



## TEACHING THROUGH BOOKS

# INDIGENOUS VOICES

BY LILA ARMSTRONG, LEAH CROWELL, AND BETH LYONS

## LEARNING FOCUS

Exploring, sharing, and discussing stories about the lives, joys, and experiences of Indigenous peoples is important as it relates to the land we now call Canada and our moral imperative to move forward with the Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. As readers connect with stories by Indigenous storytellers, they are also working to connect to the land on which they live, work, and play.

**Identity:** How does learning about the lives, joys, and experiences of Indigenous peoples help me to understand my identity as it relates to the land we now call Canada?

**Skills:** How might exploring stories that can be shared with the next generation teach me about understanding, appreciating, and keeping those stories alive?

**Intellectualism:** How will I commit to learning about the Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and how I can make a plan of action for my own role in the reconciliation process?

**Criticality:** How can we integrate old knowledge with new ways more deeply and naturally?

**Joy:** How does connecting with stories by Indigenous storytellers help me to connect to the land on which I live, work, and play? How might I share the joy of that connection with others?

**THEME:** Diversity

**SUB-THEME:**

Indigenous Voices

**GRADE LEVELS:**

Elementary (K-3)

Middle School (4-8)

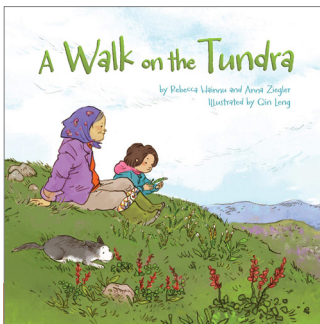
High School (9-12)



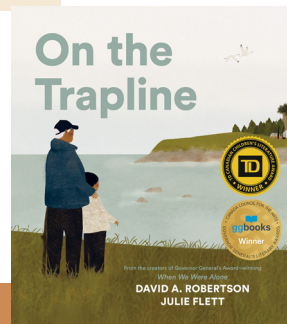
# INDIGENOUS VOICES | ELEMENTARY LEVEL

BY BETH LYONS

## FEATURED BOOKS



*A Walk on the Tundra* by Rebecca Hainnu and Anna Ziegler, illustrated by Qin Leng (Inhabit Media, 2011)



*On the Trapline* by David A. Robertson, illustrated by Julie Flett (Tundra, 2021)  
Also available in FR: *Ligne de trappe* par David A. Robertson, illustré par Julie Flett (Éditions Scholastic, 2021)

## LEARNING EXPERIENCE

### MINDS ON PROVOCATION

Ask students to think about a time that they were outside with a family member enjoying nature. Have students close their eyes and visualize what the experience was like. Prompts could include: What did the weather feel like that day? What sounds could you hear? What plants and animals did you see while you were outside?

If time permits, you could have the students share their visualizations by recreating their memories using loose parts, drawings, or oral storytelling with the class.

## READ, PLAN, AND PRACTICE

Display the covers of both featured books and ask students to share what they notice and wonder about them (e.g. both covers have an adult and a child, the people are outside, the titles have unfamiliar words such as trapline and tundra). Ask students to make predictions about what the books might have in common.

### Day 1

Start by reading *A Walk on the Tundra*. Stop to discuss the moments when Anaanatsiaq (grandmother) teaches Inuujaq something about the land or plants. Work with students to create a list of all the things Inuujaq learns.





Pause on the page where Inuujaq remembers being hungry in the summer. Ask students if there has been a time when they ate fresh fruit or vegetables grown locally where they live. You could start a list of local foods to reference later.

Continue reading until Anaanatsiaq explains to Inuujaq all the ways plants can be used. Work with students to discuss how plants have been used in their life/home/school. A scavenger hunt for materials and objects made from plants could be done after reading the book.

## Day 2

Tell students that as they read *On the Trapline*, you want them to be on the lookout for connections to *A Walk on the Tundra*. What might they notice is the same? What is different? What connections might they make to their own experiences?

Stop at the page where Moshom describes the trapline as “where people hunt animals and live off the land.” Ask students what they think this means and if they have any examples to share.

