

Six Seasons of the Asiniskaw Īthiniwak

Community Magazine



August 2026



Credits & Acknowledgements

Six Seasons of the Asiniskaw Īthiniwak

Magazine Credits

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Some of the Six Seasons team celebrating the launch of *Amō's Sapotawān* book, accompanying teacher's guide and picturebook app in 2022 (photo by Naniece Ibrahim at the University of Winnipeg).



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Introduction to Magazine

The idea of working together on a community magazine arose when Mavis Reimer, Project Director of the Six Seasons of the Asiniskaw Ithiniwak Project, suggested that we needed to find a way to share overall project results with asiniskaw ithiniwak (Rocky Cree) community members, researchers, participants, and the public. Jill Taylor-Hollings, Melanie Braith, and Jessie Taylor were given the task to brainstorm about what would be a good medium. So, after many discussions, we proposed a few ideas, but the concept of a community magazine was chosen by the core Knowledge Keepers and team members during several meetings. It is impossible to include everyone who was involved in this very large Six Seasons project and everything that was learned over nearly a decade (2017–2026). However, we aimed to capture the essence of different groups of people who contributed, what we learned, and some of the many research outputs. As we go to print, we are in Nipin (summer) and we hope that you enjoy the magazine! Hiy hiy!

Teaching Young People about the Old Ways: How the Six Seasons Project Began

By: William Dumas and Mavis Reimer (Project Leaders)

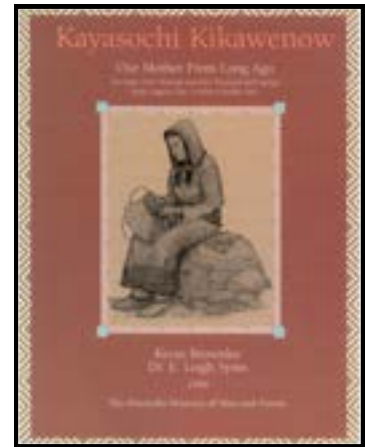
In 1993, Bruce Tait and Bob Moose from O-Pipon-Na-Piwin Cree Nation (OPCN) found a burial site on the eroding banks of Nagami Bay in South Indian Lake, erosion caused by the dramatically fluctuating water levels due to hydro-electric dams. A year later, the community excavated the site with the help of archaeologists and anthropologists from the Manitoba Museum and found the well-preserved remains of a young woman, pieces of the clothing in which she had been buried, beads from a necklace, and various tools carefully placed at her side. Elders from OPCN gave permission to the scientists to work with the Ancestor and her burial belongings, observing that “[t]hese are gifts from the ancestors to today’s generation. They are to be used by our youth to learn about the old ways and gain respect for the past”.

Archaeologists Kevin Brownlee and E. Leigh Syms pieced together the story of the young woman’s life from the evidence found at the burial site. They deduced that she had died sometime in the early 1640s, had been in her mid-twenties when she died, had given birth several times, and that she was in generally good health, among other things. The details of their work were reported in a book entitled *Kayasochi Kikawenow, Our Mother from Long Ago* (1999). William Dumas was then a teacher in OPCN and involved in the reburial of the ancestor the Elders named Kayasochi Kikawenow. While he appreciated the careful and respectful museum publication, he was not convinced that this book fully honoured the Elders’ observation that the purpose of the ancestor’s reappearance was to teach the young people of his community about the old ways.

In 2006, William approached Mavis Reimer at the University of Winnipeg to help him to create a

picture book about the young woman found at Nagami Bay. At the time, Mavis had recently established the Centre for Research in Young People’s Texts and Cultures (CRYTC). She was intrigued by William’s account of the Nagami Bay woman and, while creating picture books was not something she had ever done before, she agreed to support William in his project.

Together, we began to imagine what a picture book that told the story of Kayasochi Kikawenow in compelling ways might look like. We knew that the story should focus on her as a girl in order to appeal to young people, and that it also would have to provide explanations



and contexts for Rocky Cree culture in the mid-17th century. We knew, too, that the illustrator who produced the pictures to accompany the story would have to be well supported by Knowledge Keepers, historians, and archaeologists in order to ensure that the world they created was historically, geographically, and culturally accurate. We wanted to tell the story in digital forms, so that it could be heard as well as seen. Above all, we wanted to ensure that this material made it into the hands of young people, in school classrooms and beyond classrooms.

And, so, our journey began, to build a team of storytellers, Knowledge Keepers, translators, illustrators, narrators, historians, archaeologists,

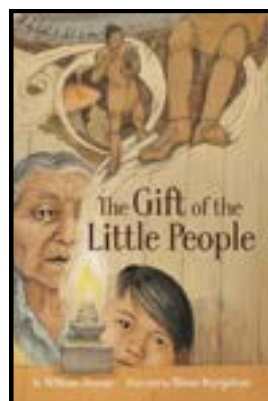
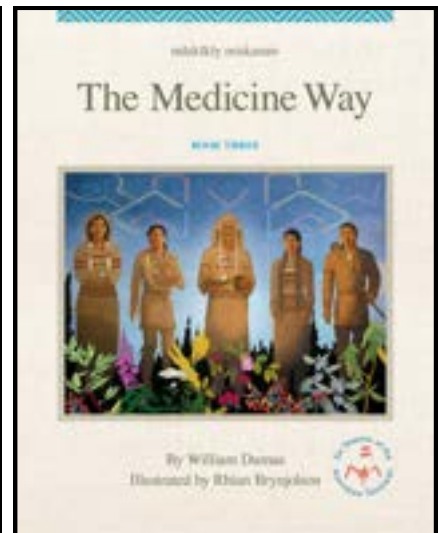
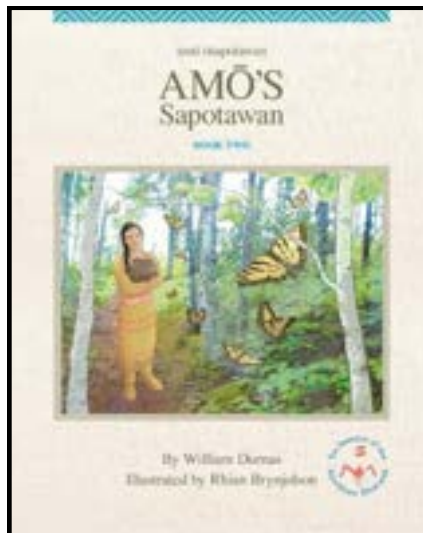
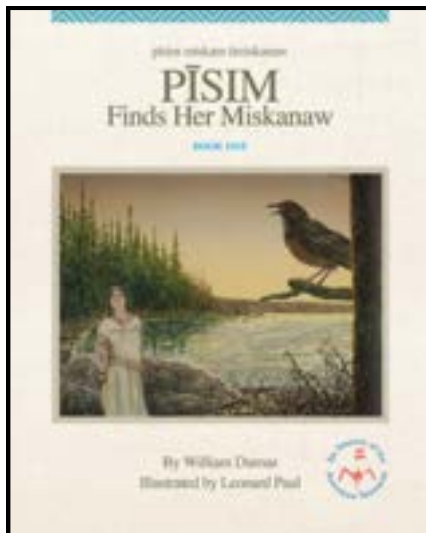
teachers, and curriculum designers who were willing to collaborate across the differences of northern and southern locations, community and academic researchers, Rocky Cree and settler cultures. Almost 20 years later, we have completed three beautiful picture books and will soon finish the third digital picturebook app and third teacher's guide in what has come to be known as the Six Seasons project.

It's been a long road, not without its pitfalls and challenges. But, over the many years of our walk together, we have learned much. Perhaps most importantly of all, we have learned that it is not only possible but also profoundly rewarding to work respectfully together across our differences to create the gift of story for all of our children who will inherit the world we build for them.



Project leaders Mavis Reimer and William Dumas giving a presentation at the Manitoba Aboriginal Languages Strategy Annual Language Symposium in 2022.

The Six Seasons Children's Historical Fiction Picture Books



Other Six Seasons Picture Books





Project Director

Developing Project Proposals

By: Mavis Reimer

The work that has been undertaken by the research team on the Six Seasons of the Asiniskaw Īthinīwak project would not have been possible without access to generous funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) to cover the costs of travel between northern Manitoba and Winnipeg, the salary of a project manager, honoraria for Knowledge Keepers from Rocky Cree First Nations, and support for student researchers, among other things. We know that there are many important projects waiting to be undertaken in northern communities and that most of them will need funding to be completed.

There are various sources for grants at local, provincial, and federal levels. To apply for funding from any of these sources, a group needs to write a proposal that clearly explains their project and their reasons for requesting funding. I think of the process of writing grant proposals as answering a series of questions.

The first question is an important one to spend some time reflecting on: What do you want to learn? Sometimes, this question could be asked in other ways: What do you want to know? What do you want to do? What do you want to document? Every grant proposal should start with one or two sentences or, at most, a short paragraph that explains in simple language what the main purpose of the project is.

The second question is closely related to the first: Why is your purpose an important one? Why do you want to do what you're proposing to do? How will what you learn be of significance to other people – your communities, region, or country?

Once you have articulated what you want to know and why this is an important question to answer, you need to think about what is already known about this subject. Has anyone in your group already started some work on this or a related question? Are there other communities or groups that have undertaken similar projects? Can you find any published books or articles about the topic? Knowing what has already been said about the subject you want to study can help you to explain how your question is the same as and different from what other groups have done and said.

The next step is to consider how you will answer your question or questions. Will you gather Knowledge Keepers in sharing circles? Will you send researchers to archives or museums to study documents, pictures, or cultural objects? Will you ask land users to take you onto the land to experience sites of historical, cultural, or spiritual importance?

This is the section some templates for grant proposals call the “Methods” section. You might well have several different pathways for considering your question. An important part of answering the how question is to decide how long the research is likely to take.

It's a good idea at this point also to consider what the main obstacles to completing your work might be. Can you suggest ways that you can overcome these obstacles if they arise?

Once you know the what, the why, and the how of your project, you can think about who needs to be involved in your project. Who will you need to undertake the various research pathways you've identified? Can you name the primary people who will do this work? Will you recruit other participants once the project is underway? Will you have an advisory group to guide you in setting directions or solving problems as you move along?



A visual representation of the process of preparing grant applications.

