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## NOVEL STUDY AND TEACHER'S GUIDE FOR **NAPACHEE**

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### CLASSROOM USES

*Napachee* is a novel appropriate for grades 4 to 8 and can be used to explore the geography, culture and language of the aboriginal people of Canada's arctic including the clash of lifestyles and influences of both north and south that challenge the Inuit and Inuvialuit traditional heritage. The story is set primarily in the western arctic region of the Northwest Territories and the community of Sachs Harbour.

*Napachee* and his father, Eruk, struggle to reconcile their opposing points of view with respect to the value of southern experiences, products, attitudes and modern means of living. When two men from the zoo in Edmonton fly in to capture a polar bear cub, *Napachee* spies his chance at a trip to the big city, hiding in the bear's cage during the plane and truck ride south. Excitement changes to terror when one of the zookeepers discovers the stowaway and veers off the road near Yellowknife. The cub escapes into the wild while *Napachee* finds himself dwarfed by the concrete jungle of Edmonton, reeling from culture shock. Within a week, *Napachee* has turned his back on urban life and resolves to find his way home again. With the help of Jo, the zookeepers daughter, *Napachee* heads overland from Fort Providence near Yellowknife to Sachs Harbour, rescuing the cub along the way, proving to both his father and himself that he is the rightful inheritor of a life he once so badly wanted to escape.

The novel lends itself to discussion and activities in Language Arts, Social Studies, Visual Arts/Music/Writing and Life Skills as illustrated in this guide through suggested activities and related resources suitable for the classroom environment.

### LANGUAGE ARTS

*Napachee* discusses the origin of both the written and oral languages of Inuktitut and Inuvialuktun, roman orthography and syllabic printing and the struggle to maintain these languages in the face of the language of commerce: English. The novel itself includes a glossary of words in these languages used in the body of the text and exercises, which offers not only an opportunity to test reader comprehension, but also to develop and expand student vocabularies in English and these foreign languages. Each character has a very distinct way of speaking and teachers may wish to explore how that dialogue conveys tone, personality and emotion, challenging students to write with these concerns in mind when experimenting with their own writing.

### SOCIAL STUDIES

*Napachee* provides an opportunity to investigate and share the traditions, history and culture of the Inuit, Inuvialuit and other aboriginal peoples of Canada's arctic, while exploring the geography of the diverse land in which they live. The book can also be used to introduce questions regarding other minorities or cultures that may



1999 consecration of the new territory of Nunavut, *Napachee* leads naturally into timely discussions of why this new territory has come into existence and what it means, both to the people that live there and all Canadians.

## VISUAL ARTS, MUSIC, WRITING

*Napachee* sets the stage for further exploration of Inuit and Inuvialuit music, dance, singing, sculpture, beadwork and other indigenous craft. Artists well-known to this region may be profiled and the traditional beliefs behind the imagery in the artwork studied and contrasted to those in the south. Discussions about the importance and relevance of these crafts to the culture at large are also applicable.

## LIFE SKILLS

*Napachee* provides the context for discussion of conflict between teens and parents, both across generations and cultures. *Napachee*'s experience with stereotypes and subtle forms of racism allows students to address their own misconceptions and share instances where they have been the target or instigator of similar prejudice. Students can also discuss issues related to anxiety, separation, fear, independence, the loss of a parent and leadership.

## SETTING THE SCENE

### *The Region*

Until 1999, the Northwest Territories covered an area of 3.166 million square kilometres. Its population, 64,000, lived in numerous small communities scattered over this vast land mass. In 1999, two new territories were created from the former Northwest Territories; Nunavut and the new Northwest Territories. The Territory of Nunavut covers 1,994 square kilometers and has a population of 24,730. It begins east of the community of Holman and extends east to Iqaluit and Lake Harbour. It borders the Northwest Territories, and the provinces of Manitoba and Quebec.

The Northwest Territories is 1,172 square kilometres and has a population of 39,672. It borders the Yukon Territory, the provinces of British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and the territory of Nunavut. Together Nunavut and the Northwest Territories comprise Canada's arctic and form roughly one-third of the entire landmass of Canada.

The story takes place primarily in the western arctic region of the Northwest Territories, beginning in the remote community of Sachs Harbour on Banks Island in the Arctic Ocean. *Napachee*'s trip to Edmonton and journey home take him through some of the other towns in this area: Tulita, Norman Wells, Fort Good Hope, Tsiigehtchic, Fort McPherson, Aklavik, and Tuktoyaktuk. Other western arctic communities mentioned in the novel are: Deline, Colville Lake, Inuvik, Paulatuk and Holman. Tsiigehtchic, Fort McPherson, Inuvik, Aklavik, Tuktoyaktuk, Paulatuk and Holman are all situated inside the Arctic Circle.

The largest community in the Western Arctic is Inuvik with a population of 3,296. The population of the other Western Arctic communities ranges between 90 and 940 people. Fort McPherson, Tsiigehtchic and Inuvik are each serviced by air and the Dempster Highway. Norman Wells, Tulita, Deline, Fort Good Hope, Colville Lake, Aklavik and Tuktoyaktuk are serviced by air and winter snow routes when temperatures are cold enough. Sachs Harbour, Paulatuk and Holman are only serviceable by air. Each fall barges bring large loads of nonperishable goods to these communities. Inuvik and Norman Wells have regular asphalt runways, but the other communities of the Western Arctic have only gravel airstrips.

