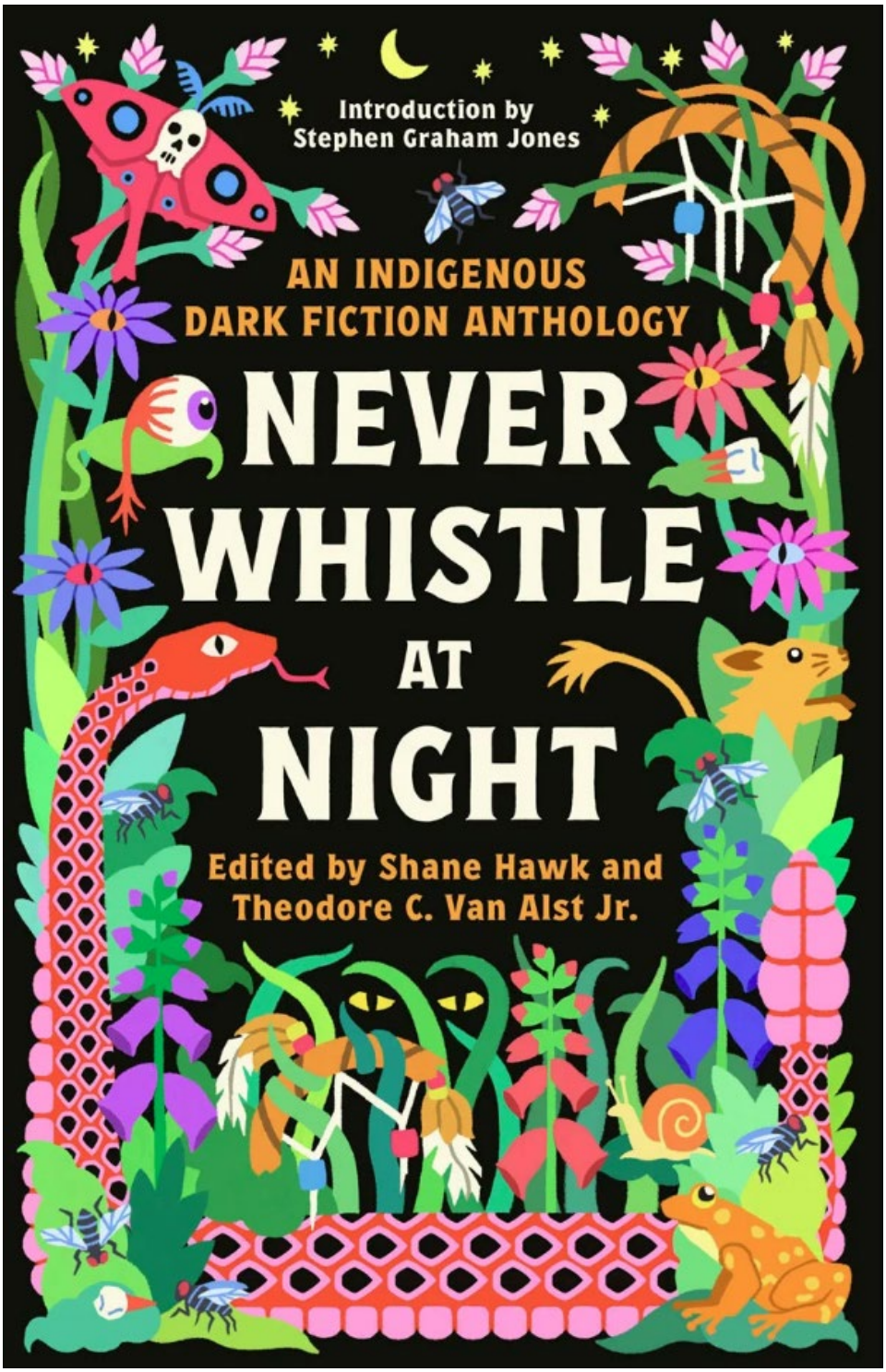
Yavapai College Riders Read
Reading Guide - 2026-2027



To the students of Yavapai College—

Riders Read was created for you and is sustained by your curiosity, courage, and commitment to growth. May this program open new doors of perception, inspire thoughtful dialogue, and spark opportunities you've yet to imagine. Your voices are at the heart of this journey.

Resilience

Resilience is not merely the ability to survive a crisis; it is the capacity to endure, reclaim, and rebuild in the face of ongoing hardship, historical trauma, and deep systemic injustice. In times of profound challenge or fear, how do individuals and communities protect their identity, heritage, and hope? What does it mean to stand firm when the world attempts to make you invisible?

This year's Common Read, ***Never Whistle at Night: An Indigenous Dark Fiction Anthology***, edited by Shane Hawk and Theodore C. Van Alst Jr., invites us to sit with these questions through the powerful, unsettling, and deeply transformative lens of Indigenous dark fiction.

In this groundbreaking collection, twenty-six Indigenous authors share stories that blend horror, dark fantasy, and psychological thrillers with real-world histories and lived experiences. These are not simple bedtime ghost stories. They are raw, honest, and complex explorations of colonialism, land exploitation, stolen identities, and generational trauma—alongside fierce acts of reclaiming power, family, and sovereignty. Through monsters, spirits, urban legends, and cultural taboos, these writers reveal how storytelling itself serves as a tool for endurance and self-determination.

Never Whistle at Night reminds us that resilience is a living practice. Turning away from darkness or history isn't an option for a community seeking truth and healing. Facing what haunts us--both real and supernatural--matters. Reclaiming the narrative is an act of resistance. Storytelling, art, cultural preservation, and honest dialogue are ways people keep their heritage alive and push back against forces that aim to erase them.

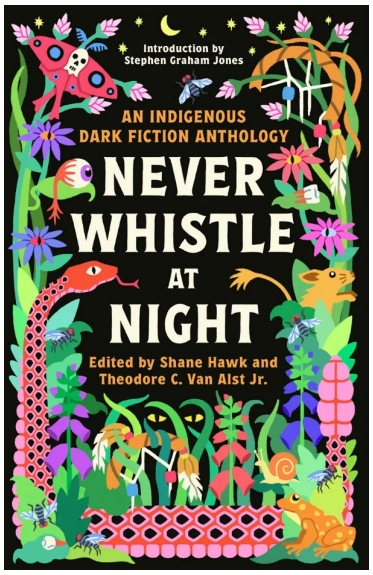
Part of a student's college experience is to think about their role in an interconnected world. How do we honor stories of survival? How can we stand as allies with marginalized communities facing ongoing struggles? What does it mean to cultivate personal and collective resilience in the face of uncertainty?

This book doesn't give easy answers. But it challenges all of us to reflect, to ask deeper questions, and to consider how our own resilience and understanding can help build a more just and compassionate future.

Welcome to the conversation.

"Don't whistle at night. You might call something to you."

THE BOOK



Never Whistle at Night: An Indigenous Dark Fiction Anthology,
eds. Shane Hawk and Theodore C. Van Alst Jr.
By Nora Krug

A bold, clever, and sublimely sinister collection that dares to ask the question: "Are you ready to be un-settled?"

Many Indigenous people believe that one should never whistle at night. This belief takes many forms: for instance, Native Hawaiians believe it summons the Hukai'po, the spirits of ancient warriors, and Native Mexicans say it calls Lechuza, a witch that can transform into an owl. But what all these legends hold in common is the certainty that whistling at night can cause evil spirits to appear--and even follow you home.

These wholly original and shiver-inducing tales introduce readers to ghosts, curses, hauntings, monstrous creatures, complex family legacies, desperate deeds, and chilling acts of revenge. Introduced and contextualized by bestselling author Stephen Graham Jones, these stories are a celebration of Indigenous peoples' survival and imagination, and a glorious reveling in all the things an ill-advised whistle might summon.

Featuring stories by: Norris Black - Amber Blaeser-Wardzala - Phoenix Boudreau - Cherie Dimaline - Carson Faust - Kelli Jo Ford - Kate Hart - Shane Hawk - Brandon Hobson - Darcie Little Badger - Conley Lyons - Nick Medina - Tiffany Morris - Tommy Orange - Mona Susan Power - Marcie R. Rendon - Waubgeshig Rice - Rebecca Roanhorse - Andrea L. Rogers - Morgan Talty - D.H. Trujillo - Theodore C. Van Alst Jr. - Richard Van Camp - David Heska Wanbli Weiden - Royce Young Wolf - Mathilda Zeller

- Publisher description from Birchbark Books
https://birchbarkbooks.com/products/never-whistle-at-nigh

THE EDITORS

Shane Hawk

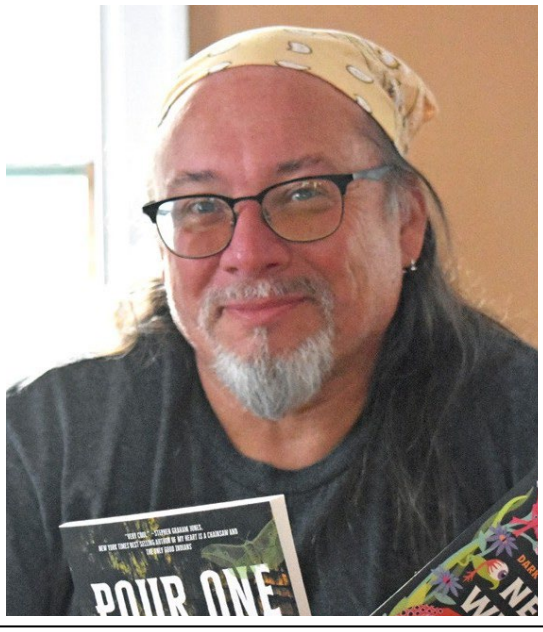
Shane Hawk is an Indigenous horror author, editor, and screenwriter. He is an enrolled citizen of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma and is of Hidatsa and Citizen Potawatomi descent.

