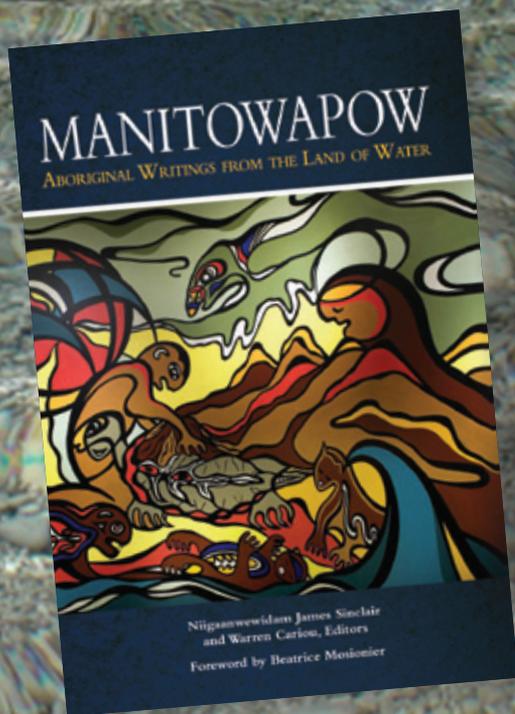




# READER'S GUIDE

**READ THE SAME BOOK  
SHARE THE SAME STORY**



## *Manitowapow: Aboriginal Writings from the Land of Water*

edited by  
Niigaanwewidam  
James Sinclair and  
Warren Cariou



# ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Manitobans have selected *Manitowapow: Aboriginal Writings from the Land of Water*, edited by **Niigaanwewidam James Sinclair** and **Warren Cariou**, as this year's featured book for **On The Same Page**, a province-wide reading initiative that encourages all Manitobans to read and talk about the same book at the same time.

The program includes book giveaways, writer appearances, and special events inspired by the anthology. The shared experience of reading the same book and participating in events brings readers together to discuss and debate issues and themes identified in the anthology, creating opportunities for personal and creative expression.

"**On The Same Page** is Manitoba's biggest book club, and what better place for a book club than in a public library," says Rick Walker, Manager, Winnipeg Public Library. "With generous funding support from The Winnipeg Foundation, **On The Same Page** is helping to bring all Manitobans together to share, with this year's selection, in the province's rich Aboriginal heritage through a unique reading experience."

"The Winnipeg Foundation is pleased to partner with Winnipeg Public Library to present the fifth year of **On the Same Page**," says Rick Frost, CEO. "This is a great community-building project that both showcases our vibrant arts community and encourages lifelong literacy."

**On The Same Page** has featured the following titles in the program's first four years:



*In Search of April Raintree*

2009



*Reading by Lightning*

2010



*Juliana and the  
Medicine Fish*

2011



*The Setting Lake Sun/Le  
soleil du lac qui se couche*

2012

# ABOUT THE BOOK

This anthology of Aboriginal writings from Manitoba takes readers back through the millennia and forward to the present day, painting a dynamic picture of a territory interconnected through words, ideas, and experiences. A rich collection of stories, poetry, nonfiction, and speeches, it features:

- Historical writings from important figures.
- Vibrant literary writing by eminent Aboriginal writers.
- Nonfiction and political writing from contemporary Aboriginal leaders.
- Local storytellers and keepers of knowledge from far-reaching Manitoba communities.
- New, vibrant voices that express modern Aboriginal experiences.
- Anishinaabe, Cree, Dene, Inuit, Métis, and Sioux writers from Manitoba.

Manitowapow or “the narrows of the Great Spirit” is the original Saukteaux and Cree name for the lands and waters in and around what is now known as Manitoba. This name reflects the sacred sounds when waves hit the loose surface rocks on the north shore in the narrows of Lake Manitoba – sounds that traditional peoples believed came from the drum beats by Gichi Manitou (The Great Spirit).

