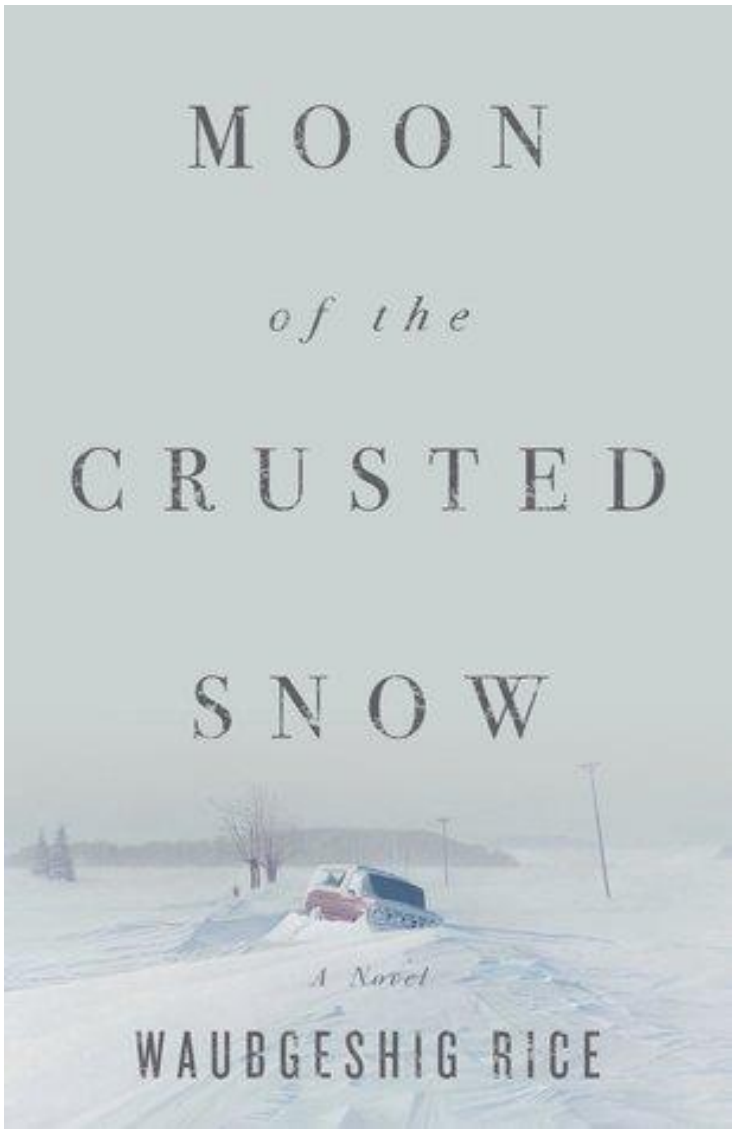

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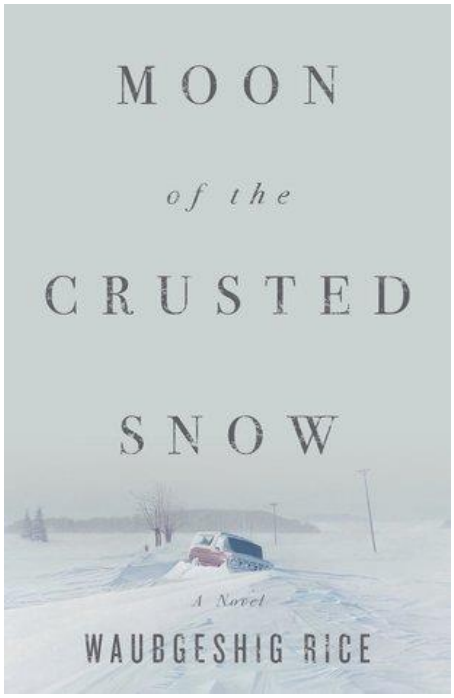

