Voices of the First Nations

From Keeper ‘n Me by Richard Wagamese pg. 128

Read the story and answer the following questions in point form. Be prepared to discuss the answers orally in class.

1. Why do you think the author means when he says “the land is a feeling”?
2. What does it mean when Keeper says “politicians are pretty much aware of the way the land was taken on the sly”?
3. Why does Keeper say that the politicians have been “carrying around a big blanket of guilt”?
4. What does Keeper think first nations people were put on reserves? Do you agree? Why or why not?
5. What is funny about the following quote from the story? What does it mean? “The government came along and told all the Indians if they put down their arrows and went off to live on these reserves and were good little Indians then maybe one of these days we’d be able to get some of those arrows back. Down through the years they gave us a few back but they kept all the points and feathers and only gave us the shaft. And we ben pretty much getting the shaft ever since.” P. 129/130
6. Why do the first nations peoples want the land claims settled?
7. Explain the importance of the land and what happens if the connection is lost.
8. What does the author do every fall?
9. Why is the description of silence on pg. 129 so powerful? How does it show a connection to the land?
10. What can you tell about the relationship between the author and his mother from their conversation on pgs. 130-132?
11. How does the author describe paddling? How does his description make you feel? Why?
12. Why is Keeper give the author tobacco, white pieces of cloth and string to bring with him? What is Keeper trying to teach him by doing this? What do you think about this tradition?
13. What are ways you show being thankful/grateful for things in your life?
14. What kinds of things does Keeper say he should pray for?
15. Why do you think his mother is so proud of him when he is about to leave? (top of pg. 134)
16. How does the author get lost in the moment in the last paragraph on p. 134?
17. Why does the author say something in all human beings is attracted to a good fire?
18. How does the author feel as he is sitting at night in front of the fire (bottom of pg. 135)? Why?
19. Describe things that happen to the author during his stay that demonstrate him connecting with his surroundings and the land.
20. What does the following line from the bottom of pg. 136 mean? “Needed to touch a part of myself I never knew was there. I felt like one of them salmon that’s gotta go back upriver to where it was hatched after a long time at sea. I was at sea a long time myself. The only difference being that the salmon’s gotta go back so it can die. Me, I had to come back so I could live.”
21. What is the moment that the author is talking about at the top of pg. 137?
22. Why do you think the author describes his experience in the second to last paragraph on pg. 137, as “an eerie kinda feeling”?
23. Why do you think the author describes the way he is feeling as “flowing” after he finds the cabin? (last paragraph on p. 138)
24. Describe the voices the author heard in the first paragraph on pg. 139.
25. Why does the author say that when “it was time to leave this place, it would be sacred land”?
26. What is meant by the lines “Sacred land. To carry it in my heart forever was my responsibility, my destiny, and my dream.”?