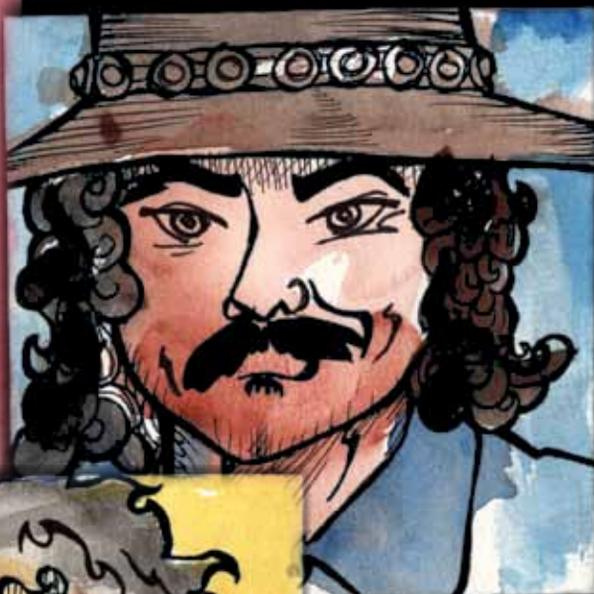




How Michif was Lost



Based on a story by Jeanne Pelletier

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Based on a story by Jeanne Pelletier
Illustrated by Carrie Saganace

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

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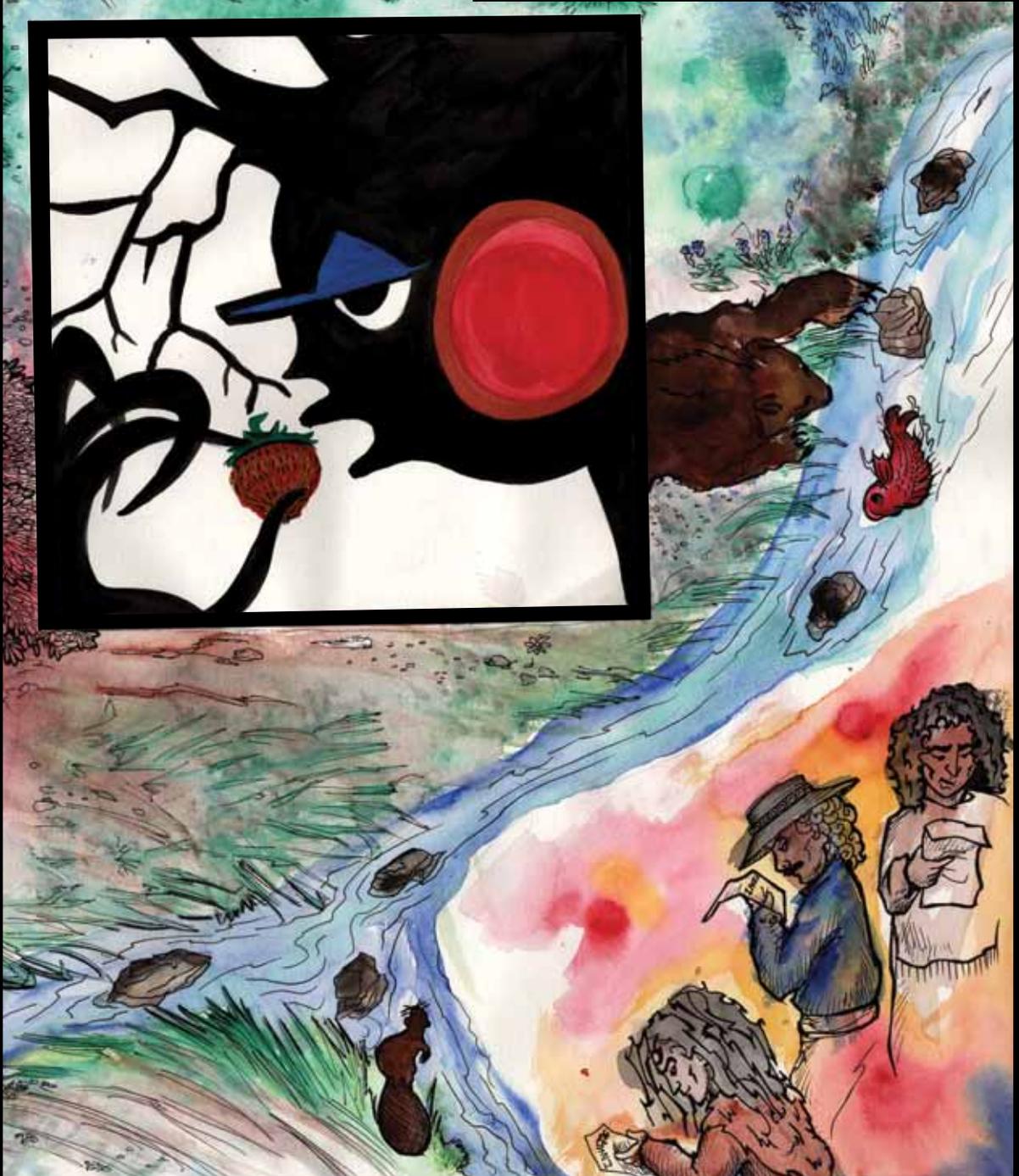
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One day the forest was alive with excitement. Mother Nature, or *lii lway di la tayr* or *Pimachiwin* as she was also known, was having a party. Before long all of the forest buzzed with news of three special guests who had been invited.



