

# HERIZON

a story of intergenerational  
strength and imagination



**BY AWARD-WINNING AUTHOR  
DANIEL W. VANDEVER**

*Fall in Line, Holden*  
2017 Honor Award  
American Indian Library Association

[www.herizon.com](http://www.herizon.com)

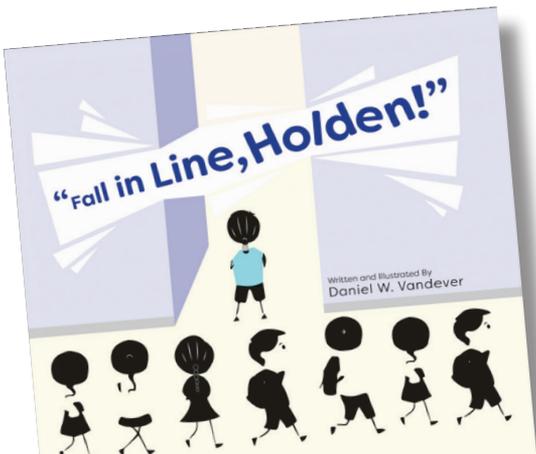
## INTRODUCTION TO THE AUTHOR



Daniel Vandever is a product of Small Wonders Day Care where his experiences as a Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle helped shape the creativity behind his debut picture book, *Fall in Line, Holden*, a 2017 honor award book with the American Indian Library Association.

Vandever is the owner of South of Sunrise Creative, a strategic communications firm that helps advance higher education initiatives through community development strategies. The company focuses on equity, access, and advancement - principles that also shape his approach to children's books. It is in each role that Vandever hopes to affect change on the Navajo Nation through education.

*Fall in Line, Holden* is a story about boarding school era education, a period when Diné (Navajo) identity and language were suppressed along with Indigenous people throughout the world. It is a story rich in imagination, which carries over to his second book, *Herizon* (2021).



OVER  
40

READINGS TO  
OVER 4,000  
INDIVIDUALS  
NATIONWIDE.





## WHAT IS HERIZON?

*Herizon* is a book dedicated to my nieces with the hope for a more inclusive, empowering future. The story details the journey of a young Diné girl as she helps her grandmother retrieve a flock of sheep aided by a magical scarf. Within the scarf's powers is the ability to transform, which changes the girl and the world she knows.

In an age that has seen the election of the first female vice president in U.S. history, *Herizon* speaks to the power of the moment and not a distant idea of what could be. It is a story that honors progress and persistence, and will reach audiences from any background.

NOTE: *Herizon* is a wordless book as an ode to Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives (MMIR) and in honor of all those without a voice.

*Herizon* is illustrated by Corey Begay (Diné).

Begay played a critical role in getting *Fall in Line*, Holden published with Salina Bookshelf, Inc., and was commissioned to provide illustrations to showcase the story.



## FEMALE EMPOWERMENT



Females are at the center of Diné worldview as identity is determined through one's mother in our matrilineal society. As such, females are sacred beings that bear life, nurture growth, and provide safety and security within the home and community. As the Navajo Nation moves forward, it is our mothers, sisters, aunts, grandmas, wives, and daughters that will help us thrive in the modern world. As a son, brother, uncle, and grandson, I lend my encouragement in supporting efforts for equal opportunities and rights.

For the sake of my nieces and the future of our people, it is my responsibility to serve as an advocate with books like *Herizon*.

### USE OF SYMBOLS IN THE ILLUSTRATIONS

Many symbols used in the book address female empowerment and intergenerational strength.

Scarf/Zéédééłtssoozí



The scarf aids the girl in her journey and represents intergenerational strength. It is red in honor of MIMÍ.

Hair/Ats'ii'



Growth is represented in the girl's hair; from wild and unruly to fixed and poised.

Spider Rock/Tsé na'ashlé'ii



Spider Rock, home of Spider Woman in Chinle, AZ, revives the girl's spirits after she faces setbacks.

Navajo Bun/Tsiiyéét



The girl's entrance into womanhood is signified when her hair is tied into a Navajo bun by her grandmother.



Bessie D. Vandever and Essien Mae Vandever  
inspired the book's illustrations.

## **INTERGENERATIONAL STRENGTH & KNOWLEDGE**

The role of nurturer was taught by Changing Woman, a diety who passed on wisdom and teachings on how to be a matriarch. Over time these teachings, and the concept of the family unit, were systematically attacked through strategies like boarding school education and legislation that forced the Navajo people into the wage economy.

But we are resilient, and our identity and values have persisted, backed by the intergenerational strength and knowledge put forth by Changing Woman: love, compassion, and hard work. This strength is reflected in our language, songs, ceremonies, and stories. It is in this space where resilience is learned and holds hope for the future.



Hair is tied during Kinaaldá, the coming of age ceremony for Diné females.

## THE TIMELINESS OF THE STORY

The year of the pandemic was devastating for people throughout the world, but with tragedy came glimmers of good. From Deb Haaland being nominated as Secretary of the Interior to Michaela Goade being recognized with the Caldecott medal, it was a year filled with stories of hope. Narratives forged by female protagonists with no regard for limitations.

