

BOOK CLUB KIT

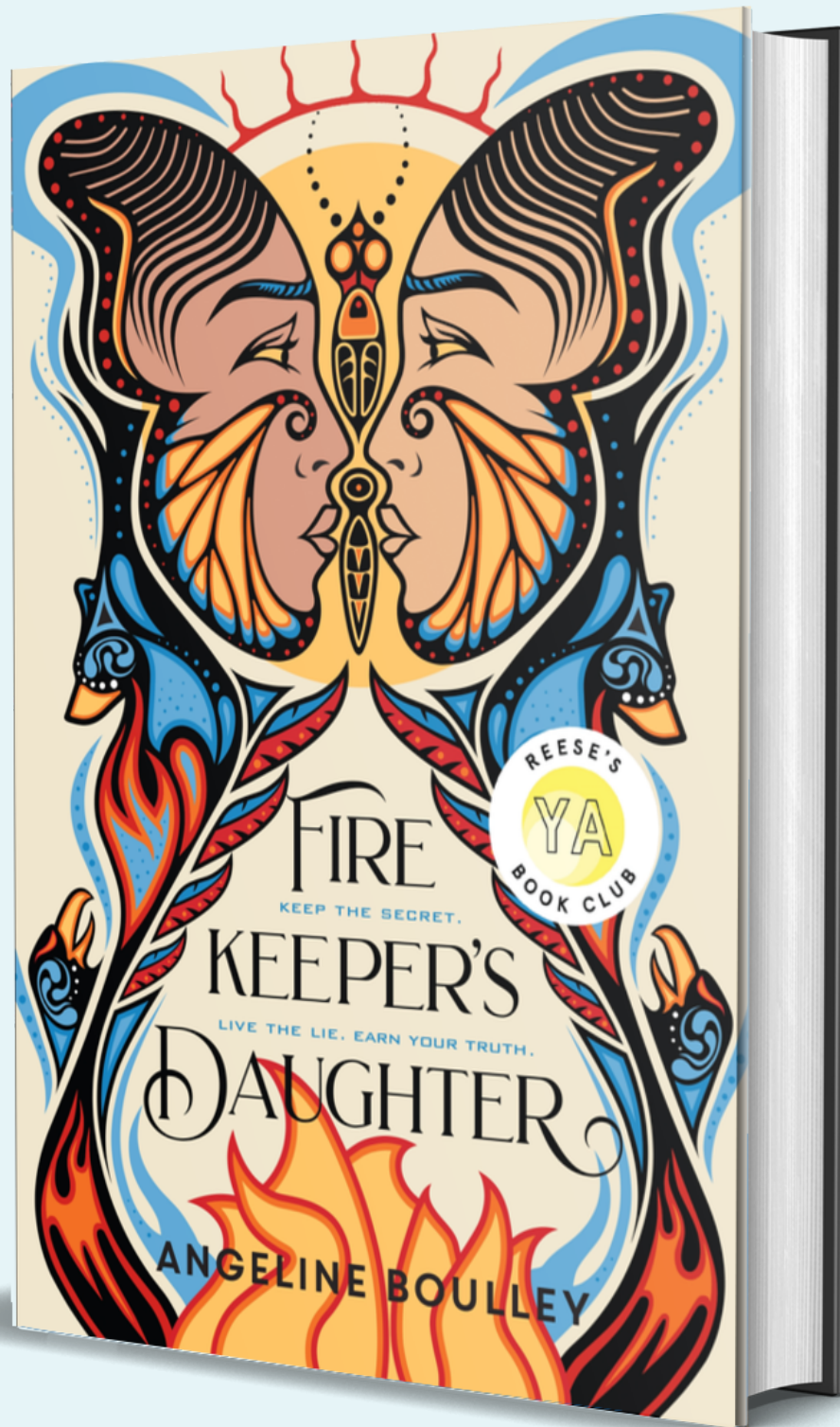


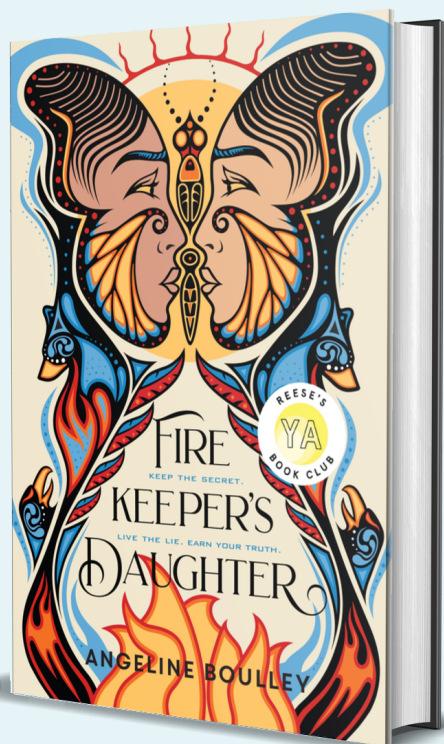


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CONTENT WARNINGS

Substance abuse
Murder
Grief
Sexual assault
Racism
Kidnapping
Death by suicide
Gun violence





FIREKEEPER'S DAUGHTER

ABOUT THE BOOK

Eighteen-year-old Daunis Fontaine has never quite fit in, either in her hometown or on the nearby Ojibwe reservation. She dreams of a fresh start at college, but when family tragedy strikes, Daunis puts her future on hold to look after her fragile mother. The only bright spot is meeting Jamie, the charming new recruit on her brother Levi's hockey team. Yet even as Daunis falls for Jamie, she senses the dashing hockey star is hiding something.

Everything comes to light when Daunis witnesses a shocking murder, thrusting her into an FBI investigation of a lethal new drug. Reluctantly, she agrees to go undercover, drawing on her knowledge of chemistry and Ojibwe traditional medicine to track down the source. But the search for truth is more complicated than Daunis imagined, exposing secrets and old scars. At the same time, she grows concerned with an investigation that seems more focused on punishing the offenders than on protecting the victims.

Now, as the deceptions—and deaths—keep growing, Daunis must learn what it means to be a strong Anishinaabe Kwe (Ojibwe woman) and how far she'll go for her community, even if it tears apart the only world she's ever known.

Photo Credit: Amber Bouley



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

