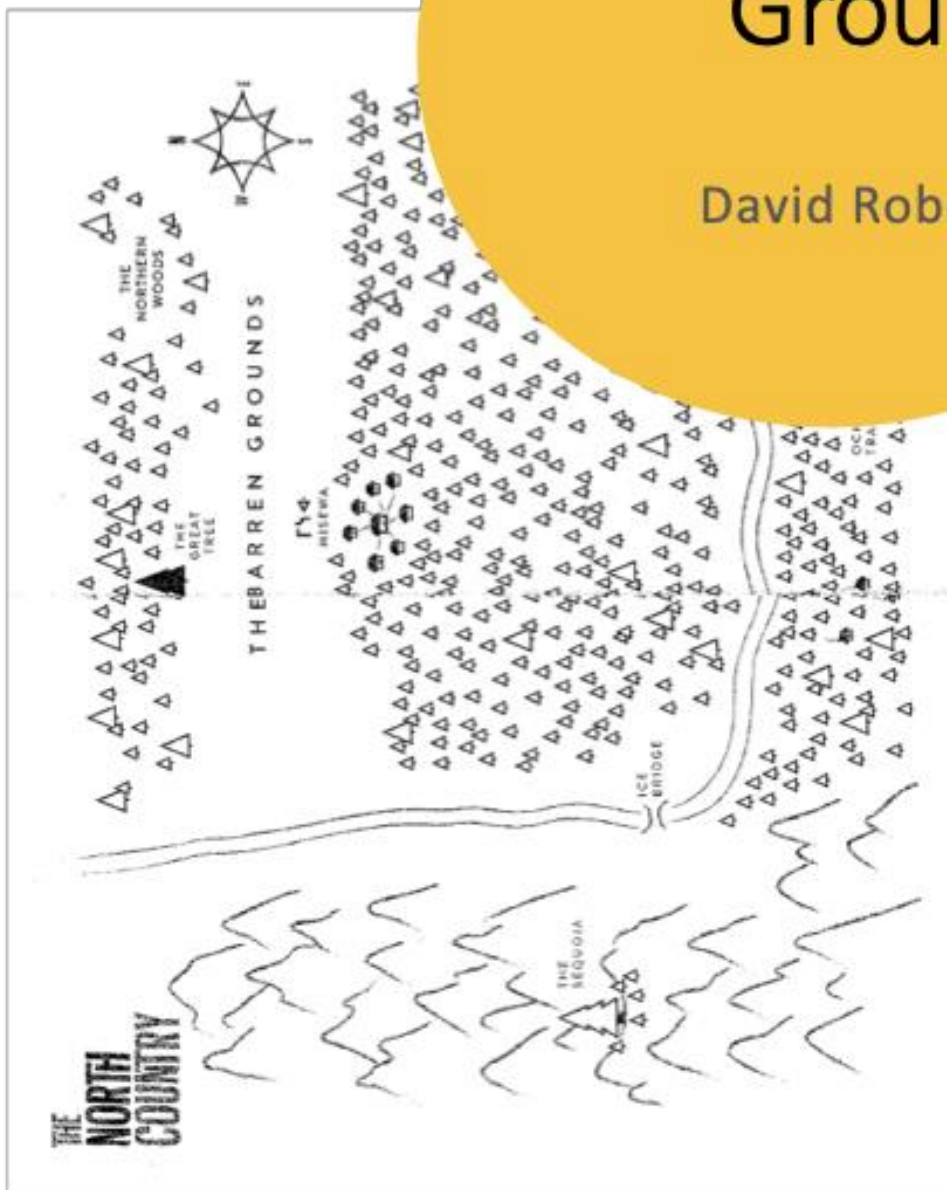


The Barren Grounds

David Robertson



SECTION 2: Land & Place

pgs 54-96

Section 2: Land & Place

pg. 54 – pg. 96

Summary:

Morgan and Eli grow closer as we learn more about why Morgan reacts and feels the way she does towards her foster parents. Simultaneously, Eli's drawing reveals itself to be more than just a picture-leading Morgan and Eli to discover a new friend and a new world.