Pause a few times when the story shares the meaning of Cree words. Ask students if they noticed that some of the words in *A Walk on the Tundra* were also in a different language. Tell them to listen for more Cree words and that you will return to this idea.

Stop at the page where the community has a feast. Ask the students to listen carefully to the description on this page. What do they notice about this part of the story? What do they wonder?

After reading, have students share the connections they made between the two books. Help guide them towards seeing the respectful use of resources from the land, the way the land sustains and feeds people, and how the children learn from older family members (specifically grandparents).

## MAKE, TINKER, AND MODIFY

**Inquiry Provocation:** Gather pictures or real examples of fruits, vegetables, and other foods grown and produced in your local region. Work with students to create a list of which foods they have tried, which foods are new to them, which foods are cooked with other foods, and which foods they eat with their families. What foods are missing from the display? Work to add foods from other parts of the world where students may have originated from or continue to have family. As the display grows, use a map to track these places that represent the lived experience of the students.

**Create:** This is an opportunity to invite the home community into the class by having each student and their trusted grown-up provide a recipe that is special to their lived experience. Students can illustrate the recipe and share connections to their memories of eating various foods in their home.



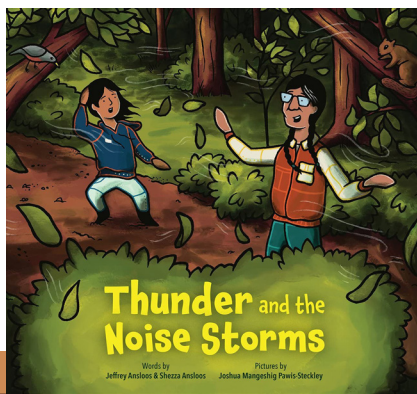


Use the glossaries from both books to create a multilingual display in your classroom. Include the words for family members, places, foods, etc. from the books and add to it with the home languages of your learners.

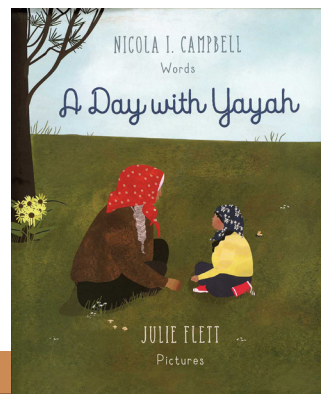
## REFLECT AND CONNECT

Work with students to connect their learning and new questions from these books to previous learning about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Orange Shirt Day, and Treaties Recognition Week. Then go deeper and introduce a land acknowledgement. Gather books written and illustrated by Indigenous authors that relate to these topics and themes, and develop a plan to explore these books and create new inquiry questions to be answered.

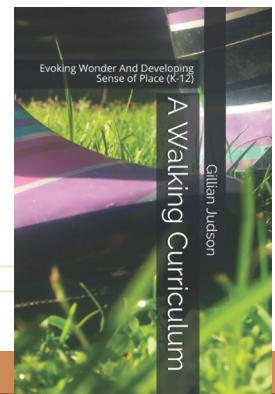
## ADDITIONAL CANADIAN BOOKS TO SUPPORT THIS SUB-THEME



*Thunder and the Noise Storms* by Jeffrey Ansloos and Shezza Ansloos, illustrated by Joshua Mangeshig Pawis-Steckley (Annick Press, 2021)



*A Day with Yayah* by Nicola I. Campbell, illustrated by Julie Flett (Tradewind Books, 2017)



*A Walking Curriculum: Evoking Wonder and Developing Sense of Place (K-12)* by Gillian Judson (independently published, 2018)  
Use *A Walking Curriculum* to explore the land around your school. Learn about the plants that grow nearby, what uses they might have, and how they have been used for food, materials, or medicines.



# INDIGENOUS VOICES | MIDDLE SCHOOL LEVEL

BY LILA ARMSTRONG

## FEATURED BOOK



*This Is What I've Been Told* by Juliana Armstrong (Medicine Wheel Publishing, 2021)  
Also available in FR: *C'est ce qu'on m'a dit* par Juliana Armstrong (Medicine Wheel Publishing, 2022)



## LEARNING EXPERIENCE

### MINDS ON PROVOCATION

Exploring stories and other texts helps us understand ourselves and make connections to others and to the world.