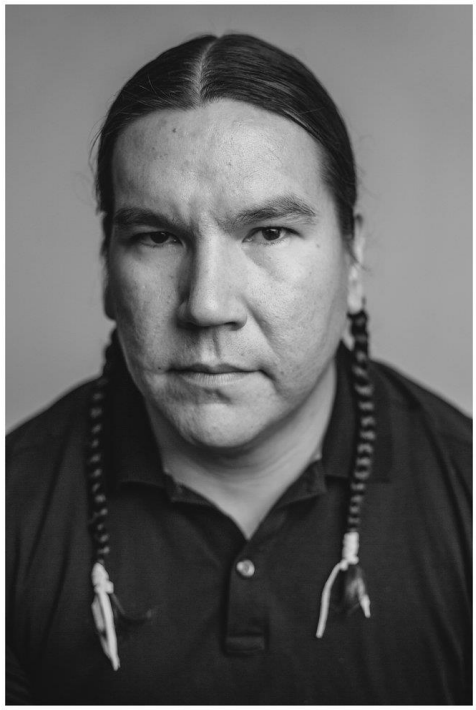

Moon of the Crusted Snow
by Waubgeshig Rice

About Waubgeshig Rice

from waub.ca

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.

Waub 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 Debwewin 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 the book

from ecwpress.com

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.

Reviews

from ecwpress.com and amazon.ca

"This slow-burning thriller is also a powerful story of survival and will leave readers breathless." — *Publishers Weekly*

"Rice seamlessly injects Anishinaabe language into the dialogue and creates a beautiful rendering of the natural world… This title will appeal to fans of literary science-fiction akin to Cormac McCarthy as well as to readers looking for a fresh voice in indigenous fiction." — *Booklist*

"The creeping tension and vividly drawn landscapes make Waubgeshig Rice's characters' choices all the more real." **—** *Toronto Star*

"*Moon of the Crusted Snow* sets itself apart **—** an apocalypse novel in reverse." **—** *Globe and Mail*

"Rice complicates and demands a rethinking of the apocalyptic category itself, which is the book's greatest revelation and strength . . . Rice's writing is measured and he has a lovely ear for the cadence of conversation **—** humour, rage, and introspection all coming through the dialogue . . . Rice's story teaches, but it's not didactic; it's original, and somehow takes the frenetic pace of a crisis, slows it down, and shows us its parts." **—** *Canadian Notes & Queries*

A Doubled Apocalypse

A remote community, the end of modernity, and an unnerving, 'intensely claustrophobic' novel

By Navneet Alang (Dec 2018), Literary Review of Canada,
from reviewcanada.ca

A sudden, sharp crack opens Waubgeshig Rice's *Moon of the Crusted Snow*. It is the sound of protagonist Evan's gun, echoing through an otherwise silent Canadian North as a moose is felled. As Evan approaches the bull, he awkwardly performs the Anishinaabe ritual of thanks, dropping tobacco in front of the carcass, an unfamiliar yet comforting process.

But the shattering of the silence is also the figurative sound of some unseen rupture to the south, a calamity that leaves phones and power lines dead, and replaces the general clamour of life with an eerie, chilling silence. The stage for the novel is set. The infrastructure of contemporary life falls away, and Evan and the small community in which he lives are forced to fend for themselves, often by returning to practices many around him have lost.

The novel is thus a refracted series of ruptures: not just the mysterious event that pushes the world into an apocalypse, but also the echoes of the forced assimilation and relocation of so many First Nations peoples. There is, too, the broader undoing of modernity, the seeming impossibility of going backwards from literacy and the ubiquitous technology that now holds life together: plumbing, electricity, fossil fuels, and telecommunications. A difficult question animates this spare, unnerving novel: What might it mean to decolonize modernity?

Rice's weapon here is the jump cut, the technique from film first transposed to English literature by James Joyce, in which time passes without explicit description. The breaks after each short chapter reveal a steadily accumulating sense of dread. First there is the ordinary: routine disruptions in power or communication in the isolated North, sudden bursts of weather. But then, the silent lines stay dead, and winter approaches with the looming threat of a life without modern convenience. Food begins to be rationed. Two of the community's members return home from a city to the south, bringing news of widespread violence and chaos as the connective tissue of life tears.

As tempers begin to fray, there is the ominous arrival of Justin Scott, a white man whose uncanny ease and swagger hints at a violent past. The resonance is unmistakable: a threatening, white outsider promises help—protection, know-how, labour—while auguring something much darker. The novel hinges on this doubled apocalypse, the one in fiction, and the one that has already befallen the Anishinaabe and other First Nations and Indigenous peoples in Canada. In the text it is the material infrastructure of life that has suddenly been taken away, but for Evan and his community—and perhaps for Rice as well—it is the cultural infrastructure that was destroyed by colonialism: language, ritual, tradition, and a connection to the land.