They were the cousins, *Chi-Jean*, *Nanabush*, and *Wiisakaychak*. All three were clever tricksters or *Chakapesh*, and all three had a way with Mother Nature.





Mother Nature enjoyed Chi-Jean's company because of his great dancing ability.



Mother Nature relished spending time with Wiisakaychak because he was a wonderful fiddle player.



Mother Nature loved Nanabush's company because of his wonderful singing voice.



The three cousins agreed to meet at a crossroad on the way to the forest Mother Nature called home. *Wiisakaychak* was the first to arrive since he always ran. He had only just arrived and already he was impatient.



I wonder where my little cousins are? They'll be coming, but to make sure they know I'm here, I'll whistle.

Shwi shwho.
Shwi shwho.

Nobody heard him so he tried again.

Still no one heard him. He waited a moment then whistled a third time.

Shwi shwho.

Shwi shwho.

This time he heard someone whistle back...

Shhh shhh tick shhh shhh tick.

...which told Wisakaychak that Chi-Jean was coming. Wisakaychak looked and saw Chi-Jean dancing his way toward him.



They greeted one another and waited for Nanabush to arrive.



After only a few minutes the two heard a sound: "shhh shhh shhh."

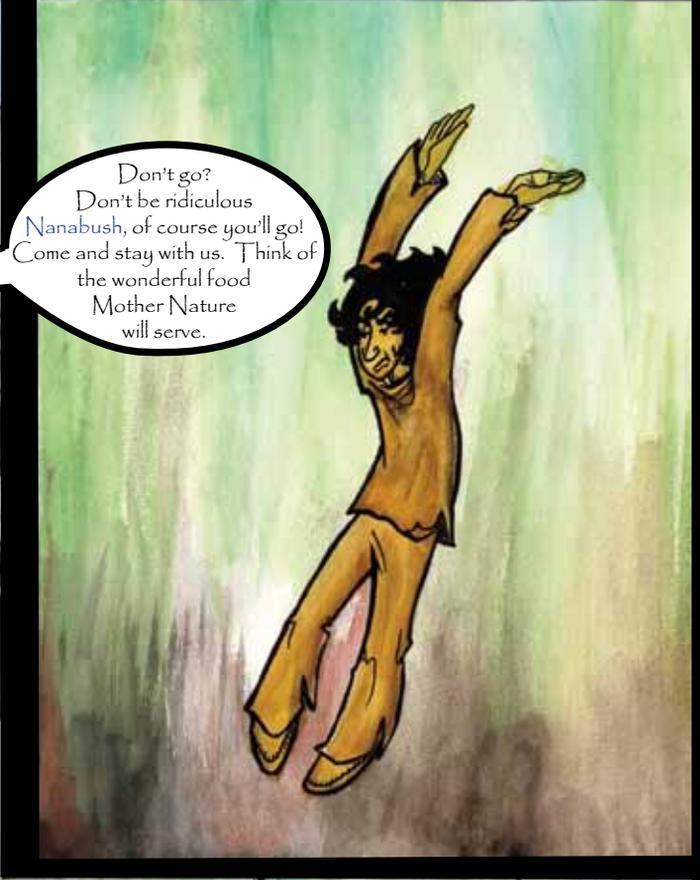
It was Nanabush flying to meet them, and he had something to tell them.



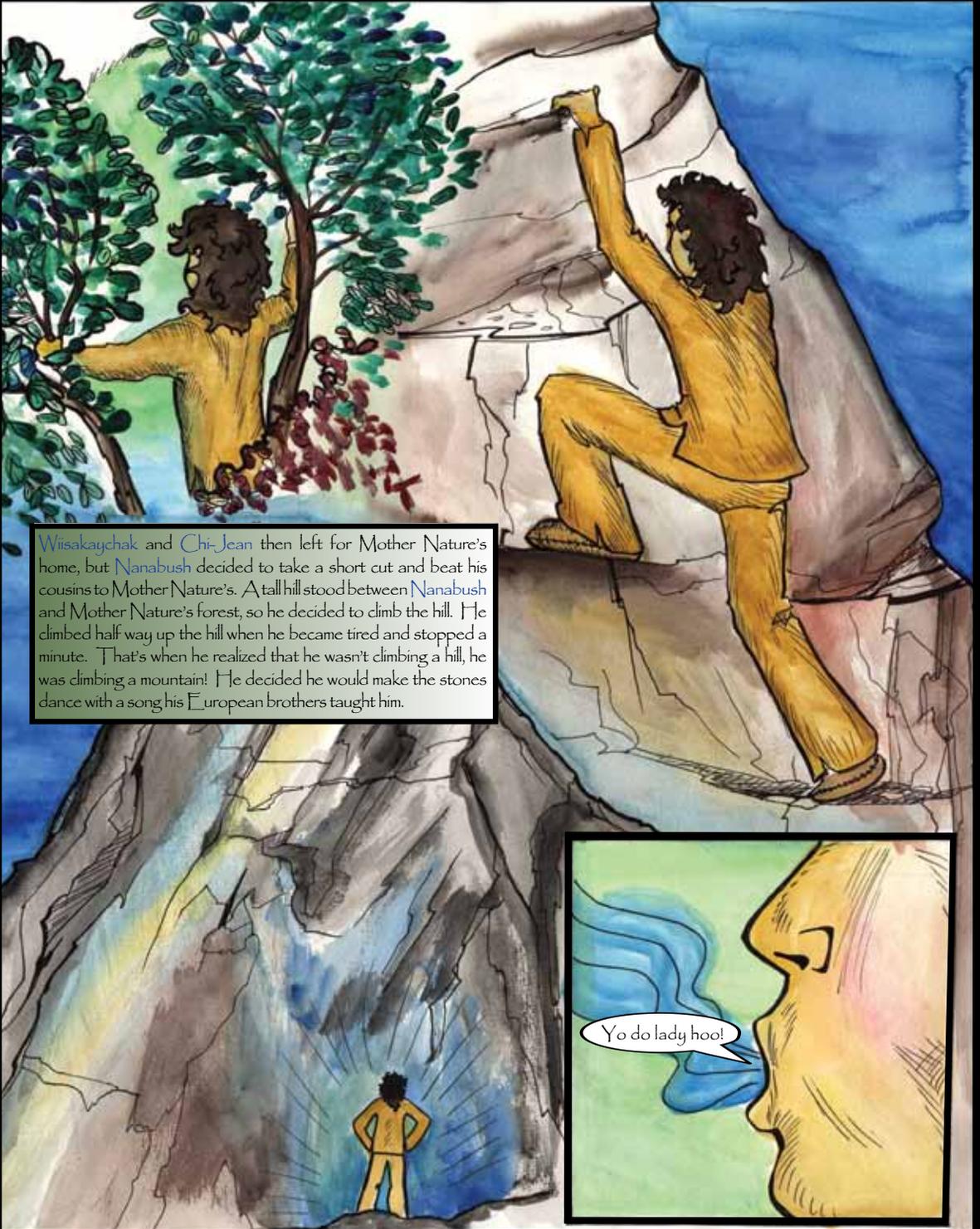
I'm not going to Mother Nature's party. She tells stories about us and I don't want to go there. Besides, she'll ask me to sing and I'm not in a singing kind of mood.



