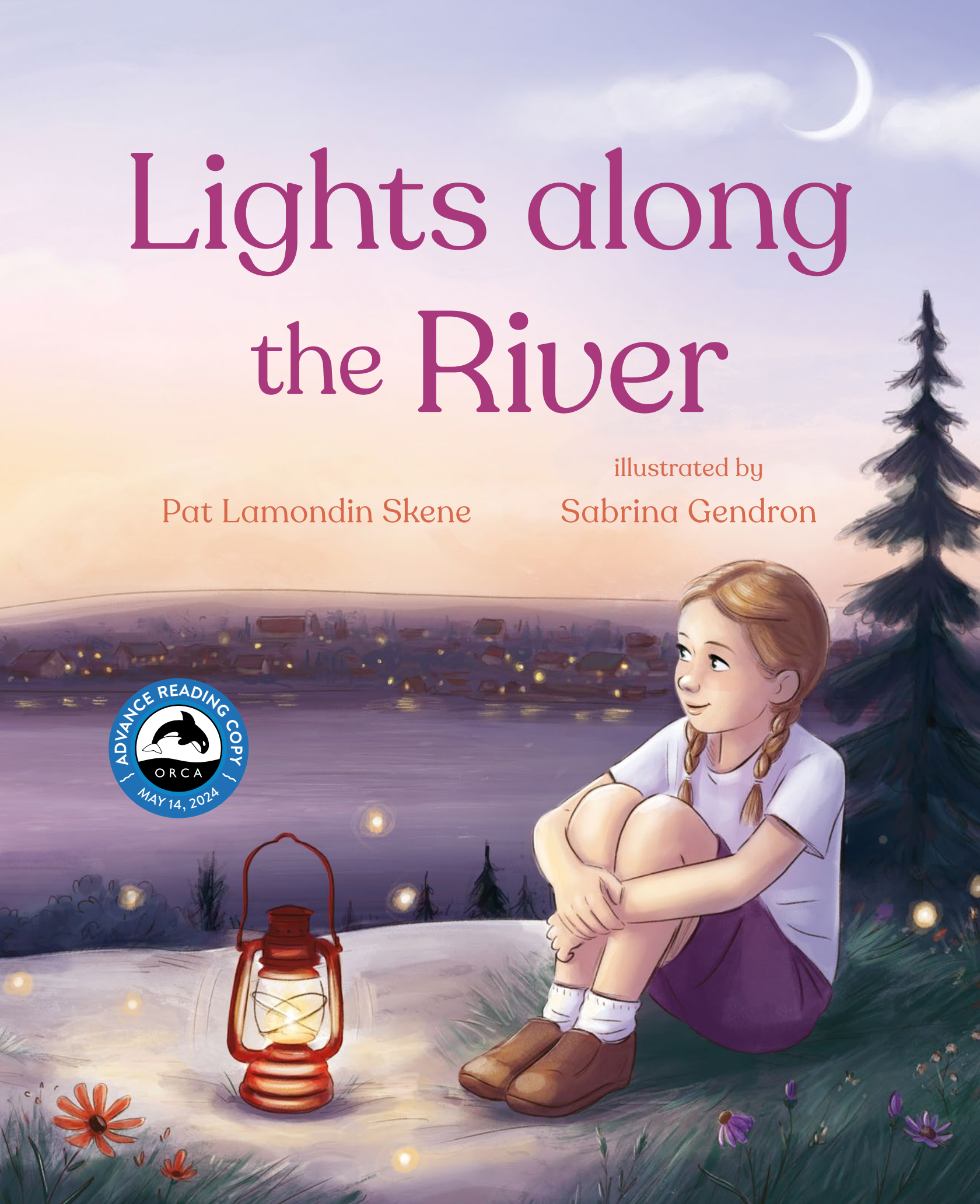
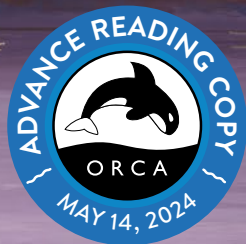


Lights along the River

Pat Lamondin Skene

illustrated by
Sabrina Gendron



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Lights along the River

Author: Pat Lamondin Skene

May 14, 2024

Illustrator: Sabrina Gendron

In this illustrated picture book set in 1952, a young Métis girl anticipates the arrival of electricity in her small town.

