

Bringing Métis Children's Literature to Life—Kohkum's Babushka

Author: Marion Mutala

Illustrator: Donna Lee Dumont

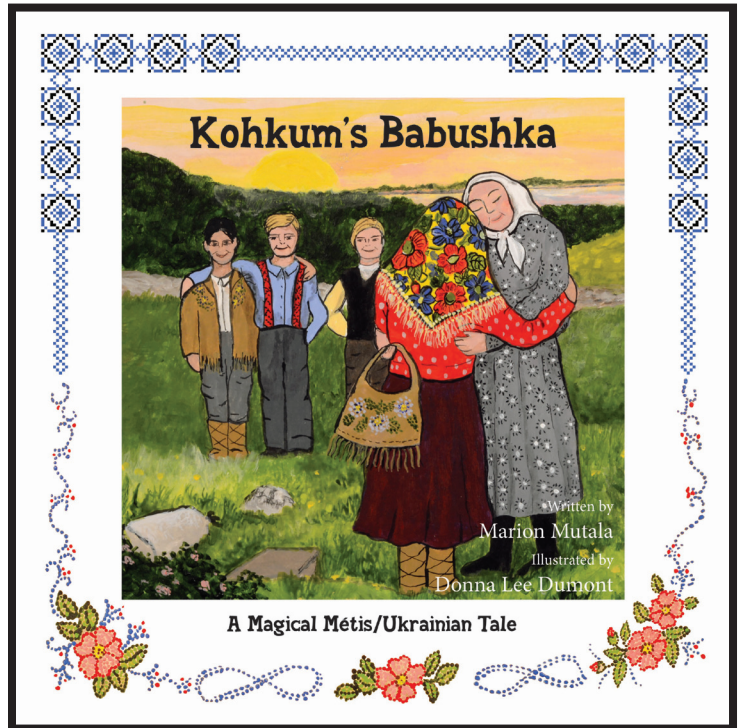
Overview of Story: Most families today have something in common with families who lived long ago. They make the most of the times in which they live, the places where they live, and the interactions they have with the people they meet.

Kohkum's Babuska is a tale about two diverse families and their first encounter with one another. It shows the beauty of their differences and similarities, particularly the generosity and reciprocity valued by each family's cultural tradition.

Marion Mutala takes readers into a vibrant prairie world that weaves fact and fantasy to witness two families, one Métis and the other Ukrainian, meeting for the first time. Through this magical encounter, we see core values intrinsic to our common humanity: our curiosity and empathy, and our willingness to share with others, regardless of language or culture.

Themes in this book:

- Métis/Ukrainian
- Values/Virtues (generosity, empathy, sharing, reciprocity, etc.)
- Similarities and differences in cultures
- Early settlement/Immigration to prairies
- Summertime
- Family
- Communities
- Fantasy/dream sequence
- Clothing
- Round Prairie Métis
- Dance & Music
- Beadwork, embroidery, cross stitching
- Food



Possible Curriculum Connections:

- Integrates nicely with most Indigenous outcomes
- Integrates nicely with the Ukrainian-English Bilingual program resources

Social Studies

- Analyze daily life in a diversity of communities
- Analyze the cultures and traditions in communities
- Interdependence in communities
- Divergent viewpoints
- Cultural diversity in Saskatchewan
- Evolution of Canada as a multicultural nation
- Cultural beliefs and value

Language Arts

- Identity, community, and social responsibility
- Communicating ideas
- Literature from a variety of cultural traditions
- Compare and contrast similarities and differences
- View, listen to, read, comprehend, and respond to a variety of texts that address identity

Arts Education

- Dance
- Métis music and Ukrainian music
- Analyze how dance, music, and visual artwork represents unique ideas and perspectives
- Respond to art perspectives from different cultures (dance, beadwork, etc.)

Health

- Healthy relationships
- Identities and the well-being of self, family, and community
- Healthy eating



“Different But Good” Lesson

Before Reading:

Introduce the story. Tell the students that this is a story about two cultures: Métis and Ukrainian. Ask students in the class; Who is Métis? Who is Ukrainian? Maybe there are students who have both lineages? In this story, there is a phrase repeated and is the theme of the story. Present the phrase, “Different but good.” Turn and talk to a partner, discuss what that phrase means. Share with large group.

Now ask the students to talk to their partner about what they think “Different but good,” means in this story, *Kohkum’s Babuska*. This prediction or inference will help them focus on the similarities and differences in the story.

While they are discussing, draw a “T” chart and put Métis on one side and Ukrainian on the other. After sharing a few of the responses, tell the students to listen carefully to the story and focus on what is uniquely Métis and what is uniquely Ukrainian.

During Reading:

Purposely stop from time to time while reading and record what is Métis and what is Ukrainian. There may be some responses that fit on both sides of the “T” chart. That is good!

After Reading:

Complete the “T” chart. Have a discussion about what is uniquely different about the two cultures and what is the same. If they are having trouble coming up with what is the same, you can always prompt them with what values, clothing, and features are the same.

Have the students do a written response to the story. One paragraph will describe the Métis in the story, one paragraph will describe the Ukrainians in the story and one paragraph will describe how they are similar. Have students read their responses to a partner.



Additional post-reading activities:

Recipe Lesson:

At the back of the book there is a recipe for borsch. Discuss the format for recipes: name the ingredients, describe the procedure for preparation and cooking, and the amounts, etc. As a class, in partners or on their own, have students prepare a recipe for welcoming people new to Canada or new to your school. What are the ingredients of this interaction? How should it look? How often, or how much?

Cooking Lesson:

Prepare the soup from the recipe at the back, prepare the bannock from the recipe at the back. Invite your reading buddies, or another class to share with you. The entertainment can be their creations from *Recipes for Welcoming New Canadians* writing.

***Look at the Cultural Connections at the back of the book and choose one or two to do.

