

BOOK REVIEW

A Girl Called Echo: Northwest Resistance (Vol 3)

Katherena Vermette , Scott B. Henderson (Illustrator), Donovan Yaciuk (Colorist)

Winnipeg, MB: Highwater Press (2020) 47pp, paperback \$18.95

ISBN: 978-1-553-798316

Laura Forsythe, Laura.Forsythe@umanitoba.ca

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5662-9359>

University of Manitoba, Canada

DOI Number: <https://doi.org/10.26203/45q6-zg91>

Copyright: © 2021 Forsythe

To cite this book review: Forsythe, L. (2021). A Girl Called Echo: Northwest Resistance (Vol 3). *Education in the North*, 28(1) pp. 186-187.



This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-Non-commercial License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

BOOK REVIEW

A Girl Called Echo: Northwest Resistance (Vol 3)

Katherena Vermette, Scott B. Henderson (Illustrator), Donovan Yaciuk (Colorist)

Winnipeg, MB: Highwater Press (2020) 47pp, paperback \$18.95

ISBN: 978-1-553-798316

Laura Forsythe, Laura.Forsythe@umanitoba.ca

University of Manitoba, Canada

My nine-year-old daughter is no stranger to Echo Desjarlais and her opportunity to time travel to identity-forming Metis experiences in the 1800s. As we opened up the third volume in Katherena Vermette's Graphic Novel series Northwest Resistance, we are met with the familiar illustrations of Scott B. Henderson. Muted hues of the illustrations create an ambiance for the reader to begin to embrace Indigenous aesthetics, and there are various forms of sovereignty – both cultural and political in A Girl Called Echo. The teachings bestowed to the lead character speak to the resilience of her people both in her 21st century classroom, reconnection to her ancestry and the dreams into the distant past.

Within the visual narrative depicting the Battle of Batoche and the inner struggle of a troubled teenager, the level of education and previous knowledge of the novels' intricacies lends itself to a deeper understanding of the visual narratives. However, according to my child, the background and previous connection to the historical narrative is unnecessary as they appreciate what is on the paper.

Throughout the series the playlist and song selection of Echo add another layer to the storytelling by Vermette. Going beyond teenage angst and musical rebellion the songs are carefully curated by the author. During the classroom panels featuring a high school history teacher describing the encroachment of colonizers Echo selected Rage Against the Machines Freedom – a song dedicated to the Pine Ridge Reservation stand-off and the American Indian Movement.

Vermette in Vol 3 depicts the struggle to defend Metis and First Nations land with their lives. Houle explains that throughout Indigenous history, the

“loss of land has meant not just the losing of farmland, hunting grounds, and fishing areas; it has simultaneously led to the physical/environmental and spiritual/philosophical destruction of aboriginal peoples and their homes through desecration.” (Nemiroff *et al.*, 1992)

The hopelessness resulting in surrender at the Battle of Batoche to Middleton and the need to relocate ends the tragic time travel.

The relationality and strength of Metis women both historically and contemporarily bookend this graphic novel as it opens with the survivance of Echo's mother and ends with a reclamation of their family's history. Vermette strives within her work to highlight voices and stories often untold. The infamous tale of the Metis loss at Batoche has been retold endless times. However, the inclusion of Metis women in a place of power and supporting the fight by crafting bullets is seldom highlighted. The Northwest Resistance series follows Vermette's contribution to the graphic novel edited collection *This Place 150 years Retold*, Annie of the Red River highlighting the position of Metis women in the 1800s powerful and asserting their authority over the community and individuals that threaten their live livelihood and good name.

Louis Riel's role in both inspiring and sacrificing for the nation is expertly woven into the storyline of this volume. The use of quotes from the leader of our nation alongside the historical facts provided at the end of the book allow readers unfamiliar with our history the opportunity to explore. As Metis women my daughter and I thoroughly enjoyed this graphic novel depicting the lived experience of our ancestors at both the surface as a young reader and for its depth at an academic level.

NEMIROFF, D., HOULE, R. and TOWNSEND-GAULT, C., (1992). *Land, Spirit, Power: First Nations at the National Gallery of Canada*. Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada.