



October 1, 2006

BC launches First Nation Communities Read program

Vancouver-based First Nations author Larry Loyie returned to school in his mid-fifties to fulfill his dream of becoming a writer. His first children's book, *As Long as the Rivers Flow* (House of Anansi Press/Groundwood Books) continues to win prizes for the author, co-author Constance Brissenden and illustrator Heather D. Holmlund.



Chosen as the first Honour Book to launch British Columbia's First Nation Communities Read program, *As Long as the Rivers Flow* is featured in a month-long author's tour this fall. The First Nation Communities Read program launch begins at the Langley Branch of the Fraser Valley Regional Library on October 5 and ends at Vancouver's Carnegie Branch Library on November 3. Loyie and Brissenden will visit public libraries and schools in 16 communities including: Abbotsford, Delta, Duncan, Hazelton, Houston, Langley, Lillooet, Merritt, Nanaimo, One-Hundred-Mile House, Prince Rupert, Saanich, Smithers, Vancouver, White Rock, and Williams Lake.

Suite 150 – 900 Howe Street, Vancouver BC, Canada V6Z 2M4
Tel: (604) 683-5354 Fax (604) 609-0707
office@bcla.bc.ca www.bcla.bc.ca

Additionally, six public libraries have received grants from the BC Library Association for local celebrations and promotion of Aboriginal authors, publishers and stories. They include: Chetwynd Public Library; Pender Island Public Library, Port Moody Public Library, Powell River Public Library, Prince George Public Library and Surrey Public Library.

The First Nation Communities Read program is sponsored in BC by the British Columbia Library Association's First Nations Interest Group, with support from Canadian Heritage and the BC Public Library Services Branch, Ministry of Education.

Larry Loyie got his start as a writer in free creative writing classes at Carnegie Community Centre. *As Long as the Rivers Flow* (House of Anansi/Groundwood Books) is the poignant story of his traditional Cree childhood before he attended residential school, with award-winning illustrations by Heather D. Holmlund of Pickering, Ontario. The book won the 2003 Norma Fleck Award for Canadian Children's Non-Fiction, as well as being named the 2006 Honour Book of the First Nation Communities Read program. *The Gathering Tree*, published by Theytus Books, Canada's leading aboriginal publisher, was featured at the AIDS 2006 mega-conference in Toronto. Illustrated by Heather D. Holmlund, *The Gathering Tree* is a gentle introduction to HIV awareness with a First Nations storyline.

Loyie's newly published children's book, *When the Spirits Dance* (Theytus Books) is the dramatic tale of his childhood during the Second World War. Co-author Constance Brissenden is a long-time writer and editor.

The First Nation Communities Read program, launched in Ontario in 2003, enables the public library community to recognize outstanding First Nations, Metis and Inuit books. Since its initiation, the program has expanded, with the province of Saskatchewan joining in 2005 and the province of British Columbia coming on board in 2006. A year-long celebration of the Honour Book selection, the program encourages family literacy and intergenerational storytelling, and promotes and shares Aboriginal voices and experiences.

- 30 -

For more information, contact Larry Loyie and Constance Brissenden, 604-876-0880. E-mail: livingtradition@telus.net. Website: www.firstnationswriter.com