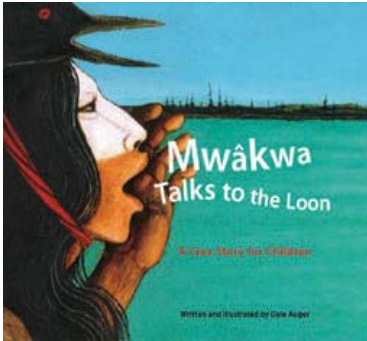


# The Heritage Group

Heritage House Publishing TouchWood Editions Rocky Mountain Books



**Mwakwa – Talks to the Loon: A Cree Story for Children**  
By Dale Auger. Heritage House Publishing. ISBN 1894974042.  
32pp. HC. C\$24.95.

Mwakwa – Talks to the Loon, is the universal and timeless story of Kayas, a young Cree man who is blessed with the ability to hunt well and provide for his People. Over time, however, Kayas takes his great gift for granted and, as a result, the gift becomes lost to him and both he and his People grow hungry.

With the help of The Elders and The Beings that inhabit the water, young Kayas is taught to be respectful of his abilities and to realize that in order to live a life of success, fulfilment and peace, one must always remember to respect and cherish the gifts, talents and skills that we are given throughout our lives.

Illustrated throughout with the powerfully unique, insightful and sensitive paintings of one of Canada's most evocative artists, Mwakwa – Talks to the Loon, introduces the reader – both young and old alike – to the unmistakable world of Native artist and storyteller, Dale Auger.

Includes a list of Cree words and phrases, along with a pronunciation guide.



**Dale Auger, PhD.**, is a Sakaw Cree from the Bigstone Cree Nation in northern Alberta. He is a highly talented speaker, educator and visual artist, whose vividly coloured and highly provocative paintings have captured the attention and imagination of many audiences across Canada and throughout the world.

The subject of Auger's lectures and paintings has varied over the years; where he once sought to portray Native history, he now captures the deeper, more spiritual levels of Native life, particularly the intricate links between Native spirituality and the natural laws of the land, along with how knowledge is gained and transferred between all Beings, utilizing both Traditional and Western modes of education as his inspiration.

Dale studied education at the University of Calgary and graduated with a doctoral degree in 2000. Dale currently lives near Bragg Creek, Alberta, and is in much demand throughout Canada and the United States for his visual work, motivational lectures, workshops and keynote addresses.

More of Dale's artwork can be seen at his website: [www.daleauger.com](http://www.daleauger.com)

## *Praise for MWAKWA - TALKS TO THE LOON:*

**SEPTEMBER 30, 2006**

**WINNER of the 2006 "Aboriginal Children's Book of the Year Award"  
at the Anskohk Aboriginal Literature Festival and Book Awards!**

"Dale Auger is a storyteller that deserves to be invited into every family's home. His knowledge of the traditional and the spiritual is at once ancient and contemporary. MWAKWA is a beautiful story, and timeless in its lesson."

*Joseph Boyden*

*- Author of "Three Day Road" and "Born With a Tooth"*

"I have been waiting for this gorgeous book my whole life. The artwork is stunning and the story is timeless. What incredible medicine for the world."

*Richard Van Camp*

*- Author of "A Man Called Raven" and "What's the Most Beautiful Thing You Know About Horses?"*

"Dale Auger's gift as a storyteller blended with his vision through art is exceptional. Dale's - Mwakwa - Talks to the Loon story - is one that every child and adult should have in their collection. Dale transfers the knowledge and the teachings of the People in a way that touches the heart and the spirit. It is truly a teaching tool that acknowledges and pays a masterful tribute to the way of the People."

*Dr. Phyllis Cardinal, Ed.D.*

*- Education Consultant and Former Principal, Amiskwaciy Academy, Edmonton, AB*

"Dale Auger is a well-established and gifted artist. He is also an educator who understands curriculum and has married it with traditional Aboriginal teaching and learning through Elders in his doctoral studies. *Mwakwa - Talks to the Loon* demonstrates transference of knowledge from one generation to the next. The vision communicated is one in which human beings are integrated with the natural world and every action has a positive or negative repercussion. Beautiful images are blended with text in a way that celebrates Aboriginal culture and traditions as well as the natural world. The integration of Cree vocabulary completes the fusion of text, images and language in a way that is transformative."

*Dr. Adriana A. Davies, Ph.D.*

*- Executive Director, Heritage Community Foundation of Alberta*

**THE CALGARY HERALD - September 18, 2006**

**By Jamie Komarnicki,**

### **READING SPAWNED 'GREAT SENSE OF ADVENTURE'**

As a child, Dale Auger struggled with reading and writing before he dropped out of school in grade six. Years later, the Sakaw Cree from the Bigstone Cree Nation in northern Alberta studied art and education at the University of Calgary and graduated with a doctoral degree.

Now, the author and artist lives life with a "great sense of adventure," and he wants to spread a love of learning to the aboriginal community and beyond.

"What changed it for me is really understanding the importance of who we are as a people," he said.

In his children's book, *Mwakwa Talks to the Loon*, Auger weaves storytelling techniques with traditional illustrations.

The story is about a talented Cree hunter, who loses his gift when his pride gets the best of him.

"It's about the real sense of accomplishment and initiation, and most of all, respecting your gift. We're all born with gifts. One of the things we have to acknowledge is to take the time to appreciate our gifts and not lose track of them," said Auger.