Don't go?
Don't be ridiculous
Nanabush, of course you'll go!
Come and stay with us. Think of
the wonderful food
Mother Nature
will serve.



This appealed to Nanabush's stomach. He agreed that Mother Nature was a good cook, and he liked eating. Boy did he like eating!



Wisakaychak and Chi-Jean then left for Mother Nature's home, but Nanabush decided to take a short cut and beat his cousins to Mother Nature's. A tall hill stood between Nanabush and Mother Nature's forest, so he decided to climb the hill. He climbed half way up the hill when he became tired and stopped a minute. That's when he realized that he wasn't climbing a hill, he was climbing a mountain! He decided he would make the stones dance with a song his European brothers taught him.

Yo do lady hoo!

Only a few pebbles fell, so Nanabush sang a little louder.

From behind he heard a big noise.



Yo do lady hoo.
Odalady, odalady,
odalady!



Turning around he saw a huge rock coming toward him. Then he saw many rocks coming toward him, all falling at once.



Nanabush quickly flew up into the air, using his arms like wings.

Wiisakaychak was sitting on the ground whistling to his cousin, unable to see that a huge rock was barrelling down the mountain towards him.



Nanabush whistled urgently...



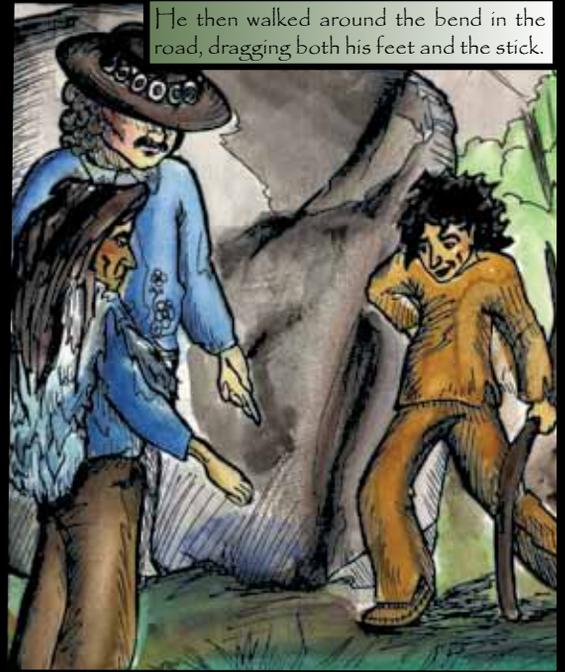
...and Wiisakaychak moved just in the nick of time.



Nanabush landed on the ground and grabbed a big stick.



He then walked around the bend in the road, dragging both his feet and the stick.



After all the excitement Nanabush was quite tired and needed to rest, so he came up with a plan.



Oh, I hurt my back.

A big stone fell on me. That's why I'm dragging my feet. I'm so sore. I'm just so sore.



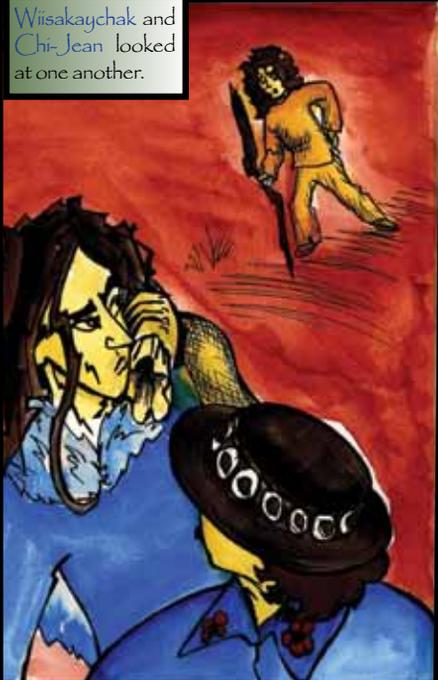
How am I going to walk?



