

Annick Press

INDIGENOUS STUDY GUIDE

AN EDUCATOR'S GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING
INDIGENOUS CONTENT IN K-12 CLASSROOMS

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INTRODUCTION

Annick Press has been publishing books by and about Indigenous Peoples for over twenty-five years. Ranging from picture books to non-fiction titles to young-adult literature, these books have brought insights, information, and literary connections to and about Indigenous experiences.

This study guide is for educators and will introduce Indigenous worldviews, histories, perspectives, and contemporary issues as they relate to the books included in our Indigenous titles. The information provided is a starting point in understanding the truth about the history of this land now known as Canada. It is information that will provide a solid context for using these texts in classrooms.

For over 150 years, residential schools operated throughout Canada. Over 150,000 children attended these schools, many of whom never returned to their homes. In most cases, attendees did not just attend the schools but “survived” them. It is for this reason that many who attended prefer the term *survivor* to describe the experiences they endured. Some survivors report positive experiences playing sports, learning certain skills and abilities, gaining lifelong friends, and/or attaining employment. The vast majority, however, report traumatic experiences.

The impacts of these schools continue to this day. In 2009, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) was established to listen to survivors’ stories and to make a plan for healing and change. Central to the final report of this process are 94 Calls to Action, laid out by the Commission to provide direction towards reconciliation in Canada. Of the calls, two are specific to K–12 education:

62. We call upon the federal, provincial, and territorial governments, in consultation and collaboration with Survivors, Aboriginal peoples, and educators, to:

- Make age-appropriate curriculum on residential schools, Treaties, and Aboriginal peoples’ historical and contemporary contributions to Canada a mandatory education requirement for Kindergarten to Grade Twelve students.

63. We call upon the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada to maintain an annual commitment to Aboriginal educational issues, including:

- Developing and implementing Kindergarten to Grade Twelve curriculum and learning resources on Aboriginal peoples in Canadian history, and the history and legacy of residential schools.
- Sharing information and best practices on teaching curriculum related to residential schools and Aboriginal history.
- Building student capacity for intercultural understanding, empathy, and mutual respect.

The 94 Calls to Action (https://nctr.ca/assets/reports/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf) provide a good understanding of the road forward in education. As a direct response to the TRC and Calls to Action, much of the work involves advancing the conversations and actions about embedding Indigenous content into K–12 education and beyond.

Education was used as a tool of assimilation of Indigenous Peoples not only in Canada but in the United States and Australia. When Indigenous children were in residential schools, they were learning that their stories, histories, traditions, languages, and ways of being were unacceptable. And in the Western education system, non-Indigenous students were getting the same messaging about Indigenous Peoples. Senator Murray Sinclair, when in his role as Chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, stated that it was the educational system which got us into this situation, and it is education which will get us out. He maintained that it took generations to get to where we are today, and it will take us generations to see real change. In 2011, Sinclair went on to say that “there are no quick and easy solutions because there are none” (Sinclair, “What Is Reconciliation,” <https://vimeo.com/25389165>).

Indigenous Peoples have lived on this land called Canada since time immemorial, and yet, many educators have little knowledge of Indigenous Peoples. This is due in large part to colonization and the assimilative process. The intent was to fully assimilate Indigenous Peoples, so there would have been no need to know their stories. In 1920, Duncan Campbell Scott, a leader in the Department of Indian Affairs, stated, “I want to get rid of the Indian problem . . . Our objective is to continue until there is not a

single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic and there is no Indian question, and no Indian Department.” Given the legacy of this type of governmental policy, there is much work to do in learning about and teaching the stories and histories of Indigenous Peoples.

It can feel uncomfortable venturing into areas outside of one’s own knowledge and expertise. There may be historical and cultural contexts that are new. Having an open stance for learning is essential. Do make sure that you know the book well before reading it in your class. Reference the content in this guide for context and, if needed, look through the additional sources for support. Some books contain words in the language of the author. Take the time to become familiar with these words. Call to Action 14 calls upon the government to make the teaching of Indigenous languages in public schools a priority, so including even a few words in lessons is important.

If possible and appropriate, connect with local Indigenous community partners. If this is not possible, it is important to be familiar with whose ancestral and treaty lands your school is presently situated on, and to consider how the local people and practices are acknowledged in your schools and classrooms. School districts in most provinces have Indigenous education leads. These individuals will have appropriate connections in your community and will know the protocols for engaging the community members. These protocols will vary by region and by guest. Connecting with the Indigenous education lead for your school district will ensure that these connections are made with the right people in a culturally appropriate way.

Be open to learning alongside students. This guide in itself can be a co-learning opportunity with your students. Remember that colonization has left a lasting impact on Indigenous communities, and some Indigenous students and families may not know these histories and worldviews themselves. It is important that educators not expect Indigenous students to be the experts in the room, unless they volunteer to share.

Teaching about Indigenous issues can be very challenging. Administrators, teachers, and students from all walks of life may have strong emotional reactions to or triggers from specific topics. These could be caused by experiences with residential school survivors, family members, or Canadian society. Educators must be prepared for these situations and help those around them deal with the complex feelings that may emerge. It is therefore crucial that health supports be available, and people knowledgeable about the issues be included in

educational planning. These may include school counsellors, Indigenous knowledge keepers, or other health practitioners in a community.

It is critical to honour Indigenous voices telling their own stories. Ask who is telling this story. Is this their story to tell? These are important considerations before engaging with stories. Honouring #ownvoices has been a social media movement. Sometimes, non-Indigenous (settler) writers are telling the story. To ensure there is no appropriation of voice, stories may be told in partnership with Indigenous Peoples. In these books, well-known children's author Robert Munsch partners with Michael Kusugak to tell a story of Inuit. Christy Jordan-Fenton works with her mother-in-law, Margaret Pokiak-Fenton, to tell her stories about residential school. In the intermediate texts, Lisa Charleyboy works with Mary Beth Leatherdale to showcase the multitude of Indigenous creative voices. These partnerships work when done in a good way.

Teaching the full story is as important for settler teachers as it is for Indigenous teachers. Learning these histories, worldviews, perspectives, and contemporary issues is as important for settler students as it is for Indigenous students. Indigenous history is the collective history of this land. This work can start with small steps, such as learning truths and sharing stories. As educators, you are working with the generations to come, and you cannot underestimate your ability to effect change. Every book, conversation, and historical discussion is a step towards restoring positive and respectful relations.

This is your call to action!

KEY TERMINOLOGY

Aboriginal	A term used in the 1990s to refer to the Indigenous Peoples of Canada. It still remains part of the language of many court cases and legal documents. The term is embedded in the Canadian Constitution and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.
colonization	The conquest by one nation of another nation in order to establish a colony on the other nation's territory with the intent of taking power, land, and resources.
Elder	A member of an Indigenous nation who has acquired wisdom through life experiences, education, and reflection who is a custodian of knowledge and lore, and who has been recognized by their community to share knowledge and beliefs.
First Nation(s)	Indigenous nations that occupied territories on Turtle Island before the arrival of Europeans; largely a political term adopted by the Assembly of First Nations in the early 1980s.
Indian	The term used in the past to describe the hundreds of distinct nations of Indigenous Peoples throughout North America. This term should be avoided unless it is referring to the status of individuals under the Indian Act.
Indigenous	The term used to refer to First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples in Canada.
Inuit	The term used to refer to Indigenous Peoples who inhabit the Arctic regions of Canada, Greenland, and Siberia. Inuk is the singular noun for an individual.
Inuit Nunangat	The Inuit homeland in Canada, encompassing the land claim regions of Nunavut, Nunavik in northern Quebec, Nunatsiavut in northern Labrador, and the Inuvialuit Settlement Region of the Northwest Territories.