FORMAT	Hardcover	PDF	EPUB
8.75 × 10.75"	9781459836518	9781459836525	9781459836532
32 pages	\$21.95		

KEY SELLING POINTS

- Inspired by the true story of electricity coming to Britt, Ontario, in January 1952, years after much of North America had already been connected to the grid.
- This story paints a picture of what small-town life was like for children seventy years ago when there were no phones, televisions or other electronic devices for entertainment.
- Glowing illustrations by Sabrina Gendron depict the rural 1950s before electricity: oil lanterns, wood stoves, battery radios and hand pumps.
- Author Pat Lamondin Skene learned of her family's Métis heritage after it was hidden in plain sight for generations. This story is a reclamation of her Indigenous identity and her family's history in Georgian Bay, including happy memories of jigging to fiddle music and gathering flowers on the big rock overlooking the Magnetawan River.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



PHOTO CREDIT: BARB DUBRAWSKI

PAT LAMONDIN SKENE retired from the world of banking to find her voice. She is a Métis author of seven books for children, including *What a Hippopota-Mess*, *Rhyme Stones* and *Monster Lunch*. Her forthcoming memoir, *Swiftly Flowing Waters*, shares more stories of her childhood growing up on the Magnetawan River. Pat keeps her imagination fed and watered in Oakville, Ontario.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR



PHOTO CREDIT: SABRINA GENDRON

SABRINA GENDRON has a degree in visual arts from Cégep de Ste-Foy and in 2D/3D animation from Collège Bart. She loves to work on animation and visual arts projects and has illustrated a number of French-language books. Her art is colorful and lively and will make you want to dive into the worlds she has created. Sabrina lives in Mont-Saint-Hilaire, Quebec.

PROMOTIONAL PLANS INCLUDE

- Print and online advertising campaigns
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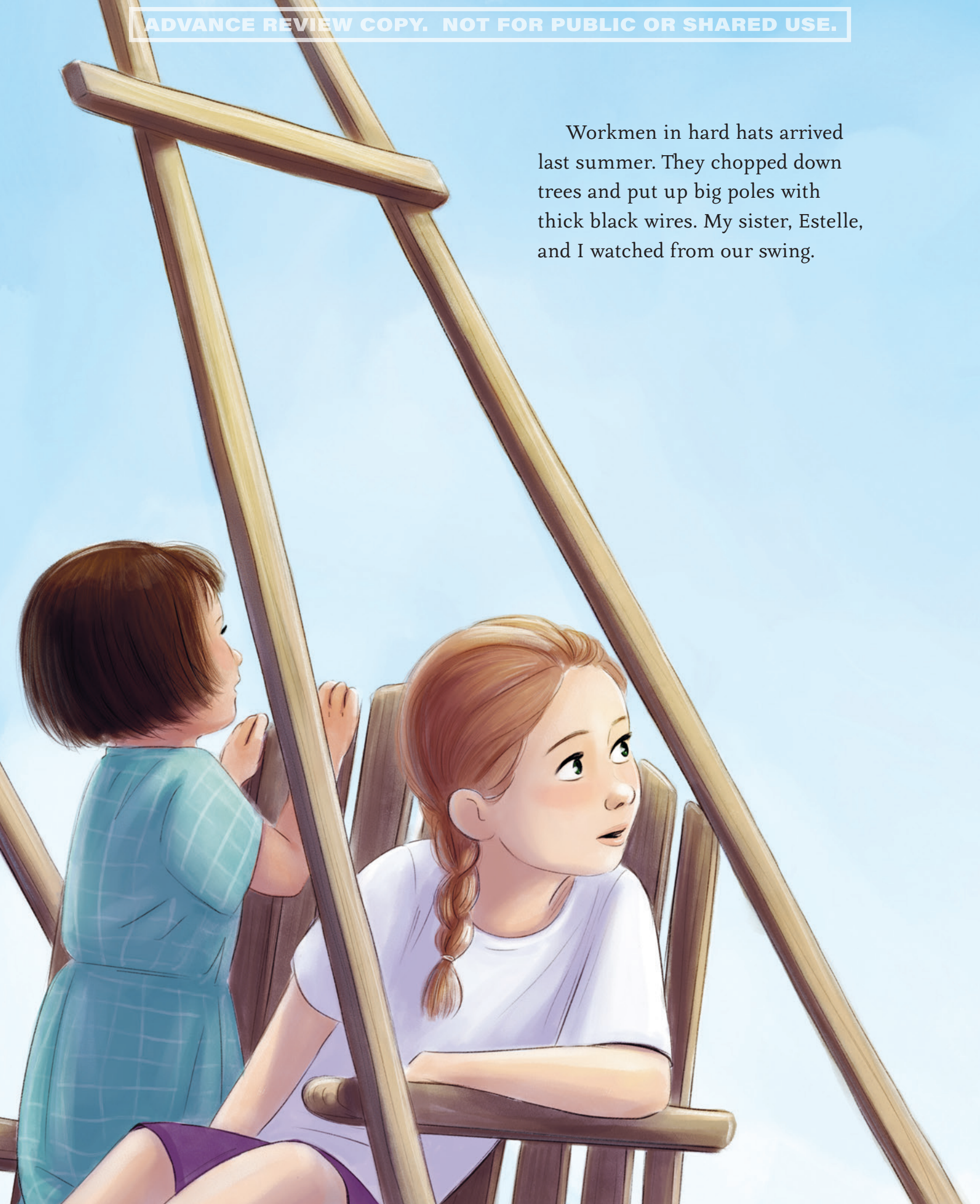
“Get up, Patsy!” my brother says, shaking me awake and then bolting down the stairs before my sister and me.