That history finds its expression in Aileen, an elder in her eighties who is one of the last remaining members to recall not just the language, but traditional values, beliefs, and forms of medicine. But as the winter sets in and tragedies build, she too succumbs to the cold and is laid to rest in a -storehouse with other frozen cadavers. The lack of power and food also exacerbates the lingering spectres of alcohol abuse and suicide, both of which add to the body count.

That pile of corpses becomes the site of the novel's most horrific turn, as Justin, the outsider, finally turns to it as a source of food—the consumption of First Nation flesh, a perfectly morbid metaphor that, in less skilled hands, would be a bit too on the nose. But Rice is restrained, and his spare prose effectively keeps explicit horror at bay, preferring the slow, steady build of tension. He tends to evoke rather than describe the sources of fear, creating a thriller-like, page-turning quality that makes the novel a quick, satisfying read. There are certainly times Rice breaks into slightly pedantic asides seemingly for his non-Indigenous audience, which is an unfortunate if perhaps unavoidable distraction.

More generally, though, the novel is intensely claustrophobic. Rice wisely resists the temptation to pull back the lens, keeping his focus on Evan's community, invoking the outside world with only the barest hints, which heightens the tension. But the emphasis on the small community also enmeshes the reader in the relationships of the novel, most importantly Evan's connection with his partner, Nicole, and their children. While no other character is afforded the same depth as Evan, the glimmers we are given—of the unsteady leadership of Terry, or Evan's troubled brother Cam—flesh out the feeling of a tight-knit, shrinking community in the process of reorienting itself.

The narrow focus also marks out in structure
a kind of cultural break. The community's imbrication in broader Canadian society is severed, but the novel eventually looks at this as a kind of liberation, a restoration of what has been taken and destroyed. By the book's end, a smaller, thinner community decides to leave the town and return to the lands they were historically forced out of. The reader is left to decide whether it functions better as a kind of projected fantasy or political polemic, an actual ideal of secession—if indeed one is forced to make such choices in literature at all.

This is the work done by speculative fiction and post-apocalyptic fiction in particular. It is the inverse of the prelapsarian fantasy, a chance to imagine what the world might be like if it all went to proverbial hell. As readers we walk a line between imagining the intensely personal—what would I do in this situation?—and contemplating how the impossibly complex networks that form modern society skew life in
a particular way.

Post-apocalyptic works have a particular resonance at the moment. We live in what feels like a moment of rupture, not just because of the rise of neo-fascism, but also the spectre of climate change. How we adapt to this new terrain will depend on some sort of radical reimagining of the world we have come to know, and it seems unlikely that we can continue to rely on technocratic capitalism as a way out.

But Rice's novel is less concerned with this broad, global reimagining. Rather, it deliberately focuses on a dislocated people coming to terms with the end of life as we know it. As such, *Moon of the Crusted Snow* is punctuated by a series of dreams: images of growing unrest in the community; piles of frozen cadavers foreshadowing the horror to come. The novel itself is a kind of dream, an aesthetic arrangement of what the world might be. In its circuitous blend of past and future, the shackles of both modernity and colonialism are broken by some unseen force, leaving a chance to think about how healing might begin.

Katharine Coldiron Reviews
Moon of the Crusted Snow by Waubgeshig Rice

from locusmag.com

Moon of the Crusted Snow is a book on the cusp. It's not a preface to apocalypse, and it's not the postscript; it takes place during the moment in which a society realizes that one kind of life is over, and another kind of life is going to be the norm. Rice isolates and stretches this moment, setting his novel in a remote community and giving the story several months to unfold. First phones go down, and then TV and radio, and then power. The trucks delivering groceries don't come. No one knows why, and no one arrives to explain. The remote community must fend for itself, and build a new way of life from the remains of the old.

Story is the primary asset of this book. The main character, Evan, is developed only to the extent he must be, and the language forgoes decoration and lyricism almost entirely. It's a simply written book, almost leaning to YA in its slow, deliberate sentences and plain vocabulary. But the story, one of survival, is terrifically powerful, a familiar narrative told in an unfamiliar location.

