



Attack of the Roogaroos!



Based on stories by
Gilbert Pelletier, Norman Fleury,
Joe Welsh, and Norma Welsh

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This series is a departure from other books about Aboriginal or traditional stories. It includes five stories. As readers go through the series, they will notice that the narrative and artwork gets progressively darker. The series starts with trickster stories, then moves to a Whiitigo and Paakuk story, then jumps to a story about selling one's soul and personal redemption, and finally to a Roogaroo story.

This project came to life from the stories of our Elders, and as such, original transcripts of the stories, prose renditions by Janice DePeel, and biographies of the storytellers and project team are available on the Virtual Museum of Métis History and Culture: www.metismuseum.ca/browse/index.php?id=13100

Stories of Our People/Lii zistwayr di la naasyoon di Michif Series:

How Michif was Lost

Chi-Jean and the Red Willows

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Sins of the Righteous

Attack of the Roogaroos!

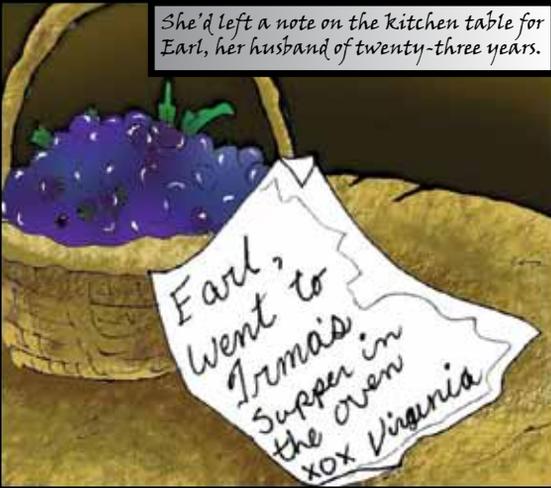


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It had been a long day for Virginia Lavallée. She and Irma Morin had been out most of the day berry picking. Virginia had fresh bannock and jam in her deer-hide satchel and was on her way to Irma's for coal oil, refreshment, and a visit.



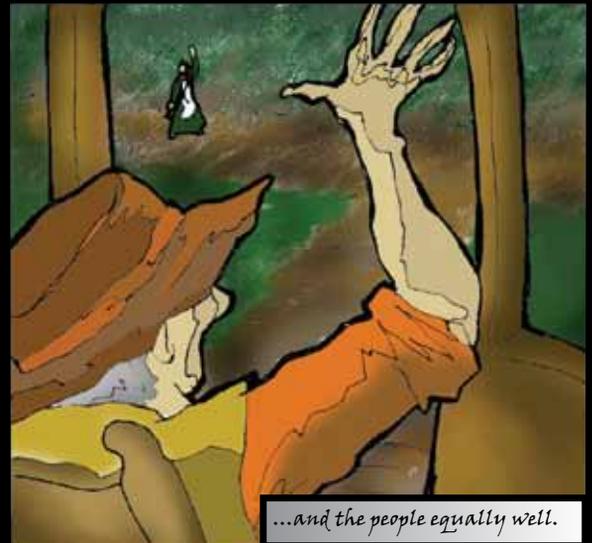
She'd left a note on the kitchen table for Earl, her husband of twenty-three years.



The road she travelled was as familiar to her as the back of her hand. She knew the land...



...the forest...



...and the people equally well.



As she breathed the sweet night air, she felt grateful for her life and her culture.



Above her, a nearly full moon lit her path.



To the north, *lii Chiraan*, the Northern Lights, danced in the sky.

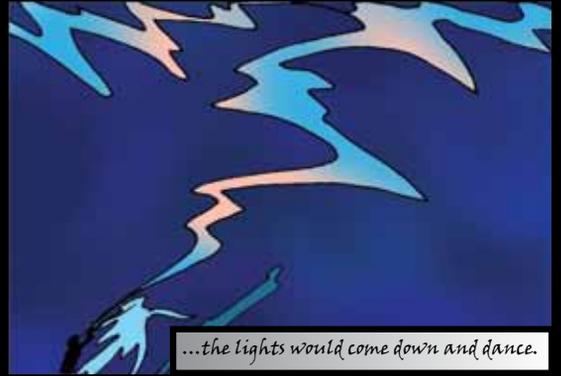


Legend said these were the ancestors, which is why they were colourful and active on this night.

Virginia recalled the story that her *Kokum* had told her about the Northern Lights.



