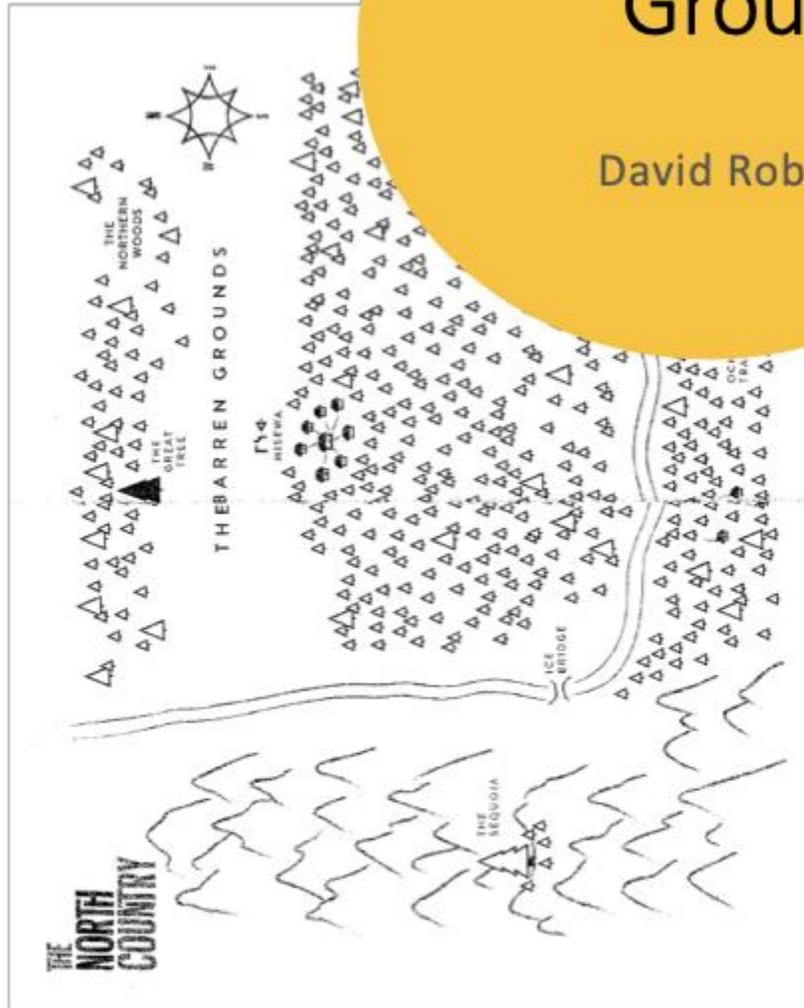


# The Barren Grounds

David Robertson



**Langley Read Aloud  
Teacher Resource Guide**

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## Introduction:

### Purpose:

This Teacher Resource Guide is intended to support and inspire teachers and students in the Langley School District on their reading journey of *The Barren Grounds* by David Robertson.

This guide is deliberate in addressing the [Calls to Action](#) of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, specifically the call to “integrate Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods into classrooms (clause 62) and “build student capacity for intercultural understanding, empathy and mutual respect” (clause 63).

### Teaching Strategies:

Using the model of the Global Read Aloud and adapting it to our district’s context – we endeavoured to provide diverse and varied opportunities for teachers to engage with this story. Rooted in the First Peoples Principles of Learning (FPPL) and supplemented with wide-ranging and distinct Indigenous voices, we chose to include many different Indigenous worldviews and knowledge systems throughout this guide to highlight the depth and breadth of Indigenous knowledge. Please see the Annotated Resource List for information on resources and voices throughout the guide. We have also created a list of strategies and resources at the beginning of this guide to create structures within the class that support not only what is being taught but *how* it is being taught. This is the direct and intentional modelling of Indigenous teaching methods.

### Organization:

This Teacher Resource Guide is organized into seven sections. The first is a recommended Opening Activity to set up classroom systems and situate the text in Indigenous worldviews. The next six sections follow the six week Read Aloud schedule and are paired with a FPPL and a theme that connects to Indigenous pedagogy:

#### Opening Activity: [Looking at the Stars](#)

**Section 1: [Belonging](#)** (start – p53)

**Section 2: [Land & Place](#)** (p54 – p96)

**Section 3: [Responsibility](#)** (p97 – p142)

**Section 4: [Teachings](#)** (p143 – p183)

**Section 5: [Community Consciousness](#)** (p184 – p220)

**Section 6: [Identity](#)** (p221 – p247)

Support materials for each section, are included directly within each section. This may include graphic organizers, supplementary materials and excerpts from *The Barren Grounds* itself. We have also tried to hyperlink additional resources for teacher use. All activities and resources are included as suggestions. Teachers are encouraged to adapt and find meaning for their own classrooms and student population.

## Formatting Details:

We have also used the **Note for teachers** as a flag throughout this guide, to identify an explicit idea, concept, intention or sensitive piece of content. Please be mindful of this formatting choice throughout the guide. Anything that is in green within the resource guide is because it is a quote or piece of information from an Indigenous voice, knowledge system or represents Indigenous pedagogy. This is intentional to point out and draw attention to this content.

## A note on the Creation:

A group of Langley teachers met throughout the Winter & Spring of 2021, over TEAMS, to read and discuss the power of Indigenous story in our classrooms. Off the sides of their desks, they worked to co-create, edit, discuss, and enhance this resource. This is the product. We acknowledge this guide is by no means complete but the beginning of our collective understanding of how to thoughtfully incorporate Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods in our Langley Schools.

We know Langley teachers will take this resource and build on it, making it their own. We look forward to ripples of this work throughout the district.

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## Teacher Strategies

### Building Cultural Context:

Indigenous author Chelsea Vowel writes:

“Sometimes what you are reading simply will not make sense to you because you lack the cultural context. That does not mean you should avoid these stories. It just means you may have to put a bit more work into getting the full benefit of them than you would with stories that come from a context you are already completely familiar with.”

Chelsea Vowel, **Indigenous Writes: A Guide to First Nations, Metis, and Inuit Issues in Canada** (pg 98)

This is a great lens to use as you work through this novel (or any novel that represents a perspective that is unfamiliar to the reader). Ask yourself *What context do my students need to be able to find meaning?* This question will help to identify the necessity for any knowledge building activities as you move through the novel. Next, by being explicit with students about the purpose of building context – it creates a relationship between speaker (author) and listener (reader). Reciprocity or relationality is a significant aspect of the storyteller and listener relationship. Encouraging and being explicit with students about the responsibility of the listener role, to ultimately be able to identify moments where cultural context building is necessary, is a foundational aspect of Indigenous pedagogy.

### Indigenous Language Exploration and Honouring:

David Robertson is Norway House Cree, and uses Cree throughout the text. The series itself is called *The Misewa Series*. Misewa in Cree means ‘*all that is.*’ Sharing this with students would be a great first step in engaging with Indigenous Language in this book. Explore and engage with Indigenous language by:

- Tracking Indigenous words and their meaning as a class on chart paper, as they are used in the text.
- Encouraging students to apply the language in oral language by speaking it, any written reflections by writing it, etc.
- Exploring Indigenous Languages on First Voices [website](#) (Including local Indigenous languages)
- Exploring and pronouncing Indigenous words from the text on First Voices [website](#)
- Have students share words from their language that are meaningful to them.

### Connect to Local Language Teachings

The Langley School District Aboriginal program has a language teacher, Fern Gabriel, who teaches the hən̓q̓əmiñəm language to Langley students. To make local connections, engage in videos to hear and learn about the hən̓q̓əmiñəm language – please visit the SD35 website. Some of the videos that are generously shared, are already embedded within each section.

Access School District site: [Learn hən̓q̓əmiñəm](#)

## Connection to Land:

FNESC includes the following framework for teachers to think about when connecting to land within Indigenous literature.

Connection with place, with the land, is foundational to Indigenous perspectives. Each Indigenous group holds unique worldviews, knowledge, and stories according to its environment and territories. The concept of Place goes far beyond the physical space. It includes a crucial Sense of Place – the memories, emotions, histories, and spiritualities that bind the people to the land. Five concepts of place have been identified, common to most First Peoples:

- Place is multidimensional. More than the geographical space, it also holds cultural, emotional, and spiritual spaces which cannot be divided into parts.
- Place is a relationship. Relationship encompasses both human relationships and the relationships between people and the land.
- Place is experiential. Experiences a person has on the land give it meaning.
- Place is local. While there are commonalities, each First Nation has a unique, local understanding of Place. Stories are connected to Place.
- Place is land-based. Land is interconnected and essential to all aspects of culture. Making connections with place in courses is an integral part of bringing Indigenous perspectives into the classroom. Peoples' perspectives are influenced by the land they are connected to. That means including experiential learning in local natural and cultural situations.

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

## Say Something Strategy:

Let students know when you begin reading that you will be doing the *Say Something* activity at the end of the reading. This gives students a heads-up to be thinking while they are listening about what they will contribute. This is a great recursive strategy. Once the reading is completed– go around the classroom for everyone to 'Say Something'- 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, etc. 'Say Something' can also be done as a Think-Pair- Share. Students may benefit from prompts on the board to support their ideas. Students are also encouraged to feed off one another, by acknowledging one another's ideas (*I want to add on to what Muhammed said...; I really like what Jasneet said, I hadn't thought about it that way because...*) The purpose is that everyone has something of value to contribute to move our collective understanding forward as we engage with story.

For more specific instructions use see: [Say Something Strategy](#).

## Recursive Questions:

Asking the same or similar questions to begin discussion, in each section, supports the revisiting and building of understanding over time. It also allows students to acquire meaning, have epiphanies and connect to the process of learning based on their own contexts. This connects to the First Peoples Principles of patience and time as well as exploring one's own identity. Part of the learning process, over time, is the balance of both: *where we are finding meaning* and *where we do not understand*, is part of this process. Our job as teachers is to “[give] learners just enough to ensure understanding and to pique their curiosity to learn more”. ([Indigenous Storywork](#), Dr. Jo-ann Archibald)

*“Ellen uses a metaphor to symbolize time to think, talk and make meaning from a story. The blanket is a signal to the students that they are going to go ‘within themselves’ to think...*

*They know that one day we’re going to... look at it [the story]. We’re going to lift all the little corners of it ... To bring in their interest [say]... we’re going to talk about the story. We’re going to lift this end, and lift it and peek under there to see what is going on in there.. how about the crying underneath there [in reference to a part of a story]”* ([Indigenous Storywork](#), Dr. Jo-ann Archibald 135)

- Do you think this could be useful in our thoughts?
- Does it expand our thinking?
- What is meaningful to you? Where are you finding meaning? Where are you making meaning?
- What do you have questions about?
- What do you need to learn more about to better understand?
- How does this match what you/we already know?

(Questions taken from and adapted from [Indigenous Storywork](#), Dr. Jo-ann Archibald 136)

## Teacher Resources:

Dr. Jo-ann Archibald| [On Indigenous Stories and their Framework](#)

- “.. go away, reflect, figure out what I ought to do”  
How is this story a guide?

Dr. Jo-ann Archibald| [On Including Indigenous stories](#)

- “.. a basic form of protocol, teachers may actually use stories that Indigenous people from various communities have developed, teacher resources, published their own stories in book or video form. I think those are ones that teachers should feel comfortable using if they have been developed by Indigenous people. And in doing that, they can follow the protocol”.

**Basic Protocol:** Identify storyteller. Identify Nation and culture the story derives from. Provide cultural context when necessary to support an understanding of the story.

## Sketch-noting / Doodling / Word collecting:

When the teacher is reading aloud or the class is listening to the audio book, this is an effective strategy for helping students make sense of what they are hearing. Students record key words and images that resonate with them while they are listening to the text. This should be as a highly personal process, where students are encouraged to record words, phrases that connect with them,

and sketch images that resonate with them. It is key to remember that no one needs to be an artist to participate – this is a tool to help them create meaning from the text as they hear it. It is often valuable for students to reflect on which words or images they found themselves focusing on and what parts resonated with them personally.

### Listening:

The audio for this book is incredible. Whether through an Audible, purchased audio book or the district SORA app – engaging with this story through listening is a powerful strategy. This connects to oral tradition and the honouring of Indigenous languages. It is often said, that when listening – it's great to do something with your hands (Yolanda Skelton, LFAS). Suggestions of sketch-noting, colouring, weaving, creating while listening – all allow for the brain to listen, and stay focused. Listening can also support students thinking about not just *what* is said, but *how* it is said.

How do I sign in?

Access Sora from the app

Your school setup code is:  
**sd35ca**



1. Tap to open the Sora app.
2. Enter your school setup code.
3. Enter your login credentials.
4. Browse, borrow, enjoy!

Download the Sora app



## Character / Setting Charts:

As a whole class, keep track of key traits, events, ideas, or phrases that resonate with you around each of the main characters. Have students add to these as you read the book. These are whole class on large chart paper, to help all students see and access the information. This can be done first through small group discussion, where student identify key character and setting details that they believe should be added to the class charts. Keep these posted in your classroom and add to them as you read the book. It is powerful to also add stickie notes of evidence from the text that supports the traits you are.

## Talking Circle Instructions:

“Talking Circles or Circle Talks are a foundational approach to First Nations pedagogy-in-action since they provide a model for an educational activity that encourages dialogue, respect, the co-creation of learning content, and social discourse. The nuance of subtle energy created from using this respectful approach to talking with others provides a sense of communion and interconnectedness that is not often present in the common methods of communicating in the classroom. When everyone has their turn to speak, when all voices are heard in a respectful and attentive way, the learning atmosphere becomes a rich source of information, identity, and interaction.”

For specific instructions, protocols and more please see the FNEESC recommended page: [Talking Circles](#)

**Note for teachers** For localized protocols and participation please reach out to the Aboriginal Support Worker in your school.

## Medicine Wheel Thinking:

Indigenous worldview and knowledge are unique to each Nation. It is important to acknowledge these differences and unique traits and avoid generalizing across this diverse group of peoples. There are many diverse types and forms of Medicine Wheels. Yet an aspect that unites all these unique forms of the Medicine Wheel, is the significant role of balance modelled in the wheel and in our lives and the world around us. At different points in the novel have students engage with this Indigenous way of knowing and being.

Using a graphic organizer or having the four aspects written on the walls of your classroom – have students connect to thinking about:

the **Physical** (personal health, body, and/or land, place etc.),

the **Mental** (knowledge, learning, etc.),

the **Emotional** (the heart, relationships, family, feelings, etc.)

and the **Spiritual** (culture, tradition, language, spirit).

When using this tool – be sure to use it in a way that does not only highlight imbalance – but also balance. For example, it can be a strong tool to show when deficits exist (analyzing the plight of Misewa) – but it can also highlight when health and overall wellness exist (when the pack of four are out on their journey working together).

For more information on the Medicine Wheel teachings please go [here](#).

**Note for teachers** Cultural Presenters who teach about the Medicine Wheel can be booked [here](#). For more teachings with Dr. Martin Brokenleg, Circle of Courage, please go [here](#).

### Twitter Board:

Allocate a section of your board space for this ongoing activity.

After each section read, each group of students (4-6 students) agree on one *Hashtag* that would best summarize the most important happening of the section read. The chosen Hashtags from each group are written on the board and read out to the whole class. Each student decides on which Hashtag they align most with and write a short response, a *Tweet*, on a sticky note to place under the *Hashtag*.

Before the reading of the next section of the novel, *Hashtags* and *Tweets* are read out and the board is cleared for the new *Hashtags* and *Tweets*.

This activity encourages discussion about what has been read and allows for engagement of all students as minimal writing is required. The reading out of the *Hashtags* and *Tweets* before each new section allows those who have missed that section or those who need to be reminded of what has happened, to hear a summary of what has happening in that section of the novel. This allows for the creation of community shared knowledge which fosters a group meaning making where every perspective counts.

### Twitter / Image Board – School Wide:

Allocate a bulletin board in a common space. Have divisions contribute weekly a response. Do not post these until the end of the reading week to avoid spoilers. Students enjoy seeing the reactions of their peers. Couple this with a quick image or doodle that each class also contribute.

**Note for teachers** We caution against dividing it by division number. Instead do as grades or just a generic board that each class contributes to each week. A great location is outside the learning commons.

### Wayfinding:

This is an ongoing activity that may be used for the duration of the novel, and beyond.

In the long-ago, before Google Maps or even street signs were available, Indigenous peoples found their way by their attentive and keen *noticing's* of the world around them.

For this activity you will find a walking route in the neighbourhood of your school. This route should be a distance that can be walked in 20-45 minutes, depending on your individual classes and the time you wish to allot for this activity. If possible, choose a route that includes cut-through pathways through *cud-de-sacs* or trails through wooded areas. Instruct your students that you will be walking a route that they will be creating a map for afterwards. Signage may not be included on the map, only landforms (i.e. trees, rocks), and landmarks (i.e. benches, fences, mailboxes etc.) will be used to mark places along the route. Invite your students to walk mindfully, noticing the forms around them.

Once returning to the school, have your students draw a map of the route using only the landforms/marks they remember. Walk the same route as many times per week as time allows. After each walk, students will continue to add details of their *noticings* to their maps.

A culminating activity may include trading maps with another student, or another class, to use as a guide for the route.

#### **Follow-up discussion questions:**

- What landforms/marks did you notice that you had not noticed on the first walk along the route?
- Did you and your partner have the same landforms and landmarks?
- In what ways was the map true to the route?
- What landforms did the novel characters, Ochek and Arik, use to wayfind their way through the Barren Grounds?
- How does using landforms/marks as wayfinding rather than using Google Maps, help us to better connect to the land around us?
- Create a mental map using landforms and landmarks of the routes to your hockey rink, friend's houses, the mall or other places you travel to.

### **Identity Weaving Art Project**

Attached are instructions on how to engage students in an art project that explores different aspects of their identity. This activity is designed to accompany students throughout their novel study and beyond. By beginning with a shoe box, students weave their box covers and add a variety of meaningful images and objects throughout the novel. In a sense, students will be walking alongside the novel's characters as they share their own relationships with identity. Teachers are encouraged to adapt and build on this idea to best fit their classroom contexts.

**Note for teachers** This is also an excellent example of focusing on process- the process of weaving takes patience and time. We learn from our mistakes, and we help one another as we go, as everyone will be weaving at a different pace. This is also an opportunity to connect to place and Indigenous peoples. The west coast of BC has many Indigenous groups that are renowned weavers. Exploring with students the skill of local Indigenous weavers and artists highlights the knowledge and skill these communities hold.

A very special thank you for the instructions, created by art teacher April Parchoma from HDSMS.

#### **Weaving Resources:**

**Note for teachers** Cultural Presenters who teach Weaving can be booked [here](#).  
Indigenous Weaving Lesson Plans- Comox Valley School District| [here](#)

Coast Salish Weaving: Tools and Technologies – Burke Museum| [here](#)

Exploring Patterns through Coast Salish Weaving- Lesson Plans & Math connections |[here](#)

The Fabric of our Land: Coast Salish Weaving- Museum of Anthropology| [here](#)

The Dogs that Grew Wool & the People who Loved Them- Hakai Magazine| [here](#)

# Weaving Project

Shoe Box Covering Process

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## Purpose of exercise

Student can choose colours that remind them of family members, places they love, their cultural ancestry, places that remind them of home to weave a paper covering for their shoe boxes.

Things to keep in mind:

- This is a multi-class project
- Starting construction paper should be 24 x 35 with a bit extra needed for the lid
- The lid sits on top of the shoe box after the paper weaving is attached.

