

## Artefact 4

### Final Project

#### Using Indigenous Picture Books to connect to Indigenous Ways of Knowing

#### INST 511: Indigenous Knowledge and Education

June 3 2023

I first came across the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY) while working in a children's museum during the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings. They are a non-profit organization that represents an international network of people around the world who are committed to bringing books and children together. In 2008 they released *From Sea to Sea to Sea*, a collection of 100 picture books for children. Having access to such a large collection made me realize how little I knew about Indigenous education, Indigenous authors and Indigenous lessons within these books. IBBY was founded in the wake of World War II to bridge cultures and promote peace (Ibby.org, 2022). **How does an extensive list of Indigenous children's books help us further connect and understand Indigenous World Views, The Land, Language, Education and Family? Knowing the power of education, can an extensive list like this one help our understanding of contemporary Indigenous Issues?** The list includes information on how to use the collection, they mention that the list "reflects the most current attitudes and approaches to Indigenous literature today" From Sea to Sea to Sea (IPBC Catalog 2021). The lists warns that some topics may be difficult for readers and that when using the list, one must be prepared with strategies for facilitating and encouraging discussions

that will prepare, engage and inform readers. Children's literature is a fantastic entry point into Indigenous education as it can help with the developmental and socialization process. Through rhythm, sound, images, texts, rhymes, characters, animals and known objects, children's interests can peak by connecting to any of these categories. Both Indigenous and non-Indigenous parents or education can use these books as entry ways to Indigenous learning which may include difficult topics.

## **LAND**

With descriptive language, and vivid imagery the books in the IBBI list paint a picture about the sacred connection between Indigenous People and the land. According to, *Blackfoot ways of Knowledge* by Betty Bastine (2004) Blackfoot epistemology extends from "seeing understanding of the complex levels of kinship relations that constitute a cosmic world of balance and harmony (Bastine, 2004. p.24) Hansen (2018) notes "land-based education has taught people lessons for living for thousands of years". Indigenous peoples understand the connection to the land and the necessity to take care of it. "The elders emphasize the sacredness of the Earth, and in particular the sacredness of the Peoples' Island - North America - that was given to the peoples to live on. The Elders say that the Creator gave the First Nations peoples the land in North America. The Elders maintain that the land belongs to their peoples and their peoples belong to the land. The land, waters, and all life-giving forces in North America were, and are, an integral part of the sacred relationship with the Creator" (p.11)

There are many books from Sea to Sea to Sea that highlight Indigenous sacred relationships to the land. First is *The Eagle Mother* (Huson, 2020) which tells the story of the

Gitksan people and their relationship to the land, the salmon, and their home in Xsan, the River of Mists. By following the Eagle Mother on her journey to capture food, we see the illustrated landscape from an aerial viewpoint. As an epilogue, the author further investigates the Gitksan's people's connection to the river. The next book that highlights a strong connection to the land is *Sus Yoo/The Bear's Medicine* (Gauthier, 2019), the story follows two bears interacting with the land highlighting how each aspect nurtures them, from the warmth of the sun to the taste of the berries. Every aspect of the landscape is described as interconnected with other aspects, highlighting these gifts of the earth as "medicine". This book was particularly effective in the way it showed how important all aspects of the land were, illustrating how these elements should be respected, exemplifying their careful use shown as a piece of a larger ecosystem. In Western views, respecting the land is showing dominion over it, in Indigenous ways of knowing that land has autonomy while simultaneously being interwoven with everything else. The book, *Awásis and the World-Famous Bannock* (2018) shows a young child accidentally losing her grandmother's famous Bannock. The animals in the forest take turns giving her each individual ingredient as a gift. This simple lighthearted story illustrates the importance of the land, how materials in the environment are gifts while also encoding the step-by-step process of making Bannock. Lastly, *Tanna's Owl* (2019) is the story of a young girl who raises a young snowy owl. It is clear throughout the story that this is not a pet, that animals don't belong to people, they belong to themselves and the land. Elder Danny Musqua said, "Because, if any man owns a piece of the Earth, then he no more respects the Earth because he believes he can do what he wants with that Earth and he can destroy it, he can do whatever he wants. That's the reason why we don't own the Earth because it belongs to all people. For the purposes of that we cannot own the Earth. We were willing to share it." (Cardinal & Hildebrandt, 2001: 630). Many of the books in

the list paired with imaginative illustrations depicted the land with respect and reverence. Some even used traditional ancient imagery. The rhythm of the language echoed one walking on the land or flying in the sky. In many books the notion of land as place of remembrance was shown, it was most evident in the book, *The Train* (2020) and *The Bear's Medicine* (2019) where the altered land was used to highlight events of the past.

