

BOOKS TO BUILD ON

Teaching and Learning Ideas

Thank you for downloading this Books to Build On Teaching and Learning "Seed" for you to plant in the garden of your professional practice! We are excited for you to use it in a good way to further Indigenous Education and reconciliation for you and your students. Please take them as inspiration and adapt them to your needs. See below for some important information.



Books to Build On: Indigenous Literatures for Learning

Okî, Ába wathtech, Danit'ada, Taanishi, Hello, Welcome!

Call for new lesson plan donations

Are you interested in contributing to the lesson plan selection available on Books to Build On? Have you written a lesson plan that accompanies an existing resource, or a resource you think we should include? Or, are you interested in creating a lesson plan for one of the resources? If you answered yes to any of these questions, the Books to Build On team would love to hear from you! We

These teaching and learning ideas originate from the Books to Build On: Indigenous Literatures for Learning website. Please check out the website, as well as the Indigenous Education resources at the Werklund School of Education, for more information on working with Indigenous literatures! We would love to hear your feedback on our educational materials! Please find our contact information on the website.

<https://werklund.ucalgary.ca/teaching-learning/indigenous-literatures-learning>

Open Education Resource



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How do we engage with Indigenous literatures in teaching and learning?

By Erin Spring & Aubrey Hanson

“Starting with Story” allows us to centre Indigenous voices, knowledges, people, and experiences in our teaching and learning

Why do we believe in teaching and learning with Indigenous literatures? During our years of engagement with Indigenous knowledge systems, communities, literatures, and scholarship, we have come to know that stories are at the heart of our work. Stories embody communities and their ways of knowing, being, and doing in an appealing form—reaching the heart, not only the head. Stories are inherently relational, in that a teller and listener are drawn into relationship with each other and with the story being told. And because relationships call for mutual responsibility, storytelling as a mode of sharing knowledge draws people into reciprocal webs of connection. Stories are not just for entertainment; they are there to guide how we live our lives. Thomas King’s oft-repeated line at the end of each chapter in the Truth about Stories lecture series is an illustration of this principle. King (2003) tells the reader that the story is “yours. Do with it what you will . . . But don’t say in the years to come that you would have lived your life differently if only you had heard this story. You’ve heard it now” (p. 29). When deciding how to engage others in the work of Indigenous education, then, we believe in starting with story. We appreciate storytelling for how it respects Indigenous knowledge systems, ensures that knowledge remains rooted in context, and emphasizes the value of personal voice and collective listening. Stories are a key way into relational work in education.

Social responsibility is at the heart of our work, we are working for better futures

Teaching and learning with Indigenous literatures is part of the broader work of Indigenous Education. We believe that work in education must be socially responsible and committed to communities. Significant social impact is being created by the process of reconciliation and with Indigenous-focused teaching and learning happening across the country. We see our task as working to nourish Indigenous communities and knowledge systems, while challenging racism and colonialism. This work is also about fostering open and reciprocal relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. This call for social responsibility informs our collaborations in the Books to Build On project.

Moon of the Crusted Snow
by Waubgeshig Rice



An apocalypse in one place is a new beginning in another place. – Waubgeshig Rice

Teacher Bio: Laura Wright is a settler of English/Irish descent who moved to Calgary from Ontario in 1998 and has made her home here ever since. She has been a high school ELA teacher for 23 years and is a self-described book nerd. Originally hesitant about teaching Indigenous texts due to her settler background, she is making a concerted effort to incorporate more Indigenous stories into her teaching. With that in mind, she chose *Moon of the Crusted Snow* by Waubgeshig Rice to adapt into a novel unit for her ELA 30-2 classes. In her preliminary research, she found a helpful and topical resource in the Reading Guide developed by Dr. Anna Rodrigues and Dr. Kaitlyn Watson from Ontario Tech University in consultation with the author. The Reading Guide is linked in the unit booklet and the unit draws heavily from its resources.

Note: In 2018, Dr. Anna Rodrigues approached author Waubgeshig Rice with the idea of collaborating on an open educational guide for his novel, *Moon of the Crusted Snow*, when she discovered that OERs for books written by Indigenous authors were lacking. That collaboration resulted in an online educational guide launching in 2019 that was well received by educators across Canada. In early 2021, Waubgeshig and Anna decided to update the guide and, at that time, Dr. Kaitlyn Watson, from the Teaching and Learning Centre at Ontario Tech University, joined the project. As part of this update, themes from the original resource have been expanded and a new theme which explores connections between the novel and the global pandemic have been added. **We will use the guide as an online resource to supplement this booklet.**

Access the OER Reading Guide here:

<https://openlibrary-repo.ecampusontario.ca/jspui/bitstream/123456789/919/3/Moon-of-the-Crusted-Snow-Reading-Guide-1633443801.pdf>