That location is the reserve for a First Nations band in northern Canada. (Since Rice is Canadian, some of his terms might be unfamiliar. In America, it would be the reservation of a Native American tribe.) The actual location is not specific, but the reserve is many miles from the nearest developed town. A few hundred of Evan's people live on the reserve, which is a nearly self-sufficient community, particularly thanks to traditional hunting and fishing. The winters are extraordinarily long and harsh. The band's interdependency is a major aspect of the novel, because, in extreme circumstances, interdependency becomes a means of survival.

Rice never reveals what has happened to make the power and communication grids go down. Whatever happened, it was big. Two young men attending school in the closest developed town return to the community a few weeks after the first outage, and they offer a sketch of the crisis as the outside world experienced it: food and water running out, insulin-dependent students dying, eventual rioting and desperation. The crisis, whatever it is, isn't due to a Canadian province cutting off the reserve's connections to the grid, but something more significant and ominous. How the band copes with this loss fuels the remainder of the novel.

Aiding the conflict is a white visitor, Justin Scott, a doomsday prepper who supposedly comes in peace and humility after realizing he can't survive on his own. Despite his guns and bravado, Justin is a man alone on someone else's property, as Evan realizes: "He's stranded… He needs us more than we need him." Scott brings divisiveness, deception, and violence to the community, almost serving as an allegory for white interference into Native ways and lands. There's plenty of conflict without Scott, though, as interdependency will always be controversial to those who believe they deserve more for having worked harder. These petty conflicts make **Moon of the Crusted Snow** what it is: a thorough look at the first stage of apocalypse as it affects a specific group of human beings.

The book brings to mind a 1959 novel from the throes of nuclear anxiety: Pat Frank's **Alas, Babylon**, which also focuses on a handful of people during and just after a major disaster. That

book seems to have fallen out of fashion, which is a shame. Like **Moon of the Crusted Snow**, it's less about testing and excoriating humans who have survived a catastrophe (e.g. Cormac McCarthy's **The Road**, or Emily St. John Mandel's **Station Eleven**), and more about the human reaction, right at eye level, to a major shift in the normal way of life. The worst possible reaction is giving in to panic, both novels instruct, and the best is to rely on your neighbors.

Rebecca Roanhorse posited in **Trail of Lightning** that Native American populations may be better equipped than white people to survive the world's end. Rice seems to agree: "Survival had always been an integral part of their culture. It was their history. The skills they needed to persevere in this northern terrain… were proud knowledge held close through the decades of imposed adversity… Each winter marked another milestone." More baldly, as an elder puts it late in the novel, "Yes, apocalypse. We've had that over and over. But we always survived. We're still here. And we'll still be here, even if the power and the radios don't come back on and we never see any white people ever again."

The novel's most significant achievement may be its mood. From mundane beginnings, the book increases its tension continuously across its 200 pages. It's a cliché, but this book is hard to put down. Written with such guilelessness that it's easy to read, and with such strong linearity and so little waste that it's extremely absorbing, **Moon of the Crusted Snow** is a humble but welcome addition to apocalyptic literature.

WHEN THINGS START TO FALL APART:

