

A Select Bibliography of Canadian Picture Books for Children by Aboriginal Authors

• Paul DePasquale and Doris Wolf •

Résumé : La présente contribution propose une sélection d'ouvrages pour l'enfance et l'adolescence parus depuis 1967 et dont les auteurs sont d'origine autochtone. Ce choix est tiré d'une bibliographie qui se veut exhaustive, entreprise en 2002 et à la veille d'être complétée. Les œuvres recensées ont été publiées par trois éditeurs amérindiens et quatre maisons d'édition traditionnelles dites établies. À la différence d'autres bibliographies qui incluent les livres "sur" le sujet sans préciser l'identité des auteurs, tous les écrivains retenus ici s'identifient expressément comme autochtones. Il est à espérer que la publication de la bibliographie exhaustive permettra d'assurer une meilleure connaissance de la production littéraire pour la jeunesse chez les Premières Nations.

Summary: This select bibliography is a sampling of the comprehensive descriptive bibliography of children's and young adult books by Aboriginal authors published since 1967 which the authors have been working on since 2002 and are close to completing. This present bibliography focuses on the front and back lists of seven publishers that publish Canadian Aboriginal children's literature, three of which are Aboriginal publishers and the remaining four general and/or mainstream publishers. By including only authors who self-identify as Aboriginal, this resource stands apart from existing ones that use a "by and about" selection criteria ("by and about" Aboriginal peoples, First Nations, Natives, etc.), which allows for the inclusion, without identification, of books by non-Aboriginal authors. The authors hope that this select bibliography and especially the comprehensive one to come will be a useful resource for educators, librarians, students, community groups, parents, researchers, writers, and anyone else with an interest in Aboriginal literature but who have struggled to identify Aboriginal-authored children's literature for teaching, studying, research, and enjoyment purposes.

As the title of this article indicates, we offer below a select bibliography of Canadian picture books written by Aboriginal authors. Two kinds of books dominate Aboriginal picture books for children in Canada: retellings of traditional tales and legends and fictional stories with Aboriginal content set in recent historical and contemporary settings. For this select bibliography, we focus on the latter category. As this list reveals, children's literature by Aboriginal authors, even when we focus on a very select grouping within this field, offers a wide diversity in its representations. Readers of this bibliography and the books included in it will encounter boy and girl protagonists of various ages and Aboriginal affiliations who are learning lessons and/or having adventures in various time periods and in a number of different locales, urban and rural, reserve and non-reserve.

This select bibliography is a sampling of a comprehensive annotated bibliography of children's and young adult books by Aboriginal authors that we've been working on for about two years and are close to completing. Because there are no resources available on Canadian children's literature specifically by Aboriginal authors, we are preparing this comprehensive bibliography as a resource to help inform teachers, librarians, students, community groups, parents, researchers, and others about the vast range and diversity of books written by Aboriginal peoples since the late 1960s. The bibliography is part of our project entitled "Home and Native Land: A Study of Aboriginal Children's Literature in Canada." Along with the bibliography, this project includes a critical examination of the complex ways in which "home" is portrayed in Aboriginal children's literature. Home includes, of course, the physical and emotional contours of the family home, including interactions with extended family and friends, but it also involves socio-political factors included in concepts of self-identification, community connectedness as well as affiliation, nation, and nationhood. Both parts of our project feed into each other: our bibliographic descriptions are influenced by our focus on "home," and our study of home is influenced by our work on the bibliography, which has given us an historical and comprehensive overview of children's books by Canadian Aboriginal authors. Our emphasis on the concept of "home" arises from our work's location in a much larger project called *In Their Places: The Discourse of Home and the Study of Canadian Children's Literature*. This three-year study, funded by SSHRC and headquartered at the University of Winnipeg with Mavis Reimer as principal investigator, involves twelve scholars, each of whom is engaged in unique projects centred on ideas of home in Canadian children's literature.

For the bibliography we offer here for readers of *Canadian Children's Literature*, we've focused on the front and back lists of seven publishers that publish Canadian Aboriginal literature. Three are Aboriginal presses, including the Gabriel Dumont Institute, established in 1985 and located in

Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, which publishes Metis-specific books exclusively; Pemmican Publications, established in 1980 and located in Winnipeg, Manitoba, which emphasizes Metis books and publishes First Nations and Inuit content as well; and Theytus Books, established in 1980 and located in Penticton, British Columbia, whose goal is to document a range of Aboriginal cultures through its books. The remaining four are mainstream publishers, including two children's presses and two general publishers. Annick Press and Kids Can Press were founded in 1975 and 1973, respectively, and both are located in Toronto. Established in an era when Canadian children's literature barely existed, they have similar, broad mandates: to publish children's literature and young adult fiction that reflect Canadian culture. We've also included selections from two imprints of large publishers: Groundwood, an imprint of Douglas & McIntyre, located in Vancouver, and Stoddart Kids, part of Stoddart Publishing, located in Toronto. In contrast to the Aboriginal presses, all four non-Aboriginal publishers, while committed to multicultural literature, are profit ventures looking for the bestseller: for example, Annick was the original publisher of Robert Munsch and continues to publish and reprint many of his works, and Kids Can is part of the Corus Entertainment Group and publishes the Franklin the Turtle and Elliot Moose series.¹

This bibliography, which looks at a range of publishing houses, small and large, non-commercial and commercial, specialized and general, also functions as a mini-literary history of children's literature in Canada, where we can see, for example, the important role of small press publishing for non-mainstream voices. Commenting on adult fiction by Aboriginal authors in 1996, Greg Young-Ing, managing editor of Theytus Books and then instructor at the En'owkin International School of Writing, noted that, "In the 1990s, with the exception of Thomas King, a Cherokee author residing primarily in Canada, all books by Aboriginal peoples have been published through small and independent presses. Not one other Aboriginal author has been published by a large Canadian publishing house while over a hundred books *about* Aboriginal peoples have already been published by large Canadian houses in the 1900s" (166). Below we can see just how much the three Aboriginal presses dominate the select bibliography, and we find a similar pattern in our comprehensive bibliography.