## **LANGUAGE**

Many Indigenous languages are slowly becoming extinct, while countless dialects have already been lost. In 2019 the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed the period between 2022 and 2032 as the International Decade of Indigenous Languages to draw attention to the many surviving Indigenous languages and advocate for resources aiding their preservation, revitalization and promotion (UNESCO, 2021). Children's books that introduce Indigenous languages are vital to the preservation of Indigenous language. Even for non-Indigenous people, they offer alternative viewpoints - understanding language is a major part of understanding each other's cultures. Many of the books in the list are translated from Indigenous languages, some introduce Indigenous words and use the context surrounding that word to illustrate its meaning. One of my favourite books that dealt with language learning was, *It's a Mitig!* (2020). The book introduced a variety of Ojibwe words as riddles. The text would set up a poem and the answer is presented in Ojibwe with an illustration to go along with the riddle. I enjoyed the pace and rhythm of this book so much that I found myself reading it several times. When learning languages repetition is extremely important and this book was written in a way where repetition was enjoyable.

Some books told origin stories and many mentioned that in the beginning of time, words had magic and could become what they were. Even the bible says that in the beginning was the

Word, and the Word was God. I have heard many interpretations and analysis of that line; they all illustrate the power of language. During the pandemic, I finally had time to read *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967). There is an interesting passage that talks about everyone slowly forgetting language. They first try to write the names of things, but soon forget how to read. Throughout the book the notion of forgetting and relearning is explored, the passage about the town forgetting language resonated with me as English is my second language. As I have grown up in Canada, I no longer think in Spanish. Through early literacy books, caregivers engage with their children, and they read the words on the page, they are the experts imparting knowledge to their children. Through the readings this semester, we learned how the Dene Tha' Elders translate knowledge to others through Indigenous language by sharing stories and daily conversations. The language used during the communication provides others with learning opportunities and allows them to search for their own answers while creating knowledge through their own experience (Goulet, 1994). In the book, *I Lost My Talk* (2019) Poet Rita Wilson discusses the profound effects of having lost her language during her years at residential schools. Originally this poem was written in 1978, it has been reprinted with, *I am finding my Talk* (2019) which discusses the author's many ways that she is reconnecting with her culture, and slowly reclaiming it "one world at a time. Both books published together reconnect the conversation across generations.

## **EDUCATION**

Knowledge is generated for the purpose of maintaining the relationships that strengthen and protect the health and well being of individuals and of the collective in a cosmic universe (Bastien, 2004. p. 25). For the Dene people, relationships are crucial to education and learning because they operate, and function based off their close family and kinship ties. Education is

delivered to the Dene at a very early age and involves sacred and formal rituals. Not only is the family involved in passing on Dene traditions and lived experiences, but the community is also involved. Children are taught values like sharing, respect and promoting the well-being of the community over themselves. “Their faith and culture, an integrated whole, governed their lives” (Goulet, 1994) Dene children are taught that everything is shared and that individuals must contribute to the Dene culture and community responsibly. This is true for many Indigenous cultures in Canada. “The distinctive features of Indigenous knowledge and pedagogy are learning by observation and doing, learning through authentic experiences and individualized instruction, and learning through authentic experiences and individualized instruction, and learning through enjoyment.” (Battiste, 2002:18) Storytelling provides an important opportunity for teaching and learning, thus transferring knowledge about “ancestral and contemporary connections to place” (Cornassel, Chaw-win-is, & T’lakwadzi, 2009). Metaphors are often utilized as ways of articulating complex social and historical events to teach the lived experience when the “existing language is not capable of adequately describing the topic term or the listener does not possess the necessary language to understand the topic term” (Jensen, 2006).