Finally, you need to figure out what all this work is going to cost by developing a budget. Common items to include in a budget are travel, personnel, gathering, and equipment costs. Often an organization tells you the maximum amount it will award as a grant. If you think that what you want to do cannot be done for that amount of money, you may have to return to your statement of purpose, your methods, or some of the other questions, and rework them. For example, can you choose only one method instead of several to answer your question? Can you do your work with fewer people or at only one location?

In fact, the process of writing a grant proposal is always a circular one rather than a linear one. Thinking about one question might give you an idea

for how to answer an earlier question better. If you're finding it difficult to answer a how question, for example, you might realize that you have not formulated your what and why questions as precisely as you should. Sometimes when you're thinking through the budget, to take another example, you'll recognize that you've forgotten to name some of the groups or individuals you will need to consult.

When you can answer all these questions, you will have a strong proposal to use for the purposes of applying for funding AND, just as importantly, a solid plan for beginning the work you want to do.





Community Members



Heart of the Project: Carrying on the Work

By: Mackenzie Anderson

In June 2024, members of the Six Seasons project met in Thompson to discuss traditional Rocky Cree archery, hunting, clothing, and medicine gathering. The knowledge that was shared during this meeting is a crucial element of the third book in the Six Seasons series: *māskikiy miskanaw: The Medicine Way*. The meetings brought together Knowledge Keepers from O-Pipon-Na-Piwin Cree Nation (OPCN), Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation (NCN), and researchers from University of Winnipeg and Lakehead University. One of the participants was me, a student in the University of Winnipeg's Indigenous Summer Scholar's Program (ISSP). My own research project carried out during our meeting consisted of conversations with the Knowledge Keepers about their views on the Six Seasons project, its importance, and research processes. These conversations were deeply personal as I have family ties to the communities. I am a member of Pinaymootang First Nation on my Father's side and my Mother is a member of NCN with ties to OPCN.

Speaking with the Knowledge Keepers about their experiences with the Six Seasons project, I noticed that conversations centred around three main themes: reconnecting with the land; youth empowerment; and cultural continuance. This speaks to the ways in which the books in the Six Seasons series, *Pisim Finds Her Miskanaw* and *Amō's Sapotawan* aspire to support the resurgence of Rocky Cree history, language, and culture. On that weekend in Thompson, the Elders shared knowledge and stories that they have kept for generations, which goes into the production of the third book, *māskikiy miskanaw: The Medicine Way*. As all the Knowledge Keepers have made clear in conversations, their motivation is to empower their youth to reconnect with traditional knowledge.

Knowledge Keeper Larry Tait emphasized the role of his own grandparents in his upbringing and stressed the importance of preserving language and teaching embedded within it. He spoke about the importance of going out on the land to learn. Larry works with the Land Based Program at the Family and Community Wellness Centre at NCN. The program brings young people from the community on the land where they learn how to hunt and fish, etc. The program is, similar to the Six Seasons books, organized around different activities for each season.

Clifford Hart, a Knowledge Keeper from NCN, agreed with Larry in emphasizing the value of sharing traditional knowledge and learning from the land. He noted that people often take the land for granted. Clifford, who works with the NCN Nehetho Culture and Education Authority, believes that teaching on the land can help instil cultural pride.

Jennie Tait works in NCN at the Otayitiskiwin Kiskinwahamakamik School and is also the chair

of the Asiniskaw Īthiniwak Mamawiwin. She agreed that students learn well on the land. Jennie mentioned how there is often a certain tranquility that the students feel while on the land. To her, this is a key aspect in the empowerment of Rocky Cree learners. Jennie mentioned that one of the Rocky Cree pedagogies is the gradual release model, following the principle of "I do, we do, you do". She emphasized the value of visual and hands-on learning. Jennie also stressed the significance of social skills and a sense of belonging in shaping students' identity, stating that language is an integral part. Peter Flett, a Knowledge Keeper from NCN, who also works with the Wellness Centre's Land Base Program, highlighted the importance of making mistakes when learning out on the land. As an example, he told a story of how students were learning how to fillet fish. If one makes a mistake, it doesn't matter, because, as he joked: "there's always more fish".

Kevin Tait, who worked with the same program agreed with Peter. He emphasized how the kids who attend the land-based education camps often want to stay out on the land even after the camp time is over. Kevin shared a video with us that showed scenes from the Land Based program and one of its camps for young people. In the video, he showed a young man how to pick medicine and spoke about giving thanks for harvesting it and not taking more than is needed—lessons also woven into the Six Seasons books.

Wilbur Wood, a Knowledge Keeper from OPCN, has been working with the Six Seasons project for years and was involved in the publication of *Amō's Sapotawan* and the companion app, emphasized how important it is that young people learn about their culture. He used the example of hunting to illustrate how crucial it is to pass on intergenerational knowledge through hands-on learning.

Continued The importance of hands-on learning does not only apply to young Rocky Cree people. As all Knowledge Keepers reflected on the importance of learning and the central role that the land plays in Rocky Cree education, Kevin pointed out the irony that our conversation took place in a hotel meeting room, disconnected from the land that we had been talking all weekend long. “Next time, we should meet out on the land when we talk about how the Rocky Cree hunt”, he suggested. Rather than speaking about these activities in the abstract, researchers would then be conducting hands-on research in the Rocky Cree tradition.

Bringing Six Seasons to the Classroom: Learning from Youth Community Members

By: Margaret Dumas and Jill Taylor-Hollings

As Mackenzie explained so well, experiential or hands-on learning is very important to the Rocky Cree and the Six Seasons team. Margaret is an experienced Indigenous educator working in Thompson, Manitoba and in Nisicawayasihk Cree Nation, where most students are asiniskaw itiniwak. She and other curriculum team members have been testing the Six Seasons books, apps, teachers guides and related materials in classrooms for years. This example is at the heart of why the Six Seasons project began and why we are all doing this research and tangible learning outputs - to share information with youth and discuss asiniskaw itiniwak language, archaeology, history and culture.

Margaret incorporated the *Gifts of the Little People* book into classroom teachings with her students, creating dioramas and little people (dolls) that are shared here (photos by Margaret). There is a at least centuries long history of Cree people making dolls in the image of themselves (see History Team discussion). Like the Six Seasons books, these dioramas have vivid Rocky Cree boreal forest landscapes, beaches, water, trees, islands, but also dwellings and busy camp scenes. The students clearly enjoyed being creative, learned more about their cultures, and even improved their sewing skills. What an amazing success with the Six Seasons series!



In addition to other incredibly creative dolls, one child made one with the poignant messages of Red Dress Day with “MMIWG2S”, which stands for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirit people; this is the lived reality of many Indigenous children.



Story Team

The Stories and the Weasel

**By: Warren Cariou and William Dumas
(Team Leaders)**

One of my favorite times in our Story Team work was in the fall of 2018 when we spent some time at a hunting camp between Nelson House and South Indian Lake. Our original plan had been to go to Lesley Baker's camp at Suwannee, but mother nature had different ideas. A cold front blew in a few days before we were supposed to go, and the ice suddenly began to form on the lakes. It was the classic asiniskaw ithiniwak season of mikiskaw, the time of freeze-up, and I came to understand the importance of Rocky Cree people naming that as a separate season, as well as the spring break-up season of mithoskamin. For people who travel on the water, these seasons are the times when you have to stay where you are, or at least when you need to make alternate plans, because the water is no longer your highway. The newly-formed ice was less than an inch thick, so we couldn't travel on it across Suwannee Lake to Lesley's camp.

The season told us we had to change our plans, and change we did. William knew of a hunting camp not far off the road between Nelson House and South Indian Lake, where his brother Rod and several other community members sometimes camped. We met there with Lesley Baker for nearly two days of storytelling around the wood stove in one of the cabins. Lesley and William talked about traditional asiniskaw ithiniwak life on the land, and the role of medicines, and many other teachings the elders had shared with them over the decades. They recounted mist-of-time stories about the traditional Rocky Cree characters, and also historical narratives and personal memories. There was laughter and good food, and always the welcoming sound of the fire. The storytellers seemed so comfortable there in the quiet comfort of that simple cabin, even though there were a couple of holes in one wall where, at some point in the past, a bear had tried to force its way in. That didn't seem to bother anyone. Sometimes we went outside to walk around in the new snow, and a whiskeyjack followed us, hoping for a piece of bread, which we were always happy to provide. The animals reminded us that we were not alone up there, that we were visiting their homes. On the morning of our second day, when William was telling an amazing story about hunting caribou, Myra stepped into the

kitchen and suddenly called out to us: "There's a weasel in here!" We all got up and peered around the doorway, and there he was underneath the table, his newly-changed fur bright white against the dark floorboards. He was cheeky too - he took his time about leaving, stayed around for almost a minute, looking side-eyed at us while he sniffed the bacon-filled air. Myra had time to step into the other room and pick up her camera, and when she came back, he was still posing there. She got a great photo of him. I remember the look of intrigue on his face, as if he was thinking, "when does the storytelling start again?"

A few seconds after the shutter clicked, the weasel was gone, disappearing through a hole in the floorboard behind a cooler. I wish I could share that photo with you, but just like the weasel, it has somehow vanished! Perhaps that disappearance is appropriate, in a way, because it reminds me that I can still carry the image of the weasel in my memory, just like I carry all those stories. I bet he remembers them too. And maybe, when the snow is on the ground, he tells them to his friends and relatives too.



Author and Story Teller William Dumas cutting up moose meat at his home.



Award winning stories: Margaret Dumas, William Dumas, Kevin Tate, Jennie Tate, and Larry Tate accepting the 2023 Canadian Archaeological Association Public Communications Awards, Writer Category, for the *Amo's Sapotawan* book via the Archaeology Team. This took place at the "awaniki asiniskaw itchinwak? Who are the Rocky Cree?" Gathering in Thompson.



Warren Cariou and William Dumas working on the Six Seasons stories.





Archaeology Team

Archaeological Visits to Eagle Rapids:

The Location of Amō's Story

By: Scott Hamilton (Team Leader) and Kevin Brownlee

The Six Seasons of the Asiniskaw Ithiniwak books, teachers guides and apps are based on the real stories of Rocky Cree people, including where they lived. The archaeology team is based at Lakehead University and was also at the Manitoba Museum, when Kevin was curator there. Sometimes archaeologists get an opportunity to visit these real locations and learn from Community Members about ancient places (in this case being animated).