**Contact the On the Same Page coordinator at:**

Phone: (204) 986-2802

Email: [dpilon@winnipeg.ca](mailto:dpilon@winnipeg.ca)

# ABOUT THE EDITORS

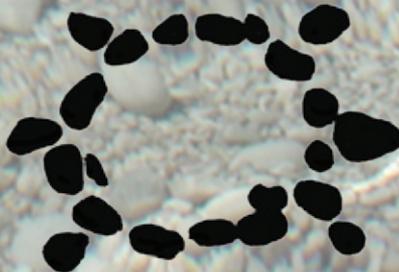


Photo: Aaron Pierre Photography

**Niigaanwewidam James Sinclair's** critical and creative work has been translated into several languages and can be found in periodicals such as *Prairie Fire*, *Canadian Literature*, *The Goose*, *Urban NDN*, *Canadian Dimension*, and *The Winnipeg Free Press*.

In 2009, he co-edited (with Renate Eigenbrod) a double issue of *The Canadian Journal of Native Studies* (#29, 1 & 2) focusing on "Responsible, Ethical, and Indigenous-Centred Literary Criticisms of Indigenous Literatures." Other short stories and essays have appeared in *Tales from Moccasin Avenue* (Totem Pole, 2006), *Across Cultures/ Across Borders: Canadian Aboriginal and Native American Literatures* (Broadview, 2009), *Stories Through Theories/Theories Through Stories: North American Indian Writing, Storytelling, and Critique* (Michigan State UP, 2010), and *Troubling Tricksters: Revisioning Critical Conversations* (Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2010).

Originally from St. Peter's (Little Peguis) First Nation in Manitoba, Canada, he now lives in Winnipeg, where he is completing his PhD in Anishinaabeg literature (University of British Columbia) while raising his beautiful daughter.



**Warren Cariou** was born in Meadow Lake, Saskatchewan, into a family of mixed Métis and European heritage.

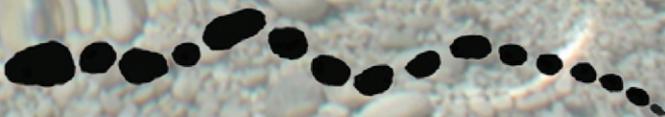
He has written many articles about Canadian Aboriginal literature, especially on Métis culture and storytelling, and he has published two books: a collection of novellas, *The Exalted Company of Roadside Martyrs* (1999) and a memoir / cultural history, *Lake of the Prairies: A Story of Belonging* (2002). He has also co-directed and co-produced two films about Aboriginal people in western Canada's oil sands region: *Overburden* and *Land of Oil and Water*.

Cariou has won and been nominated for numerous awards. His most acclaimed work to date, *Lake of the Prairies*, won the Drainie-Taylor Biography Prize in 2002 and was shortlisted for the Charles Taylor Prize for literary nonfiction in 2004. His films have screened at many national and international film festivals, including Hot Docs, ImagineNative, and the San Francisco American Indian Film Festival.

Cariou has also served as editor for several books, including an anthology of Aboriginal literature, *W'daub Awae: Speaking True* (2010), and he is the fiction co-editor of *Prairie Fire*. Cariou is a Canada Research Chair in Narrative, Community and Indigenous Cultures at the University of Manitoba, where he also directs the Centre for Creative Writing and Oral Culture.



Photo: Robert Tinker



# FROM THE EDITORS

*By Niigaanwewidam James Sinclair*

My family holds reunions at the St. Peter's church virtually every summer, just north of Selkirk and on the banks of the Red River in southern Manitoba. Growing up, I never knew why we did, nor cared really; the homemade pie was far more of a concern.

Last summer, we held races, a candy scramble, and ended in a water fight around the underground well pump – which happily gushes as it has for generations.

Just a few metres from our reunion site is Chief Peguis' grave. Just a few more, there are headstones, with dozens of names of my relatives. On the other side remains the foundation of the old St. Peter's Store. Not to be forgotten is the church, a powerful spiritual place that has held up well over the years.

