



# Bringing Indigenous Culture to the classroom

by Ashweena RUMAJOGEE,  
PED3138 – FNMI

## STORYTELLING / NOVEL STUDY

### Junior

#### What is it?

Published as *Gaawin Gindaaswin Ndaawsii* and then translated, this is a picture book based on a true story about eight-year-old Irene, who is removed from her First Nations family to live in a residential school. She is confused, frightened, and homesick. She tries to remember who she is and where she came from despite the efforts of the nuns to force her to do otherwise. When she goes home for the summer holidays, Irene's parents decide never to send her and her brothers away again. But where will they hide? And what will happen to her parents when they disobey the law?

#### Who is it for?

Grades 4 to 6 (Junior)

#### Who are the authors?

Authors: Jenny Kay Dupuis & Kathy Kacer, illustrated by Gillian Newland. The book is based on the life of Jenny Kay Dupuis's own grandmother.

**Dr. Jenny Kay Dupuis** (Ojibway Anishinaabe) is a member of Nipissing First Nation. She is an educator, researcher, artist and motivational speaker who has over fifteen years' experience focusing on issues that relate to Indigenous education, leadership and diversity, engagement and the importance of relationship-building today.

**Kathy Kacer** has won many awards for her books about the holocaust for young readers, including *Hiding Edith*, *The Secret of Gabi's Dresser*, *Clara's War* and *The Underground Reporters*. A former psychologist, Kathy tours North America speaking to young people about the importance of remembering the Holocaust.

#### How can it be used in the classroom?

Through storytelling, the topic of residential schools can be introduced for the younger ones. I plan to do Read-Aloud with it.

#### What kind of learners is it for?

Storytelling has aspects that work for all 3 types of Learners. **Visual** learners appreciate the mental pictures storytelling evokes. **Auditory** learners focus on the words and the storyteller's voice. **Kinesthetic** learners remember the emotional connections and feelings from the story.

#### What pedagogical approaches does it involve?

- Storytelling
- Language
- Cultural Assimilation
- Importance of Relationships
- Belonging

### Intermediate

#### What is it?

More of a memoir for children, this novel is about Margaret Pokiak-Fenton's experiences at a Catholic residential school for Indigenous Canadian children, and what she undergoes to gain an education. Though it is unusual for Indigenous children to want to go to the 'Outsider's school,' Olemaun (Margaret's Inuvialuit name) yearns to do so. Her desire to read is so strong that she pleads with her father, who agrees to send her. Upon arriving there, she is faced with the harsh reality of those schools, and the book narrates how Margaret navigates through life at the school.

#### Who is it for?

Grades 6, 7, 8, 9 (Intermediate)

#### Who are the authors?

**Christy Jordan-Fenton**, who is the daughter in law of Olemaun, was blessed with a stepfather who loved the outdoors and often took her and her brother on day-long bike rides, and fishing and camping trips. From a young age, she was very aware of how his experiences as a Native affected both his life and the lives of her stepsiblings. She has been passionate about Native rights ever since.

**Margaret Pokiak-Fenton, Olemaun**, is Inuvialuit, which is the Aboriginal community of the Inuvialuit settlement region. When she was eight years old, she moved to join the other kids at the Catholic residential school in Aklavik. Aklavik was a residence of the fur trade, which her great-grandfather established. In her book "Fatty Legs," Margaret describes this experience and reveals her eagerness to learn how to read and her desire to join a school, despite the oppressive atmosphere present in these schools.

#### How can it be used in the classroom?

This book could be used as springboard for a discussion of the importance of culture and traditions in different groups and at the same time educating children about Residential Schools by highlighting the need to respect the human rights of all people. I plan to use it as a Novel Study Assignment.

