

Indigenous Literature and Books I Believe In for Your Classroom and Library

by

Richard Van Camp, author, storyteller (Tlicho Dene)

Chart of his recommended books, followed by a narrative/opinion of these books by Richard

| Suggested Reading for Middle and Senior Years Students | | |
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| Name of Book | Author | Grade Level/Audience |
| 1. Will's Garden | Lee Maracle (Theytus Books) | Grades 5 and up |
| 2. Speaking Our Truth: A Journey of Reconciliation | Monique Gray-Smith | Grades 5 and up |
| 3. Deadly Loyalties | Jennifer Storm | Grades 8 and up |
| 4. Inside Out | Terry Trueman | Grades 5 and up |
| 5. Twilight | Stephanie Meyer | Grades 8 and up |
| 6. The Absolutely True Diary of a Part Time Indian | Sherman Alexcie | Grades 8 and up |
| 7. Nobody Cries at Bingo | Dawn Dumont | Grades 10 and up |
| 8. Hard Love | Ellen Wittlinger | Grades 8 and up |
| 9. The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Time | Mark Haddon | No grade specified by Richard |
| 10. Touching Spirit Bear (multiple copies in the division system) | Ben Mikaelson | Grades 7 and up |
| 11. Holes | Louis Sachar | Grades 5 and up |
| 12. Little Voice | Ruby Slipperjack | Grades 6 and up |
| 13. Tatsea | Armin Wiebe | Grades 9 and up |
| 14. Running the Bases | Paul Kropp | Grades 9 and up |
| 15. Catcher in the Rye | J.D. Salinger | Grades 10 and up |

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| 16. Skraelings: Clashes in the Old Arctic | Rachel Qitsualik-Tinsley and Seah Qitsualik-Tinsley | Grades 9 and up |
| 17. Monster | Walter Dean Myers | Grades 10 and up |
| 18. The Outsiders | S.E. Hinton | Grades 7 and up |
| 19. The Night Wanderer (Annick Press) | Drew Hayden Taylor | Grades 7 and up |
| 20. Tomboy Survival Guide | Ivan Coyote | Grades 11 and up |
| 21. The Way of Thorn and Thunder: The Kynship Chronicles | Daniel Heath Justice | Grades 10 and up |
| Suggested Reading for Children (elementary students) | | |
| Title/Theme | Author | Grade Level/Audience |
| 1. The Next Place (Death) | Warren Handson | Elementary |
| 2. The Blue Roses (Death) | Linda Boyden | Elementary |
| 3. The Red Tree (Depression) | Shaun Tan | Elementary |
| 4. The Rabbits (Colonization) | John Marsden | Elementary or High School |
| 5. Stories of the Road Allowance People (Métis pride & identity) | Mariah Campbell | Grades 8 and up |
| 6. Thunder Through my Veins (Métis pride & identity) | Gregory Scofield | Grades 8 and up |
| 7. Li Minoush (Metis pride & identity) | Bonnie Murray | Elementary |
| 8. The Métis Alphabet Book | Joseph Jean Fauchon | Elementary |
| Children's Books: | | |
| Title/Theme | Author | Grade Level/Audience |
| 1. She-She-etko (Residential schools) | Nicola Campbell | Grades 5 and up |
| 2. The Secret of the Dance (BC Potlatch) | Andrea Spalding | Grades 5 and Up |
| 3. This Land is My Land | George Littlechild | Grades 5 and up |
| 4. The Moccasins | Earl Einarson (Theytus) | Grades 4 and up |

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| 5. Mwakwa: Talks to the Loon | Dale Auger (Heritage House Publishing) | Grades 4 and up |
| 6. The Art of Dale Auger (coffee table book) | Heritage House Publishing | Grades 4 and up |
| 7. Yellow Line | Sylvia Olson (Orca Books) | Grades 7 and up |
| 8. The Curse of the Shaman | Michael Kusagak | Grades 5 and up |
| 9. Watishka Warrior: A Story of Hockey, the Reserve & Hope | Daniel Auger (Eshchia Books) | Grades 8 and up |
| 10. Series: The Land is Our Storybook 'Come and Learn with Me' and 'Living Stories' | Mindy Willett & Tessa Machintosh | Grades 4 and up |
| 11. How the Fox Got his Crossed Legs (Tlicho Nation) | Virginia Football | Grades 7 and up |
| 12. All the books from the South Slave Divisional Board of Education (Seven Sacred Teachings by David Bouchard and Kiwiwin: Heading Home by Pi Kennedy in Cree) | | Grades 4 and up |
| 13. When We Were Alone | David A. Robertson and Julie Flett | (grades 3 and up) |

Young Adults - Anthologies that you can use in your classroom

Please see Richard's notes on page 12 about these anthologies- they deal with hard-hitting and timely issues facing high school students today – not necessarily Indigenous literature

| Title/Theme | Author/Editor | Grade Level/Audience |
|---|--|-----------------------------|
| 1. The Worst Years of Your Life | Edited by Mark Jude Pairer | Teens |
| 2. Initiations: A Selection of Young Native Writings | Edited by Marilyn Dumont | Teens |
| 3. Moccasin Thunder (Note: only 1 Canadian story in this anthology) | Edited by Lori Mari Carlson | Teens |
| 4. Dark Times (Note: please read over Richard's review of the stories prior to classroom use) | Edited by Ann Walsh | Teens |
| 5. CLI-FI: Canadian Tales of Climate Change | Edited by Bruce Meyer, published by Exile Editions | |

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| 6. Love Beyond Body, Space & Time: An Indigenous LGBT Sci-Fi Anthology | Edited by Hope Nicholson, Bedside Press | |
| 7. Impact: Colonialism in Canada | Edited by Warren Cariou, Katherena Vermette, Niigan James Sinclair (published by Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre, Ltd) | |
| 8. The Malahat Review: Indigenous Perspectives (Winter, 2016 Edition. Issue number 197) | | |
| 9. Mitêwâcimowina : Indigenous Science Fiction and Speculative Storytelling | Edited by Neal McLeod, published by Theytus Books | |
| 10. Coming Home: Stories from the NorthWest Territories | Published by Enfield & Wizenty | |
| 11. KWE: Standing With Our Sisters | Edited by Joseph Boyden published by Penguin Books | |
| 12. Moonshot: The Indigenous Comics Collection | Edited by Hope Nicholson (published by AH Comics) | |
| 13. Moonshot II and III: The Indigenous Comics Collection | Edited by Andy Stanleigh (published by AH Comics) | |
| 14. Strength and Struggle: Perspectives from First Nations, Inuit and Metis People in Canada | Edited by Rachel A. Mishenene and Dr. Pamela Rose Toulouse, published by McGraw Hill-Ryerson | |
| Graphic Novels for Junior and Senior High School | | |
| Title/Theme | Author | Grade Level/Audience |
| 1. Essex County (Vol. 1) Tales from the Farm (Canadian) | Jeff Lemire | Grades 8 and up |
| 2. Blankets | Craig Davidson | |
| 3. Potential (very graphic imagery)-transgender | Arial Schrag | Counselors/teachers |
| 4. Water Baby | Ross Campbell | Grades 11 and up |
| 5. Maus (Holocaust) | Art Spiegelman | Grades 10 and up |