That if she whistled...



...the lights would come down and dance.



If she called the lights down to the earth, they'd steal her voice so that her song would be with them forever.



She shook her head at the idea and smiled, thinking she would share the same story with her own grandchildren some day.



Just then, all thoughts of the pleasant evening were shattered by a deep, throaty growl emanating from behind the bush.

Virginia turned...



...and saw an animal, crouched, ready to leap.





Virginia yelled and waved her arms, trying to appear larger than she was.



She tried to remember everything her father had taught her about wolves and rabid dogs: don't look the animal in the eye.



While backing away, face the animal in slow, steady movements. Even as she did these things, she saw the animal was not a wolf, nor was it a coyote or a dog.



"Roogaroo!" her mind screamed. She didn't have time to think because the animal was flying through the air, lunging at her with its open fangs.



Virginia put her deer-skin bag between herself and the animal.



The animal sunk its powerful jaws into the bag and shook with all its might.



Then Virginia saw a long thick tree branch.

She picked it up and crouched low.





This time when the animal attacked, she'd be ready.



Growing, and having decimated the deer-skin bag, the animal turned its attention to Virginia.



Disobeying her father's advice, she looked the animal in the eyes. The eyes were human!



As the black dog lunged forth, she hit it on the head with all her might. She heard tearing, and then the animal picked itself up and ran, the piece of cloth still clasped within its powerful jaws.

She quickly hurried to Irma's house, which was just around the next stand of trees.



Irma!
Irma phone
Constable Jack
quick!



For heaven's
sake Virginia! What's
the matter with you?
Was it a bear?

No! It was worse!
Phone Jack! His people
are Michif, he'll
understand.



Constable Jack Pelletier arrived and sent two men up the path with flashlights to see if they could find anything.



Twenty minutes later he listened to the story for the second time. He'd known Virginia Lavallée his whole life. She wouldn't make something like this up.



Jack could see the jagged round hole in Virginia's apron.

I don't think much more will happen tonight. How about I give you a ride home?

The drive to the Lavallées' was quick and uneventful.



Jack knew about this place's legends. It was the same in every Métis community.





I'll stop by tomorrow Virginia!

Returning to the road, he found his men searching for clues.



Nothing Jack. This is a needle in a haystack. There's a lot of animal prints, but nothing else.

Jim Bird shone his flashlight on the dirt, confirming what he'd already said.



Give it another hour, then return to headquarters.

Jack's shift was over and he was looking forward to relaxing. But no sooner had he pulled off his boots and grabbed a sandwich than the phone rang.



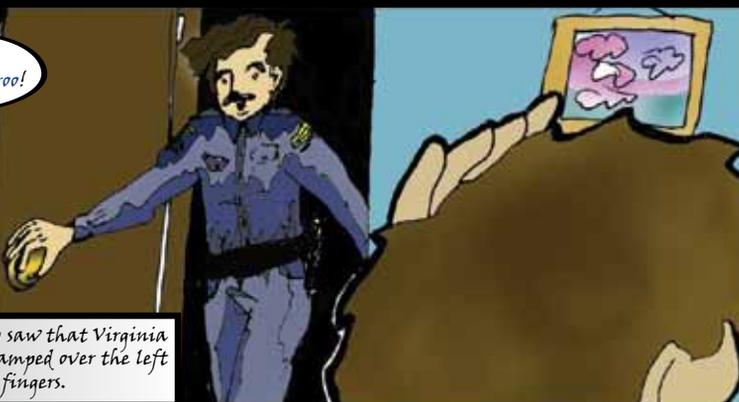
He walked through the front door without knocking.



He followed the noise coming from upstairs.



It was him!
He's the Roogaroo!

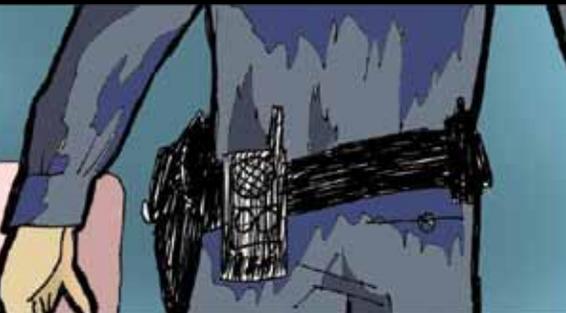


Making his way into the bedroom he quickly saw that Virginia was fine, but Earl wasn't. His hand was clamped over the left side of his head and blood trickled between his fingers.

