educate and inform. This is, of course, a false dichotomy, for the year's best Canadian history books for children prove that it is possible to do both. As for the others, the wise reviewer should commit to memory Smith's rule of thumb on choosing books for her library: "to tolerate the mediocre and the commonplace is to misunderstand the purpose of book selection" (53).

Jonathan F. Vance holds the Canada Research Chair in Conflict and Culture in the History department at the University of Western Ontario. His most recent book is ***High Flight: Aviation and the Canadian Imagination*** *(Penguin, 2002).*

Imagining *Home* in Children's Picture Books by Canadian Aboriginal Authors / *Paul De Pasquale*

Dragonfly Kites / pímíhákanísa. Tomson Highway. Illus. Brian Deines. Text in English and Cree. HarperCollins, 2002. 32 pp. $19.99 cloth. ISBN 0-00-225527-8.

Flour Sack Flora. Deborah L. Delaronde. Illus. Gary Chartrand. Pemmican, 2001. 48 pp. $9.95 paper. ISBN 1-894717-05-8.

Lessons from Mother Earth. Elaine McLeod. Illus. Colleen Wood. Groundwood, 2002. 22 pp. $15.95 cloth. ISBN 0-88899-312-9.

The Slapshot Star. Gloria Miller. Illus. Gloria Miller. Pemmican, 2001. 40 pp. $9.95 cloth. ISBN 1-894717-07-4.

Willy the Curious Frog from Pruden's Bog. Grant S. Anderson. Illus. Sheldon Dawson. Pemmican, 2002. 44 pp. $12.95 paper. ISBN 1-894717-15-5.

What the image of home is or represents in the contemporary Canadian Aboriginal context and what the forces are that threaten home have been of concern to Aboriginal authors at least since Maria Campbell's groundbreaking *Half-Breed* (1973). In this account of a Métis community in Saskatchewan, or the "road allowance people" as Campbell calls them, home is difficult to return to because the independence and pride of the Métis had been eroded by forces that had alienated them from their lands and culture. The challenge depicted in Campbell's text of "returning home," of revitalizing past traditions and languages and reconnecting with the land and peoples, parallels a similar challenge shared by many Aboriginal peoples across Canada today. As recent Aboriginal scholars have argued, returning home, in the metaphorical or literal sense, is fundamental to the sustenance of Aboriginal cultures and languages as well as to the resurgence of Aboriginal self-determination. In several recent children's picture books by First Nations and Métis authors, images of home provide both a focal point and an important gloss on discussions about Aboriginal rights, nationhood, and identity currently in the Canadian political and literary arenas.

Home is not a specific dwelling or location in Tomson Highway's *Dragonfly*

Kites but, importantly, a vast, beautiful territory that a Cree family in northern Manitoba uses for its sustenance. This book is the second in a trilogy of children's books published as "Songs of the North Wind." Like the first book, *Caribou Song*, *Dragonfly Kites* was written in English and translated into Woods Cree by Highway, then rendered into standard Roman orthography by Brenda Ahenakew. The first paragraph introduces us to the summer home of the two young protagonists and their parents, a home that is clearly just one of many special places the family has lived: "Joe and Cody lived in the far north. Their summer home was a tent near a lake. There are hundreds of lakes in northern Manitoba, so they never stayed on the same one twice. The lakes had beautiful islands and forests and beaches and clear water. But no people." While their parents fish, the boys entertain themselves by playing games with sticks and stones and making pets of wild animals, including Arctic terns, loons, and eagles. Their favourite pets are dragonflies, which they catch and turn into magic kites. Brian Deines's illustrations capture in an exquisite way the colours and textures of the natural world surrounding Joe and Cody's home as well as the boys' exuberance at play. At the same time that *Dragonfly Kites* celebrates these things, it is also a disturbing story for adult readers of Highway's fictional autobiographical novel *Kiss of the Fur Queen* (1998) because it evokes so strongly the home that was lost to many Aboriginal peoples through colonial policy and assimilationist strategy. The innocence of Joe and Cody in *Dragonfly Kites* recalls the novel's brothers, Champion and Ooneemeetoo Okimasis, fictional counterparts of Highway and his brother René, before they experience the horrors of a Catholic residential school. The connection between these two texts is explicit and deliberate; in *Kiss of the Fur Queen*, prior to the scene in which Champion is whisked away from his family in an airplane, Highway tells us that the boys had observed planes before, "drifting in the wind like dragonflies." While adult readers may appreciate the metaphoric significance of Joe and Cody in the children's book catching and transforming dragonflies into kites, many will also enjoy experiencing (along with younger audiences) Highway's deep reverence for his homeland as expressed in this work. The third book in the trilogy, *Fox on Ice*, is due out in fall 2003.

