

## Barren Grounds Theme: Land & Place

“Place” is central to Indigenous culture and identity:

"Place is multidimensional. More than a geographical space, it also holds cultural, emotional, and spiritual spaces which cannot be divided into parts."

"Place is experiential. The experiences a person has on the land give it meaning."



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.

**Animals** are central to Indigenous culture and ways of knowing and being – think back to the discussions we had with Clayton Gauthier and to his art pieces and the stories they told.

Why do you think the author of *The Barren Grounds* uses animals in this novel/story?

### Fisher Constellation



# Fisher

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

ᐃᓕᓴ **ocek** [NA]

Source: Alberta Elders' Cree Dictionary English-Cree

Language: Cree



© 2010 by Nature Stock Ltd.



## Anatomy

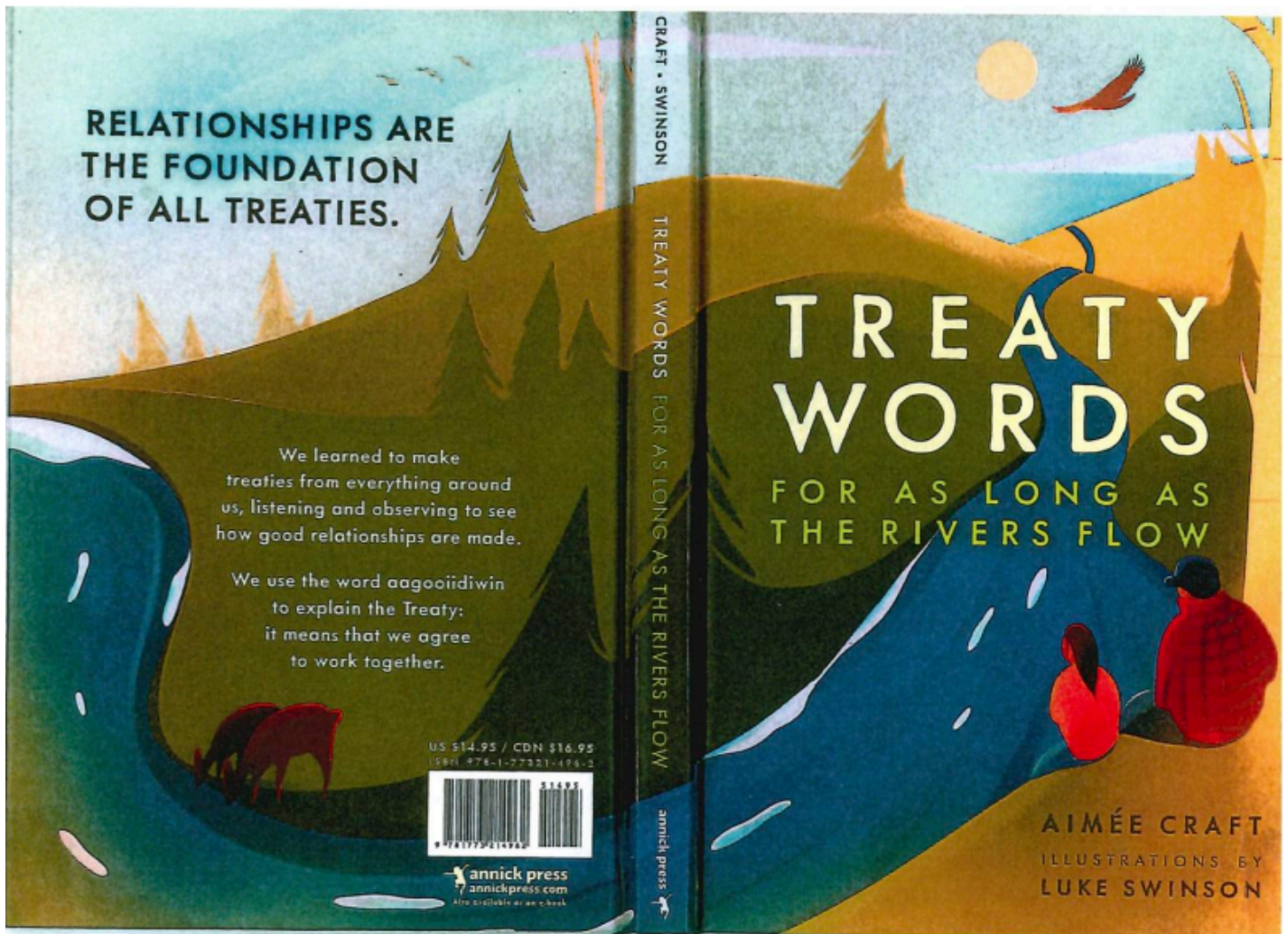
### Fisher




ILLUSTRATION BY ANNA SERRAO



To help us better understand the relationship between people, place, land, and animals, let's read the following short story – Treaty Words: For As Long As the River Flows.



