

**How Can I Read Aboriginal Literature?:  
The Intersections of Canadian Aboriginal and Japanese Canadian Literature**

by  
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## Abstract

This study aims to examine critiques of social injustices expressed through the medium of literature, injustices imposed on, and in part shared by, the Native peoples of Canada and Japanese Canadians. My objectives are to explore literary representations of the struggles of Native peoples and of Japanese Canadians, and examine how these representations –and the struggles– intersect. My study uses the following selection of intersectional texts by Canadian Aboriginal and Japanese Canadian authors: “Coyote and the Enemy Aliens” by Thomas King, *My Name is Seepeetza* by Shirley Sterling, *Obasan* by Joy Kogawa, *The Kappa Child* by Hiromi Goto, *Burning Vision* by Marie Clements, and “The Uranium Leaking from Port Radium and Rayrock Mines is Killing Us” by Richard Van Camp. I base my comparative methodology on King’s border crossing strategy employed in “Coyote and the Enemy Aliens.” By crossing the cultural and historical border set by his Cherokee background into the Japanese Canadian realm through the Coyote character, King creates a parallel between the colonial experiences of Native peoples and Japanese internment in order to highlight the colonial legacy of racism and oppression. I adapt his approach to my own positionality that shapes my study since I engage with Native culture, history, and literature as a Japanese person. The findings of my comparative discussions reveal the problematic nature of Canada’s nation state still rooted in a White settler constructed society. They also show a legacy of imperialism that continues, in the form of globalization, to destroy Native peoples’ lands. My thesis concludes with the im/possibilities of reconciliation, also considering my own role as a person of colour, a temporary settler from Japan, who has lived on, and benefited from, Native peoples’ land.

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## **Chapter I: Introduction**

### **I. 1. Intersectional Texts by Canadian Aboriginal and Japanese Canadian Authors**

First of all, in this thesis, the word “(Canadian) Aboriginal(s)” specifies those who have Indigenous ancestry in North America and reside in Canada. In the following discussion, I call them mostly “Aboriginal peoples,” “Native peoples (Natives)” and “Indigenous peoples.” Each culture including the language is unique and complicated by their geopolitical and socio-cultural mobility.<sup>1</sup> The term “Aboriginal” brings together different nations, communities, and groups because my discussion does not highlight cultural specificity but Native peoples’ common experience of colonization as the history that affected and continues to affect all Native peoples. Although “Native peoples’ colonial experience is not uni-dimensional or inflexible” (LaRocque 10), and “colonization cannot explain everything about who [they] are and who [they] were today” (155), it is also true that the shared colonial oppression influences Native writers and their work.

My study of Native peoples and colonialism, from the position of both a Japanese person and a graduate student in the Department of Native Studies at the University of Manitoba, has led me to a comparative discussion of Canadian Aboriginal and Japanese Canadian literature. Through a variety of texts, and based on both groups’ experiences, I have been convinced that my understanding of ongoing colonialism must be tied into the examination of my interconnectivity --the intricate relations among Native peoples and

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<sup>1</sup> According to Indian and Northern Affairs, there are 615 First Nations bands, and more than 3,100 communities as of 2008 including reserves, settlements, and villages (“First Nation Profiles”). Inuit communities in Nunavut, Quebec’s northern portion, the north coastal and south-eastern areas of Labrador and Inuvialuit region in the northwest corner of the Northwest Territories (Senécal and O’Sullivan); Métis communities in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, Ontario, British Columbia, and the Northwest Territories communities (“The Métis Nation”); and non-Status people. Some live in urban centers.

their land, Japanese Canadians, and myself. To discern the complexities and their relevance, I chose literary texts that shed light on the intersections of Native peoples' and Japanese Canadians' experiences.

The story by Thomas King, Native author of Cherokee, German and Greek descent, "Coyote and the Enemy Aliens" is particularly significant because it provided initial direction for this study.<sup>2</sup> The story begins with an author's note in which King clearly shows his affiliation with Japanese Canadians who had a "strikingly similar" policy imposed on them to that of Native peoples, who are still under its imposition (King, *Our Story* 158). King tells about the Japanese internment from a Native point of view by twisting the story through his signature strategy of the border-crossing. In this case, King crosses into the history of Japanese Canadians by letting the Native "trickster" figure Coyote play in the mobility.<sup>3</sup> A second text is *My Name is Seepeetza* (1992) by Shirley Sterling, a member of the N'lakapamux (interior Salish) Nation of British Columbia. After Sterling's death by cancer in 2005, literary critic Judith Saltman comments that Sterling "believed in the value of education, but particularly believed in the value of instilling N'lakapamux values and philosophies in the children" (cited in Twigg).<sup>4</sup> It is a fictionalized account, presented as journal entries by the twelve-year old girl Seepeetza.

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<sup>2</sup>This text is from *Our Story* (2005) edited by King, Tantoo Cardinal, and Tomson Highway. Published by Anchor Canada. It is also published in *A Short History of Indians in Canada* (2005) by Harper Collins Publishers Ltd.

<sup>3</sup>"Trickster" is a controversial term as many Aboriginal scholars critique its troubling interpretation. Cree scholar Neal McLeod condemns that Wisahkecahk, an elder brother figure among his Cree people, is "mistakenly called 'the trickster' by many" (14). In his preface to *The Rez Sisters*, Tomson Highway, a Cree author and playwright from northern Manitoba illustrates the trickster figure by pointing out his/her diversity among Native peoples --i.e. Weesageechak (Cree), Nanabush (Ojibway), Raven, and Coyote-- and his/her significance in the Native world view: "Essentially a comic, clownish sort of character, he teaches us about the nature and the meaning of existence on the planet Earth; he straddles the consciousness of man and that of God, the Great Spirit"(xii).

<sup>4</sup> Sterling received the Native Indian Teacher Education Alumni Award among other literary awards.

Though the narrative focuses on Seepeetza's disconnectedness between home (her cultural origin) and the dehumanizing colonial institution of the residential school, there are some scenes in which she affiliates with Japanese Canadians who are persecuted during and after war time. Two other texts are *Burning Vision* (2003, initially premiered in 2002) by the Fort Norman Sahtu Dene / Métis playwright Marie Clements,<sup>5</sup> and "The Uranium Leaking from Port Radium and Rayrock Mines is Killing Us," a short story from *Angel Wing Splash Pattern* (2002), a short story collection by Richard Van Camp, a well-known Tlicho (Dogrib) storyteller and author from Fort Smith, North West Territories (NWT). The intersectional themes between these texts are global connections and globalization, another form of imperialism which continues today. The two texts provide the juxtaposition of devastating living conditions in Native communities at a uranium mining site in NWT, and the atrocious Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings in Japan. The seemingly different situations are linked by a common cause, uranium made in Canada.

On the side of literature by Japanese Canadian authors, I included *Obasan*, the seminal novel about the previously silenced story of Japanese internment, by Joy Kogawa. Like *My Name is Seepeetza*, the novel is fiction, yet there is an autobiographical essence because the story is based on Kogawa's own experiences. The author, born in Vancouver in 1935, wrote her first poetry "as a white person" (Koh 20), then awakened "another voice" when working as a staff writer in the office of the prime minister. She reviewed the documents filed in the Public Archives of Canada by Japanese Canadian activists, such as Muriel Kitagawa who is reflected in the character Aunt Emily (Koh 20). In some

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<sup>5</sup> Clements is also a founder of a Vancouver-based Aboriginal and multi-cultural production company named Urban Ink Productions ("PLCN Authors: Marie Clements").

instances, the protagonist Naomi sympathizes with Native characters through shared traumas of oppression by relating Naomi's uncle to Chief Sitting Bull: "He has the same prairie-baked skin, the deep brown furrows like dry river beds creasing his cheeks" (Kogawa 2). The other text is Hiromi Goto's novel *The Kappa Child*, a story about a new immigrant family from Japan. Goto's family emigrated to Canada around 1969, when she was three, "in the privileged position of choosing to leave, choosing to go somewhere else"; and later she found out that many people of color are "not being welcome" (Notkin, "Cross-cultural Creatures"). By locating the Japanese family from Vancouver in the Alberta prairies where the protagonist meets a character of Kainai (Blood) / Japanese descent, Goto de-centers the image of a White settler dominant landscape of the prairies. The image of white dominance is derived from settler-constructed policy and legislation concerning Native peoples, dating back hundreds of years. It is also reflected in the persecution of Japanese immigrants that culminated around the Second World War and finally ended by Redress in 1988. The obvious intersection between these two historical trends is Canada's legacy of colonialism and imperialism. In an interview with Debbie Notkin, Goto contends that "we all have the responsibility to examine our sense of entitlement of living on First Nations land."

Through the particular selection of these intersectional works as primary texts, together with other secondary materials of literary criticism and socio-political critiques, this paper explores the literary representation of struggles of Native peoples and of Japanese Canadians, and investigates the intersection of the two. Through the use of fiction I am able to show not only victimization but agency, recovery and empowerment of those affected by oppression. As Métis scholar Jo-Ann Episkene states, Native

literature has healing power in “challenging the ‘master narrative’” (2). Also, according to another Métis scholar, Emma LaRocque, it humanizes Native people as individuals to be free from “the constraints of certain categorizations or academic disciplines, theories or oppositional politics” (10). Similarly, the potential for empowerment through fiction is also seen in the counter-narratives by Japanese Canadian authors: “fiction that includes cultural identities bridges the gap between [what is exotic for one reader is home ground for another’]” (Goto cited in Notkin).

## **I.2. Comparative Methodology**

Thomas King in his short story “Coyote and the Enemy Aliens” addresses the core theme of my thesis: literary representations of intersections of the colonization of Native peoples and the history of Japanese internment. Thomas King states in the introduction to the story:

...whenever I hear the story, I think about Indians, for the treatment the Canadian government afforded Japanese people during the Second World War is strikingly similar to the treatment that the Canadian government has always afforded Native people, and whenever I hear either of these stories, a strange thing happens. I think of the other. (158)

King’s literary representation of Japanese Canadian experiences through his Native point of view provides me with an entry point into the comparison of hi/stories of oppression. He tells a story by crossing the cultural boundary between Natives and Japanese Canadians in the mode of “interfusional literature” –“a blending of oral and written literature” (King, “Godzilla” 244) -- and also bringing in the so-called “trickster” figure Coyote. According to Davidson, Walton, and Andrews, King’s strategy of “border

crossings” “[...] explores political, social, and cultural possibilities through the use of alterna(rra)tives and counter-memories” of the official history of Canada (28). King’s strategy of bringing together “counter-memories” of colonial oppression and Japanese internment constitutes the theoretical frame of his story “Coyote and the Enemy Aliens.”

To examine the relation between theory and story, Salish/ Métis writer Lee Maracle’s essay “Oratory: Coming to Theory” is significant. Maracle points out that theory in Western academia eliminates the stories and emotions in human interaction from theoretical arguments. In contrast, story is fundamental to her Native concept of Oratory as a “place of prayer,” which represents collective opinions in communities, to persuade people in a form of social interaction that could be depicted in a character, plot, and story (Maracle). Thus, for Maracle, theory needs to be explicated “through story, human beings, doing something, real characters working out the process of thought and being” (Oratory: Coming to Theory). King himself argues that stories “that’s all we are” (*The Truth about Stories* 2) and therefore may have used a story in order to theorize a comparison between colonialism and Japanese internment.

In King’s narrative style, *I*, the first person narrator dialogues with Coyote, who visits the narrator living on the reserve during the Second World War. Coyote finds a job on the West Coast as a Custodian of Enemy Alien Property. One item in Coyote’s custody is a truck named *Kogawa Seafood*, personified as Japanese Canadian – presumably named after Joy Kogawa who wrote the novel *Obasan* -- who argues with Coyote and then is sold. Coyote’s next job is to disperse Enemy Aliens to different areas across Western Canada. Coyote brings those Enemy Aliens to a place where the narrator (who is not gendered) and his/her Native friends treat them as guests. While the

“Indians” remember their own story as similar to that of the Enemy Aliens, they begin to drum and sing. The RCMP come and order Coyote to capture the Enemy Aliens and send them to sugar beet farms. Coyote and the RCMP do not recognize any longer who the Enemy Aliens are, and all the Indians and the Enemy Aliens are caught together, and placed in a truck. Coyote also ends up being caught by the RCMP.

King here makes two points which become the theoretical framework of the story: First, establishing similarities between the victimization of Native peoples and of Japanese Canadians, and second, blurring the line between victimizer and victimized. The commonality of oppression is that the colonial ideology of dehumanization and discrimination is legalized. King illustrates the systematic process of Japanese internment as Coyote, a servant of the Canadian government, carries out this dehumanization step by step. In each part of the story, he (Coyote is gendered as male figure, while the narrator *I* isn't) inserts a dialogue between *I* and Coyote, highlighting the narrator's scepticism of Canadian governmental authority by having the narrator interrogate Coyote about his job, and by listing “White magic words” (166), or euphemisms –i.e. “patriotic” and “national” (166)-- often used by the authorities to puzzle the general public. Throughout King's story, Japanese internment is experienced by the government-servant Coyote and *I*. Furthermore, King brings his critiques of the colonial oppressor from his Native perspective into his discussion of Japanese Canadians. It is through the first person narrator *I*'s commentaries in dialogue with Coyote that King's comparative examination of oppression is understood.

The other important point in King's story is that he destabilizes the binary of oppressor and oppressed. This is seen in the story's climax, in which the RCMP arrest

everyone including Coyote, the Enemy Aliens, and the Indians. The trickster figure Coyote is the representation of both the oppressor and the oppressed. The arbitrariness of the oppressor/oppressed dichotomy is reflected in the relationship between Coyote and the RCMP. At first, Coyote carries out whatever the government of Canada orders, playing his part in the oppressive regime. Coyote brings about his mission of dehumanizing Japanese Canadians not just physically and materially, but also by controlling the mind of the general public by participating in a slogan campaign. Engaged in such propaganda, Coyote's mind is already controlled before he repeats the slogan. Coyote is gradually indoctrinated to be an oppressor, yet does not recognize himself as such:

Coyote. ...I have a new slogan...

...“Let our slogan be for British Columbia: ‘No Japs from the Rockies to the seas’”

Narrator. Ho! That's your new slogan?

Coyote. ...It's Ian Alistair Mackenzie's slogan.

Coyote denies his owning of the slogan even though he acknowledges that he 'has' it. Coyote illustrates a tendency of a society to adopt systemically the oppressing discourse of slogans. Coyote, like society, however, does not feel responsible for what he has done. Coyote separates himself from the Canadian authority. King shows his readers that they are like Coyote himself: protagonists who are involved with the history of Japanese internment.

However, at the end, he will become the victimized in the same way that the RCMP and Coyote himself victimize the Enemy Aliens and the Indians: Coyote gets

caught by the RCMP and is forced to relocate; he disappears. This is happening to him because he did not understand that the white supremacist ideology does not only affect Japanese “enemy aliens” but anybody who is non-white and that what he is doing had been done to his people. If he had understood that connections, he may not have become complicit.

King’s method is to discuss Japanese Canadians’ dehumanizing experiences from the Native point of view which is shown in the character Coyote. Coyote is a necessary figure for King to set the cross-cultural framework. It is Coyote, the ever-present trickster with whom King can cross the boundary into the history of Japanese Canadians. (I further discuss the role of Coyote in Chapter III.) King tells a story of Japanese internment, but it is simultaneously a story of the Native experience of colonization. By making this connection, by crossing the border that divides two seemingly different histories, he makes readers understand the larger picture of the workings of white supremacy. Examining King’s critique of the border between the U.S. and Canada dividing Native territory in his novel *Green Grass, Running Water*, Fee and Flick point out that “King asks us to bring together different ‘sets’ of information to emphasize the similarities between the struggle over land and water rights on both sides of the border” (134). In this sense, it is clear that “Coyote and the Enemy Aliens” asks for a dual reading, a reading on two levels of meaning. There is one scene with a dialogue between the narrator and his/her friend:

You know, that Billy Frank tells me, this story about the Enemy Aliens have their property taken away by Coyote and the Whitemen and get moved from their homes to someplace else reminds me of another story. (170)

The narrator agrees with Frank, though King does not allow the narrator to tell “another story” here. The text requires the knowing reader, the participatory reader, as in oral stories. By crossing the cultural border into the Japanese Canadian realms, through that Coyote character King creates a parallel between the colonial experiences of Native peoples and Japanese internment, in this case to highlight the colonial legacy of racism and oppression that affect legal, psychological, geographical, and cultural realms. This crossover is how I set my positionality as a student in Native Studies. I also cross the border, yet mine is the reversal of King’s: I, as a Japanese person, cross the border into Native culture and history through my dual readings. This helps me to see myself in a study of Aboriginal literature, to understand connections instead of studying “the other.”

Besides Thomas King, Okanagan writer and activist Jeanette Armstrong informs my comparative methodology. In her essay “The Empowerment of First North American Native Peoples and Empowerment through Their Writing” (2005 --originally prepared for the *Saskatchewan Writers Guide 1990 Annual Conference* in 1990), Armstrong explains oppression and domination as not only a specific colonial practice, but as the root of imperialism. Given Armstrong’s analysis, imperialist discourses inform all trials of oppression and domination including colonialism as well as the Japanese internment. The following quote is Armstrong’s argument for multiracial alliance through which I explicate the intersection of colonization and Japanese internment:

[...] this country is multiracial and multicultural now [...] [T]hose whose thoughts I have provoked may become our greatest allies in speaking to their own. It is this promotion of an ideal which will produce the courage to shake off

centuries of imperialist thoughts and makes possible the relearning of co-operation and sharing, in place of domination. (244)

I interpret that by identifying the common oppressor as Canada's totalizing nation state, Native and Japanese Canadians could cooperate to empower Native peoples and at the same time advocate for anti-imperialism.