## Teacher Preparation:

Supply check list:

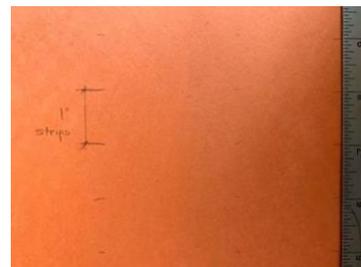
- 24 x 35 construction paper; 2+ sheets per shoe box.
- Scissors
- Ruler
- Pencil
- Stapler
- Masking Tape
- Eraser
- Paper cutter



## The Prep Process

### Prepping the paper

- Place two to three sheets of construction paper together and lightly staple along the top to secure the pages together for cutting.
- Take a ruler and mark out 23 notches for 1" spacing along the wide 35" side of the paper.
- Once you have enough marking guides for a clean cut either cut with scissors or with a paper cutter the strips until the last two inches of the 35" wide side.
- \*NOTE: you will not be cutting strips all the way to the top. Leave the top 2" uncut.



*Each student group will need:*

- Scissors
- A stapler available
- Masking tape
- One base paper per student. One extra paper per student, and one extra paper per group (for 3-5 extra strips needed for the shoe box top).



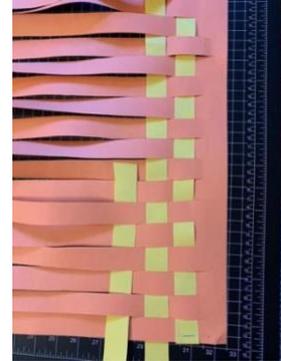
## The Construction Process:

### Getting Set Up

1. Have students choose their base colour to weave in and out of.
2. Have student choose the colours of their strips. The large papers have uncut tops so the students can trim them off as needed and the exercise is kept tidy and the paper strips have a higher chance of staying intact.
3. If students wish to have multiple colours they can share cut sheets with one another.
4. Make sure each weaving group/pair has:
  - a. Scissors
  - b. A stapler available
  - c. Masking tape
  - d. One base paper per student. One extra paper per student, and one extra paper per group (for 3-5 extra strips needed for the shoe box top).

### Getting Started

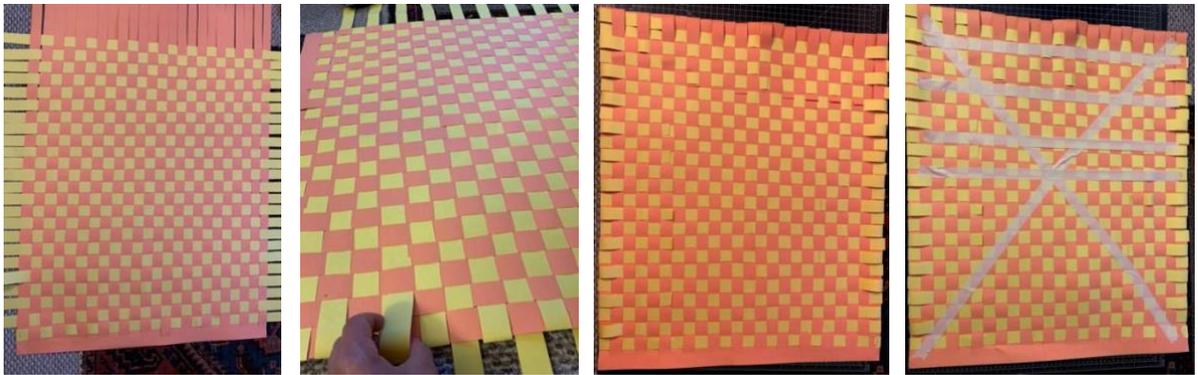
1. Weaving is an over and under action.
2. Every strip must be opposite the previous. So if one line is over, the next line is under on the same “warp” strip (the strips attached to the weaving base).
3. Stapling the first strip in can help get students started as it gives them some resistance to work with in their first row.
4. All remaining strips can be woven in leaving the ends equal on each side.



*Now you can just keep weaving the paper over and under, adding 3-4 extra strips from another paper to the end to make sure you have enough paper to wrap the lid.*

## Weaving: Finishing Touches

1. Once you are finished loading all of the weaving strips into base sheet, you can then weave in the ends.
2. Every second end will weave into the top, so weave in all of the paper that bends and seals in the ends.
3. Once you have tucked all of them in, flip it all over and every second end will weave into the backside. Keep the weaving on its backside to tape with masking tape so that you can cut it to size for the shoe box and the lid.



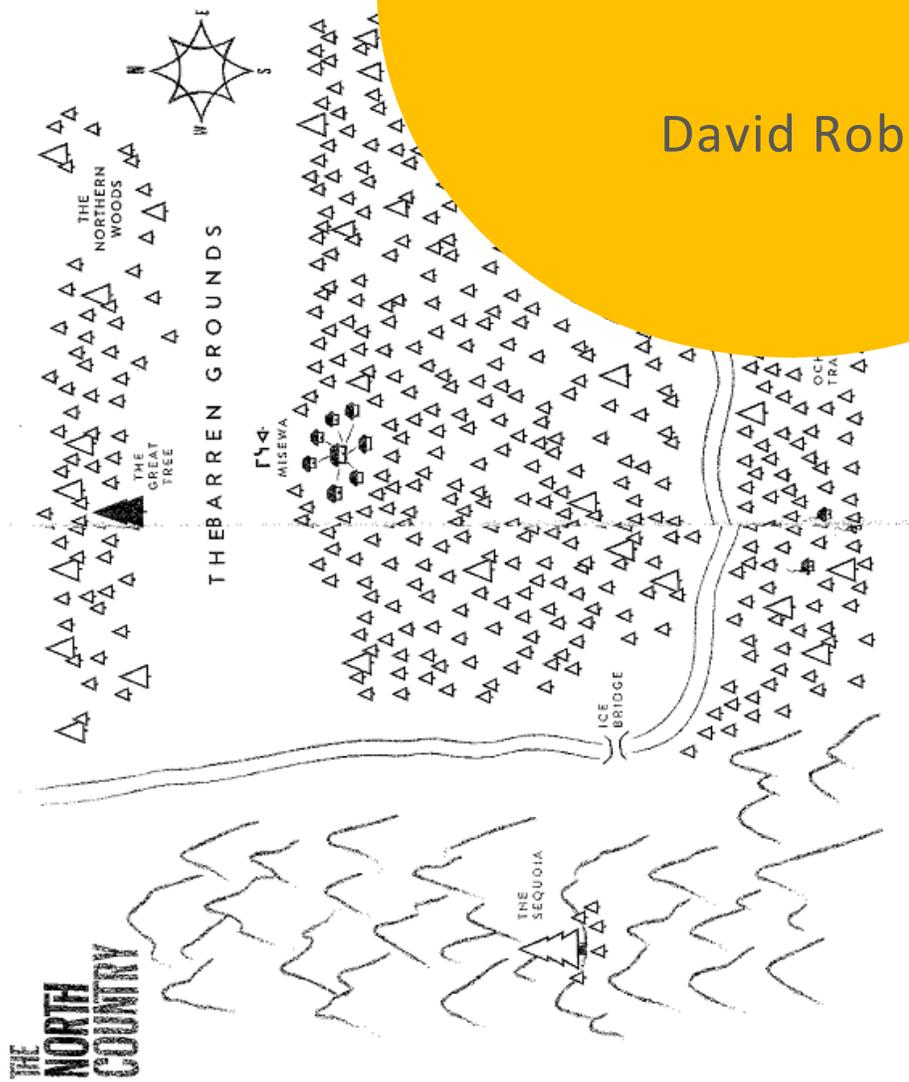
## Wrapping the box

1. Choose the side that will give you the most advantage. I found the 24” side wrap around the long side as well as left enough depth for the shorter sides of my shoe box. See photos for techniques used in the exemplar. If you have better wrapping techniques, please use them.
2. Use the remainder to wrap the lid.



# The Barren Grounds

David Robertson



Opening Activity:  
Looking at the Stars

## Opening Activity: Looking at the Stars

**Question:** What do you know/not know about the stars? What comes to mind when you think about 'stars in the sky'?

- Have students quietly reflect on this question before sharing out. Think/ Pair / Share
- Emphasize both what is known or not known.

Have students share out their ideas and capture the feedback on the board or on a piece of chart paper.

(Areas that may be shared or can be prompted to show a more complete brainstorm- *what stars are? Star names? Types of stars? Constellations? Sayings that include stars? Stories from childhood? Cliches? Navigation? Space exploration? Songs that include stars?*)

**Note for teachers** Having diverse ideas and knowledge about the notion of the stars (both literal and figurative) helps to model that we all think differently and have different connections to the world around us. It helps to model that different worldviews exist- it is not about one over the other, but rather, the spectrum of ideas that endure.

**Bring in the text:** David Robertson, the author of the Barren Grounds, is a member of [Norway House Cree Nation](#). There is a lot of Cree knowledge that is connected to the stars. That knowledge is sometimes shared, with permission, by elders to show Cree worldview and teachings.

**Share:** Wilfred Buck, a Cree elder, introduces us to important life teachings, concepts and of course how the stars play into all of this. Select a quote or quotes that best supports your classroom context that can be shared with students. This might look like writing a quote on the board, using the quote sheet for them to choose from, putting students into groups and giving them each a quote—whatever supports student engagement with critically reading, thinking and engaging with Wilfred Buck's words.

See attached quote list.

### Learning from Elder Wilfred Buck:

Individually or in groups have students identify:

- What are key words?
- What are powerful phrases?
- What are the sentences or phrases that teach you something new?

**Share:** Have students share out learning from Wilfred Buck

- What can you add to the original star brainstorm that reflects your new understandings about the stars?

**Read & View:** Project the image of the Fisher Constellation attached below and read aloud the Legend of the Fisher, as told by Wilfred Buck. Let students know that at the end of the story, they will be asked to reflect on:

- **Where did you find meaning?**
- What is unclear or is an area you think you might need to learn more about?
- Where they found meaning MEANS – *what stood out to you? What was meaningful is often based on your worldview, understandings, experiences, perspective? There is not a singular meaning, it is about seeing what resonates with each person.*

**Share:** Use one of the following strategies to have each student contribute where they found meaning in the legend told by Wilfred Buck: *Talking Circle* or *Say Something strategy*.

**Connect:** Ask students if any of their learning from Wilfred Bucks quotes, could be connected to the story they just heard. Have students share questions they still have, predictions on what this may have to do with the novel they are about to read.

## Wilfred Buck: Cree Elder

*“All cultures on Mother Earth have their own understandings of the stars. No matter where one was located on Earth, all one must do was look up into an evening sky and a myriad of stories can be revealed. As human beings made sense of their world and established a sense of belonging, stories were told and connections between people and the environment were established.”*

**Buck, Wilfred.** *Atchakosuk: Ininewuk Stories of the Stars*

*“I came across an atayokewina (sacred stories) about the constellation popularly known as the Big Dipper. The storyteller, late Murdo Scribe called this constellation Ochekatchakosuk – the Fisher stars.”*

**Buck, Wilfred.** *Atchakosuk: Ininewuk Stories of the Stars*

*“We as individuals tend to view our civilization as “the best” and when our teachings, knowledge, and belief systems are ridiculed, marginalized and then utterly dismissed as “quaint”, we begin to question our world view. This has happened and is still happening to First Nations people as well as all colonized peoples. Until other world views are proposed and considered, there will be a distinct “difference” and “quaintness” about all that is not mainstream. In addition, our children will see these differences and attempt to discard them in order to become more mainstream. These teachings reflect the differences and propose another perspective, broadening and giving voice to them.”*

**Buck, Wilfred.** *Atchakosuk: Ininewuk Stories of the Stars*

*“I hope to see a day where Anishinabe, Dene, Oji-Cree, Inuit, Lakota, Ininewuk and all other marginalized peoples hold their stories and relationships to the stars in plain view for their children and all the world to see. First Nations astronomy can be just as relevant as that associated with Roman or Greek mythology and makes people aware of the quality and quantity of knowledge that has been overlooked in Canada.”*

**Buck, Wilfred.** *Atchakosuk: Ininewuk Stories of the Stars*

*“We arrive at knowledge from many different paths and the more aware we are of other possibilities, the more sensitive we will be to understanding and difference.”*

**Buck, Wilfred.** *Atchakosuk: Ininewuk Stories of the Stars*

*“. we are told by various Elders and Knowledge Keepers, there are untold numbers of stories about the stars and skies and slowly they will reveal themselves.”*

**Buck, Wilfred.** *Atchakosuk: Ininewuk Stories of the Stars*

**Ochek Atchakosuk (The Fisher Stars)**

This constellation encompasses the asterism known as the Big Dipper and tells the legend of how the Ochek (Fisher) brought summer back to Turtle Island for us.



# The Legend of the Fisher, or Ochek

As told by Wilfred Buck, Science Specialist, Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre

A long time ago, there was no summer in the north country. It was winter all the time. Cold and bitter winds rushed through the lands and the beautiful colours of nature were only a dream. It hadn't always been this way, but there was once a man who captured all the little summer birds. He tied them in a bundle and they were always with him and Herring. This is why there was winter all the time.

The animals in the north country knew that summer existed somewhere, even though it never came to them. They wanted summer. They were tired of the cold. One day, Squirrel discovered where the birds had been taken, and the animals decided that one of them must go and free the summer birds. They chose Fisher, and off he went.

He walked and walked until he had left the north country. He walked and walked until he reached the wigwam where the captor and Herring lived.

When Fisher went inside, he found the man was gone but Herring was there. Quickly, Fisher put some sap around Herring's mouth so that he couldn't call out to the man. Once Herring was captured, Fisher used his teeth and tore open the prison that held the summer birds captive. As the summer birds made their way out of the wigwam, Herring broke free from the sap and called out, "Fisher broke the summer birds out! Fisher used his teeth! The summer birds are free!"

The man came running, but as he arrived at the wigwam, Fisher and the summer birds were already far away. The man chased after Fisher with a bow and arrow, and shot many times at him. But Fisher jumped into the sky and climbed up higher and higher and higher, right to the stars.

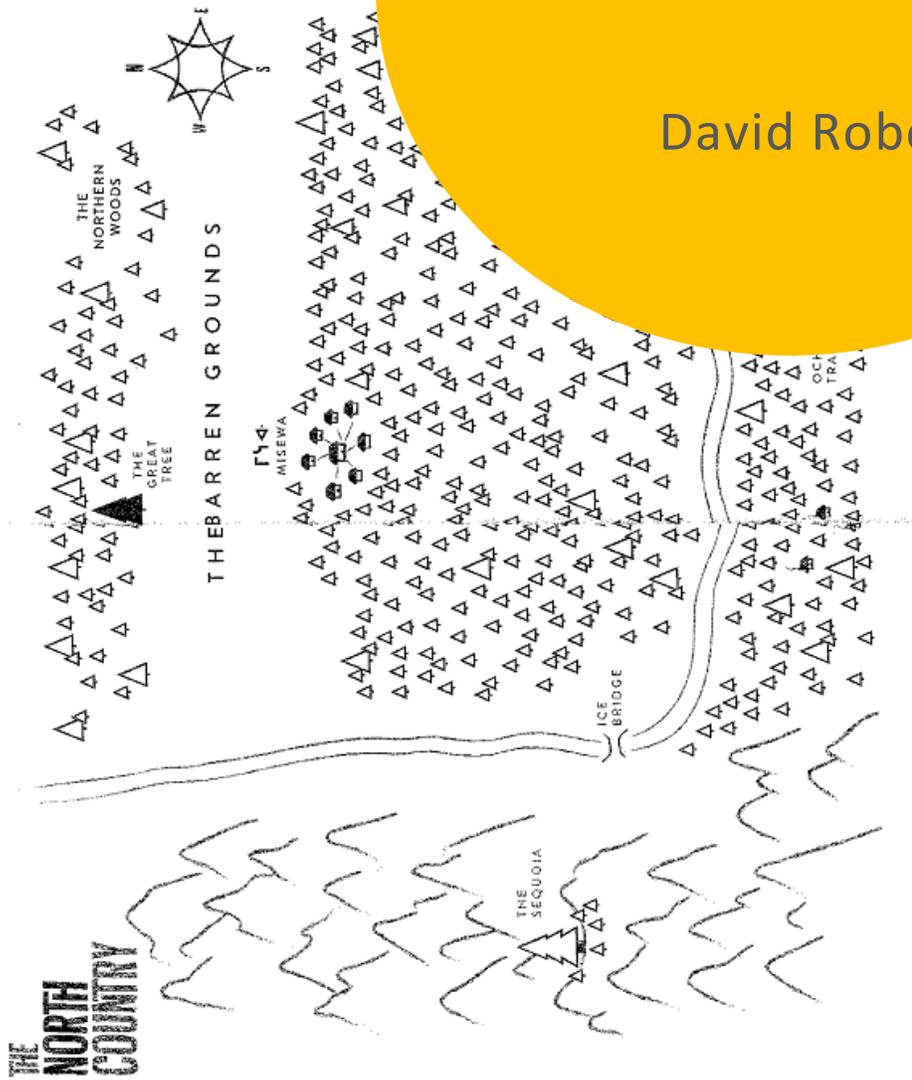
All the man could do was shoot Fisher's tail. Fisher escaped into the sky, and that is where we see him now.

His broken tail can still be seen today as the bent handle of the Big Dipper constellation.

Source: <https://mfnerc.org/newsletter/under-a-blanket-of-stars/>

# The Barren Grounds

David Robertson



**SECTION 1: Belonging**  
Start- pg 53

# Section 1: Belonging

Start - pg. 53

## Summary:

Meet Morgan and Eli, foster siblings living in Winnipeg. This first section introduces students to these characters, as well as the home and school life of Morgan and Eli. This section also includes the first hints of a magical portal.

## Important background knowledge/ context for Teacher consideration:

**Note for teachers** Morgan and Eli are foster children- a topic that connects deeply to the historical and current child removal policies of the Canadian government. Indigenous children are disproportionately removed from their homes, families, and communities. David Robertson has publicly stated that this book is not an inditement of the foster care system, it does however reflect contemporary Indigenous stories. For more on Davidson's decision to have the two main characters in care watch this [interview](#).

**Note for teachers** for your classroom context, be mindful of how these stories could impact your student population—having this conversation in conjunction with school counsellors, principals, vice principals, Family support workers, Aboriginal support workers, families, and the student themselves will support the success of this novel.

## FPPL:

**Learning ultimately supports the well-being of the self, the family, the community, the land, the spirits, and the ancestors.**

## 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?
- What is a gift you have been given that held meaning for you?
- What are all the ways we can show people we care about them?
- What does it mean to be welcome? What suggestions do you have to make sure our classroom is a welcoming to each other?
- What does it mean to write from the heart not the head? Have you ever struggled to write what you really feel or mean?

## Indigenous Worldview & Perspectives Focus

### Indigenous Language:

From the Langley School District site: [Learn hə́ŋqəmiṇəm](#)

“hə́ŋqəmiṇəm is spoken by the Down River peoples of the Fraser Valley, including the Musqueam, Tsleil-Waututh, Kwikwetlem, Tsawwassen, Katzie, and Kwantlen Nations. In the Kwantlen Nation, the language is taught to Langley students by hə́ŋqəmiṇəm Language Teacher, Fern Gabriel — Sesmelot. Fern learned her language from the Musqueam Nation.

We would also like to recognize the UBC First Nations Endangered Languages Program in collaboration with the Musqueam First Nation. It is through this program that Fern Gabriel, Luke Dandurand, Deanna Miller, and Carlyn Andres learned their language.”

Learn a greeting in hə́ŋqəmiṇəm: [Where are you from?](#)greeting in hə́ŋqəmiṇəm: [Where are you from?](#)

### Self: Artifact share:

Have students bring in/and or share an artifact of meaning to them. Have students share in a circle about the object.

- What do we learn about each other through the objects we care about?

### Self: Explore the notion of gifts:

*“The most important thing each of us can know is our unique gift and how to use it in the world.”*

- Robin Wall Kimmerer

Thought provoking question: Are gifts always things that can be touched, consumed, or held?

Unpack with students the word gift from different perspectives:

- North American view of gift (present, things)
- Indigenous view of gift (personal trait, quality)

The author uses both views in Eli’s artbook. It is both a meaningful gift for him (from his birth father) and is a place where he records his gift (his artistic skills)

- Students Reflect: What are your gifts? (Emphasis on quality/strength) Can you think of a life lesson or experience that taught you something which you could look back at as a “gift”?