knowledge keeper/carrier	A person who is trusted, respected, and valued by the Indigenous communities they serve. This acknowledgement has been earned through their many experiences and their willingness to help others in times of need.
Métis	People of mixed Indigenous and non-Indigenous heritage, including people of Red River heritage who emerged during the fur trade from the intermarriage of people of European descent and people of Indigenous descent. The Métis Nation state that Métis means a person who “self-identifies as Métis, is distinct from other Aboriginal peoples, is of historic Métis Nation Ancestry, and is accepted by the Métis Nation.”
missionization	The work done by missionaries to convert Indigenous Peoples to Christianity.
Native American	A term used in the United States to refer to Indigenous Peoples.
residential schools	Institutions established in the late nineteenth century to assimilate Indigenous children into the dominant white culture by separating them from their homes, families, Elders, and communities. The children were taught to be ashamed of who they were, and they were physically, mentally, and sexually abused. Over 150,000 Indigenous children were sent to Indian residential schools between 1879 and the late 1980s.
settlers	Non-Indigenous people who came to Turtle Island to settle.
syllabics	A type of writing system used by Inuktitut-speaking Inuit of Nunavut and Nunavik. Syllabics were also used by other nations such as Cree, Dene, and Blackfoot.

traditional knowledge

Indigenous knowledge systems that were in existence in Indigenous communities before the arrival of non-Indigenous people and that flourished for millennia. These knowledge systems are integrated with the ecosystems in Indigenous territories and include soil and plant taxonomy, cultural and genetic information, animal husbandry, medicine and pharmacology, ecology, zoology, music, arts, architecture, social welfare, governance, and conflict management, plus many others. These knowledge systems continue to exist and evolve.

Turtle Island

The term used by Indigenous Peoples to refer to the continent of North America, based on origin stories told in oral traditions by numerous Indigenous nations.

worldview

The single most important precept of the Indigenous worldview is the notion that the world is alive, conscious, and flowing with knowledge and energy. All that we need to know and all that we should know already exists in the world.

SETTING THE CONTEXT

Before contact and settlement, Indigenous Peoples lived in rich, vibrant communities across Turtle Island. Communities had their own systems of governance, creation stories, and customs and cultural practices. They had their own unique ways of life, with the common tenet that living in relationship with the land was central to their worldviews, knowledge systems, and stories. Indigenous nations carried thousands of linguistic dialects spread over fifty unique languages, with different community customs, practices, and traditions that emerged in unique political and social circumstances.

Every Indigenous community used a name to describe themselves, such as *Anishinaabe* (used by people also known as Ojibwa) and *Haudenosaunee* (Mohawk). These names often translate into English as “the people” and/or people who carry a certain role, practice, or responsibility (*Anishinaabe*: the “spontaneous people,” and *Haudenosaunee*: “people of the longhouse”). These are the names these communities still use to describe themselves today and should be used by anyone interacting with them.

The land provided everything Indigenous communities needed: food, shelter, clothing, tools, and fire. People treated the land with respect, taking only what they needed and ensuring that there would be plenty for generations to come.

Before Europeans came to this land and began recording events and histories, Indigenous Peoples were telling their own stories, passed from generation to generation. While storytelling, song, and ceremony (collectively known as oral traditions) were—and still are—practiced in all communities, writing was also done universally through mediums such as birchbark, papyrus, animal hide, rock, and trees. These expressions relayed messages, recorded stories, histories and creative and critical experiences, and mapped a community’s ties with human and non-human beings (such as animals, plants, stars, the moon, the sun, and the spirit world).

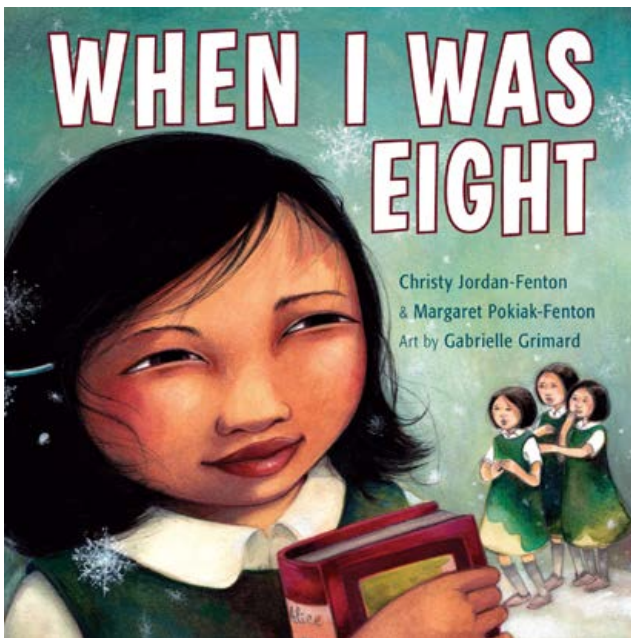
Today, authors share some of these traditional First Nation, Métis, and Inuit stories in print. These stories can be found alongside other stories of the past 500 years of history since contact and reflect the impact colonization has had on Indigenous Peoples from across the country. Some of these are stories of friendship, resilience, and cultural resurgence, while others are stories of some of the harder truths for Indigenous Peoples of the history of this land: the loss of land, language, and culture, the experience of residential schools, and more.

The information in this guide has been developed to support the Indigenous titles in the Annick Press collection. Background information to support the content has been divided into primary, junior, and intermediate/senior levels, and includes fiction and non-fiction books with similar content and/or themes. Please remember that the information provided here is to give educators the confidence to have these important discussions with their classes and to respond to the TRC Calls to Action. This is just the beginning. It is our hope that these conversations will spur understandings of Indigenous Peoples, of good things, and will lead students and educators to dig deeper into these topics.

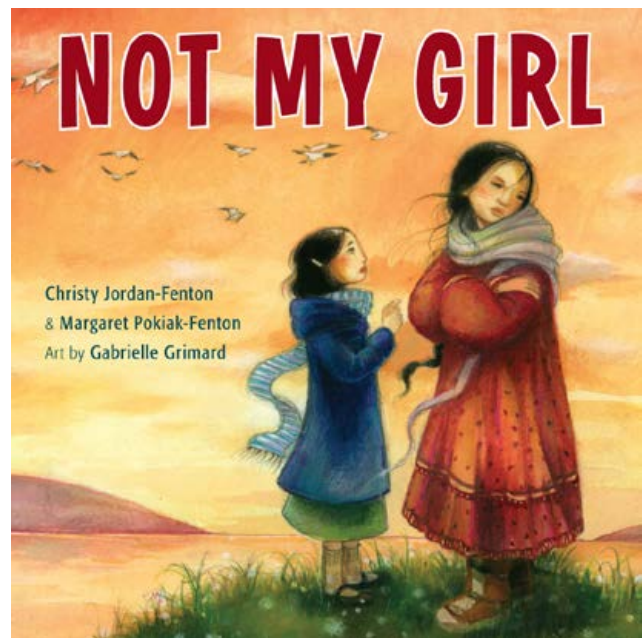
PRIMARY

Books covered in this section: *When I Was Eight* by Christy Jordan-Fenton and Margaret Pokiak-Fenton, *Not My Girl* by Christy Jordan-Fenton and Margaret Pokiak-Fenton, *A Promise Is a Promise* by Robert Munsch and Michael Kusugak, *Baseball Bats for Christmas* by Michael Kusugak, *Hide and Sneak* by Michael Kusugak, *Northern Lights: The Soccer Trails* by Michael Kusugak, *My Arctic 1, 2, 3* by Michael Kusugak

When I Was Eight



Not My Girl



In these two books, author Christy Jordan-Fenton recounts her mother-in-law's experiences at residential school. Both of these picture books are adaptations of award-winning books for middle-grade students, *Fatty Legs* and *A Stranger at Home*.

In *When I Was Eight*, people not from the Arctic are first described as “outsiders,” through the term “outsiders’ books.” These books represent a stark contrast to Olemaun’s life in the North, and she is determined to understand them. Unlike many residential school students, Olemaun (later named Margaret at the school) asked to attend the school because she wanted to learn to read.

The experiences shared in these books are like those of many who attended the schools. They were treated harshly by the nuns/teachers, their appearances were altered (hair cut, European-style clothing), they were forbidden to speak their own languages, and they were forced to spend much time performing menial labour rather than being educated. As discussed in the second book, *Not My Girl*, many residential school students struggled to reconnect with their families on their return to their communities. So much had changed (language, diet, familial roles, etc.) that their traditional ways of being in the world were now often unfamiliar. The reconnection that takes place for Olemaun (Margaret) often did not happen for many other former students.

