

# WHAT THE EAGLE SEES

## INDIGENOUS STORIES OF REBELLION AND RENEWAL

by Eldon Yellowhorn and Kathy Lowinger

**Educator's guide written by Nadine McSpadden, Helping Teacher, Aboriginal Learning, Surrey District School Board, Surrey, B.C.**

**Genre:** Non-fiction, history, social science

**Themes:** Significance of story, point of view, perspective, Indigenous history of Turtle Island/North America, rebellion, cultural assimilation, cultural renewal, anthropology

**Suitable for:** Grades 6–9

**Lexile Measure:** 1060L

**Common Core standards:** WHST.9-10.1,2,4,7,8,9,10  
RH.6-8.1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10  
RH.9-10.1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10  
L.8.3,4,4a,4c,4d,5,5a,5b,5c,6  
SL.8.1,1a,1c,1d,2,3,4,5,6

**Next Generation Science Standards:** HS-LS2-Ecosystems: Interactions, Energy, and Dynamics  
HS-LS3-Heredity: Inheritance and Variation of Traits  
HS-LS4-Biological Evolution: Unity and Diversity  
HS-ESS1-Earth's Place in the Universe  
HS-ESS2-Earth's Systems  
HS-ESS3-Earth and Human Activity  
HS-ETS1-Engineering Design

### Summary

Indigenous Peoples across Turtle Island have faced disease, war, broken promises, and forced assimilation. Despite crushing losses and insurmountable challenges, they formed new nations from the remnants of old ones, they adopted new ideas and built on them, they fought back, they kept their cultures alive, and they survived.

The authors of *What the Eagle Sees*, Eldon Yellowhorn from the Piikani Nation and Kathy Lowinger, document the resistance and resilience of Indigenous Peoples from European contact to the present. Thematic chapters explore early Viking settlements, slavery (especially as practiced by the Spanish), the prevalence of confederacies allying Indigenous groups, participation in wars (particularly the World War II Navajo code talkers), the changes horses brought to Indigenous society, forced

migrations and massacres, attempts to assimilate Indigenous Peoples into white society, prohibitions on Indigenous cultural activities, residential schools, forced adoptions, government naming policies, current efforts toward reconciliation, and recognition of traditional knowledge. Anthropologists, musicians, social activists, Olympians, soldiers, healers, artists, and an Indigenous astronaut are featured. Examples from all parts of North America told in a series of non-consecutive events highlight the resistance strategies, coping mechanisms, and renewal efforts undertaken by Indigenous Peoples in Canada and the U.S.

## **ACTIVITY IDEAS**

The following activity ideas are only a start. There are many possibilities for helping students construct meaning from text.

Comprehension activities

- help readers to extend their general knowledge from prior experience
- develop reading strategies for comprehension
- bring relevance to the act of reading
- foster discussion and reflection through response to the text

## **BEFORE STARTING THE BOOK**

These activities build the context and introduce the topic of the book, and establish prior knowledge and interest, and develop predictions of what the text will be about.

### **WHAT DO YOU KNOW?**

In this text, students will be exploring the histories of Indigenous Peoples of Turtle Island. Prior to starting the text, take time to find out what students know or think they know about the history of Indigenous Peoples of North America. Create a chart recording the students' thinking. This could be a group brainstorm activity.

- What do you know about the Indigenous Peoples of North America? Specifically, what do you know about the history of Native Americans or First Peoples of Canada and the U.S.?
- What do you know about the history, language, and culture of Indigenous Peoples?

The intent of this activity is to activate prior knowledge. It might also draw out misconceptions that students have that will be clarified through the reading of the text.

Students can complete their own Know, Wonder, Learn chart.

## **TRADITIONAL TERRITORY**

Does your school reside on the traditional territory of an Indigenous community? Where could you find out? Does your school do an acknowledgement of traditional territories at assemblies? Why or why not?

## **EXPLORING TEXT FEATURES**

Throughout the book, the writers use text features to draw attention to certain aspects of the content.

