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TEACH

EDUCATION FOR TODAY AND TOMORROW

EMPOWERING EDUCATION:

EXPLORING HISPANIC/LATINX
REPRESENTATION
IN COMICS



**THE POWER OF
MENTORSHIP:**
HOW GUIDANCE AND
CONNECTION SHAPED
MY TEACHING JOURNEY

NOTES

Another school year has begun, and another issue of *TEACH Magazine* is here to aid and inspire you as you set off on this new adventure. To mark the occasion, this issue presents an exploration of the many different journeys we take, how they shape us, and what we can learn from them. It also serves as a reminder of the value of continued growth, reflection, and creative expression—and the importance of seeing ourselves in the stories and perspectives we share with our students. Here's to embracing the road ahead, with all the discoveries it holds.

High school history teacher Jenna Vandenberg starts things off by sharing her journey with Substack, the online writing platform. In her article, she recalls her early experiences, along with how she came to value it as both a place to reflect on her educational practice and as a different kind of online space to connect with fellow educators—other than through social media. Today, Vandenberg creates weekly Substack newsletters where she writes about lessons taught, insights gained from discussions with students, worksheet ideas, resource links, and more. If you're interested in setting up a Substack for yourself, be sure to also check out her tips on how to get started.

Hoda Ahmed looks back on her own experience of connecting with other educators: through a mentorship organization called The Mentoree. When she was a first-year Faculty of Education student, Ahmed reached out to a mentor named Teri, a K-12 Special Education Consultant. The two of them hit it off immediately, forming a relationship that lasted through the pandemic and continues to this day. To learn more about how this mentorship shaped Ahmed's journey as an early career educator, give her article, "The Power of Mentorship," a read.

In another Classroom Perspectives piece, sixth-grade educator Ruth Duran writes about sending her students on literary journeys—through the magic of comic books. She has found that her students are naturally drawn to stories with characters who reflect their own backgrounds and experiences. This, she explains, is why representation is so important, and why it is crucial to keep a wide selection of books available.

Since many of her students are of Hispanic/Latinx descent, Duran shares a few comic books and graphic novels that have deeply resonated with them. And with Latin American Heritage Month (in Canada) / National Hispanic Heritage Month (in the U.S.) right around the corner, there's no better time to consider adding some of these texts to your own classroom!

All students have the right to see themselves in the books they read, but unfortunately as book bans are increasing across both Canada and the United States, stories that address diverse topics, perspectives, and identities are often the ones being targeted. With Banned Books Week set to take place from October 5-11 in America, our latest Bookstuff column shines a spotlight on some of the books that have been banned, challenged, or quietly removed from shelves, as well as those that never made it there in the first place. We're also pleased to introduce a new Bookstuff segment called "TEACHer's Corner," where staff, writers, and readers of *TEACH Magazine* will have the opportunity to share their own book recommendations.

This issue's Curricula is a novel study centred around the memoir *From the Ashes*, written by Jesse Thistle. In the book, Thistle shares his journey of learning to embrace his Métis identity, his struggles with addition, and his search for belonging in a world that seems determined to deny him. Throughout this novel study, students will examine the systems and structures that contribute to the marginalization of individuals and groups. They will then participate in an action project that explores how they can inspire change in their community.

Lastly, our Field Trips column takes students on interactive, creative journeys where they can really get their hands dirty. Here we look at seven studios, centres, and galleries across Canada and the United States that take art education to a whole new level.

Whether students are crafting clay sculptures, weaving wall hangings, or generating gelli plate prints, they're sure to have a blast as they experience the magical, messy world of authentic art making.

As always, thanks for reading. See you next time.

KELSEY MCCALLUM
ASSOCIATE EDITOR



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Jenna Repeats History



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Social Media, but with Paragraphs: Using Substack to Reflect and Connect

By Jenna Vandenberg

SEPTEMBER, 2025



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10



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Share

The summer before I started teaching, my cousin and fellow teacher gave me a beautiful notebook, and implored me to set aside time to write and reflect in it every day. She warned that classroom days would fly by quickly and at winter break, I'd have no idea how I'd gotten there. She told me to pause after the chaos of each day and take time to untangle all the student outbursts, questions, instances of non-compliance, and "ah-ha" moments.

To my shame, the notebook sat unused in my desk drawer.

My cousin was right. I have zero memories of that first year. I have no idea how I made it through.

Did I course correct during my second year? No.

For the better part of the next two decades, I spent my nearly depleted stores of after-school energy in IEP meetings or fighting with the copy machine rather than writing about my day. But after 17 years of mostly reflection-free teaching, I've finally found the perfect space to force myself to stop, step back, and think about what I'm teaching. That place is Substack.



What Is Substack?

[Substack](#) is an online platform for writers. Recalling the early days of blogging, anyone can sign up for an account and start writing. The platform allows readers to peruse a writer's content online or receive newsletters via email. There are Substack newsletters about standing stones, political cartoons, the baseball scene in 19th-century Seattle, and much, much more.

There are also Substacks about teaching.

Using Substack to Reflect

For the past year, I've been using Substack to reflect on my educational practice. With the click of a few buttons, I created an account and told my three readers that I'd publish something new every Sunday.

And suddenly I found the impetus to reflect. I'd promised those readers a newsletter, so I had to find something to write about. Pretty soon those three readers doubled and tripled and quadrupled, and suddenly I had a hundred people who were expecting my thoughts.

Now, every Monday, after my 6th period class stacks their chairs and streams out into the hallway, I click the "new post" tab on the Substack creator dashboard. Then, I reflect. I add a few sentences or thoughts every day throughout the week, looking for connections and themes. Each Friday evening, during the hours between my kid's cheer practice and my other kid's drum lessons, I plug in my laptop and pull a cohesive story together from my fragments of reflections.

I write about lessons taught. I ponder the most effective way to grade essays. I revel in the insights gleaned from student discussions and I consider how I could have handled a conflict with more grace. I share lesson plans, slide decks, student worksheets, and links to resources. I make connections between history lessons, picture books, and places I've traveled.

Initially, it was the public accountability and novelty of a new system that finally forced me to make time for reflection. Then, connecting with readers and other teachers on Substack fueled my motivation. Now, I write and reflect because I genuinely enjoy it.

Benefits of Reflecting on Substack

Once I got into the habit of reflecting and writing, it became addictive. Just like my cousin promised, setting aside space to do so has made me a better and happier teacher and person. It's forced me to consider different perspectives and evaluate teaching moves I made or didn't make. Almost subconsciously, I feel myself planning to make better decisions in the classroom. When I write, I can find words to express the purpose of each assignment, which lets me better articulate that purpose to students.

Also, sharing lessons on Substack forces me to continually improve my slides and student worksheets. Much like reflecting, the best time to improve a lesson is right after you teach it, when moments of student confusion or impromptu explanations that finally click are still in your working memory.

Until recently, I rarely made time for lesson edits either. Sometimes I find myself handing out an assignment I'd created three years ago that still contains my old typos and the confusing metaphor I'd always meant to go back and fix. Now that I'm sharing assignments and slides on Substack, I'm finally fixing all those typos.