On his forehead he wore an ugly purple goose egg.



You're crazy! The woman tried to murder me in my sleep!



As Earl removed his hand from his head something fell to the bed beside him. Lying beside Earl was his left ear.



The only sound in the room was a choked gasp and then Earl lay beside his ear, passed out from the sight of it.



Do you have ice?

Yes, it's in the freezer.



There's a cooler out in the truck. Fill it with ice and pack the ear inside. A plastic surgeon may be able to reattach it.

The officer left and returned immediately with the cooler.





Do we arrest this woman, Jack?

Jack looked at Virginia.



Her imagination and nerves had just gotten the better of her. She certainly wasn't a flight risk.



No, go outside and make sure the paramedics get here.



I'll get her statement.



I can't believe it, Jack. Earl is a Roogaroo! He's a werewolf!



That's a pretty bold statement, Virginia.



Maybe you'd better start at the beginning. What happened after I dropped you off?



Earl was already home. I found him sleeping on the bed upstairs so I covered him with a blanket. That's when I saw a piece of material in his hand.



She walked over to the nightstand and retrieved the cloth.



Look. The hole matches perfectly.



I know what you're thinking... that this doesn't prove anything. I wasn't convinced either...



...until I pulled back his hair and had a look at his head.



I gave him that nasty looking bump when he attacked me. As soon as I saw it I knew I had to try and cure him, you know, like the Old People say to do.



"I was going to cut him on the ear and draw blood from him."



"Just then he woke up, and then next thing I knew his ear was hanging from his head."



I'm not a Roogaroo!

Not anymore you're not!



Then where did you get this from Earl?



Mom...dad?

They heard their daughter's voice and both thought the same thing.



Isabella, don't come in here!



But it was too late. She saw her father's disfigured face and her mother's bloody hands.



She gave a cry of distress and threw her hands over her belly, where her baby kicked violently inside.

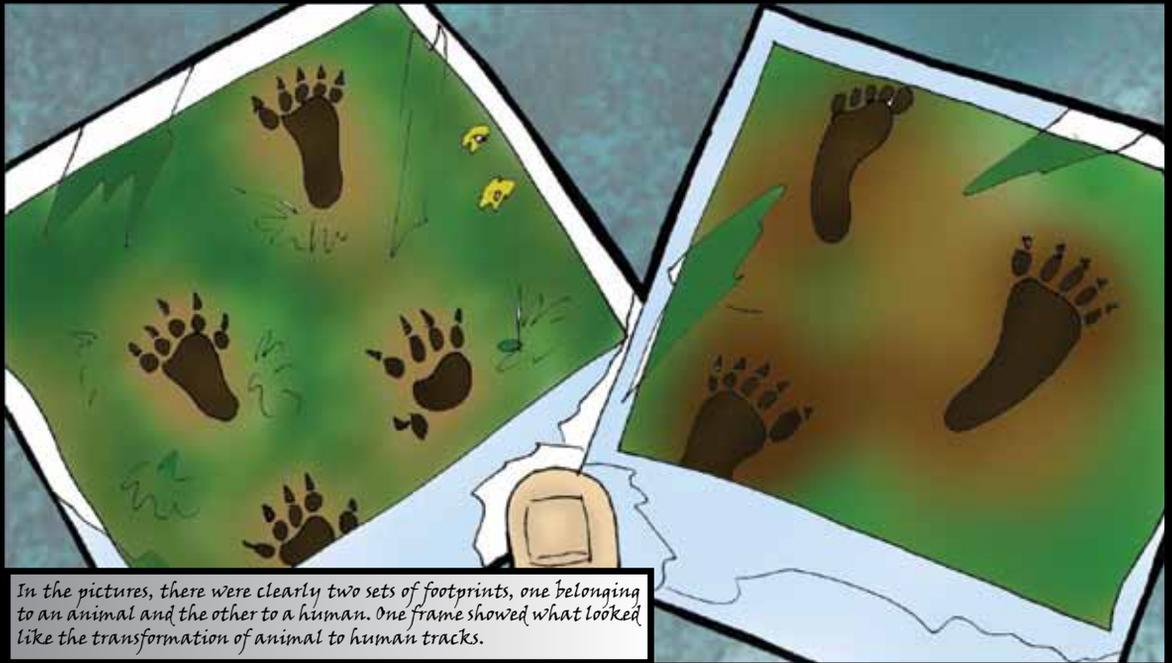
The paramedics arrived just then. One of the cops also rushed into the room.



