Putting ideas into words

Three Cape Dorset youths publish children's book

by Jeanne Gagnon
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Kinngait/Cape Dorset

The story of a young girl who discovers there's nothing like home after spending the night alone with the spirits of her Inuit ancestors was penned by three Inuit youths.

Stephanie Weedmark, a Grade 6 student at Sam Pudlat School, along with her older sister, Joanne, and Arnakadiak Pootoogook, wrote Elisapee of the Arctic: Mallikjuak Adventure.

The 27-page book tells the story of Elisapee, a young girl who wants to escape her step-brother Charlie after he has taken her diary. Elisapee makes it to Mallikjuak Island Territorial Park on the causeway at low tide. Stone foundations of the homes of the Inuit ancestors, the Thule, are there. Stranded overnight by the tide, she stays in one of those homes but discovers the best place for her to be is at home.

The book was published by Littlefield and Cook and will eventually be available to libraries across Nunavut.

Stephanie, a 11-year-old student born and raised in Cape Dorset, said the writing was difficult and the story needed many revisions.

But all things considered, she said she enjoyed it and might consider becoming an author as an adult.

"We just think about it and wrote it. I liked everything about it (writing the book)," she said. "It makes me proud."

Year to compete

The three were provided with a story template they had to fill with details, descriptions and drawings to illustrate the story. The project took about a year to complete.

Sam Pudlat School Principal David Webber said he was pleased these students carried the project forward. He added, in his experience, few young people write these days.

"In order for the children to become bilingual, they must write and read," he said. "I would hope this might be a model for other children and encouragement for them to start doing more writing and start reflecting their culture in that writing."

The school library will carry a copy of the book and each teacher will have one in their classroom, said Webber.

"It's going to be an incentive for every child in the school to become a writer," he said.

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photo courtesy of David Webber

***Stephanie Weedmark reads** Elisapee of the Arctic: Mallikjuak Adventure, a book she wrote with her older sister Joanne and Arnakadiak Pootoogook. The book tells the story of a young girl who runs away from home to Mallikjuak Island Territorial Park but after spending a night there, she realizes home is the best place to be.*