

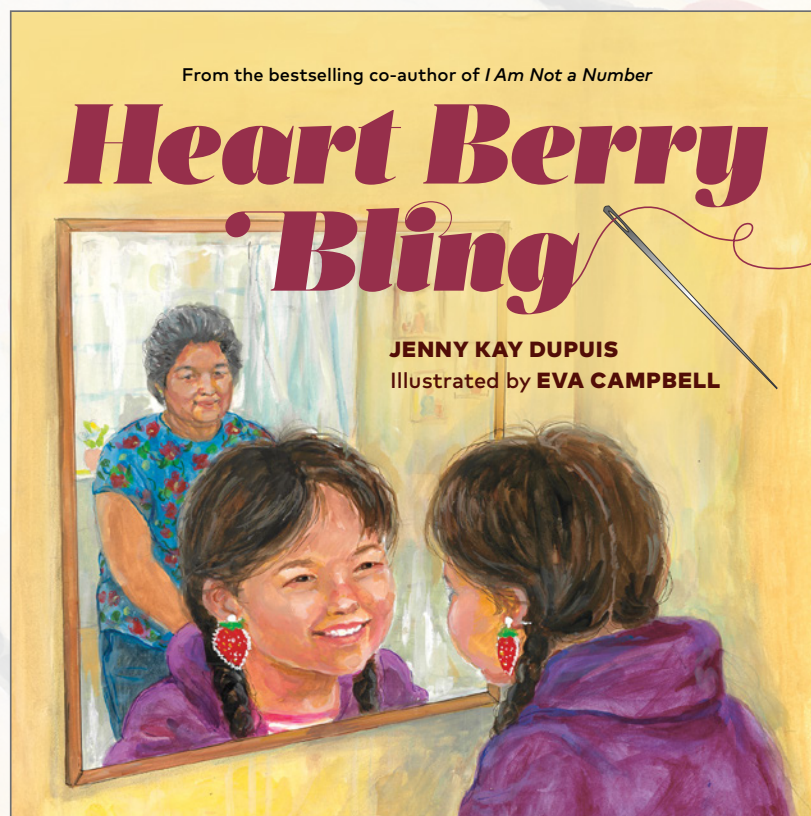


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TEACHER GUIDE FOR

Heart Berry Bling

Engaging Respectfully With Indigenous
Stories and Their Themes in Grades 1–8



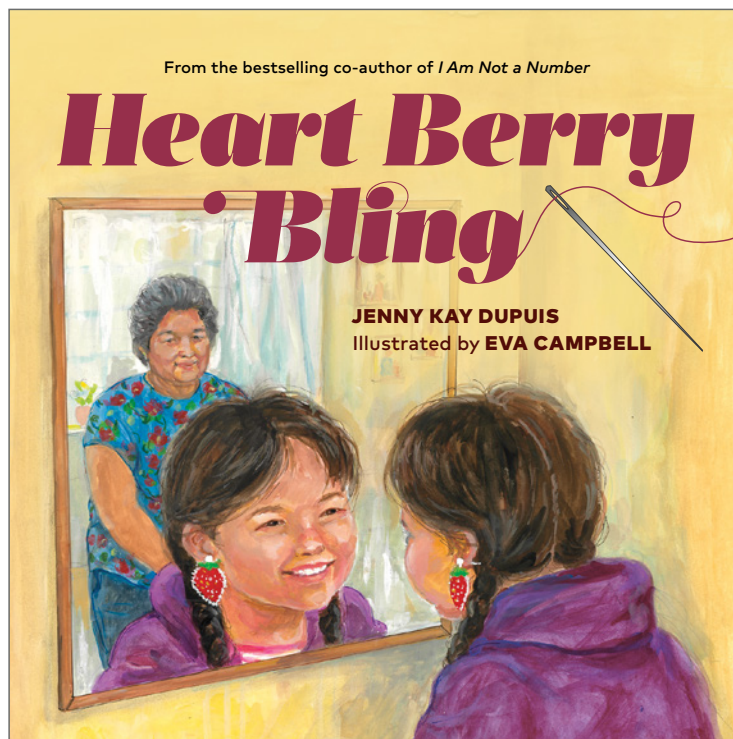
JERICA FRASER

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JERICA FRASER



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INTRODUCTION

Today, more books than ever before are being published by Indigenous authors, providing Indigenous young people with opportunities to read and engage with stories that reflect their lived experiences and acknowledge their histories and identities. These stories also provide non-Indigenous people with the opportunity to learn about diverse knowledges, histories, cultures, and lived realities from Indigenous voices and perspectives.

