

HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN AWARD 2026

David A. Robertson

AUTHOR NOMINEE

(CANADA)



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INTRODUCTION

It is with great honour that the Hans Christian Andersen Award Nominating Committee of IBBY Canada submits author David A. Robertson for the 2026 Hans Christian Andersen Award for Author.

Robertson is one of the most celebrated and exciting authors writing for children today, telling stories from an Indigenous perspective about matters of Indigenous identity, language, history, and belonging. His bestselling books for children of all ages — spanning picture books, middle grade novels, and young adult graphic novels — have made an indelible mark on Canadian children, culture, and literary heritage. His work has been recognized by the highest literary awards in the country, including two Governor General’s Literary Awards (*When We Were Alone* and *On the Trapline*) and the prestigious TD Canadian Children’s Literature Award (*On the Trapline*), among numerous other award wins and distinctions. In 2021, he was the recipient of the Writers’ Union of Canada Freedom to Read Award. His books have been translated around the world, including into Cree, French, German, Spanish, and Japanese, demonstrating the global reach and appeal of his writing.

Not only has Robertson made an impact through his own writing, but he continues to leave a legacy by spearheading a newly created imprint at Tundra Books/Penguin Random House Canada. This imprint, launched in January 2025, is dedicated to publishing Indigenous authors and illustrators. “As my career has progressed,” Robertson says, “I’ve recognized the importance of creating opportunities for new and emerging Indigenous writers so they can write stories that matter, that heal, that inspire, and that lead us on a good path.”

In this dossier, we are pleased to introduce you to Robertson’s full body of work, with a particular focus on the five representative titles submitted to the jury. They are *Sugar Falls: A Residential School Story* (HighWater Press/Portage & Main Press, 2011), *When We Were Alone* (HighWater Press/Portage & Main Press, 2016), *The Barren Grounds* (Tundra Books/Penguin Random House Canada, 2020), *On the Trapline* (Tundra Books/Penguin Random House Canada, 2021), and *The Song That Called Them Home* (Tundra Books/Penguin Random House Canada, 2023).

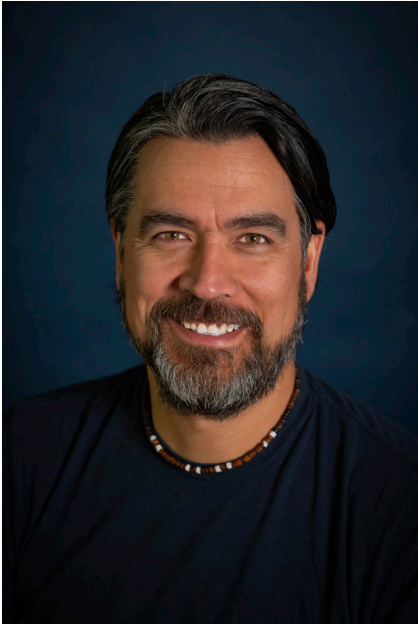
Through this presentation of Robertson’s work, we aim to share with you the lasting impact of his contribution to children’s literature. It is our honour and privilege to showcase his work to the Hans Christian Andersen Award jury on this international stage.



PART ONE: ABOUT DAVID A. ROBERTSON

BIOGRAPHY OF DAVID A. ROBERTSON

Photo: Amber Green



David Alexander Robertson is a renowned Canadian author and social advocate, celebrated for his impactful contributions to Indigenous literature.

Born in 1977 in Brandon, Manitoba, he is a proud citizen of the Norway House Cree Nation. His father was Swampy Cree, and his mother has English, Irish, and Scottish ancestry. Raised in Winnipeg, with summers spent in Melita, Manitoba, Robertson graduated with a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Winnipeg in 1999.

Robertson's family history is deeply intertwined with the legacies of colonialism in Canada. His paternal grandmother, Sarah Jane Robertson, was sent to Norway House Residential School, where Indigenous children were often degraded for their culture and forced to assimilate into settler society. His father grew up in Northern Manitoba on a trapline. This land, usually in a wooded area and along a specific route,

is utilized for catching animals for food and for their fur. It is how many Indigenous Peoples subsisted for generations. His father later attended a day school where he was forced to assimilate and forbidden from speaking Cree.

When Robertson was three years old, his father became the superintendent of the Manitoba Indian Education Board, a role that led the family to relocate to Winnipeg. They lived in the affluent suburb of River Heights, a predominantly white community. For much of his childhood, Robertson and his brothers were shielded from their Cree identity; it was not until junior high school that he learned of his Indigenous heritage. He first believed his parents were trying to protect their children from the anti-Indigenous racism prevalent in Winnipeg. However, later in life, he discovered that his father had adhered to the Cree philosophy of non-interference, allowing his children to discover their heritage at their own pace. His father's approach was to model what it meant to be Cree, giving his children the freedom to independently explore their identity.

The pressure of his father's responsibilities eventually strained the family, leading to his parents' separation. The emotional toll of his parents' separation affected his relationship with his

father, making it difficult for Robertson to connect with his Cree heritage. However, he embarked on his own journey of self-discovery, uncovering more of his family's history, including knowledge of a missing relative who was previously unknown to the family. In 1991, his parents reconciled, and his father returned home, allowing them to rebuild their relationship, which remained strong until his father's death in 2019.

This journey of rediscovery of his identity became a profound source of inspiration for much of Robertson's writing. For example, his 2021 picture book *On the Trapline* tells the story of a child reclaiming his Indigenous identity and language by learning his culture through a visit on the trapline with his grandfather. Robertson's picture book *When We Were Alone* (2016) and graphic novel *Sugar Falls* (2011) both speak to the residential school experience. We can also see these influences in his writing for adult readers. Robertson's 2020 memoir, *Black Water: Family, Legacy, and Blood Memory*, and 2022 novel *The Theory of Crows* both explore his relationship with his late father.

Robertson's writing career spans over thirty books that address themes such as Indigenous identity, residential schools, mental health, and contemporary Indigenous issues. Many of his works have received the highest literary honours in Canada. *When We Were Alone* won the 2017 Governor General's Literary Award, the highest recognition for a Canadian children's book. *On the Trapline* also won the Governor General's Literary Award in 2021 and the prestigious TD Canadian Children's Literature Award in 2022. *The Barren Grounds*, part of the Misewa Saga, was a 2021 Governor General's Literary Award nominee and one of *Quill & Quire's* Books of the Year of 2020, among other accolades. *The Song That Called Them Home* was selected as one of the Canadian Broadcasting Company's (CBC) Best Books for Kids and Teens for 2023.

Robertson's influence extends beyond literature — he is a podcaster and public speaker who contributes to conversations about Indigenous representation and education. His podcast, *Kiwewew*, reflects his personal journey of Indigenous self-discovery. As editorial director of an imprint devoted to Indigenous children's literature at Tundra Books/Penguin Random House Canada, Robertson is dedicated to promoting Indigenous writers and illustrators in children's literature.

Over the course of his career, Robertson has received numerous accolades, including the Writer's Union of Canada Freedom to Read Award. He was honoured in 2023 with a Doctor of Letters from the University of Manitoba for his outstanding contributions to the arts and distinguished achievements.

Robertson currently lives in Winnipeg with his wife and family, continuing his mission to amplify Indigenous voices through literature and advocacy.

Illustration © Julie Flett from *On the Trapline*



STATEMENT OF CONTRIBUTION TO CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

CHERIE DIMALINE

David A. Robertson is a once-in-a-lifetime storyteller. There can be no arguing that. His work is expansive, intimate, prolific, and profound. Robertson has already changed the world for the next generation of readers, not just the literary world or the landscape of available books, but an entire outlook on life and imagining of what is possible.

With thirty titles in print, numerous anthologized stories, and a dossier of published articles and essays, Robertson has already produced a lifetime of work, and he is not nearly done. His awards and accolades are too vast to list, but some highlights include being a two-time Governor General's Literary Award winner, recipient of the TD Canadian Children's Literature Award and winner of the Writer's Union of Canada Freedom to Read Award. The quickest way to find his latest work is on the bestsellers list, where he has remained steadily, without a week's vacancy, for years at a time.