By including selections from both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal publishers for this bibliography, we wanted to represent one of the major challenges we faced in compiling our comprehensive list, a challenge that involves the definition and location of Aboriginal authors. The issue of Aboriginal identity is, as Kateri Damm (now Akiwenzie-Damm) suggests in "Says Who: Colonialism, Identity, and Defining Indigenous Literature," a complicated one arising historically from the Canadian government's Indian Acts and having political, geographic, social, emotional and legal implications:

There are status Indians, non-status Indians, Metis, Inuit, Dene, Treaty Indians, urban Indians, on reserve Indians, off-reserve Indians; there are Indians who are Band members and Indians who are not Band members. There are First Nations peoples, descendants of First Nations, Natives, Indigenous peoples, Aboriginal peoples, mixed-bloods, mixed-breeds, half-breeds, enfranchised Indians, Bill C-31 Indians. There are even women without any First Nations ancestry who gained "Indian status" by marriage. (12)

For many, such as Native writer, teacher, and activist Rayna Green, identity as Aboriginal goes beyond mere political affiliations, legal definitions, and even ideas about kinship and inheritance: "'identity' is never simply a matter of genetic make-up or natural birthright. Perhaps once, long ago, it was both. But not now. For people out on the edge, out on the road, identity is a matter of will, a matter of choice, a face to be shaped in a ceremonial act" (qtd. in Damm 25). Picking up on the notion of "choice," we have decided on a working solution to the complex issue of identity by using self-identification as Aboriginal as the main criteria for inclusion in our work. In using self-identification as the main criteria, however, we recognize that, in an era when colonial mentalities and tendencies remain entrenched in Canadian society (see Battiste xix; DePasquale), this criteria is in itself imperfect and, occasionally (as we have seen in our own research), subject to some confusion or lack of clarity around what constitutes a "legitimate" or ethical Aboriginal identity.

Once we determined a working definition of "Aboriginal author," we quickly discovered that locating these authors was far from a simple task. Existing resources do not aim to be comprehensive and most use a "by and about" selection criteria ("by and about" Aboriginal peoples, First Nations, Natives, etc.), which allows for the inclusion, without identification, of books by non-Aboriginal authors. A good case in point is Indian and Northern Affairs' on-line guide, "A Select Bibliography of Children's Books by and about Aboriginal Peoples for Ages 4-14," a twelve-page, printable bibliography of mostly Canadian and some U.S. books organized according to the following categories: Fiction, Myths and Legends for Older Children, Non-Fiction, and Picture Books.² Similarly, the Library Archives Canada (National Library) website offers a brief bibliography of "Native People's Literature" under its Read Up On It program. This bibliography lists ten English and eight French books by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal authors.³ And the Ontario First Nation Libraries' Advisory Committee, Ontario Library Service, also provides an online bibliography called "First Nation Librarians Recommend . . . Aboriginal Materials for Children." This bibliography is not as extensive but is similar in scope and organization to the Indian and Northern Affairs bibliography. There are also, of course, numerous other websites provided by various governmental, cultural, and business organizations.

Anyone turning to these resources to choose a book actually written by an Aboriginal person would be unable to do so unless she or he had prior knowledge of a particular author's identity. Beverley Haun, who found "Aboriginal fiction" to be one of the largest subsets in her database of Canadian fiction for adolescents published between 1970 and 1990, sees little problem with defining that category according to content and the inclusion of "Aboriginal elements" rather than a consideration of authorship. In fact, in "The Rise of the Aboriginal Voice in Canadian Adolescent Fiction, 1970-1990," Haun remarks that the creation of Aboriginal fiction "by more than one of the cultural strands of the Canadian literary community" is a strength because "each bring[s] a different point of view to the enterprise, lends complexity and strength to Canada's evolving vision of itself" (47). We feel quite otherwise. Writing in 1992, Jon Stott observed that, while an interest in multiculturalism had helped to overcome much of the European ethnocentrism that had long dominated most children's literature in English, "most of the picture books, folktale adaptations, and novels are still being written by members of the majority culture, who, despite the good intentions of the authors, are essentially outsiders. . . . This is particularly true of stories written about Native American peoples" (41). The landscape has changed significantly over a decade later, so that Canadian Aboriginal peoples today are writing, illustrating, and publishing children's (and adult's) literatures at unprecedented levels. Yet, despite a substantial increase in output in recent years, there are no resources currently available to enable educators and librarians to select books by Aboriginal peoples for their schools and classes. As well intentioned as the "by and about" resources might be, we believe that they tend to blur the available materials, elide Aboriginal perspectives (even though Aboriginal organizations and peoples are sometimes involved in the production of such resources), thereby contributing to a neocolonial apparatus already too securely in place. If we think that the problem of teaching Aboriginal children's literature actually written by Aboriginal authors is at least in part a problem of locating and identifying those texts from the mass of "by and about" material within which it tends to be subsumed, then we hope that our bibliography will help get Aboriginal-authored materials into schools, which, in turn, may help overcome the ethnocentrism still at work in Canadian society.

Further, although advances have been made in recent years in terms of the variety and complexity of electronic searches available, we are still unable to search library catalogues and databases by a writer's race or ethnicity. Putting "Native or Aboriginal literature" in subject lines, of course, calls up all books on Aboriginal topics written by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal authors. While Theytus and the Gabriel Dumont Institute both publish exclusively Metis and Aboriginal authors so that we could rely on their front and back lists in constructing our bibliography, this was far from the

norm. The remainder of the presses, including Pemmican, publish with a "by and about" mandate, which requires some legwork in determining the backgrounds of authors.⁴ As one example, while Stoddart Kids publishes Aboriginal authors Maxine Trottier and Jan Waboose, it also publishes non-Aboriginal authors Connie Brummel Crook and Margaret Shaw-MacKinnon, who have written books on Native topics with Native youths as protagonists.