In years past, Indigenous voices were often missing from the literature students had access to in the classroom. Books were usually written by non-Indigenous people, and the roles of Indigenous people within them were limited or completely omitted. When Indigenous individuals, families, and communities were depicted, these representations were often inaccurate, inauthentic, and based on stereotypes.

There is now greater awareness of the past and acknowledgment of harms that have been inflicted on Indigenous Peoples, which has led to action to change discriminatory behaviours. This includes a commitment to providing access to authentic and diverse Indigenous voices in schools, homes, libraries, and other community spaces so that young people can learn why accurate information and representation matter in the literature they engage with.

Heart Berry Bling tells the story of a young Anishinaabe girl, Maggie, who learns about her family's lived experiences during a special visit to her granny in the city. While they bead together, Maggie learns how Granny and many other First Nations women were forced to leave their homes—and all they knew—behind due to restrictions imposed by the Indian Act. Readers see how the process of engaging with an Indigenous art form like beadwork can create opportunities to communicate histories and explore identity. It can also build family and community relationships. Maggie learns about Granny's commitment to her culture and how beading has helped her heal from the losses she has experienced. With Granny's help, Maggie learns to bead, discovering the wonder of bringing love and happiness into one's work while giving thoughts to the strawberry, or heart berry, teachings: truth, love, respect, trust, acceptance, peace, and hope. Maggie is proud to wear the heart berry bling earrings she makes with Granny—to her, they are a symbol of her own and her family's strength and values.

RATIONALE

Diverse picture books provide children with the opportunity to explore who they are and learn about cultures and experiences outside of their own. They also offer young people the chance to make connections to, and deepen their understanding of, the world around them. Picture books can provide a starting point for guided discussions that help children develop empathy, kindness, and an appreciation for others both within and outside of their communities.

Heart Berry Bling is recommended for readers in grades 1 to 8 who want to explore Indigenous contemporary life, history, and identity building through story. The narrative contains many themes of interest to young readers: Indigenous beadwork, family and community traditions, strength and resilience, and finding joy. While this is a picture book, it will also appeal to older audiences, including beadwork artists, arts educators, and social studies and history teachers who explore the history of the Indian Act (Canadian law), the impacts of colonization, the continuity of Indigenous cultural identity, and community healing.

PROTOCOLS AND APPROACHES FOR ENGAGING WITH INDIGENOUS HISTORIES, TEACHINGS, ARTS, AND STORIES

Respecting Protocols

When learning from Indigenous histories, teachings, arts, and stories, it is important to consider certain protocols and culturally appropriate approaches. These protocols and approaches centre around the teachings of **respect, reciprocity, relevance, and responsibility**, which are embedded in many Indigenous community values and are foundational within Indigenous education.¹

Respect is an action that can be shown to young people in small and big ways. From demonstrating a willingness to learn, to providing children the time to think about and ask questions, to choosing to share Indigenous stories in homes, communities, or classrooms, adults can model how to approach and support Indigenous stories with respect. Listening and learning alongside young people not only demonstrates humility and mutual respect but also sets an example of how to approach diverse texts in various learning spaces.

When you are learning from Indigenous stories and people, it is important to consider the role of **reciprocity**. Community stories are often shared to educate and to improve relationships and understandings between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. These stories might share historical, racial, and cultural trauma experienced over time and across generations, allowing listeners and readers to gain awareness of histories they may not have experienced first-hand. This can help them recognize their own and others' incorrect assumptions and beliefs. Considering how this exchange is rooted is important, as it helps to frame Indigenous stories and storytelling as acts of ongoing resistance and resilience. In addition, it reminds readers of the importance of demonstrating reciprocity and gratitude for the story being shared.