Okay, you can jump into my bag.

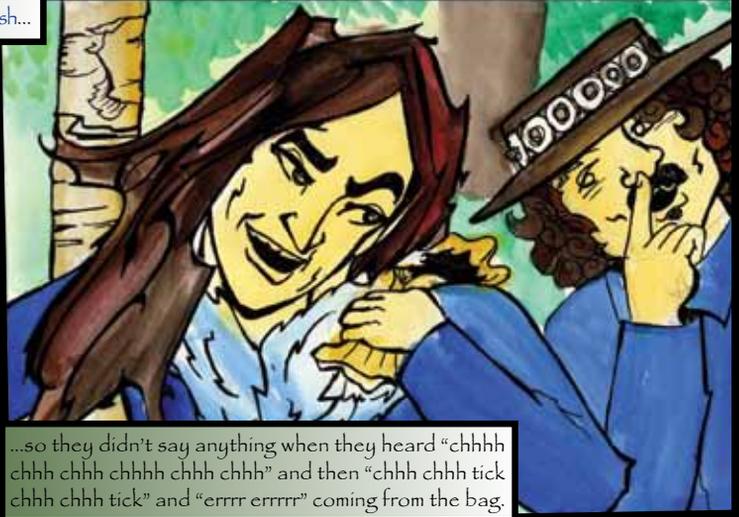


Wisakaychak and Chi-Jean looked at one another.



In an instant Nanabush transformed himself into a tiny little person, jumped into Wisakaychak's bag and enjoyed his ride to Mother Nature's house.

Chi-Jean and Wiisakaychak felt sorry for Nanabush...



...so they didn't say anything when they heard "chhhh chhh chhh chhhh chhh chhh" and then "chhh chhh tick chhh chhh tick" and "errrrrrrrrr" coming from the bag.



Even when Chi-Jean and Wiisakaychak neared Mother Nature's house, they didn't wake him and tease him about falling asleep and snoring.

When they arrived at Mother Nature's house she invited them into her home and welcomed them. Her conversation was pleasant and soft as she spoke in Michif.



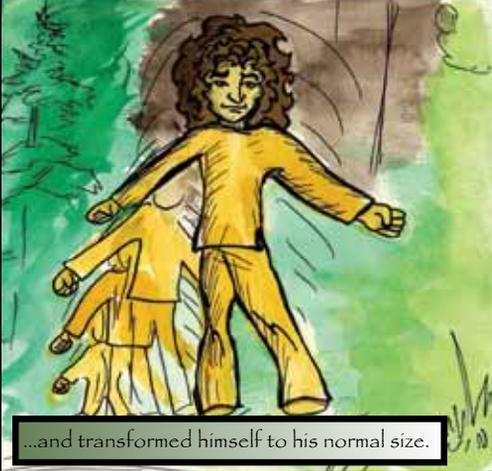
Oh mes koozin,
mes koozin, mes koozin.
Did you bring your fiddle
Wiisakaychak?

Yes I
did!

Did you bring
your dancing shoes
Chi-Jean?

Oh yes, and I even
have new jigging steps
I'll dance!

Just then Nanabush crawled
out of Wiisakaychak's bag...



...and transformed himself to his normal size.



Well sleeping beauty, welcome at last!

I'll sing!



And what will you be doing this evening?



Okay, maybe you should rest awhile before you come and eat.

