
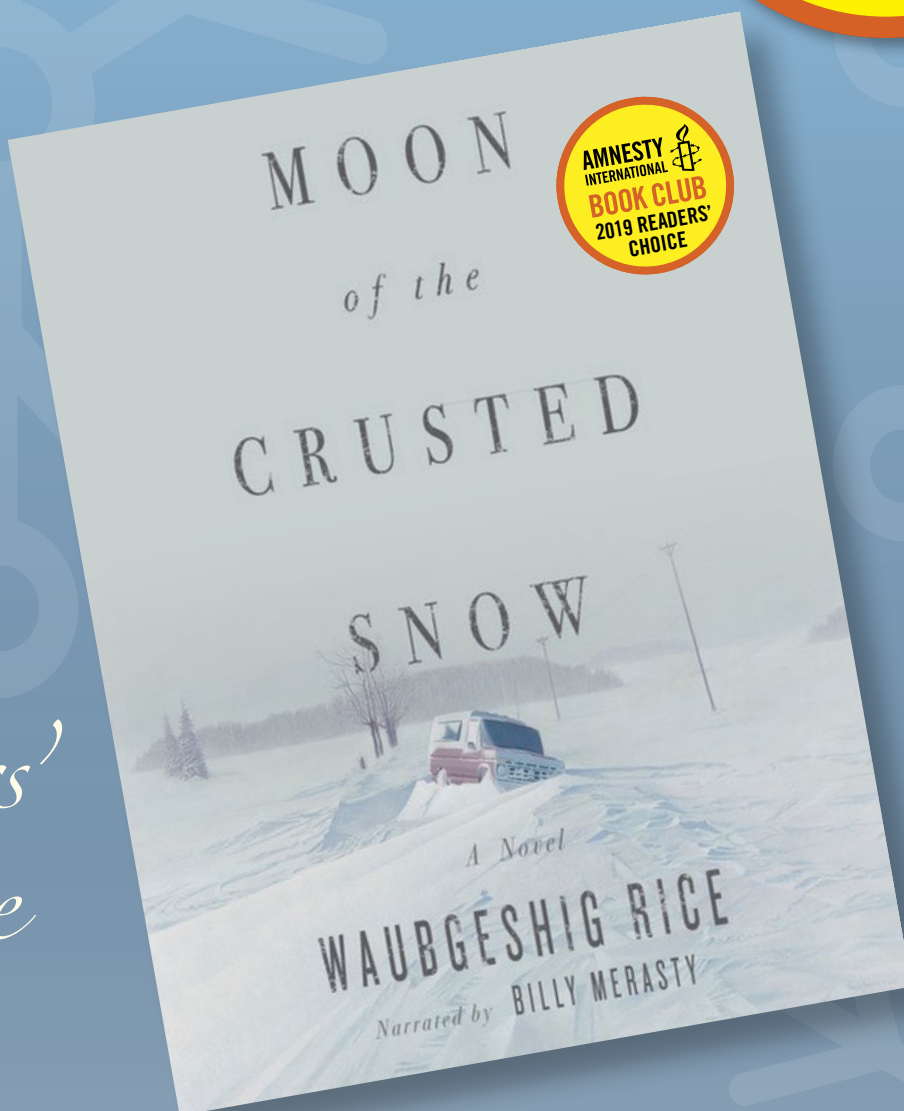


NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2019 DISCUSSION GUIDE

AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL 
BOOK CLUB
DISCUSSION
GUIDE

*Readers'
Choice*



MOON OF THE CRUSTED SNOW

BY WAUBGESHIG RICE

RECOMMENDED BY AMNESTY BOOK CLUB MEMBERS

WELCOME

Amnesty Book Club members

Welcome back to the Amnesty International Book Club! We are delighted to announce our 2019 Readers' Choice title *Moon of the Crusted Snow* by Waubgeshig Rice. This brilliant and unique novel has been recommended by many Amnesty readers and voted on by majority of Amnesty Book Club's readers' choice voters. In this discussion guide you will explore the novel with its in-depth narrative and go beyond the book to learn more about some of the pressing human rights concerns that Indigenous Peoples face in Canada.

In this guide, you will find Amnesty's reflection on the book, as well as discussion questions, primary characters of the book, a background section, and an action you can take to urge the Canadian federal and BC's provincial governments to honour their commitments to Treaty 8 First Nations.

With winter looming, a small northern Anishinaabe community goes dark. Cut off, people become passive and confused. Panic builds as the food supply dwindles. While the band council and a pocket of community members struggle to maintain order, an unexpected visitor arrives, escaping the crumbling society to the south. Soon after, others follow.