The primary aboriginal groups represented in the region of the western arctic are the Hareskin Dene, Mountain Dene, Gwich'in Dene, Metis, and Inuvialuit. Most residents make a living by working for the territorial or federal government, service industries, hunting, trapping and as guides for sport hunting. Norman Wells has a large oil industry sector. At one time Tuktoyaktuk was a booming oil town as well. Oil companies no longer operate in Tuktoyaktuk due to the decline in oil prices that made further exploration unjustifiable due to the expense.

Most towns in the western arctic, with the exception of Inuvik, only have a Northern Store and/or the local Arctic Co-op. The smaller communities have government offices, one school, a nursing station and perhaps a Royal Canadian Mounted Police detachment with one to four officers. Until recently, children in these communities had to be flown to Inuvik for high school.

The Northwest Territories and Nunavut are covered in forest, mountain ranges, canyons, tundra, fjords and

countless lakes and rivers. The Franklin Mountain range is to the east of Wrigley, Tulita, and Norman Wells. The Mackenzie Mountains are to the west of these communities. The Richardson Mountains lie to the west of Fort McPherson and Aklavik in the Mackenzie Delta.

The Mackenzie River flows from Great Slave Lake to the Mackenzie Delta and into the Arctic Ocean. The Mackenzie Delta is the second largest delta in the world. The land is dotted with thousands of lakes and rivers making it marshy and partially frozen; a condition called muskeg. Trees become smaller as one moves further north with the treeline located just north of Inuvik. The communities of Tuktoyaktuk, Paulatuk, Holman and Sachs Harbour are all above the treeline. The land here is called tundra and only small shrubs and vegetation grow.

Sachs Harbour sits on the southwest coast of Banks Island in the Arctic Ocean. The population has decreased over the past years and is now less than 200 people. The tundra is flat and covered with rock and small plants and shrubs. In summer wild flowers are plentiful. In the winter a hard covering of snow continually shifts and changes shape in the ceaseless wind. Muscox are plentiful on Banks Island and have been a source of food for Inuvialuit people there for many years.

The communities of the Northwest Territories and Nunavut experience more daylight in summer and less daylight in winter than most other locations around the world. At the peak of a Sachs Harbour summer, you will experience a short period of fading light in the early morning hours but the sun will not set. In the dead of winter, the reverse will occur. In early afternoon a soft light will emerge briefly but this is the only break in the winter darkness.

The temperatures in Sachs Harbour will not rise much above 10 degrees Celsius in the summer and average around -30 degrees in the winter. With no shelter from the wind, the temperatures with the wind chill factor can fall to -100 degrees. When the wind chill factor gets this cold exposed flesh can freeze in a matter of seconds and extra care must be taken.

### *Inuit and Inuvialuit History*

During the ice age Canada's arctic was covered by ice several kilometres thick. The glaciers that covered the

arctic melted approximately 10,000 to 15,000 years ago. Over the next 5,000 years the land above the tree line remained uninhabited by humans.

The first people to explore Canada's arctic were the Tuniit. Their camps started to appear in Alaska 5,000 years ago. Their communities spread across the western arctic, Nunavut, and along the coasts of Greenland and Labrador. It is believed that two items that the Tuniit brought with them allowed them to survive in this region: the bow and arrow and clothing fashioned from animal skins. Some believe the bow and arrow may have first been introduced to America by the Tuniit.

Inuit people came from the southern Bering Sea or north Pacific adapting their maritime hunting practices to the ice-covered waters 2,000 to 3,000 years ago. Some of these first Inuit people learned to hunt bowhead whales, setting up large communities along the northern coast of Alaska, where hunting was easier. A thousand years ago these North Alaska Inuit spread rapidly eastward across Canada's arctic to Greenland, displacing the Tuniit. They brought with them throwing harpoons, kayaks, skin-covered boats large enough to move entire villages, bows for hunting animals on the land, winter houses built from turf and boulders that were insulated for winter and many other tools and equipment for hunting and travelling on the ice.

For a time these people lived in permanent villages until this way of life no longer allowed the accumulation of large enough quantities of food for survival through the long winters. The Inuit began to winter in temporary snowhouse communities to facilitate the hunting of seal and smaller mammals.

Contact between Europeans and the Inuit likely occurred in the 1500s, when Portuguese fishermen reached southern Labrador. It is believed the Inuit and the people much later known as Inuvialuit all shared a common language, spiritual beliefs and legends.

Over the next four centuries the arctic became a land of exploration. Whalers from Europe and America hunted the bowhead whales for their oil and baleen. Explorers went overland, along the Mackenzie River, and sailed the channels in search of the Northwest Passage to the Orient. These nations introduced guns, cloth, metal, tools and utensils, musical instruments, dance, alcohol and tobacco

to the Inuit. These items became new commodities to be traded in the traditional Inuit bartering system. Some of the new visitors started to employ the Inuit to help with whale hunting or trapping, encouraging further integration. This environment also stimulated disease among the Inuit who had no immunity to southern illnesses.