Jack,
we found
something.



He handed Jack two photos.



In the pictures, there were clearly two sets of footprints, one belonging to an animal and the other to a human. One frame showed what looked like the transformation of animal to human tracks.



Earl was on a gurney, ready for transport, when Jack stopped the medics.



Taking a swab from Earl's feet...



...he measured his feet...



...and took pictures of them as well.



Then he let the medics continue with their job.



Clay casts were made of both sets of prints, but no charges were ever laid.



In the months that passed the community let the story die. Isabella and her husband Harold welcomed a son into their family and peace returned to the community for thirteen years.

Earl recovered and his ear was restored to its natural place. Virginia made sure her husband knew that she loved him and was not trying to kill him.



Jack, Marsha Fiddler brought in her dog.



She claims an animal came out of nowhere and attacked it. I just wanted you to have a look.



Jack took a look at the dog. It shivered and whimpered, traumatized from its experience.

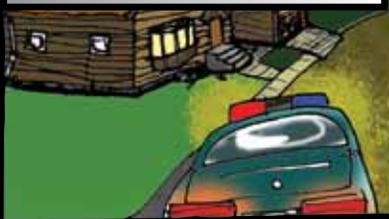


Okay, get a statement from Marsha and tell her we're looking into it.

Lately people had reported finding carcasses of small animals. It was obvious they had been attacked, but by what, no one was sure.



Jack had a hunch and he knew he had to get over to Isabella and Harold Morin's to check that hunch out.



Any hesitation Jack felt about approaching the Morins disappeared when he arrived at their door.

He squatted down and looked closely at what he saw.



He knocked on the door.

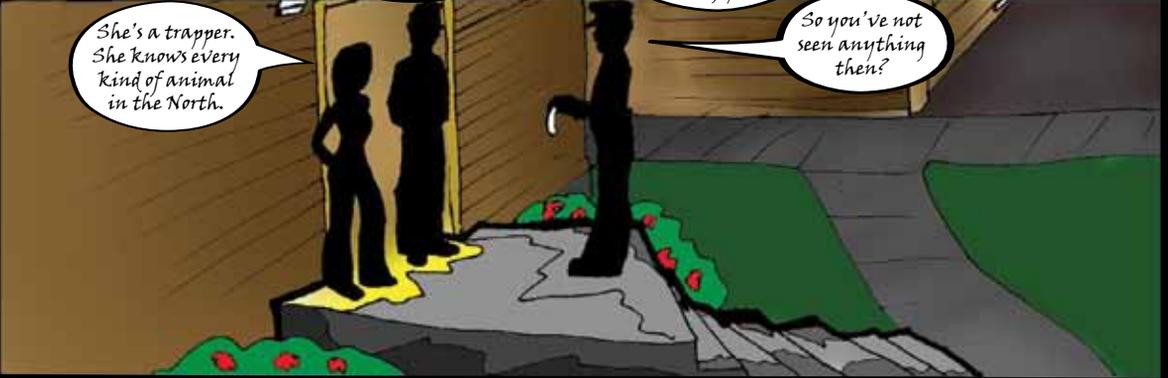


Is everything okay?

Harold answered, somewhat surprised to see Jack.



We're tying up loose ends with the Lavallée case.





After the incident with your parents, I did some research.









Then the sound changed. It came from the house and from the forest, from the heavens and from the ground. It was a low, throaty, rumbling growl that kept building.







I've been asking you for help but you refuse to see what I'm telling you, Harold. He's withdrawn, distant, he's stopped going to Church, and two of his so-called friends have been charged with petty crimes.



You just can't relate to our boy.



Drew's acting like any other boy.



If I told you some of the things I did when I was his age...



Harold, that's not it. I really think Drew needs our help and ignoring the problem won't make it go away!



Jack cleared his throat, reminding the couple that he was still there.



The reason I came here tonight was that I thought you might be targets for pranksters. Then I found this by your door step.



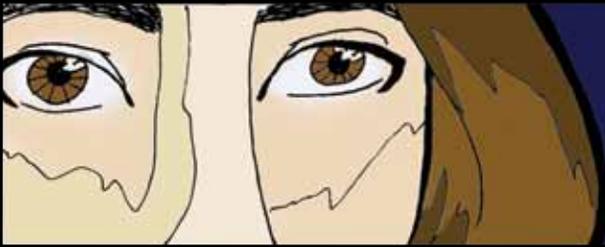
Jack stepped aside, revealing the dead carcass of a once healthy calf.



