

DAVID A. ROBERTSON

THE MISEWA SAGA



THE STONE CHILD

3

EDUCATORS' GUIDE



DAVID A. ROBERTSON

is the author of numerous books for young readers including Governor General's Literary Award winners *On the Trapline* and *When We Were Alone*. *The Barren Grounds*, Book 1 of The Misewa Saga series, was a *Kirkus*, NPR, and *Quill & Quire* best middle-grade book of 2020, as well as a USBBY and Texas Lone Star selection. Winner of the Writers' Union of Canada's Freedom to Read Award, as well as the 2021 *Globe and Mail* Children's Storyteller of the Year recipient, Dave is a member of Norway House Cree Nation and currently lives in Winnipeg, Canada.

For more information, visit his

website: www.darobertson.ca

and follow him on

Instagram: [@davidrobertsonwriter](https://www.instagram.com/davidrobertsonwriter) and
on Bluesky: [@davidarobertson.bsky.social](https://bsky.app/profile/davidarobertson.bsky.social).

This guide was created by

APRIL WATERS,

a Métis educator from Treaty One territory in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. She has been a classroom teacher and Indigenous Education teacher for over a decade. She is currently an administrator of Indigenous Education and provides instructional support and professional development for educators in bringing authentic Indigenous perspectives, culture and history into their classrooms.

THE STONE CHILD

3

THE MISEWA SAGA

**It's a race against time to save
Eli in this third book in the award-
winning, Narnia-inspired Indigenous
middle-grade fantasy series.**

After discovering a near-lifeless Eli at the base of the Great Tree, Morgan knows she doesn't have much time to save him. And it will mean asking for help — from friends old and new. Racing against the clock, and with Arik and Emily at her side, Morgan sets off to follow the trail away from the Great Tree to find Eli's soul before it's too late. As they journey deep into the northern woods, a place they've been warned never to enter, they face new challenges and life-threatening attacks from strange and horrifying creatures. But a surprise ally comes to their aid, and Morgan finds the strength to focus on what's most important: saving her brother's life.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. After Morgan discovers that Mistapew has taken Eli's soul, she remembers the story of Kihiw. What happened to him? What makes her worry the most for Eli?
2. Morgan pulls her friend Emily through the portal to help her save Eli. How does Emily react to the situation? How would you deal with it if you were Emily?
3. In the Council Hut right before the meeting, Muskwa smudges. Morgan also smudges the sweatlodge before she begins the ceremony. What is smudging? Why do you think they are smudging before the meeting and ceremony? Do you know of other similar practices that other cultures observe?
4. Muskwa tells Morgan that tears are your body letting out pain, and Mahihkan tells her that sweat is negativity leaving the body. Why do you think they tell her that?
5. On page 32, we begin to get an idea of what it's like in the northern woods. What is it like in this area? How does it compare to Misewa?
6. Arik and Morgan compare the differences in perspectives towards youth and age in Askí compared to our world. How are the two worlds different?
7. The children and Arik first run into the groundlings in the northern woods. Describe these creatures. How would you react if you encountered these creatures in the forest?
8. Mahihkan returns to the story, much to the surprise of Morgan. He explains what happened to him the last time the children saw him. He tells them about World's End and the village called Ministik. How does Morgan feel about Mahihkan returning?
9. On page 79, the group discovers paintings on the wall in the cave. What is the significance of the paintings?
10. What happens to Eli near the Great Tree? What do the children and animals do to the Great Tree to help release Kihiw? What do they sacrifice in the process?
11. Morgan decides to connect with her kókom and wants to visit her right away in Norway House. How do Katie and James react?
12. Describe Morgan's interaction with her mom, Jenny Trout. How does Morgan feel after the interaction?
13. How does Morgan and Emily's relationship develop and transform throughout the book?

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

1. A sweatlodge is built by Morgan, Emily, Arik, and Mahihkan, and then Morgan holds a ceremony with Eli to bring Eli back to life. What did you learn about this ceremony in the book? Following appropriate protocols in your area, invite an Elder or Knowledge Keeper from an Indigenous nation in your territory to learn more about it. Or, if you discover that the nations in your area don't hold sweatlodges, see if they have a similar type of ceremony.
2. Throughout the book we learn a little bit about Morgan and Eli's home communities, Norway House First Nation and Cross Lake First Nation. Find these communities on the map. Where are they in relation to Morgan and Eli's current home of Winnipeg? What treaty territory are these communities in? Research both communities — their histories and present-day realities. Compare it with life in your own community.
3. In this book we finally learn how Eli became a part of the CFS (Child and Family Services) system — his parents became involved in a dispute with the local police. Across Canada, Indigenous communities have a turbulent relationship with police. Research some events that have taken place that have impacted that relationship (for example, the role of police in residential schools; Oka; Elsipogtoq; We'tsuwet'en; starlight tours). Share what you have learned with your class.
4. On page 195, Eli brings up the cost of food up north as he talks about the price of apples. Look at some prices of basic healthy food items in your area, as well as some "junk food." Compare those prices with prices in a store in the north. How do they differ? Why do you think there is such a difference? How do you think these costs would influence a family's eating habits, and how do these habits affect health in the north?
5. Throughout the book we learn about different dreams that Morgan has. These dreams are significant as they contain important information and directions that Morgan needs to follow. Arik states in the book that "dreams help us make sense of the world in ways that we can't while we're awake" and that they help connect us to the spirit world. Have you ever had a recurring dream or a dream that left such a strong impression that you remembered it when you woke up? How did it make you feel? Consider keeping a dream journal and write down what you remember every morning. Once you've written a few entries, go back and review. Do you notice any repeating images, feelings or themes?