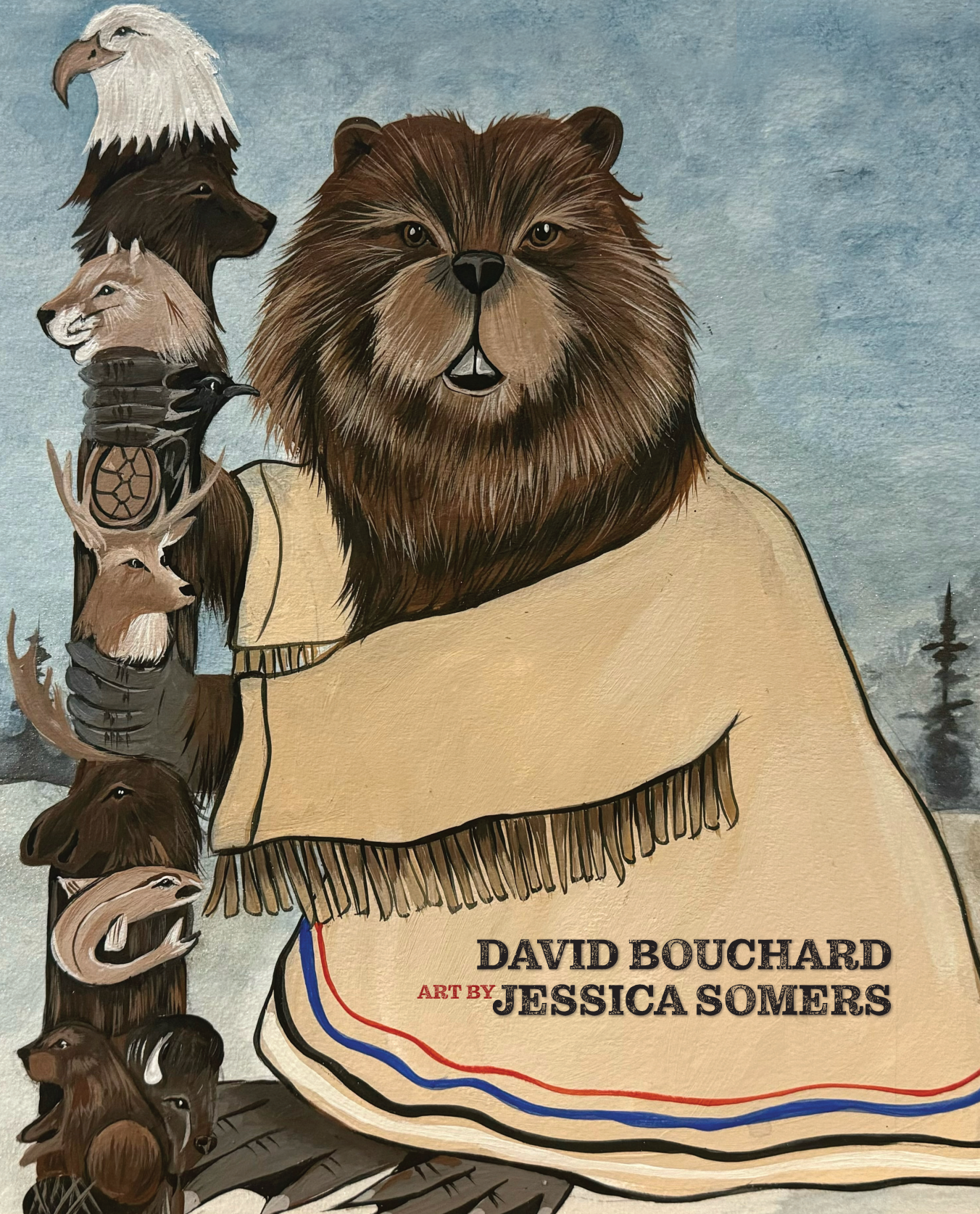


The Talking Stick



DAVID BOUCHARD

ART BY JESSICA SOMERS

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VIDACOM



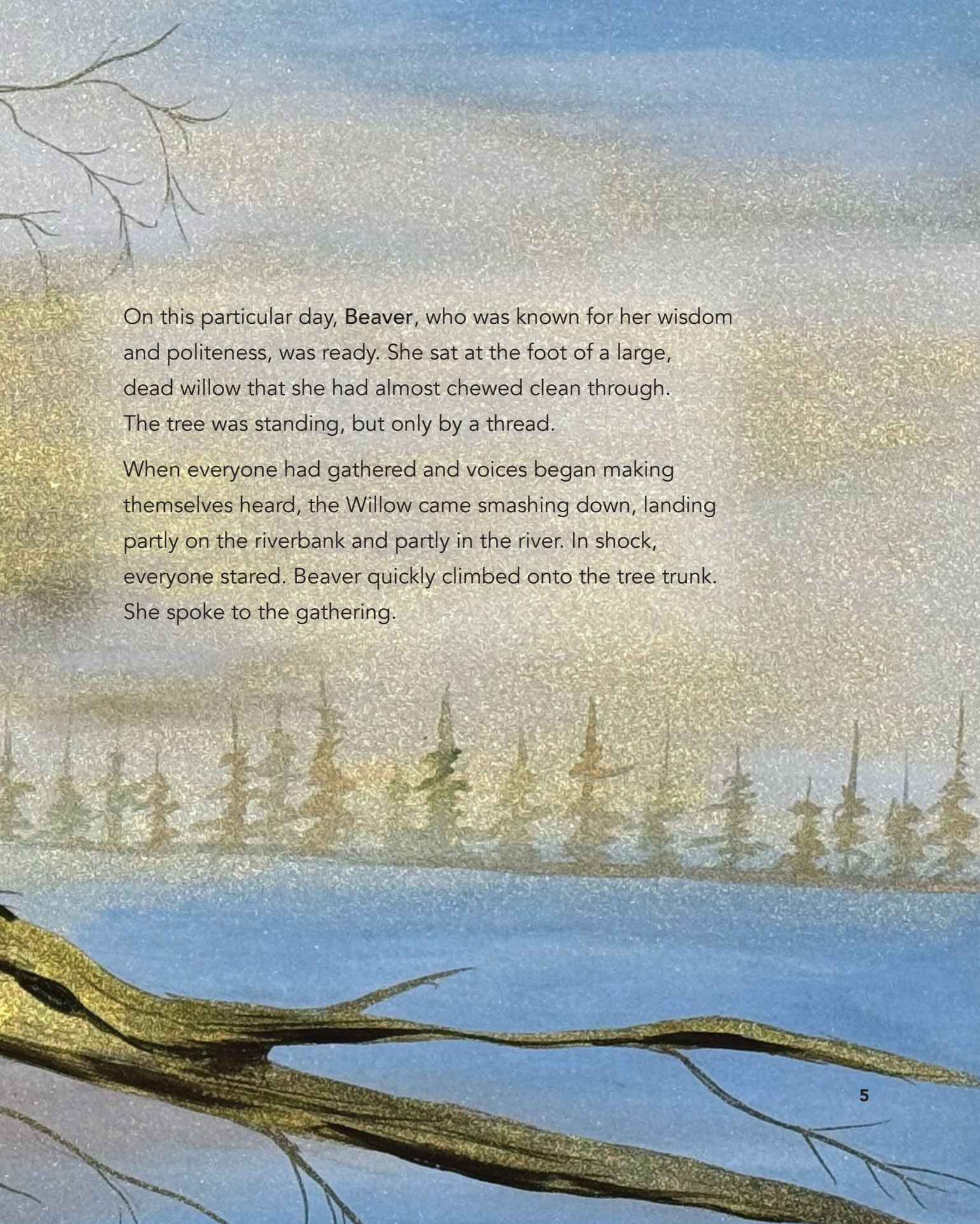
This gathering was much the same as all others.

Next to a gentle turn in the river, four-leggeds, flyers, crawlers, and swimmers gathered to discuss important events on Turtle Island.

They gathered this way several times a year. They had to. Nothing ever got done. As soon as a gathering began, a cacophony arose from the land, the air, and the water. All spoke at the same time and they were loud. They all believed they had important contributions to make.







On this particular day, **Beaver**, who was known for her wisdom and politeness, was ready. She sat at the foot of a large, dead willow that she had almost chewed clean through. The tree was standing, but only by a thread.

When everyone had gathered and voices began making themselves heard, the Willow came smashing down, landing partly on the riverbank and partly in the river. In shock, everyone stared. Beaver quickly climbed onto the tree trunk. She spoke to the gathering.

Friends, I am sorry if I frightened you. I merely wanted to get your attention.

After our last gathering, like so many others, nothing was accomplished. I have given serious thought as to what our problem might be and just how it might be resolved. Identifying the problem was not difficult. There is no order in our gatherings. We all speak out of turn and we speak over one another in such a way that no one can be heard. That is the problem. Now, what is the solution?

I have my own thoughts, but in the spirit of collaboration and team work, I would like to hear your thoughts on who you think should speak first and in what order.

Beaver then picked up and began gnawing on a branch that had broken off the fallen tree.



The participants looked around at one another. They weren't surprised by Beaver's request, because she often solved problems that others could not.

