

# Kara Frey

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Kara Frey is a dedicated educator and literacy advocate whose instructional model centers on cultivating independent reading as a foundation for academic success and personal growth. Serving as an English and Indigenous Studies instructor at Great Plains College in Maple Creek, Saskatchewan, Frey established and continues to expand an almost entirely self-funded classroom library; which provides students access to a rich spectrum of literature, including contemporary and Indigenous titles. Her classroom library is more than a repository of books; it is a conduit for cultural affirmation, emotional resilience, and academic engagement.

At the heart of Frey's instructional approach is a daily 15-minute independent reading period dedicated to pleasure-driven exploration. This practice is complemented by genre-based book tastings, daily book talks, and individualized reading conferences, allowing students to discover texts aligned with their interests. The results are compelling: one formerly disengaged reader discovered Neal Shusterman's *Scythe* and went on to read the entire series; another student who had experienced domestic violence completed an entire novel for the first time in years after reading *It Ends With Us* and later read the sequel; a third student reconnected with his Indigenous identity through *The Marrow Thieves* and its sequel, and another began his reading journey with *Making Bombs for Hitler* and transitioned into audiobooks with the help of Frey's Libro.fm initiative. These anecdotes illustrate the power of responsive, personalized literacy engagement in creating lifelong readers.

Frey models reading with authenticity and enthusiasm, making literature a visible and valued part of the classroom experience. She reads alongside her students, shares meaningful recommendations, and celebrates reading as a communal practice. Her space is intentionally designed to feel welcoming and reflective of student identity. In addition to daily literacy routines, she facilitates author visits and community partnerships to enrich students' literary exposure. In an educational setting defined by limited resources and high academic stakes, Frey's library and pedagogical approach stand as

a testament to what is possible when equity, voice, and literature intersect. Her work highlights the transformative impact of independent reading and the enduring value of creating culturally responsive literary spaces.