

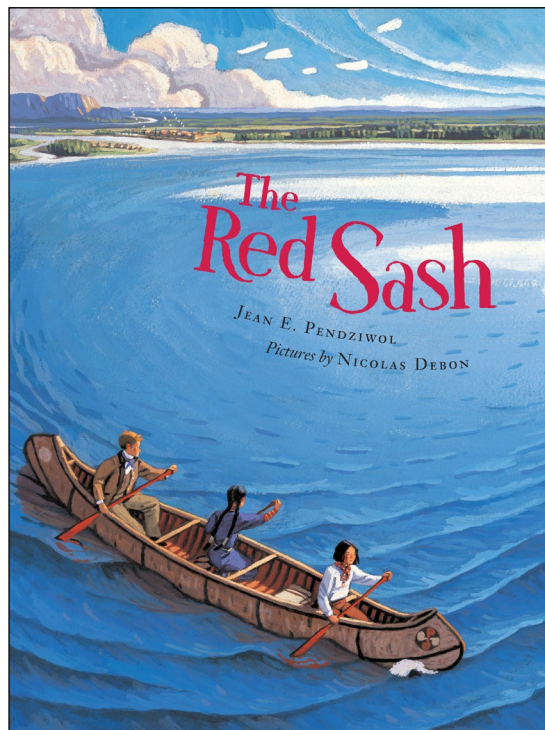


GROUNDWOOD STUDY GUIDES

The Red Sash

Written by Jean E. Pendziwol

Illustrated by Nicolas Debon



The Red Sash is the story of a young Métis boy who lives near the fur trading post of Fort William, on Lake Superior, nearly 200 years ago.

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Ages 5 to 8 / Grades K to 3

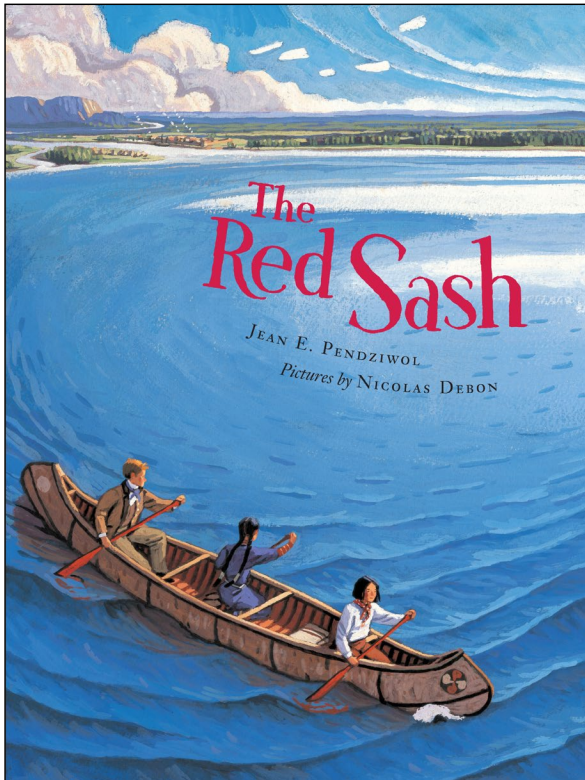
JUVENILE FICTION / People & Places / Canada / Indigenous

Full-color illustrations / 8.75 x 11.25 / 40 pages

Trade paperback / \$14.99 / 978-1-77306-982-1

Ebook / 978-1-55498-284-4

groundwoodbooks.com



BOOK DESCRIPTION

In reading this book, you gain an authentic sense of the look and feel of a 19th-century Canadian fur trading post. The story centers around a young Métis boy who lives near the trading post of Fort William, on Lake Superior, nearly 200 years ago. In the winter, the boy's father guides voyageurs into the northwest to trade with Indigenous Peoples for furs. Those same voyageurs paddle back to Fort William with their packs of furs, while another group comes in from Montreal bringing supplies. This is a time of feasting, dancing and trading stories around the campfire called rendezvous. In a storm, the boy saves a canoe carrying a gentleman from the North West Company, earning the gift of a voyageur's red sash.