ANDREW WILMOT IN CONVERSATION WITH WAUBGESHIG RICE

From hamiltonreviewofbooks.com

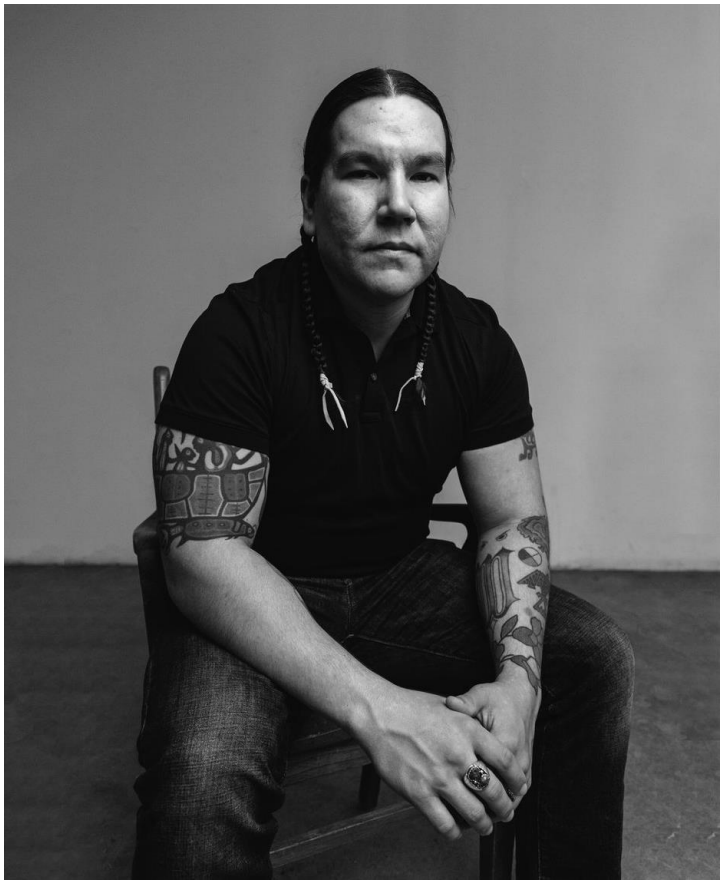

Photo credit: Rey Martin

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. He currently works as a multi-platform journalist for CBC in Sudbury. In 2014, he received the Anishinabek Nation's Debwewin Citation for excellence in First Nation Storytelling. Waubgeshig now splits his time between Sudbury and Wasauksing.

Andrew Wilmot: *Hi, Waub! Thanks so much for agreeing to speak with me about your new book,* Moon of the Crusted Snow*, and congratulations on its publication. I'd love to ask you about the genesis of this story. When did it first start taking shape for you?*

Waubgeshig Rice: Hi Andrew! It's my pleasure and honour to discuss my new book with you. Thank you very much for this opportunity, and for your kind words. The story that eventually

became *Moon of the Crusted Snow* really started taking shape about ten years ago. I've always enjoyed post-apocalyptic or dystopian fiction, but it wasn't until I read *The Road* by Cormac McCarthy that I really wanted to explore writing my own story in that genre. I really enjoyed that novel, but it left me wishing for more stories like it from an Indigenous perspective. I felt that because Indigenous nations have already endured apocalypse and largely exist in relative dystopia, a book about the end of the world that's centred on an Indigenous community would reflect a different spirit. It was an idea I kicked around for a long time, before finally sitting down to write it more than three years ago.

AW: *Your previous books,* Legacy *and* Midnight Sweatlodge, *both dealt with different forms of isolation experienced in First Nations communities via, among other things, location, privilege, and identity. In* Moon, *though, nature itself is a kind of accelerant, with an extreme (and possibly apocalyptic) winter furthering this sense of isolation and facilitating conflict. What led you to want to test this group of people in this way?*

WR: I think winter has always been the ultimate test of survival for humankind. Since time immemorial, people who've lived in climates that bring winter have always had this looming season of great challenges. Many cultures and nations would prepare for months to ensure communities made it through to spring. But that's something we've largely forgotten, with the luxuries of modern infrastructure. The community in *Moon of the Crusted Snow* isn't that far removed from the days of hunkering down for the winter. But in just a couple of generations, a lot of people have moved away from winter preparations like hunting and gathering wood, and have become more reliant on the amenities that bring them closer to the world to the south. So when they lose many of these conveniences, it's a sobering wake-up call to re-examine their roles and responsibilities to the land and their community as Anishinaabeg.

AW: *Piggybacking on all this talk of isolation, the book wastes no time in establishing the stakes: no cell service, no landlines, no outside communication of any kind as winter very quickly sets in. All told, it's an excellent horror set-up. When laying the groundwork for this story, did you have the sense that you were writing to a specific genre? Or do you see this book as carving its own path?*

WR: Because I was inspired by the post-apocalyptic genre in general, I always saw this story as part of those discussions. I wanted it to complement stories like *The Road* by showing how an Indigenous community would respond to a crisis that "ends" a world and survives in its aftermath. It's not a unique or original concept at all—see *The Marrow Thieves* by Cherie Dimaline and *Future Home of the Living God* by Louise Erdrich, for example—but I think there's an opportunity for richer conversations about the sustainability of communities and what we can learn from the land itself when things start to fall apart. It wasn't until editor Susan Renouf and I were into the revisions that we realized the story could serve as a decent thriller, too. As we worked to build the tension in the community, I think we started to scare ourselves!