Important background knowledge/ context for Teacher consideration:

Land-based practices are at the core of indigenous ways of knowing and being. For Eli and Morgan, their ability to reconnect with the land, is a homecoming.

FPPL:

Learning ultimately supports the well-being... of land.

Big Ideas:

Language and text can be a source of creativity and joy.

Exploring stories and texts helps us understand ourselves and make connections to others and to the world.

Curricular Competency:

Recognize and appreciate the role of story, narrative, and oral tradition in expressing First Peoples perspectives, values, beliefs, and point of view.

Talking Circle

Prompts:

- Where did you find meaning?
- What is unclear or is an area you think you might need to learn more about?
- How is this story a guide?
- Why do they use animals in this story?
- What people make us feel belonging?
- Where do we feel that we belong?
- What do we receive from the land, or what do we get from the land?
- What do we give back to the land?

Indigenous Worldview & Perspectives Focus

Indigenous Language:

- *Iskewsis* – girl
- *Tansi*- How are you?
- *Astum*- come here, or come
- *Kiskisitotaso* – from Morgan's Dreams Eli "In English it means something like 'don't forget who you are' or 'don't forget yourself.' p92

A great online resource for learning, listening, reading and watching about Indigenous language: *Our Living Languages: What Can You Learn About Indigenous Languages in BC?* | Access [here](#)

Observation Walk:

Before going out OR if you are in an urban setting:

- Have the discussion about the differences between a sound and a noise.
- Think about how nature provides many sounds, as opposed to human made noise.

Now go on senses walk- begin by gathering outside. Do a walk where students don't speak and engage with their sense.

- After the walk has happened – share out what you heard, see, smell, felt, any tastes?

Extension: Urban Setting: What would you have heard/seen/smelled/ felt 100 years ago? What would we not have heard/seen/smelled/felt 100 years ago?

Medicine Wheel Thinking

- Place is multidimensional. More than the geographical space, it also holds cultural, emotional, and spiritual spaces which cannot be divided into parts.
- Place is experiential. Experiences a person has on the land give it meaning.

Adapted for EFP from Michell et al.,
Learning Indigenous Science from Place, p. 27-28

Have students think of their favourite place.

- Use the Medicine Wheel Graphic Organizer attached to guide students through thinking about what that place provides for them.
- What knowledge does it teach? Comfort does it give?
- What does it do for their physical health? How does it make them feel?
- What tradition, family or cultural activity does it connect to?

Ask students to reflect if that place gives them balance.

- After individual thinking, have students share out one aspect of their wheel about their place to the class in a Pair Share or Circle activity.

Exploring Place and Personal Names

- What is in a name?

- What are the traditional meanings of the names of Morgan, Eli, James?

Power of Names.

- What is the story behind a name?

- This could be a nickname, family name, etc. given in different cultures.

- Do names in diverse cultures put importance on different things?

Research the history of names of places of B.C.

- How were such places as Coquitlam, Chilliwack, and Kamloops, named?

- How does this compare with the way in which Langley, Victoria and Vancouver were named?

- What does this say about the difference in values of Indigenous peoples and the colonizers?

Relationship to Land:

Seek out quotes by Indigenous peoples that help to expand our understanding of the land and our relationship to it.

Changing Language: Relationship to Land:

Indigenous scholar Robin Wall Kimmerer suggests we replace the use of the pronoun “IT” when referring to the more-than-human beings of the world. She states:

“Calling the natural world “it” absolves of moral responsibility and opens the door to exploitation.”

- Robin Wall Kimmerer (Potawatomi Nation)

Quote taken from article: *Nature Needs a new Pronoun: To stop the Age of extinction, let us start by ditching ‘it’* | Access [here](#)

We would never refer to a person as “it,” well maybe some of you might call your little brothers “it,” but to speak of a person as “it” would be considered very disrespectful. Yet when we refer to an animal or plant we use “it,” reducing the being to a *thing*. Robin suggests we use the pronoun “Ki” to signify a being of the living Earth. “Ki” is derived from the Anishinaabe word Bemaadiziiaki, meaning Land. We know through our journey with SOGI, pronouns matter. Can we begin to use the pronoun “Ki” when speaking of another living beings? And rather than “What,” we use “Who.”