I don't know what to tell you about Drew, but what I can tell you is there are forces at work that may be influencing him.



We can't comprehend these things.



They're part of our Michif heritage. Isabella, your family can help him through this. They've lived it.



Harold whispered to his wife in Michif "Dimaen ka itistahan Drew chi kawakawayakoohk li vyeu."* He repeated what he said in English, in case Jack missed his meaning.



Tomorrow we will take Drew to the Old People.



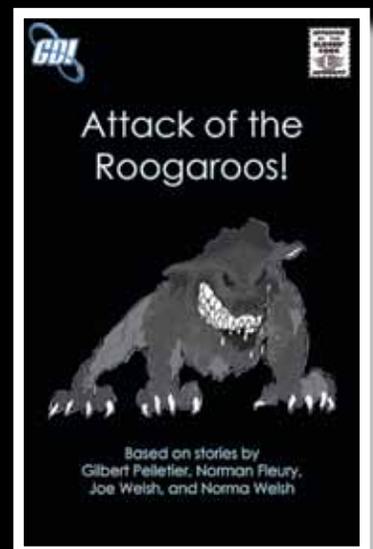
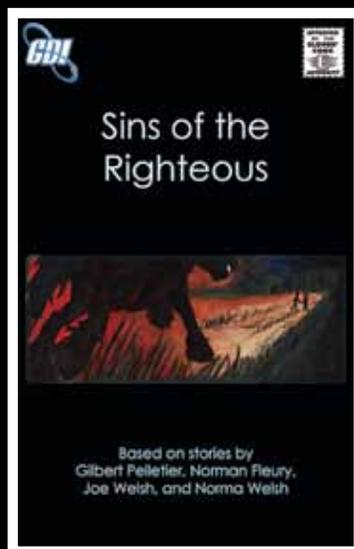
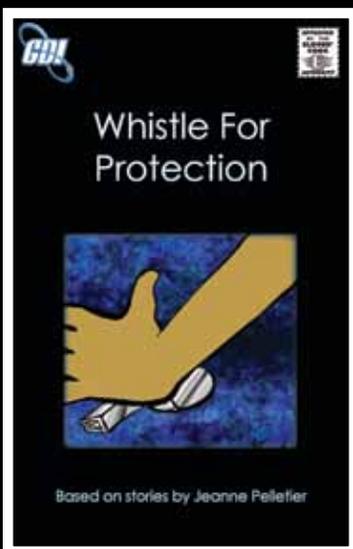
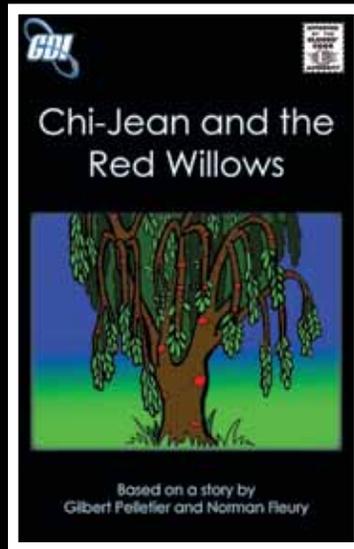
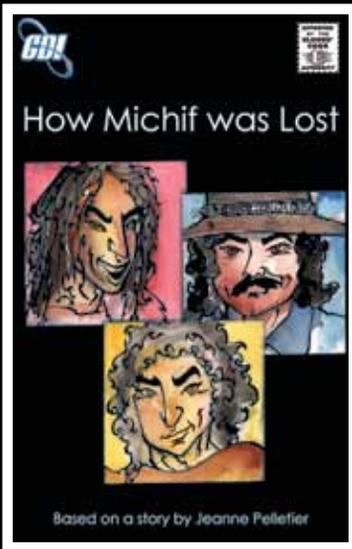
Jack took the calf carcass back to dispatch. He'd leave a report that the animals were killed by wild dogs or coyotes. He had a feeling there wouldn't be any more killings.



Jack knew this case would always stand out as the highlight of his career. By working with the Lavallées and Pelletiers during the past thirteen years, he learned more about himself and his culture than he ever could investigating animal mutilations.

* To learn Michif, visit www.metismuseum.ca/michif_tools.php

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LII ZISTWAYR DI LA NAASYOON
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