

TAKING ROOT



 **Indigo**
LOVE OF READING
FOUNDATION™



NATIVE CHILD
AND FAMILY SERVICES
OF TORONTO

**A resource guide to exploring Indigenous voices in
child and youth literature from across Turtle Island**

The cover art and iconography seen throughout this guide was developed by Oji-Cree artist Jordan Stranger.

About This Resource

The Indigo Love of Reading Foundation is committed to advancing reconciliation within all the programs and partnerships we facilitate. While the books we provide help achieve this goal, many of the schools, parents and even students we work with reach out regularly for support in selecting Indigenous texts that will support them in their own goals of promoting reconciliation, education, and cultural reclamation. It is for this reason that we sought out partnerships with Native Child and Family Services as well as the artist Jordan Stranger to create a resource guide for students and educators that highlights 50 book titles for children and youth.

These books are just a starting point — and do not represent a comprehensive curriculum nor do they reflect all backgrounds, perspectives, or worldviews. Nevertheless, they were carefully and thoughtfully selected with the goal of supporting young people, parents and educators in building knowledge and understanding. We encourage anyone with recommendations of new titles that they would like to see added to email us at loveofreading@indigo.ca so we can continue to update and revise this list in the year(s) to come.

About The Artwork

Knowledge has been proven to change perspectives small and large. Through the efforts of many people past and present, this resource has been made possible. With everything I have come to know about indigenous cultures across Kanata, I felt it was only right to create an image of an indigenous family, surrounded by love and their culture.

With the support of their ancestors above, the family stands on the back of a great turtle, held up by the great spirits that live in the ground. As ten feathers fall to the earth from the great eagle's wings, thirteen moons glow as a reminder to honour the seasons. Sacred medicines of Tobacco, Sage and Cedar float above each family member to provide cleansing as the great star of life guides them all.

– Jordan Stranger

Using This Resource

THEMATIC CONNECTIONS

Please look for the following icons relating to specific themes that are explored in the featured book titles throughout this resource guide.



1. On The Land Land-based activities have been central to Indigenous wellbeing and identity since time immemorial. Indigenous ceremonial practices, learning and knowledge-sharing happen in close relationship with the land. Being on the land is healing (physically, emotionally, spiritually, mentally) and increases connection to culture, community, and all living things.



2. Intergenerational Bonds and Teachings Building and strengthening relationships across generations allows for Indigenous knowledge-sharing, learnings, and cultural teachings to spread across all ages. We learn from each other, no matter what age. Across Indigenous communities, the wisdom and diverse cultural knowledges held by Elders are highly valued, who pass these on to the next generation through teachings.



3. Indigenous Language Learning Language is a form of Indigenous self-determination. Accessing, learning, and reclaiming Indigenous languages are important ways for Indigenous peoples to reconnect to culture and identity. There are many Indigenous languages, and their diversity should be explored. Books with this theme serve as an Indigenous language learning resource for readers.

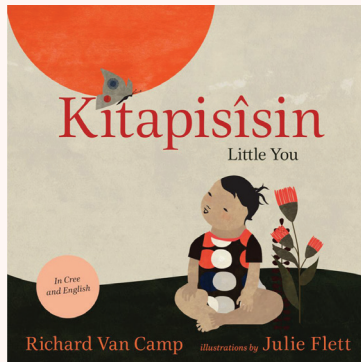


4. Indigenous Worldviews/Ways of Being Relational and holistic, Indigenous worldviews and Ways of Being hold a collective responsibility to past and future generations. The whole person's physical, emotional, spiritual, and mental aspects are considered interconnected to land, and in relationship to others. Indigenous worldviews are nonhierarchical, nonmaterialistic, encourage nonlinear thinking, highly respect women, and emphasize a deep respect and duty to the natural world. All life is viewed as sacred, and all life forms (from the sea to the sky) are connected—to hurt the land and community is to hurt oneself.

Little You

written by Richard Van Camp
illustrated by Julie Fleet

ages
0-2



Themes explored:

INTERGENERATIONAL
BONDS AND TEACHINGS



INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE
LEARNING (CREE &
ANISHINAABEMOWIN)



Richard Van Camp, internationally renowned storyteller and bestselling author of the hugely successful *Welcome Song for Baby: A Lullaby for Newborns*, has partnered with award-winning illustrator Julie Fleet to create a tender board book for babies and toddlers that celebrates the potential of every child. With its delightful contemporary illustrations, *Little You* is perfect to be shared, read or sung to all the little people in your life-and the new little ones on the way!

Thematic connections:

- The language used to speak to the young child weaves together themes of love, adoration and appreciation (to strengthen the bond between parent and child), with connection to nature (comparing the young child with the elements, nature and animals in a way to illustrate the inner strength of the child).
- The pictures illustrate love and bonding between parent and child within different environments outdoors, or indoors while still bringing in the outdoors (i.e. observing the moon/night sky).
- The book is offered in English-Cree and English-Anishinaabemowin.

My Heart Fills with Happiness

written by Monique Gray Smith
illustrated by Julie Fleet

ages
0-2



Themes explored:

INDIGENOUS WORLDVIEWS/
WAYS OF BEING



The sun on your face. The smell of warm bannock baking in the oven. Holding the hand of someone you love. What fills your heart with happiness? This beautiful board book, with illustrations from celebrated artist Julie Flett, serves as a reminder for little ones and adults alike to reflect on and cherish the moments in life that bring us joy.

International speaker and award-winning author Monique Gray Smith wrote *My Heart Fills with Happiness* to support the wellness of Indigenous children and families, and to encourage young children to reflect on what makes them happy.

Thematic connections:

- Happiness is explored in relation to each other (i.e. storytelling), connecting to land (i.e. sun, grass), and connecting to culture (i.e. dance, drumming).

Sweetest Kulu

written by Cellina Kaluk
illustrated by Alexandria Neonakis

ages
0-2



Themes explored:

INDIGENOUS WORLDVIEWS/
WAYS OF BEING



This beautiful bedtime poem, written by acclaimed Inuit throat singer Celina Kalluk, describes the gifts given to a newborn baby by all the animals of the Arctic.

Lyrical and tenderly told by a mother speaking to her own little Kulu; an Inuktitut term of endearment often bestowed upon babies and young children, this visually stunning book is infused with the traditional Inuit values of love and respect for the land and its animal inhabitants.

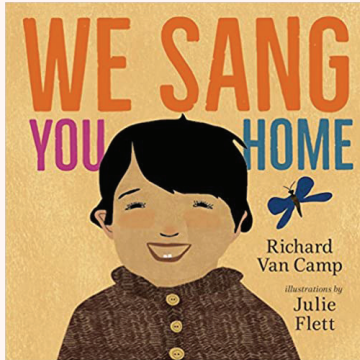
Thematic connections:

- Love for a newborn is expressed by and explored through our relationships with and teachings from the land and animals.

We Sang You Home

written by Richard Van Camp
illustrated by Julie Flett

ages
0-2



Themes explored:

INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE
LEARNING (PLAINS CREE)



INTERGENERATIONAL
BONDS AND TEACHINGS



INDIGENOUS WORLDVIEWS/
WAYS OF BEING



A celebration of the bond between parent and child, this is the perfect song to share with your little ones. In this sweet and lyrical board book from the creators of the bestselling *Little You*, gentle rhythmic text captures the wonder new parents feel as they welcome baby into the world. Internationally renowned storyteller and bestselling author Richard Van Camp teams up with award-winning illustrator Julie Flett for a second time to create a stunning book for young readers.

Thematic connections:

- This book is written and illustrated by an Indigenous person and tells the story of welcoming the gift of a newborn to the world.
- The author is a proud member of the Dogrib (Tlicho) Nation from Fort Smith, NWT, and the illustrator is Cree-Métis.

Indigenous Language Learning

- This story focuses on elements of Plains Cree, introducing a new worldview along with elements of music.
- Through this book the reader connects personally with the words in the song and the love that is shown through family in the story.

We Sang You Home

written by Richard Van Camp
illustrated by Julie Flett

ages
0-2

Intergenerational Bonds and Teachings

- The big picture this story connects is the bond and closeness the parent/guardian shares with a child through music.
- “*We Sang You Home*” has many beautiful teachings from Indigenous Elders and writers; for example:
 - The teaching that says that children, before they are conceived, choose who their parents will be,
 - Or that children are precious gifts that are on loan to us by the Creator.

Indigenous Worldviews/Way of Being

- This story helps in building awareness of Indigenous identity through language, symbols, and family in order to unite communities.
- The story teaches to convey that love and community as universal, even if that story is told from another culture.

We All Play

written by Julie Flett

ages
0-5



Themes explored:

ON THE LAND



INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE
LEARNING (CREE)



INDIGENOUS WORLDVIEWS/
WAYS OF BEING



This wonderful book celebrates playtime and the connection between children and the natural world. A beautiful ode to the animals and humans we share our world with, *We All Play* belongs on every bookshelf. This book also includes:

- A glossary of Cree words for wild animals in the book
- A pronunciation guide and link to audio pronunciation recordings

Thematic connections:

- Julie Fleet outlines multiple animals native to Canada and how they interact with their environments. Julie also includes the Indigenous translations when comparing the similarities between how animals and humans experience play.

On the Land

- The book mentions multiple animal species native to Canada and their means of communication with the world.
- The book depicts how children experience play and interaction with their environment.

Indigenous Language Learning

- The book includes the Indigenous translation of the title of the book as well as “we play too” when comparing the animals and children.
- The book includes a list of animals mentioned with the Indigenous language translations as well as pronunciation/language resources.

Indigenous Worldviews/Ways of Being

- Fleet compares the interaction/play between both the animals and the children with their environments. This comparison shows how similar humans are with their animal brothers and sisters from the land, sky and sea.

Birdsong

written by Julie Flett

ages
3-5



Themes explored:

ON THE LAND



INTERGENERATIONAL
BONDS AND TEACHINGS



INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE
LEARNING (CREE)



When Katherena and her mother move to a small town, Katherena feels lonely and out of place. But when she meets an elderly woman artist who lives next door, named Agnes – her world starts to change. Katherena and Agnes share the same passions for arts and crafts, birds, and nature. But as the seasons change, can Katherena navigate the failing health of her new friend?

Award-winning author and artist Julie Flett's textured images of birds, flowers, art, and landscapes bring vibrancy and warmth to this powerful story, which highlights the fulfillment of intergenerational relationships, shared passions, and spending time outdoors with the ones we love.

Includes a glossary and pronunciation guide to Cree words that appear in the text.

Thematic connections:

- The story is told following the year's seasons. Following the seasons holds cultural significance when connecting community with the land. Katherena makes connections between seasonal weather and her feelings, when having to move from her old home in the city and adjusting to her new home in the country.

Birdsong

written by Julie Flett

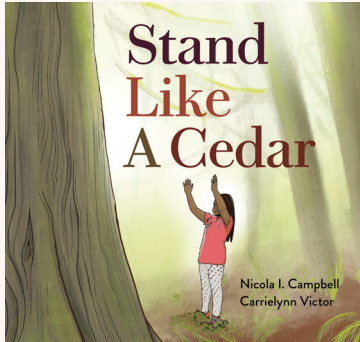
ages
3-5

- Katherena is encouraged by her mom to visit her elderly neighbour, Agnes, and the two form an intergenerational bond. Agnes teaches Katherena about waxing and waning moons and Katherena teaches Agnes about Cree seasons.
- Agnes supports Katherena's connection to the land by providing her with snowdrop bulbs to plant and garden; Katherena is inspired to create art.
- Katherena continues to spend time with Agnes when she's fallen ill and cheers her up with art she has created, depicting birds.
- After Agnes passes, Katherena expresses gratitude for their friendship and reflects on her moon teachings.

Stand Like A Cedar

written by Nicola I. Campbell
illustrated by Carrielynn Victor

ages
3-5



Themes explored:

ON THE LAND



When you go for a walk in nature, who do you see? What do you hear?

Award-winning storyteller Nicola I. Campbell shows what it means to “stand like a cedar” on this beautiful journey of discovery through the wilderness. Learn the names of animals in the Nl̓eʔkepmxcín or Halq’emeylem languages as well as the teachings they have for us. Experience a celebration of sustainability and connection to the land through lyrical storytelling and Carrielynn Victor’s breathtaking art in this children’s illustrated book.

