

Novel Study and
Teacher's Guide for

Finders Keepers

by Andrea Spalding

CLASSROOM USES

Finders Keepers is an educational and engaging young adult novel set in Southern Alberta which deals with issues relating to learning disabilities, cross-cultural relationships (between Whites and First Nations) and cultural heritage. It has relevance for children and adults in all communities dealing with these issues and offers an opportunity to make an insightful connection between the book and similar issues experienced in the students' own lives. It will be useful for teachers of upper elementary and junior high grades and for parents home schooling their children.

Finders Keepers may be enjoyed as a novel study, but may also be used as the core of an interdisciplinary unit on geography, history, science, the arts and personal development. It may also be used as a means of introducing units on First Nations, The Prehistoric World, Cultural and Family Heritage, the Prairies or Personal Development.

SOCIAL STUDIES, SCIENCES

Set in the present, but dealing in part with ancient First Nation cultures, this book offers an opportunity to contrast both contemporary and traditional cultures as well as different urban (small town) and rural lifestyles. The buffalo jump and associated archaeological discoveries allow for study of ancient lifestyles dependent on the buffalo. The book revolves around the discovery and significance of a stone point (p. 85) and describes the use and making of a spear thrower or atlatl (p. 86).

Vivid descriptions of the Fort Macleod region of Southern Alberta can be expanded upon to take in a study of Canada's entire prairie region. The contrast of White and First Nations cultures currently inhabiting the region, and those present there historically, or in other regions of Canada (e.g. West Coast), will also allow for a greater appreciation of the movement of cultural communities.

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The stone artifact is a central symbol in the novel and much discussion of its relevance and significance, both to the museum and interpretive centre, and to the boys, invites a classroom discussion of heritage objects and sites and their interpretation. Historical photographs, such as the one mentioned in the story, also introduce questions for students relating to personal, regional and national heritage.

VISUAL ARTS, MUSIC, WRITING

The arts play a significant part in the story, providing a number of opportunities to develop interesting creative projects around the book. The boys discuss First Nations' design when they look at beadwork in the museum (p. 34), and at pictures of tipis (p. 69). Music and dance are explored in chapter 16 when Danny attends a pow wow. In his own culture, Danny watches TV shows (Star Trek, p. 22) and dreams of pop music groups (p. 54).

Danny is not a passive observer of the arts, but engages in building projects himself repairing a helicopter (p 100), and preparing a model of the buffalo jump to complement his oral presentation in the classroom (Ch. 21). He also creates his own stories (p. 124), and records them with sound effects (p. 126). By exploring these possibilities themselves, students enhance their own creative skills and understanding.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

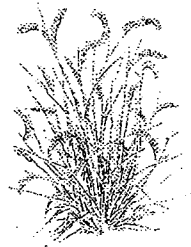
"Everyone has a gift, but some take a while to find it" says the Peigan elder (p. 75). In the story, Danny finds his personal gifts, and with new confidence comes to

deal successfully with his problems with school, replacing his tendency to escape into fantasy and evade problems with more realistic strategies. His friend Joshua also develops, finding a way to earn money doing something he enjoys, despite it being in an environment that could threaten a First Nations child. Adults grow too; Danny's father comes to terms with his son's limitations and lack of interest in his business, and Danny's teacher, Mr Berg, learns to employ new methods of teaching.

SETTING THE SCENE

The Region

Finders Keepers is set in southern Alberta, where the prairie landscape rolls away to the horizon. (The decorative chapter heading is the Blue Grama grass characteristic of the prairies). To the west, the snow-clad Rocky Mountains glitter on the skyline, and give rise to the Oldman River (named for a Blackfoot mythological figure, Na'pi -The Old Man).



The small prairie community of Fort Macleod owes its origin to the Northwest Mounted Police, who built a fort nearby in 1874. The town has preserved its past in the small museum which is a re-creation of the Mounties' fort, one of the region's most visited tourist attractions.

Archaeology

Archaeology is the study of people of the past through the physical evidence they have left, and it is particularly important for periods before written history 2

begins. (It is often confused with palaeontology, the study of fossil life, which also excavates much of its evidence).

Stone artifacts like the one found by Danny are among the most important evidence of the past because they survive conditions that have destroyed almost all other evidence of its kind. Types of points and other artifacts are often named after places where they are first found.

Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump

Northwest of Fort Macleod the Porcupine Hills get their name from the forests on their spine. On the southeastern edge of the hills is the site now known as Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump. It is one of the oldest prehistoric sites in the North American plains and was used to hunt buffalo 5500 years ago. The hunt ended there 150 years ago. Its name derives from the story of a young man who wanted to see the buffalo fall but was killed in the process. The site is explained by an imaginative interpretive centre, in which First Nations participate.