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| 6. "Same Difference" – in Same Difference and Other Stories (Richard recommends the short story 'Same Difference' in this series; it is published with more mature material) | Derek Kirk Kim | High School |
| 7. Swallow Me Whole (mental illness) | Nate Powell | Grades 11 and up |
| 8. Make 5 Wishes (Volume 1 and 2) – for young women/self-esteem | Avril Lavigne (Ballantyne books) | Grades 5 and up |
| 9. Girlfriend (Slight of Hand...and Heart) | Avril Lavigne (House of Parlance) | Grades 5 and up |
| 10. Darkness Calls (on suicide prevention) | Steve Sanderson (Healthy Aboriginal Network) | Grades 6 and u0 |
| 11. Flight of the Hummingbird | Michael Nicoll Yahgulanaas (Indigenous graphic novelist) | |
| 12. Red: A Haida Manga | Michael Nicoll Yahgulanaas | |
| 13. Stories of Our People/Lii zistwayr di la naasyoon di Michif | Edited by Norman Fleury et al (Gabriel Dumont Institute) | Grades 8 and up |
| Poetry | | |
| 1. This is a small northern town | Rosanna Deerchild (The Muses Company) | |
| 2. Stone the Crow | Chris Bose (Kegedonce Press) | |
| 3. Everything Gregory Scofield, Duncan Mercredit, Kateri Akiwenzie Damm and Louise Halfe | | |
| Zombie Literature | | |
| "I love zombies even though they're trying to eat me and you and what we could have been" | | |
| By Richard Van Camp | | |
| Title/Theme | Author | Grade Level/Audience |
| 1. The Walking Dead (Graphic Novel) | Robert Kirkman (Image Comics) | Grades 10 and up |
| 2. Simon Dark (Graphic Novel) | Steve Niles (DC Comics) | Grades 10 and up |

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| 3. Zomnibus – Graphic Novel (IDW Publishing) | | Grades 10 and up |
| 4. World War Z (novel) | Max Brooks | Grades 12 and up |
| 5. Monster Island | David Wellington (Running Press) | -- |

Indigenous Literature and Books I Believe In for Your Classroom and Library

by

Richard Van Camp, author, storyteller (Dogrib/Tlicho Dene)

Great news, everyone! 2020 is the year that it is now impossible to keep up with all the great Indigenous Literature being published right now by mainstream publishers and the eight Indigenous publishers in Canada (Theytus Books, Pemmican Publications, The Gabriel Dumont Institute, The Healthy Aboriginal Network, Highwater Press, Them Days Publishing, Inhabit Media—and this does not include band councils and school districts that are now publishing their own text books and resources). This sharing will address the importance of including Indigenous and non-Indigenous children’s, graphic novels and Young Adult literature in the curriculum that you can use in any classroom where you have Indigenous students and non-Indigenous students who wish to learn more about Indigenous culture K through 12 in the genres of children’s literature, Young Adult literature and the graphic novel.

What distinguishes works by Indigenous authors in their writing is simple: we are living in a time right now where members of many Indigenous communities are starting to publish their poetry, prose, illustrated works and plays, etc. for the very first time in English. With this comes the braiding of the oral tradition and Indigenous languages and perspective with the written word. I did not know that when I published my first novel, *The Lesser Blessed*, that I would be the first member of the Dogrib or Tlicho First Nations to publish a novel in print. What an honour! And we have only to see more of this happening in our future!

In this paper, I’d like to share with you 21 of my favourite Young Adult novels, and my numerous favourite graphic novels that I hope you consider teaching and one illustrated short story that I consider Young Adult literature, and I will share with you the titles of several children’s books that I adore. As well, I’d like to review a dozen or so anthologies that are by Indigenous authors writing specifically for the teen audience, and I’d like to review another two anthologies that have short stories that are contemporary because I am continually asked to suggest short stories that can be taught in high school English courses. If you’ve never heard of some of these, I’m happy, because this means you’ve got a lot of great reading ahead of you.

Here are my favourite picks of Young Adult novels written by Indigenous and Non-Indigenous authors that I adore for all students:

- 1) **Will's Garden** by Lee Maracle (Theytus Books). What I love most about this novel is the author invites you into Will's Sto:loh home and invites you to visit each room at your leisure. You get to hear the hopes, dreams, laughter and history of Will's family expressed in the laugh and worry lines on the faces of his parents, aunts, uncles, brothers, cousins, nephews, nieces and ancestors. I can't remember a family in any book that I felt so privileged to spend time with as Will's. I love the love stories within this 194 page novel. Very romantic. I have meditated non-stop on the insight one of the men provides in this novel on what sacrifices parents have to make when they do have children and how lovers can become strangers when they become parents. I think this is Lee's finest work yet in terms of her novels; I think her short story "The Canoe" is my favourite of her short stories, and that's reviewed a few pages from now. **(Grades 5 and up)**

- 2) **Deadly Loyalties** by Jennifer Storm. Blaise, a young Native girl in Manitoba, witnesses the death of her best friend and reluctantly enters a Native gang after running away from home. Absolutely an incredible debut from one of our most promising Indigenous authors in Canada! **(Grades 8 and up)**

- 3) **Inside Out** by Terry Trueman. What a brilliant premise for a short novel: a young boy with schizophrenia is waiting for his mother one day at the regular diner when it is held up by two brothers the same age as he is. Everything goes wrong. What was supposed to be a simple hold up, turns into a hostage situation. The young boy who is waiting for his mom needs his pill. The voices that haunt him start to come back and the boys holding up the diner start to realize that this boy is mentally ill. My Musqueam students, who are aged 13 to 21 loved this book and, I felt, it raised an awareness towards mental illness that led to several great discussions. **(Grades 5 and up)**

- 4) **Twilight** by Stephanie Meyer. What can I say? Anything that gets the whole world reading and getting our youth to feel connected to an international dialogue of Bella and Edward's love story is fine by me. Personally, I loved reading this story! **(Grades 8 and up)**

- 5) **The Absolutely True Diary of a Part Time Indian** by Sherman Alexie (an illustrated novel with art by Ellen Forney). By far, Sherman's finest novel yet! What a great story: a young and budding cartoonist leaves his home, family and friend behind on the Spokane Indian Reservation to attend an all-white high school. What makes this novel so great is the honesty and heartbreak that comes with the realization that we all have to leave home in order to grow. **(Grades 7 and up)**

- 6) **Nobody Cries at Bingo** by Dawn Dumont. If you want to know what it was like growing up Indigenous in the 80's this is YOUR book! Very, very funny. You'll be giggling, smirking, laughing and enjoying yourself on every single page. A great read for everyone. **(Grades 10 and up)**

- 7) **Speaking Our Truth: A Journey to Reconciliation** by Monique Gray Smith. If you are looking for the one book every classroom, library and home should have on Reconciliation, this is it. Bravo to Orca Books and Monique Gray Smith on their treasure of resources and action points that everyone can take on the path to Reconciliation together.

