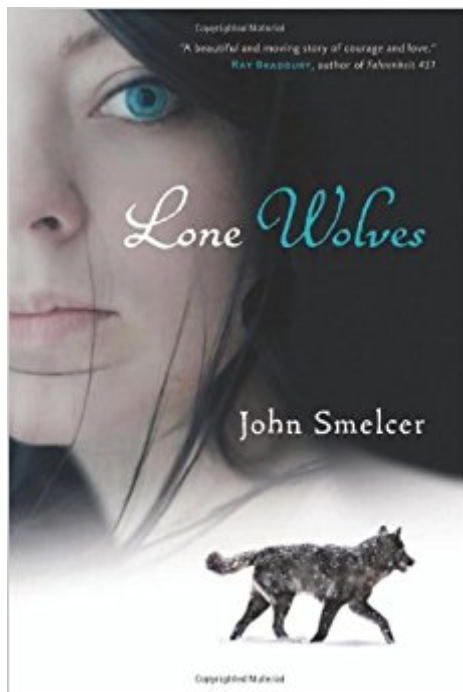


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# Lone Wolves



## Synopsis

"A beautiful and moving story of courage and love."&#151;Ray BradburyPraise for The Great Death:"An amazing story."&#151;Frank McCourt"Gripping and poignant. . . . An unforgettable survival tale."&#151;Horn Book"A beautiful, poignant story."&#151;Elie Wiesel, Nobel Prize winner"Graphically illustrates the effects of a plague on isolated peoples."&#151;School Library Journal"An engaging tale of survival."&#151;Kirkus ReviewsPraise for The Trap:"An unforgettable story. Brilliant!"&#151;Ray Bradbury"A gripping example of talented storytelling. Unforgettable."&#151;Tony HillermanPraise for The Edge of Nowhere:"More psychological depth than Robinson Crusoe."&#151;Frank McCourtPraise for Alaskan:"Smelcer is Alaska's modern-day Jack London."&#151;W.P. Kinsella"A celebration of the diversity of cultures. Undeniably important!"&#151;James Michener"An indispensable contribution to Alaskan literature."&#151;JD Salinger"This writer speaks from the land, and for the land, and the people who belong to it."&#151;Ursula K. Le GuinDeneena Yazzie's love of the woods and trail come from her grandfather, who teaches her their all-but-vanished Native Alaskan language. While her peers lose hope, trapped between the old and the modern cultures, and turn to destructive behaviors, Denny and her mysterious lead dog, a blue-eyed wolf, train for the Great Race&#151;giving her town a new pride and hope.John Smelcer is poetry editor of Rosebud and the author of more than forty books. He is an Alaskan Native of the Ahtna tribe, and the last surviving reader and writer of Ahtna. John holds degrees in archeology, linguistics, literature, and education, and formerly chaired the Alaska Native Studies program and the University of Alaska (Anchorage).

## Book Information

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Age Range: 12 - 17 years

Grade Level: 6 and up

## Customer Reviews

Gr 8 Up—Sixteen-year old Deneena Yazzie thrives on the ways of life traditional to her village in Alaska's vast interior: hunting for food, speaking the language of her ancestors, and mastering the art of dogsledding, or mushing, alongside her grandfather. When unexpected circumstances make selling the dogs and sled a necessity, Denny enters herself into the Last Great Race on Earth (the Iditarod) in hopes of winning the cash prize and sustaining her way of life. Smelcer confronts some of the darker aspects of Alaskan village life—the struggle of part-Native youth to belong, the sometimes pervasive nature of substance abuse, and the uphill battle of those attempting to preserve Native languages and culture. Some of the key plot elements are a little hard to swallow, particularly the idea of a teenager training a wild animal to be her lead dog only a month before the Iditarod, but on the whole, the author weaves an engaging tale of survival, love, and courage. The book includes a few pencil illustrations and poetry excerpted from Smelcer's *Beautiful Words/Kasuundze' Kenaeye'* (Truman State Univ., 2011).—Sara Saxton, Wasilla Public Library, Wasilla, AK --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

