

April Raintree

Beatrice Mosionier



Foreword by Senator Murray Sinclair

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HIGHWATER
PRESS 

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[In search of April Raintree]

April Raintree / Beatrice Mosionier.

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*In memory of Mom and Dad,
my sisters, Vivian and Kathy,
and my brother, Eddie.*

Foreword

Everyone has a need to belong – to someone, to some place, to some thing. *April Raintree* is about that need. It's about the need to know where you come from, where you're going, why you're here, and who you are ... the most basic questions of life.

It's a fictionalized story about a real set of events, when governments removed Indigenous children from their parents and families and communities – the sources of the answers to all those questions – for the sole purpose of making them believe in another set of answers.

And it's about how one young heroic girl fights against all odds to find those answers for herself. The telling of this story is a wakeup call to the need for Indigenous children to feel value and validity in their sense of identity. It's about what happens to those who can't. There is a sadness buried between the lines, and yet it is a story of resiliency, of healing, and of triumph. Every child should read this.

– SENATOR MURRAY SINCLAIR, FORMER CHAIR OF THE
TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION OF CANADA

Preface

WRITING THE STORY OF THE RAINTREE FAMILY was an act of love for my family. Surprising for me, because, if I thought about it at all, I thought the bond with my parents and siblings was long gone. My sister Vivian committed suicide when she was in her early 20s. As a fourteen-year-old, there was nothing I could do for her but to accept it. To protect myself from possible future betrayals, I needed to stop caring about anybody else.

Sixteen years later, in October 1980, I was living on a farm in Vita, Manitoba, when I got a call. My brother-in-law told me that my sister Kathy had died – that she had committed suicide.

Having compassion is what I like best about myself, but I'm not always compassionate. At times in my younger years, I thought that if a person commits suicide, it's a betrayal, it's the final act of selfishness, it's a coward's way out. In my softer moments, I would wonder what kind of unbearable pain makes a person give up on life.

After I heard of Kathy's suicide, questions flooded my mind. Why did my sisters commit suicide? Why did we have

to grow up in foster homes? Why did my parents become alcoholics? Why did we have to face so much racism? Why was I raped? If I wanted to try to find answers to these questions, I decided I would have to write a book.

With no connections to my Aboriginal community, I had a lot of research to do and much to absorb. Somehow, I tapped into memories that did not come from my life, but brought a true understanding of what we had been through as a people. Somewhere, during the writing, I realized I had been ashamed of being part-Indian. I also realized that it's possible to use the tragedies in our lives to achieve positive actions. And the ending to my first novel became the beginning of my life with my reclaimed identity. I am Métis!

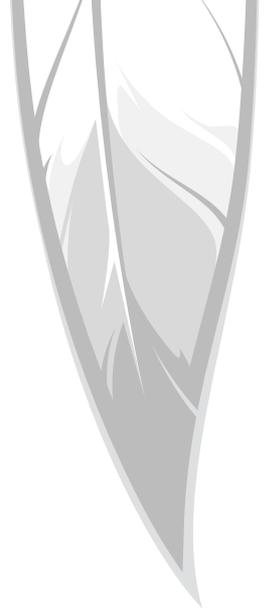
When *In Search of April Raintree* was first published in 1983, I was able to reconnect to my parents. I am so grateful that they generously gave me permission to talk about their lives. Mom said, "If it will help others, that will be good."

I owe much gratitude to those who read *In Search of April Raintree* and encouraged me to revise it so that *April Raintree* could be used for high-school study. I especially appreciate the willingness of those readers who opened their hearts and their minds to gain a better understanding of April and Cheryl.

Thank you to those who work in publishing at Pemmican Publications Inc., Portage & Main Press, and its imprint, HighWater Press, with an extra thank you to Catherine Gerbasi and Annalee Greenberg. You've gone that extra mile, not just for me, but for so many.

To Murray C. Sinclair, thank you very much for your advice over thirty years ago and for your ongoing support.