Thematic connections:

- This story explores environmental experiences and awareness throughout outdoor activities.
- Observations are made about human experiences with nature and animals.
- Stories are shared by the animals and plants of their experiences with the different seasons, illustrating how animal and plant lives flow with the changing seasons as well as noting the life-death cycles of living things.
- Gratitude is given to the land and animals for the food that is provided which helps to take care of us.

Stand Like A Cedar

written by Nicola I. Campbell
illustrated by Carrielynn Victor

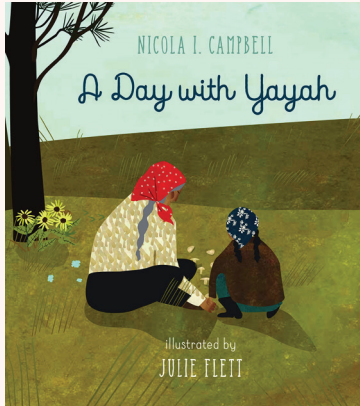
ages
3-5

- Animals spread environmental awareness by sharing knowledge about the land before pollution.
- Animals spread ancestral teaching on resilience and cultural survival through future generations.
- Importance is given to connecting to land, gratitude for all living things, sitting with Elders, honouring loved ones, and being proud of being Indigenous.

A Day with Yayah

written by Nicola I. Campbell
illustrated by Julie Flett

ages
3-5



Themes explored:

ON THE LAND



INTERGENERATIONAL
BONDS AND TEACHINGS



INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE
LEARNING (INTERIOR SALISH)



Set in the Okanagan, BC, a First Nations family goes on an outing to forage for herbs and mushrooms. Grandmother passes down her knowledge of plant life to her young grandchildren. This cheerful story of a spring-day outing ultimately balances instruction and entertainment. Flett's lovely collages add beauty and a fresh, contemporary tone, while the text captures the essence of the young learning from the old. Timeless values, such as gratitude for the earth, are seamlessly integrated.

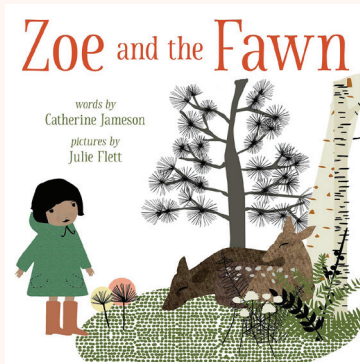
Thematic connections:

- The grandchildren learn from their Yayah, grandmother.
- The family explores plants that are available in the Spring season and the specifics of foraging for the diverse range of mushrooms in their environment.
- Yayah teaches the translation and pronunciation of words in Interior Salish.
- The grandchildren in the story learn about Spring harvesting.
- Yayah teaches about poisonous plants and treatments.
- Cultural traditions are explored: Yayah and grandchildren participate in an offering of tobacco and give gratitude to Creator for the food they eat.

Zoe and the Fawn

written by Catherine Jameson
illustrated by Julie Flett

ages
3-5



Themes explored:

ON THE LAND



INTERGENERATIONAL
BONDS AND TEACHINGS



INDIGENOUS
LANGUAGE LEARNING
(OKANAGAN-SYLX)



Zoe and her father are delighted to come across a fawn in the forest. But the fawn is alone—where is its mother? Join Zoe on her quest for the deer, as she encounters animals and learns their Okanagan (syilx) names along the way. Repetition of phrased questions will enhance success for beginning readers while creating a playful rhythm for young listeners.

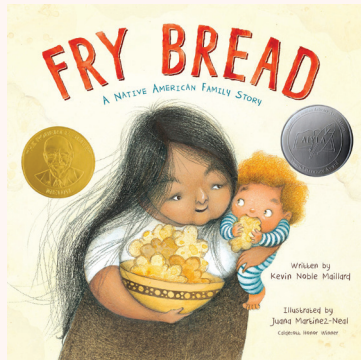
Thematic connections:

- Zoe and her father are adventuring through the forest and encounter various animals while experiencing different paths to find the mother of the fawn.
- The animals names are in Okanagan but are translated to English; it has the pronunciation on the last page.
- Zoe and her father are bonding through their shared experience of speaking Okanagan and their journey through the forest.

Fry Bread

written by Kevin Noble Maillard
illustrated by Juana Martinez-Neal

ages
3-5



Theme explored:

INTERGENERATIONAL
BONDS AND TEACHINGS



Told in lively and powerful verse by debut author Kevin Noble Maillard, *Fry Bread* is an evocative depiction of a modern Native American family, vibrantly illustrated by Pura Belpre Award winner and Caldecott Honoree Juana Martinez-Neal.

Thematic connections:

- Children learn about fry bread and how it brings together community through nourishment, celebration, heritage, and cultural resilience.
- Children learn about the ingredients, the feeling of the dough, and the changes in its shape and sound as it's prepared and cooked. The fry bread's colour and flavour are also explored.
- Through connecting with their caregivers/family/loved ones, children learn about how the time spent in preparing, cooking and enjoying the fry bread is also a way to spend quality time and celebrate with each other, including during cultural ceremonies and events.

When We Are Kind

written by Monique Gray Smith
illustrated by Nicole Neidhardt

ages
3-5



Theme explored:

INDIGENOUS WORLDVIEWS/
WAYS OF BEING



When We Are Kind celebrates simple acts of everyday kindness and encourages children to explore how they feel when they initiate and receive acts of kindness in their lives.

Celebrated author Monique Gray Smith has written many books on the topics of resilience and reconciliation and communicates an important message through carefully chosen words for readers of all ages. Beautifully illustrated by artist Nicole Neidhardt, this book encourages children to be kind to others and to themselves.

Thematic connections:

- Kindness is depicted as a considerate/thoughtful action in relation to ourselves, each other (i.e. family, friends and Elders), animals, and nature.
- The feelings that kindness can evoke are also explored.

We Are Water Protectors

written by Carole Lindstrom
illustrated by Michaela Goade

ages
3-5



Themes explored:

ON THE LAND



INDIGENOUS WORLDVIEWS/
WAYS OF BEING



INTERGENERATIONAL
BONDS AND TEACHINGS



INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE
LEARNING (OJIBWE,
TLINGIT, AND LAKOTA)



Inspired by the many Indigenous-led movements across North America, *We Are Water Protectors* issues an urgent rallying cry to safeguard the Earth's water from harm and corruption — a bold and lyrical picture book written by Carole Lindstrom and vibrantly illustrated by Michaela Goade.

Goade's watercolor illustrations fill the spreads with streaming ribbons of water, cosmic backdrops, and lush natural landscapes. Lindstrom's spare, poetic text flows with the river's rhythm. Written in response to the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline, it is an unapologetic call to action.

Thematic connections:

On The Land

- The story depicts that one road is the natural path, leading to global peace and unity while embraces the sacred relationship between humanity and all living things (leads to healthy Mother Earth).
- The story depicts the alternative second Road: Hard surfaced highways, everything moving fast and faster. Humans embrace technological advancement (eg. oil pipelines, depicted as the “black snake”) with little regard for Mother Earth (leads to a damaged earth).

We Are Water Protectors

written by Carole Lindstrom
illustrated by Michaela Goade

ages
3-5

Indigenous Worldviews/Ways of Being and Intergenerational Bonds and Teachings

- Many of the animals included in the book reflect Anishinaabe/Ojibwe clan symbols or hold special significance in traditional teachings, while the repeated floral designs were inspired by traditional Anishinaabe floral motifs.
- Standing Rock is just one powerful example of what happens when we rise up, resist, and join together in solidarity for Mother Earth regardless of where we come from. She needs our compassion, love, and respect, and she needs our voices now more than ever.

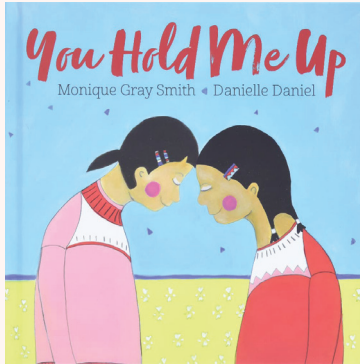
Indigenous Language Learning

- Anishinaabe: The people; Chi-miigwech: Thank you very much; Nokomis: Grandmother.
- Mni wiconi (miNEE wee CHOH-nee): Water is Life (Lakota); Nijji (nee-Gee): Friend (Ojibwe).

You Hold Me Up

written by Monique Gray Smith
illustrated by Danielle Daniel

ages
3-5



Themes explored:

INDIGENOUS WORLDVIEWS/
WAYS OF BEING



INTERGENERATIONAL
BONDS AND TEACHINGS



Simple but powerful text shows us the different ways we can respect and be kind to one another in this moving picture book. Consultant, international speaker and award-winning author Monique Gray Smith wrote *You Hold Me Up* to prompt a dialogue among young people, their care providers and educators about reconciliation and the importance of the connections children make with others. With vibrant illustrations from celebrated artist Danielle Daniel, this is a foundational book about building relationships, fostering empathy and encouraging respect between peers, starting with our littlest citizens.

Thematic connections:

Indigenous Worldviews/Ways of Being

- This story is sharing about how we hold each other up through showing kindness, being respectful, learning together, sharing with one another, and more.
- The author is writing about all of the different ways we hold each other up throughout the entire story. This relates back to the idea that Indigenous people take care of each other within a family, community, including the land, the water, and animals.

Intergenerational Bonds and Teachings

- Different generations are depicted sharing with each other (eg. grandmother in the kitchen).

Discovering Numbers: English, French, and Cree

written by Neepin Auger

ages
3-5



A new format for young readers transforms Neepin Auger's bestselling board books into playful and colourful resources for elementary school children. With more and more parents and educators looking for Indigenous resources, this paperback edition of *Discovering Numbers* will bring the experience of learning French and Cree to a whole new group of early elementary school-aged kids. In addition to the English words presented, the French and Cree equivalents are also given, along with pronunciation support, making these some of the most dynamic and useful picture books on the market, perfectly suitable for the classroom, library, and playroom.

Thematic connections:

- Neepin Auger outlines the numbers from zero to ten as well as the following multiples of ten up to one hundred. This reading is part of the Discovery series directed towards school aged children and includes the English, French and Cree translations of the mentioned numbers. This reading also includes a pronunciation guide to assist the reader to utilize the multiple languages properly.

Discovering Numbers: English, French, and Cree

written by Neepin Auger

ages
3-5

Indigenous Language Learning

- The Cree language is included throughout this reading to educate the reader on what the mentioned numbers are called.
- The pronunciation guide helps to educate the reader of the proper pronunciation/sounds of the Cree words/letters/syllables.

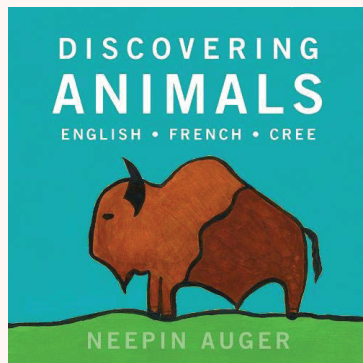
Indigenous Worldviews/Ways of Being

- The reading uses depictions of traditional items including Feathers, Sweetgrass, Teepee tools, Teepees and Arrowheads to help the reader familiarize themselves with the numbers in multiple languages.

Discovering Animals: English, French, and Cree

written by Neepin Auger

ages
3-5



Themes explored:

INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE
LEARNING (CREE)



ON THE LAND



INDIGENOUS WORLDVIEWS/
WAYS OF BEING



With more and more parents and educators looking for Indigenous resources, this paperback edition of *Discovering Animals* will bring the experience of learning French and Cree to a whole new group of early elementary school-aged kids. In addition to the English words presented, the French and Cree equivalents are also given, along with pronunciation support, making these some of the most dynamic and useful picture books on the market, perfectly suitable for the classroom, library, and playroom.

Thematic connections:

Neepin Auger outlines the names of common animals found in Canada. The book is directed towards school aged children and includes the English, French and Cree translations of the mentioned animals. The book, *Discovering Animals*, also includes a pronunciation guide after the content to assist the reader to utilize the multiple languages properly ensuring retention of the information and further education.

