



# Remembering E. Pauline Johnson: 1861-1913

By GoodMinds.com

The books of poetry, short stories, and literary criticism of Emily Pauline Johnson continue to inspire and enlighten readers today.

Emily Pauline Johnson (1861-1913) was born at Chiefswood on the Six Nations Reserve to a Mohawk father and an English mother. Johnson's writing career began in 1895 with the publication of her first book of poems, *White Wampum*.

She went on to write additional books of verse and prose. Her career as a stage entertainer took her across Canada and United States as well as to England. In her stage career she adopted her grandfather's Mohawk name, Tekahionwake.

*Flint and Feather* is a reprint of the book of verse first published by the Musson Book Company of Toronto in 1912. This Iroqrafts Reprint was published in 1997.

*Flint and Feather* contains over 90 poems from *Canadian Born*, *White Wampum*, and a selection of additional poems. *The Song My Paddle Sings* remains her most popular poem that for many years was required memory work for Canadian students.

*Flint and Feather* has remained in print throughout the years since Johnson's death. Her poems strike a romantic chord of nationalism, loyalty to the Crown, and a celebration of the Canadian landscape.

Many of the poems in *Canadian Born* reflect her travels from Eastern Canada to British Columbia. Poems such as *The Sleep-*

*ing Giant*, *At Crow's Nest Pass*, and *The Legend of Qu'Appelle Valley* reflect her love of the lands of the West.

Her Mohawk heritage is addressed in poems such as *The Corn Husker*, *Lullaby of the Iroquois*, *Ojistoh*, and *As Red Men Die*. Pauline Johnson remains a popular Canadian figure and her writing continues to inspire First Nations authors. This Iroquois Reprint contains a portrait of Pauline Johnson by Tuscarora artist Raymond Skye.

*The Moccasin Maker* is an annotated anthology of Emily Pauline Johnson's (1861-1913) short story collection first published in 1913. This University of Oklahoma Press edition is edited by A. Lavonne Brown Ruoff, Professor Emerita, from the Department of English, at the University of Illinois in Chicago.

The 266-page reprint is faithful to the original and its stories include: *My Mother*; *Catharine of the "Crow's Nest"*; *A Red Girl's Reasoning*; *The Envoy Extraordinary*; *A Pagan in St. Paul's Cathedral*; *As it was in the beginning*; *The Legend of Lillooet Falls*; *Her Majesty's Guest*; *Mother o' the Men*; *The Nest Builder*; *The Tenas Klootchman*; and *The Derelict*.

In addition to Pauline's original stories, A. Lavonne Brown Ruoff provides a helpful introduction about this poet as well as notes explaining each entries references and background.

*E. Pauline Johnson Tekahionwake: Collected Poems and Selected Prose* edited by Carole Gerson and Veronica Strong-Bo-

ag contains a generous selection of E. Pauline Johnson's poems and prose writings.

This collection includes 169 poems organized chronologically into periods such as *The Early Years: Beginnings to 1888*; *The Prolific Years: 1889-1898*; *Later Years: 1899-1913*; and *Anonymous and Pseudonymous Poems*. Readers familiar with Johnson's lyrical and narrative poetry will find her best-known examples such as *A Cry from an Indian Wife*, *As Red Men Die*, *The Song My Paddle Sings* and *The Cattle Thief* as well as her nature verse and romantic poems.

The editors include an introduction that recounts the main biographical data of the Mohawk performer's life, her career that took her across Canada and overseas to England, and her publishing history. They also describe their editorial process and corrections to particular poems and stories and their perspective on E. Pauline Johnson's place in Canadian literature as a "Mixed-race New Woman".

The book includes 19 of Johnson's prose works including her retelling of legends especially those from British Columbia, short stories, and non-fiction essays. The prose works expand our understanding of Johnson as a woman with distinct opinions on race and gender roles.

One essay in particular, "A Strong Race Opinion: On the Indian Girl in Modern Fiction," takes firm aim at current literature of the times as it relates to the portrayal

and depiction of Indian Women. Many of Johnson's arguments and concerns are relevant to contemporary First Nations who still contend with grotesque stereotypes of Aboriginal women in popular culture.

The book contains detailed notes on each entry that scholars will find beneficial. The gen-

eral reader and literary scholar will also find something of interest in this extensive collection of the works of E. Pauline Johnson.

While some may find Johnson's vocabulary tainted with the British colonial mentality, her essays contain interesting subject matter especially "Forty-Five Miles on the

Grand," "The Iroquois Women of Canada," and "The Silver-Craft of the Mohawks: The Protective Totem."

In 1961 the Canadian Post Office chose Pauline Johnson as the first woman born in Canada to have her likeness depicted on a stamp.