The community leadership loses its grip on power as the visitors manipulate the tired and hungry to take control of the reserve. Tensions rise and, as the months pass, so does the death toll due to sickness and despair. Frustrated by the building chaos, a group of young friends and their families turn to the land and Anishinaabe tradition in hopes of helping their community thrive again. Guided through the chaos by an unlikely leader named Evan Whitesky, they endeavor to restore order while grappling with a grave decision.

Blending action and allegory, *Moon of the Crusted Snow* upends our expectations. Out of catastrophe comes

resilience. And as one society collapses, another is reborn.

Thank you for being part of the Amnesty International Book Club. We appreciate your interest and would love to hear from you with any questions, suggestions or comments you may have. Just send us an email at **bookclub@amnesty.ca**.

We, at Amnesty Book Club, believe that as winter is approaching, you will find this a meaningful read and an opportunity for self-reflection of our different lifestyles. We are pleased to be able to be part of this conversation with you.

About Amnesty International

Amnesty International is a global movement of more than seven million supporters, members and activists in over 150 countries and territories who campaign to end grave abuses of human rights.

Our vision is for all people to enjoy all the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights standards.

We are independent of any government, political ideology, economic interest or religion, and are funded mainly by our membership.

Until everyone can enjoy all of their rights, we will continue our efforts. We will not stop until everyone can live in dignity; until every person's voice can be heard; until no one is tortured or executed.

Our members are the cornerstone of these efforts. They take up human rights issues through letter-writing, online and off line campaigning, demonstrations, vigils and direct lobbying of those with power and influence.

Locally, nationally and globally, we join together to mobilize public pressure and show international solidarity.

Together, we make a difference.

For more information about Amnesty International visit **www.amnesty.ca** or write to us at: Amnesty International, 312 Laurier Ave. E., Ottawa, ON K1N 1H9.

November/December 2019: *Moon of the Crusted Snow*

About this month's author, **Waubgeshig Rice**



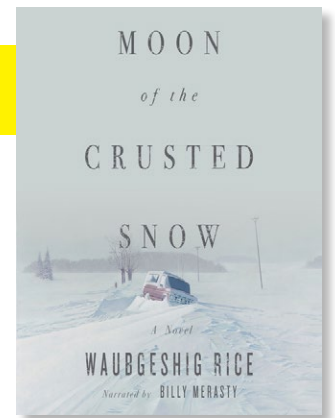
Waubgeshig Rice is an author and journalist originally from Wasauksing First Nation. His first short story collection, *Midnight Sweatlodge*, was inspired by his experiences growing up in an Anishinaabe community and won an Independent Publishers Book Award in 2012.

His debut novel, *Legacy*, followed in 2014. A French translation was published in 2017. His latest novel, *Moon of the Crusted Snow*, was released in October 2018.

Waubgeshig got his first taste of journalism in 1996 as an exchange student in Germany, writing articles about being an Anishinaabe teen in a foreign country for

newspapers back in Canada. He graduated from Ryerson University's journalism program in 2002. He's worked in a variety of news media since, reporting for CBC News for the bulk of his career. In 2014, he received the Anishinabek Nation's Debwevin Citation for excellence in First Nation Storytelling. He currently hosts Up North, CBC Radio's afternoon show for northern Ontario.

His proudest roles are as dad to Jiikwis and husband to Sarah. The family splits its time between Sudbury and Wasauksing.



About *Moon of the Crusted Snow* by **Eden Robinson**, author of *Monkey Beach*, our September/October 2017 pick



"*Moon of the Crusted Snow* asks how do we live in a good way during the collapse of the infrastructure that supports modern life? For Evan

Whitesky, the answer lies in rekindling Ojibwe, the old ways, language and culture. For other characters, when the food runs out, all options are on the table, no matter how gruesome. As the tensions between those surviving the end of modern civilization build to a harrowing conclusion, Rice deftly weaves tender family moments with his brutal survival scenes in the unforgiving northern Ontario winter. Chilling in the best way possible."



Drift by David Caesar, the cover art of Moon of the Crusted Snow.

Primary Characters of the *Moon of the Crusted Snow*

“I know my characters very intimately.”

— Waubgeshig Rice

Evan Whitesky: An Anishinaabe man in his mid-20s who lives with his partner Nicole and two children in a First Nation in Northern Ontario.

Nicole McCloud: An Anishinaabe woman in her mid-20s who is Evan’s partner and mother to two children:

Maiingan, a five-year-old boy and Nangohns, who is a three-year-old girl.