There are other writers whose work is as well-received, enthusiastically devoured, and universally beloved, but even among such brilliance, Robertson stands out. I want to examine just three of his exceptional qualities. These are facets of Robertson's career that would individually make him an exceptional writer but, when pulled together, make him a master of craft and an international phenomenon.

INSIGHT

We know, as artists and those who consume art, that there are often difficult emotions and catalysts behind the greatest of works. We also know that we are in the presence of rare genius when these emotions are somehow not only conveyed through the work but also transformed into stepping stones for the rest of us to get through similar trials.

Now imagine taking difficult histories, like that of Canadian residential schools — where generations of our children were taken, abused, and horrifically stripped of identity and self-worth — and somehow making the facts transformative for children. Imagine tackling racialized child apprehension and the broken foster care system, and turning that into an empowering series for young readers. Imagine doing all this work and not only reaching out to the Indigenous youth who need these stories for their very survival but also somehow reaching the wider youth community so that they become better informed and better equipped to play the pivotal role of ally.

This is the tremendous gift of Robertson's work. Yes, it is beautifully written. Yes, it is presented in a format that embraces the full range of emotions that allow a reader to go on a meaningful journey. And yes, from a craft perspective, these books are as close to perfect as one can get. But more than all of this, Robertson has a way of cutting through the fear and anxiety so many of us have when writing for young people. He brings an insight that comforts as it tears down barriers. His work leaves more space for every child to exist and thrive, but it does this with such care that no one is left feeling the harshness of the new winds that blow into that space. His work, in fact, is shelter. I cannot think of any other Canadian writer who provides such paradigm shifting insight with such overwhelming care.

COMMUNITY

Robertson is a member of Norway House Cree Nation in Manitoba. This is not just a fact of biology or citizenship — it is the lens through which he sees the world. He has never been a person who speaks before he thinks, who acts before he considers, who hides before he confronts. Robertson doesn't have to deliver the themes and best practices of his community because he embodies them. His very existence is proof that Norway House is a strong and grounded community. His work is proof that there is hope for all of us to follow a gentler and fiercer path.

As a writer, I am fully aware of the demands on our time that can cut into the creative space, time we jealously guard from the world. If you are lucky, there is always a book club, school, conference, or event requesting your attendance as a guest speaker. I know how difficult it is to say no and how difficult it is to say yes. Either way, you feel like you are letting down the work; you're either not meeting the readers who support your books or you're taking time away from the book you're currently writing.

In this respect, I am fully convinced that Robertson has some sort of time machine that allows him to be in two, three, or even half-a-dozen places at once. He manages to run an imprint dedicated to Indigenous books for young readers at one of the largest publishing houses on the planet, while delivering keynotes, travelling internationally for school visits, and publishing multiple titles a year. Let's not forget that he is also the busy father to five amazing children, a community pillar, and a sought-after resource for all things story.

There is no louder advocate for Indigenous story and storytellers than Robertson. He loves us. We feel it. He makes every one of us feel the privilege we hold as original storykeepers and as beloved colleagues. In this way, he has curated a wider space for us, his fellow community members, and continues to tend to the shelter that holds us all — keeping us safe and cared for, while continuing to challenge us to do better by example.

PASSION

As someone who has the tremendous privilege of calling Robertson a friend, I can tell you that he is never not thinking of us, all of us. If you ever have the opportunity, attend one of his

sessions. Sit in the back row while a thousand children laugh and think and shoot up their arms in excitement to be a part of the conversation. Bear witness to the awe he invokes, the solutions he midwives, the joy he cultivates. And again, remember that he is somehow teaching the hardest parts of our collective history.

Without passion, I cannot imagine Robertson would have the energy to get out of bed and face another day of multiple presentations, publisher meetings, and creative writing. Without passion, I am not sure how he could reach out to check on fellow writers and thinkers. Without that singular and ancestrally connected passion, I am not sure David Robertson could change the world the way that he does.

I wrote a blurb for one of Robertson's books, the seminal memoir *Black Water*. I reread that blurb recently, and I think it could be used for any of his work, so I would like to include it here.

"This is the book I never knew I was waiting for but my whole body recognized when I read it. (This book) is mesmerizing, difficult, inviting, and tremendously gorgeous. It is a love letter about coming home. We are all better people because of the journey David took with his dad and I am forever grateful for having been allowed to accompany them. David A. Robertson is a treasure: kind, honest, and a master of storytelling. This is him at his best, and while I'm not sure we deserve him, we sure as hell need him."

We all need David Robertson and his once-in-a-lifetime work. I am still not sure what we ever did to deserve him, but I am grateful every day that he decided to show up with remarkable insight, carrying us all as community and setting forth with joyful passion. I am grateful every day that all across the globe, children can find his stories. I am grateful that somehow, even at this time when so much is bleak for so many, Robertson is changing the world for a new generation who will understand that there is always a good way forward.

There is not enough time or space to accurately explain the impact of Robertson's work, so I will conclude with a simple truth: I would not be a writer without David Robertson. His stories pull more stories into the fold. His stories bring so many of us home. He is without equal, and though he would be the first to humbly back away from such praise, he deserves all the praise we can muster. More than this, he and his children deserve the changed and vibrant world his work makes possible.

With respect and gratitude,
Cherie Dimaline

Cherie Dimaline is the author of many acclaimed books for young readers, including *The Marrow Thieves*, named a *TIME* magazine Best YA Book of All Time and winner of the Governor General's Literary Award. She is a registered and claimed member of the Métis Nation of Ontario.

DAVID A. ROBERTSON

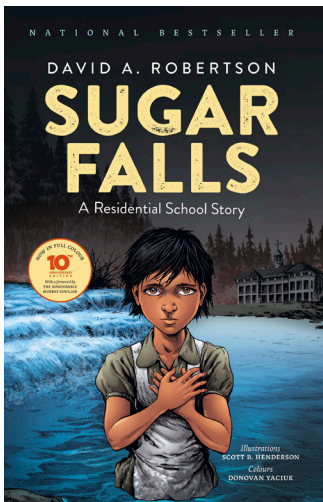




PART TWO: BODY OF WORK

FIVE REPRESENTATIVE TITLES

SUGAR FALLS: A RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL STORY



Written by David A. Robertson

Illustrated by Scott B. Henderson and Donovan Yaciuk

HighWater Press/Portage & Main Press, 2011

Inspired by true events, this story of strength, family, and culture shares the awe-inspiring resilience of Elder Betty (Betsy) Ross. Abandoned as a young child, Betsy is adopted into a loving family. A few short years later, when Betsy is eight, everything changes. Betsy is taken away to a residential school. There she is forced to endure abuse and indignity, but Betsy recalls the words her father spoke to her at Sugar Falls — words that give her the resilience, strength, and determination to survive. The 10th-anniversary edition (2021) is rendered for the first time in full colour, with a foreword by

The Hon. Murray Sinclair, Chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, and a touching afterword from Elder Betty Ross herself.

REVIEWS

***Anishinabek News* (Karl Hele)**

Sugar Falls: A Residential School Story is a graphic novel based on the true story of Cross Lake First Nation Elder, Betty Ross.

The novel begins with a young man sitting in class. He is worried about a recent assignment by his high school teacher to speak with and write a report of his conversation with a residential school survivor. The student, Daniel, is invited to speak with his friend April's Kokum, Betty. Together they listen to Betty describe her experience of physical and sexual abuse while at school at the hands of a priest.

Betty attributes her survival as well as the retention of her Cree language and culture to a lesson from her father. Prior to being forcefully enrolled at the school, Betty and her dad travelled to Sugar Falls where she learned that family, relationships, and interconnectedness to tradition, Mother Earth, and the ancestors were bound through the thumping rhythm of the drum. He told her to listen to the beating of her heart for that was what connected her to him and everything else. After



witnessing the drowning of a friend attempting to flee the abuse at the school, Betty remembered her dad's lesson and found the light to survive and succeed as Cree in this hostile environment.

Betty's survival is based on how connections to others enabled perseverance. After leaving the residential school, Betty attended high school in Winnipeg and eventually became a Cree language teacher and consultant. Thus, *Sugar Falls: A Residential School Story* is a story of a young girl who never surrendered, endured, and retained her pride in being and speaking Cree. This story, while tinged with horror and sadness, speaks to the adaptability and strength of tradition and the human spirit.