Mom is making fried apples with cinnamon for breakfast.


“The big day is finally here, kids!” she says.

Our little town of Britt, Ontario, is getting electricity.





Workmen in hard hats arrived last summer. They chopped down trees and put up big poles with thick black wires. My sister, Estelle, and I watched from our swing.



“Patsy...what does electricity look like?” she asked.

“It makes things brighter,” I told her. “Maybe we’ll get colored neon lights like they have in the city!”

“I like my house the way it is,” Estelle said.

That summer afternoon my sister followed me to the Big Rock near our house. We picked flowers and sweetgrass to braid into necklaces. We sat on the ledge and watched a coal boat passing by on the Magnetawan River.

“Did you know *Magnetawan* means ‘swiftly flowing waters’ in Ojibwe?” I asked Estelle. But she had fallen asleep.

I sat quietly on the rocky ledge, cradled by the feeling that I belonged there. Electricity would never change that, would it?





As I wash the breakfast dishes, I look at the new ceiling light Dad put up in the kitchen. A big glass fixture covers the dark bulb underneath.

“Will we use our lanterns anymore?” I ask.

“Nope, we’ll just store them all in the shed,” Mom answers.

“Is the lighthouse getting electricity too?” Bruce asks her.

“Not right away,” she says. “It’s too far out in the bay.”



Dad's family used to be lighthouse keepers at Gereaux Island Lighthouse in Georgian Bay. Dad gives fishing tours in the bay when he isn't working at the railway docks. He lost his hand in an accident, and he wears a hook to help him pick things up.

Dad's family is Métis. But we don't use that word. Mom is French, and that's what I say I am too. People are not always kind when they know you are Indigenous.



I love spending time with my big family. Every Sunday we go next door to Aunt Lily and Uncle Nye's house. We crowd into the kitchen, and my uncle plays the fiddle while my cousins play piano, guitar and spoons. Everybody sings along. Last week I wrapped a tablecloth around my waist and did a jig!





When we aren't making our own music, we listen to the battery-operated radio. In the evenings, Dad puts on some toe-tapping country music. Oil lamps fill the living room with warm amber light.

Estelle and I cut pictures of clothing out of department-store catalogs to make outfits for our paper dolls.

Bruce reads comic books.

Mom works at her sewing machine. It makes a gentle whirring sound as her foot moves up and down on the treadle.

Bruce, Estelle and I share a bedroom. Every night, Mom carries an oil lamp upstairs to light our way before she tucks us in. When she leaves, it is so dark.

I miss the summer glow of fireflies in the yard. In winter the only light comes from the moon sprinkling diamonds on the snow, and the faint reflection of lights along the frozen river from the houses in the next town. Will this change with electricity too?





“Is it time to go yet?” I ask.
“Not for a few hours,” Mom replies. She is going to take us into town this afternoon to watch the electricity get connected.