"That's what the story is about -- we lose track of why we were put on earth, then we get in trouble."

The book is also about bringing aboriginal history to life for young people, encouraging them to stay in school and possibly even return one day as teachers to encourage other eager young minds, he said.

"One of the things we do at Suncor is support aboriginal literacy," said Cathy Glover, manager of Suncor Energy Foundation, lead sponsor of Calgary Herald's Raise-a-Reader campaign.

"We want to help ensure that young people complete their education, and certainly literacy is such a critical skill. I think one of those ways to work with those kids, their families, their teachers, is to be able to share stories that resonate with them culturally."

Auger is one of several authors connecting with local communities as part of a book tour Suncor is sponsoring.

"It's one of the ways we're encouraging kids to get excited about reading, to get excited about storytelling. We see that as sort of pulling into their abilities to stay in school," Glover said.

Tapping into different learning styles is important in promoting effective reading and writing skills, Auger said. He wrote the children's book to draw readers into the sense of adventure, incorporating several Cree words and using traditional values rich with cultural meaning.

"It has a much wider audience. I think it's for everybody. It gives everyone a window into traditionally how our people worked with the land," he said.

"To learn from a history book is one thing, to learn from a story is even much more exciting for them to learn."

**WINDSPEAKER MAGAZINE - September 2006**

**By Debora Steel. Page 13.**

### **CONTEMPORARY ARTIST TURNS AUTHOR.**

Dale Auger has already secured himself a spot in the pantheon of contemporary art, but can he carve out a niche in contemporary literature? Well, he's sure gonna try.

*Mwakwa - Talks to the Loon*, written and illustrated by the Sakaw Cree from Bigstone Cree Nation, is his first foray into book publishing. The Cree story for children, written in English with Cree words included, tells the tale of a talented hunter who takes for granted his gift for providing for the community. The hunter prefers praise for his work rather than the work itself and soon loses his special connection with the beings he hunts and the ability that makes him unique and important.

The story is a tale of thanksgiving, and the special way Cree people honor the beings that sacrifice themselves to feed, shelter and clothe them. And while the tale is a simple one, the illustrations are remarkable, sometimes funny, often emotional, but always quintessentially Auger.

*Windspeaker* talked with Auger at his art salon at the Calgary Stampede's Western Showcase, where he said it was important for him to be to disassemble stereotypes about Indigenous peoples, including the image of the majestic warrior on the Prairies greeting cowboys, which is still a very strong component of the marketing of the festival.

"Being at the stampede is important because I am bringing a different component to what the Indian is about...A lot of my paintings are teachings from a different aspect, the relationship with the land, relationship with the four-legged. It wasn't just running around and chucking spears bare naked on the Prairies, or else greeting the wagon trains from a distance and saying 'I don't know if these people should be walking on our land.'"

One of the most spectacular pieces in his display is called "The Traveler", a man dressed in traditional garb with a coke can in a medicine bag tied around his neck. Auger describes the work as coming a little closer to an Andy Warhol approach to expression.

"What it is focusing on is the power of the medicine person and his ability to travel...We have always maintained in our medicine world, in our traditional Indian world, that we had the ability to travel to the future. So, that is based on spirit travel, a very powerful form of spirit travel." Auger explains that his traveler goes to the future and believes the substance that they drink there is medicine, so he brings that back to his time to show the people evidence from where he has been. Auger leaves it to the imagination of his audience to decipher what "the Traveler" means to them.

"We have sources of knowledge that we haven't even tapped into...I'm opening the door to questions, I'm opening the door to discussion," he said. Over the years Auger's work has made statements on the treaties and the relationship between Indigenous nations and the Europeans, and though he acknowledges his work serves as a means of education, he's not prepared to push too hard too fast so as to alienate his market.

"To be a warrior you've got to pick and choose your battles, and I think that this is a very sensitive part of the land."

Just as Auger expects his art to gently educate, so does he hope the story of a northern Cree boy with a gift for hunting will provide food for thought.

The gift Auger describes in *Mwakwa – Talks to the Loon* is the deep level of communication between the human being and the beings that are hunted.

“There’s a spiritual relationship that has been with us for thousands of years. It’s not just that he knew where they were. He was on the path. That’s the teaching I want to pass on, the gift, the higher power, the relationships of the beings and this understanding of this two-legged who could survive on the land, and that’s our history...Long before the coming of the white man or the coming of the different belief systems, we had a way...that’s what I think is great knowledge that needs to be passed to our kids.”

He says that the philosophy of the book is not so different from what he offers up in his paintings.

“I’m being a good, tactful warrior.” He said to deliver a message he tries to find a balance between the “friendly one” and the “fierce warrior”. And he delivers it with color, with language and with pride.

“The teachings in that book are so important because our kids really, really need to know, particularly the children who have never had a traditional relationship with the land or with nature.”

“A lot of kids, whether they are girls or they are boys, have great, great powers to travel. They are great dreamers.”

*Mwakwa – Talks to the Loon* (1894974042) is published by Heritage House and retails for \$24.95.

*Forthcoming News & Reviews for MWAKWA – TALKS TO THE LOON...*

**AVENUE MAGAZINE – NOVEMBER 2006 – AUTHOR / ARTIST PROFILE**

**By Anthony Charron**

**CANADIAN COWBOY TELEVISION – NOVEMBER 2006 – AUTHOR / ARTIST PROFILE**

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