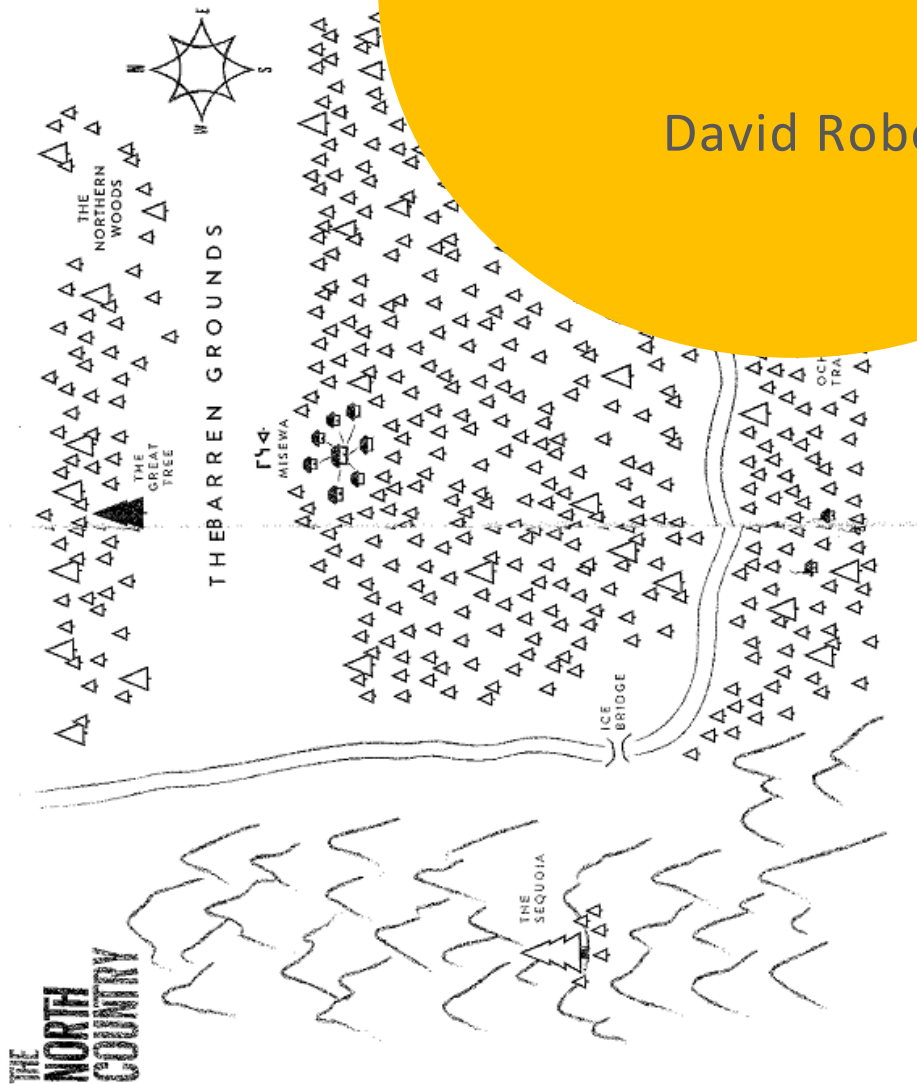


# The Barren Grounds

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**

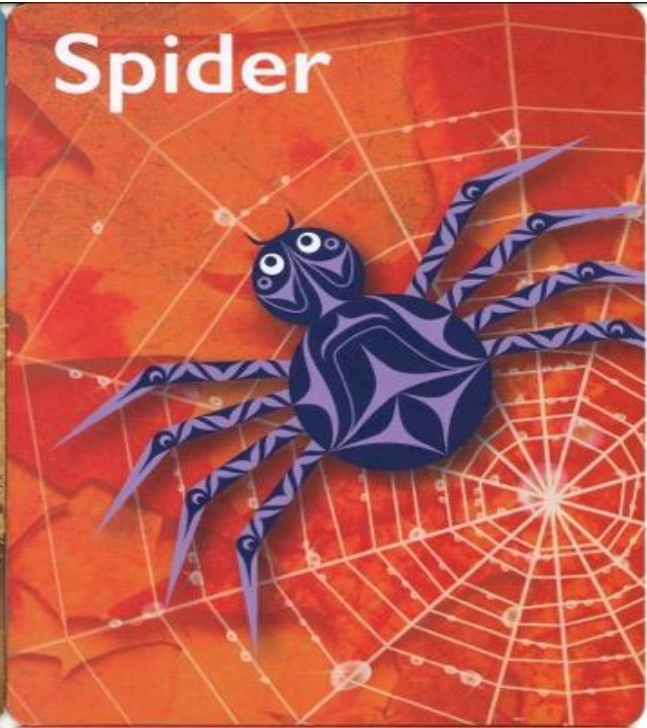
What I was told from an Elder at one time,  
First there needs to be land.  
When there is land it allows people to be there.  
When there is land and people then it becomes a culture;  