Eagle Rapids is one place featured in *Amō's Sapotawan: Book Two*. The translated name of that place is actually 'where the eagles are', in reference to birds flying over the rapids in search of fish. It is also a campsite at a seasonal fishery, a portage along the north shore, and the home of the mimikwisiwak (in the *Gifts of the Little People* book), who live in the rocky outcrop nearby.

William Dumas was inspired to write *Amō's Sapotawan* because several years ago the hills overlooking the rapids were burned in forest fires and later regenerated with berry-producing plants.

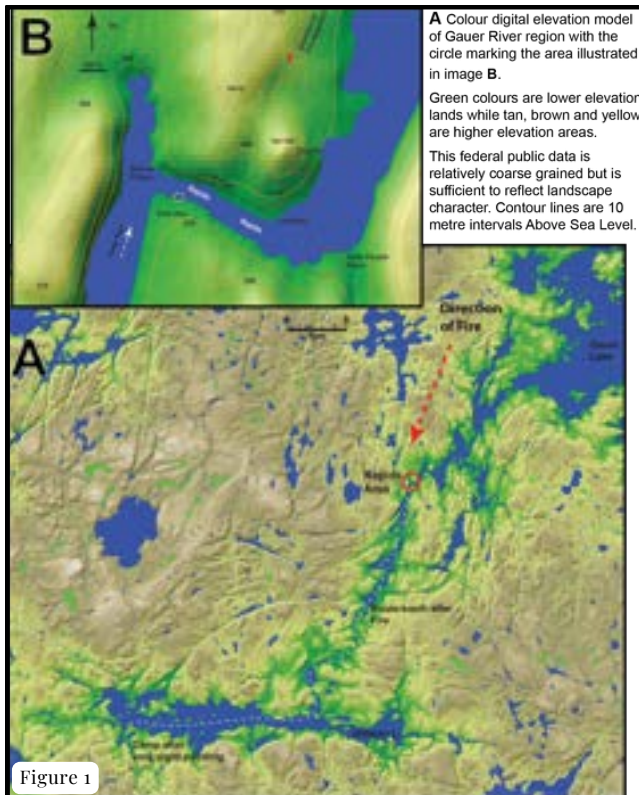


Figure 1



Figure 2

Berry pickers discovered ancient pottery fragments, stone tools and discarded stone chips left behind by Indigenous people centuries ago on exposed surfaces where the brush had been burned off. This inspired William to tell the story of Amō and her family at a summer encampment disrupted by a summer forest fire.

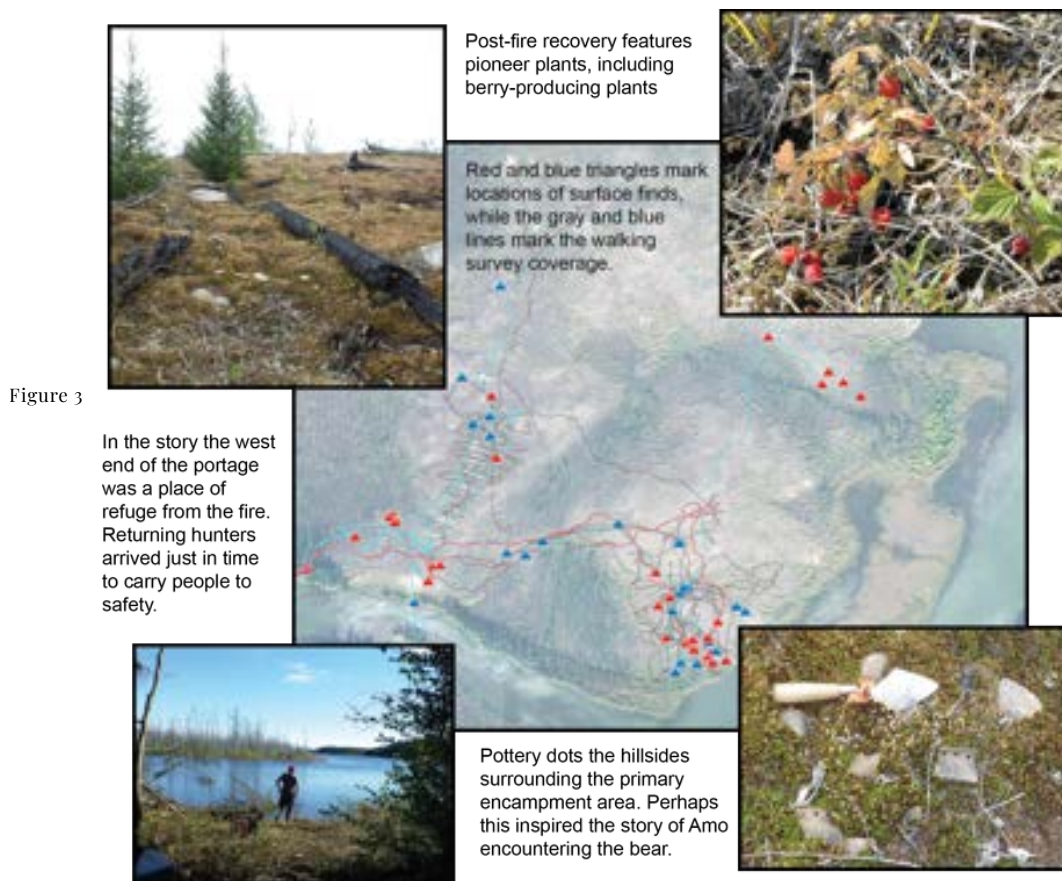
Archaeologists visited the site to aid in finding information for the story notes and the illustrators of *Amō's Sapotawan*. It also offered a chance to merge Traditional Knowledge and archaeological insights. One 'behind the scenes' task was map production to aid story review (Figure 1) by helping team members visualize the story and address continuity and consistency. Figure 1 is a regional overview, while the inset illustrates the encampment area adjacent to Eagle Rapids. Such technical maps and site photographs aided the artists in developing more understandable and realistic illustrations for the book.

This then relied on Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and satellite images that enabled 3D visualizations of the site (Figure 2). The location is complex, with gentle slopes of the encampment area next to the rapids rising into hills to the north. We can then readily imagine a cluster of homes and workstations along the shore as they were several centuries ago, with the uplands covered with trees and regenerating moss and berry plants. This includes Amō's route as she carried water to the berry pickers and where she encountered the bear in the story (Figure 1). We can imagine the growing unease for the past Rocky Cree site inhabitants as the smoke and orange sun indicate the approaching forest fire (something that is happening for many Canadians presently), followed by leaving hurriedly from the camp and fleeing west up the portage path to be rescued by the returning hunters.

Consistent with the story, much of the locality had burned prior to our visit. This left a few standing charred trees, with thin bands of forest within protected lowlands (Figures 2, 3). The repeated burning destroyed the vegetation covering the ground surface, exposing the soil. Clusters of ancient possessions, mainly clay pottery fragments, were visible on these exposed surfaces (Figure 3). Concentrations of these items indicated the camp

location for the scene but also for us to evaluate the archaeology. This yielded information about the nature and age of the occupation and also revealed objects scattered some distance from the shoreline encampments (Figure 3). Some of these objects were far removed from shorelines and offer an important caution to archaeologists, who often assume that old camps are strongly associated with water, with inland areas being less likely to have archaeology. Such untested assumptions often drive how and where archaeologists look for sites and contributes to biased and incomplete archaeological inventories. Being able to learn Indigenous Traditional Knowledge (and important local details) becomes an important way to correct these biases and gain a more comprehensive understanding of the past.

The combined archaeological, historic and Traditional Knowledge about Rocky Cree culture and history in the north helped Jill Taylor-Hollings and Scott to form the sidebar notes and archaeology illustrations for *Amō's Sapotawan*. This involves researching and assessing information about tools, shelters, clothing, tattoos, and hairstyles to ease the process of illustrating the storybooks as accurately as possible. Such insight was greatly furthered with opportunities to walk the ground upon which the story was set, which we were lucky to be able to do.





Archaeological Contributions to the Six Seasons Projects

By: Jill Taylor-Hollings (Team Leader)

At the beginning of the Six Seasons project, the Archaeology Team was headed by Scott Hamilton and Kevin Brownlee (see previous article). Later, I joined the project as a Postdoctoral Researcher, then a Research Associate and co-team leader. I was recently hired as a faculty member at Lakehead University and am Past President of the Ontario Archaeological Society. It has been an honour to work on this project and learn so much from asiniskaw īthiniwak people, both past and present.

One of my main tasks working for the Six Seasons project was researching all possible archaeology, ethnohistory, ethnology, history, and environmental information about the Rocky Cree and Northern Manitoba. I compiled that for community members and other team members such as the illustrators and Tactica app developers. Scott and I worked with Roland from the History Team to find as many details as we could about people from the 1600s in Northern Manitoba. Then, we could discuss the ancient information with expert Traditional Knowledge Keepers and have historical accuracy in all books, teachers guides, apps, and research outputs (e.g., see specific Rocky Cree birch bark canoe style shared with us).



Photo: William Dumas

As a potter and archaeology pottery specialist, it was a perfect match to assist with the *Amō's Sapotawan* book, teachers guide and app, since her miskanaŋ or life purpose is to become a potter! This project also provided opportunities to research Northern MB archaeological pottery with community members and students in our department. I have also been replicating the twisted plant fibre bag impressions on pots from the Late Woodland period (ca. 1000 – 1800) to learn more about that practice (see the beautiful impressions on the pot from the Gauer River in N. Manitoba).

I have been teaching pottery workshops for many years, so had the opportunity to work with Margaret Dumas and other team members to hold a few Traditional Indigenous pottery workshops with school age students in Thompson, MB (see students' mini pots). Many of the them said that they enjoyed making pottery and learning about the replicas of old tools that. We could show them real ancient belongings (artifacts), replicated pots I had made, and the 3D printed items that Clarence Surette had made based on real examples from N. Manitoba in the Manitoba Museum (see next article). The Archaeology Team continues to learn from the asiniskaw īthiniwak Knowledge Keepers and ancient belongings; we are grateful to work on the Six Seasons projects.



