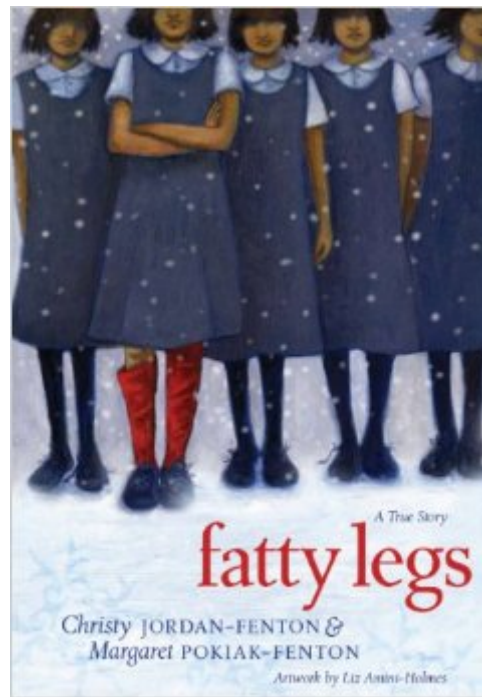


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# Fatty Legs



## Synopsis

Eight-year-old Margaret Pokiak has set her sights on learning to read, even though it means leaving her village in the high Arctic. Faced with unceasing pressure, her father finally agrees to let her make the five-day journey to attend school, but he warns Margaret of the terrors of residential schools. At school Margaret soon encounters the Raven, a black-cloaked nun with a hooked nose and bony fingers that resemble claws. She immediately dislikes the strong-willed young Margaret. Intending to humiliate her, the heartless Raven gives gray stockings to all the girls &#151; all except Margaret, who gets red ones. In an instant Margaret is the laughingstock of the entire school. In the face of such cruelty, Margaret refuses to be intimidated and bravely gets rid of the stockings. Although a sympathetic nun stands up for Margaret, in the end it is this brave young girl who gives the Raven a lesson in the power of human dignity. Complemented by archival photos from Margaret Pokiak-Fentonâ™s collection and striking artworks from Liz Amini-Holmes, this inspiring first-person account of a plucky girlâ™s determination to confront her tormentor will linger with young readers.

## Book Information

Paperback: 112 pages

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Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 starsÂ Â See all reviewsÂ (13 customer reviews)

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Age Range: 9 - 11 years

Grade Level: 4 - 7

## Customer Reviews

Eight-year-old Margaret Pokiak , whose name is Olemaun in the language of her people, the Inuvialuit, wants to learn to read. But her father has seen the true nature of the outsider and puts

little value in such learning. But Margaret is determined to learn, and begs her father to let her go to the Anglican school. Her father tries to warn her, showing her a pebble that has been changed, and all but worn away, by the slapping of the ocean."But Father, the water did not change the stone inside the rock. Besides, I am not a rock. I am a girl. I can move. I am not stuck upon the shore for an eternity," says Margaret. Her father relents, and so begins Margaret's adventure. But what she discovers is far from the fantasy she had imagined. She meets the malicious Raven, the pale-faced, beak-nose nun who becomes her tormentor. Like the ocean slapping the rock, the Raven assigns tedious chores to Margaret in an attempt to wear her down. She requires Margaret to wear thick, red socks, in contrast to the slender grey socks that the other girls wear, an act that earns Margaret the humiliating nickname, Fatty Legs. Beautifully written and illustrated with archival photographs from Margaret Pokiak-Fenton's personal collection, and artwork by the amazing Liz Amini-Holmes, this book becomes a mesmerizing, and moving account as Margaret faces the humiliations faced by many of the First People as they are "plucked" from their families and taken to the residential schools. As educator Keith Schock discusses on his website, Teach With Picture Books, this book becomes an excellent tool to teach about the process in which a dominate culture "...

Fatty Legs by Christy Jordan-Fenton and Margaret Pokiak-Fenton is my first exposure to stories about the Inuit, and it's a good one. This true tale of Olemaun and her wish to attend a faraway residential school has drama, realistic characters, and educational value. Set in the 1940s, Fatty Legs is an autobiographical account of a determined eight-year-old from an Inuvialuit community in the Arctic Circle. In the introduction, Olemaun writes that her nickname of "Fatty Legs" came about because of a nun who forced her to wear a pair of red stockings that made her legs look enormous and that she made those stockings disappear. After this suspenseful teaser, which makes me want to sneak a peek ahead to the concluding pages, Olemaun backs up in time to describe a book that her sister owns which entranced Olemaun. Despite her sister's warnings of mistreatment that will happen at the hands of the outsiders, Olemaun wants to attend the same residential school that her sister had, because that's where she'll learn to read. By now, I'm wondering if Olemaun will succeed in wearing down her parents with her request to go away to school, but I'm also worried that she might discover that the school isn't what she hopes. And this was my ongoing state as I read Fatty Legs—sympathy coupled with angst. I picked realistic characters as the second element to highlight, because sometimes books that depict atrocities resort to portraying all of the "enemy" as evil. In the case of the church-run school that Olemaun attends, the nuns and brothers could have been painted with the same brush. And

perhaps this would have been a fair and accurate depiction; historical accounts have revealed that great abuse happened to the Inuit at the hands of religious leaders.

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