While I read, try to pick out a few key words or phrases that summarize Indigenous values and beliefs regarding animals and the importance of land and our relationships to land and place.



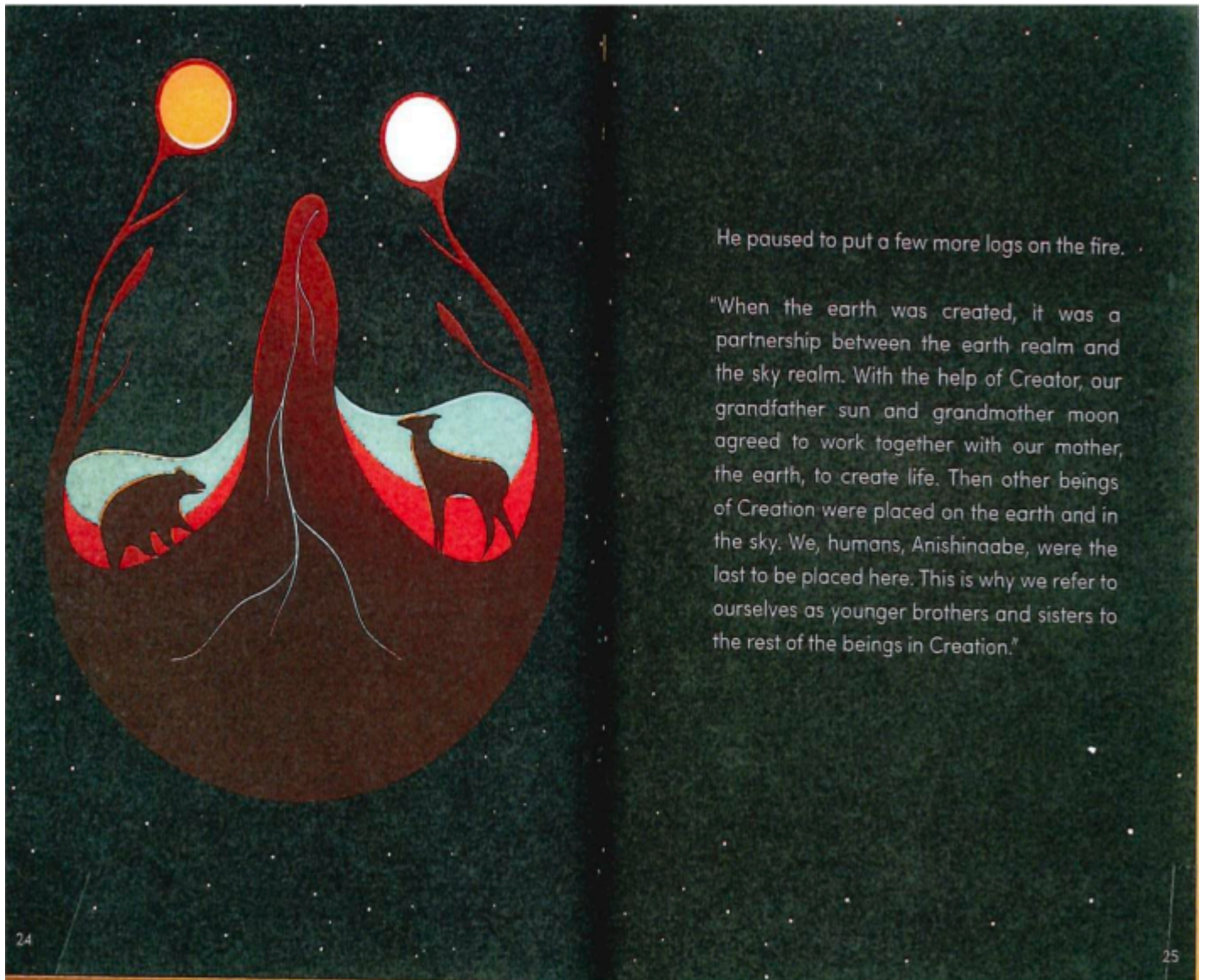
He turned to her, lovingly reminding his granddaughter that she had responsibilities to this land and water, and to their stories.

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.





He paused to put a few more logs on the fire.

"When the earth was created, it was a partnership between the earth realm and the sky realm. With the help of Creator, our grandfather sun and grandmother moon agreed to work together with our mother, the earth, to create life. Then other beings of Creation were placed on the earth and in the sky. We, humans, Anishinaabe, were the last to be placed here. This is why we refer to ourselves as younger brothers and sisters to the rest of the beings in Creation."



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-biimaadiiziwin*, 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."



