Métis | ABC | Michif Language | Nature

Sharing Our World: Animals of the Native Northwest Coast
Written and illustrated by various authors and illustrators
Native Northwest, 2010
ISBN: 978-1-55471-876-4
Kindergarten – Grade 3 (Ages 4-8)

This bright, lively book teaches young readers about the importance of totems in Native Northwest cultures. Each page honours a significant animal such as the eagle, frog, raven or salmon with beautiful artwork and a brief explanation of its cultural meaning. Many First Nations and Native artists from communities throughout the Pacific Northwest contributed images and text for this celebration of the animals of the Native Northwest Coast. Through their art and words, each artist shares the importance of their personal and cultural relationship to the natural world.

Thematic Links: Pacific Northwest | Totems | Native Northwest Art | Animals
A Walk on the Tundra

Written by Rebecca Hainnu and Anna Ziegler
Illustrated by Qin Leng
Inhabit Media, 2011
Grades 1-4 (Ages 5-9)

One morning, Inuujaq’s grandmother suggests she come along for a walk. They set out together on the Arctic tundra where Inuujaq’s grandma gathers many different plants and flowers. Inuujaq learns some of the secrets of the tundra — the leaves that can be crushed and eaten, which flowers to add to cooking fires, and a blossom that makes a yummy tea. This book is a celebration of both the natural world and the bonds between children and their elders. A delightful cross between picture book and field guide, the book includes a glossary at the back, featuring colour photos of the plants Innujaq learns about as well as descriptions of how the plants can be used. It also includes a pronunciation guide to the Inuktitut words found in the story.

Thematic Links: Inuit | Arctic | Tundra Plants | Family | Traditional Knowledge

We All Count: A Book of Ojibway Art
(We All Count, Book 1)

Written and illustrated by Jason Adair
Native Northwest, 2014
Preschool – Grade 1 (Ages 3-6)

“We learn to count to find our place in the community and the world. We learn to count to be seen and heard. We all read to be counted.” Beautifully bold and bright, this first book in the We All Count series showcases Ojibway art and culture, and teaches young children to count in English and Ojibway. Jason Adair’s vibrant paintings offer children a glimpse into the Ojibway’s deep relationship with wildlife and show how colours represent different powers, feelings and energy in each of the animals. Counting from one to 10 in Ojibway offers the appreciation of cultural diversity and encourages a commitment to language preservation.

Thematic Links: Ojibway | Counting | Colours | Ojibway Art

We All Count: A Book of Cree Numbers
(We All Count, Book 2)

Written and illustrated by Julie Flett
Native Northwest, 2014
ISBN: 978-1-55476-398-6
Preschool – Grade 1 (Ages 3-6)

“Whether in the country or the city, creature or insect, plant or animal, a part of a big family or a small family, we all live together and we all take care of one another... we all count.” Clearly written for emerging readers, this lovely board book introduces young children to Cree numbers with simple English phrases in order to foster skills in two languages. Julie Flett’s graceful illustrations offer a window into Cree culture as it is today, celebrating extended family and traditional resource harvesting as well as animals important in Cree culture.

Thematic Links: Cree Culture | Counting | Cree Numbers | Animals | Family

Wild Berries

Written and Illustrated by Julie Flett
Simply Read Books, 2013
Preschool – Grade 3 (Ages 4-8)

This is a beautifully simple story of a boy and his grandmother walking to a clearing in the woods to gather wild berries — pikaci-minisa. Clarence has made this trip since he was small, but now he carries his own bucket and sings with his grandma. Once at the clearing, the two gather berries in sweet harmony. Once they are finished, Clarence and his grandma say thank you and Clarence leaves a handful of berries on a leaf for the birds and other woodland creatures. The gentle illustrations of the woodland landscape, in a warm earth-tone palette, complement the story eloquently. The book introduces young readers to many words in Cree and includes a pronunciation guide with an explanation of the various Cree dialects at the back. There is also a recipe for making wild blueberry jam just like Clarence and his grandma will make with their wild berries.

Thematic Links: Cree | Family | Nature
Exploring Native Art

Art can offer a portal into exploring different cultures in a creative and dynamic way. Many of these picture books feature artwork that will capture the imagination of young children with its vibrant colours and fantastic creatures. Read Counting Wild Bears of the Native Northwest Coast, Sharing Our World: Animals of the Native Northwest Coast and We All Count: A Book of Ojibway Art as a class and give children time to look at the colours and style of art used throughout the books. Discuss the animals represented in the totems, their significance and the importance of colour to many Native artists. If possible, invite a local First Nations artist to the class to show examples of his/her artwork, to tell a legend about animals in his/her artwork and to talk about the use of colour.

Counting in Cree

The very youngest learners will enjoy counting and practising their numbers with Counting Wild Bears of the Native Northwest Coast, We All Count: A Book of Ojibway Art and We All Count: A Book of Cree Numbers. Learning to count to 10 in other languages gives students an appreciation of cultural diversity and encourages a curiosity about the many languages spoken in Canada. Youngsters can also count, sort and match the beautiful horses in Leo Yerxa’s Ancient Thunder. Similar images could be created for sorting, matching and counting activities, and children could classify and sort a variety of animals.

Grandparents and Elders

Elders and seniors in First Nations communities are greatly respected for their wisdom and life experience. Several of these picture books celebrate the role of grandparents in children’s lives. In Grandpa’s Girls, Salish cousins visit a beloved grandfather’s farm. In A Walk on the Tundra, a grandmother takes her granddaughter for a walk to collect plants and flowers; while a grandmother and grandson gather berries for jam in Wild Berries. A boy learns the value of traditional ways when he and his grandparents are trapped by a snowstorm in The Old Ways. These books are a celebration of love and the connections with family history that help ground children and give them a sense of identity. After listening to some of these stories, children could interview a grandparent or a senior close to them to learn about a skill or a tradition that they participate in. A First Nations elder could be invited to the class to speak about the importance of ancestors and elders in many Native cultures. A class might build a photo wall devoted to photographs of grandparents or seniors who are important to them, with a picture or a few words about what that person has taught them.

Community Helpers in the North

Children in most towns and cities are used to going to see the doctor, dentist or eye doctor right in their own community. If they need to go to the hospital, there is usually one not far away. For some Inuit children, many of these services and community helpers that are taken for granted elsewhere are not available. While Moe & Malaya Visit the Nurse was initially written to encourage more Nunavut schoolchildren to consider a career in nursing, the story gives all children a glimpse of life in a remote Inuit community where many healthcare services are not available and a nurse plays a central role in community health. After reading this book, the class could brainstorm what helpers and services are available in their communities that Inuit children may not have access to. What would it mean to a community to not have a doctor or to have to travel long distances to get to a hospital?
Michael Kusugak

TITLES
My Arctic 1, 2, 3
Northern Lights: The Soccer Trails
Hide and Sneak
Baseball Bats for Christmas
A Promise Is a Promise (with
Robert Munsch)

1. The number of books being written by members of First Nations, Métis and Inuit (FNMI) communities is on the rise and so is the awareness of these books. Tell us what that means to you as a member of this community and as a writer.

It has always been my feeling that FNMI have stories that need to be told. We have been in this country from time immemorial, and these stories have taught us how to survive in one of the harshest environments in the world. They have taught us how to live with each other, to care for the disadvantaged, how to get along and to strive for better things. These stories need to be told and I am glad we are telling them.

2. What was the first book you wrote and what inspired you to write it?

I wrote the first version of A Promise Is a Promise and I wrote it because there were no books about northern Canada or all of Canada, for that matter, to read to my boys. I was thinking, here we are, people with the greatest stories ever told and I am reading and rereading Dr. Seuss to my boys. It was time they started learning about their own culture.

3. The preservation and revitalization of indigenous languages and culture is an important goal that many members of the FNMI communities are striving to achieve, and it is imperative that today’s youth have knowledge of indigenous cultures in Canada. How can books help to accomplish these goals?

Books record our history. Stories and legends record our history. We have words that just do not translate into English. Inuktitut is an incredible storytelling language. It is expressive. It is musical. It can be vindictive when it needs to be. It is poetic. When I write, I try to get the feeling of place and time into English and sometimes it just does not work. I know it sounds good when a story is crafted well, but there usually is something missing, the essence of something that just does not come across. I always think of things like, I am very fond of some translations of Les Miserables, but I would really love to be able to read it in the language in which Victor Hugo wrote it, in his original words. I am always happy when I talk with old people up north in Inuktitut, to hear things like, “He would keep his head underwater so long, he would move the sun.” That is what I was trying to convey when I wrote, “All the manager of the Hudson’s Bay Company store had to do was to hoist the Union Jack and Rocky Parsons would come,” in Baseball Bats for Christmas.

4. When you speak to young audiences about your books what is the most important message you wish to convey to them?

I want to say to my audience, listen to these stories and then go home and ask your parents and grandparents to tell you stories and listen well because, someday, you will be glad you did.

I am a storyteller. The way the system works is that you listen to those stories, you get them stored in your head and then you begin to tell them because, when the elders are gone, it will be your turn to keep those stories alive, to tell them to the next generation and, eventually, pass them on. We were, for a long time, stuck on stories about those awful experiences we had in residential schools.

I think it is time we move on and tell the stories that matter, stories that have sustained us, stories that gave us heroes, stories that gave us dreams and something to strive for for thousands of years.

Michael Kusugak grew up in Repulse Bay, NWT (now Nunavut). During his childhood, his family travelled by dog sled, hunted and fished, built igloos where night found them and lived a traditional Inuit lifestyle. In the fall of 1954, Michael and some of his friends were taken to school in Chesterfield Inlet. But Michael never forgot the years he spent, travelling on the great expanse of sea ice on Hudson Bay, living in igloos and sod huts and the stories he heard every night falling asleep in the flickering light of a qulliq — a soapstone, seal oil lamp.
Ava and the Little Folk
Written by Neil Christopher and Alan Neal
Illustrated by Jonathan Wright
Inhabit Media, 2012
ISBN: 978-1-927095-02-7
Grades 1-4 (Ages 6-9)

The most magical things can come in tiny packages and, in the Arctic, tales of tiny people who live on the land abound. This story follows the adventures of Ava, an outcast orphan in his Arctic village. One day, Ava stumbles upon a tiny hunter who takes him home to meet the hunter's family and friends. Ava discovers that these tiny people are Inugarulligaarjuit — magical dwarves from Inuit legends. He learns that each of the Inugarulligaarjuit brings a special gift to the camp, but can’t imagine what gift he could bring in order to belong. With gentle guidance, he discovers that size and shape are merely perception, and one can change that simply by learning to see things in new ways. He finds love and acceptance and discovers that he is now the same size as the magical dwarves. Watercolour illustrations with a dream-like quality beautifully express Ava’s growth from a lost child to a brave boy.

Thematic Links: Inuit | Orphans | Arctic | Magic | Folktales

The Blind Boy & the Loon
Retold by Alethea Arnaquq-Baril
Illustrated by Alethea Arnaquq-Baril and Daniel Gies
Inhabit Media, 2014
ISBN: 978-1-927095-57-7
Grades 1-5 (Ages 6-10)

The tale of Lumaajuuq is a dark but beautiful retelling of the traditional Inuit story that both explains the origin of the narwhal and cautions listeners against the dangers of seeking revenge. A cruel mother curses her son with blindness in revenge for her husband’s death and forces him to live on the cold porch and eat dog meat. The boy seeks out a red-throated loon who helps the boy regain his eyesight, but the boy, like his mother, becomes blinded by desire for revenge. He tricks his mother and she is dragged into the sea where her braids twist together into a tusk and she slowly becomes a narwhal. This act of revenge leads the boy to a life of cruelty and suffering. The narwhal, then, is a reminder that the chain of revenge can only be broken by forgiveness. Haunting, brooding illustrations in a palette of greys and blues capture the mood of the story perfectly.

Thematic Links: Inuit | Legends | Revenge | Arctic

The Blue Raven
Written and illustrated by Ted Harrison
Macmillan of Canada, 1989
Grades 3-7 (Ages 8-13)

The Athapaskan People live on the banks of the Yukon River, in harmony with nature and with each other. But one year, disaster strikes and the village is threatened by starvation. Nik, a strong boy who has learned the skills and wisdom of his people, sets out on a journey to find the Great Shaman and seek his advice. His journey is harrowing, but Nik perseveres and is rewarded by the Great Shaman. On his return, Nik becomes an inspiration for his people who find new courage and enthusiasm to improve their lot, and their village prospers. Illustrated by 10 original paintings depicting the majesty and mystery of the north, Ted Harrison’s captivating tale is part myth and part fable, full of adventure and magic. Nik’s story of courage and self-sacrifice will be appreciated by readers young and old.

