

# Circle of Literacy

The Little Spirit Moon Month or Manidoo-Giizisoons

by Loriene Roy

**L**iteracy is the power to be great in the world," storyteller Geina Mhlophe assured the audience August 19 during the opening ceremony of the 73rd World Library and Information Congress of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions in Durban, South Africa (*AL*, Oct., p. 36–38).

Parents and library workers witness the magic that happens when young people are in contact with books. From kindergarten through 5th grade, I joined my son Owen Hunter for lunch at his school two or more times a week, reading aloud to him and his class and completing hundreds of books over those six years. Now, as a high school senior, Owen reads titles such as *Collapse*, *An Inconvenient Truth*, and any book by Orson Scott Card.

We have fallen in love with books and, as a result, created a generation of readers connected through characters and stories—witness the remarkable success of the Harry Potter series. I can return home to Minnesota through the writings of Louise Erdrich, Tim O'Brien, and LaVyrle Spencer. I connect with my indigenous colleagues around the world through the writings of Patricia Grace, Witi Ihimaera, and Alan Duff.

Graduate students enrolled in my fall Public Libraries class encounter genre fiction for adults as they support each other in learning about the history, authors, titles, and readers' advisory of romance, western, mysteries, and science fiction literature.

I have never met a parent who did not want his or her child to be literate in English. I have also been privileged to be included in the conversations of indigenous people around the world who are working to recover and strengthen family languages.

During the 2008 observance of National Library Week, April 13–19, we will host an international celebration of indigenous children's reading and culture. Similar to the "Gathering of Nations Powwow," North America's biggest Native American event, that takes place each spring in Albuquerque, New Mexico, we are inviting 50 to 100 schools around the world to participate in "A Gathering of Readers." Through this project, participating schools are contributing content information on how they support reading and cultural expression to a sharable website that also includes activities for the children, such as story-webbing explorations, virtual membership cards, and reading certificates.

We welcome everyone to visit the Gathering of Readers website at [www.school.utexas.edu/~gathread/](http://www.school.utexas.edu/~gathread/). Schools from Florida to Alaska and from Aotearoa/New Zealand and Australia to Africa are currently enrolling in this endeavor.

The Gathering of Readers website



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also features several indigenous writers. Larry Loyie (Cree) writes about his youth in Canada before residential school. Loyie wrote the first book about HIV/AIDS for young indigenous readers. Robert Sullivan's stories about Maori culture are available in full-text from the International Children's Digital Library ([www.icdlbooks.org](http://www.icdlbooks.org)). Cynthia Leitich Smith (Muskogee Creek) portrays urban Indian children in books such as *Jingle Dancer* and *Rain Is Not My Indian Name*. Chad Solomon illustrates a comic strip featuring Anishinabe brothers, Rabbit and Bear Paws, as they live a traditional life in the 18th century. Patricia Wade and her son Dimi Macheras write and illustrate the Ya Ne Dah Ah stories, a series of graphic novels depicting the cultural stories of Alaska's Chickaloon Village.

Meanwhile, librarians around the country are preparing to celebrate our own "Academy Awards" with the announcement of the youth media awards during the upcoming ALA Midwinter Meeting in Philadelphia. Read the award-winning books, add them to your collections, and watch the celebration in person or online. ■

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