

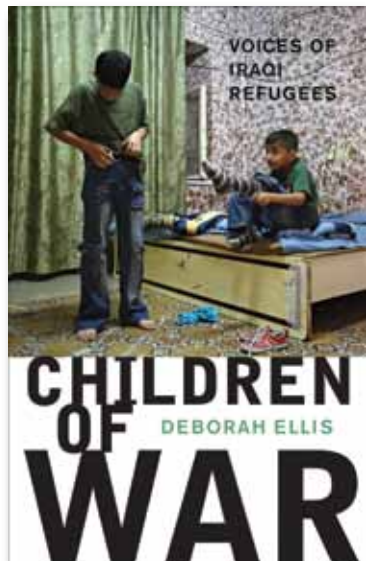
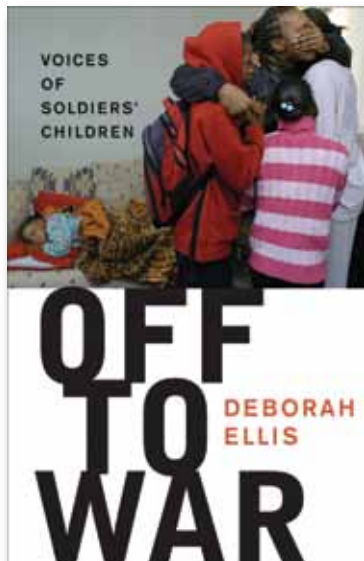
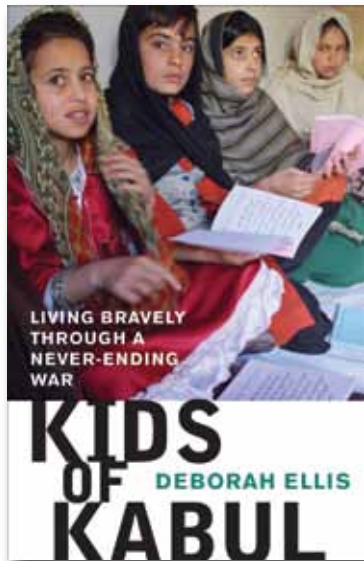


An Exclusive Preview

*LOOKS
LIKE
DAYLIGHT*



DEBORAH ELLIS



LOOKS LIKE DAYLIGHT VOICES OF INDIGENOUS KIDS DEBORAH ELLIS

Foreword by Loriene Roy

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From the Foreword by Lorie Roy

All royalties from the sale of this book will go to the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada, which supports and advocates for Indigenous youth, including those in foster care. Their vision is a generation of First Nations children who have the same opportunities to succeed, celebrate their culture and be proud of who they are as any other children in Canada.

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These are the stories of young people who have inherited the challenges of colonialism. These challenges of family dissolution, family/intimate partner violence, diabetes, alcoholism/drug abuse, foster care, bullying, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), self-abuse and suicide are the outcomes of the efforts of majority cultures to abolish traditional lifeways. These young people have faced new challenges that came with the elements and by human hand — floods, hailstorms, mold, petrochemical poisons.

Yet they live and, often, thrive ... And they are teaching us to dream — dreams tempered with reality and with the need to connect and serve ...

To some, the future is wide open. The message may not be, to all, that it gets better, but that staying strong in one's Indigenous past and present is the best of all worlds: "We're going to keep moving forward."

Lorie Roy, Ph.D., is Anishinabe, enrolled on the White Earth Reservation, a member of the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe. A former president of the American Library Association, she is a professor at the University of Texas at Austin. She is the founder and director of "If I Can Read, I Can Do Anything," a national reading club for American Indian students.

Author's Note

In the United States, 3.08 million people identify themselves as Indigenous. There are 565 federally recognized tribes. In Canada, there are 617 First Nations communities representing more than fifty nations.

Life expectancy for Indigenous people in North America is still ten years less than that of their non-Indigenous counterparts. Indigenous people are more likely to live in poverty, more likely to get tuberculosis, more likely to die as infants and less likely to go to university.