Sugar Falls: A Residential School Story is a wonderfully illustrated black and white graphic novel that, through images and words, portrays the emotions and experiences of Betty. Its impact on young readers, including university students, provides grounds for discussion and a visual connection to a human experience. It is a definite must-read that is both accessible and engaging, while offering a lesson about the past and engaging with the present.

Canadian Review of Materials (Joanne Peters)

A young girl, dressed in a drab dress and pinafore, stands in the middle of a pool of water staring forward impassively, hands crossed on her chest. To one side of her is a cascade of water known as Sugar Falls. On the other side is a stretch of still water, behind which looms a two-story building, its roof surmounted by a cross-crowned cupola. It is a residential school run by the Roman Catholic Church. This scene is the front cover of David Alexander Robertson's 40-page graphic novel, *Sugar Falls*. Although written as a work of fiction, it is based on the true story of Betty Ross, an elder from Manitoba's Cross Lake First Nation.

Having just finished an essay about Helen Betty Osborne (whose story was recounted in Robertson's *The Life of Helen Betty Osborne*), a high school student named Dan finds himself faced with yet another assignment. This time, he must consider aspects of the residential school system: How does it affect the First Nations people and why does it affect them today? How does understanding the system change your view of First Nations People? Should it? [His] assignment is to consider these questions ... However, the assignment also requires that Dan seek out a personal account from a residential school survivor and then tell that individual's story. Although Dan doesn't know anyone he can interview, fortunately for him, a classmate, April, happens to have a grandmother who is a survivor of the residential school system. April has always wondered about her grandmother's school

experience and so, after a quick phone call to her Kokum (her grandmother), the two young people hop on a Winnipeg transit bus to meet with her and to undertake the assignment. (Although the author does not directly name the city in which the story opens, the drawings feature a number of landmarks familiar to Winnipeg residents.)

Kokum has never before told the story of life at residential school to anyone, including her granddaughter. Attired in traditional garb, sitting in a round room on a star blanket, holding an eagle feather, and amidst the smoke that wafts from the burning of sacred medicines, Kokum begins her story after Dan asks her why she attended the school. [. . .]

As an account of the residential school experience, *Sugar Falls* presents a sad and difficult story. Scott Henderson's black and white drawings underscore the bleakness of residential school life, and Betty's story reiterates the inter-generational impact of that experience on First Nations families. Unlike David Robertson's 7 Generations series, in which storylines shift between past and present, this narrative is straightforward, direct, and accessible to high school readers of various reading abilities. However, there is much in the book's content that is disturbing — particularly the depictions of corporal punishment and description of sexual abuse making this a book unsuitable for audiences under the age of 15.

Sugar Falls can be used in a variety of senior high school instructional contexts: in language arts/English classes studying literature of the Aboriginal/First Nations experience, as a supplemental text in social studies classes, and in Aboriginal/First Nations studies courses. As well, it is worth acquiring for a high school library's graphic novel collections. However, due to the book's content, potential purchasers should read the book carefully prior to acquisition and consider possible challenges within its school community. As well, teachers and teacher-librarians working in Catholic education contexts or in public schools with large Catholic populations are cautioned that the nun and priest of this story present a shameful example of the Catholic church's role in the history of residential schools. Use of this book in a Catholic school context necessitates careful consideration of how to offer balance, fairness, and sensitivity in the telling of this story.

Recommended.

AWARDS & ACCOLADES

2013–2014 First Nation Communities READ Award, Shortlist

"Sugar Falls is a powerful graphic novel that recounts the horror Indigenous children experienced in residential schools." —*CBC Books*

FOREIGN RIGHTS & TRANSLATIONS

French (worldwide): Glénat Quebec



WHEN WE WERE ALONE



Written by David A. Robertson

Illustrated by Julie Flett

HighWater Press/Portage & Main Press, 2016

A young girl notices things about her grandmother that make her curious. Why does her grandmother have long, braided hair and beautifully coloured clothing? Why does she speak Cree and spend so much time with her family? As the girl asks questions, her grandmother shares her experiences in a residential school, when all of these things were taken away. Also available in a bilingual Swampy Cree/English edition.

REVIEWS

★ *School Library Journal*, STARRED REVIEW (Chelsea Couillard-Smith)

A young girl learns about family and heritage in this gentle picture book about the legacy of Native American boarding schools. Working in the garden with her grandmother, a pigtailed girl asks why her “Nókom” wears colorful clothing and her hair in a long braid. Her grandmother explains that as a child, she was sent far away from her family to a school where she was forced to wear plain clothing and chop off her hair. “They wanted us to be like everyone else,” she explains. But when they were alone, the children would cover themselves in the fall leaves and braid grasses into their hair in order to recapture the identities they left behind. As her grandmother speaks Cree to a passing bird and sits laughing with her brother, she shares how it feels to be forbidden to speak the only language you know and how stolen moments with a sibling can feel like a lifeline to home. “Now, I am always with my family,” the grandmother says. Flett’s spring palette of warm blues and browns punctuated with splashes of red contrasts the loving moments between

grandmother and granddaughter with stark winter whites and grays depicting boarding school life. The repetitive structure creates a predictable narrative; together the illustrations and Robertson's child-centered text make the boarding school experience accessible to a young audience without glossing over its harshness.

VERDICT A poignant family story covering a part of history too often missing from library collections. A first purchase.

★ *Horn Book Magazine*, **STARRED REVIEW** (Alia Jones)

This quiet story is one of love and resistance during the decades-long era of oppressive residential schools for First Nations children in Canada. While spending the day with her grandmother, a contemporary girl has several questions, beginning with "Nókom, why do you wear so many colours?" Nókom answers by telling her granddaughter that at the residential school she was sent to as a child, students wore colorless uniforms. She goes on to say, "Sometimes in the fall, when we were alone ... we would pile the leaves over the clothes they had given us, and we would be colourful again. And this made us happy." As the title of the book suggests, Nókom and the other students found strength in quiet moments when they could be alone. Through descriptive language and an effective use of repetition, Robertson describes the seasons of Nókom's resistance ("Sometimes in the spring, when we were alone ... Sometimes in the summer, when we were alone ..."). Flett's collage illustrations, with their simplicity and earthy colors, are soulful and gentle; the double-page spreads of the children enjoying nature are particularly beautiful. This is an Indigenous story (the illustrations show a White person only once, and only from the back); the cover image of two Cree girls smiling out at us celebrates this. Readers unfamiliar with the history of residential schools may need some background in order to get the most out of this story, but all readers will connect with how Nókom lives in celebration of colors, her long hair, her language, and, most of all, her family.

AWARDS & ACCOLADES

2017 Governor General's Literary Awards, Young
People's Literature — Illustrated Books
2017 McNally Robinson Book for Young People Award,
Younger Category, Manitoba Book Awards
2017 TD Canadian Children's Literature Award, Finalist
2018 Shining Willow Award, Finalist

★ "Each spread is compelling in its own way, offering remarkable depictions of resilience and the strong emotional ties within this family. An empowering and important story." —*Booklist*, **STARRED REVIEW**



Illustration © Julie Flett from *When We Were Alone*

“Spare, poetic, and moving, this Cree heritage story makes a powerful impression.”

—*Kirkus Reviews*

“A beautifully rendered story of resistance and love.” —*Toronto Star* (Deirdre Baker)

“*When We Were Alone* is rare. It is exquisite and stunning, for the power conveyed by the words Robertson wrote, and for the illustrations that Flett created. I highly recommend it.”

—*American Indians in Children’s Literature* (Debbie Reese)

FOREIGN RIGHTS & TRANSLATIONS

French (worldwide): Éditions des Plaines

German (worldwide): Merlin Verlag

Japanese (Japan): Iwanami Shoten

Spanish (United States of America, Philippines, Mexico): Scholastic

Swampy Cree/English (worldwide): HighWater Press/Portage & Main Press





THE BARREN GROUNDS (THE MISEWA SAGA, BOOK 1)



Written by David A. Robertson

Toronto: Tundra Books/Penguin Random House Canada, 2020

Morgan and Eli, two Indigenous children forced away from their families and communities, are brought together in a foster home in Winnipeg, Manitoba. They each feel disconnected, from their culture and each other, and struggle to fit in at school and at their new home — until they find a secret place, walled off in an unfinished attic bedroom. A portal opens to another reality, Askí, bringing them onto frozen, barren grounds, where they meet Ochek (Fisher). The only hunter supporting his starving community, Misewa, Ochek welcomes the human children, teaching them traditional ways to survive. But as the need for food becomes desperate, they embark on a dangerous mission. Accompanied by Arik, a sassy Squirrel they catch stealing from the trapline, they try to save Misewa before the icy grip of winter freezes everything — including them.