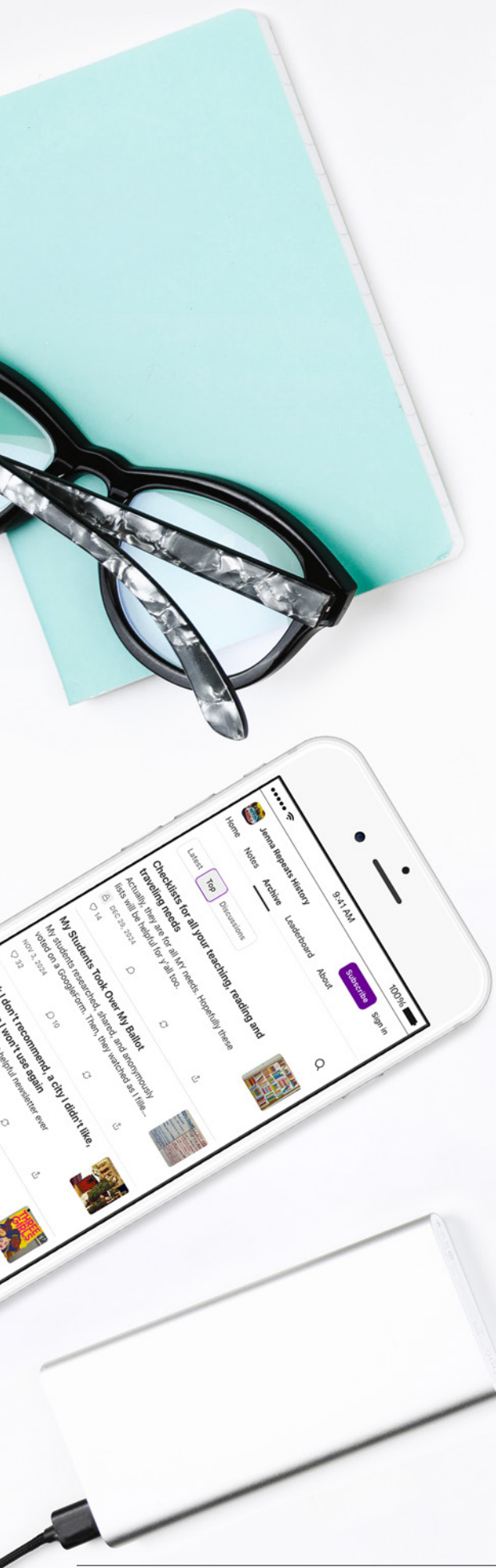
Connecting with Other Teachers

I'm not the only educator on Substack. Far from it. The platform is full of teachers, policy-makers, and education reporters from across the globe who share their own lesson plans, weigh in on debates about vouchers and AI, and muse about their days in the classroom.

Social media has long provided a place for teachers to connect, but I'd never really found an online community before. I've scrolled through Instagram posts of gorgeous elementary classrooms and laughed at teacher TikToks, but even in the halcyon days of Twitter #educhats, I never actually connected with people.

With Substack, I've finally figured out how. The platform's long-form content allows for thoughtful and nuanced conversations, and I frequently find myself in comment sections chatting with other Substack teachers. Because I subscribe to my favorite educators, their newsletters come directly to my email instead of as fleeting posts in an endless





feed. When I read something that I want to think more about, I simply keep the article in my inbox before returning to comment—something that is harder to do when scrolling. Substack is perfect for people like me who want to engage with others online, but need a little extra time to think.

How to Get Started on Substack

As a reader, you don't need to download an app or give your email address to anyone in order to read content on the platform. You can go directly to a Substack writer's page where all their newsletters live. [Adrian Neibauer's Substack](#) is a great place to start. You'll be prompted to enter your email address, but there is a "no thanks" option to bypass the email prompt and simply read. In addition to writing about his elementary classroom, Adrian recommends other education-related Substacks.

If you eventually want to subscribe to a newsletter you love, then you'll need to enter your email address. You'll likely need to choose whether you want to pay for the Substack or read for free. Simply click the free option and you are subscribed! While some newsletters are behind a paywall, most Substackers in the education sphere keep their content free.

Substack also has an app and a social media section called [Notes](#) that allows users to share links, pieces of newsletters, pictures, videos, and other content, much like X. It can be a good way to discover other Substacks and get quick tips or pieces of information, but is not necessary.

If you want to get started on Substack as a writer, setting up a newsletter is easy. Think of a name, upload a picture, and start writing! Unlike other newsletter options such as Mailchimp or Constant Contact, Substack is free and doesn't require writers to disclose a physical address to their readers. When readers sign up for your newsletter, their email address goes directly to you the creator, so writers can take their audience with them if they decide to leave the platform (unlike TikTok, Meta, or X).

That notebook my cousin bought me decades ago is long gone, lost amid school transfers and cross-country moves. But I do have a new notebook these days that I carry with me and use in WiFi-free spaces. It's full of Substack ideas.



JENNA VANDENBERG is a mom and a public school teacher in Everett, WA. After 6th period ends, she's a Substack writer at [Jenna Repeats History](#).



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Lana | 9y
Rottweiler
Archer | 5y
Boxer-Bulldog Mix
Big, Big Personality, Big Heart *Athletic, Playful, Cuddly*

Location: Washington, USA | Parent: Brittany L.

Lana is consistently on the "dangerous dog breed" list, but the most dangerous thing about her is stepping on someone's toes with her 100 lb weight! Lana is a certified canine good citizen dog; she and Brittany volunteered in a resource teacher's classroom, where students read and wrote to Lana. Both Lana and Archer have also visited a middle school, where Brittany spoke about dog training and how dogs can support mental health.



Phoebe | 7y | Welsh Corgi
Location: Bangkok, Thailand
Parent: April S.
Resilient, Fluffy, Always Hungry



Smooch | 11y | Domestic Longhair
Location: British Columbia, Canada
Parent: Michelle D.
Affectionate, Smart, Brave



EMPOWERING EDUCATION: EXPLORING HISPANIC/ LATINX REPRESENTATION IN COMICS

BY RUTH DURAN





s they enter the classroom, students' eyes are drawn to the bins that are stacked by our class library. They're filled with brand new comic books that have been gifted to my 6th graders—a class made up of general education students, some students with special needs, and English Language Learners. Quite the eclectic group!

My students come from diverse backgrounds; many of them are of Hispanic/Latinx descent. As they sift through the bins looking for whatever comics will catch their attention, I notice they're asking and comparing: "Who's this superhero? What's their superpower? Is it a guy or a girl? Where do they come from?" In short, they want to know: Which of these can they connect with?

This makes me think about just how much representation matters. It's essential to influencing children's self-esteem and cultural identity. Who they see on TV and in the media as people in power can impact their self-image and inspire a future of possibilities.

However, we must consider the right kind of representation for our Hispanic/Latinx students. It is important to find content that is accurate (not white-washed) and that our students can readily connect with. These kids want to read stories that matter to them and, most of all, they want to see themselves reflected within the pages of their beloved comics.

Unfortunately, all too often in media, books, and pop culture, there is representation solely for the sake of adding diversity. This creates tokenism and usually results in disappointing characters whose backgrounds may have some claim to certain cultures and ethnicities, but whose actions and identities do not actually represent the culture they are meant to embody.

Our children, students, and impressionable readers deserve true representation. Therefore, the right kind of portrayal—the kind that allows them to identify familiarity and create connections to the characters on the page—is of paramount importance.

LET'S CLARIFY SOME TERMS

"Hispanic" refers to those who descend from a country that is primarily Spanish-speaking, while "Latinx" refers to those who descend from countries in Latin America (whether or not these countries speak Spanish). Due to colonization and influences from European countries, such as Spain and Portugal, a person can be Hispanic or Latinx or both. We should also note that these are ethnicities, relating to culture and ancestry, not necessarily the arbitrariness of race.