He made his literary debut with the acclaimed short story collection *Anoka: A Collection of Indigenous Horror* (2020), which explores modern Indigenous experiences, folklore, and fear set in and around Minnesota. His short fiction and essays have appeared in various genre anthologies and literary magazines.

In addition to co-editing the bestselling *Never Whistle at Night* (2023), Hawk has worked as a history teacher and contributing editor, frequently writing and speaking on the resurgence and significance of Indigenous dark fiction.



Shane Hawk
Photo Credit: Shane Hawk



Theodore C. Van Alst Jr.

Theodore C. Van Alst, Jr. is an author, editor, and academic, and an enrolled member of the Mackinac Bands of Chippewa and Ottawa Indians. He is the Tilikum Professor and Chair of Indigenous Nations Studies at Portland State University, where he has also directed the School of Gender, Race, and Nations.

Van Alst is known for his interconnected, Chicago-set "mosaic" novels, including *Sacred Smokes* (2018), winner of the Tillie Olsen Award for Creative Writing, and *Sacred City* (2021), winner of the Electa Quinney Award. His other works include the Southern Gothic novella *Pour One for the Devil* (2024).

Alongside co-editing *Never Whistle at Night*, he edited *The Faster Redder Road: The Best UnAmerican Stories of Stephen Graham Jones* (2015) and serves as the creative editor for the journal *Transmotion*.

Core Themes

While these twenty-six stories are deeply rooted in Indigenous cultures and traditions, their core messages speak to universal human experiences. Horror and dark fiction have a unique way of holding up a mirror to our deepest anxieties. Whether you are Indigenous or encountering these cultural perspectives for the first time, these four central themes offer powerful insights into history, human ethics, family, and what it truly means to be resilient.

1. Cultural Resilience & Taking Control of Your Story

- Reclaiming the Narrative: Narrative sovereignty means having the power to tell your own story on your own terms. These authors use dark fiction to dismantle old stereotypes and show Native communities as active, modern, and resilient.
- Ancestral Wisdom: In this anthology, cultural rules—like the warning *never to whistle at night*—aren't just spooky superstitions. They are practical tools for safety, setting boundaries, and respecting the world around us.
- Literature as Active Defense**:** Writing within the dark fiction genre weaponizes suspense and speculative terror as tools against cultural erasure, proving that traditional knowledge remains adaptive, protective, and essential in contemporary life.

This theme reminds every student of the value of honoring where you come from. It challenges us to consider the wisdom our own families and cultures offer and how keeping our stories alive helps us navigate difficult times.

2. Real-World Horrors & Facing Hard History

- Horror as a Mirror for Reality: The horrors within these stories are rarely purely imaginary; they draw directly from historical atrocities, including the lingering trauma of mandatory boarding schools, forced relocation, and state-sanctioned land theft.
- Understanding How the Past Shapes the Present: These stories show that history isn't just in the past—it lives on in present-day communities. Issues like the crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Relatives (MMIWR), environmental degradation, and the exploitation of traditional cultures are brought to light through suspense and narrative tension. Trauma is presented as a physical and psychological inheritance, illustrating how historic violence manifests in modern settings such as real-world hauntings, bodily fear, and institutional neglect.

You don't have to share a specific background to feel empathy for another person's struggle. For non-Indigenous readers, these stories provide an eye-opening look at real historical and modern issues through engaging storytelling, inviting us to build empathy and recognize our shared responsibility to stand up for justice.

3. The Monster as Metaphor

- What Truly Makes a Monster? In many mainstream movies, monsters are often portrayed as random threats, scary creatures that appear out of nowhere. In this collection, "monsters" convey lessons, often representing human flaws—like corporate greed, disrespect for nature, or taking things that don't belong to us.
- The Consequences of Crossing Lines: Many stories explore what happens when people ignore warnings, disrespect sacred spaces, or exploit natural resources. The supernatural forces in these pages restore balance or mete out consequences for selfish actions, serving as instruments of justice rather than random violence.
- The Fear of Erasure**:** Shapeshifters, thieves of identity, and malevolent forces reflect the deep-seated anxiety of losing one's language, lineage, or connection to the land, turning abstract cultural loss into visceral, physical encounters.

This theme asks fundamental questions about human ethics: *How do we treat the environment? How do we treat each other? What happens when human greed goes unchecked?* It encourages readers of all backgrounds to reflect on their own values and personal boundaries.

4. Survival, Family, and Community Connection

- You Don't Have to Fight Alone: In many Western stories, the main character is a "lone hero" who solves problems by themselves. In *Never Whistle at Night*, true strength comes from community, family, elders, and connection to ancestors.
- Ancestral Guidance**:** Characters draw power from elders, traditional healers, and ancestral memory, using inherited wisdom as a practical shield to navigate both mundane and supernatural dangers.
- Healing Through Reclamation: Ultimate protection and recovery come from restoring balance, reconnecting with sacred lands, and honoring tribal heritage, demonstrating that kinship and shared memory are the ultimate defenses against darkness.

Life can be overwhelming, especially when facing big, systemic challenges. This theme offers a hopeful lesson for every student: resilience isn't about going it alone. We are stronger, safer, and more resilient when we stay connected to our roots and lean on one another.

Book Summary

Never Whistle at Night gathers twenty-six original dark fiction stories by contemporary Indigenous authors. The anthology spans multiple subgenres, including psychological thriller, supernatural horror, body horror, and gothic fiction, anchored by the central cultural warning shared across many Tribal traditions: never whistle at night.

The collection explores the lived realities of Indigenous peoples in both reservation and urban settings. Stories address topics such as resource extraction on sacred land, the crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Relatives (MMIWR), blood quantum laws, identity theft, and the enduring bond between humans and the natural/spiritual world.
Rather than viewing horror solely as a tool for fear, Never Whistle at Night frames dark storytelling as a mechanism of survival, boundary-setting, and resilience—proving that those who have endured the dark know best how to navigate it.

Short Story Summaries

"Kushtuka" by Mathilda Zeller In a remote Alaskan village, Tapeesa is pressured by her mother to yield to a wealthy, predatory white miner. When the outsider pushes too far, the legendary shapeshifting Kushtuka emerges from the wild to exact bloody retribution against the colonizers.

"White Hills" by Rebecca Roanhorse After marrying into a wealthy gated community, Marissa attempts to erase her Indigenous heritage to fit in with high society. When her mother-in-law discovers her background and pregnancy, Marissa is forced into a gruesome compromise to protect her luxurious lifestyle.

"Navajos Don't Wear Elk Teeth" by Conley Lyons Joe enters a summer romance with Cam, an unsettling white man obsessed with collecting teeth and fetishizing Indigenous identity. As Cam's behavior grows increasingly controlling and unhinged, Joe realizes the physical danger lurking beneath his partner's facade.

"Wingless" by Marcie R. Rendon Living under the care of abusive foster parents, a young boy named Punk copes with his trauma by pulling the wings off flies. The story highlights the systemic cruelties of the child welfare system and the dark ways neglected youth adapt to survive.

"Quantum" by Nick Medina After receiving genetic testing results, a mother discovers that only one of her two sons meets the blood quantum threshold for tribal enrollment. Her resulting favoritism transforms their household into a psychological nightmare, exposing the toxicity of government-imposed identity metrics.

"Hunger" by Phoenix Boudreau A predatory Wehtigo spirit possesses a frat boy and targets Summer, an Indigenous college student leaving a party. Expecting an easy victim, the spirit is caught off guard when Summer uses traditional knowledge to turn the tables on her attacker.

"Tick Talk" by Cherie Dimaline While grieving his deceased parents at his family's old hunting cabin, Son finds an unnaturally large tick burrowed into his stomach. As he struggles to remove the parasite, his escalating physical torment mirrors his unresolved emotional grief.

"The Ones Who Killed Us" by Brandon Hobson The spirits of murdered Indigenous ancestors rise from the earth to seek retributive justice against the descendants of their killers. Written in a poetic style, the narrative frames spectral revenge as an inescapable response to historic atrocities.