There have been many resources created to support teaching about residential schools. Some highly recommended resources may be found in the following:

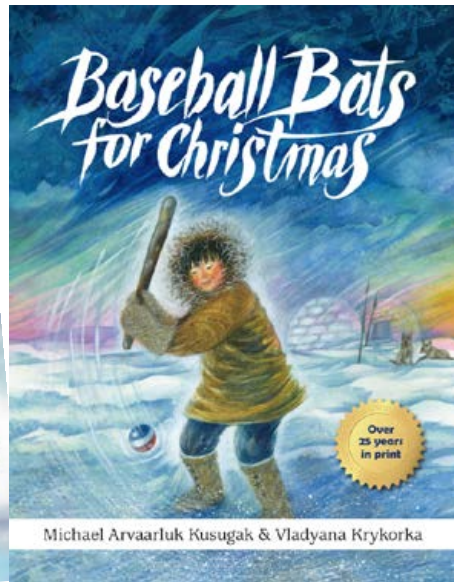
- <http://www.fnesc.ca/grade5irst/>
The First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC) is a First Nations-controlled collective that provides support for First Nations education in British Columbia. This organization provides excellent resource support for educators in their Learning First Peoples series. The link above provides support specific to discussions about residential schools for elementary students. Historical facts about residential schools and strategies for engaging in the conversations, as well as blackline masters of sample activities, are provided. *When I Was Eight*, *Fatty Legs*, and *A Stranger at Home* are referenced in the Literature Resources section of the guide.
- <https://indspire.ca/webinar/uncovering-the-past-a-journey-from-residential-schools-toward-reconciliation-2016-national-gathering/>
This resource, created by staff at the District School Board of Niagara in collaboration with community partners, uses an exemplary inquiry approach to discussing residential schools. Model lesson plans using an inquiry model are provided, along with historical contexts. The Anticipation guides, lesson ideas, and consolidation models provided can be modified to use with any books about residential schools. Both *Fatty Legs* and *A Stranger at Home* are referenced as literature resources.

Reading of *When I Was Eight*: www.youtube.com/watch?v=LSBrkJn3NeI

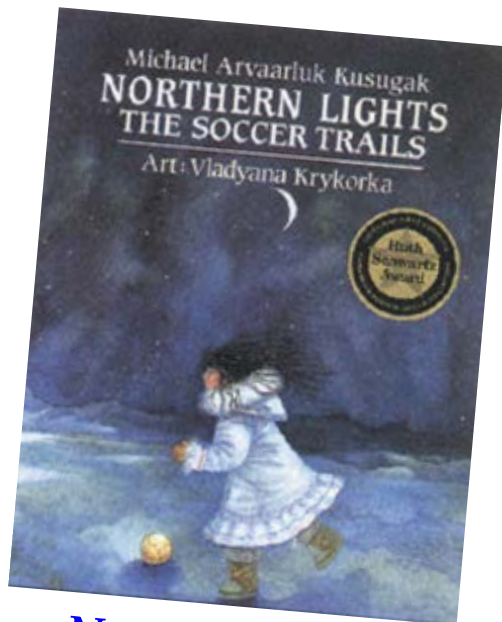
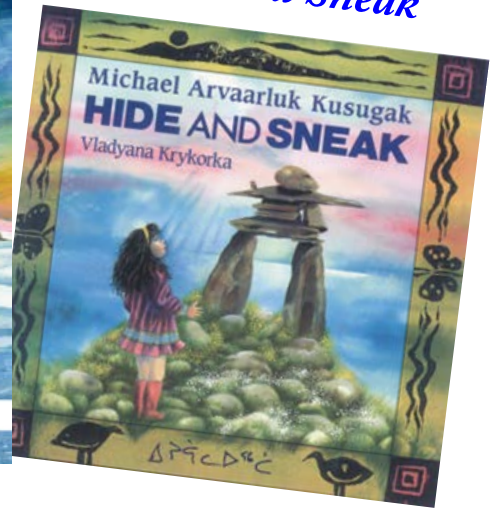
Trailer for *Not My Girl*: www.youtube.com/watch?v=I981OZ_UedA

*Baseball Bats
for Christmas*

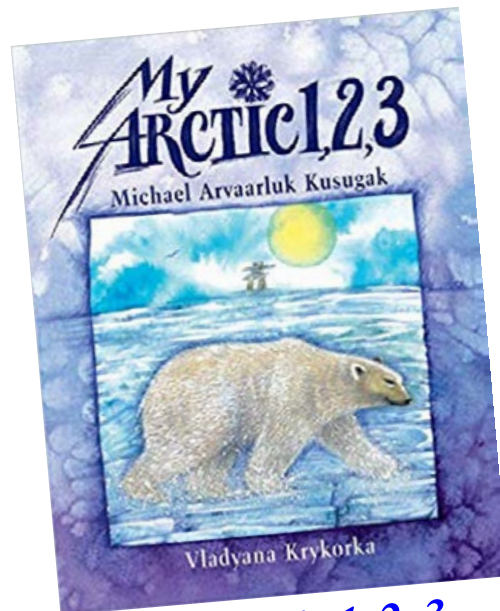
A Promise Is a Promise



Hide and Sneak



*Northern Lights:
The Soccer Trails*



My Arctic 1, 2, 3

It is essential to have an understanding of Inuit and the North for this cluster of books. Inuit Nunangat is the Inuit name given to the four regions of the Arctic across the north of Canada where Inuit are from: Inuvialuit Settlement Region (Northwest Territories), Nunavut, Nunavik (northern Quebec), and Nunatsiavut (northern Labrador). These regions encompass approximately 35 percent of Canada's land mass and about half of its coastline. The majority of the 65,000 Inuit in Canada live in Inuit Nunangat in fifty-three communities. Roughly one quarter of Inuit live in other parts of the country.



For an understanding of Inuit ways of learning, the Canadian Council on Learning (CCL) consulted with Elders, educators, community partners, and researchers to create a visual representation, the Inuit Holistic Lifelong Learning Model (2007). The CCL no longer exists, but the graphic does, housed now on the Inuuqatigiit Centre for Inuit Children, Youth and Families website: <http://inuuqatigiit.ca/2016/08/inuit-holistic-lifelong-learning-model/>.

Looking through this model in advance of the books helps to set the context for Inuit ways of life. Relationships with people and relationships with the land are intricately woven into the culture. Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit (IQ), translated as Inuit traditional knowledge, is the cornerstone of Inuit culture. The Inuit Holistic Lifelong Learning Model shows that there

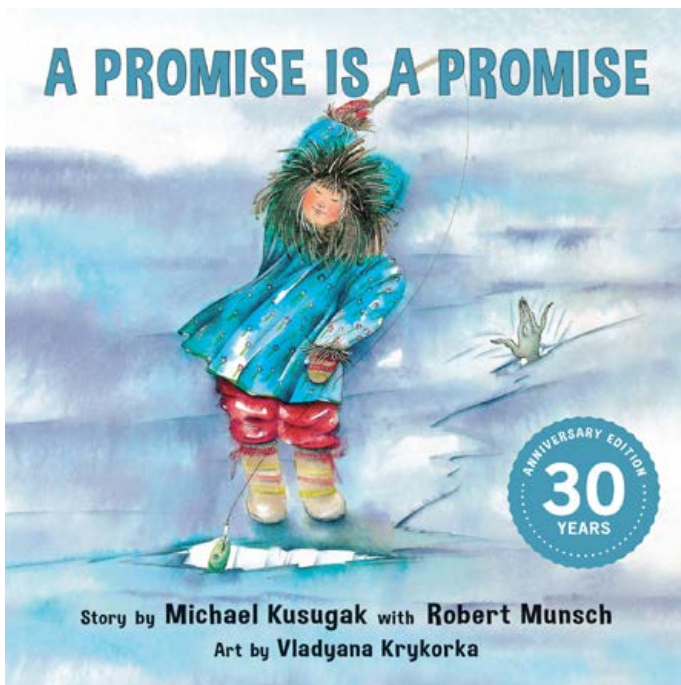
are thirty-eight values and beliefs that are part of IQ, values and beliefs that make up what it means to be Inuit. “If Inuit culture is lost, Inuit lose themselves.” The values shared here are ones that often surface in the books, such as cooperation, sharing, interconnectedness, adaptability, and patience.