In all this beauty, you would never know what happened here in 1907. After bribing leaders and waiting until much of the community was absent, government agents visited and held a vote for removal. You see, unscrupulous Manitoban citizens and farmers desperately wanted the fertile and rich land the Cree and Anishinaabe residents of St. Peter's had negotiated through treaty and lived on. The vote – in which anyone who voted “yes” was promised \$90 and no voting record was kept – unsurprisingly passed.

The following years were rife with violence as St. Peter's residents were forcibly removed north, where Peguis First Nation now sits. Those who remained were harassed by police, forced to squat on their own territory, and subjected to ridicule when they entered town looking for work.

Amazingly, and regardless of this violence, my ancestors persevered. Many eventually made homes in Selkirk. Some bought back their family homelands. The Selkirk Friendship Centre became a meeting place for all of us. In fact, that's where I first learned of the removal.

That's because, inexplicably, I never heard about St. Peter's in school, in town, or read about it on any monument.

Surrounded by the very land in which this happened, this history was never mentioned. I grew up surrounded by the erasure and silence created by one of the most violent and unjust acts in Manitoba's history.

That is until every summer, when my family showed me the complexity of the story of St. Peter's through laughter, food, and water fights. While I have never forgotten the painful parts, I remember far more the beautiful gifts they give me.

Later, as a researcher and writer, I discovered the most amazing thing of all: this story is not unique. It continues to be, however, one that few know. Like it, there are many more. Stories of relationships, resisting violence, and resilience are everywhere; our province is filled with powerful visions and experiences told through the eyes of Aboriginal peoples.

All of Manitoba should hear these stories in order to get a full understanding of all that has happened in this place; the beauty, the struggles, and everything in between. This is what my co-editor Warren Cariou and I hoped to do while assembling the anthology *Manitowapow: Aboriginal Writings from the Land of Water*.

"One of the reasons that Niigaanwewidam Sinclair and I spent years editing the anthology *Manitowapow: Aboriginal Writing from the Land of Water* is that we hoped the book would be an important resource for teachers and students in Manitoba. We wanted to present the richness of Manitoba's Aboriginal writing in a format that would be accessible to school-age students because they are the readers of the future."

– Warren Cariou

## Our home and vitally native land

*Magnificent Aboriginal anthology adds to our understanding of Manitoba*

Until the appearance of this beautiful volume, anthologies of Manitoba writing – and there are several excellent collections – have tended to represent aboriginal writers somewhat sporadically and selectively.

*Manitowapow* (the meanings and origins of the name are fully explained in the anthology's excellent introduction) will fundamentally revise the ways in which the province's literary, cultural and political history is read, by beginning to more fully restore and reconsider the fundamental significance of aboriginal writing to that history.

And inevitably, the anthology will not only revise the ways in which readers engage with Manitoba writing; it will also revise and enrich "our" conceptions of who "we" are in Manitoba, as readers, writers and citizens.

For those who love art and beautifully produced books, this anthology will not only instruct but delight; on its cover, aptly, is a striking and powerful reproduction of Daphne Odjig's 1971 mural *The Creation of the World*, which, as the editors explain, is a "story full of stories," installed at the entrance to the Earth History Gallery at the Manitoba Museum.

**Niigaanwewidam James Sinclair** and **Warren Cariou**, both well-known academics and writers at the University of Manitoba, consulted widely and did prodigious research to arrive at their final choices, winnowing their selections of 90 writers' work – poets, playwrights, politicians, novelists, storytellers and anonymous inmates from Stony Mountain – from the hundreds of writers they had at hand.

Each selection in *Manitowapow* is prefaced by an ample headnote that provides biographical and contextual detail, and the table of contents, arranged chronologically, gives us the origin or affiliation of each writer.

Moreover, the anthology opens, appropriately, onto a map of aboriginal communities in Manitowapow, and some of the selections are transcribed in aboriginal languages alongside their translations.

This generous and instructive apparatus will ensure the wide readership the anthology deserves, both inside and well beyond the classroom, or provincial and national borders.

