

The Case of Windy Lake

Michael Hutchinson

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In Michael Hutchinson's clever middle grade mystery *The Case of Windy Lake*, four precocious children are on a quest to find a missing archaeologist.

The Mighty Muskrats—Sam, Otter, Atim, and Chickadee—are cousins who spend their time together at home on the Windy Lake First Nation reservation in Canada. A mining company is working at Windy Lake, raising concerns with the locals and sparking protests over the excavation of Native land and the destruction of the environment, though they are also providing much-needed jobs. When the company's archaeologist goes missing, the Mighty Muskrats decide they must find him.

Their entertaining search is well thought out and logical, and it is at the center of the story. Each of the Muskrats has unique skills and insight when it comes to finding clues and following leads. They are supported by their grandfather, uncle, and other community members; all are caring, showing concern for the group while providing small tips and advice on how and where the Muskrats can look.

As the children search, their older cousin, Denice, stages a protest, attaching herself to a pipe at the mining site. This action is interpreted by their grandfather as a vision quest; his observations about what she is doing and what may come of her actions are insightful. Denice's ordeal nicely parallels the predicament of the archaeologist, who is presumed to be lost and exposed to the elements.

All scenes are supported by a foundation of information about the native people in and around Windy Lake and the economic, environmental, and cultural issues that they face; it is wonderful and incorporated in a thoughtful way. *The Case of Windy Lake* is smart and thought-provoking mystery for middle grade readers.

CATHERINE THURESON (March/April 2019)

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