When you select an Indigenous text to share, it is essential to consider how it can be presented in a way that is **relevant** to young people's lives. If you are sharing *Heart Berry Bling* in a classroom, reflect on how it will be meaningfully woven into the collective learning expectations of the class. It is important to ensure that Indigenous stories are treated equitably in the classroom. Indigenous texts can offer a springboard to deeper learning about the experiences of Indigenous individuals and communities. Educators can help learners move beyond a surface-level understanding by creating multiple opportunities to engage with the diverse stories of Indigenous people and learn about their lived experiences.

Educators need to take **responsibility** when engaging with Indigenous histories, teachings, arts, and stories, not only within the classroom but also when extending learning beyond the classroom. You can demonstrate responsibility by deepening your knowledge and taking action in your school community. Embody the teaching of responsibility by participating in

1 Verna J. Kirkness and Ray Barnhardt, "First Nations and Higher Education: The Four R's—Respect, Relevance, Reciprocity, and Responsibility," in *Knowledge Across Cultures: A Contribution to Dialogue Among Civilizations*, ed. Ruth Hayhoe and Julia Pan (Hong Kong: Comparative Education Research Centre, University of Hong Kong).

local events, leading change in the school community through conversations and professional development, amplifying Indigenous voices, and providing opportunities for students to learn from Indigenous community members.

Practising Cultural Appreciation

It is important to demonstrate cultural appreciation when working with the stories of individuals from cultures other than your own. Cultural appreciation is described as making an effort to understand a culture to broaden your perspective and connect with others. It also includes engaging in cultural exchange with permission.² This is in contrast to cultural appropriation, which is defined as “the act of copying or using the customs and traditions of a particular group or culture, by somebody from a more dominant group in society.”³ Cultural appropriation often occurs when an individual uses elements of another culture for their own interest and without understanding the custom or tradition. One example of cultural appropriation is wearing traditional Indigenous regalia as a Halloween costume.

Providing young people with the context of an art form, like beadwork, and its history, enables them to have a greater appreciation for the people and cultures they are learning about. Beadwork is not only an Indigenous art form but also a representation of cultural history, resurgence, and healing. Under the Indian Act in Canada, First Nations ceremonies and public displays of dancing and regalia were banned. European-style clothing was favoured as “progressive” and forced upon generations of Indigenous children in residential schools in Canada and boarding schools in the United States. Settlers and colonial governments did not understand or appreciate the labour, history, and knowledge reflected in Indigenous clothing created using natural materials and the delicate and intricate designs in beadwork and quillwork.

Beadwork can provide much information to someone who knows how to interpret and appreciate its design. The materials and designs may reflect a specific community—including their ecological knowledge, creation stories, and systems of kinship—based on which flora and fauna and other items are depicted. Beadwork also provides space to learn personal stories and cultural knowledge from and with family and community members.

In *Heart Berry Bling*, Maggie actively listens to and learns from her granny as she shares her family experiences and community teachings. Maggie finds out where her granny learned to bead and how she was forced to leave her community due to the restrictions imposed by the Indian Act. She also learns about her granny’s commitment to her culture, how beading helps heal her trauma, and how the strawberry, or heart berry, carries Anishinaabe teachings about truth, love, respect, trust, acceptance, peace, and hope.

2 Grant Loveless, “Cultural Appreciation vs. Cultural Appropriation: Why It Matters,” Accent: Student-Led Media Organization, July 17, 2020, <https://sites.austincc.edu/accent/cultural-appreciation-vs-cultural-appropriation-why-it-matters/>.

3 “Cultural Appropriation,” Oxford Learner’s Dictionaries, <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/cultural-appropriation>.

Knowing Your Learners and Using Trauma-Informed Practices and Approaches

Educators are in an ideal position to engage in conversations with children and provide them with tools to analyze and understand the world around them. It is important to know your learners and provide a space where they feel safe engaging with the concepts and lived experiences you wish to discuss. Some children may connect with the impacts of colonialism and experiences of loss that are shared in *Heart Berry Bling*. Building strong relationships with your students will allow you to learn more about their experiences with the following topics: colonialism, racism, the Indian Act, family and community separation, identity, racial injustice, and trauma or loss. This will help you determine what approaches are appropriate and what considerations to make around certain discussions about the text.

