

A TEACHERS' GUIDE TO SHIN-CHI'S CANOE

Written by Nicola I. Campbell and illustrated by Kim LaFave

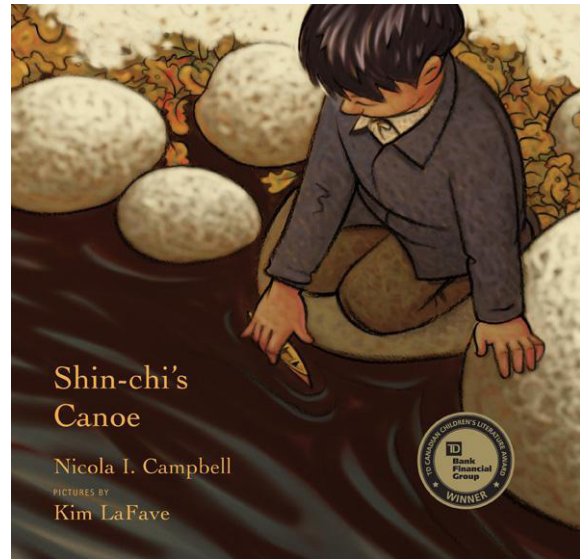
ABOUT THE BOOK

This moving sequel to the award-winning *Shi-shi-etko* tells the story of two children's experiences at residential school. Shi-shi-etko is about to return for her second year, but this time her six-year-old brother, Shin-chi, is going, too.

As they begin their journey in the back of a cattle truck, Shi-shi-etko tells her brother all the things he must remember: the trees, the mountains, the rivers and the salmon. Shin-chi knows he won't see his family again until the sockeye salmon return in the summertime. When they arrive at school, Shi-shi-etko gives him a tiny cedar canoe, a gift from their father.

The children's time is filled with going to mass, school for half the day and work the other half. The girls cook, clean and sew, while the boys work in the fields, in the woodshop and at the forge. Shin-chi is forever hungry and lonely, but, finally, the salmon swim up the river and the children return home for a joyful family reunion.

Some of the major themes presented in this story are to remember your family and their teachings even when you are not with them, to always stay strong and true to yourself even when under adversity and the importance of Indigenous cultures and what was lost during the residential school system.



Shin-chi's Canoe

Written by Nicola I. Campbell

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JUVENILE FICTION

Reading Ages 4 to 7

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Nicola I. Campbell is Interior Salish and Métis, and she grew up in British Columbia's Nicola Valley. She is the author of *Shi-shi-etko* (Aboriginal Children's Book of the Year) and *Shin-chi's Canoe* (TD Canadian Children's Literature Award, Governor General's Award Finalist for Illustration, USBBY Outstanding International Books), both illustrated by Kim LaFave. Nicola lives with her children in Rosedale, British Columbia.



ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Kim LaFave has won the Governor General's Award, the Ruth Schwartz Children's Book Award and the Amelia Frances Howard-Gibbon Award for his illustrations in *Amos's Sweater* by Janet Lunn. He also illustrated both *Shi-shi etko* and *Shin-chi's Canoe* by Nicola I. Campbell, which was a finalist for the Governor General's Award. He lives in Roberts Creek, British Columbia.



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BEFORE READING

Shi-shi-etko Book

With students, read *Shi-shi-etko*, the first book of this set.

Comparing Covers

As a class, look at the cover and predict what this story might be about. What similarities are there between the cover of this book and the cover of *Shi-shi-etko*?

Explain that this is the second book of the set and that the story is about Shi-shi-etko's little brother's first year at residential school.



No Talking at School

Read the introduction that Nicola I. Campbell wrote at the beginning of this story. Ask students: Why do you think the school wouldn't allow the siblings to talk to each other? Imagine what that must have been like for the children and describe what emotions they might have felt (confused, sad, angry, hurt, challenged, etc.).

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DURING READING

These are guiding questions that can be discussed orally — as a shared response as a class or in small groups — or completed as individual reading responses. This book should be read over a couple of days to gain the most insight from the discussions.

Evidence of Feelings Through Pictures

Ask students: Looking at the first picture in the story, how do you think Shi-shi-etko is feeling about leaving? How can you tell?

Growing Up and Gaining Independence

Shi-shi-etko and Shin-chi want their father to build them a dugout canoe while they are away at residential school so that they can learn how to paddle on their own next summer. Ask students: Can you think of something that you used to have to do with an adult but now you can do on your own?

