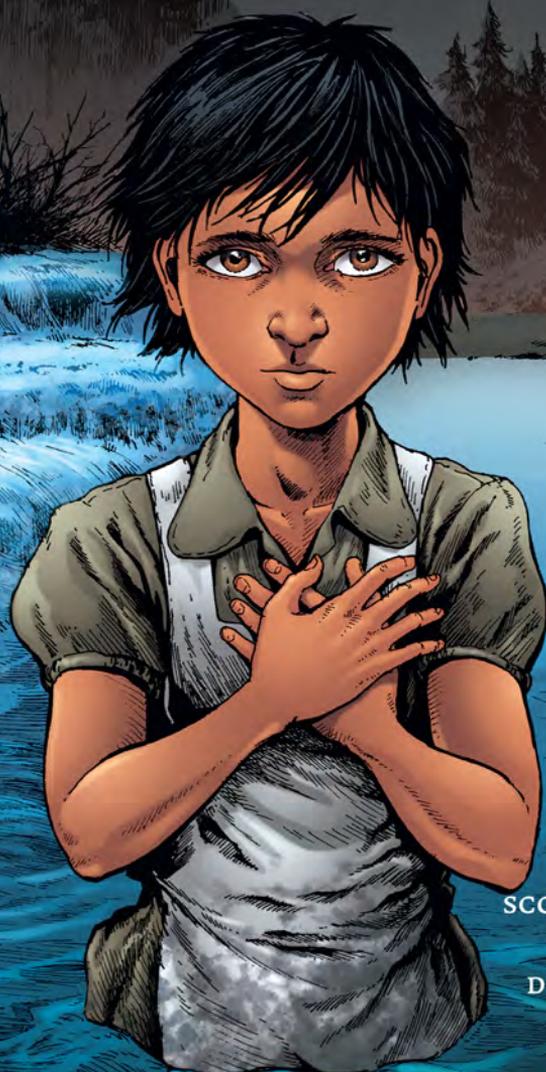


NATIONAL BESTSELLER

DAVID A. ROBERTSON

SUGAR FALLS

A Residential School Story



Illustrations
SCOTT B. HENDERSON

Colours
DONOVAN YACIUK

*Among CBC Books' 21 Canadian Comics
to Watch for in Spring 2021*

Among Indigo's An Antiracist Reading List for Kids

Sugar Falls is a powerful graphic novel that recounts the horror Indigenous children experienced in residential schools.

—CBC Books

*[A book] with the hope that, by telling stories
from the past, the future will bring healing.*