### **Community: Role of Children in Society:**

The two main voices so far in this story are children.

- Explore the role of children in Indigenous society through the FNESC resource: [Beliefs and Values around Children](#)

- Teachers could post this in their rooms and refer to them throughout the story.

- A fantastic opportunity to break students into groups and have them take a statement and put it on large paper and illustrate the statement they have been given. Students can then share their visual choices. Great collaborative activity. Post these statements around the room – students can then access these throughout the read aloud, looking for examples of these values in the text as they explore the story.

**Note for teachers** – This document creates a deeper understanding of the impact on Indigenous communities when children were/are removed from Indigenous homes due to ongoing systemic racism. Connections can be made using this document to Residential Schools, the 60’s Scoop and unsatisfactory access to education – that forces many Indigenous children to leave their communities to receive a high school education. This document has a **recursive quality** that could be used to make connections throughout the text.

### **Land - Place Based:**

How aware are we of the weather? Go outside and sense the weather. What temperature do you think about? Why don’t we need to think about the weather? How do different peoples dress for weather?

Understanding Winnipeg’s climate and geography and how it is different than coastal BC. Have students find facts about Winnipeg’s or share some facts. Perhaps do a class Venn chart to understand the differences in each place – i.e., the lack of mountains, the more sustained winter and cold. Look at a detailed map of Canada and ask students to think about how the location of a place influences its weather, and its people.

Check out some facts about the geography of Manitoba [here](#) and [here](#).

To find some useful information, this is an opportunity to introduce students to some of the digital resources the school district has free access to including World Book and Encyclopedia Britannica.

Go to the school Library Learning Commons website: <https://library.sd35.bc.ca/> and select your school. Login: **langley** and password: **langley 35**

### **Ancestors: Cultural Iceberg:**

Share graphic in the appendix of the **Cultural Iceberg**. Ask students to comment on how what is under the water is different than what you see above the water. Ask for examples of these, students can list or fill out their own, on a copy of the Cultural Iceberg.

- Discuss how what is under the water is often hidden and harder to realize or understand. The

responsibility of the listener/reader of a new culture to them, is to learn beyond the surface. When we learn only about cultural surface items, we are in danger of reinforcing stereotypes, and misinterpreting someone else's culture.

- What is the difference between knowing a culture and understanding a culture?

Extension:

- What areas of another culture are 'out of bounds'?

**Note for teachers** Opportunity to connect to sacred knowledge- some knowledge you may know exists (like a protocol etc.) but are not invited to be a part of or share.

- Why is it important to build context about a culture?

**Note for teachers** Opportunity to connect concept or benefits of building cultural context. The goal would be for students to be able to identify when and if they are lacking a cultural context to understand a given situation, text, etc.

### **Self: Repetition:**

In the closing comments of the section – Morgan asks Emily 'Why are you being so nice to me?' to which Emily responds, 'Why wouldn't I be?'. Hours later, in an interaction with Eli, Eli asks, 'You got this for me?' in reference to the new notebook for his drawings. Morgan responds, 'Why wouldn't I?'

- Where do you find meaning in these interactions?

- Where do we learn how to treat one another?

### **Self: Identity Map:**

Explore what makes us, us. Use the Identity, Value Map from the appendix to think about:

- What are my strengths and abilities?

- How do I use my strengths in my family, relationships and communities?

## **Literacy Focus**

### **Pre- Read: Cover Prediction Activity:**

Project image of the front cover and have students individually record details or share orally what:

- they notice (*I see, I notice..*),

- predictions for the content (*I predict, I expect, I think, I hope...* ) and

- questions that they have (*I wonder, Why is...*)

### **Discussion Questions:**

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

- How does Morgan express her feelings? How is her current situation different from her past foster experiences?

**Note for teachers** Avoid having questions that directly connect Morgan and students. *IE DO NOT ASK – How would you feel if you were Morgan?*

- Describe Morgan's relationship with Eli, the twelve-year-old boy who is also being fostered in the same home. How has Morgan's childhood differed from Eli's childhood? How have they been similar?

- Morgan is an avid reader, especially of fantasy novels, and Eli is a gifted artist. Why do you think

they connect with one another? Why do you think these interests are so important to them?  
- How do you think Morgan feels about being Indigenous? Why do you think her foster parents Katie and James try so hard to connect her to her Indigenous culture? How does Morgan react to that?

**Allusion:**

Define. Referencing other literature in this section “Western Popular cultural Literature” - “tin-man of poetry”; Spiderman’s Multiverse

Why use western references? (Discussion)

**Literacy Choice Board:**

See attached resource for student engagement with core aspects of the text.

- Teacher can choose a topic or students can choose a topic to demonstrate their understanding of this section.

- This Literary Choice Board can be used throughout the novel after reading a chapter or a section.

**Creative Arts Learning**

**Activity with movement:**

(How emotions can affect our body/ How the body interprets emotions)

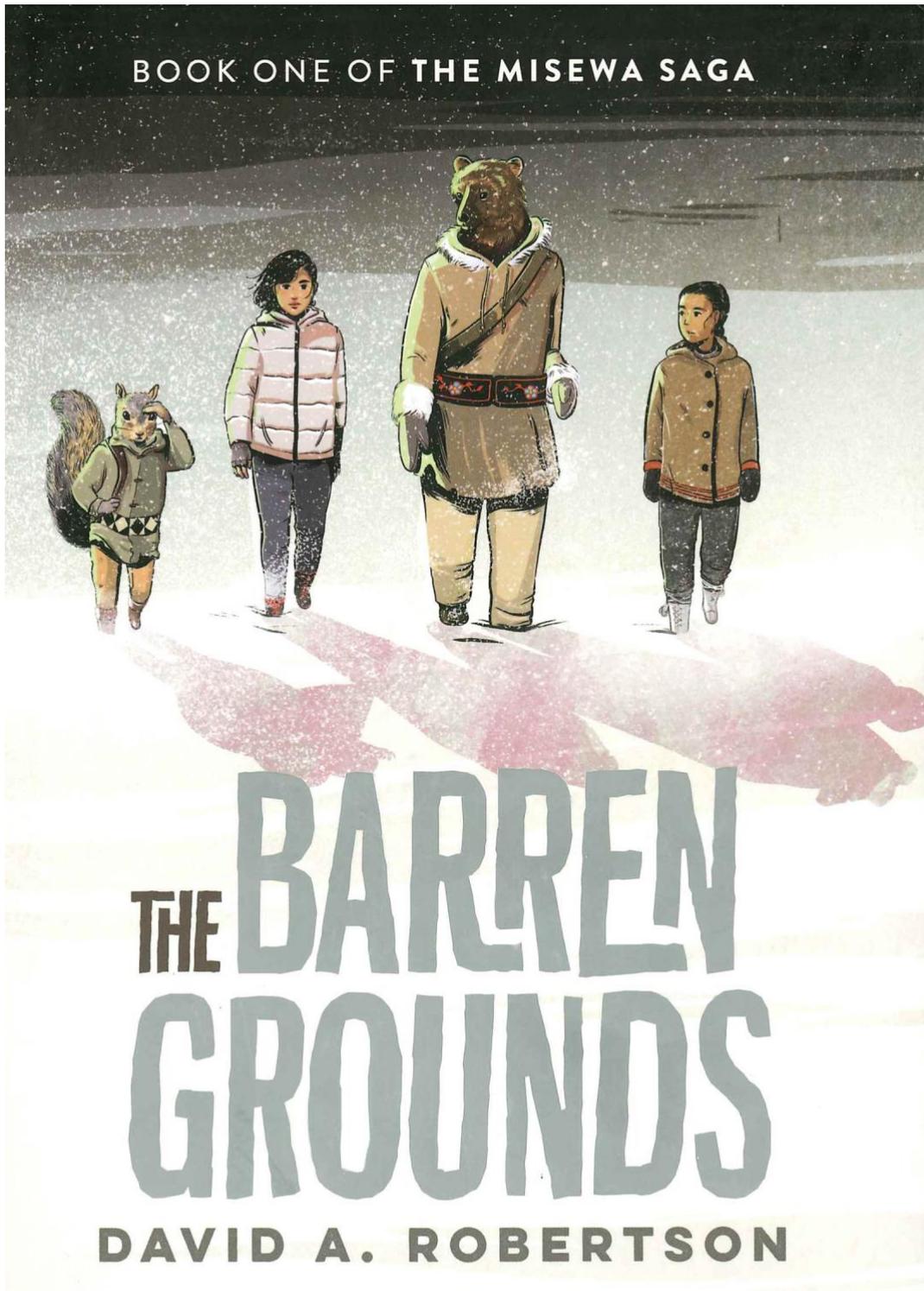
Kids stand in a circle and wait for the teacher to call out an emotion. Once the teacher calls an emotion, students allow their bodies to mimic/ feel/ interpret the emotion, moving silently in the same direction to avoid chaos and bumping into others. Example: “What does “sadness” look like?” Etc.

Inspired by the point in the novel “...moving around like a jewel thief”. Once kids have felt those different emotions as an action in the body, ask students to move “like a jewel thief”. (Creeping around and getting that feeling of moving slowly, cautiously and without sound, as if you don’t exist and not to cause attention to yourself).

Here is a excerpt from the film “[Ocean’s Twelve](#)”, showing a thief move thru laser security beams.

*Debrief:* Did you move your body in ways you do not usually move? Were you more aware of a part of your body because of having to move in different ways than you usually do? What did it feel like to have to navigate a space cautiously?

Pre-Read Prediction: What do you **See**? What do you **Think**? What do you **Wonder**?



from the Public Health Agency of Canada, Aboriginal Head Start

[www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/hp-ps/dca-dea/publications/ahsuni-papairun/index-eng.php#a6](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/hp-ps/dca-dea/publications/ahsuni-papairun/index-eng.php#a6)

While First Nations people, Métis, and Inuit have distinct cultures and languages, they also share common beliefs, values and histories. It is with this in mind that the following Statement of Beliefs and Values about Children was written.

We believe...

- That children are a gift from the Creator.
- That our children have a right to live proudly as Aboriginal people in the lands of their ancestors.
- That children have a right to learn their respective Aboriginal language(s) and histories, and adults have a responsibility to pass on the instructions that the Creator gave in the beginning of time as are reflected in our languages, cultural beliefs and cultural practices.
- That each child is part of what makes a community whole.
- That it is essential for children to develop meaningful relationships with Elders, the carriers of knowledge and history.
- That children, under the guidance of Elders, will learn to love learning throughout their life.
- That adults are community role models who are to teach children how to live a good life.
- That children deserve opportunities to gain knowledge and experience of how to live a good life.
- That children acquire knowledge by watching, listening and doing, and adults are responsible for encouraging and guiding them in all those activities.
- That children, through being loved, valued and encouraged, will gain the courage, the strength and the wisdom to use the power of a good mind and spirit in all that they do.
- That children have a right to enjoy the opportunities that education offers.
- That children have a right to live in healthy, self-determining communities that are free of violence.

# Literary Choice Board

Jan Richardson's 'The Next Step Forward in Guided Reading'

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Stop, Think, Paraphrase (STP)</b></p> <p>In your own words, retell the chapter you just read. Try to remember as many details as you can.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Key Word Summary</b></p> <p>After you have read the chapter, identify 3 key words that help you remember the most important events. Or ideas. Using those three words, write a summary of the parts you've just read.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Very Important Part (VIP) Fiction</b></p> <p>It is impossible to remember every detail of the book, Identify the VIP and determine the main idea or message in the book.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Track a Character's Feelings</b></p> <p>Track the main characters feelings from the beginning, middle, and end of the story and reflect on what caused those feelings.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Sociogram</b></p> <p>A sociogram is a visual representation of relationships between characters. Draw a circle for each character and write a sentence that describes the relationship.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Inferences from Actions</b></p> <p>Find an important or surprising dialogue or action that a character took. Why do you think the character said or did that? What is the character thinking?</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Who-What</b></p> <p>After you have read a chapter, identify the most important character and retell what that character did.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Who-What-Why</b></p> <p>After you have read a chapter, identify the most important character, what they did, and why that character took that action</p>

# The Iceberg Concept of Culture



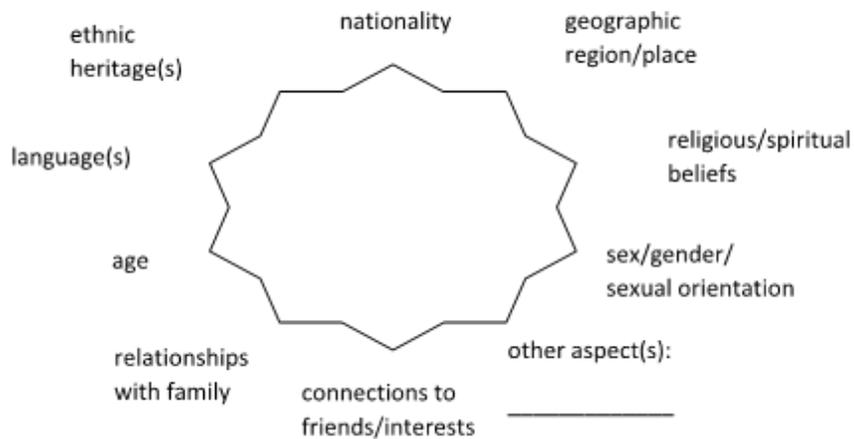
Source: PBS LearningMedia

Access <https://www.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/a353a4ba-cd56-4999-97dd-0e40e11a7211/iceberg-concept-of-culture-images-and-pdfs/>

## BLM 1 – Identity Map

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Use the following graphic organizer to examine the different aspects of your life that help create your own personal/cultural identity.



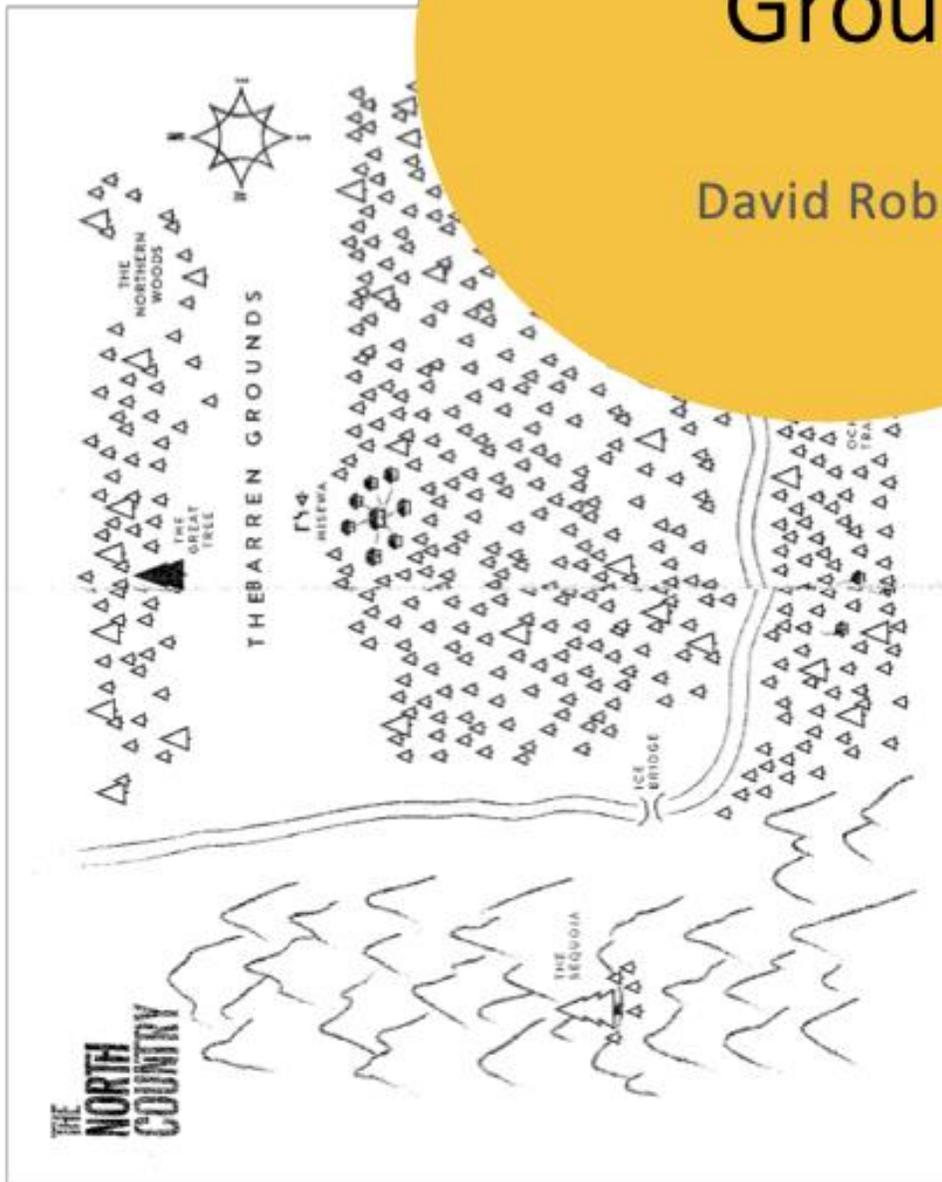
### Personal Strengths and Abilities

What are my strengths and abilities?

How do I use my strengths and abilities in my family, relationships, and communities?

# 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 Langleys*, 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 Ocheq 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 need to know more about ....
- I am thinking about...
- I wonder if...
- I found meaning when ....

### 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.

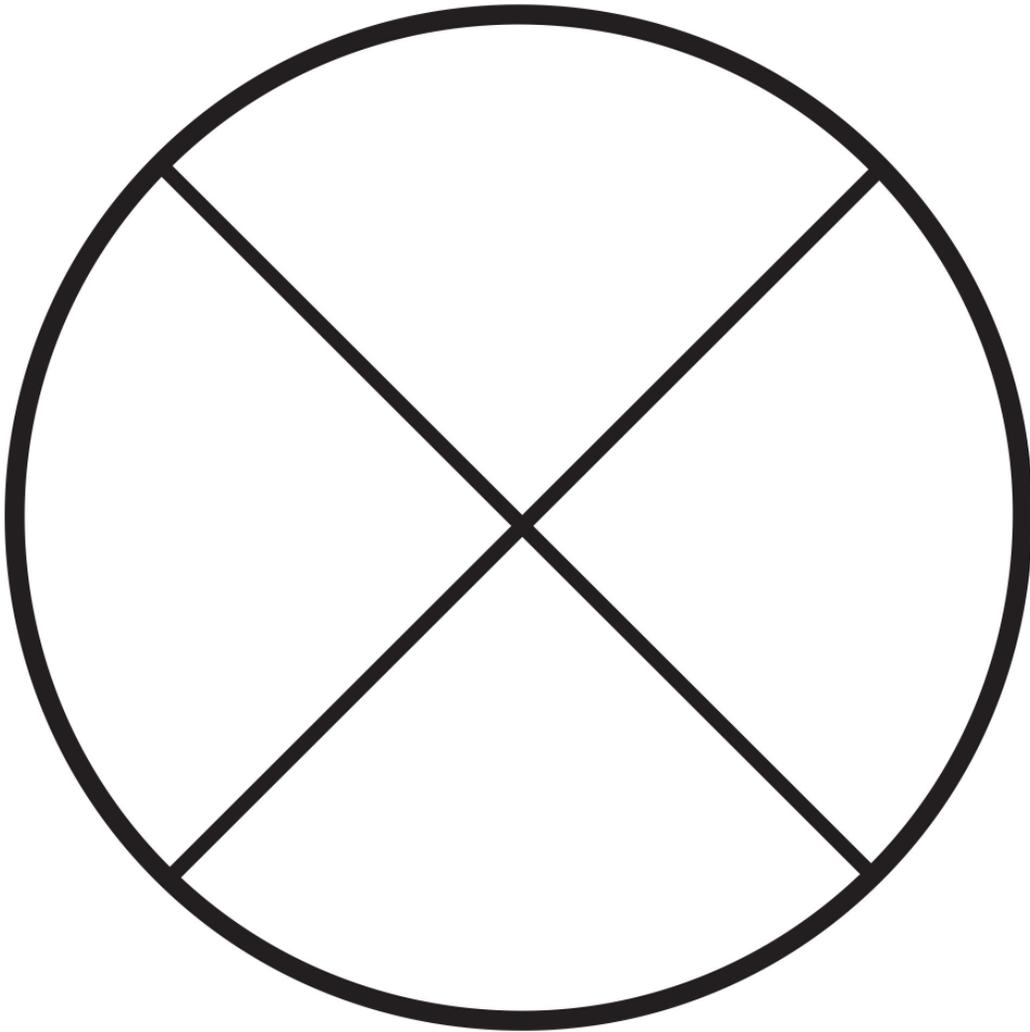
**Create your own personal Fantasy place and space.**

(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.

