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Raven's Ribbons

TEACHING TIPS

Raven's Ribbons is the story of Raven and his grandmother. They love dancing together at **round dances** and Raven loves seeing the **ribbon skirts** there. When he asks his **Nohkum** if a boy could ever wear a ribbon skirt, she tells him that she hasn't seen a boy wear a ribbon skirt before. Raven's grandmother tells him the very next morning, "I've lived for a long time, **Nosesim**, and I'm lucky to see beautiful things that I've never seen before." She then gives him a beautiful ribbon skirt for him to wear at the next round dance.

Raven's Ribbons has a lot of words you may not have seen before. Some words are from the **Cree language**. This is one of many, many Indigenous languages spoken in North America. Some of the other terms are ones you may not know. Find out what they mean below:

Round dances – Gatherings where people can dance in a circle with each other. The kind of round dance depends on the tribe or organization hosting it, but they can be social and/or ceremonial events. A Master of Ceremonies (MC) and/or stickman may give instructions for what to do and how to participate. There are usually drummers playing hand drums and singing. [Click here for some examples of round dance songs by the drum Northern Cree!](#)

Ribbon skirts – Skirts decorated with ribbons, usually in parallel lines near the middle/bottom of the skirt. Different tribes have different meanings around colors, patterns, and ribbon spacing, but what ribbon skirts have in common is that they are a way to connect to one's culture. They have historically been worn by women but are worn now by people of many different genders.

Nohkum – This word means "my grandmother".

Nosesim – This word means "my grandchild".

Two-Spirit – A term used by some Indigenous communities in North America to describe a person who embodies gender diversity and holds a unique role within their culture, often connected to identity, spirituality, and community responsibilities. The full meaning of Two-Spirit varies by tribe or

community, and it is rooted in Indigenous traditions and ways of knowing. Two-Spirit people are recognized and respected in many Indigenous cultures for the gifts and perspectives they carry.

CONNECTING TO YOUR OWN COMMUNITIES:

What colors do you like best? Raven loves his ribbon skirt with the colors of the rainbow on it. What are your favorite colors to wear? Do they change based on your mood, the seasons, or something else?

Spending time with loved ones. Do you have any favorite traditions with your family and friends? What makes those traditions special? Do they involve food, music, or something else? Do they happen around a certain time of year? What is your favorite part of those traditions?

Making things for others. In the story, Raven's grandmother makes ribbon skirts for many different people and says that "every ribbon skirt she makes is as beautiful and unique as the person she sews it for." Have you ever made something for someone else? What inspired you to make it? How did it make them feel to receive the thing you made for them?

MORE RESOURCES:

Gichi miigwech, thank you very much, for reading this book and these teaching tips. If you are interested in learning more about North American Indigenous people, here are some places you can start.

[Native-land.ca](#) – a mapping project that shows ancestral and current homelands of Indigenous people all around the world. Many tribes and nations are linked to more resources for further learning.

[Native Knowledge 360 \(NK360\)](#) – a learning and teaching resource by the National Museum of the American Indian for teachers, parents, and students.

These Teaching Tips were created by Alexandra Genia