Whaling declined over the years and trapping for furs replaced it as a primary source of income. Posts were established across the arctic. Furs, too, became a part of the barter system and a steady source of trade.

Missionaries of the Roman Catholic and Anglican denominations went north to turn what they considered pagan savages into Christians. The native peoples were in awe of any white man at that point in time, so they were for the most part well received. However, they were not always welcomed by the Shaman of these communities, who perceived the missionaries as a threat to their powers.

By 1920 most arctic exploration had ended and the bowhead whales had greatly declined in number. The original Inuit of the western arctic had been virtually destroyed by disease and a new group of Alaskan Inuit inhabited the area in their place and became known as Inuvialuit.

Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, unstable fur prices, disease and wildlife shortages affected the lives of the Inuit and Inuvialuit who began to live in permanent communities, altering their nomadic lifestyle.

### *Inuit and Inuvialuit Today*

The Inuit and Inuvialuit have experienced changes in the last hundred years that it took industrialized nations more than 5,000 years to adjust to. The switch from living on the land as nomadic hunter-gatherers to living in permanent settlements, learning English and holding salaried 9 to 5 jobs forced challenges to traditional language and cultural practices, including Inuit and Inuvialuit relationships with the land and their heritage. Some Inuit and Inuvialuit have tried to continue making their livelihood from hunting and trapping, but this has been made increasingly difficult as a result of the anti-fur lobby and low fur prices in recent years. These economic pressures have in many cases created a dependence on welfare and has also led to high rates of alcoholism, suicide, abuse and poverty in communities once proud and

self-sufficient.

Most Inuit and Inuvialuit, even if working full time, will spend much of their time on the land hunting, fishing and camping. The connection to the open land is at the centre of Inuit and Inuvialuit spirituality and is so important to their culture that they may risk losing full-time employment to be out on the tundra when game is close by and they must leave immediately in order to hunt these seasonal herds.

In most arctic communities, although they have modern houses in town, families maintain traditional camps outside of town in the summer. They commute daily to work and return to their camp after hours. In the winter, hunting and camping continue but families live in a house in the community.

Although reliant on many modern food and dry good items, the Inuit continue to draw as much food from the land as possible. In communities such as Cambridge Bay and Sachs Harbour, southern meat products are extremely expensive. Dairy and vegetables are likewise overpriced: 2 litres of milk or a head of lettuce can cost as much as seven dollars. Eating caribou, muskox, seal, fish and whale allows large families to retain self-sufficiency by decreasing costs. Hunting however, with its modern dependency on motor boats, snowmobiles and four-wheelers is not as cheap an option as it once was.

The advent of television, which appeared in many towns only as recently as 1983, has had a dramatic effect on the desires and expectations of people across the north. Young people have been particularly affected by the wish to emulate the fashions and trends of their southern counterparts. This in turn has increased family expenses and created greater tension between generations. While Inuit and Inuvialuit youths are expected to go to school and complete their studies, they are often also expected (or want) to help with more traditional efforts on the land. Confused by simultaneous feelings of pride and shame or embarrassment they are further taunted by the temptation of alternate southern lifestyles.

As with any small community, options for activity are limited and idle time can be dangerous. The Northwest Territories and Nunavut have the highest adolescent suicide rate in Canada, one of the highest in the world. With a rapidly changing social landscape, aboriginal

peoples of the north constantly confront economic and cultural pressures from both past and present.

### *Language*

In recent years there has been a resurgence of interest in the preservation of aboriginal languages and cultures across the north. The Inuit, Inuvialuit and Dene have made a concentrated effort to revive their languages, some of which have been completely lost. These languages are being reintroduced into the school curriculum in many communities so that students can maintain, and share, their own language and culture.

The written and spoken Inuit/Inuvialuit languages are rich in dialects: seven dialect groupings of Inuktitut and Inuvialuktun are spoken in the arctic. Inuit and Inuvialuit across the north adjust to each other's dialects fairly easily and they are able to understand their neighbours without too much difficulty. Dene languages, Gwich'in and Slavey, are also spoken in the western arctic.

It is said that Inuktitut, rather than being based on a string of words being added to each other to convey meaning, is based on blocks of words locked together to convey meaning.

#### *Quviasuktunga tamaaniinnama*

( happy + I here + in + be + because I )

Here is an examples of the dialect heard in western Nunavut that means hello:

*Qanuritpit* ( cun - ah - wut - put ) - how are you

Moving from Cambridge Bay west, the Inuktitut language is written in "roman orthography", just as it is in Labrador, Alaska and in Greenland. In the rest of Nunavut, however, Inuktitut is written in "syllabics".

Nunavut has three official languages; Inuktitut, English and French. The western reaches of Nunavut have seen the greatest loss of language. Schools are now trying to salvage Inuktitut by teaching it to their young with the hopes they will speak it at home and to each other despite the heavy presence of English in TV and print media.