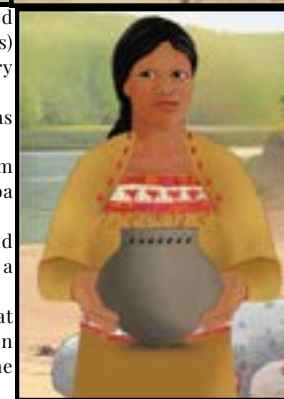
Different ways we have shared information (and learned ourselves) about Precontact Indigenous pottery in Northern Manitoba:

Top: One of my small pot replicas made of local Thunder Bay clays

Top right: Reconstructed sherds from Gauer River pot (photo via Manitoba Museum)

Middle: Two sets of mini pots made by students in Thompson at a workshop

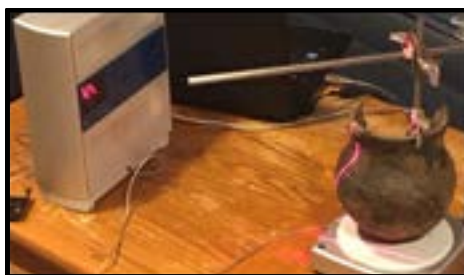
Right: Amō holding a finished pot at the end of the "Make a Pot" game on the AMO app, that teaches people the steps in how they were made



Other Archaeological Contributions to the Six Seasons Projects

Clarence Surette and Jill Taylor-Hollings

The Six Seasons project is community driven and centres on the asiniskaw İthiniwak in Northern Manitoba. For this project, the Archaeology Team are specialists who work in the central Canadian Subarctic in the Dept. of Anthropology at Lakehead University. Clarence is a Technician and Jill is now an Assistant Professor. He joined the Six Seasons archaeology team about half way into the project. One of his most impactful contributions for the archaeology team includes scanning some real ancient belongings (below), then modelling, and 3D printing the resulting ‘artifacts’. His wife Jennifer Surette paints the 3D prints to look very real!



Clarence created copies of some items that were on temporary loan from the Manitoba Museum to Lakehead. He and other department Technician Chris McEvoy also spent weeks photographing the items for posterity. Several scans of ancient Rocky Cree belongings are now loaded into the “Sketchfab” program so that community members can view these items (and print them). Clarence also printed sets of some artifacts to go with the Six Seasons of the Asiniskaw İthiniwak *Shoebbox Dig Artifact Description Guide* created by former Master’s student Laura Gosse (see right). These have been distributed to teachers alongside the books, apps, and teachers guides for a useful Northern Manitoba archaeo-kit.



Sketchfab showing one of the Six Seasons Project scans of a Winnipeg Fabric-impressed ware pot from Northern Manitoba.



Rocky Cree people made these unique pottery lamps that are decorated like their pots but are flat like a plate. We have learned that they were lamps used to burn oil or fat - providing heat and light. This is one of the scans in Sketchfab; note how the details are preserved.



Before the academic team from Lakehead was in Thompson, MB for the “awaniki asiniskaw İthiniwak? Who are the Rocky Cree?” gathering, we were invited to work with school age children and their teachers. Margaret Dumas organized tool, flintknapping and pottery workshops for us to teach different classes more about ancient Indigenous people and their belongings in the area, since we had learned a lot from archaeology. Many of the Thompson area students are Indigenous and some Rocky Cree, so this was an important opportunity for us to share information but also learn from the students. We are honoured to have worked on the Six Seasons project with so many great people.

We stopped here along the highway to look for lithic raw material on the way back from Thompson; Clarence is often found searching for flintknapping materials since he teaches many people how to make stone tools.





History Team

Documentation on Traditional Indigenous Material Culture in Books for Young Readers

By: Roland Bohr (Team Leader)

For picture books, the accurate depiction of material culture is especially important, since images viewed by young readers often shape their life-long opinions about peoples and their lifeways in times past. Working closely with Knowledge Keepers from OPCN and NCN, the researchers and collaborators on the project made every effort to ensure that our reconstructions of the appearance of central Subarctic Indigenous clothing from the seventeenth century is as accurate as possible, based on local Indigenous oral histories and Traditional Knowledge, archaeological and linguistic evidence, and information gleaned from fur trade records.

Due to the scarcity of recorded direct ethnographic observations about people in Rocky Cree territory for the seventeenth century, we often had to use sources from later dates but pertaining to the region in question, or sources dating from the seventeenth century and recorded in another region of the Subarctic/boreal forest. The sketches (right) were made by European travellers in northern North America, as well as surviving original clothing items in museum and auction houses found by the history and archaeology teams.

These women's dresses are often referred to as "strap dresses". European travellers and traders observed Indigenous women wearing this type of dress with detachable sleeves from the Mi'kmaq in Labrador in the mid-1600s (Denys 1672) to the Swampy Cree on the west coast of Hudson Bay in the mid-1700s (Graham 1969), and the Anishinaabe in western North Dakota in the mid-1800s (Hewitt 1937).

We combined these verbal descriptions and images of surviving Indigenous clothing with information gleaned from images of a few rare, Indigenous made dolls, such as these found by Jill on the archaeology team. People used the dolls to teach the manufacture of traditional clothing and ceremonial garments. Girls learned from older female relatives how to measure and sew the material for clothing, first using dolls before attempting the manufacture of human-sized clothing. These dolls are covered with miniature versions of Indigenous clothing commonly worn at the time of their making in about the 1780s (BBC 2025; Hanson 1994; Oberholtzer 1998).



"Saulteaux Woman," drawing by the Swiss ethnographer Rudolph Friedrich Kurz, Fort Berthold, North Dakota, (Hewitt 1851).

Possible Plains Cree strap dress of traditional tanned hide and red ochre paint from Manitoba at the Field Museum in Chicago (taken from Wissler 1915:73-77).



These are referenced as "Woodland Cree" dolls at the Cuming Museum, England (taken from BBC 2025).

In close cooperation between the Knowledge Keepers, the archaeology team and the history team, this visual and textual information was shared and vetted and then sent on to the illustrator who worked for our publisher. I also met with Rhian at the Manitoba Museum to show her excellent examples of traditional smoke tanned hide, quillwork and other ancient belongings.

The importance of this striving for accuracy and detail became even more apparent, when I presented an earlier version of this paper to an audience of largely Rocky Cree people at the “awaniki asiniskaw it̓hiniwak? Who are the Rocky Cree?” conference in Thompson, Manitoba, in the spring of 2023. After the presentation, several members of the audience expressed their gratitude for this research, as they had not been familiar with aspects of traditional material culture, such as strap dresses and porcupine quillwork, but greatly appreciated the material and spiritual richness of their Ancestors’ lifeways, brought back to them through the Six Seasons books and related presentations. Thus, they said, they were able to draw strength and inspiration in the present from old, but proven traditions of their Ancestors.



Amō in her family home, wearing a strap dress with detachable sleeves and porcupine quillwork embroidery from *Amō's Sapotawan*.





Production Team

Translating a Picture Book into a Picturebook App

By: Mavis Reimer (Team Leader) and Eric Meyers

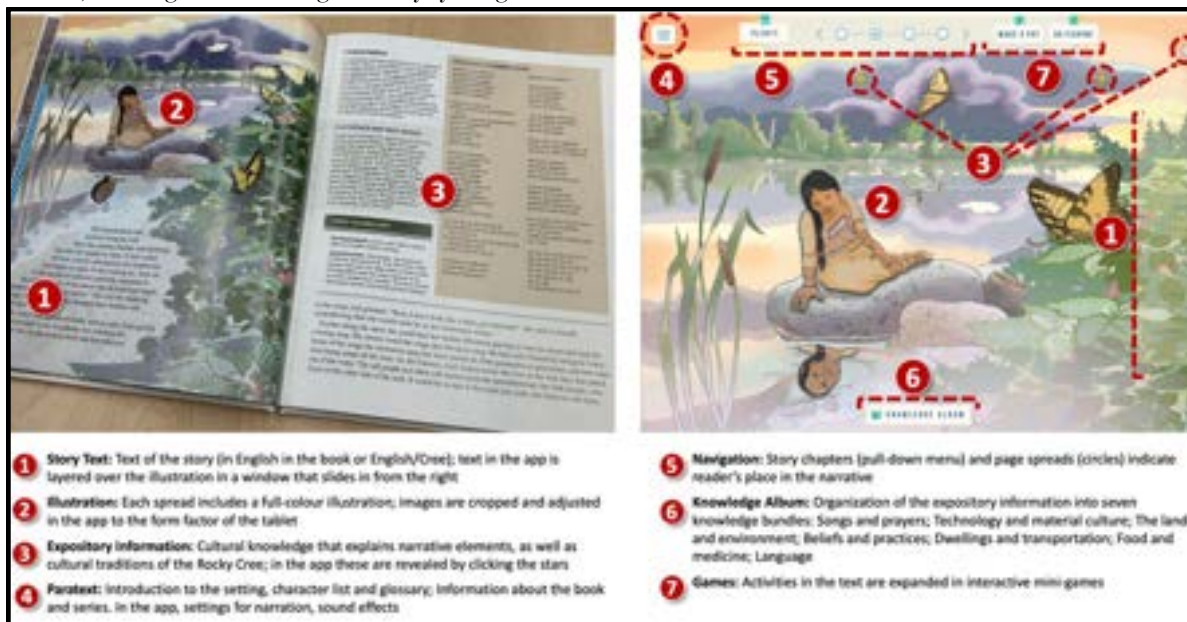
One of the overarching goals for the Six Seasons project was to find ways of bringing knowledge about the traditional lifeways of the Rocky Cree into the present and putting that knowledge into the hands of contemporary young people. This was William Dumas's original motivation for choosing the form of historical picture books for his stories about the asiniskaw ithinwak and their seasonal activities. When the research team thought about how young people today interact with story, we quickly realized that one clear answer was "on screens." And so we began to explore various possibilities for creating screen versions of the picture books. We considered a number of options, including building an interactive website or museum displays. But Production Team members concluded that the best solution for the Six Seasons project was a picturebook app. These members have taught courses on children's and young people's literature in a number of Canadian institutions – Mavis Reimer (University of Winnipeg), Eric Meyers (University of British Columbia), Margaret Mackey (University of Alberta), and Naomi Hamer (Toronto Metropolitan University) – and digital texts are regularly part of the curriculum for those courses. We saw the picturebook app as being the right choice for the Six Seasons project for a number of reasons.