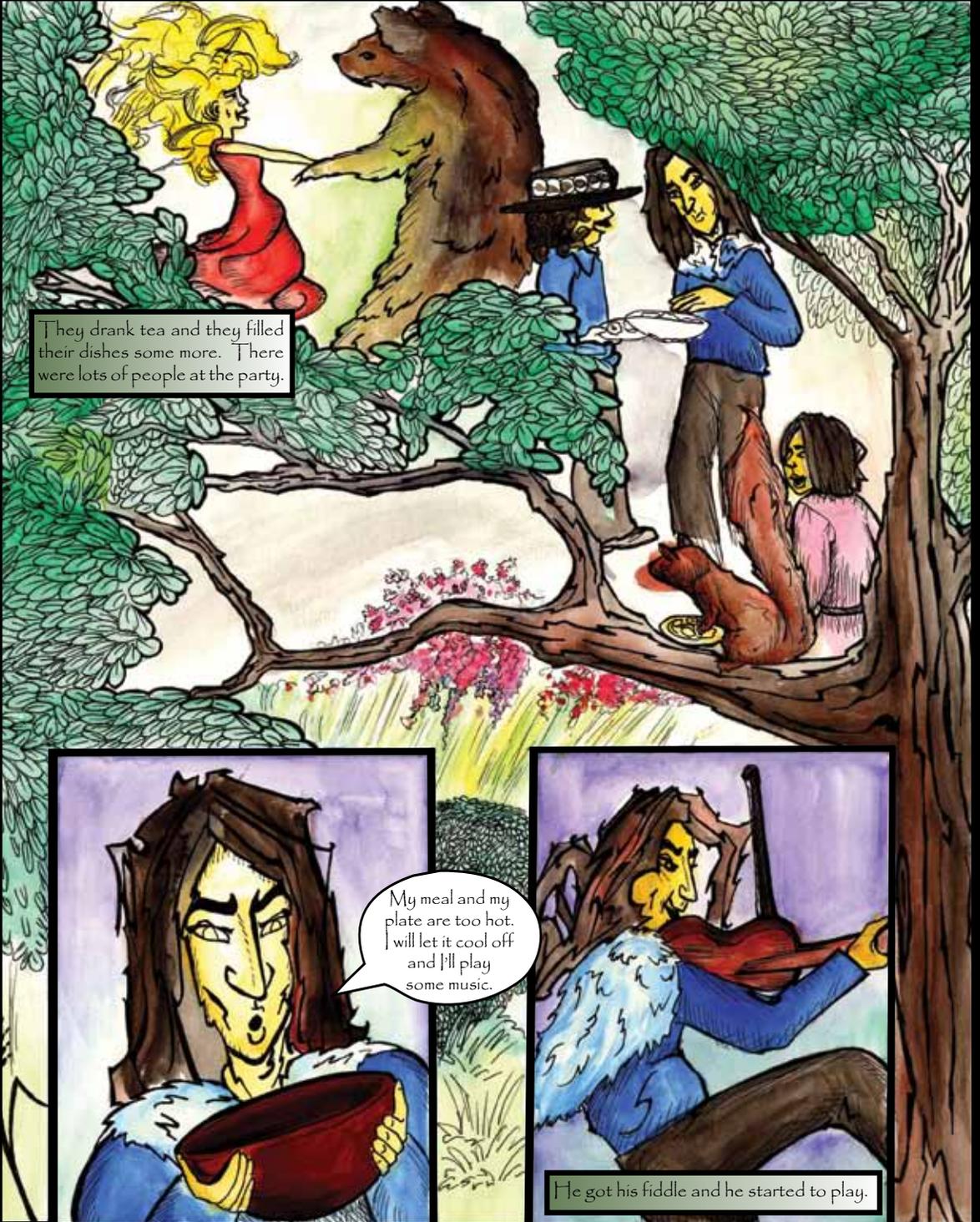
Nanabush felt insulted again. Mother Nature knew he loved to eat.



I've been cooking in anticipation of your arrival. I cooked lii boolet*, lii patate, lii gaalet, and apray, lii bayng and fried chokecherries. They are all ready.

Mother Nature and each of her guests got a plate and had their meal together.

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



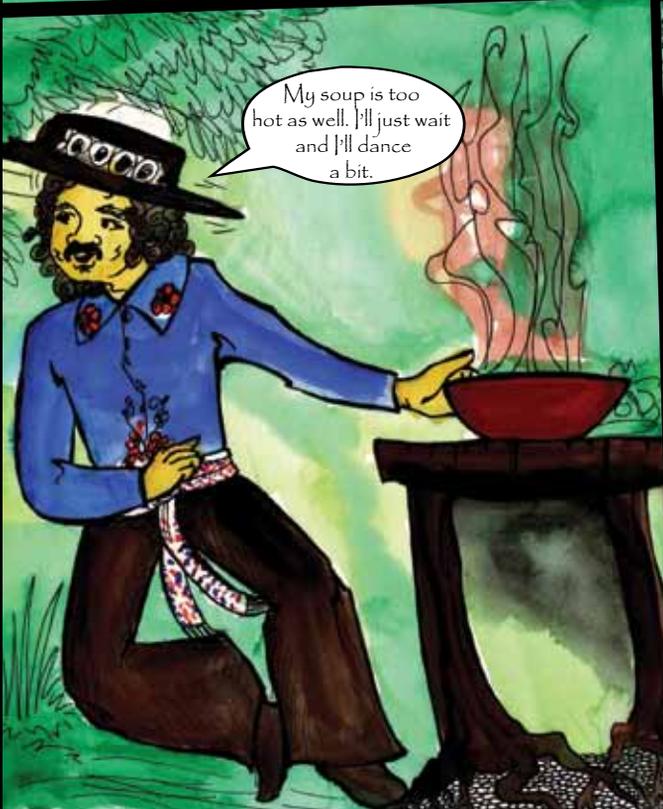
They drank tea and they filled their dishes some more. There were lots of people at the party.

My meal and my plate are too hot. I will let it cool off and I'll play some music.

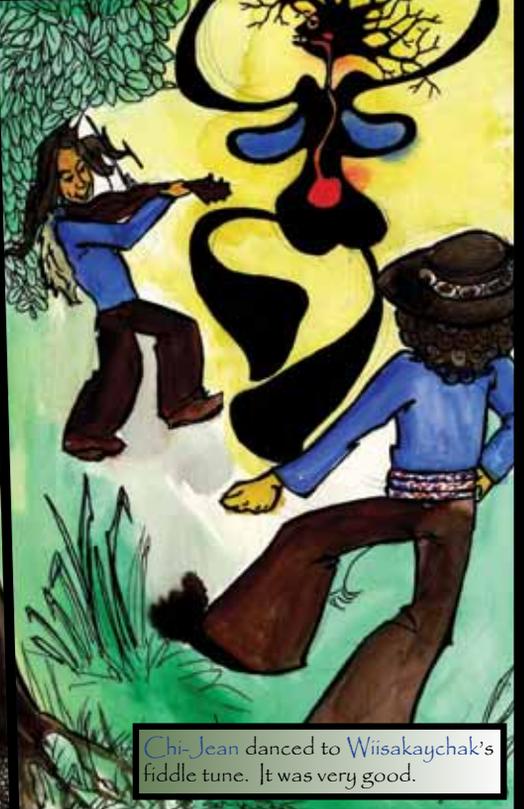
He got his fiddle and he started to play.