- 8) **Hard Love** by Ellen Wittlinger. A zine creator, John, comes to terms with why he's so distanced from his emotions and friends and all relationships when he meets, Marisol, a lesbian zine creator who becomes his best friend. I was both surprised by the emotion conveyed here and the authenticity of voice from the author. Ellen Wittlinger nailed teen boy angst to a T! **(Grades 8 and up)**

9) **The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Time** by Mark Haddon. Premise: a young boy with autism comes home to discover that his dog has been murdered. The plot unfolds as he sets out to solve this mystery. I wept like a man baby as I read the last line of this novel in the Edmonton International Airport.

10) **Touching Spirit Bear** by Ben Mikaelson. After half killing a younger boy, Cole Mathews agrees to spending one year in complete isolation on a remote Alaskan island as part of his sentencing circle as part of his punishment. While there he is mauled half to death by himself by a mysterious white bear. I had never read a book where the main character is almost killed in chapter 8 and you can't wait to see how he or she will recover. Wow! **(Grades 7 and up)**

11) **Holes** by Louis Sachar. "Is that the book about the juvenile delinquents?" I was asked the other day as I picked up a class set for my Musqueam Youth Project students, aged 13-21. "Yes," I answered. "And it's about so much more. It's funny, it's got the tragi-comedy thing happening and it's such a clever story about Stanley Yelnats serving a sentence he does not deserve and trying to overcome a family curse." It's just brilliant! I haven't seen the movie adaptation and I don't think I need to, but what a book! **(Grades 5 and up)**

12) **Little Voice** by Ruby Slipperjack. What a joy to read! The story follows "Ray", a young Ojibwa woman growing up in Ontario from the summer of 1978 to the summer of 1982. Because Ray has green eyes, she is bullied and ostracized in her community. This changes when her grandmother, a midwife, takes her out on the land in her canoe and they portage and camp and find adventures together as Ray learns more about what it means to be a human being. As in all of Ruby's novels, I felt innocent reading it. She brought me back to the bush, and she reminded me just how rich our traditional people are on the land and with each other. **(Grades 6 and up)**

13) **Tatsea** by Armin Wiebe. A love story and an adventure story all rolled up into one! Author, Armin Wiebe, has created a one of a kind classic northern story set in the 1760s about a man, Ikotsali, with frog medicine power who is separated from Tatsea, the woman he loves after a raiding party separates them. Not only does Ikotsali have to save his wife, he has to protect their baby. This story is epic! **(Grades 9 and up)**.

14) **Running the Bases** by Paul Kropp. After continuously striking out with the opposite sex in his school, Alan Macklin hires Maggie McPherson to help him get the insight into a woman's mind. A very clever love story. **(Grades 9 and up)**

15) **Catcher in the Rye** by J.D. Salinger. A classic for a reason! **(Grades 10 and up)**

16) **Skraelings** by Rachel Qitsualik-Tinsley and Sean Qitsualik-Tinsley. If you want the Inuit perspective on first contact, this will haunt you forever. Promise.

17) **Monster** by Walter Dean Myers. The back jacket says it all: "Steve Harmon's Black. He's in Jail, Maybe Forever. He's on trial for murder. And he's sixteen years old." Why this book is so important is it is written as a screenplay by Steve Harmon and it captures the pure terror of, "Oh My God, how did I get myself here?". What a compelling read. **(Grades 10 and up)**

18) **The Outsiders** by SE Hinton. If your teen students don't know this novel, stop, drop and roll and get this onto your syllabus pronto! **(Grades 7 and up)**

19) **The Night Wanderer** by Drew Hayden Taylor. I'm going to give this book a larger review because it deserves a lot of discussion: **(Grades 7 and up)**

Drew Hayden Taylor's novel, *The Night Wanderer* (Annick Press):

Drew Hayden's new novel, *The Night Wanderer*, is a joy to read and, I believe, Mr. Taylor's finest writing yet.

It's always a joy in Indigenous literature when we are able to follow the daily lives of an Indigenous family. Craig Lesley let us follow Jack and Danny Kachiah, a Nez Perce father and son team, in his wonderful series, *River Song* and *Winter Kill*, and Lee Maracle allowed us to follow Will and his family in the Sto:loh epic, *Will's Garden*. Richard Wagamese let us follow the Wolfchild and Hartley families as they braided their lives together in his fantastic novel, *Dream Wheels*, so I was thrilled to follow an Ojibwa family around still recovering from the separation and divorce of Tiffany Hunter's parents, Keith and Claudia, as well as the budding relationship between Tiffany and her first real boyfriend, Tony B.

The Night Wanderer takes place on the Otter Lake First Nations Reserve in Ontario—where the author now lives. The novel opens with Tiffany's father, Keith, deciding to make extra cash for the family by renting out a guest suite in their house. What they don't know is their first guest, Pierre L'Errant, is Ojibwa and a vampire.

What sounds like a plot that could turn into a sitcom or campy is actually the opposite. Annick Press calls the novel "a mesmerizing blend of coming-of-age novel and pulse-pounding thriller", and I agree. This could be marketed as Young Adult literature and it could be found in the fiction aisle in any bookstore; it's open to academic interpretation and it's also a fun read. I think it's all of this, and that's a great compliment to our author.

The reason I say that this is Drew's finest writing is Drew once told me that he never considered himself a prose writer a few years ago. I disagreed strongly at the time after reading his brilliant short story, "A Blurry Image on the Six O'Clock News" in the anthology, *Our Story*, published by Doubleday. It was that story that gave me a glimpse of Drew Taylor's gift of mastering any genre he puts his mind to. His characterization throughout *The Night Wanderer* is completely compelling. The writing is spectacular in the hunting scenes and the dialogue hits home every time. His themes of family, home, transformation and inheritance give this story a heartbeat that everyone who reads it will connect with. I won't give the most shocking scene away, but I will say that the true horror of the novel comes not from the vampire but from Tiffany herself in the climax of the story.

I do have three editorial concerns about the novel: I could have used more of the Ojibwa language throughout the interplay between characters—especially coming from Pierre L'errant and Granny Ruth. I would have loved to read an Ojibwa dialogue between Granny and Pierre in Ojibwa—without English interpretation—especially in that last scene, which just blew me away with its tenderness. I could have also used more descriptions of the Hunter household (Are there still pictures of Claudia in the house? Where did all the family pictures go?), and that last line of the novel should be in a paragraph of its own—but these are editorial mistakes. The editors should have pushed Drew to work harder here.