First, apps are increasingly common kinds of texts. We use apps for online shopping and for our social media accounts, among other things. Many young

people already know how to perform the standard actions used to navigate apps. Second, the picture books in the Six Seasons series, by their design, invite a kind of reading that is like the reading expected by apps. The books contain not only William's stories, but also non-fictional texts on the edges of the story, many of them developed by the Knowledge Keepers in the project, featuring notes on language, geography, cultural practices, and cultural objects. Because there are both narrative and non-narrative texts that are combined in non-linear ways on each page, the books already encourage readers to choose their own paths through the books. Choosing your own paths is a reading practice that is assumed by apps. And, third, although downloading book apps onto tablets requires a reader to have access to the Internet, once the apps are downloaded, they are fully functional without Internet access. This makes them accessible to a wider audience, especially since some northern communities do not have reliable high-speed Internet connections (although this is changing rapidly in the era of Starlink).

The change from a picture book form to a picturebook app form is often called a remediation or translation. As in a translation from one language to another, all of the elements of the picture book are present in the app, but they appear in different ways. In addition, some new features are added to

Figure provided by Eric Meyers.





Six Seasons materials including the books, teacher's guides, and apps.

the apps that do not appear in the picture books and open new possibilities for learning. The figure included here was developed by Eric Meyers to use when he teaches Six Seasons texts in his UBC classrooms. It outlines the similarities and the differences between the book and the app in visual form.

In Eric's figure, a page from Amō's Sapotawan, the second book in the Six Seasons series, appears on the left and a screenshot showing this same part of the narrative in the app appears on the right. The number 1 on both images indicates the place where you can find the story in both texts. In the picture book, the story text sits on top of the illustration and is positioned so that readers can easily find it on the page. In the app, the story text appears at the right side of the screen in a faint box. When readers tap on the box, the story text slides across the illustration in a dark font to make it easy to read. In the picture book, the story only appears in English (with many Cree words used within the English text). In the app, readers can choose to read and to hear the story read in either English or Cree by clicking on the menu bars at the top left (shown at number 4 on the app image) and selecting the various options for Narration.

As the note to number 2 on the figure explains, both the picture book and app reproduce beautiful colour illustrations created by Rhian Brynjolson specifically for this story. In the case of the app, sometimes the illustrations are cropped or the dimensions are changed slightly to fit the size of the screen. In a few cases, the images have been flipped, so that something that appears on the right side of a page will appear on the left of the screen in the app. This is typically done by the app developers from Tactica, the company which produces the apps, when the story box would hide important features of the illustration as it slides across the screen.

Story notes, developed by Knowledge Keepers and academic researchers, are featured on most pages of the book. On the page shown here, these appear at number 3 on the figure. In the app, the story notes are not visible on the page. Rather, faint stars glimmer in the illustration. When readers tap on these stars, the various story notes pop up in boxes in the centre of the screen. If a reader is interested in a note, they can "like" it by clicking on a heart icon at the left corner of the pop-up. This action saves that note in a Knowledge Album for that particular reader. The Knowledge Album can be accessed at any time by clicking on the icon at the bottom middle of the page (shown at number 6 on the app image). All of their chosen story notes will be highlighted for the



reader, who can also print or email these notes to themselves. The story notes are organized into various themes, so that readers might decide to work on gathering all of the notes on a particular subject, such as technology and material culture or songs and prayers. This component also encourages readers to return to the story over and over.

Number 4 on Eric's app image is the Menu for the app. Here readers can find general information about the Six Seasons project, the names of the Knowledge Keepers, academic researchers, student researchers, and others who collaborated to create the app, and the various options for seeing and hearing the story. In addition to deciding whether to hear the story read in English or in Cree or to read the story silently, readers can choose to turn off all of the sound effects (such as songs and the ambient noises of the environment) or to see the story written out in Cree syllabics.

Number 5 on the app image is the Navigation Bar. The circle with the dot in it indicates where readers are in the story. Readers can move to the next screen in the app by clicking on the empty circle to the right of that circle. They can also, however, choose to move to another section of the story by clicking on the pull-down menu at the left of the navigation bar. The app organizes the stories into chapters.

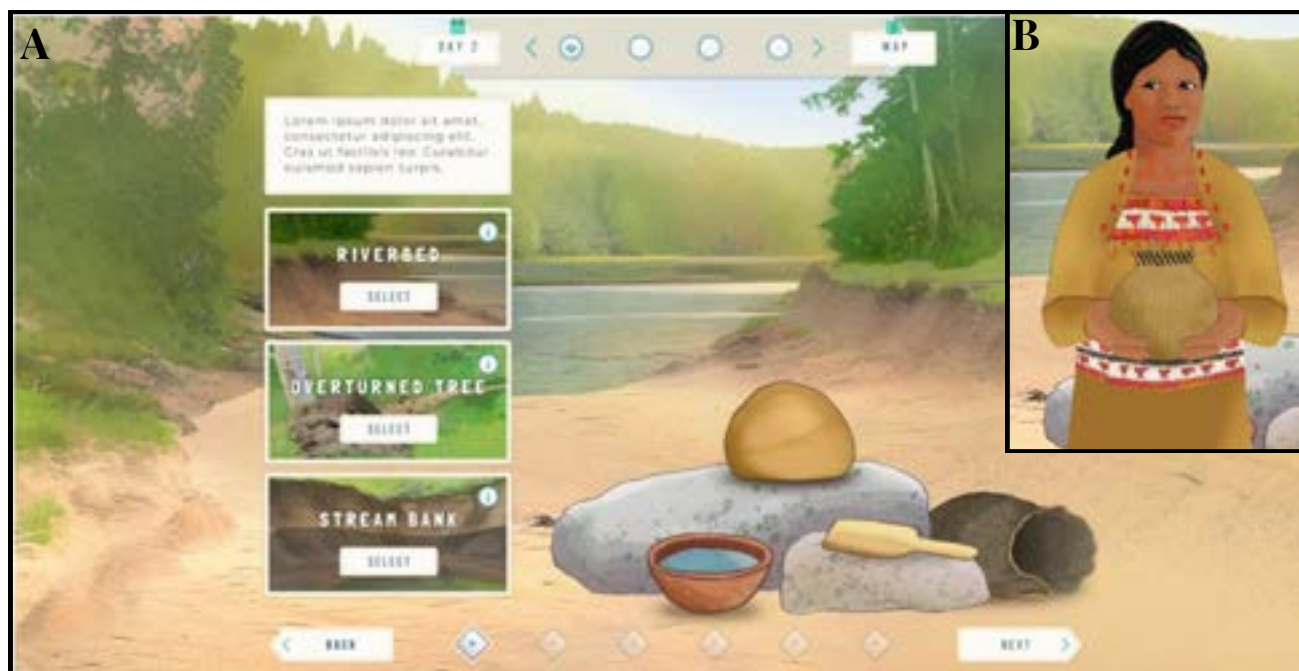
The screen that is shown in Eric's figure is from the first chapter of the story, called "Plenty". Readers can also choose to move from this screen to other chapters of the story, perhaps, for example, to the chapter entitled "Fire!" that tells the story of the forest fire that descends on the Rocky Cree camp in the story. When readers have read the story from beginning to end at least once, we think they might choose to use this function to move to their favourite parts if they are reading it again.

Number 7 on Eric's figure indicates two tabs that appear to the right of the Navigation Bar. These mark the two supplementary games that have been developed for the app, which allow readers to explore some of the activities discussed in William's story. The first of these is the "Make a Pot" game, where readers can design their own pot (an activity Amō enjoys in the story) and learn more about Rocky Cree pottery making. The second is "Go Fishing", which allows readers to practice skills of eye-hand coordination as they also learn where they are likely to find the various kinds of fish used by the Rocky Cree community. This kind of discovery learning represents a powerful approach to sharing cultural heritage.

To this point, we have developed an app version of the first book, entitled PISIM, and an app version of the second book, entitled AMO. Both of these apps



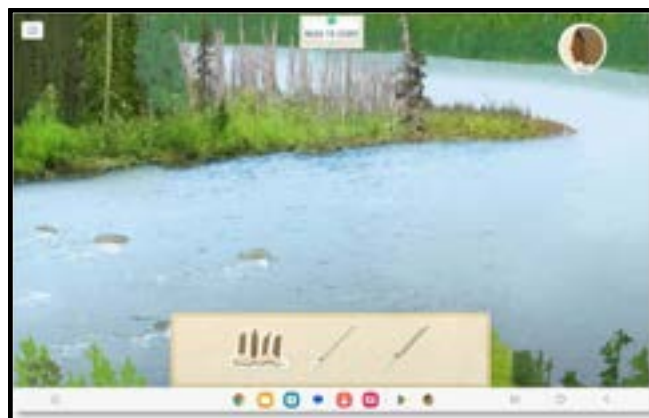
Sarah Piché, Angela Failler, Jennie Tait and Jennifer Williams happily viewing the newly released *Amo's Sapotawan* app on a tablet in 2022 at the University of Winnipeg (photo by Some of the Six Seasons team celebrating the launch of Amō's Sapotawan book, accompanying teacher's guide and picturebook app in 2022 (photo by Naniece Ibrahim)).



A) One scene from the “Make a Pot” game in the *Amo's Sapotowan* app showing her pottery making tools and the different clay sources.
B) Amō holding the finished pot that results all of from the player's choices.

are free to download from the Apple and Google stores. The third app, based on book 3, will be released in the fall of 2026.

Teachers who have used both the picture books and the picturebook apps in their classrooms report that students enjoy both of these texts, in different ways, with some readers responding more fully to the book and others to the app. Those reports assure us that both of these forms of the story work toward achieving the goals of this project - bringing knowledge about traditional lifeways of the Rocky Cree into the present and putting that knowledge into the hands of contemporary young people.



A scene from the “Fishing Game” in the *Amo's Sapotowan* app showing one of the beautifully realistic boreal forest scenes and special tools that player's can choose.



Knowledge Keepers Larry Tait and Jennifer Williams working in the recording studio to create the Rocky Cree narration for the *Amo's Sapotowan* app.





