

Winning Stories



Youth Writing Contest
Fort Resolution, NT
January, 2003

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Illustrator:

Henry Mandeville

Judging Panel:

Barbara Miron

Bernice Odeen

Leo Saroop

Text Typing:

Shauna McCallum

Editing and Foreword:

Barbara Miron

Graphic Design and Layout:

Shauna McCallum

Logistic Support:

Jayne Mierse

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Foreword

The Fort Resolution Community Writing Contest for 10-14 year-olds was held in November, 2002. Rowan Cardinal's "Christmas Eve" was the first prize story. Charlene Giroux's "My Camping Trip" won second prize, and Jennifer Sanderson's "Drugs and Alcohol" earned third prize.

Contest entries were judged for grammar and structure as well as content and creativity. The winning entries were announced on December 13, 2002, at an assembly at Deninoo School; and prizes and awards were presented to the contest winners at the Deninoo School Christmas concert on December 18, 2002.

The purpose of the writing contest was to inspire the development of writing skills. The ability to express ideas and convey information in writing is and always has been crucial to academic and professional success. Hopefully, other young Northerners will follow the excellent example set by the three authors of this booklet and discover the power and the joy of writing well.

Contest Winners



From left to right: Jennifer Sanderson, 10;
Charlene Giroux, 12; Rowan Cardinal, 12.

Christmas Eve

It was Christmas Eve, back in 1952. My grandmother was to give birth to her fourth child. My grandmother was getting ready for the new arrival; she scrubbed the floors, did the laundry, washed the dishes and bathed the three older children.

She tucked the children into bed and, of course, they played around since they were all in one big bed. She had to get them into bed because there was no more firewood to heat the house, and she put the last log in the woodstove.

The children continued to play, and all of a sudden the door swung open. Foof! The cold air billowed into the small house. By this time, my grandmother was also in bed and couldn't get out of bed because the baby was close to being born.



She asked the eldest of the three children to get out of bed and close the door, so the eldest son got out of bed and ran to the door. He leaned to peek out the door, stopped and said, "Mommy, the angels are singing. I can hear them!" He turned around, closed the door and put an old blanket in front of the door to stop the cold air from coming in and jumped back into bed.

Right then, my grandmother had a feeling that everything was going to be all right. She said her nighttime prayer with the oldest son, who was only three years old at the time, and he was fast asleep as the others.

Shortly after that, she gave birth to another son. She said that it was so cold in the house that steam was coming off of the baby. She quickly bundled up the baby in a baby blanket and remained in bed. As she lay there with the four children at her side, she wished that she were in church for midnight mass as it was Christmas Eve and my grandmother is a very dedicated Catholic.

She lived close to the church, and said she could now hear everyone singing in church. She thought, "Was this what my child had heard? Or did he really hear angels singing?" At that moment, she remembered that church had just begun.