- How will this change how we view the more-than-human?

- Who lives/grows here?

See if students can name or describe common trees, plants, or shrubs in our area.

A supportive teacher resource:

Learning Portal: Royal BC Museum| Native Plants on the South Coast [here](#)

Formulating Ideas with Graphic Organizer: Relationship to Land

Use the FNEESC Graphic organizer in Appendix: [The Land is Important because ...](#)

Supplementary Text: Relationship to Land

Use the picture book *Treaty Words: For as Long as the Rivers Flow excerpts* provided in the appendix to explore the original treaty between Indigenous people and the animal nations from an Anishinaabe perspective. This is a wonderful way for students to build culture context around:

- Importance of land, relationship to land
- Value of all living things

Read with students and pull-out knowledge that Aimee Craft (Anishinaabe) shares with the reader. This could be done in partners, or as a class on chart paper or on the white board. Have students reflect and share out the teaching that most impacted them. Make sure they focus first on what they understand, then next what is unclear (words, sentences...). This is an opportunity to emphasize the responsibility of the learner – when teachings are generously given, it is important that learners ‘do the work’ to build context to further their understanding.

Prompts like:

- I found meaning in the line...
- I now understand...
- I did not know _____, now I know....
- I think I still need to know more about...

Extension- How does learning from Aimee Craft help us to better understand *The Barren Grounds*?

Connecting to Place:

If a place were captured in time (left completely untouched, like a photograph)

- what would people learn about us from place: *this community of Langley*, place: *our school*, place: *this room*? (Look around and think about that question.)
- What can we learn about a person by their place?
- What do we learn about Ochek from his place?

Image & memory connection: Relationship to Land

Post these two principles of place on the board or project them. Asks students to identify important words and meaning of each principle.

- Place is multidimensional. More than the geographical space, it also holds cultural, emotional, and spiritual spaces which cannot be divided into parts.
- Place is experiential. Experiences a person has on the land give it meaning.

Adapted for EFP from Michell et al.,
Learning Indigenous Science from Place, p. 27-28

Next, display four pictures of nature that students would be able to relate to. Number the pictures. (Examples below of local images that could resonate with students).



Have students look at the images and select one that reminds them of a memory. They may sit quietly to think about it or jot down ideas. Once sufficient time has passed – do a class show of hands for each image to see who connected with what image.

Invite students to contribute/share their memory or part of their memory with the class.

Debrief:

All: What do these memories show about how we feel about the land?

Responsive Listening focus: What similarities/patterns did you hear among all the stories?

Do these memories and feelings about land connect to the feelings that characters have about Misewa? If so, how? If not why?

Connect to principles of place by asking students how their memories relate to the following principle(s) or aspect of a principle. Connect to back to the principles that began this activity. How does a word, aspect, full principle(s) help to support our understanding and connections to place?

Gr. 7: Responsive listening focus: What memory stands out to you? Did hearing other people's stories, help remember your own?

Gr.8: What happens when we hear about other's connections to the land?

Note for teachers the idea being that we can become more connected to one another through each other's relationship to the land.

Literacy Focus

Discussion Questions:

Resource: [The Barren Grounds- Educators Guide](#)

- Why do you think the residents (the animals) of Misewa refer to the Cree language as “the good words”? Why do you think the author, David Robertson, uses so many Cree words throughout the novel?

Say Something:

Prompt students before reading/listening that they will be doing the Say Something strategy after. Share the idea being that everyone’s ideas are a contribution to our learning. Each person in the class goes and could contribute: a question, a part they liked, a connection to a past part of the book or other text, a prediction, even something they are thinking about. **Avoid student responses that solely summarize. Avoid commenting as a teacher after each student’s responses, let student responses flow from one student to the next without adult opinion.** Encourage responsive listening – and encourage students to connect their thinking to what others have shared. Students may benefit from prompts to guide their thinking:

- I noticed....
- I am thinking about...
- I found meaning when
- I need to know more about
- I wonder if...