The story "Coyote and the Enemy Aliens" and Jeanette Armstrong's critical assertion of decolonization and anti-imperialism historicize Canada's problematic colonial legacy as a nation state, and highlight similarities of dehumanizing discourses imposed on Native peoples and Japanese Canadians. Thus, these two texts allow for a space in which I can construct my standpoint in reading Native literature.

### **I.3. Positionality**

The selected texts are personally meaningful to me. These texts facilitate my affinity of my non-Native, Japanese, and temporarily Japanese Canadian subjectivity, with Native peoples.

I am originally from Kumamoto, in the Kyushu islands of southern Japan. I first visited Canada as a cultural exchange student eleven years ago, and began to wonder what impact colonization has had on Native peoples. To find out, I came back to Canada in 2008. Since then, my eyes have been opened by two major things. One has been a change of my identity, not just as Japanese but also as Japanese Canadian (apart from my citizenship status as Japanese). The other has been realising the significance of the fact that it is Native people's land which I have made my temporary home, and benefitted from. How I can relate to Native people became my biggest concern, and I learned that Native literature was the key to better understand this relationship. Native literature

provides both a rich history and diverse cultural views from time immemorial to the present, and covers a wide range of social, cultural and political issues, and struggles for decolonization. While learning that Indigenous peoples are in the process of seeking justice and redress (for example for the harm done through the Indian Residential School system),<sup>6</sup> I was reminded that Canadians of Japanese ancestry also requested to the former government of Canada redress for the Japanese internment during and after World War II, from 1941 to 1949. As I learned about the history of Japanese Canadians through texts and dialogues with people who experienced the mass uprooting, felt an affinity with Japanese Canadians.<sup>7</sup> I also came to understand that the scope of dehumanization, in the form of racialization, dispossession, relocation, and exploitation, from the Canadian mainstream society, is shared by both Natives and Japanese Canadians. The research question for this thesis, then, is how the similarities of oppression are represented in literature by the respective groups.

It is challenging for a non-Native person to read Native literature. Besides the discrepancy between Native cultures and the Western concept of the modern world that the non-Native population dominates (I myself have also been exposed to with the same concept in Japan, such as the ideology of progressiveness and technology for

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<sup>6</sup> Although the Indian Residential School system was designed for Status-Indian children of First Nations and Inuit, some Métis and non-Status children also went to the residential schools. As this evidence has been overlooked, these survivors are marginalized in the process of the Truth and Reconciliation (Episkenew 188-9).

<sup>7</sup> As part of my course requirements, I organized “Sharing stories of social justice issues: Cross-cultural community meeting of Aboriginal and Japanese Canadians”, held on December 13<sup>th</sup> 2010 at the Manitoba Japanese Canadian Cultural Center (MJCCC). The public event was to create an environment in which the two communities could work together towards a just Canadian society. Art Miki, a Japanese internment survivor and the key activist of the Redress settlement as then President of the National Association of Japanese Canadians, and Cree/Métis Winnipeg poet and storyteller Duncan Mercredi told stories of Native and Japanese Canadian linkages among other speakers from each community.

exploitation), Native literature is further complicated by the authors' political critiques of Canada's continuous colonial oppression. Thus, reading Native literature requires non-Native readers to challenge themselves to understand the complexities of Canada's colonial legacy from the point of view of the colonized. How should I avoid the danger that a non-Native reader easily encounters in terms of reading narratives of the objectified "them", the Other, without having Native perspectives? Clearly, my biggest concern about reading Native texts is how I position myself --"A positionality [...] hinges on personal connections with the topic, but also emphasizes the challenges and pitfalls of cross-cultural interpretations from the vantage point of an outsider who may assume familiarity too easily and tends to overlook differentiations" (Eigenbrod xii). Renate Eigenbrod, professor of Aboriginal literature, has worked for more than two decades in different universities and also taught in a Native community. She provides her theoretical "im/migrant (border crossing) reading" of Native literature. Although her examination is from the position of White immigrant, the points she makes about her "interpretive method" are key to my reading of Native writings because of the common aspect of a new immigrant position. Her choice of the migrant highlights her reading of Native texts in the migratory position between Native cultures and her previous knowledge production back home in Germany. This means that at the same time "[she] problematize[s] [her] subjectivity, the situatedness of [her] knowledge, and the context of [her] subject position" (xv). Non-Natives like myself have not experienced colonization as the oppressed and hardly understand that the oppressive discourse is actually perpetuated by us, new immigrants (if only temporarily). As the conquest of North America began with European settlements, the imperialist legitimacy of land ownerships has been taken for

granted by following immigrants not only from Europe, but also the rest of the world. Given such a troubled relationship between the Native and non-Native, understanding how Native culture is linked to the land is key because both the first and the new immigrants share Indigenous peoples' lands in the process of Canada's nation re/building. For the cross-cultural reading, as Eigenbrod puts it, non-Native /outsider readers must become aware of their limited access to knowledge of Native peoples (43). Eigenbrod also notes that educational and interpretational commentaries are not provided in Native texts as Native authors are not only 'writing back' but are also 'writing home' (61). Native authors often consider Native readers as their primary audience. What Thomas King categorizes as tribal literature among Native literature, for example, exists "primarily within a tribe or a community," "is shared "almost exclusively by members of that community," and is presented and retained in a Native language" (King, "Godzilla vs. Post" 244). In her discussion of challenges to "cultural literacy" attempted by people from fundamentally different cultural background, Eigenbrod indicates that non-Native readers must learn from the Native –i.e. Inuit, Métis, and First Nations-- point of view about colonial history and their resistance in the political arena towards the authority's continuously oppressive legislations (61).

However, focusing on cultural literacy could fall into essentialist discourses of ignoring diversity of cultures and human personality among Native peoples (LaRocque 141). Eigenbrod warns that it is colonial minded to "[deny] the 'multiplicity of experiences' and [understand] culture as 'static' and 'monolithic'" (40). Among many critics who are concerned about the ideological analysis of Native literatures, some of them challenge the postcolonial theory in which such ideology is often seen. According

to Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith, “post-colonialism is viewed as the convenient invention of Western intellectuals which reinscribes their power to define the world” (14). Cherokee author Thomas King challenges such colonial legacy reflected in postcolonial literary criticism in “Godzilla vs. Post-Colonial” (1997):

While post-colonialism purports to be a method by which we can begin to look at those literatures which are formed out of the struggle of the oppressed against the oppressor, the colonized and colonizer, the term itself assumes that the starting point for that discussion is the advent of Europeans in North America. (242-3)

For this thesis, which focuses on Native literature as the literature of the colonized, it is a challenge to remember that Native creative expressions did *not* start with the advent of Europeans. King’s own literary character Coyote, based on oral traditions from thousands of years ago, is a reminder of the continuance of Native cultures that resists post-colonial analysis.

The title of my thesis *How Can I read Native literature?* was inspired by the book *How Should I Read These?: Native Women Writers* by Helen Hoy. Similar to Eigenbrod, Hoy’s discussion of the challenges of reading Native women’s writing from the White point of view complicates the concept of cultural literacy, as there exist “the dangers of fixating on or ignoring difference” (Hoy 11). In my case, a challenge of reading Native literature concerns my particular identity as Japanese and Japanese Canadian. To differentiate from Eigenbrod and Hoy’s White immigrant subjectivity, I wonder how my multiple identity and non-White immigrant subjectivity could relate to Native texts.

The perspectives from people of colour are needed for Canada’s reconciliation of its historical and colonial traumas. At the beginning of his introduction to *Cultivating*

*Canada: Reconciliation through the Lens of Cultural Diversity* (2011), the third and final volume in a series of publication by the Aboriginal Healing Foundation (AHF), the president of AHF, George Erasmus, announces that:

[...] any discussion of reconciliation must include the perspectives of those who have arrived in more recent days and those who trace their family histories beyond western European colonial states. The reason for this is simple. Aboriginal people have a unique historical relationship with the Crown, and the Crown represents all Canadians. From this it follows that all Canadians are treaty people, bearing the responsibilities of Crown commitments and enjoying the rights and benefits of being Canadian. (vii)

From an Indo-Canadian perspective, Ashok Mathur, one of the editors of the volume, argues for a conceptual shift of the land, what is called Canada in colonial mapping: “such view points [of people of color] need to be aware of what has come before them – specifically, Aboriginal populations and the history of the land that is determined not by colonizing definitions, but by pre-contact awareness” (8). Hiromi Goto, the author of *The Kappa Child*, also inspects the responsibility for living on Aboriginal peoples land: “How are we [people of color] complicit in the ongoing oppression of the people of the First Nations? What are we doing about it?” (Notkin) Given the intricacy of these relationships with and responsibilities for the land, my subjectivity as Japanese (Canadian) should take seriously Asian Canadian critic Rita Wong’s question. Wong asks “[w]hat happens if [Asian Canadians] position indigenous people’s struggles instead of normalized whiteness as the reference point through which [they] come to articulate

[their] subjectivity?” Thus, rather than within the framework of White dominant society, my relationship with Canada has much more to do with the land and Native peoples.

Despite the fact that I am Japanese and do not intend to settle in Canada in the future, this sojourn status cannot be indifferent about the fact that I have been a beneficiary of the Native peoples’ land for more than three years. Therefore, my relationship to their land is the same as that of settlers of colour, such as Japanese Canadians. But still my Japanese subjectivity is troubled: What will be my relation to the Native peoples’ land after I leave Canada? For this question, the texts by Marie Clements and Richard Van Camp might help. I will come back to these concerns of my subjectivity in my conclusion.

#### **I. 4. Outline of Thesis**

This study aims to examine critiques of social injustices expressed through the medium of literature, injustices imposed on, and in part shared by, the Native peoples of Canada and Japanese Canadians. Through the eyes of different oppressed groups, the problem of Canada’s political state and normalized White domination in society will be highlighted. My objectives are to explore literary representation of struggles of Native peoples and of Japanese Canadians, and examine how these representations –and the struggles-- intersect. The exploration of forms of oppression towards the two peoples constitutes an analysis of Japanese (Canadian) characters in Native writings, and Native characters in Japanese Canadian literature. An analysis of the mistreatments of the two groups could lead to a realization of the nature of Canada’s colonial power. While the socio-political and historical contexts of the two peoples are different, the government’s

policies imposed on both, like assimilation into White Canadian culture and forcible relocation, intersect.

The discussion in Chapter II, following the Introduction in Chapter I, titled “Theoretical Framework,” reviews theories of colonization/decolonization from Native perspectives, Japanese Canadians’ critiques of the politics of racism, and scrutinizes current multiculturalism in order to apply the critical analysis of Native theorists to examine complex contexts behind narratives in the texts. As the crossover of Native texts and Japanese Canadian texts has received hardly any critical attention (except for the work by Aloys Fleischmann), my comparative study is original. However, I also employ the critiques by Rita Wong, Nancy Van Styvendale, and Marie Lo who have done research on the crossovers of multicultural and Native literature. The discussion of the relationship between colonialism and multiculturalism leads to an exploration of how Native authors describe Japanese Canadians as the Other and vice versa. Moreover, I question whether the Indigenous authors ever identify with Japanese Canadians through the reflection of themselves on representations of Japanese characters, and vice versa. Chapter III, “Intersections of Colonization and Japanese Internment” aims to examine the authors’ political critiques of colonial legacy and compare the forms of oppressions in four fictional pieces – “Coyote and the Enemy Aliens,” *My Name is Seepeetza*, *Obasan*, and *The Kappa Child*. It examines how these similarities represent Canada’s continuous colonialism, racial ideology, and power relation of the oppressor/the oppressed. This comparative study also analyses the representation of culture-specific characters including the Coyote figure in King’s and Sterling’s works and Goto’s *Kappa* in order to understand the meaning of transformation embedded in these “trickster” figures. Chapter

IV, “Intersections of Themes: Global Interconnections,” aims at revealing transnational connectivity and globalization built into the interpretation of Richard Van Camp’s and Marie Clements’ works. Chapter V, “Concluding Remarks: Towards Reconciliation?” examines the meaning of reconciliation by looking at the 1988 Japanese Canadians’ Redress Settlement and the ongoing Truth and Reconciliation process following Steven Harper’s 2008 apology for the Indian Residential Schools. This examination leads to the open-ended discussion on what reconciliation means to me as a Japanese person engaged in Native Studies.

## **Chapter II: Theoretical Framework**

### **II.1. Colonization and Decolonization**

My attempt to understand the intersectional texts by Native and Japanese Canadian writers necessitates reviewing theories and issues of colonization and decolonization from the Native point of view, and an analysis of racial profiling by Japanese Canadians. Native theories of decolonization<sup>8</sup> as well as colonial discourses are articulated based on complex layered histories of individual, communal, and nation-specific knowledge and culture. In her criticism of colonial myth in mainstream Canadian texts, Métis / Cree scholar Emma LaRocque notes that “[the] theory in Native writing is to be found in the complex combination of [...] colonial and contemporary experiences, along with [...] respective indigenous poetics” (159). To understand the complexities, Native critics / theorists’ commentaries on literary works are the best

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<sup>8</sup> Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith states that “once viewed as the formal process of handing over the instruments of government, [and] is now recognized as a long-term process involving the bureaucratic, cultural, linguistic and psychological divesting of colonial power” (98).

medium for a non-Native reader, as those comments are an interpretation of the context behind stories, such as the historical and political background, nation-specific knowledges and biographies of authors. Thus, Native authors' implied discussions on colonization and decolonization could be discerned through Native theorists / thinkers' varied perspectives on common concerns and hopes based on both individual and collective experiences. It is through their analyses that I can comprehend colonization and decolonization which are reflected aesthetically in narrative styles, structures, themes, and characters.

In this chapter, I review the critical comments of Native theorists on colonization and decolonization and the responsibilities as Native literary critics. This review allows me to construct the theoretical framework of my study – exploration of how reading intersectional texts of Natives and Japanese Canadians helps me to better understand the complexity of the legacy of colonialism and situation of contemporary Native peoples.

Okanagan writer and activist Jeannette Armstrong's critique best summarizes what colonization has been to Native peoples in Canada: "totalitarianism and genocide" (243). Her critical essay, "The Disempowerment of First North American Native Peoples and Empowerment through Their Writing" notes that Native peoples were disempowered by colonial violence, such as what Armstrong calls "indoctrination camps," the Indian Residential school system (242-3). Given Armstrong's analysis of totalitarianism, it is true that Native peoples did not have the right to choose the nature of their existences -- just as their children were forced to go to residential schools-- and were directed towards destruction of their social structures along with familial, communal, and national disruptions. Such assimilation policy "destroy[ed] all remnants of [their] culture" (243).

That is cultural genocide. Armstrong underlines the institutional racism as a tool used by Canada's totalitarian nation state, under the guise of democracy and through law, to frame cultural supremacy (243). Her discussion of "totalitarianism" does not only problematize colonization specifically, but also imperialism generally rooted in the ideology of domination. This ideology is inevitably reflected in the writings of mainstream society in which Native cultures are marginalized while representing a romanticized "'pioneer spirit' of colonialist practice and imperialist process" (244). Armstrong contends that it is the political obligation of writers and thinkers to change the dominant discourse before demanding their own "'Freedom of Voice', 'Equal Rights', 'Democracy', or 'Human Rights.'" For decolonization, Armstrong raises two points. One is an understanding of the past – what *really* happened-- leading to cultural affirmation of co-operative values. The other is to expose the true meaning of democracy in Canada, which continues to divide the dominant and the marginalized to undermine multiracial and multicultural beings. Armstrong's commitment as a Native writer and activist is to provoke not merely Native audiences but also those of the dominant society who work towards changes. Her advocacy of "the relearning of co-operation and sharing" (244) in the name of cultural affirmation aims at demolish domination as the root of imperialism. She further discusses the challenge of Native writers engaging in empowerment / decolonization: righting wrongs and promoting resistance against oppression need to be done by attacking not individuals but systems of disempowerment (245). However, because a racist discourse is practiced by people, it is likely that the dehumanized Other internalizes the racism, and misdirects the hate towards his/her own people as well as the racist individuals, without knowing that its real cause is the complex

system and institutional ideology of racism. The responsibility of Native writers to cope with these challenges is to address the failure of assimilation, and reveal the contradiction of Canada's democracy, which shows support for other nations overseas that struggle for liberation while it denies First Nations the right to sovereignty which is guaranteed by treaties (245). Armstrong's emphasis on co-operation, including the alliances with other racial and cultural groups (as discussed in Chapter I.2. Comparative Methodology), assumes inevitable change in Canada.