But, all in all, *The Night Wanderer* is a gem of a novel and a very important book for Indigenous, Canadian and world indigenous literature because it's fun, contemporary, action packed and full of mercy. Pierre L'Errant could have torn the throats out of the entire Hunter family, two bullies (who are without mercy themselves) and a reserve of 1,100 or so. Instead, what we leave the novel with is a wiser Tiffany Hunter and a vampire with a peace that only home can bring.

I'd give this novel a 5 out of 5. It's just brilliant!

20) **Tomboy Survival Guide** by Ivan Coyote. Ivan Coyote has been saving lives for decades now bringing issues of gender to the forefront of many courageous conversations with families and in classrooms. Everyone should be reading Ivan Coyote. Period.

21) **The Way of Thorn and Thunder: The Kynship Chronicles** by Daniel Heath Justice (Kegedonce Press). This is a fantastic fantasy epic written by a member of the Cherokee Nation. Any grade nine's who love Harry Potter or The Hobbit will adore Tarsa, the main character, as she leads her people in a battle for her homelands against many foes.

Children's Literature

Children's books for your elementary students

Can I just say how in awe I am of how children's literature is tackling the most difficult subjects out there? Take two children's books that explain death to children. We have the completely comforting The Next Place by Warren Handson (Waldman House Press) or the astonishing The Blue Roses by Linda Boyden, illustrated by Amy Cordova (Lee & Low Books). Simply Read Books' Shaun Tan's The Red Tree portrays depression and if you want to convey the terror of colonization, why not read The Rabbits by John Marsden, illustrated by Shaun Tan. Horrifying and unforgettable!

If you have older Metis students in **grades 8 and up**, may I suggest Stories of the Road Allowance People by Mariah Campbell and Thunder Through My Veins, a biography by Gregory Scofield and, for children, the Michif classic, Li Minoush, by Bonnie Murray, illustrated by Sheldon Dawson and translated by Rita Flamand and The Metis Alphabet Book by Joseph Jean Fauchon. All of these books are great catalysts for promoting Metis pride and identity, and there are 60,000 self-identifying Metis in the province of BC alone!

Here are children's books written by Indigenous authors that I am in awe of:

- 1) **She-she-etko** by Nicola Campbell (Groundwood books). This children's book deals with She-she-etko as she prepares herself to go to residential school. Before the cattle truck comes to pick up the children, She-she-etko takes the time to remember her heartland and the seasons she'll return to. **(Grades 5 and up)**
- 2) **The Secret of the Dance** by Andrea Spalding (Orca Book Publishers). This is a historical account of Elder Alfred Scow's memory of the banning of the traditional Potlach dance and how his family and relations defied the government in 1935. I like this book because it speaks to times we have to all defy the government to stand for what we believe to know is true and important for all future generations. **(Grades 5 and up)**
- 3) **This Land is My Land** by George Littlechild (Childrens Book Press). George Littlechild uses the children's book as a testimony to showcase history and dignity to Indigenous people in Canada with pride and beauty. **(Grades 5 and up)**
- 4) **The Moccasins** by Earl Einarson (Theytus Books). What a gorgeous book honouring the love of foster parents and how by honouring a child's heritage you empower them for the rest of their lives, especially when those children grow up and have children of their own. **(Grades 4 and up)**
- 5) **Mwakwa: Talks to the Loon** by Dale Auger (Heritage House Publishing). This gorgeously illustrated and told story by the late and great Dale Auger tells the story about not taking your gifts for granted. What a timeless book, a modern day fairy tale and teaching story all wrapped up into one. Also, please purchase his coffee table book: **The Art of Dale Auger (Heritage House Publishing)**. It's breathtaking and completely inspiring for any aspiring artists. **(Grades 4 and up)**

- 6) **Yellow Line** by Sylvia Olson (Orca Book Publishers). If you want a short novel about reverse racism and a love story all wrapped into one, please check this unforgettable story out of love reaching across borders in a series designed for reluctant readers. I loved this book. **(Grades 7 and up)**
- 7) **The Curse of the Shaman** by Michael Kusagak. What a great book set in the barren lands of Canada's Nunavut. This is the story of banishment, medicine power, vengeful spirits, a longing for love and redemption. Michael Kusagak digs deep into Inuit tradition and pulls out a tale that should be a national treasure. **(Grades 6 and up)**
- 8) **Watishka Warrior: A Story of Hockey, the Reserve & Hope** by Daniel Auger (Eshchia Books). The title says it all: a junior hockey team looking for a win, a lurking gang in the background and a teacher who cares with all her heart for her community's future. **(Grades 8 and up)**

Also! Please check out Mindy Willett and Tessa Machintosh's series for **grades 4 and up**: "The Land is Our Storybook" **Come and Learn With Me** (honouring the Tlicho People) told by Therese Zoe and Philip Zoe, **Living Stories** (honouring the Dene Yatie(formerly South Slavey) with Sheyenne Jumbo. This is an ongoing series and so much care goes into creating every single one. Bravo, Mindy and Tessa and the storytellers you work with!

- 9) The books that Theytus Books is producing with the Tlicho Nation are gorgeous: **How the Fox Got His Crossed Legs** by Virginia Football/ illustrated by James Wedzin (translated by Rosa Mantla & Mary Siemens) as well as Yamozha and His Beaver Wife as told by Vital Thomas/Illustrated by Archie Beaulieu and translated by Mary Siemens. These are gorgeous books with CDs in the back for people just like me who are learning their language—the Tlicho language—as fast as they can. **(Grades 7 and up)**
- 10) All of the books from the South Slave Divisional Board of Education. Check out Dave Bouchard and Dr. Joseph Martin's **Seven Sacred Teachings** in English and South Slavey as well as Kiwiwin: **Heading Home** by Pi Kennedy in Cree. **(Grades 4 and up)**
- 11) **When We Were Alone** by David A. Robertson and Julie Flett **(grades 3 and up)**. This book is the story of so many families alive today whose parents went to Residential Schools. This children's book is a testimony to the grace, dignity and perseverance of Indigenous people and the human spirit.

For our early childhood educators, may I please invite all of you to check out **Beans** and **Messy Me** by Naturally Baby? Edmonton's dream team of Speech-Language pathologists, Megan Stock and Nicole Diduck, have created gorgeous books that introduce babies to board books that are 3 D with doors and windows that open that celebrate every baby's first speech sounds "M" and "B". For more information, please check out www.naturallybaby.com

19 Anthologies you can use in your classroom

One thing I'm continuously asked when I give workshops recommending Indigenous literature for teens is, "Short stories. Tell us about short stories. We can photocopy short stories. Our kids love short stories!"

So, I'd like to review and recommend short stories for your students from four anthologies: The Worst Years of Your Life edited by Mark Jude Pairier for Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, Initiations: A Selection of Young Native Writings, edited by Marilyn Dumont for Theytus Books, and Moccasin Thunder, edited by Lori Mari Carlson for HarperCollins and Dark Times, edited by Ann Walsh for Ronsdale Press. The first two anthologies, The Worst Years of Your Life and Dark Times, have nothing to do with Indigenous literature (except for Lee Maracle's unforgettable short story "The Canoe" in Dark Times), but I want to review both anthologies because they deal with hard-hitting and timely issues facing high school students today—and isn't that what all young readers want—to see, feel, understand and process how other voices relate to the world through the same perspective?