ANGELINE BOULEY, an enrolled member of the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians, is a storyteller who writes about her Ojibwe community in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. She is a former Director of the Office of Indian Education at the U.S. Department of Education. Angeline lives in southwest Michigan, but her home will always be on Sugar Island. *Firekeeper's Daughter* is her debut novel.



FineAngeline



angelinebouley

Firekeeper's Daughter Cover Artist: Moses Lunham





FIREKEEPER'S DAUGHTER

Dear Reader,

Ahniin! Angeline Boulley nindiiznikaaz. Mukwa dodem. Bahweting Anishinaabe. Ziibsabaaka Minising endoonjibah. Hello! My name is Angeline Boulley. I am Bear clan and a member of the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians. My family comes from Sugar Island.

I love introducing myself in this traditional Anishinaabe way! It connects me to my community and celebrates that our language and cultural teachings are still here . . . because of stories. Storytelling is how we share what it means to be Anishinaabe (Indigenous).

I was raised on stories. My dad is a traditional firekeeper. (Yes—I really am a firekeeper's daughter!) He tells stories while tending ceremonial fires at our tribe's fasting camp and other cultural events. Firekeepers ensure that protocols are followed because ceremonial fires are different from ordinary campfires. You don't roast hot dogs, or talk politics, or even gossip around a ceremonial fire. Only good thoughts and words feed that special fire.

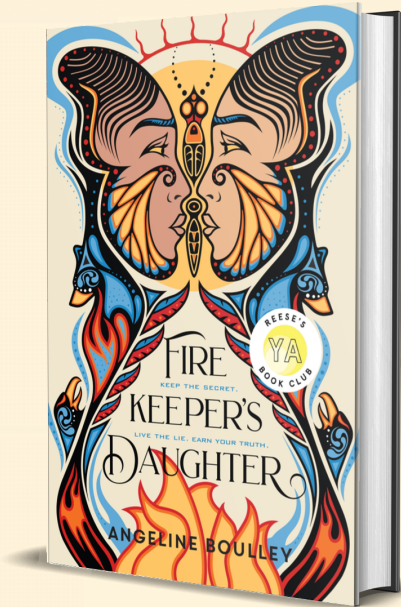
Other stories enthralled me as well. Especially mysteries and thrillers: Nancy Drew, the Dana Girls, and authors Lois Duncan and Shirley Jackson. But none of the stories I read growing up reflected *my* identity as an Ojibwe girl with a Native dad and a non-Native mom.