"Snakes Are Born in the Dark" by D.H. Trujillo During a desert hike, a young man watches in disgust as his cousin's racist boyfriend defaces Native petroglyphs and hurls slurs. The disrespect triggers a terrifying, body-horror retribution enacted by the ancient landscape itself.

"Before I Go" by Norris Black Keira travels to the gorge where her fiancé tragically died, hoping to find closure. Instead, she is haunted by dreams of the Night Mother and a terrifying apparition, leading to a fatal encounter at the edge of the cliff.

"Night in the Chrysalis" by Tiffany Morris Moving into her aunt's new home, Cece is terrorized by hostile spirits and an unsettling doll left behind by previous occupants. As the house comes alive around her, she must draw on her inner strength to break free from supernatural possession.

"Behind Colin's Eyes" by Shane Hawk While hunting with his father, young Colin breaks an ancient cultural taboo by whistling back at an unseen noise in the woods. A shapeshifting elk spirit stalks and possesses him, trapping his consciousness while taking control of his body.

"Heart-Shaped Clock" by Kelli Jo Ford A troubled young man continually gets caught in destructive situations while seeking the love and approval of his mother. The story explores the heavy weight of intergenerational trauma and the painful longing for connection within broken families.

"Scariest. Story. Ever." by Richard Van Camp A writer tries to manipulate a First Nations elder into sharing a sacred story so he can win a writing contest. Recognizing the writer's selfish motives, the elder turns the interaction into a sharp lesson on cultural boundaries and respect.

"Human Eaters" by Royce K. Young Wolf A grandmother prepares her grandsons for a traditional fast while warning them about predatory monsters that hunt those who abandon their culture. As the boys listen, the boundary between folklore and reality blurs as the creatures watch from the dark.

"The Longest Street in the World" by Theodore C. Van Alst, Jr. A young boy named Junior is protected by Louis, a terrifying supernatural entity who metes out brutal justice to neighborhood bullies and criminals. The narrative examines the fine line between monstrous violence and community protection in urban settings.

"Dead Owls" by Mona Susan Power While staying with her Aunt Phyllis, young Amy becomes spooked by a horror film and fears her aunt's house is haunted. Through eerie dreams, Amy discovers gentle truths about the historical trauma and memory embedded in the land.

"The Prepper" by Morgan Talty Nelly spirals into severe paranoia, isolating himself in preparation for an imagined zombie apocalypse. Convinced his dying grandfather is turning into an undead monster, Nelly's delusions trigger a devastating, irreversible tragedy.

"Uncle Robert Rides the Lightning" by Kate Hart After Robert is murdered following a party, his nephew Greg spends his remaining years consumed by grief. In the afterlife, Greg searches endlessly for Robert, unaware that his uncle's spirit is trapped in a perpetual loop hunting his killer.

"Sundays" by David Heska Wanbli Weiden Haunted by childhood abuse suffered at a residential school, Thomas tracks down the elderly priest responsible to seek revenge. Remembering his wife's plea for healing over violence, Thomas chooses self-forgiveness and walks away.

"Eulogy for a Brother, Resurrected" by Carson Faust Driven by overwhelming grief, Della asks her medicine woman aunt to help her construct a mud golem and resurrect her murdered brother, Callum. The ritual succeeds in bringing Callum back, but his reanimation comes at a horrific price.

"Night Moves" by Andrea L. Rogers Stationed in Germany, a group of Native soldiers ignores local warnings about a creature in the woods on their walk back to camp. When a giant wolf attacks them in the dark, one soldier must fight for his life in a bloody confrontation.

"Capgras" by Tommy Orange An Indigenous author traveling in France for a book release spirals into alcoholism and existential dread as his translator distorts his writing. Surrounded by disconnect, he experiences an unsettling loss of identity and separation from his family.

"The Scientist's Horror Story" by Darcie Little Badger A group of geologists trades eerie stories after hours, blending scientific inquiry with supernatural terror. One scientist recounts an investigation into mysterious, unexplained fatalities in an abandoned ghost town.

"Collections" by Amber Blaeser-Wardzala An Indigenous college student attends a party at her professor's home to request a recommendation letter, only to discover real human heads mounted like trophies. The horrifying discovery serves as a metaphor for the exploitative, predatory nature of elite academia.

"Limbs" by Waubgeshig Rice Set in late 19th-century Ontario, an Anishinaabe guide leads an arrogant fur trader through treacherous wilderness terrain. As the journey unfolds, the harsh environment becomes the backdrop for a severe, reckoning-driven act of colonial retribution.

General Discussion Questions

Opening Questions

1. What does the concept of "resilience" mean to you, and how did reading this anthology expand or shift your understanding of it?
2. How does using dark fiction or horror change the way real-world issues (like land displacement or cultural erasure) are understood?
3. Many stories in this collection center around warnings, taboos, or rules passed down through generations. What warnings or stories did you grow up with, and how do they shape behavior or safety?
4. How do personal and cultural traditions serve as tools of protection and strength for the characters in these stories?
5. Why do you think horror and dark fiction are effective media for expressing historical trauma and community survival?

Resilience & Cultural Survival

1. How do the characters in *Never Whistle at Night* draw resilience from their ancestral heritage and community ties when facing supernatural or physical threats?
2. In what ways do these stories challenge the trope of Native peoples as "figures of the past" by centering modern Indigenous experiences and modern resilience?
3. How do the authors explore the tension between urban life and reservation connection, and how do characters maintain cultural identity across these spaces?
4. What role does humor, irony, or subversion play alongside horror in demonstrating Indigenous endurance?
5. How does narrative sovereignty—the right of Indigenous people to tell their own stories—serve as an act of resilience in itself?

The Role of Dark Fiction & Storytelling

1. How do the monsters or supernatural entities in these stories differ from mainstream Hollywood horror monsters? What real-world anxieties do they reflect?
2. In what ways does the act of telling dark or scary stories help communities process fear, grief, and trauma?
3. How do the writers use atmosphere, cultural lore, and suspense to build empathy and tension without relying solely on traditional horror tropes?
4. How does the theme of "whistling at night" act as a metaphor for ignoring cultural protocols or crossing boundaries?

5. What ethical responsibilities do readers have when engaging with stories that draw from real-world cultural trauma and sacred traditions?

Reflection & Application

1. How can learning about Indigenous histories and contemporary struggles through literature influence your perspective on local and national community issues?
2. What are some ways you can practice personal resilience when facing systemic barriers or overwhelming personal challenges?
3. How can non-Indigenous allies support Indigenous sovereignty, storytelling, and community resilience in meaningful, non-extractive ways?
4. How does this collection prompt you to rethink the relationship between humans, land, and the environment?
5. What is one takeaway or story from this anthology that will stay with you, and how might it influence your personal, academic, or civic choices?

Facing One's Fears & Learning from Experience

1. How do the characters in these stories differentiate between healthy fear—which acts as a protective warning or boundary—and paralyzing fear that prevents them from acting?
2. The anthology suggests that running away from what frightens us (such as painful histories or unspoken truths) often gives that fear more power. What does this collection teach us about the value of facing uncomfortable realities head-on?
3. In many of these narratives, confronting a terrifying situation forces characters to discover internal strengths they didn't know they possessed. Can you recall a time in your own life when facing a fear led to unexpected personal growth or self-discovery?
4. When characters face supernatural or real-world threats, how does leaning on family, ancestral wisdom, or community help them find bravery? How does facing a frightening situation with others change the outcome compared to going it alone?
5. How can fear be transformed from an overwhelming, negative emotion into a tool for building personal resilience, setting firm boundaries, and taking positive action in our everyday lives?

Discipline-Specific Activities

The stories in *Never Whistle at Night* offer a multidisciplinary lens for exploring a vast variety of human behavior. By reading this anthology together, our college community connects diverse fields of study through shared reflection on resilience, courage, and human experience. *Never Whistle at Night* invites students and faculty from every academic field to engage in meaningful conversations that connect the past to the present, the cultural to the contemporary, and the personal to the political.

By reading *Never Whistle at Night* together, our college community affirms that education is not confined to individual disciplines but enriched by their intersections. This shared experience encourages us to think critically, feel deeply, and consider what it means to be responsible citizens in an increasingly interconnected world.

Topics, activities, and discussion prompts have been created for the following topics.

Academic Disciplines

- Business
- Communications
- Education
- History and Political Science
- Humanities
- Math
- Nursing and Allied Health
- Science
- Social and Behavioral Sciences
- Visual and Performing Arts

Student Services

- Academic Advising
- Athletics
- Basic Needs Support
- Career Services
- Mental Health Support
- Student Engagement
- Student Government
- Veterans Services

BUSINESS

In business courses, *Never Whistle at Night* provides opportunities to examine corporate responsibility, environmental ethics, resource extraction on tribal lands, tribal economic sovereignty, and cultural exploitation versus ethical partnership.