The land is central to Inuit stories. It plays a role in all the stories here, from the dangers of getting too close to the sea edge and cracks in the ice, to the seemingly endless tundra in which there are no trees to cut the distance, to the snow and ice. Sharing images of the land with students in advance of reading will help set the context. There are images on the front and back covers of the Michael Kusugak books that replicate traditional Inuit art and, on some, Inuktitut syllabics.

Dreaming, or visioning, plays an important role in these Inuit stories as well.

For more in-depth information about Inuit, the *Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada* is a great resource. It’s available for free online at <https://indigenouspeoplesatlasofcanada.ca/section/inuit/>. One of the sections in this atlas is specifically about Inuit and includes topics from geography to traditional clothing to Inuit games to climate change.

A Promise Is a Promise

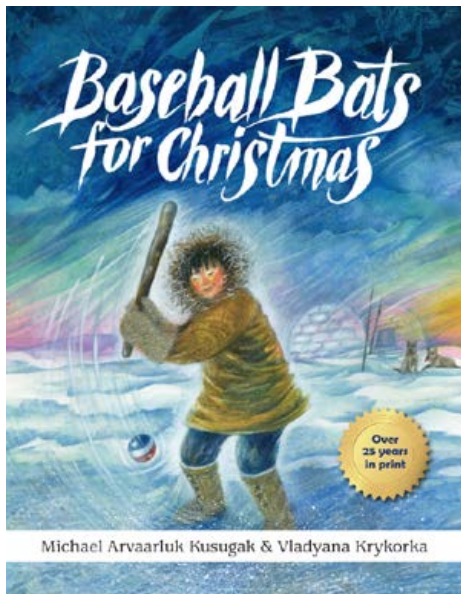


Co-written by Robert Munsch and Michael Kusugak, *A Promise Is a Promise* is a modern version of the story of Qallupilluit (singular: Qallupilluq), the sea creatures that prey on children who do not listen to their parents and go too close to the sea edge and the cracks in the sea ice. A short explanation of the story can be found at the end of the book.

An excellent animated version of the story, *Qalupalik* (same creature, different spelling), is part of the National Film Board of Canada’s Nunavut Animation Lab series. It is available at www.nfb.ca/film/nunavut_animation_lab_qalupalik/.

This short film could be a bit frightening for very young viewers. It is important to remember that parents wanted to ensure that their children would not wander too close to the water, so they would have told stories to discourage them from venturing out and to keep them safe.

Baseball Bats for Christmas



Understanding the topography and history of the land is important to *Baseball Bats for Christmas*. Locate Repulse Bay on a map. It is the only community in North America that lies on the Arctic Circle. The community has had a Hudson's Bay outpost since 1921 and a Catholic church since 1932. Knowing these facts sets the context for understanding how this story is an important one for Inuit. While looking at the map, also note that the name of the community has changed from Repulse Bay to Nauyasat. Many Indigenous communities across Turtle Island are reclaiming their place names over the names that were assigned by settlers. These names don't just embody details about the space but also indicate how to act and live in that space. The place names are viewed as the law. For more information on this community, see www.repulsebay.ca.

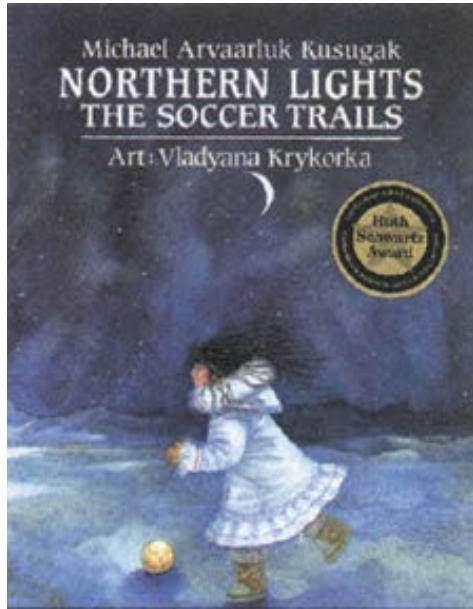
The Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) was formed by wealthy European merchants in 1670 who were granted exclusive trading rights on any of the lands whose rivers drained into the Hudson Bay. HBC dominated the fur trade for many years. As the fur trade dried up, HBC sold its territory, Rupert's Land, to Canada. At this point, HBC began opening retail stores and many trading posts in Canada's North, such as Repulse Bay.

The periods of missionization varied across the North: in the late 1700s for the Inuit in Labrador (by the Moravian Church) and later in the 1800s across the central and western Arctic. The first permanent mission in what is now Nunavut was established near Pangnirtung, Baffin Island, in 1894. Goods from the south were expensive and arrived only periodically by plane, so the commercial side of Christian holidays took longer to reach communities. This, combined with a terrain that does not have any trees, made "standing-ups" as a Christmas tree inside a house unknown.

Page 16 Dogs were essential to transportation in the North as sled dogs until snowmobiles became mass produced in the 1970s. A dog would be a valuable gift.

Taima means to end.

Northern Lights: The Soccer Trails



The explanation for *Norther Lights: The Soccer Trails* is on the back cover, where Kusugak shares the traditional story of aurora borealis, and the Inuit belief that the spirits of loved ones who have died are playing soccer in the sky.

The big sickness referenced near the beginning of the text when Kataujaq’s mother was sent “way down south” is tuberculosis (TB), an airborne disease that can be cured with treatment. But TB is still a concern for Inuit, who contract the disease at a rate of more than 290 times higher than non-Indigenous Canadians. TB has impacted Inuit more than any other community. From the 1940s until the early 1960s, hundreds of Inuit were sent south, mostly to Manitoba, Quebec City, and Hamilton, Ontario, for treatment in TB sanatoriums. Often, family members

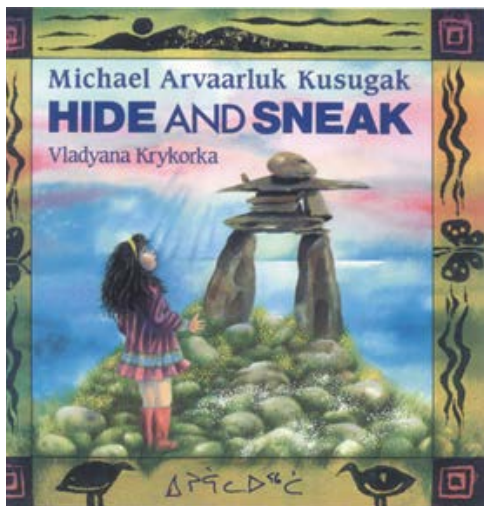
were not informed of the patients’ locations, even after they died. In 2019, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau apologized for the paternalistic and unfair treatment of Inuit in the TB policy at the time.

Throughout the book are photographs of beading on an amauti (parka), taken by the illustrator. Beadwork was important for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities. Often, grandmothers would pass down certain patterns and techniques. Glass beads were a popular trade item. The close-up images of the beadwork on most pages of the book bring attention to the fine detail of the work, which can be seen as a whole on the second-last page with the ghostly image of the child’s mother wearing the amauti, a form of writing/text that pushes the boundaries of what we understand as literature, such as who the “author” is.

On page 10, they speak of berry picking on an esker. An esker is a long, narrow ridge of gravel that was formed by a retreating glacier.