Creating safe and brave spaces using trauma-informed practices and approaches allows learners to share and take risks because they know they are safe and supported in their classroom. Trauma-informed practice, sometimes referred to as trauma-informed care, is a framework grounded in understanding trauma and its impacts. It seeks to provide appropriate and responsive services and opportunities for those who have experienced trauma, helping them gain control and empowerment in their lives by considering their physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual safety and well-being.⁴ The goal of trauma-informed practice is to respond in ways that avoid triggering or causing further harm to individuals who have been affected by trauma.

It is recommended that you establish safety protocols in your classroom. This could include deciding on a signal students can use if they are overwhelmed by the content of a lesson. It could also include regularly checking in with students and validating their emotions and experiences while they are engaging with the text. Examples of trauma-informed practices are available online, including training from Indigenous organizations, school boards, and health services.

Balancing Stories of Trauma With Joy

Indigenous stories are not just about experiences of trauma and racism. In addition to these themes, *Heart Berry Bling* explores the continuity of Indigenous cultural identity and healing, as well as Indigenous people’s happiness and joy. Indigenous and non-Indigenous students alike must learn that experiences of trauma and joy can occur together.

As much as Indigenous Peoples have faced historical and ongoing oppression, they are also resilient against the systems intended to make them vulnerable. Despite the attempts of colonial governments to eliminate and exclude them, Indigenous Peoples continue to exist and thrive. Awareness of this can provide a powerful reminder to children to be proud of who they are and where they come from. It also reminds them that inequities persist in Canada and other parts of the world, and we all have a part to play in removing barriers and creating a better future for everyone.

⁴ “Trauma-Informed Practice (TIP)—Resources,” Government of British Columbia: Health, <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/managing-your-health/mental-health-substance-use/child-teen-mental-health/trauma-informed-practice-resources>.

PREPARING FOR READING

Learning About the Indian Act and the Impacts of Colonization on Indigenous Peoples

Heart Berry Bling provides an opportunity for children to understand the history of anti-Indigenous racism in Canada, as well as the impacts of colonization on Indigenous families and communities. These historical experiences continue to affect Indigenous lives today. Becoming familiar with the Indian Act and the impacts of colonization will help you feel more confident when leading discussions with young people around these topics.

It is important to consider the diverse impacts colonization has had on First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities in Canada and how these continue within different systems of society, including who qualifies as an Indigenous person under the Indian Act. Educators should also consider the intersectionality that exists within Indigenous experiences and that First Nations, Métis, and Inuit lived experiences are vast and diverse. Each Indigenous community has been affected differently by colonization and colonial policy. Acknowledging and teaching about the diversity of Indigenous experiences helps affirm Indigenous identities inside and outside the classroom, and works against generalizations and stereotypes about Indigenous Peoples.

Situating Yourself as a Learner

- Understand and acknowledge your own beliefs, power and privileges, and biases. This will help you have more truthful conversations with learners.
- Be aware of your position within and relationship with your community, classroom, and the cultural and racial communities to which you belong.
- Recognize your discomfort with certain topics around colonialism and racism. This will provide you with an opportunity to confront your discomfort and actively move forward with learning.
- Learn and become more familiar with the cultural and racial identities within your classroom and connect these to your students' learning.
- Appreciate that each learner has their own unique lived experiences. Even if some students in your class share the same cultural and/or racial group, their individual experiences will not be the same.
- Model authenticity and truth when, as an educator, you may not have the answer to a particular question or know the correct terminology to use. Educators are always in a state of learning, and no one is an expert. Being open about this with your learners will help ease their emotions and anxieties around saying the wrong thing or asking the wrong question.

- Learn how to have courageous conversations and take anti-racist approaches to texts. There are many books, blogs, podcasts, and videos on anti-racism in education to support your ongoing learning.
- Seek support from other educators who are learning about anti-racism and decolonization.

