unusual but effective colours he has chosen, and the mysteriousness of the
supernatural figures and the owls for whom they are named. Yet despite the
stylization of the background and the gods, the owls themselves are drawn with
intrinsic detail. Without anthropomorphizing the owls in any way, Springett has
conveyed their emotions and personalities through the subtle use of colour and
expression, bringing them alive and making them uniquely individual.

Whowill introduce young readers to both good story telling and fine art
splendidly. It is, however, an equally good book for adult readers because the
story is mythic and thought-provoking, while the illustrations are superb. Few
picture books written and illustrated by different people achieve such a harmony
of story and picture. And among the many excellent picture books available from
Canadian authors and illustrators, Who stands with the very best.

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A CREE GRANDMOTHER’S TALE

wanisinwak iskwesisak: awasisasinahikanis: Two Little Girls Lost in the
Bush: A Cree Story for Children. Freda Ahenakew, ed. Nehiyaw/Glecia Bear,

Memories of a “terrible time” in the mid 1920s in northern Saskatchewan are
brought to readers of Two Little Girls Lost in the Bush through original Cree,
translated English words and stark mood-evoking paintings. Social history and
language lesson are combined with a delightful children’s story where words
and pictures interact.

In the tale, Nehiyaw (Glecia), aged eleven, and her little sister, Gigi, aged
eight, watch over a cow at calving time, following it into the thick bush. When
the cow gets stuck and the two little girls realize they are lost, Glecia takes
charge, caring for her little sister, and proving herself level-headed, courageous
and resourceful. The girls find that an owl is not the traditional bearer of bad
news or cause for fear but a guide to rescue. All segments of the community take
part in the two day search for the lost girls, the priest leading the prayers and the
Hudson’s Bay Company manager providing the gear—and, in the end, new
clothes for the modest, needy girls.

The life of the time is revealed through narrative details about such things as
flour-sack clothing, lanterns and wagons, the devout practice of Roman Catholi-
cism, and the Cree social structure.

The book requires a flexible reader since the translator has maintained oral
storytelling rhythms which may seem like awkward repetitions in written
English: “And I had been to church early that morning to take communion, I had gone with my mom to take communion ...”

The boldly original paintings by the Saskatchewan Cree artist, Jerry Whitehead, tell the story with evocative stark colours. Large severe figures reflect the sombre mood, the faces especially revealing struggle in a harsh landscape.

The original text is part of a larger collection of women’s life experiences, *konkominiwak otacinowiniwawa: Our Grandmothers’ Lives, as Told in Their Own Words*, published by Fifth House in 1992, with commentary and explanatory notes.

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**OLD STORIES GET NEW LIFE**


Theytus Books, the Penticton Native press, has republished its 1984 series in a large, full-colour format suitable for reading with young children, with a new artist as illustrator. The book serves as an excellent introduction to Native folklore for older children.

The three “lesson stories” in the series clearly state teachings at the end and can be used to help children think about the values of sharing, self-sacrifice and reverence for life in all forms. By comparing nature with humanity they explain that spirits, nature and humans are all one.

**How Names Were Given** begins the series teaching that everything on earth has been given a purpose, that real importance comes with the responsibility to help others, and that even our failings can be turned to good. The tale relates how before the People-to-be (humans) came, the Great Spirit decided that all the animals were to be given a special name and task. The selfish coyote decided that he wanted the most special name and task. Coyote, the bragger and trickster, does not receive an important name, but receives an important task.

**How Food Was Given** tells a tale of the world before this one, controlled by four chiefs who agree to let only one be in control. Bear, Salmon, Bitterroot and Saskatoon Berry, speaking for all living things, agree to lay down their lives providing themselves as food for humans when they arrive on earth. This moving story illuminates one of the most basic of Native values: the human