Using sticky notes (or an online sticky note app), ask students to share one important skill/idea that they have learned from a family member older than them (i.e. aunt or uncle, parent, grandparent). Invite students to share their learning out loud and/or post their notes onto the board (or other location).

### READ, PLAN, AND PRACTICE

Using a read-aloud approach, ask students to give you a thumbs up during the reading if they connect their skill/knowledge to a page in the book. Invite them to give you two thumbs up if they think it connects to more than one idea.

### MAKE, TINKER, AND MODIFY

Using a variety of tools, students will pick the medium of their choice to tell their story of knowledge sharing (the same one that they wrote on the sticky note, or a different one, if they reconsidered after reading the picture book). Students can:





- Write and illustrate on paper
- Use the [Clips app](#) to tell the story (and possibly add photos to their video)
- Use a voice recording app to create an audio clip
- Use [Book Creator](#) to make a labelled album showing themselves using the skill/knowledge

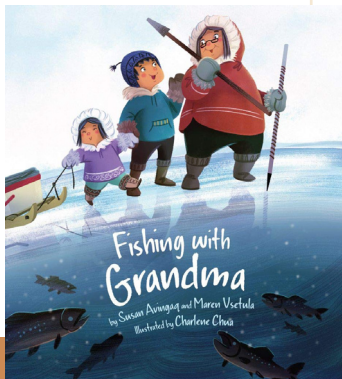
Group students according to their medium, and allow them time to prepare, make storyboards, and familiarize themselves with the apps.

## REFLECT AND CONNECT

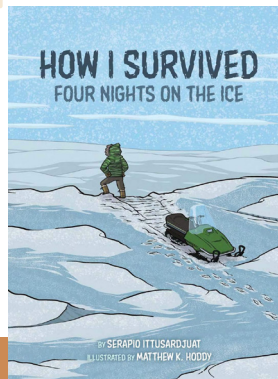
**Reflect:** How did connecting to your own story help you appreciate the nature and importance of Indigenous values such as passing down and sharing knowledge? Give students a few minutes to consider their thoughts. Ask them to write their answers on an index card, or similar. Post the reflection question and ask students to share their responses, then pin them up under the question. This will anchor your Connect activity.

**Connect:** Create a multimedia presentation and invite your students to listen, watch, or read the stories of their classmates. Then invite other students to visit your class, or perhaps stage the presentation in the library.

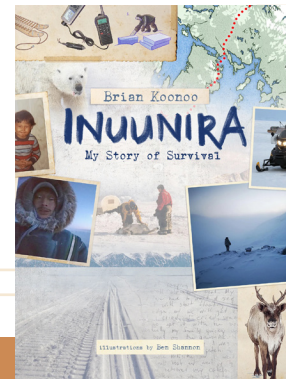
## ADDITIONAL CANADIAN BOOKS TO SUPPORT THIS SUB-THEME



*Fishing with Grandma* by Susan Avingaq and Maren Vsetula, illustrated by Charlene Chua (Inhabit Media, 2016)  
Also available in FR: *À la pêche avec grand-maman* par Susan Avingaq et Maren Vsetula, illustré par Charlene Chua (Inhabit Media, 2018)



*How I Survived: Four Nights on the Ice* by Serapio Ittusardjuat, illustrated by Matthew K. Huddy (Inhabit Media, 2020)



*Inuunira: My Story of Survival* by Brian Koonoo, illustrated by Ben Shannon (Inhabit Media, 2022)



# INDIGENOUS VOICES | HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL

BY LEAH CROWELL

## FEATURED BOOK



## LEARNING EXPERIENCE

### MINDS ON PROVOCATION

#### Important Notes:

- Alicia Elliott's writing delves into complex and traumatic topics based on her lived experiences. Do not assign individual essays to students; they should be given the opportunity to research and choose essays from the text based on their comfort and interest.
- If you are not an Indigenous person/educator, ensure that you position yourself as a co-learner to centre Alicia Elliott's stories as the focal point of the learning in this lesson.