It was really good fiddle music. Chi-Jean heard the music and he couldn't stop his feet from moving.



My soup is too hot as well. I'll just wait and I'll dance a bit.



Chi-Jean danced to Wiisakaychak's fiddle tune. It was very good.

Nanabush came to the table where Wiisakaychak's and Chi-Jean's food cooled. He took a bit of Wiisakaychak's soup and pushed it away.

Then he tried Chi-Jean's soup.



Oh, it's too salty!



Oh! Too much pepper!



So he dumped out the soup but he took both plates and ate the food. The only thing he didn't touch was the fried chokecherries. Then Nanabush went and got his own plate of food, but still he didn't try the chokecherries. He ate and ate some more. Finally, he had a full stomach and felt satisfied and happy.



Nanabush joined his cousins and sang. Wiisakaychak played fiddle and Chi-Jean danced for a long time.



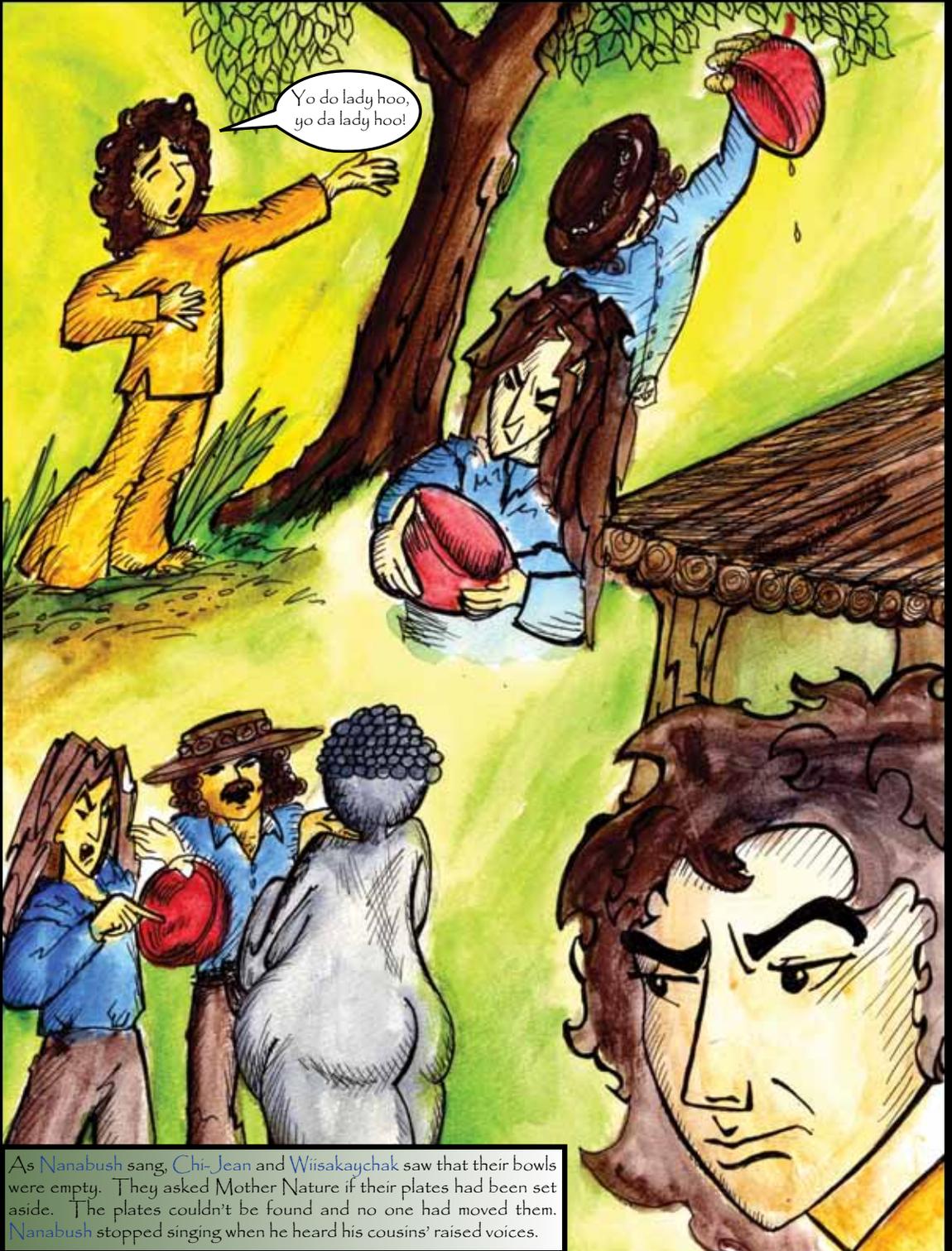
Soon they were going so hard and so fast that Wiisakaychak broke the neck of his fiddle, and all the hair had gone off of his bow.



When the music stopped Chi-Jean stopped dancing. When he looked at his feet, there was smoke rising off of them – he had been dancing so hard and so fast.



Now *Wiisakaychak* and *Chi-Jean* decided to eat, which gave *Chi-Jean* a chance to rest his feet and *Wiisakaychak* time to fix his fiddle. *Nanabush* kept singing different songs and then he remembered the song he'd sung on the mountain earlier that day. He was a really good singer and an even better yodeller.



As Nanabush sang, Chi-Jean and Wiisakaychak saw that their bowls were empty. They asked Mother Nature if their plates had been set aside. The plates couldn't be found and no one had moved them. Nanabush stopped singing when he heard his cousins' raised voices.