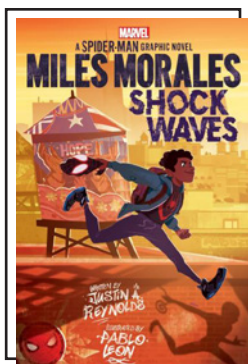
SOME COMICS TO EXPLORE

Since kids love to read comic books and graphic novels, here are a few examples that have deeply resonated with my students:

1

THE MILES MORALES SERIES

BY JUSTIN A. REYNOLDS,
ILLUSTRATED BY PABLO LEON



Miles Morales (aka. Spider-Man) is the biracial son of an African-American father and Puerto Rican mother. In *Miles Morales: Shock Waves*, the first graphic novel in the series, it's clear throughout the story that Miles' heritage is part of his everyday life, whether this is shown by Miles speaking Spanish to his mother, participating in a fundraiser to benefit Puerto Rico, and so on.

2

AMERICA CHAVEZ: MADE IN THE USA

BY KALINDA VAZQUEZ, ILLUSTRATED BY CARLOS GÓMEZ



America Chavez is a superhero from the Utopian Parallel, but upon arriving on Earth, she builds a connection within the Puerto Rican community in the Bronx. Her ability to open portals and transverse the multiverse resonates with the displacement of Hispanic/Latinx people who have been forced to leave their homes and build connections elsewhere, adapting and adopting found families.

The character of America Chavez was originally created by Joe Casey to connect with a wide audience that was not being represented in comics at the time. Throughout *America Chavez: Made in America*, author Kalinda Vazquez ensures that the various Hispanic/Latinx neighborhoods of New York and the way they have influenced America Chavez is made evident, while Carlos Gómez's illustrations accurately represent the people who truly live in these areas.

3

THE LA BORINQUEÑA SERIES

BY EDGARDO MIRANDA-RODRIGUEZ



Marisol Rios De La Luz is La Borinqueña, a superhero who acquires her powers while exploring the caves of Puerto Rico. Within these caves she meets Atabex, the Taíno mother goddess, who appears before Marisol and summons her sons, Yúcahu (the spirit of the seas and mountains) and Juracan (the spirit of hurricanes). These spirits grant Marisol superhuman strength, as well as the ability to fly and control storms.

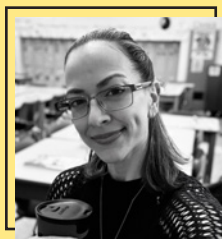
Marisol's cultural ties are so essential that without her connection to the island, there would be no origin story. Edgardo Miranda-Rodriguez created this superhero to promote social and environmental justice, while also celebrating Puerto Rican culture in meaningful ways. His philanthropic work with La Borinqueña has benefited many humanitarian and local non-profit organizations in Puerto Rico.

POSSIBLE STUDENT ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

In order to help students take ownership of their learning and internalize the impact of reading these comics, it's important to provide creative opportunities for them to engage with the books. One way to embed learning about cultures and identities could be by allowing students to create a superhero that embodies aspects of their own identities. Alternatively, they could research cultural myths and write a comic based on these stories.

To delve deeper into the characters and cultural representation they are reading about, students could create character maps that include main attributes, explaining how a character's culture plays a role in their personality and strengths. Or, after coming up with a set of criteria (such as authenticity, significance, and accuracy), students could evaluate the cultural representation within a graphic novel. As a culminating activity, have students go on a gallery walk that allows them to display their findings and showcase how cultural elements are woven into the comics' storylines and character traits.

All of our students deserve to see themselves represented in the pages of a book, especially in the pages of the comic books they love. By supporting writers/artists of color and voicing our appreciation for diverse characters and storylines that celebrate true details from a multitude of cultures, we will ensure that our children can see themselves saving the world, navigating conflict with superhuman attributes, and embracing their own ethnicities as part of pop culture.



RUTH DURAN has been a public school teacher in the Bronx, NY, for the past 19 years, with a BA from New York University, MA from Pace University, and EdM from the Bank Street Graduate School of Education. She has also

devoted her career to empowering multilingual learners and students of color by creating engaging learning opportunities that bring education to life.

Here's the thing about history: along with being an important subject to teach - and learn about – in school, it's also a part of our everyday lives. History shapes our communities, and our communities shape us. When we learn about good things our country has done in the past, we gain pride and incentive to do more. When we understand how and when we've failed, we realize the need to improve.

That's why we at Historica Canada place such importance on being accurate and objective in our approach to our country's history. Every item in our programs – whether it's the **Heritage Minutes**, The Canadian Encyclopedia, Memory Project Speakers Bureau, Citizenship Challenge, or others – is rigorously fact-checked. We take up to nine months to make each new Minute: much of that time is spent on research. Our staff of six full-time editors on **The Canadian Encyclopedia** commission new articles and update old ones on a daily basis. Our **Citizenship Challenge** questions are drawn straight from previous questions used on the tests the federal government gives to newcomers wishing to become Canadian citizens. We offer more than 40 learning guides specially designed for classrooms on all manner of subjects, and more than 100 mini-documentaries. **The Memory Project Speakers Bureau** has been connecting veterans and currently serving Canadian Forces members with classrooms for more than 20 years. You can keep up with our always-evolving program offerings on our various social media platforms and our website.

We have close to 30 million unique users of our programs every year, but view our relationship with teachers as particularly special. Teachers are the lifeline to the young students who will become our leaders of tomorrow. We consult with you in shaping new programs; we look for your feedback on existing ones. Our encyclopedia offers plain language summaries of many articles that are written in a way that is easier for younger students or those still learning English to understand. Our Historica Canada staff are spread across the country: this makes it easier in turn for us to understand the concerns and different priorities of the various regions in this vast country.

At Historica Canada, it's a point of pride to us that all of our programs are offered free of charge, and in both official languages. In addition, our Canadian Encyclopedia is now available, with the click of a button on our website, in 35 other languages. We hope you regard us as a reliable resource to give added detail and context to the materials you already use. Our mission statement is 'when others forget, we remember.' **Because learning brings us together – and teachers are the most important part of that process.**



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SHINING A SPOTLIGHT ON 10 ~~BANNED BOOKS~~

BY KELSEY MCCALLUM

Across North America, books are disappearing from shelves in classrooms and libraries. This wave of censorship has [increased in frequency](#) over recent years—not just in the United States, but Canada as well, most recently with Alberta’s new [school library standards](#). As groups, government entities, parents, and individuals continue to raise issues about the content of certain books, it’s important to consider the impact this will have on our students.

Frequently, books that address diverse topics, perspectives, and identities are the ones being targeted. Rather than removing or restricting access to this material, however, we should be celebrating these stories. All students have the right to see themselves reflected in the books they read; not only does this help them feel supported, it also encourages a lifelong love of reading. Plus, having access to a wide range of reading options gives students the opportunity to learn about lives, communities, and cultures other than their own.

With [Banned Books Week](#) set to take place from October 5-11 this year in the U.S.—culminating in Let Freedom Read Day on the 11th—we’re taking this opportunity to reflect not only on the books that have been banned, challenged, or quietly removed from shelves, but also on those that never make it there in the first place. Books by [Palestinian authors](#), in particular, are often excluded from mainstream circulation and conversations around censorship. We want to draw attention to the broader issue of whose voices are heard—and whose are systematically left out.

