

# Spirit Bear: Echoes of the Past Based on a True Story



Written by Cindy Blackstock  
Illustrated by Spotted Fawn Productions

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**Echoes of the Past**  
Based on a True Story

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**DEDICATED TO** all of the truth tellers  
who stand courageously for human rights and dignity.

Special thanks to the Lekwungen-speaking peoples  
of the Songhees and Esquimalt First Nations,  
the City of Victoria, the family of Peter Henderson Bryce,  
and the Beechwood Cemetery Foundation.



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**WE ARE** the City Family in Victoria, BC. The Songhees and Esquimalt Nations, and the City of Victoria, brought us all together to work hard on reconciliation. We made a big decision together, to remove the statue of John A. Macdonald from the front steps of City Hall. It made the hall a more welcoming place for everyone to come in. We're so happy that Spirit Bear was inspired to make this book when he heard about us. We like his story very much. As for us, we don't yet know how our story ends.

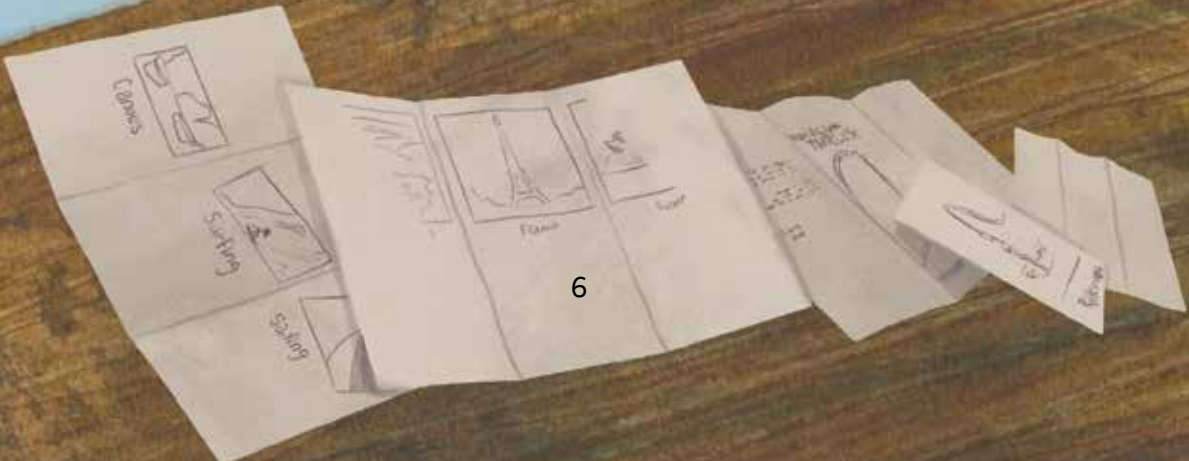
FAIRNESS





Hi everyone! My name is Spirit Bear and I was born in a huckleberry patch in the Carrier Sekani territory in British Columbia. I am a *Bearrister*, which means when I see something wrong, I have to learn about it and try to help. For the past 13 years, I have been trying to make sure First Nations kids get the help they need when they need it so they can grow up safely with their families, get a good education, and be healthy and are proud of who they are. It's been a long journey, so, I'm going to take care of myself and go on a vacation with my Mom (Mary the Bear), Uncle Huckleberry, my sisters Memengwe, Cedar Bear, and Era Bear, and our good friend Lak'insxw!







“It’s time to go on a vacation, cubs!” said my mom, Mary the Bear. “Where do you want to go? Remember that we want to leave a small carbon paw print to help the environment.”




My sister Cedar Bear said, "I want to go to New York City to see all the shops!"



“Are there roller coasters there?” I asked.  
“That’s too far away” Mom said, “and besides, we would all have to get *pawsports!* We live in Canada and New York City is in another country called the United States of America.”



An illustration of two bears in a futuristic airport terminal. The bear on the left is light brown and wearing a pink shirt. The bear on the right is dark brown, wearing a pink cap, a light pink shirt, and a dark blue vest. They are both holding and looking at a document that resembles a passport or travel card. The background shows a large, arched structure with a grid pattern, possibly a ceiling or a wall, and some mechanical equipment on the left.

My other sister Memengwe asked, “Mom, what is a *pawspport*?”

“A *pawspport* is just like a human passport but for bears,” Mom replied. “It says what country you are from. You need a *pawspport* to visit another country.”

“That seems weird!” I said.

“Uncle Huckleberry told me bears did not need *pawports* until the settlers came and put up fences. Before then, First Nations peoples, who now live in Canada and the United States, had ways of welcoming each other instead of checking pawports and searching through your luggage.”

“That’s right, Spirit Bear,” Mom said. “First Nations respected their neighbours and had ceremonies to welcome them and make sure they were well cared for while they visited.”



“Mom, does that mean the New York City stores would welcome me and take care of me?” asked Cedar.

“Things have changed now Cedar Bear,” said Mom. “The stores will welcome you, but you can’t take anything unless you have money to pay for it. That means if you don’t have a lot of money it’s harder to get what you need.”

I added, “That’s part of what I’m trying to fix, Cedar. Mom says every cub and child is sacred and they all deserve help—even if their parents don’t have a lot of money.”



# BEAR FOODS



Mom tells us, “You don’t need lots of money when you have lots of love! That is why we share what we have with others so no one goes without.”

Cedar smiled. “Sharing is good. Are we going to share our vacation with someone Mom? Where are we going?”





Just then I saw something moving in the bush. “Look! It is Uncle Huckleberry and Lak’insw! They are coming with us on our vacation too!”



“It’s super cool to be here in the homelands of the Lekwungen-speaking peoples!” said Uncle Huckleberry.

“I can’t wait to go fishing. The fish here are HUGE!”

“Yes,” Lak’inswx agreed, “but first we have to introduce ourselves to the community and get permission to be on the Songhees and Esquimalt First Nations territory.”