I've spent my career striving to improve culture-based educational programs for Native American children and teens. In each position, regardless of my actual job title, I have always been a storyteller. With every grant I wrote or during each meeting with educators and policymakers at the local, state, or federal level, I was telling a story about what our students needed and how we could make a difference in their communities.

When my daughter was a preteen, I decided to write the "Indigenous Nancy Drew" novel that I'd wanted to read, a twisty thriller set in my tribal community. I'd write at five a.m. before my "day job." Characters and subplots were developed in a notebook during my son's hockey games. I spackled plot holes while traveling to Indian education conferences. I dreamed about my story, sometimes waking up with the perfect line of dialogue. In feeding that creative fire—over ten years—the story grew and deepened with all the layers about coming-of-age as a young *Nish kwe* (Ojibwe woman), a story about identity, loss, and justice that hasn't been told before.

My daughter is a senior in college now (and she's read every draft). *Firekeeper's Daughter* is for her and also for others: Teens who, like my protagonist Daunis Fontaine, feel like an outsider in their tribal community. Readers who think about Native Americans only in the past tense. And those who, perhaps for the first time, might see themselves as the hero in a story.

Miigwetch (thank you) for the opportunity to share this story of my heart with you.



FIREKEEPER'S DAUGHTER

AUTHOR INTERVIEW

This is your debut novel! What has your publishing journey been like?

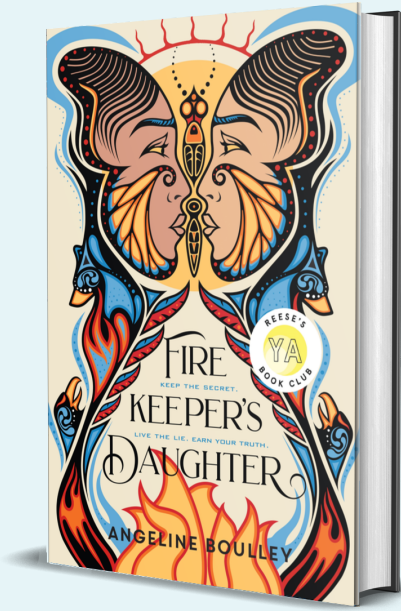
It feels like a rollercoaster with a very long (ten-year) uphill climb. But now that my book is out in the world, it is a wild ride!

What first inspired you to tell this story?

I was first inspired by the mysteries and thrillers I read growing up. I always tried to solve the mystery before Nancy Drew did. As a senior in high school, my friend told me about a new guy at her school who was supposedly my type. Although I never met him, it turned out that he was an undercover narcotics officer—just like *21 Jump Street*! I remember wondering what might have happened if we had met and liked each other. Then, I thought, what if it wasn't that the new guy liked me, but that he needed my help? That spark of an idea eventually (38 years later) became my debut novel!

The cover of *Firekeeper's Daughter* is stunning. What was the design process like?

Rich Deas, the art director for Macmillan Children's Publishing Group, sought an Ojibwe artist for the cover. He found Moses Lunham, from Kettle & Stony Point First Nation in Ontario. Their collaboration on the cover was incredible. Moses read an early draft of the manuscript and captured so much imagery from the story. I was able to provide input but really, it was all Moses and Rich. At my book cover reveal (virtual) event, seeing its final form, I was speechless in the best way possible.