Thematic Links: Yukon | Athapaskan Peoples | Nature | Magic | Quest | Courage
Caribou Song
Written by Tomson Highway
Illustrated by John Rombough
Fifth House Publishers, 2013
ISBN: 978-1-89725-261-1
Kindergarten – Grade 3 (Ages 4-7)
Young Cree brothers Joe and Cody live with their mama and papa and Cody’s dog Ootsie in the Far North. All year long, they follow the caribou and, to entice the wandering herds, Joe plays his accordion while Cody dances, whirling like a young caribou. One day, they are so busy singing, playing the accordian and dancing, they don’t hear the rumbling. Bursting from the forest, thousands of caribou fill the meadow. Engulfed by the plunging animals, Joe swims through the snorting herd to reach his brother and together they perch on a big rock, watching the caribou flow around them. All they can hear is the hooves, drumming like thunder. What should be a moment of terror turns into something mystical and magical, as the boys open their arms and hearts to embrace the caribou spirit. The simple text written in English and Cree is vibrantly and dramatically illustrated by John Rombough’s magnificent Woodlands- or Anishnaabe-style paintings.

Thematic Links: First Nations | Caribou | Family | Siblings

Cloudwalker
Written by Roy Henry Vickers and Robert Budd
Illustrated by Roy Henry Vickers
Harbour Publishing, 2014
Kindergarten – Grade 3 (Ages 4-8)
This First Nations legend tells the story of Astace, a young Gitxsan hunter who is intent on catching a group of trumpeter swans with his bare hands. He is carried away by the birds’ powerful wings and dropped in the clouds. With only a cedar box of water, Astace, or Cloudwalker, wanders the clouds and, as he grows weaker, he stumbles and spills the contents. When he finally returns to earth, he discovers lakes, creeks and rivers where there were none before. The Gitxsan rejoice at having him home and name the new river they live alongside the Ksien — “juice from the clouds.” Vickers’ stunning artwork gracefully combines the spiritual and physical worlds by the use of a layered technique, with palely outlined imagery overlaying solidly coloured landscape and figures. A gorgeous picture book with strong ecological and environmental themes, this contemporary take on a traditional story will appeal to readers of all ages.

Thematic Links: First Nations | Legends | First Nations Art | Northwest Coast | Origin Story

The Gathering Tree
Written by Larry Loyie with Constance Brissenden
Illustrated by Heather D. Holmlund
Theytus Books, 2005
Grades 3-7 (Ages 8-13)
This is a beautifully illustrated children’s book about HIV/AIDS. Written by award-winning First Nations author Larry Loyie and co-author Constance Brissenden, it is a gentle, positive story of a First Nations family facing HIV. After 11-year-old Tyler and his younger sister, Shay-Lyn, learn their favourite cousin, Robert, has HIV, they discover that knowledge brings understanding and self-awareness. Robert’s story is augmented with traditional lore and culture. The family is cleansed with burning sage; Tyler catches his first salmon, signifying he is able to provide for his family. Readers learn about the importance of community and family, in sickness and in health. Aspects of physical, spiritual, mental and emotional health are addressed.

Thematic Links: HIV/AIDS | First Nations | Elders | Spirituality | Traditions
The Legend of Lightning & Thunder
Written by Paula Ikuutaq Rumbolt
Illustrated by Jo Rioux
Inhabit Media, 2013
Grades 1-5 (Ages 6-10)

This is a delightful retelling of a traditional legend told for centuries in the Kivalliq region of Nunavut. In a time before stealing existed, two orphaned siblings are shunned when they try to join a camp’s spring celebration, and resort to stealing caribou meat to feed their empty stomachs. The children also find a caribou skin, a piece of flint and a rock, and while the girl waves the caribou skin in the air and hits it with her hand, the boy strikes the flint and rock together, making sparks shoot out. Realizing that they will be accused of thievery, the children run away and hide in the sky and when they are bored or lonely, they play with the flint, rock and caribou skin — creating lightning and thunder. This beautifully illustrated traditional legend weaves together elements of an origin story and a traditional cautionary tale, giving young readers an accessible window into Inuit mythology.

Thematic Links: Nunavut | Origin Tale | Legends | Orphans

Mingan My Village
Poems by Innu Schoolchildren
Translated by Solange Messier
Illustrated by Rogé
Fifth House Publishers, 2014
ISBN: 978-1-92708-324-6
Grades 3 and up (Ages 8 and up)

“Listen to your heart. It speaks of our grandfathers and our grandmothers” — Sabrina. This is a moving collection of 15 portraits by Rogé and 15 poems written by young Innu students at Teueikan School in Mingan, an Innu reserve on Quebec’s North Shore. Rogé, the noted Quebec illustrator and author, sketches the children’s faces in a soft palette of grey, black and sepia, tinted with touches of colour. Each full-page portrait is accompanied on the opposing page by the children’s poems — breathtaking in their simple grace. Given a platform to be heard, the children chose to transport readers far away from the difficulties and problems related to their realities to see the beauty that surrounds them in nature and the strength of their relationships with family, especially grandparents. Their poems will touch the hearts of readers young and old. First published in French as Mingan mon village in 2012.

Thematic Links: Inuit | Poetry | Nature | First Nations

Not My Girl
Written by Christy Jordan-Fenton and Margaret Pokiak-Fenton
Illustrated by Gabrielle Grimard
Annick Press, 2014
ISBN: 978-1-55451-624-7
Grades 1-4 (Ages 6-9)

Two years ago, Margaret left her Arctic home for the outsiders’ school. Now she has returned and can barely contain her excitement as she rushes toward her waiting family — but her mother stands still as a stone. “Not my girl!” she says angrily. Margaret’s years at school have changed her. Now 10 years old, she has forgotten her language and the skills to hunt and fish. She can’t even stomach her mother’s food. Her only comfort is in the books she learned to read at school. Gradually, Margaret relearns the words and ways of her people. With time, she earns her father’s trust enough to be given a dogsled of her own. As her family watches with pride, Margaret knows she has found her place once more. Based on the true story of Margaret Pokiak-Fenton, and complemented by evocative illustrations, Not My Girl makes the original, award-winning memoir, A Stranger at Home, accessible to younger children. It is also a sequel to the picture book, When I Was Eight. A poignant story of a determined young girl’s struggle to belong, it will move and inspire readers everywhere.

Thematic Links: Inuit | Arctic | Residential Schools | Belonging | Identity | Biography

A Promise Is a Promise
Written by Robert Munsch and Michael Kusugak
Illustrated by Vladyna Krykorka
Annick Press, 1992
ISBN: 978-1-55037-008-9
Kindergarten – Grade 3 (Ages 4-8)

When Allashua announces she is going fishing, her mother warns her about sea monsters called the Qallupilluit, who grab children fishing on the sea ice without their parents.
Allashua promises to fish on the lake and not the ocean but breaks her promise and goes fishing alone on the ice. At the edge of the frozen ocean, she calls the creatures by name and even challenges them to catch her. When she starts fishing, the Qallupilluit grab Allashua, dragging her down beneath the sea. She escapes by promising to bring her brothers and sisters to the sea creatures. And a promise is a promise! Suspenseful and magical, with engaging illustrations, this story of promises and quick thinking is sure to captivate young readers.

Thematic Links: Arctic | Choices | Family | Folktales | Inuit

**Rainbow Crow**
Written by David Bouchard
Illustrated by David Jean
Music by Manantial
ISBN: 978-0-88995-458-8
Grades 2-5 (Ages 7-10)

Before two-leggeds walked on Mother Earth, there was a great cold. The animals formed a council; someone had to seek help from the Creator. Rainbow Crow, a most colourful bird, was selected because he had a beautiful voice that would surely impress the Creator. He flew into the heavens and won fire from above. But on the way back, the fire began to burn his plumage black and destroy his beautiful voice. But Rainbow Crow persevered, bringing the life-saving fire safely back to his friends. This Lenape legend of courage and sacrifice is masterfully retold in English and Ojibway by award-winning author David Bouchard. The stunning art, painted on traditional drums by celebrated Canadian artist David Jean, will inspire young and old alike.

Thematic Links: Native Folklore | Lenape Legends | Sacrifice | Courage

**Shin-chi’s Canoe**
Written by Nicola I. Campbell
Illustrated by Kim La Fave
Groundwood Books, 2008
Grades 1-3 (Ages 6-8)

This evocative and beautifully illustrated sequel to *Shi-shi-etko* tells the story of two siblings’ experience at residential school. Shi-shi-etko is preparing to return for her second year, but this year, her six-year-old brother, Shin-chi, is also going to the school. As they begin their journey, Shi-shi-etko tells Shin-chi the things he must always remember — the trees, the mountains, the rivers and the salmon. When they arrive at school, Shi-shi-etko gives him a tiny cedar canoe, a gift from their father. On his first night sleeping without his family, Shin-chi holds the little canoe close and reminds himself that he and his sister will be able to go home in the summertime. Shin-chi is forever hungry and lonely at the school, but retains a sense of hope. Finally, the salmon swim up the river and the children return home for a joyful family reunion. La Fave’s softly sombre illustrations neatly capture the ambience, with moody, darker palettes for pictures within the school and brighter, happier tones for the children at home and on their own.

Thematic Links: First Nations | Residential School | Friendship | Family

**The Red Sash**
Written by Jean E. Pendziwol
Illustrated by Nicolas Debon
Groundwood Books, 2005
ISBN: 978-0-88899-589-6
Grades 1-3 (Ages 6-8)

This is the story of a young Métis boy who lives near the fur-trading post of Fort William, on Lake Superior, nearly 200 years ago. His father spends the long winter months as a guide, following the river highways into the Northwest to trade with native peoples. Now it is Rendezvous, when the voyageurs paddle back to Fort William with their packs of furs, and North West Company canoes come from Montreal, bringing supplies for the next season. It is a time of feasting and dancing and of voyageurs trading stories around the campfire. The boy canoes to a nearby island to hunt hare, but a storm begins to brew. The boy helps land a canoe carrying a gentleman from the North West Company. Then he saves the day as he paddles the gentleman across to Fort William in his own canoe, earning the gift of a voyageur’s red sash.

Thematic Links: Métis | Voyageurs | North West Company | Canadian History
In just four days, young Shi-shi-etko will have to leave her family to attend residential school. She spends her last days at home treasuring the beauty of her world — the dancing sunlight, the tall grass, each shiny rock, the determined bumblebees and the tadpoles and minnows in the creek. She bathes in the creek with her mother, who tells her to remember their songs and dances and to remember the land. She goes paddling with her father who sings her grandfather’s paddle song. On her last day, Shi-shi-etko’s grandmother gives her a soft deer-hide bag in which to put her memories. Together they collect sprigs from trees and plants, which Shi-shi-etko promises to remember, and then she places her carefully gathered memories in the roots of her favourite fir tree for safekeeping. Richly hued illustrations complement this gently moving and poetic account of a child who finds solace all around her, even though she is on the verge of great loss — a loss that First Nations people have endured for generations because of the residential school system.

**Thematic Links:** First Nations | Residential Schools | Family | Remembrance | Loss

Eight-year-old Olemaun is stubborn, like the stone that sharpens the *ulu* knife for which she is named. Olemaun wants to learn to read more than anything else and she begs her father to take her far from her Arctic home to the outsiders’ school to learn. The nuns at the school call her Margaret. They cut off her long hair and force her to do menial chores, but she remains undaunted. Her tenacity draws the attention of a black-cloaked nun who tries to break her spirit at every turn. But Olemaun is more determined than ever to learn how to read. Based on the true story of Margaret Pokiak-Fenton, and complemented by stunning illustrations, *When I Was Eight* makes the best-selling *Fatty Legs* accessible to younger readers. Now they, too, can meet this remarkable girl who reminds us what power we hold when we can read.

**Thematic Links:** Biography | Inuit | Residential School | Courage | Growing Up | Arctic
Northern Landscapes

Ted Harrison’s paintings of Canada’s northern landscapes are iconic and uniquely distinct. His illustrations and artwork truly reflect the natural landscape and culture of northern Canada. The art of Ted Harrison is vibrant and compelling, and children will be drawn to his use of vivid colour and simple lines and shapes. Read *The Blue Raven* or one of the many other Ted Harrison books aloud to the class and then explore his style of art with students. Chalk, paint or construction paper could all be used as a medium for students creating their own Harrison-inspired masterpiece. For an example of Ted Harrison-style student artwork follow this link. Click here for a second example.