“That is the respectful thing to do!” said Uncle Huckleberry.  
“I will come with you and after that I can take a nap because  
these cubs have lots of energy and are tiring me out!”



"This is *pawsome*! When are we having lunch?" I asked.

"Spirit Bear, we just had breakfast... you will have to wait for lunch," my Mom told me.

"I have to go to the bathroom!" my sister Era Bear said.

Mom sighed. "You just went!"

"I know, but I have to go again!" she insisted.

"Me too, the wind has messed up my fur!" Cedar exclaimed.





Early the next morning, Uncle Huckleberry came out of the tent. “Mornin’ Mary! I hope the coffee pot is on. Those cubs have a lot of energy!”

“Good morning, Huckleberry,” Mom said. “I’m glad you and Lak’inswx are helping to keep an eye on them!”



Era was *beary* excited. "Let's go, Mom! I want to see the whales!"










“Mom, what is ‘Victoria?’” Cedar said. “I thought we were in the homelands of the Lekwungen-speaking peoples, the Songhees and Esquimalt First Nations.”

“We are, Cedar. The settlers named it Victoria after they came.”

“I like the way the First Nations peoples named their land better!”

I pointed and asked, “Why are they taking down that statue?”  
Era added, “It looks like some people are mad about it and  
other people are happy.”



An illustration of a modern building with the words "CITY HALL" and a crest on its facade. Two workers in orange safety vests and blue hard hats are on a raised platform in front of the building, handling a large, brown, draped object. The background is a light blue sky with soft clouds.

Uncle Huckleberry explained to us, “That’s a statue of John A. Macdonald. He was the first Prime Minister of Canada. Some people only remember the good things he did; others only remember the bad. We have to learn from the good and the bad parts of history—things that happened in the past—so we can make better decisions now and for future generations of cubs and children!”

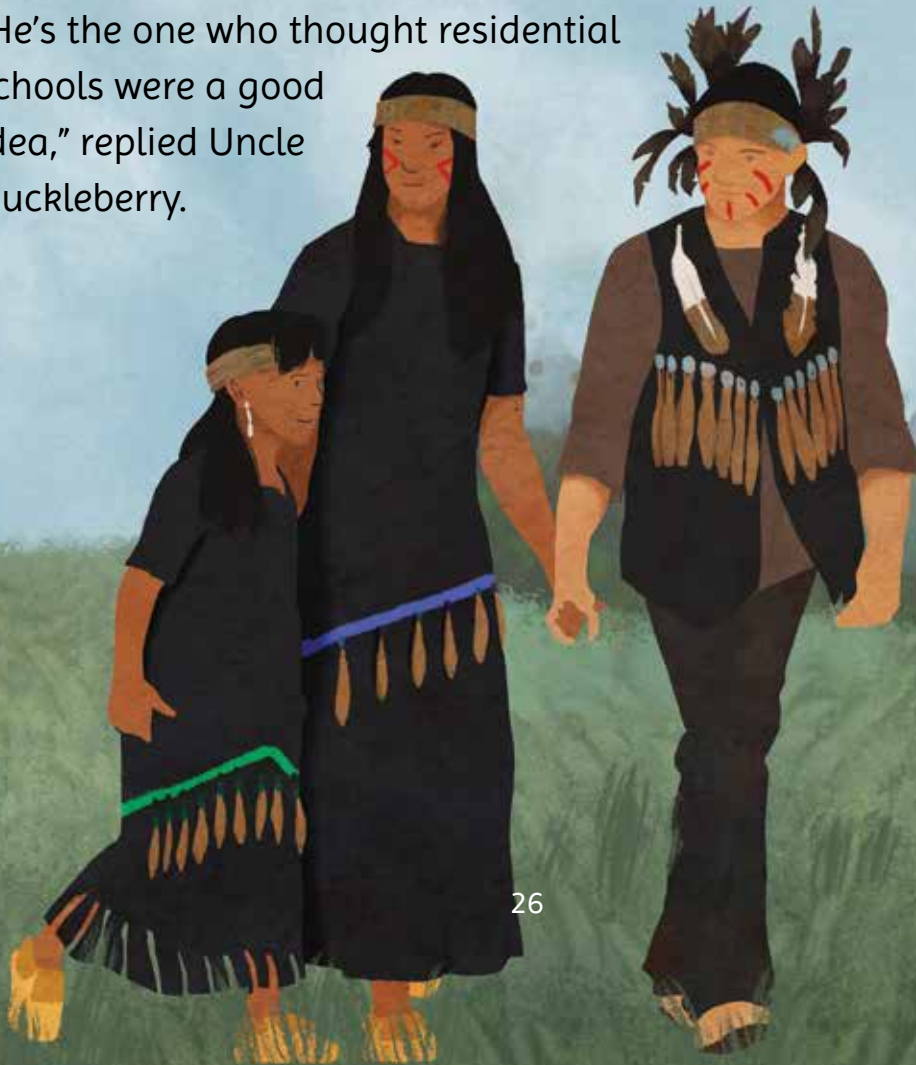
Cedar asked, “What does ‘Prime Minister’ mean Uncle Huckleberry?”