The Publisher

Portage and Main Press, Winnipeg

The Six Seasons project continues to be a unique opportunity for Portage & Main Press to collaborate with Indigenous community members and Knowledge Keepers in what is now Manitoba, as well as project leaders from the University of Winnipeg. This exciting collaboration and consultation have been the focus of our contributions as a partner on this project.

Three books written by storyteller William Dumas have now been published as a result of these collaborations. The first two, *Pisim Finds Her Miskanaw* and *Amō's Sapotawan*, feature the seasonal stories of the asiniskaw ithiniwak (Rocky Cree) set during the mid-1600s and follow the journey of two youth: one who searches for her miskanaw (the path of her life) and the other who prepares for her sapotawana (one of the many transitions in life). The third book, *The Gift of the Little People*, is a companion story for all ages that builds on the Little People introduced in the main series.

All three of these stories were published through our HighWater Press imprint, which exclusively publishes books written by Indigenous authors. However, despite all our experience with producing picture books for the educational and trade markets, these books presented both unique challenges and opportunities.

The elements of these books are at once divided and complementary: they combine oral stories, academic scholarship, and traditional knowledges for an audience of middle-grade readers. The collaboration between oral storytellers, scholars, and Knowledge Keepers required a flexible approach to the usual processes and formatting conventions for a children's picture book.

The narrative at the centre of each picture book, a fictional re-imagining of the life of a Rocky Cree young person during the featured season, also includes cultural, historical, linguistic, and geographical notes, illustrations, and maps that provide the contexts for understanding the story. These many elements made the consultation process for this project more extensive than for other titles published by our press and gave us the opportunity to learn more about respectful and meaningful consultation—and what types of future projects might require a similar process.

Another unique challenge of this project was finding ways to reach audiences living in remote and Northern communities. Rocky Cree young people and their teachers, who live in communities that extend across northern Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta, are the primary audience for the books. We partnered with University of Winnipeg student intern Tara Myran, who researched and helped develop a database of contacts for schools on reserves, Indigenous education consultants, friendship centres, and Indigenous Studies programs.

From this, we developed several different marketing and publicity strategies to bring awareness of the books and the project to a broader audience. As a result of these efforts, we're thrilled that these important stories have reached an audience where youth may see themselves and their communities in the stories being told.

We have been honoured to be a part of this multi-disciplinary project and to have the opportunity to collaborate with so many exceptional people in the process. We look forward to the release of book three of the main series!

The books have received acclaim from several local, national, and international organizations including:

The Gift of the Little People

- Shortlisted, McNally Robinson Book for Young People, Older Category, 2023
- Selected for the USBBY 2023 Outstanding International Books List
- Selected for the Ontario Library Association's list of Best Bets Top Ten, Junior Fiction

Amō's Sapotawan

- Winner of the Public Communications Awards, Writer Category (Canadian Archaeological Association)
- Selected for CCBC's list of Best Books for Kids & Teens 2023 as a starred selection of exceptional caliber
- Selected for American Indians in Children's Literature (AIICL)'s list of Best Books 2022

Pisim Finds Her Miskanaw

- Winner of the Public Communications Awards, Writer Category (Canadian Archaeological Association)
- Shortlisted for the Lillian Shepherd Memorial Award for Excellence in Illustration (The Atlantic Book Awards Society)

Portage and Main
Press



The Illustrators

By: Rhian Brynjolson

Amō's Sapotawan, written by William Dumas, captured my imagination as soon as I read the manuscript. I began to picture how dramatic scenes in the book might play out the encounter with the charging bear, the wildfire at the summer camp, and aurora borealis dancing over the night sky.

I am an artist, illustrator, art educator and science communicator who lives and works on Treaty 3 Territory. The illustration process for this book was unique. I began by meeting a team of experts with the Six Seasons of the Asiniskaw Itchinikwak team included academics and specialists in children's literature and archaeology from the University of Winnipeg, Lakehead University and the Manitoba Museum, a group of Elders from O-Pipon-Na-Piwin First Nation, and author/educator William Dumas, in collaboration with HighWater Press.

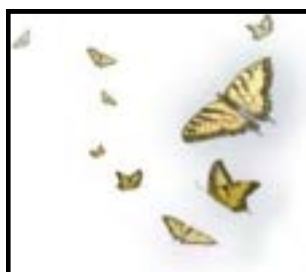
I would send preliminary sketches for each character and scene and receive pages of comments in return. The comments were an intriguing mix of details, such as adjustments in the texture and size of the clay vessels used during the pre-contact setting of the story, or philosophical questions about how to represent the main character, Amō, on the cover of the book. I had sketched a close-up of Amō's face for the cover, but the Elders suggested that they would prefer to show her as a whole person, walking on her land. This was an essentially different way of seeing the character, and helped me to be more aware of the symbolic aspects of the representations.

On other occasions, team members intervened to correct specific aspects of an image. I met up with an archaeologist at the Manitoba Museum to see samples of clothing and learn about the vivid, permanent, natural dyes used to decorate clothing. I was also given advice on how to draw boreal forest trees — which I initially thought was funny, since I live in a forest — but what was meant was the importance of representing a very particular place, in a particular period of time after a fire, on a certain south-facing slope down to the lake. It was a humbling experience to be learning about such a rich, symbolic, visual culture, and the importance of how specific locations are tied to memory and connection to the land.

In order to respond to feedback and accommodate the multiple versions of each illustration, I made initial sketches on a Wacom tablet and then worked

in layers in Adobe Photoshop. Keeping track of multiple comments, multiple versions and dozens of layers required some organization, which was challenging on long days at the computer! Illustrators often work in isolation, so I was happy to be included at a dinner for the team and hear laughter at lively stories being told in the Rocky Cree language. Working collaboratively was a very positive, wonderfully entangled experience, and produced a book that is truly authored and illustrated by a whole community of people.

In terms of other illustrators working on the projects, back in 2013, Mi'kmaq artist Leonard Paul had completed the illustrations for Book One (Pisim). Also, Métis artist Alexis Greener-Ironside created the special watercolour maps and archaeology illustrations for Books Two and Three.



Various stages of my conceptual drawings ending with the final version that went into the *Amō's Sapotawan* book last. Every detail was discussed with team members (e.g., clothing, how people looked, correct butterfly and bird for N. Manitoba). I also worked closely with the archaeologists to create the accurate ancient belongings (ca. 1600) like the Winnipeg Fabric-impressed ware pots of the Selkirk Composite archaeological culture found around Southern Indian Lake.



The Six Seasons of an Urban Creek

By: Terry and Margaret Mackey



Photos illustrating scenes of the four familiar seasons that most non-Indigenous Canadians would recognize.

How do you see what you don't have a name for? As children, we learn schemas for the seasons very early, and we assume they describe the universe. In mainstream Western cultures, the sequence of spring, summer, fall, and winter is taken very much for granted. But the latitude of the city of Edmonton registers 53.55° North of the Equator, and, although the four seasons here follow each other in canonical order, they do not divide the year neatly into quadrants. The first snow normally falls around the beginning of November and it is common for it to linger into April. By standard nomenclature, that adds up to between five and six months of winter.

But what about six seasons as the asiniskaw īthinīwak demarcate the year? Add freeze-up and break-up to the calendar, and you alter the dynamics of how you look at the world. We are two non-Indigenous Canadians (one settler, one immigrant), living beside a small urban creek in Edmonton. When we expand our seasonal perspectives, we inhabit the year on different terms.

Spring, summer, fall Mithoskāmin, Nīpin, and Tākwākin, pass conventionally in these parts; our pictures above could come from many spots in the Northern Hemisphere. And winter, pipon, is entirely recognizable, though other places do not necessarily experience winter as thoroughly as we do. These are the seasons of primary colours of purple blossoms, green grass, gold and red trees, white snow, and blue sky. But the in-between seasons, new to us and transformative to our way of looking at the world, come in more modulated and subtle tones.

Mikiskaw is freeze-up time. One year offers a typical pattern. The skim of ice on the creek forms around November 10th. We have no snow before mid-November, but we get a sprinkling on the 14th and a real storm on the 15th and 16th dropping over 20 centimetres in 24 hours, with winds up to 70 km per hour. But even as the snow flies, the temperature is barely below freezing, producing the kind of heavy wet flakes we rarely see. Two days later, though the sky is blue, the temperature is minus 11°C, and we are heading for winter.

Some years, freeze up lasts well into December. It is an active process as winter lockdown moves forward, retreats, yields, and settles in more solidly. Winter represents a condition of greater stasis; although there are shifts in the levels of snow, the direction of drifting, the fluctuations of temperature, at heart winter is not a flirt. It means business. The months pass – but how we perceive winter’s lock on our surroundings has adapted.

Break-up or Sikwan brings the first hint of change. The snow is still blowing, the ground remains granite-hard with frost, but under the footbridge the ice is beginning to give way. The first evening that the reflection of a bridge railing light glints in the water is a poignant signal that winter is, as we say, “giving ground” to something softer and more mobile.

Break-up means mess. It means mud. It means tantalising to-and-fro. It is a long time before we can declare spring to be fully in flower. But like freeze-up, it means movement and change; even the forwards-and-backwards of the snow and the ice and the frost feels tentative now, rather than adamantly set in. It is too grimy and grey to be completely hopeful, but it is a step forward.

With a repertoire of six seasons rather than four, we experience the shape of the passing year in different and more subtle ways. For many weeks, this idea changes how we perform an act as simple as looking out the window. Our sensitivity to the world around us is altered by the categories we bring to bear. Ancient Indigenous ways of knowing open our eyes to a local truth that was there all along; nothing changed but our capacity to see.



The last shades of brown are dappled with encroaching whiteness; the creek is iced in for the duration.



Sikwan: Looks like winter still – but under the bridge the ice has melted.



Mikiskaw: The early stages of freeze-up and the skim of ice beginning to form on the creek, along with the quiet fading of the bright colours.



Gradually, the sloppy brown slush of the reappearing water begins to take hold.



Curriculum Team

Learning the Past to Move into the Future: Creating Teaching Resources for the Six Seasons Books and Apps

By: Doris Wolf (Team Leader)

William Dumas always wanted the story of Kayasochi Kikawenow to be accessible to asiniskaw ithiniwak youth and to all young people so they could learn about the traditional life ways of the Rocky Cree of northern Manitoba. This desire shaped the format of the picture books with their historical fictional stories at the centre and detailed story notes in margins. It also led to the development of teacher's guides and teaching resources for each book to help educators use both the picture books and picture book apps in their classrooms.