Business Ethics and Corporate Responsibility

Topic: Resource Extraction and Indigenous Land Rights

Recommended Stories: *"Kushtuka"* by Mathilda Zeller or *"The Scientist's Horror Story"* by Darcie Little Badger. Both of these stories examine the arrival of greedy, extractive outsiders who exploit local resources and tribal lands, serving as a springboard for conversations on corporate ethics and tribal consent

Activity: Research a historical or ongoing case study where corporate resource extraction (mining, pipelines, forestry) impacted Indigenous land or sacred sites. Analyze the ethical dilemmas, legal frameworks (such as free, prior, and informed consent), and long-term community impacts.

Discussion Questions:

- How should modern businesses balance profitability with environmental ethics and respect for tribal sovereignty?
- What responsibilities do corporations have to Indigenous communities?

Cultural Appropriation vs. Fair Trade

Topic: Commercial Exploitation of Cultural Identity and Art

Recommended Story: *"Navajos Don't Wear Elk Teeth"* by Conley Lyons. This story highlights the creepy, controlling nature of fetishizing and collecting Native culture, prompting debate on where cultural appreciation ends and exploitation begins.

Activity: Analyze how Indigenous symbols, stories, and art are sometimes commodified by non-Indigenous businesses without consent or fair compensation. Contrast this with ethical business models that support Native-owned enterprises.

Discussion Questions:

- Where is the line between cultural appreciation and commercial exploitation in branding and marketing?

Ethical Tech Leadership & Data Sovereignty

Topic: Digital Branding, Data Ethics, and Algorithmic Representation

Recommended Story:*"Quantum"* by Nick Medina. This story centers on genetic testing metrics and artificial blood-quantum calculations, offering a direct tie-in to data ethics, privacy, and the human cost of algorithmic identity metrics.

Activity: Examine how technology platforms, genetic testing companies, and social media algorithms collect, categorize, and profit from personal and cultural data. Have students evaluate a tech company's data privacy and branding policies to identify whether customers retain control over their digital identities and cultural property.

Discussion Questions:

- How can computer science and business leaders build algorithms, data platforms, and branding campaigns that respect data sovereignty and prevent the digital exploitation or misrepresentation of collected data?

Workplace Culture

Topic: Preventing Extractive Workplace Culture and Fostering Psychological Safety

Recommended Stories: *"Collections"* by Amber Blaeser-Wardzala or *"Scariest. Story. Ever."* by Richard Van Camp. These stories illustrate predatory tokenism and the unethical extraction of cultural knowledge in professional/academic settings, sparking discussions on workplace safety and boundary-setting.

Activity: Analyze stories in the anthology that depict hostile, tokenizing, or predatory environments. In small groups, task students with designing a set of leadership guidelines for corporate and tech workplaces that promote psychological safety, honor cultural boundaries, and prevent the exploitation of employee backgrounds.

Discussion Questions:

- What does ethical leadership look like when navigating diverse cultural boundaries in tech and business environments?
- How can organizations build a workplace culture that moves beyond surface-level diversity toward genuine respect and inclusion?

COMMUNICATION

In communication courses, *Never Whistle at Night* serves as a text for exploring oral tradition, dark fiction as a rhetorical strategy, media framing of Native issues, narrative sovereignty, and intercultural communication.

Narrative Sovereignty and Rhetoric

Recommended Stories: *"Capgras"* by Tommy Orange or *"Scariest. Story. Ever."* by Richard Van Camp. These stories explore how narratives can be distorted, mistranslated, or stolen by outside voices, showing why controlling one's own narrative is essential.

Topic: Reclaiming the Mic through Genre Fiction

Activity: Analyze selected stories from the anthology to evaluate how Indigenous authors use suspense, sensory detail, and cultural rhetoric to resist mainstream stereotypes and assert narrative authority.

Discussion Questions:

- How does dark fiction allow writers to communicate hard truths about historical trauma more effectively than traditional news media or academic essays might?

Media and Representation
Topic: Reporting on MMIWR (Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Relatives)

Recommended Stories: *"Uncle Robert Rides the Lightning"* by Kate Hart or *"The Ones Who Killed Us"* by Brandon Hobson. These stories focus on the emotional aftermath of unpunished violence against Indigenous people, contrasting sensational media headlines with the deep reality of community loss.

Activity: Compare news media coverage of missing Indigenous individuals with how the crisis is portrayed rhetorically and emotionally in literature.

Discussion Questions:

- How do media narratives shape public empathy and policy responses?

- What ethical obligations do journalists have when reporting on marginalized communities?

Memory, Testimony, and Silence

Topic: Silence as communication, subtext, and bearing witness to unspoken trauma.

Recommended Stories: *"Dead Owls"* by Mona Susan Power or *"Tick Talk"* by Cherie Dimaline. These stories explore how unaddressed grief, unspoken historical trauma, and quiet family memories manifest visually and psychologically, showing how silence can carry as much emotional weight as spoken words.

Activity: Have students analyze selected scenes from the anthology where characters choose silence, avoidance, or nonverbal cues instead of direct speech. Using communication theories on high-context communication, subtext, and nonverbal messaging, map out what is being communicated through what remains *unsaid*.

Discussion Questions:

- When is silence used as a tool for survival, protection, or mourning, and when does silence become complicity in injustice?
- How can communicators create environments that enable difficult or painful testimonies to be voiced at last?

Ethics of Storytelling

Topic: The ethics of sharing traumatic, sacred, or culturally specific narratives.

Recommendation: *"Scariest. Story. Ever."* by Richard Van Camp This story directly tackles the ethics of storytelling through a writer who attempts to extract a sacred, scary story from a First Nations elder just to win a contest, receiving a sharp lesson on boundaries, respect, and cultural consent.

Activity: Assign students to evaluate a case study involving a journalist, researcher, or creative writer who shares a sensitive cultural story or trauma narrative without proper consent or community input. Have students construct an "Ethical Storytelling Code of Conduct" that outlines guidelines for cultural consent, fair representation, and avoiding narrative exploitation.

Discussion Questions:

- What ethical responsibilities do storytellers, journalists, and media creators have when sharing stories that involve cultural trauma or sacred traditions outside their own lived experience?
- Where is the line between respectful cross-cultural sharing and extractive exploitation?

EDUCATION

In education classes, *Never Whistle at Night* encourages future educators to examine culturally responsive teaching, handling heavy or traumatic topics in the classroom, integrating Indigenous literature, and trauma-informed pedagogy.

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

Topic: Integrating Indigenous Voices Across the Curriculum

Recommended Story: *"Human Eaters"* by Royce K. Young Wolf This story demonstrates traditional oral storytelling as a vital educational tool used by elders to teach children boundaries, respect, and cultural protocol.

Activity: Create a lesson plan for secondary or higher education that incorporates an Indigenous short story or theme from the anthology, ensuring appropriate cultural context, respectful framing, and active engagement.

Discussion Questions:

- How can educators incorporate Indigenous perspectives into their subjects year-round, rather than limiting them to specific heritage months or historical units?

Teaching Heavy Topics with Care

Topic: Trauma-Informed Classroom Practice

Recommended Story: *"Dead Owls"* by Mona Susan Power or *"Wingless"* by Marcie R. Rendon. These stories highlight childhood vulnerability and inherited trauma, giving future teachers a lens to discuss trauma-informed care and supportive classroom spaces.

Activity: Discuss strategies for teaching literature that deals with dark themes (e.g., violence, fear, historical loss) while maintaining a safe, supportive, and empowering learning environment for all students.

Discussion Questions:

- How can teachers foster emotional resilience and critical thinking in students when discussing systemic injustice?

Historical Memory and Curriculum (Early Childhood Education)

Topic: Deconstructing Myths and Introducing Living Indigenous Histories to Young Learner

Recommended Stories: *"Human Eaters"* by Royce K. Young Wolf or *"Dead Owls"* by Mona Susan Power. Both of these stories illustrate how elders gently pass down memory, history, and cultural lessons to young children through oral tradition, demonstrating the profound impact early storytelling has on a child's sense of identity and safety.

Activity: Future educators evaluate common early childhood classroom materials and holiday units (e.g., traditional Thanksgiving activities or "pilgrim and Indian" crafts) to identify stereotypes, omissions, and romanticized tropes. Students will then design an age-appropriate picture-book lesson plan using contemporary Indigenous children's literature (such as *Fry Bread* by Kevin Noble Maillard or *We Are Water Protectors* by Carole Lindstrom) that presents Indigenous peoples as active, modern, and thriving communities.

Discussion Questions:

- How do the stories and historical narratives we share with young children shape their early concepts of fairness, culture, and truth?
- How can early childhood educators move beyond simplified, mythical portrayals of history to foster genuine historical memory and respect for living Native cultures from an early age?

