

## The Full Circle Library is Open!

I proudly gathered all the books I've used, taught, recommended, and studied. I even included the ones I bought with my own money to ensure I always have a copy in my classroom. I stuffed them into three reusable grocery bags and proudly left them on Grandmother Pahan's steps for review. Later, when I picked them up, I saw some of those books in the red 'no' bag. **My heart skipped a beat.**

The series that I had recommended to so many colleagues and introduced me to Indigenous literature was there. I felt a second of defensiveness, sadness, shame. I started **flipping through the pages with curiosity**, using Grandmother Pahan's eyes and asking myself, "What did I miss? What did she see?" Just as fast as my defensiveness showed up, so did my understanding. The illustrations were littered with feathers, buckskin, face paint, landscapes with buffalo standing in the background. And it wasn't just the illustrations, the characters, the story; the lessons were all stereotypes as well.

Plus, one of Grandmother's rules is **the story has to be good**. All of them were boring. Memories of the students not enjoying the story and me trying to make it an entertaining experience by adding my own stories came flooding in. Suddenly, I understood and agreed. **"Just because it's there doesn't mean we use it."** She would say.

I knew that the goal I set for myself early in my career as an educator was simple, but it was also a challenge. **I want every Indigenous person to feel proud of their identity.** I want them to say, "I'm Cree!" instead of, "I think my grandma might be Cree." I want them to feel there is space, voice, and learning relevant to their lives and identity. I want that **defensiveness to meet love, the sadness to melt, and the shame to morph into pride.**

My conversations with educators have been the inspiration I needed to fuel my work on this project. They know they need to do something, do it well, and address the many areas of Indigenous education. Still, they are reluctant to go ahead, **with fear** of offending someone! Even asking for help from an Indigenous educator is tricky as we are often overworked, over consulted, or even worse, consulted then ignored.

We all agree; there is a need for all educators to feel more comfortable teaching Indigenous topics. Our children, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, lose out without the inclusion of Indigenous knowledge. The Full Circle Library is here to help you.

### The Full Circle Library

In preparing to add resources to the library, we first had to screen them. We created multiple drafts of a screening tool. We hoped to adapt it in time, as experience built, feedback came in, and educators used the tool themselves. However, even in our first round of screening, we

found we were breaking our own rules! There are exceptions! Selecting and reviewing appropriate resources can be a very subjective process.

**Full Circle Library provides clarity, confidence, and efficacy for educators.**

Then it happened! Two hundred and fifteen unmarked graves of children who died at Kamloops Indian Residential School were found. As the weeks passed, community after community announced that they too had found hundreds more unmarked graves. Indigenous people across Canada were triggered and reeling with grief and sorrow. Canadian awareness was awakened to the atrocities committed against our children. Genocide. That's when we knew that the Full Circle Library had to start with the topic of Indian Residential School.

**We want you to be ready** for the National Day of Truth and Reconciliation on September 30<sup>th</sup> and to feel able to discuss this challenging topic with your students and families. If most of your education about Canada's colonial history comes from children's picture books, we would like to challenge you to **take your learning to the next step.**

The Full Circle Library includes resources appropriate for kindergarten to senior years to adults. We work to include the perspectives of various Indigenous Nations with a focus on the First Peoples of Manitoba. Language experts review books that include an Indigenous language. Screened virtual resources are waiting for you to access them, including websites, documentaries, books, games, and more.

**Interact!**

One last thing. Use the library, rate a resource, submit a resource to be screened or send us your suggestions!

**The Full Circle Library is now open!**

With love and respect,

Jenna Firth  
Co-chair

Pahan Pte San Win  
Grandmother