ForeWord Reviews

PICTURE BOOKS

When the Shadbush Blooms
Carla J.S. Messinger
Susan Katz
David Kanietakeron Fadden, illustrator
Tricycle Press
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The Lenni Lenape (First or True people) or the Delaware, were the original inhabitants of northeastern United States. Forced off their ancestral lands by white settlers, many of them migrated to Oklahoma, where they are now reclaiming their cultural heritage.

The Lenape divided the seasons into months based on the lunar cycle, and each spread in this beautiful picture book has two texts—one in Lenape and one in English; one historical, one modern. The cycles and continuity of traditional life are presented through the eyes of two unnamed girls, Traditional Sister and Contemporary Sister.

Fadden uses acrylic paints to illustrate the changes of seasons and activities. The two-page spread for "*Winigischuch*/Falling Snow Moon" shows both girls sledding, several hundred years apart. Another shows Traditional Sister and her brother climbing a hill, while Grandpa, who has long white hair, waits at the top. They wear clothes made of animal skins. On the opposite page, Contemporary Sister and her brother slide down a hill, while her Grandpa, who is wearing a knit cap and boots, watches. Despite the change in clothing, the occupations are timeless. Both girls use wooden sleds, both grandfathers wear snowshoes, and both bring along the family dog.

Whether fishing, planting, or storytelling, different generations participate, for family life is central both yesterday and today. The book begins and ends with "*Mechoammowi Gischuch*/When the Shadfish Return Moon." This is when the bush blooms, the shad return and the family goes fishing. Contemporary Sister notes: "We watch for the shadbush to bloom again, as my grandparents' grandparents did."

The note at the back includes a history of the Lenape people and a pronunciation guide for each cycle mentioned in the book. The merits of this book are twofold: children will learn about an ancient way of life and at the same time consider their own lives. Co-author Carla J. S. Messinger is cultural educator and director of Native American Heritage Programs in her

hometown of Allentown, Pennsylvania. Susan Katz has written other books, including *Snowdrops for Cousin Ruth* and *Looking for Jaguar and other Rain Forest Poems*.

Jada Bradley