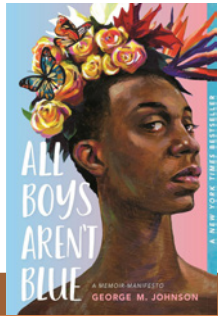
Here we also introduce our new segment: **TEACHER’s Corner**, where staff and members of the *TEACH* community can share their own recommendations with fellow educators and book lovers. Keep an eye on our socials, where we’ll let you know about upcoming Bookstuff themes and how you can submit your book picks.

In the meantime, as Banned Books Week approaches, explore the list below—each title a reminder of the power of stories and the voices we must not overlook.

Decisions about what books to add or remove from libraries and classrooms should best be left to the educators and librarians who are trained on how to assess and address this material. In a [statement](#) from Canadian School Libraries addressing the surge of book bans in Canada, the organization notes:

“School library resources are selected by trained professionals, following established guidelines. Pressure for material inclusion or exclusion from individuals or groups should not be factored into selection, but instead the professional judgement of trained library professionals should be applied, supported by guideline documents that defend universal principles of protecting intellectual freedom.”





1 ALL BOYS AREN'T BLUE: A MEMOIR-MANIFESTO BY GEORGE M. JOHNSON

Farrar, Straus and Giroux Books for Young Readers (April 2020) | Grade Level: 9-12

In this captivating coming-of-age memoir, journalist and LGBTQ+ activist George M. Johnson reflects on their life growing up Black and queer in New Jersey and Virginia. Told through a series of personal essays, *All Boys Aren't Blue* explores topics of gender identity, brotherhood, marginalization, toxic masculinity, Black joy, and more.

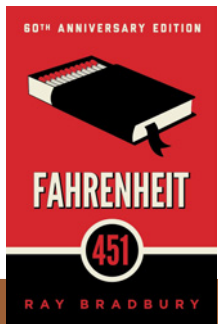


2 THE ANTIRACIST KITCHEN: 21 STORIES (AND RECIPES)

EDITED BY NADIA L. HOHN, ILLUSTRATED BY ROZA NOZARI

Orca Book Publishers (September 2023) | Grade Level: 4-7

This thoughtful anthology is a celebration of food, family, and diversity. It features 21 stories and accompanying recipes from children's authors across North America, including [Linda Sue Park](#), [Danny Ramadan](#), [Waubgeshig Rice](#), and many others. Each author recounts personal memories tied to specific meals or dishes, while also looking at the roles that food can play in honouring culture and fighting against discrimination.

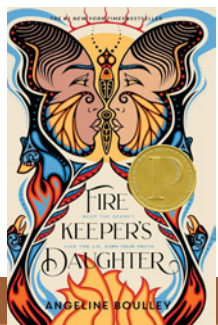


3 FAHRENHEIT 451 BY RAY BRADBURY

Originally published: Ballantine Books (October 1953)

This edition: Simon & Schuster (January 2012) | Grade Level: 7-12

Published over 70 years ago, the message of *Fahrenheit 451* is still relevant today—perhaps even more so. Bradbury's dystopian novel focuses on Guy Montag, a fireman whose job is to burn books. He never questions this until he meets a girl named Clarisse, who opens his eyes to possibilities of a world very different than Guy has ever known. (Note that a [teacher's guide](#) is available.)



4 FIREKEEPER'S DAUGHTER BY ANGELINE BOULLEY

Henry Holt and Company (March 2021) | Grade Level: 9-12

Angeline Boulley's award-winning debut novel tells the story of eighteen-year-old Daunis Fontaine, an Ojibwe teen who has never really fit in—neither in her hometown, nor on the nearby reservation. Then one day, she suddenly finds herself drawn into an FBI investigation, agreeing to go undercover to help track down a new lethal drug plaguing her community. But as Daunis delves deeper, she unearths a web of secrets more deadly than she could have imagined.

5 FROM THE STARS IN THE SKY TO THE FISH IN THE SEA

BY KAI CHENG THOM, ILLUSTRATED BY WAI-YANT LI AND KAI YUN CHING

Arsenal Pulp Press (October 2017) | Grade Level: K-3

This beautifully imagined picture book offers young readers a gentle introduction to concepts of gender, identity, and the importance of accepting each other's differences. A magical child named Miu Lan is born at a time when both the sun and moon are in the sky. Miu Lan can change their shape into anything they want: a boy, a girl, a fish, a flower. Sometimes Miu Lan can't decide what they want to be, but they always find comfort in their mother, who offers unwavering love and support.



6 FRONT DESK BY KELLY YANG

Arthur A. Levine Books (May 2018) | Grade Level: 3-7

In this award-winning middle-grade novel, ten-year-old Mia Tang grapples with prejudice, poverty, and the weight of many secrets: her own, and those of her parents. Her secret? Mia wants to be a writer, even though her mother thinks she'd be better off sticking to math, since English isn't her first language. Her parents' secret? They hide immigrants in the Calivista Motel that they've been managing for its owner, Mr. Yao, since their recent move from China to California—and if he finds out, Mia and her family will be in serious trouble. Will Mia be able to help the people she cares about, while still finding the courage to chase after her own dreams?



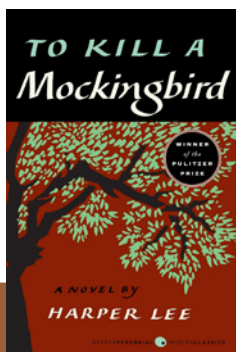
7 HOMELAND: MY FATHER DREAMS OF PALESTINE

BY HANNAH MOUSHABECK, ILLUSTRATED BY REEM MADOOH

Chronicle Books (March 2023) | Grade Level: K-3

Homeland is a love letter to Palestine, told through the memories of a father who is unable to return, to his daughters who have never been. Hannah Moushabeck's autobiographical text celebrates the stories of her family's homeland and the importance of intergenerational sharing, while Reem Madooh's heartfelt illustrations perfectly capture the hope and strength of immigrants and refugees in a way that transcends borders. Since the book's publication, Hannah Moushabeck now runs [Interlink Publishing](#), the only Palestinian-owned publisher in America, with her family.



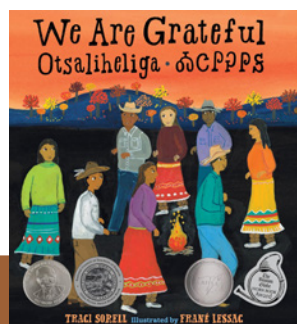


8 TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD BY HARPER LEE

Originally published: J. B. Lippincott & Co. (July 1960)

This edition: Harper Perennial Modern Classics (July 2005) | Grade Level: 7-12

Told from the perspective of “Scout” Finch, a young girl living in Alabama during the 1930s, *To Kill a Mockingbird* is a story of racial injustice, social inequality, the loss of innocence, and the importance of empathy. Over the course of the book, Scout watches as her father, a well-known lawyer in town, defends a Black man who was falsely accused of a terrible crime. Harper Lee’s classic coming-of-age tale has frequently been listed as one of the most influential, enduring, and best-loved novels in the English language. (Note that this edition comes with a [teacher’s guide](#).)



9 WE ARE GRATEFUL: OTSALIHELIGA BY TRACI SORELL, ILLUSTRATED BY FRANÉ LESSAC

Charlesbridge (September 2018) | Grade Level: K-2

Otsaliheliga is a word used by members of the Cherokee Nation to express gratitude. In this book, young readers will learn about the many blessings and experiences that the Cherokee community celebrates each year, beginning with the new year in the fall and ending the following summer. The book includes a glossary and a complete list of characters used in the Cherokee writing system. Be sure to also check out the [teacher’s guide](#) and [KidLit TV video](#), where Traci Sorell speaks about her book and introduces kids to several Cherokee words.