If I ever teach a course on Young Adult literature, this will be one of the required texts. In The Worst Years of Your Life, published by Simon & Schuster Paperbacks. Mark Jude Pairier has gathered 20 stories about adolescence. *The Worst Years of Your Life* is a great read—well, most of it...I think the main problem was: who was the target audience for this collection—adults looking back on their teen years or to write something scandalous for teens to read and feel more adult?

Julie Orringer's "Note to Sixth Grade Self" is brilliant. They say that when it comes to bullying, boys use fists and girls use words. This story proves it! This is a warning story about how cruel girls can be to each other in school and the wisdom that can only be gained through time, and I love-LOVE-the ending of this story!

Chris Adrian's story "A Child's Book of Sickness and Death" should be turned into a novel. It works as a short story about a narrator with a chronic condition due to her own premature birth in the children's hospital, and I didn't want it to end. This writer and this story are brilliant!

Kevin Canty's "Pretty Judy" is dripping with guilt as the narrator has sex with another teen who's mentally delayed but has the body of a woman. Um, yeah. Maybe not high school safe, but certainly and completely engaging.

"A Real Doll" by A.M. Homes is disturbing and, again, I wish the editor had worked the author harder because I want to understand the ending. I've reread it several times and it just doesn't make sense. Be warned: this story is about sex with Barbie dolls and their heads. Disturbing content! (Another maybe on the "high school no no" list.)

Elizabeth Stuckey-French shares a dark and terribly terrific story from a psychotic teen who tries to drown a young girl after the young girl tries to drown her in "Junior" and the voice in this story is completely convincing. This may be a great complimentary female narrator story after reading "Male Teen Rage" novels like Touching Spirit Bear, Project X and Right Behind You.

The same with Stacey Richler's "The Beauty Treatment." The story opens up with the main character's face being slashed open by a "frenemy" and the story opens up to reveal a world of rules and conduct as a teen in high school today. Whoah!

I'm always suspicious of anthologies with work by the editor included but Mark's story, "Thunderbird" is one of the best in the collection: it's about homosexuality and the confusion of "am I or aren't I"? and it's so well done. He's nailed the voice of an adolescent and the ending is perfect.

There were a few stories in here that, in my opinion, didn't belong in the collection: Malinda McCollum's "Good Monks" could have been told by a 30 year old. I wasn't convinced this was YA and was actually insulted that this story was taking the space of what could have been another great adolescent story. Jennifer Egan's story, "Sisters of the Moon" should have been more flushed out. I still don't get it. Same with George Saunders "Bohemians." This wasn't YA magic to me. It felt more like a memoir and YA, to me, is immediate, right now, nothing more than doing the best you have with what you've got before you right now. Not looking back with wisdom (unless you can pull it off like Julie Orringer). This is why my eyes glazed over while reading John Barth's "Lost in the Funhouse." Um, hello—memoir, and what was the point?

I was also disappointed with Jim Shepard's "Spending the Night with the Poor" because I didn't realize the narrator was supposed to be a girl until I was halfway through the story. Sorry, Jim. I love your work (especially your novel, Project X!) but the editor needed to work you a lot harder on the editing. I also could not understand "A Poetics for Bullies" by Stanley Elkin. It's about a bully but that's about it for me for getting it. The title threw me off and I gave up trying to understand what was going on a few pages in.

All in all, this was a great collection. I know I'm a tough ass but I love great YA. I'd give **The Worst Years of Your Life** 3 out of 5. Mark should have worked several of the authors a lot harder, and I wish he would have chosen more YA stories with voice and the immediate terror that comes with the territory of youth and hormones. This is where the next anthology comes in because it does all of this and it does it all so well.

Dark Times is an intriguing anthology: there are 13 short stories in here that are targeted at the Young Adult audience and this anthology deals specifically with loss. Unlike **The Worst Years of Your Life**, this is an anthology that can be in any classroom grades 7 or up because there is no gratuitous sex, drug use, violence or content. These are stories about youth dealing with devastation and I have to applaud Ronsdale Press for taking a chance on an anthology that isn't up and happy. The stories in here are timeless and important and great vehicles in any classroom to promote discussion about "Where do youth today put their grief?"

"Snow Angel" by Carolyn Pogue is important because it deals with a family who adopts a girl, Elizabeth Ann, who has FAS and commits suicide in Yellowknife. Sad, yes, but it's how the family copes together that gets a huge thumbs up from me. This story is gorgeous!

In Lee Maracle's "The Canoe" (and can I just say that this is my all time favourite short story of Lee's?) a young narrator has to learn how to be his father's son and his father has to learn to be a dad after they both lose the matriarch and lighthouse for their family.

Ann Walsh does a great job of illuminating what it's like to lose a grandmother to Alzheimer's Disease from a granddaughter's perspective in "All is Calm."

"Kick" by Betty Jane Hegerat is probably one of my favourite in the collection because the story is about how a victim of bullying copes with the confusion after the school bully, Will, dies suddenly in a vehicle accident with his family. I like this story because the author nails the confusion that comes with grief and mourning so perfectly at the end.

"Sisters" by Sarah Ellis is about the magic of adopting elders in your life but it's also about learning about death for the very first time. What a joy to read!

"Explaining Andrew" by Gina Rozon is terrifying. The narrator has a brother with schizophrenia and it's keeping her family hostage. There are no easy answers in this entire collection and this story nails how unfair life can be when a family member is lost to mental illness and the devastation it can bring—on all fronts.

"Cold Snap" by Diana Aspin is told from Cassie's point of view. She discovers, to her horror, that her father is having an affair with a girl who could very well be her age. Ugh!

"the sign for heaven" by Carrie Mac is just so brutally sad it shaved five years off of my life. The story is about how our narrator, Della, questions the existence of God after she loses her deaf sister to pneumonia. Double ugh!

"A Few Words for My Brother" by Alison Lohans is a testament to the confusion of having an adopted family member, Devon, with FAS who critically injures a friend and eternally wounds a sister after stealing a vehicle. The narrator, Hailey, tries to find peace with anything through the grief of it all and it's just so sad!!

"Dear Family--" by Donna Gamache is about the grief that comes after a mother abandons her family. Melinda, our narrator, travels to Vancouver to find out why her mother left so she can move on in her life as an emerging woman.

"Dreams in a Pizza Box" by Libby Kennedy is a family's story of two sisters and a mother who live in their car after getting evicted from their home and the terror of not having a home.

"Hang On" by Patricia McCowan is about Kevin and how he tries to find his way through the grief of Randy, his best friend, getting struck by a train right in front of him.