Indigenous Language Learning

- Cree language is included throughout the reading to educate the reader of the names of the mentioned animals.
- The pronunciation guide included in the reading helps to educate the reader of the proper pronunciation/sounds of the Cree words/letters/syllables.

Discovering Animals: English, French, and Cree

written by Neepin Auger

ages
3-5

On the Land

- The animals that are mentioned within the reading are all species that are native to Canada.

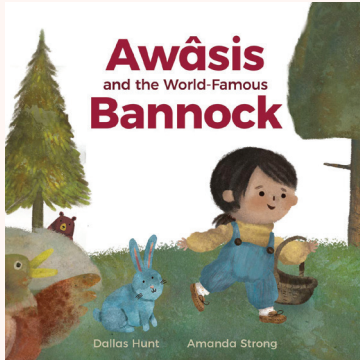
Indigenous Worldviews/Ways of Being

- The animals mentioned within the reading include species that are used to represent the Grandfather Teachings. These include the Turtle, Eagle, Bear, Beaver, Buffalo, and Wolf.

Awâsis and the World-Famous Bannock

written by Dallas Hunt
illustrated by Amanda Strong

ages
3-5



Themes explored:

ON THE LAND



INTERGENERATIONAL
BONDS AND TEACHINGS



INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE
LEARNING (CREE)



INDIGENOUS WORLDVIEWS/
WAYS OF BEING



During an unfortunate mishap, young Awâsis loses Kôhkum's freshly baked world-famous bannock. Not knowing what to do, Awâsis seeks out a variety of other-than-human relatives willing to help. What adventures are in store for Awâsis? *Awâsis and the World-Famous Bannock* highlights the importance of collaboration and seeking guidance from one's community, while introducing the Cree words for different animals and baking ingredients. Find a pronunciation guide and the recipe for Kôhkum's world-famous bannock in the back of the book.

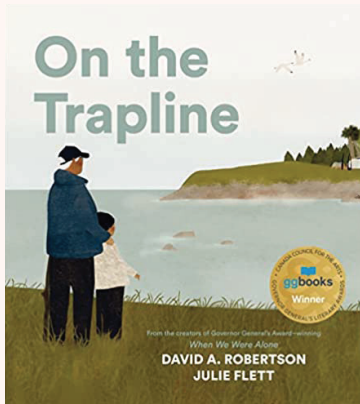
Thematic connections:

- Awasis's journey highlights the importance of community and collaboration by having the animals come together and help her along the way.
- Indigenous language (Cree) is used throughout the book.
- The animals on her path help her with finding her way through the forest and collecting the ingredients she needed. They use the Cree language and include the pronunciation of each word.
- Kohkum's world famous Bannock recipe in the back of the book for readers to enjoy.

On the Trapline

written by David A. Robertson
illustrated by Julie Flett

ages
6–8



Themes explored:

ON THE LAND



INTERGENERATIONAL
BONDS AND TEACHINGS



INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE
LEARNING (SWAMPY CREE)



A boy and Moshom, his grandpa, take a trip together to visit a place of great meaning to Moshom. A trapline is where people hunt and live off the land, and it was where Moshom grew up. As they embark on their northern journey, the child repeatedly asks his grandfather, “Is this your trapline?” Along the way, the boy finds himself imagining what life was like two generations ago – a life that appears to be both different from and similar to his life now. This is a heartfelt story about memory, imagination and intergenerational connection that perfectly captures the experience of a young child’s wonder as he is introduced to places and stories that hold meaning for his family.

Thematic connections:

On the Land

- Connecting to the land is depicted as being very important to Indigenous wellbeing and identity.
- The young boy explores the land in the community Moshom grew up in.
- The boy in the story compares the land from his home in the city and Moshom’s community up north; observes the differences and similarities (i.e. spacing, sizing); explores nature and describes his observations (i.e. sizes of rocks, types of trees, size of the river and changes in the colour of water, movement of the sun, animals’ actions);

On the Trapline

written by David A. Robertson
illustrated by Julie Flett

ages
6–8

- The young boy opens his mind to moving slowly when exploring the land.
- The young boy learns about how Moshom's family lived in connection to the land and compares to his experiences at home in the city.

Intergenerational Bonds and Teachings

- Moshom tells the young boy stories about growing up in this community, and his experiences growing up after leaving the trapline.
- The young boy learns about how Moshom's family lived (i.e. together in one tent to keep warm at night; sharing chores outside), how everyone shared with each other on the trapline.
- The young boy learns about his cultural relationship with Moshom as an Elder when partaking in a traditional Feast.
- Most of the children in the community spoke Cree, but all learned and spoke English when in school (it is not said explicitly, but strong clues are given that Moshom went to a residential school).

Indigenous Language Learning

- Moshom speaks Swampy Cree and teaches his grandson many words throughout the books, including *Tansi* (hi), *kîwetinohk* (north), and *wakomakanak* (family).

Sometimes I Feel Like a Fox

written by Danielle Daniel

ages
6–8



SOMETIMES I FEEL LIKE A FOX

Danielle Daniel

Themes explored:

INTERGENERATIONAL
BONDS AND TEACHINGS



Children's love for animals and disguise come together in this award-winning introduction to the Anishinaabe tradition of totem animals. In this introduction to the Anishinaabe tradition of totem animals, young children explain why they identify with different creatures such as a deer, beaver or moose. Delightful illustrations show the children wearing masks representing their chosen animal, while the few lines of text on each page work as a series of simple poems throughout the book. In a brief author's note, Danielle Daniel explains the importance of totem animals in Anishinaabe culture and how they can also act as animal guides for young children seeking to understand themselves and others.

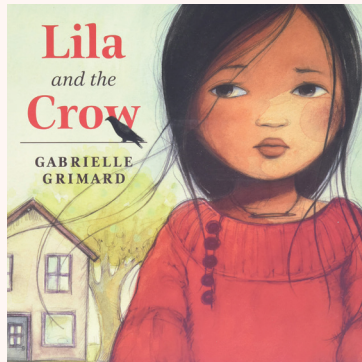
Thematic connections:

- Each animal is described with its importance of totem meanings.
- The illustrations are of children wearing the animal masks which give a meaning of characteristics that a person can share with the animal.

Lila and the Crow

written by Gabrielle Grimard

ages
6–8



Themes explored:

INDIGENOUS WORLDVIEWS/
WAYS OF BEING



Lila is bullied because of her dark skin, but the crows have a solution for that! Lila has just moved to a new town and can't wait to make friends at school. But on the first day, a boy points at her and shouts: "A crow! A crow! The new girl's hair is black like a crow!" The others whisper and laugh, and Lila's heart grows as heavy as a stone. The next day, Lila covers her hair. But this time, the boy points at her dark skin. When she covers her face, he mocks her dark eyes. Now every day at school, Lila hides under her turtleneck, dark glasses, and hat. And every day when she goes home, she sees a crow who seems to want to tell her something. Lila ignores the bird and even throws rocks at it, but it won't go away.

Meanwhile, the great autumn festival is approaching. While the other kids prepare their costumes, Lila is sadder and lonelier than ever. At her lowest point of despair, a magical encounter with the crow opens Lila's eyes to the beauty of being different, and gives her the courage to proudly embrace her true self.

Thematic connections:

- This story emphasizes acceptance for being oneself, but also in Lila being different from her friends.
- It shares the spirit of the crow giving her the strength to embrace who she is.

Phyllis's Orange Shirt

written by Phyllis Webstad
illustrated by Brock Nicol

ages
6–8



Themes explored:

ON THE LAND



INTERGENERATIONAL
BONDS AND TEACHINGS



This book is an adaptation of the original Phyllis Webstad book for younger readers between the ages of 4–6 with illustration. It highlights Phyllis living on Dog Creek Reserve with Granny and attending residential school and not know what comes with that. The book highlights the importance of orange shirt day and the survivors of residential schools like Phyllis. Phyllis shares her story at an age-appropriate lens of leaving her reserve and attending residential school and unsure when she returns.

Thematic connections:

On the Land

- Little Phyllis is able to learn more about the land when living with Granny in Dog Creek Reserve.
- Little Phyllis is able to pick berries as well as garden and catch fish.

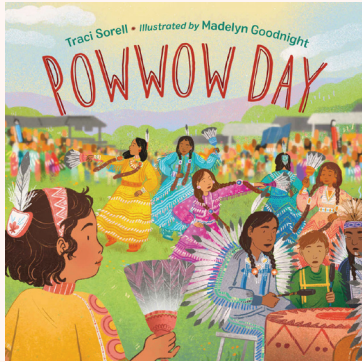
Intergenerational Bonds and Teachings

- Wearing orange shirts is remember that every child matters, honoring First Nations and reflecting on the respect and purpose of every child.
- Little Phyllis learns what it means to be Northern Secwepemc by following her Granny's teachings and honoring Orange Shirt Day to come together in reconciliation for future generations of families.

Pow Wow Day

written by Traci Sorell
illustrated by Madelyn Goodnight

ages
6-8



Themes explored:

ON THE LAND



INTERGENERATIONAL
BONDS AND TEACHINGS



It's Pow Wow Day and River, her sister Amber and their mom and Dad are getting ready to attend their annual tradition, their Tribal Powwow. River is sad because she's not going to be able to dance this year. Even though she's feeling a lot better, she is still not strong enough. River struggles with watching her friends and family dancing and she can't. At one point she thinks she can at least dance for Grand entry but she is disappointed when she realizes she can't hear the heartbeat of the drum through her feet like she usually could. However River soon realizes that even though she cannot dance this year, when the Elder prays after grand entry he prays that people dance to honor the creator, that the culture and language stay strong and that healing will come to those who need it.

This is a beautiful story about family and how River tries to make peace with her temporary limitations. River is a jingle dress dancer and she soon reminds herself that her beloved Jingle Dress dance is to honor the Creator, the ancestors and everyone's health, including her own.

Pow Wow Day

written by Traci Sorell
illustrated by Madelyn Goodnight

ages
6–8

Thematic connections:

On the Land

- The family is shown attending their Tribal Pow wow.
- Connecting to the land and the different kind of dances i.e.: Jingle dress, fancy, traditional and grass is depicted in the story.
- Connecting to the drum, mother earth and one another is depicted in the story.

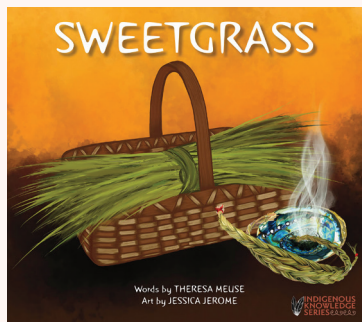
Intergenerational Bonds and Teachings

- Strong Family bonds are demonstrated through River's journey.
- Teachings about what our dances stand for is depicted.
- The healing power of the dances and the drum is actively portrayed in the story.

Sweetgrass

written by Thereesa Meuse
illustrated by Jessica Jerome

ages
6–8



Themes explored:

ON THE LAND



INTERGENERATIONAL
BONDS AND TEACHINGS



INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE
LEARNING (MI'KMAW)



A modern story of traditional Indigenous knowledge that follows a young boy and his Auntie as they gather and braid sweetgrass, **one of the four sacred medicines.**

It's early July, and for Matthew and his Auntie that means one thing: time to go sweetgrass picking. This year, Matthew's younger cousin Warren is coming along, and it will be his first time visiting the shoreline where the sweetgrass grows.

With Auntie's traditional Mi'kmaw knowledge and Matthew's gentle guidance, Warren learns about the many uses for sweetgrass—as traditional medicine, a sacred offering, a smudging ingredient—and the importance of not picking more than he needs. Once the trio is back at Auntie's house, she shows the boys how to clean and braid the grass.

From the duo behind the bestsellers *The Gathering* and *The Sharing Circle*, this heartfelt story about the gifts we receive from Mother Earth and how to gather them respectfully offers thoughtful insight into a treasured Mi'kmaw tradition.

Sweetgrass

written by Thereesa Meuse
illustrated by Jessica Jerome

ages
6–8

Sweetgrass grows in wet meadows, low prairies, and the edges of sloughs and marshes. It grows from Labrador to Alaska, south to New Jersey, Indiana, Iowa, New Mexico, and Arizona. Widely used by North American indigenous peoples from many different Nations, it is also considered one of the “four sacred medicines” by many Plains Indians.