"What happened to our food?" *Wiisakaychak* asked Mother Nature as *Nanabush* approached. All eyes turned to *Nanabush*.



You ate it,
you ate our
food!

No I didn't!
Wiisakaychak, you were
playing your fiddle so hard you
didn't know what you were doing.
You were eating at the same time
you were playing. And you *Chi-Jean*
were jigging so hard you didn't
notice you were eating.
I didn't eat your food.

Mother Nature knew what *Nanabush* had done
with his cousins' food but she didn't say anything.

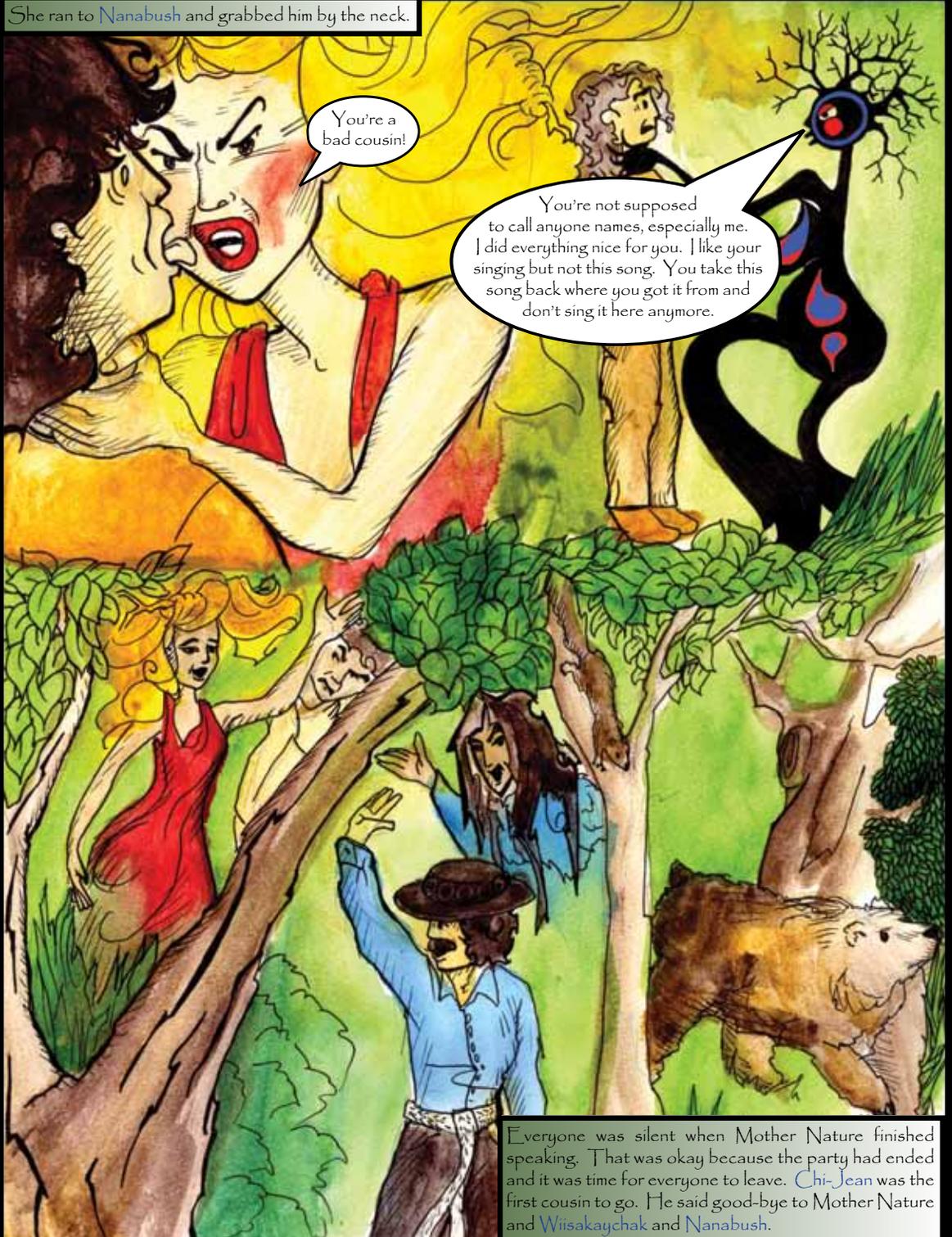
Nanabush knew his cousins were angry at him so he began to sing.



Odalady odalady odalady hoo!

Mother Nature looked at Nanabush and began to get very angry. She thought he was calling her an old lady.

She ran to Nanabush and grabbed him by the neck.



You're a bad cousin!

You're not supposed to call anyone names, especially me. I did everything nice for you. I like your singing but not this song. You take this song back where you got it from and don't sing it here anymore.

Everyone was silent when Mother Nature finished speaking. That was okay because the party had ended and it was time for everyone to leave. Chi-Jean was the first cousin to go. He said good-bye to Mother Nature and Wiisakaychak and Nanabush.



When **Wisakaychak** left he said good-bye to Mother Nature and to **Nanabush**.

Nanabush was the last to leave. He hugged Mother Nature so hard she began to choke and gasp for air.