AW: *Speaking of paths and following them (or not), Evan Whitesky is an interesting protagonist in that despite being a "rez lifer" he seems to exist on the fence between two worlds—he's part of the community, yes, but not fluent in Ojibwe and still learning and growing comfortable with older Anishinaabe customs. What was your reasoning behind this?*

WR: I appreciate that observation, because it really gets at what I was trying to do with him in general. I wanted to portray Evan as a rez "everyman" who embodies the paradox of modern Indigenous life, like many of us who grew up in a First Nation do. Within just a couple of generations, culture and language are scrubbed from his community due to the brutal impacts of colonialism. Even though he didn't endure the violence of residential schools himself, because his grandparents did, very little of his Anishinaabe identity was passed down to him. It's the common intergenerational trauma of these terrible assimilative measures. Fortunately, he still has links to the old ways, and they become clearer and more important during this crisis. But basically, I wanted to convey that there are a lot of people like Evan, wanting to learn about being Anishinaabe but finding it hard to connect with those old ways even though they live immersed in an Indigenous community.

AW: *As the community's situation worsens, we're given snippets of what things are like outside the community,* War of the Worlds-*style: bits and pieces of information doled out as rumour and hearsay. In the end, we never learn the true extent of things or the lasting impact of this especially brutal winter on the outside world—the word "apocalypse" being used in only one situation, and not until three-quarters of the way through the narrative. Can you speak to the decision to keep the story so laser-focused in this way? Was there ever a version of this story that focused more on the broader world?*

WR: I only ever wanted to tell this story from the perspective of the people in the community. It was really important to me to give the Anishinaabe characters the primary voice because I wanted to highlight their sense of community and relationship with the land as a means to survive. That said, though, I did thoroughly imagine what happened that led to the blackout and its wider impact on the broader world as I was developing the story. Those details were part of my initial notes, but never made it into the manuscript. I had to run these parallel experiences of this apocalyptic event in my mind in order to effectively peel back the curtain on the southern, urban world both here and there. As things slowly crumble on the rez, they're rapidly descending into chaos in the city. Honestly, it was fun to dip into that chaos throughout the story in different ways.

AW: *Continuing to focus on the crisis at the heart of this book, I'd like to now dive into the Justin Scott character, as there's quite a lot here to unpack. First, let me say that Scott is a fantastic villain—detestable in every way, especially in how familiar he is: an imposing, broadly sculpted white male with an aggressive, authoritarian streak who inserts himself into every situation, whether he belongs or not. What did you use as your starting point in developing a character like Scott? And was he always a factor in the planning of this book, or were there earlier drafts that focused more on just the survival/nature aspects of the narrative?*

WR: I really like "detestable in every way"! That's how I hoped readers would react to Justin Scott. Basically, I wanted to write as detestable a character as possible. An outsider coming in to manipulate and exploit the community was always critical to the plot. I wanted to create an antagonist who was essentially an allegory for settler colonialism on this land. I tried to make his physical and personal traits as alien as possible from the perspective of the Anishinaabeg in the story. He was there from the beginning, although a few months into writing the manuscript, I started to have some doubts. In this situation, would someone really leave a city and seek refuge in a faraway reserve? It seemed believable to me, but I worried it wouldn't be to some readers. Then I went to a Halloween party in Ottawa and got to chatting with a dude there about the apocalypse (it was obviously top of mind for me back then, haha). He eventually

revealed that his plan for an urban collapse was to find the nearest rez and survive there. That was all the validation I needed! Also, how presumptuous that he'd just expect to be welcomed to live there. And thus, Justin Scott became much clearer.

AW: *Scott's very presence, from his first moments, is both authoritarian and deceitful. It feels intentional that his first words, "I come in peace," are followed by laughter—it comes across as mocking in its intent, approaching a community as one would an alien in a science fiction film. Following this, Scott proclaims himself a "man of the land," implying that he doesn't have anything to learn and aims to control both the response to him and his placement in the community, right from the jump. When first introducing this character, what aspects of him were important for you to immediately convey to readers?*

WR: I think it was important for me to convey that he embodies conflict. He arrives well prepared and apparently very resourceful, but his intentions aren't that clear. The community leadership is immediately in a bind due to his presence, and he's able to take advantage of their uncertainty from the beginning. He inserts himself into as many situations as possible to flex his muscle and slowly assert control. At the same time, he earns the trust of some community members by exploiting their weaknesses. And I wanted him to be mysterious from the get-go as well. We never really find out anything about him, other than the skills and demeanour he displays as he settles in. What's his story? It's never made clear. I think that adds to the intrigue and loathing around him.