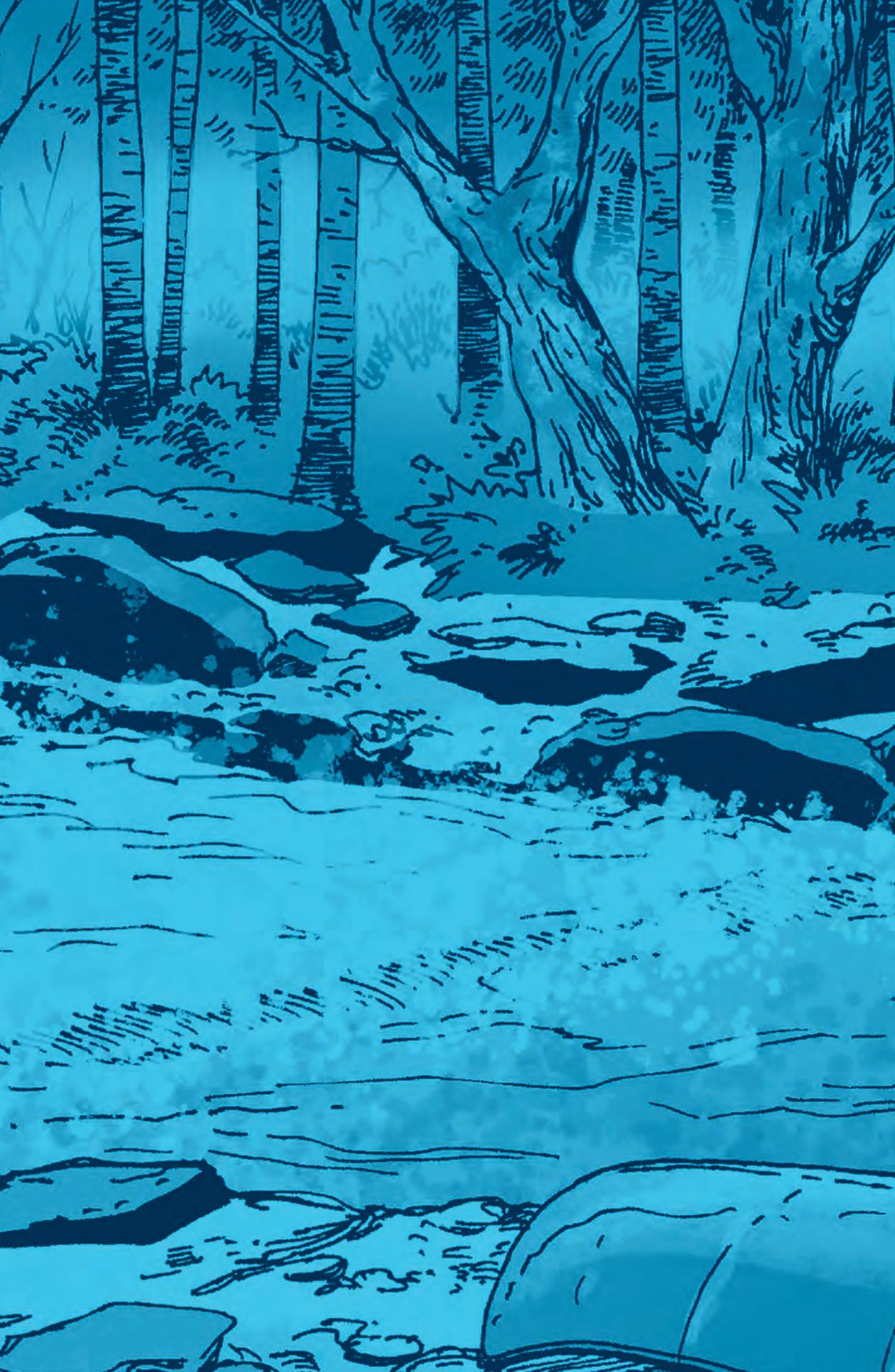
—JOANNE PETERS, CM Association

*A definite must-read that is both accessible and
engaging, while offering a lesson about the
past and engaging with the present.*

—KARL HELE, Anishinabek News







Content Warning: This book includes scenes of child abandonment and abuse, and could be triggering for residential school survivors and intergenerational survivors. Emotional and crisis referral services are available through the 24-Hour National Indian Residential School Crisis Line at 1-866-925-4419.

SUGAR FALLS

A Residential School Story



Story | DAVID A. ROBERTSON

Illustrations | SCOTT B. HENDERSON

Colours | DONOVAN YACIUK


HIGHWATER
PRESS

© 2021 David A. Robertson (text)

© 2021 Scott B. Henderson (illustrations)

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Conseil des arts
du Canada

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First published as *Sugar Falls: A Residential School Story* in 2012. For this 10th-anniversary edition, the author has made substantial changes to style within the text, and the original artwork has been colourized.

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Winnipeg, Manitoba

Treaty 1 Territory and homeland of the Métis Nation

FOREWORD

When I was growing up, I wanted to know why I could not speak the language of my grandmother and why I did not know the history and the traditions of my people—the Anishinaabeg. I wanted to know why my grandmother, along with so many others, believed by not teaching me those things she was somehow saving my life.

I've learned since that this was predominantly because of residential schools, a place my grandmother, my uncles, my aunts, and my father attended. It took me a long time to realize this, as none of them ever talked about it. By now, most of us have become aware of the brutal cruelty, abuse, and destructive nature of the residential school system, established by Canada's federal government and run by the churches.

When I was growing up though, the conflict and pain in my family—manifested most clearly in my father's alcoholism, mental health problems, and despair—made no sense. No one talked about why things were this way and why he acted in this fashion. I, therefore, grew up with a sense of confusion, uncertain of who I was, why I was here, where I had come from, and where I was going.

In my family, silence has been the currency of injustice. Not talking about our family's experiences with residential schools has led to most of the frustration, anger, and struggles we have fought with our entire lives.