A short video and pronunciation guide can be found on Michael Kusugak’s website: www.michaelkusugak.com/the-stories/northern-lights

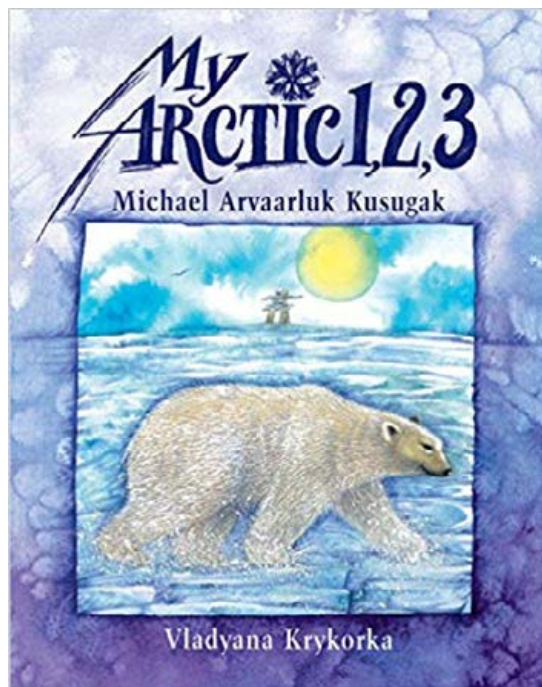
Hide and Sneak



Like *A Promise Is a Promise*, *Hide and Sneak* introduces another traditional Inuit story that serves as a warning to children about the dangers of venturing too far from home. The Ijiraq is a creature that can stay invisible until it shape-shifts into whatever it wants and lures unsuspecting children away from their families.

The short story at the front of the book tells a bit about the Ijiraq and also introduces the inuksugaq, more commonly known as an inukshuk (plural: inuksuit). *Inuksugaq* means something that acts as a person (*Inuk* is the singular for *Inuit*, meaning person). Rocks act as a person who provides directions. Most often, inuksuit will point the direction to good hunting or fishing places, travel routes, or a camp. Depending on the shape of the inuksugaq, there could be additional meanings as well.

My Arctic 1,2,3



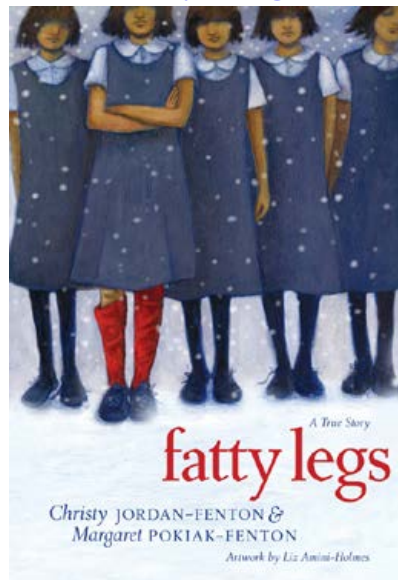
The author provides the background for *My Arctic 1,2,3* in the back section, “The Arctic World of Michael Kusugak and His Family,” and some words that may be unfamiliar are defined on the last page. As with the books above, it is important to understand the landscape of the North and the animals that sustain life there. Before reading the book with students, it is recommended that teachers read the background first.

For more information on the Inuktitut syllabics found here and in other books, visit Inuktitut Tusaalanga at <https://tusaalanga.ca/node/2516>.

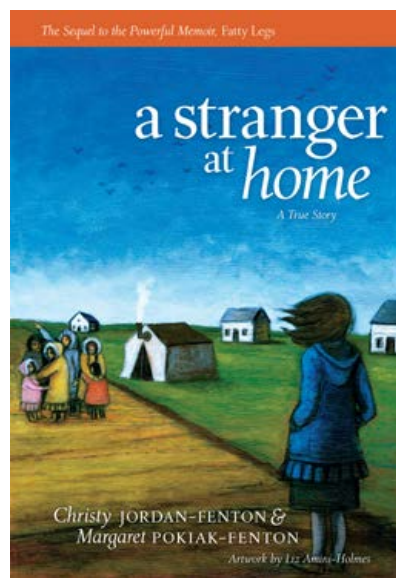
JUNIOR

Books covered in this section: *Fatty Legs* by Christy Jordan-Fenton and Margaret Pokiak-Fenton, *A Stranger at Home* by Christy Jordan-Fenton and Margaret Pokiak-Fenton, *The Inuit Thought of It: Amazing Arctic Innovations* by Alooook Ipellie, *A Native American Thought of It: Amazing Inventions and Innovations* by Rocky Landon

Fatty Legs



A Stranger at Home



Fatty Legs and *A Stranger at Home* are middle-grade stories that share the lived experiences of residential school survivor Margaret Pokiak-Fenton.

Much has been written about residential school experiences.

“These Residential Schools were created for the purpose of separating Aboriginal children from their families, in order to minimize and weaken family ties and cultural linkages, and to indoctrinate children into a new culture.”

—Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015)

The TRC gathered survivor stories over a period of six years before writing their report. It is important that these voices sit at the centre of any work on residential schools. Some survivors will speak to educators or school groups and some have had their stories presented in exhibitions or captured in videos on websites such as the Legacy of Hope Foundation (<http://legacyofhope.ca/exhibitions/>) and Where Are the Children (<http://wherearethechildren.ca/en/stories>); other stories have been captured in print, as in these two books. The stories that informed the TRC report can be found at the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation: <https://nctr.ca/reports.php>. These stories are appropriate for advising educators of the work, but not necessarily for young people, particularly in primary or junior divisions. The last chapter of *Fatty Legs*, “The Schools,” contains details of Olemaun’s experiences, which guide the narrative of these books.

Fatty Legs details what life was like for Olemaun and her family before she left for residential school. This is important in order to understand what was lost and the impact it had on identity. Indigenous Peoples’ identities are intricately woven into their connections to their lands. Before the school, Olemaun and her family lived off the land. They hunted and trapped, and they cured meat to ensure it would last. They made their own clothing, parkas (coats), and kamiks (boots) with the skin and furs of animals they hunted and trapped. Before Inuit were forced into permanent settlements by the Canadian government, they followed spring migration routes, living in summer and winter camps. Many Inuit, like Olemaun’s family, lived many days’ travel away from the outposts they would go to once a year for supplies. They could recognize where others were from based on their style of dress. For example, Olemaun talks about her Mother Hubbard parka, the name given to the traditional style of parka worn by Inuvialuit women of the western Arctic. Clothing serves as a primary venue not only for resistance but for resurgence today.

Olemaun becomes Margaret while at the school. It was common practice for students to have their Indigenous names changed to Western names at the schools. At some schools, children were called by an assigned number rather than any name. For Inuit, names are traditionally given from a family member who has passed on. These names help to maintain kinship bonds, which in turn form nationhood, government, and family, and to create connections to where people come from. The loss of a name is a significant cultural break.

A Stranger at Home discusses the difficulties Olemaun had transitioning back home after her time at the residential school. Additional information to support this book can be found in the links to Inuit content given in the primary section above (pages 13 and 15).

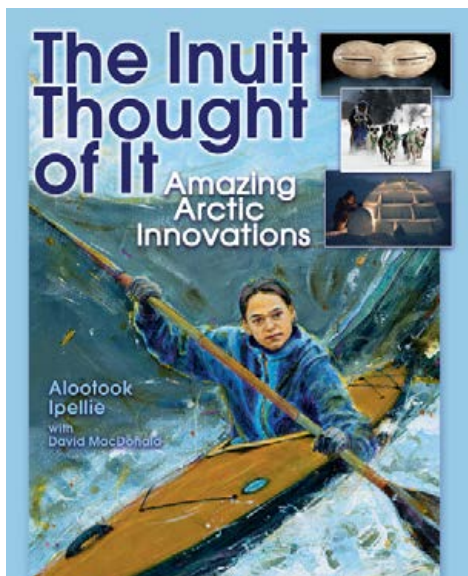
Both *Fatty Legs* and *A Stranger at Home* have been referenced in many resources for educators on how to teach students about residential schools, including the following two support resources that contain classroom activities (also listed in the primary section for the picture books of the same stories:

- <http://www.fnesc.ca/grade5irst/>
- <https://indspire.ca/webinar/uncovering-the-past-a-journey-from-residential-schools-toward-reconciliation-2016-national-gathering/>

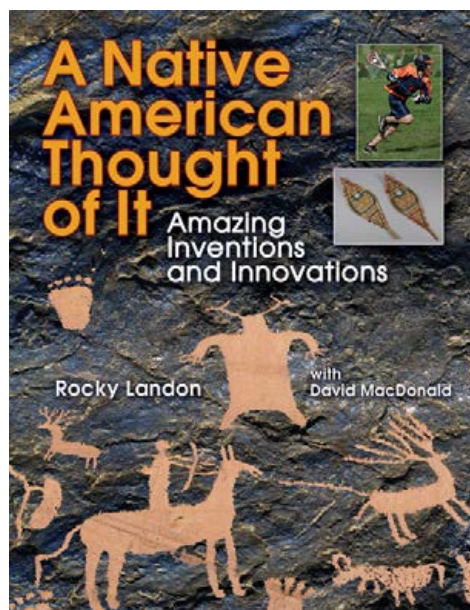
Additionally, a webinar with the authors and classroom activities for *Fatty Legs* can be found at <http://empoweringthespirit.ca/fatty-legs-webinar-series/>.

