

legends, why add this book to the already existing collections when nineteen of the twenty selections have been previously published? Why choose the words of Columbus to describe the virtues of Native people in the introduction? Why complain about the stereotyping of Natives, when the cover images reinforce those stereotypes? These are questions which Riordan must address if he wants to better understand how he can help to right a dreadful wrong.

Perhaps the most suitable piece of advice for Riordan can be found in the words of E. Pauline Johnson, Mohawk writer, to whom he paid tribute with his title. Five of Riordan's selections were taken from Johnson's own collection, *Legends of Vancouver*. One of these pieces begins, "I saw a legend coming, so I crept into the shell of single sounds" (21). Possibly the best Riordan can do is to choose to be silent, to choose to create the space in which Native people can decide, or decide not, to share their oral history.

### Works Cited

- Goebel, B. (1996). "Honoring Native Cultures: Reflections and Responsibilities." *Primary Voices* 4:3 (1996) 3-10.
- Moses, D.D., and T. Goldie., eds. *An Anthology of Canadian Native Literature in English*. Toronto: Oxford UP, 1992.
- 

*Avril Aitken coordinates curriculum development at Jimmy Sandy Memorial School, which is located in Kawawachikamach, Northern Quebec.*

### "Paddling in the Burn" with Robert Burns

*Auld Lang Syne*. Joanne Findon. Illus. Ted Nasmith. Stoddart Kids, 1997. 32 pp. \$18.95. ISBN 0-7737-30060.

On New Year's Eve, all around the world, people sing "Should auld acquaintance be forgot ... and the days of auld lang syne?" Let us hope that Joanne Findon's book, very attractively illustrated by Ted Nasmith, will give young readers an acquaintance with Robert Burns, the author of that world-famous song. Ted Nasmith's ancestor (the book jacket tells us) painted the haunting portrait of young Robert Burns, now in the Scottish National Portrait Gallery. The modern artist traces the stages of the poet's life, from birth on a poor tenant's farm, through golden days of childhood, "paddling in the burn," through romantic days with Bonnie Jean Armour, to fame as a "ploughman poet" welcomed to Edinburgh salons. The illustrations blend sensitively with Joanne Findon's first person narration about those "old times long-ago."

The only false note among the series of fine paintings, for me, was struck in a turgid picture of the young poet kneeling before a mystic wraith.



This picture illustrates an equally high-flown bit of text, which imagines a Celtic muse in “a lustrous green gown” and a wreath of holly, who greets Burns as “my own inspired bard!” Burns’s poetic power came, as Joanne Findon’s text more properly suggests elsewhere, in part from his readiness to listen to old songs and ballads, in part from his own heart, “constantly ablaze with one passion or another: with rage at our poverty, with love for a neighbour lass, or with pity for ... the mouse” disturbed by the ploughman’s intrusion into the life of a “fellow mortal.” Burns’s poetic craft was strengthened also by the excellent early education guaranteed to every child in Scotland, long before England proffered comparable training to any but the children of the rich. In his village school Robert Burns studied — and memorized — the best poetry of his time, that late eighteenth-century period of the height of Augustan clarity, and the dawning of Romantic intensity. Maybe this modern book will help children turn again to the poetry of the 1780s, to Blake and Wordsworth, Coleridge and Burns, to recapture something of the old delights of rhythm and rhyme.

Burns’s poetry came to Canada in early days, when Scots predominated among immigrant settlers and Canadian schools perpetuated the disciplines of early Scottish schools. Today, when the ethnic mix is much richer, and when technology has left the simple methods of one-room schoolhouses far behind, it is still worthwhile to remember the songs of “auld lang syne.” This handsome book offers a fine bridge to that past and to the life of a still-powerful poet.

---

*Elizabeth Waterston, now Professor Emeritus of the University of Guelph, was one of the founding editors of CCL.*