In 2012, this silence ended. By this time, I had become chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, a body created by Survivors of Indian Residential Schools and tasked with documenting and educating Canadians about the experiences and legacies of the Indian Residential School system and ensuring something like this would never happen again. While I had spent hundreds of hours listening to Survivors' stories, researching residential schools, and being moved by the resilience of incredible, brave former students, I was not prepared for the day my uncle explained to me that my father had been sexually and physically abused while he attended residential school.

Suddenly, everything clicked into place.

This is the power of telling our stories. In *Sugar Falls*, we hear the story of Betty Ross, one of so many of our Elders and Survivors who have come through a genocidal past but emerged with a courageous heart still filled with love for their families, communities, and for you, the reader. This is not an easy story to hear, but it is one that, once heard, will change you forever—like it does for Daniel. Storytellers like Betty not only help us inherit legacies of history but see that we can change as well.

Quite frankly, Canada's treatment of Indigenous peoples is nothing in which this country can take any pride. I sense, however, that we are on the cusp of something special as this country begins to come to terms with our history and its impact. Graphic novelists like David A. Robertson are at the front lines of this work, educating the next generation so that silence will not be our currency.

I hope that a new generation of readers like yourself can see that you are not just bearers of the burdens of history, but beneficiaries of a new awareness. Once we collectively understand how things happened we can join together, building a framework for the future that has become possible. *Sugar Falls* is a step on this journey.

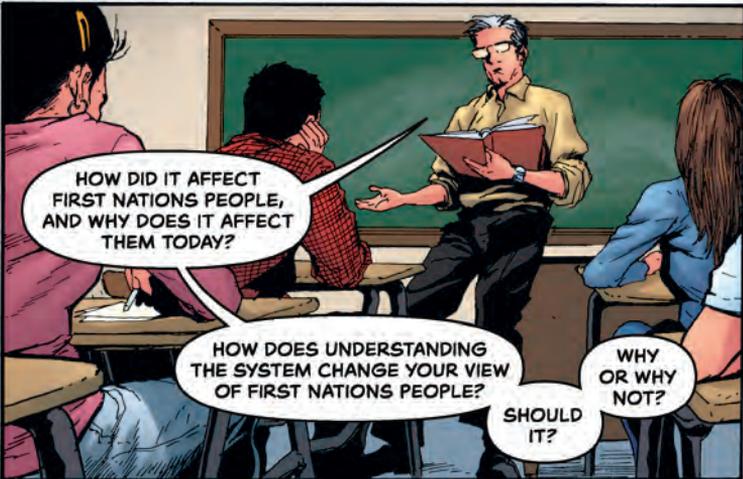
Senator Murray Sinclair
Treaty 1 Territory
June 20, 2020



PRESENT DAY—A LOCAL HIGH SCHOOL.



"WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THE RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL SYSTEM?"



HOW DID IT AFFECT FIRST NATIONS PEOPLE, AND WHY DOES IT AFFECT THEM TODAY?

HOW DOES UNDERSTANDING THE SYSTEM CHANGE YOUR VIEW OF FIRST NATIONS PEOPLE?

WHY OR WHY NOT?

SHOULD IT?

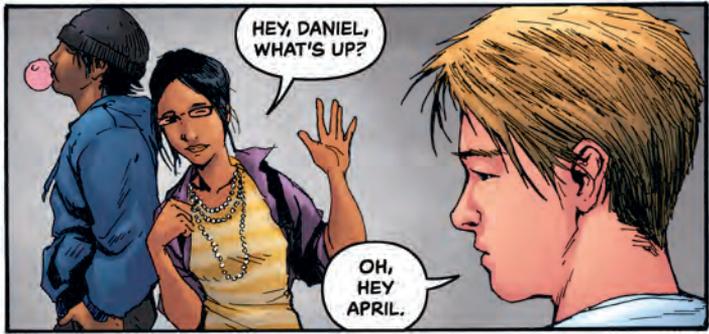


YOUR ASSIGNMENT IS TO CONSIDER THESE QUESTIONS.

"TALK TO AN ELDER. REMEMBER TO APPROACH THEM WITH RESPECT, AND AN OFFERING OF TOBACCO, ONE OF THE FOUR SACRED MEDICINES."