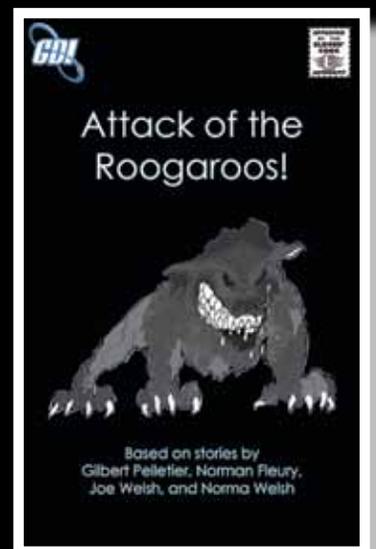
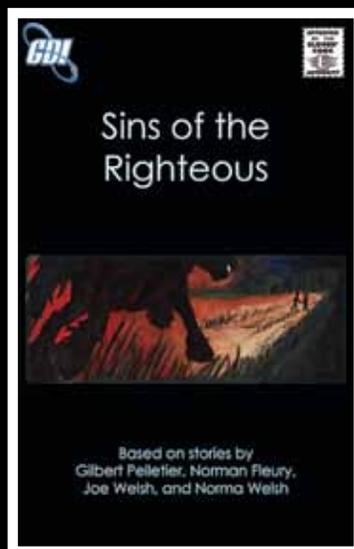
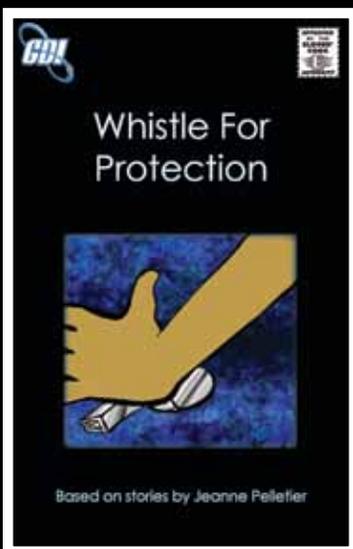
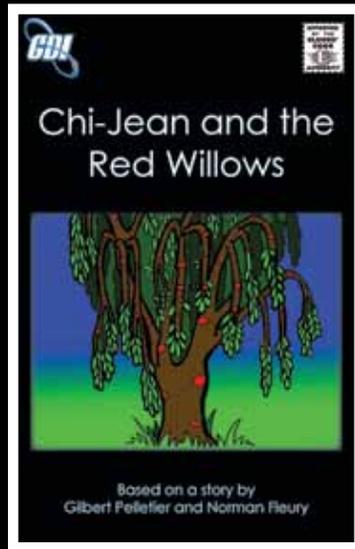
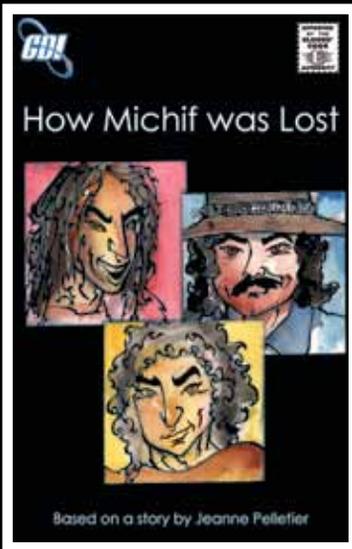
That's for saying that I ate my cousins' food. I heard the words you spoke in Michif to them. You told them I ate all their food. You told a lie.

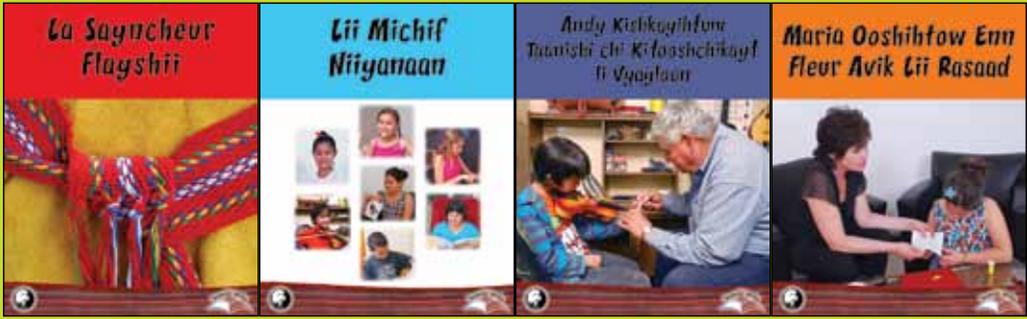


You'll never talk your language, but someday you'll remember it.

Nanabush let go of Mother Nature's throat. Tears glistened in her eyes, and they never spoke another word to one another. To this day, Mother Nature has never spoken Michif.

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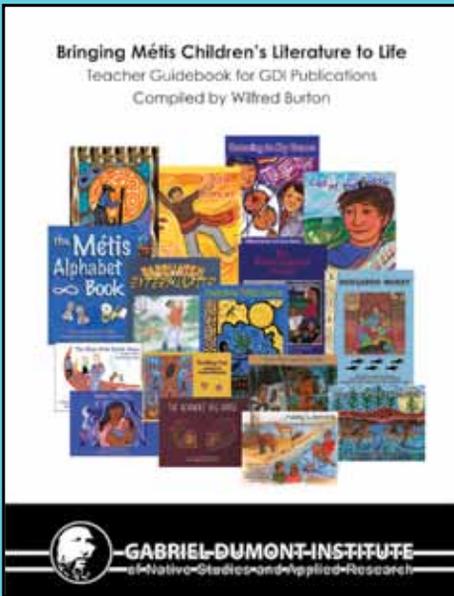
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