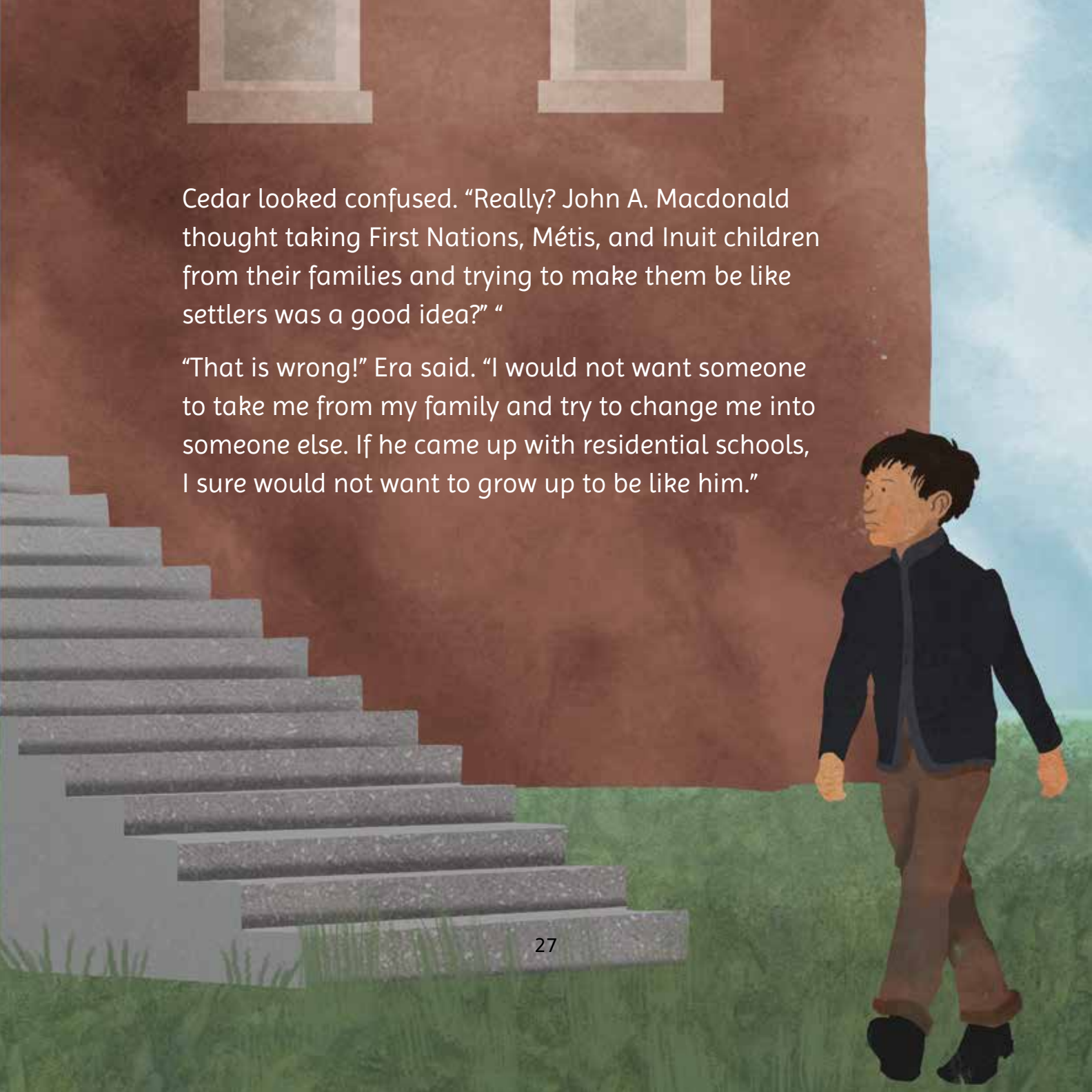


“A Prime Minister leads the country along with some other people. They decide how to spend money and what laws to make.”

“What did John A. Macdonald do that was bad?” I asked.

“He’s the one who thought residential schools were a good idea,” replied Uncle Huckleberry.





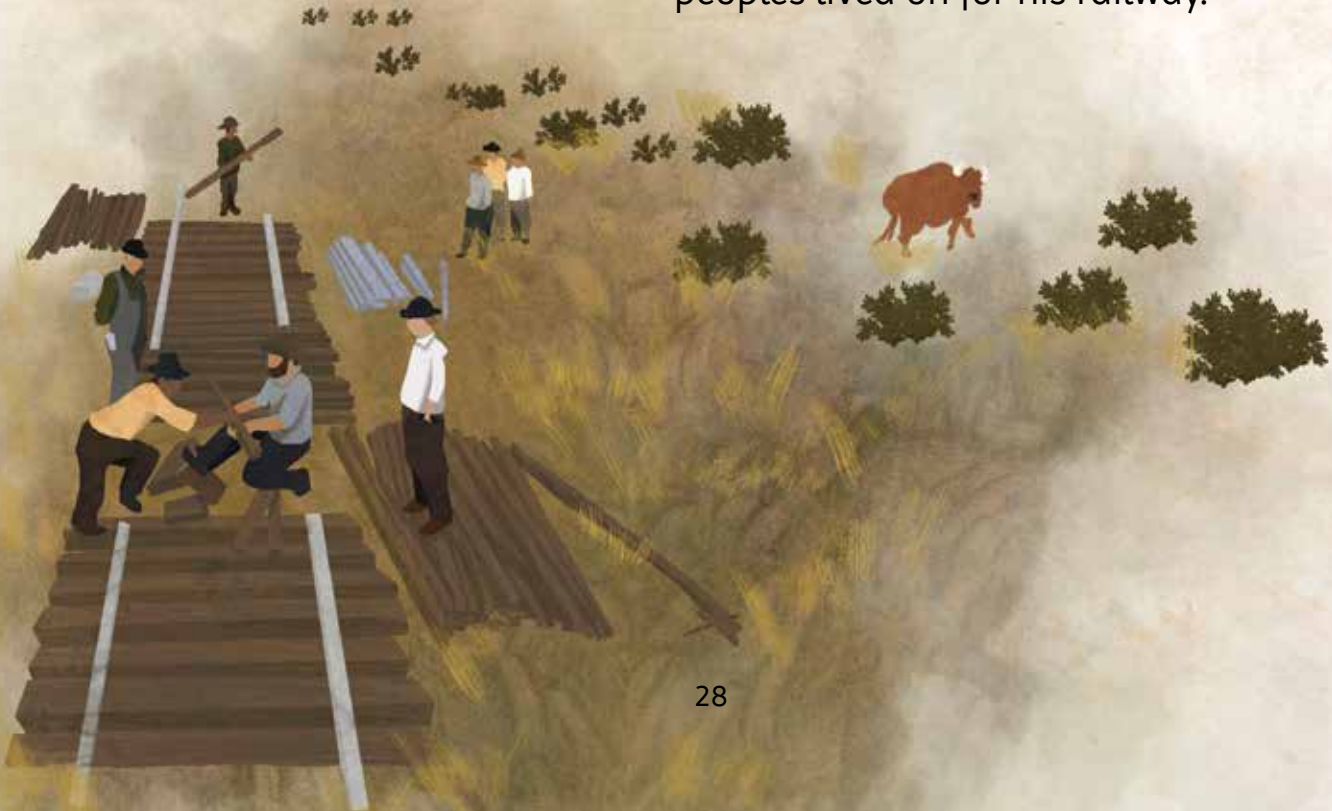
Cedar looked confused. “Really? John A. Macdonald thought taking First Nations, Métis, and Inuit children from their families and trying to make them be like settlers was a good idea?” “