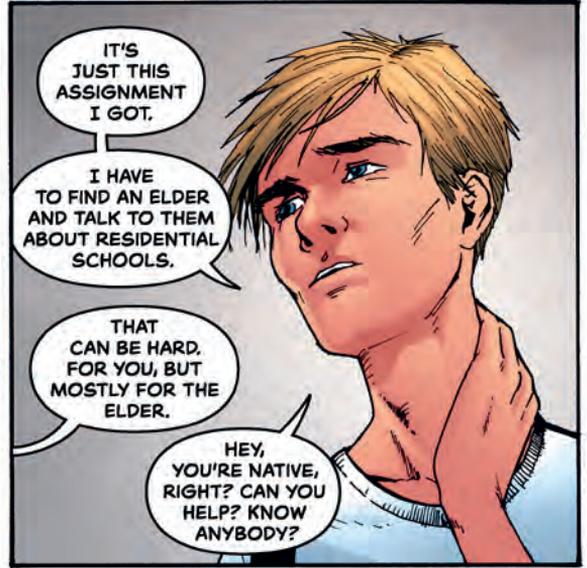


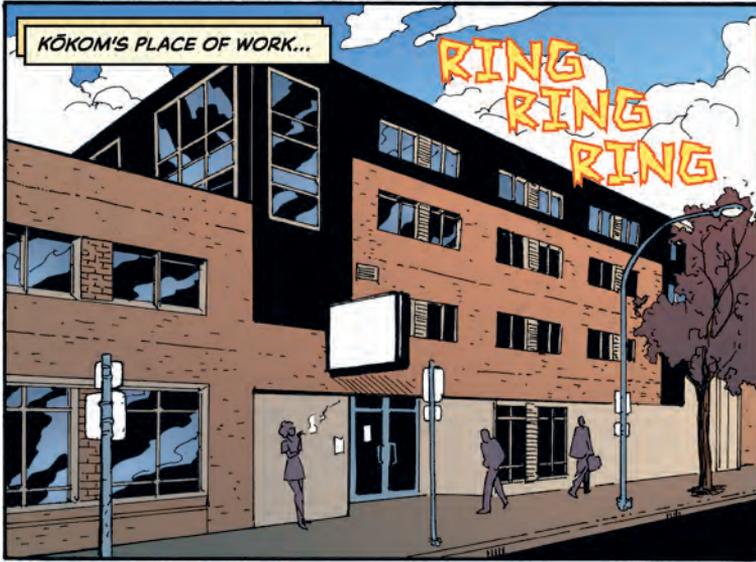
GREAT.



HEY, DANIEL, WHAT'S UP?

OH, HEY APRIL.





KÖKOM'S PLACE OF WORK...

RING
RING
RING

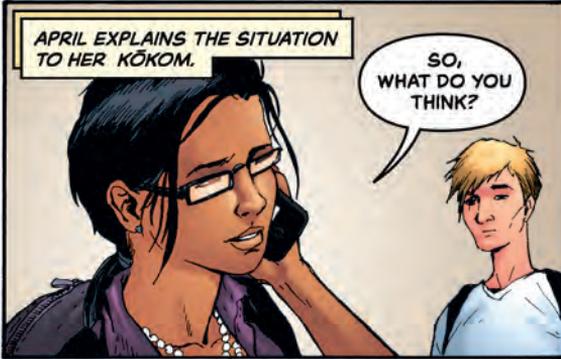


HELLO?

NÖKOM/*

OH HI,
APRIL!

*MY GRANDMOTHER



APRIL EXPLAINS THE SITUATION
TO HER KÖKOM.

SO,
WHAT DO YOU
THINK?



OF
COURSE I
CAN HELP,
NÖSISIM.*

*MY GRANDDAUGHTER



OKAY...



A FEW DAYS LATER, THE
FRIENDS TRAVEL TO MEET
APRIL'S KÖKOM.



...SHE'LL DO
IT, AND I'LL COME
WITH YOU.

APRIL, YOU'RE
THE BEST.





LET'S BEGIN.