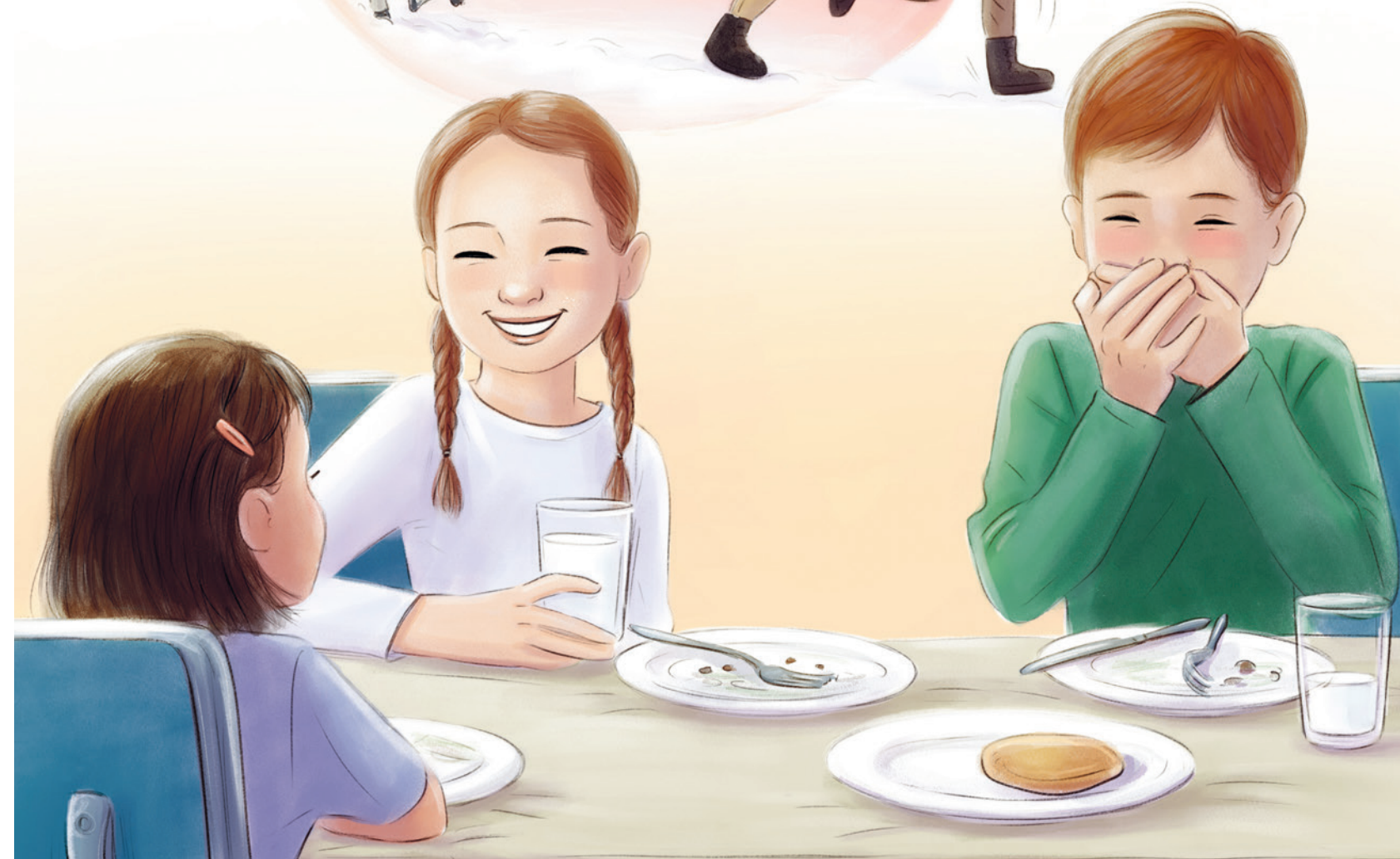
“Can we get a TV?” Bruce asks.



“Will electricity mean no more stinky outhouses?” Estelle asks.

Finally Mom calls us for lunch—fish that Bruce caught through the ice and warm, buttery bannock. Mealtimes are my favorite part of the day, because we always tell stories around the table. Today Estelle describes her escape from Mrs. Gendron’s goat. “He chased me and Cousin Janice and butted us from behind!” she says.

