

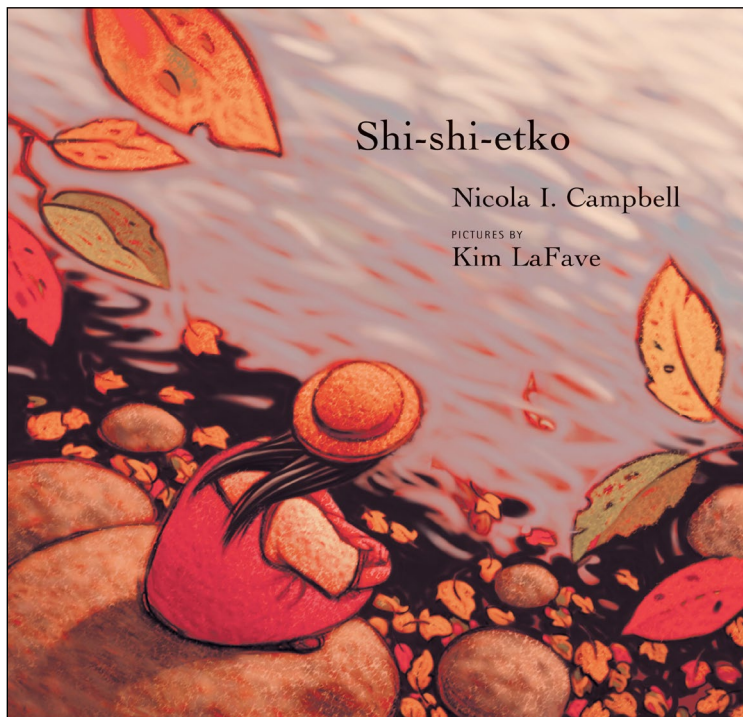


# GROUNDWOOD STUDY GUIDES

## Shi-shi-etko

Written by Nicola I. Campbell

Illustrated by Kim LaFave



In just four days young Shi-shi-etko will have to leave her family and all that she knows to attend residential school. *Shi-shi-etko* is a moving and poetic account of a child who finds solace all around her, even though she is on the verge of great loss.

### CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Ages 4 - 7 / K - 2

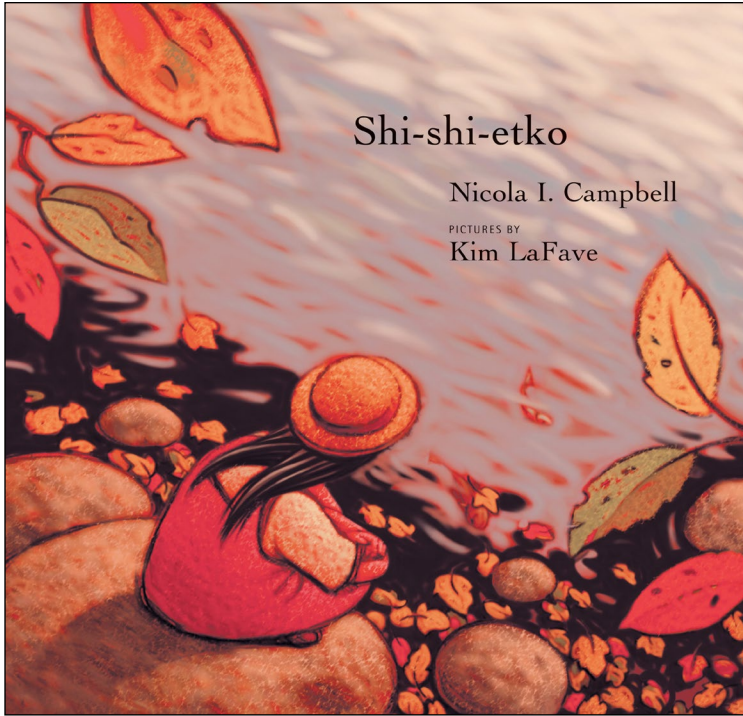
JUVENILE FICTION / People & Places / Canada / Indigenous

Full-color illustrations / 8 x 8.5 / 32 pages

Hardcover / \$18.95 / 978-0-88899-659-6

Ebook / 978-1-55498-233-2

[groundwoodbooks.com](http://groundwoodbooks.com)



## BOOK DESCRIPTION

In just four days young Shi-shi-etko will have to leave her family and all that she knows to attend residential school.