A culture forms out of that.  
When you have land, people and culture,  
You'll need a way of governing yourself.

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

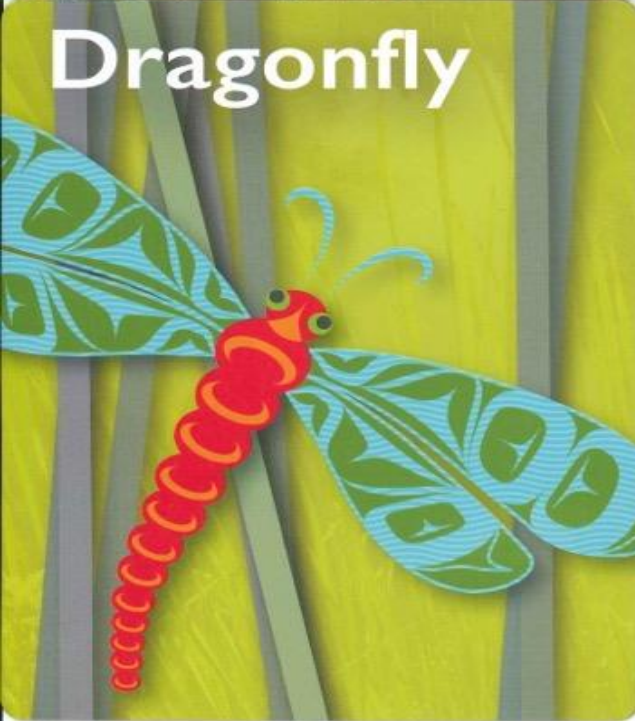
Crab



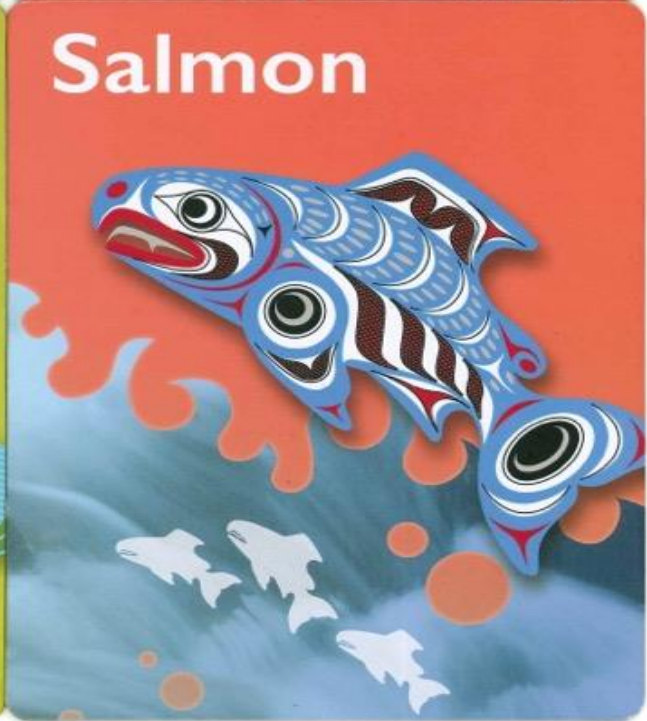
Spider



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.