

Road Allowance Kitten: Broken Promises

Author: Wilfred Burton

Illustrator: Christina Johns

Translator: Norman Fleury

Overview of Story: *Road Allowance Kitten: Broken Promises* shares more of the adventures of the main characters, Rosie and Madeline, and their pet kitten. Their adventure began in *Road Allowance Kitten*, which has become a very popular and widely acclaimed book within the canon of Métis children's literature.

In *Broken Promises*, the sequel, Rosie, Madeline, and Kitten go with their families by train to the north where they were to be relocated in Green Lake. Upon arrival, they soon found out nothing was ready for them. The families were discouraged and decided to make the long trek back south. Full of adventure and malicious encounters, the families finally arrived back south. Kitten accompanies them back, but has a surprise at the end.

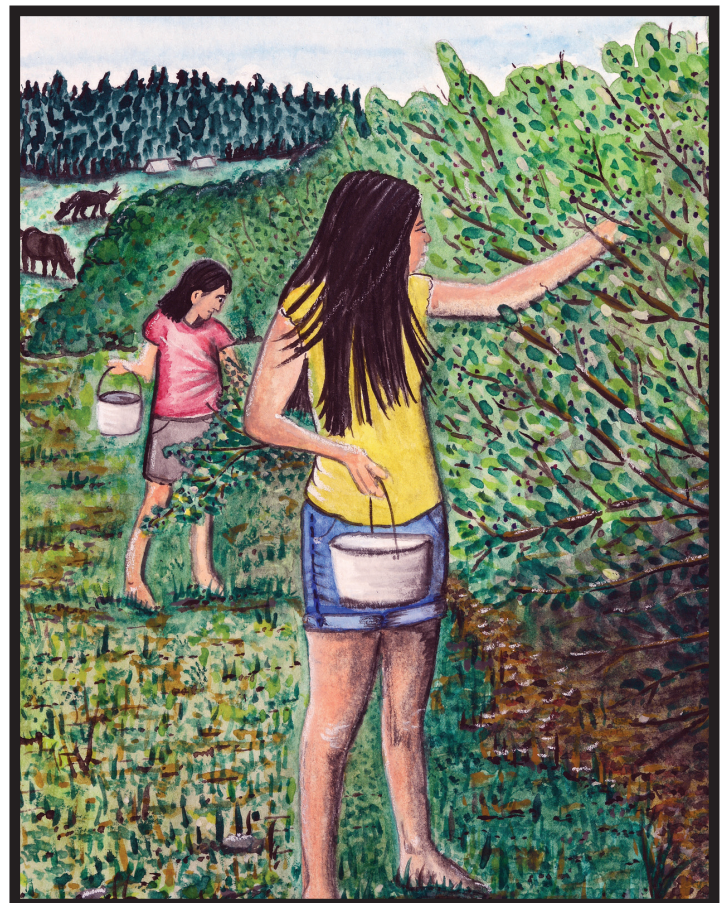
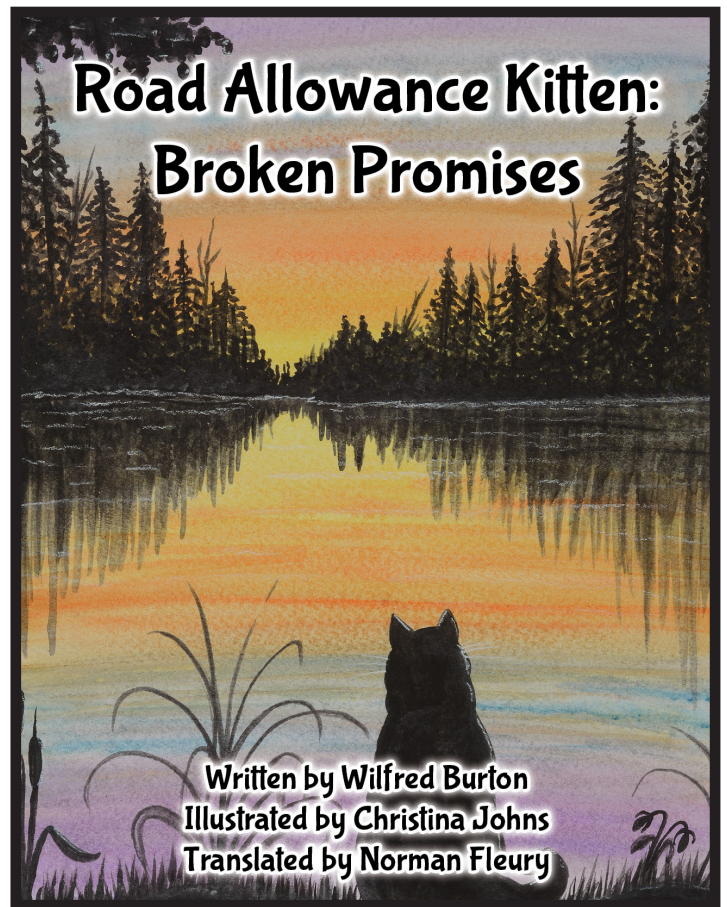
Themes in this book:

- Resilience
- Friendship
- Families
- Métis history
- Journeys
- Michif
- Weather
- Life cycle
- Games
- Racism/discrimination

Possible Curriculum Connections:

Science

- Investigate and analyze weather for society and environment
- Diversity of living things
- Analyze growth and changes of familiar animals