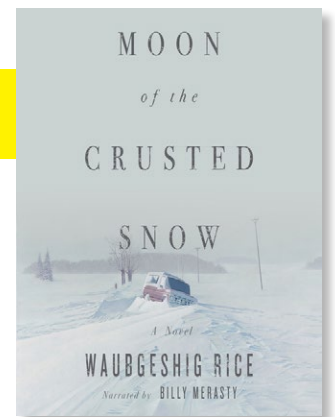
Isaiah “Izzy” North: An Anishinaabe man who is Evan’s friend.

Terry Meegis: The chief of the First Nation where the novel takes place.

Aileen: An elder who speaks fluent Ojibwe and knows the traditional ways of living on the

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The novel begins with Evan hunting a moose. In what ways is Evan connecting with his Anishinaabe identity when harvesting the moose?
2. How has your perception of land-based knowledge changed from before reading the novel to after reading it?
3. On page 107, Justin Scott says that he knows how to live on the land. On page 124, Justin goes hunting with Evan, Dan, Isaiah and Jeff. How would you compare and contrast Justin’s way of living on the land with Evan’s?
4. Have your group reflect on how Indigenous land-based knowledge has been impacted by the imposition of settler society and values.
5. The community was forced to make a number of tough choices as supplies dwindled and the power stayed off. How well do you think they managed the crisis? Are there things you would have done differently if you were put in the same situation?
6. The community’s elder – Aileen Jones – has an important conversation with Evan to begin section two. What does she mean when she says her people have had apocalypse “over and over”? How does her perspective differ from the younger people on the reserve?
7. The perseverance of the “Anishinaabe spirit of community” is highlighted by the narrator on page 48. Does this spirit of community persevere through the power outage? How is it challenged, and how do people attempt to keep it going?
8. Discuss the different roles of the female characters throughout the story. How does Robin react as the crisis develops?
9. Were you satisfied with the conclusion of this book? Did anything surprise you over the last handful of chapters? How will the future play out for this community in particular?



BACKGROUND



Canada, Nwt, Hudson Bay, South Hampton Island, Native Pt, Inuit In Traditional Kayak

Whilst *Moon of the Crusted Snow* is set during an apocalyptic future time and the circumstances are unusual for most readers, it is clear that the characters in this novel are familiar with periods without services such as electricity, phones and 24-hour grocery stores. This has been and continues to be true for people in northern and remote communities. Distance, transport difficulties and lack of infrastructure prioritization by governments mean that many people in Canada live in a situation of food instability.

Despite impediments, Indigenous Peoples have often been able to retain some traditional economic activities for food production so important for the exercise of Indigenous rights; transmission of language, values and culture; and providing for family and community.

The articulation of food sovereignty as a concept arose from Latin America's campesino movement. La Via Campesina defines food sovereignty as the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems.

Food sovereignty doesn't just mean that people have enough food to meet their needs. Additionally, people reclaim their own food system by rebuilding relationships between people and the land, and between food providers and those who eat.


Food and food production are fundamentally important to Indigenous communities' health, well-being, economic resilience, cultural heritage and self-

Food-related indigenous traditional economic activities: fishing, hunting, berry picking, wild rice cultivation, maple sugar production, fish hatcheries, cultivation of tubers and gathering medicines

preservation; and as directly connected to land rights is a powerful demonstration of Indigenous rights and responsibilities in their territories. Reclaiming food sovereignty by Indigenous people supports the re-introduction of indigenous food production, distribution practices and infrastructure. Food sovereignty projects empower people and communities to grow and harvest their own healthy, fresh produce; maintain relationships with the land and waters; ease food insecurity and prevent disease such as diabetes and heart disease directly related to introduced foods.

Food sovereignty is also directly related to reversing the climate crisis. The relationship between climate change and food systems is important: food systems and the food humans eat are affected by climate, but they also act as a major driver of climate change. Food systems contribute an estimated 19–29% of global people-caused greenhouse gas emissions. Placing an importance on locally and sustainably produced food is one way we can reverse the damage humans have caused. For Indigenous Peoples who hold sacred responsibilities to protect their territories and whose identity and rights derive from the land, food sovereignty is doubly important.

The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples affirms in Article 20 the right to maintain and develop Indigenous political, economic and social systems or institutions, to be secure in the enjoyment of their own means of subsistence and development, and to engage freely in all their traditional and other economic activities.



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TAKE ACTION: Urge the federal and provincial governments to honour their commitments to Treaty 8 First Nations

Join Amnesty International in welcoming the Partnership Agreement on Caribou Recovery as an example of reconciliation in action and urge the federal and provincial governments to follow through on their commitments.