It is crucial to grasp Emma LaRocque's analysis of the dichotomy of "civilized" or "savage," the binary opposition of Whites and Natives. Her emphasis on dehumanization as represented in the arbitrary dichotomy, which is quintessential for the colonial framework, explicates how one can create the "Other", or the "alien."<sup>9</sup> The civ/sav doctrine "is really an ideological container for the systematic construction of self-confirming 'evidence' that Natives were savages who 'inevitably' had to yield to the superior powers of civilization as carried forward by Euro-Canadian civilizers" (38). As Native writers take resistance strategies to retell stories –stories that are what Armstrong calls "the reality for the majority of Native peoples" (244)-- through their critical writing and theorizing, so does LaRocque. Her focus is to reveal one of the dehumanization discourses, the representation of the civ/sav doctrine in archival and contemporary texts. Colonial dehumanization has long taken place in any medium of the dominant writing, regardless of educational or entertainment purposes, along with the commodification of Native culture. LaRocque asserts that decolonization requires humanization of Native

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<sup>9</sup> This identification of Indigenous peoples as aliens is represented in the film *Avatar* (2009), directed by James Cameron. Thomas King's "Coyote and the Enemy Aliens" also implies by hinting at "another story" that Native peoples are conceived as aliens by the dominant society just as Japanese Canadians used to be. I discuss more in Chapter III.1.

peoples “to personalize the depersonalized ‘Indian’” (164). She advocates that scholars of Western academia especially should read Native literature and learn the values of Native peoples in order to recognize their resistance to “Western epistemological and canonical assumptions and practices” (163), in which cultural and intellectual progresses are matters of supreme importance. The main direction of LaRocque’s work is deconstruction of “the colonizer’s model of the world”,<sup>10</sup> the Eurocentric projection of both the noble and ignoble savage (120) and “its racial politics that set the foundation of colonization” (8) –and, as this thesis shows, is continued in the dominant White supremacist ideology of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and beyond.

Jo-Ann Episkenew, professor of English and a member of the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan, theorizes decolonization of Native peoples by focusing on the healing function of stories. Episkenew suggests a transformation of Native readers “from individuals often living in isolation to members of a large community of shared stories” (16) through the creativity of Native writers. Furthermore, Episkenew sees an education of settler readers of Native literature “by exposing the structures that sustain White privilege and by compelling them to examine their position of privilege and their complicity in the continued oppression of Indigenous people” (17).

A Métis thinker and a leader of the Native rights movement, Howard Adams, analyses the mechanism of White supremacy. Although his book *Prison of Grass* was first published in 1975 (and republished as revised edition in 1989), Adams’ examination of the complicated relation between racism and capitalism is still crucial today, for three

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<sup>10</sup> See Blaut, J.M. *The Colonizer’s Model of the World: Geographical Diffusionism and Eurocentric History*. New York and London: Guilford Press, 1993.

reasons. First, white supremacy still exists today.<sup>11</sup> Second, it is necessary to understand the historical background of selected Native texts. For example, Marie Clements' *Burning Vision* sets the story in the period of the 1930s to the 1950s and takes up the issue of race and class. The third is to compare the complexity of racism and capitalism as a colonial project imposed on Native peoples, as Adams explicates, with the ideology of the immigration policy affecting Japanese Canadians before and during the internment (which I discuss in the next section II.2. Multiculturalism). Adams historicizes White supremacy by examining the two hundred years of the fur trade society in Canada: "[...] the purpose of racism was to reduce native people to a subhuman level where they could be freely exploited. Racism therefore arose from economic factors inherent in capitalism" (11). He condemns the imperialist discourse and the ideology of White supremacy as Canada's foundation which is perpetuated in the current economic system and any other social, legal, political and educational institutions. Adams also maintains that the colonial scheme is a psychological one, including the internalization of White supremacy among Native peoples who "become conditioned to accept inferiority [...] as a part of their true selves, often with strong feelings of shame" (15). The internalization of racism adds to the powerlessness of Natives by their accepting of "the denial of their human and civil rights" (42). Such conditions easily let them embody the racial stereotype which is what the mainstream society calls the "Indian problem," and leaves them "vulnerable to manipulation and exploitation by the authorities" (42). Inherent in Adams' critique of the legacy of colonialism is that Canadians do not recognize the

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<sup>11</sup> In their study of anti-racist curriculum on the Canadian prairies, "Troubling National Discourses in Anti-Racist Curricular Planning" (2005), Carol Schick and Verna St. Denis contend that "[...]public education largely remains reflective of white, Western, or Eurocentric interests" as "[c]urriculum is one of the significant discourses through which white privilege and 'difference' are normalized" (298).

normalization of White supremacy because authorities, historians, and media have promoted stereotypes of Native people as degraded, troubled and inferior for centuries.

## **II.2. Multiculturalism**

As the foundation of Canada was based in the process of colonization begun by European settlers bringing in imperialist ideology, White supremacy is also located in another part of national history, namely, the discrimination of Canadians of Japanese ancestry.

Japanese Canadian literary critic Roy Miki, who worked with his brother Art Miki, a leading activist for the redress movement, examines racialization of non-whites as “integral to the formation of Canada as a nation” (17). Miki comments on the racial profiling and its internalization as not merely Asian but also Japanese based on his own experience. It is important to note that racial profiling of Japanese Canadians began long before their political charge as a threat to national security during 1941 to 1949, and continued --as Miki experienced in the postwar era—until it officially ended with the Redress settlement in 1988. The culmination of anti-Japanese sentiment took place under the War Measures Act, wherein all Japanese nationals and those naturalized after 1922 were registered as Enemy Aliens, and 1800 fishing boats were confiscated right after 1941’s Bombing of Pearl Harbour as a response of the authorities in Ottawa and British Columbia.<sup>12</sup> In the four months that followed, the British Columbia Security Commission uprooted 22,000 Canadians of Japanese ancestry from the “protected zone” (Miki 90), an area which was extended along the west coast of B.C. for a hundred miles (Sunahara 1). “Enemy Alien” men, over thirteen years of age, were segregated by

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<sup>12</sup> “Within hours the federal cabinet declared war on Japan for [...] the attacks described as ‘a threat to the defence and freedom of Canada’”, and “issued a statement urging calm, counselling against anti-Japanese demonstrations in British Columbia, and expressing its confidence in the loyalty of Japanese aliens and Canadian-born Japanese in B.C.” (Sunahara 27).

generations, sent to different road camps in B.C. and Ontario (Sunahara 55), and some male protestors against the forcible relocation were sent to detention camps in Ontario (Miki 58). Women and children were put in the livestock buildings at Hastings Park in Vancouver for anywhere from weeks to months, and treated like animals (Sunahara 58). They were then dispersed to ghost towns and camps in the B.C. interior (Sunahara 97), and some were given a choice to keep their family together by working for low wages on sugar beet farms in Alberta and Manitoba (Miki 5). Despite the fact that 75% of the internees were Canadian citizens, either Canadian-born or naturalized (“Japanese Canadian Timeline”), their citizenship rights were nullified, and their properties, businesses, assets and personal belongings were seized, and sold without consent (“WWII & Internment”). Additionally, 4,319 people were deported to Japan (Miki 105). Redress was settled in 1988, twenty years before an official apology to the Indian Residential School survivors.

Japanese Canadian writer Ann Gomer Sunahara discerns the context behind Japanese internment as based on the government’s documents that reveal the ideology of politicians and their deceptions. In her critical study on *The Politics of Racism*, Sunahara notes that the mass uprooting was “the culmination of logic history of discrimination resulting from Canadian social norms that cast Asians in the role of second-class citizens” (161). Canadians of Japanese descent were categorized not even in hyphenated terms, but just as “Japanese” outsiders –the inassimilable others to the white dominant society-- no matter whether they were naturalized or Canadian-born. Just as Issei (the first generation of Japanese immigrants) were conceived as not British subjects but as cheap labour, the following generations remained disenfranchised with no access to the

professions of the public sector. Sunahara analyses the racial discourse that was exemplified by British Columbian politicians, the very advocates of the anti-Asian movement. Those provincial racist policy makings were sanctioned by the federal government's acquiescent responses to the radical B.C. politicians. In contrast to such active racism by B.C. politicians, the federal government carried out passive racism which was "more destructive" than the active one (3). Despite the opposition from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and the military officers to B.C.'s accusations of enemy aliens, "it took the silent compliance of the federal cabinet to put those measures into effect" (3).<sup>13</sup> It is clear that the authorities, both the Dominion of Canada and Britain, battered these challenges by making up rules each time to rationalize the denial of rights of Japanese Canadians as well as other racialized peoples.

According to Sunahara, the Japanese Canadian was a "scapegoat" to settle down B.C.'s frenzy of "Yellow Peril" –the fear that Asian Canadians could take over the control of social aspects from the white dominant province, and eventually entrenched in Canada as a whole—"sanctified" by the attack on Pearl Harbour in 1941 (161).

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<sup>13</sup> Roy Miki addresses, in *Redress: Inside the Japanese Canadian Call for Justice* (2004), Japanese Canadians' continuous fights against B.C.'s racist policies in both legal and political arenas as model cases precedent to actions towards the redress movement. For instance, once Japanese Canadians seemed to have the legitimacy of their claim by right of enfranchisement with the fact that the Naturalization Act in the British North America Act guaranteed all naturalized aliens political rights. Therefore, the Provincial Election Act which banned people of Asian descent and Native peoples from voting in B.C. was recognized as inoperative. However, the court decision was eventually dismissed. Against it, the B.C. government appealed to the Privy Council. The British authority responded that Naturalization did not mean enfranchisement (27). The other case is political action. 196 Japanese Canadians joined the Canadian army as volunteer during World War I with a hope that their loyalty could be recognized to gain Canadian citizenship. Again, their efforts at the cost of death and wounds were denied by the authorities (31).

It was not until 1949 that Canadians of Japanese ancestry were finally enfranchised for the first time. However, it was still a far cry from full participation in Canadian society. In his inquiry into the history of Japanese Canadians and the process of their achievement of Redress, Roy Miki brings back his own hardships as an outsider in facing assimilation and racialization in his everyday life, even after their enfranchisement:

While social forces encouraged assimilation through language, thought and performance, the movement of my body continued to be tracked as the other –the “Jap” in the midst. “Canadian,” in this context, assumed meanings that extended well beyond the mere attribute of citizenship and came to occupy the boundary line between presence and absence –between being somebody and being nobody.

(14)

Such oppression of Japanese Canadians would not end until reconciliation in 1988 because central authorities dismissed the value of cultural heterogeneity, considering racial and ethnic differences as inimical to national interests and detrimental to Canada’s character and integrity as white settler constructed society.

In order to abolish assimilation as government policy and due to “[p]ressures for change stemm[ing] from the growing assertiveness of Canada’s aboriginal peoples, the force of Québécois nationalism, and the increased resentment of ethnic minorities towards their place in society” (Leman), Canada introduced its multicultural policy in 1971. It focused on “cultural preservation and intercultural sharing through promotion of ethnic presses and festivals” (Leman). In 1988, the Canadian Multiculturalism Act was passed more specifically for “cross-cultural understanding and the attainment of social

and economic integration through removal of discriminating barriers, institutional change, and affirmative action to equalize opportunity” (Leman). However, it is still questionable, as seen in controversies among many critics, whether multiculturalism is another form of assimilation to mask racist discourses and the power relation between the mainstream White dominant society and the racialized groups, non-White ethnic groups and Native peoples. In her critique on multicultural policy in relation to literature, Ana María Fraile Marcos analyses that:

In spite of the positive effects of a law that celebrates difference and encourages minorities to preserve, develop, and spread their own languages and cultures, critics show themselves wary about the legal exaltation of otherness which, they fear, may be merely a sign of tokenism and only serve to ghettoize marginal cultures. (175)

Sneja Gunew argues that Canada’s multiculturalism has two sides: on one hand, the policy is “a set of government policies designed to manage cultural diversity” and on the other, “an attempt by various groups and individuals to use these policies to achieve full participatory cultural democracy” (5). Given her examination of White hegemonic discourse, it is urgent to re-examine multicultural policy in Canada. Otherwise, another mass uprooting and internment could happen again just as Japanese Canadians experienced. Asian Canadian literary scholar Rita Wong’s examination of the Multiculturalism Act draws on the parallels between other legislation including the Indian Act and the Anti-Terrorism Act. Being of Native and Chinese mixed heritage herself, Wong’s analysis is such that Canada has historically classified people of colour into different groups and marginalized them to control troubled cultural differences under the

favour of national protection acts which have only allowed more power for the authority. Scott McFarlane states that it is through the relationship between the marginalized with Whites that “immigrants or nonpersons” become Canadian (cited in Wong). The Multiculturalism Act brings up criticism of its assimilation policy, but also signals another concern of the complex relationship between non-White ethnic groups and Native peoples. Among other critics, Bengali-Canadian scholar Himani Bannerji points out the necessary understanding of connection between multiculturalism and colonialism: “the construction of visible minorities as a social imaginary and the architecture of the ‘nation’ built with a ‘multicultural mosaic’ can only be read together with the engravings of conquests, wars and exclusions” (93).

The questions about the dynamics between Native peoples and racial/ethnic minorities arise to seek different multicultural relations in deconstructing White-centered multiculturalism. Nancy Van Styvendale discusses intersections of Indigenous and diasporic literatures: the relation between these groups is commonly oversimplified as one of strict opposition and tension, a friction between the original occupants of the land and a further wave of trespassers; on the other hand, the national turn to multiculturalism collapses very real differences between the two types of community.

Rita Wong examines Asian Canadians’ intricate relationship with Native peoples in more detail. As all the racialized “have inherited the violence of colonization,” Wong suggests the potential for the two groups to work together towards decolonization. However, she also questions the challenging relationship between Natives and Asian Canadians as the latter are complicit with White settlers in the colonization of land for which Native peoples continue to struggle. She suggests “decolonizasian” —in which

Asian Canadians deconstruct Eurocentric reference points of being Canadians, whose focus is ownership and conquest. Wong concludes that Asian Canadians must adopt value to connect to land as Native peoples have done for their sustainable lives.

Another reference to the complexity of Aboriginal and Asian relation can be found in the work of Marie Lo. She analyses how Native characters and cultures are configured to contest the particular forms of Asian Canadian marginalization in Asian Canadian literature: “the aboriginal status of First Nations [and] their struggle for self-determination and sovereignty [...] are reflected [...] as models of anti-racist resistance and as enabling figures of social-political critique”(97). Lo asserts that Native peoples are models of resistance and Asians are model minorities in terms of successful assimilation and capital accumulation.

It is clear that these complex relationships between Indigenous peoples and racialized immigrants are built upon the history of colonization, and that “[t]hrough legislation such as the Indian Act, the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, the Multiculturalism Act, and the Citizenship Act, ‘we’ have historically been managed, divided, and scripted into the Canadian nation-state” (Wong).

### **II.2.1 Images of the Other: Cross-cultural Characters and Themes in Texts**

Himani Bannerji notes the significance of understanding the interrelation of colonialism and multiculturalism in Canada’s nation building: “if we want to understand the relationship between visible minorities and the state of Canada [...], colonialism is the context or entry point that allows us to begin exploring the social relations and cultural forms which characterize these relations” (92). For my study the question arises in which

way the colonial imaginary of “the other” shapes cross-cultural characterization in Aboriginal and Japanese –Canadian texts respectively.

*My Name is Seepeetza*

The Aboriginal author Shirley Sterling touches on Canadians of Japanese descent in the context of the Second World War and the following post-war era. The protagonist Seepeetza associates with a fourteen year old Japanese girl named Miyoki. They share the same room when Seepeetza is hospitalized for an abscessed tooth in December of 1958. They share snacks brought by Miyoki’s parents, trade comics, and draw together. Miyoki’s background is not mentioned, nor is her health condition. Seepeetza describes Miyoki’s parents’ great restraint in communicating with her: “Sometimes they gave me chips too. They talked to me a few times but mostly they just smiled and said hello” (40). Given Seepeetza’s assumption that her school has not told her parents about her hospitalization, this Japanese family might feel sorry for Seepeetza, whose parents never come to visit like Miyoki’s parents do. During the anti-Japanese uproar and mass uprooting after Pearl Harbour, Seepeetza’s father “guarded [Japanese Canadians] in a camp near Firefly” (41). They had shared their culture and knowledge with him, and Seepeetza feels a link to Miyoki’s family. Just as those other Japanese were desperate to find jobs, faced racism as the Enemy Aliens, and were afraid to be sent to internment and road camps apart from families, Miyoki’s family could potentially face these traumas. Taking into account the evidence that Sterling went to the Kamloops Indian Residential School, the location of the story setting is in the same area. I interpret that the family were exposed to cruel racism having resided in the Kamloops district. According to John Stewart, assistant archivist of Kamloops Museum and Archives, there was a small

Japanese population in Kamloops since the early 1900s. During World War II, many people in the community reacted similarly to anti-Japanese sentiments spread across the province, and demanded the internment of Japanese in the area (3-5). Miyoki's family represents all Japanese Canadians who were similarly oppressed by the White dominant society. Seepetza is also reminded that "Once my brother Jimmy called them Japs and my dad took him in the woodshed and whipped him. Both my dad and Jimmy cried" (41). This scene alludes to the danger of perpetuating a racial ideology even by those who are also racialized, and of becoming complicit in oppression as Thomas King's Coyote demonstrates in "Coyote and the Enemy Aliens." For the intersectional theme of this thesis it is noteworthy that an Aboriginal author alludes to the racism against Japanese-Canadians in a novel that focuses on a residential school experience.