“That is wrong!” Era said. “I would not want someone to take me from my family and try to change me into someone else. If he came up with residential schools, I sure would not want to grow up to be like him.”

Lak'inswx added, "John A. Macdonald also made sure a railroad was built connecting British Columbia with the rest of Canada."

"That sounds good," I said.

Lak'inswx went on, "Yes, some of that was good because it helped bring goods, like food, to people. But the way he did it was bad. He wanted the plains that the First Nations peoples lived on for his railway."



That was their home, and they did not want to leave. But John A. Macdonald forced them onto reserves and made sure the buffalo that the First Nations depended on for food and clothing were all gone.”

Cedar looked sad. “Will the buffalo come back?”

Lak’insxw put her paw on Cedar’s shoulder and said, “Thankfully, the First Nations are bringing buffalo back to the prairies now!”

Cedar was relieved!



“This statue is coming down because it’s right next to City Hall. This is where a lot of First Nations peoples have to go to get things done. The statue is being stored somewhere until they figure out how to use it to teach people about Canada’s history.”

“What does reconciliation mean, Uncle Huckleberry?”  
Memengwe asked.





“It means learning from the past so we don’t repeat the same mistakes and making the world a better place for all humans and animals.”



“Uncle Huckleberry, who do you think will get the biggest fish?  
You or me?” I asked.





“Hey, Mom! Everyone! It’s Cindy the Sheep, and she has kids with her!”





“I’m happy to see you Cindy and Jake!” I said. “What are you doing here? I’m on a family vacation!”

Cindy said, “After helping you with the court case to get equal services for First Nations kids, I told some students what was going on. They decided to learn more about First Nations and how they can help with reconciliation.”

Jake walks up and says, “Hey, Spirit Bear! How is my big reconciliation bear buddy? Meet my Aunt Mia!”





“What have you done on your vacation so far?” Cindy asked.

I was excited to share what we had done. “We went fishing and I... well... Cedar caught a big fish. And we went swimming and ate lots of ice cream! Speaking of reconciliation, we saw a statue of John A. Macdonald coming down!”





Jake said, "Cindy and I saw that too! I wonder what they will do with it?"



“Maybe they will do something like folks did for Dr. Peter Henderson Bryce!” said Cindy. “Do you remember, Spirit Bear? We went to visit his grave many years ago to say ‘thank you’ for all he did to help First Nation, Métis, and Inuit children.”

“Cindy, who was Dr. Bryce?” asked Era.





“Dr. Bryce worked for the federal government in 1907. He went to check on the health of the kids in residential schools and found a lot of them were very sick. They had less medicines and health care help than other kids in Canada. Dr. Bryce told the government that they needed to end the unfairness and help the kids in residential schools get healthy again. The federal government said it cost too much money and a lot of kids got sicker. Some even died.”

“And when the government told him they would not help the kids,” I added, “Dr. Bryce put his story in the newspapers so the entire world could see. Some people spoke up, but a lot didn’t so the government did not help the kids.”

“That is why it is so important that all animals and people speak up when something wrong is happening! We have to look out for each other,” Mom said.



# THE EVENING CITIZEN

OTTAWA, CANADA, FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 1907—10 PAGES.

GREAT FAMILY JOURNAL  
Five Cents

## SCHOOLS AID WHITE PLAGUE

Quitting "Quack" Pills  
Resisted.

## AMONG INDIANS

Absolutely Inattention To  
State Regulations  
of Health.

A special section of the  
Evening Citizen, published  
last night, contains a  
report on the progress of  
the epidemic in the  
Indian reservations. It  
states that the health  
department has been  
informed that the  
Indians are not only  
ignorant of the danger  
but are also indifferent  
to the regulations of  
the health department.  
It is stated that the  
Indians are not only  
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but are also indifferent  
to the regulations of  
the health department.

In November 1907, the Evening Citizen (now the Ottawa Citizen) carried Bryce's report on the front page with the headline "Schools Aid White Plague." Other newspapers across Canada also covered the story, prompting Samuel Hume Blake, a lawyer and pamphleteer, to write in 1908 that Ottawa, "in doing nothing to obviate the preventable causes of death, brings the department within unpleasant nearness to the charge of manslaughter.