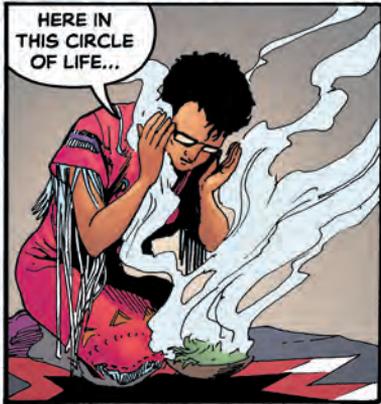
I AM WEARING TRADITIONAL ATTIRE--ALWAYS IN BRIGHT COLOURS, BECAUSE OF THE BLAND CLOTHING WE WERE MADE TO WEAR AT THE SCHOOL.



"I AM ALSO HOLDING THE EAGLE FEATHER..."



...TO HONOUR THE PAST AND MOVE FORWARD WITH COURAGE, HONESTY, AND TRUTH.



HERE IN THIS CIRCLE OF LIFE...



"...WHERE WE ARE CLEANSED..."



"...WE CAN TRUST IN THIS MOMENTOUS TIME."



I HAVE NEVER TOLD MY STORY BEFORE.

I THINK IT WILL WORK BEST IF YOU ASK ME A QUESTION FIRST, DANIEL.



OKAY.

WHY DID YOU HAVE TO GO TO THE RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL?



HMMMM...

TO ANSWER THIS, I MUST GO FAR BACK INTO MY CHILDHOOD.



"I WAS VERY YOUNG, ABOUT THE AGE OF 5,"



LEAVE!

I CAN'T TAKE CARE OF YOU.

WHAT?

WHAT DID I DO?



I HAVE NO DAUGHTER.

I DON'T WANT ONE ANYMORE.



MOM?



"WHAT I DIDN'T KNOW THEN WAS THAT SHE WAS A SURVIVOR OF A RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL AND ITS UNIMAGINABLE ABUSES."



MOM!?

NO!!

PLEASE, LET ME STAY!



"SHE WASN'T CARED FOR, AND SO DIDN'T KNOW HOW TO CARE FOR ME."

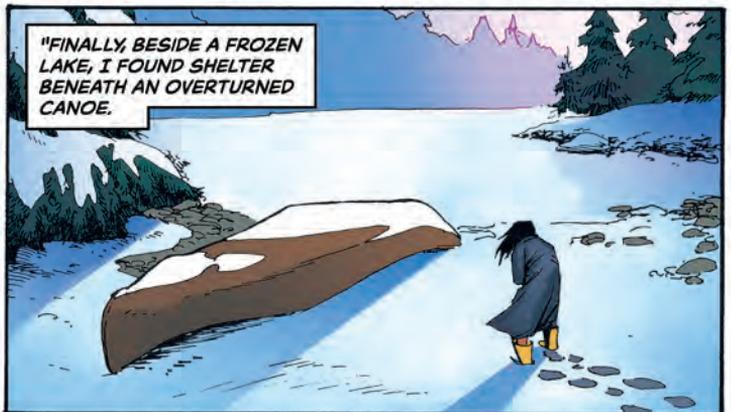


"LIKE THAT, I WAS OUTSIDE
IN THE BITTER COLD.

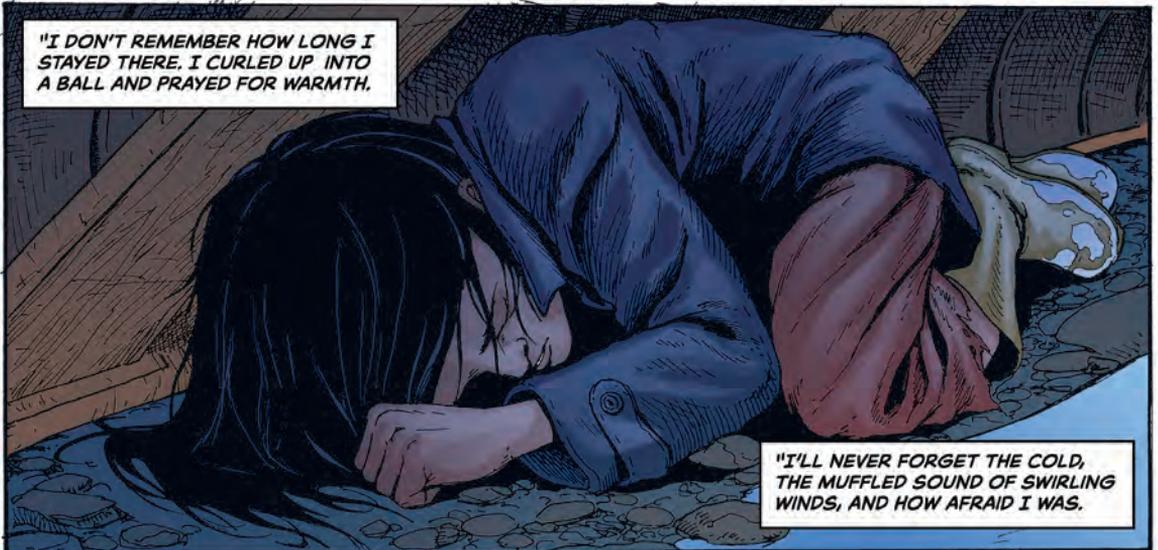
"I WANDERED FOR WHAT
SEEMED LIKE FOREVER.