### *Obasan*

In Kogawa's novel, Naomi's first encounter with Native characters takes place in Slocan, B.C., after the evacuation from her home in Vancouver. Rough Lock Bill, who lives in a cabin by the lake, eventually saves her from nearly drowning. The representation of Rough Lock Bill, in particular described by Naomi's child point of view, repeatedly indicates his racial identity as Native: "big toe ...dark as a walnut" (143), "his arm ...darker than mine" (144), "dark wrinkled neck" (144), and "brown leathery arm" (145). Rough Lock himself admits he is "red skin" (147). His cultural particularity as Native, depicted in his own voice, is seen in his telling of a naming story about Slocan. A long time ago "an Indian brave" (145) led people to Slocan and they survived from smallpox, wars between different Native groups, and poverty. Therefore, this is an acknowledgement of Native peoples' history that extends much further than colonialism,

their belonging to the land, and recognition of historical oppression of the peoples. Moreover, it evokes the shared experience of forced relocation and racism between Japanese Canadians and Native peoples. Rough Lock's linking of Naomi, who suppresses her voice, and an old man within another story, who is "almost like a mute" (146), shows his sympathy toward her. Paradoxically, this reflects Kogawa's sympathy toward Japanese Canadians, as well as Native peoples since she, fictionalizing herself as Naomi, experienced that oppression. By telling of such historical oppression of Native peoples, Kogawa might more strongly contest mainstream Canadian society whose ancestors took the lands of Native peoples in order to explain the reproduction and continuation of the same colonial discourse through the government's racist policy. The novel also highlights the parallel between Japanese Canadian characters' subjectivity and that of Native characters as both exiled on their homeland. Naomi learns "it is a riddle" from her brother that although born and raised in Vancouver, she cannot be Canadian like whites but "the enemy and not the enemy" (70) who are forced into exile from the West Coast to the B.C. interior for internment and road camps, ghost towns, and sugar beet farms in Alberta and Manitoba. Rough Lock, although his ancestry is indigenous to land, was inflicted with what Neal McLeod puts as "spatial and spiritual exile" (54) in the face of the advancing settlement into his people's territory. Such exile includes the Indian Residential School system and its impacts on Native children as well as their family, home, and communities as Shirley Sterling explains in *My Name is Seepeetza*. Kogawa describes the example of the consequences of exile through the image of suppression among Native children, protagonist Naomi's quiet students in school, who "could almost pass for Japanese, and vice versa" (2):

There's something in the animal-like shyness I recognize in the dark eyes. A quickness to look away. I remember, when I was a child in Slocan, seeing the same swift flick-of-a-cat's-tail look in the eyes of my friends. (2)

In the same manner, Naomi reflects herself and other Japanese Canadians onto Native characters. When she and her uncle visit a coulee for the memorial of her mother who died during the atomic bombing in Nagasaki, Naomi sees her uncle as Chief Sitting Bull:

He has the same prairie-baked skin, the deep brown furrows like dry river beds creasing his cheeks. All he needs is a feather headdress, and he would be perfect for a picture postcard-squatting here. (2)

Although several stereotyped images of “the Indian”, such as “the animal-like shyness” and “a feather headdress” could be understood as Kogawa’s romanticization influenced by the colonial imaginary, I argue that these representations of Native characters go beyond the stereotype. They are projections of Japanese Canadians onto the Native characters not merely to show Kogawa’s affiliation to Native peoples, but rather to seek the possibility to ally the oppressed peoples to contest against the official version of Canadian history and its legacy of White domination in society, which is currently seen in the Multiculturalism Act.

There are many scenes that depict patronizing attitudes of the mainstream society which is also seen in the colonial ideology of the white-man’s burden towards Native peoples. Kogawa draws the parallel between “Our Japanese” and “Our Indian” with the link of “a terrible business” (225) as Mr. Barker, into whose sugar beet farm the rest of Naomi’s family is finally relocated, describes Japanese internment apologetically and

condescendingly. In her study of the relationship between identity and exile represented in *Obasan*, Elenora Rao inspects that “such a combination of native and immigrant identities challenges the idea of monolithic national and ethnic identity and opens up other possibilities of hybridisation” (106). Arnold Davidson, in his close reading of the text, points out that:

The real issue of the novel [...] is not Naomi’s –or the Japanese Canadians’— ability to endure; it is the country’s capacity to require such endurance. As certain signs suggest – the military standoff at Oka, the continuing irresolution of Native land claims, politicians and new parties crudely exploiting anti-Quebecois feelings after the failure of the Meech Lake Accord—that capacity may well be still too much with us. (78)

Corresponding with my discussion in Chapter II reviewing Canada’s controversial multicultural policy portrayed in literature, Kogawa’s critiques of the policy are also reflected in the text. In his inquiry into the multiculturalism policy as the exclusionary nationalist discourse and consolidation of ethnic differences, Apollo O. Amoko contends that:

*Obasan* represents an attempt to interrupt the progressivist discourses of official multiculturalism. Kogawa presents not so much an unproblematic reminder of a “forgotten” historical moment central to the construction of Canadian nationality, but rather, an interruption of the continuist narrative of national progress propounded by Multiculturalism Canada.

The main issue here is the land: the racialized and uprooted Japanese Canadian characters in the novel search for belonging to “native” land. Here are the double

meanings I posit on the native land: one is identification with the Canadian nation, the other is the belonging to Native peoples' land. Aunt Emily repeats in her manuscript "[t]his is my own, my native land" by questioning herself and concluding, "[f]or better or worse, *I am Canadian*" (40). Her desperate self-convincement portrays the discrepancy between self-consciousness of being a part of the nation and the reality of being betrayed by the nation that had already betrayed Native peoples (although Aunt Emily conceptualizes that the land she believes she belongs to is the same as the country). Against the mixed norm of nationality and identity, Kogawa questions not only the equity of citizenship and arbitrariness of national identity, but also underlines Japanese Canadians' relationship with Native land. It is not Canada but the land which Native peoples originally inhabited and on which they continue to thrive, though stripped of their ancestral territories, culture, knowledge, and social structure under the threat of white domination. The importance of Native characters is explained by Lo's analysis on the intimate relationship between Naomi and Father Cedric (French Canadian of Native heritage) in *Itsuka*, the sequel to *Obasan*: "[...] it is through him that she is able to reclaim a primordial connection to the land that precedes national inscription" (103).

The question of where Japanese Canadians fit into Canadian history and geography is also at the heart of *The Kappa Child*. They surely do not align well with official Canadian policy/history, yet at the same time their history is not quite like Native history, either. Given this schema, how and where can they exist in their own country?

### ***The Kappa Child***

Similar to Kogawa's representation of Chief Sitting Bull as mirrored in Uncle, Goto depicts the reflection of the protagonist's father in the image of a Native person to

blur the arbitrary racial difference: “He could pass for an Indian”(44). However, the most striking reflection of the linkage between the Japanese Canadian protagonists, and Native characters and themes is portrayed in her encounter with Gerald, a hybrid character of a Kainai (Blood) First Nation father and a Japanese-Canadian mother, and the narrator’s realization of the frontier myth projected in *Little House on the Prairie*.

The narrator meets Gerald when her family had just moved to the prairie and were struggling to get water; his mother Janice eventually helped them out. Janice is a Nisei (the second generation of Japanese Canadians) single mother, who split with Gerald’s father, and manages a chicken farm on her own. She speaks no Japanese and behaves mannishly. Janice matches neither the image of a Japanese (Canadian) woman nor the figure carrying the frontier spirit in the prairie like white settlers. Karin Beeler’s examination of the gaps between the life of Laura Ingalls’ family in *Little House on the Prairie* and the reality of the Japanese Canadian narrator’s family in the Alberta prairie life that Goto projects in the text emphasizes:

In rewriting the “master-narrative” of the West, Goto replaces the active role of Pa Ingalls (the builder of a well) with that of a Japanese-Canadian mother figure, thus creating a new culturally mediated myth of the prairie experience with a special Canadian and feminist twist. (60)

Gerald becomes friends with the narrator as they both share a sense of isolation from their families and as both characters struggle with counter-ideal families. Besides, the narrator’s family is also fragmented because of the father’s violence<sup>14</sup> towards his family

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<sup>14</sup> The father’s oppression, both physical and psychological, ranges from exploitative labour for rice cultivation, enforcement of disgraceful acts of stealing the water from the neighbour, and rage against his family.

in reaction to his obsessive desire to grow Japanese rice, against obvious difficulties in the climate and such an alienated situation in the prairies. Gerald and the narrator's isolation from their families can be attributed to the isolation of both families from the White settler dominant landscape. The narrator points out her family's Otherness when she admits her hopelessness to get away from forced labour on her father's farm, even from her family: "Going to white outsiders wasn't an option for an Asian immigrant family like us. If you ditched the family, there was absolutely nothing left" (Goto 199). Gerald, of Native and Japanese Canadian heritage, is also a far cry from the image of prairie characters. The representation of Gerald deconstructs the stereotyped image of the "Indian" and the narrator is shocked by the gap between her perception of Natives and what he is like:

Gerald Nakamura Coming Singer was incomprehensible. In Laura Ingalls' book-world, Indians meant teepees on the prairies and that was that. Indian didn't equal someone who was both Blood and Japanese Canadian. Indians certainly never meant someone who lived next door on a chicken farm. (188)

It is clear that the protagonist's stereotyped image of Native peoples is created in the story *Little House on the Prairie* by which she is initially obsessed. Given Beeler's further discussion on Goto's critique of cultural appropriation seen in *The Kappa Child*, Wilder's story conveys "a colonizer's desire to 'manage' or assimilate native culture into white reality" (62). Goto presents the scene in which Laura Ingalls wants a Native baby as a cultural abduction while the author draws the parallel to the literal meaning of abduction of the narrator's mother by an alien. Goto explicates the cultural abduction in her essay, "Alien Texts, Alien Seductions: The Context of Colour Full Writing":

I have not been abducted by aliens but, in Canada, Aboriginal Peoples and People of Colour face ongoing cultural abduction. There have been largest massacres, treaties of deceit, internment, and ongoing institutionalized racism from national to private. (cited in Beeler 63-4)

Applying the metaphor of abduction into the prairie landscape, it is neither Japanese Canadians nor Native peoples, but white settlers who are the aliens, in that European settlers invaded Native peoples and continue to abduct/marginalize their culture(s). Japanese Canadians were also marginalized through the internment and high ratio of interracial marriage<sup>15</sup> because of the trauma of racial profiling. Beeler contends that Goto is “rewriting Laura Ingalls Wilder’s ‘myth’ of alien abduction, and “instead of viewing Laura as the one who wants to abduct an ‘alien’ or cultural other, she must be viewed as the ‘alien’ presence wanting to abduct the Indian baby” (64).

It is Gerald who indicates the Native peoples’ connection to the land. The connectedness to land is similarly represented in Rough Lock, a Native character in *Obasan*. Gerald’s representation, however, as a child of an interracial marriage between a Japanese Canadian and a Blood, means more than a Native connection to the land. Guided by Gerald, the narrator explored the prairie in which she eventually changed her view of the prairie landscape, from “a desert” (34) to “How beautiful the land was” (168). This is a transformation that changes her epistemology, thus also geography and history of the Prairies. It was also a space where she and Gerald build a friendship by playing

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<sup>15</sup> “Approximately 95% of Japanese Canadians are in interracial marriage, the highest out of any other ethnicity in Canada”(Kamloops & Area Chapter of National Association of Japanese Canadians and Vernon Japanese Cultural Society).

Jean-François Gravel, vice-president at Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre of Montreal, comments on the cause that "The Japanese experienced so much racism so they assimilated - the pressure to keep their culture wasn't there" (Rosel Kim).

“Janken po” (190), the Japanese version of rock-paper-scissors, a part of Japanese culture with which he can link his identity to a certain extent. This scene shows that Gerald takes the role of a cross-cultural bridge between the Japanese and the Native. More specifically, it is through Gerald’s offering of an alternative from being either white Canadian settler/immigrant or being Native that the narrator made her connection with the land which was previously strange and hostile.

Goto’s text reconstructs the Canadian prairie that is different from the “monolithic white settler landscape and perspective” (Beeler 60), by showing the diversity of each humanity as well as the diversity within a homogenized racial group. The dialogue between Gerald and the narrator creates the moment when they reveal the troubled perception of each other, e.g. Gerald’s “Thought you couldn’t speak English” (167). [...] “You a boy or a girl?” and the narrator’s “You Blood or Japanese?” (168). Their questioning shows that both characters share ambiguities of identity, such as race, ethnicity, national origin, language, and gender. However, their friendship breaks up. The protagonist refuses Gerald’s affection for her when her fragility is revealed:

“Hey, sissy boy,” I sneered. “I don’t let sissy boys touch me. Ever.” This hateful coil of ugliness twisting in my gut, the words stinging something inside me, but unable to stop. “Why don’t you get your baby butt home.” (200)

As Rita Wong and Christine Kim both examine, this broken friendship represents the challenge of cross-cultural allying. The complex relationship between Native peoples and Japanese Canadians is still called into a question. However, as there is a suggestion of Gerald and the narrator’s reconciliation, the relationship between the two groups might

not be impossible and must be done. I will come back to this challenging relation in the final chapter, in relation to my troubling subjectivity.

### **Chapter III: Intersections of Colonization and Japanese Internment**

In the following I will analyze texts that intersect in their themes of political critiques of colonialism and of Japanese internment by Native and Japanese Canadian authors respectively. These critiques address not merely past injustices, but their continuity in the present, and into the future. My discussion in this chapter looks at representations of oppression, and also at ways of transformation evoked through the use of trickster figures from each culture, Coyote and Kappa . The intersectional texts selected here are “Coyote and the Enemy Aliens”, *My Name is Seepeetza*, *Obasan*, and *The Kappa Child* .

#### **III.1. “Coyote and the Enemy Aliens”**

In Thomas King’s “Coyote and the Enemy Aliens,” the representation of oppression towards Japanese Canadians begins with calling them Enemy Aliens in the name of National Security. In a scene in which Coyote and the Kogawa Seafood truck are arguing,<sup>16</sup> the Japanese Canadian character says “I’m not an Enemy Alien” (162). In a colonial context, naming is a dehumanizing tool and a colonial measure,<sup>17</sup> which claims authority and asserts power and control. What may seem like simple derogatory names was/is in fact a way of how empires and states regulate, order, and ultimately control

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<sup>16</sup> On the one hand, this is a reminder that not only Japanese Canadians were dispersed by trucks, but also Aboriginal children were transported between the Indian residential schools and home by pickups. These parallels are seen in photographs –the photo of Japanese Canadians’ relocation is found in “This Week in History: The Promise” ([www.pc.gc.ca](http://www.pc.gc.ca)) and that of Aboriginal children’s relocation to Kamloops Indian Residential School is in “Residential School Survivor: Queen of England Took Children Away” ([blogspot.com](http://blogspot.com)). On the other hand, “Seafood” associates a history of Japanese immigrants who participated in the shipping and cannery industry.

<sup>17</sup> See Smith, Linda T, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, 1999.

colonized populations. Coyote justifies the dehumanization through a law: “We only need one word for Enemy Aliens. And that one word is legal” (166). It is the same manner of having named Native peoples “Indians” and maintaining the name even after Columbus’ mistake became clear. For governing convenience, “Indians” were and still are divided into categories of Status Indian and Non-Status Indian under the Indian Act.<sup>18</sup> Further legislations continued to classify Native peoples. For instance, the title protagonist in *My Name is Seepeetza* knows from her father about the law which rules her fate as a child: “All status Indian kids have to go to residential schools” (13).

Another legislation that King discusses in his story is the “Order-in-Council 469” (163) which “allows the government, through the Custodian of Enemy Alien Property, to sell Japanese-Canadian property held in custody without owners’ consent” (“Japanese Canadian Timeline”). Coyote, given the official document with Coyote’s name on it, has a right to confiscate and sell the property. After seemingly understanding the importance of Coyote’s duty, the narrator doubts Coyote:

Is it more important than being truthful, I says.

Oh, yes, says Coyote.

Is it more important than being reliable, I says.

Absolutely, says Coyote.

Is it more important than being fair, I says.

Probably, says Coyote.

Is it more important than being generous, I says.

It certainly is, says Coyote.

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<sup>18</sup> See Fitznor, Laara, “The Power of indigenous Knowledge: Naming and Identity and Colonization in Canada,” 2006.

This scene describes the narrator's sarcasm about the government's fabrication of rules over Japanese Canadians. At the same time, land confiscation and dispossession also have happened to Native peoples. The fact that the narrator lives on "the reserve" (162) alludes to that. When Coyote is naming all the confiscated property for sale one by one, the narrator responds, "A fishing boat? You have a fishing boat for sale?" (164). The scene does not merely tell of the dispossession of Japanese Canadians during the internment, but also alludes to that of Native peoples. The fishing boats evoke the struggle for fishing rights violated by the federal government (such as the case of Mi'kmaq fisherman Donald Marshal whose fishing right was upheld on Sept. 17, 1999, by the Supreme Court of Canada) ("The Marshal Decision"). The evocation will draw readers' attention to the dispossession that Native peoples experienced and continue to experience.

The text illustrates the same path of the Enemy Aliens and Indians; both, the Japanese Canadians' and the Native peoples' dispossession end in their dispersal. In King's story, the scene takes place first in the Livestock Building where displaced Japanese Canadians from the West Coast are temporally interned until the authorities decide where they should go next. Inside, the narrator is shocked at the living conditions of the Enemy Aliens, mixed with smells of the livestock. When the narrator suggests Coyote remove Japanese Canadians out of the building by saying "Maybe the Enemy Aliens would like to leave, too" Coyote responds, "Enemy Aliens don't mind that smell. They are not like you and me." (167) In this phase of the internment, it is much clearer that the Enemy Aliens are seen as lesser human beings, not just called so by a

derogatory name (as seen in LaRocque's civ/sav dichotomy).<sup>19</sup> King describes how Japanese communities and families are torn apart by gender and age --women and children confined in a livestock building separately from men.<sup>20</sup> King also indicates another division: male detainees who resist the removal from the coast and separation of families are not held in the Livestock Building (169).