Storytelling – Creation Myths

First Nations and Inuit peoples, like so many civilizations throughout history, tell creation stories to explain how the world, animals or landscape features came to be. Historically, these stories would not have been written down but passed on orally from one generation to the next. There are several examples of these myths or legends in this selection of picture books. *The Legend of Lightning & Thunder* tells an Inuit tale of how thunder and lightning came to be and a contemporary version of the origin story of British Columbia’s three largest rivers is told in *Cloudwalker*. *The Blind Boy & the Loon*, a much darker tale, re-tells a traditional Inuit story about the origin of the narwhal. There are many more creation stories to be found in books and on the Internet. Explore elements of creation myths with students then have them write a myth of their own. They could include an illustration and perhaps honour the Native oral tradition by reading/telling their myth aloud to the class.

Poetry

*Mingan My Village* is a moving testament to the power of children to see the beauty in the world around them, no matter what their circumstances. Mingan (Ekuanitshit) is an Innu reserve on Mingan Bay of the Gulf of St. Lawrence in Quebec. The band has fewer than 600 members and one school for all grades. Illustrator Rogé states in his foreword that “In this book, young Innu choose to transport us away from the difficulties and problems connected to their realities... Through the Mingan children’s poetry we can see the sun rise... the children draw us forests to contemplate.”

Through these poems students will see what is truly important to these Innu children — family, grandparents and especially the animals and the natural world surrounding them. A nature walk or a class trip to a conservation area could begin a conversation about the natural environment and why it is so important to all people. Students could work alone or in small groups to create their own poems celebrating some aspect of nature.

Taken From Home

*Shi-shi-etko, Shin-chi’s Canoe, When I Was Eight* and *Not My Girl* are four remarkable and accessible stories that offer incredible windows of opportunity for talking about residential schools with younger students. There is also a short but powerful video of *Shi-shi-etko* available that could be shared with students after reading the book. Personal connections can be made between students’ lives and the lives of children like Olemaun, Shin-chi and Shi-shi-etko. There are many issues a class could discuss after reading one or more of these stories. At the schools, Native and Inuit children lost their given names and were given Christian names or sometimes only numbers. Why did the schools take their names away? Why are names important? What would students miss most from home if they were forced to go away to school? What memories does Shi-shi-etko put in her bag of memories? What memories would students want to hold onto? Why is learning to read so important to Olemaun? What does the tiny canoe represent to Shin-chi? These are only a few of the questions that could be explored as students learn about the experiences of children not so different from themselves.
Leo Yerxa

TITLES

Ancient Thunder
A Fish Tale, Or, The Little One That Got Away
Last Leaf First Snowflake to Fall

Leo has also illustrated many other titles.

1. The number of books being written by members of First Nations, Métis and Inuit (FNMI) communities is on the rise and so is the awareness of these books. Tell us what that means to you as a member of this community and as a writer.

The growing awareness of books written by First Nations, Métis and Inuit authors is timely. Residential schools, land claims, resource sharing and management are some of the issues Canadians on both sides of that ledger are faced with. First Nations, Métis and Inuit authors certainly play a role in planting the seeds of awareness and understanding so necessary to that process. As children become aware of these issues, awareness and understanding grows, hopefully and eventually accommodating solutions.

2. What was the first book you wrote and what inspired you to write it?

Prior to writing and illustrating books for children I worked many years as an artist and graphic designer. By the time I decided to write and illustrate a children’s book, I had already developed many of the tools required to do so, i.e., the printing process and the making of books. I chose, as the subject of my first book, a day I, as a child, had spent with my father on the land. Also inspired by the changing colours of a changing season, autumn to winter sent me searching for a medium that could express the same spontaneity of colour found in nature. After years of experimentation, I finally decided on dyed tissue paper and a collage technique. By choosing such a familiar subject, the book was much easier to write. I wrote the story during an afternoon and illustrated it over a period of 20 years. That book became Last Leaf First Snowflake to Fall.

3. The preservation and revitalization of indigenous languages and culture is an important goal that many members of the FNMI communities are striving to achieve, and it is imperative that today’s youth have knowledge of indigenous cultures in Canada. How can books help to accomplish these goals?

The Indian Residential School system in Canada (a system I am a product of) worked diligently and successfully at destroying Native languages and culture. In recent times I have noted language and culture appearing for the first time in classrooms. I am, from time to time, invited to participate in that experience by reading from the books I have written. Authors and their books do play a vital role in the communication and preservation of the culture and language by creating tools for the educational process.

4. When you speak to young audiences about your books what is the most important message you wish to convey to them?

It’s always an honour to be invited to speak with young audiences. I attempt to convey to those audiences the importance and joy of writing and drawing. Man’s place and role in his environment and the importance of having a clean healthy environment to live in and to pass on to generations yet to come, is an underlying theme in my stories as well as in such talks.

Leo Yerxa is a Governor General’s Award-winning author, illustrator and visual artist. Leo was born of Ojibwa parents on the Little Eagle Reserve, Couchiching First Nation in northwestern Ontario. He studied graphic arts at Algonquin College and fine arts at the University of Waterloo. Leo’s designs were used for the Series Four 1976 Summer Olympic Coins and he won the Mr. Christie’s Book Award (1993) for Last Leaf First Snowflake to Fall. Leo has also won many other prestigious book awards for his work.
Meet Angelique, a 10-year-old Métis girl living near Batoche, in what is now northern Saskatchewan. It’s 1865, and this year Angelique will join in the spring buffalo hunt, helping to identify the fallen buffalo by the hunters’ markers so the meat can be claimed by their families. Her story is set in a time when the buffalo herds, which once covered the land as far as the eye could see, are growing ever smaller, putting pressure on everyone involved to make sure the hunt is a good one. Angelique worries about the dwindling size of the buffalo herds and the perils her father and the other hunters will face; the impending hunt haunts her dreams. She knows being part of the hunt will be hard work, and she will have lots of new and important responsibilities. Just how important they are becomes clear on the day Angelique wanders off exploring, and finds herself in the middle of a buffalo stampede. The consequences not only to her, but to the whole hunt, may be costly.

Thematic Links: Métis | Buffalo Hunts | Coming of Age | Responsibility | Family

Mike Watson’s team has just won the Alberta Bantam Provincial box lacrosse championships and he is on top of the world. The euphoria of victory and plans for next season are short-lived, however, when Mike’s father, a member of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, is transferred to Inuvik, Northwest Territories. The transition to life inside the Arctic Circle is a tough one for Mike. With temperatures of -30°C, a hulking monster named Joseph Kiktorak threatening him at every turn and not a lacrosse ball in sight, Mike’s resentment at moving to the north simmers. Then Mike and his father are introduced to the amazing spectacle and athleticism of traditional “Arctic Sports.” When his father witnesses the natural talent of Mike’s new friends, the idea of an Inuvik lacrosse team is born!

Thematic Links: Arctic | Changes | Friendship | Lacrosse | Inuit

Stepping back in time, this book introduces young readers to the Riel Rebellion from a Métis point of view. Belle and Sarah both want the coveted job of bell ringer for the town’s new church. An embroidery contest is announced to award the position, so Belle enlists the help of her talented mother to learn the most beautiful stitches to use on her cloth. Belle discovers that Sarah is cheating by paying an elder to stitch her cloth but, before she can expose her, the two are caught up in the advancing forces as they surround Batoche. The girls work together to save their families, finding shelter in a root cellar. Belle must go out and forage for supplies, but one wrong move could alert the enemy soldiers to their hideout. Students may also want to read the two companion novels that follow: Outcasts of River Falls and The Comic Book War.

Thematic Links: Métis | Canadian History | Riel Rebellion | Bravery

Talon, Raven and their cousin T-Bear are visiting their grandfather at his cabin on a lake in northern Saskatch-
ewan. They’ve never lived in the bush, but they want to learn the old ways of surviving on the land. It’s Christmas, and the whole extended family is coming to Mushom’s cabin. Everyone is looking forward to it. But, because of a terrible forest fire, hunting is poor this winter. There may not be enough food for Christmas. The children decide to help by going hunting. They don’t understand how unprepared they are or what dangers they face. They get lost, forcing Mushom to rescue them. But when they find their grandfather collapsed in the bush, it is the children who have to bring Mushom home safely. The children learn they can benefit from two kinds of knowledge: the traditional learning through their elders and the things they learn at school. Click here for a teacher’s guide of the book. *Wapos Bay* is also a TV series, with a teacher’s guide to go with the series.

**Thematic Links**: Saskatchewan | Northern Cree | Grandparents | Survival | Traditional Learning

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*A Different Game* (Orca Young Readers)

Written by Sylvia Olsen
Orca Book Publishers, 2010
Grades 3-6 (Ages 8-11)

For Murphy and his friends, the playing field is no longer level and the goalposts have been moved. In this sequel to *Murphy and Mousetrap*, Murphy and his three friends, Danny, Jeff and Albert, are making the transition from their tribal elementary school to the community middle school. They are all trying out for the middle school’s soccer team, and they’re pretty confident that ‘The Formidable Four’ will all make the team. But once the tryouts begin, Albert, the tribal-school superstar, plays like a second stringer. Murphy’s new friend, Molly, is determined to help the boys find out what’s wrong with Albert, but when they discover the truth, they realize that Albert is playing a whole different game. And he is going to need his friends to see it through to the end.

**Thematic Links**: Soccer | Friendship | Courage | Illness

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*Drifting Snow: An Arctic Search*

Written by James Houston
McClelland & Stewart, 1992
ISBN: 978-0-7710-4283-6
Grades 6-10 (Ages 11-15)

This book is premised on true events that unfolded when very young Inuit children suffering from tuberculosis were rushed from their Arctic homes and families to southern hospitals. Tragically, in the mayhem, the identity papers of some children were lost. Many of these young Inuit later returned to the Arctic determined to find their families, their true names and even their own language. This story focuses on one such Inuit teenager, Elizabeth, or “Elizapee” as she is called by the Nesak Island people who take her in. Elizapee learns her native language and how to survive the harsh environment and, as the nomadic group moves to its summer hunting area, she begins to realize how much this lifestyle means to her. Yet, when she is finally reunited

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Abby is having trouble fitting in at Bear Creek Reserve. After having lived most of her life with her grandparents in town, it’s definitely a transition moving back to the reserve. When Choom, her grandfather, falls ill, Abby must leave her best friends at school, her supportive grandparents and her perfect pink bedroom, and adjust to living with her mom. But it’s not only being back with Mom that is hard — there’s a new father, a pesky half-brother, a schoolroom full of kids who don’t know her (and don’t seem to want to, either) and a completely different way of life that seems so traditional, so puzzling, so complicated. But, with the help of the reserve’s chief, Paulie, a puppy named Ki-Moot and her parents’ vision of a sled-dog tourist venture, Abby slowly begins to find her rhythm at Bear Creek. All she has to do is follow the dog tracks.

**Thematic Links**: Self-Discovery | Anishinawbe Culture | Family | Identity | Traditional Knowledge
with her birth family, the decision about where she belongs is a difficult one.

**Thematic Links:** Canadian History | Inuit | Tuberculosis | Identity | Belonging

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**Fight for Justice**
Written by Lori Saigeon
Coteau Books, 2009
ISBN: 978-1-55050-405-7
Grades 3-6 (Ages 8-11)

Ten-year-old Justice feels like the “man of the house,” living with his twin sister, Charity, and their mom. But when his classmate Trey bullies him, he doesn’t know what to do. A visit to his beloved Mushum (grandfather) helps give Justice some ideas about bullying and how he might deal with it. But when Trey bullies him and also attacks Charity, Justice can’t understand why. He’s afraid to tell anyone — his mother, his teacher or the school principal — for fear of making things worse. Then on a family visit to their home reserve, Justice helps his Mushum fix his snowmobile and finds the courage to talk about Trey. Through Mushum’s stories and actions, he begins to understand why people bully and some possible ways to deal with them. There is no simple, sure-fire solution in this honest and compassionate story, but Justice no longer feels quite so alone at school or on the street.

**Thematic Links:** Bullying | Family | Choices

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**Lost in the Barrens**
Written by Farley Mowat
McClelland & Stewart, 2009
ISBN: 978-0-77106-466-1
Grades 5-8 (Ages 10-13)

Awasin, a Cree boy, and Jamie, a Canadian orphan living with his uncle, are brothers in courage, enchanted by the magic of the Arctic wilderness. They set out on an adventure that proves longer and more dangerous than they could have imagined. When their canoe is destroyed by the fury of the rapids, they must face the wilderness with no food and no hope of rescue. To survive, they build an igloo, battle a towering grizzly bear, track several wolves and slaughter caribou for food and clothing. Two lost huskies bring companionship — and maybe a way home from their dangerous adventure. Drawing on his knowledge of the ways of the wilderness and the implacable northern elements, Farley Mowat has created a memorable tale of daring and adventure. First published in 1956, *Lost in the Barrens* won the Governor-General’s Award for Juvenile Literature and the 1958 CLA Book of the Year for Children Award.