Critical Pedagogy and Civic Education

Topic: Developing Fairness, Boundaries, and Community Care in Early Learners

Recommended Stories: *"Wingless"* by Marcie R. Rendon or *"The Longest Street in the World"* by Theodore C. Van Alst, Jr. These stories highlight the acute vulnerability of young children when

adult systems fail them, serving as a reminder for educators of the critical role they play in creating safe, protective, and empowering environments for every child.

Activity: Design a circle-time learning module for preschool or primary-grade students centered on fairness, listening to community warnings, and taking care of one another. Future teachers will create interactive scenarios (using puppets, role-play, or visual cards) that guide children in recognizing unfair treatment, setting personal boundaries, and practicing "civic courage" by speaking up when someone is excluded or hurt.

Discussion Questions:

- What does civic engagement look like for a four- or five-year-old?
- How can early childhood classrooms cultivate empathy, personal responsibility, and a commitment to justice long before children encounter formal political systems?

HISTORY AND POLITICAL SCIENCE

Never Whistle at Night provides a compelling bridge between literature, history, and political science, helping students explore the ongoing impacts of federal Indian policy, tribal sovereignty, land loss, and political resistance.

History Classes

Federal Indian Policy and Ongoing Impacts

Topic: Boarding Schools, Allotment, and Sovereignty

Recommended Stories: *"Sundays"* by David Heska Wanbli Weiden or *"Limbs"* by Waubgeshig Rice. These stories deal directly with the brutal legacy of residential boarding schools and colonial expansion, grounding historical policy in visceral human experience.

Activity: Pair specific stories from the collection with historical documents (e.g., the Dawes Act, Indian Relocation Act, or boarding school records). Examine how past federal policies created conditions reflected in modern settings.

Discussion Questions:

- How do the historical actions of state and federal governments continue to affect Indigenous communities today, and where do we see evidence of tribal resilience and political self-determination?

Oral Traditions vs. Institutional Historiography: Who Writes the Record?

Topic: Epistemology of History, Counter-Narratives, and the Power Dynamics of Archival Records

Recommended Story: *"Limbs"* by Waubgeshig Rice. Set during the 19th-century fur trade, *"Limbs"* contrasts the arrogant, transactional mindset of a colonial trader with the deep, unrecorded land knowledge and memory of an Anishinaabe guide, highlighting the stark divide between recorded colonial expansion and Indigenous historical reality.

Activity: Pair an excerpt from a standard history textbook or university archive detailing 19th-century expansion, trade, or settlement with an Indigenous oral history or counternarrative from the anthology. Have students analyze both texts using a comparative chart to evaluate:

- What counts as "valid" historical evidence (e.g., written contracts, military logs, and government surveys vs. oral testimonies, lived experiences, and land-based memories)?
- Whose perspectives are centered as active historical figures, and whose voices are minimized or categorized as background noise?
- How the framing of events changes when recorded by outside colonial observers versus passed down through generations within a community.

Discussion Questions:

- Why have Western academic institutions historically privileged written documents over oral tradition, and what gets lost when history is restricted to official archives?
- How do the stories in *Never Whistle at Night* demonstrate that oral history and community memory are living, accurate, and vital records of survival?

Political Science

Environmental Injustice and Political Resistance

Topic: Environmental Racism and Tribal Land Rights

Recommended Story: *"Snakes Are Born in the Dark"* by D.H. Trujillo This story focuses on the desecration of sacred land and petroglyphs by outsiders, connecting to real-world political struggles over environmental land protection.

Activity: Research the legal and political battles fought by Native nations to protect water, land, and sacred sites (e.g., Standing Rock, Oak Flat).

Discussion Questions:

- How do political institutions respond to Indigenous environmental resistance, and what role does collective action play in upholding tribal sovereignty?

Legal Sovereignty, Jurisdictional Gaps, and the MMIWR Crisis (Political Science Focus)

Topic: Tribal Sovereignty, Criminal Jurisdiction, and Public Policy Boundaries

Recommended Story: *"Uncle Robert Rides the Lightning"* by Kate Hart or *"The Ones Who Killed Us"* by Brandon Hobson. These stories focus on unpunished violence, unresolved community grief, and the search for justice following a murder, framing supernatural retribution as an answer to systemic jurisdictional neglect.

Activity: Conduct a policy and legal case analysis examining tribal jurisdiction over non-Native offenders on reservation land (focusing on statutes like the Major Crimes Act, landmark Supreme Court rulings like *Oliphant v. Suquamish Indian Tribe*, and updates to the Violence Against Women Act). Students will map out how jurisdictional loopholes impact law enforcement responses to the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Relatives (MMIWR) crisis.

Discussion Questions:

- How do complex jurisdictional boundaries limit a sovereign tribal nation's ability to protect its citizens?
- How do the supernatural and speculative themes in *Never Whistle at Night* serve as responses to these real-world legal and political failures?

HUMANITIES

The humanities offer rich avenues for exploring Never Whistle at Night through literature, philosophy, art history, religious studies, and Indigenous studies. Its exploration of indigenous culture, identity, resistance, history, art, and community makes it ideal for sparking critical reflection, discussion, and creative work across disciplines.

Art and Art History

Topic: Visual Imagery of the Native Gothic

Recommended Story: *"Night in the Chrysalis"* by Tiffany Morris

This story uses vivid, haunting atmosphere and symbolic objects (a possessed doll, home space) to explore how visual aesthetics build mood and cultural memory.

Activity: Examine visual artwork by contemporary Indigenous artists (e.g., Kent Monkman, Nicholas Galanin). Analyze how visual art and dark literature utilize gothic themes, subversion, and symbolism to express resilience.

Discussion Questions:

- How do Indigenous visual artists and writers use horror aesthetics to challenge colonial gaze and history?

Literature

Topic: The Indigenous Gothic and Speculative Horror

Recommended Story: *"Behind Colin's Eyes"* by Shane Hawk or *"White Hills"* by Rebecca Roanhorse. Both of these stories reimagine classic horror elements—like shapeshifters or high-society Stepford cults—through an Indigenous lens to critique assimilation and broken taboos.

Activity: Write a literary analysis comparing how tropes of the horror genre (hauntings, monsters, isolated settings) are subverted in *Never Whistle at Night* compared to classic Euro-American gothic literature (e.g., Poe, Lovecraft).

Discussion Questions:

- How does Indigenous dark fiction redefine what is considered "monstrous" or "frightening"?

Philosophy & Ethics

Topic: Ethics of Survival, Land, and Justice

Recommended Story: *"Sundays"* by David Heska Wanbli Weiden

This story focuses on a survivor confronting his former abuser, wrestling with complex philosophical questions around revenge, justice, and self-forgiveness.

Activity: Analyze ethical dilemmas presented in the anthology regarding retribution, protection, and duty to ancestors vs. future generations.

Discussion Questions:

- What does *Never Whistle at Night* suggest about moral responsibility to land, community, and the spirit world?

Religious Studies & Indigenous Traditions

Topic: Sacred Taboos, Belief Systems, and Respect

Recommended Story: *"Before I Go"* by Norris Black

This story explores spiritual boundaries, grief, and the Night Mother's spiritual presence, opening a dialogue on cultural protocols around death and mourning.

Activity: Explore how spiritual beliefs, protocols, and respect for nature are depicted across different tribal traditions in the text.

Discussion Questions:

- How do cultural warnings (like whistling at night) embody spiritual discipline, respect for boundaries, and community protection?

Spanish Language Learning Through Storytelling

Topic: Language learning through dark fiction, oral traditions, and cross-cultural reflection on Indigenous resilience.

Recommended Story: *"Human Eaters"* by Royce K. Young Wolf or *"Snakes Are Born in the Dark"* by D.H. Trujillo. Both stories explore oral traditions, cultural warnings, and respect for the land, making them ideal for comparison with traditional Latin American folklore, legends (leyendas), and Indigenous land-protection movements.

Activities:

- Reading and Translation: Select a short, meaningful passage from *Never Whistle at Night* (such as a passage emphasizing cultural warnings, oral storytelling, or environmental connection) and have students translate it into Spanish. Afterward, discuss the emotional tone, horror subtext, and cultural nuances in the target language.
- Comparative Reflection: In Spanish, have students write or discuss: *¿Cómo se comparan los temas de resiliencia y memoria histórica en esta antología con las experiencias y luchas de los pueblos indígenas en América Latina?* ("How do the themes of resilience and historical memory in this anthology compare to the experiences and struggles of Indigenous peoples in Latin America?")

- Vocabulary and Expression: Teach vocabulary related to resilience (*resiliencia*), oral tradition (*tradición oral*), warnings/taboos (*advertencia / tabú*), land and territory (*tierra / territorio*), and cultural survival (*supervivencia cultural*), then have students apply these words in written essays or spoken presentations.

Discussion Questions:

- How do the themes of cultural survival, land rights, and resistance in *Never Whistle at Night* resonate with the experiences of Indigenous populations across the Spanish-speaking world (such as the Maya in Guatemala, the Mapuche in Chile, or Indigenous communities in Mexico)?
- How can reading and discussing translated excerpts deepen both advanced Spanish language skills and cross-cultural understanding?