<https://takeaction.amnesty.ca/page/43152/>

CANADA: Help protect First Nations culture in NE British Columbia

Support a First Nations partnership to save caribou from extinction

An incredible good news story is emerging in northeast British Columbia –but your help is needed to make sure this opportunity isn't lost.

Caribou are central to the culture and identity of First Nations in northeast British Columbia. That's why the survival of local caribou herds has direct implications for rights that are set out in an historic Treaty, entrenched in the Canadian Constitution, and protected in international human rights law.

The Saulteau and West Moberly First Nations have recently negotiated a ground-breaking partnership with the provincial and federal governments that would both protect crucial caribou habitat and ensure a continued role for these First Nations in restoring vital ecosystems.

The agreement is vital because intensive resource development and loss of habitat has pushed caribou in northeast BC to the brink of extinction.

While the partnership agreement is a clear win both for conservation and reconciliation, it has also provoked an ugly backlash from individuals and private interests who object to Indigenous peoples having a meaningful role in such decisions.

Response to public consultation about the agreement has included widespread misinformation and shocking expressions of racism directed against Indigenous peoples.

It's critical that the federal and provincial governments remain firm in their commitments to this important agreement and publicly condemn racism against Indigenous peoples.

Sign up to urge the federal and provincial governments to honour their commitments to Treaty 8 First Nations.

<https://takeaction.amnesty.ca/page/43152/action/1?locale=en-US>

WRITE FOR RIGHTS 2019!

GRASSY NARROWS YOUTH, CANADA

“OUR COMMUNITY
CAN'T WAIT ANY
LONGER”

WRITE
FOR
RIGHTS

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You're Invited to a Global Celebration of Human Rights

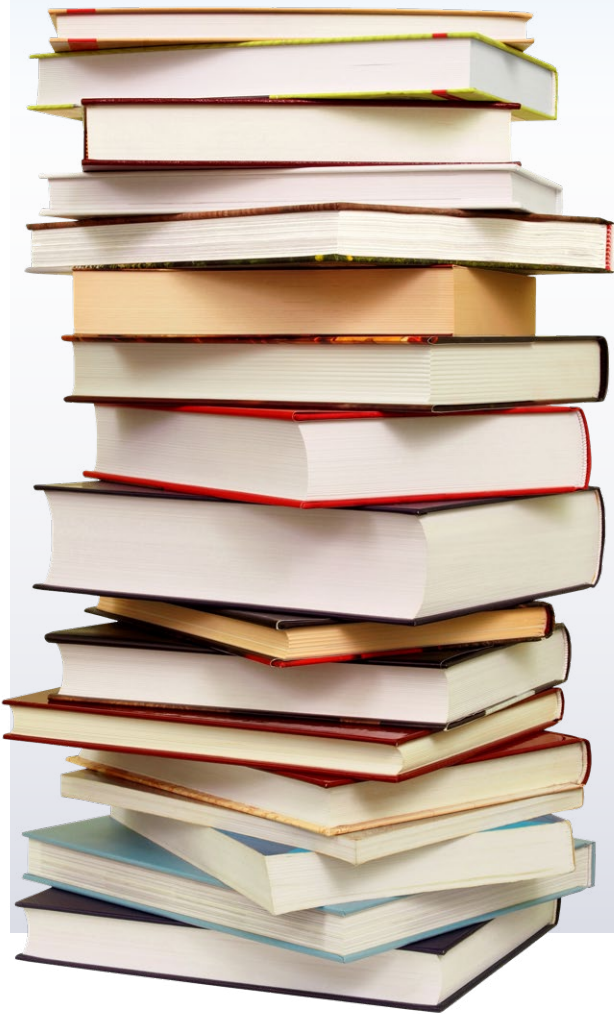
On December 10, – International Human Rights Day – Amnesty International supporters in Canada and around the world will be taking part in Amnesty's annual Write for Rights campaign, the world's largest letter-writing event. This year, we will take action on 10 global cases featuring young people whose human rights are threatened, including youth from Grassy Narrows First Nation, whose community has experienced the devastating impacts of mercury poisoning for more than 50 years.

Join Us! It's easy to take part.

Whether you want to hold a Write for Rights event in your workplace, school or community or you want to write on your own, we're here to help.

Register now for Write for Rights!

Visit www.writeathon.ca to sign-up, email us at writeathon@amnesty.ca or phone us at **1-800-266-3789** to register your event and find out more about how to get involved.



STAY TUNED!

Our book selections of
2020 will be announced
by Dec 15th!



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