

A Note from Kyla Bernard, Author of *Goat Island*

Goat Island is located in the largest Mi'kmaq community in Canada. This story is about Maya, a child from the Eskasoni First Nation, who makes connections to the land to help her better understand changes in seasons, temperature, and time. Many First Nations people have strong connections with nature because their communities lived off the land for thousands of years.

Key Idea: *The importance of making connections with the land and Mother Earth*

Maya spends a lot of time with her family at a cultural walking trail on Goat Island. She recognizes the changes in the land and in the wildlife she sees at specific times of the year. Mi'kmaq people had their own method of telling time, using the moon as the measurement of time passing. Maya also learns about the interconnectedness of Mother Earth and how animals respond to the changing seasons.

Guiding Questions to use with students:

- What are some things Maya notices when it is spring?
- What did Maya learn about crickets and their connection to nature?
- What does your family grow in the summer? (e.g., plants, trees, food)

Key Idea: *The importance of learning from our Elders*

Many First Nations people are careful observers of the land. These keen observations of the land, water, plants, and animals make them good hunters and gatherers, and allow them to prepare for cold winters and hot summers. Maya learns that careful observation is important. Through experiences with her parents, grandparents, Elders, and others in the community, she sees that many of these changes throughout the year can be observed anywhere—even in the school playground. She records her observations and shares her discoveries at Goat Island.

Guiding Questions to use with students:

- In what ways does Maya interact with the water on Goat Island?
- Why do you think it is important to learn about the land/environment?
- Is there a place where you and your family can observe similar and/or different changes?
- Who do you think taught Maya about the land?