Archaeologists have found evidence of an early period of prehistory (to about 900 yrs B.C.) when the principal weapon was a lance thrown with the help of a throwing stick, or atlatl. In a later period (to about 1850 A.D.) stone points became much smaller as a result of the invention of the bow. The historic period officially dates from the point of contact (when western peoples first met with First Nations - 1754 in Southern Alberta) and begins a period which sees ancient weapons gradually replaced by guns.

First Nations

The people once known as "Indians" are now referred to as First Nations people, a change in terminology which reflects a more respectful view of their role in Canadian society. In legal terms a nation is an independent group of people, governing themselves. The treaties between the British and Canadian governments are often regarded as treaties between independent nations.

Many people forget that First Nations across the country are as diverse in culture (with different languages, customs, and dress) as other Canadians whether English, French, Chinese, Ukranian or "East" Indian.

First Nations of Southern Alberta belong to a Blackfoot-speaking group including the Blood (Kainai), Blackfoot (Siksika) and Peigan (Pikuni). Joshua and his grandfather belong to the Peigan nation who now live largely in a reserve near Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump. Others live south of the border in Montana.

At the time of contact the Peigan were an independent nation travelling through the region hunting buffalo, and living in tipis. By 1880, the buffalo were gone, the Blackfoot had signed a treaty, and they were largely confined to reserves. In the 1990s, they retain some traditional practices (related to religious beliefs, respect for elders, music and dancing). They also participate in modern western culture, with an educational system based on traditional and mainstream cultures.

Races and Cultures

Settlers in the region are largely of

European, Eastern Canadian, American, and Japanese origin. Danny's Ukrainian ancestors were subject to strong prejudice in earlier years and the lingering memory helps Danny to relate to prejudice against the First Nations. The book deals subtly with these tensions which exist behind the story.

First Nations peoples hold varying views about sharing their culture. The Sundance photograph discussed in the book was taken at a ceremony that some would regard as sacred and private, yet it has been published in a number of places including a Peigan school text.

The Presence of the Past

Though the novel has a strong regional focus, it deals with important universal themes, one being the significance of the past. This theme is explored via Danny's discovery of an ancient stone point, his visits to the museums, and his identification with First Nations people.

The physical and oral evidence of First Nations heritage was once collected by mainstream society as if by right, without much concern for the rights of its owners. Now dialogue between First Nations people and those in Canadian heritage preservation is addressing these issues.

Regional museums interpret their regions, while interpretive centres usually focus on a specific site or story. The interpretive centre at Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump is real, as is the museum at Fort Macleod. Specific details of people and policies used in the story are fictitious, but the issues they represent affect museums across the country.

Learning Disabilities and Human Potential

Children traditionally find it difficult to discover their strengths, identify and accept or overcome their weaknesses, and find their voice when confronted with conflicting expectations from educators, parents and society at large. Danny's learning disability is primarily a form of dyslexia which (with other serious learning disabilities) may be present in as many as 10% of the population. Such disabilities can lead to increasing frustration at school and home.

Although Joshua is not dyslexic, he is dealing with racial stereotypes and exclusion. He also enjoys finding an outlet for his math skills.

MAIN CHARACTERS

Page references are given to key incidents.

Danny Budzynski is a boy of 10 who lives on a farm near Fort Macleod. Danny is imaginative, but has difficulties in school (p. 15), and is likely to panic under pressure (p. 17). As the story develops it becomes clear this is a result of learning disabilities.

Joshua Brokenhorn is about the same age as Danny, and lives on the Peigan Reserve.

Mike is Danny's school friend, but does not share in all his interests at home.

Brett Gibson is the class bully.

Charlie Budzynski, Danny's father, leases out his farm and runs a store in Fort Macleod. He is also on the museum board.

Jeanie Budzynski, Danny's mother is sympathetic to his problems - the text hints she may have learning disabilities too (p. 20).

Joshua's grandfather (description p. 9) is a Peigan elder. Joshua calls him "Naaahsa", the Blackfoot name for grandfather.

Mr. Berg is Danny's teacher - sometimes nicknamed "the Iceberg."

Al Hubner is the principal of Danny's school, and a friend of Danny's father.

Carol Wakefield is a friend of Danny's mother, who is teaching at University, and researching children's learning.

Mrs Brokenhorn, Joshua's mother, is an archaeologist working at Head-Smashed-In.

PLOT OUTLINE

This outline of the book will help you to locate passages to read or discuss.