FIREKEEPER'S DAUGHTER

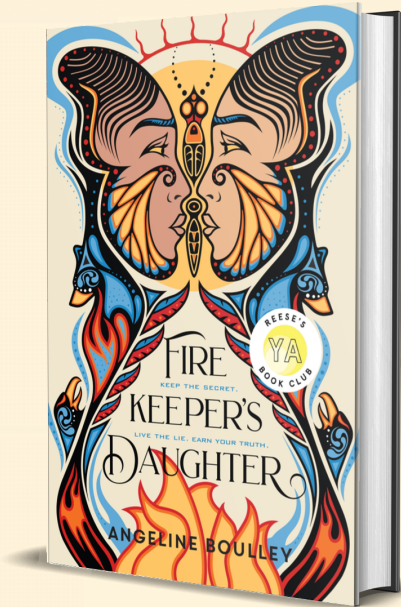
AUTHOR INTERVIEW

You've said, "I write to preserve my culture, and I edit to protect it." Can you share more about what that means to you and how it impacted how you wrote this book?

Dr. Rudine Sims Bishop wrote an essay about how books serve as mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors by which children and teens can see themselves reflected in a story or can peer or step into another person's story. Dr. Debbie Reese, who founded American Indians in Children's Literature, enhanced the analogy by adding that some of those windows need curtains. Some stories aren't meant to be shared outside of a community. Each Indigenous author needs to draw the curtain at some point, according to the protocols and traditions of their tribe, clan, or family. When revising my manuscript, I knew to leave out information about ceremonies but there were cultural teachings that felt appropriate to the story. So my editing process involved delineating what was ceremony and what were cultural teachings.

There's a strong thread throughout the book of women protecting other women and girls. Was that something you knew you wanted to incorporate early on or did it develop as you got deeper into the story?

It developed as I got deeper into the story. I mean, I knew about blanket parties since I was a teen. And as someone who travels frequently for my career, I've experienced women travelers looking out for other women travelers. But when I researched the jurisdictional loopholes and lack of justice for Native women experiencing violent crimes, I learned more about the whisper networks in tribal communities alerting other women about individual predators.



FIREKEEPER'S DAUGHTER

AUTHOR INTERVIEW

Daunis recognizes the importance of making room for her grief, even as she struggles to do that. What drew you to this theme?

My sister passed away suddenly in a car accident. It happened twenty-four years ago and there are moments when I still cannot fathom that she died. Writing about grief has helped me. But, oh, how I'd give anything not to have that insight into loss.

You are the former Director of the Office of Indian Education at the U.S. Department of Education. How did your role there influence the way you told this story?

I met with educators, students, parents, and other stakeholders to listen to what their culture-based educational needs were, so I could share resources to help them. Over and over, I heard teens talk about Native identity as a major concern. My career experience helped shape the story by including characters who experience different issues surrounding tribal enrollment, colorism, lateral oppression, and code-switching.

What questions do you recommend book clubs include in their discussion guide for *Firekeeper's Daughter*?

What was the most unexpected aspect you learned about in the story?