#### What kind of learners is it for?

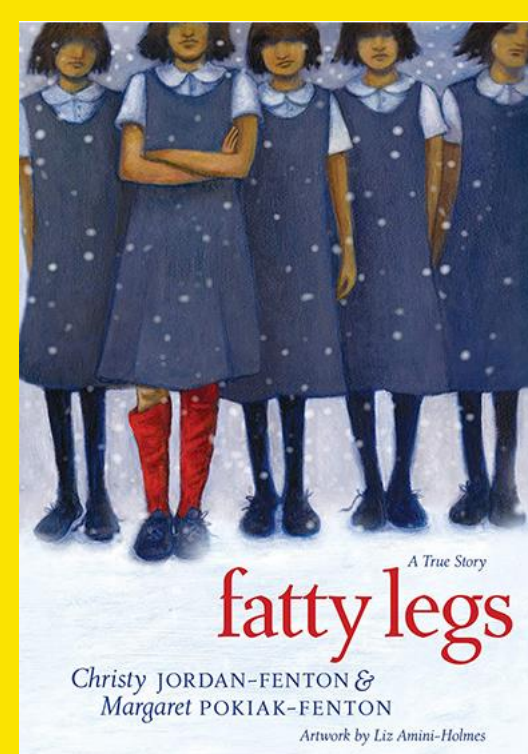
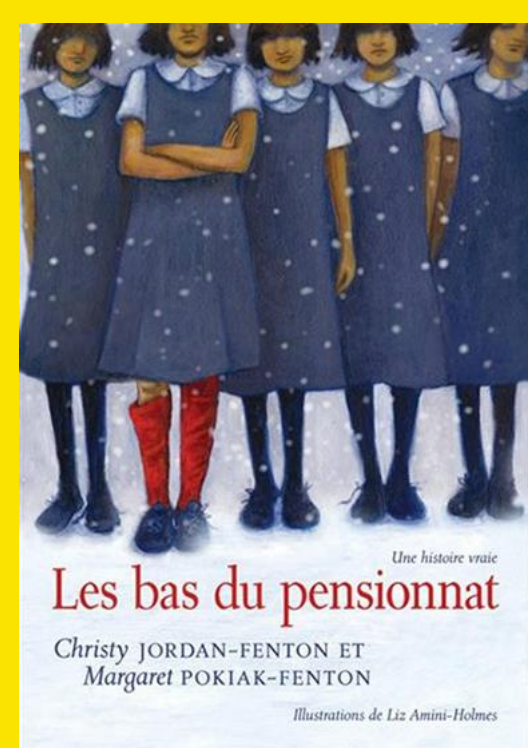
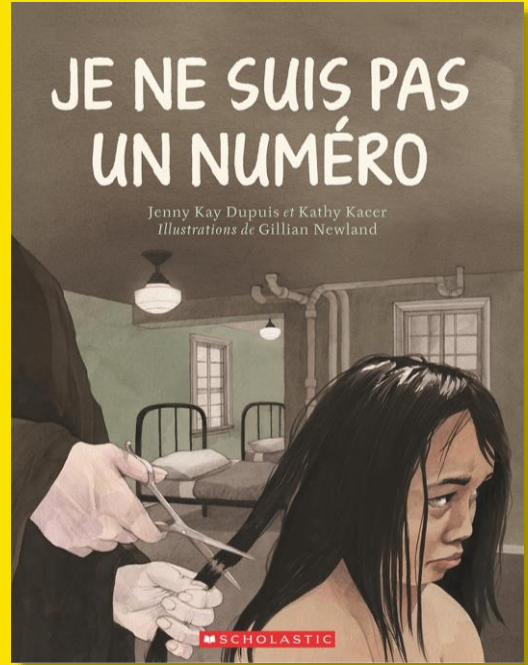
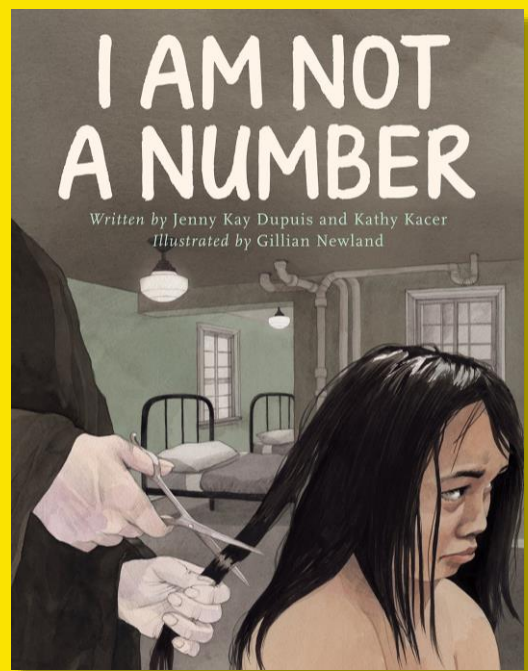
Once more, it can be used for all kinds of Learners as it covers reading, writing, listening, audiovisuals etc.