The first book from the list that I will highlight is *In my Anaana’s Amautik* (2020). Through imaginative illustration and Inuktitut words, we learn about the connection between a young child and the warmth and safety that they find in the mother’s Amautik. The strong bond created through infancy begins the important lifelong learning connection that parents and caregivers share with the children. I found *The girl and the Wolf* (2019) to be a significant book about knowing. This story involves a young girl that is separated from her mother while berry picking and spends the night in the company of a wolf who helps her remember all the lessons her family has taught her about surviving on the land by herself. All of the books on the list

provide lessons through their engagement. Some provide instruction, like in *Awasis and the World famous Bannock* (2018), *How I Survived Four Nights on the Ice* (2020), and *Lowanpi Mato's Tipi* (2020). Others show the importance of intergenerational learning such as *When we are Kind* (2020), *Birdsong* (2019) and *The Train* (2020). *The Train* (2020) is an extremely important book as it not only deals with intergenerational learning but also deals with intergenerational healing. My favourite line from this book is when the grandfather looks at the landscape and where the old train tracks were and says that he is “I am waiting for what we lost to come back to us” and at that moment his granddaughter takes his hand and tells him she will wait as well. Each book has several lessons which highlight the “distinctive features of indigenous knowledge and pedagogy” (Battiste, 2002, p. 18). Some do this by showing observation, others by doing. Some do it by highlighting authentic experiences and individualized instruction, and some through the enjoyment of reading the words on the page.

## **FAMILY**

The importance of family connections is a universal trait that we all share. For the Metis “family units go beyond the traditional nuclear family living together in one house. Families are extensive networks of strong, connective kinship; they are often entire communities” (CITE) The concept of family was the basis of all relationships within the community encouraging a sense of place and stability. Many towns were built on families joining together through common family lines such as sisters and their husbands. Teaching was done within the family and first lessons were about how to be a good relative. Each person had a responsibility and skill that was able to be valued by the community when a family framework was created to allow this cooperation to be reciprocal. The interlinking of families allowed an individual to have many teachers at different points in their life depending on the needs, interests, and talents of that person as they

grew and changed. A shared collective knowledge that was based on the land and place was able to thrive and continue through this expansive and inclusive approach to the concept of family. Aboriginal women – Cree, Dene, and then Metis – grounded their families in their homelands, creating a sense of belonging to the territory through a regionally defined matrilineal residence pattern and, therefore, female-centred family networks. (MacDougal, p. 444). One of the books from the collection that showed the importance of family while also teaching the different names for family members is, *Wahhagicobi: Kinship terms to make relations with each other* (2020). Children might not notice how the names for different members are the same (for example, uncle and father), and they may not notice how the word “Kinship” is used in the place of “family”. The words are presented in a fun sing-song style, and these subtle lessons begin to reframe how one thinks of our kinship relationships.

## **WORLD VIEW**

One of the Indigenous guiding principles has to do with the natural law of reciprocity- which deals with the connections between relatives and with those who cohabit the land (Bastien, 2004, p.59). Since infancy, children are taught that their lives are interdependent and interconnected with nature (Bastien, 2004 pg.59). The Blackfoot emphasize the importance of traditional knowledge and sacred science being passed onto future generations. Knowledge, responsibilities and relationships are pivotal elements in the Blackfoot epistemology. Bastien summarizes this by saying, “By knowing one's place in the cosmic universe, we form intricate alliances with the world coming from *Ihtsipaitapiyo'pa*. From these relationships arises an intricate constitution of *Kiitomohpiipotokoi* that forms the identity of *Siksikaitsitapi*. Through these responsibilities we, as *Niitsitapi*, come to know who we are in the universe; these responsibilities become the source of knowing our place [*Mokaksin*]” (Bastien, 2004, p. 80). This is a huge concept to be able to

articulate within children's literature, however there are several books on the list that encapsulate this with elegance and creativity. First, is *The Bear's Medicine* (2019), it is worth mentioning again how wonderfully it illustrates the interconnectedness of the world and everyone in it.

For the Blackfoot and for many other Indigenous cultures the circle is an important symbol. In many of these books the symbol of the circle appears in the illustrative forms such as those written and illustrated by Leah Marie Dorion in *How the moon came to be* (2018) and *Metis Camp Circle: A Bison Culture Way of Life*. The circle also appears in the illustrative work of Elder Norman Chartlan in *Meennunyakaa/Blueberry Patch* (2019). The circle implies equity and participation of those present and also represents the circular patterns found in nature, such as the four seasons and the four elements as well as the four sacred medicines. (CITE). The change of seasons is also expressed in several of the books in the list including *Birdsong* (2019), *The Bear's Medicine* (2019), *Tanna's Owl* (2019) and *The Pencil* (2018).