"THE FREEZING WIND
TORE AT MY SKIN.



"FINALLY, BESIDE A FROZEN
LAKE, I FOUND SHELTER
BENEATH AN OVERTURNED
CANOE.



"I DON'T REMEMBER HOW LONG I
STAYED THERE. I CURLED UP INTO
A BALL AND PRAYED FOR WARMTH.

"I'LL NEVER FORGET THE COLD,
THE MUFFLED SOUND OF SWIRLING
WINDS, AND HOW AFRAID I WAS.







DAVID A. ROBERTSON (he/him/his) is an award-winning writer. His books include *When We Were Alone* (winner Governor General's Literary Award), *Will I See?* (winner Manuela Dias Book Design and Illustration Award), *Betty: The Helen Betty Osborne Story* (listed In the Margins), and the YA trilogy *The Reckoner* (winner Michael Van Rooy Award for Genre Fiction, McNally Robinson Best Book for Young People). David educates as well as entertains through his writings about Indigenous peoples in Canada, reflecting their cultures, histories, communities, as well as illuminating many contemporary issues. David is a member of Norway House Cree Nation. He lives in Winnipeg. | @DaveAlexRoberts

SCOTT B. HENDERSON (he/him/his), is the author/illustrator of the sci-fi/fantasy series, *The Chronicles of Era* and has illustrated select titles in the Canadian Air Force's *For Valour* series, *Tales From Big Spirit* series, the *7 Generations* series, select stories in *This Place: 150 Years Retold*, and is an Eisner Award nominee for *A Blanket of Butterflies*. He is a recipient of the C4 Storyteller Award (2016). | @Ouroboros09

Since 1998, colourist **DONOVAN YACIUK** (he/him/his) has done colouring work on books published by Marvel, DC, Dark Horse Comics, and HighWater Press, including *A Girl Called Echo* series and *This Place: 150 Years Retold*. Donovan holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts (Honours) from the University of Manitoba and began his career as a part of the legendary Digital Chameleon colouring studio. He lives in Winnipeg. | @yaciuk

Find the accompanying teacher guide at
www.highwaterpress.com.



From Governor General's Award-winning writer **DAVID A. ROBERTSON** comes this special edition of the timeless graphic novel that introduced the world to the awe-inspiring resilience of Betty Ross, and shared her story of strength, family, and culture.

A school assignment leads Daniel to interview his friend's grandmother, a residential school survivor, who shares her story. Abandoned as a young child, Betsy was soon adopted into a loving family. A few short years later, everything changed. Betsy was taken away to a residential school. There she was forced to endure abuse and indignity, but Betsy recalled the words her father spoke to her at Sugar Falls—words that gave her the resilience, strength, and determination to survive.

Sugar Falls is based on the true story of Betty Ross, Elder from Cross Lake First Nation. We wish to acknowledge, with the utmost gratitude, Betty's generosity in sharing her story. A portion of the proceeds from the sale of *Sugar Falls* goes to support the bursary program for The Helen Betty Osborne Memorial Foundation.

This 10th anniversary edition brings David A. Robertson's national best-seller to life in full colour, with a foreword by Senator Murray Sinclair, Chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, and a touching afterword from Elder Betty Ross herself.