

For young readers, the story of an Umpqua girl

This Week's Book

"Indian No More" By Charlene Willing McManis with Traci Sorell

Tu Books – 224 pp – \$18.95

"Indian No More" is a new middle-grade novel conceived by Portland-born author Charlene Willing McManis, who drew upon her own family's struggle for identity when, as Umpqua living on the Grand Ronde reservation in the southern Yamhill Valley, their tribe was terminated by the federal government in the 1950s.

One hundred years earlier, the Grand Ronde reservation had been accorded to a confederation of more than two dozen tribes. This work of historical fiction takes place when the US reneged on that treaty obligation.

In 1957, 10-year-old Regina Petit has

never known a home other than the reservation. But now the government is selling the land out from under longtime reservation residents – unless they can pay inflated prices for the property.

Unable to afford that, Regina's father signs up for the federal Indian Relocation Program and moves his family to Los Angeles to seek new opportunities.

Life in southern California is very different from the rural setting of the reservation. Regina meets children of other races – African-American, white, Latino – and is introduced to new foods, new customs and even new ways of playing "Cowboys and Indians."

Los Angeles is the first place where Regina recognizes racism – as it is directed variously toward her friends, her family and herself.

Her father believes his hard work will allow his family to leave their struggles behind and assimilate into the dominant culture, but her mom has doubts. As a cou-

ple learning to get by without their customary extended family, they argue frequently.

But Regina's grandmother, Chich, has accompanied them to California. A reassuring presence, she continues to share the old stories and traditions of the Umpqua with Regina and her sister.

Through observation, trial and error, Regina learns how to stake her own unique identity.

This book, plainspoken but deeply moving, has many thoughtful elements.

In the opening pages, there's a brief glossary of Chinuk Wawa vocabulary – the jargon that the different tribes in the Grand Ronde Community used to speak with one another and that are sprinkled into the dialogue between Regina and Chich.

The passages containing Chich's stories are presented in a different typeface, with those pages edged in a handsome design.

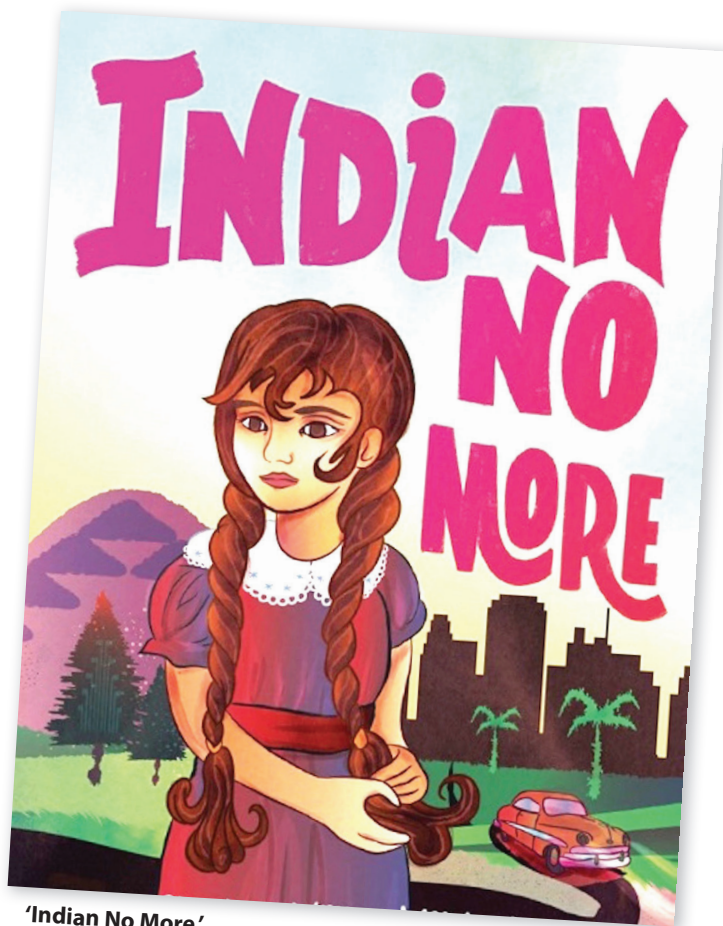
The back of the book contains more special touches. Photographs from the author's own childhood provide visual context for

the story. Historical notes give brief explanations about some of the issues and concepts that confront Regina. And there are also notes from the author, her co-author and their editor – all very much worth reading.

"Indian No More," you see, is the result of a remarkable collaboration. Author Charlene Willing McManis succumbed to cancer last year while the story was still in draft form. Before passing away, she asked a fellow writer, Traci Sorell, to see the book through to completion. The story behind the novel demonstrates the great care undertaken by all involved in getting it right.

In probing how the termination era affected one family, "Indian No More" gives young readers another facet of American history to consider.

The Bookmonger is Barbara Lloyd McMichael, who writes this weekly column focusing on the books, authors and publishers of the Pacific Northwest. Contact her at bkmonger@nwlk.com



'Indian No More.'



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