### MINDS ON PROVOCATION

Ideally, students will have researched, selected, and read their essay selection from the book prior to this lesson.

Place students into general discussion groups (3-4 per group). Each group should be given one of the Seven Teachings to discuss:





<b>Love</b>	What does love mean to you? How do you demonstrate this teaching in your own life?
<b>Respect</b>	What does respect mean to you? How do you demonstrate this teaching in your own life?
<b>Bravery</b>	What does bravery mean to you? How do you demonstrate this teaching in your own life?
<b>Truth</b>	What does truth mean to you? How do you demonstrate this teaching in your own life?
<b>Honesty</b>	What does honesty mean to you? How do you demonstrate this teaching in your own life?
<b>Humility</b>	What does humility mean to you? How do you demonstrate this teaching in your own life?
<b>Wisdom</b>	What does wisdom mean to you? How do you demonstrate this teaching in your own life?

Using sticky notes and/or a digital sticky note tool (i.e. [Jamboard](#)), students work together to capture and display their individual responses.

## READ, PLAN, AND PRACTICE

There are 14 essays in *A Mind Spread Out on the Ground*. Students should now be placed into groups with other readers who have all selected the same essay.

Ask each group to discuss the questions listed below. Using a non-permanent surface, they will track their ideas and must support their thinking with evidence from the text (direct quotations and/or page numbers).

- How did the selected essay make you feel? What is your reaction to the essay?
- What passages in this essay stood out to you? Why?
- What are three real-world topics/issues that can be connected to this essay?
- Which of the Seven Teachings do you think resonates most with this essay? Why?

## MAKE, TINKER, AND MODIFY

Using a free digital platform (i.e. [Google Slides](#), [Jamboard](#), [Canva](#), etc.) students work within their discussion groups to build a poster that will be printed and displayed within the classroom as an anchor chart for Alicia Elliott's writing in connection to the Seven Teachings.







### Activity Instructions:

1. Choose a free digital platform.
2. Title your poster with the Teaching that you have connected to the essay.
3. Embed a direct quotation from the essay that reflects the chosen Teaching (MLA formatting).
4. Design your poster with images, colours, and fonts to enhance your ideas (credit all sources).
5. Share your work with another group for immediate feedback.
6. Apply feedback and finalize your poster.

Each group will get the chance to share and present their work to the rest of the class.

The posters can then be printed for classroom display and/or captured in a shared digital platform as a means of increasing visual lessons and representation within the classroom community.

## REFLECT AND CONNECT

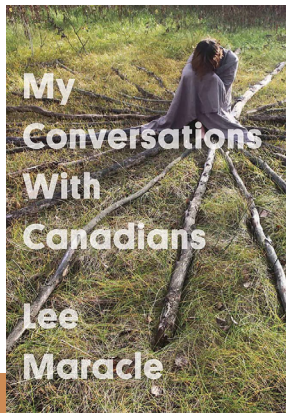
After finishing this activity, students can capture their learning and reflections in a written Thought Book journal response (paper or digital). They can choose one of the following questions to respond to in their writing; whenever possible, they should be encouraged to use direct evidence from the essay they read to reinforce their ideas.

- What is one key learning you will take away from today's discussion and exploration? How can you carry this learning into your own life?
- If you got the chance to meet Alicia Elliott, what questions would you want to ask her about the lived experiences she shares in her writing?
- Reflect on this statement: "Nothing about us without us." How did today's activity ensure that we centred Alicia Elliott's voice and lived experiences in our learning?