But statistics don't tell us everything.

They don't tell us about the healing that is being done, about the books that are being written, the music being recorded, the languages being revived and the families who are rediscovering each other.

Statistics don't tell us about the kids who are learning from the struggle and courage of the people who went before them, about the countless hours spent in community organizing, and about the determination to create a better future that will honor the pain of the past.

This book includes a small sample of these kids.

Most of the interviews were conducted in person. A few were done over the phone. Generous families and community leaders all over North America allowed me into their homes, their schools, community centers and churches. It was a privilege to meet them and to be able to record the words of their children.

This book is not intended to be a comprehensive look at the situations faced by Indigenous youth today. Large sections of the community, such as the First Nations of Quebec,

the California Mission Indians and the Indigenous peoples of Alaska and Hawaii are not represented — not because of lack of importance but because of the limitations of a single book.

During my writing career I have been able to meet with kids around the world whose lives have been turned upside down by people with money, power and education who ought to know better. Always, I have been enlightened by what these young people have to say. My heritage is English, Scottish and Irish, which means that there are things I simply cannot understand. The children in this book have a strong grasp of history, a clear understanding of the world around them and a hopeful vision of what the future could be.

I hope that everyone who reads this book will come away with a better understanding of the tremendous wealth of talent these eloquent young people can bring to the world.

Deborah Ellis, 2013

Pearl, 15

Kashechewan First Nation is a Cree reserve near James Bay in northern Ontario. During the summer, the only way in or out is by plane or barge or freighter canoe. There are winter roads when the temperatures are low enough for packed-down ice and snow. In recent years, climate change has led to warmer winters. The ice roads don't stay frozen as long as they used to and badly needed goods like kerosene are not able to get into the community.

Seventeen hundred people live in Kashechewan — descendants of people who once roamed the land hunting and fishing. The community has had to deal with high rates of youth suicide. In January 2007, twenty-one young people tried to kill themselves, one as young as nine years old. In late 2012, the chief declared a state of emergency. With winter closing in, the community was running out of fuel, and twenty-one homes were not fit to live in during the cold weather.

Pearl lives in Kashechewan.

Kashechewan is a small reserve. The roads are rough and narrow. We have a few houses that have been renovated and are in okay shape but most are not. The Band has been working at getting the homes better for the last three years.



Some kids think there's nothing to do on the reserve and that's why they get into drugs. I started smoking grass when I was eleven. I saw my older sister do it. Then I tried it and got addicted to it. I smoked it for a lot of years.

It wasn't hard to stop once I made the decision to. I told myself it wasn't good for me and I don't want to die at an early age.

Marijuana is around. People go out to the south and bring it in. I think people do drugs because they have losses in their family or losses in their spirit and they need to forget their pain for a while.

Or they can't find anything else to do. That's not my problem. I think there's lots to do. I go for walks along the dyke that holds back James Bay. I go out in the bush, go for picnics.

The reserve used to flood all the time. When my father was little it was really bad. I also remember floods happening. The whole community would gather on the big hill on the baseball field to get out of the way of the rising water. Graveyards would get flooded. They still do. The water treatment center would break down.

Our drinking water is safe now. A few years ago we had E. coli in the water, which can kill you. They sent us all out of the reserve. We had to go. It was an evacuation. Still, people got sick. They got terrible rashes and bad stomachs and got very weak.

Then later I was evacuated out to Stratford with my family. That's in the southern part of Ontario. We didn't choose where we went. The Band office made all the arrangements and that's where they found that would accept us. We stayed in the arena. I slept in the curling rink on a mat on the floor. The town was really welcoming to us. A lady came and took

some of us out to her farm for the day so we could enjoy her animals. A man from a nearby reserve came and showed us some First Nations medicines and gave us sweetgrass.

We didn't go to school while we were there. We just hung out. I went for walks around the town with my friends.