**Thematic Links:** Adventure | Arctic | Friendship | Survival

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**No Time to Say Goodbye:**
*Children’s Stories of Kuper Island Residential School*
Written by Sylvia Olsen with Rita Morris and Ann Sam
Sono Nis Press, 2001
ISBN: 978-1-55039-121-3
Grades 5-9 (Ages 10-14)

This is a fictional account of five children sent to Aboriginal boarding school, based on the recollections of a number of Tsartlip First Nations people. These unforgettable children are taken by government agents from Tsartlip Day School to live at Kuper Island Residential School. The children are isolated on the small island, and life becomes regimented by the strict school routine. They experience confusion and the pain of homesickness while trying to adjust to a world completely different from their own. Their lives are no longer organized by fishing, hunting and family, but by bells, lineups and chores. In spite of the harsh realities of the residential school, the children find adventure in escape, challenge in competition and camaraderie with their fellow students. Sometimes sad, sometimes funny, always engrossing, the story is one that readers of all ages won’t soon forget. Learn more about *Kuper Island Residential School*.

**Thematic Links:** Residential School | Tsartlip First Nations | Identity | Growing Up
When Cole’s teacher catches him drawing rather than listening in class, he gives Cole a special assignment — an oral presentation on an important Aboriginal figure. Cole will do almost anything to avoid speaking in public — even feigning illness. But then he learns the story of the remarkable woman known as Thanadelthur — a young Dene woman enslaved by the Cree, who becomes a guide for the Hudson Bay Company. In 1715, she negotiated a peace between longstanding enemies, the Cree and the Dene. Cole is so inspired by her bravery, he overcomes his own fears. Tales from Big Spirit is a unique graphic novel series that delves into the stories of indigenous heroes from Canadian history. These full-colour graphic novels could be used in literature circles, novel studies and book clubs to facilitate discussion. These books will help students make historical connections while promoting important literacy skills.

**Thematic Links:** First Nations | Dene | Canadian History | Indigenous Heroes | Graphic Novels

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In the ancient Arctic, a wandering Inuit hunter named Kannujaq happens upon a Tuniit camp in grave peril. “Tuniit” is a word he has only ever heard in fables — they are a strange stocky race of beings that live in Inuit lands but are rarely seen. Kannujaq learns that the tranquil Tuniit camp is under siege by a group of murderous, pale, bearded strangers who arrived on a huge boat shaped like a loon. As the camp prepares to defend itself, Kannujaq discovers that the Vikings may have motivations other than murder and warfare in their quest. Why do these bearded giants continue to return every spring? And why won’t their leader allow his men to stop searching these Tuniit camps? It is up to Kannujaq to find the answers. This lush historical fiction is steeped in Inuit traditional knowledge and concepts of ancient Inuit magic.

**Thematic Links:** Arctic | Inuit | Vikings | Coming of Age | History

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A search down a wooded path for a well-hit baseball turns into an encounter between Pamela and a veteran soldier in front of a statue commemorating Sgt. Tommy Prince, the most decorated Aboriginal soldier in Canada. Pamela is curious about the statue, and the veteran is happy to regale her with the story of the soldier who was an expert marksman and tracker, renowned for his daring and bravery in World War I and beyond.

**Thematic Links:** First Nations | Aboriginal Soldiers | Canadian History | Indigenous Heroes | War | Graphic Novels

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In this early chapter book, a nine-year-old Cree boy is visited by a master soapstone carver named Lindy, who gives him four pieces of soapstone. The primary secret to carving, the boy learns, is recognizing that each piece of soapstone already holds its true form inside. Only the carver knows the soapstone’s true shape. Lindy teaches the boy to listen to the soapstone and look to the world around him for signs as to what form is in the stone waiting to be carved. As the seasons change, the young boy’s experiences provide opportunities for him to develop his carving skills and become attuned to the signs around him. He eagerly awaits the return of spring, which will bring Lindy’s reappearance and a chance to show off his carvings.

**Thematic Links:** Cree | Soapstone Carving | Hunting | Patience | Growing Up

In this series of graphic novels is set in 18th-century colonized North America. The stories follow the escapades of two mischievous Ojibwa brothers as they play pranks and have amazing adventures using a traditional Ojibwa medicine (spirit powder) that transforms them into animals for a short time. Rabbit is a bold and headstrong 12-year-old who is small for his age while his 10-year-old brother, Bear Paws, a “gentle giant,” has already reached the size of a full-grown man. In the 18th century, the brothers’ world of the Anishinabek Nation is becoming a smaller place with more land-hungry neighbours each passing season. In this story, Rabbit and Bear Paws join the voyageurs to take furs from Lake of the Woods to Montreal and experience all the trials and tribulations of the voyageur life. This entertaining, fast-paced story features a lacrosse game, an encounter with fur traders and a flying canoe. Chad Solomon employs the Ojibwe Seven Grandfather Teachings for the core of the stories. This edition draws on the Teaching Aakdehewin or Bravery.

**Thematic Links:** Graphic Novels | Ojibwa | Voyageurs | Canadian History | Bravery

The great Mohawk leader, Thayendanegea (aka Joseph Brant), has chosen Broken Trail to assist him in the daunting task of uniting all the tribes and nations with the goal of establishing a federation. In preparation, Broken Trail (The White Oneida), a young man who was born white but was captured and adopted by the Oneida people, must attend Sedgwick School for Native youth, where he finds that he has to gain the trust of young men from many different tribes whose ancient enmities lie just beneath the surface. He discovers that the school — racist in the extreme — is a place of secrets where appearances can be deceiving and loyalty is sometimes proven in unexpected ways. Broken Trail’s next step is to meet with Tecumseh, the young Shawnee leader, to begin the work of union. In this tale of intrigue and adventure, Baxter once again demonstrates her ability to transform the past into living history.

**Thematic Links:** Thayendanegea | First Nations History | Racism | Identity | Self-Discovery
Culture Clash: A Novel Study

What happens when young people have to move away from everything they know and begin life in a new community and new environment? *Arctic Thunder* and *Dog Tracks* both deal with this universal theme of being the new kid on the block, trying to fit in. Mike is a white boy who leaves behind his favourite sport when his father is transferred to Inuvik, and Abby is an Anishinawbe girl who must return to Bear Creek Reserve after living much of her life in town with her grandparents. Have students divide into groups and assign each group one of the novels. Students can explore the ways in which the main character in each novel is an outsider. How does the character adjust to his or her new community? What barriers must he or she overcome? What part does racism or prejudice play in each story? What personal connections can students make between these novels and their own lives?

Get Graphic

Graphic novels can make potent teaching tools — as a mostly visual medium they have the power to engage and motivate readers at so many levels, putting excitement back into learning, especially with difficult subjects. Many First Nations authors such as David Alexander Robertson (author of both *The Tales from Big Spirit* and the 7 Generations: A Plains Cree Saga graphic novel series) are creating graphic novels to explore themes such as stereotyping and racism, and to confront difficult issues in Canadian/First Nations history. Other graphic novels such as *Country of Wolves* (found in the YA section) or the Raven Tales series, (only available through the school market), tell First Nations stories, myths or legends. Have students select and read some of these graphic novels and then discuss the issues, ideas, myths or stories that are tackled in these books. Students could then create their own graphic novel — they can tell or retell a story, create a myth or explore a contemporary or historical issue concerning Canadian First Nations, Métis or Inuit peoples. Perhaps they could make their graphic story into a short film, inspired by watching the NFB production of *Country of Wolves*. The options are limited only by their imaginations.

Historical Connections

Many novels in this reading guide provide fertile ground for cross-curricular connections between Language Arts and Social Studies — especially units on Canadian history. These novels are inspired by true events and offer an accessible entry for students learning about First Nations history in Canada. Students learning about Louise Riel and the Métis could read *Belle of Batoche* or *Angelique: Buffalo Hunt*, and a unit on French Canada and the battle at Louisbourg could include a reading of *Blood Brothers in Louisbourg* (found in the YA section). Students could also read *The Lynching of Louie Sam* (found in the YA section) and then research the true events that inspired Elizabeth Stewart to write the book through website links such as this example on CBC.ca or this example at HistoryLink.org. The class could also watch the film *The Lynching of Louie Sam* and have a discussion around the harsh realities of settler life, the implications of historical racism and prejudice, the dangers of mob mentality and standing up for what is right.

Surviving Residential School

Teachers tackling this issue now have a wealth of resources available to them. The Indian Residential School Survivor’s Society has initiated the Education Project, irsr.ca, which includes detailed lesson plans. Project of Heart, projectofheart.ca, and The Legacy of Hope Foundation, legacyofhope.ca, are two organizations teachers can access for classroom materials and information on how to connect with survivors or elders willing to visit a classroom. One of the most profound ways for students to learn about residential schooling is to have the opportunity to listen to and speak with a survivor of residential schooling or an elder. The inclusion of such oral history can be very meaningful, bringing history alive in a far more tangible manner. Consider reading aloud one of the books included in this guide, such as *Fatty Legs* (Non-Fiction), *No Time to Say Goodbye: Children’s Stories of Kuper Island Residential School* (Junior & Intermediate Fiction) or *Goodbye Buffalo Bay* (Non-Fiction), as a powerful method of introducing students to this complex and difficult subject.
1. **The number of books being written by members of First Nations, Métis and Inuit (FNMI) communities is on the rise and so is the awareness of these books. Tell us what that means to you as a member of this community and as a writer.**

Canada is an amazing country and a vast one. People have lived here for more than 16,000 years. Immigrants have been coming to Canada since the Vikings settled at L’Anse aux Meadows, Newfoundland, 5,000 years ago. Written accounts of early indigenous people, however, are non-existent as First Nation’s societies relied on an oral history. It is only in modern times that we realized the need for passing on cultural traditions and stories through literature so that this rich and unique history is not lost. This is why the recent explosion of Aboriginal writers is such a welcome advance. Many of these authors are creating reinterpretations of old myths and legends to entertain today’s young readers and prevent the loss of this old magic. This is the 21st century and although we are technologically advanced and culturally sophisticated, we still need these moral tales, these bedtime stories, to teach our young people. With family units often split and personal histories lost, preserving cultural stories is incredibly important. Through our literature we can maintain this link to the past.

2. **What was the first book you wrote and what inspired you to write it?**

Ah, this is a tricky question. Learning to write is like learning to ride a bike. You start out with training wheels, (writing safely in the privacy of your own home), then you take off those wheels and take that first tentative ride, (you join a writing group or enter a contest). Then the inevitable happens: you fall down! On a bike, you tear your jeans and scrape your knee; with your writing, it’s critiqued and found wanting. Wise writers know this is all part of the process of learning your craft. That first opus you penned probably shows all the flaws of a first attempt, but this is totally acceptable. In fact, if you didn’t make mistakes and then fix them, how would your writing ever improve? When you were learning to ride and fell, you got back up and started again. The same thing happens when you write. You have to keep writing. The first book I wrote was called *A Wish for Wings*, about a girl who wanted to learn to fly. My daughter was in Air Cadets and my mom had been in the Royal Air Force, so this seemed a natural topic for me. I finished the book, sent it to an agent and promptly got it back again with a note that said it was not publishable, but that I should write another book. And the agent made me promise to never, ever, read another *Sweet Valley High!* Apparently what I thought was good kid lit may not have been such a good model to use. I then wrote *Hat Trick*, a book about a girl who played hockey on a boys’ team where she was not wanted. She struggles and perseveres, demonstrating her skill and earning her right to be on the team. In this novel, I also have a secondary story line. It involved the girl’s ethnicity. She was Métis, but her dad wanted her to pass as white, as he did. She was not allowed to celebrate her culture and this led to a strain on their relationship, until finally, things exploded. *Hat Trick* was not just about hockey, but about the importance of being true to yourself and having pride in your heritage.

3. **The preservation and revitalization of indigenous languages and culture is an important goal that many members of the FNMI communities are striving to achieve, and it is imperative that today’s youth have knowledge of indigenous cultures in Canada. How can books help to accomplish these goals?**

Encouraging children to take an interest in their culture cannot be achieved without a team effort. We, the older generation, need to demonstrate our own cultural pride by actively living it. This can be done by speaking our indigenous language in the home and celebrating traditions. Relying on outside sources alone to achieve this important goal will not work. Education systems need to foster multicultural acceptance by making sure textbooks and curriculum include aspects of different cultures in the educational paradigm. Here in Canada we have a built-in rich and com-
plex history with our own indigenous peoples that can easily and authentically be used in the classroom. Culture cannot be absorbed by osmosis, but if our children are immersed in that culture to the point where it is natural and not a foreign concept to be studied for a month in school in Grade 5, then it becomes part of their fabric of life. For Aboriginal kids, this means parents must ensure that language and traditions are lived and taught at home, and not left to teachers who are often not of their culture. Literature is a wonderful way of passing on information. Interesting novels can fire a child’s imagination and make them seek further on their own. The recent mass interest in vampires shows that. By incorporating culture in an interesting way in novels, we can plant the seeds that lead to young people investigating and learning for themselves. Who wouldn’t want to know the secret of how a Hoop Dancer makes those imaginary animals come alive! Indigenous authors provide a window into a fascinating world worth keeping alive.

