
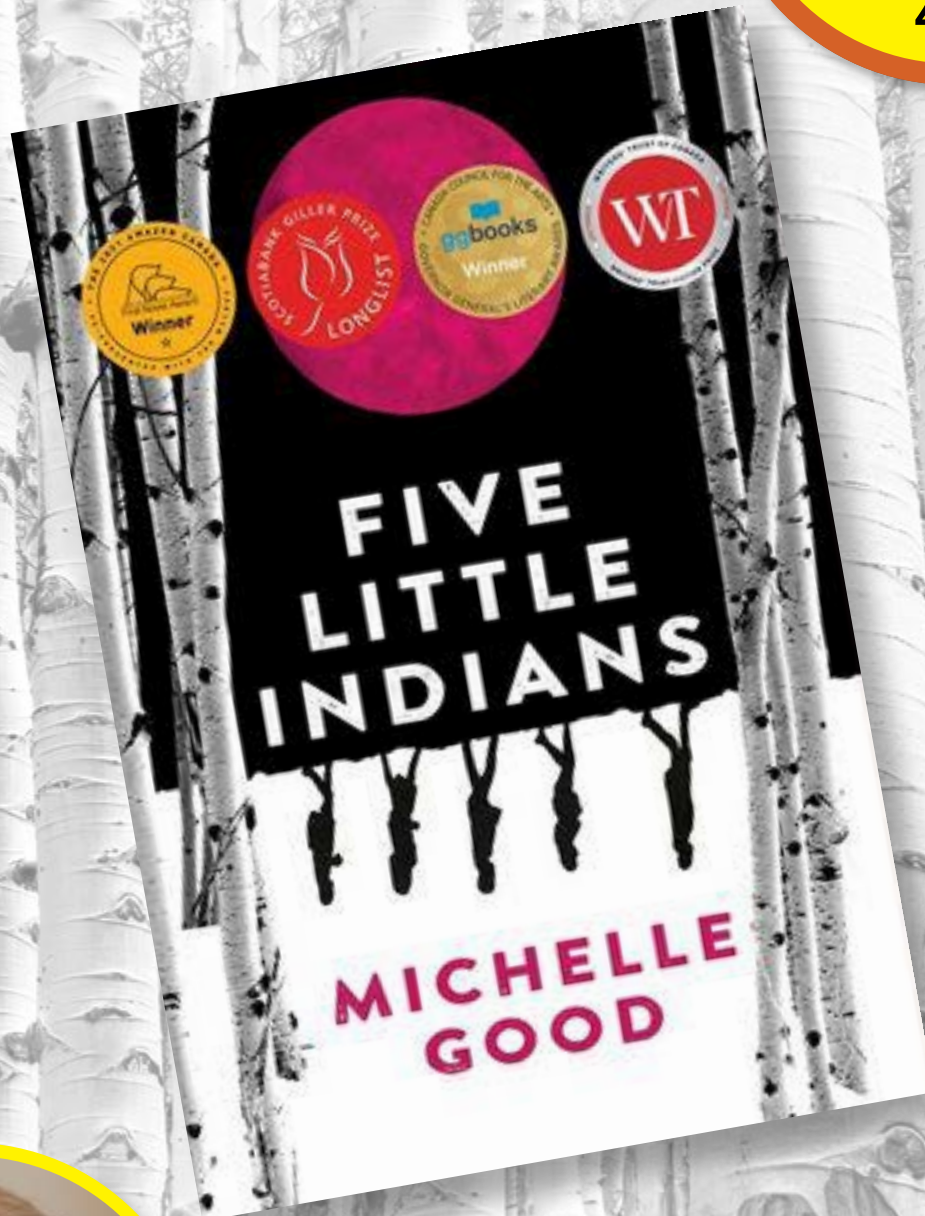


NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2021

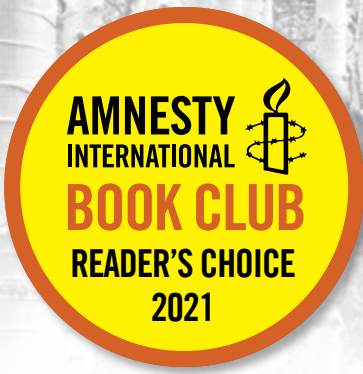
DISCUSSION GUIDE

AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL 
BOOK CLUB
READER'S CHOICE
2021



FIVE LITTLE INDIANS

BY MICHELLE GOOD



NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2021

DISCUSSION GUIDE

WELCOME

AMNESTY BOOK CLUB MEMBERS

Thank you so much to everyone that provided your thoughts and votes for this year's Reader's Choice Selection! We're so pleased to announce the winner; *Five Little Indians* by Michelle Good.