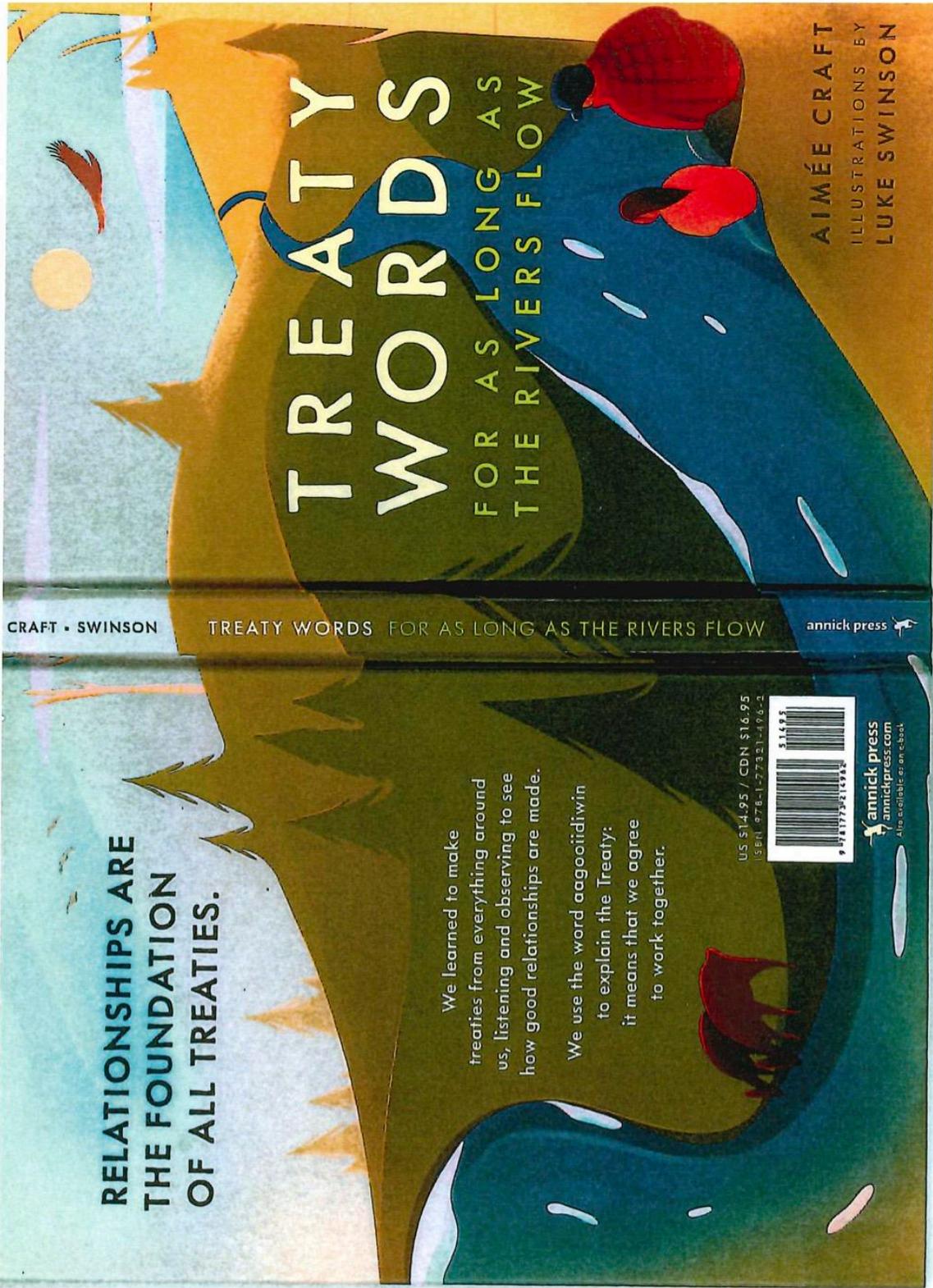
The Land is important because it gives us .....

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 .....



# 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

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.

US \$14.95 / CDN \$16.95  
ISBN 978-1-77331-418-2



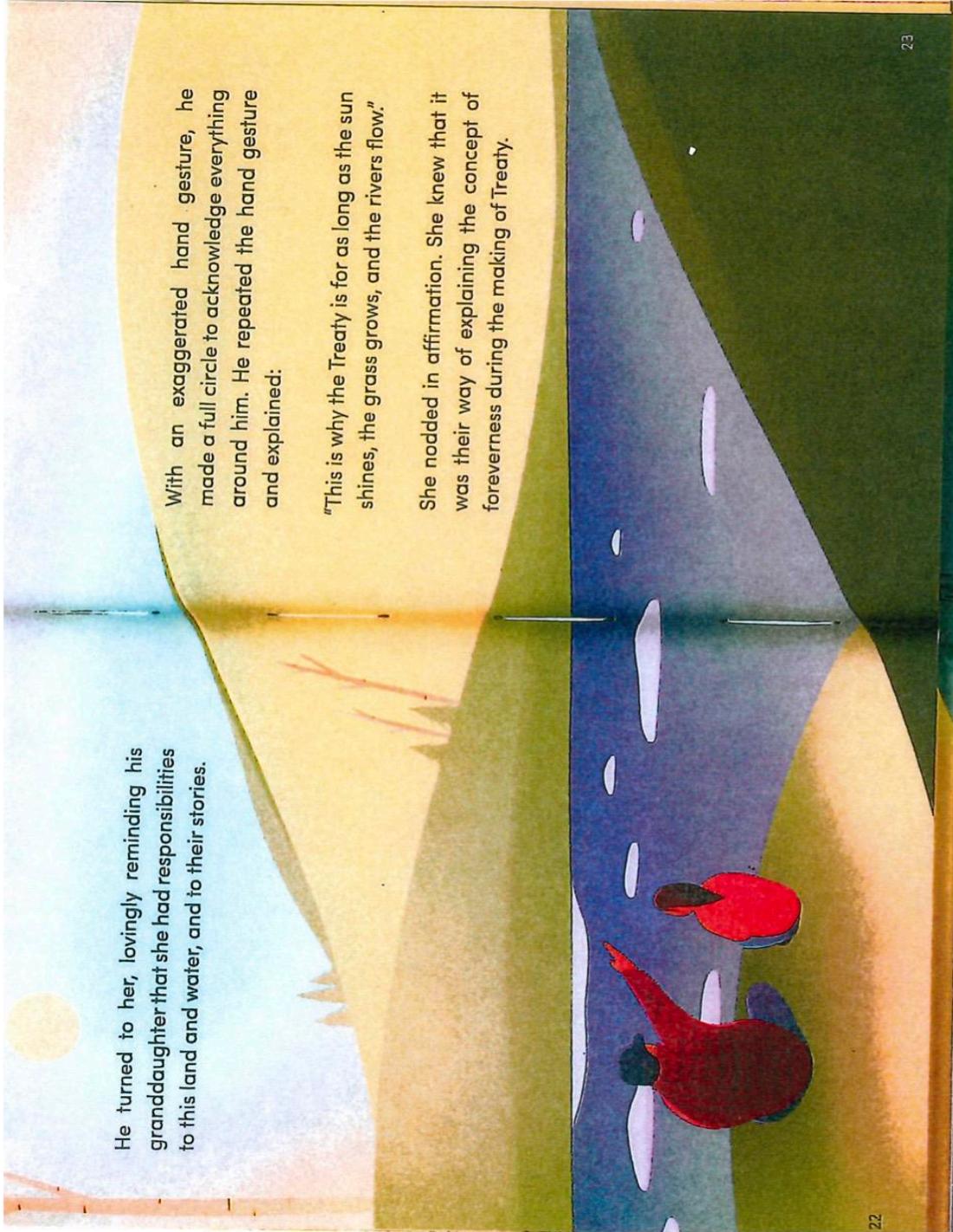
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Also available as an eBook

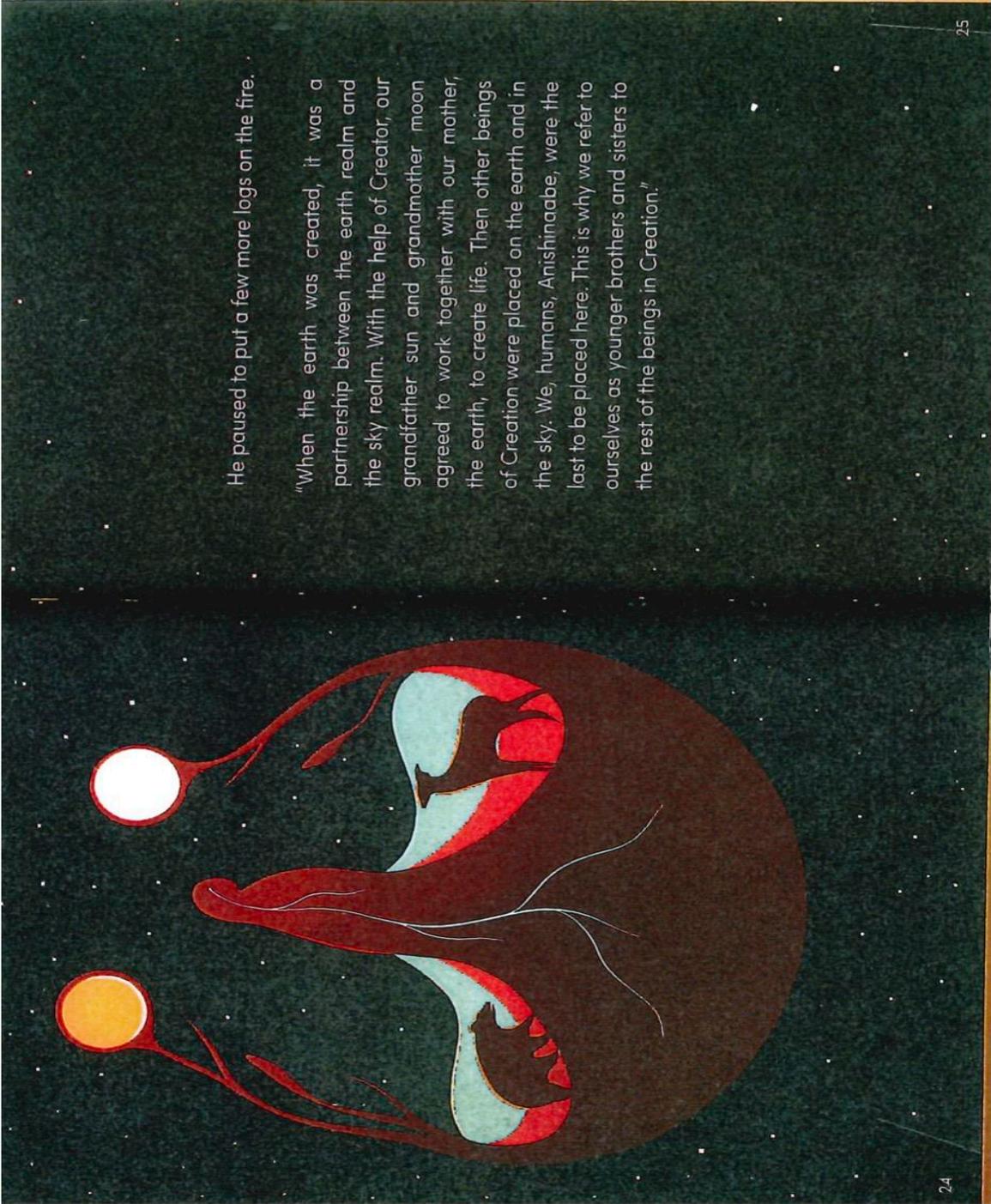
He turned to her, lovingly reminding his granddaughter that she had responsibilities to this land and water, and to their stories.

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.

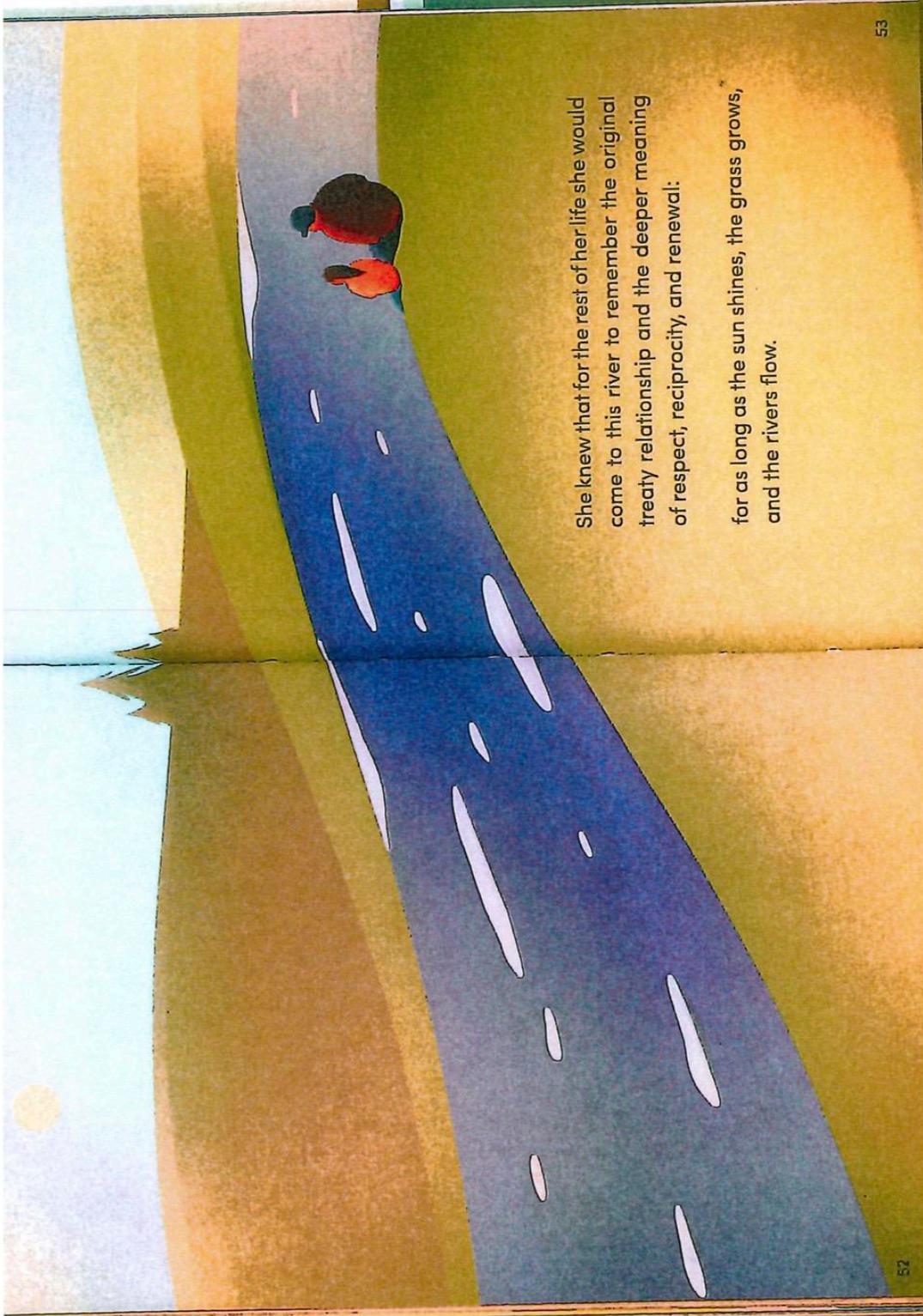






She stood to warm her hands by the fire. Mishomis carried on:

"Long ago, we made treaties with our brothers and sisters, the animal nations . . . You remember those stories don't you? We made those treaties to live well together. With the deer nation, for example, we agreed not to take too many of them. In turn they would provide us with food and sustenance. We agreed to work together. To collaborate and respect each other. We agreed that we would discuss when we did not agree and find solutions together. That treaty built upon all the other treaties that came before. We promised that we would always do our best to honor the treaty. To do that, we would meet regularly to confirm our agreement to continue to act in relationship, and toward *mino-biimaadiziwin*, that collective and reciprocal sense of well-being. We would all benefit from the relationship, as equals. And most of all, we would respect each other, always. Without the respect, there could be no treaty."

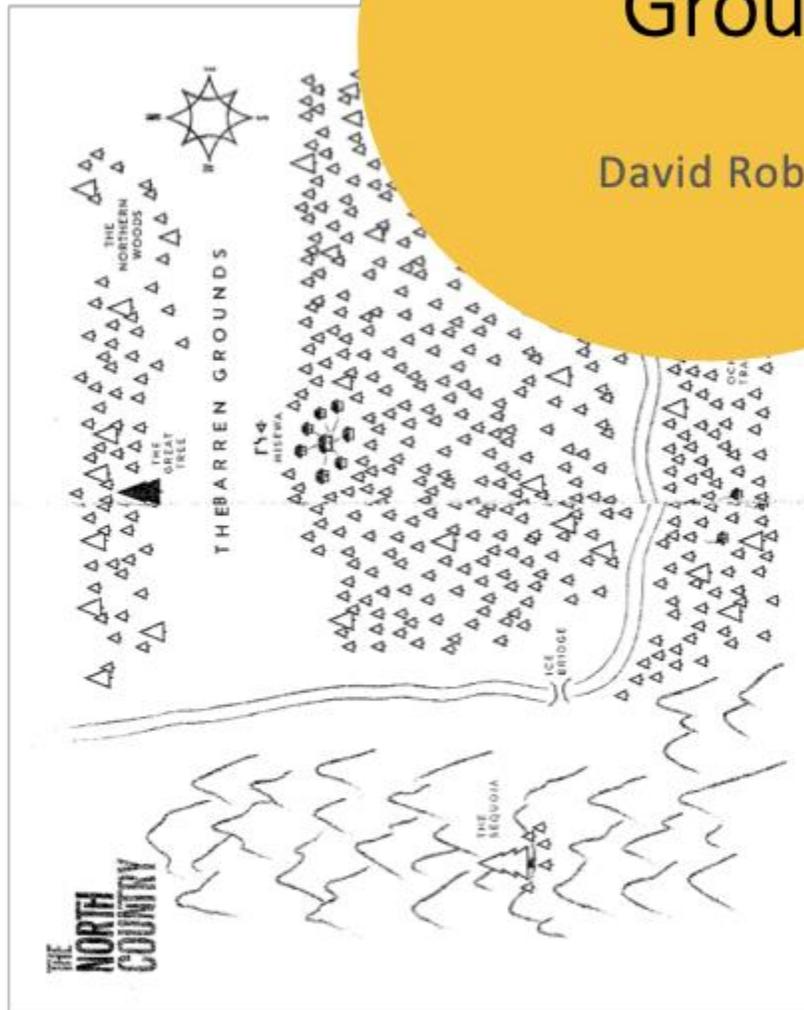


She knew that for the rest of her life she would  
come to this river to remember the original  
treaty relationship and the deeper meaning  
of respect, reciprocity, and renewal:

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

# The Barren Grounds

David Robertson



**SECTION 3: Responsibility**

pgs 97-142

## Section 3: Responsibility

pg 97-142

### Summary:

Morgan and Eli learn more about the Barren Grounds, and the reason why the land is sick. They learn from Ochek and encounter Arik, all while trying to figure out their role as guests to this land. A meeting with the Elders at council launches these four beings on a new journey.