It was the Six Season's Curriculum Team's role to create these guides and resources. We had so many wonderful helpers along the way – curriculum writers, Knowledge Keepers from O-Pipon-Na-Piwin and Nisichawayasihk Cree Nations, undergraduate and graduate student researchers, and Six Season team leaders and project members. It was an ongoing process of learning and a labour of love for all of us. Through producing the teacher's guides, we helped fulfil part of William's vision to help Rocky Cree young people find their identities and know their past to move forward into the future. We also responded to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action for education in that the guides offer age-appropriate curricula for all Manitoban young people on Indigenous Peoples' historical and contemporary contributions to Canada.

Early in our planning, the Curriculum Team decided on a number of principles that would shape all the teacher's guides in the series. Although we recognized Six Seasons materials would be useful at any grade level, we decided to focus the guides on middle years, with a special focus on grade 5. We wished to reflect the holistic asiniskaw ithiniwak worldview that is embedded in the idea of nihithaw: coming from the four directions and corresponding to the physical, emotional, spiritual, and mental realms. So we adopted a cross-curricular and integrated learning approach, which means the guides include teaching strategies and activities that make connections across many subject areas such as



Doris Wolf and Margaret Dumas of the Curriculum Team discussing the launch of the Amô's Sapotawan Teacher's Guide in 2024.

Social Studies, English Language Arts, Science, Health, and Arts as well as Rocky Cree culture and language. We created a handy vertical bar icon throughout the guides that lets teachers know quickly which subject areas apply to specific topics and activities. Teachers are very busy with so many demands on their time so a key goal was to make the guides easy to use. We adopted a thematic approach with modules and submodules. This way teachers can easily take up one module, or even parts thereof, in their classrooms depending on the time and goals they have. We included historical and cultural backgrounders so they have important information right at their fingertips. There is also a series of black line masters for each module – worksheets, fill in the blanks, maps, and so on – so teachers can photocopy them and use them with their students.

Over the years of the Six Seasons project, the Curriculum Team has shared information about the teacher's guides and how to use them with many people in numerous places. We hope these resources will be used by teachers going forward so that the Six Seasons books are taught in classrooms around Manitoba and Canada in the years to come. They are free and available both through the Six Seasons website and our publisher Portage and Main Press.

Teacher's Guide for *māskikīy miskanaw*: *The Medicine Way*

By: Audrey Barkman-Hill

The Six Seasons curriculum writing team is currently producing the Teacher's Guide to accompany the *māskikīy miskanaw: The Medicine Way* narrative. Designed to run parallel to the digital app and to spark creative explorations of the *māskikīy miskanaw* narrative, the Teacher's Guide is organized into four modules with an introduction to the narrative, and three topical modules titled "Medicine", "Hunting and Gathering" and "Earth and Sky".

These lessons and activities suggested by the guide are intended to draw teachers and students to consider what it might mean to walk the medicine way. The overarching questions are cause for reflection – what does it mean to be a good person? To live a good life? To walk a good path?

The "Medicine" module works to establish a holistic understanding of medicine, suggesting lessons that consider: how people meet, greet and treat one another; how kindness and consideration promote wellbeing; and how use of medicinal plants improves health. Also, we consider how reciprocity between people, between people and animals, and between people and the earth bring joy and make life sustainable.

Secondly, the "Hunting and Gathering" module aims to provide lesson ideas on topics such as orienteering, finding one's path, the use of waterways, safe and respectful hunting protocols, and the physics involved in hunting techniques and development of hunting tools. Also considered are the gifts of water, water stewardship, and processes of finding, gathering, preparing and preserving food stuffs and medicinal plants.

The final unit is "Earth and Sky" and the writing team knows that there will be an interest in developing lessons such as music composition and making music from the land, the star chart and its connection to phonetics, Rocky Cree cosmology, and the life cycle from birth to death and beliefs about the journey beyond.

As a writing team, we remind ourselves to begin each of our topical explorations with direct reference to the *māskikīy miskanaw* narrative, and to be sensitive to Rocky Cree pedagogy and ways of knowing.

We have had opportunities to meet with Rocky Cree Knowledge Keepers, and to be guided in our research by team members from Lakehead University and the University of Winnipeg. The team is working on building a community of practice among teachers who use Six Seasons materials and to use their insights within the Teacher's Guide as best practice examples. As well, the writing team has submitted proposals to present Six Seasons resources to educators at two conferences.

Working under the Principal Investigator Mavis Reimer, and the procedural framework provided by Team Leader Doris Wolf, the writing team for this Teacher's Guide is the third in the Six Seasons series. It is comprised of lead writer, Audrey Barkman Hill, writers Connie Wyatt Anderson, Latika Raisinghani, Margaret Dumas, Jill Taylor-Hollings, research assistants Genevieve Field, Brooke Buchan, and project manager, Tyra Dunits.



Six Seasons Website





Students and Research Assistants

University of Winnipeg & Lakehead University

Editors' note: We asked the students who participated in the lengthy Six Season project to write about their experiences and what they learned while working with the Knowledge Keepers and other team members. While not all were able to participate in the *Community Magazine*, these articles provide a snapshot of all the benefits to the students who worked on this project *but* also how the project benefitted from their many efforts.

Bukola Ajayi-Afuwape, Univ. of Winnipeg



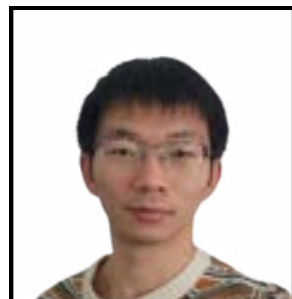
The Six Seasons Project has been a profoundly enriching endeavour, weaving together threads of cultural preservation, linguistic revitalization, and community collaboration. Among the experiences this project has offered, one

was particularly valuable for me in working with Dr. Mavis Reimer to develop a framework for a mobile language learning application tailored to the needs of the Rocky Cree communities.

Language is a cornerstone of cultural identity, serving as a vessel for history, traditions, and the collective memory of a people. The Rocky Cree language encapsulates unique worldviews, and ecological knowledge passed down through generations. However, like many Indigenous languages, it faces the threat of erosion due to historical injustices and the pervasive influence of dominant languages. In this context, creating a mobile application for language learning is not merely a technical project but a vital effort to sustain and revitalize living heritage.

Dr. Mavis Reimer brought invaluable expertise to the framework. Her deep understanding of academic principles and the cultural sensitivities involved in such projects was instrumental in shaping a comprehensive and respectful approach. Working with her provided an exceptional learning experience, blending theoretical knowledge with practical application. My experience with the project has been transformative. It highlighted the vital role of interdisciplinary approaches in addressing complex cultural challenges and demonstrated the power of technology as a tool for cultural preservation. This project is a testament to what can be achieved when academic rigour, cultural respect, and community collaboration converge toward a common goal.

Donglin Guo, University of Winnipeg

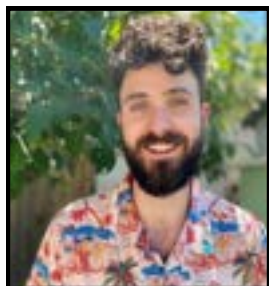


Participating in the Six Seasons Project as a research assistant was joyful and rewarding. As an international student, I benefited extensively from the resources provided by the project and gained an intimate view of the past and present of this land.

Here, I met wonderful people, engaged in colourful activities, and deepened my appreciation of Indigenous cultures. Throughout the year, I was involved in various duties, such as searching for studies on teaching Indigenous literature, testing mobile apps developed for the picture books, and assisting in video production during the “awaniki asiniskaw īthiniwak? Who are the Rocky Cree?” Gathering in 2023, with Indigenous community members in Thompson. The project effectively brought people together, that is, researchers, educators, and Indigenous community members, to make a difference. There were several occasions where I had the honour to meet some Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers and listen to their teachings. These encounters drew me closer to them academically and emotionally as well, which further led me to see the sophistication and significance of cultural continuation.

Moving forward and preserving the past do not have to contradict each other but can be integrated. I can derive that revelation because the project has invited Indigenous people to represent themselves for themselves, which is particularly inspiring and empowering.

Ben Roloff, University of Winnipeg



Soundscapes are constant, all-encompassing guarantees. They are significant yet often relegated by our ears and minds to our subconscious. When we pause to consider something so omnipresent, such as Hiroyuki Sawano's (famous Japanese composer)

soundscapes penetrating in our daily lives, we open the door to a deeper sense of understanding, a more profound connection. As I create this document, I invite you to imagine my soundscape – its layers, consistent and sporadic, that are unique to my home:

- the fluid tapping of a keyboard, interrupted by intermittent pauses to think,
- the notifying buzz of a plastic phone case against a poorly refinished teak table,
- the two cats bounding down the stairs, back up, and back down again,
- the straining creak of the wooden kitchen chair with every shift,
- the incessant hum of the fridge.

Soundscapes are inseparable from place. In imagining the sounds above, you are sonically stepping into my home and sitting down at my kitchen table on a Sunday afternoon. Had I invited you on a Monday evening, the soundscape would be quite different, yet still uniquely that of this place. The Six Seasons of the Asiniskaw Ithiniwak project is one that invites learners into the proto-contact-era home of the Rocky Cree, in part through storybook apps. With sound so central to place, the soundscape of such an app becomes a crucial extension of the story it tells, the invitation it extends to the user. In my research, I ask questions of soundscapes, consider their construction, understand their significance, and apply what I learn in a way that I believe better invites you, and others, into the places of the asiniskaw ithiniwak.

I invite you to tap or click the “play” icon on the app, listen closely, and connect more deeply with your own sense of place.



Sarah Leo Piché, University of Winnipeg

Working for the Six Seasons of the Asiniskaw Ithiniwak provided a valuable array of experiences for personal and community growth. The time spent engaging in interactions with people from the University of Winnipeg and Rocky Cree



communities as we worked together toward something greater than ourselves was an invaluable experience as a student researcher.