These books do not set out to impart the incredible knowledge that they do, they are small pieces of a huge world filled with lessons. It is important to gather collections like these, as looking for individual books without this support is not easy. Through this collection, readers can connect to the concept of the importance of the land. Regardless of where one lives, the illustrations and the words display a sense of reverence. The creativity and artistry from the Illustrators showcase a variety of viewpoints, as well as reflecting the changing seasons. Many of the books in the list include language lessons, some are completely translated while others play with language in creative ways. The stories highlight intergenerational education, with elders and parents teaching the characters stories within the books, and sometimes the lessons leap from the page to teach the reader something important about contemporary Indigenous issues. As a non-Indigenous person, I learned many lessons while reading these books, I have used them in

my classroom and will continue to use them as enjoyable, playful and sometimes heartwarming introductions to wider Indigenous education.

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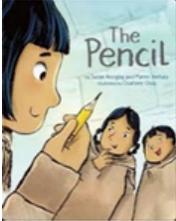
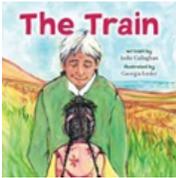
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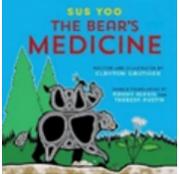
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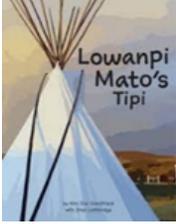
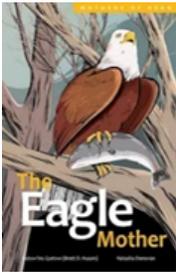
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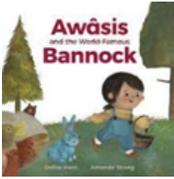
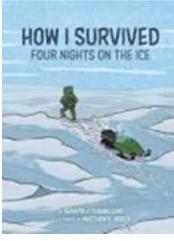
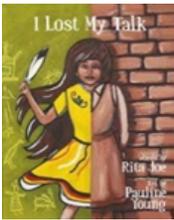
## Appendix

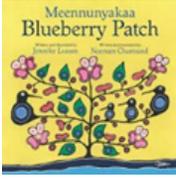
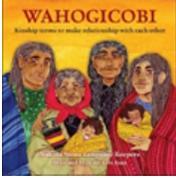
Book	Author	LAND	LANGUAGE	EDUCATION	WORLD VIEW	Theme
 <p>The Pencil (2018)</p>	<p>Susan Avigaq (Inuit)</p> <p>Illustrated: Charlene Chua</p>	<p>Living in the North in the 1960s</p> <p>Living in Igloos in</p>	<p>Inuit- uses Inuktitut syllabics</p> <p>ANAANA (mother)</p> <p>ATAATA (father)</p> <p>ANAANATSIA Q (grandma)</p> <p>IGLOO</p> <p>Dome shaped house made with blocks of snow</p> <p>INUKSHOOK</p> <p>Stone markers</p> <p>QULLIQ</p> <p>Oil burning lamp</p>	<p>parents giving information their children</p> <p>Talks about tools for cleaning skins and for sewing</p> <p>Parents teaching their children how to practice writing on the ice in the windows</p>	<p>Using things wisely, because they are so difficult to acquire.</p>	
 <p>The Train (2020)</p>	<p>Jodie Callaghan</p> <p>[Migmaq]</p> <p>Illustrated: Georgia Lesley [Mi'gmaq]</p>		<p>Mi'gmaq</p> <p>GA'S (the train)</p> <p>GIJU' (mother)</p> <p>NNU</p>	<p>Uncle tells story - tance of story telling</p> <p>Rations - eating raw potatoes</p>		<p>Residential school experience</p> <p>"I am waiting for what we lost to come back to us"</p> <p>Intergenerational healing</p>

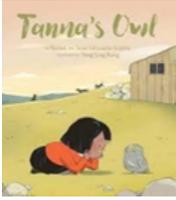
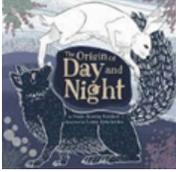
			(Indigenous person)			
 <p>Métis Camp Circle: A bison Culture way of life (2019)</p>	Leah Marie Dorion [Métis]	High plains	<p>paskwa^wimost osin</p> <p>(Buffalo- cree)</p> <p>Michif language</p>		Métis cultural symbols	Tells about bison as a keystone species
 <p>Bird Song (2019)</p>	Julie Flett [Cree/Métis]	Nature and the seasons	<p>OJO</p> <p>(owl - Cree)</p> <p>(migrating moon)</p> <p>(frog moon)</p>		<p>Cree worldview: stories connect to the land, language and story connect us</p> <p>Importance of the seasons</p>	Intergenerational friendship
 <p>Bear's Medicine (2019)</p>	<p>Clayton Gauthier (Cree/Dakelh)</p> <p>And Theresa Austin (Dakelh)</p>		Bilingual in Cree		<p>Giving thanks</p> <p>Sharing nature</p> <p>The land as medicine</p> <p>The importance of seasons changing</p>	