Foreshadowing Place:

Now that Morgan and Eli have met Ochek what clues did we see earlier in the novel? Why would the author include these clues?

How does he use foreshadowing to showcase the connection to land? To identity?

The book opens with a powerful image, that we now see is a glimpse into where she is headed.

- “A rhythmic, crunching sound replaced the alarm with this last strike of the snooze button, and a scene of a blizzard came into her mind. Morgan was walking through it, across an endless field. There was a square light in the distance, but she never got closer . . . her feet crunching through the snow.” (p.1)
- “His drawings were all villages withing beautiful landscapes, with animals walking on two legs through forests and along canyons . . . others were made to face the harsh bite of winter. (p.14)
- “No kidding. You’re blowing on me and it’s creepy!” ... “It came from the paper” – (p.41-42)

Creative Arts Learning

Observe under a tree: Kids bring a towel or yoga mat to lay down under a tree and observe the trees from below.

- Look at the shape of the tree from below. How are the branches spread out around the trunk? Can you see that the tree makes a kind of “umbrella” for the earth directly below it? How does the umbrella do for the living things under it?
- What do the branches look like? Pick a large branch and count the branch offshoots that stem from that branch. Do the layers of branches look 2D or 3D?
- Is there wind? Look at the branches to see if wind is moving through them. If there is wind, can you?

See which direction it is coming from and which direction it's going? What movement do the branches make when the wind blows through them? Can you find a pattern or rhythm to that movement? Allow your hand or foot to move like that movement or rhythm. Try to remember it so that you can share it with your classmates.

- Imagine yourself to be a little bird, where would you decide to perch to have the best view of your surroundings? What would be looking for or looking at if you were a bird? What would be important for you as a bird in the tree?

- If you had to place a comfortable chair somewhere in this area so you could sit and read or listen to music, where would be the best spot to put a chair? Why?

Reader's Theatre Opportunity:

First meeting of Ochek - Give students this section of the story and have them dramatize it.

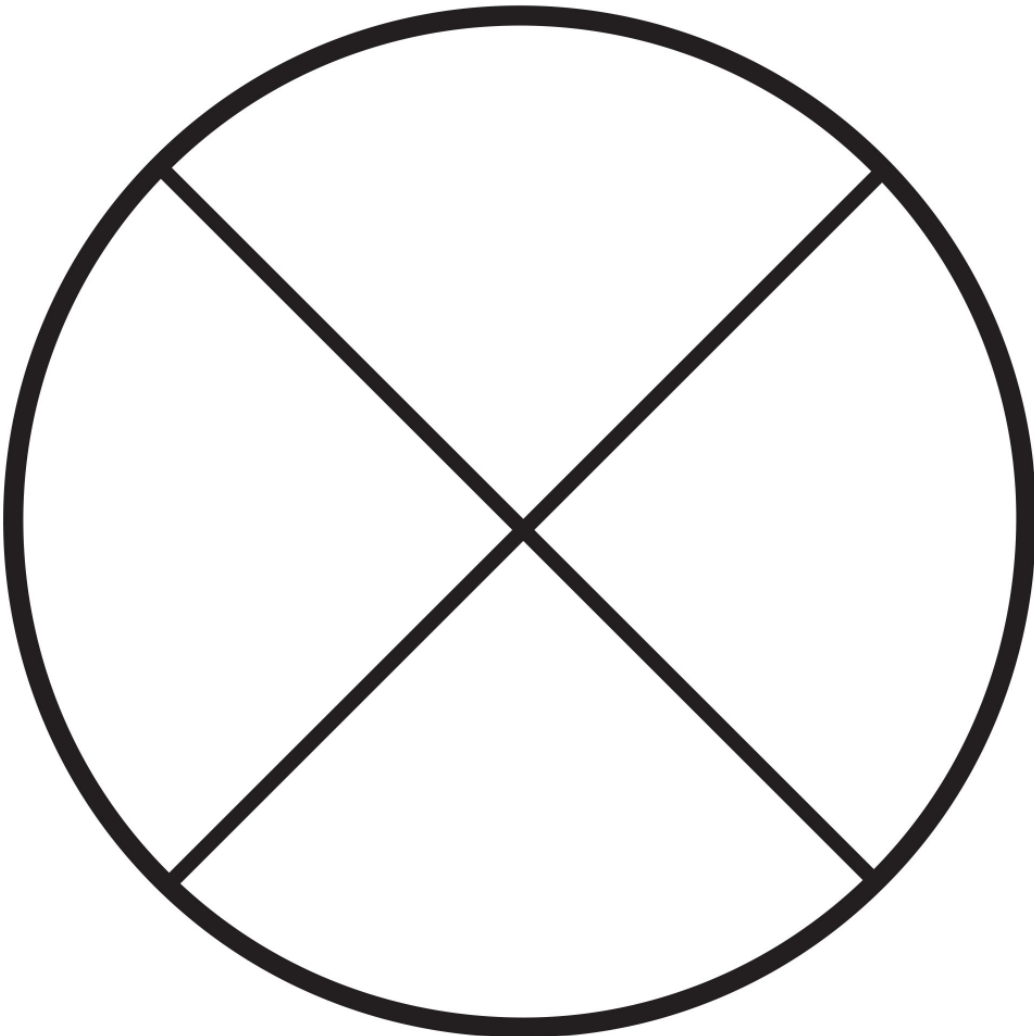
Create your own personal Fantasy place and space.

