



Sweetest Kulu

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A lyrical lullaby imbued with traditional Inuit beliefs

This bedtime poem, written by internationally acclaimed Inuit throat singer Celina Kalluk, describes the gifts bestowed upon a newborn baby by all the animals of the Arctic. Lyrically and lovingly written, this visually stunning book is infused with the Inuit values of love and respect for the land and its animal inhabitants.

Sweetest Kulu Details

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Author : Celina Kalluk , Alexandria Neonakis (Illustrations)

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From Reader Review Sweetest Kulu for online ebook

LauraR says

This book is listed as an AICL's best book of 2014. This picture book is a wonderful addition to any classroom library in grades 3 and above. This story tells of a young boy who receives "gifts" and personality traits from animals that are around him. Each animal offers up a different trait that beautifully reflects a part of a person. Together, the author and the illustrator show that the Earth is made up of all living things and how those living things are connected. The Inuit culture shines through as the values of the personality traits represented appear. In this particular culture, animals and people live respectively and cooperatively and this book shows their connection.

Based on the vocabulary of this book, it is recommended that this book be placed in a classroom library for grades 3 and above. The illustrations are clear and have a setting that depicts the animal giving away the personality trait to the young boy. The illustrations lead off the page, which allows the reader to draw their own inferences based on the already developed image. The images flow throughout both pages of the book and the text is located on the center of one of the pages. This book could be used as a read-aloud or as an independent read. It is important that the vocabulary words are discussed in order for students to understand the meaning of the book.

Samantha says

A bedtime poem to a newborn baby in which a mother speaking to her child tells of all the Arctic animals that bestowed blessings upon the child.

The artwork supports the dreamy nature of this book with its subdued color palette and softly shaped animals. Traditional Inuit values of love and respect for land and animals are woven into text making this a celebration of culture as well as the child.

Highly recommended for PreK-2.

Liaken says

Beautiful illustrations with a simple gender neutral lullaby theme. The art is both intimate and vast.

Aolund says

A lovely, lulling bedtime read full of very sweet energy. Own Voices author.

Debbie says

Sweet! Sometimes, that exclamation (Sweet!) means something is endearing, and sometimes, it means something is way cool. Both meanings apply to Sweetest Kulu by Celina Kalluk, illustrated by Alexandria Neonakis.

Kulu is an Inuktitut term of endearment. The babe who is the sweetest kulu in this book is Inuit (Inuktitut is one of the languages spoken by Inuit people). I got it yesterday. The sense of peace and promise in Kalluk's book was just what I needed on a particularly trying day. See the cover? The whole book is like that...

Kalluk's words and Neonakis's art work beautifully together as we learn Inuit values in which people and animals coexist as caretakers of the land. In Kalluk's hands, this is not the stereotypical one-with-the-animals story that we see all too often.

This is a terrific book for those who have a newborn in the house... And for those of us who just need a book that rights the world for us, that reminds us of that world in all its richness.

Sweetest Kulu is another great book from Inhabit Media. By the way! If you're interested in Native music, you ought to add Kalluk to your playlist. She is a throat singer. Check out this video. She was performing in New York with a cousin. You MUST ALSO watch the set of short videos here.

Note (added May 27, 2014): Sweetest Kulu will be available in October. I reviewed it from a bound galley.

Cheryl says

Marvelous concept, breathtaking illustrations, rhythmic text, just right book design, an almost perfect book. I'd probably love it even more if I had a baby to dote over, or a classroom with which to share this. Definitely recommended.

Errin says

The illustrations of the wittle beebee, Kulu, with all the animals were adorable. The landscapes and colors used were stunning. The poem was soft and lovely and a nice way to introduce children to traditional Inuit values.

Rachel says

In this charming picture book, an unnamed mother speaks lovingly to her newborn. She tells her baby (which can be either a boy or girl) about the day he/she was born, and how all of the Arctic came to give their greetings. As they visit, the animals, and the land itself, endows little Kulu with a set of qualities; tenderness from Arctic Char, patience and a sense of direction from Caribou... each spread features a different entity and their gift. This sense of love and well-wishing is conveyed through both word and art. All the illustrations have soft, coloured linework, designs that emphasize the gentle, cuddly side of the animals and baby, and a beautiful dreamlike palette. Sweetest Kulu is a heartfelt lullaby, looks phenomenal, and, it nurtures the Inuit value of respect for nature. Absolutely recommended for all little ones and their guardians.