Thematic connections:

On the Land

- Matthew and his cousin Warren go with their Auntie in July to pick Sweetgrass along the ocean/shoreline, on their Traditional territory.
- It is Warren’s first experience picking and he is excited to experience this and learn some new teachings.
- Connecting to the land and the medicines is depicted.
- Land and medicine teachings are cited in the story.

Intergenerational Bonds and Teachings

- Auntie ensures the boys are ready and equipped for picking and once they arrive at the spot they will be picking, she offers them the teachings that she knows.
- Auntie teaches Matthew and Warren how to pick sweetgrass in a good way, which respects the land, their culture and the medicine they are harvesting.
- The teachings include making an offering before you pick, how to braid the medicine and clean it, etc.

Sweetgrass

written by Thereesa Meuse
illustrated by Jessica Jerome

ages
6–8

- Warren thinks about sharing the sweetgrass with some Elders who are not able to pick medicines anymore and others in his community.
- Matthew and Warren learn more about sweetgrass and what picking entails (asking permission to pick, cleaning the sweetgrass, braiding it, the right time to pick, its usage).
- Auntie teaches the ways in which she learned growing up.
- This experience is exciting for the boys and creates an opportunity for them to connect as a family.

Indigenous Language Learning

- Mi'kmaw is the family's Nation and these teachings come from that way of life.

Giju's Gift

written by Thereesa Meuse
illustrated by Jessica Jerome

ages
6-8



Themes explored:

INDIGENOUS
LANGUAGE LEARNING
(PACIFIQUE MI'GMAQ)



INDIGENOUS WORLDVIEWS/
WAYS OF BEING



INTERGENERATIONAL
BONDS AND TEACHINGS



Long ago, all living creatures on this land shared a special balance with one another. The pugulatmu'j- the Little People-were the original guardians of the land, and they looked after all living things. As time passed, we forgot these playful yet powerful guardians, but they did not forget us. Occasionally, they make their presence known with the little tricks they play.

When her hair clip disappears, Mali is devastated. It was special, made by her giju'. Her mom thinks she lost it, but Mali knows it was stolen by the pugulatmu'j. Soon after, Mali is surprised to meet Puug-and he's wearing her hair clip. If she helps him find what he needs, she has a chance of getting it back. As they hunt for the objects on Puug's list, Mali uncovers a lot of unanswered questions along the way.

Thematic connections:

Indigenous Language Learning (Pacifique Mi'gmaq)

- The title is Indigenous language learning since Giju is Pacifique Mi'gmaq for Grandmother as well as many other words in the book such as:
 - Apaja'sit which means Come Back
 - Pugulatmu'j which means Little People
 - Jenu which means Giant
 - Nemijgami which means grandfather
 - E'e means yes
 - Wela'lin means Thank you

Giju's Gift

written by Thereesa Meuse
illustrated by Jessica Jerome

ages
6–8

- And many more words are translated throughout the story and the best part is at the back of the book there is a glossary for the words so you can know what they mean.

Indigenous Worldviews/Ways of Being

- This whole story is based off a traditional Indigenous story and is a great way to share the stories of our Indigenous people to today's kids and families and a new way to learn them.

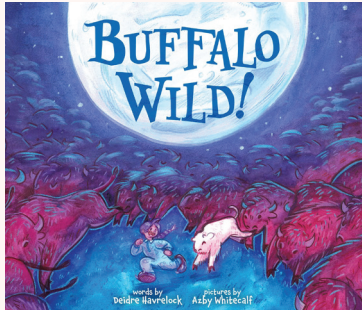
Intergenerational Bonds and Teachings

- In the story when Puug and Mali travel to an old run-down residential school, they find a red version of Mali's hair clip and when she touches the clip she has a vision of the past when her Giju (grandmother) was in the school and made this hair clip and had it taken from her because it was not part of the dress code.
- This story also shows the importance and healing properties of the medicines as proven when the capture the Jenu (Giant) and Mali is able to use the braid of sweet grass that her Nemijgami (Grandfather) gave her to help release the spirit to a safe travel into the spirit world.

Buffalo Wild

written by Deidre Havrelock
illustrated by Azby Whitecalf

ages
6–8



Themes explored:

ON THE LAND



INTERGENERATIONAL
BONDS AND TEACHINGS



Since Declan was born, his kokum has shared her love of Buffalo through stories and art. But Declan longs to see real Buffalo. Then one magical night, herds of the majestic creatures stampede down from the sky. That's when things really get wild!

Azby Whitecalf's playful illustrations add to the joy and reverence in Deidre Havrelock's picture book debut. A reprinting of the Buffalo Treaty and an author's note describe the importance of Buffalo to Indigenous Peoples and efforts to revitalize the species.

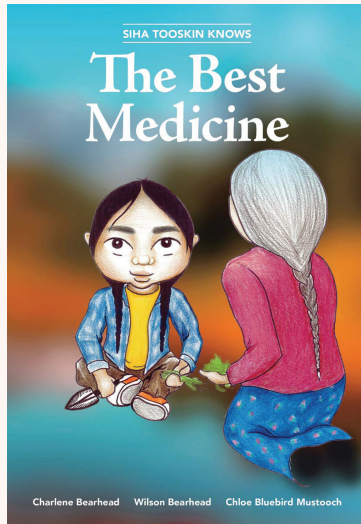
Thematic connections:

- Teaches the meaning of the buffalo to Indigenous Peoples.
- Highlights Declan's close relationship with his kokum (grandmother), and the knowledge she has shared with him.

Siha Tooskin Knows The Best Medicine

written by Charlene Bearhead and Wilson Bearhead
illustrated by Chloe Bluebird Mustooch

ages
9-12



Themes explored:

INTERGENERATIONAL
BONDS AND TEACHINGS



INDIGENOUS WORLDVIEWS/
WAYS OF BEING



INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE
LEARNING (NAKOTA
DIALECT FROM WABAMUN
LAKE FIRST NATION)



When Siha Tooskin-Paul Wahasaypa – finds himself not feeling at all well he learns that there are answers for him from the healing practices of his own people and from Western medicine. Pay a hospital visit to Paul as he learns more about where “modern medicine” really comes from and how we can all benefit from Indigenous and Western healers as Paul seeks the best medicine for his own wellness.

The Siha Tooskin Knows series uses vivid narratives and dazzling illustrations in contemporary settings to share stories about an 11-year-old Nakota boy.

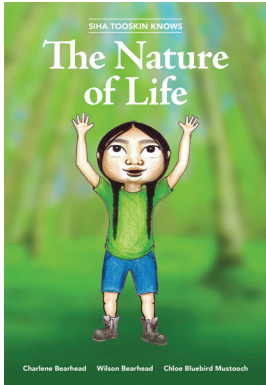
Thematic connections:

- The book highlights the importance of bonding with Elders. This is highlighted in the interactions between Paul and Mugoshin, as Mugoshin explains to Paul that she has brought him medicine that she has boiled from the plants they had picked together that past summer.
- Pictures throughout the book illustrate two of the four sacred medicines, sage and sweetgrass, as well as the medicines that Mugoshin prepared for Paul.
- Mugoshin encourages Paul to embrace both Indigenous ways and Western ways of healing by encouraging him to take both types of medicines and teaching him that many western medicines are also derived from plants.
- Mugoshin passes on Nakota dialect to Paul when she greets him or refers to his parents, the Creator or Mother Earth in her local dialect.

Siha Tooskin Knows The Nature of Life

written by Charlene Bearhead and Wilson Bearhead
illustrated by Chloe Bluebird Mustooch

ages
9-12



Themes explored:

ON THE LAND



INTERGENERATIONAL
BONDS AND TEACHINGS



INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE
LEARNING (NAKOTA)



INDIGENOUS WORLDVIEWS/
WAYS OF BEING



Paul explores the land and all that it has to offer with his mother (Ena) as he learns about strength, generosity, kindness, humility and resilience. He learns these teachings from the grass, the trees and the animals and his mother encourages him to stop, take a pause and listen. We all have a lot to learn on our journey and nature is one of our biggest teachers.

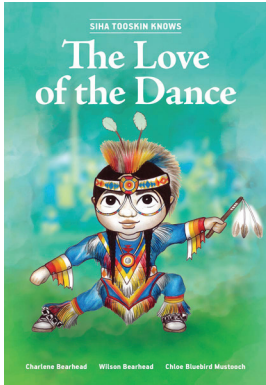
Thematic connections:

- Paul and his mother go on a walk and explore Mother Earth (Ena Makoochay). The land has many teachers, the rocks (grandfathers) who are so strong and resilient, the four legged who give their life for us so we can eat, the grass that gives us a soft place to sit and teaches us how to dance. Paul learns kindness, compassion and generosity from his surroundings.
- Paul's mother expresses that she received a lot of these teachings as a child and encourages Paul to reach out to Creator when he is experiencing difficulties in his life. Paul's mother states she learned from the animals and from nature on how to live in a good way.
- Paul loves to spend time with his family which include his parents, siblings and grandparents.
- Paul is proud of his family and their culture as Nakota People.
- Nakota language is used throughout the book to describe certain people and relations.

Siha Tooskin Knows The Love of the Dance

written by Charlene Bearhead and Wilson Bearhead
illustrated by Chloe Bluebird Mustooch

ages
9-12



Themes explored:

ON THE LAND



INTERGENERATIONAL
BONDS AND TEACHINGS



INDIGENOUS
LANGUAGE LEARNING



INDIGENOUS WORLDVIEWS/
WAYS OF BEING



Paul invites his friend Jeff to experience and enjoy his first Powwow. Paul and Jeff are accompanied by Paul's uncle Lenard. Jeff learns about the history of the Powwow as a non-Indigenous person and the different types of dance styles across Turtle Island. Paul and his uncle are excited and open to share these teachings and experiences with Jeff who can't wait to learn more.

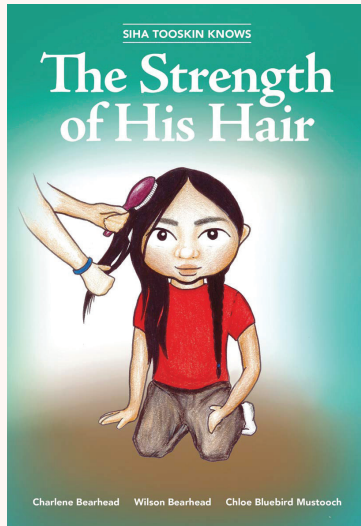
Thematic connections:

- Paul, his uncle Lenard and friend Jeff are camping at the Powwow grounds for the weekend.
- The Powwow takes place outside, and it is a beautiful day where everyone can gather.
- Uncle Lenard has taken Paul to many Powwows and this has become a tradition for them. They are excited to share this experience with Jeff, Paul's friend.
- Jeff learns about the many dances that take place during a Powwow, from what Nation they originated and the purpose.
- Many Powwow dances were created from visions, dreams and imitate Indigenous life and nature. Dancing is 'medicine' and dancing is a form of prayer/healing.
- Jeff is grateful he has learned so much from the Powwow about Indigenous culture and ways of being. He has so much admiration for Paul.

Siha Tooskin Knows The Strength of His Hair

written by Charlene Bearhead and Wilson Bearhead
illustrated by Chloe Bluebird Mustooch

ages
9-12



Themes explored:

INTERGENERATIONAL
BONDS AND TEACHINGS



Where can you find strength when someone disrespects you? And what does having strength really mean? Paul Wahasaypa-Siha Tooskin – has learned from Ena (his mom) and Ade (his dad) to maintain a strong mind, heart, and spirit. Though starting at a new school can be hard, especially when the kids there have never experienced the values and culture of the Nakota people. Join Paul as Mitoshin (his grandfather) helps remind him how strength of character can be found in the strength of his hair.

The Siha Tooskin Knows series uses vivid narratives and dazzling illustrations in contemporary settings to share stories about an 11-year-old Nakota boy.