## MAIN CHARACTERS

- **NAPACHEE** is the central character of the novel. He is fourteen years old and lives in Sachs Harbour, Northwest Territories with his parents and sister. He helps his father on the land, hunting and fishing, but longs to experience the world to the south. Given his waning patience for his father's "stubborn" ways he stows away in a zookeeper's plane en route to Edmonton with a polar bear cub in order to sample the culture he covets firsthand.

- **ENUK** is Napachee's father. He was born on the land and cannot understand why the younger generation wants to abandon the traditional methods of hunting and living so revered by his ancestors. He is constantly in conflict with his son and struggles to understand why Napachee would reject a lifestyle he is so proud of.

- **TALIK** is Napachee's mother. She is often the peace-keeper between her husband and son who fight frequently. She attempts to appease both Napachee and her husband by explaining the rationale for the other's point of view.

- **PANNIK** is Napachee's younger sister who often is charged with collecting him from work or friends in the community centre to complete his duties at home or to attend mealtimes. She carries Napachee's younger brother in an amoute on her back.

- **JOSEPH** is Napachee's closest friend in Sachs Harbour and he often meets him at the community centre to play ping pong, videos or other games. Napachee tells his father he is with Joseph when he is really with the zookeepers. Joseph teases Napachee about his father's old-fashioned ways but identifies with his frustration and anger.

- **JAMES STRONG** works for the zoo in Edmonton, Alberta. He is kind-hearted and has spent his life trying to teach others about animals and the importance of their survival. He has one daughter and is a widower.

- **JO STRONG** is James Strong's daughter. She is head-strong and feels her father treats her like a child, being increasingly overprotective since the loss of her mother. She joins Napachee on his journey home, after showing him around Edmonton, as a means of proving to her father she is capable of responsibility and independence.

- JARVIS is James Strong's right-hand man, determined to capture two cubs in the north. He is often abusive toward both animals and children. Unlike James his concern is not for the animals he works with, but the money they bring him. He beats Hagiyok prior to the bear's escape.

- HAGIYOK is a young polar bear cub captured and taken away from his mother by James Strong and Jarvis on the tundra near Sachs Harbour. He is transported to the Edmonton zoo but escapes near Yellowknife when the vehicle goes off the road. In the wilderness, he encounters animals foreign to him and eats fish and vegetation until he is joined by Jo and Napachee who guide him home. He is believed to have a unique and special connection to Napachee who can communicate to him without words.

- JOHNNY CHARLIE is a respected former Chief of Fort McPherson who guides the travelers from Fort McPherson to Aklavik, telling them about the history, geography and beliefs in the area and introducing them to other communities.

- WILFRED POKIAK is a friend of Napachee's father who lives in Tuktoyaktuk. He takes Napachee and Jo from Tuktoyaktuk to Sachs Harbour in his schooner despite the vessel's poor condition and rough weather.

## PLOT OUTLINES

### *Chapter 1*

While on a caribou hunt Napachee tells his father he does not want to learn the ways of his forefathers, but instead wants to visit the south to experience firsthand the adventure of that different world. When Napachee expresses his desire to make contact with men from the zoo who are staying in Sachs Harbour, Eruk becomes enraged. Napachee's mother, Talik, attempts to reconcile them at a feast at the community centre several nights later with little success. Napachee runs off, upset about the prospect of never being understood. Meanwhile the zookeepers have captured a polar bear cub to be transported to Edmonton, Alberta.

### *Chapter 2*

Despite the chance of further disapproval from his father, Napachee approaches James Strong and offers to help

him feed and wash the caged polar bear cub. Jarvis, Strong's assistant, is a bully with little patience for the boy or bear. Napachee hunts for seal with his father but is again uninterested in learning from his elder. When Napachee returns to the camp to care for the bear he names the cub Hagiyok and learns of the southerners' hasty plans for departure. He devises a plan.

### *Chapter 3*

Napachee has befriended the polar bear cub who seems strangely accepting of his new companion. He stows away in its cage as they head south on a cargo plane. Shortly after the bear cub is transferred to a flat bed truck in Yellowknife for the final leg of its journey, Napachee is discovered by Jarvis. The truck swerves out of control and crashes, the cub escaping into the wild. Napachee is wrestled to the ground by Jarvis who delivers him to Edmonton and the apartment of James Strong. There he spends the night, rising only to watch the noisy city below Strong's 20th floor apartment balcony, and finally drifts off into a strange dream.

### *Chapter 4*

Napachee is introduced to Jo, James Strong's daughter, who confuses him for Japanese and begrudgingly agrees to show him the city. Before leaving, James insists Napachee call his parents, but Napachee pretends there is no answer and hangs up. After a confusing episode in the elevator, the two young people take the bus to visit James at the zoo and have a picnic lunch. Napachee begins to learn that life in the city is founded on new rules (no fires in public parks) and while it does offer restaurants and movies and cars it is crowded, fast-paced and disorienting.

### *Chapter 5*

Napachee is overcome by culture shock after a visit to the West Edmonton Mall. The stores, crowds and fast pace take their toll and in a conversation with Jo's friends Tim and Jill reveal how different their world is from his own. Surprisingly, Napachee feels pride in describing life in the north: hunting, food, houses and climate. Regardless, he has determined he must head home and devises a plan to return north overland. Jo hears him attempting to sneak out of the apartment during the night and convinces him to allow her to join him on the journey.

