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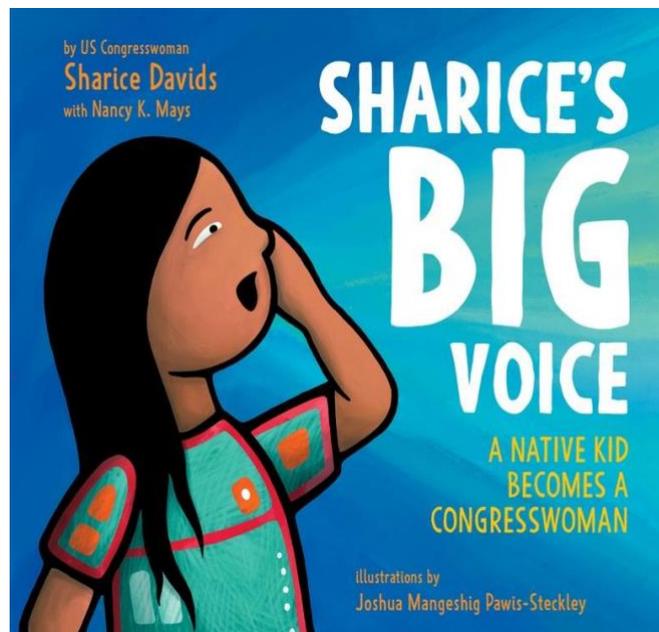
JOURNAL OF LANGUAGE & LITERACY EDUCATION

**Review of *Sharice's Big Voice: A Native Kid Becomes a Congresswoman* Written by US Congresswoman Sharice Davids with Nancy K. Mays & Illustrated by Joshua Mangeshig Pawis-Steckley**

**Adult/Educator Reviewer:** Nancy Heiss

The University of Georgia, Athens, GA

**Child/Student Reviewer:** Zoë Heiss, Grade 1, Age 6; Benjamin Heiss, Grade 4, Age 9; Miriam Heiss, Grade 7, Age 11; Rachel Heiss, Grade 9, Age 14



Davids, S., Mays, N. K., & Pawis-Steckley, J. M. (Illustrator) (2021). *Sharice's big voice: A Native kid becomes a congresswoman*. HarperCollins.

ISBN: 978-0062979667

### **Adult Review: Nancy Heiss**

As promised by the title, *Sharice's Big Voice* details Davids' journey becoming a congresswoman. The opening spread shows her celebrating her election win with her mother and then the story shifts into a series of backflashes wherein Davids describes meaningful experiences in her childhood and young adulthood, as well as influential people who helped her become who she is today. Davids also opens the door to talk about many difficult topics with students, from the history of Indian Boarding Schools to ongoing discrimination against BIPOC communities and LGBTQ+ people. Though Davids doesn't dwell long on any particular issue within the story—her main theme being learning how to fight for your beliefs—she mentions many issues that are important to her and gives enough information that a meaningful conversation can take place between adults and children reading the book together.

This book was particularly useful to me while doing a unit on Native American History with my children. We were particularly interested in the history of Indian Boarding Schools and while Davids' story only briefly touched on this part of Native American History, the end matter of the book includes a section about the Ho-Chunk Nation (Davids' tribe), written by Jon Greendeer, which includes a wealth of information and helped us in our research. Both the author's and artist's notes were wonderful supplements to the story. In his artist's note, Pawis-Steckley said that *Sharice's Big Voice* "resonated deeply with [him] because she speaks so openly about how she grew up disconnected from her nation" and shows how she sought to forge those connections. He chose to illustrate the book in a style that "honored the relationship both Sharice and [he] have to [their] past, present and future as Indigenous people on Turtle Island" (artist's note, n.p.), using his training as an Ojibwe Woodland artist to create powerful, brightly colored illustrations honoring the traditional style created by Norval Morrisseau.

*Sharice's Big Voice* will captivate your children with its beautiful illustrations, inspire them to fight for their beliefs, and teach them that they "deserve to be seen—and heard."

### **Student Review: Zoë Heiss (Grade 1, Age 6)**

In *Sharice's Big Voice*, she talks about how she became a congresswoman. Before that, I think she was a lawyer, or at least she studied laws. She's nice to the people around her. For example, she helped the people who couldn't afford a doctor when they were sick.

I liked the book because the pictures were very nice, and it reminds you of how Native American people were being treated.

### **Student Review: Benjamin Heiss (Grade 4, Age 9)**

In *Sharice's Big Voice*, we learn about a congresswoman's path and how she got there. In the book, we learn fun facts, like that she likes Bruce Lee but she does not like onions on her pizza. We also learn that when you work hard and practice, you can achieve anything you want to.

I liked this book because it tells the people who read it that if you work hard, you can do big things.

### **Student Review: Miriam Heiss (Grade 7, Age 11)**

In *Sharice's Big Voice*, she covers a variety of important topics and shows us that even you are a part of a minority group, you can accomplish great things. She is both a Native American and a lesbian. Being a part of a minority can be hard in our white-centered society. This book might help minority groups, such as Native Americans, feel like they have the potential for their voices to be heard. It might help minority groups

feel like they can do important things and help change happen. That is good because if people are always silenced then the world would just continue to be an unjust and unfair place.

I liked when she said that her team listened just as much as they spoke out. That is important because if you are not listened to, you are either misrepresented or not represented at all. As she said earlier in the book, you can learn a lot about someone just by listening. By listening, I can learn how minority groups want to be treated and represented. I think this book promotes social harmony and justice for everybody, which is why I like it.

**Student Review: Rachel Heiss (Grade 9, Age 14)**

In the book *Sharice's Big Voice*, we learn the story of US Congresswoman Sharice Davids, who is one of the first indigenous women elected to congress. She is a lawyer, a politician, and a form mixed martial artist. In this book she talks about the importance of using your voice to help yourself and other people, noting that “a good conversation could break down walls.” She’s skilled in physical combat, yes, but she’s also a warrior with words and knows how to get her point across. Sharice Davids has a big voice, and she teaches everyone who reads her book that it’s good to have a big voice, which I really liked.

This book is important because it tells girls, LGBTQ+ people, and indigenous kids that they can and should do big things, even though they’ll face opposition. Sharice Davids’ story shows us that if you’re open to challenges and work hard you will improve and accomplish your goals, which is why I think everyone, no matter how old, should read this book. It’s geared towards younger kids, but the ideas in it are ideas that everyone needs to hear.