Without hesitation, **Eagle** launched herself from her place high on Grandfather Cedar. She was soon gliding through Father Sky, looking down at the gathering. She circled once or twice before landing back on her perch. Then, she spoke.

It would be simple for us to determine who should speak first and in what order if we could agree that that honour should lie with she who is closest to Creator. No one can achieve the heights that I can. More than any other, I have Creator's ear. We all know that! Yes, I should begin. After me, the honour should be determined by our proximity to Creator. When it comes to the four-leggeds and others, well, the speakers should go in order of height.



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ISBN: 978-1-77461-072-5
Text ©2025 David Bouchard
Illustrations ©2025 Jessica Somers

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The publisher gratefully acknowledges the support of the Canada Council for the Arts and the Manitoba Arts Council for its publishing program. We acknowledge the support of the Government of Canada through the Canada Book Fund and the Government of Manitoba through the Publishing Tax Credit Program for our publishing activities.

Financé par le gouvernement du Canada
Funded by the Government of Canada

Canada

Manitoba



Canada Council
for the Arts

Conseil des Arts
du Canada

Cover illustration: Jessica Somers
Book design and layout: Arifin Graham, Alaris Design
Editor-in-Chief: Joanne Therrien
Editor: Lynne Therrien
Copy Editor: Jessica Antony

Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication

Title: The talking stick / David Bouchard; art by Jessica Somers.
Names: Bouchard, David, 1952– author | Somers, Jessica, illustrator.
Identifiers: Canadiana (print) 20240496787 | Canadiana (ebook) 20240496795
ISBN 9781774610725 (softcover) | ISBN 9781774610732 (PDF) | ISBN 9781774610749 (EPUB)
Subjects: LCGFT: Fiction. | LCGFT: Picture books.
Classification: LCC PS8553.O759 T35 2025 | DDC jC813/.54—dc23

Legal deposit 2025
Library and Archives Canada
Manitoba Legislative Library



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