And of course, my love and affection go to all my families.



I

MEMORIES. SOME MEMORIES ARE ELUSIVE, fleeting, like butterflies that touch down and are free until caught. Others are haunting. You would rather forget them, but they will not be forgotten. And some are always there. No matter where you are, they are there, too. I always felt most of my memories were better left untouched, but now I think it's best to go back in my life before I go forward. Last month, April 18th, I celebrated my twenty-fourth birthday. That's still young, but I feel so old.

My father, Henry Raintree, was of mixed blood, a little of this, a little of that, and a whole lot of Indian. My sister, Cheryl, who was eighteen months younger than me, had inherited his looks: black hair, dark brown eyes that turned black when angry, and brown skin. There was no doubt they were both of Indian ancestry. My mother, Alice, on the other hand, was part Irish and part Ojibway. My name is April Raintree, and like her, I have pale skin, not that it made any difference when we were living as a family.

We lived in Norway House, a small northern Manitoba town, before my father contracted tuberculosis. Then we moved to Winnipeg. I used to hear him talk about TB and how it had caused him to lose everything he had worked for. Both my mom and dad always took this medicine, and I always thought it was because of TB. Although we moved from one rundown house to another, I remember only one, on Jarvis Avenue. And, of course, we were always on welfare. I knew that from the way my dad used to talk. Sometimes he would put himself down, and sometimes he counted the days till he could walk down to the place where they gave out cheques and food stamps.

It seemed to me that after the welfare cheque days came the medicine days. That was when my parents would take a lot of medicine, and it always changed them. Mom, who was usually quiet and calm, would talk and laugh in a loud, obnoxious way, and Dad, who already talked and laughed a lot, and loudly, just got clumsier. The times they took the medicine the most were the times when many other grownups would come over and drink it with them. To avoid these people, I would take Cheryl into our tiny bedroom, close the door, and put my box of old rusted toys in front of the door. Along with the aunties and uncles out there, there were strange men, and they would start yelling, and sometimes they would fight, right in our small house. I would lay on my cot, listening to them knocking things over and bumping into walls. Sometimes they would crash into our door, and I would become scared stiff, even though I knew Mom and Dad were out there with them. It always took a long time before I could get to sleep.

There were days when they came with their own children. I didn't much like these children either, for they were sullen

and cranky and wouldn't talk or play with us, or else they were aggressive bullies who only wanted to fight us. Usually, their faces were dirty, their noses were runny, and I was sure they had done "it" in their pants, because they smelled terrible. If they had to stay the night, I would put our blankets on the floor for them, stubbornly refusing to share our cot with them. Once Mom had let a little girl sleep with us, and during the night she had wet the bed. It had been a long time before the smell went away.

My mother didn't always drink that medicine, not as much as my father did. That's when she would clean the house, bake, do the laundry and the sewing. If she was really happy, she would sing us songs, and at night she would rock Cheryl to sleep. But that was one kind of happiness that didn't come often enough for me. To prolong that mood in her, I would help her with everything, chattering away in desperation, lest my own silences would push her back into her normal remoteness. My first cause for vanity was that out of all the houses of the people we knew, my mother kept the cleanest house. She would tell her friends that it was because she was raised in a residential school and then worked as a housekeeper for the priest in her hometown.

Cheryl and I usually woke up before our parents, so I would tend to Cheryl's needs. I would feed her whatever was available, then wash and dress her in clean clothes. Weather permitting, we would then go off to the park, which was a long walk, especially on hot summer days. Our daily routine was dictated by our hunger pangs and by daylight. Darkness brought out the bogeymen, and Dad told us what they did to little children. I liked all of Dad's stories, even the scary ones, because I knew that Cheryl and I were always safe in the house.

