*Three Day Road* context

ENG2D3

The following information has been cut and pasted from Wikipedia.

*Three Day Road* is the first [novel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Novel) from [Canadian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canada) writer [Joseph Boyden](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Boyden). This novel follows the journey of two young [Cree](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cree) men, Xavier and Elijah, who volunteer for WWI and become [snipers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sniper) during the conflict. The book was well received and a national best seller. The novel was inspired by [Ojibwa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ojibwe) [Francis Pegahmagabow](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_Pegahmagabow)\*, the legendary First World War sniper.

\*Francis Pegahmagabow (March 9, 1891 – August 5, 1952) was the [First Nations](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Nations) soldier most highly decorated for bravery in [Canadian military history](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Military_history_of_Canada) and the most effective [sniper](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sniper) of [World War I](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_I). Three times awarded the Military Medal and seriously wounded, he was an expert [marksman](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marksman) and [scout](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reconnaissance), credited with killing 378 Germans and capturing 300 more. Later in life, he served as chief and a [councillor](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Councilor) for the [Wasauksing First Nation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wasauksing_First_Nation%22%20%5Co%20%22Wasauksing%20First%20Nation), and as an [activist](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Activist) and leader in several [First Nations](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Nations) organizations. First Nation members who served in the army during World War I were particularly active as political activists. They had travelled the world, earned the respect of the comrades in the trenches, and refused to be sidelined by the newly empowered “Indian Agents” (White government agents who acted as intermediaries between First Nations peoples and the Canadian government. The powers of the Indian agent held sway over the lives of all [First Nations](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Nations) peoples in their jurisdictions). Historian Paul Williams termed these advocates "returned soldier chiefs", and singled out a few, including Pegahmagabow, as being especially politically active. This caused intense disagreements with his “Indian Agent,” John Daly, and eventually led to Pegahmagabow being deposed as chief. Daly and other agents who came in contact with Pegahmagabow were incredibly frustrated by his attempts, in his words, to free his people from "white slavery". The Indian agents labelled him a "mental case" and strove to sideline him and his supporters.

Controversies Surrounding Boyden (Ahumada’s italics for emphasis)

Boyden is primarily of Irish and Scottish ancestry. Many in the Indigenous community say they knew Boyden was falsely claiming to be First Nation or Metis. *They considered the subterfuge harmless so long as he was quietly writing fiction. Then Boyden began to publicly speak on behalf of First Nations in the media and repeatedly made statements regarding sexual harassment, residential schools, and reconciliation which contradicted the views those of prominent Indigenous spokespeople.* *Boyden began to crowd out legitimate voices from Indigenous speakers and writers, presenting his opinions as reflecting those of Indigenous people.* So a group of Indigenous writers came forward to publicly state Boyden did not have the right to speak on behalf of any Indigenous community because he was not a First Nations citizen and not Indigenous.

Boyden's claims to Indigenous heritage subsequently became the subject of public dispute when an [APTN National News](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/APTN_National_News) article, "Author Joseph Boyden's shape-shifting Indigenous identity" by Jorge Barrera, was published December 23, 2016. Barrera's article investigates Boyden's past claims of Mi'kmaq, and [Métis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/M%C3%A9tis) ancestry as well as his current claims of being Nipmuc and Ojibway. On January 12, 2017, Boyden gave his first public interviews since the appearance of the APTN article. *He personally selected the interviewers* who were both friends of his, Mark Medley of *The Globe and Mail*, and Candy Palmater a comedian who occasionally works at CBC. Boyden now admitted he had erroneously identified himself as Mi'kmaq in the past. He continued to identify as a "white kid with native roots", Ojibway on his mother's side and Nipmuc on his father's side. *Boyden denied that he had relied on his identity as an Indigenous person to popularize his books, and he stated he had only won one literary prize based on heritage and little money.* He did, however, apologize for taking up too much of the "air space" and stated he would do less public speaking, thus allowing for Indigenous voices to be heard in the media. Reaction to the interviews was mixed.

Characters and Setting

Niska: A Cree woman who is Xavier’s aunt. He chapters are set prior to WWI (she recounts her past), and after WWI (she takes care of Xavier after he returns from the war). Her chapters, among other ideas, teach readers about Cree culture, residential schools\*, and the importance of storytelling.

\*In [Canada](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canada), the Indian residential school systemwas a network of boardin schools for [Indigenous peoples](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indigenous_peoples_in_Canada). The network was funded by the [Canadian government](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Government_of_Canada)'s [Department of Indian Affairs](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aboriginal_Affairs_and_Northern_Development_Canada) and administered by Christian churches. *The school system was created for the purpose of removing Indigenous children from the influence of their own culture and*[*assimilating*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cultural_assimilation)*them into the dominant Canadian culture, "to kill the indian in the child."* Over the course of the system's more than hundred-year existence, about 30 per cent of Indigenous children (around 150,000) were placed in residential schools nationally. The number of school-related deaths remains unknown due to an incomplete historical record, though estimates range from 3,200 upwards of 6,000.

*The residential school system harmed Indigenous children significantly by removing them from their families, depriving them of their ancestral languages, exposing many of them to physical and sexual abuse, and forcibly enfranchising them. Disconnected from their families and culture and forced to speak English or French, students who attended the residential school system often graduated unable to fit into either their communities and still subject to racist attitudes in mainstream Canadian society. The system ultimately proved successful in disrupting the transmission of Indigenous practices and beliefs across generations. The legacy of the system has been linked to an increased prevalence of*[*post-traumatic stress*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Post-traumatic_stress)*,*[*alcoholism*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alcoholism)*,*[*substance abuse*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Substance_abuse)*, and suicide, which persist within Indigenous communities today.*

SEE ALSO: 60s Scoop

Xavier and Elijah: Cree teens who have grown up in different circumstances and settings. They are best friends and enlist in the Canadian army during WWI\*. They become excellent snipers, but their friendship is pushed to the limit in the hellish circumstances of the war. Their chapters, among others ideas, focus on friendship, racism, assimilating, maintaining one’s identity, losing one’s sanity, and betrayal.

\*WWI also known as the First World War or the Great War, was a [global war](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_war) originating in [Europe](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Europe) that lasted from 28 July 1914 to 11 November 1918. Contemporaneously described as "[the war to end all wars](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_war_to_end_all_wars)", it led to the mobilisation of more than 70 million [military personnel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Military_personnel), making it one of the largest wars in history. It is also [one of the deadliest conflicts in history](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_wars_and_anthropogenic_disasters_by_death_toll), with an estimated nine million [combatants](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Combatants) and seven million [civilian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Civilian) [deaths as a direct result of the war](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_I_casualties), while [resulting genocides](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Genocides_in_history#World_War_I_through_World_War_II) and the resulting [1918 influenza pandemic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spanish_flu) caused another 50 to 100 million deaths worldwide. The war saw the introduction of new artillery such as tanks, flame throwers, and mustard gas. *TDR* often references the trenches and trench foot (see pictures on slides). The intense fighting took its toll on soldiers both physically and emotionally. Many that were injured were given morphine to cope with the pain; it is a highly addictive drug. Many soldiers became dependant on morphine both during and then after the war. Many also suffered from what was called “combat stress” or “shell-shock”, which is now called “post-traumatic stress disorder.