They stow away in Jarvis' truck as he drives to the crash site in an attempt to track the cub. Undiscovered, they follow the bear's prints then camp for the night.

### Chapter 6

Once in the bush, Napachee and Jo veer away from Jarvis' route and come upon the polar bear cub just as it is set upon by a pack of wolves. The cub warms to Napachee again and gradually adjusts to Jo. As they battle mosquitoes and search for fish in the nearby streams the two companions compare reasons for needing to do this trip. All the while the trio is followed by a bothersome raven, a talisman for their journey. Using the skills their fathers have taught them, Napachee and Jo head north.

### Chapter 7

Napachee begins to discover a connection to the land he has never before acknowledged and puts it to use finding small game and fish for their meals. He encounters a mountain lion and a Dall's sheep who appear and disappear stealthily but without conflict. Jo proves herself a capable companion and asks many questions about the geography and people of the north. The forest is dry and lightning strikes in the distance starting a freak fire. Napachee, Jo and Hagiyouk escape across a river and flee the area before flames engulf them. Meanwhile, Jarvis leads the rest of the search party astray and begins his own review of the area, vowing to get revenge for the trouble Napachee and the bear have caused him.

### Chapter 8

Eruk blames himself for Napachee's trip south and his subsequent disappearance. Talik attempts to console him, convinced that Napachee is alive and will return home. After a close encounter with a search helicopter they believe to be Jarvis, the travelers duck into a wooded area and are greeted by Alfred, from the community of Tulita. He tells the trio that an elder in the village predicted the arrival of a boy with special powers, a red-headed girl, and a polar bear cub. Napachee and Jo are treated as special guests and learn the legends of the region, including the tale of Yamaria told to them by Alfred's father who takes the visitors on a tour of the neighbouring Dene land.

### Chapter 9

Napachee, Jo, and Hagiyouk make their way further north to Fort Good Hope, traveling by boat along the Mackenzie river to Fort Good Hope where the Hareskin Dene hold a celebration in their honour and Jo and Napachee visit a church famous for its beautiful paintings. After a short visit the travelers continue on to Tsiigehtchic onto the banks of the Red River and then negotiate passage to Fort McPherson. Johnny Charlie, a well-respected Chief, tells them the stories of Shildii Rock and the Mad Trapper of Red River before ushering them on to Aklavik. There they are assisted by the Gwich'in Dene, given supplies, and loaned snowmobiles to continue on to Tuktoyaktuk. Just outside this village they are cornered on thin sea ice by Jarvis' helicopter. He points a rifle and threatens to shoot Hagiyouk just seconds before the ice gives way and Jarvis falls through to his death.

### Chapter 10

Napachee and Jo secretly contact Wilfred Pokiak, a friend of Napachee's father, in Tuktoyaktuk and help him ready his schooner, *The Sea Otter*, for the trip to Sachs Harbour. When the time is right they make the journey, avoiding pack ice to land on the shores of Banks Island. They are within sight of their final destination.

### Chapter 11

The trio makes the last leg of their journey home and are confronted by a herd of muskox before being reunited with Eruk and Hagiyouk's mother, the unwitting hunter and target in a near-miss. Napachee has learned that he does in fact belong in the land of his ancestors and along with the other aboriginal peoples of the north must work to keep his culture and heritage alive. Jo is invited to stay with Napachee's family until her father can be contacted.

## ACTIVITIES

Classroom discussions, research in the library and at home, hands-on creative activities, and the use of outside resources through field trips and visiting specialists can be addressed separately or as part of an integrated approach. Reference resources are listed in the bibliography at the end of this guide. Keep in mind that though this



novel refers specifically to Inuit and Inuvialuit cultures many activities can be adapted to be inclusive of other cultures in the classroom as well.

## LANGUAGE ARTS

1. As noted, the Inuit and Inuvialuit language is spoken in over seven dialects and written in two forms, roman orthography and syllabics. The website “nunavut.com” gives an excellent discussion of the language and dialects and the syllabic alphabet. Have students write their names using syllabics. Invite them to “translate” several short comprehension questions and statements using Inuit words listed on the site.
2. Using the words in the glossary at the back of the novel invent a scene that might have been in the novel, first from the point of view of a southern character like Tim or Jill asking about the north, then from Napachee or Joseph’s point of view giving a newcomer to the village a tour of Sachs Harbour. Break into pairs and ask students to act out each role.
3. Napachee and Jo travel overland for many days, relying on each other’s company and the help of others to see them home. Imagine they each kept journals while on route. How would they differ? What would they describe? What worries would their entries reveal? Students should write one-page entries in the journal at three different points along the journey: eg., the first night of camping, the escape from the fire, the encounter with Johnny Charlie, Alfred or Wilfred or set in a village en route. Encourage students to stay in character.
4. Jarvis speaks abruptly and aggressively due to his anger toward his boss and the antics of Napachee and the bear. James is more compassionate, stopping to explain the circumstances. Jo teases Napachee and pretends she is unafraid. Write a short scene of dialogue where these or other characters interact demonstrating how descriptive language, tone and adjectives can convey mood.
5. Divide the class into two teams. One team will write down all the words in the first 5 chapters of the novel that are unknown to its members and look up definitions for them in a dictionary. The second team should do the same for the last 6 chapters of the novel. Once both the vocabulary and definitions sections are complete, have

the two teams face off, one team asking for a definition the other providing it, alternating one word each. Correct answers receive one point. The team with the most points wins. Use the same words for a spelling bee.