Taken from their families when they are very small and sent to a remote, church-run residential school, Kenny, Lucy, Clara, Howie and Maisie are barely out of childhood when they are finally released after years of detention.

Alone and without any skills, support or families, the teens find their way to the seedy and foreign world of Downtown Eastside Vancouver, where they cling together, striving to find a place of safety and belonging in a world that doesn't want them. The paths of the five friends cross and crisscross over the decades as they struggle to overcome, or at least forget, the trauma they endured during their years at the Mission.

Fuelled by rage and furious with God, Clara finds her way into the dangerous, highly charged world of the American Indian Movement. Maisie internalizes her pain and continually places herself in dangerous situations. Famous for his daring escapes from the school, Kenny can't stop running and moves restlessly from job to job—through fishing grounds, orchards and logging camps—trying to outrun his memories and his addiction. Lucy finds peace in motherhood and nurtures a secret compulsive disorder as she waits for Kenny to return to the life they once hoped to share together. After almost beating one of his tormentors to death, Howie serves

time in prison, then tries once again to re-enter society and begin life anew.

With compassion and insight, *Five Little Indians* chronicles the desperate quest of these residential school survivors to come to terms with their past and, ultimately, find a way forward.

Thank you as well for joining us through another year of fantastic Canadian literature, that gripped our hearts and brought us closer to the stories that live through human rights work. We're so grateful to have you alongside us for the journey, and we're thrilled to see what 2022 will bring us ahead.

About Amnesty International

Amnesty International is a global movement of more than ten million supporters, members and activists in over 150 countries and territories who campaign to end grave abuses of human rights.

Our vision is for all people to enjoy all the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights standards.

We are independent of any government, political ideology, economic interest or religion, and are funded mainly by our membership.

Until everyone can enjoy all of their rights, we will continue our efforts. We will not stop until everyone can live in dignity; until every person's voice can be heard; until no one is tortured or executed.

Our members are the cornerstone of these efforts. They take up human rights issues through letter-writing, online and off line campaigning, demonstrations, vigils and direct lobbying of those with power and influence.

Locally, nationally and globally, we join together to mobilize public pressure and show international solidarity.

Together, we make a difference.

For more information about Amnesty International visit www.amnesty.ca or write to us at: Amnesty International, 312 Laurier Ave. E., Ottawa, ON K1N 1H9.

READER'S CHOICE 2021: *Five Little Indians*

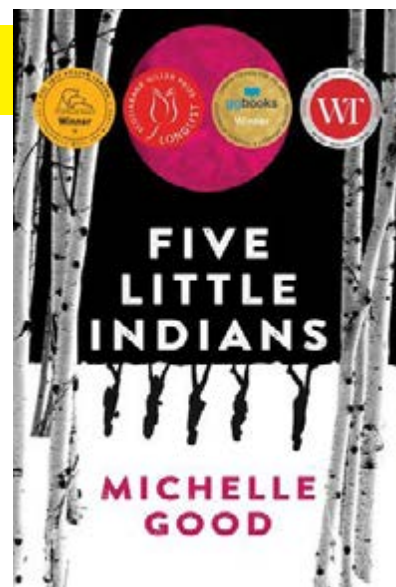
ABOUT THIS MONTH'S AUTHOR, **MICHELLE GOOD**

MICHELLE GOOD is of Cree ancestry, a descendent of the Battle River Cree and a member of the Red Pheasant Cree Nation. She has worked with indigenous organizations since she was a teenager and at forty decided to approach that work in a different way obtaining her law degree from UBC at 43. She has practiced law in the public and private sector since then, primarily advocating for Residential School Survivors.

She graduated from UBC with a Master of Fine Arts Degree in Creative Writing MFA in 2014 where her novel

Five Little Indians first started

taking shape. Her poetry, and short stories have appeared in a number of publications. Her first novel, *Five Little Indians* won the HarperCollins/ UBC Best New Fiction Prize and her poetry has been included in Best Canadian Poetry in Canada 2016 and Best of the Best Canadian Poetry in Canada 2017. Michelle is currently working on her second novel.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FROM AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL BOOK CLUB

1. The precipice of the novel centres around showing the true effect of intergenerational trauma. As Michelle Good has said herself, “Trauma is almost like osmosis. When you’re living with people that have trauma responses, you learn those.”