Significance of Braids

Shi-shi-etko doesn't want a repeat of what happened the previous year when the people at the residential school cut off her braids and threw them away. She asks her grandmother to cut them for her, and afterward she and Shin-chi go "up the mountain to put their braids away." Ask students: What does this mean? Why would she return her braids to the earth? Why would Shi-shi-etko want to cut off the braids herself?

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DURING READING

Subtle Feelings

Ask students: Why do you think their father gave Shi-shi-etko a tiny canoe before they left? What evidence does the author give that lets you know how the adults are feeling about the two children leaving for residential school?

Older Sister Wisdom

Ask students: What teaching does Shi-shi-etko tell her brother? Do you think he will remember?

Comparing Siblings (We Are All Unique)

Like his sister in the previous book, Shin-chi looks at everything. Ask students: Does he look at the same things that Shi-shi-etko did? Why do you think that Shin-chi memorizes different things than she did?

Attendance at residential schools was mandatory for Indigenous children aged seven to fifteen years old. Parents who failed to send their children to residential schools often received punishments, including imprisonment.

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DURING READING

What's in a Name?

Ask students: Why do the characters in the story have English names? How do you think they felt not being able to keep their own names? How would you feel if someone came and renamed you and you couldn't be called your name anymore?

Predictions

Ask students: What do you predict might happen to the special canoe that Shi-shi-etko gives to her little brother? Will that canoe help Shin-chi to remember his memories from home?

First Night in New Surroundings

Have students imagine Shin-chi's first night at the school.

Ask students: How might he be feeling? What about his older sister — how might she be feeling about sleeping there again? What might be different about this time? (Having her brother there now, having a year's experience, etc.)

“Indian agents” had the task of keeping track of people who lived on the reserves. Since they didn't understand the ways the Indigenous peoples named one another, they simply changed the names of Indigenous peoples to Christian and/or English names. The belief was that people would assimilate to the European culture more easily and quickly when they had European names.

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DURING READING

Lonesome but Surrounded by People

In the story, it says that when winter arrives Shin-chi is feeling lonely. Ask students: How could he be feeling lonely when he is surrounded by so many other children? Can you think about a time when you were lonely? Share with the class.

Excited to Go Home

Ask students: How do you know how Shi-shi-etko and Shin-chi are feeling while they ride in the cattle truck back to their home? What evidence does the author give you to make you understand their excitement?

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AFTER READING

Short-response questions can be used to discuss and engage in writing short paragraphs. Teachers can co-construct a rubric/success criteria with students to indicate the essential elements of a written short response.

Significance of the Dust Following the Truck

When Shi-shi-etko and Shin-chi are traveling to the residential school, the dust on the road hurts their eyes and noses and is said to be following them like a snake. On the way home from the school, the dust “rose around the cattle truck like a great big butterfly.” Ask students: Why is the dust depicted differently, when for both trips the children are in the same cattle truck traveling along the same roads?

Activity: Have students depict the two trips visually in a drawing, painting, collage, etc.

Curriculum Connection: the Arts

Older Sister Responsibilities

Ask students: How does Shi-shi-etko show that she is a caring and loving older sister throughout the book?

Is Stealing Okay?

When Shin-chi makes a friend named “John,” the boys start stealing food from the school. Ask students: Are they justified in their actions? Why or why not? You may wish to create a debate in class and have students defend each point of view.

Author's Messages

Ask students: What do you think is the underlying theme of the story? What do you believe the author is trying to teach us by writing this story? What is the author's message?

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CROSS-CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS

Media Literacy

Have students create an advertisement or poster for their own canoe to sell.

Language / Drama

Ask students: What messages would you like to pass along to your friends without talking? Have students work with a friend to come up with their own special sign language for a few messages.



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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Web Resources

Losing their traditional names:

“The Indian Act Naming Policies.” Working Effectively with Indigenous People (blog), Indigenous Corporate Training Inc., March 11, 2014. <https://www.ictinc.ca/indian-act-naming-policies>

Residential school history:

Hanson, Erin. “The Residential School System.” Indigenous Foundations (First Nations and Indigenous Studies, the University of British Columbia), 2009.

http://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/the_residential_school_system/

Stripping children of their identities:

Quan, Douglas. “‘Assault’ on residential school students’ identities began the moment they stepped inside.” *National Post*, June 2, 2015.

<http://nationalpost.com/news/canada/assault-on-residential-school-students-identities-began-the-moment-they-stepped-inside>

100 Years of Loss: The Residential School System in Canada (an education program by the Legacy of Hope Foundation):

http://legacyofhope.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/100-years-print_web.pdf