

# THE MYSTERIOUS INGREDIENT

Story by **MIREILLE MESSIER**  
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Dairy Farmers of Canada would like to acknowledge the contributions made by Indigenous partners in the representation of the book’s Mi’kmaw characters, Nadine and her family.

**MI’KMAW MOTIF DESIGNS**

**The double curve motif design associated with the Mi’kmaq nation can be traced back to pre-contact petroglyph art found in the traditional coastal regions of the Maritime provinces. What sets these motif patterns and designs apart from those of other Indigenous nations is their floral representation. These patterns would traditionally be found on clothing (look for the motif at the bottom of Nadine’s shirt when reading the book), birch bark canoes, furnishings and body art.**

**THE MI’KMAQ**

**The Mi’kmaq, who also call themselves L’nu, are the coastal Indigenous peoples of the Maritime provinces (and the Gaspé Peninsula) and are known as People of the Dawn. They are part of the Wabanaki Confederacy, which is made up of the Abenaki, Mi’kmaq, Penobscot, Peskotomuhkati, and Wolastoqiyik. There are seven districts within traditional Mi’kmaq territory, which includes the coastal regions of the Maritimes and the province of Quebec.**





Tomorrow Nadine is having a sleepover.  
Emma has her invitation. Colin and his twin brother,  
Robin, do too. Everyone is excited!

"We'll do a treasure hunt and play flashlight tag," says Nadine.

"What's flashlight tag?" asks Colin, intrigued.

"It's like regular tag, but instead of touching the players,  
you have to tag them with the beam from your flashlight,"  
explains Nadine.

"That's the perfect game for a sleepover!"  
says Emma.







Robin is already thinking about breakfast.

"Will you make your grandmother's delicious bannock? It's my favourite kind of bread!" asks Robin.

"Yes!" answers Nadine. "My grandmother showed me how and I have all the ingredients at home."

"Oh, it's going to be great!" says Robin, hopping excitedly.

"I like bannock with apples and cheese," says Colin, smacking his lips.

"I like bannock with yogurt, tomatoes and chives," says Emma with a twirl.







"I know, let's make it a potluck breakfast!"  
says Nadine.

"What's a potluck?"  
asks Colin.

"It's when everyone brings food to share,"  
says Nadine.

"That sounds like fun," says Robin.  
"We can bring apples and cheese from home."

"And I can bring tomatoes and chives  
from our garden," says Emma.

"Yay!" says Nadine.  
"This will be the best breakfast ever."







The next day after school, the friends meet at Nadine's house. The living room is covered with sleeping bags and pillows. The guests bring their delicious breakfast foods into the kitchen. Then the games begin—and last late into the evening!

Everyone has so much fun that when the friends finally fall asleep, they all have great big smiles.





In the morning, Nadine and her friends aren't woken up by the sound of an alarm clock or the crow of a rooster. They wake up because of the growling of Robin's stomach.

*Grrr! Grumble! Grrrowl!*



"I'm hungry," says Robin.

"Let's make breakfast!" Nadine jumps out of her sleeping bag and runs to the kitchen.

"Yes!" says Colin, right behind her.

Emma opens one eye, then the other. She wriggles out of her sleeping bag as slowly as a turtle.

"Wait for me," she says with a yawn.