## SOCIAL STUDIES

1. One of the main characters in the novel is a polar bear, but Jo and Napachee also encounter whales, mountain lions, Dall’s sheep, ravens, muscox and caribou. Divide the class into groups, assign one animal to each group and have them prepare a written project for presentation to the class about its unusual habits, eating and hunting preferences, its indigenous habitat and other interesting data and photos. Library and internet research is appropriate.
2. The northern geography is diverse and dramatic. Again, break the class into groups and assign various areas of the arctic to each group with attention to how the land was formed, who lives there (both human and animal), average temperatures, snowfall, and daylight. Compare these findings to those of their home community. Has anyone ever visited the north? What was it like?
3. What causes the northern lights (aurora borealis)? The library and the Environment Canada website are excellent sources of information. Provide colour photocopies or photos of the lights and compare them to a sunset or sunrise. What other astrological phenomena might be better seen in a northern sky?
4. The study of Inuit/Inuvialuit history and culture reveals a history of resourcefulness in order to survive and adapt to both the landscape and southerners who came to work or live among them. How have other aboriginal groups in Canada fared under similar conditions? How are these aboriginal cultures the same/different? What can we learn from these cultures and from history. Have each student write a short answer to this question, citing examples where possible.
5. Why was the Territory of Nunavut created? Why is it important to recognize the distinct culture and society of the Inuit? What are some of the ways we recognize or fail to recognize culture in our own communities? In our own classroom?
6. Napachee ice-fishes and drives snowmobiles and dogsleds. Research these and other northern sports like



hockey, the Airplane, neck-pull, one foot high kick and two foot high kick and try to simulate them, dividing into teams if needed, during recess or class (winter conditions providing).

## VISUAL ARTS/MUSIC/WRITING

The aboriginal cultures of the north are world-renowned as artists and musicians. Colorful clothing, beadwork, furs, paintings, prints, tapestries and carvings from antlers, soapstone and other medium are plentiful.

1. Traditional northern arts and crafts such as carving and beadwork are a major source of artistry, tourism, income and pride in the north. Take out books in the library with examples of this kind of work and the way it is achieved and have the class (in groups) profile an artist from each of the major northern communities who has achieved some recognition. Field trips to museums or gallery exhibits can be scheduled where possible.
2. Drum dancing is practiced by all aboriginal peoples of the north. Students can produce drums of different types and hold a drum dance of their own after listening to tapes or videos demonstrating the means of constructing and playing the instrument. The dances may involve costumes that can be imagined or copied depending on the ambition of the class and teacher.
3. Throat singing is only practiced in the eastern arctic, Nunavut. It is a haunting sound produced when two women place their mouths together or less than inches apart and sing by breathing into each other's throats. What other cultures create music through the innovative use of vocal sounds?
4. Invite classroom groups to research the facts behind the stories of the Mad Trapper, Shildii Rock and other famous sites and figures in northern history and lore. Invite students to volunteer legends from their own family backgrounds. Do legends created in different cultures have any common themes? Devise a legend that tells a story important to your own beginnings, beliefs or community.
5. Jo witnesses many of the women in the villages she visits making clothing, or using the materials of the animals and land of the north to fashion both practical implements and art. What crafts or artistic traditions have students

inherited from their own place, culture and family?

## LIFE SKILLS

One of the most difficult tasks we face is achieving real understanding of peoples whose background and culture are very different from our own. Prejudice results from fear of the unfamiliar or unknown, and is more likely to become an issue where economic pressures (loss of jobs, rivalry) and interpersonal concerns (personal relationships, politics) enter the picture.

Extensive literature is available on multicultural matters and issues related to racism. Publications of the Canadian Education Association, federal and provincial governments, social science councils, teachers' organizations and some school boards may be useful. *Napachee* lends itself to exploring some of these issues in the classroom and may be particularly useful if the opportunity is taken to move beyond the experiences of these Inuit youths to those of other cultures.

1. Break the class into pairs and have students interview each other about where they were born, where their parents were born or grew up, what their ethnic origins are, what their religious practices are, special customs or events the student's family celebrates and different places they have lived. (Some students may not feel comfortable discussing their culture, religion etc. Teachers should use discretion and take these feelings into account). What does each student have in common with *Napachee*? How did they feel when they entered a "new world" whether that be a new town, school, or culture?
2. If comfortable, some students may wish to volunteer times or situations when they have felt pre-judged or the target of discrimination. These are sensitive subjects and the class should be prepared for emotional reactions and listen attentively and with understanding. In what way did Jo and her friends prejudge *Napachee* and the people who live in the arctic? What are the dangers of prejudging others? How do we avoid doing this?
3. The story deals with problems *Napachee* faces as a young adult confronting the "old fashioned" ways of his father, a source of embarrassment and frustration for a child who wishes to be independent and recognized for his own identity. How are these conflicts similar to those

every teen faces, regardless of culture? How can parents and children better understand each other and avoid “running away” from each other and their problems?