Unit Plan for Teachers

****Please note, these days are approximate and therefore tentative, so please adjust the schedule in a way that suits your class best.**

Day 1

- ⇒ Distribute the content questions printouts for students.
- ⇒ Read bio of Waubgeshig Rice
- ⇒ Listen to short interview of Rice by Shelagh Rogers on the CBC; link in Reading Guide (page 13)
- ⇒ Discuss importance of land acknowledgements
- ⇒ Work on the pre-reading questions in the Reading Guide (page 16)

Day 2

- ⇒ Read pages 3 – 27 (Chapters 1 – 3) in the novel. We will be listening to the Audible version narrated by Billy Merasty
- ⇒ Class discussion
- ⇒ Work on the questions for those pages in this booklet

Day 3

- ⇒ Read the interview Rice did with Andrew Wilmot, “When Things Start to Fall Apart” and discussion about connection to book; link in Reading Guide (page 21)

- ⇒ Watch CBC short doc “The Last Fisherman”; link in Reading Guide (page 23)

Day 4

- ⇒ Read/listen to pages 28 – 57 (Chapters 4 – 7)
- ⇒ Class discussion
- ⇒ Work on questions for those pages

Day 5

- ⇒ Watch video explaining smudging with Julie Pigeon; link in Reading Guide (page 37)
- ⇒ Here would be a good time to invite a knowledge keeper into your space to engage in a smudge ceremony
- ⇒ Watch video on impact of residential schools & reconciliation from Facing History & Ourselves (page 38)
- ⇒ Read interview Rice did with Will Johnson, “There are Shreds of Promise in What’s Smouldering” (page 30)
- ⇒ Discussion – what did you already know about these topics? What have you learned?

Day 6

- ⇒ Read/listen to pages 58 – 89 (Chapters 8 – 13)
- ⇒ Discussion
- ⇒ Questions from booklet

Day 7

- ⇒ Read/listen to pages 90 – 116 (Chapters 14 – 17)
- ⇒ Discussion
- ⇒ Questions from booklet

Day 8

- ⇒ Watch “Last Call Indian”; link in the Reading Guide (page 49). This video is based on the life of Sonia Bonspille Boileau. She shares her thoughts about family, identity and community, and the effects of colonialism. Please be aware, based on the official language in the *Indian Act*, which is a legal government document, that the film uses the word *Indian*, even though Indigenous people do not use that word anymore.
- ⇒ How do Sonia’s thoughts echo or connect with Evan’s in the novel? Discussion
- ⇒ Read about bands through the resource “What is a Band?”; link in Reading Guide (page 51). Discussion

Day 9

- ⇒ Read/listen to pages 117 – 141 (Chapters 18 – 21)
- ⇒ Discussion
- ⇒ Questions from booklet

Day 10

- ⇒ Read/listen to pages 145 – 174 (Chapters 22 – 25)
- ⇒ Discussion
- ⇒ Questions from booklet

- ⇒ Read the article “Will the Gendered Aspect of Canada’s Colonial Project be Addressed?”; link in Reading Guide (page 58). Discussion

Day 11

- ⇒ Watch CBC Short Doc Wiigwaasabak: The Tree of Life; link in Reading Guide (page 58). How do Indigenous women play a role in the novel? How can we connect what we learn from the Short Doc to what we know about the characters in the novel? Discussion
- ⇒ Finish Discussion questions found in Reading Guide
- ⇒ Catch up on any missing work

Day 12

- ⇒ Read/listen to pages 175 – 213 (Chapters 26 – Spring Epilogue)
- ⇒ Discussion
- ⇒ Questions from booklet

Day 13

- ⇒ Read article “Language Warriors Needed”; link in Reading Guide (page 66)
- ⇒ Read article “Waubgeshig Rice Balances Historical Accuracy with Dystopian Future in New Novel”; link in reading guide (page 64). Discussion
- ⇒ Answer Discussion questions from Reading Guide for Language section (page 66)

Day 14

- ⇒ Read article “Quebec Couple Fleeing COVID-19 ‘endangered’ Yukon First Nation, Chief Says”: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/quebec-couple-old-crow-yukon-covid-19-1.5514429>
- ⇒ Read article “How Waubgeshig Rice’s Post-Apocalyptic Storyline Became a Reality”; link in Reading Guide (page 78)
- ⇒ Discussion – connections to the pandemic. How can we see real-life connections to the novel in our world over the last two years?
- ⇒ Complete Discussion question in Reading Guide – Venn Diagram (page 80)

Day 15+

- ⇒ Provide class time for any final summative assessments needed (eg, unit test, essay, etc)



Content Questions for *Moon of the Crusted Snow*



Chapter 1

1. Rice chooses to open the novel with the scene of Evan Whitesky, the protagonist, hunting and killing a moose. What kind of mood/tone is set by this scene?
2. Describe the ritual Evan performs after he kills the moose. Why is this important?
3. What sense do you get of Evan's relationship with his family (wife and children)?
4. How will the coming winter affect the people in the community?