### Important background knowledge/ context for Teacher consideration:

**Note for teachers** As teachers you need to be conscious that there are particularly important sacred teachings for Indigenous people that are embedded in this text. Robertson has included Cree language and stories throughout the text. Although it is in a fantasy world – these are real teaching and real beliefs.

### FPPL:

## Learning is... relational.

### 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?
- In what ways is the land sick today, in Langley, in Canada? In the world?
- How can we help the land? What is one thing I could practise today to help the land?
- What are 5 things I think I should know?
- How would we feel if the animals that we eat could talk? Would we feel different and why?

## Indigenous Worldview and Perspectives Focus

### Indigenous Language:

- **Muskwa**- bear
- **Kiskisitotaso**-do not forget yourself, do not forget who you are
- Learn how to identify animals in our local region in hən̓q̓əmiñəm̓ with Fern Gabriel:  
[Beaver](#), [Raven](#), [Goose](#)

### Animal Exploration:

- What is a fisher?
- Share the appendix item of the collage of images of what a fisher looks like.
- Why do you think of all the animals that could have been chosen as the leader, why is the leader a fisher?

**Note for teachers** The document and book also reveal that Ochek, in Cree, means fisher. This also connects back to the **Open Activity: Looking at the Stars**.

Explore other Indigenous languages below for the animal: Fisher:

Listen to 'fisher' in three different Indigenous languages: (double click the speaker to hear the pronunciation).



*Fisher in Tsilhqot'in (Xeni Gwet'in) language*



*Fisher in Uik'ala language*



*Fisher in Secwepemc language*

Source: First Voices [here](#)

### **On the Trapline:**

This is one of David Robertson's most recent published works. Great partner story for this section of the book and connecting with Orange shirt week and/or themes of resilience, reconciliation.

Morgan, Eli and Oshek are headed to Oshek's trapline. Important for students to understand what a trapline is and the importance to the Cree people. In his book ["On the Trapline"](#), A boy and his moshom take a trip to the trapline where his grandpa and family used to live off the land. This is a terrific book that explores the connection between the boy, his grandfather, and the land. There is a brief mention of moshom going to school. There is a brief, yet powerful mentioning of residential schools, When the boy asks him "what it was like going to school after living on the trapline." He was quiet for a long time. 'I learned in both places,' he says. 'I just learned different things.'

Cree words are woven throughout the story. The book does a wonderful job of showing the reconnection to culture and land. In his note from the author, David Robertson says the following "Reconciliation is more than just healing from trauma. It's connecting, or reconnecting with people, culture, language, community."

### **Medicine Wheel Thinking:**

Have students fill out the Medicine Wheel graphic for the community of Misewa. Have them think about the Mental, Emotional, Spiritual and Physical aspects of the community. This could be done in pairs or small groups, then collaboratively built together on the board. Have students debrief how using the lens of the medicine wheel, helps us to learn, understand what Misewa is going through.

- Have students share what they notice?
- What does this imbalance mean?
- What needs to be more balanced? What would balance look like? Feel like?
- Whose responsibility is it to find balance? In Misewa? In our communities?

### **Constellations:**

Relate back to the opening activity of this guide- **The Legend of the Fisher.**

- Explore more stories of Cree Elder through text, video and or images. For context on these stories and Elder Wilfred Buck, see article in **Annotated Resource List.**
- Wilfred Buck- *Atima Atchakosuk The Dog Stars* [here](#) (5 min)
- Wilfred Buck- *Sisikwun: The Rattle* [here](#) (2 min)
- Wilfred Buck- *Makinak: The Turtle* [here](#) (3 min)

\*See images of constellations in appendix.

**Note for teachers** Prolonged listening is a skill that has to be built. Having conversations with students about the responsibility of the listener to the storyteller – is an important part of Indigenous pedagogy. Additionally, giving students something to do with their hands is a wonderful way to encourage listening, and avoiding students getting distracted. Colouring is one accessible way to encourage a task that allows for open ears.

By chunking the listening and sharing out after each story- this can allow students to show the reciprocity of the listener to the storyteller.

- Where did you find meaning?
- What is unclear or is an area you think you might need to learn more about?
- How do these teachings relate to The Barren Grounds?
- What can we learn about how Indigenous people see and experience the world? What does “worldview” mean? What Indigenous worldviews can we learn from these teachings?
- What benefits do we get from listening that we do not get from reading?
- What is hard about being a good listener?
- What do you do when you feel your mind wandering when you are meant to be listening? Is it ok for our minds to wander? Where does your mind wander to? Does it wander to the same place? Try sketch doodling or drawing where your mind wanders to. It may not be a place but a thought... doodle the thought, add detail.

## The Calendar

How does time track time on Calendars – Have students create Winter calendars or Seasonal Calendars.

Use this publicly shared resource from Stellat’en First Nation to see how one Indigenous community marks time on a calendar.

**January-** Big moon. Cold. Cold weather.

**February-** We can fall tress on top of the snow.

**March-** ling Cod Moon

**April-** Pea Mouth First Moon.

**May-** Sucker Moon.

**June-** Trout Moon

**July-** Middle of the Summer.

**August-** Salmon Moon.

Kokanee Moon.

**October-** Char moon.

**November-** White Fish Moon.

**December-** Short Days Moon



Access from Stellant’en First Nation Website, for both the descriptions and graphic. Credit to Emma Baker. [Access here](#)

Have students think about activities/ aspects of their lives they could record by the seasons or by the month, to show how they know what time of the year it is.

- How do the seasons affect your life? Does the calendar affect your life? How? Does the calendar affect the structure of time/ how time is divided or used in our own lives? What affects your life more...the seasons, or the calendar, in other words, the way time is organized for us in our day to day lives? Can you imagine a world where the seasons are more important than “time”? What would that look like? What would be important in a life where seasons are more important than the calendar, or time on a clock?
- What was happening at the time you were born on the land and in the sky?

Other resources for calendars, moons, marking time in Indigenous knowledge systems:

[Thirteen Moons Curriculum](#)- Ojibway, Cree, Mohawk

[Indigenous Calendars Mark Much more than the Spring Equinox](#)- Muskrat Magazine

[Thirteen Moons Calendars](#)- Wsanec

[The Grizzly Mother](#)- Gitsxan Moon information

[Days and Months in Hulqumínum](#) (Printable cards with QR codes with sound) -Nanaimo Ladysmith Schools

- Learn to count in hənqəmihəm with Fern Gabriel in- [Count to Thirteen with Let's Count the Moons](#)

### **Governance:**

David Robertson has talked a lot about how he wanted to create a fantasy world, where the values, traditions and culture were rooted in Indigenous ways. One example of this is through The Council. To support building student context and understanding of the complex and diverse practices of Indigenous governance you may choose to share the attached:

- [First Nations Laws](#) or [Land & Traditional Government](#) (**gr 6, 7 level**)
- [First Nations Government](#) (**gr 8, 9 level**)

Have students identify ways that Robertson included these Indigenous values of governance in the text? Impact?

## **Literacy Focus**

### **Kiskisitotaso:**

This book introduces us to the Cree word Kiskisitotaso. The meaning being ‘[don't forget yourself, don't forget who you are](#)’.

Provide students with the graphic organizer from the appendix. In this week of Orange Shirt Day and/or Truth & Reconciliation (if engaging with the text in other months, outside of September) How does this Indigenous word help us to reflect on the past, present and future?

- *Past:* How do we think/relate this word for those who attended Residential Schools? Survived? Never returned?
- *Present:* How do we think about this word in our present, as we remember, learn work to honour Residential School survivors, Indigenous knowledge?
- *Future:* What is our hope around this word for future generations?

**Note for teachers** this task is keeping in mind Orange Shirt Day, and connecting to the language, culture and family impacts of this colonial policy. This connection is meant to both highlight the resilience and strength of Indigenous people, also the immense trauma that was imposed due to Residential Schools. If you are teaching at time outside of Orange Shirt Day – this is a very integral notion to the Truth aspect of Reconciliation.

### **Gr.8: Speculative Fiction:**

*'The definition of speculative fiction works that are not set in the real world, but instead create a supernatural, futuristic, or other imagined world. Indigenous speculative fiction is unique in this world of speculation, especially when it comes to post-apocalyptic narratives. The reality is that for Indigenous peoples who have been colonized and engaged in assimilation, the apocalypse – the destruction of a reality – has already occurred.'* This excerpt from [Turtle Island Reads Teacher Guide](#) explains why dystopian & sci-fi are becoming more popular in Indigenous literature. The theme of resilience and navigating a harsh reality relates to the real-world experiences of Indigenous people. Support students unpacking, reflecting, and discussing the theme of resilience.

- What is resilience?
- What are examples of resilience in the text?
- When have you been resilient? How does reading about resilience in a fictional world, help us to understand resilience in the real world?
- Have students write, orally share or perform an alternate scene starring a character from the text where the purpose is to show an example of resilience.

# Fisher

**fisher** A carnivorous mammal of the weasel family

ᐃᑦᑦᑦ **ocek** [NA]

**Source:** Alberta Elders' Cree Dictionary English-Cree

**Language:** Cree



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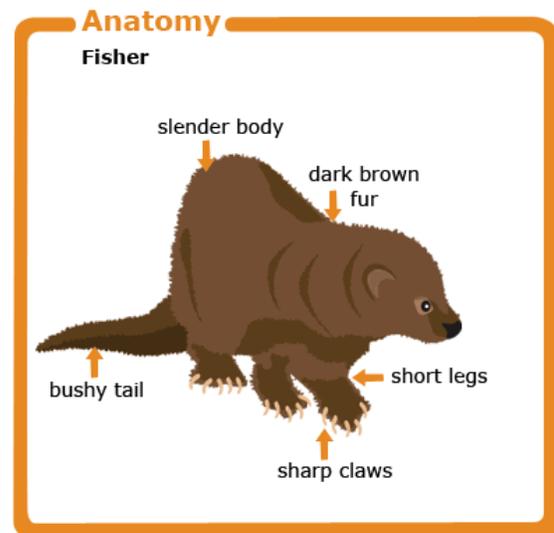
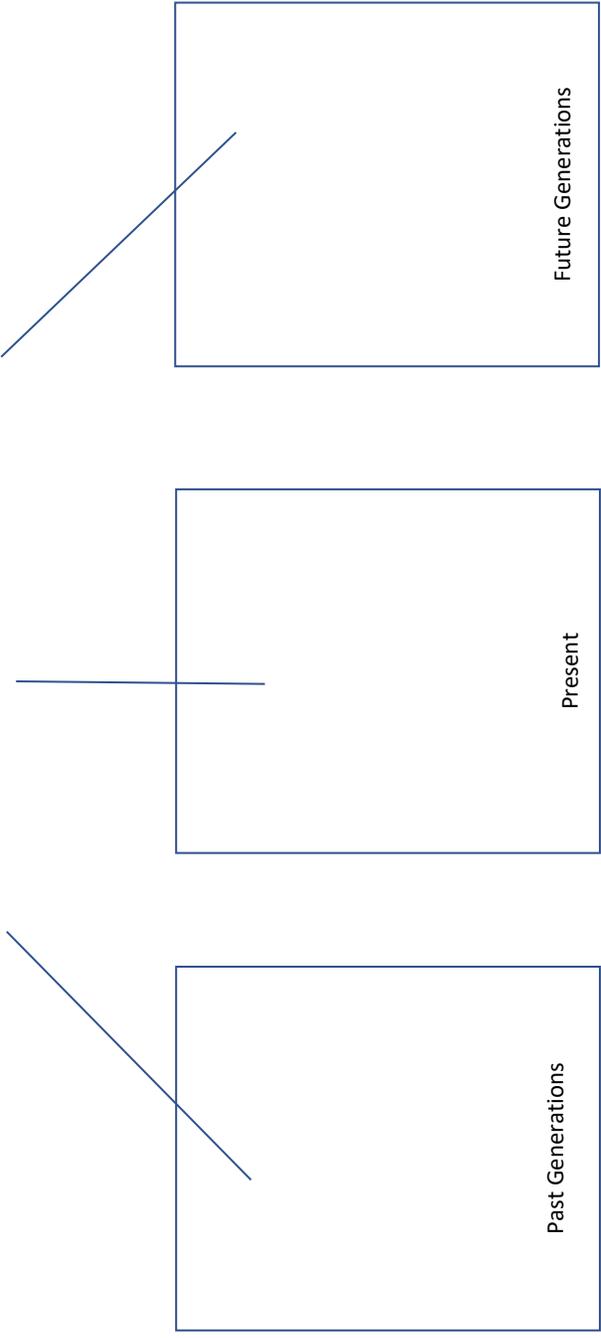