KEY THEMES AND CONNECTIONS

- Importance of Indigenous cultures, arts, identities, languages, and communities
- Diversity of First Nations experiences and identities
- Impacts of colonization and colonial legislation and policy
- Separation of Indigenous families and communities
- Indigenous stories of happiness and joy
- Resilience and resistance of First Nations women
- Historical and contemporary human rights violations based on race and gender
- Intergenerational love

VOCABULARY AND TERMINOLOGY

Anishinaabe: Meaning “original person,” *Anishinaabe* is both a singular and collective term to describe a person’s identity. Anishinaabe includes the Odawa, Chippewa, Ojibway and Saulteaux, Oji-Cree, Mississaugas, Algonquin, Nipissing, and Potawatomi Nations.

Anishinaabemowin: The Anishinaabe language.

baamaapii: A casual farewell meaning “after a while” or “until later” in Anishinaabemowin. There is no word for “goodbye” in Anishinaabemowin.

bead soup: A collection of beads that are all different shapes, colours, and sizes.

gender discrimination: The unfair treatment of individuals or groups based on gender. Gender refers “to the socially constructed behaviours, expressions, and identities of girls, women, boys, men, and gender diverse people.”⁵

heart berry: The word in the Ojibway language for strawberry is *ode’imin*, meaning “heart berry.”

First Nations: Refers to the original inhabitants of the lands now commonly known as Canada who are neither Métis nor Inuit. There are more than 630 recognized First Nations communities in Canada.

fry bread: A traditional Indigenous dish made by combining flour, baking powder, salt, and water or milk to form a dough that is fried in oil or lard. Fry bread was introduced as a response to the oppression of Indigenous Peoples, lands, food systems, and traditional hunting/gathering by colonial governments. Fry bread is now considered traditional comfort food by many Indigenous Peoples across Turtle Island, also known as North America.

Indian Act: Canadian legislation that defines First Nations lands (reserves), governments (band councils), and identities (status and non-status). It has been highly criticized for being paternalistic, sexist, and divisive as it aims to manage and control daily life in First Nations communities. Its policies have divided communities by discriminating against First Nations women as a means of disrupting familial systems through status and non-status identification.

Indian status: A First Nations individual who is recognized by the government under the Indian Act is referred to as a “Status Indian,” while “non-status” refers to a First Nations person who is not recognized by the government as a “Status Indian.”

moccasins: Traditional footwear of Indigenous Peoples across Turtle Island, made of different types of animal hides and sewn together using sinew. Moccasins are made with materials and designed in styles that reflect specific communities.

⁵ “What Is Gender? What Is Sex?” Canadian Institutes of Health Research, <https://cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/48642.html>.

powwow: A cultural gathering that brings many different Indigenous nations and communities together. Everyone is welcome to attend a powwow to appreciate and celebrate Indigenous music, dance, art, food, and more. Each powwow is different depending on which community hosts the celebration and which nations attend.

powwow bling: A type of beadwork style that emerged from powwow competitions that adds sparkle to a dancer's outfit.

regalia: Traditional clothing worn by Indigenous people during ceremonies, powwows, or gatherings. Designs, colours, and materials vary based on the community of the individual who wears it, as well as the specific event or dance.

reserve: A tract of land designated specifically for First Nations communities under the Indian Act that is held in trust by the Crown. Reserves were not created for Inuit or Métis peoples.

rhinestone banding: A type of trim commonly used in Indigenous beadwork designs. It was popularized in powwow competitions, where it was used to add sparkle to a dancer's outfit.

strawberry (heart berry) teachings: The strawberry is a culturally significant plant for many Indigenous communities across Turtle Island. In Anishinaabe culture, the heart shape of the strawberry reflects its teachings of truth, love, respect, trust, acceptance, peace, and hope.

CONNECTING LEARNERS TO THE STORY

Engaging Before Reading

Before reading *Heart Berry Bling*, use the following suggestions to encourage students to begin to connect to the story's themes, characters, and content.