10 WHITE BIRD: A WONDER STORY BY R. J. PALACIO

Knopf Books for Young Readers (October 2019) | Grade Level: 3-7

R. J. Palacio is the author of the bestselling book *Wonder*, a story about a boy with facial differences that inspired the real-life #ChooseKind movement. Set within the *Wonder* universe, *White Bird* tells the story of how Sara Blum, a young Jewish girl, survived living in a Nazi-occupied French village during World War II. Palacio was partially inspired by the experiences of her husband’s family, who lost many relatives during the Holocaust, and partially inspired by the rise of discrimination and the systematic separation of families in America following the 2016 election. While the events in this middle-grade graphic novel take place over 80 years ago, their parallels to what’s happening around the world today are striking, making it more important now than ever to share stories like this with students.

TEACHer's Corner



LULA DEAN'S LITTLE LIBRARY OF BANNED BOOKS

BY KIRSTEN MILLER

William Morrow (June 2024)

Censorship is a slippery slope. By allowing it to take root, we open the door to other forms of oppression as well—the consequences of which Kirsten Miller explores through her latest novel. While not strictly a banned book itself, *Lula Dean* addresses the issue of book banning in an approachable way, injecting wit and humour into the discussion, while still tackling serious topics like abuse, racism, anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric, and more. Utilizing a delightful cast of characters, Miller demonstrates the immense value that can be found in having access to a rich and diverse collection of stories. Best of all, *Lula Dean's Little Library* is an incredibly validating book for anyone who supports the freedom to read.

—Kelsey McCallum, Associate Editor at *TEACH Magazine*
Her favourite banned books are *The Outsiders* by S. E. Hinton and the *Heartstopper* series by Alice Oseman

Other favourite banned books from the TEACH team:

The Catcher in the Rye by J. D. Salinger
—Wili Liberman, Publisher and Editor

The Handmaid's Tale by Margaret Atwood
—Lisa Tran, Managing Editor

The Bluest Eye by Toni Morrison
—Raenu Sarathy, Associate Editor

Maus by Art Spiegelman

Persepolis by Marjane Satrapi

—Pauline Lopez, Art Director

1984 by George Orwell

The Kite Runner by Khaled Hosseini

—Nupur Bagoria, Assistant Editor





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What Will Students Learn?

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- The importance of quick action
- Knowledge of hands-only CPR & AED use
- Effective communication skills



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STUDENT WELL-BEING:

Social Equity and Health

By Rebeca Rubio

GRADE LEVEL:
SECONDARY (11-12)

THEME:
STUDENT WELL-BEING

SUB-THEME:
IDENTITY, SELF-IMAGE, EQUITY



FEATURED BOOK



From the Ashes: My Story of Being Métis, Homeless, and Finding My Way by Jesse Thistle (Simon and Schuster Canada, 2019)



LEARNING FOCUS

Resilience in the Face of Adversity: Systems and Power in Our Communities



LEARNING EXPERIENCE

MINDS ON PROVOCATION

Eric Klinenberg is a sociologist from New York who wrote *Palaces for the People: How Social Infrastructure Can Help Fight Inequality, Polarization, and the Decline of Civic Life* (Crown, 2018). In his book, he argues about the importance of social infrastructure for the health of individuals and the community as a whole.

Have students consider the following questions as they watch Eric Klinenberg's [talk](#) on *Palaces for the People*:

- What is “social infrastructure”?
- How does the social infrastructure of neighbourhoods shape people’s capacity to live well?
- How is city planning linked to healthy communities?

READ, PLAN, AND PRACTICE

From the Ashes follows Jesse Thistle as he grapples with many adversities:

- He has external struggles with addictions, poverty, mental health, and homelessness;
- He has deep internal struggles with his self-image as he learns to embrace his family history and Métis identity;
- He seeks to find belonging in a world that rejects and neglects him at every turn.

This novel study unit will explore these personal elements but will also explore the systems and structures that contribute to the marginalization of groups in the broader community.

Essential Questions

- In the face of adversity what leads some to prevail while others fail?
- What are the factors that create an imbalance of power and equity within a community?
- Who do our communities serve and how do they serve them?

Adversity and Resilience

- How does Jesse show resilience in the face of adversity?
- What prompts him to keep going despite all odds?

Power

- To what extent does power, or the lack of power, affect Jesse's identity / sense of self?

Systems/Equity/Belonging

- Examine the systems that Jesse encounters throughout his journey: educational, policing, social services, health care, correctional, etc. To what extent does each system support or fail him?
- How do these systems shape Jesse's identity / sense of self / sense of belonging?
- Connect back to the interview with Eric Klinenberg. To what extent does the infrastructure in Jesse's world help or hinder his ability to thrive?

MAKE, TINKER, AND MODIFY

Students will be invited to participate in a community action project, exploring how they can impact change in their community.

Check the Critical Thinking Consortium's (TC2) [Social Action Projects handbook](#) for guidance on how to set up an action project inquiry.

- **Brainstorm community issues:** Students explore their interests and make observations about their community.
- **Research:** Students research the issue at the heart of their inquiry. This is where the teacher and teacher-librarian will guide students in research skills, identifying bias, determining reliability of sources, etc. Refer to [MediaSmarts](#) and [Canadian Resources to Support Inquiry Learning](#) for teacher resources. Students start to shape their inquiry question.
- **Explore solutions and make an action plan:** Students explore ways in which they can provide action in relation to the issue they have identified. The action plan can take many forms: a structured event, advocacy, interviews, awareness campaign, fundraising, etc.
- **Take action:** Students enact their plan and document their process and findings.
- **Share:** Students can share with a variety of different audiences (their peers, the school, the community stakeholders, a broader audience on social media, etc.)





REFLECT AND CONNECT

Throughout the study, students will follow the three guiding questions from Kaser and Halbert's *The Spiral Playbook: Leading with an inquiring mindset in school systems and schools*:

- What are you learning and why is it important?
- How is it going with your learning?
- What are your next steps?

After students have completed their action project, they can reflect on how their action contributes to change.



BOOK LISTS

Books about [homelessness](#) (49th Shelf)



ADAPTATIONS FOR THIS LESSON

This novel study could be adapted for online learning environments, through the use of collaborative platforms available across school districts. Students could engage in discussions through video conferencing and could adapt their community action projects to virtual platforms (i.e. advocacy or awareness campaigns on social media platforms). Additionally, students could share their process and products virtually, engaging stakeholders from their community and beyond.

From the Ashes is available in both [e-book](#) and [audiobook](#) format.



MORE RESOURCES

Homelessness and Poverty:

- [The Canadian Observatory on Homelessness](#) is the largest national research institute devoted to homelessness in Canada. The COH is the curator of the [Homeless Hub](#)—a library of over 30,000 resources.
- [Voices of the Street](#), an anthology by *Megaphone* magazine, offers a collection of poems, stories, essays, and creative writing from writers marginalized by poverty and homelessness.
- [Definition of Indigenous Homelessness in Canada](#) explores the 12 dimensions of Indigenous homelessness in Canada.
- “[Homelessness in Canada](#)” is a comprehensive article from *The Canadian Encyclopedia* that examines all aspects of homelessness in Canada.
- [Between the Cracks](#) (Curio 2019) investigates the homelessness crisis in Hamilton, Ontario before looking to Medicine Hat, Alberta for innovative solutions.

