

THE SWEET BLOODS OF EYYOU ISTCHEE:

*Stories of Diabetes and
the James Bay Cree*

ABOUT

The Sweet Bloods of Eeyou Istchee is essential reading for anyone who knows anyone with diabetes, and for anyone interested in a contemporary rendering of one of Canada's vibrant, thriving, and highly adaptive indigenous communities.

In this award-winning collection, Ruth DyckFehderau and 27 storytellers offer a rich and timely accounting of contemporary life in Eeyou Istchee, the territory of the James Bay Cree of Northern Québec.

Connecting these stories is a disease – diabetes – but the stories themselves are not records of illness as much as they are deeply personal accounts of life in the North: the fine, swaying balances of living both in town and on the land, of family and work and studies, of healing from relocations and residential school histories while building communities of safety and challenge and joy, of hunting and hockey, and much more.

AWARDS

Finalist, Foreword Reviews [2017 INDIES Book of the Year Award](#) (*Winners will be announced June 15, 2018*)

Silver medal, [2018 Independent Publisher Regional and Ebook \(IPPY\) Awards](#)

“The stories contained in *The Sweet Bloods of Eeyou Istchee: Stories of Diabetes and the James Bay Cree* are incredible. They are life lessons, they are tales of warning, they are songs of resilience, they are prayers for a healthier life. Each one is its own entity, and each storyteller bravely and beautifully speaks out so that we may all begin our own healing journey. This is a must-read book. I've not seen something quite like it before.”

Joseph Boyden

MEDIA

The Conversation: [Indigenous group tackles diabetes with storytelling](#)

Folio News: [New collection of stories explores life with diabetes in northern Cree community where one in three have the disease](#)

CBC: [Cree Nation tells stories of living with diabetes in new book](#)

LEARN MORE

sweetbloods.org

sweetbloodsbook@gmail.com

facebook.com/sweetbloods

Available for purchase on [Amazon](#) and via [sweetbloods.org](#)

PRESS RELEASE

Rx: STORIES FOR HEALING

DETAILS

The Sweet Bloods of Eeyou Istchee: Stories of Diabetes and the James Bay Cree.

Book of 27 biographical stories of people living with diabetes in Eeyou Istchee (the territory of the James Bay Cree of Northern Quebec). 2017. 280pp. Paperback.

Published by Cree Board of Health and Social Services of James Bay. creehealth.org

Available on Amazon.ca

Written by Ruth DyckFehderau ruthdyckfehderau.com

Learn more at sweetbloods.org

From one of Canada's vibrant, thriving, and highly adaptive indigenous groups comes a book – written in powerful, simple, riveting prose – that's not quite like anything else out there.

Eeyou Istchee, the traditional territory of the James Bay Cree of Northern Quebec, has ten Cree communities spread across an area of about 450,000 km. And, like many other indigenous territories and groups worldwide, it's currently fighting a diabetes epidemic.

The James Bay Cree have tackled the epidemic head-on in a number of ways, one of which is a decidedly Cree solution: a Talking Circle in print. *The Sweet Bloods of Eeyou Istchee: Stories of Diabetes and the James Bay Cree* gathers the stories of 27 people who are living with diabetes. While living in Eeyou Istchee, writer Ruth DyckFehderau travelled across the territory, spent time with each storyteller to hear the stories, wrote them up, then travelled out again to have the storytellers check and approve them.

The stories are sometimes gut-wrenching, often funny, each one distinct from the next, and they pack a wallop. Jonathan is an elite high-school athlete headed for a pro hockey career when he learns that most people would be comatose if they had his blood sugar levels. Raquel has been living with diabetes well controlled for thirty years but struggles to convince her doctor to take her seriously. Jennifer, undergoing chemotherapy for leukemia, barely registers her diabetes diagnosis. Leonard deals with the emotional complexity of working for the very government that forced him into residential school. Angela goes into labour during the Great Ice Storm of 1998, barely manages not to deliver during the hair-raising cab ride, only to arrive at the wrong hospital and learn that she isn't permitted to give birth there either.

Taken together, the stories paint a vivid picture of life in the North – and also reveal the ways in which diabetes is inextricably bonded to the workings of colonization, from forced relocations and residential school histories to hydro-electric projects and bureaucracy-laden medical systems.

Part record, part awareness-raising, the storybook was originally written for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples of Canada. Only recently did the Cree Board of Health and Social Services decide to make the material available to the public. All proceeds from the book go to long-term health care for people living with diabetes in Eeyou Istchee.

DyckFehderau, recently longlisted for the CBC Literary Prize, currently lives in Edmonton and teaches Creative Writing and English Literature at University of Alberta.

HELPFUL QUOTATIONS

Paul Linton, the Assistant Director of Public Health for Adults in Eeyou Istchee, says, "Diabetes now affects every family on our territory, and the newly diagnosed are getting younger every year."

Ruth DyckFehderau, writer of the book, says, "Every storyteller who told me a story for this project said, unsolicited, that s/he was participating to help others in the community with diabetes. I heard some version of the same sentence 27 times."

Kevin Patterson, in his article "Diseases of Affluence," says, "Around the world, as traditional peoples and societies have been absorbed into the global monoculture, the prevalence of diabetes has exploded." In *Maisonneuve* 35 (2010): 34-41.

OTHER RELEVANT SITES

Grand Council of the Crees: gcc.ca

Cree Culture: creeculture.ca

CONTACT

Nicole (publicist): nicoleritzyer@gmail.com

Ruth (writer): rdyckfeh@ualberta.ca

Other Inquiries: sweetbloodsbook@gmail.com

sweetbloods.org