Despite being a common and important thread to each character, this is especially seen between Clara and Kenny as they grow up, begin to have kids and try to rebuild a life after the school. How did their trauma manifest and effect their development as they moved through adulthood?

2. The novel highlights this further through the trauma within families. Maisie highlights this when she says, “the rest of us ran too, right into that crowd of grown-ups who were supposed to be our parents.” Why was this phrased this way? What does it mean? Discuss the stories of parents throughout the book and the trauma that they too experienced.
3. In keeping with this concept, Kenny is reunited with another child from the school, whilst working as a picker on an orchard. There is an exchange prior to picking up their paychecks;

“Yeah, well, we’re back in the same place again, aren’t we?”

Kenny motioned toward the foreman, his khakis still spotless, blowing on a whistle and yelling for everyone to hurry up.

What is the symbolism of this scene? What does it represent about the structures at play in Canada today, for Indigenous Peoples?

4. *Five Little Indians* highlights the systemic racism that lives within the foundational structures of society. This is shown through each character’s interactions with the police and judicial systems,

as well as health and medical services, in post Residential School system life. Some examples include when Maisie is in the hospital or when Howie is moving through the prison system. Discuss these interactions with your group and how systemic racism and oppression are prevalent both in other elements of the book and in Canada today.

5. Maisie is a particularly tough exterior character, explained in the book description as having, “internalized her pain and continually placing herself in dangerous situations.” Finally, Maisie has a vulnerable moment with a healer within her community and states, “We were children, me and Lily, and neither of us survived, even though I’m still walking.” What does this mean? How does this manifest in her actions and the ways she interprets the world?
6. Discuss with your group the symbolism of the pinching, not only its act but when it came up in the book. Why do you think this was included? What did this add to the story?
7. a) The impact of the residential school system is continuously whitewashed and portrayed as something of the past, despite the last school closing in 1996. Many call into question the failure of the Canadian education system as having a role in this. Discuss your experience in learning about the Residential School system growing up. Was this discussed within your family, your school, your friend groups, your workplace?
b) Did you learn something new in reading *Five Little Indians*, if so, what?
8. What is something that you can take from reading this book, that be applied in your everyday?
9. Who would you recommend *Five Little Indians* to? Why?

BACKGROUND

INDIGENOUS CHILDREN DESERVE JUSTICE AND ACCOUNTABILITY



WINNIPEG, CANADA: Red handprints and orange shirts cover the base of a now toppled statue of Queen Victoria on the grounds of the Manitoba Legislature on July 2, 2021 in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. The statue was pulled down by indigenous protestors following a march to honour survivors and victims of Canada's residential school system.

Learn more and get involved!

Centuries of racism and dispossession have denied Indigenous peoples the opportunity to enjoy their basic human rights right here in Canada. In particular, Residential schools were part of a colonial policy to eradicate Indigenous cultures, languages and communities. While the last school closed in 1996, intergenerational trauma, ongoing harms and discriminatory practices continue.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission, national investigations, the United Nations, and several other international human rights bodies have repeatedly called on Canada to address these human rights violations and ensure justice for survivors and their families. The bulk of these recommendations remain unimplemented. Canada must act on these recommendations now.

Amnesty International urges Canada to act on these recommendations without delay, including the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action and the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls' 231 Calls for Justice. Canada must also, without delay, implement the Canadian Human

Rights Tribunal's decision on providing equal funding for child and family services in First Nations communities.

This year, while news that the remains of children being found buried on the grounds of several former Indian Residential Schools around Canada came as a shock to many settler Canadians, this was already known to Indigenous Nations who have been seeking justice and accountability for years.

To ensure justice and accountability—not only for the children who died at residential schools—but for all First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Peoples, Canada must take concrete action without delay

Here's how you can do that:

- ✓ Talk to your non-Indigenous friends and family members, including children, about the residential school system and the ongoing harms. Please be mindful that many Indigenous people are grieving, and many are reliving their pain and trauma.
- ✓ Follow and share posts on social media from Indigenous-led organizations.

- ✔ Check out our other fantastic selected Indigenous writers, use the discussion questions and take action as a group on the website: amnestybookclub.ca
- ✔ Learn about the ongoing impacts of the residential school system, like reading the full report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and in particular the 94 calls to action or read through the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and in particular the 231 Calls for Justice.
- ✔ Use the Truth and Reconciliation Action Plan drafted by the late, Sarah Robinson to support your learning and further action here: https://static1.squarespace.com/static/55a6d67ee4b0edf846244867/t/5ee2a3eff80d6046a35329ef/1591911435038/Rainwatch_T%26R_PersonalActionPlan.pdf
- ✔ Donate to Indigenous-led organizations and initiatives that are supporting residential school survivors and their families along with language revitalization, cultural and land-based initiatives.