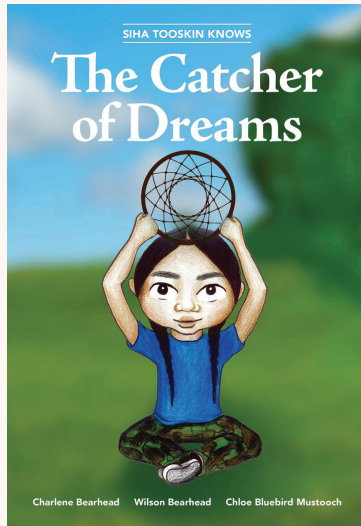
Thematic connections:

- Mitoshin (grandfather) and grandson Paul working on the land and bonding.
- Paul will be attending a new school, Mitoshin offers teachings relating to respect and kindness.
- Paul talks about his mother brushing and braiding his hair and the teachings she passes on to him whilst doing so.
- Teachings passed on through generations.
- Teachings about the land and connection to our bodies.

Siha Tooskin Knows The Catcher of Dreams

written by Charlene Bearhead and Wilson Bearhead
illustrated by Chloe Bluebird Mustooch

ages
9-12



Themes explored:

INTERGENERATIONAL
BONDS AND TEACHINGS



A new baby due any day and a visit from his grandparents!

Siha Tooskin (Paul) takes his expert bike riding to a whole new level to make sure he doesn't miss a thing. At home, Mugoshin (Grandmother) is creating a very special gift to protect the precious little one. Join Paul as he enjoys delicious bannock, imagines the future of a new baby sister, and listens to Mugoshin's teachings about the catcher of dreams.

The Siha Tooskin Knows series uses vivid narratives and dazzling illustrations in contemporary settings to share stories about an 11-year-old Nakota boy.

Thematic connections:

- Traditional names as well as English names used throughout story.
- Mogoshin shares the traditional teaching about Dream Catchers with Paul (Siha Tooskin).
- Paul is being taken care of by his grandparents while his mom is in the hospital having a baby.
- Traditional medicines used throughout story to support Mogoshin's teachings.

The Sharing Circle

written by Theresa “Corky” Larsen-Jonasson
illustrated by Jessika Von Innerebner

ages
9–12



Themes explored:

ON THE LAND



INTERGENERATIONAL
BONDS AND TEACHINGS



INDIGENOUS WORLDVIEWS/
WAYS OF BEING



When two red foxes have an argument which breaks apart their community, a gentle buffalo decides to take a braid of sweetgrass to a local elder and asks her to help with a sharing circle for all the animals.

Thematic connections:

- Two best friend foxes have an argument that disrupts peace in their animal community.
- An older buffalo seeks help from a Great Horned Owl called Kokom.
- Kokum uses water teachings to teach the animals about sacred circles, and invites them to a Sharing Circle.
- All animals have an opportunity to share how they are feeling: taking turns using the talking stick.
- Kokum makes sure everyone feels safe and understood in the Circle.
- The animal friends listen to one another and are able to move past their disagreement.

The Barren Grounds

written by David A. Robertson

ages
9-12



Themes explored:

ON THE LAND



INTERGENERATIONAL
BONDS AND TEACHINGS



INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE
LEARNING (SWAMPY CREE)



INDIGENOUS WORLDVIEWS/
WAYS OF BEING



Morgan and Eli, two Indigenous children forced away from their families and communities, are brought together in a foster home in Winnipeg, Manitoba. They each feel disconnected, from their culture and each other, and struggle to fit in at school and at their new home -- until they find a secret place, walled off in an unfinished attic bedroom. A portal opens to another reality, Askí, bringing them onto frozen, barren grounds, where they meet Ochek (Fisher). The only hunter supporting his starving community, Misewa, Ochek welcomes the human children, teaching them traditional ways to survive. But as the need for food becomes desperate, they embark on a dangerous mission. Accompanied by Arik, a sassy Squirrel they catch stealing from the trapline, they try to save Misewa before the icy grip of winter freezes everything—including them.

Thematic connections:

- Robertson weaves together European fantasy tropes and Indigenous stories of the constellations and issues both contemporary and personal:
 - Eli is new to the foster care system and has a strong connection with his heritage- he still speaks the Swampy Cree dialect of his community
 - Morgan's connection to her past is depicted as tenuous- she longs for a home but rejects her foster parent's attempts to give her on

The Barren Grounds

written by David A. Robertson

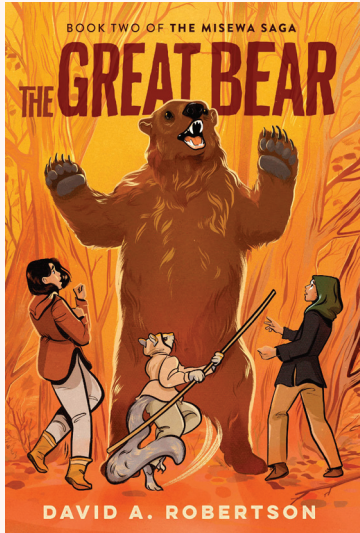
ages
9-12

- Eli mourns the loss of his family, community and culture and finds in Misewa and Ocheq his first and language and old way of life; Morgan to her surprise, finds pieces of herself in Misewa and begins to build an intergenerational bond with her birth mother
- Morgan and Eli learn how it is important to treat the land of Misewa with care and respect through observing the delicate balance between man and nature over the course of their adventure together.

The Great Bear

written by David A. Robertson

ages
9-12



Themes explored:

ON THE LAND



INTERGENERATIONAL
BONDS AND TEACHINGS



INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE
LEARNING (SWAMPY CREE)



INDIGENOUS WORLDVIEWS/
WAYS OF BEING



In this second book in the Narnia-inspired Indigenous middle-grade fantasy series, Eli and Morgan journey once more to Misewa, travelling back in time.

Back at home after their first adventure in the Barren Grounds, Eli and Morgan each struggle with personal issues: Eli is being bullied at school, and tries to hide it from Morgan, while Morgan has to make an important decision about her birth mother. They turn to the place where they know they can learn the most, and make the journey to Misewa to visit their animal friends. This time they travel back in time and meet a young fisher that might just be their lost friend. But they discover that the village is once again in peril, and they must dig deep within themselves to find the strength to protect their beloved friends. Can they carry this strength back home to face their own challenges?

Thematic connections:

- Morgan and Eli experience different situations where they are victims of racism and hate. Education and allyship are shown in the story to be essential for creating safe spaces for all.

The Great Bear

written by David A. Robertson

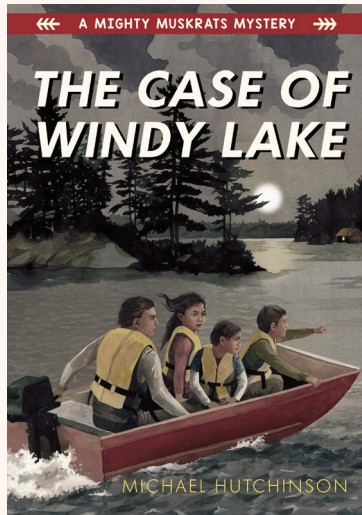
ages
9–12

- Courage is shown as an important teaching in the book, which is also common teaching within Indigenous communities. Courage is an ongoing theme throughout the novel, with different characters having to show courage in different parts of the story.
- Mihko references “blood memory” as defining a strong connection to a place where you feel a sense of belonging.
- Mihko introduces the idea of Knowledge Keepers to Morgan and Eli: this helps to emphasize the importance of storytelling and oral traditions in Indigenous communities.
- Throughout the *The Great Bear*, traditional medicines are used to heal injured or sick characters.
- Eli’s braid is a source of pride for him, and its cultural significance is something this discussed frequently throughout the story.
- Stories that Indigenous nations carry throughout the generations often explain why something is or how something came to be – stories of this sentiment are communicated to Morgan and Eli throughout the story.

The Case of Windy Lake

written by Michael Hutchinson

ages
9-12



Themes explored:

ON THE LAND



INTERGENERATIONAL
BONDS AND TEACHINGS



INDIGENOUS WORLDVIEWS/
WAYS OF BEING



Sam, Otter, Atim, and Chickadee are four inseparable cousins growing up on the Windy Lake First Nation. Nicknamed the Mighty Muskrats for their habit of laughing, fighting, and exploring together, the cousins find that each new adventure adds to their reputation. When a visiting archeologist goes missing, the cousins decide to solve the mystery of his disappearance. In the midst of community conflict, family concerns, and environmental protests, the four get busy following every lead. From their base of operations in a fort made out of an old school bus, the Mighty Muskrats won't let anything stop them from solving their case!

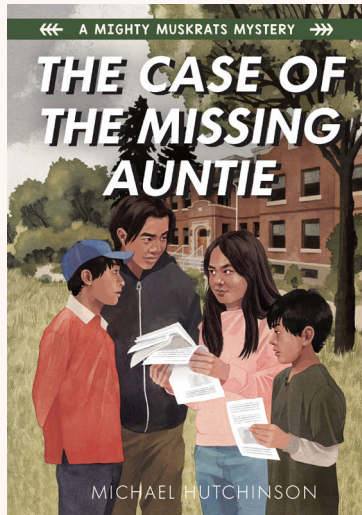
Thematic connections:

- The Mighty Muskrats travel throughout their reserve – describing areas of cultural importance to their Nation.
- Their grandfather tells them stories/teachings about a vision quest; it's importance to their cousin who is going through her own journey in the story.
- The grandfather says, “Do you know what the birds know?” – helping the children decipher a way to understand nature to help them solve the mystery.
- Their cousin Denice ties herself to a pole at a mining site for an environmental protest – she stays there for 3 days (on a vision quest) to learn how she can help the environment in her reserve.

The Case of the Missing Auntie

written by Michael Hutchinson

ages
9-12



Themes explored:

INTERGENERATIONAL
BONDS AND TEACHINGS



INDIGENOUS WORLDVIEWS/
WAYS OF BEING



The Mighty Muskrats are off to the city to have fun at the Exhibition Fair. But when Chickadee learns about Grandpa's little sister, who was scooped up by the government and adopted out to strangers without her parents' permission many years ago, the Mighty Muskrats have a new mystery to solve. Once in the bright lights of the big city, the cousins get distracted, face off with bullies, meet some heroes and unlikely teachers, and learn many of the difficulties of life in the city, as well as hard truths about their country's treatment of First Nations people.

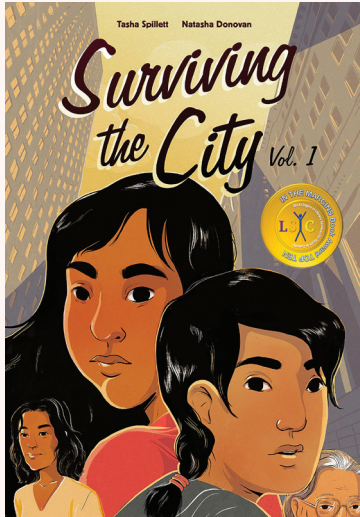
Thematic connections:

- The grandfather tells Chickadee about his sister that was sent to a residential school and then was adopted out and never returned to home.
- The children meet a friend from the reserve, who moved to the city. He shows them that people change and must do things that aren't nice to survive in the city.
- The children go to the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation to learn about residential schools and to get information on their great-aunt.
- The information from the Centre helps them connect with a family that adopted their aunt and they get to meet her adopted family.
- They have a sweat for both families to heal and say goodbye to their shared loved one.

Surviving the City, Volume 1.

written by Tasha Spillett and Natasha Donovan

ages
9-12



Themes explored:

INTERGENERATIONAL
BONDS AND TEACHINGS



INDIGENOUS
LANGUAGE LEARNING



INDIGENOUS WORLDVIEWS/
WAYS OF BEING



Miikwan and Dez are best friends. Miikwan is Anishinaabe; Dez is Inninew. Together, the teens navigate the challenges of growing up in an urban landscape - they're so close, they even completed their Berry Fast together. However, when Dez's grandmother becomes too sick, Dez is told she can't stay with her anymore. With the threat of a group home looming, Dez can't bring herself to go home and disappears. Miikwan is devastated, and the wound of her missing mother resurfaces. Will Dez's community find her before it's too late? Will Miikwan be able to cope if they don't?