- Engage learners in discussions about what they already know about Indigenous Peoples, specifically First Nations peoples, in Canada. Use the cover and interior illustrations of *Heart Berry Bling* as a starting point for these discussions. For example:
 - Preview the illustrations with learners and ask them what elements they notice, are familiar with, or wonder about. What questions can they form about the text through exploring the illustrations?
 - How does the illustrator show parts of the text that are meaningful or important? Ask learners to identify in an illustration something they think might be significant to the story and/or the characters and explain why they think this.
 - What do learners notice about the shapes and colours used in the illustrations? What words might they use to describe the artwork on two different pages where the shapes and colours vary?
 - Based on the illustrations, ask learners to make predictions about the role and importance of family in First Nations communities. Ask them to identify which illustrations help support their ideas and how they do so.
 - Identify the different activities and/or experiences Maggie participates in and shares with her family in the illustrations. Ask learners what they think these activities reflect about relationships between First Nations grandparents, parents, and children.
 - Share the illustration of Granny's beadwork. What plants and animals can they identify? What connections can they make between Anishinaabe art forms and nature and/or the environment?
- Read the author's note that appears at the end of *Heart Berry Bling* to learners so they will be familiar with the challenges faced by the characters when they read the story. Let learners know that although the story is fictional, it reflects the lived experiences of many First Nations women, including the author. As you read the author's note, clarify and expand on terminology and historical events that may be unfamiliar to learners and encourage them to ask questions.

- Ask learners which art forms bring them a sense of pride, strength, and hope or make them feel connected to their families, cultures, and communities. Encourage them to share why this art form is important to them and if they've had an opportunity to create their own artwork using this form of expression.
- Discuss with learners if they have ever taken action against something they believed was wrong. Work with them to identify the risks of saying or doing something in this situation, as well as the risks of not saying or doing anything. How did they know they had a responsibility to act?

Engaging During Reading

As you read with students, ask guiding questions to prompt discussions that can deepen their understanding and help them make personal connections to *Heart Berry Bling*.

- Which places or spaces do you get excited about visiting? What makes them special to you?
- What do you think *baamaapii* means?
- What cultural foods are important to you? What do these foods make you think of?
- What smells, sounds, or items remind you of a special place you like visiting?
- How do beads look, feel, and sound? How do you think beads were traditionally made? What do you think they were made of?
- What are moccasins?
- What do you notice about how Maggie's granny comes up with ideas for her beadwork designs? What might this reveal about Indigenous people and their beliefs and values?
- How do you think Granny felt when she had to move away from her community?
- Why do you think the government established the Indian Act?
- What impacts did the Indian Act continue to have on First Nations women even after some discriminatory parts of the act were changed? What effect do you think this had on First Nations communities?
- How does Granny show kindness and love to Maggie? How does Maggie reciprocate these feelings for her granny?
- What values does Granny teach Maggie through beading?
- How does beading continue First Nations culture and art forms?
- What teachings does the strawberry, or heart berry, represent? What teachings have you heard in your family that relate to the ones Maggie learns from her granny?

- What art forms are passed down in your culture or family? Why is it important to continue these art forms today?
- What do you do for fun at home or when visiting a member of your family?
- What are some skills you have learned? Which one was the most difficult to learn? How did you feel when you were trying to learn it? How did you feel after you learned it?
- Have you been to a powwow before? What dances, events, or gatherings are important in your culture or community?
- Why is it important to learn about cultural stories from someone who is from that culture or community? What harm could come from learning these stories from someone outside of the community?
- How do both Maggie and Granny show perseverance and resilience throughout *Heart Berry Bling*?

Engaging After Reading

After reading *Heart Berry Bling*, provide opportunities for learners to continue to deepen their understanding of the book's themes and make connections to them. The following activities and projects centre around students' voices, highlighting their gifts, interests, and lived experiences. Honour your learners' voices by acting on the ideas they share and the direction they provide.

- Provide opportunities for learners to investigate the efforts of First Nations women who challenged gender discrimination in the Indian Act, including Mary Two-Axe Earley, Yvonne Bédard, Sandra Lovelace Nicholas, Sharon McIvor, Jeannette Corbiere Lavell, Stéphane Descheneaux, Susan Yantha, and Tammy Yantha.
- Encourage learners to share their community and cultural stories and to connect these stories to *Heart Berry Bling* in ways that validate their lived experiences. Learners can make connections with Maggie and the story's themes. Be sure to emphasize learners' distinct experiences, rather than comparing their lived experiences to Maggie's.
- Explore with learners both personal stories and historical periods of social and racial injustices. Research what particular people or groups did to resist discrimination and unfair treatment during these times.
- Create opportunities for learners to deepen their understanding of the Indian Act, including the reserve system, band councils, membership, gender inequality, health, education, clean drinking water, and First Nations sovereignty. Encourage them to consider how the Indian Act continues to impact First Nations communities today.