#### What pedagogical approaches does it involve?

- Storytelling, Significance of Elders
- Language, novel study
- Cultural Assimilation, Connection to the Land
- Importance of Relationships, Interaction with community, Belonging

#### Themes Addressed

- Ecosystems: Appreciating the Natural World
- Human Rights: Cultural Diversity
- Indigenous Knowledge: Rituals, Spirituality and Worldviews, Fur Trade



## INQUIRY-BASED TEACHING

### Project on *Les Sept Enseignements Sacrés* (Seven Grandfather Teachings)

#### Le projet final

1. Individuellement
2. Choisis UN (ou deux) enseignement sacré
3. Représente l'enseignement visuellement (comme art)
4. Ecris une description d'artiste pour accompagner l'enseignement

#### Les buts d'apprentissage

1. To be able to express core values and how they apply to myself
2. To be able to explain personal preferences and choices
3. To be able to understand personal preferences and choices
4. To be able to look up and explain the difference in meaning between similar words

#### Qu'est-ce qu'on a fait?

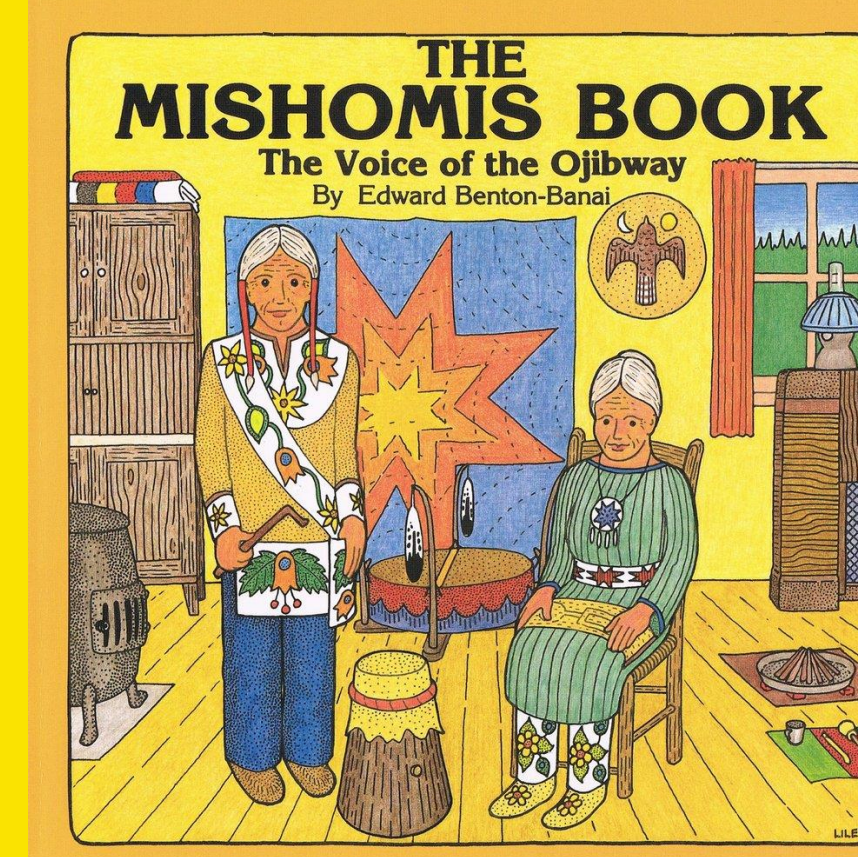
- o Faire un description d'art (Animaux, Vocabulaire d'art, Adjectifs)
- o Apprendre les 7 Enseignements Sacrés (& Grandfather Teachings) – Mishomis Book
- o Faire des descriptifs de personnalité (oral et écrit)

#### What is it?

Project Based Learning (Inquiry) on the Seven Grandfather Teachings.

Questions that students need to work on:

- What are the Seven Grandfather Teachings?
- Why are they important?
- Where did the teachings come from?



#### Book that will be used is *The Mishomis Book: The Voice of the Ojibway*

*The Mishomis Book* documents the history, traditions, and culture of the Ojibway people through stories and myths passed down through generations. Written by Ojibway educator and spiritual leader Edward Benton-Banai, and first published in 1988, *The Mishomis Book* draws from the traditional teachings of tribal elders to instruct young readers about Ojibway creation stories and legends, the origin and importance of the Ojibway family structure and clan system, the Midewiwin religion, the construction and use of the water drum and sweat lodge, and modern Ojibway history.

