

Recommended Reads – Indigenous Authors

by Katherena Vermette

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the 2014 *On the Same Page*,
Manitoba's Biggest Book Club selection



This is a re-print of a June, 2013 blog post Katherena wrote for Winnipeg Public Library's Booked website for teens. We share her enthusiasm for these great titles and encourage teens and adults alike to check them out.

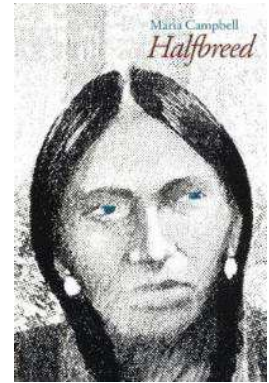
I love this blog post because it combines two of my favourite things to do. The first: working with youth! I lead a lot of writing workshops with young people and LOVE to see the amazing things they find in their brains. The second: telling people what books they should read! Being a card carrying member of the bookish club, I love to talk about what I'm reading, or have read, or want to read. All. The. Time. (I also like telling people what to do in general, but that's a whole other blog post!) So there you have it: I get to tell you young people what you should read and therefore put into your heads. (This list is by no means complete or a must do. Pick what looks interesting, leave the rest, and /or look for other Indigenous authors / books / subjects. We're everywhere!)

I love Indigenous books and authors. We are blessed to have so many to choose from. I asked all my friends and made a list of a few must-reads. Great for Indigenous youth or anyone who wants to learn more about some of the many beautiful and vibrant cultures on this big continent we call Turtle Island. First the women...

In Search of April Raintree by Beatrice Mosionier (Culleton)

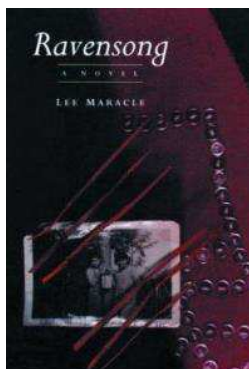
You knew this one was going to be on here! I think this story about two Manitoba sisters growing up in foster care should be mandatory reading for anyone who lives in this province.

Halfbreed by Maria Campbell Set in Saskatchewan a few years before Raintree, Halfbreed is a bridge between the past and future in the long story of Metis people in Western Canada.



My Name is Seepetza by Shirly Sterling

A new one making the rounds in middle years classrooms, this is an exciting book about the residential school experience. Sterling is a member of the Nlakapamux First Nation of the Interior Salish, and has a PhD in Education too. She just might be my new hero. I am going to have to read this one too. I have a feeling it's going to be a gooder.



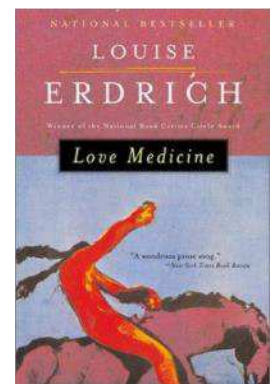
Ravensong by Lee Maracle

A beautiful story about sisterly love in BC. There is so much to love about this story. Senior years bookish types will love it.

Monkey Beach by Eden Robinson

Smooth as a stone washed ashore on the Haida Gwaii, Robinson debut novel about a young girl and her missing brother is one of my absolute favourites.

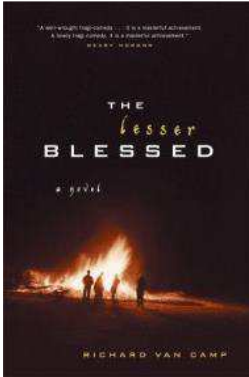
Love Medicine by Louise Erdrich I am big fan of writers' first books. The first book is always the book you've been writing for years and years before you actually sat down to write it. Love Medicine is like that. Erdrich creates a whole world, with a whole new community to dive into and swim around in. It's a beautiful, epic story, and truly good medicine.



A Really Good Brown Girl by Marilyn Dumont

I couldn't make a must read list without including some poetry. Everyone should read poetry. It's fast, beautiful and cuts to the quick. Generation Twitter should be all about poetry (says the old person). Oh, just try a poetry book! There are so, so many amazing Indigenous poets out there. Start with them. Indigenous poetry tends to come from the oral tradition and reads like sitting around the camp fire and someone telling you a good story. The really good ones, you can even smell the wood burning. Try it!

And then, the boys:



The Lesser Blessed by Richard Van Camp

Set in the North, this amazing book about young Larry is now also a brand new movie, starring Benjamin Bratt (and some beautiful young people from the North). Everyone is going to know this book before too long. Read soon!

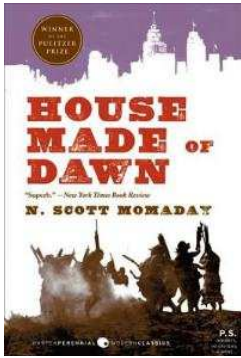
The True Diary of a Part Time Indian by Sherman Alexie

Mixed with great drawing and laugh out loud funnies, it's like an older, smarter, funnier version of Diary of a Wimpy Kid. I am going to read it again this summer. If it's checked out of the library, that's probably me. Don't worry, I'll be quick, just put it on hold.

7 Generations by David Alexander Robertson, illustrated by Scott Henderson

The art is beautiful and the story is universal. This graphic novel series is going to be a must read for middle or senior years classrooms in years to come. Also check out **Sugar Falls** and **The Life of Helen Betty Osborne**, also by Robertson.





House Made of Dawn by M.Scott Momaday

Winner of the Pulitzer Prize in 1969 and said to be the “breakthrough work” for Indigenous literature, House Made of Dawn tells the story about a young man returning to his desert home in New Mexico after fighting in World War II. Beautifully written, this is a great book for a senior year student.

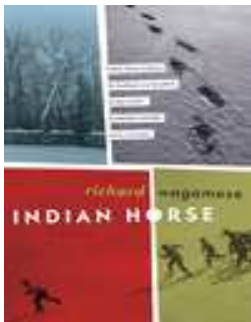
Green Grass, Running Water by Thomas King

A blessing bound in paper, this book is perfect for university bound senior years students (and hint: it is often included in university English classes so you just might be working ahead). Another one of King’s in on my own summer reading list? **The Inconvenient Indian.**



Indian Horse by Richard Wagamese

Ok, I have to read this one too. I have read several books by Wagamese - all wonderful. Keeper and Me is my favourite. Indian Horse is a residential school story about a young man trying to overcome his abusive reality. It has also just been voted as the *First Nations Communities Read* selection for 2013, so we all should get on that.



Winnipeg Public Library has these titles and more by many First Nations, Métis and Inuit authors – as well as by Indigenous peoples in the United States. Search for your favourite author in our online catalogue or speak with staff at one of our 20 Library locations or 4 mobile library service sites.

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