

# A Suncor Pathways Magazine Story: The Accidental Author

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Ron Janvier's story, and that of many more inspiring Indigenous People from northern Alberta to St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador and places in between, can be found in the 2022 edition of Suncor's Pathways magazine. Our Pathways magazine is a representation of our ongoing commitment to the Journey of Reconciliation. Visit [Suncor.com](https://www.suncor.com) to read more stories.

A welder by vocation, Ron Janvier was always more comfortable working with metal than words.

"As my career progressed, I began to take on new roles in planning, business analysis and reliability that required me to write more reports, which was a challenge for me," says Ron, who worked for Syncrude for 33 years before retiring in 2012. "But I had several good mentors and one of them, Colleen Kearney, encouraged me with writing. She told me, 'Use words to your advantage and paint a picture. That's how you will get results.' Those were wise words."

Ron has continued to follow that advice in retirement, though his focus now is on retelling the stories of his childhood rather than building business cases. The Chipewyan Prairie First Nation Elder published his first children's book, *Sakisak and the Squirrel*, last year. It was something of an accident as Ron didn't start out wanting to author a book.

"My wife, Shelly, was developing curriculum for Head Start, a program to help children living on First Nations get ready for school, in the Treaty 8 territory. She had found many Cree children's stories, and stories from other regions, but nothing from the Dene in the Wood Buffalo region," says Ron. "So, she asked me to write down some of the tales that I learned growing up. Stories were very important for us as youngsters-it's a big part of how we learned. These stories were shared from generation to generation by knowledge keepers, who always told us to carry the stories down."

Ron wrote down 10 of his favourite stories from childhood, which involved *Sakisak*, a mythical character who created animals and would change their colours to protect them.

"An archeologist who has studied the history of the Prairie Chipewyan First Nation really liked the stories and suggested I turn them into the book," he says. "It was the right time for me to take something like that on. I started writing during the pandemic when I was stuck at home and could concentrate without any distractions."

Working with illustrator Terresa Dersch, Ron finished the story. Calgary-based publisher Joey Podlubny released the book in April 2021.

"I've done a lot of public readings, including the recent Athabasca Tribal Council festival in Fort McMurray," he says. "I've decided I'm going to write another book about *Sakisak* and a weasel. I've learned so much from this experience. My son Ryan, who is a graphic artist, will illustrate the next book, so it is a real family affair."

And Ron hopes the books, with their lessons about animals and their behaviours, will help children of all ages better understand the natural world as well as Dene storytelling. "It's important to preserve these stories and the wisdom within them for future generations."

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