Indeed, Winnipeg's Highwater Press promises that this will be the first of a series of volumes dedicated to aboriginal themes, and the co-editors and the press have donated the proceeds from this splendidly edited book to that admirable cause.

Writers from virtually every founding community in *Manitowapow* – Anishinaabe, Cree, Dene, Métis, Saukteaux, Inuit – are represented in this volume's 400-plus pages, beginning, fittingly, with two pieces by Peguis (1774–1864).

The rich, book-long intermingling of history and linguistic provenance begins, appropriately, with Peguis's name: the headnote advises that he was "also known as Be-gou-ais, Be-gwa-is, Pegeois, Pegouisse, Pegowis, Pegqas, Pigewis, Pigwys" before setting out, succinctly, his vital political and literary importance.

The two selections, *A Reply to the Selkirk Settlers' Call for Help* and *An Open Letter to the Queen's Representatives* summon up, first-hand and vividly, the historical moment he negotiated.

One of the volume's many virtues is its breadth: alongside well-known writers, historical and contemporary, such as Pierre Falcon, Louis Riel, Gabriel Dumont, or Louis Bird, Phil Fontaine, Elijah Harper, Tomson Highway, Ian Ross, Rosanna Deerchild and Beatrice Mosionier, we are given many relatively unrecognized writers who deserve a wider audience.

Sadly, we are also reminded, again, of the fine talents, lost prematurely, of contemporary writers such as Marvin Francis (1955–2005) and Douglas Nepinak (1960–2005).

Several themes recur powerfully across many of the selections: an abiding connection to and intimate knowledge of the land (and water); a deeply felt kinship with nature; a strong and enduring connection to family and to local place.

And their all-too-familiar and corrosive correlatives: displacement and dislocation, alienation and estrangement, pain, misplaced trust and distrust, suppressed and distorted history, and betrayal.

More surprising and less predictable for some readers, perhaps, will be the trenchant and crackling and subtle ironies, the sudden and startling humour that animates many of the selections.

Just as important, the anthology as a whole might bring many readers to reconsider their received notions of what "literary" writing means – and how, and by and for whom, these standards are set.

*Manitowapow* will prompt a welcome re-engagement with debates about what we read, how we read and how we talk about what we read – and about what generations of readers in Western Canada as in other constituencies understand as “our” literary legacy.

For these gifts and others, readers will be grateful to the co-editors, who took on and succeeded in a monumental achievement, worked on for years with love and with rigour.

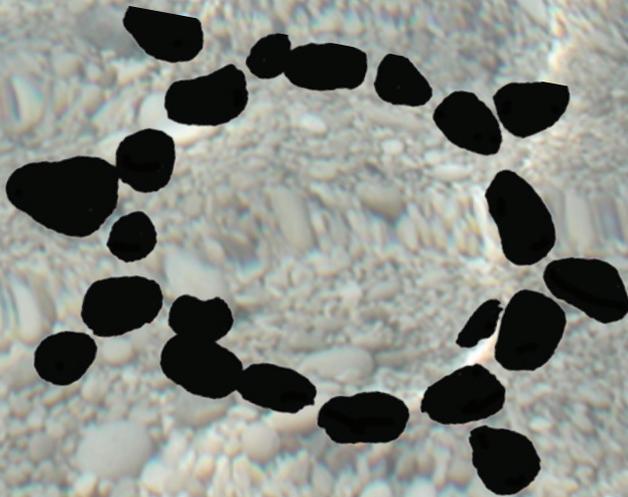
Readers everywhere should also be grateful to Masionier (who wrote the foreword) and to the other visionaries at Highwater Press, a division of Portage and Main Press.

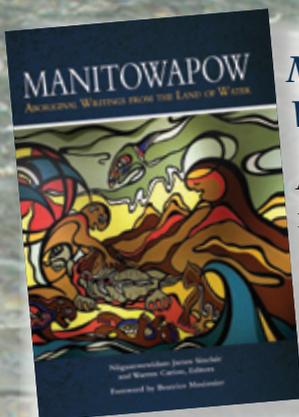
Collectively they have realized a radiant and communal dream that serves all Manitobans and honours every aboriginal ancestor, bestowing a heritage that will inform and reshape everyone’s contemporary life here.