Both *Fatty Legs* and *A Stranger at Home* make excellent read-alouds to ensure the necessary scaffolding of the difficult content.

The Inuit Thought of It: Amazing Arctic Innovations



A Native American Thought of It: Amazing Inventions and Innovations



These two books clearly establish that prior to contact, Inuit and people from First Nations were innovative at using and adapting to their environments to improve their lives. Social studies curricula can provide historical and geographical contexts to support understanding of these books. For example, in the enhanced Ontario Social Studies curriculum (2018), grade 4 focuses on early societies up to 1500 CE and now must include references to at least one First Nation and one Inuit society. The innovations highlighted in these two texts will help students understand how First Nations and Inuit interacted with their environments and used what they had at their disposal to survive and thrive. The early hunting tools described on pages 16 and 17 of *A Native American Thought of It* and pages 22 and 23 of *The Inuit Thought of It* tell about historic hunting practices. The sections on clothing will help students understand the ways in which the materials used to make it related to the land and the environment. Students can also compare the similarities and differences in hunting practices and clothing of early Inuit and early First Nations people.

Students will also be able to extract information on the daily lives of First Nations people and Inuit, from transportation to shelter, health care, and more. They will also make connections to purpose and the formation of relationships: the currency of Indigenous lives. These contexts will provide important background information for many other books included in this study guide.

It is important that stories of Indigenous strength and contribution are shared alongside stories of the effects of colonization. This will ensure that Indigenous Peoples are portrayed as more than their traumas. It is clear from the examples shared in these two books that First Nations people and Inuit were creative problem solvers, mathematicians, scientists, athletes, health care practitioners, and much more.

A note on language:

Language is always evolving. As described in Key Terminology, preferred terms at the time of this publication included *Indigenous* and *First Nations*. *Native American* is no longer a preferred term. It is important to ask people how they would like to be called.

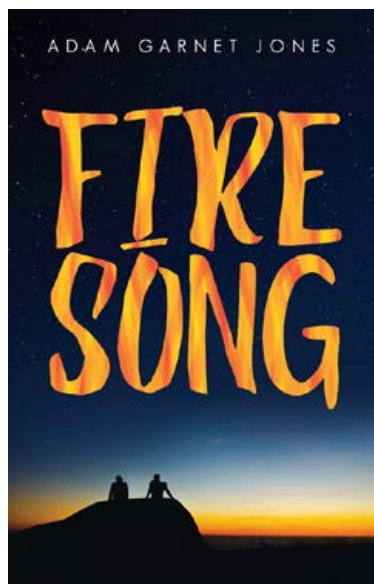
Place names don't just embody details about a space, they also indicate how to act and live in that space. Place names are viewed as the law.

INTERMEDIATE/SENIOR

Books covered in this section: *Fire Song* by Adam Garnet Jones, *The Night Wanderer: A Native Gothic Novel* by Drew Hayden Taylor, *Urban Tribes: Native Americans in the City* edited by Lisa Charleyboy and Mary Beth Leatherdale, *Dreaming in Indian: Contemporary Native American Voices* edited by Lisa Charleyboy and Mary Beth Leatherdale, *#NotYourPrincess: Voices of Native American Women* edited by Lisa Charleyboy and Mary Beth Leatherdale

NOVELS

Fire Song



www.adamgarnetjones.com/fire-song-novel/

Fire Song is a coming-of-age novel by Adam Garnet Jones about a teenager coping with the suicide of his younger sister, his sexuality, life on the reserve, and hopes for the future.

It is important to understand that this story of youth suicide is too often the story for First Nations youth. According to Statistics Canada, suicide rates for First Nations youth are five to seven times higher than the national average. In fact, according to the National Aboriginal Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy (NAYSPS) Program Framework, rates of Indigenous

youth suicide (including First Nations and Inuit) in Canada are among the highest in the world. Conversations about this need to be happening in schools to bring about much needed awareness and prevention. Many communities have been or are now in crisis over youth suicides. Youth commit suicide when there is no hope. First Nations and Inuit youth may feel that there is no hope because the Indian Act is all encompassing and destructive. The impacts on families and communities cannot be underestimated.

Page 6 Shane is talking about living in the home of his ancestors, the place of prophecy, where the food grows on the water. In Chapter 14 of *The Mishomis Book*, Anishinaabe Elder Edward Benton-Banai talks about the prophecy of the coming of the light-skinned race. Before the light-skinned race came, the Anishinaabe were living on the east coast of Turtle Island by the salt water. Their prophecies told them that if they stayed on the east coast, they would all be killed by the light-skinned race. They then followed a migration route inland to the place where the food grows on the water. That food is manomin, or wild rice, found on the shores of Lake Superior. Summaries of *The Mishomis Book* can be found at <https://mishomisbook.wordpress.com>. It is a worthwhile investment for anyone wanting to learn about Anishinaabe traditional knowledge.

Page 13 Cedar, sage, sweetgrass, and tobacco are medicines that many First Nations people use for health care and for ceremony. Many First Nations people use tobacco as an offering to the earth, water, or fire, or to other people, when asking for something. There are many teachings that accompany the use of medicines, and it is most appropriate to obtain these teachings directly from an Elder or knowledge keeper. Smudging is a customary practice for many First Nations people, and again, obtaining teachings from an Elder or knowledge keeper is most appropriate.. There has been much co-opting of traditional cultural practices. For Anishinaabe, using medicines is a way of life and includes teachings that are part of growing up, not something that comes with a step-by-step instruction guide.

Page 16 *Rez* is the vernacular for *reserve*. Reserves are typically tight-knit communities of families and extended families, and often everyone would show up for a memorial service. Beginning on page 29, Shane goes to Janice's store. Many smaller reserves may have only one variety store that is usually also a convenience store and gas station.

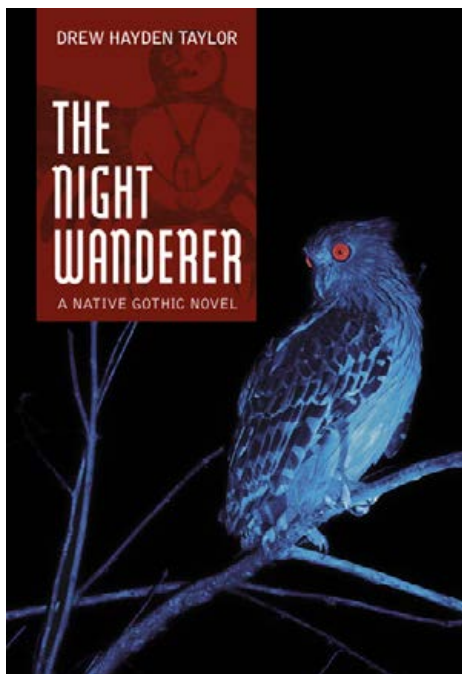
Page 20 An Elder is someone who is recognized by a community for carrying traditional knowledge and having leadership skills.

It is a customary practice for First Nations people to introduce themselves in their language, and they may include their spirit name and their clan (if appropriate). *Aanii* and *Boozoo* mean hello. *Nindizhinikaaz* means “I am called.” *Chi miigwetch* means “thank you very much.” There may be regional differences in the spelling of Nishnaabemwin, the language group of the Anishinaabe.