In spite of the very real potential for omissions and inaccuracies involved in this project, we feel the attempt to construct a bibliography of Aboriginal children's literature by Aboriginal authors is a vital one. Greg Young-Ing has reflected on the impact of Aboriginal peoples' inequitable participation in the publishing industry: "In some regards, this has been more damaging than marginalization in other sectors because it has had the effect of silencing the Aboriginal Voice paving the way for a rash of non-Aboriginal writers to profit from the creation of a body of literature focusing on Aboriginal peoples that is based on ethnocentric, racist and largely incorrect presumptions" (165). While the W.P. Kinsella and Anne Cameron examples loom large in the adult arena, the field of children's literature in Canada has faced its own challenges with non-Aboriginal voices dominating Aboriginal ones. In the picture book genre, for example, Betty Waterton's *Salmon for Simon*, which tells the story of a Native boy living along the Pacific Northwest Coast who saves a salmon stuck in a clam hole, was first published in 1978 and won the Governor General's Literary Award for illustrations (by Ann Blades). Today it is frequently taught in schools, is in its twelfth printing, and is considered a "Canadian classic." *Ribbon Rescue* by Robert Munsch, whose protagonist is a Mohawk girl wearing a traditional ribbon dress, also comes to mind; the popularity of Munsch has ensured its place in school curricula across the country, and the book has been adapted for school plays as well. The First Nations Public Library "First Nation Communities Read" selection for 2004 is Andrea Spalding's *Solomon's Tree*, a book inspired, according to the author as quoted in the publisher's teachers' guide, "by a remarkable few days I spent at a mask-making workshop given by my friend Tsimpshian Master Carver Victor Reece" ("*Orca Teachers' Guide: Solomon's Tree*"). If we look at the lists of publishers committed to producing books "by and about Aboriginal Peoples," then the dominance of non-Aboriginal voices in the telling of Aboriginal experiences is not likely to end soon.

We believe that another strength of our project is that we do not attempt to sort through such highly subjective matters as the quality, authenticity, or fairness of representation in the books that we review. Today's resources "by and about" Aboriginal peoples are generally compelled in one way or another to identify examples of children's books that avoid stereotypes and are respectful of the cultures and traditions represented in the texts, a trend we trace to Beverly Slapin and Doris Seale's influential

American publication, *Through Indian Eyes: The Native Experience in Books for Children* (1987).⁵ While few resources available in Canada today are as highly subjective as this text, many still appear to follow similarly undefined criteria about what constitutes quality writing and accurate representations of Aboriginal peoples and cultures. Further, many of these resources continue to stereotype or essentialize Aboriginal peoples as the producers of culturally authentic, valid information. Our bibliography, on the other hand, makes no such subjective claims about quality or accuracy in the books. Rather, we seek in our entries to provide readers with a brief idea of what the book is about, particularly in the context of issues surrounding ideas of home.

In making the primary selection criteria for our bibliography that of Aboriginal identity, we enter one of the most heated literary debates of the past couple of decades, that of appropriation of voice. Centring on the question of who has the right to create ethnic stories and characters, this debate has been polarized around two positions: on the one side, we have those who claim that the writing of ethnic literature should be the domain of those from the appropriate ethnic group; and on the other, we have those who feel that the power of the imagination gives anyone the right to write on any subject. That we side with the former position here is far from an essentialist move or one that denies anyone the power of his or her imagination; our position arises instead from the numerous and overlapping material realities that have made it all too easy for publishers, teachers, researchers, readers, funding agencies, literary awards bodies, etc. to support books on Aboriginal topics authored by non-Aboriginals. We hope that this select bibliography and especially the comprehensive one to come will be a useful resource for educators, librarians, students, community groups, parents, researchers, and anyone else with an interest in Aboriginal literature who have struggled to identify Aboriginal-authored children's literature for teaching, studying, research, and enjoyment purposes.

Notes

We gratefully acknowledge the assistance of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. Over the two years of this project, several student research assistants at the University of Winnipeg have helped us with a variety of tasks, including culling "by and about" Aboriginal bibliographies down to their Aboriginal authors and finding books and authors not listed in these resources. We thank Kelly Burns, Robbie Robertson, Andrea Siemens, and Sophie Walker for their work on this project.

- 1 Information about the publishing mandates in this paragraph comes from the publishers' websites.
- 2 In 2000, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada also published *An Aboriginal Book List for Children/ Suggestions de livres jeunesse sur les Autochtones*, a 44-page selection of English and French titles by and about Aboriginal authors. The booklist grew from the on-line guide but now seems to have been replaced by the website bibliography: at present, Indian Affairs has no plans to reprint it.

- 3 Published in 1993 to mark the International Year of the World's Indigenous People, the books in these lists, according to then National Librarian Marianne Scott, are "the best children's books about the first inhabitants of this country" (Scott). Of the ten English titles, four are by Aboriginal authors.
- 4 Since we've started this project, Pemmican has made the cultural identity of its authors more transparent in its printed catalogue and now lists its publications under the categories "Metis," "First Nation," "Inuit," and "Contributing" or non-Aboriginal authors. Pemmican's website, however, does not identify its "Contributing" authors, merging these non-Aboriginal authors into other headings. The categories "Metis," "First Nations," and "Inuit" authors are available, however, as they are in the printed catalogue.
- 5 *Through Indian Eyes* provides a range of Canadian Aboriginal and American Indian viewpoints in an effort to educate audiences, as the title of one chapter indicates, "How to Tell the Difference" between stereotypical and respectful portrayals of Native lifeways. The authors of this chapter, Beverly Slapin, Doris Seale, and Rosemary Gonzales, recommend: "When looking at books about Native peoples . . . perhaps the most important questions to ask are: Does this book tell the truth? Does the author respect the People? Is there anything in this book that would embarrass or hurt a Native child? Is there anything in this book that would foster stereotypic thinking in a non-Indian child?" (241). Several reviews of Canadian and US children's books by Doris Seale, a Santee Dakota and Cree educator, are as subjective as these criteria would suggest. For example, Paul Goble's *Buffalo Woman* "treats the material with great respect," Seale writes, "and, as usual, his illustrations are lovely" (161). Basil Johnston and Del Ashkewe's *How the Birds Got their Colours* "is one of the best books made from a Native story that I have ever seen" (176). Similarly, Sharol Graves' illustrations to Simon Ortiz's *The People Shall Continue* "are vivid and stately, and perfect. If you give only one book about Native Americans to your young children, let this be the one" (203).

