Piau’s Potato Present

Monckton Township

Pecouidia River

Memramkouke River

Hillsboro Township

Illustrations by Tamara Thiébaux-Heikalo
Piau's Potato Present
At the end of this book, you will find a glossary of German words followed by a glossary of old Acadian words and expressions, found in the story.
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A TALE BY
DIANE CARMEL LÉGER

ILLUSTRATED BY
TAMARA THIÉBAUX-HEIKALO

BOUTON D’OR ACADIE
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MONCKTON TOWNSHIP

The old orchard

The chapel ruins

HILLSBORO TOWNSHIP

Village-des-Piau

Petitcodiac River

Nacadie Creek (Halls Creek)

Memramcook River

Toward the Bay of Fundy
At the break of day, on a frosty April morning, the Treitz family is asleep in their humble little cabin—all except Christian, the youngest. He lies awake, listening as his father, mother, two brothers, and sister cough in their sleep.

Since their arrival on the banks of the Petcoudiac River many months ago, the Treitz family has known only hunger and sickness. The grain, tools, and other provisions promised to them and the seven other families who came with them from Pennsylvania still have not been delivered.

Christian’s stomach growls. "We only have old turnips left to eat. We need meat. Since everyone’s
sick, I will have to be the one to hunt today." Christian gets out of bed quietly so as to not wake the others. The eight-year-old boy looks at the muskets belonging to his father and older brother Abraham. "If only Vater would trust me with a musket. Ach, Jacob managed to kill a porcupine with the club, and he’s barely taller than me." Christian grabs the club and slips out of the house.

On the wooded trail, Christian searches the last of the snow patches for tracks or droppings which might lead him to an animal. He walks by the charred ruins of an Acadian chapel, where his father had unearthed some stones to build their fireplace. He nears the old cemetery, and then decides to head toward the marsh.

In the early morning light, he scans the frost-covered marsh. Still, he has seen no tracks and no
animals. Nothing. Christian sits on a fallen tree facing the river, exhausted. His stomach growls so loudly that he worried the noise will alert any nearby prey. He hears some birds and spots seagulls flying over the river. These birds always follow the river as the tide rises. The little boy hears the solitary wave which appears at the river bend and watches the tidal bore roll upriver, causing the water level to rise. “What a strange river,” he says to himself.
After a while, Christian, chilled to the bone, walks home empty-handed. Frustrated and famished, he grumbles: “It looks like it might snow again. And yet it’s the month of April. There is no spring at all here. Not at all like Pennsylvania…”

Suddenly, something black appears at the forest’s edge. A bear! Christian throws himself to the ground and crawls over to hide behind the dyke. “I should’ve taken a musket,” Christian say to himself reproachfully. “Bear meat could have fed us for a whole month.”
Christian dares to stick his head up from the dyke. “What? A bear carrying a bow and arrows?”

The bear-man walks toward the path leading to the Treitzes’ cabin.

“He’s going to attack my family!”

Trembling, Christian follows at a safe distance. The stranger stops in front of the crosses in the cemetery, bows his head, and appears to pray. Christian, hidden behind spruce trees, is overcome by a sudden urge to cough.

“Kwe!” the man says loudly, obviously surprised.

An Indian! Frightened, Christian tries to run but his violent coughing fit forces him to stop.

The Mi’kmaw catches up with the terrified boy. “Acadien?” he asks in a gentle voice.
Christian cannot answer because of his hacking cough. The man pats him on the back, like Frau Treitz would do to make her youngest son feel better. Finally, Christian is able to stop coughing. When he looks up, to his surprise, he is staring into a pair of twinkling blue eyes.

“Français?”

Christian guesses what the man has just asked and shakes his head to say no.

“You’re English. Don’t fret. I won’t hurt you.”

“Nein! German from Pennsylvania,” answers Christian, regaining his breath.

Timidly, he dares ask, “And you, sir?”

“Acadian,” he answers in English, also. “We’re also called the French Neutrals.”
The Treitz family, recent immigrants to the Monckton Township, is running out of supplies, and everyone is hungry and cold. In a land where memories of the brutal Acadian Deportation are still fresh, the family's youngest son, Christian, meets someone who will change his life and perhaps save the lives of a whole community.