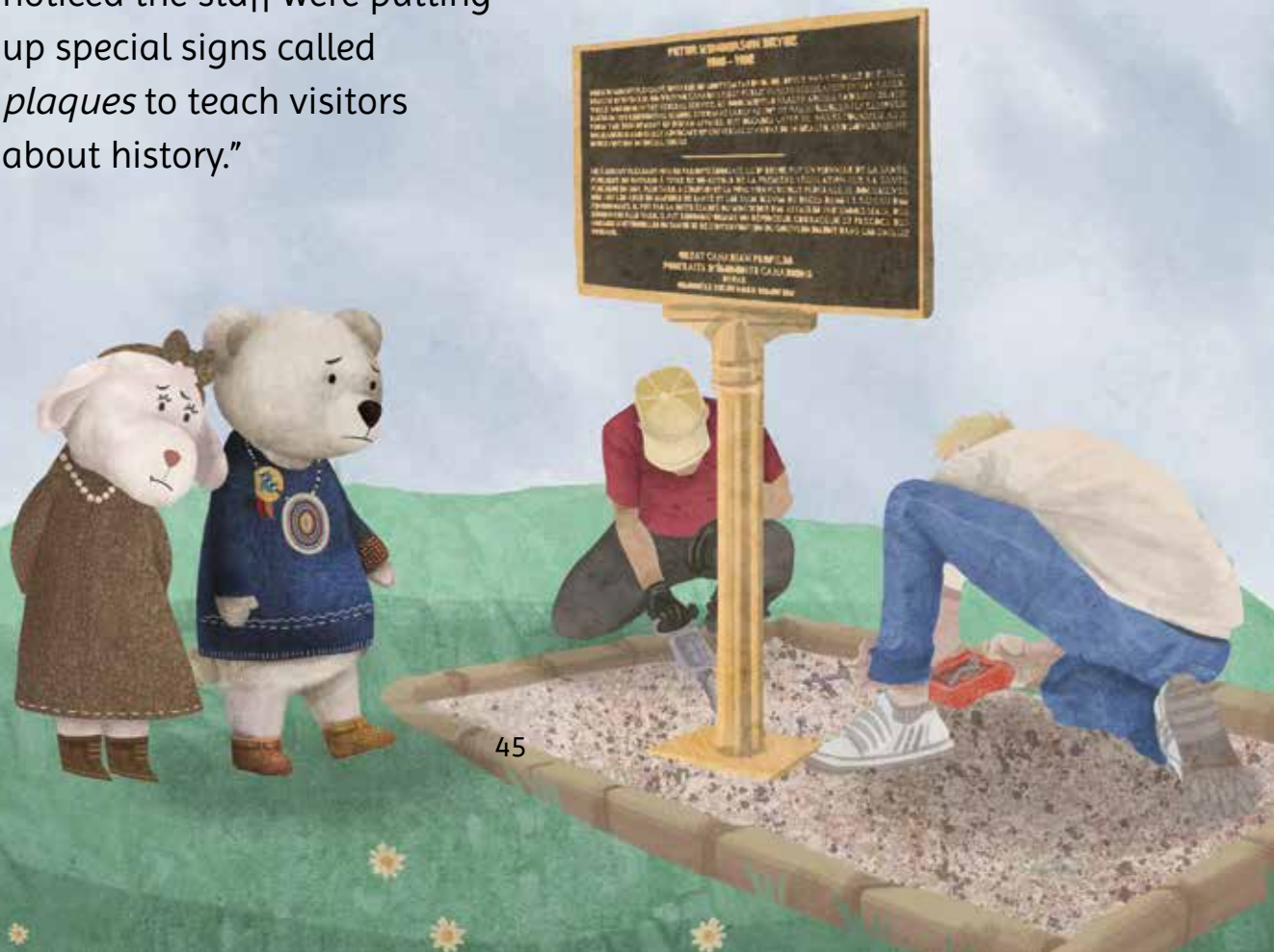


BRYCE  
PETER HENDERSON BRYCE  
1877-1952  
MATE LYNDIE PARDON  
1885-1971

DR. BRYCE  
Thank you for...  
Edward M. Lee

“What does Dr. Bryce have to do with the removal of the statue?” Era asked.

“Well ...” Cindy said, “one day, when Spirit Bear and I went to visit Dr. Bryce’s grave at Beechwood Cemetery in Ottawa, we noticed the staff were putting up special signs called *plaques* to teach visitors about history.”



“Just when Cindy and I said, ‘Dr. Bryce needs a plaque!’, a fox walked out of the forest. The fox said to us: ‘Hi there! My name is Echo. I am a fox and I live here at Beechwood and I take care of people who are feeling sad and I help out with other stuff too.’”