- Identify as many text features as you can. What do the text features do?
- Describe something that caught your eye that made you want to read more.
- Read the table of contents. What does it tell you? Does it suggest whose perspective is going to be shared in this text? How so?
- Look at the Selected Sources on page 112 and 113. What do you notice?
- Look at the design of each chapter page. Notice that each chapter page includes a quote. How do you think these quotes were selected and what do they tell you about what you are about to read?

## **EXPLORING IMAGINE BOXES**

One of the text features that is used extensively throughout the book is an Imagine box (pages 13, 20, 30, 45, 54, 82). Select one of the Imagine boxes and read it. Whose perspective is being shared? Why is it difficult to relate to the Imagine box if you have not read the entire chapter? How do you think your ability to imagine might change after reading the entire chapter? What is the purpose of trying to get the readers to imagine something? What are some things that might prevent a reader from imagining themselves in the role of someone else?

## **VOCABULARY**

Look at the glossary in the back of the text. What do you notice about the words that are included in the glossary? What do most of these words have in common? Why were these words selected while words like *confederacy*, *constitution*, *resistance*, *battles*, *victory*, and *massacre* were not included?

## WHILE READING THE BOOK

These activities check on comprehension, stimulate interest, involve readers in reflection as they read, and encourage consideration of other readers' reactions.

### CONFEDERACY

What is a confederacy? Look up the word and think about how it relates to the forming of the United States of America. What are the benefits of forming a confederacy? What might be the downsides to forming a confederacy? What are some of the challenges of creating a confederacy? How do you think decisions are made within a confederacy? Do you think there is always consensus within a confederacy?

After reading pages 30–32, what surprised you about what you read? Think about this quote, “If six Indigenous nations could form a union that had lasted for centuries, surely ten colonies could find a way to work together.” (page 31). We learn in the next paragraph that in 1988, a resolution was passed to recognize the contributions of the Six Nations of the Iroquois Confederacy to the development of the U.S. government. Do you think that prior to 1988, this was considered an important perspective to share in history books? Why do you think history books in the past may have not included this information? What do you think changed?

### ROLES OF WOMEN AND WHY THEY MATTER

The authors chose to include a number of key female historical figures in the text. Research them in more depth. Why do you think the authors chose to include these strong figures? How might this relate to Indigenous culture? Look up the words matriarch and patriarch. How do these words relate to Indigenous culture?

Read the information relating to Pochahantas (page 34). What was her real name and what did it mean? How does this compare to more contemporary versions of Pocahontas (e.g. the Disney character)? How does the more contemporary version hurt our understanding of history? Can you think of any other historical female figures who have had their characterizations changed or minimized? Do you think this only happens to female historical characters?

- Madam Sacho (pages 42–43)
- Pocahantas (pages 33–35)
- Nanychi (page 46)
- Mollie Burkhart (page 75)

## **ASSIMILATION**

This text provides some truths about what happened to Indigenous Peoples in Canada and the United States. In Canada, the Federal Government made a formal apology to the survivors of Indian Residential Schools. You can read the apology at <https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100015644/1100100015649>

What is the significance of this apology? List some of the things that have been done to Indigenous Peoples of Turtle Island (*Possible answers might be the reservation system and the loss of land and the ability to live off the land; Indian Residential Schools and the resulting loss of language, culture, and connection to our knowledge keepers and Elders; the 60s scoop as a continuation of an assimilation practice to get rid of the Indian problem; the Trail of Tears; disease; and disenfranchisement, among many other things*). How do the authors address this issue? These events greatly affected Indigenous Peoples. Why does the lost of language and culture matter so much? Find references in the text to support your answer.

## **CONTRIBUTIONS**

This text provides numerous examples of significant cultural, social, scientific, and other contributions made by the Indigenous Peoples of Turtle Island. Imagine you are a writer for a newspaper. Your editor has charged you with preparing a blog related to a special day held on June 22 in Canada—National Indigenous Peoples Day is celebrated on this day every year. Use the information in this text to write a blog about the contributions of Indigenous Peoples. Be sure to provide a description of Turtle Island as your readership may not be familiar with this term. Your editor is looking for in-depth entries so be sure to fact-check. Consider including other selected sources to make your blog entry accurate. How might you ensure your information is accurate?