She spends her last days at home treasuring the beauty of her world — the dancing sunlight, the tall grass, each shiny rock, the tadpoles in the creek, her grandfather's paddle song. Her mother, father and grandmother, each in turn, share valuable teachings that they want her to remember. And so Shi-shi-etko carefully gathers her memories for safekeeping.

Richly hued illustrations complement this gently moving and poetic account of a child who finds solace all around her, even though she is on the verge of great loss — a loss that Indigenous people have endured for generations because of the residential school system.

## BEFORE READING

### WHAT'S IN A NAME?

As a class, talk about the title and cover of the book, and discuss ideas on what Shi-shi-etko means. Once the class discovers that Shi-shi-etko is the little girl's name and that it means "she loves to play in the water," ask them how it affects how they see the cover.

### CANADA'S INDIAN RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

Read the introduction from Nicola I. Campbell about the residential school system and how the government at that time forced all Indigenous children to attend schools away from their families. Discuss with the class the implications that this created for the families at that time and continues to cause in today's society.

### PICTURE WALK

Do a "picture walk" through the story, noting the significance of water throughout the book. Ask students: Why do you think the author and illustrator included so many references to and pictures with water?

### IMPORTANCE OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Ask students: What do you notice about all the illustrations throughout the story? (All have a red hue.) Why do you think the illustrator may have done this? (Maybe as we read the story, we will understand why.)



## DURING READING

These are guiding questions that can be discussed orally — as a shared response as a class or in small groups — or completed as individual reading responses. This book should be read over a couple of days to gain the most insight from the discussions.

### SIGNS OF THE SEASONS

On page 7, it says, “My girl, we will not see each other until the wild roses bloom in the spring and the salmon have returned to our river.” Ask students: Looking at the picture of the mom and girl in the water, what time of year is it? How do you know? What are the signs that reveal the seasons? How many months will it be until spring? Is that a long time?

**Curriculum Connections: Science (Seasons)**

### EMOTIONS

Ask students: What does the mom want Shi-shi-etko to remember? What emotion or feeling does the mother want her daughter to remember when she is away from the family? How do you know?

**Curriculum Connections: Health (Well-Being, Families)**

### FAMILY VISITS

Shi-shi-etko has lots of family come to visit before she leaves. Ask students: When have you gotten together with your families to say goodbye to someone? Were your family members happy or sad? Was Shi-shi-etko’s family happy or sad? How do you know?

### IMPORTANCE OF GRANDPARENTS

Ask students: How was Shi-shi-etko feeling when she heard her yayah’s cane? How do you know? Where does it say she was excited or happy in the text, or does it? What connections do you make with your grandparents, relatives or other important people in your life?

## MAKING MEMORIES

Ask students: What does Shi-shi-etko do with her father? What does he want her to remember when she leaves for residential school?

## SOUNDS OF THE PADDLE

Ask the class: Has anyone ever gone canoeing before? What was that experience like? What does canoeing sound like? How does Shi-shi-etko's dad keep their pace while they're paddling?

## KEEPSAKES

Ask students: What does Shi-shi-etko's yayah give her? What is she supposed to put in the small bag? What keepsakes would you choose to put in a small bag like Shi-shi-etko's? What do you predict that Shi-shi-etko will put in her bag? How will she keep it safe when she goes to residential school?

## ONE SLEEP

Ask students: How would you be feeling if you had only one sleep left until you had to leave to go to school for many months? How is Shi-shi-etko feeling? How do you know?

