

# Bringing Métis Children's Literature to Life—Road Allowance Kitten

Author: Wilfred Burton

Illustrator: Christina Johns

Translator: Norman Fleury

**Overview of Story:** They say, "Home is where the heart is." For Rosie and Madeline, home also included their pet kitten. Imagine being told you have to leave your home ... without your pet. Based on a true story, *Road Allowance Kitten* gives readers a glimpse into the history of the Road Allowance Métis and their forced removal from their humble, but beloved, homes on the road allowance. Award-winning children's author Wilfred Burton skillfully shares this story through the eyes of the children involved. The vibrant illustrations by Christina Johns are the perfect accompaniment to this authentic vignette of a little-known part of Prairie history.

## Themes in this book:

- Métis (families, displacement, post 1885, jobs, Métis in the 1940s & 50s)
- Road Allowance history
- Prairie Life
- Friendship
- Pets
- Seasons
- Games: Canny Can
- Power dynamics
- Moving
- Transportation (horse/wagon, railway, cars)
- Broken promises
- Problem solving

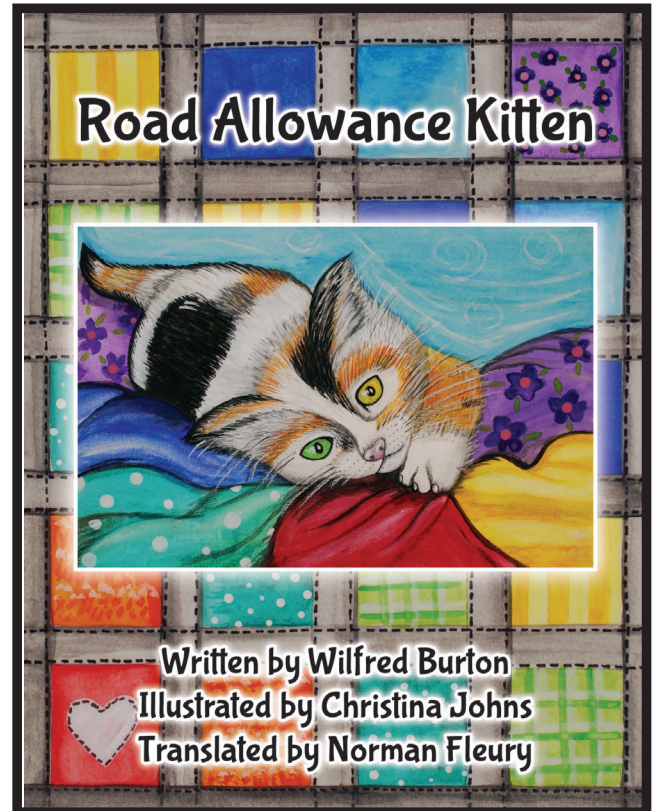
## Possible Curriculum connections:

### Language Arts

- Comprehend and respond
- Compose and create
- Metaphor; "Home is where the heart is"

### Science

- Prairie flora and fauna through the seasons
- Seasonal signs and transitions



## Social Studies

- How Métis people have shaped Saskatchewan
- Impact of land on lifestyles and settlement patterns
- Challenges presented by the natural environment
- Relationship with the land, environments, events and ideas as they have affected the past, shape the present, and influence the future
- Power and authority
- Maps, map reading
- Cultural differences

## Arts Education

- Understand the connection between the arts and the human experience within the cultural heritage of the Métis
- Quilting
- Respond to work of Métis artist whose artistic expression reflects the issues, history, culture, and lifestyle of the Métis
- Jigging and fiddle music
- Illustration: What an artist has to think about. Which images would be more difficult to produce?

## Math

- Special awareness, distances, measuring, volume (on maps, for quilting, packing)

### **Before Reading:**

List vocabulary used in the story to describe the setting and the characters from the first part of the story. (treeless, cozy, cheeky, calico, fluttering, golden, delicious, wild, hot, beautiful, fresh). What could the story be about? How do those words make you feel? What is the mood in this first part of the story? Justify why you think that.

List vocabulary from the second part of the story and ask the questions: Do you want to change your prediction about what the book is about? What is the mood in the second part of the story? Why do you think that? (tearful, choking, commotion, starve, ruckus, arched, hissed, shouted, fugitive, gasped, blackness, sobbing)

Listen to the story and think about when this mood changes and why.

### **During Reading:**

The reader of the text stops from time to time to add additional mood or feeling words to the existing list of words. Throughout the text stop and ask for new words and how characters in the story must be feeling. Record responses.

### **After Reading:**

1. Explain MOOD: The MOOD of the story is the feeling you have when listening to or reading a text (refer to definition already displayed). Think about how you feel when you see a friend or how you feel when you read a frightening book. That is the MOOD - how you feel about something. When we read, we react and have feelings about the characters or setting based on the vocabulary and illustrations.
2. Write all mood words on index cards from the Before Reading section. Group mood words together. Have students explain why each group is together.



3. Take your words and list additional words on the back of the card that are synonyms to each word. EG: Commotion = noisy, ruckus, uproar, brouhaha, etc.) Find two sentences with the original words in the story and rewrite that sentence with your new synonyms. Does it sound better? Why is choosing the perfect word important?
4. Discuss the mood change in the story and the reason the author had in creating that mood change. How did the story make you feel at the beginning and how did it make you feel at the end? How does this part of history make you feel? Did you know about it before? Why do you think that you didn't know this part of Saskatchewan history? Why is it important for everyone to know this story?
5. Illustrate a scene mentioned but not found in the book or one that could have been part of this story (siblings, other pets, seasonal reference).