Chapter 2

1. How does Evan feel about the trees and black bears? Why?
2. Are Evan and Nicole worried about the outage in cell service? Why or why not?
3. We are given more detail about Evan's children, Maiingan and Nangohns. What are we told about them, and what else do we find out about his relationship with them?
4. What is Evan trying to do when he uses Anishnaabe words to speak to his children?

Chapter 3

1. Evan spends some time at the beginning of this chapter thinking about the possibilities he didn't end up pursuing in his life, opting to stay "on the rez". Why does he say he decided to stay? How does he feel about this decision?
2. What kind of relationship does Evan have with his dad Dan? How does the skinning of the moose show us this?
3. What details are we given about Evan's mom Patricia?
4. A **motif** is an image or idea which turns up more than once in a story, and helps to emphasize the theme. **Dreams** are a motif in the novel, and we see the first one in this chapter. Describe Dan's dream – is it positive or negative? What mood does the dream create? How does the dream make Evan feel?

Chapter 4

1. How have the houses in the community changed since Evan was young? How are the new houses equipped to deal with a shutdown of services (loss of electricity, internet access)?
2. What is the "moccasin telegraph"?
3. What is Evan's job in the community? How does it change from season to season?
4. What kind of relationship does Evan have with his brother Cam? How is Cam different from Evan?
5. How is the last sentence an example of foreshadowing?



Chapter 5

1. How does their conversation about country music in the truck show the relationship between Evan and his friend Isaiah (Izzy)?
2. What emergency has Terry, the chief, summoned Evan and the others to deal with? How are they going to deal with it?
3. The word Anishnaabe means “good person”, and “kwe” is the female version/pronoun for an Anishnaabe. Joanne calls Evan’s wife Nicole “a good kwe”. What does Evan’s reaction to this say about their relationship?
4. What do you think the band/community will think of the flyer Evan has to distribute? How might they react?

Chapter 6

1. What is Evan’s opinion of people like Vinny Jones, the radio host? What does he imply might happen to them?
2. What is the community’s view of alcohol? What is Evan’s view?
3. What happened to Justin Meegis? How did this event change the community’s view on alcohol?

Chapter 7

1. How is the weather described in this chapter? How is the environment in the house contrasted with the weather outside?
2. Why does no one panic on the first night of the blizzard?

Chapter 8

1. Describe the smudging ceremony Aileen leads the community in. Compare and contrast this with the ceremony you experienced. What were your thoughts about the ceremony? Why does Evan say it’s important?
2. What does Aileen pray for?
3. Why is Chief Terry so confident that the power will come back on?
4. What is the plan going forward to deal with the loss of power?



Chapter 9

1. How do the children playing make Evan feel better about the current situation?
2. How does the situation at the Northern Trading Post remind you of events from our COVID pandemic, especially at the beginning?
3. Do you think it’s likely that the store will get another delivery soon?



Chapter 10

1. How are the people in the community feeling about loved ones who are south for school or work?
2. What does the new flyer say? Why can't it be 100% truthful?
3. Describe Chief Terry's response to the questions about the food delivery. Why does he react this way?

Chapter 11

1. The dream motif is repeated in this chapter, this time by Evan's wife Nicole. What does she dream about? How does this dream compare to the one described by Evan's dad in Chapter 3?
2. What is an omen? Why does Evan think of the two dreams as omens?

Chapter 12

1. What does Tyler think the end of world will be like? Does Evan agree? Why or why not?
2. How does Rice build the tension while the two snowmobiles approach Evan and his friends?
3. Who are the snowmobilers? Why are they there?
4. What does Evan ask the snowmobilers to do? Why?

Chapter 13

1. In five points, outline how Kevin and Nick got out of the college and the city.
2. How does Kevin and Nick's experience compare with Evan's experience so far on the reserve?

Chapter 14

1. How does Rice give us a temporary break from the tension in this very short chapter?

Chapter 15

1. What is the plan Dave proposes for the rest of the winter? What might happen if the people don't follow it?
2. What is the cache? Why is it so important?



Chapter 16

1. What is the suspicion about Donny, the manager of the Great Northern? What does Evan worry about here?
2. Again, we see someone on a snowmobile approaching the reserve. How is this event similar to when Nick and Kevin came, and how is it different?
3. How does Rice use colour symbolism in the description of the new arrival?
4. What is Evan's opinion of the new stranger? How do the stranger's actions reinforce this opinion?
5. When the council asks the stranger why they should let him stay, what does he say?
6. What is the request the council makes of the stranger when they tell him he can stay?