¿De qué manera la literatura y las historias orales ayudan a preservar la identidad de una comunidad frente a la injusticia y la asimilación?

("In what way do literature and oral stories help preserve a community's identity in the face of injustice and assimilation?")

MATH

Integrating *Never Whistle at Night* into mathematics highlights data literacy, demographic statistics, spatial analysis, and data sovereignty.

Topic: Quantitative Analysis of Indigenous Disparities and Resilience

Recommended Story: *"Quantum"* by Nick Medina. This story provides a narrative context for analyzing blood quantum percentages and mathematical formulas imposed by governments to define tribal enrollment.

Activity: Research statistical data regarding tribal demographics, health outcomes, or resource distribution from credible sources (e.g., Census Bureau, Urban Indian Health Institute). Evaluate issues of data completeness and missing data regarding Native populations.

Discussion Questions:

- What is Indigenous Data Sovereignty, and why is it essential for tribal nations to control how data about their communities is collected, analyzed, and used?

Spatial Analysis & Mapping

Topic: Land Reduction and Tribal Boundaries

Recommended Story: *"The Longest Street in the World"* by Theodore C. Van Alst, Jr.This story uses urban geography and neighborhood boundaries as a backdrop, making it ideal for discussions on spatial mapping, demographic tracking, and geometric boundaries.

Activity: Use proportional reasoning or geometric modeling to compare historical tribal land bases with current reservation boundaries over time.

Discussion Questions:

- How can mathematical visualization help tell stories of land loss, population movement, and survival?

Probability and Decision-Making

Topic: Explore how probability might have influenced everyday decisions during wartime, such as the likelihood of surviving a bombing or being conscripted.

Activity: Present students with historical scenarios and ask them to model outcomes using probability.

Discussion Questions:

- How do we weigh risk and uncertainty in times of crisis?

Geometric Modeling of Land Loss and Sovereignty

Topic: Quantifying spatial changes, land division, and boundary reductions over time through geometric and spatial modeling.

Recommended Story: *"Limbs"* by Waubgeshig Rice or *"Snakes Are Born in the Dark"* by D.H. Trujillo. These stories center on colonial expansion, boundary crossing, and the physical landscape, providing a narrative context for analyzing spatial boundaries, mapping, and historical land loss.

Activity: Have students calculate the percentage loss of tribal land bases across historical eras using geometric area measurements and historical mapping data (such as analyzing the mathematical impact of the 1887 Dawes Act and allotment policies). Students will evaluate the mathematical concept of "checkerboarding"—the spatial fragmentation of land into isolated parcels—and model its impact on tribal jurisdiction and resource management.

Discussion Questions:

- How can spatial mathematics and geometric modeling expose the structural mechanisms of land dispossession, and how might these same quantitative tools be used today to support land reclamation and tribal sovereignty initiatives?

Probability, Risk Assessment, and Environmental Disparities

Recommended Story: *"The Scientist's Horror Story"* by Darcie Little Badger. This story blends scientific and geological field research with environmental threats and supernatural horrors, offering an ideal backdrop for examining environmental data, risk modeling, and field ethics.

Topic: Evaluating mathematical risk, probability, and environmental exposure metrics in vulnerable communities.

Activity: Present students with quantitative data on environmental hazards (such as proximity to mining runoff, industrial waste, or pipeline corridors near tribal lands). Have students calculate exposure probabilities using conditional probability, risk ratios, or decision trees to mathematically compare risk factors between different geographic and demographic groups.

Discussion Questions:

- How do mathematical models of "acceptable risk" fail when they treat communities as statistical data points rather than living ecosystems?
- How can quantitative reasoning and risk analysis be used ethically to advocate for environmental justice?

NURSING AND ALLIED HEALTH

In health science disciplines, *Never Whistle at Night* provides insight into intergenerational trauma, social determinants of health, culturally safe care, and community-centered healing.

Understanding Intergenerational Trauma

Topic: The Health Legacy of Historical Trauma

Recommended Stories: *"Tick Talk"* by Cherie Dimaline or *"Heart-Shaped Clock"* by Kelli Jo Ford. Both of these stories physicalize internal grief and family trauma into visceral bodily manifestations, illustrating how psychological stress impacts physical health.

Activity: Review health science literature on historical trauma, ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences), and epigenetics in Indigenous communities. Connect these clinical concepts to the emotional and physical health themes depicted in the stories.

Discussion Questions:

- How can healthcare providers deliver trauma-informed care that acknowledges historical context while supporting patient resilience?

Culturally Safe Healthcare Practice

Topic: Bridging Traditional Healing and Western Medicine

Recommended Story: *"Hunger"* by Phoenix Boudreau. This story examines power dynamics, vulnerability, and traditional healing knowledge, emphasizing why healthcare workers must understand cultural context to build trust.

Activity: Analyze case studies in rural or urban Indian health settings where healthcare professionals integrate cultural practices and respect traditional beliefs alongside Western treatment.

Discussion Questions:

- What steps can healthcare workers take to build trust and deliver culturally safe care to Native patients?

Narrative Medicine and Empathy

Topic: Narrative Medicine and Storytelling as Clinical Tools for Healing

Recommended Story: "*Tick Talk*" by Cherie Dimaline. In this story, Son's suppressed grief and unresolved trauma over his parents manifest as a visceral, physical parasite burrowed into his flesh. The narrative dramatically illustrates how unaddressed emotional pain impacts physical health, demonstrating why holistic care must incorporate space for patients to process and heal through their own stories.

Activity: Introduce the principles of Narrative Medicine in healthcare. Have students explore how expressing trauma through storytelling, whether through oral traditions, expressive writing, or narrative nursing assessments, helps patients process psychological distress, chronic pain, and inherited grief. Students will practice drafting a narrative care plan that centers on a patient's personal story, cultural background, and emotional health alongside their physical diagnosis.

Discussion Questions:

- How can active listening and honoring patient storytelling serve as therapeutic interventions in clinical settings?
- What are the psychological and physiological benefits when a healthcare provider validates a patient's lived experience as part of the healing process?

SCIENCE

Incorporating *Never Whistle at Night* into a science class offers a powerful way to explore the intersection of scientific inquiry, ethics, traditional ecological knowledge (TEK), and environmental justice. Though a collection of dark fiction, its stories spark critical reflection across disciplines—especially in courses focused on environmental science, geology, ecology,

biology, and the neurobiology of stress and fear.

Environmental Science & Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK)

Topic: Bridging Western Empirical Inquiry with Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK)

Recommended Story: "The Scientist's Horror Story" by Darcie Little Badger. This story directly bridges field research and geology with supernatural events, demonstrating how scientific inquiry and traditional ecological knowledge intersect during environmental investigations.

Activity: Have students compare traditional Western scientific research protocols with the principles of Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK). Students will analyze how scientific models can be enriched—or how researchers might overlook crucial ecological warnings—when local oral traditions and land-based knowledge are excluded from fieldwork.

Discussion Questions:

- How can Western scientific methodologies and Traditional Ecological Knowledge complement one another to create more holistic, respectful environmental practices?
- What are the risks when field scientists ignore local community knowledge and environmental history?

Neurobiology of Stress and Survival Physiology

Topic: The Biological Mechanisms of Extreme Fear, Paranoia, and Social Isolation

Recommended Story: "The Prepper" by Morgan Talty. This story details a character's descent into extreme isolation and paranoia, offering a powerful case study on psychological stress, fight-or-flight biology, and delusion.

Activity: Examine the physiological and neurological impacts of chronic stress, focusing on fight-or-flight responses, HPA axis activation, and how prolonged isolation alters cognitive processing. Students will use the narrative as a case study to map how hypervigilance and acute stress distort human perception and risk assessment.

Discussion Questions:

- How does acute physiological stress alter human judgment and perception during a crisis?
- How can understanding the biology of fear help researchers better address isolation, trauma, and hypervigilance in real-world settings?

Scientific Ethics and Epistemology (Ways of Knowing)

Topic: Ethical Scientific Practice, Colonial Extraction, and Validating Non-Western Epistemologies

Recommended Story: "Collections" by Amber Blaeser-Wardzala. This story depicts an academic professor secretly preserving human remains as personal trophies, serving as a dark metaphor for how Western scientific institutions historically extracted, cataloged, and commodified Indigenous bodies and cultural knowledge without consent.

Activity: Research the history of NAGPRA (Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act) and modern Institutional Review Board (IRB) ethical guidelines regarding research on human remains and Indigenous communities. Have students analyze how scientific protocols are evolving to move away from extractive research models toward collaborative, consent-driven partnerships that respect non-Western ways of knowing.

Discussion Questions:

- What happens when scientific research prioritizes data collection or academic prestige over human dignity and community consent?
- How can modern scientists broaden their understanding of valid knowledge to include oral traditions, community memory, and Indigenous scientific ethics?

