

Chalk Talk

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Letter from the Editor

Dear Subscribers,

This week I attended a presentation by Stephen Lewis who recounted his experiences as former UN Special Envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa. He spoke of a study done by renowned African humanitarian and social activist, Graça Machel, on the ['Impact of Armed Conflict on Children'](#) for UNICEF which asked children in poor, war-torn, or AIDS ridden countries what they most wanted. The number one answer was 'to go to school'. The report concluded that school was the anti-thesis of conflict in a child's psyche, representing a safe place where they could learn.

Mr. Lewis' accounts of the crisis in Africa were disturbing and heart-breaking; more than once his voice broke with emotion at recalling what he had witnessed. I have to be honest that I was concerned about the impact of these details on the fifty or so, 11 and 12 year-olds that were in attendance. But it was clear during the question period that followed, that Mr. Lewis' remarks had made an impression on these students that was a positive one. They lined up to ask questions about what they could do, how their schools could help, whether they could 'twin' with an African school. They spoke of fundraisers to buy books and soccer balls to send to their peers. More than anything, though, they wanted to **understand** what was going on and why it was happening.

Conflict, famine, displacement and disease seen through the eyes of someone who has experienced it first-hand is a powerful way to understand a current or historical event. This week's Chalk Talk, features two distinct writing opportunities that encourage high school students to explore significant happenings, to share their stories and to voice their opinions.

CoEd Communications is dedicated to supporting the important work of teachers by providing resources on a range of topics for the classroom. We invite you to visit our website at 4edu.ca to view the many free teachers' resources on offer.

[Let us know what you think!](#)

Mary Korach

The Colonel Douglas H. Gunter History Awards



In 2007, the [Canadian War Museum](#) will award up to five \$1,000 prizes to the winners of its annual [Colonel Douglas H. Gunter History Awards](#). The awards are funded by the Friends of the Canadian War Museum, through a bequest from Colonel Douglas H. Gunter's family. The nationwide awards are open to graduating secondary school students.

The theme for this year is **Canada's Changing Role in Afghanistan**. Students' original works can explore any aspect of Canada's presence in Afghanistan and the nature of, or reasons for, any changes in that presence. Questions to be considered might include: What Canadian interests are served by the ongoing mission? How has it affected Canadians at home and internationally? How have the Afghan people responded, or been affected? Completed applications must be postmarked and mailed no later than March 15, 2007. To download the application form, [click here](#).

The Canadian War Museum is Canada's national museum of military history, and offers a wide range of meaningful learning opportunities for students from kindergarten through senior high school. Programs are designed to help students discover how war has affected them and their country, and support Ontario and Quebec curricula in the areas of history, geography, language, visual arts and social studies. To download or to order a copy of the **2006-2007 School Programs Guide**, [click here](#).



Canadian Soldiers assault the Whale's Back mountain in

Mary Kovack

Mary Kovack

Canadian Soldiers assault the Whale's Back mountain in Afghanistan 2002. Photo credit: Stephen Thorne [DSCN0708] Featured in [Afghanistan: A Glimpse of War](#), a new exhibition at the Canadian War Museum from February 9, 2007 to January 6, 2008

OUR STORY

ABORIGINAL WRITING CHALLENGE



Our Story is a national storytelling initiative to educate Canadians about the defining moments in history that have shaped this country and its Aboriginal people.

Take part in the **2007 Canadian Aboriginal Writing Challenge** — a short story contest for young Aboriginal Canadians (ages 14-18). **The Dominion Institute** is challenging young Aboriginal Canadians across the country to write a short story about a defining moment in Aboriginal history. Students will have the opportunity to win [great prizes](#) and be profiled on TV.

The new [Teacher's Guide](#) will help engage your entire class in the Aboriginal Writing Challenge. Classroom activities will help your students brainstorm, debate and reflect on historical events. The historical event can be of personal or national significance and date as far back as a traditional legend or as recent as the Caledonia land dispute. Participants are also encouraged to be creative in their choice of writing styles. For ideas on some alternative writing styles [click here](#).

Participants are encouraged to read the [Contest Rules](#) before submitting a story. You may find it helpful to read the [2006 Submissions](#). You can also access the [Six Steps to Writing Historical Fiction](#) to inspire the creative process.

Click on [2007 Contest](#) to go to the official website or call 1-866-701-1867 to find out more. Submissions are due May 6, 2007. All stories will be reviewed by an expert panel of Aboriginal leaders and authors, who make up our Advisory Committee. Group submissions are eligible to win additional prizes. Teachers should visit the [Teaching Tools](#) page for information on group submissions.