I remember seeing Justin Bieber but he wasn't so famous then. I was in an ice-cream shop trying to decide what to get. He was in the line behind me. I thought I was taking too long because I couldn't make up my mind. I told him to go ahead of me. He was really nice. He said, "Go ahead, take your time, no problem." I remembered him because he was so kind and then later I saw him on TV.

I'd never been that far south before. I was born in Thunder Bay and I'd been to Timmins when my sister was born. Mostly I've been on the reserve.

The south has a lot of rules and a lot of laws and a lot of noise.

I prefer up north. It gets nice and cold in the winter. I can go snowshoeing and skidooing.

We go winter camping too. We stay in tents. We have a woodstove in the tent that dies out at three in the morning. I have to get up and feed it so we don't freeze.

I go hunting geese with my father in the winter. We sit and wait and talk in quiet voices. We see the trees, the little birds chirping. We see little seals. I've caught three seals.

I know about guns. I use a 20-gauge shotgun, which is bigger than a 12-gauge. It's really big. I taught myself to shoot by first using a BB gun and aiming at cans.

With geese you shoot fast and aim at the head. I've been shooting geese since I was six.

I do most of the work. I learned when I was little how to pluck the goose, cut it open, take out the organs, cook it on

the fire, chop the wood for the fire, go into the bush to find the wood — all of it. It's a natural thing for young women to do. In the south, kids are not allowed to do anything except watch TV.

I like being up north because I'm not lazy. I can be healthy. I'll be able to tell my kids and grandkids about my adventures and show them how they can do the same things.

Up north we eat food from the land and food that's shipped in. I don't eat a lot, just little amounts every day, enough to fuel me.

I love helping the elders, chopping wood, cleaning their yards. It's a sign of respect to do things for them. Whenever we go hunting we bring back geese for them. Or I can give them a ride, like a taxi, but without paying. I don't have a driver's license. No one on my reserve cares about that. I taught myself to drive. Some days I'll borrow a relative's truck and drive around looking for elders who need a ride.

I taught myself how to draw as well. I like to draw Native art, things from nature. I get drawing tips from school, then I keep working on it until I get it right.

I'm a writer as well. Whenever I'm bored and have nothing to do, I get a scrap of paper and write down what's on my mind. I show these thoughts to my mom, but mostly I keep them private. I write poetry too. I just write down what my heart is saying and it comes out like a poem.

I'm good at school. I was an honor student in grade six. In grade seven I missed a lot of school because I was always out in the wild. I still go when I can. Sometimes to hunt, sometimes to just be there.

I go alone into the bush. I have this place I've been to a lot with my grandfather. When we go together we just sit and talk. When I go alone the animals come up to me. I sit

very still so they're not afraid. They think I'm just part of the forest. I bring food for them. Squirrels, raccoons, fox. I feed them and talk to them.

This place is our land. There are beautiful trees around me. Me and Grampa built benches using just wood, without nails. He taught me to make fire without matches or lighters, using rocks to make sparks on grass and adding wood slowly. It's all about taking time and not rushing things when you're in the wild.

When I'm out in the bush by myself I have no worries. I know I can care for myself. I can find meat and cook it. Sometimes I don't even bother to cook it. I just eat it raw. If I don't hunt I'll take meat from home — bear, moose, caribou, deer, beaver. It's all healthier to eat raw.

My parents are both from the north and they had a good experience of school. But my grandparents went to residential school and it was not good. They got hit when they spoke their language. The nuns told them to wash their faces with Javex bleach because their skin was dark. My grandparents were taken far away from their families when they were four and didn't get back home again until they were eighteen. They couldn't go home to visit. They simply lost their parents and their parents lost them.

But my grandparents were smart. They didn't listen to the nuns. They kept speaking their language when the nuns and priests weren't around. They weren't brainwashed.

My grandfather is a windtalker. He prays and speaks to the wind and gets answers. He goes out with a hand drum when it is very windy and sings.