## **RECLAIMING WHAT WAS TAKEN**

The text provides information in relation to the Lost Scrolls (page 81) and the returning of artifacts and human remains of our ancestors to the people of Turtle Island (page 95). Why is this important and why do you think the authors felt it necessary to include this information? Why do you think museums might be reluctant to return these items? How do you think these items ended up in the hands of museums in the first place?

## AFTER READING THE BOOK

These activities inspire continued reflection and response to the text, bring conclusion to the experience of reading this text, and stimulate further extensions.

### LOOKING AT INDIGENOUS STORIES

This book contains several traditional Indigenous stories. What do you know about Indigenous stories? You can visit this website that provides some information on the importance of Indigenous stories and oral traditions: <https://www.ictinc.ca/blog/11-things-you-should-know-about-aboriginal-oral-traditions>

Explore why story is significant to Indigenous Peoples. How is an oral story different from a story that has been written? How does perspective change story? How does your own world-view change how to read and understand story?

Examine the following stories. How might you categorize them? How does their inclusion strengthen this text and the chapter in which they are featured?

- Never Eat an Eagle! (page 6)
- Quetzalcoatl, the Feathered Serpent (page 18)
- Rabbit Brings Fire (page 39)
- How Horses Came to the People (page 56)
- How the Ookaan (the Sun Dance) Was Given to the People (pages 62, 63)
- The Story of Katoyis (page 98)

### THE *DELGAMUUKW* DECISION AND THE STORY OF KATOYIS (KAINAI)

Explore how Indigenous stories connect to oral history. Research the 1997 *Delgamuukw* decision. How does it change your understanding of the significance of story and oral traditions?

What do the *Delgamuukw* Decision and The Story of Katoyis (Kainai) on page 98 have in common?

## **DOES WORD CHOICE MATTER? WHAT'S IN A WORD?**

Authors choose words deliberately to convey meaning and value. For example, on page 15 we learn about Thule technology and the Viking legacy. Think about the words *technology* and *legacy*. Do they give you a sense that the authors respect the contributions of people long ago? What if the word *technology* was substituted with *pre-historic tools*? What if the word *legacy* was substituted with the word *barbarians*? How does this change things? Find 10 examples of word usage in the text that implies that the authors mean to convey respect.

## **SOARING INTO THE FUTURE**

When they first arrived, how little did the colonizers of Turtle Island know and understand about the people already living here? There is a strong argument to be made that they knew nothing nor did they care to do so. There was no understanding of the history, cultural, and spiritual practices, and the diversity of Indigenous Peoples. There was no sense that they understood the presence of Indigenous knowledge, the strong connection to land and place, and the significance of stories and oral traditions. This is changing and this text is evidence of that.

Do you think it would have made a difference to the course of history if colonizers had known more about Indigenous Peoples before they set foot on their land? What misunderstandings and mistreatments occurred because colonizers did not make an effort to learn about Indigenous Peoples?

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When two cultures meet for the first time, what are some of the barriers that prevent them from knowing and learning from each other? How does a people's world view shape how they see and understand other cultures?

Imagine from a non-Indigenous perspective what it must have been like to witness a potlatch for the first time. Imagine seeing Indigenous masks being danced. Would you understand what was happening? What barriers would prevent you from understanding?

Imagine seeing welcome poles and memorial poles for the first time. How would you make sense of them? You do not speak the language and the Indigenous Peoples may not have been so willing to share their meaning because you were somewhat of a mystery to them.

This text is written by an Indigenous author. Do you think this matters? How so? Would the content of the text be slightly different if it was written by a non-Indigenous author?