**Neil Besner**

*Winnipeg Free Press*

March 31, 2012





## *MANITOWAPOW: Aboriginal Writings from the Land of Water*

As a publisher at Pemmican Publications in the 1980s, I realized that there was a desperate need to have Aboriginal educational materials available for school curriculums. With the success of my first novel, *In Search of April Raintree*, with students, I came the next realization – educational materials must be able to engage students and teachers, too. In early 2010, Niigaan and Warren told me about their plan for an anthology and what it would include. Listening to them, I thought of all the students I’d met at school visits who hungered for more knowledge of the Aboriginal experience. This would be a book that would feed their hunger. As teachers, writers, activists, and visionaries, Niigaan and Warren were the ideal editors. I believed in their vision and I believed in them. The proposed anthology would include excerpts from Aboriginal writers of Manitoba, from those who lived before our times to the writers of today. All together, they would tell the story of our province, known by many as *Manitowapow*.

More than a year after my initial meeting with Niigaan and Warren, I received their manuscript. One glance at the cover artwork, *The Creation of the World* by Daphne Odjig, promised me that within would be pages and pages containing a collection of rich, colourful, diverse stories written from our perspectives. The care taken to find and choose this perfect artwork is the same care taken to find and choose the collection within.

Because the excerpts in this book were compiled by Niigaan and Warren, I hungrily absorbed each piece, and by the time

## EXCERPT

I reached the last page, it came to me that I had just read a memoir of Manitowapow. This collection of Aboriginal writings made me want to read on, read more – and it made me want to write! Imagine that. It aroused my emotions for as many different reasons as there were stories. It made me laugh; it made me cry; it brought joy; it brought anger. Most of all, it renewed my pride in my community. In spite of so many setbacks in their lives, consecutive generations maintained their sense of generosity, perseverance, compassion, and, of course, that wonderful sense of humour, evident in both the early and more recent stories.

This unique collection opens with early Aboriginal writings of Manitoba, including illustrations of petroforms, rock paintings, and birchbark scrolls. The excerpts that follow are organized chronologically, and each section is preceded by an invaluable brief biography of each contributor. Because this book is rich with prose, poetry, and historical events, it will be invaluable in Native studies, literature, and history courses, as well as for the general reader.

Another feature is the diversity of the collection. It's a gathering of recollections, songs, legends, speeches, plays, poetry, and a graphic-novel excerpt. Some are told in the languages of our people.

Once, at an Aboriginal writers' conference, I heard a writer say that if you are born Aboriginal, you are born political. There is a political thread throughout the offerings. As the oppressed, we are on an ongoing quest for social justice. Watching newscasts of the historical event at Oka, one 12-year-old, who became the activist Clayton Thomas-Muller, became inspired. He writes: "Our greatest power as the peoples of Mother Earth is in maintaining our sacred responsibility to protect her and to speak to those animal and plant relations that cannot speak for themselves."

# EXCERPT

On the light side, there's even a recipe for bannock – yummy! – with a story on the side. So much food for thought and – well, I keep thinking of food – yet, all these excerpts are served like a feast at a potlatch, all complementary to one another, and with enough choices to satisfy different appetites. You can even go back for seconds.