Finders (Chapters 1-12)

Chapter 1

Danny runs away from school and meets Joshua. They tease each other about stereotyped views of each other's cultures, and Danny goes with Joshua to see eagles.

Chapter 2

Joshua and Danny find Joshua's grandfather on a hilltop. Danny is uncomfortable, but gradually becomes aware of his surroundings and eventually realizes he is eye-to-eye with a Bald Eagle. On his way home, Danny finds a stone point.

Chapter 3

Danny comes home to discover his mother upset, and finds it hard to explain why he ran away from school. He tells his mother that he is dreading a Social Studies project. They explore solutions for his problems.

Chapter 4

Danny wakes from a nightmare in which the stone point was a protective charm, and he decides to learn more about it. In town he meets Joshua again. With the sale of collected pop bottles they earn the price of admission to the museum, and Danny is embarrassed to find Joshua can work out the math better than he can. The museum is closed, and one of the museum volunteers will not let Danny in with Joshua. They sneak into the museum anyway.

Chapter 5

Danny shows Joshua the point, and realizes that his claim to ownership is not uncontested. He might have found it, but should he keep it?

Chapter 6

Danny and Joshua sneak into the Indian exhibit, and look at stone points. Joshua is concerned that a historic photograph of the Sundance is on display.

Chapter 7

On Monday Danny returns to school to face his problems. He makes it to the principal's office - and throws up. Unexpected sympathy from the principal and his teacher encourage him to return to class.

Chapter 8

Even before class starts, Danny is confronted by the class bully over the state of a toy helicopter. At recess, Danny avoids a fight by offering to fix the helicopter, shifting class sympathy to his side.

Chapter 9

Trying to make a new friend, Danny takes Mike to see his secret tipi. Mike makes insensitive remarks about First Nations traditions and tries to buy the ancient point. Danny imagines how it was made.

Chapter 10

In the library, the class researches the Social Studies project. Danny's poor spelling gets him into trouble. Danny's mother's friend Carol comes to test him to find ways to help with his problems.

Chapter 11

Danny talks to Carol about his problems and fears. Carol explains that she too has learning disabilities, and tests Danny's skills. By the time the tests are finished, school is over, and things are looking up.

Chapter 12

Danny meets Joshua at Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump. They visit a tipi village and watch Joshua's grandfather in a leading role in a traditional ceremony. Later Naaahsa explains how the jump was used, and tells Danny he has the gift of imagination.

Keepers (Chapters 13 to 22)

Chapter 13

Back in the interpretive centre, Danny discusses his interest in First Nations' culture

with Naaahsa. They talk about cultural symbols in each others' religions.

Chapter 14

Joshua takes Danny to meet his mother, an archaeologist employed at the centre. His point is approximately 8000 years old, and might have been used with an atlatl. When she points out to Danny that the point is not necessarily his, he runs away.

Chapter 15

Danny wonders who the point belongs to and imagines the original maker. In Mrs Brokenhorn's office, Danny explains he needs the point for his project, and wants time to figure out who it belongs to.

Chapter 16

At the pow wow, Danny watches while Joshua joins the dancers. They eat bannock and Danny joins in a friendship dance.

Chapter 17

Danny fixes Brett's helicopter. He raises the question of the Sundance photograph in the museum with his dad, who plans to investigate the matter further.

Chapter 18

Joshua visits Danny's "tipi" where Danny is trying to copy the stone point. They make spears and try to throw them with an atlatl. In town, the old-fashioned store is busy with tourists, and Danny's dad gets both boys serving ice cream. Danny doesn't mind and Joshua enjoys dealing with money in the till.

Chapter 19

Danny has finished making a lance, and tests it with the atlatl. Instead of an imaginary buffalo, he almost impales a neighbor's bull and has to rescue his lance.

Chapter 20

Danny learns that the tests show his intelligence, but that his disabilities mean he learns in different ways. Carol gives him a calculator and tape recorder, and explains that she has asked Mr. Berg to let Danny present his big report orally instead.

Chapter 21

On the day of his presentation, Danny is surprised to find the principal and his mother in the class. After a moment of stage fright, he talks eloquently, shows his stone point and unveils a big model of the buffalo jump. The class and Mr. Berg. are impressed - Danny receives top marks!

Chapter 22

Danny and Joshua talk about the photograph to the museum board. Later Danny goes alone out on to the prairie with his point. He has decided what to do, and the eagles seem to approve his choice.

