

English: "And I had been to church early that morning to take communion, I had gone with my mom to take communion ..."

The boldly original paintings by the Saskatchewan Cree artist, Jerry Whitehead, tell the story with evocative stark colours. Large severe figures reflect the sombre mood, the faces especially revealing struggle in a harsh landscape.

The original text is part of a larger collection of women's life experiences, *konkominwak otacimowiniwawa: Our Grandmothers' Lives, as Told in Their Own Words*, published by Fifth House in 1992, with commentary and explanatory notes.

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### OLD STORIES GET NEW LIFE

**How Names Were Given: An Okanagan Legend.** Barbara Monkman. Theytus Books, 1991. Unpag., \$12.95 paper. ISBN 0-919441-24-6; **How Food Was Given: An Okanagan Legend.** Barbara Monkman. Theytus Books, 1991. Unpag., \$12.95 paper. ISBN 0-919441-22-X; **How Turtle Set the Animals Free.** Barbara Monkman. Theytus Books, 1991. Unpag., \$12.95 paper. ISBN 0-919441-16-5. Kou-skelowh/We Are the People Series. Okanagan Tribal Council.

Theytus Books, the Penticton Native press, has republished its 1984 series in a large, full-colour format suitable for reading with young children, with a new artist as illustrator. The book serves as an excellent introduction to Native folklore for older children.

The three "lesson stories" in the series clearly state teachings at the end and can be used to help children think about the values of sharing, self-sacrifice and reverence for life in all forms. By comparing nature with humanity they explain that spirits, nature and humans are all one.

*How Names Were Given* begins the series teaching that everything on earth has been given a purpose, that real importance comes with the responsibility to help others, and that even our failings can be turned to good. The tale relates how before the People-to-be (humans) came, the Great Spirit decided that all the animals were to be given a special name and task. The selfish coyote decided that he wanted the most special name and task. Coyote, the bragger and trickster, does not receive an important name, but receives an important task.

*How Food Was Given* tells a tale of the world before this one, controlled by four chiefs who agree to let only one be in control. Bear, Salmon, Bitterroot and Saskatoon Berry, speaking for all living things, agree to lay down their lives providing themselves as food for humans when they arrive on earth. This moving story illuminates one of the most basic of Native values: the human

relationship with the animal and plant world must be one of respect and interdependence. It illustrates the values of sharing, helping one another and respect for weaker creatures and teaches the use of songs to heal, to help and to give thanks.

*How Turtle Set the Animals Free* is a story of how Turtle challenges a physically superior animal, Eagle, in a race and saves the animals from slavery. It teaches that good leadership depends on wisdom and vision rather than strength and power.

Most of the language in these stories is simple and clear, but it is a bit uneven. The first book begins with a complicated concept: "In the world before this world, before there were people and before things were like they are now, everyone was alive and walking around like we do."

Today's children need illustrators to show them the scenes once so familiar to listeners of these tales. The pictures in these three books cleverly show spirit guides and the close bond between animals and humans. The animals are part realistic, part caricature, portrayed with charming detail, revealing emotions, walking, wearing stylized decorative clothes, living in a tipi. There is pleasing continuity in the attractive coloured drawings.

The stories are clearly stated to have originated from the Okanagan Valley. However, they are certainly traditional stories, found in other publications such as Ojibwa stories and legends.

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## JEWS IN CZARIST RUSSIA

**Sworn Enemies.** Carol Matas. HarperCollins, 1993. 132 pp., \$16.95 cloth. ISBN 0-00-223897-7.

An historical novel for young adults, Carol Matas's newest book, *Sworn Enemies*, is a glimpse into the life of the Jews under Czarist repression in the early nineteenth century. Telling the tale alternatively are Aaron, privileged scholarly son of a wealthy Jew, and Zev, embittered child of a poor family, who makes extra money by kidnapping other Jewish boys for the Czar's army. Zev's hatred for Aaron creates the plot as well as fuelling the characters in a manner that creates coherence and consistency throughout the novel, somewhat coincidental though the plot may seem at times. However, the very differences between the boys sets up a black-and-white counterpoint that weakens the novel.

Aaron is a young but already respected scholar, betrothed to the beautiful Miriam, with whom he is fortunately also in love. He is even exempt from army service because his comparatively wealthy father can pay the bribes necessary to keep him free. Yet after he is kidnapped by Zev and impressed into the Czar's