The wonderful thing about books is that they stick around and, no matter when they were written or what the topic, a good story is a good story.

4. When you speak to young audiences about your books what is the most important message you wish to convey to them?

I spend a lot of time in classrooms speaking on the value of reading and the importance of history. I use my curriculum-based History and Culture Presentation to illustrate both these points. It’s an interactive and visual way to convey a message. Student voyageurs canoe with their beaver pelts to the closest Hudson’s Bay Fur Trading Post, play with early First Nations toys that teach hunting skills, and learn juicy and rather disgusting factoids about brain tanning plus many other historical facts! History steps off the page and onto the stage! Part of this session incorporates reading from my novels (Belle of Batoche or Outcasts of River Falls) about those early days in Canada. Children read the books simply because the presentation was so much fun that they want to know more. New readers are created. I believe reading is the key to the future. It is the one skill we are taught in school that we will use every day for the rest of our lives. Bottom line — reading leads to success. Getting kids to read is difficult, but we, the writers, need to meet this challenge by producing interesting books to keep them turning the pages, and if readers also learn a little about culture in those stories, that’s even better.

My message: Reading Rocks!

Jacqueline Guest is an international award-winning author with 18 published novels. She was the CANSCAIP Creator-in-Residence for 2014, and is the proud recipient of the 2013 Indspire Award for the Arts. While spreading the good word on literacy, Jacqueline has stood on an iceberg, flown a kite in a hurricane, watched lions hunt and worn bedroom slippers in Parliament. She lives in a log cabin in the high foothills of the Rocky Mountains in Alberta.
Blood Brothers in Louisbourg

Written by Philip Roy
Cape Breton University Press, 2012
ISBN: 978-1-897009-72-7
Grades 7 and up (Ages 12 and up)

In the spring of 1744, Jacques and his father leave France for Louisbourg, the French capital of Île Royale, where Jacques is to learn the military arts — a far cry from his books and music and the comforts of his mother’s home. Jacques’s life in Louisbourg is a curious mixture of military duties and his visits to the Governor’s apartments where he teaches Celestine, the daughter of a visiting merchant, to play the violoncello. Meanwhile, in the Acadian forests that surround Louisbourg, a young Mi’kmaw man named Two-feathers watches the strange comings and goings of soldiers and citizens. Two-feathers hopes to find his father who, he has been told, is an important man among the French. The two young men’s worlds collide during the violent siege of Louisbourg in 1745.

Thematic Links: Canadian History | Louisbourg | Mi’kmaw | Coming of Age

Blood Red Ochre

Written by Kevin Major
Doubleday Canada, 1989
Grades 7 and up (Ages 12 and up)

Fifteen-year-old David is unhappy at home, especially after he learns that the man he thought was his father is really his stepfather. While researching the story of the extinction of the Beothuk, David becomes more alienated from his family and is strongly attracted to a new girl at school, Nancy, who is also researching the Beothuk. An air of mystery surrounds Nancy; she looks different, “foreign,” and David finds her disturbingly attractive. After receiving a history assignment on the vanished Beothuk Indians in Newfoundland, Nancy and David set out on a canoe trip to Red Ochre Island, a burial place of the Beothuk. Intertwined with the story of David and Nancy is that of Daudoodaset, one of the last of the Beothuk. Daudoodaset’s parallel narrative of the last desperate days of his people is a prelude to a sinister rendezvous on Red Ochre Island where the past and present are drawn together.

Thematic Links: Beothuk First Nations | Canadian History | Family | Identity

Counting on Hope

Written by Sylvia Olsen
Sono Nis Press, 2009
Grades 7 and up (Ages 12 and up)

Hope and her family travel from England to their new home on Wallace Island off the coast of British Columbia in the 1860s. Hope thinks that she has arrived in paradise. Letia and her family are Lamalcha people who winter on Kuper Island and, in the summer, move to Wallace Island, which the Crown has deeded to Hope’s family. When the two girls meet, against the wishes of their mothers, their stories intersect. Set against the backdrop of the confusing events surrounding the English colonization of British Columbia, and an 1863 naval assault on Kuper Island, this is the story of two girls whose lives are profoundly changed when their two cultures collide. Ultimately a story of hope, this sensitively drawn depiction of innocence lost and wisdom hard won follows Hope and Letia out of childhood, off their island paradise and into the complex realities of an adult world. Click here for a teacher’s guide.

Thematic Links: Historical Fiction | British Columbia History | Friendship | Free Verse | Conflict

The Country of Wolves

Retold by Neil Christopher
Illustrated by Ramón Pérez
Inhabit Media, 2012
ISBN: 978-1-927095-04-1
Grades 7 and up (Ages 12 and up)

“This book shares a story that has been passed from storyteller to storyteller across the Arctic for countless gen-
erations. To some this is a sacred story, as all traditional stories are sacred to those who know their value. These ancient tales tell of magical events that happened before the modern world invaded the hidden places.” Based on the acclaimed animated film, *Amaqqut Nunaat: The Country of Wolves*, this visually stunning graphic novel takes readers on a mysterious adventure with two brothers who become lost while hunting on the sea ice. Unknowingly, the brothers cross over into the mysterious and alien country of wolves. The only safe haven to be found for miles — a mysterious village filled with the sounds of drum dancing and revelry — turns out to be far more dangerous than the frigid ocean. Pérez’s illustrations of the transformation from human to wolf are vivid, compelling and unnerving. A DVD with an animated version is included and is not to be missed. For a novel study developed by Inhabit Media visit [www.inhabitmedia.com](http://www.inhabitmedia.com).

**Thematic Links:** Graphic Novel | Inuit Folklore | Arctic | Supernatural

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**Frost**

Written by Nicole Luiken  
Great Plains Teen Fiction, 2007  
ISBN: 978-1-894283-72-4  
Grades 9 and up (Ages 14 and up)

Johnny Van der Zee is a talented hockey player and he seems to have everything going for him in the town of Iqaluit, Nunavut. But Kathy, an army brat new to Iqaluit, knows something is terribly wrong. Why is it that every time Johnny gets too close to someone, they get hurt? From a mysterious car accident that killed his parents to an encounter with a rogue polar bear, a freak snowmobile wreck and the attack on a friend’s cherished pet, strange things just keep happening. What is the secret Johnny is so desperate to tell, if only someone would listen? And who is the stranger with the cold eyes and silver hair? The one Johnny knows only as Frost... In this fast-paced supernatural thriller, Johnny’s friends and brother must piece together the reason for his strange behaviour to save him — and all of mankind — from Frost’s plan for a new ice age.

**Thematic Links:** Supernatural | Teen Romance | Death | Nuclear Threat | Thriller

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**Good for Nothing**

Written by Michel Noël  
Groundwood Books, 2004  
Grades 7-10 (Ages 12-15)

The year is 1959, and 15-year-old Nipishish returns to his reserve in northern Quebec after being kicked out of residential school, where the principal tells him he’s a good-for-nothing who, like all Indians, can look forward to a life of drunkenness, prison and despair. The reserve, however, offers nothing to Nipishish. Logging is altering the landscape of his childhood; alcohol and a government housing lottery are changing Algonquin lifestyle; and recreational hunting by whites is destroying the harmony between humans and animals. He remembers little of his late mother and father. In fact, he seems to know less about himself than the people at the band office. Nipishish comes of age as he rediscovers his heritage, fronts resistance to a logging contract, challenges a government cover-up about his father’s death and commits to a relationship and impending fatherhood.

**Thematic Links:** Residential Schools | Coming of Age | Algonquin | Environment

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**Jeremy Stone**

Written by Lesley Choyce  
Red Deer Press, 2013  
Grades 9 and up (Ages 14 and up)

Told in spare yet compelling free verse, Lesley Choyce’s story of Jeremy, a First Nations teenager, trying to find himself and where he fits in the world. At his new school, he meets Caitlan, an intense girl who tells him about her boyfriend Jenson who committed suicide. Jeremy isn’t sure whether he has much to offer Caitlan, given his own uncertainties, but she becomes a touchstone in his life and he promises to be there for her. Much of Jeremy’s strength comes from Old Man, the spirit of Jeremy’s dead grandfather, with whom he has frequent illuminating conversa-
The Life of Helen Betty Osborne: A Graphic Novel
Written by David Alexander Robertson
Illustrated by Madison Blackstone
In a Bind Publications, 2008
ISBN: 978-0-96896-534-4
Grades 9-12 (Ages 14-18)

This graphic novel shares with readers the life of Helen Betty Osborne who dreamed of becoming a teacher. Sadly, her dream never came true. Betty left her home in Norway House, Manitoba, to attend Guy Hill Residential School in 1969. In September 1971, she entered Margaret Barbour Collegiate in The Pas, Manitoba. Two months later, on November 13, 1971, she was brutally murdered by four young white men. Years later, the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry concluded that her murder was the result of racism, sexism and indifference. In this graphic retelling of her story through the eyes of a young white man, readers learn about the pervasive separation and discrimination that permeated communities such as The Pas, and the reality that Betty would not have been murdered that night if she had not been Aboriginal. For a teacher’s guide visit www.portageandmainpress.com.

Thematic Links: Racism | First Nations | History | Justice

The Lynching of Louie Sam
Written by Elizabeth Stewart
Annick Press, 2012
ISBN: 978-1-55451-438-0
Grades 7 and up (Ages 12 and up)

The year is 1884, and 15-year-old George Gillies lives in the Washington Territory, near the border of British Columbia. In this newly settled land, white immigrants have an uneasy relationship with the Native people. When George and his siblings discover the murdered body of a local white man, suspicion immediately falls on a young Native named Louie Sam. George and his best friend, Pete, follow a lynch mob north into Canada, where the terrified boy is seized and hanged. But even before the deed is done, George begins to have doubts. As George uncovers the truth — implicating Pete’s father and other prominent locals — tensions in the town rise, and he must face his own part in the tragedy. Inspired by the true story of the lynching, recently acknowledged as a historical injustice by Washington State, this powerful novel offers a stark depiction of historical racism and the harshness of settler life. The story will provoke readers to reflect on the dangers of mob mentality and the importance of speaking up for what’s right.

Thematic Links: Racism | First Nations | History | Justice

The Middle of Everywhere
Written by Monique Polak
Orca Book Publishers, 2009
Grades 7-11 (Ages 12-16)

Fifteen-year-old Noah Thorpe is spending the school term in George River, in Quebec’s Far North. Noah’s not too keen about living in the middle of nowhere, although leaving Montreal means he gets a break from the bully at his old school, but he learns that problems have a way of following you — no matter how far you travel. The Inuit kids call Noah a Qallunaaq, the Inuktitut word for a non-Inuit person, ignorant of the ways of the North. Noah

Thematic Links: Racism | Murder | Residential School | Faith | Dreams | Discrimination | Indifference
thinks the Inuit have a strange way of looking at the world, plus they eat raw meat and seal blubber. Most have never left George River — a town that doesn’t even have its own doctor, let alone a McDonald’s. But Noah’s views change when he goes winter camping and realizes he will have to learn a few lessons from his Inuit buddies if he wants to make it home.

**Thematic Links:** Inuit | Bullying | Cultural Difference | Climate Change | Survival

In this sequel to *Yellow Line*, things have changed since Raedawn and Vince started going out. The racial boundaries between the First Nations and white communities have eased a bit, but issues of race and prejudice fuelled by ignorance continue to permeate the town. Then Dune, who never took sides, doesn’t return after summer holidays. Raedawn is determined to find out where he has gone — or what happened to him — and convinces Vince and her Uncle Dave to help in the search. Fighting against ignorance and hate, Raedawn, Vince and Uncle Dave track Dune down and find themselves in the middle of a far more dangerous situation than they could have imagined, discovering that nothing is ever black and white.

**Thematic Links:** Racism | Prejudice | Relationships | Drugs | Community | Family

Newcomers to the Otter Lake Native reserve don’t go unnoticed for long. So it’s no surprise that 16-year-old Tiffany’s curiosity is piqued when her father rents out her room to a complete stranger. But neither Tiffany, her father nor her insightful Granny Ruth suspect the truth about their guest, the mysterious Pierre L’Errant. After centuries roaming Europe as a brooding vampire, he has returned home to reclaim his Native roots before facing the rising sun and certain death. Meanwhile, Tiffany is deeply troubled — she doubts her boyfriend is being faithful, she has escalating disputes with her father, and her estranged mother is starting a new life with somebody else. Fed up and heartsick, Tiffany flees into the midnight woods, where a chilling encounter with L’Errant changes everything. For Pierre, though, destiny is fixed at sunrise. In this stunning graphic version of the award-winning novel, artist Michael Wyatt brings a brilliant story to visual life.