Shortly after, Coyote disperses the Enemy Aliens with the truck named "Okada General Store," which is presumably named after John Okada, the Japanese American author of *No-No Boy*,<sup>21</sup> a novel about Japanese internment in the United States, in which 120,000 Japanese Americans were incarcerated from 1942 to 1945 ("Japanese-American Internment"), four years shorter than Japanese internment in Canada. Coyote drives these Enemy Aliens from the Livestock Building in Vancouver, passing the interior of British Columbia and the prairies to the narrator's place on the reserve as "a good place to disperse the Enemy Alien" (169) by the river.<sup>22</sup> The narrator treats the Enemy Aliens with hospitality from the whole community, like singing "a welcoming song" (169), and simultaneously is reminded by the narrator's friend of "another story," another oppression which Natives experienced. However, the narrator does not tell us "another story" here. Focusing on a story of Japanese Canadians, King gets his audience back to the scene of dispersal in the Enemy Aliens' story. Now that the RCMP and politicians come to give Coyote a new order, the Enemy Aliens are to be sent to the Sugar Beet

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<sup>19</sup> LaRocque, *When the Other is Me: Native Resistance Discourse 1850-1990*, 2010.

<sup>20</sup> The dividing of families also happened in the Nazi concentration camps.

<sup>21</sup> The protagonist Ichiro's parents keep a general store. See *No-No Boy*.

<sup>22</sup> The river might be the Old Man River located in the Blackfoot territory in southern Alberta. According to Maria Truchan-Tataryn and Susan Gingell's examination of the character "Napi~~ao~~," a friend of the narrator in King's "One Good Story, That One," it refers to the Blackfoot Creator, Old Man, in the Old Man River (11). In "Coyote and the Enemy Aliens" there is also the friend character called "Napi~~oa~~" (159). Although these characters are named differently, the assertion above could be taken into account in locating the setting of "Coyote and the Enemy Aliens."

Farms in order to take the “citizenship tests” (171). Japanese internees were contributors to “a necessary part of Canada’s war effort” (Sunahara, 78), the agricultural industry and economy. The sugar beet project was developed to fill the lack of labor to cultivate the Prairies (Sunahara). It is Canada’s human exploitation through racialization of Canadian citizens, as Japanese who are labeled as the enemy for the purpose of national economic expansion. This scene might evoke injustices against Native peoples: the dominant society’s benefitting from the exploitation of labour in the interest of capitalism embedded in Canada’s foundation as the trace of the British and French empires. Howard Adams contends that “the racism and colonialism of capitalism will always hold us [Natives] captive in misery, violence, and exploitation” (187).

Shortly after that, the scene is interrupted by a dialogue between *Coyote* and the narrator *I* who interrogates Coyote, among other scenes:

Narrator. Have any of the Enemy Aliens caused any troubles?

Coyote. Not yet. [...] but you can’t be too careful.

King criticizes the oppressor, the government, who does not care whether the Enemy Aliens are really its enemy, but it needs power to control society. According to Mona Oikawa, the authorities created Japanese immigrants as a “monolithic allegiance to the nation of the ‘enemy’” (77). It is then much easier for the government to sell the White supremacist campaign across the West coast, eventually led by Vancouver politician Ian McKenzie who developed the slogan “No Japs from the Rockies to the seas” (King 168). Although seventy-five percent of the 22,000 internees were Canadian citizens (“WWII & Internment”), they were considered as aliens, and an enemy of Canada, based on racial and ethnic differences. The story climaxes when Coyote and the RCMP arrest the Enemy

Aliens and Indians without differentiating them, and then Coyote is also arrested by the RCMP at last. Here, King implies that racial categorization is at anytime changeable and arbitrary. Near the end of the story, the narrator concludes what became of the Enemy Aliens after dispossession, displacement, and dispersal. King creates a parallel to the Indians and Coyote as he describes “another story” (of which Native character Billy Frank reminds the narrator), the history of oppression towards Native peoples: “I know where Coyote and the Indians and the Enemy Aliens go. No, they don’t go to Florida... No, they don’t give those Enemy Aliens back their Enemy Alien property either” (173). The narrator sympathizes with Coyote about Coyote’s confiscated truck in saying that “those Whitemen like to take everything” (173). This section is fully an implication of Canada’s colonialism taking the land, resources, and identity --and not giving anything back.

### **III.2. *My Name is Seepeetza***

While Japanese Canadians were dislocated from their home in the West Coast and dispersed during 1942-1949, Native children were removed from their homes and “interned” (as some survivors describe it) in the Residential Schools in B.C. from a much earlier time. The author Shirley Sterling went to Kamloops Indian Residential School, run from 1893-1977.<sup>23</sup> In the story *My Name is Seepeetza*, Sterling’s affiliation with Japanese Canadians is seen through the protagonist Seepeetza’s encounter with the Japanese girl Miyoki as discussed earlier.

*My Name Seepeetza* is twelve-year-old *Seepeetza*’s narrative written as a one year (from 1958-1959) secret diary in which events take place both at home at Joyaska Ranch

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<sup>23</sup> The Secwepemc Cultural Education Society, “History of the Residential School” Okanagan-Mainline Regional Network. Web. okmainregion.net.

and at Kalamak Indian Residential School (K.I.R.S.) in B.C. She no longer has been *Seepeetza* but has been forced to be called by her “white name” (27), Martha, since she stepped inside the K.I.R.S. for the first time:

[...] Sister Maura asked me what my name was. I said my name is Seepeetza. Then she got really mad like I did something terrible. She said never to say that word again. She told me if I had a sister to go and ask what my name was. [...] I asked her [Dorothy, Seepeetza’s elder sister] what my name was. She said it was Martha Stone. I said it over and over. Then I ran back and told Sister Maura. After that she gave me a number, which was 43(18-9).

The author Shirley Sterling dedicates this fictionalized story of her own experiences to former Residential School students and supporters who may heal by remembering/re-facing the past and a restorative culture. It is appalling how much the young girl, and other children, was exposed to the terrors of being alone as a small child, with no choice but to go to school away from family and home. Seepeetza tells of stories between past and present, and between home and school, back and forth. One day Seepeetza is reminded of her first day of school:

Mum walked in with me. The red doors slammed shut behind us and we walked down a long hallway[...] Mum turned and left. I looked at her walking away from me. I heard her footsteps echoing, and I was so scared I felt like I had a giant bee sting over my whole body. Then I stopped feeling anything.

When Mum was gone, Sister grabbed my shoulder and shoved me over to a red bench[...] That’s when this big girl called Edna came over with her fist raised. “What are you staring at?” She asked. (17)

Even just one scene of the very first moment of the school quite sums up what is happening in the Indian Residential School. Readers are terrified by the images Seepeetza provides, as she continues to describe what she has gone through during a whole day, like having her hair cleansed with coal oil and cut, and then taking a bath among other Native students who all finally wear the same clothes that the school supplied to them. The Irish Catholic-run school systematically aims at the dehumanization of Native children by completely stripping them of their identity. This was done through intimidation under the threat of watchdog nuns who “kept yelling at us to hurry up” (18), otherwise they would get strapped many times. The power is also maintained by allowing students only “to say to the Sisters, yes Sister or no Sister” (27), and to tell of nothing about the school outside (12). For Seepeetza and her peers, the nightmare of the first day is a prelude not only to isolation from home, but physical and psychological terror and wounds on a daily basis by oppressive school authorities. Nuns and priests normalize their violence, inappropriate behaviours, and exploitation of students as if Native children are not human beings.

As the school forbids all aspects of being Native, individuality and socio-cultural identity (which signifies specific nation/community) are lost, or at least submerged. Problematic racial ideology and coercive assimilation at the educational institution of the Indian Residential School crucially impact the students’ values of social structures as they were often oppressed and abused for long time, yet could neither rebel against teachers nor escape from school. Seepeetza becomes a potential target of a Native girl’s bullying because of her embodied mark of light skin and bluish eyes, until Seepeetza finally declares her identification with a “Halfbreed” in front of the other students. The

bully, Edna, along with some girls must have internalized racism towards Seepeetza as they see some nuns' excessive harassment towards Seepeetza and her sister Dorothy who both look like White girls. How the students curse at Seepeetza is exactly the same as how Sister Kerr, who Seepeetza calls "a really mean Sister," does at Dorothy: Edna says "You think you're so smart[...] You blue eyes[...] You dirty shamah. How does it feel to look like a white?" (20); and Sister Kerr intimidates Dorothy "You Stones think you're so smart. [...] But I'm going to take you down a peg or two." (42). Seepeetza and Dorothy are multiply racialized as "Indians" first by the White dominant society, secondly as "Status Indian" through legislation of the Indian Act, and finally excluded as "White" by their peers, even, at times, by their cousin Cookie. Seepeetza is never identified with who she is but continuously objectified as a racial Other based on a socially created arbitrary categorization. As a legacy of colonialism, racism is pervasive all through society and affects all non-White people. Seepeetza's brother Jimmy calls Japanese people "Japs," and the Aboriginal girl Edna racializes and bullies Seepeetza. Seepeetza does not see herself as an individual but on "a colour scale" as this has been her environment all along, as this is how she has been treated.

Oppression also encroaches home. Seepeetza describes her home not always with sweet memories of her beloved family and ranch life of "Mountain People." Her family already has gone to residential schools, decided not to teach any Native languages to their children (as they were traumatized by their own experience of punishment for not speaking English in residential schools), and seen the effects of "indoctrination camps" (Armstrong 243). As Jeannette Armstrong posits, children away from home remain disconnected from communities in which language, religions, customs, values and society

structures eventually are destroyed (243). The assimilation policy towards the people has affected members of Seepeetza's family differently: Seepeetza's uncle and father hate the Catholics while she is faithful because of her school's threatening indoctrination of Catholicism. Her father is also traumatized by World War II experiences fighting against the Germans, Italians, and Japanese. In the two World Wars Indigenous people fought side by side with the Canadians. However, they still only became Canadian citizens in 1960. Given those problems and injustices, the family is facing mounting struggles to further survive new changes along with the influx of new settlements into her people's territory. This is all rooted in the colonial nation state's focus on "progress," as many Native scholars like Neal McLeod and Emma LaRocque note.<sup>24</sup>

Jo-Ann Episkenew analyzes the story as more than juvenile fiction in a psychological as well as political sense. Sterling represents the complexity of the protagonist's troubled understanding of the cruel environment at the school, of traumatizing events which presumably actually happened to Sterling herself. In her study of colonial trauma response (7-8), Episkenew states "the psychological terrorism has begun with removal of their lands to which their language, knowledge, and worldview are attributed" (7-8). Colonial terrorism continues to affect Native peoples in the form of assimilation into a society which privileges Whites and negates Native cultures. The term "postcolonial traumatic stress response" is generally conceived as "Indian problems," "highlights colonialism as the root cause of present-day trauma" (9). It makes a reference to post-traumatic stress disorder among Native peoples that intergenerational impacts of colonial oppression towards Natives are generated from the "violence, rarely

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<sup>24</sup> McLeod, *Cree Narrative Memory: From Treaties to Contemporary Times*, 2007. LaRocque, 2010.

against the settlers but rather against oneself, one's family, or one's community, and addiction as a form of self-medicating to temporarily ease the despair of personal and political powerlessness" (8), along with other psychological stresses and physical health problems. In her critical essay on the metaphor of fireweed in Sterling's story, Deanna Reder points out that by using a child's voice of matter of fact, Sterling presents the effects of the school and pushes readers to further understand "Seepeetza's fears, her impulse for self-destruction, her alienation and loneliness" (288). Her responses to the psychological and emotional injuries are reflected in several scenes in which Seepeetza escapes into daydreams, "I can't stop thinking of home" (35); and "Sometimes I look out the dorm window at the Tomas River and I wish I could hide under the water and never come out. I look at the stars at night and wish I could travel a million miles into outer space and never come back" (20). Episkenew asserts that the latter voice conveys Seepeetza's desire to die (129). Given the suggestion, one must carefully read the description of the death of Charlie, who had a crush on Seepeetza: "Charlie wouldn't have gone in on purpose. He wouldn't have given up. He wouldn't have been drinking alcohol and fallen in accidently. He just fell into the river and didn't make it out" (116). As Seepeetza could understand how much Charlie hates the school just like she does, she also seems to have imagined "giving up" herself even if it is not for real. This implies sympathy not only for Charlie but also, presumably, other students who died, (whether by accident or not) by identifying them as the same students who have been dehumanized, helplessly isolated, and hopeless to survive oneself in the Indian Residential School. However, Seepeetza continues to struggle to survive in her current everyday life with acts of passive resistance, like keeping a secret journal entry.

### III.3. *Obasan*

Similar to *My Name is Seepeetza*, in which Seepeetza's parents also went to the Residential School, *Obasan* is another fictionalized account told from the survivor's perspective and a descendant of survivors, and written in part from a child perspective.

First published in 1981 and the winner of several literary awards in Canada, *Obasan* sheds light on the history of Canadians who are of Japanese descent and were persecuted under the politically rationalized racist policy around and after the Second World War. Naomi, the protagonist, has experienced a devastating childhood during Japanese internment and still carries the trauma of her experience. She initially refuses to remember her childhood just as Obasan ("Aunt" in Japanese) and Uncle keep silent about the incidences during the internment.<sup>25</sup> Uncle's death prompts her to remember when she was little so that she learns about the internment and her family through Aunt Emily's collection of documents and letters to Naomi's absent mother at the time of internment.

As the story tells of the protagonist's negotiation of her suppressed memories, Kogawa bears testimony of the injustices and unfolds intergenerational trauma by articulating "facts" from the perspective of the oppressed. The facts seen in Naomi's personal accounts are absences and deaths of family members, encounters with racism

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<sup>25</sup> In *The Politics of Racism*, Sunahara analyses silence among Japanese Canadians by differentiating that of Issei (first generation), Nisei (second generation), and Sansei (third generation). Naomi was raised mostly by Japanese-born Obasan and Uncle because of her parents' absence, and their silence in the family is understood in Sunahara's examination of the inter-generational trauma of Japanese internment. Naomi, as Sansei, currently teaching in school as an adult:

"grew up knowing little and caring less about their heritage [...] and ignorant of the wartime experience of their parents and grandparents. There seemed no need to teach [Sansei]. It was enough to give [Sansei] middle-class advantages to ensure their success in Canadian society" (168).

Similarly, Obasan and Uncle representing Nisei:

"had failed to deny their Japanese heritage and to submerge themselves in the dominant Anglo-Canadian culture. [...] They sought refuge from the trauma of their experience in the safety of middleclass Canadian culture. [...] Wanting only to forget their wartime experiences, the Nisei felt no pressing need to emphasize things Japanese in the rearing of their children" (167).

wherever she goes, and physical hardships on an Alberta sugar beet farm as the result of the government's dehumanizing measures. Simultaneously, Kogawa carefully historicizes these untold narratives by containing official documents of the government and those between the agencies and Japanese Canadians. The events Naomi endures are caused by a social structure which further allows racism through legislation. Kogawa suggests that the complexity of personal facts must be understood within social, legal, and political contexts.

Kogawa highlights the difference between Naomi's facts and the facts that are fabricated by mainstream media in "the reproduction of racial social order and a white nation-state" (Oikawa 74).<sup>26</sup> For instance, Naomi finds a newspaper clipping with a photograph of one family on the sugar beet farm from January in 1945: "The caption reads: 'Grinning and Happy'" (193). The mainstream society condescended to Japanese evacuees that they are finally assimilated into White Canadians thanks to Canada's decision of uprooting and dispersing the Japanese race. Accordingly, racial persecution is rationalized and eventually forgotten. Another example is seen in Mr. Barker, a sugar beet farmer owner who employed Naomi's family, and his wife who visit Obasan after hearing of Uncle's death. The couple keeps asking whether Obasan could live by herself with "condescension" by shouting at her or rather asking the question to Naomi, and refers to what Naomi calls a "totally white old folks' home" (224) for Obasan. Naomi's anger culminates when Mr. Barker mentions Japanese Canadians' relocation by calling

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<sup>26</sup> Mona Oikawa's critical study of the long-term effects of Japanese internment upon Japanese Canadians focuses on the carceral spaces where power of white domination was materialized: "Tracing the specific geographies of the Internment uncovers both the scale of violence perpetrated on Japanese Canadians and the microprocesses of power required to accomplish it" (74). "Cartographies of Violence: Women, Memory, and the Subject(s) of the 'Internment'."

them “our Japanese” (225). In her critique on Canadian multiculturalism in relation to literature, Ana Maria Frail Marcos points out that this scene shows that the couple’s condescending attitude “fetishize[s] this ethnic group even as they draw well-defined boundaries between the mainstream and the minorities, between themselves and the Other” (187).<sup>27</sup> Thus, the novel “refutes the absolute authority of the written word by privileging the subjective reading of such official documents vis a vis Naomi’s lived experience and memories” (Marcos 182).

The oppression in the form of racial trauma continues to stigmatize Naomi’s everyday life as an adult, as seen in this description of how she is viewed in school:

“My mother says you don’t look old enough to be a teacher.” That’s odd. It must be my size. 5’1. 105pounds. When I first started teaching sixteen years ago there were such surprised looks when parents came to the classroom door. Was it my youthfulness or my oriental face? I never learned which. (6)

This scene shows that Naomi embodies aspects of Asian-ness that are viewed as odd against the invisible norms of White society, and then she is judged as immature, and her ability to teach is dismissed.

Another scene that exemplifies racialization is a dialogue between Naomi and her student’s widower father who asks her to dinner: ““Where do you come from?” [...]That’s the one sure-fire question I always get from strangers. People assume when they meet me that I’m a foreigner” (7). Because of her Asian race, she becomes Other and re-experiences racialization and objectification:

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<sup>27</sup> The scene is taken place in September 13, 1972. It was right after the official announcement of the Multicultural Act in 1971 that encouraged the “‘integration’ (not assimilation) into Canadian society of non-Charter ethnic groups with full citizenship rights and equal participation in Canada’s institutional structure”(Canadian Multiculturalism, Government of Canada).