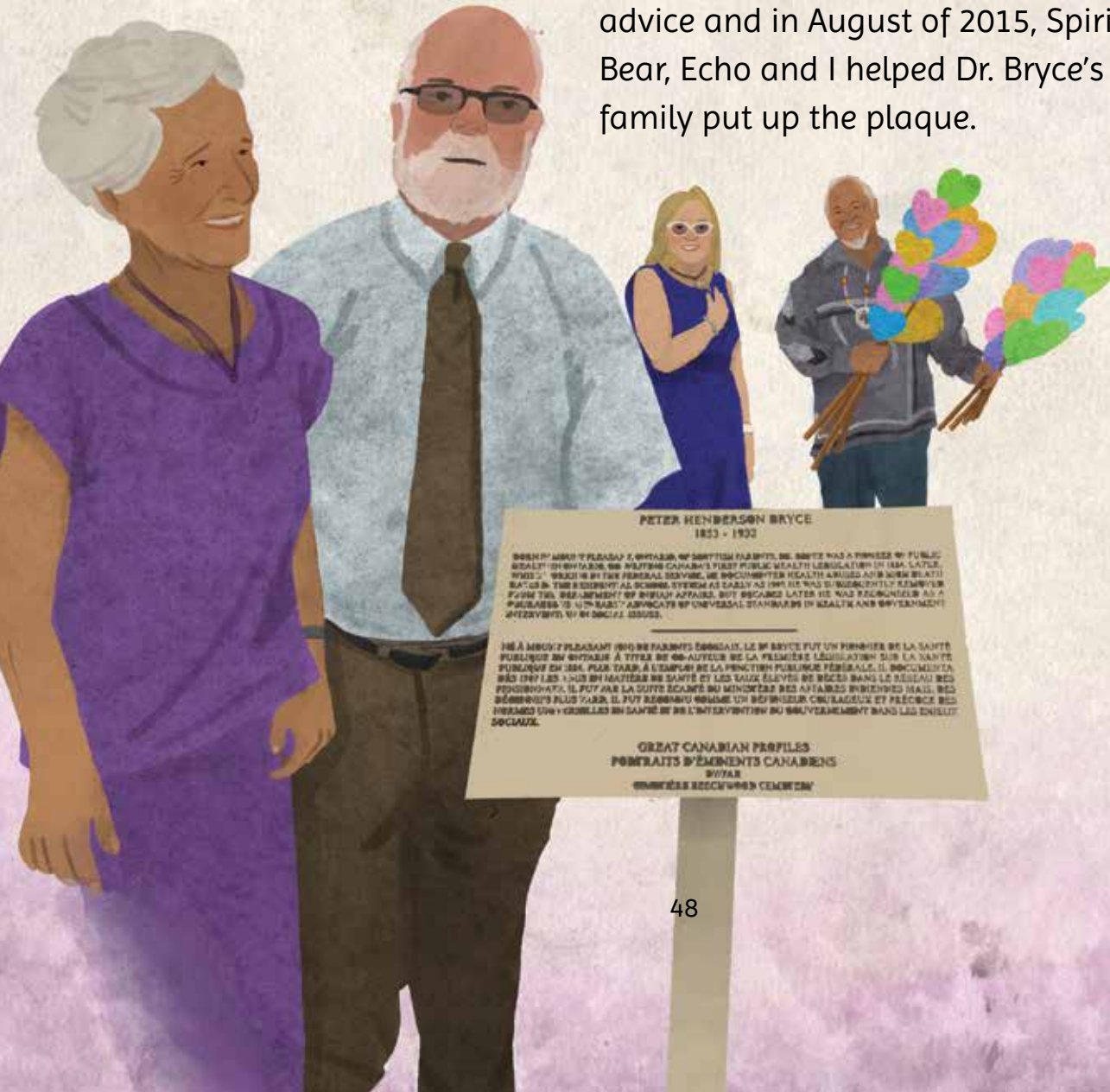


“Yes,” said Cindy, “and then I said, ‘Nice to meet you Echo! Can you help us get a plaque for Dr. Bryce?’”

I went on. “Echo told us that the first thing we needed to do was to talk to Dr. Bryce’s family and with the people who ran the cemetery. Next, we needed to talk to Elders and people who study history so we get the words on the plaque right.”



Cindy said, "We followed Echo's advice and in August of 2015, Spirit Bear, Echo and I helped Dr. Bryce's family put up the plaque.



**PETER HENDERSON BRYCE**  
1853 - 1932

BORN IN ABERDEEN, SCOTLAND, OF SCOTTISH DESCENT, DR. BRYCE WAS A PIONEER OF PUBLIC HEALTH IN CANADA. HE INTRODUCED CANADA'S FIRST PUBLIC HEALTH LEGISLATION IN 1884. LATER, WHILE WORKING IN THE FEDERAL SERVICE, HE IMPLEMENTED HEALTH AND SANITATION MEASURES IN THE DOMESTIC SCHOOL SYSTEM AS EARLY AS 1901. HE WAS DISTINGUISHEDLY MEMBER OF THE PARLIAMENT OF BRITAIN AFFAIRS, BUT ESCAPED LATER HE WAS RECOGNIZED AS A PIONEER IN CANADA'S ADVOCATE OF UNIVERSAL STANDARDS IN HEALTH AND GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION IN SOCIAL ISSUES.

NE À ABERDEEN, ÉCOSSE, DE DESCENTE ÉCOSSE, LE DR BRYCE FUT UN PIONNIER DE LA SANTÉ PUBLIQUE EN CANADA À TITRE DE CO-AUTEUR DE LA PREMIÈRE LÉGISLATION SUR LA SANTÉ PUBLIQUE EN 1884. PLUS TARD, À L'ÉPOQUE DE LA PRATIQUE PUBLIQUE FÉDÉRALE, IL IMPLÉMENTA DÈS 1901 LES MESURES DE SANTÉ ET LES TAUX ÉLEVÉS DE NÉCESSAIRE DANS LE NIVEAU DES ÉCOLES. IL FUT PAR LA SUITE SCARNE DU MINISTÈRE DES AFFAIRES BRITANNIQUES MAIS, DES ANNÉES PLUS TARD, IL FUT RECONNU COMME UN DÉFENSEUR CHALEUREUX ET PRÉCOCE DES INTERÊTS DES GÉNÉRALISÉS EN SANTÉ DE SE L'INTERVENTION DU GOUVERNEMENT DANS LES ENJEUX SOCIAUX.

**GREAT CANADIAN PROFILES**  
**PROFILS D'ÉMINENCES CANADIENNES**  
BRYCE  
COMMÉMORATION CANADIENNE

Echo was so excited that a lot of other people and animals came to honour Dr. Bryce too.”



“Echo told us there were other people in Beechwood who were involved in residential schools,” I said.  
“So, we put up more plaques and made sure the words on them would help people learn from the past.”