## CLOSE TO HER HEART

Ask students: Where did Shi-shi-etko decide to put her memories? Why do you think she didn't take this object with her to residential school? Why did she take a sprig of fir and hold it close to her heart as she left in the back of the truck?

## AFTER READING

Short-response questions can be used to discuss and engage in writing short paragraphs. Teachers can co-construct a rubric/success criteria with students to indicate the essential elements of a written short response.

### AUTHOR'S MESSAGE

Ask students: What do you think is the underlying theme of the story? What do you believe the author is trying to teach us by writing this story? What is the author's message?

### TRADITIONAL TEACHINGS

Shi-shi-etko's family members all had valuable teachings they wanted her to remember.

Activity: Walk through the text with students and make an anchor chart on chart paper of the valuable teachings. Keep it posted in the classroom for future reference.

Ask students: Why is it so important to remember the teachings given to us by our elders? What teachings have you learned from the adults in your family or life? How did they teach those lessons?

### FAMILY ROLES

Discuss with students: Based on Indigenous Peoples' beliefs, what are the roles that children and adults/parents play in their families? (Children bring questions, laughter, excitement and wonder to their families, and adults/parents bring guidance, stability, love and support to their families.) What are the roles of adults and children in your families?



## THE QUIET COMMUNITY

Prompt students to imagine what life must have been like in Shi-shi-etko's community with no children around for many months of the year. What impacts would this have had on the adults who were left behind?

## LIFE AT RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

Ask students to imagine life for the many children at residential schools without their parents. What impacts would this have had on the children who were forced to attend residential schools?

## RETELL

Have students retell the story in their own words, highlighting the important events that occurred.

## THIRTEEN MOONS

Traditionally, Indigenous Peoples did not follow the calendar used in many classrooms now. Ask students: How did Shi-shi-etko know when she would be returning to her family?

Art Activity: Have students draw the “signs of the seasons.”

## DESCRIPTIVE WRITING

Prompt students: Choose an object. Study it carefully as Shi-shi-etko did in the story. Describe the object in a written, descriptive paragraph so the reader of your paragraph knows exactly what the object looks and feels like.

## CROSS-CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS

### ORAL LANGUAGE PARTNER DRAWING

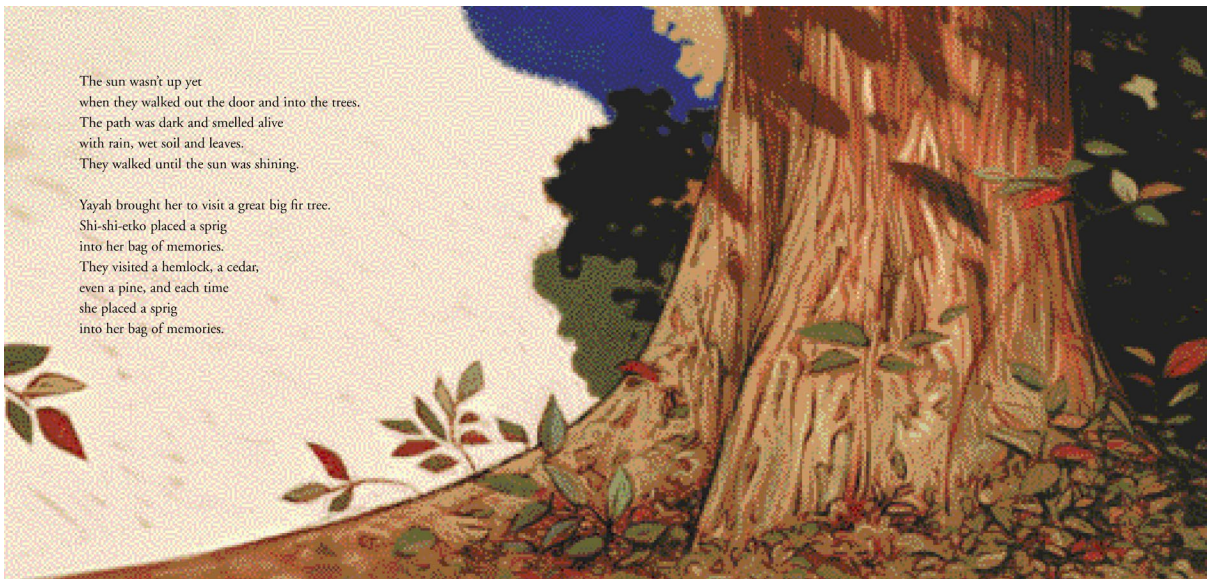
You could have the students work in pairs, in which one student describes an object orally and the other student draws the object without being able to ask questions to the speaker.