REVIEWS

★ *Kirkus Reviews*, STARRED REVIEW

Two uprooted Cree children find themselves in a dreamlike adventure in this series opener.

The edginess 13-year-old Morgan feels runs deep. As a First Nations kid whose whole life has been lived in one White foster home after another, she feels little reason to get excited about anything. Two months in to her new foster home placement, she inherits a new foster brother, Eli, a young Cree boy who spends his time quietly drawing in his sketchbook. After a blowup with their earnestly well-intentioned White foster parents, Morgan and Eli shelter themselves in the attic, where a drawing in his pad seems to come to life, creating a portal into the wintry Barren Grounds of Misewa, where the passage of time is, Narnia-like, different from in Winnipeg. After Eli disappears into this world, Morgan is determined to go after him to bring him back. When she finds him, they discover that the Misewa community of animal beings needs their help to survive the White Time. Robertson (Norway House Cree Nation) carefully establishes Morgan's anger and feelings of alienation, her resentment at their foster parents' clumsy attempts to connect her to her culture culminating when they awkwardly present a gift of moccasins. The shift into a contemporary Indigenous fantasy is seamless; it is in this world that these foster siblings discover hope and meaning that sustain them when they return to Winnipeg.

This middle-grade fantasy deftly and compellingly centers Indigenous culture.



Publishers Weekly

Robertson, a member of the Norway House Cree Nation, winks at C.S. Lewis's Narnia tales in this Indigenous fantasy series starter, centering two Cree foster children in Winnipeg. Avid fantasy reader Morgan, 13, has been living with well-intentioned but culturally insensitive white couple Katie and James for two months. After being abandoned as a toddler and cycling through seven white foster families, Morgan is frustrated, and she expects no better from this home. Meanwhile, Eli, 12, arrives at Katie and James's house, escaping his pain by drawing strange creatures in a sketchpad. When Morgan and Eli staple one of Eli's drawings to the wall of their off-limits attic, they travel to the ever-winter land of Askí, where they meet bipedal animals that wear clothes and speak an English-Cree mix. Indigenous stories are touched on as the children and their new friends, Ochek ("fisher" in Cree) and Arikwachas, a squirrel, set out to make spring return to Askí. While the humans' and animals' voices are somewhat homogenous, the treatment of Cree culture resonates, and the engaging characters and folklore ensure readers will look forward to the next installment.

AWARDS & ACCOLADES

2020 Canadian Children's Book Centre *Best Books for Kids & Teens*

2020 CBC Books Best Canadian YA and Middle Grade Books

2020 *Quill & Quire* Books of the Year

2020 USBBY Outstanding International Books List

2021 Diamond Willow Award, Shortlist

2021 Governor General's Literary Awards, Young People's Literature — Text, Nominee

2021 IODE Violet Downey Book Award, Shortlist

2021 Silver Birch Fiction Award, Shortlist

2021 TD Canadian Children's Literature Award, Shortlist

2022 Rocky Mountain Book Award, Nominee

2022–2023 First Nation Communities READ Award, Longlist

"Reminiscent of C.S. Lewis's Narnia stories, this fantasy is very much its own tale of ruptured Indigenous culture, of environmental reciprocity and care." —*Toronto Star*

"This is a book that is rich in its characterization, evocative in its descriptions, and skillful in its weaving together of traditions of the past and life in the present." —*Canadian Review of Materials*

FOREIGN RIGHTS & TRANSLATIONS

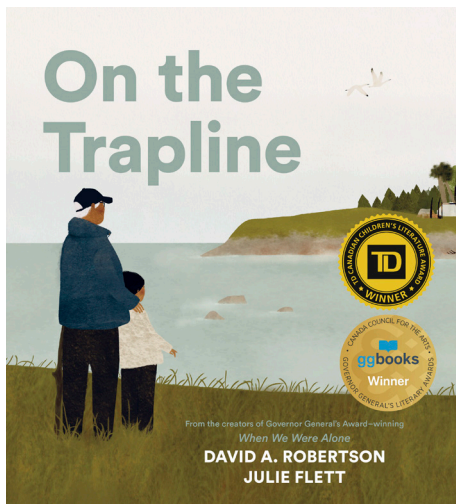
Arabic (worldwide): Al-Turjman

German (worldwide): Little Tiger Verlag

French (North America): Éditions Scholastic



ON THE TRAPLINE



Written by David A. Roberson

Illustrated by Julie Flett

Tundra Books/Penguin Random House Canada, 2021

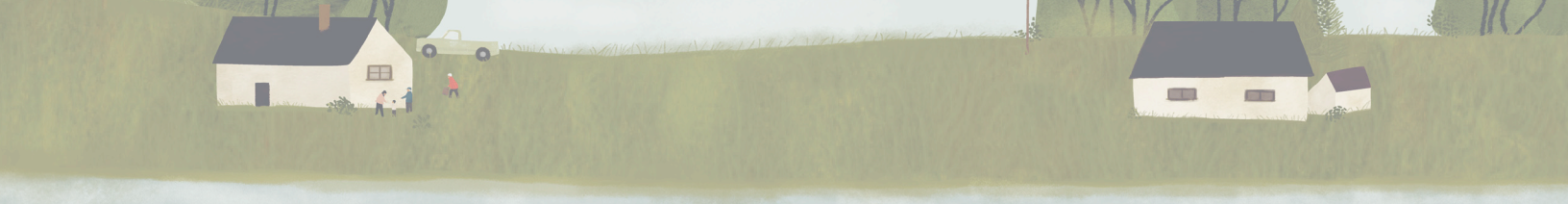
A boy and Moshom, his grandpa, take a trip together to visit a place of great meaning to Moshom. A trapline is where people hunt and live off the land, and it was where Moshom grew up. As they embark on their northern journey, the child repeatedly asks his grandfather, “Is this your trapline?” Along the way, the boy finds himself imagining what life was like two generations ago — a life that appears to be both different from and similar to his life now. This is a heartfelt story about memory,

imagination, and intergenerational connection that perfectly captures the experience of a young child’s wonder as he is introduced to places and stories that hold meaning for his family.

REVIEWS

★ *Horn Book Magazine*, STARRED REVIEW (Martha V. Parravano)

From the creators of *When We Were Alone* comes another powerful and affecting picture book, this one about a boy who accompanies his grandfather Moshom up north, where as a child Moshom and his family lived on the trapline. It’s a poignant journey, because he has not been back since. The two travel by plane, car, and boat to reach the trapline. Along the way, Moshom shows the boy where he used to swim; go to school; chop wood; pick berries; and set traps for muskrats. Robertson’s first-person text is conversational, honed, and immediate: “There’s a river at the end of the highway. We get into one of the motorboats docked along the shore and head out onto the water. The river is wide, but Moshom’s smile is even wider.” Before each page-turn, Robertson’s text ends with a sentence defining Swampy Cree words, providing a graceful landing point for each spread. Sometimes the defined word corresponds directly to a word used just before (“Moshom tells me that in the winter, everybody in the family slept in one room, where the wood stove kept them warm... / Wakomakanak means ‘family’”); sometimes the connection is subtle (“When we’re about to leave, I stand with Moshom by the lake. / He holds my hand tight, but he doesn’t say anything. / Kiskisiw means ‘he remembers’”). Flett’s remarkable illustrations immerse the viewer in the north of Moshom’s past and present. An evocative blue-green begins on the endpapers and anchors most spreads, representing lake, river, and sky; these soft, cool colors are set off by warm browns (of skin tones, birds, woodpiles) and occasional pops of bright red. An outstanding contribution



to the literature about family, intergenerational friendship, remembrance, community, Indigenous experience, and more. Appended with author and illustrator notes and a glossary.