Jesse Thistle and Métis Culture:

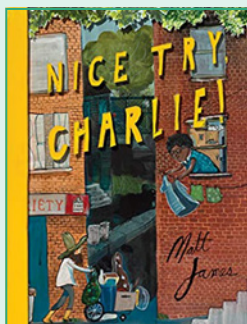
The following articles and videos delve into Jesse Thistle's memoir, exploring his journey, the history of the Métis people, and the barriers that still exist for Canadian Indigenous peoples.

- [Book review](#) of *From the Ashes: My Story of Being Métis, Homeless, and Finding My Way* (Quill & Quire)
- [How Jesse Thistle survived addiction, homelessness and incarceration — and became a Canada Reads finalist](#) (CBC Books)
- [“How Jesse Thistle’s deeply personal memoir ‘happened by accident’”](#) (Unreserved)
- [“Forced to live on roadsides: the dark history of Métis road allowances”](#) (Unreserved)
- [“Métis means much more than ‘mixed blood’”](#) (Unreserved)
- [“What’s Métis scrip? North America’s ‘largest land swindle,’ says Indigenous lawyer”](#) (Unreserved)
- [“From scrip to road allowances: Canada’s complicated history with the Métis”](#) (Unreserved)



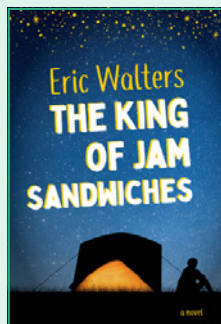
ADDITIONAL CANADIAN BOOKS TO SUPPORT THIS SUB-THEME

Primary (K-3)



Nice Try, Charlie! by Matt James (Groundwood Books, 2020)

Junior (4-6)



The King of Jam Sandwiches by Eric Walters (Orca Book Publishers, 2020)

Middle (7-10)

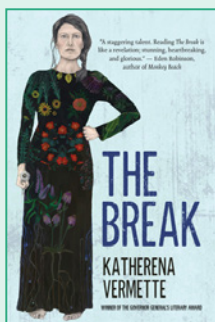


I'll be Home Soon by Luanne Armstrong (Ronsdale Press, 2012)



Safe Harbour by Christina Kilbourne (Dundurn Press, 2019)

Secondary (11-12)

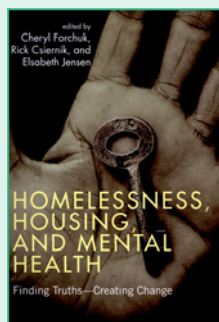


The Break by Katherine Vermette (House of Anansi Press, 2016)



Ragged Company by Richard Wagamese (Doubleday Canada, 2008)

Non-Fiction



Homelessness, Housing, and Mental Health: Finding Truths—Creating Change edited by Cheryl Forchuk, Rick Csiernik, and Elisabeth Jensen (Canadian Scholars' Press, 2011)



Homelessness & Health in Canada by Manal Guirguis-Younger, Ryan McNeil, and Stephen W. Hwang (University of Ottawa Press, 2014)



Beyond Shelters: Solutions to Homelessness in Canada from the Front Lines edited by James Hughes (James Lorimer and Company, 2018)

ART ADVENTURES

By Nupur Bagoria

It's time to flip the script on art field trips. Art education works best when it's interactive, engaging, and yes, a little messy. Gone are the days of students shuffling silently through galleries with "don't touch" warnings posted on every wall. Say goodbye to traditional museums, and hello to incredible places where kids don't just learn about art—they dive headfirst into creating, exploring, and discovering their inner artists.

These vibrant studios and immersive workshops are designed specifically for student engagement. Featuring creative experiences for all ages, the following destinations allow young learners to splash paint and mold clay without worry, while older kids and teens tackle complex artistic techniques and collaborative projects. Your students will leave with paint under their fingernails, proud smiles on their faces, and genuine enthusiasm about the world of art.

ART GALLERY OF ALBERTA

Edmonton, AB

The AGA delivers incredible art experiences that get kids excited about learning. Yes, students can explore 90-minute guided tours of the Gallery or enjoy the flexibility of self-guided visits during regular hours. But the real magic happens during the AGA's 2-hour studio sessions, where kids get their hands dirty creating murals, sculptures, and mixed-media projects that make connections between art, ideas, and lived experiences. The sessions are inquiry-based, encourage critical thinking and meaning-making, and focus on visual concepts of storytelling. Programs are available for every grade from K-12, along with virtual options for when you can't make the trip.

ARTITORIUM

Idaho Falls, ID

ARTitorium is making creativity accessible and captivating for young artists. This interactive arts centre designs impactful adventures that are entertaining and delightfully noisy—exactly what happens when kids are truly engaged in the artistic process! K-6 students can explore different art forms, from surrealism to street art, through hands-on projects. They'll have the opportunity to experiment with various tools and materials, while learning how the works they create can convey messages, ideas, and moods. Custom field trips are also available, and all experiences are designed to meet National Core Arts Standards.



CHILDREN'S ART FACTORY

Guelph, ON

This field trip is all about letting kindergarteners unleash their creativity in the most authentic way possible. The studio offers multiple hands-on art and sensory stations where young learners can explore critical thinking and independent play with a variety of art supplies. Here, students have the opportunity to explore what interests them—at their own pace! This experience focuses on meaningful, messy art making rather than cookie-cutter crafts, because the process matters more than the final product. Note that it is important to ensure students are dressed appropriately, as they can't take full advantage of the space if they have to worry about their clothes.

LEIGHTON ART CENTRE

Foothills, AB

The Centre's Art and Nature program helps students discover the wonder of nature, and then express their learning through art. The 4-hour experience begins with a sketchbook warm-up, where students are introduced to the fundamentals of art making. Then they will embark on a guided nature walk through the Centre's 80-acre facility, led by an artist-instructor who will encourage visual literacy and thoughtful observation. The day culminates in an art project of your choosing. There are dozens of options available, from clay landscapes to willow loom weaving to creative critter sculptures, and many more! Leighton Art Centre also offers a bursary program, along with numerous [teacher resources](#).

FUN TIME POTTERY

Brandon, MB

At Fun Time Pottery, young artists turn humble pieces of clay into vibrant one-of-a-kind creations. Students craft personalized mugs, bowls, plates, figurines, and clay cut outs under expert guidance, then take an exclusive tour of the kiln room, where they'll learn more about the transformative process of firing pottery. Projects stay for professional firing, then students can collect their ready-to-use masterpieces. (Note that all pottery is food-safe after it's been fired in the kiln.) This hands-on field trip is the perfect blend of science and artistry, offering an enriching experience that students are sure to never forget.

THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

New York, NY

Unlock a treasure trove of discovery at the Met. Students can embark on epic learning adventures through guided expeditions with expert Museum storytellers, chart their own course on self-guided quests, or experience the magic without ever leaving the classroom, thanks to the Met's live virtual adventures. The Museum also offers creative Studio Art Workshops which invite budding artists to sculpt their own masterpieces with wood, metal, and clay, while future scientists can explore the properties and mysteries of these materials in the hands-on 81st Street Studio, combining both art and STEM education into one enlightening experience. Be sure to check out the Met's extensive list of [educator resources](#) as well.