It was very rare when Mom would go downtown to the department stores where they had ride-on stairs. Mom didn't like going shopping. I guess it was because sometimes people were rude to her. When that happened, Mom would get a hurt look in her eyes and act apologetic. One day, I didn't notice any of that, because that day I saw my first black person. I was sure he was a bogeyman and wondered how come he wandered around so easily, as if nothing was wrong. I watched him, and he stopped at the watch counter. Since Mom and Cheryl were nearby and there were a lot of other people close enough, I went over to him. My voice was very shaky as I asked him, "Mr. Bogeyman, what do you do with the children you catch?"

"What's that?" his voice seemed to rumble from deep within him, and when he turned to look at me, I thought he had the kindest eyes I'd ever seen. Maybe, though, they changed at night. Right now, they twinkled with humour. No, he couldn't be bad.

"Nothing," I said and walked back to my mother's side.

When winter came, we didn't go to the park anymore. There was plenty to do with the snow around our house. Sometimes Mom would come out and help us build our snowmen and our houses.

One December, we all went downtown to watch the Santa Claus parade. That was such a thrilling, magical day for me. After that, we went to visit an aunt and uncle where Cheryl and I feasted on the most delicious cake ever, stuffed ourselves with fruit, and each drank about three cups of hot chocolate. Then we walked home. Dad threw snowballs at Mom for a bit before he carried our sleepy-eyed Cheryl in his arms. I was enchanted by the coloured Christmas lights and decorations in the store windows. Set against the sparkling imitation snow,

the windows looked like doorways to wonderful white fantasies. I think that was the best day ever, mostly because Mom and Dad laughed for real.

Not long after that, many people came to our house to drink the medicine, and in the beginning, they all sounded cheerful and happy. Mom and Dad let us stay up for a while, and we sang Christmas songs. But after we had gone to bed, they started their yelling, and even the women were angrily shouting. One woman was loudly wailing, and it sounded like she'd gotten smacked a few times.

In the middle of the night when everything had been quiet for a while, I got up to go to the toilet. There were people sprawled all over the place, sleeping and snoring. I carefully stepped over one who was sleeping across the doorway. He grumbled and moved, and I quickly jumped away from him, thinking he might try to reach out for me. Once in the kitchen, I saw my dad sleeping on the bare floor, still in his clothes. I wondered why, so I went to their bedroom. When I switched the light on, I saw my mother in bed, and she was kissing a strange man. I guess she realized that someone was in the room, and she sat up. She squinted from the sudden light, and she looked both dizzy and scared, but when she saw that it was only me, she hissed at me, "Get out of here!"

I forgot about having to go to the toilet and went back to my bed. I tried to figure everything out, but I couldn't.

A few days later, I was sitting on my dad's lap, and Mom was doing the laundry. A woman came to visit, but then it became an argument. She was shouting terrible names, and she began to push my mother around. Meanwhile Dad just watched them and laughed, and even egged them on. To me this was all so confusing. I just knew that Mom shouldn't

have kissed someone else; my dad shouldn't have slept on the floor; and right now, Dad ought to be trying to protect Mom, not finding the whole thing amusing. I squirmed off Dad's lap, walked over to that woman, and kicked her as hard as I could, yelling for her to leave Mom alone. I heard Dad laughing even louder. But it worked, because the strange woman left.

That winter, I noticed that my mom was getting fatter and fatter. When winter was finished, my mom got so sick from being fat she had to go away to the hospital. One of our aunts came to stay with us. She and Dad would sit around joking and drinking their medicine. I used to wonder how come they all drank this medicine, yet no one ever got better. Another thing, they couldn't all be sick like Mom and Dad, could they? So one evening while Dad and Auntie Eva were busy playing cards, I picked up his glass and took a quick swallow before he could stop me. It burned my mouth and my throat and made me cough and choke. I spit it out as fast as I could. It was purely awful, and I was even more puzzled as to why they all seemed to enjoy taking it. I felt so sorry for them, and I was real glad I wasn't sick.