★ *Publishers Weekly*, STARRED REVIEW

The Indigenous creators behind Governor General’s Award–winning *When We Were Alone* return for this grandparent-child exploration of traplines, “where people hunt animals and live off the land.” Robertson, who has Swampy Cree heritage, follows Moshom, a Swampy Cree Elder, who guides his grandchild through the trapline — as well as through memories of his time there as a child. In a deceptively simple, conversational tone, the child relays observations alongside their grandfather’s poignant recollections, offering a Swampy Cree word at the bottom of almost every page: “I ask Moshom what it was like going to school after living on the trapline ... ‘I learned in both places,’ he says. ‘I just learned different things.’/ Pahkan means ‘different.’” Flett (who is Cree-Métis) employs a naturalistic color palette for the simple, generously spaced geometric illustrations of light brown-skinned figures, rendered in pastel on paper, then composited digitally. A deeply affecting journey of memory and history.



AWARDS & ACCOLADES

- 2021 American Indians in Children’s Literature Best Book of 2021
- 2021 Canadian Children’s Book Centre *Best Books for Kids & Teens*
- 2021 Governor General’s Literary Awards, Young People’s Literature — Illustrated Books
- 2021 *Horn Book Magazine* Best Kids Book of the Year
- 2021 New York Public Library Best Book for Kids
- 2021 Ontario Library Association Best Bets List
- 2021 *Quill & Quire* Books of the Year
- 2022 TD Canadian Children’s Literature Award

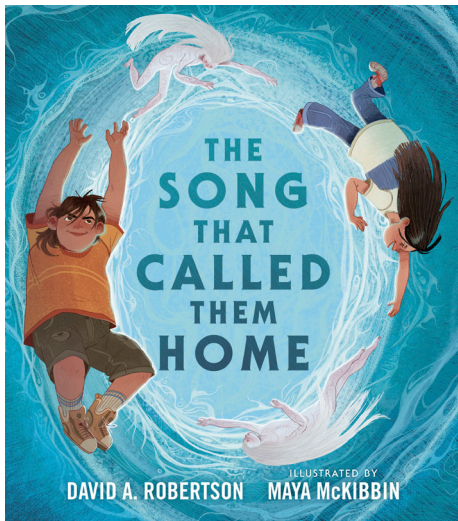
★ “Robertson’s text is as spare as Flett’s artwork, leaving plenty of space for readers to feel the emotions evoked by both.” —*Kirkus Reviews*, STARRED REVIEW

FOREIGN RIGHTS & TRANSLATIONS

French (North America): Éditions Scholastic

German (worldwide): Little Tiger Verlag

THE SONG THAT CALLED THEM HOME



Written by David A. Robertson

Illustrated by Maya McKibbin

Tundra Books/Penguin Random House Canada, 2023

One summer day, Lauren and her little brother, James, go on a trip to the land with their Moshom (grandfather). After they've arrived, the children decide to fish for dinner while Moshom naps. They are in their canoe in the middle of the lake when the water around them begins to swirl and crash. They are thrown overboard, and when Lauren surfaces, she sees her brother being pulled away by the Memekwesewak — creatures who live in and around water and like to interfere with humans.

Lauren must follow the Memekwesewak through a portal and along a watery path to find and bring back James. But when she finally comes upon her brother, she too feels the lure of the Memekwesewak's song. Something even stronger must pull them back home.

REVIEWS

★ *Kirkus Reviews*, STARRED REVIEW

On a fishing trip, Lauren and her younger brother, James, take the canoe out on the lake while their grandfather naps on the shore. The water churns, and humanoid creatures called Memekwesewak tip their boat. The children fall into the water. Dismayed, Lauren watches the Memekwesewak disappear with her brother through a waterfall. She follows “the bends and curves of the watery pathway, searching for James,” until she reaches an island and sees him dancing by a fire with the mystical creatures, caught up in the songs. And when Lauren joins him, she soon forgets why she came there. Not until the children hear the faraway drumbeats and rhythms of home do they remember their grandfather. When they stop and listen, they feel the strong pull of family, which causes the Memekwesewak to scatter. Colorful, swirling, and whimsical, the illustrations follow the lively pace of the text. Rich blues and purples capture the beauty of the night sky, bringing to life a captivating story that ultimately hinges on the love of family. An author's note explains that many Native peoples have told stories of the Memekwesewak, “one of two humanoid races on Mother Earth, the other being humans like you and me.”

A gorgeous story inspired by Indigenous legends that will lead intrepid readers on a watery adventure.



Horn Book Magazine

On an ordinary summer day, Lauren and her younger brother, James, go to the lake with Moshom, their grandfather. After the long journey, Moshom lies down for a nap. Hungry and impatient, the children decide to take their canoe out to fish. Suddenly, the boat tips over and James is taken away by the Memekwesewak (“little people”). Lauren pursues them, swimming through “a watery pathway” to another world. Finally, she meets up with James and they dance with the Memekwesewak “for hours that turned into days,” forgetting everything else until they hear their grandfather’s distant cry: “Way-oh, hey, hey / ... Come back! Hear my welcome song! / My beating drum will guide you home!” According to the appended author’s note, “Indigenous communities across Turtle Island have stories of the Memekwesewak ... [who] live between the rocks, the rapids, amid the trees of the land that provides us with life.” McKibbin’s (“an Irish-settler, Ojibwe with roots in White Earth Nation and diaspora from Zacatecas in Mexico”) illustrations depict them as white, wraithlike beings and use dark purples and blues to signal when the children have entered the underwater world. Norway House Cree Nation member Robertson here provides readers with a satisfying story about the strength of family bonds, persistence, and determination.

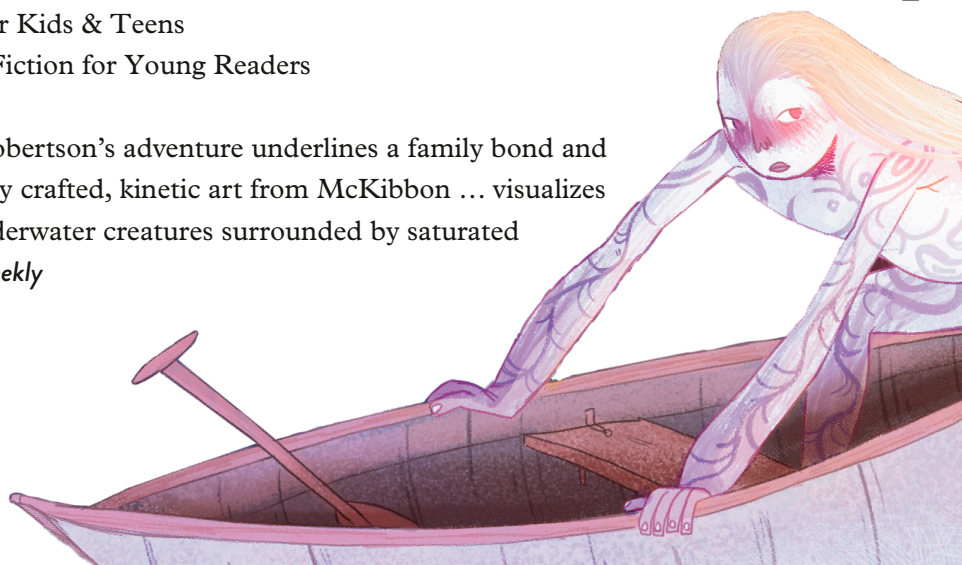
AWARDS & ACCOLADES

2023 CBC’s Best Canadian Books for Kids & Teens

2023 Chicago Public Library’s Best Fiction for Young Readers

“Tinged with mystery and peril, Robertson’s adventure underlines a family bond and anchoring traditions, while digitally crafted, kinetic art from McKibbin ... visualizes the memekwesewak as ghostly underwater creatures surrounded by saturated natural landscapes.” —*Publishers Weekly*

DAVID A. ROBERTSON



“Robertson’s text and McKibbin’s illustrations are in perfect harmony here. ... *The Song That Called Them Home* brings Indigenous mythology into the contemporary world and speaks to the importance and power of family. The exciting story and the beautiful visuals will make this a wonderful addition to anyone’s collection.” —*Canadian Review of Materials*