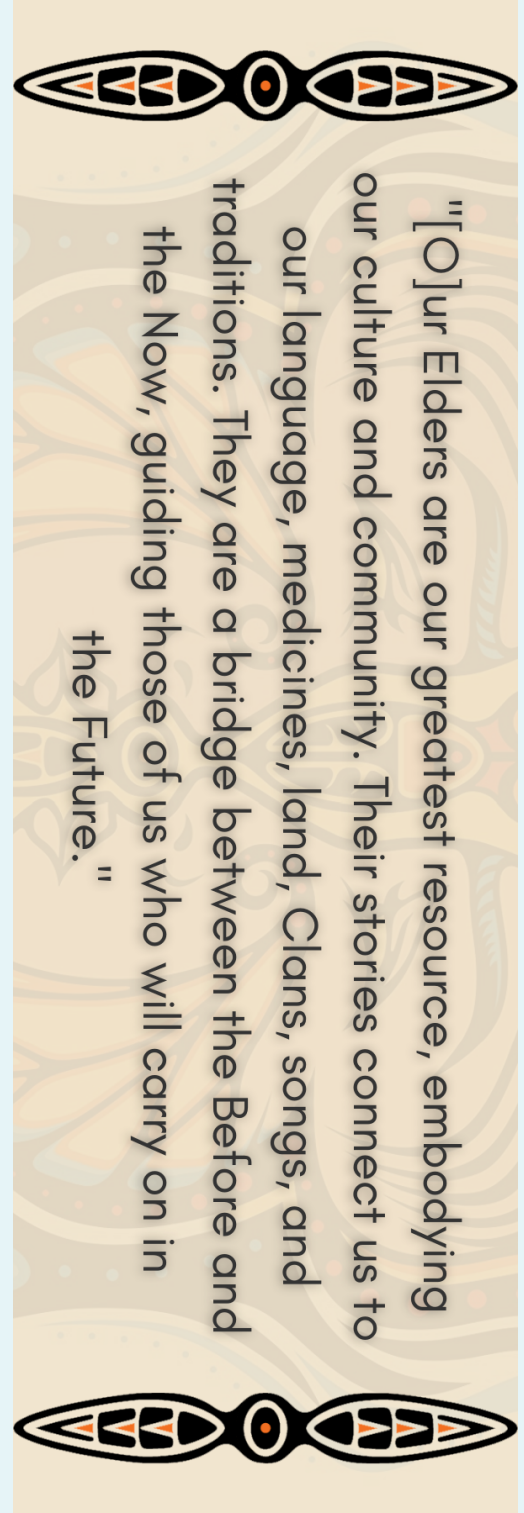
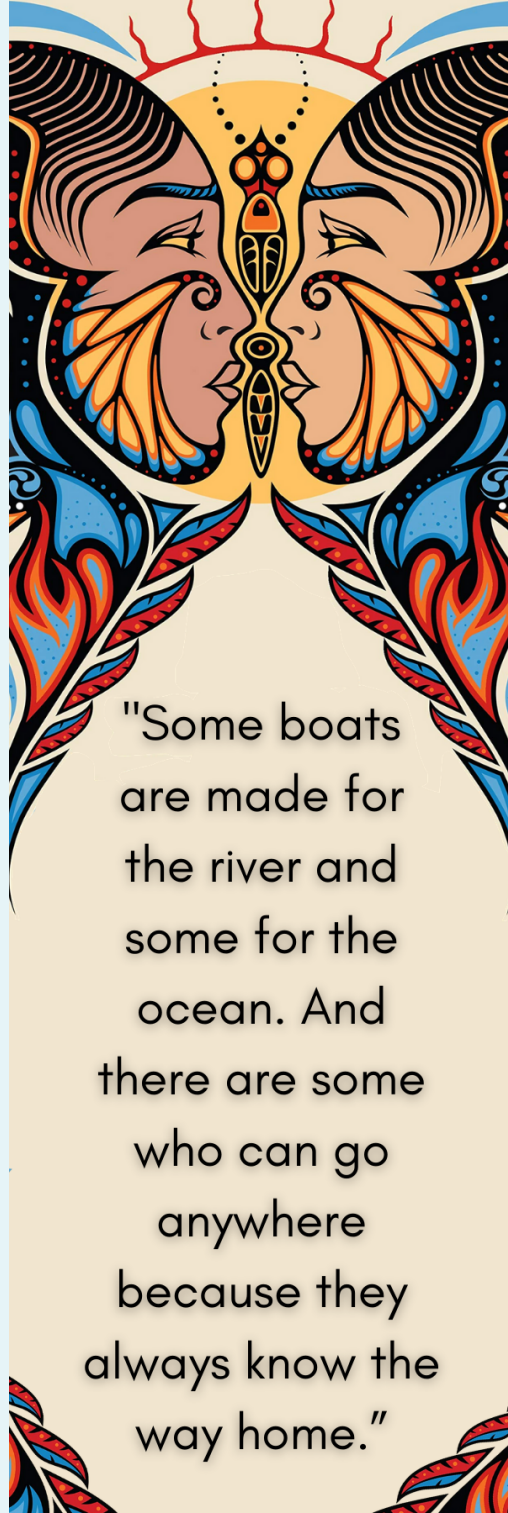
