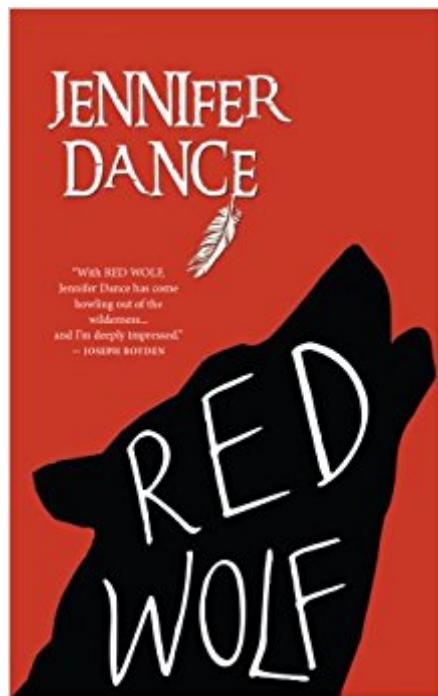


The book was found

Red Wolf



Synopsis

Life is changing for Canada's Anishnaabe Nation and for the wolf packs that share their territory. In the late 1800s, both Native people and wolves are being forced from the land. Starving and lonely, an orphaned timber wolf is befriended by a boy named Red Wolf. But under the Indian Act, Red Wolf is forced to attend a residential school far from the life he knows, and the wolf is alone once more. Courage, love and fate reunite the pair, and they embark on a perilous journey home. But with winter closing in, will Red Wolf and Crooked Ear survive? And if they do, what will they find?

Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars 7 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #2,399,158 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #83 in Books > Teens > Historical Fiction > Canada #206 in Books > Children's Books > Education & Reference > History > Canada #321 in Books > Children's Books > Geography & Cultures > Explore the World > Canada

Age Range: 12 - 15 years

Grade Level: 7 - 10

Customer Reviews

Gr 4-6 • Red Wolf is a Native child living with his family when a representative of the Canadian government comes to move his family to the reservation and the children to a residential school. As Red Wolf adjusts to the people who want to "civilize" him, so must Crooked Ear, the young wolf he has befriended. The settlers have placed a new bounty on wolves, orphaning the young cub and forcing his pack to move. While the story begins with fast-paced changes for Red Wolf and Crooked Ear, things get off balance, and the book ends with both of them as adults, having skipped large chunks of the story. The transformation of Red Wolf to "George" and his eventual reclaiming of his roots is relatively well developed, but none of the secondary characters

show much growth. Much of their story is told rather than shown, leading to an incomplete and emotionally ineffective experience. The author does an excellent job of incorporating historical facts (including separate endnotes on the Native people and the wolves), illustrating the devastating consequences of settling the frontier in Canada and the forced assimilation of Native children. However, she tries to cover too much context, and the narratives and characters are stretched too thin. Recommended as additional reading on the Native experience. •Elizabeth Nicolai, Anchorage Public Library, AK

This book should be placed in every classroom in Canada. It is informative of our cultural way of life, and respectful of all creation. There are things that non-natives do not understand about our culture. This book will help with the understanding. (Chief Arnold General, Confederacy Chief from the Onondaga tribe, Six Nations) While the topic is a difficult one, [Red Wolf] covers the realities faced by First Nations in the late 1800s in a realistic and broad-minded manner. (Anishinabek News) Although Red Wolf is marketed as juvenile fiction, it is a book that will appeal to all ages. Poignantly written from the perspective of both boy and wolf, it brilliantly encapsulates the fear, alienation and hopelessness felt by a child who is powerless against a system which seeks to annihilate his heritage, spiritual beliefs and family ties. (Stouffville Free Press) Dance imbues the novel with lyrical prose and lilting rhythms, and the essence of what we've come to recognize in First Nation storytelling. (Canadian Children's Book News) This book could make a big impact on the way that non-aboriginals look at First Nations people.... I strongly believe it also has a place in healing the legacy of the residential schools within First Nations communities where lack of self identity and self respect still endure. (Judith Ennamorato, author of Sing the Brave Song) Dance puts a human face to the history books by portraying the terror and confusion of a young boy ripped away from his family and forced to conform to the rules of a cruel and bigoted world he doesn't understand. What is especially impressive is how Dance manages to capture the internalized self-hatred forced upon the students of the residential schools. (Bookshelf Reviews) Jennifer Dance's Red Wolf is a heartrending, relentlessly compelling novel about the impact of the Indian Act of 1876 and the residential schools system upon indigenous cultures. (Canadian Materials) Children and young adults alike will want to read Jennifer Dance's novel on the intertwined stories of a wolf and a First Nation boy. It is exactly the sort of story I loved when I was a boy. (James Bartleman, Former Lieutenant Governor of Ontario) Red Wolf depicts an unquestionably shameful part of our history about which today's children should be informed. The novel serves that purpose while reinforcing our feelings of outrage and disgust. (Quill

& Quire) The Dickensian world of any nineteenth-century boarding school, particularly a Canadian Indian residential school with the agonizing clash of indigenous and British cultures, is excellent fodder for Dance’s powers of portrayal, and she gives a memorable picture of those who worked in these institutions. (Resource Links) Dance’s first novel addresses a horrific historical period and details Red Wolf’s harsh awakening in painful, hard-hitting scenes . . . readers will finish with a strong sense of the abuses suffered by natives at the hands of settlers. (Publishers Weekly) Told with great empathy and careful research, Jennifer Dance has done a good job of making us feel alienated, lost, and in between worlds . . . an important book for young readers about the sad history of Canada’s residential school system. (Philippa Dowding, author of *The Strange Gift of Gwendolyn Golden*)