“Dazzling. ... [A] compelling and dynamic adventure featuring young humans and the mischievous Memekwesewak. ... The potent partnership of author and artist skillfully honors and celebrates both family and folklore.” —*Shelf Awareness*

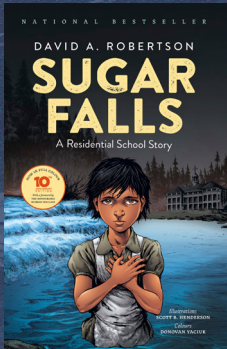
FOREIGN RIGHTS & TRANSLATIONS

French (North America): Éditions Scholastic



Illustration © Maya McKibbin from *The Song That Called Them Home*

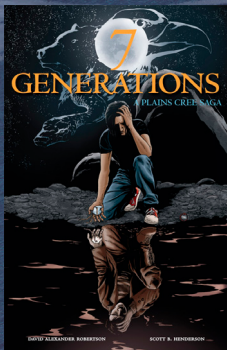
TEN MOST IMPORTANT TITLES



***Sugar Falls:
A Residential School Story***
Written by David A. Robertson
Illustrated by
Scott B. Henderson and
Donovan Yaciuk
Winnipeg: HighWater Press/
Portage & Main Press, 2011



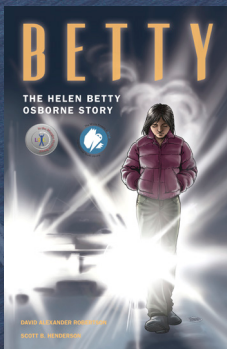
When We Were Alone
Written by David A. Robertson
Illustrated by Julie Flett
Winnipeg: HighWater Press/
Portage & Main Press, 2016



***7 Generations:
A Plains Cree Saga***
Written by David A. Robertson
Illustrated by
Scott B. Henderson
Winnipeg: HighWater Press/
Portage & Main Press, 2012



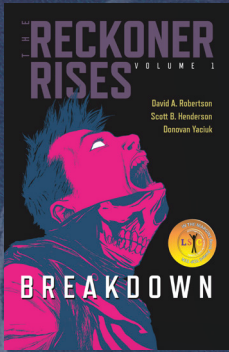
***Strangers
(The Reckoner, Book 1)***
Written by David A. Robertson
Winnipeg: HighWater Press/
Portage & Main Press, 2017



***Betty: The Helen Betty
Osborne Story***
Written by David A. Robertson
Illustrated by
Scott B. Henderson
Winnipeg: HighWater Press/
Portage & Main Press, 2015



***The Barren Grounds (The
Misewa Saga, Book 1)***
Written by David A. Robertson
Toronto: Tundra Books/
Penguin Random House
Canada, 2020



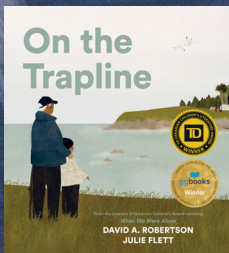
Breakdown
(The Reckoner Rises, Volume 1)

Written by David A. Robertson

Illustrated by

Scott B. Henderson, Donovan
 Yaciuk, and Andrew Thomas

Winnipeg: HighWater Press/
 Portage & Main Press, 2020

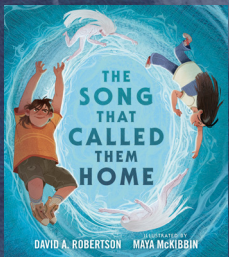


On the Trapline

Written by David A. Robertson

Illustrated by Julie Flett

Toronto: Tundra Books/
 Penguin Random House
 Canada, 2021

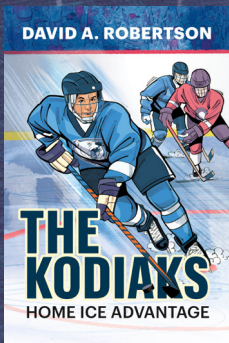


***The Song That
 Called Them Home***

Written by David A. Robertson

Illustrated by Maya McKibbin

Toronto: Tundra Books/
 Penguin Random House
 Canada, 2023



The Kodiaks:
Home Ice Advantage
**(The Breakout Chronicles,
 Book 1)**

Written by David A. Robertson

Winnipeg: HighWater Press/
 Portage & Main Press, 2024

COMPLETE BIBLIOGRAPHY

PICTURE BOOKS

- 2016 ***When We Were Alone***
Written by David A. Robertson
Illustrated by Julie Flett
Winnipeg: HighWater Press/
Portage & Main Press
- 2021 ***On the Trapline***
Written by David A. Roberson
Illustrated by Julie Flett
Toronto: Tundra Books/
Penguin Random House Canada
- 2023 ***The Song That Called Them Home***
Written by David A. Robertson
Illustrated by Maya McKibbin
Toronto: Tundra Books/
Penguin Random House Canada
- 2025 ***Little Shoes***
Written by David A. Robertson
Illustrated by Maya McKibbin
Toronto: Tundra Books/
Penguin Random House Canada

MIDDLE GRADE NOVELS

- 2020 ***The Barren Grounds***
(The Misewa Saga, Book 1)
Written by David A. Robertson
Toronto: Tundra Books/
Penguin Random House Canada
- 2021 ***The Great Bear***
(The Misewa Saga, Book 2)
Written by David A. Robertson
Toronto: Tundra Books/
Penguin Random House Canada
- 2022 ***The Stone Child***
(The Misewa Saga, Book 3)
Written by David A. Robertson
Toronto: Tundra Books/
Penguin Random House Canada
- 2023 ***The Portal Keeper***
(The Misewa Saga, Book 4)
Written by David A. Robertson
Toronto: Tundra Books/
Penguin Random House Canada
- 2024 ***The Sleeping Giant***
(The Misewa Saga, Book 5)
Written by David A. Robertson
Toronto: Tundra Books/
Penguin Random House Canada
- 2024 ***The Kodiaks: Home Ice Advantage***
(The Breakout Chronicles, Book 1)
Written by David A. Robertson
Winnipeg: HighWater Press/
Portage & Main Press



MIDDLE GRADE GRAPHIC NOVELS

2014 ***The Ballad of Nancy April:
Shawnadithit (Tales from Big Spirit)***

Written by David A. Robertson
Illustrated by Scott B. Henderson
Winnipeg: HighWater Press/
Portage & Main Press

2014 ***The Poet: Pauline Johnson
(Tales from Big Spirit)***

Written by David A. Robertson
Illustrated by Scott B. Henderson
Winnipeg: HighWater Press/
Portage & Main Press

2014 ***The Scout: Tommy Prince
(Tales from Big Spirit)***

Written by David A. Robertson
Illustrated by Scott B. Henderson
Winnipeg: HighWater Press/
Portage & Main Press

2014 ***The Land of Os: John Ramsay
(Tales from Big Spirit)***

Written by David A. Robertson
Illustrated by Wai Tien
Winnipeg: HighWater Press/
Portage & Main Press

2014 ***The Peacemaker: Thanadelthur
(Tales from Big Spirit)***

Written by David A. Robertson
Illustrated by Wai Tien
Winnipeg: HighWater Press/
Portage & Main Press

2014 ***The Rebel: Gabriel Dumont
(Tales from Big Spirit)***

Written by David A. Robertson
Illustrated by Andrew Lodwick
Winnipeg: HighWater Press/
Portage & Main Press

2016 ***The Chief: Mistahimaskwa
(Tales from Big Spirit)***

Written by David A. Robertson
Illustrated by Scott B. Henderson
Winnipeg: HighWater Press/
Portage & Main Press