Thematic connections:

- The first page of the book contains a short poem about the writer taking care of their younger sister with the practicing of Indigenous practices/traditions.
- In the book, the writer speaks of the Berry Fast and of the characters own celebration.
- In the book, Dez, has a conversation with an Indigenous support person where they use Indigenous language and Smudge together.
- The book touches on Residential school and compares Dez's potential apprehension to the Church apprehending children and forcing them into schools. She in turn runs away because being homeless, to her, is better than being forcibly separated from her Grandmother by Social Services.

Surviving the City, Volume 1.

written by Tasha Spillett and Natasha Donovan

ages
9-12

- The book shows that it is potentially unsafe for a young, Indigenous girl to leave home/choose to be homeless/wander around a large city alone due to the high potential of being assaulted/murdered/kidnapped.
- The books shows Dez's best friend and the Indigenous support worker praying and offering Tobacco for her friends safety while missing. The prayers are in Indigenous language and translated into English.
- Throughout the book, the pictures depict the main character's Ancestors standing with them/protecting them.
- At the back of the book, readers can access information, statistics and more about the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women's Movement.

Hunting By Stars (A Marrow Thieves Novel)

written by Cherie Dimaline

ages
9–12



Themes explored:

ON THE LAND



INTERGENERATIONAL
BONDS AND LEARNING



INDIGENOUS WORLDVIEWS/
WAYS OF BEING



Years ago, when plagues and natural disasters killed millions of people, much of the world stopped dreaming. Without dreams, people are haunted, sick, mad, unable to rebuild. The government soon finds that the Indigenous people of North America have retained their dreams, an ability rumored to be housed in the very marrow of their bones. Soon, residential schools pop up—or are re-opened—across the land to bring in the dreamers and harvest their dreams.

Seventeen-year-old French lost his family to these schools and has spent the years since heading north with his new found family: a group of other dreamers, who, like him, are trying to build and thrive as a community. But then French wakes up in a pitch-black room, locked in and alone for the first time in years, and he knows immediately where he is—and what it will take to escape.

Meanwhile, out in the world, his found family searches for him and dodges new dangers—school Recruiters, a blood cult, even the land itself. When their paths finally collide, French must decide how far he is willing to go—and how many loved ones is he willing to betray—in order to survive.

Hunting By Stars (A Marrow Thieves Novel)

written by Cherie Dimaline

ages
9-12

Thematic connections:

On the Land

- This whole book is based mostly in the forest, out “dreamers” live, hide and run in the forest and live off what they need to survive together.

Intergenerational Bonds and Learning

- A shared connection to the climate change-ravaged Earth, memory of ancestral knowledge, and hope for the future is the key to the character’s survival. These are all the reasons these characters are connected and support one another and are there for each other.
- Small dehumanizing details like naming dreamers “cargo” and “runners” as opposed to people, and seeing them as walking, expendable medicine, or experiments to carve up this has a huge connection to the way indigenous people were looked at and treated during the times of residential schools, not look at as humans, being forced to change and lose their culture etc.

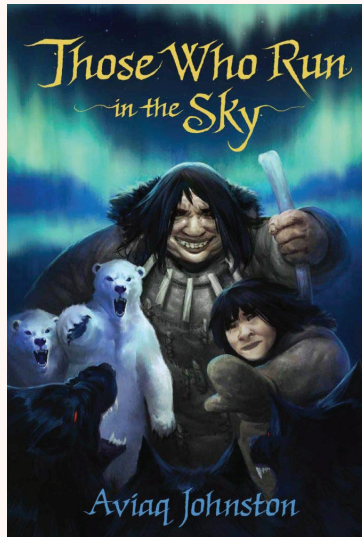
Indigenous Worldviews/Ways of Being & Colonialism

- This is a political book, told in the language of reconciliation—settler versus Indigenous—and from the point-of-view of the hunted. It’s the settlers who created the problem, yet the Indigenous people are being mined as the solution. The schools, forced imprisonment, government-sanctioned hunting of Indigenous people of all ages, and the medical testing and torture that goes on within them, are all based on the Indian residential school model of the none-too-distant past.

Those Who Run in the Sky

written by Aviaq Johnston

ages
9-12



Themes explored:

INDIGENOUS WORLDVIEWS/
WAYS OF BEING



OTHER IMPORTANT
THEMES ARE ALSO
INCLUDED IN THIS NOVEL,
INCLUDING: INUIT
MYTHOLOGY/TEACHINGS,
FAMILY, COMING OF AGE,
TRAUMA, IDENTITY,
AND GENOCIDE)

This teen novel, written by Iqaluit-based Inuit author Aviaq Johnston, is a coming-of-age story that follows a young shaman named Pitu as he learns to use his powers and ultimately finds himself lost in the world of the spirits.

After a strange and violent blizzard leaves Pitu stranded on the sea ice, without his dog team or any weapons to defend himself, he soon realizes that he is no longer in the world that he once knew. The storm has carried him into the world of the spirits, a world populated with terrifying creatures---black wolves with red eyes, ravenous and constantly stalking him; water-dwelling creatures that want nothing more than to snatch him and pull him into the frigid ocean through an ice crack. As well as beings less frightening, but equally as incredible, such as a lone giant who can carry Pitu in the palm of her hand and keeps caribou and polar bears as pets.

After stumbling upon a fellow shaman who has been trapped in the spirit world for many years, Pitu must master all of his shamanic powers to make his way back to the world of the living, to his family, and to the girl that he loves.

Those Who Run in the Sky

written by Aviaq Johnston

ages
9-12

Thematic connections:

Indigenous Worldviews/Ways of Being

- This novel showcases the life of a young shaman as he navigates his calling in life. In this book, it illustrates several ways to living such as Pitu claiming the first seal of the hunting season.
- Throughout the novel, it depicts the ways that his community hunt and are self-sufficient. It also details what it means to be a shaman in these communities and the importance of these spaces.

Inuit Mythology/Teachings

- This novel does a great deal of justice to showcasing Inuit mythology as they detail what creatures are lurking in the sky. He speaks to these tales that are passed down in Chapter 10 as he is in disbelief that these creatures, he previously believed to be folklore were in front of him. He also battles with some creature present in these tales like, qallupilluq, who steals lone children who are led astray.

Elatsoe

written by Darcie Little Badger
illustrated by Rovina Cai

ages
9–12



Themes explored:

ON THE LAND



INTERGENERATIONAL
BONDS AND TEACHINGS



INDIGENOUS WORLDVIEWS/
WAYS OF BEING



Elatsoe — Ellie for short — lives in an alternate contemporary America shaped by the ancestral magics and knowledge of its Indigenous and immigrant groups. She can raise the spirits of dead animals — most importantly, her ghost dog Kirby. When her beloved cousin dies, all signs point to a car crash, but his ghost tells her otherwise: He was murdered.

Who killed him and how did he die? With the help of her family, her best friend Jay, and the memory great, great, great, great, great, great grandmother, Elatsoe, must track down the killer and unravel the mystery of this creepy town and its dark past. But will the nefarious townsfolk and a mysterious Doctor stop her before she gets started?

Thematic connections:

- The plot is smoothly woven through with folkloric stories of heroic ancestors, and the pattern they make together is beautiful. This has a large connection to Intergenerational Bonds Teachings since the story tellers in this book tend to be Ellie's grandparents who pass down their knowledge and stories to her to help her in her journey.

Elatsoe

written by Darcie Little Badger
illustrated by Rovina Cai

ages
9–12

- “Family,” though, isn’t limited to this nuclear unit. Besides the closeness amongst cousins and in-laws, we also see the importance of past generations, most particularly Ellie’s great-great- great-great-great-great grandmother, referred to as “Six Great” throughout the book. Six Great was a famed monster-killer, and Darcie Little Badger intersperses her adventures throughout the text, sometimes via Ellie recalling family lore and sometimes through her mother telling her stories.
- Throughout the book, Ellie and her friend, Jay, must travel and journey around many things (the community, through rivers, etc.) to stay safe, and also must work on getting the information needed for Ellie to bring justice to her cousin. They work together on and with the land throughout the book.

Fatty Legs: A True Story

written by Christy Jordan-Fenton and Margaret Pokiak-Fenton
illustrated by Liz Amini-Holmes

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 make the five-day journey to 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. She immediately dislikes the strong-willed young Margaret. Intending to humiliate her, the heartless Raven gives gray stockings to all the girls — all 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. Complemented by archival photos from Margaret Pokiak-Fenton's collection and striking artworks from Liz Amini-Holmes, this inspiring first-person account of a plucky girl's determination to confront her tormentor will linger with young readers.

Fatty Legs: A True Story

written by Christy Jordan-Fenton and Margaret Pokiak-Fenton
illustrated by Liz Amini-Holmes

ages
9-12

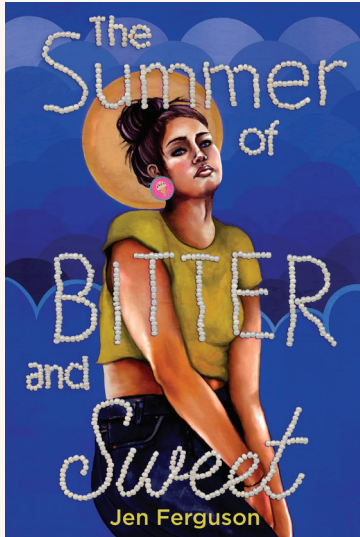
Thematic connections:

- “Fatty Legs” is written by an Indigenous person, and tells the truth about history and her personal experiences going to a residential school when she was eight years old.
- The first story told by an elder at age 65 years old, and who talks about residential school and how she retained her agency and determination in the face of unparalleled bullying from adults.
- Preserve the land, history, and traditions, furthermore, to pass them down to the next generation.
- Model and teach resilience, bravery, and patience to the younger generation.

The Summer of Bitter and Sweet

written by Jen Ferguson

ages
13+



Themes explored:

ON THE LAND



INTERGENERATIONAL
BONDS AND TEACHINGS



INDIGENOUS WORLDVIEWS/
WAYS OF BEING



(2SLGBTQ+
REPRESENTATION IS ALSO
EXPLORED IN THIS NOVEL)

In this complex and emotionally resonant novel about a Métis girl living on the Canadian prairies, debut author Jen Ferguson serves up a powerful story about rage, secrets, and all the spectrums that make up a person—and the sweetness that can still live alongside the bitterest truth.

Lou has enough confusion in front of her this summer. She'll be working in her family's ice-cream shack with her newly ex-boyfriend—whose kisses never made her feel desire, only discomfort—and her former best friend, King, who is back in their Canadian prairie town after disappearing three years ago without a word. But when she gets a letter from her biological father—a man she hoped would stay behind bars for the rest of his life—Lou immediately knows that she cannot meet him, no matter how much he insists. While King's friendship makes Lou feel safer and warmer than she would have thought possible, when her family's business comes under threat, she soon realizes that she can't ignore her father forever.

The Summer of Bitter and Sweet

written by Jen Ferguson

ages
13+

Thematic connections:

On the Land

- Lou and her family partially own the ice cream parlor that is on the land they own.
- The barn and house Lou and her family reside in is also partially owned by their family name by contract.

Intergenerational Bonds and Teachings

- Lou's uncle, Dom, will frequently Michif alive by using certain words in conversation.
- Lou's mother, Louisa, makes beaded earrings. Lou wears a new pair everyday which gathers a lot of attention.
- Lou's story focuses on her unraveling the mystery of her own past. The truths about her absent father. And the ways the secrets of her mother influences her present.
- Lou's mother was raped which led to her becoming pregnant with Lou. The man who raped her was a white man. Lou and her family bonded together as a team with their friends and community members to fight back against Peter England for threatening to take back the land.

Indigenous Worldviews/Ways of Being

- There is a lot of racism the Lou deals with in her town throughout the story. The ways that racism takes the form of insults and hate crimes, but also in friends who say nothing.

