

BOOK OF THE MONTH:

My Heart Fills With Happiness

by Monique Gray Smith

Ages: 1-5 years old

1. Introducing the Book:



Exploring the Cover

The girl on the cover of this book is dancing. She has a smile on her face and her arms are open wide. Would you like to dance before we read the book?

Building Background

The author of the book, Monique Gray Smith, is Cree. Let's learn a few simple words in Plains Cree. "Hello" is "tânisi" (pronunciation) and it is written as follows in Cree script: ᑕᓪᓯᑦ. Here are a few other simple words: "Happiness" - miywâtamowin - ᑭᑦᑭᑦᑕᑦᑭᑦ; "Family" - peyakôskân - ᐅᑦᑦᑦᑦᑦᑦ; "Story" - âcimowin - ᐱᑦᑦᑦᑦᑦᑦ; "Goodbye" - êkosi mâka - ᑦᑦᑦᑦᑦᑦ.

2. Reading the Book:

As you read the book, invite the children to think about the things that make them happy. Give a few examples of things that make you happy and ask them to follow by finishing the sentence: "I am happy when..." Write down their answers on paper or dry erase board to build a visual relationship between spoken and written words.

To engage younger children, ask a question they can answer with "yes" or "no". For example:
 "Are you happy when... I tickle you?"
 "Are you happy when... we dance together?"
 "Are you happy when... we go outside?"

3. After Reading the Book: I Am Happy When...

- Learning to reflect on lived experiences;
- Learning to recognize and label emotions;
- Learning to express oneself using language;
- Practicing pre-writing skills.

Use the template to build on the conversation about happiness. Either the children fill it out on their own or help them fill it out. Invite them to draw and scribble.

Mindful Breathing

- Learning to recognize, label and regulate emotions;
- Developing autonomy and self-confidence;
- Practicing small and large muscle control;
- Developing body awareness;
- Learning about healthy practices and self-care.

Invite the children to try some of the following breathing exercises together:

- Breathe deeply through your nose. Exhale and make a buzzing sound. Challenge the children to see how long they can buzz to encourage deeper breathing.
- Pretend to have a birthday cake in front of you and blow out the candles.
- Place your hands on your stomach. Breathe in slowly through your nose to feel your belly expand like a balloon. Slowly exhale all the air as if deflating a balloon.

References and Resources

- "I Am Happy When..." Template
- [Online Cree Dictionary](#)
- [Online Cree Dictionary for Kids](#)
- [Cree Literacy Network](#)
- [Explore Indigenous Languages](#)

Legend



I am happy when I...



Draw it here!



A large, empty rectangular box with rounded corners, outlined in yellow, intended for drawing.