The widower was so full of questions that I half expected him to ask for an identity card.[...] I should have something with my picture on it and statement below that tells who I am. Megumi Naomi Nakane. Born June 18, 1936, Vancouver, British Columbia. Marital status: Old maid. Health: Fine, I suppose. Occupation: School teacher.[...] What else would anyone want to know? (7)

This scene presents not only how the widower objectifies the protagonist as non-White, but also how she ironically objectifies herself in the same way she assumes he does. In her self-perception, his interests in her are limited to superficial details, like whether she is Canadian, or single.

It is also important to note that racialization is complicated by sexualisation of the object. As seen in Naomi's unspoken response to the widower, she bluntly genders herself as a single woman who is healthy and teaching in school. Taking into account *Orientalism* by Edward Said, --"[T]he Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience" (Said 1-2)-- Naomi, as Asian, is gendered as a teacher, and sexualized as Other, because the dominant society focuses on her particularity and difference. She also internalizes the same objectification of herself as Other. Here is the link between internalized racism among Japanese Canadians and among Native peoples in Canada. Howard Adams, among others, analyzes the psychological effects of the White supremacy ideology on Native peoples.

The link between Otherness and sexualization as a racial object was already constituted when she was a child. When, as an adult, she remembers her experience of sexual abuse by her neighbour, Old Man Gower, she is instantly reminded of recent dreams, in which naked Oriental women were lying in a row, waiting to be shot by

soldiers. This link between her experience of sexual abuse and the violence in the dream indicates her intersected self-objectification: a sexual object of Gower and a racial object to soldiers. Gower is not Japanese Canadian and is asked to protect Naomi's family property in Vancouver by her father, after their relocation. Naomi is an ideal prey for him because she is not merely a passive child but already an object of subjection: a politically oppressed and socially vulnerable Other, as a Japanese girl. Presumably, her self-objectification as a sexual and racial Other in her childhood is reflected in the naked Oriental women who are racialized and sexualized as soldiers' shooting targets. This scene underlines inseparable racial discourses of Othering and sexualisation and their continuous impact on the identity formation of the Japanese Canadian protagonist.

The sexual and racial complex stigma comes out of the sense of obedience and guilt under the two situations. One is that "it can't be helped" that Japanese Canadians like Naomi's family --except Nisei (second generation of Japanese immigrants) single men-- have no choice but to obey the Order-in-Council rather than protest in order to survive. The other is that Naomi could have avoided, but neither escaped from nor resisted Old Man Gower's molestation. Contradictorily, it is not merely because he intimidates Naomi, but because "[h]is hands are [...] pleasurable" (65). Aloys Fleischmann analyzes the relation between Naomi's reaction and her dream: "sexualized, ashamed complicity before a brutal totalitarian regime resonates with Naomi's responses to Old Man Gower's molestation, and the added guilt that she 'clamber[s] unbidden into his lap'" (7). Here "a brutal totalitarian regime" symbolized by soldiers gives no mercy to the racialized Canadians as Japanese as collective victims. At the same time like sexualized Naomi as molestation victim with guilt. Japanese Canadians are twisted and

symbolized by the naked Oriental women, for whom “[t]he only way to be saved from harm [is] to become seductive” (61). In addition, Marcos describes Naomi’s mixed trauma as that of a rape victim, “assimilation of blame and consequent silence” (183). Ann Sunahara further delineates the parallel between rape victim and Japanese Canadians who “blame themselves for what had happened to them. Like the rape victim who has been told that she led her attacker on by simply being there to be raped, Japanese Canadians were confused and ashamed” (167). From the hegemonic point of view, blame and shame are key to controlling the oppressed. Hilda L. Thomas points out the similarity between Old Man Gower’s troop and that of authority (cited in Marcos 183). As Old Man Gower abuses the small girl Naomi by assuring her safety and pleasure, Canadian government euphemises --i.e. mass-uprooting as evacuation and deportation as repatriation-- and justifies the racial persecution policy towards Japanese Canadians as if they are suspected as enemy but still under the government’s protection against further anti-Japanese uprising. Marilyn Russell Rose suggests that “ ‘the abuse of Japanese Canadians by white Canada is a kind of sociopathic rape in response to which victims can only reel in silent shame’ (222) ” (cited in Marcos 184). Regarding the literary strategies used in the selected texts for this thesis, Kogawa, similar to King, tells “another story” besides the one told at the surface level of the plot. While King implies the story of colonialism while telling the story of the Japanese internment, Kogawa tells about the Japanese internment in her story about Naomi’s molestation. This literary strategy of telling stories, that depend on “other stories” strengthens the comparative methodology and focus on intersectional themes in this thesis.

### III.4. *The Kappa Child*

This novel by Hiromi Goto is not explicitly about the Japanese internment, yet echoes the forced relocation of Japanese Canadian family through the protagonist's father. Again using the literary strategy of "another story," the author tells about Japanese internment and colonialism within the story of a new settler/immigrant family from Japan in the Prairies.

Similar to Naomi in *Obasan*, the first person narrator in *The Kappa Child* seeks to discover her self-identity by trying to come to terms with her unhappy childhood. This is combined with her encounter, as an adult, with Kappa, a Japanese trickster, and her pregnancy. The narrator and her family, as new Japanese immigrants, moved from British Columbia to the Alberta prairies because of her father's dream to successfully cultivate a rice paddy. The character's lonely adult life takes place between downtown Calgary and back home on the prairie.

There are many overlapping issues and themes between this text and *Obasan*. One is the narrator's racialized subjectivity. This can be seen in her early self-description as an "ugly pregnant Asian." The emphasis on her racial identity as Asian rather than her ethnicity as Japanese, is the same as the racialization of Naomi as Oriental that she feels in her school. The racial self-identification and racial ideology by the dominant White majority overlap. Significantly, the protagonist points out a gap between the individual self and what others perceive as her:

How your reflection isn't really who you are, just an image of your real self contained in glass. You go your whole life without seeing yourself as you really are. All you know is how you are treated. (Goto 14)

In the case of the narrator, an “ugly pregnant Asian”, her subjectivity is constructed by others. In other words, she internalizes an outsider point of view. Just as Naomi’s racial self-identification is complicated by sexualization, it is crucial to examine how the first person narrator’s racial identification deals with gender. Concerning the adjective “ugly,” it is an implication that the narrator genders her self-objectification as a woman who is expected to be pretty. The narrator’s self-perception of “ugly Asian” describes her isolated identity from two categories, White and woman. Based on the Black female relation with the White majority, Cheng proposes that the racial Other is haunted by “the imaginative loss of a never-possible perfection” (17). Concerning the inseparable relationship between race and gender, the racialized narrator also internalizes the idealized prettiness of White females.

*The Kappa Child* also portrays the legacy of Japanese internment. When the narrator and her family arrive at a motel in a town near a “sorry piece of property” (36), their new settlement in the prairie, they are racialized by a motel manager. He tells them, “I always thought it was terrible what was done to you people. [...] No offense intended, [...] I figured you folks to be Japanese” (70). While the manager seems liberal, his comments show how he views the family as “Japanese” Other, separate from the Canadian nation. In response:

“We are CANADIAN!” Dad roared. “No need,” Okasan [“Mother” in Japanese] nervously plucked Dad’s sleeve. “No need to shout,” she murmured. Swinging arc of arm. Smack. A hand-shaped stain on my mother’s cheek, the color of pain and humiliation. (70)

Rather than focus on the motel manager's exclusionist ideology, Christine Kim highlights the father's violent troubled response. C. Kim examines that the father denies Canada's racist discourse of Japanese Canadians, and that "[t]he father also utterly refuses to be read through the historical lens of Japanese Canadian struggle" (292). She further concerns, "the father's lashing out at the mother as a response to his dissatisfaction with liberal sentiments warns us of the dangers of ignoring history" (292). Goto brings that history into her text with its embodiment in the Japanese Canadian family who are forcibly relocated to the prairies in the contemporary time by Dad, the father. She also implies a pitfall of multiculturalism that the policy seems a solution to colonialism, yet actually an extension of it, a legacy of White supremacy, in the state of Canada.

Dad, as a dictator in the family, symbolizes Canada's nation state that enacted racialization, relocation, dispersal of Japanese Canadians, and that represents colonial mindset of conquest, ownership, and exploitation of the land and peoples:

"I bought the property!" he exclaimed. "This land right here? What we're sitting on?" Slither [the narrator's sister] asked, incredulous. "This is where we're going to live?!" The charm dropped off his face and he snatched another piece of chicken from the moist box. "You don't like my choice?" he chewed, spraying some soggy crumbs with force of his words. "No, Dad, I-I really like it here. There's lots of room," Slither stated sniffing. "Maaa," Okasan said gently. "Isn't that wonderful." [...]No one asked where he got the money to buy that sorry piece of property. (36)

The pioneer spirit also known as the Western concept of conquering the land, is depicted in the following scene:

“Maybe [cultivating rice paddy] was the ultimate challenge, the last immigrant frontier: to do the impossible in a hostile land. Maybe he was just an asshole and couldn’t admit he was wrong.” (192)

This scene represents the repetition of exploiting land, the same ideology practiced by early European settlers who brought their farming technology into North America without knowing their cultivation techniques were not well suited to the new land. At the same time, while exposing the colonial ideology of land exploitation, this scene also implies freedom and opportunity for Japanese Canadians after internment. It is important to note that the discourse of owning and exploiting land opposes the Aboriginal concepts of land. Emma LaRocque states about the significance of land for Native peoples that “[the land] is not just about living off the land; it is about a whole way of perceiving, practising, and connecting language, land, knowledge skill, and spirituality, and human-nature relationships from our land-based cosmologies” (136). Clearly, the early European so-called settlers necessarily affected the land and culture in which Native peoples have lived long before contact. The first settlers’ colonial approach toward land was then perpetuated by subsequent waves of immigrants, including Japanese. In her novel, Goto alludes to the contradiction of Japanese Canadians as the victimized – in this thesis likened to the colonized– and the victimizers/colonizers. Without finding an answer she goes further into the troubled dual position of racialized minorities by creating an unresolved relationship on an individual basis, between the narrator and the Japanese/Aboriginal character Gerard (as discussed above).

### **III.5. Transformation through “Trickster” Figures of Coyote and Kappa**

#### **Coyote in “Coyote and the Enemy Aliens”**

Coyote takes on a primary role in King’s strategy of dual reading, reading hi/story of Japanese internment as also the hi/story of colonization. Coyote is also a part of King’s other strategy, border crossings of Native and Japanese Canadian histories, as well as written and oral hi/stories. To consider these strategies as King’s theory and as applicable to my comparative methodology, the analysis of Coyote’s mobility and particularity is crucial.

Coyote’s character in the story can be the mirror of ordinary people who are vulnerable to power controlled by the authority. Coyote is a hero, as well as so-called “trickster” figure,<sup>28</sup> among many Native peoples. Wendy Wickwire explains that “[Coyote] is found in the mythology of native groups all over the Plateau, the Great Basin, the Plains and central California (21). In King’s story, Coyote seems to identify with Natives on the one hand, yet with the Canadian government as its servant on the other. Why then does King get the Native cultural figure to play the role of the perpetrator of colonialism and imperialism? Coyote is a key character for King to create “interfusal literature,”<sup>29</sup> as the trickster figure is presented in most of his work. It is Harry Robinson, an Okanagan storyteller, by whom King has been most influenced in his representations of Coyote.<sup>30</sup> Robinson tells in a creation story that Coyote is one of the first people, today called Indian, the older brother of twins while the younger is named White (40-52). Based on Robinson’s creation stories, Coyote is part animal and part human, given the

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<sup>28</sup> See footnote #3.

<sup>29</sup> “a blending of oral literature and written literature” (King: 1997 244) See ‘Godzilla vs. Post-Colonial’

<sup>30</sup> King, Thomas. Introduction in *All My Relations*. 1990, xiii.

power to be able to trick monsters in order to save people. However, Coyote also plays a dirty trick for his own interest, thus showing his narcissistic behaviour. He is imperfect and makes a mess. In Robinson's stories, Coyote plays not merely an ancient character in a creation story, but also takes a role in the modern world.<sup>31</sup> For Okanagan people like Robinson, Coyote is a hero, yet such a hero character is different from the western notion of a hero who is always victorious. This kind of imperfect hero figure "de-values heroes and villains in favour of the members of a [Native] community [and] eschews judgments and conclusions" (King, "Godzilla vs. Post-Colonial," 246). King adapts such Coyote mythology into his own narrative style that intertwines Coyote, whose nature is not evil but sneaky, with the general public's disposition to the dominant Western-centred Canadian mainstream society. The reflection of the power-relation social structure onto the Coyote figure also functions in King's other narratives, such as "A Coyote Columbus Story," "The One about Coyote Going West," and *Green Grass, Running Water*. Coyote often challenges the narrator's comments during their dialogue within stories. For instance, in "The One about Coyote Going West" and "A Coyote Columbus Story," Coyote refuses the narrator's re-historicizing of the colonial narrative about North America from the Native perspective, "no, no, no, no[...] I read it in a book" ("The One about..." 121) showing an assumption that what is written is absolute. This assumption is rooted in the Western notion that the written work is validated, but the oral is not. Although Coyote's interest in "The One about ..." is to fix things, his or her refusal of righting history is a contradiction. In *Green Grass, Running Water*, Coyote's nature is

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<sup>31</sup> Wickwire, who edited and compiled Robinson's stories, concludes that "it is [Robinson's] contemporary mythologizing –his reworking of his ancient stories to incorporate events of his lifetime—which makes the collection vital"(22)

never simply rebellious, but rather ambivalent. The protagonist Coyote is always utilitarian and so self-centred that Coyote is cautioned by *I*, the counterpart narrator, “Pay attention”, “Listen up” (*Green Grass*,...31), and “That’s what happens when you don’t pay attention to what you’re doing” (*Green Grass*,...56). Coyote still continues its greedy and interruptive behaviour while Coyote listens to *I*’s warnings. Coyote is an equivocal character as King acknowledges that Coyote “allows [Native writers] to create a particular kind of world in which the Judeo-Christian concern with good and evil and order and disorder is replaced with the more Native concern for balance and harmony” (*All My Relations*, xiii). Presumably, King re-frames society as utilitarian and vulnerable to authority acknowledging its imperfect and unstable nature by reflecting on the trickster figure. Coyote can bring Native concerns across the Native/non-Native border by playing the role of a character who is neither good nor evil but can be easily manipulated.

His cross cultural framework is to discuss Japanese Canadian dehumanizing experiences from the Native point of view through the character of Coyote. Coyote is a necessary figure for King to set this framework. It is Coyote, “the ubiquitous trickster” (King *All My Relations*, xiii), with whom King can cross the boundary into history of Japanese Canadians. Coyote is a travelling and wandering,<sup>32</sup> literally border-crossing character in stories re-written by other authors.<sup>33</sup> Further, King uses the cross-cultural narrative to reveal a legacy of colonialism in Canada; stated differently, he provides an alternative Canadian history through an alternative epistemology. Taking Coyote as the

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<sup>32</sup> In Harry Robinson’s *Write It on Your Heart*, a text that greatly influenced King’s work, Coyote is given power to go “all over the place” to kill monsters (62).

<sup>33</sup> Eigenbrod, for instance, points out that “The One About Coyote Going West” crosses several lines, between oral and written, Native and Western, and Native and postmodern discourses(163).

key character in a non-Native story, he makes a point about the central role of Native peoples in *all* of Canada's history.

### **Coyote in *My Name is Seepeetza***

Coyote stories are widespread. Among contemporary authors, Thomas King uses this character but so do, for example Beth Brant (Mohawk), Jeanette Armstrong (Okanagan) and Shirley Sterling (Interior Salish). In *My Name is Seepeetza*, the author opens the novel with a dedication to Indian Residential School students in "celebration of survival" (7). This dedication is followed by the poem "Coyote Laughs":

Sometimes at dusk  
When Shadowtime steals souls,  
I listen as the nighthawk  
Screams and falls.  
I search the clouds for moonlight...  
Then somewhere in the pines  
Coyote laughs—  
Transforming night,  
And welcoming the little star  
That follows Moon (15-24).

The poem delineates coyote's particularity, comical and adjustable, with hope to transform unhappy memories and traumas from a childhood in a residential school. Moonlight will break out of the night sky as Coyote notices people by not howling but "laughing" at the moon. Furthermore, coyote represents the power for survival in Native students because Coyote "[adapts] the changing environment" (Episkenew 127) caused

by colonial forces, such as English, through which Native writers could still convey cultural knowledge and reconstruct communities. Seepeetza describes Coyote in her diary as on the one hand a frightening figure with its howling, but on the other as friendly as if s/he is laughing while she is camping together with her family (16). Coyote is neither a good or bad being. Rather, coyote is a changeable Native “trickster” figure which gives Seepeetza an alternative view to see the world, an understanding that her cultural and individual identity is not completely suppressed, but can be re-centered. Episkenew maintains that “Sterling emphasizes the need for reasserting Indigenous mythologies” (127) as they do not only help to transform individual pain but also provide an alternative view on history, an alternative epistemology (as pointed out in relation to King’s story) which will also influence the telling of the Japanese Canadians’ experience of the internment, for example.