When my mother came back, she wasn't as fat as when she left. The snow was all gone, too. We celebrated my sixth birthday, and one of my presents was a book. I took it with me everywhere. There was talk of my going to school in the fall. I didn't know what reading and printing were like, but I was very curious about it. I looked forward to school. I promised Cheryl I would teach her reading and printing as soon as I knew how. But for the time being, I would pretend to read to Cheryl, and as I turned the pages of my book like Mom did, I would make up stories to match the pictures in the book.

A few weeks later, we came home from a day's ramblings to find a real live baby in Mom's arms. Mom was rocking it and singing a soft melody to it. I asked, "Where did it come from?"

"The hospital. She was very sick. She's your new little sister, Anna."

"Will she have to take that medicine? It tastes awful," I said, pitying the baby for being sick.

"No, she drinks milk. The nurse came this morning and helped me prepare some," Mom answered. Then she turned to me and asked, "And how do you know that our medicine tastes awful?"

I looked her in the eye and assessed that she wasn't angry with me. She even seemed humoured by my slip of the tongue. "Aw, Mom, I just wanted to see what it tasted like."

"Well, it's for grownups only," she said. I knew from the way she talked that she hadn't taken any medicine so far. I hoped that from now on, she wouldn't have to take it anymore. I studied the baby for a while. It was so tiny and wrinkled. I decided I'd much rather play with Cheryl anytime.

That summer, Cheryl and I spent whole days at the park. I would make us sandwiches of bread and lard so we wouldn't have to walk back home in the middle of the day. That's when it seemed the hottest. We played on the swings and slides and in the sandbox, as long as they weren't being used by the other children. We would build sandcastles and install caterpillars and ladybugs in them. If the other children were there, we would stay apart from them and watch the man mow the park lawns, enjoying the smell of the fresh-cut grass and the sound from the motor of the lawnmower. Sometimes the droning

noise lulled Cheryl to sleep, and I would sit by her, to wait for her to wake up.

Two different groups of children went to the park. One group was the brown-skinned children who looked like Cheryl in most ways. Some of them even came over to our house with their parents. But they were dirty-looking, and they dressed in real raggedy clothes. I didn't care to play with them at all. The other group was fair-skinned, and I used to envy them, especially the girls with blond hair and blue eyes. They seemed so clean and fresh and reminded me of flowers. Once I was up close to one as she was busily putting me down. I could smell the crisp newness of her cotton dress, and it made me think of one of those quaint little houses in my book where the front door could open on top like a window, and the home was surrounded by hedges and flowers and neatly kept lawns.

Some of them were freckled, but they didn't seem to mind. To me, I imagined they were very rich and lived in big, beautiful houses. I wondered what their lives were like, and I wished we could play with them. But they didn't care to play with Cheryl and me. They just called us names and bullied us.

We were ignored completely only when both groups were at the park. Then they were busy yelling names at each other. I always thought that the fair-skinned group had the upper hand in name-calling. Of course, I didn't know what "Jew" or the other names meant. Cheryl was too young to realize anything, and she was usually happy-go-lucky.

Our free, idle days with our family came to an abrupt end one summer afternoon. We came home, and there were some cars in front of our house. One had flashing red lights on it, and I knew it was a police car. When we entered the house, Mom was sitting at the table, openly weeping right in front

of all the strangers. There were empty medicine bottles on the small counter and the table. I couldn't figure out why the four people were there. A nice-smelling woman knelt down to talk to me.

"My name is Mrs. Grey. I bet you're April, aren't you? And this little girl must be Cheryl." She put her hand on Cheryl's head in a friendly gesture, but I didn't trust her.

I nodded that we were April and Cheryl, but I kept my eyes on my mother. Finally, I asked, "Why is Mom crying? Did you hurt her?"

"No, dear, your mother is ill, and she won't be able to take care of you anymore. Would you like to go for a car ride?" the woman asked.

My eyes lit up with interest. We'd been in a taxi a few times, and it had been a lot of fun. But then I thought of Baby Anna. I looked around for her. "Where's Anna?"