**Thematic Links:** Graphic Novel | Cultural Heritage | Relationships | Vampires

In this story, the reader is invited to witness the Dumont family’s life on the Okanese First Nations reserve, as narrated by Dawn herself. Beyond the stereotypes and clichés of Rez dogs, drinking and bingo, the story of a girl who loves to read begins to unfold. It is her unerring eye that reveals the great bond of family expressed in the actions and affections of her sisters, aunties, uncles, brothers, cousins, nieces, nephews and, ultimately, her ancestors. It’s all here — life on the Rez in rich technicolour — as Dawn emerges from home life, through school life and into the promise of a great future. This story embraces cultural differences and does it with the great traditional medicine of laughter.

**Thematic Links:** Okanese First Nations | Reservation Life | Humour | Family
Scars
(7 Generations: A Plains Cree Saga, Book 2)
Written by David Alexander Robertson
Illustrated by Scott B. Henderson
HighWater Press, 2010
ISBN: 978-1-55379-228-4
Grades 10 and up (Ages 15 and up)

The year is 1870, and the last great smallpox epidemic is sweeping through the prairies. After witnessing the death of his entire family, White Cloud, a young Plains Cree boy, summons the strength to deliver himself from the terrible disease and journey to a new home. Readers also reconnect with Edwin, a lost young man on his own quest (introduced in Book 1, Stone). By learning about the bravery and perseverance of White Cloud, Edwin summons his own courage and travels to confront the main source of his own despair.

**Thematic Links:** Graphic Novel | Smallpox Epidemic | Canadian History | Plains Cree | Courage

Sister to the Wolf
Written by Maxine Trottier
Kids Can Press, 2004
ISBN: 978-1-55337-520-3
Grades 7-10 (Ages 12-15)

In a rough town in Quebec in 1703, Native slaves are routinely mistreated. As Cécile Chesne watches the branding iron burn into young Lesharo’s flesh, she knows she must act. Defying convention, the headstrong girl buys the slave’s freedom and treats him as an equal. Lesharo is Pawnee — the People of the Wolf. Sworn to protect Cécile, he accompanies her and her father, a coureur de bois, as they leave Quebec for a perilous journey to the new fort at Detroit. Cécile hates life behind the palisades, where Lesharo is once again looked upon as a slave and Fort society makes them miserable. Torn between two worlds, they can only be free in the wild. But freedom will not come easily. One terrible night, Cécile is forced to make a dreadful choice …

**Thematic Links:** Canadian History | Pawnee | Fort Life | Family | Racism | Spirituality

Sugar Falls: A Residential School Story
Written by David Alexander Robertson
Illustrated by Scott B. Henderson
HighWater Press, 2012
Grades 9 and up (Ages 14 and up)

A school assignment to interview a residential school survivor leads Daniel to Betsy, his friend’s grandmother, who tells him her story. Abandoned as a young child, Betsy was soon adopted into a loving family. A few short years later, at the age of eight, everything changed. Betsy was taken away to a residential school. There she was forced to endure abuse and indignity, but Betsy recalled the words her father spoke to her at Sugar Falls — words that gave her the resilience, strength and determination to survive. This dark yet poignant graphic novel is based on the true story of Betty Ross, Elder from Cross Lake First Nation.

**Thematic Links:** Residential School | Manitoba First Nations | Canadian History | Abuse

Stone
7 Generations: A Plains Cree Saga, Book 1
Written by David Alexander Robertson
Illustrated by Scott B. Henderson
HighWater Press, 2010
ISBN: 978-1-55379-227-7
Grades 10 and up (Ages 15 and up)

This dark but poignant graphic novel introduces Edwin, a young man who must understand his people’s past if he is to have any future. Feeling lost and hopeless, Edwin attempts suicide but is saved by his mother. While he’s recovering in hospital, she tells him about the life of his ancestor Stone, a young Plains Cree man from the 19th century whose beloved brother is killed in battle. Left alone, Stone becomes a warrior and sets out to avenge his brother’s death. The story of Stone reminds Edwin that each person has someone to fight for, which in turn gives hope. Hearing the story of Stone allows Edwin to move forward. For a teacher’s guide to the 7 Generations series visit [www.portageandmainpress.com](http://www.portageandmainpress.com).

**Thematic Links:** Graphic Novel | Plains Cree | Suicide | History | Understanding
Where I Belong
Written by Tara White
Tradewind Books, 2014
ISBN: 978-1-896580-77-7
Grades 7-9 (Ages 12-14)
This moving tale of self-discovery takes place during the Oka uprising in the summer of 1990. Adopted as an infant, Carrie has always felt somehow out of place. Recurring dreams haunt her, warning her that someone close to her is in danger. When she discovers that her birth family is Mohawk, living in Kahnawake, Quebec, she makes the long journey to visit them but finds herself caught in the middle of the Oka Crisis. Unable to leave the community, Carrie struggles to understand her dreams, accept herself and find a place where she belongs.
Thematic Links: Self-Discovery | Mohawk | Quebec | Oka Crisis | Family

White Girl
Written by Sylvia Olsen
Sono Nis Press, 2004
ISBN: 978-1-55039-147-3
Grades 9 and up (Ages 14 and up)
Until she was 14, Josie was pretty ordinary. Then her Mom meets Martin, “a real ponytail Indian,” and before long, Josie finds herself living on a reserve outside town, with a new stepfather, a new stepbrother and a new name — Blondie. In town, white was the ambient noise, the no-colour background. On the reserve, she’s White, and most people seem to see only her blonde hair and blue eyes. Josie’s mother is no help. She never leaves the house, gripped by her fear of the unknown beyond Martin’s doorstep. But Josie can’t afford to hide out forever. She has to go to school and she has to get herself a life, one way or another. She makes a friend who helps her bridge the gap between being an outsider and belonging. As Josie discovers more about her new family and her new home on the reserve, Martin, Luke and Grandma become a real part of her, like nothing else ever has, or ever will. For a teacher’s guide visit www.sononis.com.
Thematic Links: Identity | Belonging | Family

Yellow Line (Orca Soundings)
Written by Sylvia Olsen
Orca Book Publishers, 2005
Grades 7-10 (Ages 12-15)
Vince lives in a small town — a town that is divided right down the middle — First Nations on one side, Whites on the other. The unspoken rule and invisible barriers dividing these two communities have been there as long as Vince remembers, and no one challenges them, so when Vince’s friend Sherry starts seeing Steve, a Native boy, Vince is outraged. Sherry and Steve are breaking one of the town’s most important unwritten rules of conduct — date your own kind. The relationship causes upheaval at the high school, which becomes a minefield Vince finds increasingly difficult to navigate, especially given his increasing attraction to Raedawn, a girl from the reserve. Trying to balance his community’s prejudices with his shifting alliances, Vince is forced to take a stand, and see where his heart will lead him.
Thematic Links: Racism | Prejudice | Relationships | Friendship | Community | Family
Residential Schools

Residential schooling is a topic ripe with possibilities for cross-curricular connections, especially between English and Canadian History. Students learning the history of The Indian Act and attempts by the Canadian government to deal with the “Indian question” could also read a variety of relevant novels and graphic novels. *Sugar Falls*, *The Life of Helen Betty Osborne* and *Good for Nothing* all offer a more personal account of the profound experience of residential schools on First Nations, Métis and Inuit children, families and communities. The NFB has an excellent film available for older students titled *We Were Children*. The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education has a website with a multitude of online and other resources. Visit www.oise.utoronto.ca.

Racism and Prejudice

Helen Betty Osborne was brutally murdered in 1971, by four young white men, and, years later, it was determined by the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry that her murder was a result of racism, sexism and indifference. In August 2014, the murdered body of Tina Fontaine, a 15 year-old Sagkeeng First Nation girl, was found in the Red River. In an RCMP report on *Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women* it is stated that “Police-reported incidents of Aboriginal female homicides and unresolved missing Aboriginal female investigations in this review total 1,181. This number includes 1,017 Aboriginal female homicide victims between 1980 and 2012, and 164 Aboriginal women currently considered missing. Of these, there are 225 unsolved cases of either missing or murdered Aboriginal women.” After reading *The Life of Helen Betty Osborne: A Graphic Novel*, discuss current events and the issue of racism and violence towards First Nations women and girls. Why are First Nations women and girls at such high risk? What might be the solutions?

Life on the Rez

In *Nobody Cries at Bingo*, Dawn, as narrator, gives readers an up-close and personal look at life on the Okanese First Nations reserve. Author Dawn Dumont tackles stereotypes head-on but also shows readers that teenagers on the Rez struggle with many of the same issues as teenagers anywhere. This book is a perfect springboard for a discussion of the history of Native reserves, life on reserves, land claims and Canadian Native issues more generally. Life on the Okanese reserve could be compared to life in Attawapiskat, one of the most impoverished places in Canada. For a dramatic photo essay of Attawapiskat visit www.thewalrus.ca. An elder from a reserve could be invited to speak to the class, and some First Nations reserves have cultural outreach programs that might include field-trip opportunities.
1. The number of books being written by members of First Nations, Métis and Inuit (FNMI) communities is on the rise and so is the awareness of these books. Tell us what that means to you as a member of this community and as a writer.

I think we have stories to tell, all of us. We used to pass those stories down orally, but now we are finding and embracing new ways of passing down stories. It’s being done through our artists: our dancers, our painters, our musicians and, yes, our writers. To me, this means a great deal, because the stories we have to tell are important, and not only for us, the First Nations, but for everybody. The things we have to say, the stories we have to tell, are about our history, culture, language, traditions and teachings, and are a piece of who we are as Canadians. You know, when I write graphic novels on history, I say that they are Canadian history, not indigenous history, because the two are inexorably linked. More than that, they are the same. The moment we realize and accept that we’re all in this together is the moment we will be able to move forward together in healing, and part of that healing process is sharing and learning about our stories.

2. What was the first book you wrote and what inspired you to write it?

The first book I wrote was a graphic novel called The Life of Helen Betty Osborne. I was inspired to write it because I saw a gap between what we should be learning as Canadians and what we have access to. When I was growing up, I learned nothing about indigenous people, not in terms of Canadian history and not in terms of culture. As a First Nations person, this had its own personal impact on me, but it also had an impact on my friends who were non-First Nations, not that any of us realized it at the time. Canada still has a problem, and at its root is ignorance and racism. The only way to fight that is to provide education that is meaningful and purposeful. So, since the Helen Betty Osborne graphic novel, I’ve tried to bring engaging works into the classroom that will contribute to that education.

3. The preservation and revitalization of indigenous languages and culture is an important goal that many members of the FNMI communities are striving to achieve, and it is imperative that today’s youth have knowledge of indigenous cultures in Canada. How can books help to accomplish these goals?

I may have already answered this, somewhat, previously. But what I will add is that books are perhaps one of the most important ways to accomplish this, along with other forms of communication, for example via art, because they embrace ways that speak to youth where information is retained through engagement. And youth are the gatekeepers to tomorrow. What we feed them with, in this case literature, is what they grow with today and tomorrow. Not only that, it’s what they, in turn, feed others.

4. When you speak to young audiences about your books what is the most important message you wish to convey to them?

Simply look around the room. Look at all the different cultures. All of those cultures exist within a larger community that we are all a part of. Let’s take the time to acknowledge and respect those differences. Part of that process is understanding where we have been, how this has brought us to where we are today, and, in so doing, finding a better place tomorrow.

David Alexander Robertson is a graphic novelist and writer who has long been an advocate for educating youth on indigenous history and contemporary issues. He has created several graphic novels, was a contributor to the anthology Manitowapow: Aboriginal Writings from the Land of Water (2012) and is currently the co-creator and writer for the upcoming television series The Reckoner. David lives with his wife and five children in Winnipeg, where he works in the field of indigenous education.
Dreaming in Indian: Contemporary Native American Voices
Edited by Lisa Charleyboy and Mary Beth Leatherdale
Illustrated by Various Artists
Annick Press, 2014
Grades 7-12 (Ages 12-17)

Truly universal in its themes, this visually stunning anthology from some of the most ground-breaking Native artists today will shatter commonly held stereotypes and challenge readers to rethink their own place in the world. Divided into four sections — Roots, Battles, Medicines and Dreamcatchers — this book offers readers a unique insight into a community often misunderstood and misrepresented by the mainstream media. This collection of writing, artwork and photographs showcases the lives of indigenous people, giving them a chance to tell their stories, their way. It offers a fresh, new perspective on what it means to be Native in North America. Insightful, thought provoking and beautifully honest, this book will appeal to young adult readers. An innovative and captivating design enhances each contribution and makes for a truly unique reading experience.