AW: *While not an overly violent book by any stretch, there are certainly notes of action and violence throughout. However, much of it is both sudden and muted, without excess gore, drama, or deliberate stylization. It really fits the story and the relatively quiet setting. Is this your normal approach to writing violence, or did you set out to write this specific story in this way?*

WR: Writing violence in a story about apocalyptic crisis is pretty much unavoidable. It was necessary to this story. But yeah, making those violent moments silent and muted, as you say, was very deliberate. That's mostly due to the overall pacing of the book—it's short, and while the descent into disorder is slow, the violence occurs as the tension builds and the rest of the story really picks up. So those moments had to happen quickly, and because it's about survival, the characters had to move on. I'm not sure if it's my normal approach to writing violence—I think it depends on the scenario.

AW: *Throughout the book, concepts of death and rebirth are prevalent—of one society crumbling and another asserting itself, preparing to take the place of the former. In this case, it's the idea that modern society (and specifically modern Canadian society) has failed and that survival depends on reconnecting with and reestablishing older customs. Was this something you'd planned from the beginning, or did this idea develop naturally through the writing of the book?*

WR: This is a message that I had wanted to convey from the beginning. Part of it goes back to what I mentioned earlier about putting a different lens on post-apocalyptic experiences and why an Indigenous perspective is crucial to consider. Nations and cultures have survived since time immemorial on this land without the fragile luxuries we're so dependent on today. If and when those things disappear, the answer to survival will be in the land, as it has always been. Also, a personal reason for driving this message home was to remind myself to reconnect with

the land. I grew up on the rez with lots of land-based knowledge, but I've lost a lot of that since I've lived in cities for two decades now. So now it's time for me to walk the talk, haha!

AW: *What are you reading right now? What have you read recently that you'd like to highlight?*

WR: This past year I read some of the most mind-blowing Indigenous literature I've ever laid my eyes upon: Tommy Orange's *There There*, Terese Marie Mailhot's *Heart Berries*, Eden Robinson's *Trickster Drift*, and so much more. I'm finally getting around to reading Joshua Whitehead's *Jonny Appleseed*, and next is Claudia Dey's *Heartbreaker*.

AW: *Lastly, what's next for you in terms of your writing?*

WR: I have almost a book's worth of short stories done. I just need to polish up a couple more, and hopefully there'll be a decent collection there. And I'm working on a non-fiction project with my current publisher, ECW Press. Details to be announced!

Additional Interviews:

"Waubgeshig Rice on Moon of the Crusted Snow" The Next Chapter with Shelagh Rogers (Dec 3, 2018):
https://www.cbc.ca/listen/live-radio/1-67-the-next-chapter/clip/15642419-waubgeshig-rice-on-moon-of-the-crusted-snow

"Waubgeshig Rice balances historical accuracy with dystopian future in new novel" Unreserved with Rosanna Deerchild (Jan 25, 2019): **https://www.cbc.ca/radio/unreserved**

"'Blew my mind': How Waubgeshig Rice's post-apocalyptic storyline became a reality" Unreserved with Rosanna Deerchild (Apr 9, 2020):
https://www.cbc.ca/player/play/1722351171838

Discussion Questions

from "Reading Guide – Moon of the Crusted Snow by Waubgeshig Rice"
found on oxfordreads.ca

1. On page 128, the narrator suggests that Evan and Nicole's children "were learning their language earlier and better than their parents had." Why do you think this is? Discuss how the author uses Ojibwe throughout the book to add to the story and develop the characters

2. 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?

3. Though never mentioned explicitly in the book, the Algonquian legend of the Wendigo hovers in the background of Moon of the Crusted Snow. How does the author use this traditional tale to tell his own story? Which characters can be seen to embody aspects of the Wendigo tale?

4. 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?

5. 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?

6. Discuss the different roles of the female characters throughout the story. How does Robin react as the crisis develops?

7. Rice told the Toronto Star last year that he has always been intrigued by "dystopian stories" like The Lord of the Flies, and The Road by Cormac McCarthy. Compare or contrast his book with others from the dystopian genre. How are these stories relevant to us in our own world? How do different authors address the possibility of societal or environmental collapse?

8. 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?