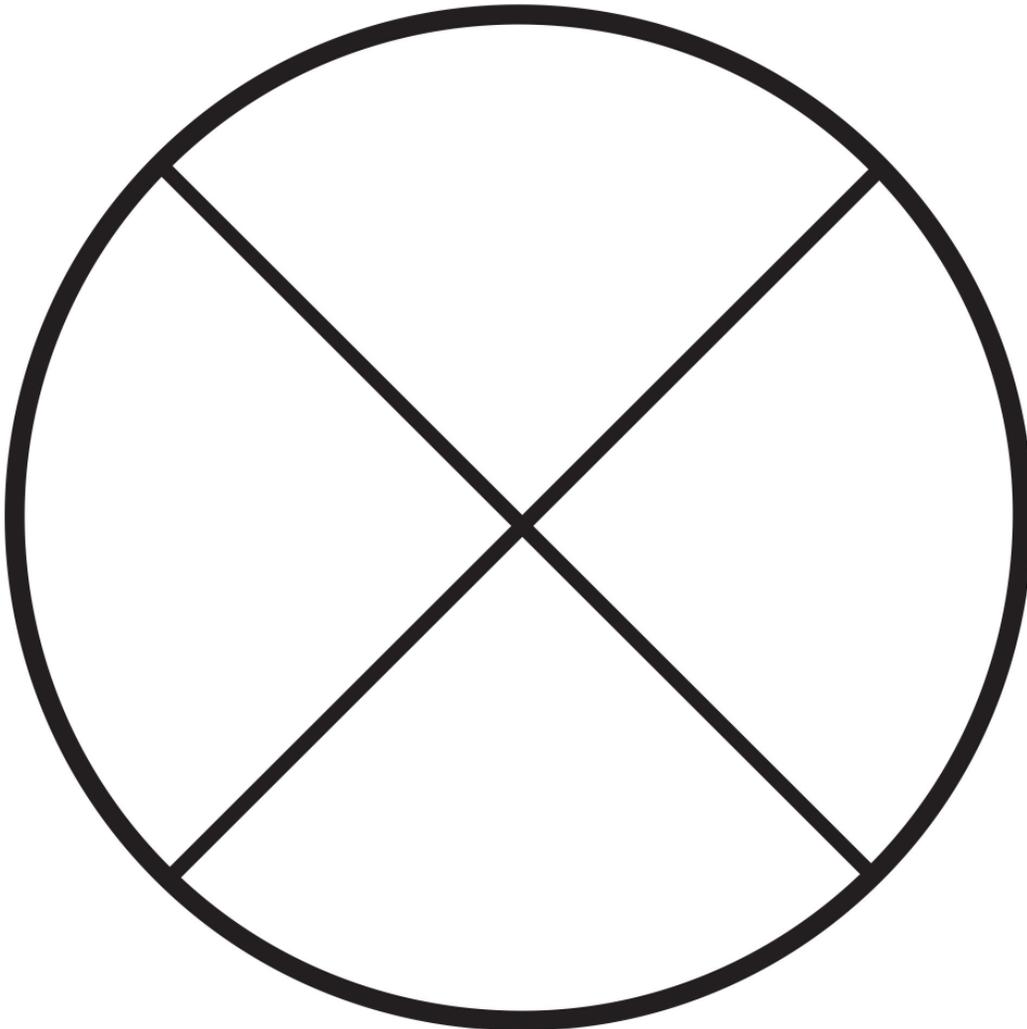
ILLUSTRATION BY ANNA SERRAO

# Kiskisito

Cree Translation: *don't forget yourself, don't forget who you are*



# Medicine Wheel



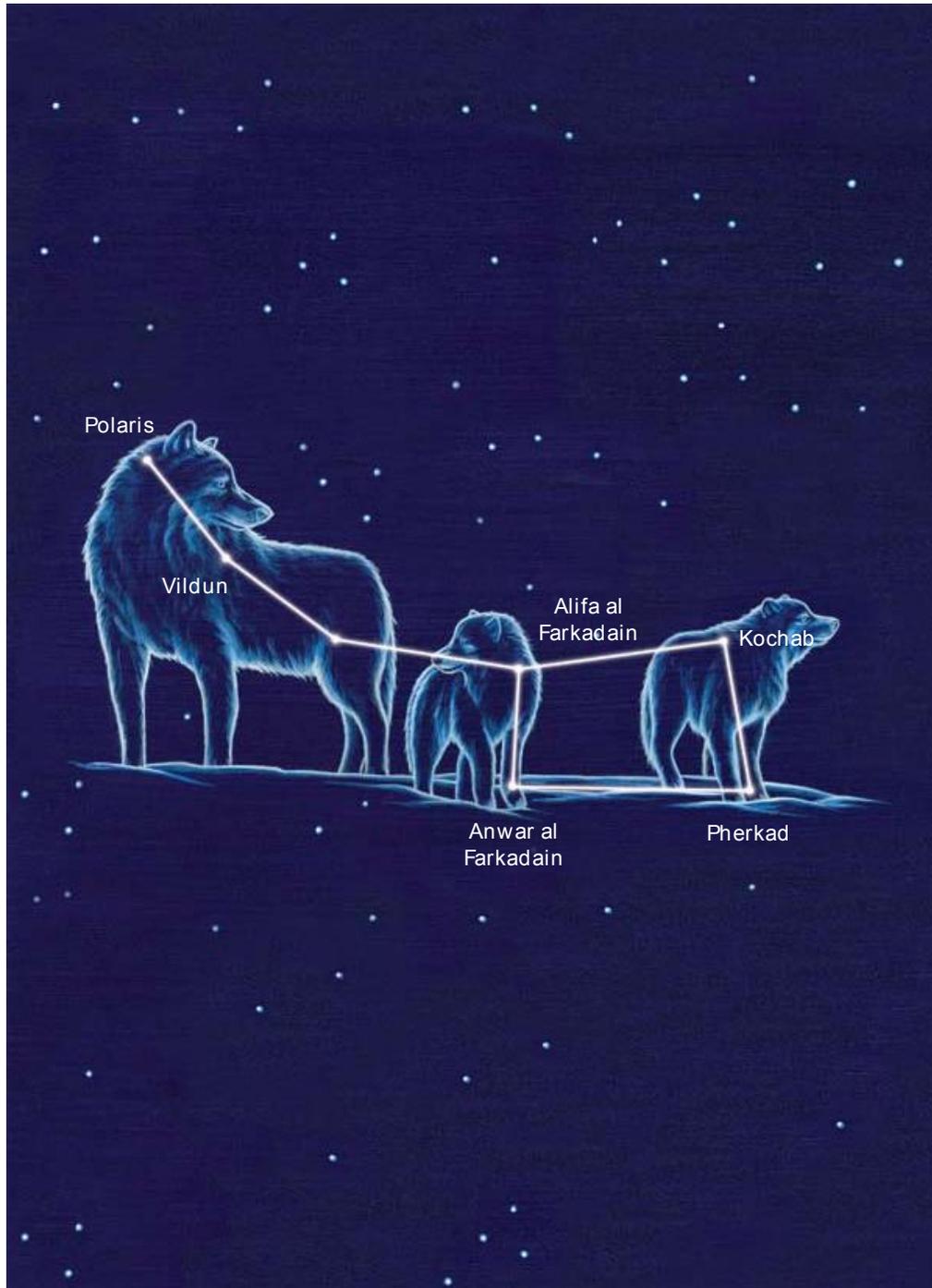
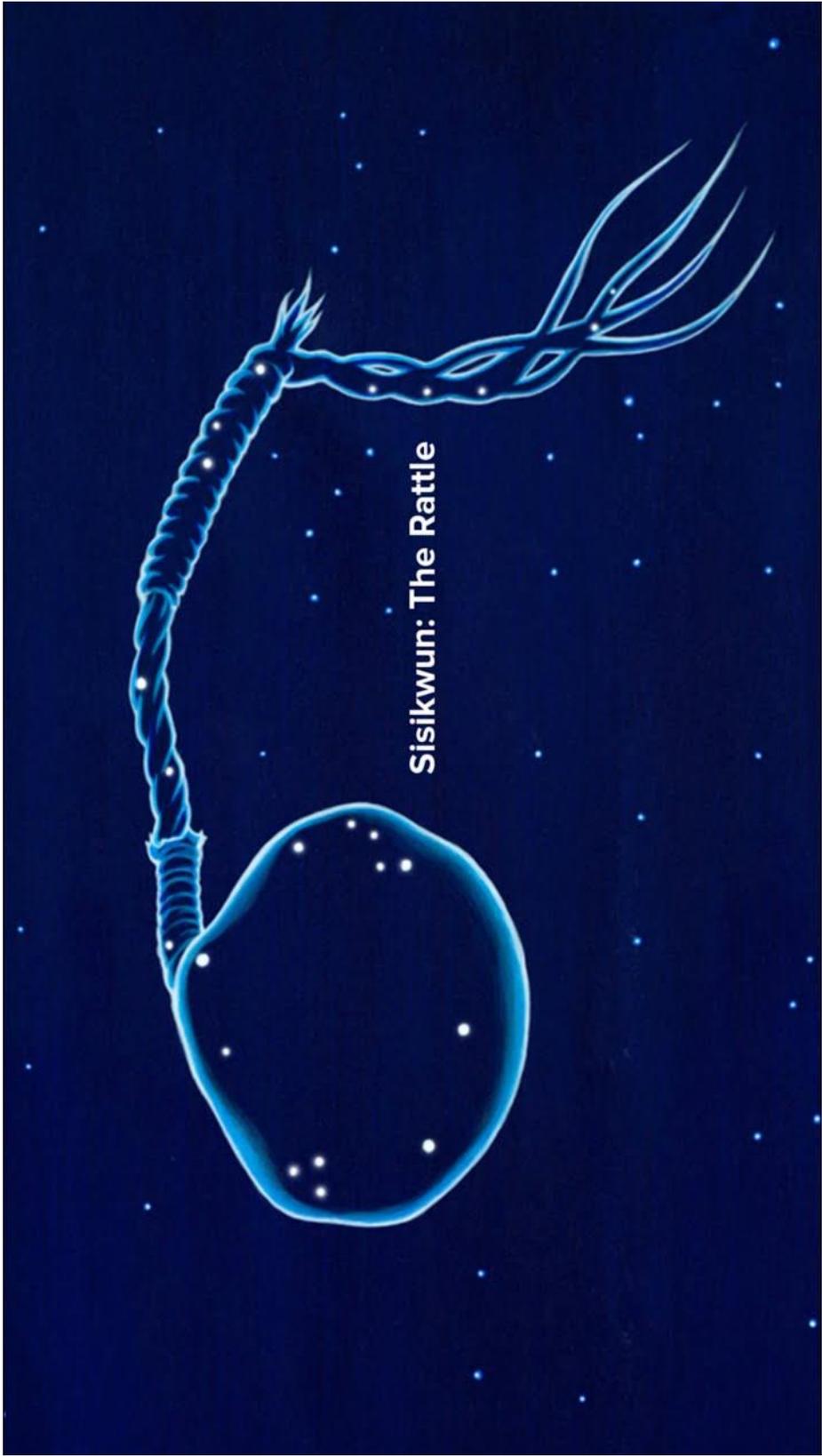
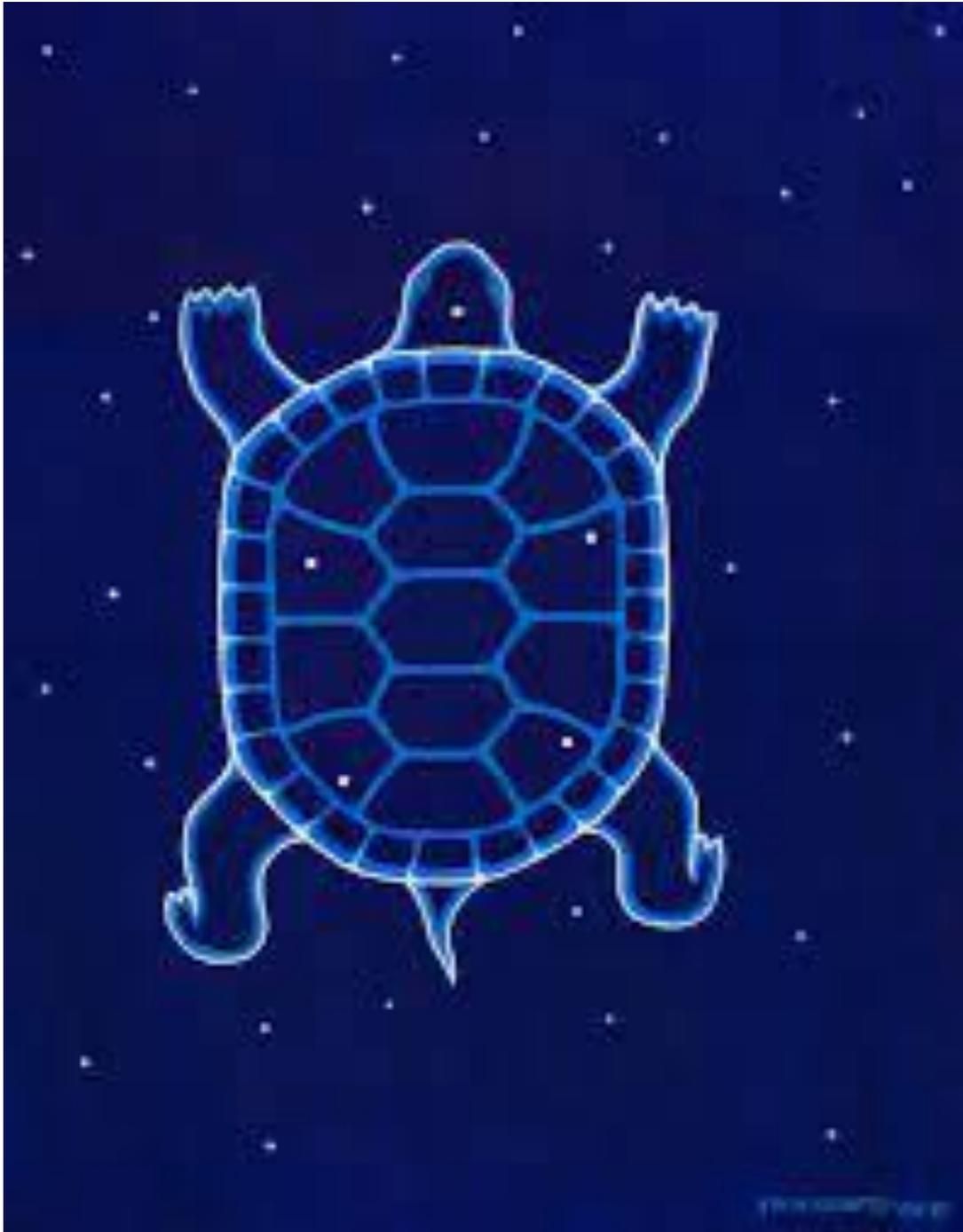


Figure 1: *Atima Atchakosuk* (The Dog Stars), popularly known as *Ursa Minor*, reminds us how the domestic dog came into being.



Sisikwun: The Rattle



## Blackline Master 10

# First Nations Laws and the Land

First Nations had governments in the past.  
They have governments today.  
First Nations have always had governments.

They follow traditional laws.  
The laws were followed in the past.  
They are still followed today.  
The laws are unwritten.  
They are passed down orally.

The laws tell how to take care of the land.  
They tell how to treat animals.  
They tell how to treat each other.

Here are some laws about the land:

- Thank the plants and animals when you take them.
- Only take what you need.
- Share your food with others.
- Only take food from your own land.

## Blackline Master 11

# Traditional Governments

First Nations people have always governed themselves. Each First Nation has its own way of organizing.

Leaders are often called Chiefs in English. There are special words for leaders in every First Nations language. What is the name for “Chief” or “leader” where you live?

How are leaders picked?

Sometimes the new Chief is born into the role. This is called a **hereditary** leader. Some First Nations follow the mother’s side of the family. Other First Nations follow the father’s side of the family.

Sometimes everyone in the community picks the new Chief. They all agree on who is best to be the leader. This is called **consensus**.

Chiefs have people who help them make decisions. These people make a council. The council has Elders, family leaders, and Clan leaders.

Often First Nations had feasts and potlatches. They were very important for First Nations government. Everyone could see, hear and remember the business that took place in the feast hall.

## Blackline Master 13

# First Nations Governments

Today many First Nations have more than one system of government. There are traditional governments and there are elected governments. They are two different ways of looking after the community.

### **Traditional Governments**

Traditional governments are the governments of First Nations' ancestors. These governments took care of First Nations people for thousands of years.

The traditional leaders are often called Chiefs in English. Each community has a name for leaders in their own language.

In some First Nations leaders are hereditary. That means a new Chief is related to the old Chief's family. In the past, chiefs were often men.

Some First Nations hereditary systems follow the mother's side of the family. This is called matrilineal.

Other First Nations follow the father's side of the family. This is called patrilineal.

Some First Nations have other ways of choosing their traditional leaders. In these First Nations the people pick their leaders. They all agree on who is best to be the leader. This is called consensus.

Some traditional governments have councils who help make decisions. The council is made up of leaders and Elders from families and Clans in the community.

Important acts of First Nations government take place at public ceremonies where guests witness and approve the business that takes place. These are sometimes called feasts or potlatches. However, every First Nation has words in its language for these public ceremonies.

### **Elected Government**

Elected First Nations governments started after Canada became a country. The Indian Act forced First Nations to make a new type of government. All First Nations had to have the same form of government, called a Band Council. Today many First Nations still operate under Band Councils.

Band members vote on who will be their Chief and Council. The Chief Councillor is the leader of the Band Council. Chief and Council make decisions for the community.

Some First Nations have a newer kind of government. These are Nations who have signed a treaty or a self-government agreement with Canada and British Columbia governments.

In treaty governments, the leaders are elected.

### **Working Together**

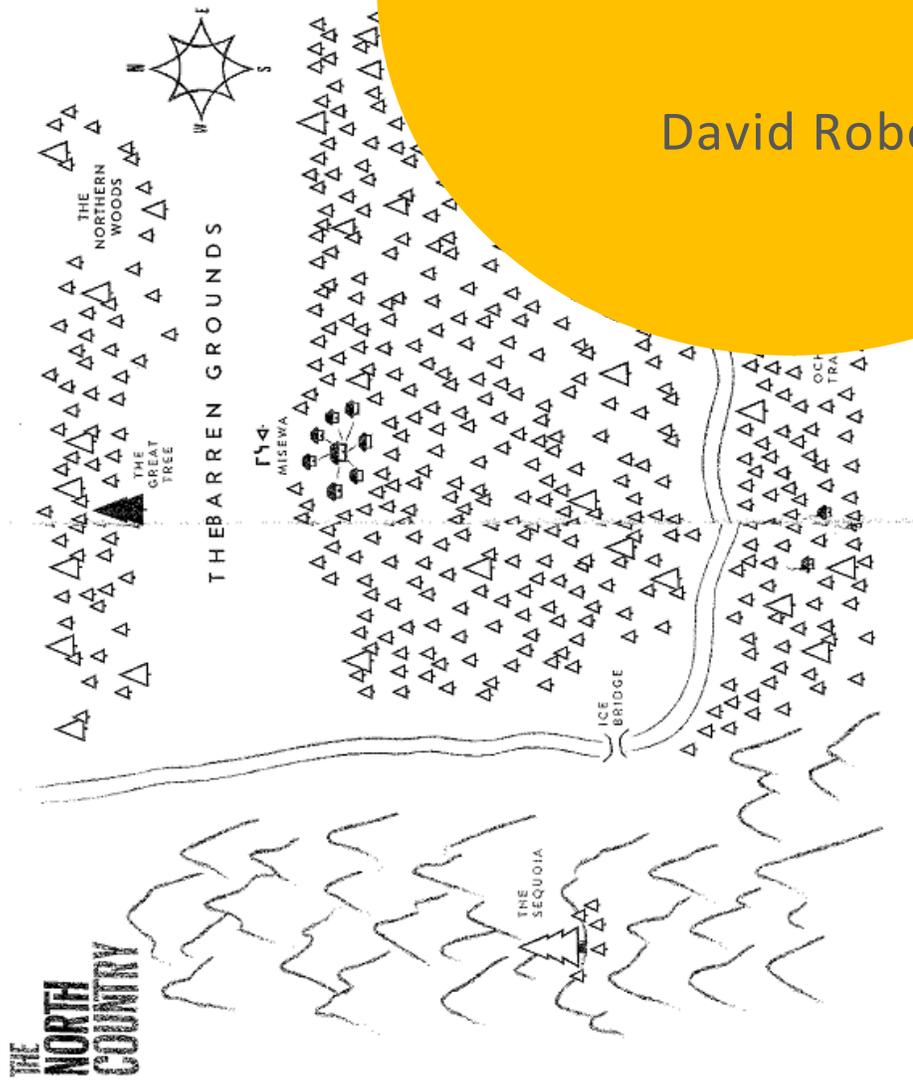
The traditional leaders and the elected leaders often work together to govern their community. Together they look after the people. They look after the land in their traditional territory.

They keep their cultures and languages alive. They bring jobs to the community. They fix the roads. They look after the water that people drink.

They make sure their people stay healthy.

# The Barren Grounds

David Robertson



SECTION 4: Teachings  
Pg 143- pg 183

## Section 4: Teachings

Pg. 143 – 183

### Summary:

Ochek, Arik, Morgan, and Eli head out on their adventure. Morgan and Eli learn more about Misewa from Arik and Ochek, all while Morgan continues to have flashbacks in her dreams. The four travellers encounter dangerous heights and a furry 'friend.'

### Important background knowledge/ context for Teacher consideration:

**Note for teachers** Morgan continues to have flashbacks of her birth mother – with hints of a non-consensual child removal. Wolf fight, with weapons (hatchet, etc.)

FPPL

## Learning is embedded in memory, history, and story.

### 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?
- What do the characters in Barren Grounds fear? Do you fear the same things?
- What do you fear?
- What animals have we attached fear to? (wolves) (sharks) (insects) (bears)
- When did you first learn to fear bears even though there are positive representations of bears like Winnie-the-Pooh and Paddington Bear?

## Indigenous Worldview and Perspectives Focus

### Story: Land & Culture:

Share the **Land & Culture** teaching from an Elder/ Indigenous Support Worker in your school (or look in the appendix for the teaching from **Ray Warden, Ktuxana Nation**) with students.

**Note for teachers** This teaching has a recursive quality and can be returned to through different moments in the text – for students to show how their understanding has increased.

Read aloud the teaching- options for engaging with the teachings:

- Have students share what they think it means – where they found meaning in this teaching.
- Have students identify what they understand from the teaching.
- Have students identify what they need to know more about
- Have students create visuals for each stage of the teaching.

(land --> people --> culture --> governance)

- Have students connect this teaching to aspects/ role of different individuals in *The Barren Grounds*.

### Memory: Animals

- Think back to a story that you learned when you were young
- What animals are often characterized as evil in stories?
- If you look at the animal, what physical traits make them look scary to you?
- Think about comics and Superheroes/ Super Villains that you know, are there any that take the shape or name of an animal? How do their character traits suit the animal that they are?

### Memory & Story: Animal Significance

Animals have a spiritual and environmental connection to land and people. Animals have different meanings and significance in different Indigenous nations.

Ex: Salmon is not as important to the People of the Plains as it is to the Haida, and other coastal nations. Again, significance is connected to land and place.

Connect to the animals in *The Barren Grounds* – the Fisher might have been unfamiliar to us on the

west coast – that is a hint that this story is set in an area that is different from ours.

- What animals would be the main characters in a West Coast story?
- What west coast animal would be the leader? Why?
- What west coast animal would be the comedian? Why?
- What west coast animal would hold the most wisdom? Why?

Have students divide a paper into four sections and have them label each section with the animals listed below.

Project the four animals from the Salish Sea flashcards: Dragonfly, Salmon, Spider, Crab, from the attached pdf. Have students record one at a time their thinking on each question, spoken orally:

- record what comes to mind when they think of each animal.
- record any stories or childhood rhymes that connect to these animals.
- record any experiences they can recall connected to any of these animals.
  
- what ability does the animal have that humans do not have?

Have students share out their thinking.

Ask the next question:

- record what these animals have taught you.

**Note for teachers** purposefully allow students to sit with the unknown of this question. Many students may not have a worldview that supports animals as teachers. Encourage the conversation of 'I haven't thought of it that way before.'

Display the next pdf image, of the Salish Sea flashcards that describe the animal teachings and meaning. **Note for teachers** Be sure to emphasize that this is one Indigenous worldview of what these animals signify- this doesn't necessarily represent all Indigenous peoples' views.

- Have students record one piece of information from each card.
- Have students reflect on the exercise/process or on the information they learned:
  - I noticed...            – I am thinking about...            – I found meaning when ....
  - I need to know more about ...            – I wonder if...

Salish Sea Flashcards: Find [here](#)

### Other Resources

To support student learning about the interconnected relationship between animals and environment as beings who provide teachings:

Natasha Donovan and Brett Huson series are a terrific way to do so. Talk to your TL about these great resources and if they are in your library:

The Frog Mother, [here](#)            The Grizzly Mother, [here](#)            The Eagle Mother, [here](#)  
The Sockeye Mother, [here](#)

## Literacy Focus

### Discussion Questions:

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

- In the novel, Ochek states, “All things are connected. Your world and this one, the sky and the land. All that is.” Cree Elders and Knowledge Keepers talk about “misewa” — all that is. Why do you think the author uses “Misewa” as the name of the community?
- What do you think is the significance and meaning behind Morgan’s dreams? Why do you think her mother repeats “kiskisitotaso” repeatedly in her dream?

### Say Something:

Prompt students before reading/listening that they will be doing the Say Something strategy after. Emphasis and repeat again the truth 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 and give students the right to pass on sharing. Avoid commenting as a teacher after each student’s responses, let student responses flow from one student to the next without adult opinion. An easy strategy is to nod in agreement with the student that has just spoken and now move on and look at the next student.** 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...

Writing these sentence starters on the board will help students to begin their sharing.

## Creative Arts Learning

Facing another student comfortably, try to act out the following on your face to your partner, without words:

- Show your partner what happiness looks like on the face.
- Notice: the shape of the eyebrows on your partners face, how the eyebrows are shaped on the face, what lines pop up on the face when you are happy? What scrunches up on the face?
- Now show what fear looks like on the face. How do the eyebrows change shape and direction? What scrunches up? What stretches out? Have the happy lines change on the fear face?
- Show your partner what fear looks like with your neck and shoulders.
- Now stand up and show your partner what fear looks like with your whole body. What do you notice? Does fear have a common movement, or shape?

## **Practising Active Listening**

With students in pairs, ask students to think of a short story, real or imagined. Have one partner go first, telling the story for one-minute. After one minute is up, the other student must retell the story back to the storyteller. Did the repeater get it right? Were there crucial details missing, or all present in the retelling of the story? Now switch, the re-teller now tells their story, and the listener must repeat it. Don't forget to time for one minute of storytelling!