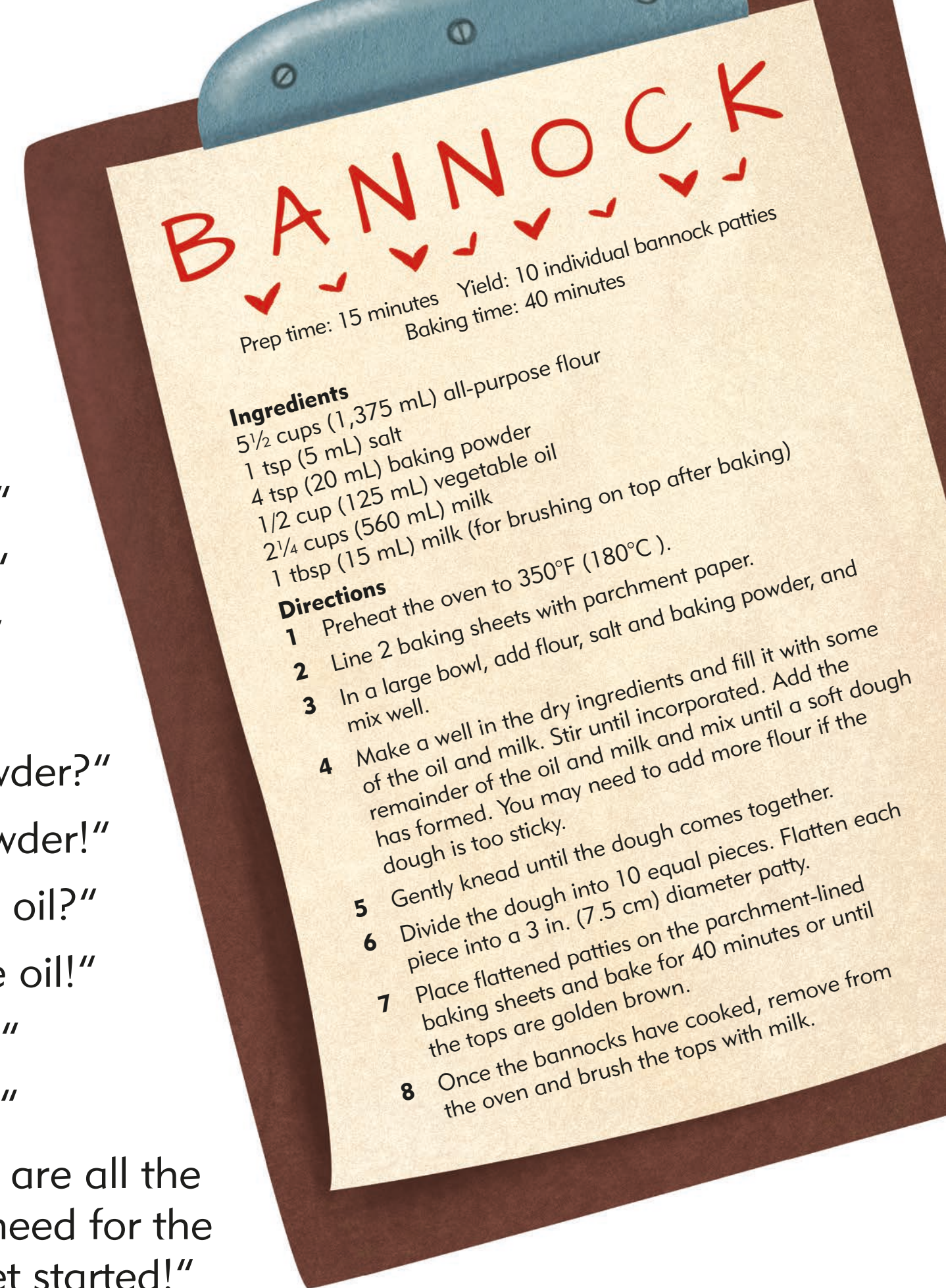




Nadine is head chef and her friends are her helpers. Recipe in hand, she reads off the ingredients they need to make the bannock.

"Flour?"  
 "Flour!"  
 "Salt?"  
 "Salt!"  
 "Baking powder?"  
 "Baking powder!"  
 "Vegetable oil?"  
 "Vegetable oil!"  
 "Milk?"  
 "Milk!"

"Perfect. Those are all the ingredients we need for the recipe. Let's get started!"







Emma measures. Colin stirs.  
Robin kneads. Nadine divides  
the dough and everyone  
flattens their own portion.



But the friends' bannock patties aren't anything like the ones  
Nadine's grandmother makes. They're too sticky and too hard.  
There's no point in baking them.

"What happened?" asks Colin, disappointed.

"I don't know," says Emma.

"We followed all the steps," says Nadine.

"Let me see," says Robin.

The four friends reread the recipe carefully.

"We had all the right ingredients," confirms Colin.

"We had all the right amounts," confirms Emma.

"We had all the right steps in the right order," confirms Robin.

"I don't understand why the recipe didn't work,"  
Nadine says with a sigh.





Disappointed, Nadine sets the recipe on the counter. She opens the refrigerator door to find something else for breakfast.

The little draft of air made by the door makes the recipe flutter to the floor.

"Hey, look!" says Emma.  
"There's something written on the back of the recipe!"

Emma picks up the paper and reads the handwritten note:

*Note: For the best bannock, add a pinch or two of Kiju' wksalsutim xox.*

"What does it mean?" asks Emma.  
"Maybe it's a magic ingredient," suggests Robin.  
"Maybe it's a secret code," suggests Colin.

Nadine smiles. She understands.

"It's not a secret code. It's written in Mi'kmaw. It means *grandmother's love*. The missing ingredient is a grandmother's love!"





Nadine runs out of the house, stops and looks both ways, then crosses the street, leaving her confused friends on the porch. She knocks on the door.


“Kiju’, we need your help!”

Nadine’s grandmother opens the door. She’s already wearing her apron—like she knew Nadine would come.

“Let’s go make bannock!”







Everyone in Nadine's kitchen  
is bursting with excitement.

Emma measures. Colin stirs. Robin kneads.  
Nadine divides and flattens. Grandmother does too.

The bannock patties are perfect this time.  
Not too sticky, not too hard.

As soon as they are ready, Grandmother puts them in  
the oven. The smell of baking bread fills the house.





Drawn by the aroma—and by the laughter—Nadine’s dad, mom and older brother, David, peek into the kitchen.

“What smells so good?” asks David.  
“Are you making bannock?” asks Mom.

Before anyone can answer, a loud rumbling fills the room.