Find a grassroots organization in your community to donate to or consider donating to the following:

- The Indian Residential School Survivors Society
 - The KUU-US Crisis Line Society
 - New Friendship Centre for the Kamloops Aboriginal Friendship Society
 - First Nations Child and Family Caring Society
- ✔ To ensure justice and accountability—not only for the children who died at residential schools—but for all First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Peoples, Canada must take concrete action without delay. Act now and call on Canada to ensure justice and accountability for Indigenous Peoples: <https://takeaction.amnesty.ca/page/83894/-/1>
 - ✔ Check out our event on Truth and Reconciliation Day this year, where Amnesty International Canada’s Secretary General, Ketty Nivyabandi, spoke with Tamara Starblanket, writer of *Suffer the Little Children: Genocide, Indigenous Nations and the Canadian State*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i6Ah-E7-90s>



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WRITE FOR RIGHTS 2021



Every year around International Human Rights Day (December 10th), people around the world send millions of letters, emails, tweets and petitions in support of people whose human rights are being denied. And every year, together, we change lives.

This year we're celebrating Write for Rights' 20th Anniversary! From 2,326 letters in 2001 to 4.5 million letters, tweets, emails and more in 2020, Amnesty supporters have used the power of words to help transform the lives of more than 100 people over the years, freeing them from torture, harassment, unjust imprisonment and more.

Some of the courageous people who need your voice this year:

- **Bernardo Caal Xol**, a Maya Q'eqchi' Indigenous leader who is in prison for defending the rights of his people in Guatemala;
- **Wendy Galarza**, a childcare worker in Mexico who was shot while protesting violence against women;

- **Imoleayo Michael**, a computer programmer who faces years in prison for protesting to #EndSARS in Nigeria;
- **Zhang Zhan**, a journalist imprisoned for reporting on Covid-19 in China;
- **Janna Jihad**, a 15-year-old journalist who faces threats for exposing systemic discrimination against Palestinians.

Last year, Amnesty supporters helped to free four prisoners of conscience and reunite them with their families, including Algerian journalist Khaled Drareni: "I want to thank everyone who supported me and who supported the prisoners of conscience because your support is essential for all of us."

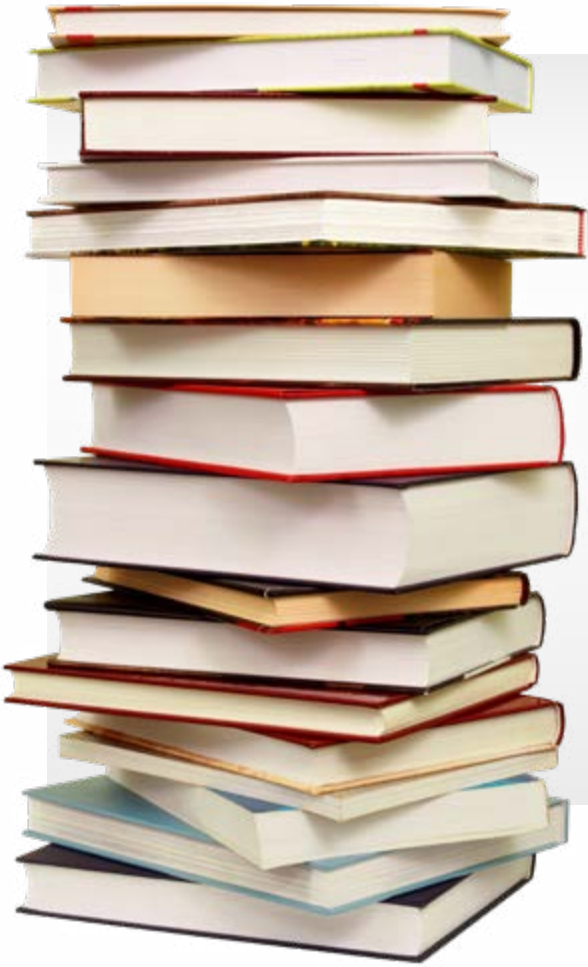
We are powerful when we act together.
Sign up for Write for Rights 2021 now
to change more lives!

Link to learn more and sign up

<https://writeathon.ca/>

**WRITE
FOR
RIGHTS**

AMNESTY
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STAY TUNED FOR OUR 2022 SELECTIONS!

In the meantime, if you have any questions
or comments, please contact us at:
Bookclub@amnesty.ca

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