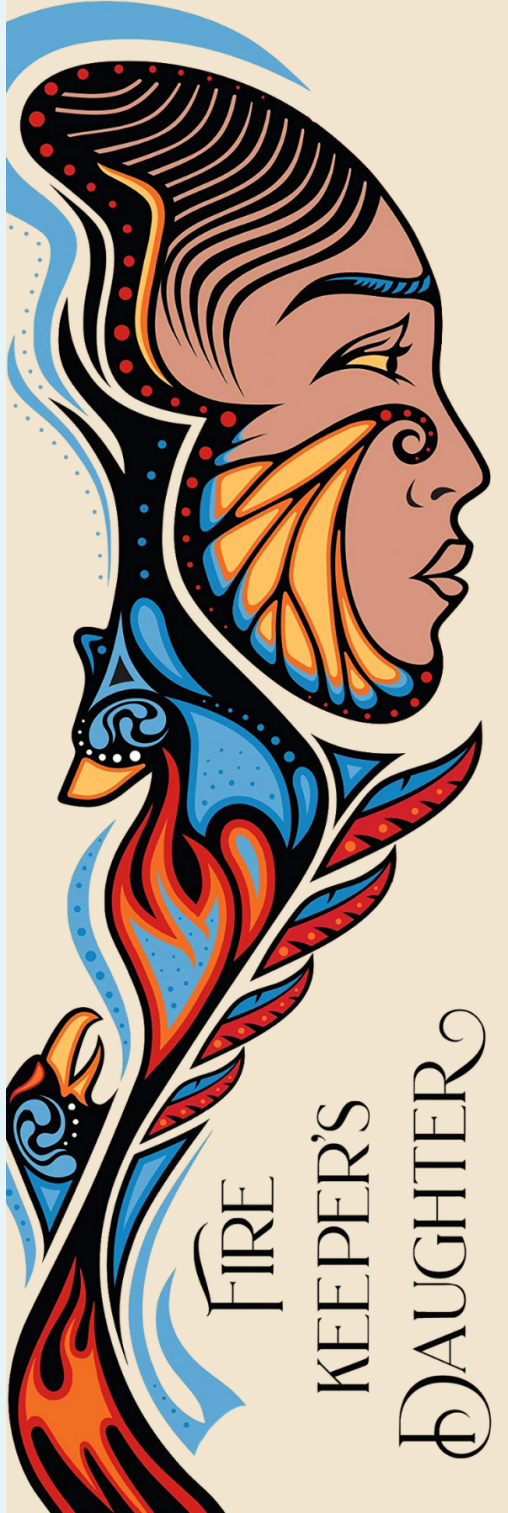
Do you think Daunis went ahead with the blanket party?