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A Select Bibliography of Canadian Picture Books for Children by Aboriginal Authors

Anderson, Grant S. (Metis). *Willy the Curious Frog from Pruden's Bog*. Illus. Sheldon Dawson. Winnipeg: Pemmican, 2002. ISBN 1-894717-15-5. 44 pp. Grades 1-4. Centring on two characters, a small Blue Spotted Prairie Swamp Frog named Willy and an eight-year-old boy named Benny, this book tells the story of the threatened destruction of Pruden's Bog, a marsh home to wildlife and waterfowl. Modelling environmental awareness and activism, it plays strongly on the oral tradition, in Cree and other cultures, in which animals have characteristics that make them appear more like humans than animals. The colour illustrations highlight the animals' human-like characteristics.

Bouchard, Dave (Metis). *The Meaning of Respect*. Illus. Les Culleton. Winnipeg: Pemmican, 1994. ISBN 0-921827-37-7. 30 pp. When he fails to pay attention to his schoolwork, a twelve-year-old Cree boy with an attitude is sent to receive counselling and spiritual guidance from his Mooshum (grandfather) on the reserve. Quickly disabused of his notion that this will be a vacation, he helps his grandfather and his uncle with the many daily chores to be done, including hunting and fishing. Through the grandfather's and uncle's actions, the book emphasizes the need for respect for land and animals and for one's elders as well. It also underscores the importance of self-reliance for healing individuals and communities. Colour illustrations.

Condon, Penny (Metis). *Changes*. Illus. Penny Condon. Saskatoon: Gabriel Dumont, 2000. ISBN 0-920915-43-4. 20 pp. Grades K-3. A Metis girl named Kona (which means "snow" in Cree) loves to laugh, but once she starts she cannot stop. She asks the Gathering Spirit (Mooshom) to help her stop feeling so happy. By taking Kona through seasonal changes, Gathering Spirit helps her to guide her own emotions so that she experiences sadness, anger, and surprise. By paralleling emotional and seasonal changes, the book highlights the interconnectedness of people and nature. Nominated in 2000 for a Saskatchewan Book Award in the First Peoples Publishing category.

Condon, Penny. *My Family*. Illus. Penny Condon. Saskatoon: Gabriel Dumont, 2001. ISBN 0-920915-61-2. 20 pp. Grades K-3. In Condon's second book about Kona, we are introduced to her immediate family, including her grandparents, and learn each family member's role in preparing for a special feast they are holding. As extended family members join them for an evening of eating and dancing, this book highlights the meaning of family. The bold full-colour illustrations highlight Kona's joy at having her family gathered to celebrate. A glossary of Metis terms is included.

Crow, Allan (Ojibwe). *The Crying Christmas Tree*. Illus. David Beyer. Winnipeg: Pemmican, 1989. ISBN 0-921827-13-X. 24 pp. Grades 1-4. When Kokum surprises her grandchildren with

a Christmas tree, her grandsons make fun of it because it is so scrawny. Emphasizing respect for elders, this book depicts how the grandsons come to acknowledge their bad behaviour when, in tracing her steps into the bush to cut a new tree, they realize just how far she walked to get them a gift. Set many years ago on the Whitefish Bay reserve, the book depicts the isolation of the community which had no roads and where few people owned cars, and the tradition of travelling to the nearest town one hundred kilometres away for supplies and presents at Christmas time. Full-colour illustrations.

Culleton Mosionier, Beatrice (Metis). *Christopher's Folly*. Illus. Terry Gallagher. Winnipeg: Pemmican, 1996. ISBN 0-921827-51-2. 48 pp. Grades 1-6. After spending the day playing with his new sailing ship and ignoring his dog Princess, Christopher dreams of a land where only animals live until he finds himself stranded there. In a story that mirrors the history of colonialism and loss of traditional ways among Aboriginal peoples, we see how Christopher's greed causes the disappearance of the Buffalo and Wolf. Distressed by what he has done, Christopher learns that he has to give back to the land and soon begins to repair the damage he caused. Christopher wakes to promise his dog Princess that he will always love and respect her. Black-and-white illustrations.

Culleton Mosionier, Beatrice. *Unusual Friendships: A Little Black Cat and A Little White Rat*. Illus. Rebecca Belmore. Penticton, BC: Theytus, 2002. ISBN 1-894778-04-9. 28 pp. Using rhyme to weave this tale of an unlikely music and dance act, which includes a dog, four cats, and a rat, this book comments on some of the problems faced by the Metis who historically have found themselves awkwardly placed between Aboriginal and mainstream cultures. With the rat on fiddle, the cats as dancers and the dog as director, this "cat jiggling zoo" moves from meager beginnings in Winnipeg to the big time in Toronto and the world. Although they wear sashes to remind themselves of the pride they have in their "ancestry that is mixed," the cats still often struggle to remain true to their original act. The main character, the black cat named "Little White Paws," especially has to learn to put his ego on a shelf and honour his traditions. Full-colour illustrations.

Delaronde, Deborah L. (Metis). *Flour Sack Flora*. Illus. Gary Chartrand. Winnipeg: Pemmican, 2001. ISBN 1-894717-05-8. 48 pp. Grades 1-4. Living in a remote Metis community, Flora desperately wants to go to town with her parents to buy supplies but cannot because her parents feel she has nothing decent to wear. Emphasizing the roles of a strong women's community and a system of bartering in an isolated and poor village, this book portrays how Flora's grandmother makes her a dress out of flour sacks and enlists her friends to decorate it. As a historical note explains, many remote communities did not have access to fabric, so flour sacks, which were made of unbleached cotton, were dyed to suit many purposes. Chartrand's landscape illustrations emphasize the physical and natural beauty of Flora's home. *Flour Sack Flora*, recipient of a 2001 McNally Robinson Book for Young People Award, was followed by *Flour Sack Friends* in 2003.