(This is an activity meant to be worked on and added to as the book progresses so that it culminates or is finished when the class finishes reading the book.)

- Put the artwork on the walls, do a gallery walk and give kids sticky notes or some squares of paper so that they can comment or tell what they liked or ask a question of the artist. Make sure you discuss ahead of time the importance of constructive feedback etc. No negative comments.

Are there similarities of place in the artwork? Are there certain things that are necessary in each fantasy place? What is not necessary, why did the artist include it in their work?

Medicine Wheel



Blackline Master 9

The Land is Important Because...

Think about why the land is important.
Finish these sentences.

The Land is important because it gives us

The Land is important because it helps us to

The Land is important because it makes me feel.....

The Land is important because it connects me with

The Land is important because it protects

RELATIONSHIPS ARE
THE FOUNDATION
OF ALL TREATIES.

We learned to make
treaties from everything around
us, listening and observing to see
how good relationships are made.

We use the word aagoodiidiwin
to explain the Treaty:
it means that we agree
to work together.

TREATY WORDS

FOR AS LONG AS
THE RIVERS FLOW

AIMÉE CRAFT
ILLUSTRATIONS BY
LUKE SWINSON

CRAFT • SWINSON


TREATY WORDS FOR AS LONG AS THE RIVERS FLOW

annick press

US \$14.95 / CDN \$16.95
ISBN 978-1-77321-416-2



annick press
annickpress.com
Also available as an eBook



He turned to her, lovingly reminding his granddaughter that she had responsibilities to this land and water, and to their stories.

With an exaggerated hand gesture, he made a full circle to acknowledge everything around him. He repeated the hand gesture and explained:

"This is why the Treaty is for as long as the sun shines, the grass grows, and the rivers flow."