Switch partners, moving a few partners to the left or right. Do this a couple of times.

Did students notice anything about the skill of listening that they did not notice before? Did they find it difficult or easy to listen actively for a minute without speaking?

Blackline Master 16  
**Land and Culture**

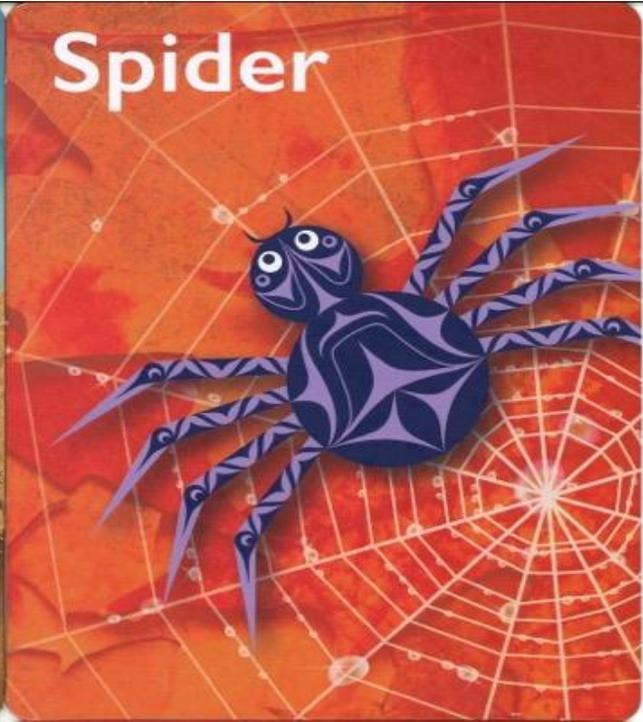
What I was told from an Elder at one time,  
First there needs to be land.  
When there is land it allows people to be there.  
When there is land and people then it becomes a culture;  
A culture forms out of that.  
When you have land, people and culture,  
You'll need a way of governing yourself.

Source: Ray Warden, Ktunaxa Nation  
Ktunaxa Nation: Building From Their Vision.  
Centre for First Nations Governance 2012.

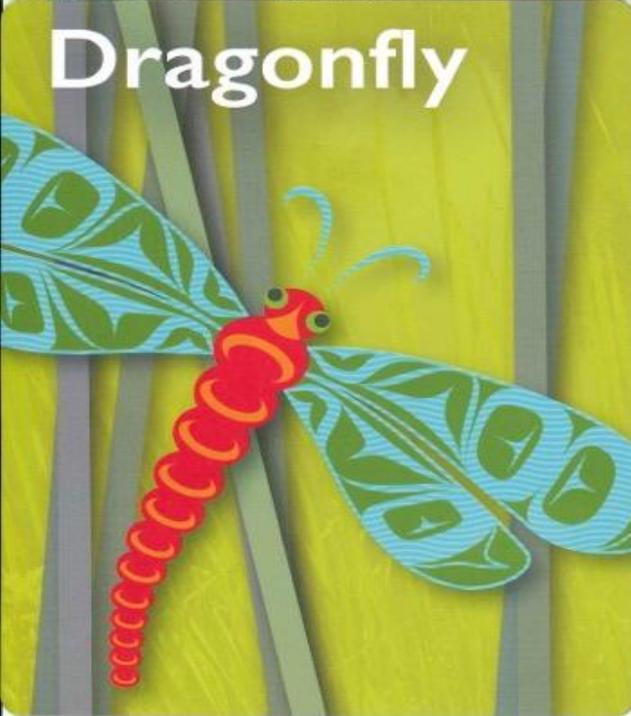
Crab



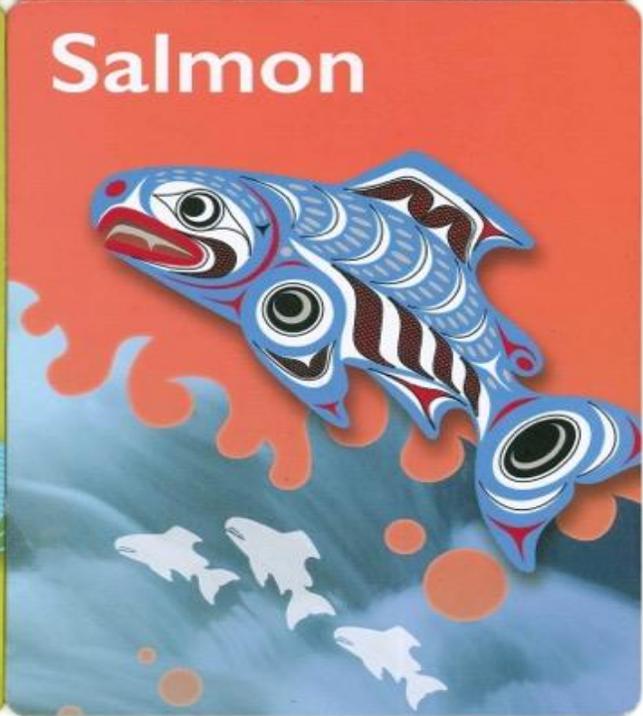
Spider



Dragonfly



Salmon



# Crab

by Darrell Thorne, *Coast Salish*

Crabs walk sideways  
teaching us that we  
need to find our  
own direction.

With their hard shells,  
crabs remind us of the  
need to protect  
ourselves and others.

# Spider

by Simone Diamond, *Coast Salish*

Spiders teach us  
the art of weaving.

# Dragonfly

by Simone Diamond, *Coast Salish*

Dragonflies live  
in the water, on the land  
and in the air.

They teach us to  
adjust to change.  
Their colours reflect  
the magic of creation.

# Salmon

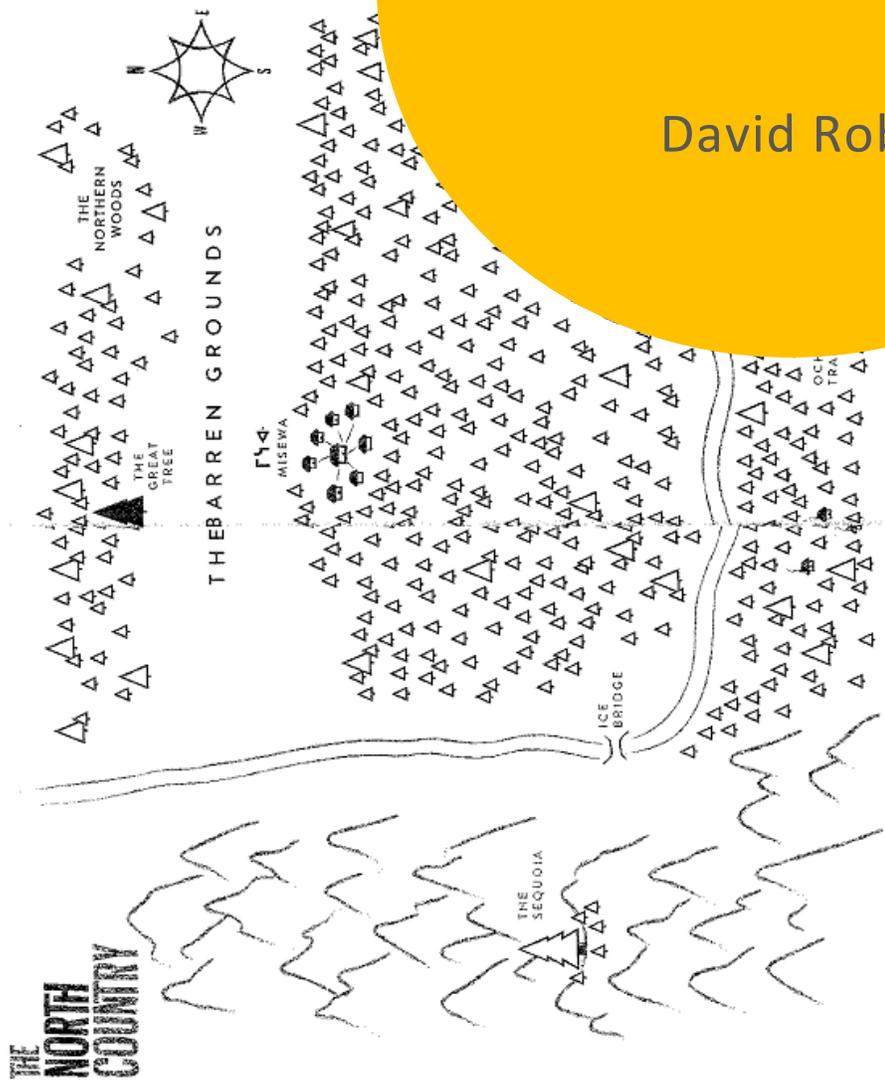
by Joe-Sxwaset Wilson, *Coast Salish*

Salmon represent life  
and sustenance.

They connect us to  
all of creation through  
their life cycle.

# The Barren Grounds

David Robertson



**SECTION 5: Community**  
Pg 184 - 220

# Section 5: Community Consciousness

Pg 184- 220

## Summary:

Ochek, Arik, Morgan and Eli are continuing their journey, getting closer to both danger and to their ultimate goal. Ochek makes a sacrifice, and the others must continue – with help from an unlikely ally.

## Important background knowledge/ context for Teacher consideration:

**Note for teachers** One of the reasons that the original Legend of the Fisher was recommended to be used at the onset of this text, as it foreshadows/prepares us for Ochek’s death. In the legend it describes the moment of Ochek facing the man: ‘The man came running...The man chased after Fisher with a bow and arrow and shot many times at him. But Fisher jumped into the sky, and climbed up higher higher and higher, right to the stars... Fisher escaped into the sky.’ A focus in this section should therefore be more on the teaching of Ochek than the literal interpretation of it.

## FPPL:

**Learning ultimately supports a well-being of self the family, the community, the land, the spirits the ancestors.**

**Learning involves recognizing the consequences of one’s actions.**

## 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?
- How has your understanding of story and place changed since the beginning of the book?
- What are all the ways we can show people we care about them?
- How are some ways that we can honour all are relations?
- How has Morgan changed? How can you tell? What did she learn about herself that has caused her to change? What has caused this change in Morgan? If Morgan had the choice to change, do you think she would choose change, or choose staying as she was before?

## Indigenous Worldview and Perspectives

### Constellation

Return to the opening activity story: **The Legend of the Fisher, or Ochek.**

- Where do you find meaning in this story - now that your knowledge has grown?
- How does this relate to The Barren Grounds? What do you notice?
- What new questions do you have now?
- How is Ochek's sacrifice in the Barren Grounds better understood alongside this Cree teaching?

### All My Relations

Write the phrase "**All My Relations**" Write the phrase All My Relations on the board- Ask students if they have ever heard this phrase and in what context.

- if students have heard it, know it, have them explain what it means
- if students haven't heard it, ask them to predict what it means

Share the following quote from famous Indigenous author Thomas King:

"All my relations" is at first a reminder of who we are and of our relationship with both our family and our relatives. It also reminds us of the extended relationship we share with all human beings. But the relationship that Native people see go further, the web of kinship extending to the animals, to the birds, to the fish, to the plants, to all the animate and inanimate forms that can be seen or imagined. More than that, 'all my relations' is an encouragement for us to accept the responsibilities we have within this universal family by living our lives in a harmonious manner (a common admonishment is to say of someone that they act as if they have no relations)."

Thomas King, (Cherokee) All My Relations

**Source:** Justice, D. H. (2018). *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter*. Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press. Pg 88

Share the following quote from famous Indigenous author Richard Wagamese:

"I have learned that to love this country [Canada] means to love its people. All of them. When we

say “all my relations,” it’s meant in a teaching way, to rekindle community. We are part of the great, grand circle of humanity, and we need each other.

**Source:** Wagamese, Richard. (2008). *One Native Life*. To Love This Country. Pg 192

- have students identify what All My Relations means by finding key words ideas in the quote
- have students identify what All My Relations isn’t by finding key words ideas in the quote

**Note for teachers** this would be a great opportunity to invite the ASW into the classroom to speak about this phrase.

Have students apply their understanding of this phrase by:

- creating an image or symbol that represents the meaning of this phrase – and explaining their choices
- finding examples of actions in the text that represent the ideas behind *All My Relations*
- finding examples of actions in the text that go against the ideas behind *All My Relations*

### **Consensus**

In a community, making decisions for everyone can be a big responsibility. Have students engage in a consensus circle to decide. The topic of the consensus circle can be one that will be acted on (a decision for a class activity) or can be one that explores ideas (a topic selected from the text). Consensus circles should be small: 4-5 people, not as a whole class.

When creating a consensus activity, it is important for students to be asked a question that isn’t Yes/No. It must be open ended to allow varied student ideas and have the capacity to blend ideas to form consensus.

See attached [Consensus activity outline](#) and instructions in appendix.

### **Tradition & Modernity**

David Robertson is a contemporary writer, using traditional influences.

Discussion prompt for students:

- How can a person be both traditional and modern at the same time?
- What is a traditional philosophy? How can that philosophy be applied in a modern world?

Indigenous author Chelsea Vowel (Metis) writes about the stereotype of freezing Indigenous people in the past:

“I am not going to belabour the frozen-in-time approach and how flipping bizarre it is to read about people telling us not to haul game home in pick-up trucks, or use kitchen appliances to make frybread, or use gasoline in our motorboats, because once you think about it, the weirdness should be self-evident.... We are just as capable of adapting to new technology and using it according to traditional beliefs and philosophies as you are.”

## Literacy Focus

### Discussion Questions:

The Barren Grounds contains Cree teachings around sustainability and the land.

- What are some of these beliefs and concepts?
- What does the man represent?
- How does this connect to issues in the world today?

Mistapew is a giant being in Cree stories that, according to Ocheq, “takes your soul and leaves only flesh and bones behind.”

- How does the author use Mistapew in the story?
- Does Mistapew remind you of similar creatures in other stories?

# The Legend of the Fisher, or Ochek

As told by Wilfred Buck, Science Specialist, Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre

A long time ago, there was no summer in the north country. It was winter all the time. Cold and bitter winds rushed through the lands and the beautiful colours of nature were only a dream. It hadn't always been this way, but there was once a man who captured all the little summer birds. He tied them in a bundle and they were always with him and Herring. This is why there was winter all the time.

The animals in the north country knew that summer existed somewhere, even though it never came to them. They wanted summer. They were tired of the cold. One day, Squirrel discovered where the birds had been taken, and the animals decided that one of them must go and free the summer birds. They chose Fisher, and off he went.

He walked and walked until he had left the north country. He walked and walked until he reached the wigwam where the captor and Herring lived.

When Fisher went inside, he found the man was gone but Herring was there. Quickly, Fisher put some sap around Herring's mouth so that he couldn't call out to the man. Once Herring was captured, Fisher used his teeth and tore open the prison that held the summer birds captive. As the summer birds made their way out of the wigwam, Herring broke free from the sap and called out, "Fisher broke the summer birds out! Fisher used his teeth! The summer birds are free!"

The man came running, but as he arrived at the wigwam, Fisher and the summer birds were already far away. The man chased after Fisher with a bow and arrow, and shot many times at him. But Fisher jumped into the sky and climbed up higher and higher and higher, right to the stars.

All the man could do was shoot Fisher's tail. Fisher escaped into the sky, and that is where we see him now.

His broken tail can still be seen today as the bent handle of the Big Dipper constellation.

Source: <https://mfnerc.org/newsletter/under-a-blanket-of-stars/>

### Ochek Atchakosuk (The Fisher Stars)

This constellation encompasses the asterism known as the Big Dipper and tells the legend of how the Ochek (Fisher) brought summer back to Turtle Island for us.



## Blackline Master 30

# Consensus Activity

In some traditional government systems, consensus was used to make decisions. That means everyone in the group had to agree on the decision.

In a meeting, Chiefs, Elders and other leaders would share their thinking. People didn't vote. They kept talking until the group could come up with a decision that everyone could agree upon.

You are going to try out the consensus model.

Your group is going to sit in a circle and one student will be asked to be the speaker. The speaker shares the decision that needs to be made and starts the conversation. Only one person speaks at a time. Once you have spoken, you cannot speak again until the circle returns to you. This means there are no rebuttals. There is no cross talk. You cannot speak until it is your turn, which means you have to be actively listening.

All thoughts and ideas that shared are to be respected. You do not name someone in the circle. For example, if a person liked an idea that someone shared, they might say, "An idea was shared that I think would help our community." If an idea is shared that you don't agree with, you could say "an idea was shared and I am wondering if we should think more about what the consequences might be."

Topic:

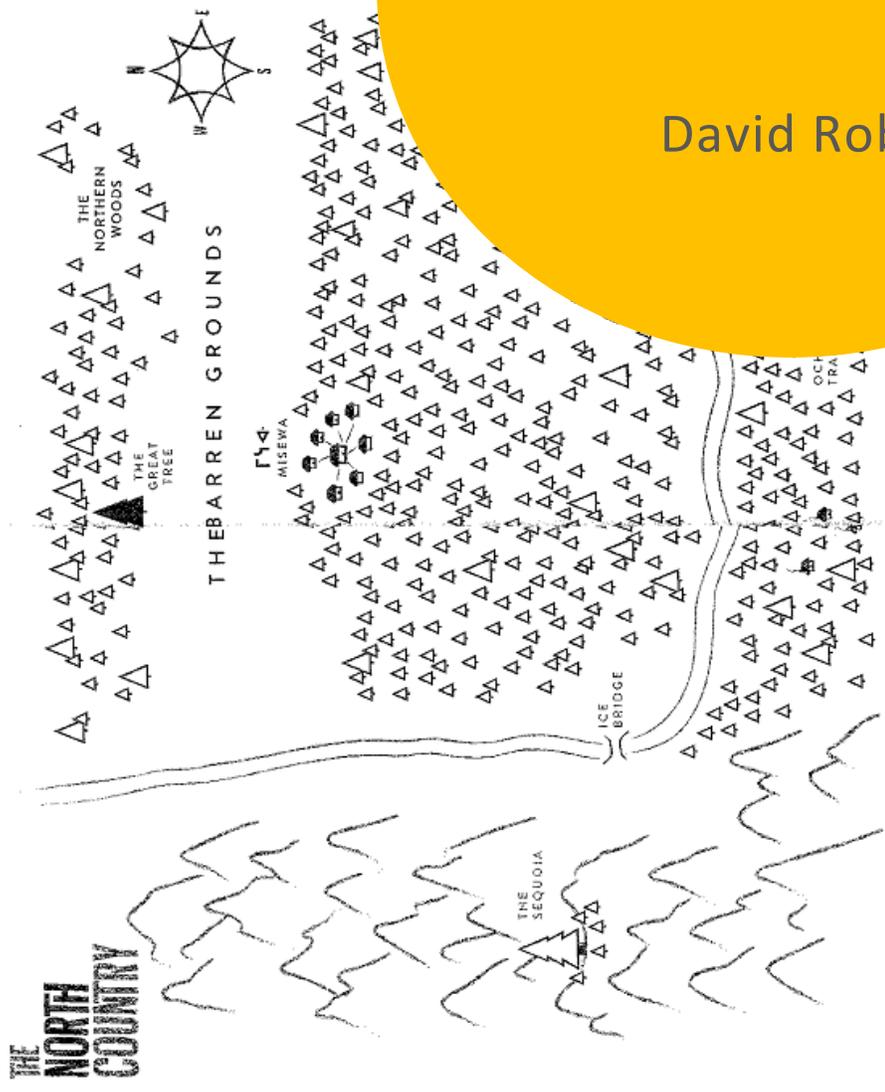
Your class is studying life cycles in science and your teacher wants the class to go on a field trip. He has a few ideas and wants the classroom to make a decision.

- The first idea is to go to the Salmon Fish Hatchery.
- The second idea is to go on a nature walk and invite an Elder to guide the class.
- The third idea is to go on a virtual field trip. For the virtual field trip, a scientist from Haida Gwaii would talk about sustainable fishing practices. The class would get to connect with her via Skype.