As we build on these stories of hope we rebuild a more inclusive society that is reinforced by the teachings of our ancestors. *Herizon* is a resource in this movement and is intended to help in the effort to improve conditions for all.



Central to *Herizon* is the Sáanii Scarf, a piece of clothing traditionally worn by grandmas in day-to-day fashion. Today, the scarf serves as protection, but also appears in contemporary fashion as purses, wallets, and dresses, among other uses.





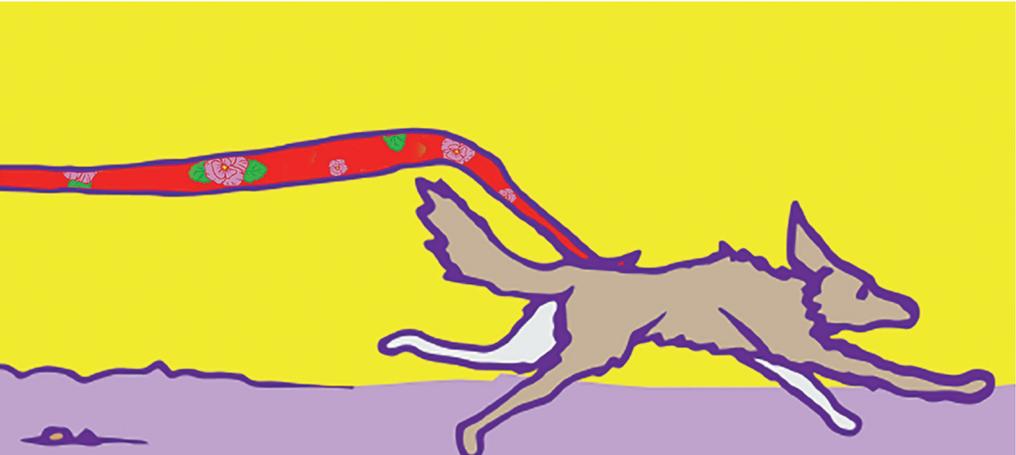
# REPRESENTATION IN CHILDREN'S BOOKS

## DIVERSITY IN CHILDREN'S BOOKS 2018

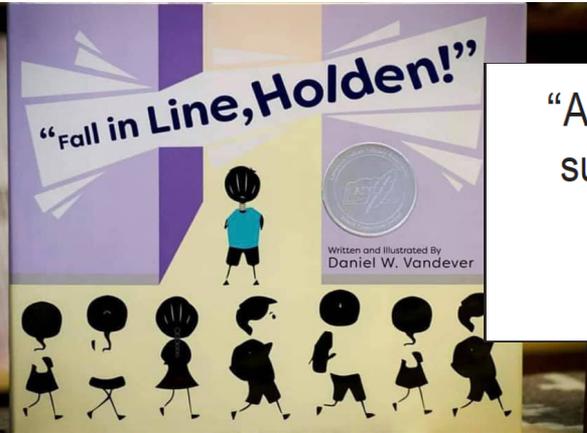
Percentage of books depicting characters from diverse backgrounds based on the 2018 publishing statistics compiled by the Cooperative Children's Book Center, School of Education, University of Wisconsin-Madison: [ccbcc.education.wisc.edu/books/pcstats.asp](http://ccbcc.education.wisc.edu/books/pcstats.asp)



Diversity matters. Children's books have historically lacked diverse representation. In 2018 merely 23% of children's books depicted characters from diverse backgrounds - only 1% of which were American Indian/First Nation characters. Incredibly, 27% of books featured animals and other non-human characters, a stunning 4% higher representation than for all people of color. It is important for children to see themselves in the pages of a book as it reinforces identity and an appreciation of what makes us each unique. *Herizon* will contribute to increasing the representation of Native Americans in children's books.



# CRITICAL ACCLAIM AND SUPPORT



“A subtle, provocative, and surprisingly joyous read.”

**KIRKUS**  
**REVIEWS**  
-August 2, 2017



Success takes a community of support for first-time authors, including support from industry professionals, educators, and community advocates. The list of organizations below played a part in *Fall in Line, Holden's* success and could help to further *Horizon's* reach. *Fall in Line, Holden* is in its third printing with Salina Bookshelf.

- National Center for Families Learning
- Navajo Nation FACE program
- Navajo Nation K-12
- Northern Arizona University
- Museum of Northern Arizona
- Native America Calling
- Tribal College Journal
- Native Women Lead
- Cynsations (Cynthia Leitch Smith blog)
- American Indians in Children's Literature (Dr. Debbie Reese blog)
- School Library Journal
- Indian Country Today
- Kirkus Reviews

“Vandever blows that (American Indian imagery) expectation away with his own graphic style...I hope he writes another book.”

-Dr. Debbie Reese,  
[socialjusticebooks.org](http://socialjusticebooks.org)



Halls Ferry Elementary, St. Louis, MO.