*Grrr! Grumble! Grrrowl!* This time, eight hungry bellies  
make all that noise.





Nadine and her grandmother carefully take the bannock out of the oven. Mom sets the table.



Dad helps the friends chop the apples, cheese, chives and tomatoes. David sets the mood by singing and playing his ukulele.





Breakfast is delicious. Nadine's friends and family eat their bannock in their own favourite way. Her mom likes hers with yogurt and her dad likes his with blueberries. David prefers his plain with a glass of cold milk. Bannock is tasty in any and every way!

At the end of the meal, Grandmother has a surprise. She gives each guest a copy of the bannock recipe. Nadine is so happy—her sleepover was a huge success.







When it's time for the friends to leave, Robin stops at the door and goes back to give Nadine's grandmother a hug.

"I really like your bannock recipe."

"Thank you, Robin! That's very kind."

"But I have a question. If we don't have a grandmother, can we still make your bannock?"

Nadine's grandmother thinks for a minute.

"Wait here," she says as she heads into the kitchen. A moment later she returns with a jar and hands it to Robin.

"Here you go."

"What is it?" asks Robin, looking at what appears to be an empty jar.

"It's grandmother's love!"

"It is?" Robin squints to look more closely.

"Yes. You can take a pinch when you need some and sprinkle it on your dough, like this."

Nadine's grandmother opens the jar, takes a pinch and wiggles her fingers.

"In this jar, you have enough grandmother's love to make the recipe ten times."

"Oh, thank you!" says Robin.

"But what do I do when I run out?"

"You come back here. I have a lot to give!"

Robin runs home, inspired.





On Monday at school, Robin proudly shares his homemade bannock patties with the class.



"Aren't they the best you've ever had?" he asks.

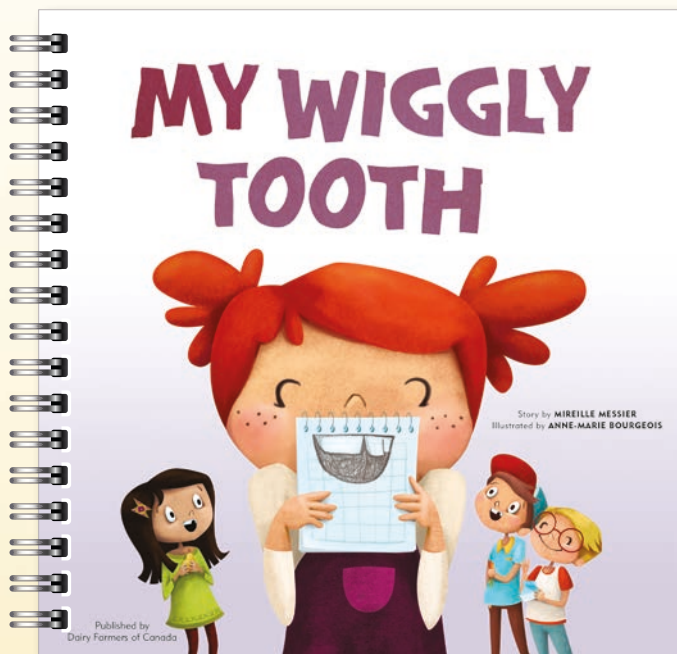
"They sure are," answers his teacher.

"It's because I used a double portion of grandmother's love!"

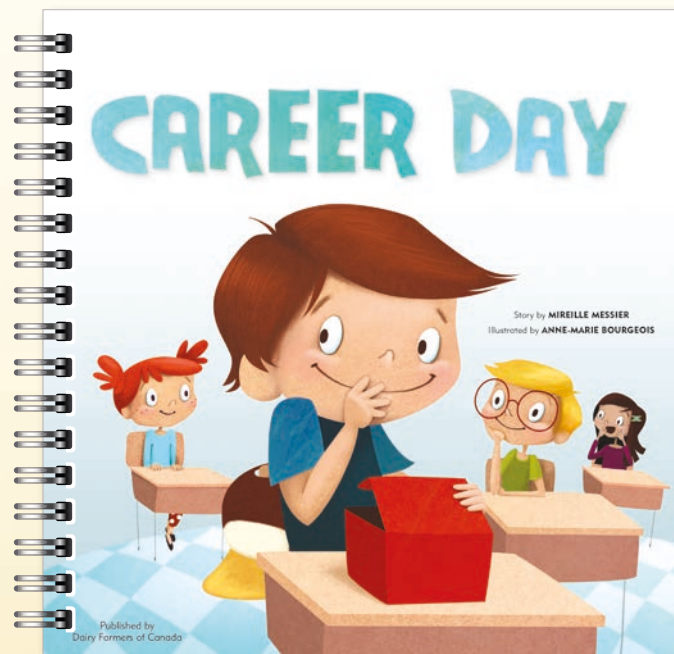
Robin's teacher is confused. Nadine smiles.  
She understands. And so do her sleepover friends.



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