I share a vision that the editors and the writers have brought to life. *Manitowapow: Aboriginal Writings from the Land of Water* will bring an understanding of the Aboriginal experience, which readers can take with them into the future. They will learn from one another, put aside distrust, shun the erroneous misconceptions of the past, and embrace our humanity and compassion. They will know why the Aboriginal person values the land, the waters, the animals, the plants above material wealth, because if our Mother Earth is not healthy, nothing else will matter. I relish the words of Elijah Harper, one of our well-known leaders: “There needs to be a healing of the land and the people. There needs to be reconciliation, restoration, and restitution. Because of our relationship with the Creator and this land, this is a spiritual process. A nation without a vision has no hope. A nation without a vision has no future. We now embark on this journey together for the benefit of all people in Canada:”

*~Beatrice Mosionier*

Foreword, *Manitowapow: Aboriginal Writings from the Land of Water*

*Manitowapow* is a land not only connected by waterways but represented by them. As the editors state in the introduction, the currents, sounds, and shorelines of water are the homes of Aboriginal stories. They are the places where people traded ideas, stories, and experiences alongside goods and resources. *Manitowapow* is, in a sense, an internet of rivers, veins that connect thoughts and themes over time and space.

The book's index excerpts (below with page numbers) allows readers to follow "rivers" of themes through the anthology and to examine how the political, historical and social context of *Manitowapow* has been shaped over time. Each theme is engaged by different authors speaking to one another over time and space while building a narrative tradition.

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- Hudson Bay Bill – 181
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# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How is history told by these authors? Are there differences between the frames of history and historical narratives or facts suggested in *Manitowapow* and those that you were taught?
2. How are non-Native peoples represented by these authors? What kinds of relationships are implied by their work – positive or negative, fair or imbalanced?
3. How are animals and land represented in these works? How do these illustrate particular relationships with animals and the landscape they reside in? How do relationships with animals change over time and in what context?
4. What does Manitoba look like through these works? How different is it from popular maps and representations of the province in traditional textbooks? Does it look different from the ways you see it depicted in other writings or artistic works? What makes it different and why?
5. Sometimes these authors agree with each other; sometimes they disagree. What are some of the similar or different angles on issues such as Christian conversion or colonization? What influences these changes – time, politics, literary genre?
6. How do these authors challenge historical representations of Aboriginal peoples? How have these endured, or changed? Do these authors suggest new ways to see Aboriginal peoples, past and present? How?

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

7. What function do these stories serve? How do they illustrate a landscape? Narrate a history? Challenge and / or suggest political and social norms and possibilities? Can stories be said to challenge or resist actions like violence? How does telling a “story” impact the world?
8. How is spirituality represented in these works? Are there similarities in spiritual beliefs between different communities? What are “traditional” beliefs and what are not? Can they be differentiated? Do these change over time? How?
9. Language is used in different ways in all of these pieces. Symbols and images, for instance, are used differently than alphabetical and phonetic writing. In what ways does the choice of language influence a story? How do you feel and what do you learn when you try to read a language other than your own? The issue of English too comes with a history. Is something less Aboriginal if it is written in English?
10. What makes a piece of writing “Aboriginal”? Is it the writer? the subject? the politics? the cultural context? What makes a piece of writing “Manitoban”?
11. Has your understanding of Manitoba changed after reading these pieces? How and why? What is the most important thing that you will take away from this book?

# RESOURCES

Many of the authors and works collected in *Manitowapow* are represented in the Winnipeg Public Library. This short list is only a small selection. Be sure to look in the Library's online catalogue ([wpl-pac.winnipeg.ca](http://wpl-pac.winnipeg.ca)) for more, or ask library staff.