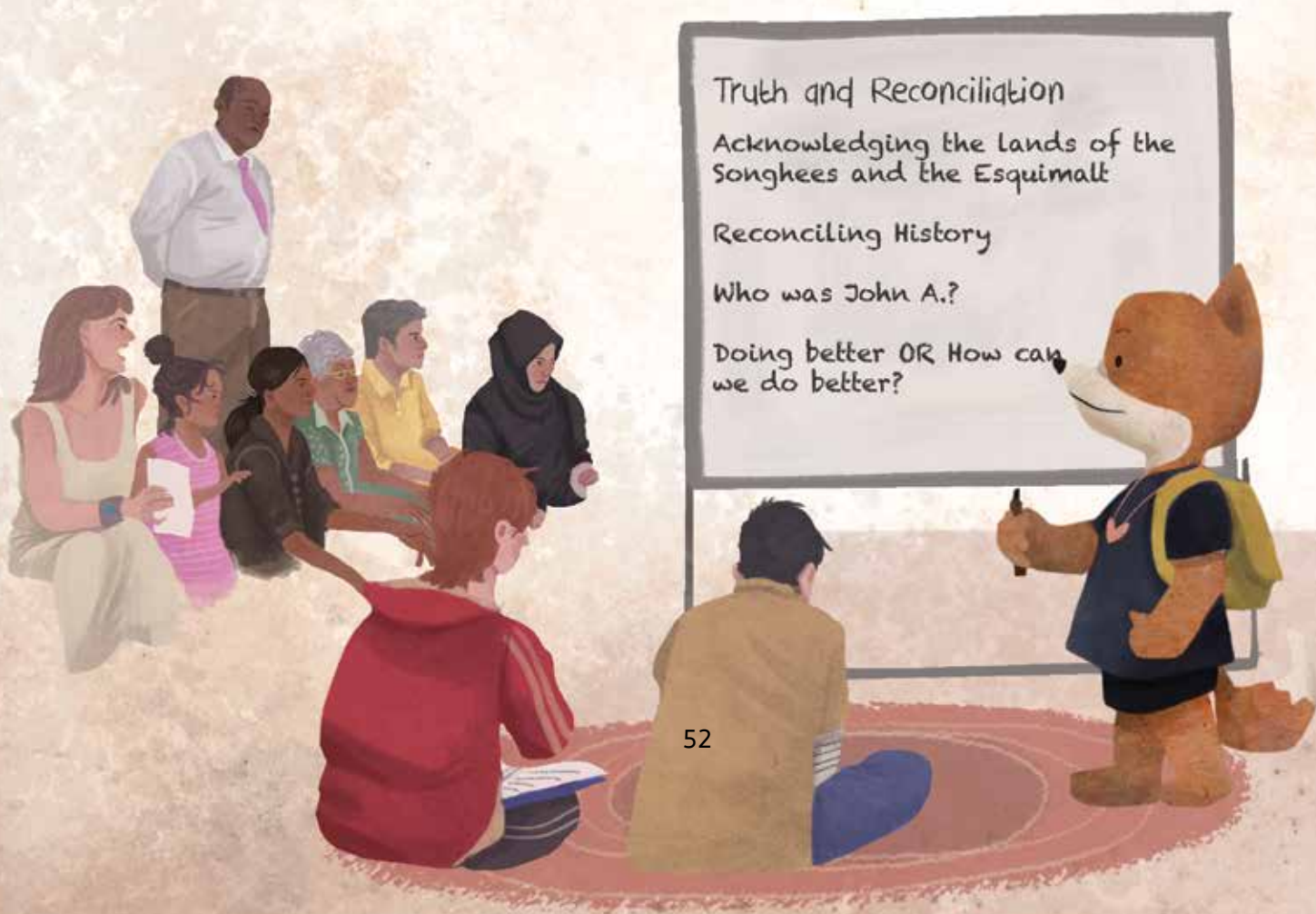


Cindy added, “Yes, and now people and animals can see all the residential school plaques at Beechwood Cemetery and learn from the past to make things better today. It’s called ‘Reconciling History.’”



Cedar suggested, “Maybe Echo could come to Victoria and help them put up a plaque for John A. Macdonald that helps people learn from the past too!”

“That’s just what I was thinking Cedar,” said Mary, “and to make sure we teach it in schools!”







“That’s why every May and June, Echo, Spirit Bear and I visit schools to plant heart gardens,” said Jake.

“What’s a heart garden, Jake?” Cedar asked.







"It's when children draw pictures honouring the children in the residential schools and then we cut them into heart shapes and plant them in a garden."

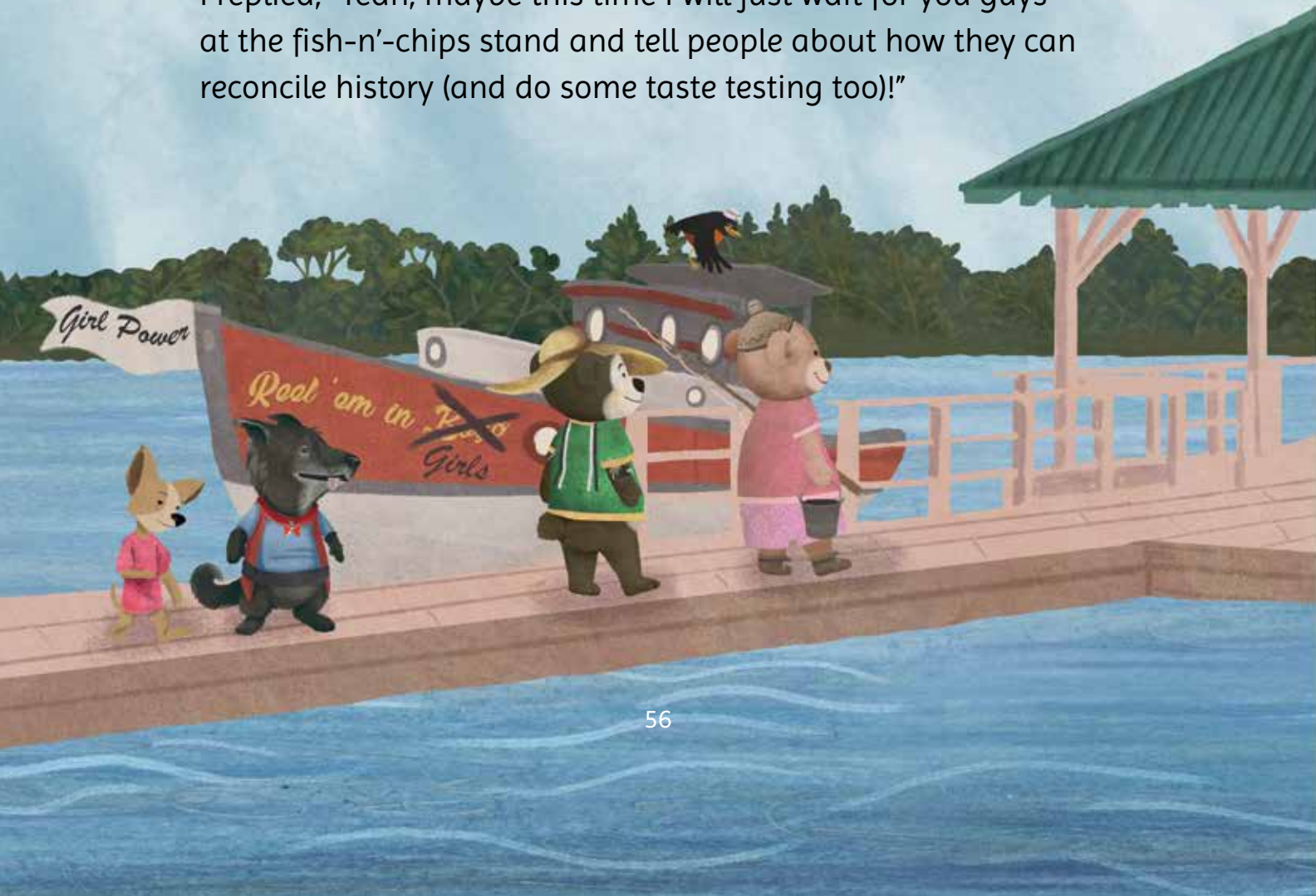
"That sounds pretty!" Cedar exclaimed. "Can we do one now?"