When I'm older I'm going to be a Sundancer. That's a Cree person who dances for three days without eating or drinking. You dance this in the wild, when the sun is bright orange in

the evening. I'm already a Fancy Shawl dancer and I can sing with a hand drum in my first language.

I'm a youth counselor on my reserve. I work with kids ages ten to twelve. We do all kinds of activities, share stories, do things to keep them busy. They come to me for advice sometimes. I tell them that we may struggle, but all they need to do is to make the right choices.

I plan to stay in school, get a job, travel and see the world. You can meet different people that way, share your stories and make friends.

I'm thinking of going into police work. On my reserve, the police are lazy. If I become a police officer I'll never use a car. I'll walk around and know what's going on and people will know that they can trust me.

Xavier, 10

Formal education has historically been a way to kill off Indigenous peoples in North America. Forcing children into residential schools, separating them from their traditional languages, culture, foods and customs, separating them from their land and families was bad enough. In addition, the physical and sexual abuse that happened in many schools (where there were often harsh living conditions, poor diets and exposure to diseases) has led many generations to have a negative view of formal education. This in turn has led to high high-school drop-out rates for Indigenous students across North America.

Through the efforts of many people, this has started to change. There are universities for Indigenous students, such as the First Nations University in Saskatchewan and Haskell Indian Nations University in Kansas. Aboriginal centers in universities provide a gathering place for students, a place to feel at home away from home. Laurentian University has a program that allows First Nations students to earn university credits while they are still in high school, to give them the confidence that they can go on and complete a degree. Some elementary schools have made a commitment to showcase and celebrate all the cultures represented by the student body, including Indigene-



ous cultures. There are mentorship programs, scholarships and a growing job market for young professionals.

Xavier is a young man just at the beginning of his journey.

I'm a member of the Nez Perce tribe of Idaho, although we moved to Spokane, Washington, when I was just a baby. I was born in Lewiston, which is right next to the reservation. I love going back there to visit my grandparents. I also love living in the city.

I'm proud to be from the Nez Perce tribe because it is the tribe of Chief Joseph, one of the great chiefs. They found gold on our land a long time ago and the government took our land away. They told the Nez Perce to leave but of course they didn't want to. The army came and Chief Joseph was afraid everyone would be killed. So he led his people on a long march. Even then the soldiers kept coming. They kept wanting to kill the Native people so that the white people could get the gold.

Really, I'm a mixture of people. My father's father is African American. I'm also part Mexican. My great-grandfather was José Hernandez. He died before I was born.

I'm in fifth grade. Math is okay, but I sometimes have trouble with fractions. I like reading best, especially books by Andrew Clements. He wrote *Frindle*.

My father's name is Raphael. He's a university professor. My mother's name is Gloria. She has a master's of social work. I have two older sisters and two younger sisters, and I'm right in the middle.

It's because of my sister Sophie that I got into running.

She was doing cross-country, but my dad didn't want her walking home from practice by herself. So I started tagging along with her so she wouldn't be alone. Then I decided to start running just to pass the time while I waited for her. And I discovered I liked it.

I didn't win my first race, but I came in second. Then I got second in an all-city mile run.

Sophie doesn't do cross country anymore. She does dance — ballet — which is also hard work.

I train with the Spokane Mercury Track Club. My events are the 200, the 400 and the 800 yard runs. We're divided into age groups. Spokane has lots of good parks for running. I run these races and I practice and I run on the treadmill too. Plus I play basketball and football. I really love football.

My family are all athletes. My father played basketball at Lapwai High School on the reservation, and then he played for Eastern Washington University. That's where he teaches now. My mom played sports all through high school. She went to the same school as my dad. That's how they met. She got an all-state award in basketball. She also played baseball and volleyball. Lapwai is a town on the reservation. It means Land of the Butterflies.

My mom's dad was Larry McFarlane Sr. He died in 1971. He was a really good man and served in the military. My Gramma Rosa is still alive. She played sports in school too. I have a step-grandfather, Papa John.