"Anna's sick," the woman answered. "She's gone to the hospital. Don't worry, we'll take you for a ride to a nice clean place. You and Cheryl, okay?"

That was not okay. I wanted to stay here. "We can stay with Daddy. He will take care of us. You can go away now," I said. It was all settled.

But Mrs. Grey said in a gentle voice, "I'm afraid not, honey. We have to take you and Cheryl with us. Maybe if your mommy and daddy get well enough, you can come to live with them again."

The man who was with Mrs. Grey had gone to our bedroom to get all our things. When he came back, I became more uneasy. I looked from the woman to the man, then over to one policeman who was writing in a notepad, then to the other one who was looking around. I finally looked back at my mom for

reassurance. She didn't look at me, but I said in a very definite manner, "No, we'd better stay here."

I was hoping Dad would walk in, and he would make them all go away. He would make everything right.

The man with our belongings leaned over and whispered to my mother. She forced herself to stop sobbing, slowly got up, and came over to us. I could see that she was struggling to maintain control.

"April, I want you and Cheryl to go with these people. It will only be for a little while. Right now, Daddy and me, well, we can't take care of you. You'll be all right. You be good girls for me. I'm sorry..."

She couldn't say anymore, because she started crying again. She hugged us, and that's when I started crying, too. I kind of knew that she was really saying goodbye to us. But I was determined that we were not going to be taken away. I clung to my mom as tight as I could. They wouldn't be able to pull me away from her, and then they would leave. I expected Mom to do the same. But she didn't. She pushed me away. Into their grasping hands. I couldn't believe it. Frantically, I screamed, "Mommy, please don't make us go. Please, Mommy. We want to stay with you. Please don't make us go."

I tried hard to put everything into my voice, sure that they would all come to their senses and leave us be. There were a lot of grownup things I didn't understand that day. My mother should have fought with her life to keep us with her. Instead, she had simply handed us over. It didn't make any sense to me.

The car door slammed shut on us.

"Please don't make us go," I said in a subdued, quiet voice, more to myself. I gripped Cheryl's hand, and we set off into

the unknown. We were both crying and ignored the soothing voices from the strangers in front.

How could Mom do this to us? What was going to happen to us? Well, at least I still had Cheryl. I thought this to myself over and over again. Cheryl kept crying, although I'm not sure she really knew why. She loved car rides, but if I was crying, I'm sure she felt she ought to be crying, too.

We were taken to an orphanage. When we got there, Cheryl and I were hungry and exhausted. Inside the large building, all the walls were painted a dismal green. The sounds we made echoed down the long, high-ceilinged corridors. Then this person came out of a room to greet us. She was dressed in black from head to foot, except for some stiff white cardboard around her neck and face. She had chains dangling around her waist, and she said her name was Mother Superior, and she had been expecting us. My eyes widened in fear. It was even worse than I had imagined. We were being handed over to the bogeyman for sure!

When Mrs. Grey and the man said goodbye and turned to leave, I wanted to go with them, but I was too scared to ask. Mother Superior took us into another room at the far end of the corridor. Here, another woman, dressed the same way, undressed us and bathed us. She looked through our hair; for bugs, she told us. I thought that was pretty silly, because I knew that bugs lived in trees and grass, not in people's hair. Of course, I didn't say anything, not even when she started cutting off my long hair.

I was thinking that this was like the hen my mother had gotten once. She plucked it clean, and later, we ate it. I sat there, wondering if that was now to be our fate, wondering

how I could put a stop to this. Then the woman told me she was finished, and I was relieved to find that I still had some hair left. I watched her cut Cheryl's hair and reasoned that if she was taking the trouble to cut straight, then we had nothing to fear. Between yawns, Cheryl complained that she was hungry, so afterward, we were taken to a large kitchen and fed some dry, tasteless food. When we finished eating, we were taken to the infirmary and put to bed.

We were finally left alone to ourselves, and it really did feel like we were completely abandoned in that pitch-black space. Cheryl groped her way to my bed and crawled in with me. She spoke for the first time since we got here: "Apple, them was bogeywomen?"