Look up the phrase “Indigenous ally.” What does it mean to be an Indigenous ally? Do you think this book would have the same significance if it was written by an ally? [https://physiotherapy.ca/sites/default/files/indigenous\\_ally\\_toolkit\\_en.pdf](https://physiotherapy.ca/sites/default/files/indigenous_ally_toolkit_en.pdf)

## **RECLAIMING**

In the last two chapters, we learn that the Indigenous Peoples of Turtle Island are reclaiming what was lost. They are reclaiming:

- music
- ancestors and cultural belongings
- languages
- ceremony
- land
- their history

Select one of the above and research it. Create a multimedia presentation that thoroughly demonstrates your understanding of how your topic is being reclaimed. Provide specific examples. Provide authentic photos (from archives) if possible. Connect or interview an Elder or knowledge keeper who can verify your information. Remember the importance of reciprocity. Look this word up and think about how it relates to connecting with and giving back to Elders and knowledge keepers (perhaps gifting an honorarium).

## **KNOWING YOUR COMMUNITY**

Throughout this text, students have learned the significance of understanding the real history of the Indigenous Peoples of Turtle Island.

More and more schools are starting assemblies with a Traditional Welcome or an Acknowledgment of the Traditional Territories. If your school does not do so, have students research traditional welcomes and acknowledgements. Have students draft a script that could be used for assemblies. If possible, do so in conjunction with the school’s local Indigenous community.

Connecting with your local community is key to reconciliation. By now, students should know the name of the local Indigenous community. Ideally, they have had an opportunity to hear from



local knowledge keepers and Elders about their history, culture, and language. Ask students to research local community events hosted by Indigenous communities. This could include local powwows, events at organizations like Friendship Centres and other Indigenous organizations. Reach out to these organizations and, if they are willing, consider a field trip to one of these events. Prior to attending it, ensure students are briefed on protocols relating to the event. If your school has an Indigenous Support Worker, ask them to help connect with local Indigenous communities and organizations. They can also help teachers connect with local Indigenous knowledge keepers, artisans, and Elders who might be willing to come and speak with students.

Consider planning an Indigenous celebration in your school in connection with the local Indigenous community. Consider incorporating Indigenous content into assemblies (acknowledging traditional territories, or inviting Indigenous veterans to talk about their service).

## **REVIEWING KWL CHARTS**

Look at the class chart or individual charts created prior to your reading of the text. Discuss key misconceptions that were clarified throughout the reading of the text and through presentations from guest speakers. Ask students to summarize in their own words their biggest takeaways from this text. Conclude their summary with things they still want to know or learn about the Indigenous Peoples of Turtle Island. These can be used to direct individual research or group inquiries.

Ask students to explore authentic Indigenous resources online. How do we know what is an authentic Indigenous resource? Look at this website for information on what makes an authentic Indigenous resource: <https://firstpeoplesprinciplesoflearning.wordpress.com/authentic-resources/>

## **CLOSURE: WHY NOW?**

In the last few years we are seeing more and more authentic Indigenous resources. Why is this? What has changed? Teachers could share their perspectives. What did they learn about the Indigenous Peoples of Turtle Island when they were in school? What did they learn as part of their teacher training in relation to the history of Turtle Island and its original inhabitants? What does the word reconciliation mean? How does it impact what students are learning in school and why you as a teacher chose to use this resource?

In Canada, the Truth and Reconciliation Committee created 94 Calls to Action. [http://trc.ca/assets/pdf/Calls\\_to\\_Action\\_English2.pdf](http://trc.ca/assets/pdf/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf) One of the calls to action relates to all Canadians knowing the true history of Canada. In British Columbia and in more and more provinces, the curriculum is changing to include Indigenous World Views, the First Peoples Principles of Learning, and the real history of Canada. Explore the Calls to Action and identify the sections that relate specifically to education. Think about your school. What are some things the school could do to participate in reconciliation?

- Acknowledge territories
- Include current authentic Indigenous resources in course work and library collections
- Invite Indigenous knowledge keepers in as guest speakers
- Connect with your local Indigenous community and encourage all staff, students, and their families to attend Indigenous events that are open to the public

Building connections and relationships with Indigenous communities is something we can all do.