Discussion Questions

Selected from "Educational Resource for Moon of the Crusted Snow"
teachingcommons.yorku.ca

1.The novel begins with Evan hunting a moose. In what ways is Evan connecting with his Anishinaabeg identity when harvesting the moose?

2. 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 does Justin's way of living on the land compare with Evan's?

3. In what ways does Justin Scott's actions seem to be characteristic of practices associated with colonization?

4. How is Evan's Anishinaabe identity impacted by the residential school system?

5. Do you agree with Aileen when she says to Evan that their community has already experienced the apocalypse (page 149)?

6. In what ways does the community in the book reveal its resiliency after the blackout? Do you feel people who are living in an urban setting are being just as resourceful when dealing with the power and communications outage?

7. Do you feel that the members of this community are better equipped to deal with the aftermath of the blackout because they have been subjected to colonialism?

8. Members of this First Nation use computers, have Internet and cell phone service. Some families though, such as Evan's, hunt and fish to put food on the table. Were you surprised that contemporary cultural practices were blended with more traditional ones?

4. The band council is shown to be caring, competent and interested in doing the best for the community. In what ways does the depiction of the chief and councillors in this community contrast with the ways band councils are typically portrayed in popular culture?

8. How does the community depicted in the novel compare with what you have seen or heard about First Nations communities?

9. How does this book portray the connections between language (whether Ojibwe or English) and identity?

10. Evan Whitesky and Justin Scott represent two very different models of masculinity. What are the differences? The similarities? What impact do these different models have?

11. Did the families portrayed in the novel seem different from what you expected a First Nation family might be like?

12. According to Brenda Gunn, “The colonial process in Canada impacted Indigenous men and women differently.” How is this demonstrated in the book?

Read Brenda Gunn’s full article here: https://www.cigionline.org/articles/will-gendered-aspects-canadas-colonial-project-be-addressed

A Moon of the Crusted Snow Playlist

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From waub.ca

Drift by David Caesar, the artwork used for the cover of Moon of the Crusted Snow

I don't usually listen to music while I write. Sometimes I'll put on some powwow music or ambient heavy metal during the creative process, but I typically find anything with discernible English lyrics distracting when I'm trying to put English words together. I do draw a lot of inspiration from music, though, and I'll play a song or two before I sit down to write, and again when I'm done for the day.

Many songs influenced the writing of Moon of the Crusted Snow and were part of that pre- and post-writing ritual. Songs with speculative lyrics or dystopian themes were obviously in high rotation, given the story's post-urban setting and plot. I also found myself drawn to songs that felt like cold, bleak winter. And to counter that darkness, I also played tunes that hinted at renewal and a more hopeful future. So here are some of the tracks that carried me through writing this novel, in no particular order:

Nine Inch Nails – "The Day the World Went Away"

PJ Harvey – "The Ministry of Defence"

Propagandhi – "A Speculative Fiction"

Deltron 3030 – "3030"

A Tribe Called Red – "Burn Your Village to the Ground"

Metallica – "The Four Horsemen"

ISIS – "20 Minutes/40 Years"

Red Fang – "Prehistoric Dog"

Sepultura – "Refuse/Resist"

Stevie Wonder – "Higher Ground"

Björk – "Pluto"

Alexisonfire – "The Dead Heart"

Biipiigwan – "Nibaak"

Danny Brown – "When It Rain"

Iron Maiden – "Run to the Hills"

Additional Resources

A Moon of the Crusted Snow Playlist: https://www.waub.ca/a-moon-of-the-crusted-snow-playlist/

Educational Resource for Moon of the Crusted Snow, Teaching Commons @ York University: https://teachingcommons.yorku.ca/open-educational-resources/educational-resource-for-moon-of-the-crusted-snow/

Indigenous Canada is a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) that explores Indigenous histories and contemporary issues in Canada. You can read more about it and register by visiting https://www.coursera.org/learn/indigenous-canada

"The Indian Act Explained" on The Agenda with Steve Paikin (aired May 7, 2018): Interview with Bob Joseph, author of the book "21 Things You May Not Know About the Indian Act: Helping Canadians Make Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples a Reality" https://www.tvo.org/video/the-indian-act-explained

Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance directed by Alanis Obomsawin (1993). Presented by the National Film Board: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mhvx51s_ZV8
Recommended in "Why Waubgeshig Rice wants you to watch this 1993 documentary" video on YouTube