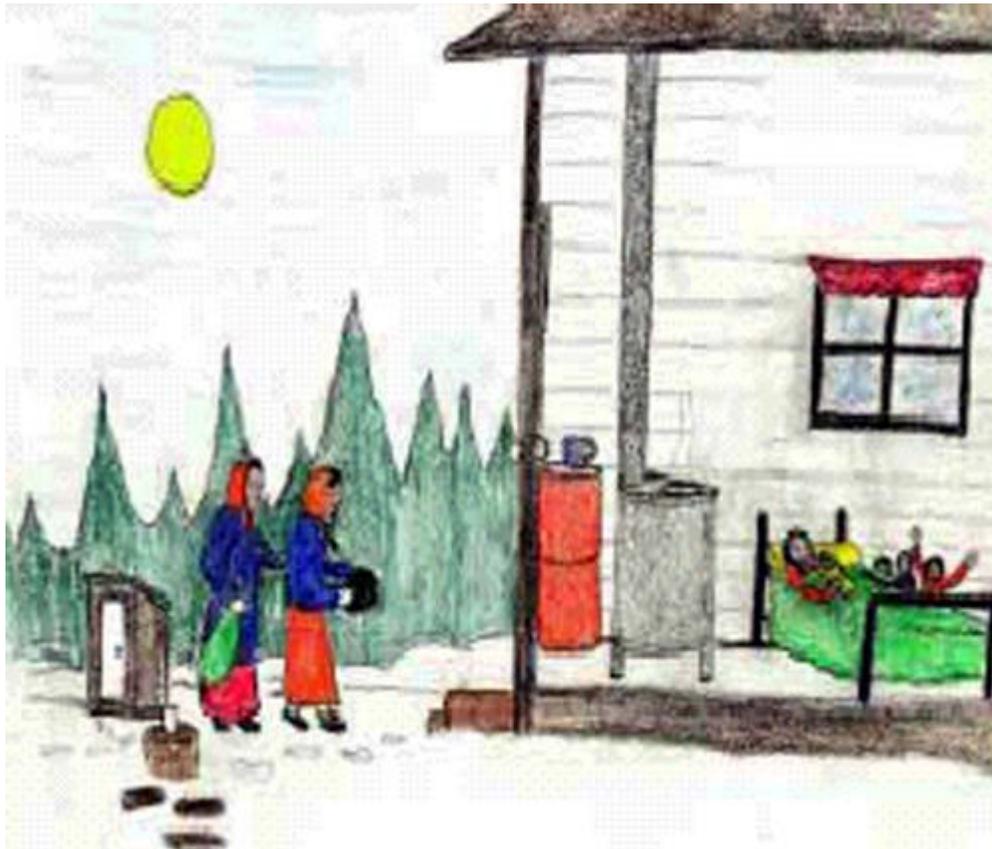
The next day was Christmas day. All the children woke up, but all remained in bed and my grandmother still couldn't get out of bed. She said to the other children, "Look at your new baby brother."

The oldest son replied, " Did the angels bring him to us?" My grandmother said, "Yes."

My grandmother's aunt came to check on her as she did every morning. Her aunt spoke only Cree, but somehow they communicated well. Her aunt said in Cree, "Oh, my God! You had your baby last night? Why didn't you send someone to come and get me?"

But my grandmother said, "Nobody came around." The old aunt rushed out of the house and said, "I'll be right back!"

Soon there was a knock on the door; neighbors rushed in to see the baby and everyone that came brought something for my grandmother's family. They brought cake, turkey and milk for the children; they also brought clothing for the children. The neighbors brought some oranges. Next, the doctor came to check on my grandmother and left after everything was all right.



My grandmother was going to name her newborn Noel; but my grandfather wanted a different name, so they named him Clifford.

Today my uncle is as strong as the spirit of Christmas. The reason I say this is because my uncle is the strongest man I know.

By Rowan Cardinal

My Camping Trip

This is a story about my camping trip with my mom and dad last summer. We went to Taltson River Rapids. To get there, we had to start off at Nagle Channel, follow the Slave River for about half an hour and then proceed to Great Slave Lake.

On Great Slave Lake, we stopped at a big bay they call Gaudet Bay. We set up camp, made fire and had something to eat. We stayed for the night.



The next day, the wind picked up, and we ended up staying for two more days. During the two days, we couldn't do too much but stay around camp because of heavy winds. We did our chores around the camp and ate most of our meals over the fire. I found that the food tasted much better cooked over fire than in a pan.

By the third day, it was still windy, but we packed up camp anyway. We went back on the lake to get to Taltson River. When we got there, we had to make a fire to dry our clothes and have something to eat. Then we went up the Taltson River to get to Rocher River, and that's where we stayed in a cabin for two days.

During those two days, we all went on a nature walk, set rabbit snares and caught a rabbit for dinner. We walked around the village, and I saw where both of my grandparents' houses were. We also picked fresh wild rhubarb.