- Encourage learners to be allies and active members of their communities by sharing what they've learned about the resilience and strength of Indigenous Peoples with others in their school and community.
- Explore with learners issues happening in local Indigenous communities, such as language revitalization, food sovereignty, and environmental sustainability. Make connections between these issues and colonization and colonial policies. Find out how the communities are participating in acts of resistance. Empower learners to be allies in raising awareness about challenges faced by local Indigenous communities.

Extending Learning in Culturally Appropriate Ways

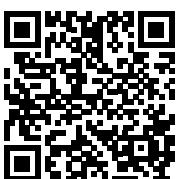
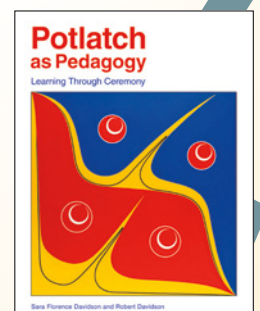
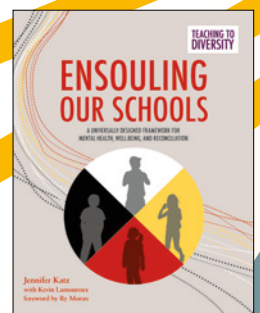
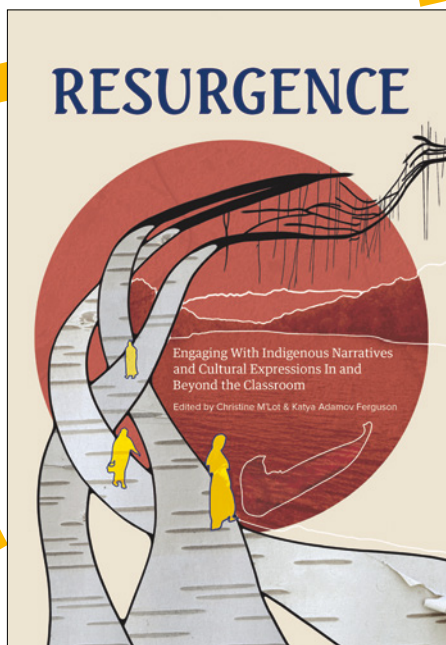
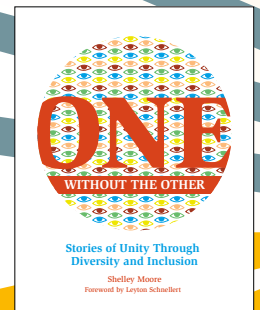
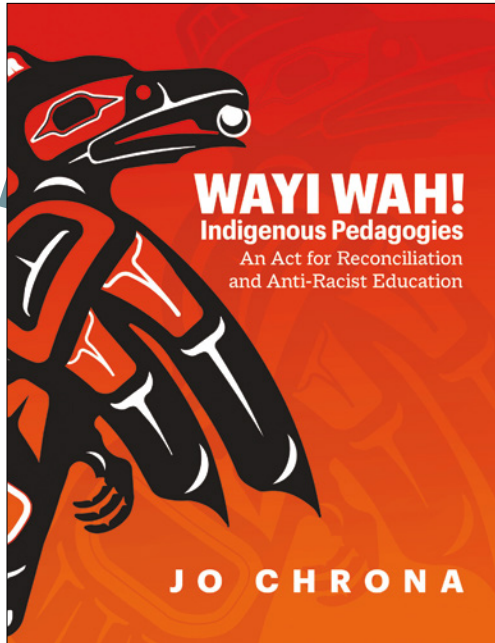
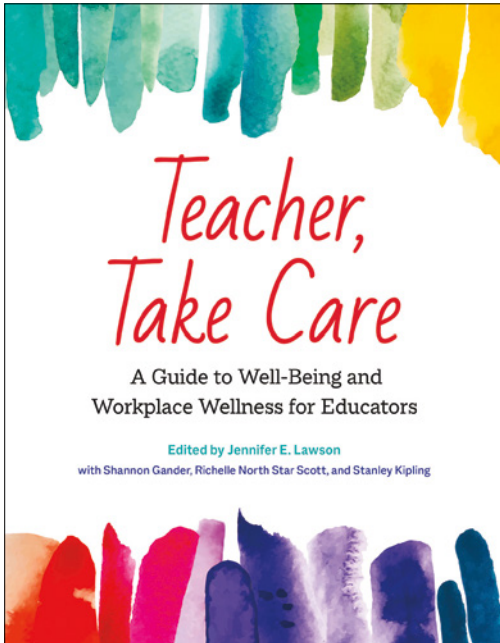
The following suggestions for extending student learning about the themes and topics described in *Heart Berry Bling* support cultural appreciation and respectful use of authentic resources.