Delaronde, Deborah L. *Little Metis and the Metis Sash*. Illus. Keiron Flamand. Winnipeg: Pemmican, 2000. ISBN 1-894717-02-3. 48 pp. Grades 1-6. Bored one day, Little Metis sets out to help several members of his family with their daily tasks. Admonished by his Kookum not to get lost, he takes the ends of her spools of coloured wool to help him find his way home. A playful Noodin (wind), personified in the colour illustrations as a young Aboriginal boy who looks very much like Little Metis, follows him and seemingly creates havoc of his attempts, until the family realizes they have unwittingly been gathered together with the makings of a feast. Highlighting the Metis tradition where young men who begin to hunt and gather food for their families are given their Metis Sash, Kookum uses all the wool Little Metis took with him on his journey that day to weave him a Sash of his own. The book includes a note about the role of the Sash in traditional Metis life and its importance as a symbol of the Metis nation today.

Delaronde, Deborah L. *A Name for Metis*. Illus. Keiron Flamand. Winnipeg: Pemmican, 1999. ISBN 0-921827-65-2. 24 pp. Grades K-4. A little boy longs for a nickname and approaches his parents, grandparents, and other elders in his community for ideas. While the boy fervently hopes for an heroic nickname to reflect his tribal past, his family and elders teasingly suggest funny names such as *Gitchi Mangijann* (Great Big Nose) and *Mamaangatawak* (Big Ears). Finally his Shoomish (grandfather) calls him *Agaasi Wiisaakodewinini* — Little Metis — to suggest that the boy's heroism lies in how he honours his mother's language and his father's traditions. The full-colour illustrations enhance both the good-natured playfulness of his elders and the seriousness of the boy's quest. A glossary of Ojibway terms is included.

Dorian, Leah (Metis). *Snow Tunnel Sisters*. Illus. Roberta Dorion. Winnipeg: Pemmican, 2000. ISBN 0-921827-00-7. 24 pp. Grades 1-4. Two Metis sisters, Angie and Leah, rush outside after eating supper with their mom and dad to make tunnels and angels in the snow. The book depicts the close and loving relationships among family members and especially the two sisters who are best friends. Through a poem Angie writes at school, in which she calls her father "big, brown, and warm," the book emphasizes its own role in offering positive images of Aboriginal families and in transforming the image of the normative family as "white." The colour illustrations enhance the feelings of love and stability that the text conveys.

Freed, Don (Metis). *Sasquatch Exterminator*. Illus. Myles Charles. Saskatoon: Gabriel Dumont, 1999. ISBN 0-920915-41-8. 18 pp. Grades K-4. According to the publisher's note on the first page, this book is the result of a music education project conducted by the author at the Charlebois School in Cumberland House and intended to encourage Aboriginal children to write and perform community-based and culturally-enhanced songs. The story, written in rhyming couplets, is about a boy who comes across a Sasquatch, which sends him to get some bannock from his Kohkom, who in turn sends the boy back with a cowpie. Finally realizing what his Kokum knew all along — that the Sasquatch is actually three of his friends in disguise — the boy stuffs the cowpie into their costume. The colour illustrations underscore the humor of this story. Sheet music is included at the back of the book.

Kusugak, Michael Arvaarluk (Inuit). *My Arctic 1, 2, 3*. Illus. Vladyana Krykorka. Toronto: Annick, 1996. ISBN 1-55037-505-9 (bound), 1-55037-504-0 (paper). 24 pp. Grades Preschool-2. In two parts, this book includes a counting book segment with full-colour illustrations depicting some of the animals that were hunted but mostly just watched by the Inuit when the author was a boy growing up on the Arctic circle. The second part, entitled "The Arctic World of Michael Kusugak and his Family," includes black-and-white sketches and a much more detailed description of the animals. This second part also foregrounds how the Kusugak family interacts with the Arctic landscape. A glossary of terms is also included. This book was a Parent Council's *Outstanding from a Learning Perspective Honor* as well as a finalist for the Ruth Schwartz Award.

Kusugak, Michael Arvaarluk. *Baseball Bats for Christmas*. Illus. Vladyana Krykorka. Toronto: Annick, 1992. ISBN 1-55037-145-2 (bound), 1-55037-144-4 (paper). 24 pp. Grades Preschool-2. Set in Repulse Bay in the 1950s, the book is based on an actual childhood experience of the author's when an airplane arrived in his community and the pilot left behind several Christmas trees. In the story, the children, many of whom have never seen a tree, are not sure what to do with them and ultimately turn them into baseball bats. The book emphasizes the creativity of the Inuit children in how they transform a tradition from white culture into an activity they enjoy. Full-colour illustrations. The book was a finalist for a Ruth Schwartz Award and appeared on the following lists: Greatest Canadian Books of the Century (Vancouver Public Library) and 100 Best Books List (Toronto Public Library).

Kusugak, Michael Arvaarluk. *Hide and Sneak*. Illus. Vladyana Krykorka. Toronto: Annick, 1992. ISBN 1-55037-229-7 (bound), 1-55037-228-9 (paper). 32 pp. Grades Preschool-2. This

book introduces readers to Ijiraqs, little men-like creatures dressed like ptarmigan who hide children so that they are never found again, and inuksugaqs, rock structures built to resemble human beings and used to help wanderers find their way home. One summer day a young girl named Allashua leaves her tent to play hide-and-seek with her friends. In spite of her mother's warning to stay close by, Allashua gets distracted and runs into an Ijiraq who hides her in a cave. She finally escapes and makes her way home by following the inuksugaq built near her tent. Highlighting through its colour illustrations both the beauty and dangers of the North, this book depicts how story and legend were used to warn Inuit children to heed their parents in a landscape whose dangers need to be respected.