Late that evening, my brother came in another boat with his friends to visit. When he came, it was late at night after we were all in bed. When he came to the door, my mom got scared and told my dad it was a bear. My dad jumped up and grabbed the gun. My brother told my dad it was him. Then my dad realized it was only my brother and let him in.

The next morning, my brother and I went fishing by boat at a place called Hook Island. I caught two big jackfish. We kept one and put one back in the water; my brother stayed with us all that day. That evening, he left for Fort Resolution with his friends.

The next day, my parents and I went for a ride in the boat up the channels and bays to hunt for ducks. My dad shot four ducks. Then we stopped at the shore, fixed all the ducks and started back to camp.

The next day, we went up Taltson River to get to Rat River. We went a little way up river to get to Taltson River Rapids; then we set up camp and went fishing. On the second cast, I caught a big fish. My dad said the fish was about fifteen pounds. We fished a while longer and caught more fish, but my dad put them all back into the water. We only ate the big fish I caught.

The next day, we started back to Fort Resolution. We made a stop at Stoney Point, which is between Taltson River and Slave River. Again, we had to set up camp because of bad weather. During our stay, we went for a nature walk on the rocks; we also gathered wood for the fire. Later on, we saw four boats pass by in the big waves. It looked cool watching the boats bounce off the waves.

The next day, we packed up our camp and started back to Fort Resolution. On our way back, we had to go the long way around the lake to get to the shores of Fort Resolution.

In total, we were held up for about ten days. I was very happy to be back home in civilization. In the bush, it's fun, but we have to work hard to survive.

By Charlene Giroux

Drugs and Alcohol

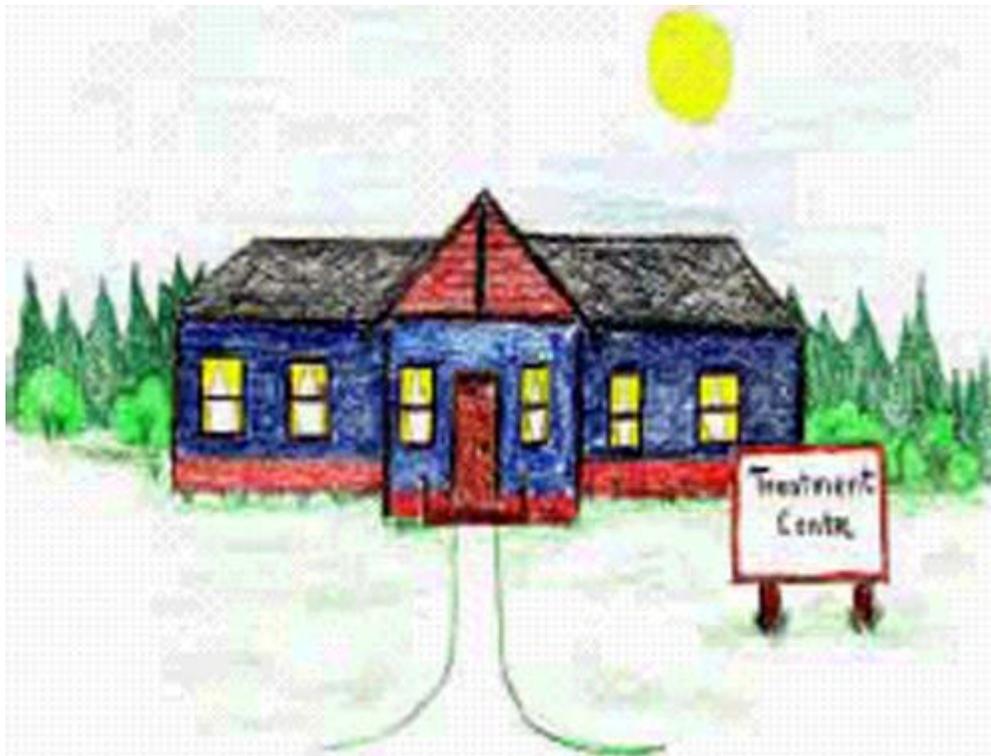
Drugs

Drugs are dangerous, and you can kill yourself and others. If drug users leave needles on the ground, little kids can start to play with them. If they leave some drugs in there, a little boy or girl could get hurt or even die.