YOUNG ADULT NOVELS

2017 ***Strangers (The Reckoner, Book 1)***

Written by David A. Robertson
Winnipeg: HighWater Press/
Portage & Main Press

2018 ***Monsters (The Reckoner, Book 2)***

Written by David A. Robertson
Winnipeg: HighWater Press/
Portage & Main Press

2019 ***Ghosts (The Reckoner, Book 3)***

Written by David A. Robertson
Winnipeg: HighWater Press/
Portage & Main Press



YOUNG ADULT GRAPHIC NOVELS

- 2011 ***Sugar Falls:
A Residential School Story***
10th Anniversary Edition published
in 2021
Written by David A. Robertson
Illustrated by Scott B. Henderson
and Donovan Yaciuk
Winnipeg: HighWater Press/
Portage & Main Press
- 2012 ***7 Generations: A Plains Cree Saga***
Written by David A. Robertson
Illustrated by Scott B. Henderson
Winnipeg: HighWater Press/
Portage & Main Press
- 2015 ***Betty: The Helen Betty
Osborne Story***
Written by David A. Robertson
Illustrated by Scott B. Henderson
Winnipeg: HighWater Press/
Portage & Main Press
- 2016 ***Will I See?***
Written by David A. Robertson
Illustrated by GMB Chomichuk
As told by iskwe and Erin Leslie
Winnipeg: HighWater Press/
Portage & Main Press

- 2020 ***Breakdown
(The Reckoner Rises, Volume 1)***
Written by David A. Robertson
Illustrated by Scott B. Henderson,
Donovan Yaciuk,
and Andrew Thomas
Winnipeg: HighWater Press/
Portage & Main Press
- 2022 ***Version Control
(The Reckoner Rises, Volume 2)***
Written by David A. Robertson
Illustrated by Scott B. Henderson,
Donovan Yaciuk,
and Andrew Thomas
Winnipeg: HighWater Press/
Portage & Main Press
- 2024 ***God Flare
(The Reckoner Rises, Volume 3)***
Written by David A. Robertson
Illustrated by Scott B. Henderson and
Andrew Thomas
Winnipeg: HighWater Press/
Portage & Main Press



ADULT BOOKS

- 2014 ***The Evolution of Alice***
Written by David A. Robertson
Winnipeg: HighWater Press/
Portage & Main Press
- 2020 ***Black Water:
Family, Legacy, and Blood Memory***
Written by David A. Robertson
Toronto: HarperCollins Canada
- 2022 ***The Theory of Crows***
Written by David A. Robertson
Toronto: HarperCollins Canada

ANTHOLOGIES

- 2015 ***Moonshot: The Indigenous
Comics Collection (Volume 1)***
- 2017 ***Moonshot: The Indigenous
Comics Collection (Volume 2)***
- 2020 ***Moonshot: The Indigenous
Comics Collection (Volume 3)***
Toronto: Alternate History Comics
- 2019 ***This Place: 150 Years Retold***
Winnipeg: HighWater Press/
Portage & Main Press
- 2020 ***Love After the End:
An Anthology of Two-Spirit and
Indigiqueer Speculative Fiction***
Edited by Joshua Whitehead
Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press
- 2021 ***Ancestor Approved:
Intertribal Stories for Kids***
Edited by Cynthia Leitich Smith
New York: Heartdrum/
HarperCollins Publishers
- 2022 ***Resurgence: Engaging with
Indigenous Narratives and
Cultural Expressions In and
Beyond the Classroom***
Edited by Christine M'Lot and
Katya Adamov Ferguson
Winnipeg: Portage & Main Press



PART THREE: LIST OF AWARDS

- | | |
|---|--|
| 2012 Canadian Children's Book Centre
<i>Best Books for Kids & Teens (7
Generations: A Plains Cree Saga)</i> | 2017 Governor General's Literary Awards,
Young People's Literature — Illustrated
Books (<i>When We Were Alone</i>) |
| 2013– First Nation Communities READ Award,
2014 Shortlist (<i>Sugar Falls</i>) | 2017 McNally Robinson Book for Young
People Award, Younger Category,
Manitoba Book Awards
(<i>When We Were Alone</i>) |
| 2015 Aboriginal Circle of Educations Award
for Research/Curriculum Development | 2017 TD Canadian Children's Literature
Award, Finalist (<i>When We Were Alone</i>) |
| 2015 Canadian Children's Book Centre
<i>Best Books for Kids & Teens</i>
(<i>Betty: The Helen Betty Osborne Story</i>) | 2018 CBC Books Best Canadian YA and
Children's Literature (<i>Monsters</i>) |
| 2015 John Hirsch Award for Most Promising
Manitoba Writer, Manitoba Book
Awards | 2018 High Plains Book Awards —
Indigenous Writer (<i>Strangers</i>) |
| 2016 In the Margins Book Awards,
Recommended Nonfiction
(<i>Betty: The Helen Betty Osborne Story</i>) | 2018 The Michael Van Rooy Award for Genre
Fiction, Manitoba Book Awards (<i>Monsters</i>) |
| 2016 The White Ravens,
International Youth Library
(<i>Betty: The Helen Betty Osborne Story</i>) | 2018 Shining Willow Award, Finalist
(<i>When We Were Alone</i>) |
| 2017 American Indians in Children's
Literature Best Books of 2017
(<i>Strangers</i>) | 2020 Best Juvenile/YA Crime Book, Arthur
Ellis Awards for Excellence in Canadian
Crime Writing (<i>Ghosts</i>) |
| 2017 Beatrice Mosionier Aboriginal Writer
of the Year Award, Manitoba Book
Awards | 2020 Canadian Children's Book Centre
<i>Best Books for Kids & Teens</i>
(<i>The Barren Grounds</i>) |
| | 2020 CBC Books Best Canadian YA and
Middle Grade Books
(<i>The Barren Grounds</i>) |

2020	<i>Quill & Quire</i> Books of the Year (<i>The Barren Grounds</i>)	2021	IODE Violet Downey Book Award, Shortlist (<i>The Barren Grounds</i>)
2020	USBY Outstanding International Books List (<i>The Barren Grounds</i>)	2021	Joe Shuster Awards, Shortlist (<i>Breakdown</i>)
2021	American Indians in Children's Literature Best Book of 2021 (<i>On the Trapline</i>)	2021	Manitowapow Award, Manitoba Book Awards, Shortlist
2021	Canadian Children's Book Centre <i>Best Books for Kids & Teens</i> (<i>Breakdown</i>)	2021	McNally Robinson Book for Young People (Older Category), Manitoba Book Awards, Shortlist (<i>Ghosts</i>)
2021	Canadian Children's Book Centre <i>Best Books for Kids & Teens</i> (<i>The Great Bear</i>)	2021	New York Public Library Best Book for Kids (<i>On the Trapline</i>)
2021	Canadian Children's Book Centre <i>Best Books for Kids & Teens</i> (<i>On the Trapline</i>)	2021	Ontario Library Association Best Bets List (<i>On the Trapline</i>)
2021	Diamond Willow Award, Shortlist (<i>The Barren Grounds</i>)	2021	<i>Quill & Quire</i> Books of the Year (<i>On the Trapline</i>)
2021	<i>Globe and Mail</i> Children's Storyteller of the Year	2021	Silver Birch Fiction Award, Shortlist (<i>The Barren Grounds</i>)
2021	Governor General's Literary Awards, Young People's Literature — Illustrated Books (<i>On the Trapline</i>)	2021	TD Canadian Children's Literature Award, Shortlist (<i>The Barren Grounds</i>)
2021	Governor General's Literary Awards, Young People's Literature — Text, Nominee (<i>The Barren Grounds</i>)	2021	Writers Union of Canada Freedom to Read Award
2021	<i>Horn Book Magazine</i> Best Kids Book of the Year (<i>On the Trapline</i>)	2022	Rocky Mountain Book Award, Nominee (<i>The Barren Grounds</i>)
2021	In the Margins Book Awards, Top 10 Fiction Titles (<i>Breakdown</i>)	2022	Silver Birch Fiction Award, Shortlist (<i>The Great Bear</i>)
		2022	TD Canadian Children's Literature Award (<i>On the Trapline</i>)

2022–First Nation Communities READ
2023 Award, Longlist (*The Barren Grounds*)

2022–First Nation Communities READ
2023 Award, Longlist (*The Great Bear*)

2023 CBC Books Best Canadian Books
for Kids & Teen (*The Song That Called
Them Home*)

2023 Chicago Public Library’s Best Fiction
for Young Readers (*The Song That
Called Them Home*)

2023 Honorary Doctor of Letters,
University of Manitoba

2023 Manitowapow Award,
Manitoba Book Awards

2023 McNally Robinson Book for Young
People (Older Category), Manitoba
Book Awards (*The Stone Child*)

2023 Silver Birch Fiction Award, Shortlist
(*The Stone Child*)

2023–First Nation Communities READ
2024 Award, Longlist (*The Stone Child*)

