

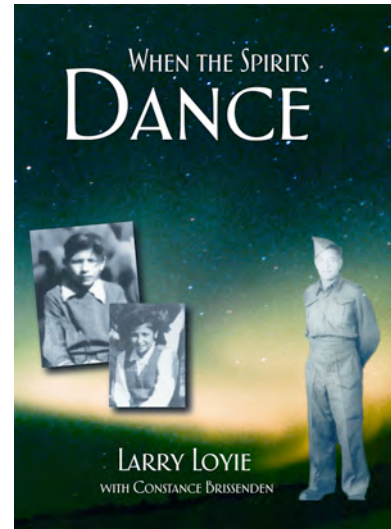
**Prepared by Jennifer Barry, teacher, Book Report Program, WordFest: Banff-Calgary International Writers Festival.** WordFest has given permission for general use of this study plan.

**Title: When the Spirits Dance**

**Author:** Larry Loyie with Constance Brissenden

**Division:** 1 (grades 103); 2 (grades 4-6)

**Author Profile:** Larry Loyie is an award-winning Cree writer, born in Slave Lake, Alberta. Larry has written three children's books: *When the Spirits Dance* (Theytus Books), *As Long as the Rivers Flow* (Groundwood Books) and *The Gathering Tree* (Theytus Books). In the first two books, he writes about what it was like to live a traditional Cree childhood in the changing world of the 1930s and 1940s. *The Gathering Tree* is a gentle, positive family story of HIV awareness. Larry and partner Constance Brissenden moved to High Prairie, Alberta in the summer of 2007. For more information: [www.firstnationswriter.com](http://www.firstnationswriter.com)



**Book Summary:** *When the Spirits Dance* is the story of Lawrence Loyie and his family growing up on Rabbit Hill. Lawrence and his siblings keep busy helping their parents and sharing in the day-to-day activities of life in the forest. One faithful day, a letter arrives in the mail. Lawrence's father has been called into service to the Canadian Armed Forces to fight in England during the Second World War. With his father gone, Lawrence and his family manage as best they can – with a little help from his grandparents. Learn about Cree culture and life in Canada during wartime.

**Curriculum Connections**  
**English Language Arts**

General Outcome 1

Students will listen, speak, read, write, view and represent to explore thoughts, ideas, feelings and experiences.

General Outcome 2

Students will listen, speak, read, write, view and represent to manage ideas and information.

General Outcome 3

Students will listen, speak, read, write, view and represent to enhance the clarity and artistry of communication.

**Information and Communication Technology**

C.1 Student will access, use and communicate information from a variety of technologies

1.1 access and retrieve appropriate information from electronic sources for a specific inquiry

1.2 process information from more than one source to retell what has been discovered

**Topics:**

Cree culture  
Second World War  
Childhood

**Create:**

1. Write a short story about your life at a particular point in time. How did a major event (a new brother or sister, moving, breaking a limb) change your daily life?
2. Build a family tree. Ask your parents about their parent and grandparents. Illustrate your tree on a large piece of bristol board. Ask your parents if they have any old photos they can copy and share with you.
3. Write a letter to a Canadian serving in the Armed Forces overseas. What would you like to say to that person?

**Extension:**

1. Did any of your relatives serve in the Canadian Armed Forces?
2. Talk to your grandparents about what life was like growing up during either a world war.
3. Grandma told Lawrence his spirit animal was the grizzly bear. What is a spirit animal? Do you feel close to any special animal?
4. Find Cree words in the story. Make a chart showing the English translations.

**Discuss:**

1. A great quote on the [www.firstnationswriter.com](http://www.firstnationswriter.com) website is: "To honour yourself is to honour your ancestors." How does this quote apply to the authors? How does it apply to you?
2. Members of Lawrence's extended family often dropped by to visit his family, like Uncle Louis and Lawrence's grandfather. What is the importance of family in Cree culture?
3. How did life change for Lawrence's family during the war?
4. How would you have felt if you were Lawrence when his father left to serve in the Armed Forces?

**Connect:**

1. Visit Larry and Constance's website for more information about the pair [www.firstnationswriter.com](http://www.firstnationswriter.com)
2. Learn more about Cree culture [www.creeculture.ca](http://www.creeculture.ca)

**Encounter:**

1. Read the second book in the "Lawrence" series, *As Long as the Rivers Flow*.
2. Another of Larry and Constance's books is entitled *The Gathering Tree*, sensitively dealing with the topic of HIV awareness.
3. Have a look at the works of some former Book Rapport authors including Dr. Dale Auger's *Mwakwa - Talks to the Loon* and David Bouchard's *Nokum is my Teacher*.