Chapter 17

1. When the situation is laid out for them, what is the response from the community in the meeting?
2. How does Justin Scott disobey the council? What is your opinion of him at this time? Do you believe his excuse?
3. What is Evan's final thought about Scott?



Chapter 18

1. How does Nicole keep Maiingan busy at the beginning of the chapter? How is she dealing with being isolated from the South?
2. How has Evan's job expanded? What has he been helping with?
3. The chapter ends with the third dream we've seen in the novel, expanding the motif. What happens in Evan's dream? How does it make him feel?

Chapter 19

1. How does Scott's killing of the moose contrast with Evan doing the same thing at the beginning of the novel?
2. Why don't the Anishnaabe like to hunt the moose in the winter? How does this display their philosophy on life?
3. The translation of "zhaagnaash" is Englishman. How is this word used towards Scott – positively, or negatively?

Chapter 20

1. What do the children's names mean? Why is it important to Evan and Nicole that they teach the kids Anishnaabemowin (Anishnaabe language)?

2. Describe the scene Evan finds at his brother Cam's house – what is his reaction?
3. What is Evan's response when he sees Justin Scott there?

Chapter 21

1. What is the bad news Isaiah brings to Evan the next morning?
2. How do Isaiah and Evan try to honour the bodies of the girls? What will they have to do with them?
3. What else happens to interrupt the men as they try to plan what to do?
4. How does Rice end this section of the novel? Is this a successful way to keep building suspense? Why or why not?



Chapter 22

1. At the beginning of this chapter, Evan is at Elder Aileen's house, looking at her late husband's army jacket. What memories does the jacket bring up, and how does Evan respond to them?
2. Aileen mentions that Evan's wife Nicole has special knowledge of something – what is it? How important will this be in the time to come?
3. What is Aileen's reaction to the idea that this is the "apocalypse"? Be specific.
4. Where do we see the novel's title in this chapter?

Chapter 23

1. Why are Nicole's parents referred to as Grandma and Grandpa while Evan's parents use the Anishnaabe words for those roles?
2. Where have the other white people settled to live?
3. How does Meghan Connor look? What can we guess about her life recently?
4. How does Rice continue building the tension at the end of this chapter?

Chapter 24

1. Why is the shop now the designated spot for food pickup? How do we see the community crumbling at this point?
2. Why are Sydney and her son Jordan staying with her parents now? How is this concerning to Evan?
3. What other news does Isaiah share with Evan at the end of the chapter?

Chapter 25

1. Google "Nanabush" – who is he? Why is he important to Anishnaabe tradition?
2. What is important about the Nanabush story told in this chapter? What lessons are there to learn from this story?



Chapter 26

1. What is the speculation about Scott at this time? What do the council think he might be doing?
2. The frustration over the food rations is getting worse. Why does Terry get so upset?
3. What happens as the ration line gets longer as the day goes on? How does Scott use this confusion to his advantage?

Chapter 27

1. What is Evan's secret project? He obviously feels this project is necessary – what does this imply about the situation in the community?
2. The last part of the chapter is a dream, part of the motif that runs throughout the novel. How is this dream different from the other one Evan had, and how does this emphasize Evan's worries about the community?



Chapter 28

1. How has Nicole's housekeeping routine changed with the loss of power?
2. What bad news does Isaiah bring to Nicole? How will this impact the community?

Chapter 29

1. How many people have died since the beginning of winter? How does Rice show the community's mourning for these people?
2. What terrible discovery do the men make at the garage? What other terrible conclusion does Evan come to? What do he and Tyler decide to do about this?

Chapter 30

1. Why does Evan warn Isaiah and Tyler to keep their guns pointing away from Scott?
2. How does Rice increase the tension to its highest point in this chapter?
3. We see Cam, Evan's brother, for the first time since the fateful party in Chapter 20. What has he been doing?
4. Why doesn't Rice answer the question about why Scott came to the reserve in the first place? Do you think he was running from something?
5. How is the conflict ultimately resolved?

Chapter 31

1. How is the abandoned store a symbol of what has happened to the community? To the world at large?



2. What is symbolic/ironic about the way Scott's body is dealt with?

Epilogue: Spring

1. How does Nicole feel about leaving their house behind?
2. How much time has passed since the original power outage?
3. Why have the remaining half of the community abandoned it? How is Indigenous history part of this decision?
4. How does Rice end his novel on a hopeful note? What is symbolic about the last two paragraphs?



Interested in learning more? Resources for additional reading:

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- Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. (2015). *Truth and reconciliation commission of Canada: Calls to action*.