ACTIVITIES

The following suggestions for classroom activities for *Finders Keepers* illustrate the main discussion areas to do with archaeology, the prairies, First Nations, learning styles and self esteem. They can be addressed separately or as part of an integrated approach to curriculum. They include a wide variety of suggestions

including classroom discussions, research in the library and at home, hands-on activities, creative projects, and the interdisciplinary use of outside resources such as visiting speakers and field trips. Some activities are detailed, while others remain as suggestions which can be developed as the teacher wishes. For brevity, they are presented as a teacher would present them to the class.

LANGUAGE ARTS

What Do Our Names Mean?

Students may be amused by the graphic name of Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump. Contrary to popular belief, the name immortalizes not the demise of the buffalo, but the sad end of a young boy who wished to watch the buffalo fall over the cliff. He hid in a hollow at the cliff base and had his head smashed in when a buffalo landed on him.

Discuss with the students the meaning of names of places and people around them. Some students may have English names that once denoted an ancestor's profession (Smith - blacksmith,). Discussion could elicit similarities in other languages. Names rooted in other languages may be more complex to understand. (e.g. the Icelandic surname Eyvindson - "son of Eyvind" - which to the hometown denotes a family history). Many First Nations' names i.e. Brokenhorn refer to important cultural symbols or dreams.

Have the students research the meanings of their own names or those of places around your area. How many place names are of First Nations origin?

Why do so many natural sites (which must have originally had Native names) now appear in the English language?

Using The Glossary (p. 140 - 143)

Test student comprehension of unfamiliar words. Look at and discuss Blackfoot words. Can students find their meaning from the chapters of *Finders Keepers*?

Creative Writing Topics

1. Who daydreams like Danny? Write a short piece based on your daydreams.
2. Star Trek meets the Green Slime - write the scene for a TV script.
3. Imagine your life without one of the abilities you currently have. Write as though you are blind, deaf, speechless, or paralyzed and describe your day.

Creative Drama

1. Dramatize a scene from the book. Class members could do this in groups, recording the results using their own sound effects.

SOCIAL STUDIES

Students can use each other, the school, the public library or museum, family or friends as resources to individually research several relevant topics inspired by *Finders Keepers*.

1. What types of ancient artifacts are found in your area? What do they tell about your area's history?

2. Danny's find is part of the cultural heritage of his community. What objects are culturally important to the families/ communities/ regions represented by students in your class?

3. Find out about the Southern Prairie region of Alberta where the story is set. Use atlases, nature and history books, and biographies to gain a more thorough knowledge of the area. What does the area look like? What plants and animals live there and how have people used them?

ART

Use art periods to make an elaborate 3-D class mural. Divide the class into four groups, one doing the buffalo jump and buffalo, another group creating the tipis and pow wow. A third group could recreate Danny's farm and the town of Fort Macleod, while a fourth group could make the fort.

As well as paint, use a variety of 3-D materials such as cotton batting and brown wool for the buffalo, and popsicle sticks for the fort. Actual grass and flowers can be used for the prairie. Research tipi designs and paint cone shapes for tipis.

HEALTHY LIVING/LIFE SKILLS

What are the preferred learning styles in your classroom? Some students learn better with written, visual or oral presentation. To illustrate different learning styles, play Kim's Game in three different styles on consecutive days. Make a large class graph of all the results.

1st day - Visual skills.

Present a covered tray containing 12 objects. Uncover it and let students look at it for one minute. Recover it. Students now have to list as many of the objects as they can remember. Start the class graph showing who remembered how many objects.

2nd day - Auditory skills.

Read out a list of 12 completely different objects. Wait one minute. Students write out a list of as many objects as they can remember. Add the results to the class graph you started earlier.

3rd day - Reading skills.

Hand out a written list of 12 objects. Students have one minute to memorize it. They come up to the teacher and individually whisper what they remember. Add results to class graph and analyze who excelled at what method.

OUTSIDE RESOURCES

Invite an Outside Speaker to your Class

1. Someone who is learning disabled
2. A member of a local First Nation's Group
3. An archaeologist
4. Andrea Spalding, author of *Finders Keepers*

Take a Field Trip

1. In Alberta, visit Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump and Fort Macleod Museum.
2. Visit an archaeological dig in progress
3. Visit a local museum showing prehistoric First Nations culture collections

BOOKS

These books are among many that provide background for teachers and parents.

Brown, Lauren. 1985. *Grasslands*. Alfred A. Knopf. Audubon Society Nature Guides. 606p.

Foster, John, Dick Harrison & I.S. MacLaren, eds. 1992. *Buffalo*. University of Alberta Press. 244p.

Helgason, Gail. 1987. *The First Albertans, An Archaeological Search*. Lone Pine. 222p.

Jobe, Ron. 1993. *Cultural Connections. Using Literature to Explore World Cultures with Children*. Pembroke Publishers Ltd. 155p.