I smiled in the darkness for two reasons. I hadn't thought to call them that, and she had been thinking the same thing I had. "No, I don't think so. They didn't eat us," I said to reassure her.

For a minute, she was silent. "They didn't like us?"

"I don't know."

After more silence, she asked, "Apple, will we go home in the morning time?"

"I don't think so, Cheryl."

"But I want to."

"So do I," I said. By now, Cheryl had laid her head down, and I could hear the breathing she used for sleeping. I lay there for a while, thinking, wondering.

That was the last night we'd share the same bed or be really close, for a long time. The next day, Cheryl was placed with a group of children, four years old and under.

I found out from the other children that the women were called "nuns" and that they were strict, at least the ones who

tended to my group. I'd seen the ones who looked after the younger children smile and laugh. The others, like Mother Superior, always seemed so unruffled, always dignified and emotionless. And the ones who took turns looking after us gave us constant orders that made my head spin.

Eventually, I figured out what the different nuns wanted and avoided many scoldings. My parents had never strapped us, and I never had to think about whether I was bad or good. I feared getting the strap. I feared even a harsh word. If I was quietly playing with some toy and somebody else wanted it, I simply handed it over because if we squabbled, we'd get heck. I longed to go over to Cheryl and talk and play with her, but I never dared cross that invisible boundary.

Most of my misery, however, was caused by the separation from my parents. I was positive that they would come for Cheryl and me. I constantly watched the doorways and looked out front-room windows, always watching, always waiting, in expectation of their appearance. Sure enough, one day I saw Dad out there, looking up at the building. Excited, I waved to him and wondered why he didn't come to the door, why he just stood there, looking sad. I turned from the window, saw that the attending nun was busy scolding a boy, so I left the room and went to look for Cheryl. I found her down the hall in another room. I looked in to see where the nun was and saw that her back was turned to Cheryl and the door. I tiptoed in, took hold of Cheryl's hand, whispering for her to stay quiet. I led Cheryl down to the front doors, but we couldn't open them. They were locked. I didn't know of any other doors except for the ones which led to the play yard at the back, but it was all fenced in. I left Cheryl there and raced back to the nearest empty room, facing the front. I tried to call to Dad, but he couldn't hear me

through the thick windows. He couldn't even see me. He was looking down at the ground, and he was turning away.

"Oh no, Daddy, don't go away! Please don't leave us here! Please!" I pounded the window with my fists, trying desperately to get his attention, but he kept walking further and further away. When I couldn't see him anymore, I just sank to the floor in defeat, warm tears blurring my vision. I sat there and sobbed, for we had been so close to going home again.

"What are you doing in here?" the nun from my room yelled, making me jump. "Don't you know what a fright you gave me, disappearing like that? You get back into the playroom. And quit that snivelling." Then she asked why Cheryl was at the front, and what did I intend on doing. I wouldn't tell her anything, so she gave me the strap and some warnings. That strap didn't hurt nearly as much as watching helplessly as my dad walked away.

A few days later, I woke up feeling ill. My head hurt, my body ached, and I felt dizzy. When I sat at the breakfast table and saw the already unappetizing porridge, I knew that I wouldn't be able to eat it. I tried to explain to the nun at our table, but she merely looked down at me and said in a crisp voice, "You will eat your breakfast."

I made the attempt, but every swallow I forced down pushed its way back up. Tears came to my eyes, and I finally begged, "Could I please be excused?"

The nun responded in exasperation, "You will stay right there until you are finished. Do you understand?"

To my horror, I threw up just then. Instead of getting heck, though, I was taken to the infirmary room. I was bathed and put to bed, and by then I was feverish. When I slept, I dreamt I was somewhere near home, but I couldn't find our house. I

was very hot, and I walked and walked, but our house was no longer where it should have been. I woke up and called for Mom and Dad.