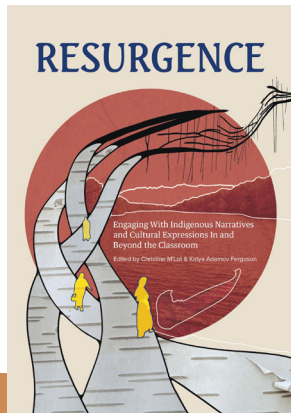




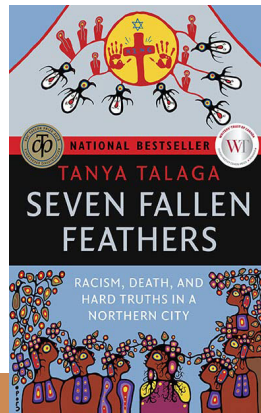
## ADDITIONAL CANADIAN BOOKS TO SUPPORT THIS SUB-THEME



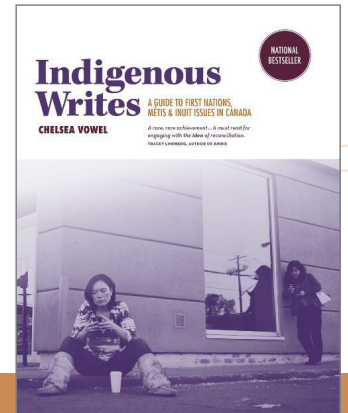
*My Conversations with Canadians*  
by Lee Maracle (Book\*hug Press, 2017)



*Resurgence: Engaging with Indigenous Narratives and Cultural Expressions In and Beyond the Classroom* edited by Christine M'Lot and Katya Adamov Ferguson (Portage & Main Press, 2022)



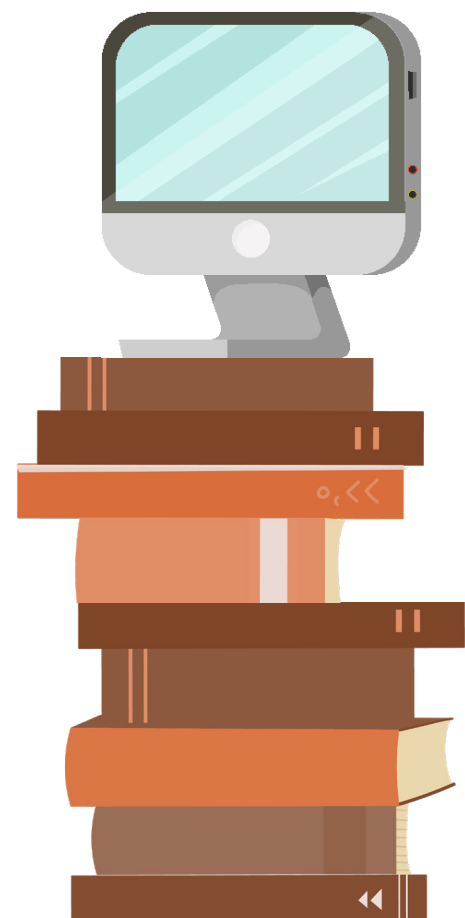
*Seven Fallen Feathers: Racism, Death, and Hard Truths in a Northern City*  
by Tanya Talaga (House of Anansi Press, 2017)



*Indigenous Writes: A Guide to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Issues in Canada*  
by Chelsea Vowel (HighWater Press, 2016)

## MORE RESOURCES FOR ALL GRADE LEVELS

- [âpihtawikosisân](#): An active blog by Chelsea Vowel that provides incredible context, information, and current viewpoints about Indigenous issues and topics in Canada.
- [CanLit is a Raging Dumpster Fire](#): Powerful article by Alicia Elliott published in 2017 that provides raw, honest, and candid commentary about the Canadian literature scene.
- [Clips User Guide \(Apple\)](#): How to use the Clips app.
- [Editing Emotions](#): MediaSmarts lesson on how certain film editing techniques can affect the emotional impact of the product.
- [How to Personalize Instruction with Seminars](#): From the popular Cult of Pedagogy podcast comes an interview on running different groups in a class at the same time.





- [Territorial and Land Acknowledgements](#): This resource may be too complex for younger students, but can be useful for the professional learning of educators.
- [Treaties Recognition Week](#): Resources for use in Ontario in connection with Treaties Recognition Week.
- [What are the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action?](#)
- The 94 Calls to Action (TRC)
  - [Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action](#) (English)
  - [Commission de vérité et réconciliation du Canada : Appels à l'action](#) (French)
  - [Reconciliation Education](#) from the First Nations University of Canada