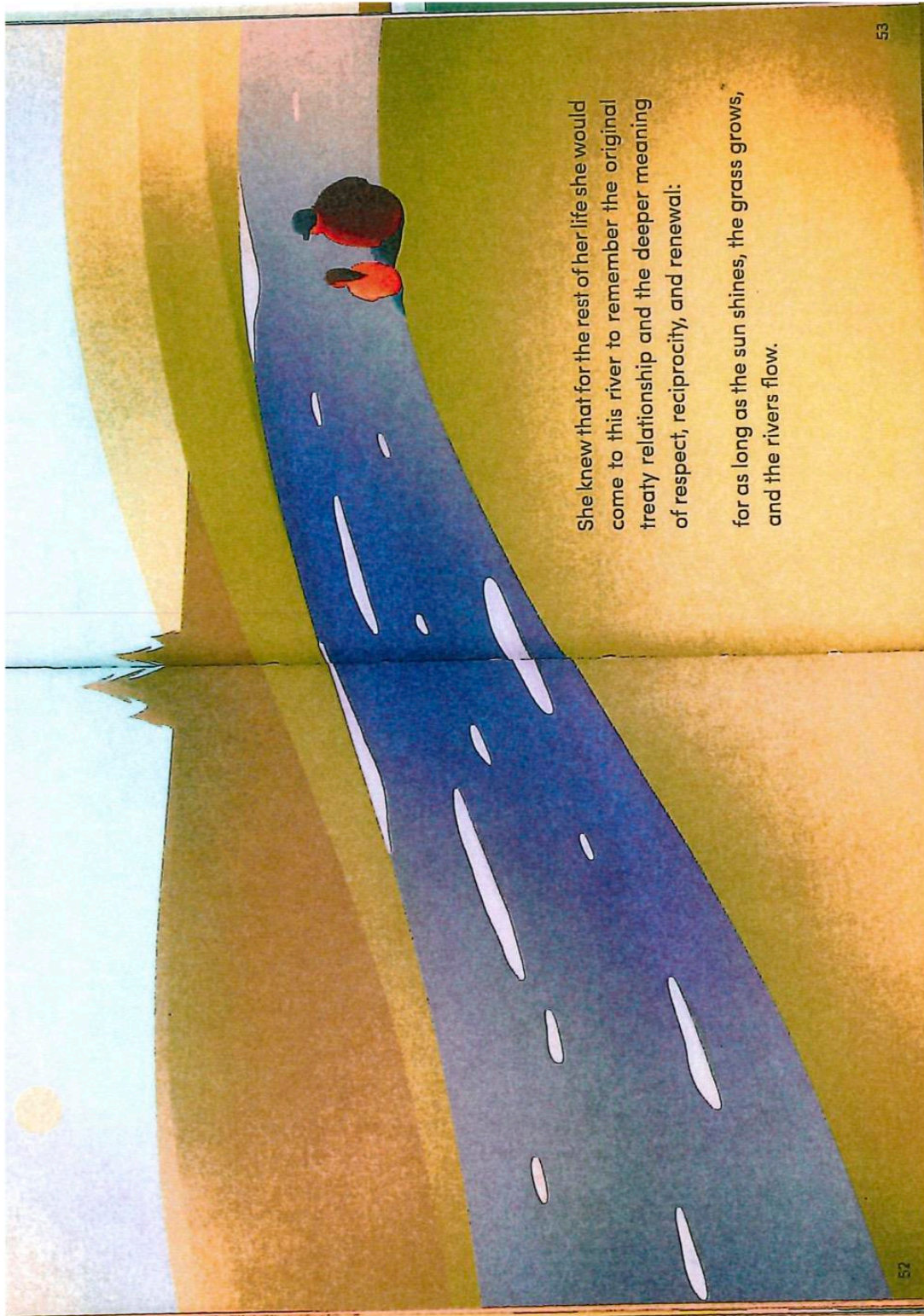
She nodded in affirmation. She knew that it was their way of explaining the concept of foreverness during the making of Treaty.



He paused to put a few more logs on the fire.

"When the earth was created, it was a partnership between the earth realm and the sky realm. With the help of Creator, our grandfather sun and grandmother moon agreed to work together with our mother, the earth, to create life. Then other beings of Creation were placed on the earth and in the sky. We, humans, Anishinaabe, were the last to be placed here. This is why we refer to ourselves as younger brothers and sisters to the rest of the beings in Creation."





She knew that for the rest of her life she would
come to this river to remember the original
treaty relationship and the deeper meaning
of respect, reciprocity, and renewal:

for as long as the sun shines, the grass grows,
and the rivers flow.