4. Pannik, Napachee’s sister, his parents and Jo’s father were likely all extremely worried about the disappearance of the two teens, especially given the uncertain terrain and risks to their survival in wilderness conditions. How did they maintain their faith and hope for Napachee and Jo’s safety? How did the runaways feel about deserting their families and causing them such worry? What does this say about their true feelings for each other?

5. Napachee and Jo share leadership during the trip, each contributing the skills they have to survive in the wild. While Jo knows more about the southern landscape, and Napachee is more experienced in the north, both cooperate and respect each other’s advice and experience. When have students taken leadership roles and how did this make them feel? Ask for examples of shared leadership (in the outdoors camping, in the classroom, in sporting events or in leisure activities) where expertise was required.

6. Jo has lost her mother, and now both she and Napachee are separated from their parents without guarantee of reunion. How do they cope with fear and loss and what might be their source of strength? Have students write a letter to a lost friend or family member reassuring them.

## FIELD TRIPS AND GUESTS

If possible arrange to have a guest of Inuit/Inuvialuit, Dene or other aboriginal descent visit your class. If no one is immediately available in your area, contact the author as he may be able to arrange a visit with advance notice.

Names of Inuit/Inuvialuit organizations:

- Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. (NTI), Cambridge Bay, Nunavut, 867-983-2517
- Government of Nunavut, main office, Bag 800, Iqaluit, Nunavut, X0A 0H0, 867-979-5822
- Inuvialuit Regional Corporation, 107 Mackenzie Road, Inuvik, NT, X0E 0T0, 867-777-2737

- Nunavut Tourism, Cambridge Bay, Nunavut, 867-983-2842

- Inuvialuit Education Foundation, 107 Mackenzie Road, Inuvik, NT, X0E 0T0, 867-777-2437

- Inuvialuit Communications Society-Tusaayaksat Newspaper, 286 Mackenzie Road, Inuvik, NT, X0E 0T0, 867-777-2067

- Inuit Broadcasting Corp.-Main office, 1085, Iqaluit, Nunavut, X0A 0H0, 867-979-6231

Contact your local museums and art galleries to see if they have arctic or Inuit art exhibits. Carvers and other artists from the north often exhibit in larger centers.

If students are interested in having northern e-mail pals this can also be arranged by contacting the author who can facilitate contact with northern schools and community centres.

## ILLUSTRATIONS

1. Inuit woman dancing to drums
2. Inuit men dancing the story of the hunt
3. Family riding on a komatic on the sea ice
4. Muskox on tundra near Sachs Harbour
5. The author’s sister at Shildii Rock
6. Putting the finishing touches on an igloo
7. Mother with baby
8. Polar bear running from noise of helicopter

## RESOURCES

### BOOKS

- Seidelman, Harold and Turner, James, *The Inuit Imagination*, Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1993.
- Steltzer, Ulli, *Inuit: The North in Transition*, 1982.
- *Up Here: Life in Canada’s North Magazine*, Yellowknife: Outcrop Publishing, 1985, bi-monthly.
- Above and Beyond Magazine

• North, Dick, *The Mad Trapper of Rat River*, Toronto: Macmillan Canada, 1972.

• Nuligak, trans. Metayer, Maurice, *I Nuligak*, P. Martin Associates, 1966.

## AUDIO/VIDEO

Tapes of throat singing and drum dancing can be purchased from CBC North in Yellowknife or Iqaluit. CBC North also has several videos that illustrate life in the North and activities such as Arctic sports.

- CBC Yellowknife: 1-867-920-5400
- CBC Iqaluit: 1-867-979-6100

## WEB SITES

About the author and the novel: <http://www.beachholme.bc.ca>. The Beach Holme page. Includes information on Robert Feagan, *Napachee* and other titles.

### *The North*

[www.nunavut.com](http://www.nunavut.com)

For general information about the territory of Nunavut, this site offers links to government, businesses, education, culture and language, tourism and discussion groups

[www.gov.nt.ca](http://www.gov.nt.ca)

The official homepage of the government of the Northwest Territories

[www.weatheroffice.com](http://www.weatheroffice.com)

The website of Environment Canada provides weather and climate information on all of Canada's regions.

[www.statcan.ca](http://www.statcan.ca)

Statistics Canada official website.

### *Inuit Artwork*

[www.inuit.com](http://www.inuit.com)

The *Inuit Gallery of Vancouver* website offers a glimpse of their collection of Inuit artwork.

[www.novator.com/vc-catalogue/Isaacs-Catalog/Isaacs-Internet.html](http://www.novator.com/vc-catalogue/Isaacs-Catalog/Isaacs-Internet.html)

The *Isaac Inuit Gallery* is also a good resource for Inuit artwork.