Page 29 The conversation with Roberta illustrates how untrue it is that all First Nations students get free post-secondary education. It varies from community to community and can also depend on the number of members requesting funds in the same year. As stated on page 30 of the novel, education is supposed to be a right granted from the treaties, and yet that is not always the case.

Page 36 The intergenerational effects of residential schools have complicated individual identities in Indigenous communities. Many Elders like Evie are survivors who worked hard to relearn their language, culture, and traditional practices.

The Night Wanderer: A Native Gothic Novel



Drew Hayden Taylor has written a coming-of-age vampire story with a twist—the vampire is Anishinaabe, and the location is a reserve.

In the prologue, Taylor shares an Indigenous story (he says Anishinaabe here, though it is often credited to the Cherokee) about the two wolves within each human, the good and the evil, and the one that wins is the one we feed. This establishes that through the Indigenous lens, there will be choices for the characters to make about feeding the wolves.

Elders are important in Indigenous communities. Granny Ruth is quickly established as the matriarch of the clan in the fictional community of Otter Lake First Nation. She knows about traditional medicines, as demonstrated when she shares a remedy with Tiffany

for her non-Indigenous boyfriend. She acts as caretaker for those around her. There is an early reference to community members questioning Granny Ruth, who had lost her way, like many others affected by colonization, and then come back to the “Red Road” (Indigenous ways of living).

Indigenous languages are in crisis, as Granny Ruth says, from “long years of existence . . . to being on life support.” Nishnaabemwin (also called Anishinaabemowin, and sometimes more colloquially Anishinaabe or Ojibwa) is an Indigenous language in the Algonquian language group, roughly covering the geographic area from Quebec to Manitoba, with the greatest concentration around the Great Lakes. Many speakers say that language is the key to culture, and they worry that as the languages disappear, so too will the cultures and connections to the land. According to *HuffPost*, “under UNESCO’s endangered languages criteria, more than two-thirds of the more than seventy Indigenous languages still spoken in Canada are endangered, and the rest are vulnerable.” Many Indigenous language revitalization efforts are underway, including new federal legislation to recognize and respect Indigenous language rights in order to preserve, protect, and revitalize Indigenous languages.

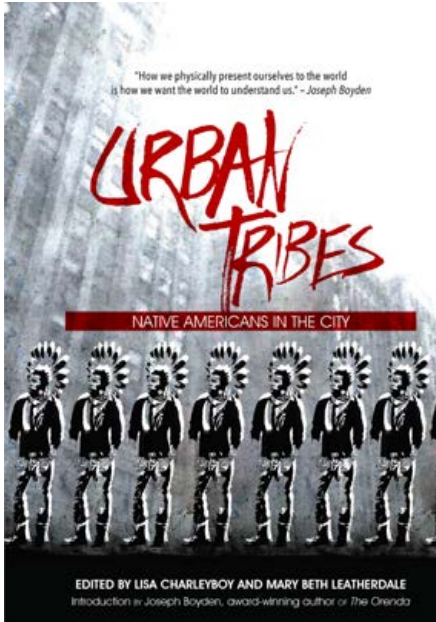
One of the main characters, Tiffany, lives the realities of racism that often take place, trying to fit in with a white boyfriend but still being on the outside. There are many examples of the racism between the local white community and the people on the reserve. This is sometimes the reality everywhere, and it is particularly noticeable in those communities that live in close proximity.

Looking at the evolution of language, the term *Native* is no longer used to describe Indigenous Peoples. For the characters in this particular story, *Anishinaabe* is the most appropriate term.

Listen to Taylor reading the first chapter from the novel at www.youtube.com/watch?v=x-pSo1H81c04. He begins by making a joke about wanting to write a story that would appropriate Western stories, referencing the ongoing problems with the appropriation of Indigenous stories, clothing, and ways of life by many non-Indigenous people. This is most definitely a vampire story, not an Indigenous story built into an Anishinaabe setting.

NON-FICTION

Urban Tribes: Native Americans in the City



Urban Tribes is an important text that unpacks what it means to be Indigenous and live in an urban setting. The contributors to this collection of short pieces debunk the myth that to be truly Indigenous, you need to live on a reserve or be in the bush living off the land, or that by living in the city, you are somehow less Indigenous.

Current issues profiled in the book include racism, murdered and missing Indigenous women and girls, health, suicide, education, and resilience.

Page 29 Tasha Spillett explains that being in ceremony does not always mean attending a function or going to a lodge: “It’s how we choose to lead our lives and conduct ourselves.” She is explaining that ceremony can be how we live every day.

Before reading the section “Shattering Stereotypes” a good activity is to ask students to brainstorm all of the stereotypes associated with Indigenous Peoples. If they feel comfortable in the space and can be honest, there will likely be many unkind stereotypes. In KC Adams’s

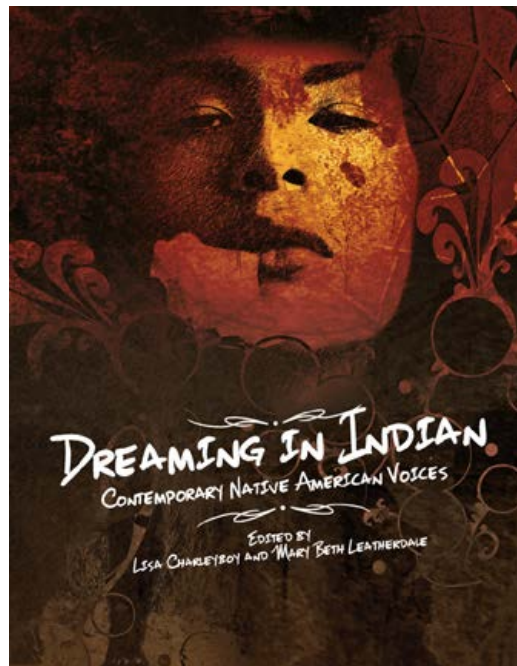
brilliant photo series *Perceptions*, different Indigenous folks share racist remarks they have heard and beside it, they show how they would describe themselves. This is a powerful way to juxtapose an authentic self with a self that has been “othered.”

A note on language:

As mentioned earlier, language is always changing and evolving. Since this book was published in 2015, the use of the terms *Native Americans*, *Native*, and *Aboriginal* have mostly fallen out of favour, with preference given to *Indigenous* or the names that communities use to refer to themselves.

Also since publication, there has been controversy regarding the Indigenous identity claims of writer Joseph Boyden. He is a talented writer who is presently not seen as speaking as an Indigenous person, although he maintains that relationship is where Indigenous kinship resides, not blood. Boyden is quoted on the cover of *Urban Tribes* and in the opening story. Understanding his story and how he centred his voice as a political one is important, and this provides a teachable moment when combined with research into the stories behind his fall from grace. Boyden also has a piece in *Dreaming in Indian*, below.

Dreaming in Indian: Contemporary Native American Voices



Annick Press

This collection of Indigenous voices and artists presents the diversity of Indigenous Peoples across the country as they face the challenges of identity, historical trauma, and racism and ultimately imagine a better world. Each of the entries could be studied on its own or in connection to the four themes of “Roots,” “Battles,” “Medicines,” and “Dreamcatchers” that comprise the four sections of the book.

As stated in the “Welcome” section by the editors, this book showcases the real lives of Indigenous Peoples, “not the li [ves] portrayed in mainstream media and certainly not the li [ves] . . . seen through the lens of Hollywood.” This book counters stereotypes often heard about Indigenous Peoples.

NDN is a written colloquial expression for *Indian*, a term that is best saved for government legislation (e.g., the Indian Act) or between Indigenous Peoples.

Page 11 The opening note by Wab Kinew sets the context of this book: “There is no one Indigenous perspective . . . no one Indigenous story. We are tremendously diverse peoples with tremendously diverse life experiences. We are not frozen in the past . . .” It is essential that Indigenous Peoples be seen as the diverse, modern, adapting, and changing peoples that they are and that they have always been.