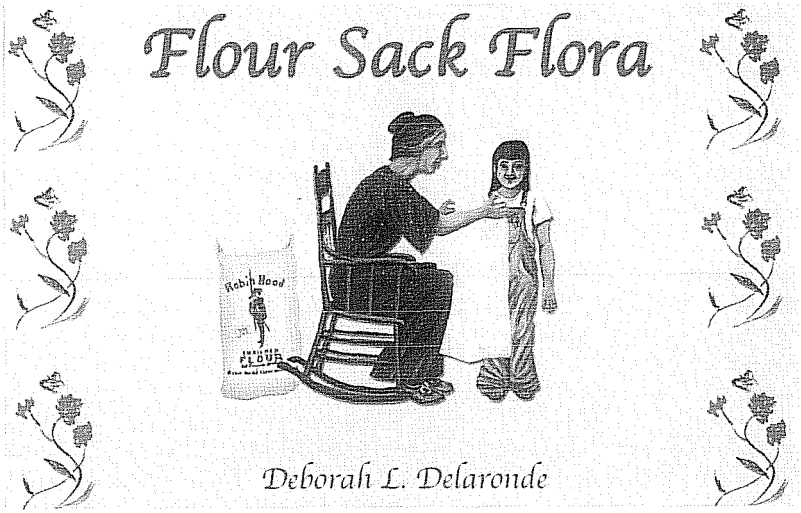
The traditional reliance of many Aboriginal peoples on a large homeland for their sustenance is again made explicit in *Lessons from Mother Earth* by Elaine McLeod, a member of the Na-Cho Nyak Dun First Nation. In this rather romanticized portrayal of Aboriginal lifeways, Tess's Grandma decides that her five-year-old granddaughter is old enough to visit her "garden," which turns out to be nature itself. As they gather blueberries, lamb's-quarters, and dandelions for dinner and freezing, Grandma teaches Tess the rules of the garden that she had learned from her own mother, Tess's great-grandmother, such as never taking more than you need and treating the garden with care. Interestingly, Grandma's physical home, a log structure located in a remote, idyllic setting, figures prominently in Colleen Wood's gentle watercolours as an extention of the natural world itself. Not only is her home nestled in a luscious valley teeming with all kinds of flora and fauna, but with no door in the doorway of Grandma's cabin there is little divide between interior and exterior worlds.

Several recent titles by Pemmican Publications also pick up on the idea of home. Métis illustrator and first-time author Gloria Miller explores the theme of the urban Aboriginal person's attachment to the homeland in *The Slapshot Star*, a theme also evident in Iris Loewen's *My Kokum Called Today* (1993), which Miller had illustrated. *The Slapshot Star* depicts how there is the potential for intergenerational con-

Cover illustration of ***The Slapshot Star****, by Gloria Miller*

flict but also mutual growth in the interactions between young urban Aboriginal peoples and elders on the reserve. Unlike the young urban girl in *My Kokum Called Today*, who is thrilled when her Kokum calls to invite her and her mom home to the reserve on the weekend of a round dance, Derek, the young protagonist of *The Slapshot Star*, is miserable when his grandparents call to ask him and his mother home for the traditional fish camp. Going home for Derek means that he will miss out on the street hockey tournament, the hockey card show, and all the pleasures that a home with electricity can provide, such as TV and Nintendo. On the contrary, going home for his mother Martha awakens powerfully nostalgic emotions: "The smell in the house was incredible. Wood smoke, home tanned leather and fresh bannock filled the air. For Martha, walking into this house was the best feeling in the whole world. 'I've been away from here too long,' she said as she slid into a chair." When his Game Boy, a toy he brings with him from his urban home, runs out of batteries, forcing him to participate in the natural world around him, Derek unwittingly begins to learn and appreciate his family's traditions. Under the guidance of his grandparents, the boy first learns the value of hard work as he helps to make his own bow and arrows and, second, learns the responsibility that comes with properly using this traditional hunting equipment. Miller has a sharp eye for detail in both her prose and illustrations. In contrast to McLeod's *Lessons From Mother Earth*, Miller's image of home is less romanticized and tidy and includes the clutter of everyday life. Her many vivid details play on the senses to convey strong ideas about homecoming and about the kinds of meaningful life experiences that can help today's urban Aboriginal youth develop a sense of belonging, community, and tradition. And, as Miller suggests, the impact of meetings between young and old is not just one way. The final illustration of Grandfather, "back at home" after his daughter and grandson have left, having a really good time with the Game Boy that Derek forgot, apparently in his excitement over his new bow and arrow, works in a way that unsettles the stereotypes that both old and young peoples living in separate worlds often have of each other.

