

Indigenous Stories – Adelyn Newman-Ting

Welcome to Indigenous Stories. We are so pleased to have 11 year-old Kwakwaka'wakw/Coast Salish/Chinese author Adelyn Newman-Ting read from her new book 'Finding the Language', which won the 2021 UNESCO Voices of Future Generations Indigenous Child Author competition.

Finding the language, by me, Adelyn Newman-Ting.

Chapter 1 - 'Namba

This is the story of two friends, Kesugilakw and Bob, who came together with their animal friends to help save the environment and Indigenous languages at the same time. Kesugilakw, who goes by the nickname Kesu, has long brown hair the colour of the forest floor, dark brown eyes like the colour of an oak leaf in fall, and skin the color of honey. Bob has reddish-orange hair, like the last colour a maple leaf turns before it falls from a tree, blue eyes like the colour of the sky at daytime, and freckles. They have been good friends for a long time, and both care deeply about animals and the environment.

One day, Kesu and Bob, who were having a sleepover, woke up in Kesu's very old, wooden house that had been painted with Kwakwaka'wakw native designs by Kesu's great-great-grandfather. Her father had always wanted to go over the old faded paint with new paint, but he'd never found the time.

Kesu lived with her parents and grandparents in a large house in a medium-sized town that was filled with a bunch of big totem poles. The town was surrounded by the forest and ocean, quite far away from the closest big city.

The children headed downstairs for breakfast. They had been up late playing and having a party where no adults were allowed. When they got to the kitchen, they asked Kesu's parents if they could go and play in the forest after they ate. Kesu's mom said that they could, so they gobbled up their breakfasts like bears waking from hibernation. Then they got their coats and shoes on and ran out the door and into the forest.

They tromped through the forest as loud as a pack of wolves. Eventually, they came across something mysterious that they had never seen before. It looked as if someone or something had created a secret place out of branches and trees. Curious, they parted the branches and went inside.

Chapter 2 - Ma'łba

Once inside the secret location, Kesu and Bob stood there for a few minutes, amazed by what they saw in front of them. They were standing in a giant ring. The ground was a mossy mixture of greens with a sprinkle of light brown color. The trees that made the walls of the ring were very

tall, with bark like melted dark chocolate. The leaves, needles and boughs up above looked like emeralds and shimmered in the sunlight. In one area, there were five little stumps covered in leaves, like stools with leafy cushions. They were arranged around a bigger stump that was like a table made by nature. The children decided to sit down and think for a few minutes.

Just as they sat down, two animals appeared through the leafy circle of trees. The animals came and joined them at the table.

“Hi,” said u’ligan, a wolf cub.

“Who are you?” asked gwa’wina, a young raven.

The children were speechless. Could they actually understand what these animals were saying?

“Oh my!” exclaimed Bob, bewildered as to what was happening.

“We are children from the village not too far away,” said Kesugilakw, who was less surprised because she had always heard stories from her grandparents of animals that could talk. Still, when she had run into the forest a few minutes ago, this was not what she had expected to be doing.