**Cross-curricular Connections: Oral Language (Literacy), the Arts (Visual)**

### SPECIES OF TREES AND SHRUBS

Ask students: What do you think a “sprig” is? What did Yayah and Shi-shi-etko visit? Look up pictures of the various trees to give students some understanding about what each species of tree looks like.

**Cross-curricular Connections: Science (Plants, Habitats and Communities)**



The sun wasn't up yet  
when they walked out the door and into the trees.  
The path was dark and smelled alive  
with rain, wet soil and leaves.  
They walked until the sun was shining.

Yayah brought her to visit a great big fir tree.  
Shi-shi-etko placed a sprig  
into her bag of memories.  
They visited a hemlock, a cedar,  
even a pine, and each time  
she placed a sprig  
into her bag of memories.



## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### CONNECT TO THIS GROUNDWOOD TEXT

Read the sequel to this book:

*Shin-chi's Canoe*

written by Nicola I. Campbell

illustrated by Kim LaFave

ISBN 978-0-88899-857-6

### WEB RESOURCES

Anishnawbe Health Toronto — “Your Name and Colours: Native Teachings are about a Way of Life” pamphlet:

<https://aht.ca/traditional-teachings-new/your-name-and-colours>

Legacy of Hope Foundation:

<http://legacyofhope.ca/education/>

Naming Ceremony:

“Grade 2, Social Studies: Naming Ceremony.” Aboriginal Perspectives: The Teacher’s Toolkit. Ontario Ministry of Education.

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/aboriginal/strategygr02socnaming.pdf>

Project of Heart:

<http://projectofheart.ca/teacher-guideslesson-plans/>

Statement of apology to former students of Indian Residential Schools — Prime Minister Stephen Harper, on behalf of the Government of Canada, June 11, 2008:

<https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1100100015644/1571589171655>

The 13 moons:

“The 13 Moons of the Wsanec (Saanich People).” Race Rocks Lesson Plans (Pearson College UWC). Adapted from The Saanich Year by Earl Claxton and John Elliott, Saanich School Board #63, 1993.

<http://bit.ly/2GOhRp5>

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada:

<http://www.trc.ca/>

100 Years of Loss: The Residential School System in Canada — Healing the Legacy of Residential Schools (an education program by the Legacy of Hope Foundation):

<https://legacyofhope.ca/english/education>

## AUTHOR AND ILLUSTRATOR BIOGRAPHIES



**Nicola I. Campbell** is Interior Salish and Metis, and she grew up in British Columbia's Nicola Valley. She is the author of *Shi-shi-etko* (Aboriginal Children's Book of the Year) and *Shin-chi's Canoe* (TD Canadian Children's Literature Award, Governor General's Award Finalist for Illustration, USBY Outstanding International Books), both illustrated by Kim LaFave. Nicola lives in Vancouver, British Columbia.



**Kim LaFave** has won the Governor General's Award, the Ruth Schwartz Children's Book Award and the Amelia Frances Howard-Gibbon Award for his illustrations in *Amos's Sweater* by Janet Lunn. He illustrated *Shin-chi's Canoe* by Nicola I. Campbell, which was a finalist for the Governor General's Award. He lives in Roberts Creek, British Columbia.