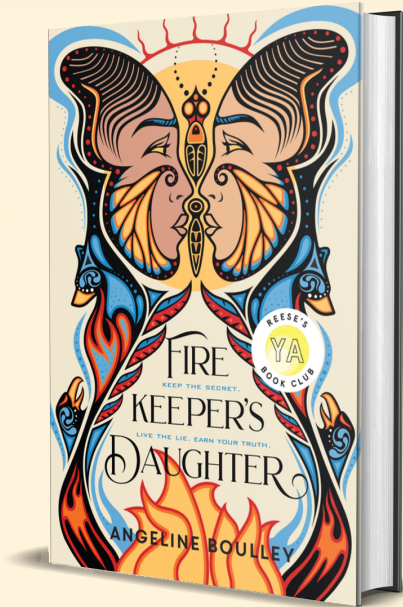
What happened to Mike Edwards?

What do you think is Jamie's story?

Which elder's coming-of-age story would you most want to read?

Printable Bookmarks





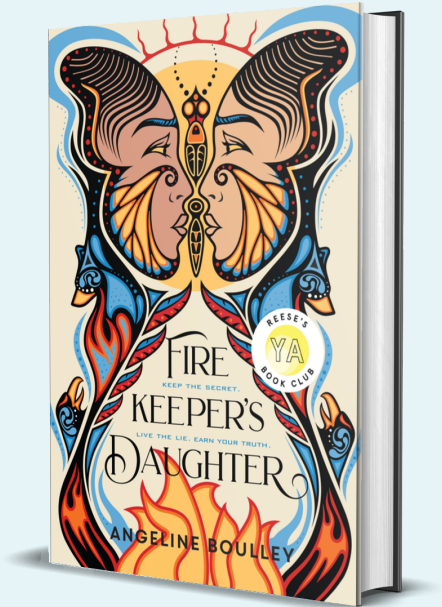
FIREKEEPER'S DAUGHTER

BOOK CLUB DISCUSSION GUIDE

- Daunis begins every day with a prayer and a morning run. What is the significance of this ritual? What other rituals—both formal and personal—does she engage in, and why are they important to her?
- How do you think Daunis views her Firekeeper side versus her Fontaine side? Do you think she feels a stronger connection to one side of her family than to the other, and why? Does that change over the course of the novel?
- Daunis talks about keeping her various “worlds” separate with clear rules, saying, “My life goes more smoothly when Hockey World and Real World don’t overlap. Same as with my Fontaine and Firekeeper worlds.” What do you think she means by this? What are the ways in which we see Daunis acting to keep her worlds separate? Have you ever felt like you belonged to different worlds? Do you agree it’s easier to keep worlds separate?
- Daunis often seeks wisdom and guidance from the Elders. Can you describe the role of the Elders in the Ojibwe community? How does this compare to the role of senior citizens in your community?
- Both Daunis and Jamie struggle with their identities—Daunis feels pulled between multiple identities, whereas Jamie doesn’t have any sense of where he comes from. What similarities and differences do they have in how they consider their identities?
- Aunt Teddie describes a Blanket Party as “Nish kwe justice.” What do you think of this form of justice? What do you think led to the creation of Blanket Parties? How do you think this might influence Daunis’s understanding of justice?
- Daunis has many facets to her identity: hockey superstar, science geek, Nish Kwe, Fontaine, and eventually confidential informant. How does each aspect of her identity come into play during her investigation?
- Teddie tells Daunis, “Not every Elder is a cultural teacher and not all cultural teachers are Elders. It’s okay to listen to what people say and only hold on to the parts that resonate with you. It’s okay to leave the rest behind. Trust yourself to know the difference.” What do you think Teddie means by this? How does she define the difference between a cultural teacher and an Elder? What does Daunis choose to hold on to from her culture and what does she choose to leave behind?
- Describe Daunis’s feelings after she learns that her testimony can’t be used in the court. Why do you believe the author made this choice?
- Why did the author choose to end the story on a powwow scene? How does this speak to the themes of the book?
- Daunis references the Seven Grandfather teachings, which are Love, Humility, Respect, Honesty, Bravery, Wisdom, and Truth. Can you name specific moments where Daunis is able to embody these teachings? Are there certain characters or moments that help Daunis learn these teachings?

THEMES AND NARRATIVE

- List some of the book’s themes, including identity, community, grief, and justice. What themes stood out most to you, and why? Which theme or themes strike you as being most important to the author? Why?
- How is *Firekeeper’s Daughter* different from other coming-of-age novels? How is it similar?
- Why do you think the author called the book *Firekeeper’s Daughter*? How does it connect to the novel’s themes of legacy and inheritance?



FIREKEEPER'S DAUGHTER

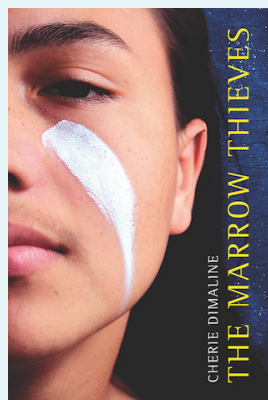
**BOOKS BY INDIGENOUS AUTHORS
TO READ NEXT**



Ages 12+

Elatsoe by Darcie Little Badger, illustrated by Rovina Cai

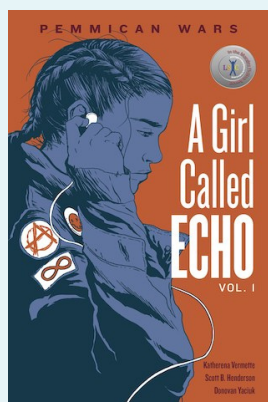
If you connected with Daunis' search for justice, pick up *Elatsoe*. No one in the town of Willowbee seems to want to help Elatsoe uncover why her cousin was murdered, but that won't stop her from digging for the truth, even when it leads her to long-buried secrets.