Data Science and Mapping the Unseen

Topic: Visualizing Complex Environmental Data and Demographic Gaps

Recommended Story: "The Scientist's Horror Story" by Darcie Little Badger. In this story, geologists combine field observations, environmental metrics, and spatial anomalies to make sense of unexplained, hidden phenomena in the landscape.

Activity: Have students create an infographic or spatial map layer (such as a GIS data overlay) that combines scientific data—such as groundwater contamination metrics, land-loss statistics, or uncounted demographic trends like MMIWR cases—with qualitative narrative elements to present complex environmental and social issues in clear, accessible ways.

Discussion Questions:

- How can data visualization and visual storytelling transform raw numbers into accessible, impactful narratives about community health and environmental change?
- What gets lost when data science relies strictly on numerical metrics without incorporating local human stories and context?

Science Communication

Topic: The Role of Narrative, Visuals, and Storytelling in Communicating Scientific Research

Recommended Story: "The Scientist's Horror Story" by Darcie Little Badger. This story features a geoscientist using personal narrative and field observations to document complex geological phenomena, illustrating how technical scientific work is framed and translated through human storytelling.

Activity: Assign students to create a short comic strip, illustrated storyboard, or visual narrative that explains a complex scientific concept, geological process, or field research dilemma to a general audience using accessible language and engaging imagery.

Discussion Questions:

- How can storytelling and visual media make dense scientific data and ethical issues understandable to the public?
- What responsibilities do scientists have when translating technical research into narratives that resonate with diverse communities?

SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES

In social and behavioral science classes, *Never Whistle at Night* offers a compelling entry point for examining how historical trauma, identity, collective memory, and human behavior are shaped by social, cultural, and colonial forces. Through its dark fiction narrative lens, the anthology explores intergenerational grief, assimilation pressures, institutional neglect, and community resilience—all of which intersect with key themes in sociology, psychology, anthropology, and related fields.

Institutional Social Control and Identity Construction

Topic: Bureaucratic Identity Metrics, Blood Quantum, and State-Imposed Categorization

Recommended Story: "Quantum" by Nick Medina. This story centers on genetic identity metrics and artificial blood-quantum calculations, depicting the psychological and social ramifications of government-imposed identity classification.

Activity: Have students research the sociology of identity construction, contrasting self-determined cultural identity with state-imposed legal definitions (such as federal blood quantum policies). Students will map out how formal categorization impacts community belonging, resource allocation, and individual self-concept.

Discussion Questions:

- How do government-mandated metrics and legal classifications influence personal self-worth and collective identity?
- What strategies do communities use to assert identity sovereignty against rigid bureaucratic frameworks?

Intergenerational Trauma and Collective Resilience

Topic: Transgenerational Trauma Transmission and Indigenous Community Protective Factors

Recommended Story: "Heart-Shaped Clock" by Kelli Jo Ford (or "Tick Talk" by Cherie Dimaline). This story physicalizes inherited grief and generational trauma within a family, examining how past psychological wounds ripple through descendants.

Activity: Students will review psychological research on intergenerational trauma transmission alongside sociological studies on community resilience. In small groups, task students with analyzing how family narratives, social support networks, and cultural reconnection serve as protective factors that disrupt trauma transmission.

Discussion Questions:

- How does historical trauma manifest in contemporary behavioral and mental health outcomes?
- In what ways do cultural grounding and collective solidarity foster long-term psychological resilience across generations?

Social Identity and Group Behavior

Topic: Group Dynamics, In-Group Loyalty, and Code-Switching in Urban Environments

Recommended Story: "The Longest Street in the World" by Theodore C. Van Alst, Jr. This story explores urban youth cultures, neighborhood group dynamics, and the complex social negotiation of peer identity.

Activity: Assign students to analyze the story using social identity theory and group cohesion principles. Have students evaluate how peer pressure, territorial boundaries, and shared cultural backgrounds influence group formation, loyalty, and code-switching behavior in public spaces.

Discussion Questions:

- How do social groups establish boundaries to create a sense of belonging?
- In what ways do individuals adjust their behavior and communication when navigating between different social groups or cultural environments?

The Psychology of Fear

Topic: Cognitive Distortions, Paranoia, and Behavioral Responses to Perceived Threats

Recommended Story: "Behind Colin's Eyes" by Shane Hawk. This story details a character's intense internal struggle with intrusive thoughts, sensory distress, and escalating psychological dread.

Activity: Students will analyze the psychological mechanisms of fear processing, focusing on cognitive distortions, panic responses, and how perceived threats alter decision-making. Task students with mapping out the progression from mild anxiety to acute paranoid behavior using the narrative as a case study.

Discussion Questions:

- How does acute fear alter an individual's cognitive processing and perception of reality?
- What psychological factors cause internal anxieties or unresolved trauma to project outward as external threats?

Social Identity, Assimilation, and Psychological Distress

Topic: In-Group/Out-Group Dynamics, Masking, and the Mental Toll of Assimilation

Recommended Story: "White Hills" by Rebecca Roanhorse. This story explores in-group/out-group dynamics and the severe psychological toll of attempting to erase one's identity to assimilate into an elite, hostile social class.

Activity: Have students analyze the psychological concepts of social identity theory, masking, and assimilation pressure using the protagonist's experiences. Task students with identifying the behavioral trade-offs made when individuals suppress their cultural backgrounds to gain social or economic status.

Discussion Questions:

- What are the mental and emotional consequences when society demands cultural erasure as the price of entry to elite spaces?
- How can individuals and communities resist assimilation pressures while maintaining psychological integrity?

Collective Memory and Group Communication

Topic: Social Construction of Memory, Oral Transmission, and Norm Enforcement

Recommended Story: "Human Eaters" by Royce K. Young Wolf. This story demonstrates how collective memory and oral traditions are used within a community to communicate vital safety protocols and social boundaries to younger generations.

Activity: Have students map the flow of intergenerational communication within a cultural group, focusing on how shared narratives and oral histories shape collective memory. Students will examine how group storytelling serves as a tool for social learning and the transmission of cultural values.

Discussion Questions:

- How does collective memory differ from individual memory in shaping group identity and social behavior?
- What role does storytelling play in reinforcing cultural norms, safety warnings, and community solidarity across generations?

Anthropological Ethics, NAGPRA, and Restorative Justice

Topic: NAGPRA (Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act), Anthropological Extraction, and the Ethics of Studying Living Communities

Recommended Story: "Collections" by Amber Blaeser-Wardzala. This story centers on an academic professor who hoards Indigenous remains and sacred objects in a private collection, serving as a visceral critique of anthropological extraction and the violation of Indigenous burial rights.

Activity: Have students analyze the legal, ethical, and historical principles of NAGPRA alongside professional codes of ethics in anthropology (such as the American Anthropological Association's "Do No Harm" guidelines). Students will evaluate a case study of institutional repatriation, tracking the legal and diplomatic steps required to return ancestral remains and sacred items to tribal nations.

Discussion Questions:

- What are the ethical responsibilities of anthropologists and researchers when studying Indigenous communities and sacred heritage?
- How can academic disciplines shift from extractive research practices toward community-led, collaborative anthropology that respects tribal sovereignty and repatriation rights?

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

In visual and performing arts classes, *Never Whistle at Night* is an exceptional resource for exploring how cultural memory, atmospheric dread, and oral traditions can be translated into visual storytelling, soundscapes, and stage performance. As an Indigenous dark fiction anthology, the book offers rich material for students to analyze and adapt in their own creative work, while prompting reflection on how art engages with historical trauma, visual sovereignty, identity, and cultural responsibility.

Audio Design, Soundscapes, and Atmospheric Tension

Topic: Translating Auditory Warnings, Taboos, and Cultural Memory into Sound Design

Recommended Story: "Behind Colin's Eyes" by Shane Hawk or "Night Moves" by Andrea L. Rogers. These stories rely heavily on auditory cues—the central taboo of whistling at night, forest sounds, ambient tension, and creature calls—making them ideal for sound design and audio scoring projects.

Activity: Have students create a 60-to-90-second audio soundscape or foley track for a key scene in the story. Students will layer environmental sounds, acoustic silences, and vocal cues (such as a distant whistle or shifting rustle) to build suspense and convey psychological dread purely through sound.

Discussion Questions:

- How does sound design shape an audience's emotional response and build atmospheric horror without relying on visual graphics?
- How can audio artists use sound, rhythm, and intentional silence to convey cultural warnings and unseen threats?

Dramatic Adaptation, Voice, and Performance

Topic: Character Voice, Dialogue Analysis, and Staging Live Performance

Recommended Story: "The Longest Street in the World" by Theodore C. Van Alst, Jr. This story features dynamic dialogue, distinct urban character voices, high dramatic tension, and vivid spatial descriptions ideal for theatrical adaptation and monologue study.

