

NHHS honours Indigenous stories



Dec. 31, 2019 By Kristena Schutt-Moore

Students in the Inuit, First Nations, Indigenous Studies Class at North Hastings High School had 10 days to read a book by an Indigenous author, write a report about it then present their book and their report to a group of judges to try to convince them that their book was the best and they needed to read it.

The Taylor Reads Contest, which the students named after their teacher Heather Taylor, is the end of the term project for the students. Taylor says it teaches confidence, patience, time management and organization, and encourages reading. The students say that while speaking in front of an audience can be daunting, the project was the best one of the year. Many found favourite authors they never would have looked at before, others said that reading the fictional works taught them a bit about themselves.

Gavin, a student at NHHS said about his book *Moon of the Crusted Snow*, "I couldn't put it down! I didn't even touch my phone, normally I'm always playing with it, but I wanted to finish the book, and I'm not a reader."

Other books on the reading list were *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* by Sherman Alexie, *Where the Rivers Meet* by Don Sawyer, *In Search of April Raintree* by Beatrice Mosiener, *Arctic Thunder* by Robert Feagen, *Medicine Walk* by Richard Wagamese, and *The Marrow Thieves* by Cherie Dimaline.

NHHS is the first school to host this kind of reading project, where every author is Indigenous and the stories centre on a First Nations story or theme. Indigenous education lead for Hastings Prince Edward District School Board Troy Maracle was on hand as one of this year's judges and he told the students that the board was looking at taking the model for this contest and sharing it with other schools. That excited the students, many of them offering to help the board if needed.

The winners of the contest received a gift card, a medal and a copy of their book. The honourable mention went to Brooke Perry and Jamie Eastman who represented *Where the Rivers Meet*, third place was awarded to Brooke Switzer and Alex Hall-Bullied who represented *In Search of April Raintree*, second place was presented to Sierra Dillabough and Amber Dillabough who represented *The Marrow Thieves*. The first prize winners were Cameron Edwards and Micah Aldom who represented *Medicine Walk*.