The book also has helpful features including a map on the endpapers, a small multilingual (French, Anishinaabemowin, and English) glossary, and an information note about old Fort William and the North West Company.

PRE-READING

DO YOUR RESEARCH

Research the history of the voyageurs in Canada and what this job entailed. Think of how this job is similar or different to another job today.

Research the history of the fur trade, the role of the Métis and First Nations people within it, and create a map of the canoe routes used by voyageurs. Locate Fort William, where this story takes place.

► Fur Trade: For nearly 250 years, from the early 17th to the mid-19th centuries, the fur trade was a vast commercial enterprise involving European and Indigenous Peoples across what is now Canada.

THE RED SASH

Using the title, and the picture on the title page, ask students what this is and what they know about it.

Record their thoughts before reading. Re-visit this after reading, and do more research following if they still have questions.

► Historically, the Métis sash had many functional uses. It had fringed ends that served as emergency sewing kits when the Métis were out on a buffalo hunt. The sash also served as a key holder, first aid kit, washcloth, towel and as an emergency bridle and saddle blanket. The sash has acquired new significance in the 20th century, now symbolizing pride and identification for Métis people.

For more information about the Métis sash:

<https://albertametis.com/culture/symbols-of-culture/>

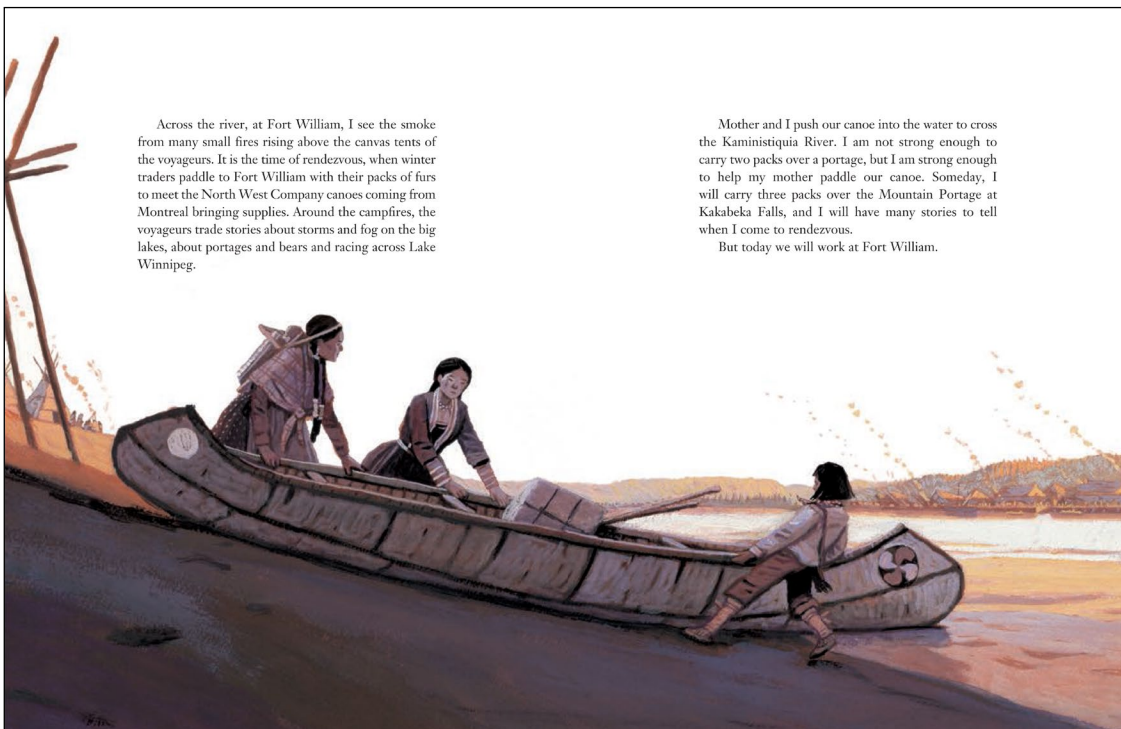
PICTURE WALK

Conduct a picture walk through the story. Ask students what they notice about the setting, characters, and what they think this story is about.