Kusugak, Michael Arvaarluk. *Northern Lights: The Soccer Trails.* Illus. **Vladyana Kryorka.** Toronto: Annick, 1993. ISBN 1-55037-339-0 (bound), 1-55037-338-2 (paper). 24 pp. Grades Preschool-2. When Kataujaq loses her mother to an illness that strikes the family, she mourns her loss intensely until her grandmother comes out to watch the village children play soccer, a traditional game the Inuit played in early winter when the ice became a giant playing field. In a story that emphasizes spiritual healing, natural phenomenon, and intergenerational connection, the grandmother teaches her granddaughter that the souls of people who have gone to heaven play soccer too, and that on a moonlit night they can be seen chasing the ball around the sky. After this, whenever Kataujaq sees the Northern Lights, she feels less lonely. The full-colour, soft watercolours enhance the loss and healing Kataujaq experiences. Recipient of a Ruth Schwartz Award, part of the Aesop Accolade List, and named a Notable Book by the Canadian Library Association.

Kusugak, Michael, and Robert Munsch. *A Promise is a Promise.* Illus. **Vladyana Langer Kryorka.** Toronto: Annick, 1988. ISBN 1-55037-009-X (bound), 1-55037-008-1 (paper). 32 pp. Grades Preschool-2. Not heeding her mom's warning about the Qallupilluit who live under the sea ice and grab children unaccompanied by their parents, Allashua goes onto the ice one day and is captured by the creatures who only let her go after she promises to return with her brothers and sisters. Because "a promise is a promise," Allashua's mother invents a plan to fulfill the promise but without sacrificing her children's lives. As the final note reveals, Qallupilluit are imaginary Inuit creatures, somewhat like trolls, invented to help keep small children away from dangerous crevices in the sea ice. A Read America! Classic.

McLeod, Elaine (No-Cho Nyak Dun First Nation, Yukon). *Lessons from Mother Earth.* Illus. **Colleen Wood.** Toronto: Groundwood, 2002. ISBN 0-88899-312-9. 24 pp. Grades Preschool-3. Five-year-old Tess visits her grandmother, who decides she is ready to be introduced to the wonders of her garden. An impatient Tess soon realizes that Grandma's garden is nature itself, and the two spend the day picking berries, lamb's quarters, and dandelion shoots. As Grandma teaches Tess the rules of the garden, the book emphasizes the need to respect the natural environment as well as elders who pass on important traditional knowledge. Grandma's physical home, a log structure located in a remote, idyllic setting, figures prominently in Wood's watercolours as an extension of the natural world itself.

Miller, Gloria (Metis). *The Slapshot Star.* Illus. **Gloria Miller.** Winnipeg: Pemmican, 2001. ISBN 1-894717-07-4. 40 pp. Grades 2-6. When he and his mom are invited home for fish camp for two weeks, Derek, who is used to life in the city, is less than thrilled. While Derek initially keeps to himself playing his Game Boy all day, he slowly becomes engrossed in life at the camp after its batteries run out. His Grandfather is especially instrumental in getting his grandson involved in daily activities and also teaches him to hunt with a bow and arrow. When Derek leaves with the bow and arrow quiver his grandparents have painstakingly made for him, he forgets to take his Game Boy with him. The book conveys 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.

Murray, Bonnie (Metis). *Li Minoush*. Illus. Sheldon Dawson. Trans. Rita Flamand. Winnipeg: Pemmican, 2001. ISBN 1-894717-06-6. 32 pp. Grades K-3. When Thomas's mom agrees to let him get a cat, she suggests they call it Minoush, which means cat in Michif, the Metis language. Thomas's mom uses her son's curiosity about the origins of this name to introduce him to the Michif language and importance of preserving it among the Metis people. When Thomas takes his cat to school for show-and-tell, he in turn teaches his classmates, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children, about Michif. Written in English and Michif, this is a groundbreaking book because Michif is primarily a spoken language, and Flamand had to develop an orthography to represent its sound systems. Colour illustrations. English/Michif Cree. Book One of the Michif Children's Series. Book Two, *Li Paviyóñ di Michif*, was published in 2003. Finalist of a 2002 McNally Robinson Book for Young People.

Pelletier, Darrell W. *Alfred's First Day at School*. Illus. Darrell W. Pelletier. Regina: Gabriel Dumont, 1992. ISBN 0-920915-37-X (series), 0-920915-27-2 (book 1). 16 pp. Grades Preschool-1. This book is the first in the Alfred Reading Series whose protagonist is a young urban Aboriginal boy named Alfred. Afraid to go to school for the first time, Alfred discovers, by day's end, the pleasures of attending school, both for the activities and the friends it offers. Through the line and crayon illustrations, the book emphasizes the importance of Aboriginal teachers for Aboriginal youths in inclusive classroom settings. The series is also offered in Cree and Michif language editions, as well as in CD-ROM format. A 1993 Library and Archives Canada Read Up On It Selection.

Pelletier, Darrell W. *Alfred's Summer*. Illus. Darrell W. Pelletier. Regina: Gabriel Dumont, 1992. ISBN 0-920915-37-X (series), 0-920915-29-9 (book 2). 16 pp. Grades Preschool-1. The second book in the Alfred Reading Series introduces Alfred's grandparents and their life in the country. When school ends, Alfred's family visit his Moshom and Kokom, where Alfred keeps busy during the day playing and going for long bike rides. Highlighting the importance of oral traditions for Aboriginal communities, the main activity this book emphasizes is Moshum's late night storytelling around the fire. Line and crayon drawings.