Led by the talent and wisdom of Mavis Reimer and William Dumas, their brainchild the Six Seasons of the Asiniskaw Ithiniwak continues to evolve and produce exemplary collaborations: it will serve as a testament to the asiniskaw ithiniwak (Rocky Cree) people's past and future for generations to come. The team at Six Seasons brought my learning to new heights by integrating Indigenous ways of knowing and scholarly pursuits.

The 2023 Gathering in Thompson was a special occasion marking the cumulative results of years of hard work (research and writing), coming together under one roof to showcase the collaborative efforts by bringing back knowledge to the community in the form of an immersive language app. The participants were able to interact with the Pisim book app and hear the book read in either Rocky Cree or English.

One of the main research areas I worked on was answering the question, “How does an app help to immerse readers?”. I read multiple research articles to gain a better understanding and combined this information with the observations I made during the time spent post-presentation: seeing the participants engaged in the immersive language app, one could see how the app was a portable tool important in language survival of the asiniskaw ithiniwak people. This was made possible by collaboratively working with and forming long-lasting relationships with all the Rocky Cree Communities.

As a team, I worked with two other students to develop a presentation demonstrating how the Pisim app (iOS) worked for the participants of the Gathering. One of the main objectives was to upport the cultural and language revitalization of asiniskaw ithiniwak. These participatory experiences lent to the overall learning experience and added to the project's continued success.



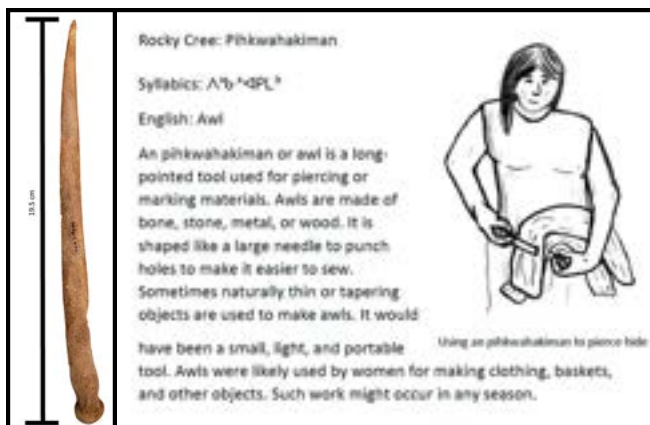
Laura Gosse, Lakehead University



I completed a Master's degree at Lakehead with the Six Seasons project. Scott Hamilton was my supervisor with Jill Taylor-Hollings on my committee. I now have a permanent job as Visitor Engagement Supervisor with Alberta Parks.

My Master's thesis, entitled *Deconstructing Canada's Colonial Narrative: Creating Space for Indigenous Narratives in Canadian Heritage*, was completed as part of the Six Seasons project. Canada's colonial legacy affects how heritage spaces are interpreted to emphasize nationbuilding at the expense of Indigenous narratives. My project explored how Canadians might collaboratively deconstruct the dominant narrative and create a space for more inclusive heritage overviews of the country, while examining the power dynamics between European settler history and Indigenous narratives that have been largely ignored. Contemporary heritage spaces provide an opportunity for Indigenous community members, museum professionals, and researchers to collaboratively re-examine past and present narratives and to authentically re-tell Canada's history in a decolonized manner.

Also during my time at Lakehead, I created a companion addition to support the revised Pîsim book, teacher's guide, and new app. I worked with Knowledge Keepers, Clarence Surette and Jill Taylor-Hollings to create the *Six Seasons of the Asiniskaw Îthiniwak Shoebox Dig Artifact Description Guide & the Basics of Archaeology*. Key Rocky Cree belongings (artifacts) are shown and described in the language and English. Clarence Surette then scanned and 3D printed and painted the items to create a classroom set for students to be able to handle them (rather than the potential to damage a real ancient artifact).



Stephanie Meredith, Lakehead University

I completed an Honour's thesis with the Six Seasons project, supervised by Jill Taylor-Hollings and Clarence Surette at Lakehead. I provide a summary of my research below. After graduating, I have been working full time as an archaeologist in Toronto and BC.



Throughout Europe, 3D technology has been used to replicate and preserve the images of ancient pottery vessels for the past decade. Imagine my surprise, when I could not find a single academic paper referring to the use of 3D technology with precontact Canadian Indigenous pottery? Almost all pottery vessels here are found in sherds (small pieces), so archaeologists have the challenge of refitting the pieces to learn more about the original pot shape/profile, size, exterior, decorations, etc. Therefore, my Honour's thesis entitled, *New Methods to Measure Precontact Indigenous Pottery from Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario using Digital Tools* (Meredith 2024) explored the use of 3D technology to measure and re-create the most accurate ancient pottery profiles, thereby improving upon earlier techniques such as hand drawing profiles and basic photography. I chose examples of similar Late Woodland period (ca. 1100-150 years ago) Winnipeg Fabric-impressed ware pottery from the Selkirk composite (likely made by Cree speakers) and Sandy Lake ware of the Psinomani culture (perhaps Sioux speakers), which were found in Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario.

I practiced using 3D measuring techniques and re-creating vessel profiles using four different software programs. Meshmixer (Autodesk 2017) and Meshlab (Visual et al., 2022) were used in the scanning and 'cleaning' process of making 3D renditions of the potsherds. Whereas, Gigamesh (Hubert, 2023) and Inkscape (The Inkscape Project, 2023) software was used in the measurement and digital drawing of the profiles. After testing these different methods, I determined that 3D scanning is more expensive than photography and hand-drawn profiles, depending on the equipment purchased. However, it proved to be more beneficial in measurement accuracy and final drawing, while also being less time consuming. Furthermore, these new methods will aid in future archaeological research improving the understanding of pottery wares and the ancient Indigenous people who made them.

Steph Skelton, Lakehead University



I am currently in the Master's of Archaeological Science program at Lakehead University and working on the Six Seasons project.

The Ancestors of the asiniskaw Itchinwak (Rocky Cree) created pottery for hundreds of years at Southern Indian Lake, Manitoba. Like any artistic tradition, pottery can reflect both individual expression and broader culture. Yet, most pottery vessels found at archaeological sites are also practical items, used to make food for a family or a community. While pottery has often been linked to the cooking of Mathomin ("wild rice"), recently cultivated plants (such as maize, beans, or squash, etc. have been found in pots from Northern Ontario sites. My part of the Six Seasons Project intends to figure out what foods were cooked in pottery vessels excavated in the 1970's from sites close to Southern Indian Lake.

Archaeologists can tell what foods were cooked in ancient pottery by analysing the burned food that preserves on the pot's surface. These residues can be radiocarbon dated, a method of determining how old an object is by analysing the carbon within it. Past research suggests that South Indian Lake archaeological sites were used by people from ~1300 years ago until ~1700. I intend to find out when these specific meals were cooked.

Residues can also be analysed for their carbon and nitrogen content, and this will allow me to determine what broad categories of foods people were eating, such as separating between different kinds of animals. As well, small pieces of plants are trapped in these residues during cooking, and when examined under a microscope I can identify what sort of plants were cooked in these pots. These three methods combine well because they can tell me different things about what was cooked and when.

This knowledge gained can then help us answer questions about what plants people choose to make part of their lives, whether they gathered wild plants or acquired cultivated plants through trade. This can help us understand the relationships between past people on Southern Indian Lake and other nations, and the relationships they built to access the foods they wanted.



Reconstructed Winnipeg Fabric-impressed ware pot from Southern Indian Lake that is curated at the Manitoba Museum.





Gatherings

awaniki asiniskaw ithiniwak?

Who are the Rocky Cree?

By: Melanie Braith and Doris Wolf

The “awaniki asiniskaw ithiniwak? Who are the Rocky Cree?” Gathering was held from May 26–28, 2023 at University College of the North (UCN) in Thompson, Manitoba. Members of two groups co-organized this three-day event. The first was Virginia Moose and Jennie Tait of the Asiniskaw Ithiniwak Mamawiwin, a grassroots group focused on documenting the oral histories of the Rocky Cree. The second was us of the Six Seasons of the Asiniskaw Ithiniwak project at the University of Winnipeg, who obtained funding and organized sessions and logistics. The goal of the gathering was to share knowledge of Rocky Cree language, culture, and history and foster a sense of shared identity among the community members in N. Manitoba.

Over the three days of the gathering, we hosted many people including community members, Knowledge Keepers, young asiniskaw ithiniwak, and academics. We began Friday with pre-conference hands-on learning opportunities for school groups in Thompson. Led by the Lakehead University Archaeology Team of Six Seasons, students all rotated through three workshops of pottery making (Jill Taylor-Hollings), flintknapping (Clarence Surette), and traditional material objects (Scott Hamilton). About 85 students, their teachers and educational assistants from Westwood and Wapanohk Community Schools participated. The workshops were very energetic and a great success!

The gathering officially opened on Friday evening with a feast to welcome participants. Over the course of the weekend, approximately 75 people attended with five asiniskaw ithiniwak communities being represented: piponapiwin (O-Pipon-Ni-Piwin South Indian Lake); kisipikamāhk (Brochet); niscawayasihk (Nelson House); okawi mithikananihk (Granville Lake); and pakitawāhk anik (Pukatawagan).

Several members of different communities brought youth (high school age) participants with them. Throughout the weekend, a wide range of topics were covered at the various sessions and workshops about storytelling, land-based knowledge, history, mapping, archaeological tools, pottery, and flintknapping (creating stone tools). We ended our

wonderful gathering with a lunch and discussion about future gatherings (see below).

We are grateful to videographer Grant Barkman and DecisionWorks for creating a beautiful video of the gathering. Also, we are grateful to Felix Walker and the NCN Family and Community Wellness Centre for their support in the creation of this video. Please use the QR code here or go to the Six Seasons Project website to watch it:



awaniki asiniskaw
ithiniwak? Who are the
Rocky Cree? Gathering
2023



Sharing conversations and a meal at the Gathering.

Gathering Photos



Co-organizer Melanie Braith talking with a group of the participants.



Fawnda Neckoway and Simon Bird sharing about language and culture through media and film at the gathering.



Larry Tait and Kevin Tait talking with people about the asiniskaw İthiniwak Star Chart Teachings.



Asiniskaw İthiniwak community members and Six Seasons team members participating in one of the discussion circles we had at the gathering.