In your group, discuss which field trip would work best for everyone. After you have all shared ideas, come to a consensus decision. That is, make a decision as a whole group that everyone agrees on.

# The Barren Grounds

David Robertson



**SECTION 6: Identity**  
Pg 221 - 247

## Section 6: Identity

Pg. 221- 247

### **Summary:**

Arik, Morgan, and Eli travel back as a trio. They meet with The Council and determine its time to leave Misewa. Entering back into life in Winnipeg, Morgan and Eli are stronger and more confident in who they are.

### **Important background knowledge/ context for Teacher consideration:**

David Robertson speaks about the agency of Morgan and Eli – as the heroes of their own story. Nobody ‘saves’ them, they ‘save’ themselves. This emphasis on strength, resilience and knowledge is an important part of the conclusion of this text. Reminder: this is the first of a series. The second book in the saga, The Great Bear comes out Sept 2021. Access [here](#)

FPPL

## **Learning requires the exploration of one’s identity.**

### **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 points of view.

## Talking Circle

### Prompts:

- Where did you find meaning?
- How is this story a guide?
- What education do we receive outside of school? Who teaches us?
- What does it mean to write from the heart not the head? Have you ever struggled to write what you really feel or mean? Have you ever struggled to SAY what you really feel or mean? Was it your heart that struggled, or your head?
- What do we receive from the land, or what do we get from the land?
- Why is connecting to the land so important?
- Why is feeling a sense of belonging so important?

## Indigenous Worldview and Perspectives Focus

**Note for teachers** below are suggestions on ways to utilize the guide or strategies from previous aspects of this resource:

\*Is there an activity that you want to revisit?

\*Is there an activity that you did not get a chance to do, that would be a good fit?

\*Is there an ongoing piece of learning that you have been working on that needs to be completed and celebrated?

### Coming back to Beginning:

Is there a way to return to where you started as a class?

- This could be returning to the Ochek constellation story, returning to one of Wilfred Buck's quotes or returning to an activity that you did in the beginning that can be replicated.

### Cover Prediction Activity:

Knowing that this is book one in a series- have students predict, creatively write or brainstorm what they think the next book will be about.

- instead of asking about the conflict or the problem in the book ask what they think the imbalance might be, or what aspect of Indigenous worldview could be explored further?

Project image of the front cover of the next book *The Great Bear* (comes out Sept 2021)

- Copy of the next cover is the appendix.

Have students individually record details or share orally what:

- they notice (*I see, I notice..*), predictions for the content (*I predict, I expect, I think, I hope...*) and; questions that they have (*I wonder, Why is...*)

### Community:

In many Indigenous stories, there is not a single identifiable 'main character'. Indigenous author

Drew Hayden Taylor often discusses how in Indigenous stories, the community is the main character.

- What is a community?
- How would you describe the community or communities in this story?
- How was community the 'main character' of this text? Explain your answer.

### **Reflect on Journey:**

*Morgan's Journey:*

What were Morgan's journeys?

How has she evolved as a person?

What new understandings does she have about herself?

*Community Journey:*

What is Misewa's journey?

What new understanding does the community have about itself?

*Your Journey:*

What has your journey been with this novel? What do you understand now that you didn't at the beginning of this novel? How will you continue this journey? What journey are you on?

You may choose to use the *CSI: Colour, Symbol, Image* graphic organizer for students to explore one of the journey's that are reflecting on. See strategy explanation [here](#)

### **Supplementary Text: Indigenous Worldview:**

Opportunity to connect to 'What is the Most Beautiful Thing About Horses' by Richard Van Camp (Dogrib Nation). Can include another Indigenous perspective that connects to identity.

'What is the most beautiful thing you know about horses, and what is the most beautiful thing you know about you?' Van Camp- What is the Most Beautiful Thing About Horses

## **Literacy Focus**

### **Annotate Poem:**

Morgan writes a poem for her English class, take some time to interpret her words.

- Focus on the many meanings (could one line mean more than one thing?)
- Identify powerful phrases and key words.
- Illustrate the poem.
- Write your own poem (see suggestion below, or write their own poem about the Barren Grounds, or a character in the story, or a moment that resonates with them)

Copy of poem is in appendix.

### **Creative Identity Writing:**

Encourage students to write an I am from poem:

Here is a link to a [template](#) form that helps generate a “rough” draft. Then have student refine this work.

Alternatively – have the student use the method suggested [here](#), where students make a list using all prompts and then pull their ideas together to make their poem.

Connect this to the Book – ‘*What is the Most Beautiful Thing About Horses*’ from the Indigenous Worldview and Perspectives section above.

### **Discussion Questions:**

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

Why does connecting to and learning to live off the land become so important to Eli and eventually Morgan as well?

Identity and knowing who you are is something that Morgan struggles with throughout the novel.

- What kinds of things make up and impact your identity?
- What has disrupted Morgan’s sense of identity?
- How does this lack of identity affect how Morgan interacts in the world?

## **Creative Arts Learning**

### **Coming to Theatres soon:**

This activity is from the [The Barren Grounds- Educators Guide](#)

Imagine that The Barren Grounds is turned into a movie. In small groups, have students create movie posters that theaters would use to advertise. Who would the students choose (which actresses/actors) to play Morgan and Eli? What imagery and words/ phrases would they include on the poster to entice viewers without giving away the story? How would they honor the Cree culture within the movie and on the poster?

### **Map Art:**

Take the map of The Barren Grounds and create representations over the map to portray how place is connected to memory. It may be helpful to enlarge on paper to make space for student thinking. Be mindful of colours, words, and symbols you could use to represent learning.

### **Favorite Scene:**

Have students choose their favorite scene or most important scene in the novel. They are to draw/ colour/ represent that scene on one piece of paper. Encourage them to add as much detail and colour as possible to the scene they have chosen, for so long that it represents accurately the scene.

On a second piece of paper, have students “represent” via original artwork, the feeling/ emotion/ essence of that scene. Display the artworks side by side so that students can see how the emotions were interpreted by their classmates.

(If you have little time, ask students to make a “frame” for their important scene artwork. The “frame” should actually frame their artwork, and have the essence or emotions, etc. represented in it. It should give the “aura” of the scene.

BOOK TWO OF THE MISEWA SAGA

# THE GREAT BEAR



DAVID A. ROBERTSON

*Morgan's poem for Mrs. Edward's English class after her return from the Barren Grounds, pg 247*

### ***On the Barren Grounds***

*It took sinking under blinding white*

*To emerge another me*

*Somebody I forgot I was*

*Someone I could never see.*

*It took facing my worst fears*

*Stepping out into the night*

*To find that I was brave enough*

*Before I found the light.*

*It took me going far away*

*To feel this close to you*

*It took dreaming of a memory*

*To change what I thought I knew.*

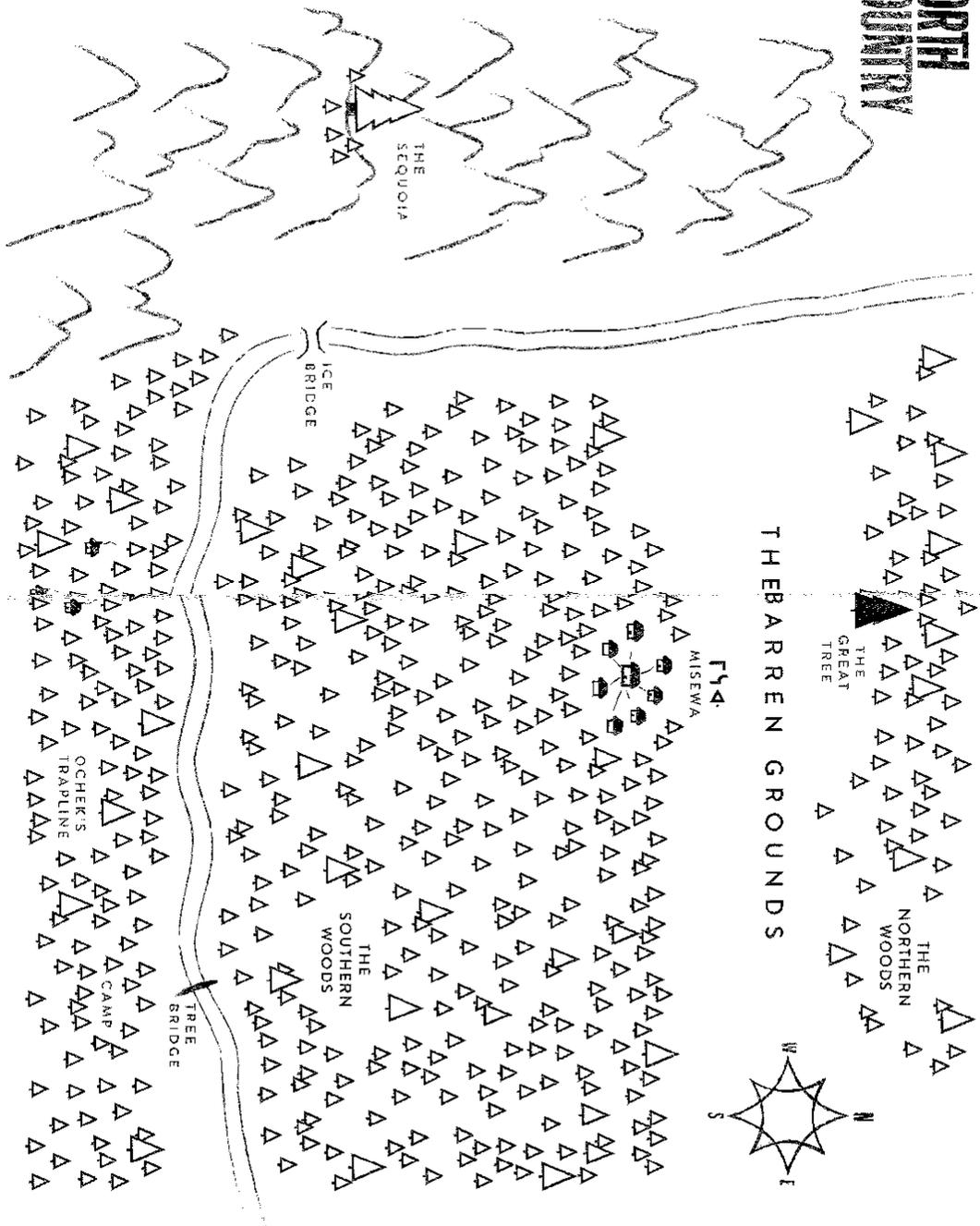
*It took stars within the sky*

*To guide my way back home*

*That I'll always know the way*

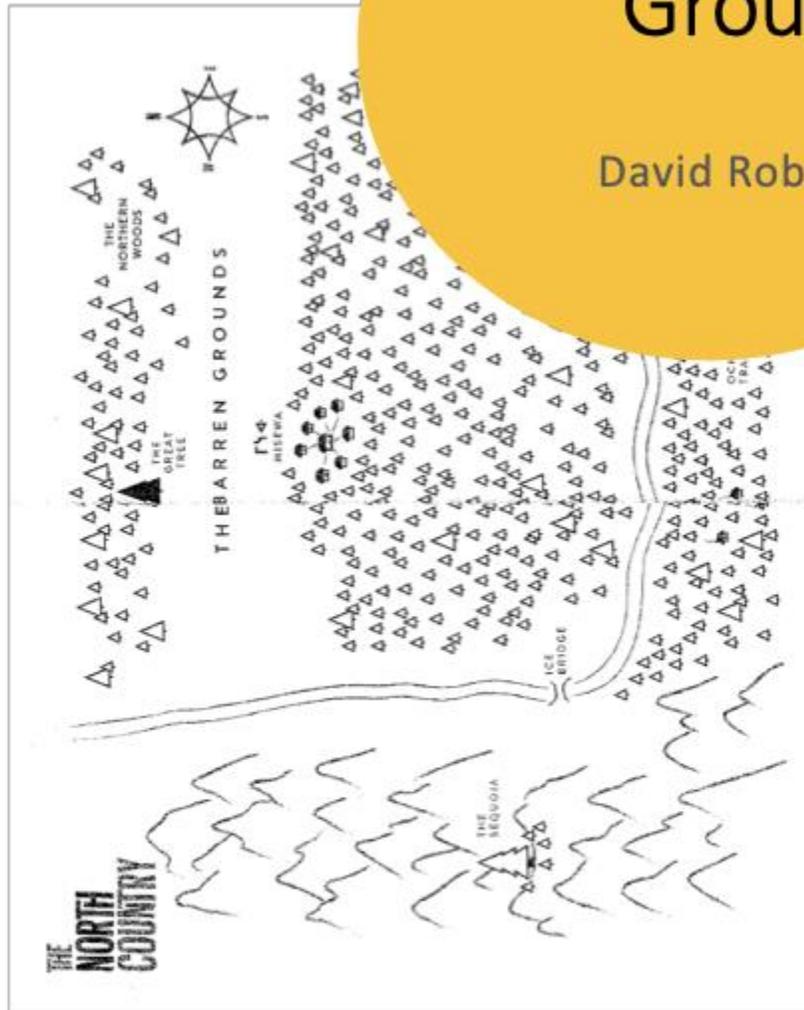
*Wherever I might roam.*

# THE NORTH COUNTRY



# The Barren Grounds

David Robertson



**Annotated  
Resource List**

## Annotated Resource List:

**Archibald, Jo-Ann.** *Indigenous Storywork: Educating the heart, mind, body, and spirit.*

Non-fiction research-based book, where author Jo-Ann Archibald works closely with elders and storytellers on ways to bring storytelling education and pedagogy into the classroom. Jo-ann is from the Sto:lo Nation and is the Associate Dean for Indigenous Education in the Faculty of Education at UBC.

**Buck, Wilfred.** *Atchakosuk: Ininewuk Stories of the Stars* [here](#)

The essay by Wilfred Buck outlines the sacred stories of the stars. Buck recounts his own learning and outlines the importance of the teachings about the stars. Buck also includes several stories of various constellations, comparing Western and Indigenous knowledge. This source in its entirety supports teacher professional development and could be chunked and used to support student understanding through the stories about the stars.

**FNESC-** Authentic First Peoples Resource [here](#)

This is where to look for authentic texts to supplement or continue exploration of Indigenous authors, Indigenous stories and of course Indigenous worldview and perspectives.

**FNESC-** Document: Beliefs and Values about Children [here](#)

‘While First Nations people, Métis, and Inuit have distinct cultures and languages, they also share common beliefs, values and histories. It is with this in mind that the following Statement of Beliefs and Values about Children was written.’ This handout comes from the FNESC English First Peoples Teacher Guide – in a unit that explores Indigenous author views of children through picture books.

**FNESC-** BC First Nations Land, Title and Governance Teacher Guide [here](#)

This free resource spans grade 1-12 with activities and resources that are useful for supporting student understanding of land through an Indigenous perspective. This resource is the source of most of the Blackline Masters in this guide.

## **FNESC - English First Peoples Teacher Resource Guide [here](#)**

This high school-based resource includes many guiding questions, graphic organizers and units that could be useful for adaptation in the Middle Years classroom. FNESC is the leading organization and advocate for First Nations in BC. It has many free resources for teacher use across all subjects.

## **FNESC- Identity Map [here](#)**

Need a support on how to have students reflect and think about their identity, culture and values? This organizer from FNESC supports students brainstorming how values and choices are interconnected.

## **Learning for Justice, Teaching Strategies [here](#)**

A resource for teachers to use that supports teaching challenging topics in thoughtful ways. The strategies are organized by grade and have a literacy focus. Though this is an American website, and should be vetted for that lens, the universal skills that it models for teachers and students are effective.

## **Robertson, David- *On the Trapline* – Picture Book [here](#)**

A boy and his moshom take a trip back to the trapline where his grandpa and family once lived off the land. “On the Trapline is a poignant story that explores the deep connection a boy and his grandpa have with the land and each other.”

## **The Barren Grounds- Educators Guide- [here](#)**

A resource for teachers, that includes discussion questions and follow-up activities. Created by a Metis educator. Many of the discussion questions are embedded in this resource.

## **Treaty Words- For As Long as the Rivers Flow- Picture Book [here](#)**

This picture book by Aimee Craft, explores the original treaty relationships- the images and teachings provide for an engaging and thoughtful sharing of Indigenous worldviews on the responsibility felt by Indigenous people to the land and all those that live on it.

### **Turtle Island Reads, Teacher Resource Guide [here](#)**

This guide models how to integrate Indigenous content and Indigenous ways of teaching into literature studies. Books that are explored in this guide include: *The Marrow Thieves*, *Those Who Run in the Sky*, and *Will I See?* Though some of these texts may not be middle years relevant, the modelling of activities is particularly useful.

### **Vowel, Chelsea, Indigenous Writes: A Guide to First Nations, Metis and Inuit Issues in Canada-Textbook [here](#)**

This textbook explores pivotal topics pertaining to Indigenous people, in the Canadian context. From proper language use, harmful stereotypes to complex explanations of legislation- Vowel is one of the most respected voices in academia on the topic of Indigenous issues in Canada. Prior to being published as a textbook, Vowel had a free blog that explores many of the topics that are elaborated fully in the text. Access the free blog [here](#).

### **What is an Indigenous medicine wheel? [here](#)**

This website is a reputable resource to explore explanations of Indigenous worldview, knowledge, and perspectives. It is created by author Bob Joseph, and this article is written by him. Bob Joseph is the author of *21 Things You Did Not Know About the Indian Act*. This website includes a helpful image, and video to support the understanding of the medicine wheel.

### **What is Land based Learning? [here](#)**

This resource was written by a group from the Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario. Their goal was to provide a document with resources for their teachers to learn about Land Based Learning and put in motion some practices to connect to the land, both as the teacher and for their students. It is an easy, practical read that gives a general overview of ideas and individual experiences.

# AUTHOR SPOTLIGHT:

# DAVID ROBERTSON



## Connecting to the past:

Robertson has several works that represent the historical context and impact of colonialism on Indigenous people. [When We Were Alone](#) can be found in English, French and Cree – it is a picture book on the impact of Residential Schools. [Sugar Falls](#) is a graphic novel that also explores the Residential School experience for a more mature audience. Finally, [This Place: 150 Years Retold](#), is a multi-author graphic novel anthology. Robertson's contribution to this work centres around an Indigenous veteran returning from war to continue to live under the oppressive Indian Act.



## Tackling tough stuff:

Robertson has had a significant role in Canadian Literature, putting words to the unspeakable. [Will I See?](#) is a graphic novel that explores the systemic violence against Indigenous Woman. [Betty: The Helen Betty Osborne Story](#) respectfully retells the story of Helen Betty Osborne, an Indigenous Woman who leaves her community for an education, and is a victim of a horrific crime. Both of these graphic novels explore the important and urgent issue of MMIWG.

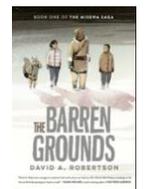
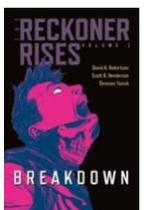


## But wait, there are more...

David Robertson: Portage & Main Press [Booklist](#)

## Making magic happen:

Robertson is a self-proclaimed superhero and comic buff. Despite this love, he acknowledges the damage these genres did to him as a youth, when portraying Indigenous people. Enter Robertson's work in several book series where you see him create the stories he never had. [Strangers](#) (Reckoner trilogy) is the first of the series, that explores a community mystery, murder and a tricky trickster coyote. [Breakdown](#) carries on the story left off from the Reckoner Trilogy, in graphic novel form. [The Barren Grounds](#) is the middle years text, the first in its series that explores themes of belonging, stewardship and language; all through the appearance of a portal to another world.



## Getting personal:

Robertson has produced two connected works that explore his own journey of belonging and identity. The five episode CBC supported podcast [Kiwew](#), was launched to situate readers in preparation for the launch of his powerfully vulnerable and generous memoir: [Black Water: Family, Legacy and Blood Memory](#). Enjoyed together or separately, they will make an impact!