Ages 12+

The Marrow Thieves by Cherie Dimaline

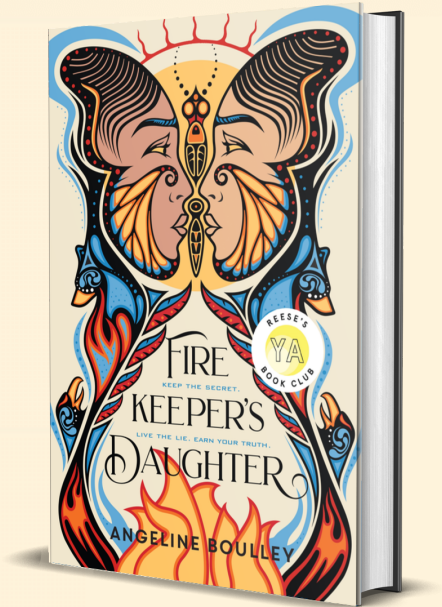
Cherie Dimaline's award-winning novel transports readers to a futuristic world where North America's Indigenous people are the only ones who retain the ability to dream due to the marrow in their bones. A 15-year-old fights to save his people from those who would take that marrow without consent.



Ages 12+

Pemmican Wars by Katherena Vermette, illustrated by Scott B. Henderson

The first in a graphic novel series, this book follows Echo as she travels back and forth in time. One moment she's listening to a lecture in her history class and the next she's on a bison hunt. On her travels, Echo visits a Métis camp and finds herself drawn into the Pemmican Wars.



FIREKEEPER'S DAUGHTER

**BOOKS BY INDIGENOUS AUTHORS
TO READ NEXT**



Ages 14+

Fire Song by Adam Garnet Jones

If the themes of grief and loss in *Firekeeper's Daughter* resonated with you, check out *Fire Song*. Shane is struggling after losing his sister. He dreams of leaving, of going somewhere he and his boyfriend can openly show their love, but when his hopes of attending university slip away, he's unsure of what his future now holds.



Ages 14+

Hearts Unbroken by Cynthia Leitich Smith

When Louise Wolfe's Kansas high school puts on an inclusive production of *The Wizard of Oz*, there's backlash from their conservative town. Louise teams up with Joey Kairouz to cover the story for the school paper. When sparks start to fly between them, Louise worries about getting her heart broken.



Ages 18+

Black Sun by Rebecca Roanhorse

This fantasy is perfect for older YA readers and adults. Outcast sea captain Xiala is hired to take Serapio from Cuecola to Tova, where Sun Priest Naranpa is trying to calm the unrest brewing in her city's clans. Xiala agrees to travel to Tova, not knowing that Serapio's determined to seek revenge when he arrives.

Support Indigenous Communities

Below are just a handful of Indigenous organizations you can support today.

American Indian College Fund **(standwithnativestudents.org)**

Part of Daunis' journey is figuring out what her future looks like. This organization uses donations to create scholarships for Indigenous students.

International Indigenous Youth Council **(indigenouslyouth.org)**

The IIYC seeks to give young people in Indigenous communities the tools they need to enact positive change.

First Nations Development Institute **(firstnations.org)**

This organization focuses on supporting communities economically. They currently have a COVID-19 Emergency Response Fund.

NDN Collective **(ndncollective.org)**

With a focus on injustice, this organization has campaigns involving climate change, education inequality, racial inequality, and the LandBack movement.





Additional Resources

Fiction can serve as a mirror for our lives, and some of the themes in this book might affect readers in a very real way. Below we've rounded up resources for readers who want to seek support for the issues they're facing. All of the below resources are free, available 24/7, and offer options for both chatting online or speaking on the phone.

StrongHearts Native Helpline

strongheartshelpline.org

1-844-762-8483

SAMHSA

**(Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services
Administration)**

samhsa.gov

1-800-662-4357

The National Alliance on Mental Illness

nami.org

800-950-6264

National Domestic Violence Hotline

thehotline.org

1-800-799-7233

RAINN

(Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network)

rainn.org

800-656-4673

About This Kit

This book club kit was created by the team at We Are Bookish, an editorially independent division of NetGalley LLC.

It was sponsored by Macmillan Children's Publishing Group.

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