- If you wish to extend student learning about beadwork or other Indigenous art forms and techniques, identify opportunities to amplify the voices and experiences of Indigenous artists. This will allow students to learn the meaning of the artists' work in a way that follows Indigenous art protocols. Learning through digital media sources (such as online videos) can be educational, but be sure that the resources you use are authentic and have been shared with permission.
- *Heart Berry Bling* makes connections to powwow culture and fashion. If you want to explore these topics in more depth with your class, remember to demonstrate cultural appreciation by listening and learning about different practices and experiences from authentic sources. Mimicking or copying a dancer's steps or regalia is not appreciation but appropriation of Indigenous cultures.
- In *Heart Berry Bling*, Granny serves fry bread, a traditional staple of Anishinaabe cuisine, to Maggie and her dad. There are also modern Indigenous comfort foods that include traditional elements. If you decide to explore contemporary Indigenous cuisine with your class, connect students' learning to the authentic voices of Indigenous chefs, cooks, farmers, seedkeepers, and harvesters who can explain the significance of different cultural or community dishes, crops, and harvesting techniques.
- If you wish to share additional Indigenous knowledges and experiences with learners, it is recommended that you do so by inviting Indigenous community members into your classroom (in person, virtually, or using social media). If you're unsure, it is important to ask your guest what protocols are customary for their community (for example, offering tobacco or other gifts, or providing accommodation or transportation).

It is also important to invite guests who specialize in the topic or practice your class is exploring. For example, if you would like your class to participate in an Indigenous beadwork workshop, reach out to an Indigenous artist who specializes in beadwork. Elders and Knowledge Keepers have specialized knowledge in various areas, including Indigenous law, community governance, treaties, traditional family structures, social work, and education. It is important to clearly outline your expectations when reaching out to an Elder, Knowledge Keeper, or community member so they can decide if the opportunity to share with your class is the right fit for their specific knowledges and experiences.

JERICA FRASER is a Rotinonhsón:ni (Kanien'kehá:ka) educator. Throughout her career, she has focused on anti-colonial, anti-racism, and anti-oppressive education not only in her classroom, but in the education system as a whole. She writes and collaborates on Indigenous-focused curriculum and workshops as well as courses for educators. She has her master's degree in Education with a focus on social justice and Indigenous health studies. Jerica is passionate about learning and reclaiming the languages of her grandparents and recently graduated from the Mohawk Language and Culture program at Tsi Tyónnheht Onkwawén:na and Queen's University. She looks forward to continuing her learning and teaching Kanien'kéha in the future.

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Use this guide alongside *Heart Berry Bling* to explore themes of social justice, cultural continuity, and resilience through art.

Written by Rotinonhsón:ni (Kanié'kehá:ka) educator Jerica Fraser and reviewed by author Jenny Kay Dupuis, the *Teacher Guide for Heart Berry Bling* offers support for educators in

- engaging learners before, during, and after reading
- using the suggested activities, questions, and ideas for inquiry
- considering trauma-informed practices when approaching sensitive topics such as colonialism, social and racial injustices, and the Indian Act
- practising cultural appreciation and providing context when introducing Indigenous stories
- respecting protocols for engaging with Indigenous histories, teachings, art, and stories
- balancing stories of trauma and joy

Activities in this teacher guide are most appropriate for grades 1 to 8.


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