The Summer of Bitter and Sweet

written by Jen Ferguson

ages
13+

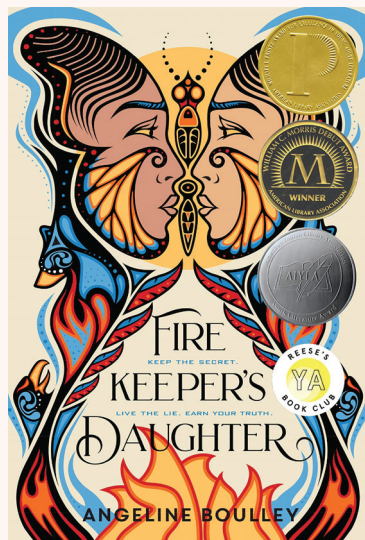
Who associate with the guilty and change nothing. It takes root in insidious comments. In the comments an employee makes. And also in the large scale racism the government employs to take children away. It's a fact of Lou's life.

- Lou is also Michif, and while she has tried to hide this part of her identity in the past, she is now trying more to embrace it and own her heritage, even if it means she is harassed for it. She is trying to gain more of a connection to her culture and community and learn more about everything while she can and is figuring herself out.

Fire Keeper's Daughter

written by Angeline Boulley

ages
14+



Themes explored:

INDIGENOUS WORLDVIEWS/
WAYS OF BEING



Eighteen-year-old Daunis Fontaine has never quite fit in, both in her hometown and on the nearby Ojibwe reservation. She dreams of a fresh start at college, but when family tragedy strikes, Daunis puts her future on hold to look after her fragile mother. The only bright spot is meeting Jamie, the charming new recruit on her brother Levi's hockey team.

Yet even as Daunis falls for Jamie, she senses the dashing hockey star is hiding something. Everything comes to light when Daunis witnesses a shocking murder, thrusting her into an FBI investigation of a lethal new drug.

Reluctantly, Daunis agrees to go undercover, drawing on her knowledge of chemistry and Ojibwe traditional medicine to track down the source. But the search for truth is more complicated than Daunis imagined, exposing secrets and old scars. At the same time, she grows concerned with an investigation that seems more focused on punishing the offenders than protecting the victims.

Now, as the deceptions—and deaths—keep growing, Daunis must learn what it means to be a strong Anishinaabe kwe (Ojibwe woman) and how far she'll go for her community, even if it tears apart the only world she's ever known.

Fire Keeper's Daughter

written by Angeline Boulley

ages
14+

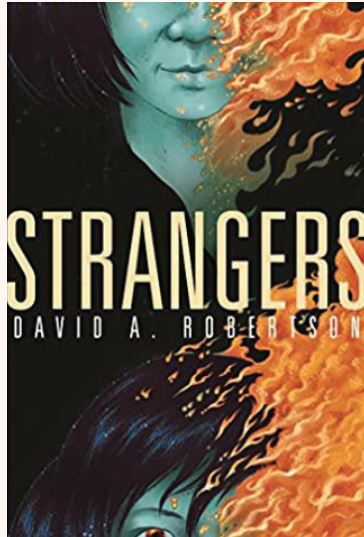
Thematic connections:

- The novel centers itself around Daunis the importance of finding one's identity in their Indigenous heritage, especially in terms of their relation to their Native American heritage.
- Before Daunis learns that Jamie is an undercover police officer, she and Jamie bond over their feelings of separation from the cultures they belong to. Even though she knows to which tribe she belongs, Daunis feels as if she is an outsider because she is not an enrolled member. Jamie, on the other hand, knows only that he is Cherokee.
- Even when Daunis is not fully embraced by her community due to others not feeling that she is “fully” Native, she feels a sense of responsibility to her community to protect and help them out.
- In the book Daunis speaks to her calling to serve her community as her aunt and uncle modelled what it means to serve others on sugar island. Through them, she had found her calling to serve and she does this in a different way by working with the FBI.

Strangers

written by David A. Robertson

ages
15+



Theme explored:

INDIGENOUS WORLDVIEWS/
WAYS OF BEING



A talking coyote, mysterious illnesses, and girl trouble. Coming home can be murder...

When Cole Harper gets a mysterious message from an old friend begging him to come home, he has no idea what he's getting into. Compelled to return to Wounded Sky First Nation, Cole finds his community in chaos: a series of shocking murders, a mysterious illness ravaging the residents, and re-emerging questions about Cole's role in the tragedy that drove him away 10 years ago. With the aid of an unhelpful spirit, a disfigured ghost, and his two oldest friends, Cole tries to figure out his purpose, and unravel the mysteries he left behind a decade ago. Will he find the answers in time to save his community?

Thematic connections:

- Cole explores the idea of Indigenous Ways of Being by connecting to the spiritual world around him.
- This book explores the concept of spirit protectors and spirit influencers as they guide Cole to unpack his past and protect the community.
 - Ideas of the trickster Coyote and spirit helpers are evident throughout the novel.
 - These spirit helpers guide Cole in decision making for the overall wellbeing of his community.

Strangers

written by David A. Robertson

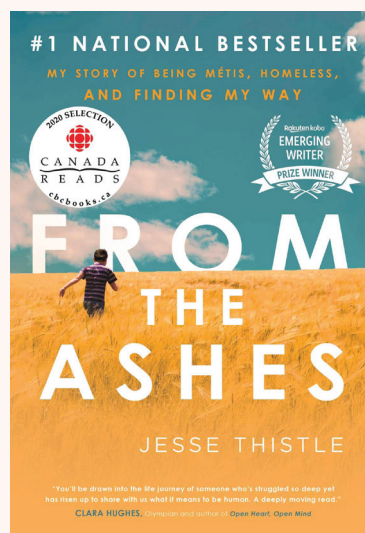
ages
15+

- Aboriginal Worldviews are also evident in the oral storytelling concept in this book.
 - The author interjects himself several times within the story to demonstrate to readers that he is narrating a story.
 - Oral storytelling concepts from community elders about Coyote's role and responsibility or the why the community is named Wounded Sky are ways in which Aboriginal Worldviews of knowledge sharing is passed down to younger generations.

From the Ashes

written by Jesse Thistle

ages
15+



Themes explored:

ON THE LAND



INTERGENERATIONAL
BONDS AND TEACHINGS



From the Ashes is a remarkable memoir about hope and resilience, and a revelatory look into the life of a Métis-Cree man who refused to give up.

Abandoned by his parents as a toddler, Jesse Thistle briefly found himself in the foster-care system with his two brothers, cut off from all they had known. Eventually the children landed in the home of their paternal grandparents, whose tough-love attitudes quickly resulted in conflicts. Throughout it all, the ghost of Jesse's drug-addicted father haunted the halls of the house and the memories of every family member. Struggling with all that had happened, Jesse succumbed to a self-destructive cycle of drug and alcohol addiction and petty crime, spending more than a decade on and off the streets, often homeless. Finally, he realized he would die unless he turned his life around.

In this heartwarming and heart-wrenching memoir, Jesse Thistle writes honestly and fearlessly about his painful past, the abuse he endured, and how he uncovered the truth about his parents. Through sheer perseverance and education—and newfound love—he found his way back into the circle of his Indigenous culture

From the Ashes

written by Jesse Thistle

ages
15+

and family. An eloquent exploration of the impact of prejudice and racism, *From the Ashes* is, in the end, about how love and support can help us find happiness despite the odds.

Thematic connections:

On the Land

- Being on the land is a way to connect with the Earth and is integral to Indigenous wellbeing and identity.
- Jesse remembers picking berries with his kokum and her explaining that berries “knew well their roll as life-givers, and we had to honour and respect that.”
- Jesse’s kokum teaches him to harvest responsibly and only take what is needed so that animals and their kin may also benefit from the berries.
- Jesse’s mushoom’s clothes came from the animals that he traps.
- Jesse is able to learn more about his culture and experience some ceremonies on the land and reconnecting to the land.
- Jess and his wife, Lucie, get married by the water/on the land in a small intimate ceremony.
- Jesse considers his real wedding to Lucie when they were alone in the woods.
- They promised they would love and support each other and submerged their hands in the water – sealing their bond on the land.

From the Ashes

written by Jesse Thistle

ages
15+

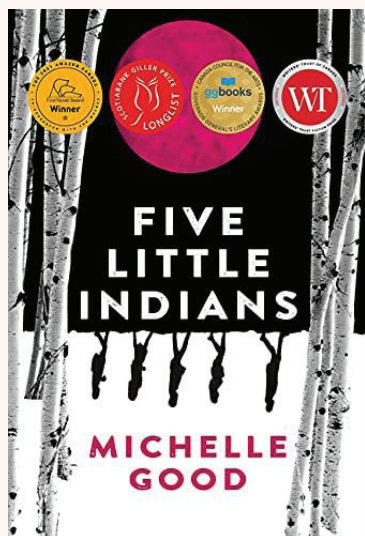
Intergenerational Bonds and Teachings

- Mushoom tells Jesse stories about how their people lived in large communities and survived off the land, building their homes themselves.
- Jesse's aunt Cecile teaches Jesse about his ancestry and states, "You're Cree and road-allowance Michif, Jesse. You come from a long line of chiefs, political leaders, and resistance fighters."
- Jesse revisits his mushoom and kokum's land with his aunt and mother.
- Jesse, along with his mother and Aunt Yvonne, interview Cree and Métis Elders to learn about their lives.
- Jesse imagines that the water ceremony between himself and Lucie is how his Nehayew Michif ancestors would have married and considers it the "best wedding" they could have had.
- Jesse hears from his mother while in Harvest House (rehabilitation centre) and forgives her for abandoning him – this helps their bond and mend their relationship.

Five Little Indians

written by Michelle Good

ages
15+



Themes explored:

ON THE LAND



INTERGENERATIONAL
BONDS AND TEACHINGS



INDIGENOUS WORLDVIEWS/
WAYS OF BEING



Taken from their families when they are very small and sent to a remote, church-run residential school, Kenny, Lucy, Clara, Howie and Maisie are barely out of childhood when they are finally released after years of detention.

Alone and without any skills, support or families, the teens find their way to the seedy and foreign world of Downtown Eastside Vancouver, where they cling together, striving to find a place of safety and belonging in a world that doesn't want them. The paths of the five friends cross and crisscross over the decades as they struggle to overcome, or at least forget, the trauma they endured during their years at the Mission.

Fueled by rage and furious with God, Clara finds her way into the dangerous, highly charged world of the American Indian Movement. Maisie internalizes her pain and continually places herself in dangerous situations. Famous for his daring escapes from the school, Kenny can't stop running and moves restlessly from job to job—through fishing grounds, orchards and logging camps—trying to outrun his memories and his addiction. Lucy finds peace in motherhood and nurtures a secret compulsive disorder as she

Five Little Indians

written by Michelle Good

ages
15+

waits for Kenny to return to the life they once hoped to share together. After almost beating one of his tormentors to death, Howie serves time in prison, then tries once again to re-enter society and begin life anew.

With compassion and insight, *Five Little Indians* chronicles the desperate quest of these residential school survivors to come to terms with their past and, ultimately, find a way forward.

Thematic connections:

- This novel and/or piece of historical fiction takes place in Vancouver, British Columbia, Red Pheasant Cree Reserve and a couple of random locations in the United States.
- This book follows 5 Indigenous youth as they navigate their lives through forced attendance and incarnation at residential school, survival on the raw and dangerous streets of Vancouver's east side, death and humiliation and ultimately healing and re-finding themselves as Indigenous adults.

On the Land

- For many of the Indigenous protagonists, land could be recognized as a symbol of loss, pain and anguish, as all of them were violently ripped from their homelands.
- The land is also recognized as a symbol of healing, ceremony and culture. For example:
 - Clara returned to the land under the guidance of the Elder Mariah, who taught and led her on her healing journey.

Five Little Indians

written by Michelle Good

ages
15+

- Howie finally returned to his reserve and Mother's home to live permanently in peace.

Intergenerational Bonds and Teachings

- This theme is present, appearing and found throughout the book.
 - Through the five Indigenous protagonists themselves – they frequently cross each other's paths.
 - Or the bonds or lack of bonds between parental relationships, like the relationship before residential school between Kenny and his Mother; the deteriorated relationship during and after his return...
- The intergenerational bonds and learnings between Clara and the Elder Mariah, as well as the relationships and leanings between the A.I.M. friends and Clara.

