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## EDUCATOR'S GUIDE





# WALKING IN TWO WORLDS

**Wab Kinew** is the bestselling, award-winning author of *Go Show the World* and *The Reason You Walk*. A member of the Midewin and an Honorary Witness for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, he is a former journalist, hip-hop artist and television host who was named by Postmedia News as one of “9 Aboriginal movers and shakers you should know.” Kinew, who is a provincial politician in Manitoba, lives in Winnipeg with his family.

This guide was created by **April Waters**, a Métis educator from Treaty One territory in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. She is currently a school-based administrator with over a decade in experience both as a classroom teacher and Indigenous Education teacher, providing instructional support and professional development for educators in bringing authentic Indigenous perspectives, culture and history into their classrooms.

An Indigenous teen girl is caught between two worlds, both real and virtual, in the YA fantasy debut from bestselling Indigenous author Wab Kinew. Perfect for fans of *Ready Player One* and the *Otherworld* series.

Bugz is caught between two worlds. In the real world, she’s a shy and self-conscious Indigenous teen who faces the stresses of teenage angst and life on the Rez. But in the virtual world, her alter ego is not just confident but dominant in a massively multiplayer video game universe.

Feng is a teen boy who has been sent from China to live with his aunt on the Rez. Meeting each other in real life, as well as in the virtual world, Bugz and Feng immediately relate as outsiders and as avid gamers. And as their connection is strengthened through their virtual adventures, they find that they have much in common in the real world, too.

But betrayal threatens everything Bugz has built in the virtual world and outside of it. It will take all her newfound strength to restore her friendship with Feng and reconcile the parallel aspects of her life: the traditional and the mainstream, the East and the West, the real and the virtual.

Author photograph by Rachael King

**WALKING IN TWO WORLDS by Wab Kinew**

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# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Bugz is the most dominating, successful player in the Floraverse. How has her approach to the game differed from other players, such as the players in Clan:LESS? How does her approach mirror how Indigenous peoples interact with the environment?
2. Bugz's family is very connected and active in powwow circles. What do you know about powwows? What do we learn specifically about the jingle dress dance? What do we learn specifically about the grass dance? How does Bugz feel when she's at the powwow?
3. Bugz struggles with her body image and self-confidence in the "real world," yet it's a different story when she is gaming. How does she change in the Floraverse? Why do you think she is so much more confident? Are there different situations or environments where you feel more confident?
4. Feng and Bugz discuss their families' respective cultural backgrounds and histories. Bugz discovers her family's colonial experience in Canada is very similar to Feng's experience as a Uyghur person in China. What do they have in common? How do their experiences differ?
5. Feng's aunt, Dr. Turukun, talks about how beautiful the Holiday family's community is, then makes the comment, "It's not like any Rez I've seen on the news." (p.40) Think about what you have seen in the news or on social media about Indigenous reserves. How have they been represented? How has this impacted/formed how you think about Indigenous communities more broadly?
6. The novel is set in the future, in a post-pandemic world. Feng experiences anti-Asian racism in his new school from other students. How is this racism connected to the pandemic? How are incidents of racism connected to situations that happen around the world? Can you think of other examples?
7. Throughout the story, Feng often defends the behaviour of Clan:LESS, even though he knows deep down that what they are doing/saying is not okay. Why do you think he defends them and justifies what they do? Have you ever been in a situation where a friend/group of friends have done or said something that you don't agree with? Is that something that you can ignore?
8. The youth in Bugz's community have to be bussed off the Rez in order to attend school. Bugz's mother is working to get a new school for the community. Her father Frank makes the statement, "Same old story . . . it's not like they teach Anishinaabe kids what they need to know in school anyway." (p.52) What do you think he means by that? What do you know about educational inequities in Indigenous communities?
9. Bugz's parents struggle with the amount of time she spends online. Bugz states that "you lost yourselves in your phones and we found ourselves online." (p.137) Do you think we become different people when we are online? Do you find you act differently when you are online? If so, do you feel it's a positive or negative change? Has your phone/technology use changed how you interact with people when you are in-person?
10. Bugz's parents share a teaching at the Sweat Lodge about "walking in two worlds." Discuss what you think they mean by having one foot in your culture and one foot in the mainstream. Do you think that all people have to walk through life this way? Why do you think it is more challenging for some groups of people than for others? Why do you think the author, Wab Kinew, chose this as the title for the novel?
11. Throughout the novel the topic of mental health comes up, with Bugz thinking often of her cousin's cutting scars. Towards the end of the novel, Bugz cuts her arm and considers suicide. What makes her stop? Why do you think she turns the noose turns into a Sundance rope? How is the cutting her cousin did different from the cuts that Bugz witnessed at Sundance?
12. Feng's aunt talks about the social media days and how it screwed everyone's brains up for a decade. What do you think she means by that? *Walking in Two Worlds* gets us thinking about our own online presence. In your own social media and/or gaming experiences, how can you influence the kind of future that you want to see in the world, and be a part of?



# FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

1. The Thunderbird Nest in Bugz's community is an important part of her success online and is important to her in the "real world" as well. Thunderbird Nests are a sacred site for many Indigenous communities. [www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/sites/thunderbirdnest.shtml](http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/sites/thunderbirdnest.shtml) Other kinds of Petroforms (rock formations) are also sacred. Learn about the Indigenous nations whose territory you live in. Are there places and spaces that are sacred or important to them? Invite an Indigenous Elder or Knowledge Keeper who carries that knowledge into your classroom. Be sure to follow proper protocols when inviting them in. If you are able, visit the site with them.
2. Wab Kinew weaves Anishinaabe beings, such as the Thunderbird and Mishi-pizhiw, into characters into the novel. Research these creatures further, as well as other ones (Anishinaabe or in other Indigenous nations). Using what you have learned about them, choose one that interests you the most and create an illustration of what you think they look like. You can choose to use traditional art supplies or use a digital/graphic art program.
3. In Chapter 24, Bugz takes Feng to visit a spot the community calls "the farm." The farm is a series of trailers where sick community members were housed and cared for during the pandemic. It is different from Feng's experience, and different from urban centers as well. Access to appropriate health care is an ongoing concern in many Indigenous communities across the country. Investigate the factors that contribute to this inequity. Invite Indigenous health experts and community leaders into your classroom. As a class, come up with ways to educate others in your school community. Hold discussions to identify possible issues and work together to find solutions.
4. The group of players in the Floraverse who come up against Bugz are called Clan:LESS. The clan system for many Indigenous nations is a structure of kinship and governance. Each clan carries teachings, knowledge and responsibilities that are essential to having a healthy, functioning community. It is an important part of identity as well. Research an Indigenous nation in your community. Do they follow a clan system? If so, how is the clan system structured? Compare how it differs from colonial government structures. Share what you have learned with others.
5. Feng is an Uyghur person from China. Explore who the Uyghurs are. Why are there allegations of genocide against China? Examine the definition of genocide from the United Nations. In your opinion, is China committing genocide? Compare and contrast the Uyghur experience with that of Indigenous peoples in Canada. Connect with your local federal government representative to share what you have learned. Does your representative have knowledge and an opinion/stance on both situations? [www.urap.ca/](http://www.urap.ca/)



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