**Cariou, Warren.** *The Exalted Company of Roadside Martyrs.*  
FICTION CAR

**Deerchild, Rosanna.** *This Is a Small Northern Town.*  
819.16 DEE 2008

**Dumont, Gabriel.** *Gabriel Dumont Speaks.*  
B DUMONT 2009

**Highway, Tomson.** *Kiss of the Fur Queen.*  
FICTION HIG

**Mosionier, Beatrice.** *Come Walk With Me.*  
B MOSIONIER 2009

**Robertson, David Alexander.** *7 Generations: A Plains Cree Saga.*  
YA GRAPHIC FICTION ROBERTSON

**Scofield, Gregory.** *Kipochikân: Poems New and Selected.*  
819.154 SCO 2009

**Storm, Jennifer.** *Deadly Loyalties.*  
YA FICTION STORM

# MORE ABORIGINAL WRITING

**Armstrong, Jeannette C. & Lally Grauer.** *Native Poetry in Canada: A Contemporary Anthology.*

819.15408 NAT 2001

**Appleford, Rob.** *Aboriginal Drama and Theatre.*

819.200989 ABO 2005

**Cardinal, Tantoo, et al.** *Our Story: Aboriginal Voices on Canada's Past.*

FICTION OUR

**Dumont, Marilyn.** *Initiations: A Selection of Young Native Writings.*

YA 819.080928 INI 2007

**DePasquale, Paul, et al.** *Across Cultures, Across Borders: Canadian Aboriginal and Native American Literatures.*

819.080897 ACR 2010

**Laronde, Sandra.** *Sky Woman: Indigenous Women Who Have Shaped, Moved or Inspired Us.*

819.080928 SKY 2005

**Fleury, Norman, et al.** *Stories of Our People = Lii zistwayr di la naasyoon di Michif: A Métis Graphic Novel Anthology.*

398.209712 STO 2008

**O'Neill, Stafford.** *Tales from Moccasin Avenue: An Anthology of Native Stories.*

819.3010806 TAL 2006.

# MORE MANITOBA STORIES

**Bitney, Katherine & Andris Taskans.** *A/cross Sections: New Manitoba Writing.*

819.080971 ACR 2007

**Duncan, Marc.** *Section Lines: A Manitoba Anthology.*

819.154 SEC 1988

*Prairie Fire Magazine* [www.prairiefire.ca](http://www.prairiefire.ca)

## PAST AND PRESENT

**Anderson, Kim & Bonita Lawrence.** *Strong Women Stories: Native Vision And Community Survival.*

305.48897 STR 2003

**Berens, William.** *Memories, Myths and Dreams of an Ojibwe Leader.*

B Berens 2009

**Davis, Lynne.** *Alliances: Re/envisioning Indigenous-non-Indigenous Relationships.*

305.8 ALL 2010

**Dickason, Olive Patricia.** *Canada's First Nations: A History of the Founding Peoples from Earliest Times.*

970.41 DIC 2009

**Johnston, Basil.** *Think Indian: Languages are Beyond Price.*

306.440899 JOH 2011

# PAST AND PRESENT

**Simpson, Leanne.** *Dancing on Our Turtle's Back: Stories of Nishnaabeg Re-creation, Resurgence and a New Emergence.*  
323.119707 NISHNAABEG 2011

*8th Fire: Aboriginal Peoples, Canada, and the Way Forward.* A documentary series hosted by Wab Kinew.  
DVD 970.5 EIG  
Also available online at [www.cbc.ca/doczone/8thfire/](http://www.cbc.ca/doczone/8thfire/).

## ONLINE RESOURCES

*Media Indigena.* An interactive, multimedia online publication dedicated to Indigenous news, views and creative expression.  
[www.mediaindigena.com](http://www.mediaindigena.com)

National Film Board: Aboriginal Peoples Channel  
[www.nfb.ca/channels/aboriginal\\_peoples\\_channel/](http://www.nfb.ca/channels/aboriginal_peoples_channel/)

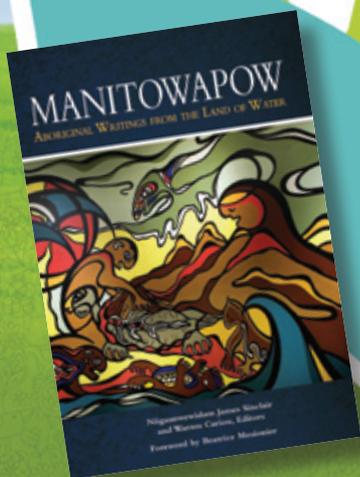
Prairie Fire Magazine  
[www.prairiefire.ca](http://www.prairiefire.ca)

Truth and Reconciliation Committee of Canada.  
[www.trc.ca](http://www.trc.ca)

**Watch for appearances by writers and other special events in January and February 2013.**

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SAME  
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