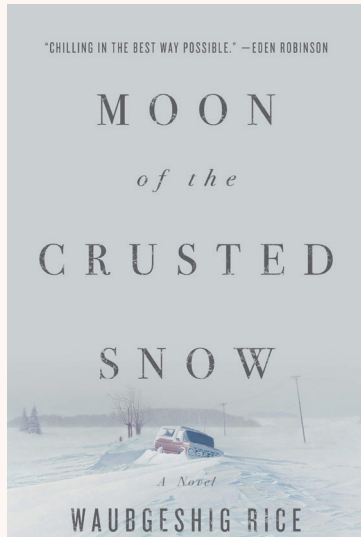
Intergenerational Bonds and Teachings

- This book demonstrated that Indigenous Worldviews are relational, wholistic and intersectional. Indigenous folks recognize themselves as deeply connected and rooted with everything and everyone around them. To understand one's self requires understanding all that is around. To hurt the land and community is to hurt one's self, and vice versa. This is seen in the book as it is also recognized in Indigenous pedagogy of today.
- This book reflected that Indigenous approaches (relationality; relationships with the land, culture, community, people, ancestors and spirituality) were (are) the most valuable and crucial approaches to strength, healing and Indigenous wellbeing.

Moon of the Crusted Snow

written by Waubgeshig Rice

ages
15+



Themes explored:

ON THE LAND



INDIGENOUS
LANGUAGE LEARNING



INDIGENOUS WORLDVIEWS/
WAYS OF BEING



With winter looming, a small northern Anishinaabe community goes dark. Cut off, people become passive and confused. Panic builds as the food supply dwindles. While the band council and a pocket of community members struggle to maintain order, an unexpected visitor arrives, escaping the crumbling society to the south. Soon after, others follow.

The community leadership loses its grip on power as the visitors manipulate the tired and hungry to take control of the reserve. Tensions rise and, as the months pass, so does the death toll due to sickness and despair. Frustrated by the building chaos, a group of young friends and their families turn to the land and Anishinaabe tradition in hopes of helping their community thrive again. Guided through the chaos by an unlikely leader named Evan Whitesky, they endeavor to restore order while grappling with a grave decision.

Thematic connections:

- It tells the story of a small northern Anishinaabe community which finds itself completely cut off from the outside world because of an apocalyptic event, having no one but themselves to count on for survival in an unforgiving icy wasteland.

Moon of the Crusted Snow

written by Waubgeshig Rice

ages
15+

On the Land

- Our main character and protagonist is seen preparing moose meat, scraping hides, preparing fuel, and as the situation becomes increasingly dire, he also takes on responsibilities beyond his level of education, such as medical care all throughout the story.

Indigenous Language Learning

- The author, Waubgeshig Rice, uses opportunities to include different words in their language seamlessly in order for readers to learn new words that are important to the story and community within it.

Indigenous Language Learning

- The author often takes the opportunity to impart on us some of his knowledge on the Anishinaabe people.
- In this story, a group of young friends and their families have decided to band together in hopes of restoring the Anishinaabe traditions, turning to them in a time of great desperation. This is their way of bringing back Indigenous Worldviews/Ways of being to help save their community.

Indigenous Toronto: Stories that Carry This Place

edited by Denise Bolduc, Mnawaate Gordon-Corbiere,
Rebeka Tabobondung and Brian Wright-McLeod

ages
All



Theme explored:

INTERGENERATIONAL
BONDS AND TEACHINGS



Beneath many major North American cities rests a deep foundation of Indigenous history that has been colonized, paved over, and, too often, silenced. Few of its current inhabitants know that Toronto has seen twelve thousand years of uninterrupted Indigenous presence and nationhood in this region, along with a vibrant culture and history that thrives to this day.

With contributions by Indigenous Elders, scholars, journalists, artists, and historians, this unique anthology explores the poles of cultural continuity and settler colonialism that have come to define Toronto as a significant cultural hub and intersection that was also known as a Meeting Place long before European settlers arrived.

“This book is a reflection of endurance and a helpful corrective to settler fantasies. It tells a more balanced account of our communities, then and now. It offers the space for us to reclaim our ancestors’ language and legacy, rewriting ourselves back into a landscape from which non-Indigenous historians have worked hard to erase us. But we are there in the skyline and throughout the GTA, along the coast and in all directions.” –from the introduction by Hayden King

Indigenous Toronto: Stories that Carry This Place

edited by Denise Bolduc, Mnawaate Gordon-Corbiere,
Rebeka Tabobondung and Brian Wright-McLeod

ages
All

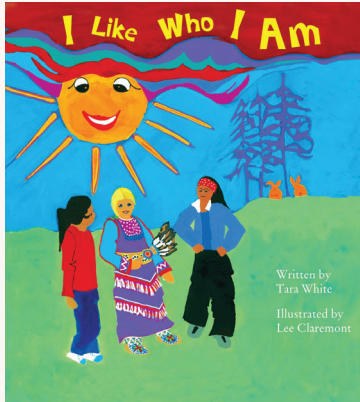
Thematic connections:

- Indigenous Toronto tells short stories written by Indigenous peoples from all different ways of life to define the history throughout the city of Tkaronto, prior to colonization and reaching the present.

I Like Who I Am

written by Tara White
illustrated by Lee Claremont

ages
All



Theme explored:

INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE
LEARNING (MOHAWK)



INTERGENERATIONAL
BONDS AND TEACHINGS



Celina is a young Mohawk girl who moves to her mother's home reserve. She is teased by her classmates who tell her that she is not Mohawk and does not belong because she has blond hair and blue eyes.

Celina starts to believe her classmates and decides not to dance at an upcoming Pow Wow. But her great-grandmother helps Celina understand that being Mohawk is not about how she looks but about what she feels in her heart. When the drumming starts at the Pow Wow, Celina decides to dance after all.

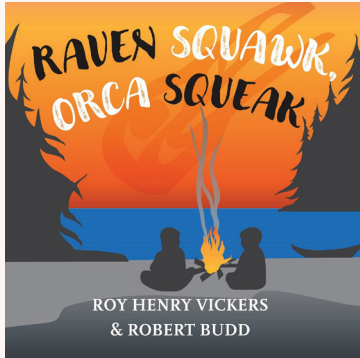
Thematic connections:

- The book teaches the importance of accepting others and not basing opinions solely on appearances.
- Mohawk translations and pronunciation are provided at the end of the book.

Raven Squawk, Orca Squeak

written by Roy Henry Vickers and Robert Budd

ages
All



Theme explored:

ON THE LAND



With bright and bold illustrations by celebrated Indigenous artist Roy Henry Vickers, this sturdy board book introduces iconic sounds of the West Coast and supports the language development of babies and toddlers. From the crackle of a beach campfire to the swoosh of canoe paddles, the rustle and creak of cedars in the wind, the roar of sea lions and the crashing waves of the Pacific Ocean, the rhythmic text, vibrant illustrations and glossy tactile finish of *Raven Squawk, Orca Squeak* will delight the very youngest readers.

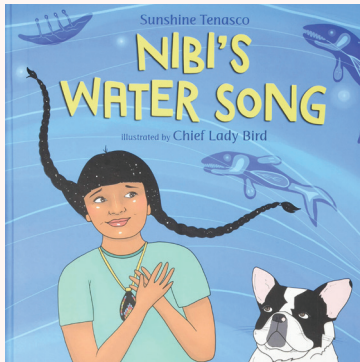
Thematic connections:

- Exploring the outdoors across different seasons, we learn about the different sounds and actions found in nature, with animals, with human outdoor recreational activities, and in ceremony.

Nibi's Water Song

written by Sunshine Tenasco
illustrated by Chief Lady Bird

ages
All



Themes explored:

ON THE LAND



INTERGENERATIONAL BONDS AND TEACHINGS



INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE LEARNING (OJIBWAY)



When Nibi, an Indigenous girl, turns the tap in her house, only mucky brown water comes out. That starts her on a search for clean water to drink. This bright and vivacious book from two Native creators celebrates the energy, moxie, and determination of water activists of all ages.

Thematic connections:

- A young girl has the determination to find clean water, she is very thirsty, and doesn't have clean drinking water available in her community.
- Working together to bring change to communities without clean drinking water.
- Exploring nature and where clean water comes from.

On The Land

- Connecting to the land is very important to Indigenous well-being and identity.
- There is an importance for all to have clean water; it is an essential life need.

Intergenerational Bonds and Teachings

- Nibi's cultural connections to her family values has taught her to carry out a message to everyone in the community.
- Her relationship with her own Indigenous culture is very strong as she works to bring change to her community.

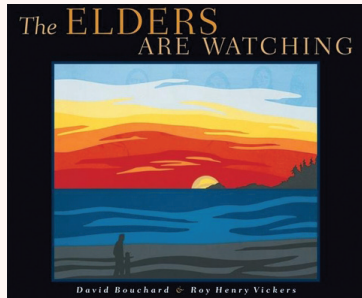
Indigenous Language Learning

- Nibi means water in Ojibway

The Elders are Watching

written by David Bouchard and Roy Henry Vickers

ages
All



Theme explored:

INDIGENOUS WORLDVIEWS/
WAYS OF BEING



When award-winning writer David Bouchard first saw the work of First Nations artist Roy Henry Vickers, he was struck by Vickers' reverence for nature and his understanding of Canada's rugged West Coast. They collaborated on *The Elders Are Watching*, which – now in its fifth printing – has delighted more than 100,000 readers in four languages. The artwork in this new edition has been restored to match the vibrancy of the originals.

Thematic connections:

- The story is the author explaining that the Elders are always watching. The author warns that humans are taking too much or disappointing the Elders with their actions. It is a very heartwarming reminder to only take what you need and to take care of one another always.
- This book heavily relays the message that we are only supposed to take what we need, nothing more.

The Elders are Watching

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All

- The author tells the reader many times that the Elders are watching, and mentions that they are disappointed, hurt, or angry. They mention that “with every new moon you seem to be more concerned with your wealth than the few women and children, their bloodline, their heartbeat, who are now so dependent on you”. This takes into consideration that we are supposed to take care of each other (and the land – all my relations) rather than worrying about our wealth. We get so worked up today with what we can get or how much we can get, that we don’t really stop to breathe and think about what we already have.
- The artwork throughout this story is very colourful and features several animals illustrated in a West Coast art form.

A note on the contributing partners

About the Indigo Love of Reading Foundation

Since 2004, the Indigo Love of Reading Foundation has been on a mission to ensure that EVERY Canadian child has the opportunity to become richly literate and achieve their full potential through reading. Through transformative multi-year grants, responsive community outreach programs, and core fundraising initiatives, the Foundation reaches for this goal through the revitalization of public elementary school libraries and the delivery of literacy programming and educational resources to high-needs communities across Canada. Together with Indigo, its customers and its employees, we have committed \$35+ million to cover 3,000 high-needs schools, impacting more than 1 million children. For more information visit indigoloveofreading.org.

About Native Child and Family Services of Toronto (NCFST)

NCFST is Toronto's largest Indigenous non-profit multi-service organization, providing holistic, culture-based programs and services for Indigenous children, youth and families. NCFST provides prevention programs, treatment and healing services, early years programs, youth programs, and cultural and recreational programs. Established in 1986 by Elders, knowledge keepers, grassroots leaders, and community members, NCFST implements a culture-based service model respecting the values of Indigenous people, the extended family, and the right to self-determination. In 2004, NCFST was directed by the Indigenous community to accept a child welfare mandate to decolonize

A note on the contributing partners

Indigenous child welfare in Toronto. This is continued by integrating holistic, culturally-based prevention services that are child centred, family focused, and community driven.

About contributing artist, Jordan Stranger

Through pencil, paint or digital mediums, Jordan Stranger communicates the importance of life, culture and acceptance. His works are deeply rooted in the traditions within contemporary Indigenous culture. As an Oji-Cree individual originally from Peguis First Nation, Jordan uses his life experiences to drive his artistic passions. He obtained his diploma in Graphic Design at Red River College in 2012 and had worked in advertising for almost a decade selling and pitching campaigns to thousands of clients. Today he continues his work as a full-time self-employed visual artist and graphic designer operating under his own brand, Totem Doodem, and is currently creating a new series of paintings and installations for a future art exhibition titled “Manitou”. To learn more about Jordan and his incredible work, visit <https://totemdoodem.myportfolio.com>