Pelletier, Darrell W. *The Big Storm*. Illus. Darrell W. Pelletier. Regina: Gabriel Dumont, 1992. ISBN 0-920915-37-X (series), 0-920915-31-0 (book 3). 16 pp. Grades Preschool-1. The third book in the Alfred Reading Series opens with Alfred asleep in bed when the crashing thunder wakes him up. Frightened because the electricity is out, Alfred is comforted by his father who comes to his room with a candle and a braid of sweetgrass. Since burning sweetgrass shows respect for Mother Nature, his father reassures Alfred he has no reason to be afraid of the storm. Through its line and crayon drawings, which include a picture of Alfred's father in a shirt and tie burning sweetgrass, this book depicts the importance of carrying on traditions in the modern urban environment.

Pelletier, Darrell W. *The Pow-Wow*. Illus. Darrell W. Pelletier. Regina: Gabriel Dumont, 1992. ISBN 0-920915-37-X (series), 0-920915-33-7 (book 4). 16 pp. Grades Preschool-1. The fourth book in the Alfred Reading Series finds Alfred at a pow-wow on his Kokom's reserve. He spends the day with Leroy, his cousin, who is one of the dancers and who shows him his pow-wow regalia painstakingly made by their Kokom. When Alfred joins in the dancing at the end, the book emphasizes how the members of the reserve welcome family and friends from off-reserve communities. The series' Saskatchewan setting is made clear in this book. Illustrated with line and crayon drawings.

Pelletier, Darrell W. *Lisa and Sam*. Illus. Darrell W. Pelletier. Regina: Gabriel Dumont, 1992. ISBN 0-920915-37-X (series), 0-920915-33-3 (book 5). 16 pp. Grades Preschool-1. The fifth book in the Alfred Reading Series focuses on Alfred's older sister Lisa, who loves to study nature. One day, she catches a garter snake that she takes home in a jar and calls Sam. Sam clearly does not thrive in captivity, and with her mother's help, Lisa learns that reptiles

belong in their natural environment. Alfred joins Lisa and his mother to take Sam back to the creek, thereby learning this important lesson as well. Illustrated with line and crayon drawings.

Plain, Ferguson (Ojibwa). *Amikoonse (Little Beaver)*. Winnipeg: Pemmican, 1993. ISBN 0-921827-34-2. 32 pp. Grades K-5. Amikoonse (“Little Beaver”) is a beaver who is best friends with a little boy. These two are inseparable, until Amikoonse, who had never been in the bush without the boy before, decides to experience the wild, wanders off, and gets lost. With the help of animal and bird friends, Amikoonse eventually finds the big puddle of water he is looking for, “home” as it is called. In several illustrations, stylized images of animal spirits and traditional Native imagery are superimposed to emphasize the spiritual and cultural aspects integral to Amikoonse’s search for identity and home. Includes a glossary of Ojibwa words.

Plain, Ferguson. *Little White Cabin*. Illus. Ferguson Plain. Winnipeg: Pemmican, 1992. ISBN 0-921827-26-1. 24 pp. Grades 1-6. After a slow beginning, a young boy develops a close friendship with an elder named Danny, who teaches him lessons about spirituality and life. The impact that Danny has on the boy even after the elder dies and the boy grows up stresses the crucial role of elders in preserving traditional ways and beliefs. Ink drawings include the characters in the foreground and traditional Aboriginal artwork in the background. Glossary of Ojibwa terms included.

Sanderson, Esther. *Two Pairs of Shoes*. Illus. David Beyer. Winnipeg: Pemmican, 1990. ISBN 0-921827-15-6. 24 pp. Grades Preschool-2. When Maggie receives what she has been coveting for a while — a pair of black patent leather shoes — from her mom for her birthday, she rushes to show them to her Kokom (grandmother). In turn, her Kokum gives her a pair of moccasins beaded with beautiful flower designs. Stressing the importance of remembering Aboriginal traditions in a modern world filled with western material goods, Kokum teaches Maggie the importance of learning how to negotiate both influences in her life. Colour illustrations.

Trottier, Maxine (Metis). *Dreamstones*. Illus. Stella East. Toronto: Stoddart Kids, 1999. ISBN 0-7737-3191-1 (bound), 0-7737-6141-1 (paper). Set in the exploration period of Canadian history, an English boy named David travels by ship with his father to the Canadian Arctic. One night he leaves the ship to play with the Arctic foxes and gets lost. When his father finds him the next morning, he is wrapped in grey sealskin lying next to the glowing embers of a fire. Depicting cross-cultural contact, the boy and his encounter with an Inukshuk which had come to life to help him survive the long, cold night becomes a legend told to Inuit children. Full-colour illustrations. The book was shortlisted for the following awards: Amelia Frances Howard-Gibbon Award for Illustration, Ruth Schwartz Children’s Book Award, and the 2002 Hackmatack Award. It was also named “Best of the Best” by Resource Links and was a 2000 Nautilus Children’s Picture Book (NAPRA) Honor Book.

Trottier, Maxine. *Storm at Batoche*. Illus. John Mantha. Toronto: Stoddart Kids, 2000. ISBN 0-7737-3248-9. When a Scottish boy named James falls out of his family’s covered wagon one wintry night as it is crossing the prairies, he is saved by a man whom he knows only as “Louis” but who is clearly Louis Riel. The story emphasizes the cultural differences between the man and boy, but ultimately depicts the two as sharing a deep bond that overcomes those differences. This bond is largely represented through the making of Galette, as the French and Metis call the popular flatbread, or Bannock, as the same bread is called to those with Scottish ancestry. The book includes a detailed historical note about Louis Riel at the back as well as a recipe for Galette or Bannock. Full-colour illustrations. An Our Choice Selection by the Canadian Children’s Book Centre.

Umpherville, Tina (Metis). *Jack Pine Fish Camp*. Illus. Christie Rice. Winnipeg: Pemmican, 1997. ISBN 0-921827-56-3. 26 pp. Grades K-4. Umpherville's second book about Iskotew describes her life at the Jack Pine fish camp that her family moves to for eight weeks every summer. Iskotew's daily adventures with her friends are contrasted to the serious business of fishing for the families who come to the camp. Through details such as the incoming planes that pick up fish and drop off comic books and treats for the children and the Saturday night movies at the old church in Brochet which Iskotew and her dad love to attend, the story depicts how an isolated community in Northern Manitoba is affected by the mainstream world. The watercolour and pastel illustrations help to emphasize this impact.