2023–First Nation Communities READ
2024 Award, Longlist (*Version Control*)

2025 Silver Birch Fiction Award, Shortlist
(*The Kodiaks: Home Ice Advantage*)





PART FOUR: OTHER FOREIGN RIGHTS & TRANSLATIONS

7 Generations: A Plains Cree Saga

French (worldwide): Éditions des Plaines

The Ballad of Nancy April: Shawnadithit

French (worldwide):
Éditions Hannenorak

Breakdown

French (worldwide): Glénat Quebec

The Chief: Mistahimaskwa

French (worldwide): Éditions Hannenorak

Ghosts

German (worldwide): Merlin Verlag

The Great Bear

French (North America):
Éditions Scholastic
German (worldwide):
Little Tiger Verlag

The Kodiaks: Home Ice Advantage

French (worldwide):
Les Éditions David

The Land of Os: John Ramsay

French (worldwide): Éditions Hannenorak

Little Shoes

French (North America): Éditions Scholastic

Monsters

German (worldwide): Merlin Verlag

The Peacemaker: Thanadelthur

French (worldwide): Éditions Hannenorak

The Poet: Pauline Johnson

French (worldwide): Éditions Hannenorak

The Portal Keeper

German (worldwide): Little Tiger Verlag

The Rebel: Gabriel Dumont

French (worldwide): Éditions Hannenorak

The Scout: Tommy Prince

French (worldwide): Éditions Hannenorak

The Sleeping Giant

German (worldwide): Little Tiger Verlag

The Stone Child

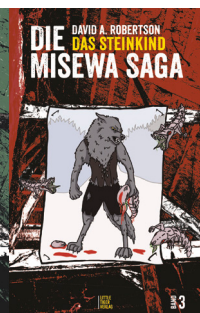
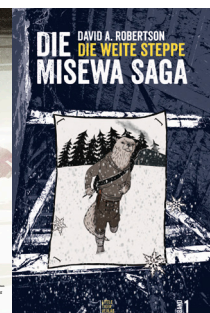
French (North America):
Éditions Scholastic
German (worldwide): Little Tiger Verlag

Strangers

German (worldwide): Merlin Verlag

Version Control

French (worldwide): Glénat Quebec



“NOT RECOMMENDED”: WHAT IT’S LIKE WHEN A SCHOOL BOARD REJECTS YOUR WORK

BY DAVID A. ROBERTSON

Published in *Freedom To Read* Volume 36 (2020)

Maybe I’d been spoiled. For 10 years, my books usually avoided controversy, although some of them dealt with heavy subjects. My picture book, graphic novels and young-adult novels met kids at their level because I worked with educators, Indigenous Elders and cultural advisers to ensure the content was accurate, age appropriate and culturally sensitive.

My books are used in classrooms and school libraries across Canada. My picture book and graphic novels get the most use, and that was always the plan. Images and words make a powerful team that allows students to draw meaning and generate empathy. That’s important in this business of reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

In the fall of 2018, I learned of a book review website created by Edmonton Public Schools. The website listed books to weed out of school libraries and classrooms. The books were primarily by Indigenous writers. My graphic novel series *7 Generations: A Plains Cree Saga* — a four-part epic that follows one Cree family over three centuries — along with several other books were “not recommended” for use.

For *7 Generations*, the reviewers had multiple concerns: “The graphic novel series contains sensitive subject matter and visual inferencing of abuse regarding residential schools. These titles are not independent reads as they require pre- and post-conversations with students regarding the legacy of residential schools and therefore not recommended.”

A growing number of Indigenous creators are writing important own voices stories that help make a teacher’s job (for example, having pre- and post-conversations with students) a bit easier. Own voices refers to marginalized characters who are written by authors from the marginalized group; they have lived experience. It’s counterproductive to have administrative bodies ostensibly take these valuable resources away. While Edmonton Public Schools didn’t intend to suggest these books be made unavailable, that’s what happened. One teacher who asked to remain anonymous messaged me. He was told to stop teaching *Betty: The Helen Betty Osborne Story*, another book of mine, because it appeared on a similar list created by Alberta Education, the provincial ministry of education.

“Representations of truth were not readily available when I was a kid. They are now, and we need to give them to, not take them away from, children of all ages.”

It would’ve been easy to get upset, but I’ve been doing this work long enough to know the reason these things happen. I, and others, have more work to do. It’s a question of readiness, and the answer can be found in the history of representation.

When I was a kid, I read comics. Historically, Indigenous representation in comics could be boiled down to stereotypes perpetuated by popular culture. The Dead Indian. The Noble Savage. The Savage Indian. These representations influenced perceptions, and they still exist today. The most effective response is making accurate depictions available. Representations of truth were not readily available when I was a kid. They are now, and we need to give them to, not take them away from, children of all ages.

Edmonton Public Schools took the list down due to public pressure. It felt like a small

victory, but it was just a band-aid on a gaping wound. It’s said that overcoming the impact of historical trauma, as it pertains to the treatment of Indigenous People, will take seven generations. Because we still live in colonial Canada, the clock has yet to start. A gaping wound needs time to heal. And there is more work to do than take a list down.

This work needs to happen at the grassroots by Canadians who recognize that they have a role in reconciliation and take meaningful action toward collective healing. This can be as simple as placing an own voices book in the hands of kids and showing them truths that have long been ignored, so they can make better decisions for us in the future.

*Courtesy of the Book and Periodical Council
(Freedom to Read Kit 2020)*



QUILL & QUIRE INTERVIEW:

BESTSELLERS: DAVID A. ROBERTSON HAS HAD BOOKS ON THE BESTSELLERS LISTS FOR A COMBINED 118 WEEKS

BY CASSANDRA DRUDI



Illustration © Julie Flett from *On the Trapline*

It's not unusual to spot David A. Robertson's name on the bestsellers charts.

The prolific author and two-time Governor General's Award winner has had multiple bestselling titles over the past year, including *The Barren Grounds* (Tundra Books, 2020), the first book in his middle-grade Misewa Saga trilogy. Follow-up title *The Great Bear* joined it on the list when it was released in September 2021.

Robertson spoke to [*Quill & Quire*] about the unexpected success of *The Barren Grounds* and the strangeness of being a bestselling author.

How does it feel to be a reliable bestseller presence?

I don't know if I ever really think of it that way. For the goals that I have for my literature — to reach as many people as possible, because I have things to say in my books that I think will move us forward to reconciliation or educate kids about important issues — the more people that are reading them, the better. I think the goals I have are somewhat being accomplished because of what I'm seeing on the bestsellers list. It's gratifying in that way.

You've just won a second Governor General's Award with illustrator Julie Flett, this time for *On the Trapline*. How important is the award attention?

You don't really ever expect to get any awards attention. It's nice to be nominated, and then to win is another level of, like, holy crap. *On the Trapline* (Tundra Books, 2021) is such a special book to me. It's about my dad, and he passed away just before it came out. Getting a GG nomination for it was probably the most I've appreciated an award nomination because of how much the book means to me. I think my dad would have been really happy.

Why do you think *When We Were Alone* keeps appearing on the bestsellers list years after it was first published?

One of the things I've said lately is that it's not really my book anymore. It's a book that belongs to survivors and families and communities. It has taken on a life of its own, and I think you'll see it pop onto the bestsellers list from time to time because people need to know. Books are a good way for people to learn, and there still aren't a lot

of books to teach really young learners about residential schools. I think *When We Were Alone* (HighWater Press, 2016) will always be a book that people go to to support their learning when they want to teach young kids a history that's really difficult to teach.

Is there anything you'd like to add about your continued bestseller status?

I just don't know, sometimes, what to think about it. There are so many amazing books

that are published in a year; it is a real privilege to see your book on this list when you know there are so many other amazing books that aren't. With *The Barren Grounds*, I think people are just connecting with it in some really strong way. It's really cool, but it's also weird. It's been on there for over a year straight, and I never would have expected that. It's so surreal.

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