### **Kappa in *The Kappa Child***

The Japanese trickster Kappa, as described in Hiromi Goto’s new-immigrant narrative, plays around the Alberta prairies and in the Calgary city-centre. While the Coyote character crosses over into Japanese-Canadian history, Kappa jumps into Native (Blackfoot) history and space (the prairies). The Kappa is originally a character from Japanese folklore. The imp-like water spirit lives near rivers because it needs the plate on the top of its head to always be wet. Without water, the Kappa eventually dies. The Kappa plays tricks on people and animals “sometimes deadly” (Goto 230), but like Coyote, the Kappa is also never seen as evil. Here in Goto’s narrative, Kappa is ubiquitous in Alberta jumping into the prairies across the ocean out of the Japanese mythology. Kappa is a good luck charm on the rice paddies in the prairies for the

narrator's family, whose oppressive father, exploits them to succeed in cultivating the rice paddy. The father succeeds only once after the rains all spring and early summer with Kappa's footprints in the paddies. The narrator is confused by her initial image of the Kappa as a troublemaker based on her parents' storytelling. But now that her parents "[nod] their heads at each other, chummy and smiling" (230) for their affirmation of a good sign by the footprints, she asks "why you'd think something that's trouble in Japan would be good here!" (231). In response, the mother muttered "There's not always an answer" (231). This scene emphasizes the characteristic of the trickster figure to make things happen in an unexpected way. The mother's response suggests the need to avoid assumption as it limits the ability to see the world in different ways. The Kappa, like the Coyote, is unpredictable and therefore teaches openness to new things; because of this the tricksters/transformers are ideal characters in cross-cultural narratives.

The success of the father's rice crop, led by the Kappa, also brings the family a rare happy moment at Christmas, when the narrator is given a diving watch:

Where would I go that was fifty meters deep? Milk Chocolate River perhaps?  
The Old Man? But I was touched, all the same, and wore the gift constantly.  
Sending thanks to a questionable creature from a different clime. A creature  
much greener than Santa. (231)

The Kappa's appearance (proven by its footprints) marks the significance of the rains. However, considering the particularity of the Kappa to live near water, one cannot dismiss the significance of the rivers, as represented by the Oldman River and the Milk

River in southern Alberta.<sup>34</sup> The two rivers are mentioned several times in the story, e.g. “No water. [...] Old Man River flowing sluggish brown north of us and the Milk River, chocolate, winding too far south” (126). Initially, this matter-of-fact comment by the narrator does not relate the two rivers to a successful rice crop, or even the existence of the Kappa. However, after the miracle happens, she makes a reference to those rivers by imagining that the Kappa could possibly exist within them. Additionally, she suggests the symbiosis of the Kappa and “Santa.” According to Piikani (Peigan) scholar Eldon Yellowhorn, there is a trickster figure, called Nappi, an old man in the Oldman River, who is “just the Blackfoot Santa Claus” because he goes north but comes back every year to bring gifts (169).

The Oldman River might remind readers of the longstanding conflict between Peigan First Nation and the federal and provincial governments over the development of water management. This can be seen in the 1920’s Peigan band’s surrender of the reserve land for irrigation, and the Oldman River dam project from the 1970s to the 1990s which violated Aboriginal rights (Daschuk and Marchildon). Furthermore, Christine Kim points out the cross-cultural coexistence of the Nappi and the Kappa:

The kappa’s ability to live alongside Blackfoot tricksters without claiming the social imagination in absolute terms opens up ways of reading the intersecting

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<sup>34</sup> “The Oldman River in southwestern Alberta provides 30 per cent of the water flow for the South Saskatchewan River Basin (SSRB). Completed in 1991, the Oldman River dam was one of a series of large-scale dam projects such as the Gardiner dam on the South Saskatchewan River that were constructed after 1945 to support agricultural and economic development in the arid regions of the SSRB. The government of Alberta built the Oldman River dam to facilitate the expansion of a pre-existing irrigation network serving farmers drought-prone southern Alberta” (Daschuk and Marchildon). “The Milk River is the smallest of the province’s major river basins encompassing an area of about 6,500 km<sup>2</sup>. The river is a northern part of the Missouri-Mississippi River Basin. The Milk River enters Alberta from Montana, flows eastward through the southern portion of the province prior to looping back to Montana” (“Alberta’s River Basins”).

narratives of Japanese-Canadian internment, the family's relocation to the prairies, and the ongoing displacement of the indigenous inhabitants. (297)

Thus, the representation of the Kappa evokes the presence of Native peoples in the prairie landscape, and at the same time transforms the white-settlers dominant prairie landscape and history. The cross-cultural juxtaposition of mythic and cultural hero figures evoked by Goto suggests that the Kappa can transplant its distinctly Japanese tradition – in spite of the narrator's initial doubt - to a Native/Canadian one. His ability to “travel,” like Coyote, makes Kappa a revolutionary figure that transforms the protagonist.

Having been relocated, the Japanese-Canadian Kappa leads the narrator to her reconciliation with her childhood trauma, the past disastrous family relationship, and her isolated life in Calgary as the result. The first meeting with the Kappa --then called Stranger who “[wears] a silk red wedding dress, snug on her slender body” with “an oddly shaped head”, looking “almost olive” (88) --is in a downtown restaurant. It is here that the Stranger asks the narrator out to watch a total lunar eclipse. During the eclipse, they Sumo wrestle, which causes the narrator's assumed pregnancy with the Stranger who has “No nipples. Nor a bellybutton” (122); and has “something cool-wet spilled, covered me in liquid sweetness,” which the narrator interprets as “she came” (124). Afterwards, she finds that the Stranger is a “skin mist, green” (124) creature, the Kappa. This incidence and following physical change of the narrator (despite no proof of the pregnancy made by her doctor) leads her into the process of transformation not unlike that from Naomi's body in *Obasan* and the changes of status/identity of the Enemy Aliens. On their second meeting, the Kappa encourages the devastated narrator (she is the only one who could not get over her family's past) to go to her sister's hair salon for

the first time. To her surprise, the protagonist gains complements from a passerby and feels a sense of change coming into her life, “Only now I have a better haircut. I guess that constitutes a change, minute in the scale of the universe, but even minutia affects the trajectory. Something someone said along the way has shaped my life” (250). The combination of the encounter with the Kappa and her pregnancy implies her physical and mental revitalization that gives rise to her will to see the “mysterious event [...] fraught with risk” (232).

#### **Chapter IV: Intersections of Themes: Global Interconnections**

My analysis of the intersectional themes in fictional works by Marie Clements and Richard Van Camp aims to reveal aspects of globalization– another, contemporary, extended form of imperialism. The two texts, *Burning Vision* by Marie Clements and “The Uranium Leaking from Port Radium and Rayrock Mines is Killing Us” by Richard Van Camp draw parallels between the devastating effects that uranium has had on the Dene communities, in the Great Bear Lake region and Yellowknife area, and on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In *Burning Vision* for example, this can be seen through the process that starts with uranium discovery and ends with the detonation of an atomic bomb not only in Hiroshima but also places in North America. The uranium mining industry practiced imperialism through the extraction of uranium, expropriation of land-base Dene life, and exploitation of peoples both the Native and non-Native because of the interest in wartime capitalism. The uranium was taken by military force, through U.S.

corps' Manhattan Project, and used exclusively by the government for the atomic bombs during World War II.<sup>35</sup>

On the one hand, the Dene, such as Clements' Sahtu nation and Van Camp's Dogrib nation, were disrupted in their every day lives as neighbours and workers in the mine. On the other hand, Japanese become casualties of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombs made from the uranium from Dene land. The texts show how land and human lives were sacrificed for economic expansion and military occupation beyond borders as well as how the U.S., the one in control of both situations, becomes completely invisible. They also question how we can work towards a future while our world is facing more and more excessive disruptions and destructions among the global communities through the hegemony of globalization.

According to Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, "imperialism [...] has been an aspect of all periods of history in which one nation has extended its domination over one or several neighbouring nations," and imperialism has advocated colonization for "economic, strategic and political advantage" (111). After the last wave of imperialism during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which saw European domination of the world, imperialism has turned into globalization by remaining its hegemony that does not center on European nations but "adapt[s] to the changing dynamic of world power" (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin). Through the uranium stories, Van Camp and Clements

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<sup>35</sup> After the Atomic Energy Act of 1954 it was taken over by the Atomic Energy Commission "to maintain civilian government control over the field of atomic research and development" and built up the commercial nuclear power industry ("Origins & Evolution of the Department of Energy"). Ironically, the nuclear power was eventually introduced to Japan with the cooperative strategy between the U.S. officials and Japanese politicians, financial circle, and media.(Nippon Hosokai 1994)

both allude to the Native and Japanese connection, and they have built this connection into their interpretation of the global interconnections in the stories.

Clements' play *Burning Vision* traces the route of the uranium from its discovery to its use in World War II. Along the way, a variety of characters become connected by the path of the uranium. Two key characters are the widow and her dead husband Dene Ore Carrier, who died from the radioactive concentrates in the ore. As the widow tries to communicate with her beloved through the flames of a fire, the intimacy of the two characters shows their belongingness to the land. She says:

I miss the smell of sweat on his clothes after a long day hunting. I miss how the land stayed in the fabric even when he got inside the cabin.[...] I miss the ritual of it. Taking off the layers to get to his skin. (44-5)

The scene of the couple also represents change of Dene life caused by the currency of modernization as seen in the uranium mining industry. The caribou hide jacket the widow made for her husband is a symbol of “the real things (87)” which are made out of Dene land to sustain their hunting based life: “We used to be able to tell where we were by the seasons, the way the sun placed itself or didn't, the migration patterns of the caribou” (44). There comes a change after the discovery of the uranium. Rose, a Métis bread maker, meets the Widow who suggests that radioactive contamination is everywhere including Rose's bread, body, and her baby with Koji. When Rose wakes up from her day dream wishing to be white, she finds Koji, a Japanese fisher man, and soon they become intimate despite the fact that they are from different socio-cultural and geopolitical backgrounds. The dialogue about Koji between the Widow: “Indian? He looks sorta like an Indian but there's something different going on” and Rose: “He's

Indian enough from the other side” (105) shows their commonality of being “Other” -- Indian or alien. One of the scenes expressing “reciprocity and solidarity” (Wong) between Rose and Koji questions the possibility of the interracial alliance: “If I make you mine then is everyone else the enemy?” “If you make me yours do we make a world with no enemies?” These questions critique a binary understanding of enemy vs. ally, as it changes depending on the context/time/space, so that one can be an enemy in one context and an ally in another. The changeable binary also implies the question, again, of where Japanese Canadians fit into Canadian history, and whether they are oppressors or the oppressed?

The polarized questions are further complicated when it comes to another problematic situation caused by the uranium. As Rita Wong stresses, the solidarity marks “the collisions and devastations of a world shattered by the uranium” (Wong) as Koji is transported onto the Port Radium after the denotation in Hiroshima and then his encounter with Rose beyond time and space. The couple’s future is full of worry as the radioactive contamination may be passed on to their baby, but Rose does not give up hope for a better future. Koji’s Japanese Grandmother appears in dream, carrying him on her back, and she makes a promise to see him again at a cherry tree whenever they part from each other. At the end of the story, these two couples, Rose and Koji, and the Widow and her husband Dene Ore Carrier, also connect to each other through the transformation of Koji’s Grandmother into the Widow. Grandmother’s promise to Koji “Wait for me here (at the cherry tree) and I will come for you” harmonizes that of the Widow’s to her husband “I will still wait for you to come home[...].” (120). Home is where loved ones, such as family and ancestors, could connect with each other, but it also

underlines their connection to the land. As the cherry tree symbolizes Koji and Grandmother's home, and the caribou hide jacket represents Dene Ore Carrier and the Widow's, their homes are in different landscapes. However, their homes both signify a dependency on the land, and share the earth on which the land exists. Thus, they are related to each other. Wong explores the land as a key concept as Clements' play "pushes towards a paradigm where land, not people, are the central focus."

There are another three characters who are involved in the drama from different directions: Little Boy, a Native boy, and the personification of unearthed uranium at the very center; Fat Man, a personification of an American test dummy; and Round Rose, a Japanese American female radio announcer. Clements adds another layer to the story by naming two characters after the two bombs, Little Boy (dropped in Hiroshima) and Fat Man (dropped in Nagasaki), in order to evoke the Second World War. This invocation is linked to another character, Round Rose, who is prosecuted as she is suspected as Tokyo Rose who conducted a propaganda radio program during the war. These three become a "nuclear" family. Beside the literal meaning of the atomic bombs in the two characters, the family portrays a typical 1950s American family because of the character Fat Man.<sup>36</sup> He lives in a mock home at one of the nuclear test sites in the late 1940s to 1950s after the Manhattan Project was taken over.<sup>37</sup> He spends the rest of his life waiting for the denotation by watching TV and reading Playboy magazine, while sitting on a lazy chair, drowning his fears and sorrows with beer until he dies. His mock home, the implication

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<sup>36</sup> May, Theresa J., "Kneading Marie Clements' *Burning Vision*." *Canadian Theatre Review*. 144. (2010) : 5-12. Project Muse. Web. 1 June 2011.

<sup>37</sup> In 1946, the Manhattan Project was taken over by the Atomic Energy Commission to settle down the debate whether the atom should be controlled by civilians or the military after the end of World War II ("Origins & Evolution of the Department of Energy").

of the housing boom, and commodities show material culture. The nuclear family as white middle-class symbolizes the American dream of riches. The context behind the economic growth of the nation is understood as the rise of globalization. It is seen in American capital accumulation after the postwar era, and also in the attempt to have military occupancy and dominate the global economy in the face of the Cold War. Although Fat Man resides within the American context, global capitalism and the ideology of consumption and exploitation in the global arena are diffused across America into Canada. Clements' interpretation of the transnational ideology could be best described through Little Boy's soliloquy:

Every child is scared of the dark, not because it is dark but because they know sooner, or later, they will be discovered. It is only a matter of time... [...] ...before someone discovers you and claims you for themselves. Claims you are you because they found you. Claims you are theirs because they were the first to find you, and lay claims on you... (20)

As Little Boy himself is a personification of the uranium, "child" is a metaphor for resources that have no choice but to be extracted by the prospectors from the moment their discovery is registered. The main beneficiaries range from businesses, to investors, to the governments across national borders. In the context of the play, the uranium from Sahtu Dene land turns into atomic bombs with orders from the U.S. authority twice during the war. The U.S. government ordered eight tons of uranium in 1941 from the private company Eldorado, and sixty tons in 1942 when the Canadian government took over the mine after its buyout of Eldorado (Clements 17).

It is Fat Man who represents another hegemonic figure in both Canada and America's colonial nation state. This is seen in racist authorities, and white majority society, as Fat Man fights "the Indian" to protect "the fort" (95) (implied as his country) and excludes Japanese Americans (among other immigrants) who "[...]just keep it coming" and, is terrified that "[s]oon there's nothing left" (48). Fat Man's fear is egocentric in that European settlers claimed Native peoples' lands as their own. Round Rose, who appears after Little Boy in Fat Man's living room, embodies the Japanese internment: "She's not American but she is sorta. It just shows different cultures can get along if we're all willing to sit down and fuck...talk" (107). Fat Man's comment is problematic because it shows the colonial ideology that miscegenation could function as assimilation of the Other to eventually get the non-white immigrants disappeared into the white dominant society. Fat Man fails to make a family by calling Little Boy and Round Rose aliens, and gets them out of his place. He yells at them, "Leave everything that is mine. And if you're in my house, it's mine" (98). This scene presents the government policies towards colonization of Native peoples and Japanese internment.

Richard Van Camp's "The Uranium Leaking from Rayrock and Port Radium Mines is Killing Us" could be the sequel to *Burning Vision*. Camp, who grew up in a town on the "Highway of the Atom" (Van Camp cited in Muro 300) in the Dogrib territory where Rayrock Mine was operated during 1957 to 1959, tells of the ongoing devastation of communities in both Rayrock Mine and Port Radium (operated from 1932 to 1960) that implies the U.S. government's use of the uranium which are also depicted in *Burning Vision*. Inspired by the author's experience of being haunted by the dead at his

friend's house (though in different landscape),<sup>38</sup> Van Camp's prose describes the legacy of the uranium mines caused by the radioactive contamination in air, water, and land over eighty years. The scars of the uranium are symbolized as deformity, decay, and the death of both human and non-human bodies --different kinds of transformation: "It is a dead caribou running on dead legs, I meet its eyes but there are only antlers. In between the antlers is an eye. It too is cold and watching. Its eye is the color of blue" (Van Camp 28). As depicted in the scene, Van Camp provides the metaphorical image of a ghost town, or like the horror scenes of the haunted house in the *Shining* by Stephen King (one of Van Camp's favourite writers).<sup>39</sup> He repeatedly uses terms like cold, wet, blue, and black to imply darkness and illness all over the town. Systemic illness could be reflected among the children: "The kids that play here are cold and wet. They are playing in their underwear" (27). Given the image of children in underwear which may remind readers of the sick in bed, Van Camp suggests concerns about future generations in the community. The sick among youth allude to the ongoing symptoms of radioactive contamination. The scene in which "[a child] is walking with a black gun" (28) also suggests the involvement of youth in violence,<sup>40</sup> such as in gang activity that is triggered by the disruption of the community. As seen in the narrator's question "Why are there only children on this bus? (28), one reason for the destruction of the community is that "most of the men who worked as labourers have died of some form of cancer" (Kenny-Gilday). According to Cindy Kenny-Gilday, a spokesperson for the village of Déline (located right

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<sup>38</sup> Van Camp, R. Afterwards in *Angel Wing Splash Pattern*. Wiraton, ON: Kegedonce Press, 2002. (103-5)

<sup>39</sup> Jordan Wilson, "An Interview with Richard Van Camp (December 2008)"

<<http://www.canlit.ca/interviews.php?interview=6>>

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. In the interview, Van Camp is worried about youth gang violence in North West Territories that he hopes to "steer our youth away from gangs" through the comic books he works on.

on the shore of Sahtu, Great Bear Lake, about 300 miles north of Yellowknife NWT), the situation regarding the survival of the community is very serious since the widows were left to raise their families with no fathers, grandfathers, uncles, and no income other than welfare.<sup>41</sup> Thus, young people have no learning opportunity from their male family members and no role models to envision their future. Kenny-Gilday contends that “[t]his cultural, economic, spiritual, emotional deprivation impact on the community is a threat to the survival of the one and only tribe on Great Bear Lake.” Such concern is voiced by what both Clements and Van Camp convey in their stories.