As 16-year-old Denny prepares for the Great Race, a seminal 1,000-mile dog-sled competition, she doesn't just train with her dogs; she has her grandfather by her side, feeding her hunger for Native Alaskan language, history, and folklore. Denny's peers, her remote village community, and even her mother scoff at her ambitions, but her connection to her heritage and her drive to win the race deepen with the tragic loss of her beloved grandfather. Smelcer's work has a touch of the classical, combining good old-fashioned adventure and survival themes with heart-tugging moments of clarity and poignancy that recall Jean Craighead George's *Julie of the Wolves* (1972). Filled to the brim with letters, poems, and cultural lessons, this fascinating account passes quickly, much like the race itself, and brings the ultimate truth that triumph isn't necessarily about winning. Younger readers in search of material heavier on the actual racing might also enjoy Sherry Shahan's *Ice Island* (2012). Grades 6-9. --Courtney Jones --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

John Smelcer perpetuates the endangered Native American language called Athna in this book.

The main character is a young heroine who is proud of this Indian language. This language is passed down to her by her grandfather. A person's language is closely tied to their sense of identity. I can identify with this being both Japanese and Chinese. I try to learn a little bit of both languages all the time. I am a fan of poetry. John Smelcer includes beautiful poems in this book. My favorite poem is entitled "Potlatch". A potlatch is a Native American celebration that honors loved ones who have recently passed away. My other favorite poem is entitled "Call Of The Wild". This is an interesting about what it feels like to be a wolf. I have never read a poem like this before. The young heroine in Lone Wolves is a teenage girl named Denny. She participates in the Iditarod dog sled race with seven dogs and one wolf in the lead. I have heard of this race before. John Smelcer is the first author to capture how physically grueling and perilous this race really is. It is a fifteen day race of 1,100 miles through snow, rivers, forests. The main thing about this race is not always about winning it. It is simply about completing it with dignity and courage. The young heroine in this book accomplishes this. Lone Wolves is the kind of book that will inspire young people to work hard for what they want in life. The author offers questions about the book that will promote discussion for young readers. Lovely illustrations of wolves are included in this book by a young artist named Hannah Carlon.

Enjoyed this book tremendously. Denny is a well developed character and this gives you such an insight into the native Alaskan culture. Loved the ending!

Let me first point out that in 1945-47 I was in Fairbanks as a musher for the Army Air Corps 10th Search and Rescue. A small house at the edge of the Ladd Field Airbase was our HQ. There was a old Sergeant, two young Eskimo lads who joined the army, and luckily, me. We had about 40 malamutes and our mission was to rescue any downed pilots. In two years, only one plane went down, and by the time we got there, the pilot had walked back to the base. We trained all winter with one team going out for two to three weeks all through the bush, while the other two stayed to handle and feed the dogs. These were wonderful dogs and I was always amazed at how they loved to run, as mentioned in the book. This is the only book about Alaska that I ever read that had everything about mushing correct, including the details of the sleds and dogs. While the story here may be intended for teen agers, I think anybody would enjoy it, especially any reader who enjoys the outdoors. Things have changed a lot since I was there, but the lore of the Indian villages and people should fascinate anybody. Actually, I never really had any contact with the Indians because Fairbanks was at the beginning of Eskimo country. However, on our training trips, my Eskimo

partner took me to several villages and I have never met such wonderful, friendly and cheerful people. Living a very hard life, they never seemed to complain or grumble, so I expect they were much like the Indians further south. The only thing that puzzled me in this book was that all the dog teams had an even number of dogs. We always harnessed up five, seven or nine dogs, with the lead dog at the center front and two files of dogs behind. Perhaps things have changed, but everybody up there did it this way, except the Eskimos. Each village had a pack of dogs that were not owned by any individual, but used by everybody. Instead of a file of two dogs, they used a sort of fan-shaped formation with each dog attached separately to the sled. Anyway, I recommend the little book highly. It is a touching story, well told.

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