Page 15 Brain-tanned hides were traditional before many of the chemical methods of tanning animal hides were used. First Nations people preserved hides by soaking them in brain matter.

Pages 15–17 The poem “Fried Bologna and Rice” on page 15 and the “4 Reservation Food Groups” entry on pages 16 and 17 reference the impact that colonization has had on the diets of Indigenous Peoples. Removing people from their traditional lands where they would have gathered and hunted has had a detrimental impact on their diets. With limited access to traditional foods and high rates of food insecurity and poverty, their diets of many Indigenous Peoples do not meet Health Canada’s Food Guide recommendations. Many inexpensive food items have become staples, such as bologna, Kool-Aid or Freshie, and canned meat. These dietary habits have resulted in high rates of obesity and diabetes.

Page 31

Residential schools started closing down in the 1970s. The last residential school in Canada closed in 1996. Legacies from the schools, however, continue today.

Pages 32–33

While residential schools have closed, many First Nations students who live in their communities still have to move away from home to get a high school education. In “Leaving Home,” Priscella Rose from Attawapiskat, a community in northern Ontario, writes about having to move to Moosonee to continue her education. Many smaller, more remote communities do not have a high school. Students are sent hundreds of kilometres away to the nearest high school, where they are billeted with local families. Some students may stay with extended relatives or families who provide loving, structured homes. Some are left to mostly fend for themselves. Many are only fourteen years old.

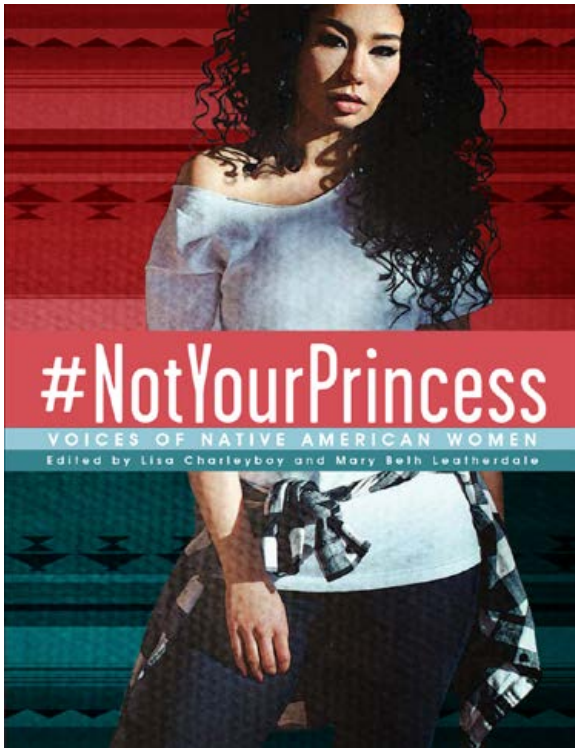
Investigative journalist Tanya Talaga chronicles the deaths of seven Indigenous high school students in Thunder Bay, Ontario, in her book *Seven Fallen Feathers*. In the 2018 Massey Lectures series titled *All Our Relations: Finding the Path Forward*, Talaga talks about the impact of cultural genocide on Indigenous Peoples.

Page 45

In the last line of her poem, Karina Rain Dominguez references being taken away from her family by the Department of Child and Family Services. In 2019, a disproportionate number of Indigenous children are impacted by Canadian child welfare services. In some provinces, this situation is at crisis proportions. In Manitoba, for example, of 11,000 children in care, 10,000 are Indigenous.

Cultural appropriation is an ongoing problem for Indigenous Peoples. There is a difference between cultural appreciation and cultural appropriation. In cultural appropriation, an individual, usually from the dominant culture, takes cultural elements of another group and often does not credit that culture or community. While the intention may be good, by adopting and using someone else’s culture, the history of oppression and colonialism—theft—is continued. Appreciation, on the other hand, is fully crediting a culture and community with an idea, expression, or material, and leaving the people it originates from better off from your interaction with them. Dr. Adrienne Keene’s website www.nativeappropriations.com is a great place for examples.

#NotYourPrincess: Voices of Native American Women



#NotYourPrincess is a collection of writings, interviews, and art that celebrates Indigenous women from across Turtle Island. For more information on the role of Indigenous women in building their communities, refer to the work of Dr. Kim Anderson, Canada Research Chair in Indigenous Relationships.

Leanne Betasamosake Simpson opens this book with a statement of reclamation. For both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, unpacking what it means to be in a “decolonial space” first involves understanding the long histories and present realities of colonialism, which includes patriarchy. How to decolonize will be different for different people. It means reclaiming languages, spaces, and ways of

being and, more than that, pushing back against colonial structures and amplifying Indigenous knowledge systems, traditions, and ways of being. Simpson has written and spoken much about this topic. For more information, visit her website at www.leannesimpson.ca.

Page 14 Ledger art came about as buffalo hides became scarce in the late nineteenth century and the Indigenous Peoples of the Plains in the United States started using paper from ledger books for their drawings. Artists drew on this lined paper, sometimes overtop the accounting of local businesses. Wakeah Jhane is at the forefront of reviving this art form.

Pages 16–17 Maria Campbell writes about the blanket of shame of her Métis identity alongside an image of a woman wrapped in a Hudson’s Bay blanket. Refer to the earlier notes for *Baseball Bats for Christmas* for more information about the Hudson’s Bay Company (page 17). The blankets became symbols of colonization and have been connected with the purposeful spreading of the smallpox virus to Indigenous Peoples.

Page 25

Nahanni Fontaine advises readers that the word *squaw* is the most degrading word to describe women. It is a word that must never be used. She lists many crises facing Indigenous women, including forced sterilization. This has been yet another attempt at erasing a people by ensuring that the women do not have children. There is a history of this in Canada: the Sexual Sterilization Act of 1928. It did not end, however, when the act was overturned. It is still an issue in this country.

Pages 42–43

The “Red Road” is a term used for Indigenous Peoples who are returning to their traditional ways of being.

Page 62

There has been much in the media regarding Indigenous Peoples pushing back, as articulated by Jessica Deer. Social media campaigns often include #NotYourCostume and #NotYourMascot. This piece could segue into discussions about why and how Indigenous Peoples are still portrayed as mascots and in the names of professional sports teams.

CONSIDERING MULTIPLE TRUTHS AND POSSIBILITIES

One of the best ways to approach working with these texts in classrooms is to use inquiry. Ask students to look at the images in the books. What do they notice? What do they wonder? These can be provocation for deeper learning. True inquiry is open-ended. Having more than one concrete answer to a question follows Indigenous philosophies, in which there is possibility for multiple truths. This approach also allows educators to learn alongside students.

These books honour Indigenous voices. Creating spaces where Indigenous Peoples speak for themselves is imperative in the work. Educators can honour Indigenous voices by including texts such as these, using videos of Indigenous Peoples, and, when possible and appropriate, inviting Indigenous Peoples into schools and classrooms. Indigenous Peoples are the guardians of their own knowledge and must be honoured as such.

Classrooms and schools need to be spaces that honour diverse voices. School districts will likely have guidelines for engaging community partners. It is important to respect people's time and to consider how engaging community partners can be acts of reciprocity. Many districts will also have designated staff who lead the learning in Indigenous education. Use these in-house resources to guide your exploration of the work.

Do think about how you can create brave spaces. A brave space is one in which people feel supported in taking risks. For many educators, these histories and contemporary realities were never part of their own learning. Creating environments where educators and students feel supported in taking risks is essential to learning. Allies, accomplices, and critical friends in this work are essential to real change. Think about what being an ally or friend means to you and the Indigenous Peoples in your community. For guidelines on how to be an ally to Indigenous Peoples, see <https://laurentian.ca/indigenous-programs/how-to-be-an-ally>.

Over your career as an educator, you will influence the lives of hundreds of students. The topics presented, conversations had, and books studied will shape students' understanding of the world. Choosing books such as the titles discussed in this guide is a first step in answering the TRC's Calls to Action with your students, and to begin restoring positive and respectful relations with Indigenous Peoples of this land.

Please let us know what you think in this [short survey](#).