Umpherville, Tina. *The Spring Celebration*. Illus. Christie Rice. Winnipeg: Pemmican, 1995. ISBN 0-921827-46-6. 24 pp. Grades K-4. This book introduces us to a girl with bright red hair named Iskotew, which means "little fire" in Cree. Iskotew lives in Brochet in Northern Manitoba where the winters are long and harsh. To celebrate the beginning of spring, the people of her village hold a feast on a nearby island. By portraying the sharing of tasks and food by young and old, this book emphasizes the communal aspects of the much anticipated annual celebration. The celebration also marks the beginning of the period between the solid ice of winter and open water of late spring and summer, when the community is completely cut off from the outside world. Watercolour illustrations.

Waboose, Jan Bourdeau (Nishinawbe Ojibway). *Firedancers*. Illus. C.J. Taylor. Toronto: Stoddart Kids, 1999. ISBN 0-7737-3138-5. 26 pp. Grades Preschool-3. A young native youth, whose gender is unclear and who is called only Fast One, is taken by his/her Noko (Grandmother) to an island where their tribe has held ceremonial dances for many generations. After they build a fire, Fast One and Noko begin to dance until the youth hears the sounds of dancing and sees through the smoke his/her ancestors' spirits joining them. This full-colour book, which emphasizes the continuance of tradition, includes an author's note at the end with some Anishinawbe terms and their English translations.

Waboose, Jan Bourdeau. *Morning on the Lake*. Illus. Karen Reczuch. Toronto: Kids Can, 1997. ISBN 1-55074-373-2 (bound), 1-55074-588-3 (paper). 32 pp. Grades K-4. This book contains three linked stories about a young boy and his Mishomis (grandfather) who set out in a canoe one morning to see the loons, climb a cliff at noon one day to see an eagle, and venture into the woods one night to see the timber wolves. All the stories emphasize the grandfather's role in teaching his grandson to appreciate and respect the traditions of his ancestors and his natural environment. Full-colour illustrations.

Waboose, Jan Bourdeau. *SkySisters*. Illus. Bryan Deines. Toronto: Kids Can, 2000. ISBN 1-55074-697-9 (bound), 1-55074-699-5 (paper). 32 pp. Grades K-3. Two sisters, Allie and Alex, set off on a cold winter's night to see the Northern Lights. When they finally appear dancing in the northern sky, the sisters see themselves and their relationship reflected in the lights and call them Skysisters. The full-colour illustrations emphasize the magic of their quest and the strong bond between the sisters. The Anishinawbe Ojibway words used in the story are translated on the copyright page.

Wheeler, Bernelda (Cree). *A Friend Called "Chum"*. Illus. Andy Stout. Winnipeg: Pemmican, 1984. ISBN 0-919143-13-X. Black-and-white pencil drawings illustrate this story told in rhyming couplets about a young Native girl named Marji May who lives in a rural setting and kicks her dog Chum one morning when she is running late for school. A dream Marji May has that night about Chum saving her from drowning teaches her the importance of treating all living creatures with kindness. When she awakes she realizes that Chum is her best friend, and promises never to treat him badly again. Like Wheeler's other books, this one was written at a Native Writer's Workshop sponsored by the Native Education Branch of Manitoba Education.

Wheeler, Bernelda. *I Can't Have Bannock But the Beaver Has a Dam*. Illus. Herman Bekkering. Winnipeg: Pemmican, 1984. ISBN 0-919143-11-3. Taking place in a northern setting, this story depicts a Native boy who cannot have bannock because a beaver chewed down a tree which knocked over the power lines. Until the hydro company for whom his dad works can fix the lines, the community is without electricity. By explaining why the oven will not work, the boy's mother highlights the ways in which one event causes or is connected to another. Black-and-white pencil drawings. Written at a Native Writer's Workshop sponsored by the Native Education Branch of Manitoba Education.

Wheeler, Jordan (Cree). *Chuck in the City*. Illus. Bill Cohen. Penticton, BC: Theytus, 2000. ISBN 0-919441-63-7. 16 pp. Grades Preschool-3. In this book, a young boy named Chuck who lives in the country goes to visit his Kookum at her condo in the city. He takes a walk by himself, which turns into an adventure as he encounters barking dogs, kids on roller blades, and tall office towers. Lost, he tries not to panic and manages to find his way back to his grandmother's home. Told in rhyming couplets and illustrated with colourful cartoon-like pictures, this book underscores Chuck's alienation from, and fascination with, an environment unfamiliar to him.

Wheeler, Jordan. *Just a Walk*. Illus. Bill Cohen. Penticton, BC: Theytus, 2000. ISBN 0-919441-73-4. 64 pp. Told in rhyming couplets, this book follows Chuck on his day-long adventure following a hawk through the countryside where he lives. The colour cartoon-like illustrations capture the humor and playfulness of the text. The book is adapted from an interactive oral presentation developed by the author. The second half of the book, which retells the story, this time with black-and-white line drawings that can be coloured and blanks so children can fill in words, captures the oral and interactive origins of Wheeler's tale.

Paul DePasquale teaches in the English Department at the University of Winnipeg, specializing in the area of Aboriginal Studies. He is the editor of a forthcoming special issue of the Canadian Review of Comparative Literature titled Natives and Settlers Then and Now: Historical Contexts, Current Perspectives and co-editor of two books, Telling our Stories: Omushkego Voices from Hudson Bay and Aboriginal Contexts for Aboriginal Literatures, both under contract with Broadview Press. Paul is a Mohawk member of the Six Nations of the Grand River Territory in Ontario. Doris Wolf teaches in the English Department at the University of Winnipeg and specializes in contemporary Canadian literature. Her current work includes a study of Canadian literature dealing with various aspects of German history, especially the Second World War, and, with Paul DePasquale, a study of the concept of home in Canadian Aboriginal children's literature.