There are all kinds of ways to do drugs: giving yourself a needle or letting somebody give one to you, smoking drugs or snorting drugs with your nose.

People can get addicted to pills they get from the doctor when they are sick. Some people have to take pills for a long time because they need to.

There are some ways to beat a drug addiction. Addicts can be put in the hospital or go to a treatment centre.



Alcohol and Drinking

When you drink alcohol and drive, it is not good because you might crash just like Patrick. His friends were drinking, and I guess they wanted to go for a ride in a car. They were drunk, and they crashed.

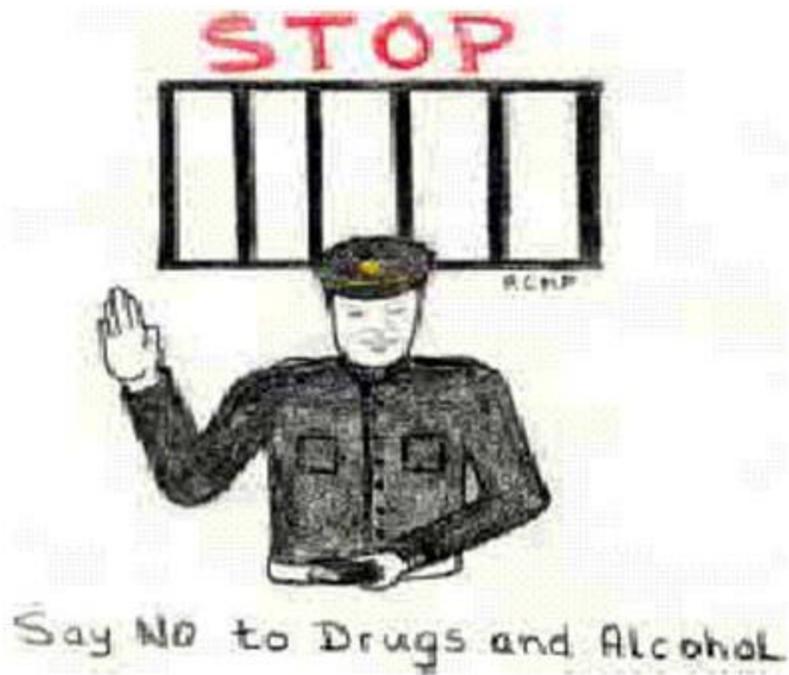
About two years after that, Sharon, my mom, my dad and I went to Yellowknife to go visit Patrick, and he was in a wheelchair. He had all of these little buttons, so he could move himself anywhere he wanted to go. He could hardly breathe by himself, so he had a balloon with a tube hooked on to it, and you had to push it to give him air. A few years later, Patrick died.

People can get killed by a drunk driver. People do silly and stupid things when they drink or do drugs. Some people try to kill themselves when they drink.

There are some places that people who drink can get help, like a treatment centre or the drug and alcohol center. At the drug and alcohol centre, they have games for kids and for adults too. It is fun when they have coloring contests too. We have Halloween costume judging for kids and adults too. Just last week, we had adult fun night, and it was fun to watch.

I am so lucky because my mom, dad, sister or brother do not drink or do drugs. I don't have to see my family do silly or stupid things because of alcohol or drugs. I love my family very much, and I am happy that my family doesn't drink or do drugs.

When I was small, my mom and dad used to drink, but I don't remember. I am glad I don't remember because I would not like it. I don't know what my life would be like if my mom and dad still drank. Maybe we wouldn't be living in the Bed and Breakfast, and maybe we wouldn't even be living in our old house.



When I grow up, I will never drink or do drugs because I know that it is bad and it hurts people. I hope my story helps people to not do drugs or drink and drive.

By Jennifer Sanderson