Activity: Assign students to adapt a dialogue-heavy scene into a theatrical script, scene study performance, or monologue. Students will focus on vocal delivery, blocking, pacing, and subtext to authentically capture youth dynamics, regional dialects, and underlying tension on stage.

Discussion Questions:

- What challenges and opportunities arise when adapting prose narrative with rich regional voice into live performance or visual storyboards?
- How can performers honor distinct cultural cadences and subtext on stage without falling into dramatic clichés?

Visual Arts, Graphic Illustration, and Visualizing the Supernatural

Topic: Subverting Gothic Tropes through Visual Imagery, Set Symbolism, and Composition

Recommended Story: "Night in the Chrysalis" by Tiffany Morris. This story uses vivid, haunting visual atmosphere, domestic interiors, and symbolic objects to blur the line between inherited trauma and physical manifestation.

Activity: Task students with creating a visual artwork (such as a book cover design, graphic novel page, costume concept, or set render) that interprets the story's themes of cultural survival and dread while intentionally subverting mainstream, Hollywood-style horror tropes.

Discussion Questions:

- How can visual artists use color palette, symbolism, and spatial framing to evoke psychological horror and Indigenous resilience?
- In what ways can visual design offer an alternative to traditional Western gothic aesthetics?

Directing, Set Design, and Cinematic World-Building

Topic: Spatial Environment, Lighting, and Visual Narrative Pacing

Recommended Story: "Kushtuka" by Mathilda Zeller. This story features rich, isolated natural landscapes, harsh weather conditions, and dramatic physical encounters that require thoughtful visual staging and environmental framing.

Activity: Have students construct a director’s visual lookbook, set design model, or film storyboard detailing shot composition, lighting choices, and environmental staging for a screen adaptation of the narrative.

Discussion Questions:

- How does physical landscape function as a central visual character in dark fiction?
- How can directors and set designers use lighting, shadow, and environmental scale to highlight themes of territorial intrusion and cultural endurance?

Visual Sovereignty, Museum Curation, and the Colonial Gaze

Topic: Decolonizing Art History, Visual Sovereignty, and the Critique of Salvage Ethnography

Recommended Story: "Collections" by Amber Blaeser-Wardzala. This story depicts an academic collector hoarding Indigenous sacred objects and ancestral remains, exposing the dark historical role of art institutions, museums, and private collectors in commodifying Native culture under the guise of preservation.

Activity: Have students compare 19th-century Western artistic representations of Native peoples (such as the "salvage ethnography" paintings of George Catlin or photography of Edward S. Curtis) with contemporary Indigenous artists practicing *visual sovereignty* (such as Kent Monkman, Nicholas Galanin, or Wendy Red Star). Task students with auditing a museum exhibit catalog or art history textbook section to evaluate how Indigenous creative works are categorized, framed, and displayed—distinguishing between sacred ceremonial items and fine art.

Discussion Questions:

- How has Western art history historically reduced Indigenous creative traditions to static, "vanishing" artifacts rather than living, evolving fine art?
- How do modern Indigenous artists use visual sovereignty to subvert the colonial gaze, challenge institutional ownership, and reclaim power over their own visual narratives?

ACADEMIC ADVISING

Power Dynamics, Mentorship, and Institutional Belonging

Recommended Story: "Collections" by Amber Blaeser-Wardzala. A working-class Indigenous student visits her elite professor's home and discovers disturbing truths about how academia objectifies, consumes, and commodifies non-dominant cultures. This mirrors the friction first-generation community college students often feel when entering higher education—facing subtle institutional elitism or feeling tokenized rather than supported.

Discussion Questions:

- In what ways can academic environments feel intimidating or extractive to students from non-traditional backgrounds?
- How can an academic advisor serve as an advocate when a student feels out of place or misaligned with a professor or program?
- What strategies can students use to preserve their personal identity while navigating institutional expectations?

ATHLETICS

Physicality, Mental Toughness, and Team Solidarity Under Pressure

Recommended Story: "Kushtuka" by Mathilda Zeller. Drawing on Indigenous shape-shifting lore in harsh survival conditions, this story deals with physical endurance, trusting one's instincts, and protecting fellow community members from hidden dangers.

Discussion Questions:

- How can student-athletes maintain mental well-being when their physical performance is constantly evaluated?
- In what ways can athletic teams build a culture of mutual protection and psychological safety on and off the field?
- How do physical boundaries and instincts play a role in maintaining personal safety in high-stress environments?

BASIC NEEDS SUPPORT

Resource Scarcity, Systemic Neglect, and Mutual Aid

Recommended Story: "Hunger" by Phoenix Boudreau. The story explores consumption, deprivation, and predatory entities driven by insatiable hunger. It serves as a metaphor for the real-world conditions of basic needs insecurity—where students struggle to focus on learning while facing food insecurity, lack of reliable transit, or housing instability.

Discussion Questions:

- How does basic needs insecurity impact a student's cognitive capacity and emotional well-being?
- In what ways can community colleges remove the shame or stigma surrounding food pantries and emergency assistance programs?
- How does mutual aid within a campus community strengthen student retention and success?

CAREER SERVICES

Professional Ethics, Workplace Realities, and Code-Switching

Recommended Story: "The Scientist's Horror Story" by Darcie Little Badger. A group of geologists at a conference share eerie experiences encountered in the field, blending scientific inquiry, fieldwork risks, and corporate ethics. It highlights how entering professional STEM or corporate fields often brings unforeseen ethical dilemmas and cultural friction for underrepresented workers.

Discussion Questions:

1. How can students prepare for ethical or cultural challenges they might face when entering their chosen career fields?
2. What role does cultural heritage play in shaping professional ethics and decision-making?
3. How can Career Services help students build professional networks without feeling forced to abandon their authentic selves?

MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

Processing Trauma, Grief, and Breaking the Stigma of Seeking Help

Recommended Story: "The Ones Who Killed Us" by Brandon Hobson. This tale centers on grief, memory, and lingering spirits that refuse to leave until historical and personal wounds are acknowledged.

Discussion Questions:

- How do unaddressed grief and mental health struggles manifest as "hauntings" in our daily academic and personal lives?
- What cultural or social barriers prevent students from utilizing campus mental health resources?
- How can campus communities create safe spaces for open dialogue surrounding mental health?

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Cultural Preservation, Community Storytelling, and Belonging

Recommended Story: "Scariest. Story. Ever." by Richard Van Camp. Centered on an attempt to steal a traditional story from an elder, this narrative highlights the sacred nature of oral history, respect for cultural keepers, and the power of shared narrative. It illustrates how authentic engagement comes from genuine community connection rather than transactional participation.

Discussion Questions:

- What role does storytelling play in creating a sense of campus belonging for non-traditional and minority students?
- How can student engagement activities move beyond transactional events (e.g., free pizza) toward deep, meaningful community building?
- How do we ensure cultural traditions and histories are respected rather than appropriated in campus programming?

STUDENT GOVERNMENT

Representation, Institutional Integrity, and Advocacy vs. Assimilation

Recommended Story: "White Hills" by Rebecca Roanhorse. A protagonist is drawn into an affluent, exclusive community where acceptance requires her to suppress her identity and conform to institutional pressures.

Discussion Questions:

- Where is the line between compromising for progress and compromising one's core values in student leadership?
- How can student government ensure it amplifies marginalized voices rather than tokenizing them?
- What responsibilities do student leaders have when institutional policies conflict with student well-being?

VETERANS SERVICES

Military Transition, Hypervigilance, and Moral Injury

Recommended Story: "Night Moves" by Andrea L. Rogers. Or “Sundays” by David Heska Wanbli Weiden. "Night Moves" features soldiers deployed in Germany confronting supernatural threats under high-stress conditions, while "Sundays" explores PTSD, justice, and long-term trauma recovery. Both stories resonate with student veterans adjusting to civilian campus life while carrying hypervigilance and service-related trauma.

Discussion Questions:

- How does the hypervigilance required in military environments impact a veteran’s transition to a community college classroom?
- What unique strengths do student veterans bring to campus, and what institutional barriers do they most frequently encounter?
- How can campus staff better recognize and support students experiencing moral injury or PTSD?

EPILOGUE

I extend my sincere thanks to the faculty, staff, and administrators who have generously lent their time, energy, and resources to the Riders Read program. Your support helps bring meaningful, thought-provoking conversations to our campus and beyond.

I am especially grateful to Peregrine Books for their ongoing partnership and dedication to fostering a culture of reading and reflection. I also deeply appreciate the contributions of ideas, collaboration, and enthusiasm from our colleagues at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, Prescott College, and the Yavapai County Library system.

Finally, I thank the wider Yavapai County community for embracing this program and helping us create a truly shared reading experience. Your engagement reminds us of the power of stories to connect, challenge, and inspire.

— Suzanne Waldenberger

Director, Riders Read Program

Please contact Committee Chair Suzanne Waldenberger at suzanne.waldenberger@yc.edu for more information about the Riders Read program.