“You should tie my saucer sled to your bum!” my brother teases. He giggles so hard, milk squirts out of his nose.



Mom suggests we play outside for a while. We toboggan down the hill beside our house and join our cousins for a game of broomball on our ice rink on the river. It's so cold, I can't feel my toes.


Then the church bells begin to ring. They are calling people to the center of town. At last it's time to go!






Estelle and I hold hands with Mom as we hurry toward the excitement. Bruce races ahead with Cousin Wally, eager to get there first.

Families huddle together, lined up along the street. Some kids have harnessed a dog to a long sled. They ride in, waving at the crowd.

An illustration of a tall wooden utility pole against a clear blue sky. Two men in blue overalls are climbing the pole. In the foreground, the tops of several people's heads and their raised hands are visible, suggesting a crowd watching the workers. The scene is set in a snowy environment, with a snow-covered roof visible in the lower left.

A man with a megaphone tells people to clear the road. A police car, siren screaming, rolls into town. Behind it, a large green truck grinds to a halt in front of the crowd. Men in overalls climb the tall wooden poles. Everyone cheers.

An illustration of a woman in a purple coat and black hat pointing towards a light bulb. She is surrounded by children in winter clothing. The scene is set in a snowy environment with a soft, hazy background.

I block my ears and move closer to Mom. She leans down so Estelle and I can hear her. "Watch that light bulb right over there," she says, pointing.

I'm so disappointed. There isn't a single colored light.
"The best part is at home, Patsy," she adds, seeing my dismay.



Just then the bulb hanging on the side of the post office lights up. The crowd roars.

"Is that it?" I ask.

"Yes, we have electricity now!" Mom answers happily.



When we get back to the house, Dad is home from work. The new kitchen light is on. Bruce, Estelle and I run around the house flipping light switches on and off.

After dark we bounce on the beds in excitement. The ceiling beneath our bedroom shakes with every jump.

“Look how bright it is in our room,” I exclaim between breaths.

“I can even read my comic books in bed!” Bruce says happily.

Outside, the lights along the river look whiter and brighter than before.



Before bed we sit around the kitchen table, drinking chocolate milk.

Suddenly there is a big **CRASH!**

The cover of the new kitchen light lies in pieces on the floor.

Dad looks up at the bare bulb. "All that bed-bouncing upstairs must have loosened the fixture!" he says.

"It almost hit you, Bruce!" I say with a chuckle.

"Maybe you're the one who needs to wear your saucer sled," Estelle teases. "On your head!" We all burst into laughter, and Bruce squirts milk out of his nose again.

We don't have any neon lights, but our big day sure ended with a **BANG!**



A Note from Patsy

This story is based on my childhood memories of growing up in a small town on the Magnetawan River. We really didn't get electricity until 1952! Here are five things that changed once it was connected:

1. We stored the coal oil lanterns in the shed. Our new electric lights were brighter and easier to turn on.
2. We replaced the woodstove with an electric one. I remember the smile on Mom's face when it was delivered.
3. We got running water. No more pumping water from the well or chopping a hole in the ice to carry pails from the river. (And yes, no more stinky outhouses!)
4. We got a record player. I could listen to my favorite music whenever I wanted—but I still liked singing and dancing with my family the best.
5. We got a black-and-white television. We could barely see *The Lone Ranger* on the snowy screen.

Soon we didn't tell as many stories around the kitchen table. Instead we watched the stories on television. But now, seventy years later, I am here telling you my story. I wonder what big changes you will see in your life. Can you imagine what the world will be like in ten, fifty or seventy years?



Patsy Lamondin in 1951

For my family —P.L.S.

To Luc and Diane —S.G.

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The river glowed with lights for the first time.

On a cold winter morning in 1952, Patsy Lamondin wakes to the day electricity will finally be connected to her small town along the Magnetawan River. Patsy and her siblings buzz with excitement, eagerly awaiting the ceremony being held at the center of town. The Lamondins have lived along the waters of Georgian Bay and the Magnetawan River for generations. They are a Métis family who love music, dancing and being outdoors, and Patsy ponders how electricity will change all of their daily lives. What she knows for sure is that, whatever changes, she will always belong here.

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This is an advance reading copy of the uncorrected proofs and is not for sale. Changes may be made to the text before publication, so **all quotations for review must be checked against the final bound book.**

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