WORD WORK

There is a glossary in the back. Introduce these key words prior to reading by having students make predictions about their meaning.

WORD	PREDICTION
Boule	
Canot du Nord	
Gichigami	
Makak	
Nanabijou	
Tikinaagan	
Voyageurs	



DURING READING

The Métis culture contains aspects of French Canadian and First Nation cultures. Where do you see examples of both in this story? Create a T-chart to track examples from the text.

For example:

FIRST NATIONS CULTURE	FRENCH CANADIAN CULTURE
Live in a wigwam	Small houses
Setting snares for hare on Traverse Islands	Barns — farm animals
Wearing moccasins	Wearing boots

CHECKING PREDICTIONS

As you come across each of the words you have made predictions for in the story, use the text to check or change your predictions.

HARD LIFE

The boy knows that the voyageur life is a hard one. The text says that “the winters are long and cold, food is difficult to find, and some of the rivers are wild.” Discuss why it is that he still dreams of becoming a voyageur someday.

WHY FUR?

The young boy helps to unload “the pack of furs that have traveled from deep in the wilds of the Indian territories – wolf, muskrat, deer, fox, buffalo, mink... but most important, beaver.” Discuss why these furs were collected. What do you think they were used for?

Show images of beaver hats during this time period.

POST READING

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Consider the use of language. How does the author's use of both the French and Anishinaabe languages help the reader understand the boy's way of life?

What is the significance of the red sash to the boy?

Why might the author have chosen *The Red Sash* as the title for this story?

What do the events of this story tell you about the roles that First Nations People and Europeans played in the fur trade?

How is the rendezvous celebration similar to, or different from, celebrations within your own family and culture?

BIRCH BARK CANOE

In this story, we see a number of birch bark canoes used by voyageurs.

► Canot du Nord (North Canoe)

This canoe was used most often between the remote outposts and Grand Portage. It was about 24 feet (7 m) in length and was manned by 2-6 voyageurs. This canoe was often light enough to be carried by two men.

FORT WILLIAM HISTORICAL PARK

Fort William's history has been preserved and is shared at Fort William Historical Park. You can visit the website to learn more and get information:

<http://fwhp.ca/>

Many historical forts are operated across the country. Take your class on a trip to one to experience and learn more about this time period.