Later that day, I was getting hungry so I asked Uncle Huckleberry for food.

He said, "You better ask your sister to go fishing again!"

I replied, "Yeah, maybe this time I will just wait for you guys at the fish-n'-chips stand and tell people about how they can reconcile history (and do some taste testing too)!"





## Timeline

**1497** Explorers from England and France start arriving in North America and begin saying the land is theirs even though First Peoples have lived here for tens of thousands of years.

**1843** Explorers set up a trading post on the Songhees and Esquimalt territory (today known as Victoria).

**1862** The United States start asking people from Canada to provide a letter signed by the Governor General to come into their country. These are the first passports.

**1867** Canada becomes a country of its own.

**1870s** First Nations across the prairies rely on buffalo for food, shelter, clothing and ceremony. Settlers hunted and killed millions of buffalo until there were none left.

**1876** The *Indian Act* becomes a law. This law tries to control First Nations peoples. It is the law that made residential schools happen and unbelievably, the *Indian Act* is still law in Canada!

**1879** Canada starts taking First Nations, Métis, and Inuit kids away from their families and putting them in residential schools. Kids were not allowed to speak their language or celebrate their culture and were often treated badly by the adults in the schools.

**1881–1885** The Canadian Pacific Railway is built from Eastern Canada all the way to British Columbia. The Government of Canada forces First Nations from their homelands to make room for the railroad.

**1878–1882** John A. Macdonald, Canada's first Prime Minister, serves as the Member of Parliament for Victoria, BC although he never visited the city until after his term is over.

**1907** Dr. Peter Henderson Bryce finds children at residential schools were getting less health care than other kids meaning they get sick more often and many die. Dr. Bryce tells the Government of Canada to end the unfairness and help the kids but it refused.

**1920** The Government of Canada orders all First Nations kids to go to residential schools.

## Timeline (continued)

**1922** Dr. Bryce writes a book called *A National Crime* to try to help First Nations, Métis, and Inuit kids get the help they need but the Government of Canada ignores him again.

**1996** The last residential school closes in Canada but taking First Nations, Métis and Inuit kids away from their families for so many years has left a lot of sadness behind.

**2007** Spirit Bear, the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society and the Assembly of First Nations start a legal case to show that the Government of Canada giving less help to First Nations kids is against the law.

**2008** A walkway, "Signs of Lekwungen," is built to honour the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations.

**2015** The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (called the TRC for short) writes a book about residential schools and things we can all do (called Calls to Action) to make sure First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples are treated fairly and respectfully today.

**2015** Dr. Bryce's family gathers with residential school survivors at Beechwood Cemetery to place a historical plaque at his burial place so people can learn from his example.

**2016** Spirit Bear and his friends win the legal case and the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal tells the Government of Canada that it has to treat First Nations children fairly.

**2018** John A. Macdonald's statue is taken down in front of Victoria City Hall.

**2020** The Songhees and Esquimalt Nations, along with the City of Victoria hold a gathering to talk to people about what they should done with John A. Macdonald's statue and to promote the TRC Calls to Action.

**2020** Spirit Bear is still working on the legal case because the Government of Canada is still not following the law and treating First Nations children fairly. But thanks to his work, and that of the children, First Nations kids are getting more help than ever before.

**2020** Wanuskewin Heritage Park in Saskatchewan welcomes the first baby bison in 150 years.

Photo courtesy of  
Wanuskewin Heritage Park



Find learning resources and fun and free ways you can help  
at: [www.fncaringsociety.com](http://www.fncaringsociety.com)



Photo courtesy of Wanuskewin Heritage Park



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For the past 13 years, Spirit Bear has been working hard to make sure First Nations children get the help they need when they need it so they can grow up safely with their families, get a good education, and be healthy and proud of who they are.

It's been a long journey, and Spirit Bear needs a vacation! He and his family set out for Songhees and Esquimalt territories (Victoria, British Columbia) for their holiday adventure. Along the way, they see a statue of John A. Macdonald—Canada's first Prime Minister—being removed from the steps of Victoria City Hall. Some people have signs that say, "Save the statue," and others have signs that say, "The statue must go!" Spirit Bear and his family learn why people disagree and how we can learn from the good and bad parts of history to make better decisions now and for future generations of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit kids.

\$15.00



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