Thematic Links: Biography | Community | Prejudice | First Nations | Acceptance | Stereotyping

Fatty Legs
Written by Christy Jordan-Fenton and Margaret Pokiak-Fenton
Illustrated by Liz Amini-Holmes
Annick Press, 2010
ISBN: 978-1-55451-246-1
Grades 4-7 (Ages 9-12)

Eight-year-old Margaret Pokiak has set her sights on learning to read, even though it means leaving her village in the high Arctic. Faced with unceasing pressure, her father finally agrees to let her attend school, but he warns Margaret of the terrors of residential schools. At school Margaret soon encounters the Raven, a black-cloaked nun with a hooked nose and bony fingers that resemble claws, who immediately dislikes the strong-willed young Margaret. Intending to humiliate her, the heartless Raven gives grey stockings to all the girls — except Margaret, who gets red ones. In an instant, Margaret is the laughingstock of the entire school. In the face of such cruelty, Margaret refuses to be intimidated and bravely gets rid of the stockings. Although a sympathetic nun stands up for Margaret, in the end it is this brave young girl who gives the Raven a lesson in the power of human dignity. For lesson plan ideas visit www.annickpress.com.

Thematic Links: Biography | Inuit | Arctic | Residential Schools | Identity | Family

Goodbye Buffalo Bay
Written by Larry Loyie with Constance Brissenden
Theytus Books, 2008
Grades 5-8 (Ages 10-13)

For the six years Lawrence was at the St. Bernard Mission, he wasn’t allowed to speak to any girls, and was never allowed to speak Cree — his native language. He watched nuns beat small boys and heard them cry and shiver at night. When he tried to escape, he was caught and punished by the Father Superior. Fortunately, his friendships and the tutelage and kind words of Sister Theresa help make his last school days bearable. Now 13, Lawrence returns home and struggles to find acceptance and a place in a community that seems to have forgotten him. He makes a name for himself as a hard worker and, with the help of his grandparents, his increased confidence and the money he has saved up, he leaves Slave Lake to fulfill his dream of living in the mountains. This poignant memoir includes a section entitled “A Brief History of Residential Schools,” a small Cree glossary and a website link where readers can see photographs of students and activities at a residential school.

Thematic Links: Residential Schools | Memoir | Cree | Coming of Age | Identity
The Great Law
Written by David Bouchard
Illustrated by Raymond R. Skye
Music by Joanne Shenandoah
More Than Words Publishers, 2014
ISBN: 978-1-927727-03-4
Grades 4-7 (Ages 9-12)

Hiawatha is perhaps the best-known First Nations person of all time. His fame can be directly linked to Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s masterful poem, *The Song of Hiawatha*, which contains multiple historical inaccuracies. This book, significantly directed by Rotinonhshón:ni artist Raymond Skye, works to correct those inaccuracies. The Rotinonhshón:ni are a strong and proud people. Truth and understanding are a significant part of their vision and mission. *The Great Law* is the way the Rotinonhshón:ni would have their children hear of the great Chief Ayen-watha (Hiawatha), not as a hero, but as one who worked alongside Peacemaker in establishing The Great Peace, The Great Law. Each page of text includes the English version beside the Mohawk-language translation.

**Thematic Links:** Hiawatha | History | Language | Traditional Knowledge

How We Saw the World: Nine Native Stories of the Way Things Began (Recordbooks)
Written and Illustrated by C.J. Taylor
Tundra Books, 1999
ISBN: 978-0-88776-373-1
Grades 2-6 (Ages 7-11)

All peoples have their own stories of how the Earth was created, what separated the land from the seas and how the many animals, fish and other creatures came to have their particular characteristics. Few created as varied and wonder-filled explanations as the Native peoples of North America. In this book, Mohawk artist C.J. Taylor provides young readers with a fascinating collection of tales that explain the origins of tornadoes, forest fires, butterflies, horses and Niagara Falls, why dogs are our best friends and even tells a very funny story of why owls and rabbits look the way they do. These beautifully illustrated stories were drawn from the traditions of the Algonquin, Bella Coola, Blackfoot, Cheyenne, Mohawk and many other peoples.

**Thematic Links:** First Nations | Myths & Legends | Origin Stories | North America

The Inuit Thought of It: Amazing Arctic Innovations (We Thought of It)
Written by Alootook Ipellie with David MacDonald
Annick Press, 2007
ISBN: 978-1-55451-088-7
Grades 4-7 (Ages 9-12)

Today’s Arctic communities have all the comforts of modern living. Yet the Inuit survived in this unforgiving landscape for hundreds of years with nothing but the land and their own ingenuity. This book explores more than 40 amazing innovations that helped the Inuit make their home in one of the harshest environments on earth. Some inventions are still familiar to us — the one-person watercraft known as a kayak still retains its Inuit name. Other innovations have been replaced by modern technology — slitted snow goggles protected Inuit eyes long before sunglasses arrived on the scene. From dogsleds to Inuksuks, this book shows us the remarkable resourcefulness and creativity of the Inuit. Included are a timeline, photographs, maps, a note about the symbols used in the Inuktitut language and information about many aspects of the Inuit way of life.

**Thematic Links:** Inuit | Culture | History | Inventions | Resourcefulness | Innovation

Jordin Tootoo: The Highs and Lows in the Journey of the First Inuk to Play in the NHL (Recordbooks)
Written by Melanie Florence
Lorimer, 2010
Grades 7 and up (Ages 12 and up)

Hockey is a relatively new sport in Canada’s North. It wasn’t until 2003 that Jordin Kudluk “Thunder” Tootoo became the first Inuk to play in an NHL game. Although hockey is a rough sport to begin with, Jordin Tootoo is known for having to “fight his way through.” Jordin has had more than his fair share of fights both on and off the ice. He has had to overcome many social problems that are associated with the North, struggle against the discrimination and culture shock he encountered after leaving
Rankin Inlet and moving to Alberta to play in the Juniors, and see his way through the grief of losing his NHL-bound older brother and hero, Terence Tootoo, to suicide in 2002. This accessible biography explores the struggles and accomplishments of one of the most recognized role models for young Aboriginal and Inuit people today.

**Thematic Links:** Hockey | Jordin Tootoo | Inuit | Discrimination | Determination | Biography

Gaylord Powless was playing lacrosse by the age of three. His father was a famous player who taught Gaylord everything he knew. But Gaylord’s tremendous skill and native ancestry made him a target on and off the lacrosse floor. Gaylord learned that the best revenge was to improve his game. He became a standard for sportsmanship and skill, and a pioneer in promoting equality for Canadian athletes of all ethnic backgrounds. Since lacrosse is still not familiar to many Canadians, although gaining in popularity, the author includes a chapter providing an overview of the history of lacrosse, which has its roots in Tewaarathon, a game that played a central role in First Nations culture, especially that of the Mohawk people — the tribal group to which the Powless family belongs. This accessible biography also includes information boxes and a glossary of lacrosse terms.

**Thematic Links:** Lacrosse | Sportsmanship | Gaylord Powless | Biography | Mohawk First Nations

Therese Zoe is a Tlicho woman from Gamèti in the Northwest Territories. In this book, Therese shares her love for her community and translates the sacred stories and traditional wisdom of her brother-in-law and his sister. Join Tlicho youth as they learn about making dry-fish, bows and arrows and birchbark baskets; the practices of old-time healers and the sacred stories that tell the history of the Tlicho people. Some of the stories related in this book have never been written down before — these versions of sacred stories are a gift to young readers across Canada, to be used wisely. The Land Is Our Storybook is a series of books for children about the diverse lands and cultures of Canada’s Northwest Territories. In the books, storytellers, elders and cultural leaders from different language groups share real stories of everyday life in the North today. Other titles include *The Delta is My Home*, *We Feel Good Out Here* and *Proud to be Inuvialuit*.

**Thematic Links:** Northwest Territories | Tlicho Culture | History | Self-Government | Storytelling Tradition

Deborah Ellis, a writer and activist, travelled across Canada and the United States for two years, interviewing indigenous young people about their daily lives, things that interested them and how being Native has affected who they are and how they see the world. She gives these youth a voice that they may not otherwise have had in the mainstream media, and their voices are as frank and varied as the children themselves. In this powerful collection
of stories, readers will meet a kid who has spent most of his life in foster homes and motels, another who started drinking at the age of 12, the winner of a local science fair, a girl who defines herself as more Native than American and another young person who comes from a family with a history of alcoholism and suicide, who is now a writer and powwow dancer. Some stories are heartbreaking, but most will leave readers filled with hope. All royalties from the sale of this book go to the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada.

**Thematic Links:** Native Youth | North America | Contemporary Stories | Biography | Autobiography

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**My First Métis Lobstick: A Story of Métis Life During the Voyageur Fur Trade Days**

Written and Illustrated by Leah Marie Dorion
Michif translation by Norman Fleury
Gabriel Dumont Institute, 2014
ISBN: 978-92679-517-1
Grades 1-4 (Ages 6-9)

This book, written in English and Michif, takes young readers back to Canada’s fur-trade era by focusing on a Métis family’s preparations for a lobstick celebration and feast in the boreal forest. Through the eyes of a young boy, readers see how important lobstick making and ceremony was to the Métis community. From the Great Lakes to the present-day Northwest Territories, lobstick poles — important cultural and geographical markers, which merged Cree, Ojibway and French-Canadian traditions — dotted the landscape of the Canadian great northern boreal forest. This little-known aspect of Métis history vividly comes to life through Leah Marie Dorion’s crisp prose and stunning gallery-quality artwork. This book includes a CD.

**Thematic Links:** Métis | Canadian History | Lobstick Poles | Fur Trading

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**A Native American Thought of It: Amazing Inventions and Innovations (We Thought of It)**

Written by Rocky Landon with David MacDonald
Annick Press, 2008
Grades 4-7 (Ages 9-12)

Everyone knows that moccasins, canoes and toboggans were invented by the Aboriginal people of North America, but did you know that they also developed their own sign language, syringe needles and a secret ingredient in soda pop? Depending on where they lived, Aboriginal communities relied on their ingenuity to harness the resources available to them. In this book, you’ll discover more than 70 items and ideas that were crucial to the survival of North America’s original inhabitants. Most of the innovations you’ll read about were developed before the arrival of Europeans. Some have changed very little over the centuries, while other innovations have been adapted over time. Filled with maps, photographs, a note on Native languages and lots of information, this book provides a good starting point for teachers and students as they begin to learn about Native North Americans.

**Thematic Links:** First Nations | Native North Americans | Culture | History | Inventions | Creativity

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**Nowhere Else on Earth: Standing Tall for the Great Bear Rainforest**

Written by Caitlyn Vernon
Orca Book Publishers, 2011
ISBN: 978-1-55469-303-0
Grades 3-9 (Ages 8-14)

You don’t have to live in Canada’s Great Bear Rainforest to benefit from its existence, but after you read this passionate and informative book, you will want to visit this magnificent part of the planet. Environmental activist Caitlyn Vernon guides young readers through a forest of information, sharing her personal stories, her knowledge and her concern for this beautiful place. She includes a chapter about the First Nations people who live in this area and sidebars with their personal stories entitled “Voices from the Coast.” Full of breathtaking photographs and
suggestions for ways to preserve this unique ecosystem, this comprehensive and compelling book is a timely and inspiring reminder that we need to stand up for our wild places before they are gone. This book has a dedicated website — visit [www.greatbearrainforest.ca](http://www.greatbearrainforest.ca) to find teacher and student resources, view the online photo gallery or read a sample chapter from the book. A teacher’s guide is available at [www.orcabook.com](http://www.orcabook.com).

**Thematic Links:** Great Bear Rainforest | First Nations | Ecology | Environmentalism | Activism | Ecosystems | Conservation

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### Residential Schools, With the Words and Images of Survivors: A National History

Written by Larry Loyie with Wayne K. Spear and Constance Brissenden

Indigenous Education Press, 2014

ISBN: 978-0-9939371-0-1

Grades 7 and up (Ages 12 and up)

This unique national history honours the survivors, the former students who attended residential schools. This essential volume, written by award-winning Cree author Larry Loyie, a survivor of St. Bernard Mission residential school and co-authored by Constance Brissenden and Mohawk author Wayne K. Spear, reflects their ongoing commitment to express the truths about residential school experiences and to honour the survivors whose voices are shared in this book. Along with the voices, readers will be engaged by the evocative archival and contemporary photographs. A detailed full-colour map showing residential schools, a timeline with key dates, a glossary and a helpful index (including names of survivors and schools) make this a must-have resource for schools and libraries.