Laird, Roderick D. 1992. *Tracks... On the Trail of the First Americans*. Volume (1. P.O. Box 117, Saratoga, Wyoming USA 82331. - re. making an atlas)

Meili, Dianne. 1991. *Those Who Know: Profiles of Alberta's Native Elders*. NeWest Press. 256p.

Reid, Gordon. 1992. *Head-Smashed in Buffalo Jump*. Boston Mills Press, 48p.

ADDRESSES ETC.

Fort Museum
P.O. Box 776
Fort Macleod
T0L 0Z0
(403) 553-4703)

Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump
Interpretive Centre
Box 1977
Fort Macleod, Alberta
T0L 0Z0
(403) 553-2731

Learning Disabilities Association of Canada:
200 - 323 Chapel St. SE
Ottawa, ON
K1N 7Z2
(613) 258-5721

PHOTOGRAPHS

(all by Andrea Spalding)

1. Archaeological excavation at Head-Smashed-In
2. Old Store, Fort Macleod. (Andrea had this in mind for Danny's father's store)
3. Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump
4. Tipi Village near Head-Smashed-In

ANDREA SPALDING



"*Finder's Keepers* is an important book for me," says Andrea Spalding. "Many of Danny's problems are also mine. I also have learning disabilities."

Andrea Spalding was born in the industrial city of Manchester, England where she grew up and trained as a teacher. She and her husband David came to Alberta in 1967, and raised three daughters there.

She has travelled extensively in the prairies, worked for a museum, been a heritage consultant, and continues to sing folk songs, tell stories and read her books in many schools. She started writing by entering a television play contest.

"I could imagine the story alright," explained Andrea, "but like Danny, I found writing it all down a problem. Fortunately, David could spell, and at first he typed the final drafts of all my work." Andrea won the competition, reworked the play and saw it filmed.

This led to a busy career writing for both radio and television (and hosting some of the programs) and writing curriculum material for Alberta schools. Andrea's first published book was co-written with Alberta pioneer Peggy Holmes, and told the story of Peggy's life.

Her picture book *The Most Beautiful Kite in the World* drew on childhood experiences of kite flying. Her interest in different cultures led to *A World of Stories*, a collection from different ethnic groups living in Alberta. By now a computer made life much easier. "If I can't spell the word," says Andrea, "the computer usually can."

Finders Keepers was in first draft when she moved to BC, but took a lot of rewriting. "It was hard to recreate the prairie on Pender Island," she says. "I put up a poster of a painted buffalo skull, and a photographic panorama of Head-Smashed-In was over my desk."

Andrea's concern for authenticity led her to check out the text with archaeologists and museum specialists.

"I had a psychologist read it - he also lent me his son and we visited Head-Smashed-In so that I could get the 10-year-old boys just right. A University specialist in learning disabilities tested me so that I could go through the examination Danny does in the book. The novel was also reviewed by a Peigan friend who is a trained archaeologist, and a teacher workshopped it in the classroom."

Andrea writes non-fiction as well as fiction, loves to travel to research new books, and visits schools whenever she can. She now tells stories to her grandsons, and lots of young friends in schools around Canada send her letters asking for more.

To Contact Andrea Spalding

Andrea Spalding is available to make presentations in your school or classroom related to *Finders Keepers* and her other writings, and as a resource person for professional development. Andrea is a trained teacher and an experienced storyteller and musician who has made hundreds of presentations to children, teachers, and educational conferences. Costs would include a fee and travel expenses which may be shared with other schools in your area.

She can be contacted at:

1105 Ogden Rd.
Pender Island, British Columbia
V0N 2M1,
Phone/fax (250) 629-2047

BUYING *FINDERS KEEPERS*

Copies of *Finders Keepers* and the Teacher's Guide may be ordered from bookstores. Should you have difficulty getting these materials please contact:

The Dundurn Group
Suite 500-3 Church Street
Toronto, Ontario
M5E 1M2
(416) 214-5544, ext. 234

A free Teacher's Guide is provided with each class set. A teacher's guide is also available for *White Jade Tiger* by Julie Lawson.

THE AUTHOR OF THIS GUIDE

David Spalding, also an author, participated in the research for Andrea's book and wrote the glossary. He has written award-winning radio programs for children and books on dinosaurs and other topics for adults.

***Finders Keepers* has been nominated for the following awards:**

Children's Book Centre
"Our Choice" Award 1995

Sheila Egoff Award for Children's
Literature B.C. Book Prizes 1996

National Chapter of Canada IODE
Violet Downey Book Award 1996

Ontario's Silver Birch Award 1997