"Balance Restored" by Jessie May Keller is about Alexandra coming to terms with the grief of losing Jake, her boyfriend, to a vehicle accident and the guilt that comes with trying to move on.

I like what Ann Walsh says about the wish for all readers for this very important collection: "Perhaps this book will help others find their way out of the dark times and into the sunlight." This anthology is a 5 out of 5 because it deals with the real stuff facing youth today. These stories are tough to read but elegantly told. Very powerful stuff!

One anthology that is Indigenous specific in authorship and readership is **Initiations: A Selection of Young Native Writings**, edited by Marilyn Dumont, published by Theytus Books.

The greatest joy I had while reading this collection of 21 short stories written by Indigenous youth (14-18 and 19-29) was discovering a short story written by Tony Liske, a member of my nation, the Tlicho First Nations, in his story "Good Child." Let me tell you what happened when I read this story. I saw the names of places I knew on the map. I saw my mother's language in print. I could read our language in English and I felt pride bloom inside of me! What a great story about the signing of Treaty 11. I was so proud of this author and I just know that this is what each Indigenous student you have must feel when he or she gets to read stories written by members of their nation. I was beaming and still am about this story!

I'm a little confused by this collection as many of the stories are very advanced for most high schoolers. Would I teach this to my Musqueam students? Probably not in its entirety as this garden of 21 short stories written by Indigenous youth is focused with some very powerful stories dealing with hard issues facing Indigenous people today.

We have five stories dealing with Residential School: "Erased" by Kelsea Northrop Donovan; "Land Warmed by the Sun" by Denise Marie Williams; "My Lesson" by Caitlyn Therrien; "A Day of Healing" by Nicholas Printup and a love story that will break your heart: "Wild Flowers" by Kerissa M. Dickie.

We also have stories about social resistance: "The Power of One and All" by Kyle G. Wilson. This story is about the banning of the potlatch and how the Gitksan resisted it. There's "Occupied" by Joe Restoule General. It's about the Six Nations Douglas Creek occupation and resistance told from the point of view of a young father taking his daughter for a walk by the barricades. I think this short story would be excellent in getting students to read about the Douglas Creek occupation and to find out the history behind this occupation and resistance. There's "Across the Barricade" by Alicia Elliott and this story is told from the point of views of both the Indigenous and non-Indigenous perspectives of the Caledonia barricades in Six Nations territory.

There's an honouring of the Frog Lake Massacre in Amanda Wapass-Griffin's "Silence Speaks a Thousand Words" and an honouring of the Blackfoot leader, Chief Crowfoot, as he went to sign the treaty for his people and their future generations. Sable Sweetgrass shares an incredible story of the matrilineal lineage honoured by wearing a dress at her graduation in her story "Maternal Ties." "Election Day" by Cory Cappel is a hilarious account of how crazy elections can become on reserves and this is a writer to watch! As well, Sara General's "Going the Distance" is about a birthday present that gives rise to research and outrage by the character's protagonist. What a writer!

All of these stories can be used in a classroom and I hope you check this treasure of new voices out as soon as you can.

The next anthology I'd like to review is **Moccasin Thunder**, which was published by HarperCollins in 2005 and was put out for teachers and readers of American Indian literature in short story form. Sadly, I was the only Canadian in the entire collection! What a shame, and this goes to prove what I've been saying for quite some time: we need our own anthologies up here in Canada that are YA and Indigenous focused.

They called in many big names in American Indian literature for these ten stories.

“How to Get to Planet Venus” by Joy Harjo. This is about residential school in the states. So well done!

“Because My Father Always Said He Was the Only Indian Who Saw Jimi Hendrix Play ‘The Star-Spangled Banner’ at Woodstock” by Sherman Alexie. This is about a Native American family and a son’s love for his father. Classic Alexie!

“A Real-Live Blond Cherokee and His Equally Annoyed Soul Mate” by Cynthia Leitich Smith. A classic teen crush story, this time with race and pride on the line!

“The Last Snow of the Virgin Mary” by yours truly. This story is about a small town drug dealer named Kevin Garner who risks it all for love. Wa hoo!

“Crow” by Linda Hogan. Like Will’s Garden by Lee Maracle or Dream Wheels by Richard Wagamese, this short story is about the power of family and the grace of time.

“Ice” by Joseph Bruchac. What a gorgeous story about a narrator who wants so badly to become a writer and his Uncle Tommy who encourages him by talking about the craft of writing as inherent storytelling. This story is about the majesty of having someone believe in you.

“Wild Geese (1934) by Louise Erdrich. I really wish the editors had asked Louise to write a short story. What we have here is an excerpt from Love Medicine. This was a great opportunity for one of our literary icons to give us a short story that would be read by many people, not a chapter of a larger work. But, be that as it may, this is about residential school in the US and what a sexy make out session that unfolds between two enemies. Woo hoo!

“The Magic Pony” by Greg Sarris. What an unforgettable story about friendship and a crazy aunt—Aunt Faye. I read this story years ago and often catching myself wondering about Aunt Faye and where she came from—all that alchemy, all that sizzling energy. Where did she come from, Greg Sarris!?

“Summer Wind” by Lee Francis. What a lovely story about a youth who is encouraged through mentorship by her grandmother and a storyteller who comes to the community to consider become a storyteller him or herself. I still do not know the sex of the narrator and that’s just fine by me: what a universal story!

“Drum Kiss” by Susan Power. Our 11 year old narrator, Fawn, is quickly discovering her power a storyteller, beginning to garner respect by her peers by sharing a ghost stories at a sleepover.

10 other anthologies to PLEASE buy for your classroom:

- 1) CLI-FI: Canadian Tales of Climate Change (edited by Bruce Meyer, published by Exile Editions).
- 2) Impact: Colonialism in Canada: Edited by Warren Cariou, Katherena Vermette, Niigan James Sinclair (published by Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre, Ltd)

- 3) Love Beyond Body, Space & Time: An Indigenous LGBT Sci-Fi Anthology (edited by Hope Nicholson, Bedside Press)
- 4) Moonshot: The Indigenous Comics Collection, edited by Hope Nicholson (published by AH Comics)
- 5) Moonshot II: The Indigenous Comics Collection, edited by Andy Stanleigh (published by AH Comics)
- 6) KWE: Standing With Our Sisters (edited by Joseph Boyden, published by Penguin Books)
- 7) Coming Home: Stories from the NorthWest Territories (published by Enfield&Wizenty)
- 8) Mitêwâcimowina : Indigenous Science Fiction and Speculative Storytelling (edited by Neal McLeod, published by Theytus Books)
- 9) Strength and Struggle: Perspectives from First Nations, Inuit and Metis People in Canada (edited by Rachel A. Mishenene and Dr. Pamela Rose Toulouse, published by McGraw Hill-Ryerson)
- 10) The Malahat Review: Indigenous Perspectives (Winter, 2016 Edition. Issue number 197).