The threatened destruction of a marsh home to numerous species of wildlife and waterfowl is the subject of Métis author Grant Anderson's *Willy the Curious Frog from Pruden's Bog*. The book models environmental awareness and activism and provides a kind of step-by-step guide to help children appreciate and protect the natural world. It centres on two characters, Willy, described in the book's first sentence as "an out to lunch but home for dinner sort of a frog," and Benny, a young boy who learns over the course of the story about the importance of protecting our wetlands. When Benny discovers that the marsh called Pruden's Bog is about to be drained for a golf course and condominiums, his first worry is that he will lose a favourite playground. Through his father and teacher, however, he soon grows concerned about the animals who will lose their home and sets out to stop the development. Anderson's prose is lively and varied; Dawson's illustrations are playful, although human subjects could use more range. The word "home" is used numerous times throughout the book to refer to the marsh where Willy and his friends live but is never used, significantly, to refer to human dwellings. That developers threaten to turn Pruden's Bog into homes for people in the form of condominiums draws attention to the fact that the physical spaces that humans occupy are often situated on land that was taken from others, that our homes are built on the homes of others. Further, because *Willy the Curious Frog* plays strongly on the oral tradition, in Cree and other cultures, in which animals have characteristics



Cover illustration of ***Flour Sack Flora****, by Deborah L. Delaronde, illus. Gary Chartrand*

that make them appear more like humans than animals, adult audiences can readily see the parallel between the plight of the animals about to lose their homes in the story and the historical reality of homelessness endured by many Aboriginal peoples since the first settlement of Europeans in North America.

In Métis author Deborah Delaronde's *Flour Sack Flora*, home is a Métis community located miles from the nearest town. In this story Flora desperately wants to go to town with her parents on one of their shopping trips. But when she asks her mom if she can accompany them, her mom sadly replies no because Flora doesn't have a pretty dress to wear and they couldn't afford one. The narrative follows Flora on her quest for a pretty dress — a quest that takes her to her Grandmother, who eventually makes her one out of a flour sack and decorates it with the help of her friends. When Flora appears before her parents in her new dress and pleads to be allowed to go to town, they hesitate because she is wearing her moccasins. They promise to take her if they can find her a nice pair of matching shoes. The protagonist's huge desire as a young rural Métis person to visit town, counterpointed with her parents' refusal to let her go in her everyday clothes, faded and worn jeans, foregrounds the colonial subtext of the story. It reminds adult readers of works such as Maria Campbell's *Half-Breed* where the negative reactions of the white townsfolk to the materially poor Métis who visited their towns fostered shame and helped erode the spirits of once proud peoples. While it is perhaps a similar sense of shame that bars Flora from town in her regular clothes, *Flour Sack Flora* undermines this shame by demonstrating and celebrating the resourcefulness of Flora's Métis community. There is also a tension in the text between the written narrative, which moves toward fulfilling the young protagonist's dream of visiting town,

and Gary Chartrand's compelling landscape illustrations. These serene, almost stark images, often seen through windows and in paintings, call dramatic attention to the physical and natural beauty of the home that Flora is so eager to leave. If pictures in picture books exist not only to exercise the visual and aesthetic sensibilities of viewers but also to aid in the telling of stories, as Perry Nodelman has suggested (vii), then the dialectic in Delaronde's book between the "here" of Flora's community and the "there" of the white town warrants closer study.

Home is a resonant concept in children's literature and, as physical space, often provides the main setting of children's books. It is telling that at this time in Canada's history home figures so prominently in Canadian Aboriginal children's literature. Despite various configurations of home in the above texts, these images work to provide Aboriginal perspectives on several issues at the centre of political and literary discussions in Canada, particularly those involving Aboriginal identity, land claims, self-determination, and the environment. The link between the literary and the political implicit in the images of home in these books should offer numerous possibilities for children and adults to learn more about Canada's less studied nations and histories.

Work Cited

Nodelman, Perry. *Words About Pictures: The Narrative Art of Children's Picture Books*. Athens: U of Georgia P, 1988.

Paul DePasquale *teaches Aboriginal Literatures at the University of Winnipeg and is a Mohawk member of the Six Nations of the Grand River in Ontario. He and Doris Wolf are involved in a SSHRC-funded study of home and nation in Canadian Aboriginal children's literature.*

Time Travels and Tangles / *Jennifer H. Litster*

Maud's House of Dreams: The Life of Lucy Maud Montgomery. Janet Lunn. Doubleday Canada, 2002. 152 pp. $24.95 cloth. ISBN 0-385-65933-4.

> Most of Janet Lunn's stories end as this one [*Shadow in Hawthorn Bay*] when the guy and the gal finally get together.
>
> — Yan Chen (Age 13)

When I was about 12, in the early 1980s before the category of "young adult" readers was invented (in Scotland at any rate), a favourite book of mine was Eileen Dunlop's *Robinsheugh* (1975). With her parents in America for the summer, 12-year-old Elizabeth Martin is packed off from London to her Aunt Kate's cottage in the Scottish Borders. Kate, who "liked people in history better than people now" (3), is holed up on the grounds of a stately home called Robinsheugh, researching the life