**Thematic Links:** Residential Schools | Canadian History | Native Peoples

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### The Shadows that Rush Past: A Collection of Frightening Inuit Folktales

Written by Rachel A. Qitsualik

Illustrated by Emily Fiegenschuh and Larry MacDougall

Inhabit Media, 2011

ISBN: 978-1-926569-46-8

Grades 4-7 (Ages 9-12)

The Arctic is brimming with ancient stories that are still told today — tales filled with daring escapes, mysterious strangers and fantastic adventures. But, not all the stories are happy ones... this book introduces young readers to some of the scariest stories from Inuit mythology. Critically acclaimed Inuit writer Rachel A. Qitsualik brings to life four fearsome creatures: the *amautalik*, *akhla*, *namurluk* and *mahaha*. Each story is accompanied by a full-page illustration of these creatures: child-stealing ogresses; monsters that are half-man, half-grizzly bear; polar bears one hundred times the size of normal bears; and a smiling creature with a deadly tickle. These tales will thrill young readers with chilling frights on every page.

**Thematic Links:** Myths & Legends | Inuit | Arctic | Monsters

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### Shannen and the Dream for a School

(A Kids’ Power Book)

Written by Janet Wilson

Second Story Press, 2011

ISBN: 978-1-926920-30-6

Grades 4-8 (Ages 9-13)

This is the true story of Shannen Koostachin and the people of Attawapiskat, a Cree community in Northern Ontario, fighting for a new school since the late 1970s when a fuel leak contaminated their original school building. In 2008, 13-year-old Shannen and the other students made a YouTube video describing the poor conditions of their classroom portables, and their plea for a decent school garnered support from across the country. Inspired, the students’ Grade 8 class visited Ottawa where Shannen spoke passionately about the need to give Native children the opportunity to succeed. She was nominated for the International Children’s Peace Prize, and her passion made politicians stand up and take notice. Tragically, Shannen was killed in a car crash before she could see her dream
fulfilled. Her family, friends and supporters continue to honour her memory, working for equality for children in communities everywhere.

**Thematic Links:** Native Peoples | Attawapiskat | Education | Children’s Rights | Social Justice

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**Stones, Bones and Stitches: Storytelling Through Inuit Art**

Written by Shelly Falconer and Shawna White
Tundra Books, 2007
Grades 6 and up (Ages 11 and up)

This informative book weaves a tapestry of fascinating Canadian stories by focusing on several important works of art from the McMichael Canadian Art Collection in Kleinburg, Ontario. The evolving character of the North is explored through the lens of some of Canada’s most significant Inuit artists. Included are eight different works, from sculpture and prints to fabric art. They are highlighted and explained by introductions to the artists, materials, geography, legends and stories. Readers gain insight into the artists’ lives, communities and working conditions through photographs and maps, brief histories of the region and a collection of interesting facts such as these: an igloo uses the same design principles found in the great cathedrals of Europe, the word Eskimo is a derogatory term meaning “eaters of raw flesh” and, according to legends, the stone figures called Inukshuks protect travellers and point them to the safest pathway.

**Thematic Links:** Inuit Artists | Arctic | Inuit Art | Traditional Stories | Inuit History

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**A Stranger at Home: A True Story**

Written by Christy Jordan-Fenton and Margaret Pokiak-Fenton
Illustrated by Liz Amini-Holmes
Annick Press, 2011
ISBN: 978-1-55451-361-1
Grades 4-7 (Ages 9-12)

Travelling up the Mackenzie River to Tuktoyaktuk to be reunited with her family in the Arctic, 10-year-old Margaret (Olemaun) can hardly contain her excitement. It’s been two years since her parents delivered her to the outsiders’ school run by the dark-cloaked nuns and brothers. Coming ashore, Margaret spots her family, but her mother barely recognizes her, crying out, “Not my girl.” Margaret quickly discovers that she is now marked as an outsider — she has forgotten much of the language and stories of her people; her feet hurt in her customary kamik; and she can’t stomach the traditional food her mother prepares. However, Margaret gradually relearns her language and her family’s way of living and she feels the Olemaun inside her get stronger. Along the way, she discovers how important it is to remain true to the ways of her people — and to herself. Highlighted by archival photos and striking artwork, this first-person account of a young girl’s struggle to find her place in her family and community will inspire young readers to ask what it means to belong. This is the sequel to Fatty Legs.

**Thematic Links:** Biography | Inuit | Arctic | Residential Schools | Identity | Family

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36 Non-Fiction
Activities

**Storytelling Through Inuit and Native Art**

Art can tell powerful stories, stretch imaginations and expose us to the narratives of other cultures and peoples. Art galleries and museums across Canada such as The McMichael Gallery, whose Inuit collection is featured in *Stones, Bones and Stitches*, the Glenbow Museum in Calgary, the Winnipeg Art Gallery, the National Gallery of Canada and the Nova Scotia Museum offer wide-ranging collections of Native and Inuit art and are an extraordinary resource for students. Many collections and exhibitions can also be found online at the Virtual Museum of Canada, [www.virtualmuseum.ca](http://www.virtualmuseum.ca). Allow students to wander and discover these stories through a visual exploration of Inuit and Native artworks. There are numerous possible extension activities students could engage in such as exploring the materials artists utilize, their communities, the myths and legends that inspire their art, etc.

**Amazing Inventions**

The Inuit and First Nations peoples are extraordinarily resourceful and have, over the centuries, created ingenious solutions to the problems of their environment and everyday living conditions. Many of these inventions are explored in *The Inuit Thought of It* and *A Native American Thought of It*. Have junior or intermediate students choose one such innovation or invention to learn about. Through a closer examination of a particular invention or innovation, students will learn about the people who developed it — their environment, their communities, etc. Working alone or in groups, students should learn what problem the invention solved, what materials were used, how the invention/innovation has changed over time and if it is still in use today. Models, interactive maps or poster boards are all possibilities.

**Exploring Residential Schools**

Residential schooling remains a pervasive and powerful theme in First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities. The topic is a fantastic opportunity for blending Social Studies and Language Arts in the classroom. Larry Loyie’s book *Residential Schools, With the Words and Images of Survivors* is a rich starting point for a cross-curricular examination of The Indian Act and long-lasting impact of the residential schooling system. After some class discussion about the issues, students can choose a novel to read such as *Sugar Falls* (graphic novel), *Good for Nothing, No Time to Say Goodbye* or a narrative non-fiction book such as *Fatty Legs*, *A Stranger at Home* or *Goodbye Buffalo Bay*. These books all deal with different aspects of residential schooling and will provide more meaningful understanding and personal connections for many students.

**Youth To Youth**

The contemporary reality of many First Nations, Métis and Inuit youth is varied, complex and sometimes difficult. Both *Dreaming in Indian* and *Looks Like Daylight* provide windows into these worlds that students, whose own lives are often difficult, will find compelling. As Lee Maracle states in her Foreword to *Dreaming in Indian*,

> “The pages of this book carry their ancestors with them. They carry the incredible heroism of the silent years...when resistance and our beliefs, our stories, were whispered in hushed tones, in curtained humble homes, in gasps, between the punitive and prohibitive power of colonialism...They sing out loud in verses plain and compelling. They cry freedom in words commanding and unapologetic. They do so with tender insistence, bravery and beauty.”

High school students can create their own autobiography, highlighting a part of their lives, in response to reading these books. They should be encouraged to be as creative as they want — by writing prose or poetry, or creating a multi-media piece exploring some aspect of themselves.
1. The number of books being written by members of First Nations, Métis and Inuit (FNMI) communities is on the rise and so is the awareness of these books. Tell us what that means to you as a member of this community and as a writer.

Going back 25 years, I was in a library in northern British Columbia. I looked for Aboriginal books on the shelves. There were no books about us written by us. That was the start of my determination to write books about Aboriginal people, culture and traditions in a truthful way. For me, it means getting beyond the stereotypes that make us seem like puppets. In my books, I share the traditional family way of life that I lived, and that many of us still live. I’m showing that our way of life was and is a beautiful way of life. In response to a reading in Regina, a Cree student said, “I feel proud.” That means everything to me.

2. What was the first book you wrote and what inspired you to write it?

More than 20 years ago, I took a creative writing class. I wrote about my years at St. Bernard Mission residential school in Grouard, Alberta. One of the other students said, “It must have been good in that school.” I knew then that I wasn’t writing the truth.

I started with a play about my school experience, then wrote my first children’s book, As Long as the Rivers Flow, in 2002 (Groundwood Books) about my last traditional summer before residential school. It won several major awards and opened up the subject when I visited classrooms. I wrote the sequel Goodbye Buffalo Bay (Theytus Books) about my last year in school and moving on at 14 years of age. I wrote the truth, sometimes dramatic and sad, sometimes funny.

My last goal was to write an accessible national history. The result is my new book, Residential Schools, With the Words and Images of Survivors (Shingwauk Residential Schools Centre/Indigenous Education Press-www.goodminds.com). I’ve shared the truth about residential schools in a way that honours the resilience and strength of the survivors.

3. The preservation and revitalization of indigenous languages and culture is an important goal that many members of the FNMI communities are striving to achieve, and it is imperative that today’s youth have knowledge of indigenous cultures in Canada. How can books help to accomplish these goals?

During my lifetime, I’ve seen pride return to our cultures. Every day, it grows stronger because of the positive changes being made. Through books, class visits and cultural activities, schools are beginning to know who we are as Aboriginal people, our history and what we have overcome and attained. Aboriginal traditions enhance the mainstream, making us all stronger. Books written by FNMI authors are a gateway to sharing that pride.

4. When you speak to young audiences about your books what is the most important message you wish to convey to them?

My message is: Learn about your own culture and its traditions, whatever your background. Each student has a personal story to tell. Children in residential schools were not allowed to speak their native language. Our human rights were ignored. Understanding human rights is important to share in the classroom. In When the Spirits Dance: A Cree Boy’s Search for the Meaning of War (Theytus Books), I wrote about the tough times my family experienced during the Second World War years. Many children today have family members in the Armed Forces. In The Moon Speaks Cree: A Winter Adventure (Theytus Books), children get to know a northern lifestyle. All my books are about change and how change affected the lives of our people. Change affects today’s children, too, and makes for good discussions.

Larry Loyie was born in Slave Lake in northwestern Alberta. He lived a traditional Cree First Nations life in his early years and was taken from his family at the age of nine to St. Bernard’s Mission (residential) school in Grouard Alberta. At 14 Larry left the school to work on farms and in logging camps and at 18 he joined the Canadian Forces. After returning from Europe, Larry spent 25 years working as a fisherman, logger and a native counsellor. In the mid-1980s he began reading again and pursued his dream of becoming a writer.
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Julie Flett is an award-winning author, illustrator and artist currently living in Vancouver, BC. She is Cree-Métis. Julie studied fine arts at Concordia University in Montreal and Emily Carr University of Art + Design in Vancouver. She received the Christie Harris Illustrated Children’s Literature Prize and was nominated for the Governor General’s Literary Award for Children’s Literature - Illustration for her book Owls See Clearly at Night (Lii Yiiboo Nayaapiwak lii Swer): A Michif Alphabet (L’alphabet di Michif) (Simply Read, 2010), and most recently Julie’s book Wild Berries/Pakwa che Menisu (Simply Read, 2013) was chosen as the First Nation Communities READ title selection for 2014-2015. As the author and illustrator of the 2014-2015 selection, Julie is the first-time recipient of the 2014 Aboriginal Literature Award, sponsored by the Periodical Marketers of Canada.

Deeply inspired by the quiet and beauty of nature, Julie’s art explores timeless themes of our relationships with place, culture and language. She is well-known for her bilingual picture books that introduce the indigenous languages of Cree and Michif to young readers and her contributions to the preservation and revitalization of indigenous languages. Little You (Orca Book Publishers, 2013), which was written by Richard Van Camp and illustrated by Julie, has been translated into Bush Cree, South Slavey, Dene and Braille. We All Count: A Book of Cree Numbers, a board book written and illustrated by Julie, was published in 2014 by Native Northwest Publishers.

Other books illustrated by Julie include Zoe and the Fawn (Thetys Books, 2006) written by Catherine Jameson and The Moccasins (Thetys Books, 2004) written by Earl Einarson. Zoe and the Fawn was nominated for the Marilyn Baillie Picture Book Award and the recipient of the Moonbeam Children’s Book Award, Multicultural – Picture Book. The Moccasins was shortlisted for the Christie Harris Illustrated Children’s Literature Prize. Dolphin SOS, written by Roy and Slavia Miki, was published in 2014 by Tradewind Books.