Here are graphic novels I would recommend for junior and high school:

- 1) Essex County (Vol. 1) Tales from the Farm by Jeff Lemire.
Every once in a while, a graphic novel is published that is so tender, so magical, so magnificent that readers are moved in the heart forever. This is what happened when I read, "Tales from the Farm" by Jeff Lemire. **(Grades 8 and up)**

This is a story about a young boy named Lester who wears a cape and a Zoro mask and does his chores at his uncle's farm and dreams. Lester dreams and has visions of grandeur as he grieves the loss of his mother to cancer and accepts that he never knew his father. This is a trilogy and books 2 and 3 are completely compelling.

Jeff Lemire has the ability to show the distance between people and the simple magic of conversation and connection in his black and white illustrations and it struck me that this graphic novel is the only way this story could have been told: a movie could never pull this off, a short story couldn't, nor could a novel.

They say holding a graphic novel is like holding a movie in your hands. I say holding Tales from the Farm in your hands is like holding magic and storytelling grace. I am very proud that this is a Canadian story and I hope Tales from the Farm finds its way to lovers of literature everywhere. Great news! Top Shelf has released an omnibus edition of Jeff Lemire's trilogy titled Jeff Lemire's Essex County.

- 2) **Blankets** by Craig Davidson (graphic novel). Craig Thompson's Blankets is not only my pick for graphic novel of 2003, it is also an instant classic in the genre of the illustrated and graphic novel. Craig's brilliance at perfecting art complimenting literature and literature complementing art is perfect. Reading doesn't get any more magical than this. What I loved most about Blankets were the story main stories between Craig, the narrator, and his little brother, Phil, and the love story between Craig and his first true love, Raina. This story captures so perfectly that sacred

relationship of the magic only brothers can know—that fragile bond shared by two sons who carry the same blood and history inside of them. I really loved how jealous Craig was of Raina when Raina wanted to go out for the evening and introduce Craig to all of her friends. *My God*, I thought, *I was just like that, wasn't I?* I know everyone who reads this magnificent story will have quite a few of those “I was just like that, wasn't I?” moments and I hope everyone who reads this runs out and buys a copy. It's worth it. Whether you are a lover of Young Adult Literature, Adult Literature, the graphic novel, the illustrated novel, you can display *Blankets* right next to *Catcher in the Rye*, Art Spiegelman's *Maus*, Dave McKean's *Cages*, Farel Dalrymple's *Pop Gun War*, and Maureen Medved's *The Tracey Fragments*. (Grades 11 and up)

- 3) **Potential** by Ariel Schrag (g.novel) (a very important book for your grrrl students who are exploring their sexuality!). Ariel Schragg shows and tells it all in this memoir of a young girl discovering that she may not be heterosexual after all. Warning: very graphic imagery and language but completely empowering to read, I am sure, for everyone. I think all teachers and guidance counselors should read this book to honour they gay, lesbian and transgender students.
- 4) **Water Baby** by Ross Campbell (g. novel). A young woman, Brody, loses her leg to a shark attack and has to learn to walk and trust again. Her friends and a road trip bring her back slowly to herself. **(Grades 11 and up)**
- 5) **Maus** by Art Spiegelman. I can't think of a finer tool to explain the holocaust to children than through this book. What an exercise in showcasing how a holocaust builds through the vantage point of mice. *Maus* is right up there with “The Diary of Anne Frank” in terms of universal literature that is a testament to our resilience as human beings. **(Grades 10 and up)**
- 6) Another story that I want in every high school classroom out there is “Same Difference” by Derek Kirk Kim in his collection of stories, **Same Difference and Other Stories**. It's a shame that Top Shelf published this elegant and poignant illustrated short story with work that is more mature and not so high school friendly. In fact, I've just written to Top Shelf to consider publishing “Same Difference” as a stand-alone or as a collection of work with the same characters because “Same Difference” is about friendship and making ammends. I really, really want to see this story being read by more teens and educators because his is an important story and not a lot of people know about it (in my opinion.)
- 7) **Swallow Me Whole by Nate Powell** (Top Shelf Productions)

You know this is a great graphic novel if you've done your best to read it twice and then Google the title so you can read what this book was actually about! Nate Powell pushes what illustrated literature can achieve in *Swallow Me Whole* because a movie, a novel, a mobisode, a poem, a short story—any other genre couldn't accomplish what's been achieve here. This novel is about two step siblings suffering from mental illness. I was confused exactly about which character was afflicted with schizophrenia and paranoia and OCD and hallucinations, but I felt like I was drowning the whole time I read this graphic novel.

For those who do not understand mental illness, this story conveys it so darkly that you become it for a while. I've never read anything like this before, though *The Boy Who Made Silence* by Joshua Hagler comes close (though I'm on issue 4 of TBWMS and I'm so lost I don't know what the story is about anymore. Here's hoping 5 and 6 set me straight!).

If you liked Dave McKean's bleakness in *Cages* and Farel Dalrymple's ability for weightlessness and magic in *Pop Gun War* and Hagler's *The Boy Who Made Silence*, you might just have the mental ammunition to escape *Swallow Me Whole's* devastatingly all destroying epic but get ready for vertigo, a rolling stomach and a deep sadness for anyone suffering from mental illness. I felt like there was no hope left for any of the characters and I'm sad about this. It's just so sad and dark with no escape or easy answers, and I love it for being so. **(Grades 11 and up)**

Oh! For those of you who loved the novella *Inside Out* by Terry Trueman this is could be what the true terror, power and suicide calling influence of the voices, Rat and Dirtbag, looked and demonized like.

For young women, I'd suggest Avril Lavigne's *Make 5 Wishes (Volume 1 and 2)* (Ballantine Books) as well as her *Girlfriend* (Slight of Hand...and Heart) published by House of Parlance. All of these books deal with self-esteem in young women. I loved them. **(Grades 5 and up)**

Indigenous Literature is experiencing an explosion of comic books with the Healthy Indigenous Network. I'm proud to say I am an editor for the series that deals with hard hitting issues facing northern and Indigenous communities. Diabetes prevention, suicide prevention, anxiety in children, gambling addiction, smoking cessation, foster care and using physical fitness and team sports as a deterrent to youth getting involved with gangs are all issues addressed with illustration and great stories. Cree artist, Steve Sanderson, is our main artist for the series and our publisher and visionary is Sean Muir (Cree). For graphic novels by Indigenous people, I'd suggest everything by Michael Nicoll Yahgulanaas: **Flight of the Hummingbird** and **Red: A Haida Manga**, as well as **Stories of Our People/Lii zistwayr di la naasyoon di Michif** edited by Norman Fleury et al (Gabriel Dumont Institute). There are Metis stories in here that celebrate language, community, family, and creation stories as well as a terrifying encounter with a Wheetago and a Rougarou **(Grades 8 and up)**:

http://www.gdins.org/catalog/product_info.php?products_id=98

One series I'd love to see in every school for grades 7 and up is **Highwater Press's "7 Generations."** So far, there are four comics books in this series: "Stone", "The Pact", "Scars" and "Ends/Begins". Without giving too much away, this series by David Alexander Robertson and Scott B. Henderson unwraps the history of an Indigenous family at the crossroads. If you're looking for an illustrated story about residential schools, the smallpox epidemics, hope and forgiveness, this is it. This hard hitting series is brilliant in showcasing the resilience of the human spirit and a mother's love. I applaud David Alexander Robertson for putting so much pain and forgiveness into this series and the artwork by Scott B. Henderson is perfect for the tone and dignity this series deserves.