My grampa on my father's side, Jeff Guillory, played football for the Dallas Cowboys.

All these people in my family doing things makes me want to try harder and do more, so they'd be proud of me. And because my parents are big on education, I want to do well in school too.

I love going back to the reservation on holidays to see my Gramma Rosa and my Gramma Connie and my grandfathers and all my cousins. Lots of cousins. We have a whole lot of fun. We can see big hills behind Gramma Rosa's house. There's woods to play in. We make forts, play in the creek, run around in all the space. It's not like the city. There's room and silence and not a lot of cars. You feel really free there.

It doesn't make a difference to people in Spokane that I'm Native. In sports it's all about the sport, not about who's white and who's Native or whatever. But there is something special about being on the reservation and you're surrounded by people who have your blood and the same history.

There are white people on the reservation too. They farm some of the land and pay rent to the tribe. I don't know if there are any problems. I don't pay attention to that anyway. When I'm there I'm too busy playing with my cousins.

I'm starting to learn how to run. In the beginning, when I first started doing long runs, I'd go into a sprint right from the start, and then I'd get too tired to keep it up. But now I start slow and keep that pace, then I have lots of energy left to do a fast sprint at the very last. The other runners don't see me coming!

It's very exciting to go to the big races, with everybody in the stands, cheering for all the runners. I get a nervous feeling in my stomach. I don't eat too much before the race. Just a snack and I drink water. When I'm not racing, my favorite food is spaghetti.

I've won some races, first place, second place. Last summer I went to the USATF National Junior Olympic Track and Field Championships in Wichita, Kansas. I brought home a medal. It was really intense. For a competition like that, you can't eat junk food or stay up late if you want to do a good

run. You should eat a lot of protein and get enough rest.

It was intense but it was also fun. I liked hanging out with the other athletes, these other kids who liked to run and do things. It was cool, being with that many runners from all over. Before the 400 meet, there was a storm, and it got rained out for a while. We all hung out. It was a really good time.

My parents make sure we know all about our history and our culture — all of our cultures. We're a pretty busy family, and we don't waste a lot of time on things that aren't important. Although I do like playing this really old video game of Dad's. It's called Technoball and it's from a really long time ago, like 1991.

As I get older I want to continue to be an athlete and get good grades. Of course I'm going to go to college. I want to end up with some sort of big-time job — engineering, business, some kind of big career like that. And I'll keep playing sports.

Deborah Ellis says her books reflect “the heroism of people around the world who are struggling for decent lives, and how they try to remain kind in spite of it.” Whether she is writing about families living under Taliban rule in Afghanistan, street children in Pakistan, the coca protests in Bolivia, or the lives of military children, she is, as *Kirkus* attests, “an important voice of moral and social conscience.”

Deborah has won the Governor General's Award, the Ruth Schwartz Award, the University of California's Middle East Book Award, Sweden's Peter Pan Prize, the Jane Addams Children's Book Award and the Vicky Metcalf Award for a Body of Work. She recently received the Ontario Library Association's President's Award for Exceptional Achievement and she has also been named to the Order of Ontario.

She is best known for The Breadwinner Trilogy, set in Afghanistan and Pakistan — a series that has been published in twenty-five languages, with more than one million dollars in royalties donated to Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan and Street Kids International.



“It’s your life. Find people who will help you live it.” — Tingo, 14

“If the white world thinks Native kids are worthless, then the best answer we can give them is to become the best — the best athletes, the best scholars, the best lawyers, the best parents — whatever. Not for them. For ourselves.” — Brittany, 17

“Anger is useful only if you use it to get yourself to do something positive.”
— Zack, 16

“We don’t have a problem with secrets. People here look after each other. There’s always an open door.” — Cohen, 14

“If I had all the power in the universe, I’d take away the chemical plants, make the reserve a bit bigger and have everything clean and good again.” — Miranda, 12

Looks Like Daylight
Voices of Indigenous Kids

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