NANAIMO ART GALLERY

Nanaimo, BC

Embark on a five-star artistic adventure right in your own classroom, with Nanaimo Art Gallery's Artist in the Schools program. Professional artists arrive with all the necessary supplies and materials, transforming ordinary school days into extraordinary creative experiences. These in-class workshops spark interest in experimentation, ignite critical thinking, and nurture visual literacy while supporting arts education and other curricular concepts. Students can learn and explore authentic techniques like inkblot art, shibori tie-dye, gelli plate printing, and more as they make their own completely unique masterpieces.

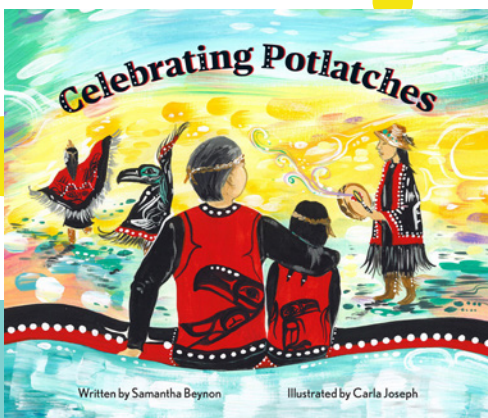


Strong Nations Celebrates 15 Years of Championing Indigenous Storytelling

This year, Strong Nations celebrates their 15th year in operation. Since 2010, Strong Nations has proudly shared Indigenous resources, growing into one of the largest Indigenous bookstores and publishers in Canada.

As a publisher that specializes in children's literature and educational resources, Strong Nations has worked with Indigenous authors and artists to create picture books, reading series, and learning tools that have found their way into classrooms, libraries, and homes nationwide.

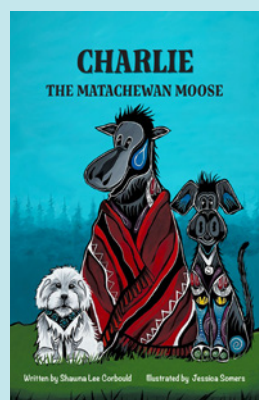
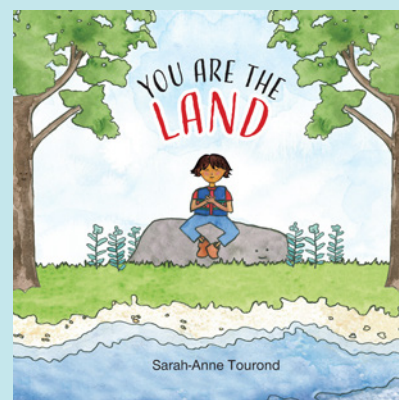
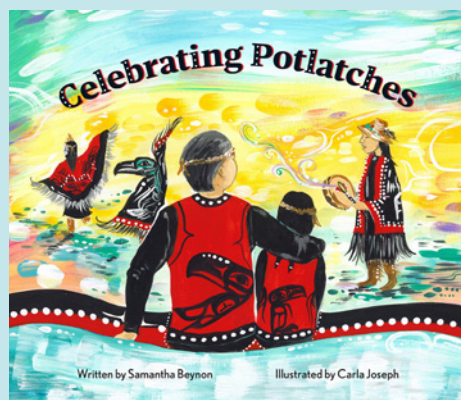
Strong Nations Publishing's newest release, *Celebrating Potlatches*, is a perfect example of how storytelling can bridge communities and generations. In this beautiful picture book, written by Samantha Beynon and illustrated by Carla Joseph, a grandfather shares the history of the 1885 Potlatch ban and the resilience of the communities who fought to keep their traditions alive. The book was inspired by the author's own grandfather, whose work as a historian and ethnographer has been foundational to our understanding of historical Potlatches. With free lesson plans that connect to early primary Social Studies curricula, *Celebrating Potlatches* is a must-have resource for this back-to-school season.



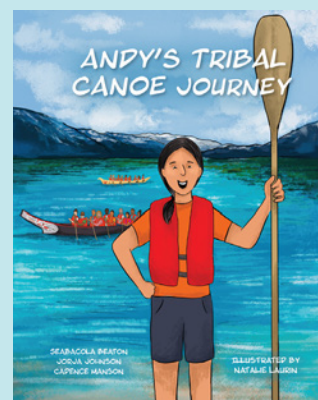
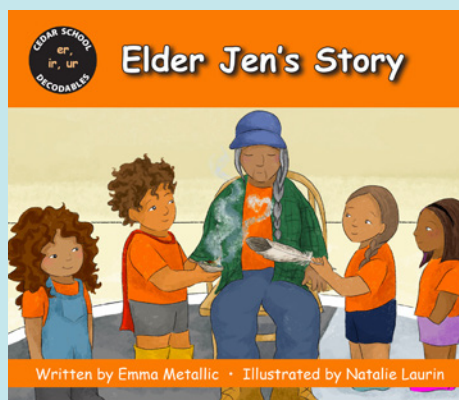
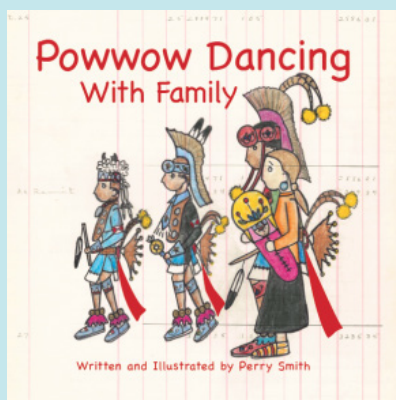
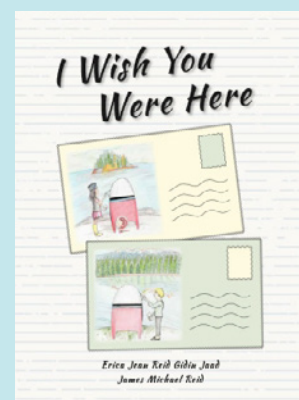
While Strong Nations has grown and expanded over the years, their dedication to providing diverse representation in children's literature remains constant. This mandate is foundational to the [Cedar School Decodables](#) series, which shares Mi'gmaq teachings and outdoor learning through plot-oriented decodable text. Created in partnership with Dyslexia Canada, educators and parents can be confident that this series is a valuable tool for supporting a structured literacy approach and creating a welcoming learning environment.


Looking ahead to the future of the company, Strong Nations is excited about their upcoming release, *Charlie the Matachewan Moose*. This illustrated children's chapter book is perfect for young readers who are transitioning between picture books and longer stories. *Charlie the Matachewan Moose* follows a young moose as he makes friends, finds community, and discovers his identity. When writing this book, the author recalled stories of a real moose named Charlie that had been passed down by her grandparents. With *Charlie the Matachewan Moose*, Shawna Lee Corbould is continuing a legacy of storytelling with the hope of sharing a message to readers that they are always enough.

Strong Nations Publishing is committed to publishing stories that will inspire, educate, and empower readers, and looks forward to continuing to uplift Indigenous storytelling for many years to come.




Celebrating Indigenous Storytelling





THE POWER OF MENTORSHIP: HOW GUIDANCE AND CONNECTION SHAPED MY TEACHING JOURNEY

BY HODA AHMED



Excited? Absolutely. Overwhelmed? Without a doubt. As a first-year Faculty of Education student, I was experiencing the full spectrum of emotions that come with balancing coursework and student teaching placements. The transition into teaching involved navigating a steep learning curve, and while I would soon realize that being a teacher involves so much more, my initial focus—like many new teachers—was on mastering the mechanics: lesson planning, classroom management, and family communication. That's when I discovered The Mentoree—a community that would not only guide me through these challenges but ultimately reshape the trajectory of my teaching career.