The global connectivity seen in Marie Clements’ play *Burning Vision* is mainly in the context from the 1930s to 1950s among Canada, U.S., and Japan. However, the play does not merely portray the past, but rather challenges Canada’s hegemonic nation state: a complicity of globalization today. In “Globalization and Imperialism”, David F. Ruccio notes that globalization is neoliberal hegemony as it is seemingly “the civilizing power of free markets, [...] and the increase in world welfare and social harmony created by the lowering of trade and financial barriers and the expansion of world economic interdependence” (75-6). Ruccio also condemns that the consequences of globalization are normalized just as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, North American Free Trade Agreement, and World Trade Organization are exempted from political critiques. Among world leaderships, Canada accelerates capital in its interplay with interests from around the world. William I. Robinson notes the hegemonic structure of

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<sup>41</sup> Cindy Kenny-Gilday. “A Village of Widows” in *Impacts of Uranium Mining at Port Radium, NWT, Canada*. Retrieved from Web (wise-uranium.org <<http://www.wise-uranium.org/uippra.html>>) 1 June 2011

globalization as “the highly predatory forms,” in particular that of global capitalism which is framed in the complex dynamic of social, political, economic, and cultural structures around the world (21). Robinson points out current disastrous effects, an “ecological holocaust” (22), as seen in the extraction of minerals, destruction of lands, and decrease of species. The authorities become complicit with private businesses to expropriate land, natural resources, and cultural lives from Native peoples who have to give up their own sustainable social structure under the pressure of globalization. Additionally, the force of globalization brings together different social justice issues that are related to each other. There are two other examples of global interconnectivity and globalization intertwined with the legacy of colonialism. One is the land struggle of the Lubicon Lake Cree that involved the Japanese pulp mill company Daishowa which gained a timber lease from Alberta government in 1988. It was a coalition project with the Federal Government (financially supported by Indian Affairs and the Provincial Government) whose logging area was more than 11,000 sq. miles to cover the entire Lubicon reserve land which was claimed in 1940.<sup>42</sup> Lubicon continued a strategic protest campaign with the organization “Friends of the Lubicon” (FOL) to conduct a boycott of Daishowa products with the sign “Stop the Genocide!”<sup>43</sup> at the headquarters of Daishowa

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<sup>42</sup> After the Lubicon’s initial protest campaign with its suggestion of a possible standoff, Daishowa’s officials and Chief Ominayak once reached the oral agreement that Daishowa would not enter their claimed land till a settlement of their long-term Native rights conflict against the authorities was achieved. (Since the establishment of Treaty 8 in northern Alberta in 1899, the Cree in Lubicon Lake region has confronted the provincial and federal governments on the native rights of inherited territory and sovereignty as a nation. As a consortium of Canadian governmental and corporate entities began to explore minerals on the Lubicon Lake Cree territory in the 1970s, the group took several legal actions against the authorities and fought at the political arena seen in the late 1980’s standoff.) Daishowa denied the occurrence of the oral agreement after all. See Ward Churchill, “Last Stand at Lubicon Lake: Genocide and Ecocide in the Canadian North.” *Struggle for the Land: Native North American Resistance to Genocide, Ecocide, and Colonization*. New Revised and Expanded Edition. Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring, 1999, 190-236.

<sup>43</sup> Daishowa took it to the court case for the defamation. In 2000 it ended with the dismissal of the plaintiff over FOL’s boycott as the right of freedom of expression though fining FOL a dollar for the use of

Canada, and some of the restaurants that used paper bags made by the company in Toronto. One of the support groups in FOL was the National Association of Japanese Canadians (NAJC).<sup>44</sup> Art Miki and Terumi Kuwada, both past presidents of NAJC, comment that NAJC's support for not only the Lubicon but all Native peoples are part of its responsibility, as Japanese Canadians are another oppressed group which went through the experience of the Internment and achieved reconciliation that was supported by Native organizations at the time.<sup>45</sup>

The other example is the mercury contamination on Grassy Narrows First Nation and Whitedog (Wabaseemoong) First Nation who continue to suffer from the pollution. It was not until 1970 that the mercury contamination in the English-Wabigoon River system in north western Ontario was detected. When the symptoms of the Minamata Disease were seen in cats, the investigation was conducted with a Japanese research team, and they confirmed the origin as a soda factory up stream, in Dryden, Ontario. The documentary *The Scars of Mercury* by Winnipeg-based Japanese Canadian filmmaker Tadashi Orui, tracks the impact of the mercury poisoning through the eyes of the two Native communities, Grassy Narrows and Whitedog in north western Ontario, and its investigation by the Japanese research team, for over thirty years. For both communities, fish was a significant resource in their cultural lives as their main nourishment, and source of economy, was based on commercial fishing. However, people continued to eat

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“genocide” as character assassination of the company. Ward Churchill further discusses the court's biased interpretation of the genocide from the point of Daishowa rather than that of the Lubicon in “Last Stand at Lubicon Lake: Genocide and Ecocide in the Canadian North”.

<sup>44</sup>Although Japanese Canadians must have been in a dilemma having to choose between supporting the Lubicon or Daishowa (with a concern about the employees and their family residing in Canada), NAJC determined its position on the side of the Lubicon. Yusuke Tanaka, “Senjumin to nikkei kanada jin.” in *Ritsumeikan Sangyoushakairon Shu*. Vol.45 Issue 2, Kyoto: Ritsumeikan University, 2009.

<sup>45</sup> Personal communication at the event “Sharing stories of social justice issues: Cross-cultural community meeting of the Aboriginal and Japanese Canadian.”

fish even after the government's 1970 banning of commercial fishing and warnings about eating fish from the river. The communities lost their main income source from the fishery because of the mercury contamination, and the local economy collapsed. Fish is not only part of their culture, but the most accessible nutrition in the remote communities where they could hardly afford food distributed from the big cities or find what they needed since food from the mainstream society was Western, and hard for them to get used to back then. The documentary highlights the context behind the pollution, the legacy of colonialism, which oppressed the communities through forced relocations, the Indian Residential School System, and the expropriation of natural resources from their territories by outsiders. Beside the transnational issue of environmental pollution and the shared situation of small fishery villages in north western Ontario and in Minamata, Japan,<sup>46</sup> the footage presents how the two racially marginalized Native communities, Grassy Narrows and Whitedog, continue to endure oppression, (as materialized by the mercury pollution) of the people, land, and their future.<sup>47</sup>

Clements and Van Camp are both concerned not only about the radioactive contamination leaked from the uranium mines, but also the fundamental shift of Dene life caused by social, political, and cultural disruption from colonial projects including the development of the mineral resources. These impacts eventually led to “genocide and

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<sup>46</sup> The village was once dependent on fishery, then dominated by a nitrogen petrochemical company for first half of 20<sup>th</sup> century, and eventually victimized by mercury contamination water and wastes into the sea from the plant. The detection of organic mercury began from 1932 (“Minamata Kougai Higaisha Shougaiha towo Wakatsumono”). Chisso Corporation finally stopped draining the contaminated wastes in 1969 (“Minamata Byou no Higeiki wo Kurikaesanaitame ni”).

<sup>47</sup> Christopher Vecsey “Grassy Narrows Reserve: Mercury Pollution, Social Disruption, and Natural Resources: A Question of Autonomy” in *American Indian Quarterly* Vol.11No.4, pp287-314, 1987. University of Nebraska Press. Web <http://freegrassy.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/04/Academic-article-1987.pdf>

Regarding more contemporary struggles, <<http://freegrassy.org/>>

ecocide” as Ward Churchill, Keetowah Cherokee scholar and activist, puts it in his book title. The condition of Native communities’ disruption could be accelerated because of the surge of globalization as transnational corporations are benefitting from the colonial legacy, as seen in the case of the Lubicon.

## **Chapter V: Concluding Remarks: Towards Reconciliation?**

Reading the intersectional texts by Canadian Aboriginal and Japanese Canadian authors, provoked me to look into the status quo of Canada’s nation state that continues to stabilize its socio cultural domination constructed by the White settler society rationalized by policy and legislation. The evidence is illustrated by both Aboriginal and Japanese Canadian writers who articulate the similarities between colonial practices on Aboriginal peoples and their land for over centuries to this date, as well as the Japanese internment that followed anti-Asian sentiment with the influx of Asian immigrants since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The selected texts, for instance “Coyote and the Enemy Aliens,” taught me how to read “another hi/story” of colonization of Native peoples while I was reading the history of Japanese internment, with King’s emphasis on the government’s deception towards both groups. *My Name is Seepeetza* also made me read in a parallel manner, about the racial oppression that Seepeetza’s family faces and that of Japanese Canadians. The critical examination of these texts provided me with a way of understanding from the perspective of the oppressed Canada’s colonialism, imperialism, and unjust democracy which are all structured as a social system of power imbalance inherited by both the governmental authorities and the general public. As the oppression psychologically and materially marginalizes and dehumanizes people for generations,

Native and Japanese Canadian authors' critiques not only condemn Canada's past injustices but also its legacy of oppression and challenges for decolonization in the future. King's illustration of the slipperiness of the oppressor and the oppressed binary, reflected in the Coyote character, made me recognize the potential for victimization of anyone in the world. A similar ambiguity is also seen in the subjectivity of Japanese Canadians. *The Kappa Child* points to the fact that Japanese Canadians are settlers living on Native Peoples' land. Although the findings from my study of reading intersectional texts show the affiliation of authors from both groups, they also question how that affiliation could actually turn into cooperation to work against further oppression of the nation state and towards reconciliation of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples, in particular non-whites.

In *Burning Vision*, Fat Man "deports" Little Boy and Round Rose from white America (his mock home); he feels full of regret: "Where is my family? What did I say? I didn't mean you. I didn't mean it. I said it... I did it... but I didn't mean it! [...] I'm sorry. What did I do wrong?" (99). Round Rose responds:

Half the time we don't even know what we are sorry about[...] You have to know when to be sorry. You can't really be sorry for something you don't want to remember can you. Selective memory isn't it? [...] [Y]ou can't even apologize for the shit you did yesterday never mind 50 years ago. Indian residential schools, Japanese internment camps[...] But it's all right... [...] Everybody's sorry they got caught sticking it to someone else...that's what they are sorry about [...] [B]e sorry before you have to say you are sorry. Be sorry for even thinking about, bringing about something-sorry-filled. (101)

Considering its year of publication, 2003, this scene critiques and questions the meaning of reconciliation in the manner of apology, as seen in the recent cases of the 1988 Redress settlement and the 1998 Statement of Reconciliation,<sup>48</sup> which was eventually followed by Stephen Harper's apology in 2008.

Among many critics raising the issue of validity and meaning of the apology, Roy Miki, who was engaged in the Redress settlement, argues that:

An apology [...] [is] a political gesture that released the state from further accountability. In this interaction, the group doing the apologizing would retain the dominant position. And such a gesture would likely have reinforced the hierarchical context, invoking a pathos instead of attaining what concerned Japanese Canadians the most in their call for justice: the public recognition that their racialization as 'of the Japanese race' had named them out of existence as Canadian citizens. (265)

Miki's examination of the apology given to Japanese Canadians indicates the problematic nature of authority and general public; an apology does not wipe out the power relation from the society. Miki also notes that the main purpose of the redress was to acknowledge the system of domination and the ideology that supported it so that the same thing would never happen to anyone in the future (cited in Miyagawa 360). Similar to Miki, Jo-Ann Episknew further questions the government's apology --in this case the one in 2008—as it isolates “one element of its genocidal policies,” the Indian Residential Schools, but refuses responsibility for consequential struggles among Native peoples (189). Episknew notes that “one benefit of White privilege in this country is the right to

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<sup>48</sup> The statement of regret by former Liberal Prime Minister Jean Chretien was thought as lip service by many Aboriginal peoples (“PM Cites ‘Sad Chapter’ in Apology for Residential Schools”).

a guilt-free existence, and Canada's apology has done much to free even the most liberal Canadians from guilt for the sins of the past" (190). With a multiracial family including a Japanese internment survivor, an Indian residential school survivor, and a Chinese head tax payer, Mitch Miyagawa, a Japanese Canadian writer and filmmaker, sums up the government apologies as "more about forgetting than remembering" in "stripping the apologies of remorse" (358), and as a tool to "use emotion to evade responsibility" (362). The points Miki, Episkew, and Miyagawa make highlight Jeanette Armstrong's critique that the systems, including totalitarianism, imperialism, and colonialism, need to be changed: "Lies need clarification, truth needs to be stated, and resistance to oppression needs to be stated, without furthering division and participation in the same racist measures" (245). Although Armstrong does not refer specifically to what is now well-known as "reconciliation" (her essay was published in 1990), this statement clearly suggests what is fundamental to the process of reconciliation, not only about the realities Native peoples endure, but also those of other racial groups. Concerning the act of the apology in question, Armstrong's declaration challenges the apologizers such as the government, the RCMP, and the Churches, on the capacity they need to have to be able to admit past injustices and their consequences and how they will effect change in the future.

While the white settler society is challenged to reconcile with Indigenous peoples, the positions of those who are a "visible minority," racially and culturally marginalized, including myself, are also called into question. As the struggles that Native people are facing are conceived as the issues between colonizer and the colonized, the discussion on reconciliation often takes place on a binary level. This arbitrary polarization then makes the racialized immigrants, new Canadians and other minoritized communities absent from

Canada's nation rebuilding process (Mathur 6), or pitted against Native peoples. An important extension of this absence is the subjectivity of the racially marginalized who remain not merely unconcerned about reconciliation, but innocent of perpetuating present colonial injustices within the system of Canada. In their discussion on the title issue *Decolonizing Anti-Racism*, Bonita Lawrence (Mi'kmaw) and Enakashi Dua (first generation of Indo Canadian) contend that while people of colour are marginalized, they live on the land expropriated from Native peoples and become complicit with the dominant society's violation of Native rights, such as sovereignty and access to their land (251). This ambivalent subjectivity of the racialized risks reconciliation as well as alliance for the dual goal of empowerment of Native communities and anti-imperialism among both racially oppressed groups. The most serious discrepancy between Indigenous peoples and people of colour is multiculturalism and immigration policies that "obscure Native presence and divert attention from their realities" as the people of colour claim against their own marginalization (253 emphasis added). Multiculturalism in Canada is often set against colonialism, resulting in the pitting of people of color against Native peoples. This unbalanced relationship of recognition of Aboriginal concerns and citizenship issues among people of colour generates from the White supremacy ideology. The white domination is inflicted on Indigenous peoples and peoples of colour and prevents them from cooperating with each other. Having such a fragmentation marginalizes both Aboriginal peoples and peoples of colour; making alliances against the common force of White domination as a crucial part of reconciliation is not an easy task.

What way then should I go about the reconciliation from the ambivalent position of a person of colour? Further, what does reconciliation mean to me personally? My

subjectivity is complex: I have been here in Winnipeg, Canada, as a sojourner from Japan for more than three years studying in Native Studies. To this day, I have learned about Native peoples' realities (including struggles against ongoing colonialism), and also explored the history of Japanese Canadians. Through their texts and dialogues with them, I have seen connections between the two groups, and I have also come to relate myself to both. But, I am not Canadian. I have not felt the same oppression as Native peoples do or as Japanese Canadians did, though I affiliate and relate with them both. Do I really care about reconciliation? What do I have to do with it?

Yes. I do care because of my relationship with the land. First, I am a beneficiary of Native peoples' land as long as I stay here, no matter how long. It means that I am responsible for the land that I reside in, travel across, and consume resources from. Second, through their studies, theories, philosophies, worldviews, and stories, Native peoples share with me alternative perspectives to current global capitalism. They are witnesses and victims of its disastrous consequence on their land throughout time just as the Dene, Lubicon, Grassy Narrows, and Whitedog among many others are struggling for their community's survival which depends on the land. The viewpoints of Native people who have been struggling for the land-based society include the key to a sustainable society for future generations. Third, although I will eventually leave Native peoples' land and settle in another land called Japan, my connection to their land remains. *Burning Vision* provokes readers to rethink their responsibilities in a current world in which globalization destroys land, not just as someone's property or small allocation, but as their collective "home." We share the land no matter who and where we are because of the fact that the land is the origin of all beings, and we can not live without it. In the

face of globalization, we are urged to share the transnational issues of social injustice as the concerned, no matter if we are the complicit or the oppressed. As a Japanese person engaged in Native Studies, my role in reconciliation is to ponder Mathur's suggestion: "The notion of apology, reconciliation, and redress has taken many forms, contingent on affected communities, but the overarching bridge is the connection to land" (8). This awareness of land in the process of reconciliation must illuminate the long term struggles for Native rights. Although I cannot vote in the decision making of policies and legislation that affect Native sovereignty, I believe that my whole discussion here, from colonialism to Japanese internment to my interconnectivity to Native peoples and their land, is all part of my current role in ongoing reconciliation.

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