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When three cultures clash

Author sets story in historical Nunavut

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Iqaluit

Author Rachel Qitsualik didn't like to write until she tried expressing herself in her own language.

"Writing in Inuktitut allowed me to think more clearly," she said.

She was invited to contribute a story to a collection of historical fiction by aboriginal authors. Each story was inspired by a defining moment in Canadian history and explores its significance for Inuit, First Nations peoples and other Canadians.

Other authors who contributed to "Our Story" include L'anton Cardinal, Tomson Highway, Drew Hayden Taylor and Basil Johnston.

Story of Skraeling

Qitsualik's story "Skraeling" takes place circa 1000AD and the story hangs around a meeting of three cultures in the high Arctic: the Inuit, the Thule and the Vikings.

Skraeling is the medieval Norwegian word used by the Vikings for the aboriginal people they found on Baffin Island.

A Thule man travelling west along the coast encounters a Tunit encampment, which is attacked and massacred by Viking raiders.

The collection in which the short story appears was launched in Nunavut with a reading at the Fantasy Palace in Iqaluit Friday.

The book launch coincided with the announcement of the Canadian Aboriginal Youth Writing Challenge, The contest is open to aboriginal youth between the ages of 15 and 18 and in high school.

The first prize winner will receive \$500, the rest of the top 10 will receive \$200. Stories are to be fictional accounts of moments in the history of Canada's aboriginal peoples.

"Our Story" and the Canadian Aboriginal Youth Writing Challenge are both sponsored by the Dominion Institute, an organization that promotes Canadian history.

Qitsualik will be one of the judges.

"What I would like to see is the telling of folktales in modern prose," said Qitsualik.

"I think young aboriginal people have to break out of the folkloric way of talking and speak out in an imaginative narrative voice.

"Aboriginal stories come from such a different experience than mainstream society that I think it *s important to bring that imagination out,"