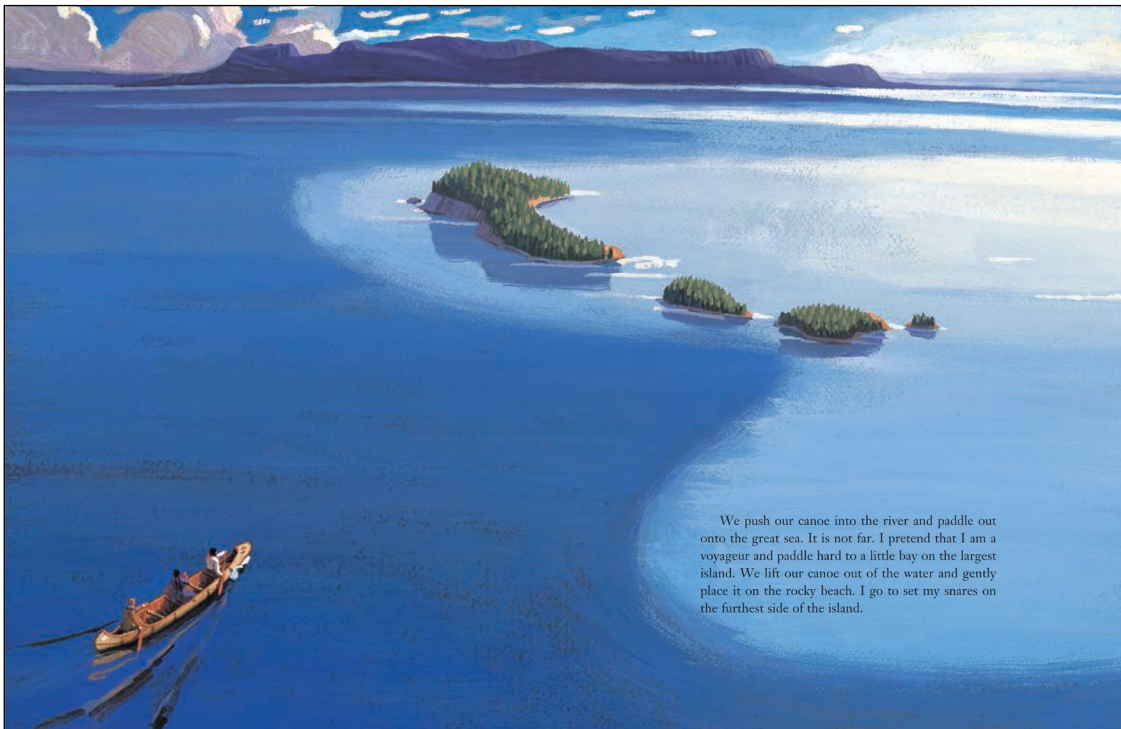
VOYAGEUR ADVENTURES

Write a story in first-person about your adventures as a voyageur. Include information about your role, the places you travelled, and hardships you faced.

LEGEND OF NANABIJOU

Read the legend of Nanabijou – “who lies sleeping on the great sea Gichigami.” Look up present-day pictures of Nanabijou, the Sleeping Giant, located in Thunder Bay, Ontario.

ART: Connect to Art lesson by recreating an image of the Sleeping Giant using different media.



We push our canoe into the river and paddle out onto the great sea. It is not far. I pretend that I am a voyageur and paddle hard to a little bay on the largest island. We lift our canoe out of the water and gently place it on the rocky beach. I go to set my snares on the furthest side of the island.

CONNECTIONS TO OTHER CURRICULUM

SOCIAL STUDIES

Compare societies from different eras and discuss how different communities contribute to the evolution of Canadian identity.

Consider the way of life of the voyageurs and life at Fort William. In what ways is life in Canada today similar/different from this time in history?

PHYSICAL EDUCATION/OUTDOOR EDUCATION

Take your class canoeing.

CONNECTIONS TO OTHER GROUNDWOOD TITLES

THE NORTHWEST PASSAGE

For hundreds of years explorers attempted to find the Northwest Passage—a route through Canada’s northern waters to the Pacific Ocean and Asia. Others attempted to find a land route. Many hundreds of men perished in the attempt, until finally, in 1906, Roald Amundsen completed the voyage by ship. Today global warming has brought interest in the passage back to a fever pitch as nations contend with each other over its control and future uses.

ADDITIONAL WEB RESOURCE

Sleeping Giant Legend

<https://www.northernontario.travel/thunder-bay/legend-of-the-sleeping-giant>

AUTHOR AND ILLUSTRATOR BIOGRAPHIES



JEAN E. PENDZIWOL was inspired to write *The Red Sash* through her involvement with Fort William Historical Park as a volunteer, and she worked closely with the Fort's historian on the story. Her highly acclaimed picture books include *I Found Hope in a Cherry Tree*, illustrated by Nathalie Dion; *Me and You and the Red Canoe*, illustrated by Phil; and *Once Upon a Northern Night*, illustrated by Isabelle Arsenault. Jean's adult novel, *The Lightkeeper's Daughters*, has been published in multiple languages. Jean lives in Northwestern Ontario near Lake Superior.



Nicolas Debon won the Boston Globe–Horn Book Award for his book *The Strongest Man in the World*. His illustrations in *Dawn Watch* by Jean E. Pendziwol were nominated for a Governor General's Literary Award. He has also written and illustrated *A Brave Soldier* and *Four Pictures* by Emily Carr. A Canadian, he now lives in France.