Edward Sullivan says

Warm, gentle lullaby story incorporating traditional Inuit values and beliefs. Lovely illustrations.

Barbara says

All the animals in the Arctic bestow their own unique gifts to newborn baby Kulu. The illustrations are lovely, filled with scenes depicting nature's beauty and the love of a mother for her young one. What is particularly impressive about this book is how the gifts aren't monetary or superficial but instead values such as believing in oneself, giving to others, tenderness, and spontaneity. The story was written by an Inuit throat singer.

Canadian Reader says

There's a great idea behind this book. A child is born during the Arctic Summer, and the animals who live there visit him/her, each with a special gift or quality to bestow on the infant. It's not unlike the story of the nativity.

But things go wrong with the book...because the language sounds as though it has come out of some Canadian Heritage and Culture document that is trying too hard to "foster empowerment" in indigenous people. For example, we're told the narwhal and beluga give "spontaneity"; the seal "loves creativity": and well, yes, . . . the muskox shares "heritage and empowerment". The spiritual gifts bestowed on the child just don't naturally go with the animal visitor. I was okay with a polar bear teaching respect, because let's face it: polar bears are in a bad state right now. There hasn't been much respect for the conditions they require in order to continue. Not only that, Inuit people do respect them--respect and fear. The additional "offering of gentleness"? From a polar bear? I don't think so! What would be wrong with a kid getting a gift of healthy fear of the powerful forces in nature?

It's just all too cute and cloying. . .which reminds me: the annoying adjectives: "cutest Kulu" and "nicest Kulu"--just not good.

This is the kind of book that a certain kind of adult would give to friends who've just had a baby--it's a book rather like Robert Munsch's Love You Forever. Some people weep over that book. Adults are crazy about it; kids much less so. Sweetest Kulu is rather less maudlin than Munsch, but the language simply doesn't recommend it for kids--and maybe not for adults either. It's a shame. It could've been a great picture book--the art, while not spectacular compared to other texts from Inhabit Media, is "nice" enough. The text itself, I can't recommend.

Robert says

An absolutely delightful book to read with your little one. The art is stunning, and the life-affirming message

from the High Arctic is tender and bittersweet.

My own baby daughter now refers to the basement, where this treasured book is kept, as "Kulu".

Kris says

Sweetest Kulu really is the sweetest. Gorgeous illustrations, and a gentle, lovely bedtime story. The rhythm of the text did take some getting used to, though, and it felt inconsistent. Still a warm, enjoyable picture book.

Elizabeth says

This is Celina Kalluk's only children's book to date, so I haven't read anything else from her. Alexandria Neonakis has illustrated a few other children's books, but this is my first time seeing anything from her. I'm a big fan of Inhabit Media as a publisher, which is what brought me to this book--but it isn't why I stayed.

Kalluk's story is absolutely charming, poetic, tender in all the best ways. Interpreting Inuit culture and Arctic nature into a bedtime story filled with love and tenderness works beautifully. My heart melted for most of this. Neonakis's illustrations are beautiful and really brought the story to life. It was hard to take my eyes off the beautiful pictures, but it was hard to take my eyes off the beautiful words.

This is perfect for anyone looking for a new bedtime story for a toddler or infant, but also genuinely a good read for any adult fans of picture books. I hope Celina Kalluk publishes more children's stories. I hope to read more books illustrated by Alexandria Neonakis.

MK King says

If I could give this 6 or 7 stars I would. This one racked up a number of awards and I believe, having recently read over 100 children's indigenous books ,that this is a Top 5 for me. Beautiful illustrations. Simple elegant poetic prose. A message of love. An indigenous story (Inuit) written by an Inuit woman. Inhabit Media is a favourite of mine. They publish great stuff. Seek this out and read this to your child and/or students and/or nieces and nephews and grandchildren. It really provides an opportunity to dig deeper into some questions of life.