English Language Arts

- Listen to understand information, finding the main idea, supporting details, and make connections between texts
- Define and create a variety of representations
- Compose and create a range of texts relating to social responsibility
- Use oral language to interact appropriately with others in pairs, and in small and large group situations

Social Studies

- Investigate stories of significant events and persons in the local community's history
- Analyze the cultures and traditions in communities studied
- Assess how geography and related environmental and climatic factors influence ways of living on and with the land
- Demonstrate awareness that divergent viewpoints may lead to conflict as part of group interactions, and assess various means of conflict resolution
- Analyze how the Métis have shaped and continue to shape Saskatchewan

Health Education

- Analyze the factors that influence the development of personal standards and identity, and determine the impact on healthy decision making
- Examine healthy opportunities for harmonious relationships

Arts Education

- Respond to arts expressions that use the environment (natural, constructed, imagined) as inspiration
- Analyze and respond to arts expressions of various Métis artists
- Create artworks using a variety of visual art concepts: forms and mixed media

Before Reading/Listening:

Since this is a sequel, it would be important to read *Road Allowance Kitten* first. After reading the first book, ask the students to predict what will happen once they get to their destination. What will happen to Kitten? What will happen to the families? What will they see when they get there?

Record predictions on a chart or interactive smart board.

Show the cover of the book and chat about the setting of this story compared to the setting in book one. Add more predictions to the chart if this conversation sparks additional ideas.

During Reading:

As the story is being read, stop every couple of pages and review the predictions. Cross off any predictions that no longer fit with the story. Halfway through the story, stop and add to the list with new predictions. Continue reading and stop every couple of pages to cross off those that don't suit the story any longer.

After Reading:

Now that the story is finished, look at the list and cross off predictions that aren't true any longer and celebrate those that were close to the storyline.

Discuss how the government policy of relocation was carried out. How did the family respond to this policy? Make predictions about the people who stayed in the north and



didn't make the long trek back to the south. What might have happened to them? After prompting and probing with more questions, read the expository text at the back of the book. This will bring additional and deeper understanding of this period of history.

Additional Activities for this book:

Post-reading Activity #1: The title of this story is called *Road Allowance Kitten: Broken Promises*. Discuss what promises were broken in the story.

With elbow partners talk about times when they've experienced broken promises (a friend, a parent, etc.). What did it feel like? Is there any way to make up for a broken promise? What do broken promises do to relationships?

After discussion about personal broken promises, segue into the broken promises made by the government or by a nation. Perhaps this is when you can introduce a residential school story. What promises were being made to the parents/families when First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children were taken away to residential school? You could tie this topic into whatever else you are studying; such as the Holocaust, the environment, school rules, etc.

Post-reading Activity #2: What is the difference between discrimination (the unfair treatment of people on the grounds of race, religion, gender, abilities, etc.), racism (superiority over another race) and bullying (when a person hurts, harms, or is mean to someone over and over again)? Discuss what Madeline and Rosie's families experienced in this story (from the government relocation and from the farmers). What other examples of discrimination, racism, and bullying are there?

With the following scenarios, have groups of students decide whether it is a bullying, racist, or discriminatory scene.

Scenarios that highlight these three concepts (create your own too):

Scenario #1: Brandy has special needs. She needs a wheelchair to get around. Sarah plays with her every day, but all the other children in her class avoid them.

Scenario #2: Justin is in grade four. He is Dakota and has his hair in braids. The other boys in his class call him names because he has braids.

Scenario #3: Grades seven and eight students prevent younger grades from using the soccer field on the playground. They say it is their field.

Scenario #4: Pria is new to Canada. She is from India. She gets on the bus last every day. She has to sit in the only seat available. Every day her seat partner twists her arm or pinches her and calls her names, then laughs. Her seat partner tries to get the other kids to do the same thing.

Scenario #5: Jordan wants to play basketball on the playground with the other kids at recess. The others won't allow him to play because they say he is too short. No one wants him on their team because they will lose with him. They have never seen him play before.



After discussion from the prepared scenarios. Discuss with the students solutions to each scenario. Perhaps the students could write their own scenarios and then have a discussion about solving the issues presented.

Post-reading Activity #3: *Science:* In the story, Rosie and Madeline encountered extreme weather. Perhaps it was the beginning of a tornado. Many tornadoes touch down each summer in Saskatchewan. Make a tornado in a bottle.

Instructions:

1. Fill your container (a large pop bottle works) about $\frac{3}{4}$ full with clean water.
2. Add a squirt of dish soap, as well as your glitter or food coloring, if desired.
3. Seal the container tightly.
4. Move the bottle rapidly in a circular motion. After a few seconds, you should see the water begin swirling. Stop, and watch your tornado!

There are also various instructions on the Internet on how to make a tornado in a bottle.

Post-reading Activity #4: *Visual Arts:* Look through the book and highlight the use of silhouette in art by Christina Johns.

Use sunset colours (red, orange, yellow) or daylight colours (different shades of light blue, white) to create a background on a sheet of art paper. Paint the entire page with these colours. Blend them together. Cut up sponge pieces are great for this blending of colours.

On a black piece of construction paper draw an outline of an animal, like a horse, or dog, or cat (fairly large). Cut the outline out and glue it on the blended colour paper.

Use black markers to create detail under and around the silhouetted animal. Create trees, grass, and whatever else would enhance the piece of art.

Post-reading Activity #5: Cat's Cradle is a string game. Find a video online to teach you how to create a cat's cradle. You will LOVE it.

What other games do you play when it is rainy out or too cold? Can you create a guide to help others play your game?

