

A Note from Kyla Bernard, Author of *Let's Play Waltes!*

In this story, Callie, a young Mi'kmaq girl from the Eskasoni First Nation, learns about the ancient Mi'kmaq game *Waltes*. In *Waltes*, players score points depending how dice land in a bowl. Asking guiding questions may encourage children to discuss their own cultural heritage, which helps them connect to the text. These questions may encourage children to ask their elders about cultural traditions.

Key Idea: *The Mi'kmaq use natural resources from their environment*

The Mi'kmaq have depended on natural resources for food, shelter, and play for thousands of years. *Waltes* uses natural equipment made by hand. Wooden sticks are used for counting, the dice can be made from bones or antlers, and the *Waltes* bowl is made of maple or birch burl. The 6 dice each have a painted/ decorated face.

Guiding Questions to use with students:

- Do you know what maple or birch burl is? Where do you think you might find a burl?
- *Waltes* players use sticks to keep score. How do you think the sticks help keep score?
- If we were going to invent a game using things we could find near our school, what could we use?

Key Idea: *Learning cultural traditions from elders*

In the story, Callie's grandfather teaches her a game he played when he was a child. *Waltes* is a traditional game that has been played for centuries. (The photo on page 3 shows Mi'kmaq children playing *Waltes* in 1936.) The Mi'kmaq have many traditions that are passed down from one generation to another—for example, making quilts like the one on page 8.

Guiding Questions to use with students:

- Does anyone play any traditional game?
- What other traditional activities are there? Who teaches you about traditions?

Let's Play *Waltes!* simplifies the *Waltes* scoring system. A real *Waltes* game has different phases and can go on for a very long time. Traditionally, there are 55 sticks: 51 regular sticks and 4 special sticks (shown on the cover). The 3 sticks with notches on one side are called the "old women" (worth 5 points each), while the "old man" has notches on both sides (worth 10 points).