CONNECTING WITH A MENTOR

[The Mentoree](#) is an organization dedicated to connecting educators—whether early career or experienced—with mentors. When I first discovered it on Twitter (now X), the idea immediately resonated with me. I was eager to connect with someone who had relevant experiences and could help answer the many questions I had. What drew me in even further was the flexibility of the mentorship. I had the agency to shape our conversations, decide what to share, and set the frequency of our meetings. This was not a rigid program; it was a dynamic, mentee-driven relationship. And that was exactly what I needed.

The Mentoree provided a diverse database of mentor profiles, allowing educators to find a connection best suited with their interests and goals. Drawn to a shared passion for early childhood and special education, I reached out to a mentor named Teri who was a K-12 Special Education Consultant—and, coincidentally, also navigating her first experience teaching a university course.

Our conversations went beyond answering my questions. She valued my perspective as a university student, actively seeking my opinions on her course content and structure, as well as her assessment and evaluation practices. Our relationship embodied The Mentoree's core belief: "We all have something to teach, and we all have something to learn."

The Mentoree provided resources to help structure our initial conversations, allowing us to build a strong foundation for our relationship. Since Teri was based in Toronto and I am in Ottawa, we opted to meet via Skype. Her experience in a different school board gave me a broader perspective, and the physical and professional distance between us created a unique sense of openness. I felt comfortable to speak more candidly—perhaps even more so than if my mentor had been a direct colleague from my own school or school board.

USING MENTORSHIP TO SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL LEARNING, WELL-BEING, AND EFFICACY

When I first connected with Teri, our conversations focused on my immediate concerns as a pre-service teacher: How do I assess student learning? How can I effectively plan for units and lessons? How often—and in what ways—should I communicate with families? Teri guided me in finding answers as these questions arose, offering insights that helped me build confidence in my teaching.

Toward the end of our first year together, we had the opportunity to share our experience with other educators as guests on The Mentoree's [OnEdMentors](#) podcast. As the next school

year approached, Teri reached out and asked if I would be interested in carrying on with our mentorship. I was thrilled to reconnect, knowing that new questions and challenges awaited me as I entered my second year. This time, our relationship evolved—we became co-learners, engaging in deeper discussions about the broader issues facing educators.

At the end of my second year in the teacher education program, we decided to continue our conversations over the summer. This gave us the perfect opportunity to further explore some of those educational issues, leading to the creation of what we affectionately call our “Book Club for Two.”

Over the years, we have explored books related to equity (*Belonging Through a Culture of Dignity* by Floyd Cobb and John Krownapple; *The Skin We’re In* by Desmond Cole), early literacy (*Reading Above the Fray* by Julia Lindsey), and self-regulation (*Self-Reg Schools: A Handbook for Educators* by Stuart Shanker and Susan Hopkins; *The Interbrain* by Digby Tantam; *Intentional Neuroplasticity* by Lori Desautels). We carefully chose the books together, aligning with my interests and learning goals. This allowed us to dive deeper into topics that were both personally meaningful and professionally relevant. Each text sparked discussions and prompted new questions, deepening my understanding and encouraging me to reflect on my own teaching practices.

As our relationship continued, we encountered a new challenge—the COVID-19 pandemic. Transitioning from in-person to remote teaching was overwhelming, especially as an early career teacher. At times it was difficult to feel effective in the new online landscape, but one advantage I had was my already established virtual relationship with my mentor. Teri was also teaching virtually in an elementary school during that time, and our regular check-ins became a vital space for reflection, brainstorming, and support. In those moments, I truly realized the value of having a mentor who understood the challenges I faced, and who was navigating similar ones herself.

Teri’s ongoing learning about [Self-Reg](#) at the MEHRIT Centre (where she ultimately became a course facilitator), piqued my curiosity, inspiring me to explore the subject further. With her support, I took advantage of opportunities to learn more about the importance of self-regulation and its impact on both students and educators.

Our shared journey led us to many insightful conversations about mentorship as a self-regulating strategy that fosters educator well-being. Ultimately, this exploration culminated in an incredible opportunity: we developed and presented on this topic at the MEHRIT Centre’s Self-Reg Summer Symposium in 2023.

AN EVOLVING RELATIONSHIP

Five years on, our mentorship remains strong. At every stage of my career, through each transition and new challenge, Teri has continued to be a steady source of guidance and support. She remains available for as long as it feels right, offering me encouragement without pressure or obligation.

Could I have survived my first five years teaching alone? Probably. But would my journey have been as enriching?

Absolutely not. This mentorship not only provided me with much needed support, but also opened doors to new opportunities and deeper learning. While our questions, conversations, and interests changed over time, one thing remained constant—a safe space where our relationship could grow.

Our roles as mentor and mentee are ever evolving because The Mentoree is built on the belief that “every teacher deserves to experience mentorship on their own terms, at the times and in the ways they choose.” There are moments when teaching can still feel a little overwhelming, but having a supportive mentor helps to transform those challenges into opportunities for learning and growth. Thanks to this reciprocal relationship, my passion for teaching continues to flourish. If you’re curious, I encourage you to explore The Mentoree for yourself—you never know how it might shape your journey!



HODA AHMED has been teaching in Ontario for five years, in the Primary and Junior divisions. She is deeply passionate about mentorship and fostering meaningful connections with her students and colleagues.

TEACH MEDIA
KOREA
THE FORGOTTEN WAR

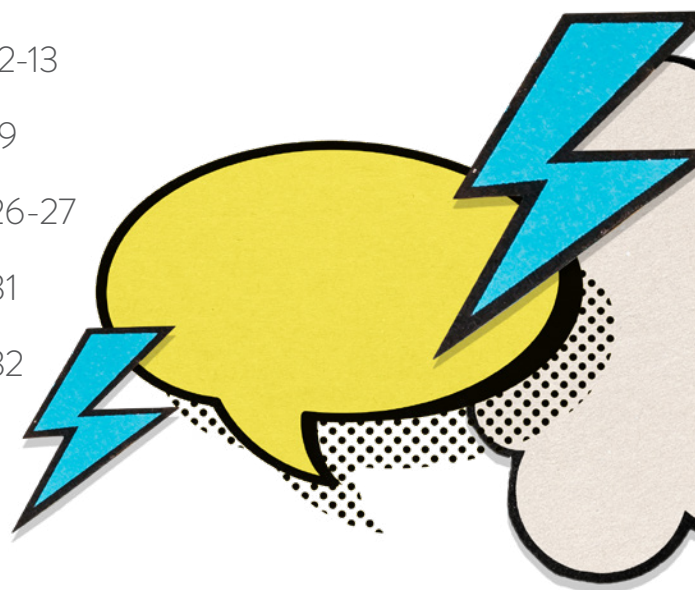
Often dubbed the “Forgotten War,” the Korean War is a pivotal chapter in history. This educational resource seeks to rekindle interest and awareness of Canada’s role in the conflict, offering a fresh perspective for educators and students.

WATCH NOW

Funded by the Government of Canada | **Canada**

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RIDING THROUGH HISTORY

THE RCMP FROM THEN TO NOW

The RCMP has played a significant role in Canadian history for over 150 years, and has contributed to shaping our country into what it is today.

Our new digital resource offers a deeper look into the organization's past, while encouraging students to consider what it could look like in the future. This resource can also serve as a great starting point for introducing students to the RCMP's impact on cultures and communities across Canada.



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