On the surface, *Red Wolf* by Jennifer Dance is a compelling story about an Indian boy and a wolf. On a deeper level, it’s also an unflinching portrayal of the harsh reality of Indian Residential Schools in Canada in the 1800s. Despite some flaws in plot and style, I enjoyed both aspects of *Red Wolf*. Although Dance herself is not Status Indian, her daughter is married to one. This gave Dance the initial encouragement to write a story that had been on her heart for over thirty years. As part of writing *Red Wolf*, Dance worked with individuals within the First Nations to ensure the Anishinaabe language, beliefs, and customs were accurately portrayed. Moreover, she read research and personal stories about residential schools, as well as read accounts scrutinizing the relationship between Indian people and the church and the repercussions endured by former students of residential schools. Finally, from other Aboriginal literature that I’ve read for young people, Dance’s account of *Red Wolf*’s devastating experiences with residential schools rings true. There is every reason to view *Red Wolf* as authentic historical fiction. Dance is also not a stranger to prejudice. While being part of a bi-racial marriage, she and her husband found themselves effected in the areas of housing and careers, and Dance even lost her husband to a racist attack. Her experiences propelled her to want to help right the wrongs of the past. It’s this passion perhaps that results in a sometimes one-sided and preachy tale. For the most part, all the white people are selfish and cruel. The priest acts out of a false belief that civilizing Natives is needed to make them Christian, the teachers admit to being there for the pay only, and an Indian agent accepted his job simply to escape England. All of them use rulers, straps, or even more violent means to achieve their goals. In contrast, Natives are portrayed as being perfect in their care of family, the land, and animals. Some of the Aboriginal literature which I have read has been more focused. Dance tries to

squeeze in an account of Red Wolf from the time he is five to an adult into a mere two hundred pages. At the same time, I appreciate that Dance provides the unique parallel of systematic destruction of wolves. Just like the Aboriginal people, the wolves were viewed as dangerous and savage. Consequently, they were shot, snared, trapped, and poisoned. Not until 2003 were wolves awarded protection. The relationship between Red Wolf and Crooked Ear, the latter being a young pup when the two first meet, is endearing and beautiful. It is also integral to the plot. Each year, when Red Wolf leaves for residential school, Crooked Ear follows Red Wolf to the forest just opposite it. He also meets up with him every summer when Red Wolf returns home. Like Red Wolf, Crooked Ear is separated from family and finds his place with strangers but struggles to remember home. Finally, both have occasion to save each other. Lives. Some reviewers have voiced the same complaints about Red Wolf as me, as well as criticizing its simplistic style. The latter I actually think will endear reluctant readers to this adventurous tale. No matter what, a significant deciding factor for me in whether to recommend a book is how much I feel moved. And Red Wolf impassioned me. There were much better ways that white man could have negotiated with Indians, taught the English language, and shared the Christian faith. How tragic that we choose to act so savage. Red Wolf also brought to my mind the controversy that exists today regards immigrants and how much they should assimilate. If we ignore the travesty wrought to our indigenous people by residential schools, we might find ourselves repeating it in the future with other ethnicities. Let us instead learn from Red Wolf, so that we can have a more honorable future.

Set in the 1880s in the province of Ontario, the novel explores the impact of the Indian Act of 1876 on the indigenous peoples of Canada. It opens as a wolf cub, left on his own when his parents are killed by 'uprights', is driven into an Anishnaabe camp by hunger. Happily, it is the camp of the Wolf Clan and the cub becomes the companion of a young boy, five-year-old Mishqua Ma'een'gun or Red Wolf. The 1880s in Ontario Canada is a time of expansion. As loggers move into the northern parts of the province, the Anishnaabe (the People) are left with the choice of moving further north away from the whites or stay and fight. A government agent offers them a third choice: move to the Reserve where they will, according to him, receive free housing and money for food. What he does not tell them is that, once they move to the Reserve, the government has complete control of their lives including the need for approval to leave the reserve for any reason. It also means that the children can be removed and put into Residential schools in an effort to 'kill the Indian to save the man'. Taken away from their parents often over long distances, the native pupils are denied their names, their language, their spiritual life, and their cultures and are told that they are 'dirty savages'

who must learn to assimilate into the 'superior' white culture. The cub Crooked Ear's story parallels Red Wolf's. When Red Wolf is forced to go to the school, he must find a new pack to join. But food and habitat are both becoming scarce and wolves are hunted relentlessly for their pelts and because they are seen as pests. But even when Crooked Ear finds a new pack, he misses the boy - they may be seen only as pests and savages to others but they were equals within their own pack of two. Eventually, when Red Wolf (or George as he has been renamed) leaves the school, he discovers quickly that, having lost his own culture, he will not be accepted into white society. To the white population, he will always be a 'dirty savage'. There are a couple of exceptions to this, whites who don't share this bigotry, but they are few and can do little to help. Red Wolf ends up back on the reserve, all hope and ambition driven out of him as it has been from the rest of his clan, spending his days doing nothing and his nights drinking. But there are rumours of another way, of his grandmother who has chosen to move away from the cruel reality the bands have been left with, to maintain the old ways. In the end, Red Wolf must decide which path he will follow. With one of Crooked Ear's offspring, he heads out to find his grandmother and learn if the rumours are true. The YA novel, Red Wolf, by author Jennifer Dance gives a very realistic, very powerful and very disturbing portrait of life for First Nations both on Reserves and especially at the Residential Schools. Because of this, I would suggest it might not be suitable for children under twelve. However, for anyone else, I can't recommend it highly enough.

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