[www.nlc-bnc.ca/north/norint-e.htm](http://www.nlc-bnc.ca/north/norint-e.htm)

National Library Exhibit of Inuit works: *North: Landscape of the Imagination* also features an online book that gives a history of the Inuit people throughout the ages.

### *Inuit and Inuvialut Language and Culture*

[www.govt.nt.ca/kids/school/inukcar.htm](http://www.govt.nt.ca/kids/school/inukcar.htm)

[www.arctic.ca/LUS/Inuktitut.html](http://www.arctic.ca/LUS/Inuktitut.html)

Online guides to the Inuktitut language

[www.siksik.learnnet.ca/Inuuqatigiit/index.htm](http://www.siksik.learnnet.ca/Inuuqatigiit/index.htm)

*Inuuqatigiit: The Curriculem from the Inuit Perspective* gives an overview of the educational curriculem from the northern point of view.

[www.geocities.com/Athens/9479/intuit.html](http://www.geocities.com/Athens/9479/intuit.html)

This site includes the new Inuit language place names along with the previous Anglicized versions.

[www.cmcc.muse.digital.ca/membrs/fph/storytell/intoeng.html](http://www.cmcc.muse.digital.ca/membrs/fph/storytell/intoeng.html)

*CMCC: Storytelling: The Art of Knowledge* features a sampling of traditional tales from Inuvialuit, Algonquin, Mi'kmaq and other aboriginal cultures.

### *Organizations*

[www.magi.com/~itc](http://www.magi.com/~itc)

*National Inuit Youth Council*

[www.inuvialuit.com](http://www.inuvialuit.com)

*Inuvialuit Corporate Group*

## CONSTRUCTING THE NOVEL

Robert Feagan, on writing *Napachee*:

"I have traveled across Canada and through the United States, Jamaica, Venezuela, The Dominican Republic, the Bahamas and Mexico. No matter where I go, people I talk to ask me about my experiences in the arctic and are fascinated by how different life is there. They always want details and it seems that invariably one of their first questions, whether in jest or seriousness, is 'do you live

in an igloo?’ It is my hope that *Napachee* offers young people the answer to this question and other stereotypes of the north. I hope they have learned enough to pique their interest so that they may want to learn more about this incredible part of our world and its people, perhaps even the desire to visit and see for themselves. If this book has inspired that curiosity and empathy for the old and young of the arctic and the challenges that face them, *Napachee* will have been a good guide to his country.

“The people of the north have an amazing love of life, sense of humor, and distinctive culture that is unique and precious. I consider myself very privileged to have been able to experience the wonders of the arctic. No matter where I go, I will always be drawn back to the north.

“I had always intended to sit down and write this story but never seemed to have the time with a full time job and children to raise. One spring I travelled to B.C. to purchase a vehicle, and on the return drive to Inuvik, I hit a rock slide at night. It destroyed my oil pan and I was stranded for a week waiting for parts. With no distractions, I spent that week writing down my ideas for *Napachee*. This gave me the inspiration and energy to continue the book once I returned to Inuvik and I finished the first draft after six months. My first experience with subsequent re-writes was an eye opener and where the real “work” started. In the end it was all very satisfying.

“I relied on my experiences and friends for the background information required. When I lived in Cambridge Bay I spent a great deal of time with the young people, coaching hockey and just hanging out with them. My experience with these friends gave me a mental picture of how *Napachee* would look, act, think and feel.

“The character of Johnny Charlie was very special because Chief Charlie was a real person. He was someone my father looked up to and respected. Later in his life he enjoyed acting as a guide for people in the Mackenzie Delta. He passed away very suddenly from cancer several years ago.

“These are the memories of the north I cherish most and always will: standing in the darkness of winter and watching my breath exhale in the frozen air under the northern lights or the first sight of the sun; sitting in my tent

in the midst of a spring storm, as the wind and snow rage around me; walking on the tundra one summer morning and marveling at the flowers, animals, and silence; being one of a circle of smiles, laughing about each other, friends, the simplicity that so often eludes us.”

## ABOUT ROBERT FEAGAN

Robert Feagan lives in St. Albert, Alberta where he moved in 1996 after spending most of his life in the Northwest Territories. Robert has lived in Fort McPherson, Inuvik, Yellowknife and Cambridge Bay. He worked for the government in Yellowknife, Cambridge Bay and Inuvik and has visited or lived in almost every region of the arctic. Robert was born in Fort McPherson where his father was stationed with the RCMP. He traveled the surrounding area as a boy with his father as he patrolled by dog team and speedboat. His father was also transferred to Ottawa, St. Johns, Charlottetown and Halifax, but always returned north. When his father retired he became the first and only non-aboriginal person to be made an honorary Gwich’in by the people of the Mackenzie Delta.

## CONTACTING THE AUTHOR

Robert Feagan visits many schools and libraries, and may be contacted through Beach Holme Publishing:

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1-888-551-6655  
bhp@beachholme.bc.ca  
www.beachholme.bc.ca/

## BUYING THE NOVEL

Copies of *Napachee* may be ordered from bookstores or educational wholesalers for \$8.95. The Teacher’s Guide can be ordered from Beach Holme (above). A free Teacher’s Guide is provided with each class set of 20 +.