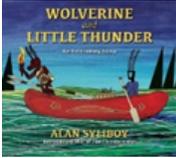
 <p data-bbox="203 409 316 504">It's a Mitig (2020)</p>	<p data-bbox="406 241 552 336">Bridget George (Anishimaabe)</p>		<p data-bbox="803 241 941 304">Ojibwe nature words</p> <p data-bbox="803 399 876 430">GIIZIS</p> <p data-bbox="803 462 860 493">(sun)</p> <p data-bbox="803 525 917 556">ASHIGAN</p> <p data-bbox="803 588 860 619">(fish)</p> <p data-bbox="803 651 876 682">GAAG</p> <p data-bbox="803 714 917 745">(Porcupine)</p> <p data-bbox="803 777 901 808">GINEBIG</p> <p data-bbox="803 840 876 871">(snake)</p> <p data-bbox="803 903 941 934">BINESHIINH</p> <p data-bbox="803 966 860 997">(bird)</p> <p data-bbox="803 1029 933 1060">AJIDAMOO</p> <p data-bbox="803 1092 876 1123">(squirrel)</p> <p data-bbox="803 1155 925 1186">GITIGAAN</p> <p data-bbox="803 1218 885 1249">(garden)</p> <p data-bbox="803 1281 876 1312">MITIG</p> <p data-bbox="803 1344 860 1375">(tree)</p> <p data-bbox="803 1407 868 1438">AMIK</p> <p data-bbox="803 1470 885 1501">(beaver)</p> <p data-bbox="803 1533 860 1564">ZIIBI</p> <p data-bbox="803 1596 868 1627">(river)</p> <p data-bbox="803 1659 901 1690">AAMOO</p> <p data-bbox="803 1722 860 1753">(bee)</p> <p data-bbox="803 1785 941 1816">MITIGOMIN</p> <p data-bbox="803 1848 876 1879">(acorn)</p>			<p data-bbox="1274 241 1380 399">Family reading, integrated language learning</p>
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			DIBIKI-GIIZIS (moon)			
 <p>Lowanpi Mato's Tipi</p>	<p>Kim Soo Goodtrack [Hunkpapa Lakota] and Stan Lethbridge [Hunkpapa]</p>					<p>Goes through the steps of building a teepee</p>
 <p>When we are kind</p>	<p>Monique Gray Smith  [Cree/Lakota]</p> <p>Illustrated: Nicole Neidhardt (Dine)</p>				<p>Gratitude, kindness</p>	
 <p>The Eagle Mother (2020)</p>	<p>Hetxw'ms Gyetxw (Brett D. Huson)</p> <p>Illustrated:  Natasha Donovan [Métis]</p>	<p>Gitxsan's people's relationship/connection to the land, the salmon, and their home in the Xsan, the river of Mists</p> <p>It also tells about all the different moons</p>	<p>Xsan language</p>			<p>Motherhood from the perspective of the eagle</p> <p>Talks about the Gitxsan people their customs and their relationship to the land</p>

 <p>Awasis and the world famous Bannock (2018)</p>	<p>Dallas Hunt [Wapisewsipi (Swan River First Nation)].</p> <p>Illustrated by Amanda Strong {Michif}</p>		<p>Cree words for the ingredients in Bannock</p>			<p>Shares bannock recipe and how to make it</p>
 <p>How I Survived: Four Nights on the Ice (2020)</p>	<p>Serapio Ittusardjuat</p> <p>Illustrated: Matthew K Hoddy</p>	<p>Northern Canada</p> <p>Baffin Bay</p>			<p>Strength and determinati on</p> <p>Traditional skills and knowledge</p>	<p>Life in the Inuit</p>
 <p>I lost my talk (2021)</p> <p>(originally published in 1978)</p>	<p>Rita Joe [MikMak]</p>		<p>Discusses the loss of language</p>			<p>Discusses the loss of language through residential schools</p>