'Three Day Road' (Penguin, 2005) — by Joseph Boyden, Canadian Author

The novel was inspired by the life of Ojibwa Francis Pegahmagabow, the legendary First World War sniper. It's told partly from the perspective of Xavier Bird, a Cree soldier who returns to Northern Ontario after the war, wounded in body, crushed in spirit, and addicted to morphine. Xavier is met in Moose Factory, Ontario, by his aunt Niska, and as she paddles him back to her home in the bush, he recalls the bloody experiences of the war. Meanwhile Niska attempts to keep him alive by narrating her own life story. The novel encompasses a myriad of themes, the motif of death being foremost, and it parallels the brutal massacre known as the first modern war and the destruction of native culture with subtle poignancy.

Still, the war has never been depicted the way it is in 'Three-Day Road', as a conflict between native and European culture and values. Boyden also argues that the native story has gone missing from Canadian chronicles of war, especially given that so many native men signed up to fight. "Native soldiers are not recognized for their accomplishments. When you look at the number of native soldiers that actually volunteered for World War I and World War II, it is an incredibly high rate. Oftentimes full reserves were cleared of eligible aged men." He has his own theories as to why. "You must also remember that 1914, '15, and '16 was a very low, low point for native people. They had been forced onto the reserves not so long before. They had lost everything. They had lost touch with what they were ... which often involved a warrior tradition."

This is the case for Xavier and his best friend, Elijah, in 'Three-Day Road'. Their life in the bush develops in them the very skills that allow them to excel as snipers. Both possess an uncanny ability to lie still for hours in their small machine-gun nests, awaiting the right moment to attack. Each can sense, without seeing, human presence. Especially in their moccasins, which they are sometimes permitted to wear, they stalk the enemy as silently as shadows. Yet while Elijah thrives on hunting men, Xavier despairs over the waste of human life.

In conversation it is Boyden's respect for native culture that most clearly comes across. "More and more over the last many years — really, all my life — I've had an Anishnabe vision of the world," he says. "We have a way in the West of looking at man as the top of the food chain — we control the world. Well, the Ojibwe view is completely opposite: even rocks are higher on the scale than us, because you need a rock to build a fire. You need a rock to build a house. You need deer to eat. You need moose to eat. We are reliant on everything. But none of these things need to rely on us. We should be looking at ourselves as in debt to our natural world."

— Excerpted from [Way of the warrior: Joseph Boyden brings new voice to First World War epic](#) — Donna

In the News

[Climate change 'unstoppable'; 'We're just going to have to live with it,' top U.S. scientists says](#) – Seth Borenstein, Associated Press, [TheStar.com](#), February 2, 2007

The warning from a top panel of international scientists is blunt and dire: “Warming of the climate system is unequivocal,” the cause is “very likely” man-made, and the menace will “continue for centuries.” Authors of the 21-page report released today by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change placed the onus on governments to stop prevaricating and take action. Among other things, the report highlighted “increases in global average air and ocean temperatures, widespread melting of snow and ice, and (a) rising global mean sea level.” It said man-made emissions of greenhouse gases can already be blamed for fewer cold days, warmer nights, killer heat waves, floods and heavy rains, devastating droughts and an increase in hurricane and tropical storm strength — particularly in the Atlantic Ocean. “This is just not something you can stop. We’re just going to have to live with it,” study co-author Kevin Trenberth, director of climate analysis at the U.S National Center for Atmospheric Research, said in an interview.

[Firm 'over the moon' after NASA deal](#) – Scott Simmie, Staff Reporter, [TheStar.com](#), February 1, 2007

The company that says it will build a spaceport in **Cape Breton, Nova Scotia**, has just signed an agreement with NASA the firm says is a significant milestone on its path toward orbital space travel. “We’re ecstatic, we’re over the moon,” said Dr. Chirinjeev Kathuria, chairman of PlanetSpace. “When I was a kid I always dreamed of working with NASA, but to actually sign a space act agreement is amazing,” he said from Chicago. PlanetSpace is one of two firms with which NASA Thursday announced it has signed Commercial Space Transportation Capabilities Agreements.

[Fidgeting in classroom may help students combat childhood obesity](#) – Chris Williams, Associated Press, [canada.com](#), July 20, 2006

The fidgety boys and girls in Phil Rynearson's classroom get up and move around whenever they want, and that's just fine with him. In fact, stretching, swaying and even balancing on big wobbly exercise balls are the point of this experimental classroom. The goal is to see if getting children to move even a little can help combat childhood obesity.

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