The next time I went to sleep, I dreamt my parents were on the other side of a large bottomless hole, and I had to edge my way slowly and carefully around the hole to get over to them. But when I got there, they were back over where I started from. At last, I dreamt that I was finally running towards them, and there was nothing around that could stop me. They even had Cheryl with them. I felt such relief, such happiness! Just as I was about to jump into their outstretched arms, I glanced up at their faces again. The faces had changed. They weren't my parents. They were the two social workers who had taken us away in the first place.

Meanwhile, my temperature was rising, and the nurse decided I'd better be taken to the hospital. My dreams continued in the hospital. I was always on the verge of reuniting with my parents, but that was always thwarted by something beyond my control. I guess I was also delirious, because I began seeing this huge, white, doughy thing, kind of like a dumpling, and it would come at me, closer and closer. It would stop just in front of me, go farther away, and come in closer and closer again. I felt that if it ever touched me it would engulf me, and that would be the end of me. Sometimes, its huge bulk would whiz around, back and forth, in front of me. I was always scared it would bang into me, but I couldn't duck it or anything. It didn't matter if my eyes were open or closed. I remained in the hospital for about a week before the fever broke and the dreams became less intense.

About the Author

Born in St. Boniface, Manitoba, in 1949, Beatrice Mosionier was the youngest of four children and was taken from her family by Children's Aid Society at age three. Following the suicides of her two sisters, Vivian in 1964 and Kathy in 1980, Beatrice was compelled to write a book. Her first novel, *In Search of April Raintree*, was published in 1983. The school edition, *April Raintree*, was published in 1984.

Beatrice spent a total of twenty years living in Toronto, and, in 2004, returned to Winnipeg permanently. She is the author of several children's books, including *Spirit of the White Bison* and *Unusual Friendships: A Little Black Cat and a Little White Rat*. Her second novel, *In the Shadow of Evil*, was published in 2000, and *Come Walk with Me: A Memoir*, was published in 2009.

From the First Edition

One cannot read this moving account of two Métis sisters without feeling their terrible anguish, bewilderment, and anger as they try in their different ways to live in a society that frequently rejects and abuses them, as it has rejected and abused their parents and ancestors. The story is a tragic one, yet its final outcome is one of affirmation and bitterly won resolve. – MARGARET LAURENCE, AUTHOR

In the past few years, there has been much controversy regarding Native children and the question of foster homes and adoption. Reams of papers and reports have been written. How many of those papers were written by people who have lived through that experience?

This is a powerful story because, with gentleness, it deals with the sickness in our society and our people. It is the kind of writing that will begin the healing of our people and help a dominant society understand and feel the lives of a people it almost destroyed. – MARIA CAMPBELL, AUTHOR

From Readers

I have just finished your novel *April Raintree*, and I am both deeply moved and full of excitement. Delighted to have found such a fine piece of writing. – J.P., ENGLISH PROFESSOR

Within a month the novel has established such a reputation, that every day, students ask to borrow copies to read on their own. Few of our kids normally read much on their own, so this is quite pleasing to me as an English teacher – J.T., TEACHER

The students in [my] class come from many different countries.... I believe that your novel has been successful in bringing about a greater understanding of people from all cultures. – J.P., TEACHER

I read your book for the first time when I was twelve years old, and I liked it so much I read it again..... It's hard to put the book down; it's exciting and addicting. – K.B., STUDENT

Th[is] book ... shows many events that people have been through and how they have overcome them. I'm not normally much of a reader. However, I was unable to stop reading your book because it seemed so real. I also know and have grown up with many people in similar situations to what you have written about. – T.B., STUDENT

Your novel was so good that once I started to read it I couldn't put it down until I completed it. For me... to read a book and finish it, it has to be good. – L.M., STUDENT

Your book speaks the truth about us Aboriginals. After reading this book, I wanted to help Aboriginals across Canada. I'm not exactly sure how yet, maybe as a politician. But whatever I do for my people... *April Raintree* has inspired me! – J.G., STUDENT