 <p>Blueberry Patch/Meennunyaka aka</p> <p>(2019)</p>	<p>Jennifer Leason</p> <p>Translated by Norman Chartrand</p>	<p>Describes the land around Duck Bay, Manitoba in the 1940s and the experience of collecting berries in the summer included the journey and the landscape</p>				
 <p>Wahogicobi: Kinship terms to make relationships with each other</p> <p>(2020)</p>	<p>Nakoda Sioux Language Keepers</p> <p>Destry Love Roan</p>		<p>Language learning in Nakota Sioux</p>			<p>Discusses all the different names for family members while introducing children to the concept of “all my relations”</p>
 <p>Kits, Cubs, And Calves: An Arctic Summer</p> <p>(2020)</p>	<p>Suzie Napayok-Short [Inuit]</p> <p>Illustrated by Tamara Campeau</p>					

 <p>Tanna's Owl (2019)</p>	<p>Rachel Qitsualik-Tinsley [Inuit]</p> <p>Sean Qitsualik-Tinsley [Mohawk]</p> <p>Illustrated by Yong Lion Kang</p>	<p>Tells of the story of people's relationship with animals</p> <p>Tells about how long the days are</p>	<p>Magic of language</p> <p>Inuktitut words</p> <p>UKPIK (owl)</p>		<p>All my Relations - how one does not have dominion over the land, instead we all take care of animals and the land by "bringing things together"</p>	
 <p>The Origin of Day and Night (2018)</p>	<p>Paula Ikuutaq [Inuit]</p> <p>Illustrated by Lenny Lishchenko</p>		<p>Inuktitut syllabics</p> <p>Tells about the importance of language, and its origins</p>			<p>Tells origin stories of how day and night came to be</p>
 <p>In my Anaana's Amautik (2020)</p>	<p>Nadia Sammurktok [Inuit]</p> <p>Illustrated: Lenny Lischenko</p>	<p>Describes the northern landscape and the warmth and safety of the mothers amautik</p>	<p>Inuktitut syllabics</p>			

 <p>Wolverine and Little thunder: An Eel Fishing story (2018)</p>	<p>Alan Syliboy [Mi'kmaq]</p>				<p>Indigenous practices</p> <p>Contemporary invocation of traditional Mi'kmaq knowledge</p> <p>Traditional fishing methods</p>	<p>The illustrations are mixed media with forms inspired by the Mi'Kmaq petroglyph tradition</p>
 <p>Nibi's Water Song (2019)</p>	<p>Sunshine Tenasco [Chippewa and Potawatomi]</p> <p>Illustrated by Chief Lady Bird</p>		<p>Anishinaabemowin</p> <p>NIBI (water)</p>			<p>Deals with water crisis</p> <p>inaccessibility of clean water</p>
 <p>Swift Fox All Along (2020)</p>	<p>Rebecca Thomas [Mi'kmaq]</p> <p>Illustrated by Maya Mckibbin [Ojibwe, Yoeme, and Irish]</p>			<p>Dad teachers Swift Fox how to be Mi'Kmaq</p>		<p>Intergenerational healing</p> <p>Identity and belonging</p> <p>Describes the ingredients in banok</p>

 <p>When we had Sled Dogs: A story from the Trapline ācimowin ohci wanihikīskanāhk (2019)</p>	<p>Ida Tremblay [Cree/Nehiyawak] and Miriam Körner</p> <p>Illustrated by Miriam Körner</p>	<p>Describes the landscape as it changes from summer to winter and what living thought he winter entails in Northern Saskatchewan</p>	<p>Includes some words in Woodland Cree</p>		<p>Traditional way of life</p>	<p>Seasonal Trapline life</p>
 <p>May we have enough to share (2019)</p>	<p>Richard Van Camp</p> <p>[Tłchǫ]</p> <p>Photographed by Tea&amp;bannock</p>				<p>Show Gratitude</p> <p>Shows the strength of connections to the land</p>	
 <p>The Girl and the Wolf (2019)</p>	<p>Katherena Vermette [Métis]</p> <p>Illustrated: Julie Flett [Cree/ Métis]</p>	<p>Talks about the land and what it can provide</p>			<p>Discusses lessons about helpful wolves</p> <p>Lessons about which berries as safe to pick</p> <p>And lessons about remembering the lessons you already know</p>	