David and Scott also teamed up again for the unforgettable graphic novel **Sugar Falls**, which illustrates the true story of Betty Ross, an elder from Cross Lake First Nation, and her experience at Residential School. I think it's safe to say that this would be a great resource for any classroom for grades 7 and up.

The one must-have comic for every classroom should be Steve Sanderson's *Darkness Calls* (The Healthy Aboriginal Network). It is about suicide prevention and it's incredible. I was lucky enough to be Steve's editor for this comic and a number of his other comics with HAN. He has comics on anxiety in children (*Just a Story*), staying in school (*Level Up*), diabetes prevention (*An Invited Threat*). Steve Sanderson is a genius. Invite him to your school!

Ultimately, what every educator wishes for their students is self-respect, dignity, pride, empathy for others and global and cultural awareness within and outside of him or herself and the wisdom to think for him or herself on their way to self-determination and self-actualization. I believe great works of literature are crucial in building pathways towards all of this. These are some pretty rock solid recommendations I'm making here and I'd like to hear yours. Please e-mail me your favourites to vancamprichard@gmail.com

Poetry:

- 1) This is a small northern town by Rosanna Deerchild (The Muses Company)
- 2) Stone the Crow by Chris Bose (Kegedonce Press)
- 3) Everything Gregory Scofield, Duncan Mercredi, Kateri Akiwenzie Damm, Janet Marie Rogers, and Louise Halfe.

Mahsi cho and happy reading!

Richard Van Camp

Ps. If you are interested in zombie literature, please read on:

I love zombies even though they're trying to eat me and you and what we could have been

by Richard Van Camp

I love zombies because zombies are already here: in addictions, in what could have been, in empty promises made and believed and held onto, in the horror of our future if we don't turn things around. Let's just say they're the perfect metaphor for a lot of things. It's kind of like snakes and ladders but the snakes want the meat on our bodies and to slurp our blood as we try and crawl away as we TURN. (Eek!)

So here are my top 5 fave zombie anythings:

Let's start with three graphic novels:

The Walking Dead by Robert Kirkman (Image Comics): if you are thinking of getting back into comics, this is the one. Trust me. The story is brilliant: Rick Grimes wakes up in a hospital only to find the world has Gone to Zombie and his wife is expecting and their son is with them but they're separated so he makes his way back to her (very romantic) only to find raw (ha ha) factions of humanity, cannibal societies, etc. etc. I follow this series monthly and it's only getting better-and now it's on AMC as a running series starting this Halloween, 2010. **(Grades 10 and up)**

Simon Dark by Steve Niles (of 30 Days of Night fame) (DC Comics) has blown me away once again with this tender character created by the occult. I think this may be his finest writing yet. The pacing of the story, the other characters, the grim black magic, the adorable familiars, Gaius, Marty and Suzy--Simon's world is just so interesting! And Scott Hampton was the perfect artist for this series as Scott has painted a character that is both innocent and mystifying. **(Grades 10 and up)**

The story follows a vigilante figure that beheads predators of the two legged variety. Simon Dark does not know why he was born or who his family is and is on a hunt to figure out why he exists. He's made from dead bodies! Along the way, he meets friends, a love interest (Rachel) and family. He's also being hunted by practitioners of black magic and can I just say I need more stories of Simon. Can we please have novels, movies and more graphic novels? Can someone turn this series into a movie? This is smart storytelling.

DC released the series as 18 issues but it's out now as three collected graphic novels. Seriously: if you need a comic series to get lost in, I strongly suggest you check out this cult figure. He'll charm you.

Zomnibus (IDW Publishing). Are you kidding me? IDW put out all of their best zombie storylines (Zombies!: Feast, Zombies!: Eclipse of the Undead, and the Complete Zombies Vs. Robots) into one book? Incredible and glorious! Get it and you will see why zombies are the new cool. **(Grades 10 and up)**

Let's move now to two novels:

World War Z by Max Brooks. A great novel. Truly. It's an oral recounting of how humanity reclaimed itself after the international zombie wars. It's eerie, haunting, totally terrifying and I loved it. So many unforgettable scenes: the submarine where hundreds of zombies are climbing all over it as it tries to dive; the media coverage of a combat ready battalion being overrun by wave after wave of zombies. E gads. There's no hope you think but then there is and you just give thanks at the end of the book that it is only a book! So smart! **(Grades 12 and up)**

Monster Island by David Wellington (Running Press). Oh man, this is so epic. This novel has two protagonists: Dekalb, a UN weapons inspector, who has to find AIDS drugs for the matriarch of Africa. His bodyguards are teenaged militia who are tactical experts armed with you name it: sniper rifles and fully automatic gas powered propulsion amplified buddah buddah guns! He has to get these drugs for the most powerful woman on the planet who has AIDS. They are keeping his daughter alive and safe. If he fails, the safest place on earth will crumble. The other narrator is Gary, who killed himself with a belief that if he could delay his brain suffocating that he could come back as a thinking zombie. Hey, if you can't beat or eat them, join them!

RAAR!!

Happy reading and e-mail me at vancamprichard@gmail.com with your suggestions. I wish you all the very best and please let me know if I'm off on grade level suggestions and please send me your suggestions and why they work in your classroom. Mahsi cho.

With respect,

Richard Van Camp

Five Quick Questions to Consider While Teaching Indigenous Literature

1. Is the author Indigenous? If not, has the author written a story about Indigenous people using the right people as sources? A great example of a book written about Indigenous people by a non-Indigenous person is **Tatsea** by Armin Wiebe. Armin lived and taught in the NWT for several years and wrote a lovely novel about the Tlicho Dene with the help of the Tlicho. I am so glad he did, too, because his research really taught me a few things about my own people that I did not know.
2. Would anything in this book make an Indigenous student feel ashamed?
3. Would anything in this book make a student who is not Indigenous feel ashamed?
4. Would anything in this book reinforce stereotypes about Indigenous people?

Can we get in touch with our author and ask them questions? Most authors I know would love to help teach their own work via e-mail and answer any questions teachers and students have. A great resource to reach Aboriginal authors is www.hanksville.org. Most Aboriginal authors have their own websites that you can visit and e-mail them through Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

This is also a golden time for Indigenous Literature because so many of our trailbreakers like Ruby Slipperjack, Jeannette Armstrong, Lee Maracle, Mini Aodla Freeman, Maria Campbell, Louise Bernice-Half, and Beatrice Culleton Mosnier) are still publishing and still going strong.