Written for readers from all cultures-but especially for Ojibway and Native youth-*The Mishomis Book* introduces Ojibway culture and an understanding of the sacred Midewiwin teachings, aiming to protect this knowledge by instilling its importance in a new generation. Encouraging the preservation of a way of life that is centered on respect for all living things, these vibrant stories about life, self, community, and relationship to nature are just as relevant to the modern reader as they were hundreds of years ago.

#### Who is it for?

Grades 5 and 6, touches on Social Science, French Language and Visual Arts

#### Who is the author of the *Mishomis Book*?

Edward Benton Banai is the Ojibway teacher and spiritual leader who founded the Red School House, an alternative school for Native students in St. Paul, Minnesota.

#### How can the book be used in the classroom?

His goal in writing *The Mishomis Book* was to provide students with an accurate account of Ojibway culture, history, and worldview based on the oral teachings. This book begins with the Ojibway creation story and how first man came to earth. The fifteen chapters cover the traditional teachings about the acquisition of fire and tools, the creation and meaning of the clan system, the migration of the Ojibway people from the Atlantic Coast to their present locations in Canada and the United States. The final chapter describes more recent history. Throughout the book, the author includes the use of Ojibway words and their meanings, as well as helpful maps and illustrations. Other major topics covered include the four directions, the pipe, the Midewiwin and Sweat Lodge, the Seven Fires prophesy, and the Seven Grandfathers Teaching, values and beliefs, and the role of Elders.

#### What kind of learners is the project for?

- Visual, Kinaesthetic, Auditory

#### What pedagogical approaches does it involve?

- Cultural Appropriation
- Language
- Respect for Spirit
- Significance of Elders
- Connection to the Land
- Traditions
- Holistic Understanding



## OTHER RESOURCES

### The Blanket Exercise By Kairos



#### What is it?

The KAIROS Blanket Exercise program is a unique, participatory history lesson – developed in collaboration with Indigenous Elders, knowledge keepers and educators – that fosters truth, understanding, respect and reconciliation among Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

#### Who is it for?

Middle and High School students

#### How can it be used?

The Blanket Exercise is based on a method that uses participatory education to weave storytelling and land-based learning into a one-hour exercise. Participants are walked through different phases of the exercise by a narrator, the goal being to help people encounter the history of Indigenous peoples in Canada on an emotional and intellectual level.

Objects like dolls, snowshoes and a pumpkin are used in the Blanket Exercise to illustrate the complexity of land issues. The exercise begins with participants finding a place to stand on the blankets. The narrator then opens the exercise with a glimpse into the complex Indigenous cultures on the land before the arrival of Europeans.

#### What kind of learners is the activity for?

- Visual and Kinaesthetic

#### What pedagogical approaches does it involve?

- Connection to the Land
- Traditions
- Holistic Understanding
- Experiential Learning

## Textbook

#### What is it?

Magazine-style student books focus on Indigenous communities across Canada, the need for reconciliation, and the actions people are taking to make a difference. Through these examples, students will realize that they too can have an impact and work toward reconciliation.

#### Who is it for?

Grades 4 to 8

#### Who are the authors?

Scholastic (range of authors)

#### How can it be used in the classroom?

The inquiry-based student books focus on Indigenous cultures, languages, and worldviews. They include:

- indigenous voices and perspectives throughout
- engaging texts with a range of reading levels
- a variety of text forms such as infographics, articles, profiles, comics, interviews, and descriptions, non-fiction features such as photos, captions, maps, and labels
- Contemporary stories and historical truths
- Examples of actions people have taken to promote reconciliation
- Quotes by Indigenous leaders and Elders highlighting ideas and/or issues
- Réfléchis! section to prompt further inquiry and help students connect to their own lives
- À toi de jouer! a call to take action, share your learning, taking a step-in reconciliation

#### What kind of learners is it for?

Visual, Kinesthetic, Auditory

#### What pedagogical approaches does it involve?

- Language
- Roles and Responsibility of all
- Storytelling
- Songs
- Progression of individual learning
- Holistic Understanding

