

A Bout of Time: Decolonization and Futurity in Indigenous Speculative Fiction

by

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Abstract

Works of Indigenous speculative fiction (SF) depict a perspective of temporality that differs from the mainstream Western conception of time as linear and teleological. Novels such as Cherie Dimaline's *The Marrow Thieves* and *Hunting by Stars* and Waubgeshig Rice's *Moon of the Crusted Snow* portray settler colonialism as an ongoing process rather than a historical event; in doing so, they challenge hegemonic notions of settler futurity by asserting an Indigenous presence and affirming the inevitability of Indigenous futures. This thesis analyzes Dimaline's and Rice's works to examine how Indigenous SF reorients readers into Indigenous temporalities and critiques assumptions of Indigenous disappearance or victimry through their portrayals of settler colonial violence and environmental destabilization. These authors use apocalyptic and dystopian settings to demonstrate how Indigenous peoples will survive the end of colonial capitalism through self-determination and a reliance on their own epistemes. Both the characters in and readers of Indigenous SF are motivated to generate Indigenous futurisms from within the present through a revitalization of Indigenous languages and practices. This critical examination of Indigenous SF situates the genre within the contexts of ecocriticism, decolonization (or *biskaabiiyang*), and futurity to showcase how different perceptions of time alter the possibilities for the future.

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Introduction

Indigenous Past, Present, and Futurisms

While all literature, to some extent, reveals the cultural assumptions and biases of its author(s), speculative fiction (SF) is unique as a genre for its ability to depict not only the author's ontological framework, but also what they consider possible. Narratives of the future are especially interesting in this regard, because they demonstrate what the author recognizes as a likely—or even desirable—outcome of current events. Dystopian stories can send grim warnings of the consequences of policies or cultural attitudes, or utopian ones can envision solutions to modern problems. Futurity narratives are inextricably tied to the author's understanding of both the past and the present, which are themselves influenced by their cultural and educational background. Though many works of Western SF (coming from settler writers in Canada, the United States, Australia, and New Zealand, as well as from many parts of Europe) treat history as definite and universal, writers from other cultures demonstrate their own understanding of past and current events—their own unique temporal experience. This, in turn, inspires these writers to imagine possible futures beyond the scope of most Western literature. These works are significant not only for their ability to entertain and engage, but also because the actions we take in the present to create the future are influenced by what we imagine as possible. Thus, I argue it is important, if not necessary, to critically examine SF and futurity narratives from a variety of cultural perspectives, including from Indigenous SF writers.

In this introduction I will explain what Indigenous SF is, what separates it from Western SF, and why it is important to examine Indigenous SF and futurisms, especially within the contexts of decolonization and environmental justice. I will be using Blaire Topash-Caldwell's (Potawatomi) definition of Indigenous SF as "*Indigenous-made* speculative film, art, video

games, literature, and oral storytelling that draws from autochthonous knowledge systems to envision and convey alternative futurisms and pasts to mainstream ones with Indigenous communities at the forefront of this imaginary landscape” (“Beam us up” 84). I distinguish this from the majority of Western SF wherein Indigenous people(s) are often almost entirely absent and contemporary colonization is unchallenged and therefore presumed to be a fixed, historical event with no relevance to futurity narratives or discussions of anthropogenic climate change—even where those narratives critique global capitalism and its effects on the environment. Settler narratives, including works of Western SF, prioritize settler futurity in ways that require the preclusion of Indigenous futurisms; this conflict is rarely acknowledged in settler literature, but is revealed through the persistence of colonial stereotypes or the outright exclusion of Indigenous peoples from futurity narratives.

I argue in this thesis that Indigenous SF directly challenges dominant conceptions of settler futurity. The texts I analyze present scenarios that are apocalyptic to settlers, but to Indigenous peoples, represent a continuation of the harms and violence they have endured over the past five hundred years of settler colonialism. As these texts demonstrate, Indigenous peoples have relied on their cultures, kinships, and epistemes to survive attempts to eradicate their languages and traditions, ecological destruction, and forced child removal. Many of the fears expressed in apocalyptic Western SF (threats to settler futurity) are events that Indigenous peoples have already/continue to experience as modes of colonial violence. Indigenous SF often critiques the ways in which the end of the world is principally conceptualized in the Western imagination as the end of capitalism. In contrast, Indigenous SF writers portray these same apocalyptic events as providing opportunities for Indigenous peoples to revitalize their cultures and decolonize their environments—the end of colonial capitalism presents no impairment to

Indigenous futurisms. In doing so, these authors both assert an active presence of Indigeneity and project the certainty of Indigenous futures.

In chapter one, I will examine Cherie Dimaline's (Métis) young adult novels *The Marrow Thieves* and *Hunting by Stars*. In these texts, Dimaline critiques the limited scope of settler futurity by depicting all non-Indigenous characters losing their ability to dream—and therefore their capacity to imagine other possible worlds outside of colonial capitalism. Although their dreams make them targets for colonial violence, Indigenous characters in Dimaline's works utilize their languages, practices, and epistemes to secure Indigenous futures and evade capture. Dimaline demonstrates, through the tangibility of language and storytelling, how living within Indigenous contexts generates Indigenous futures from within the present and is itself a radical act of resistance against settler colonialism.

In chapter two, I will turn my focus to Waubgeshig Rice's (Anishinaabe) novel *Moon of the Crusted Snow*. Rice's book is set in an isolated reserve in northern Ontario, the inhabitants of which are similarly working towards a resurgence of Anishinaabe language and culture. When the hydroelectric infrastructure that both Indigenous and non-Indigenous characters rely on suddenly and completely fails, they must rely on Anishinaabe practices to survive the harsh winter. As in Dimaline's novels, Rice shows how Indigenous epistemes support survival outside of colonial capitalism through self-determination and sovereignty. He also demonstrates the necessity of building kinships and local living relationships with humans and nonhumans—in ways that are hindered within settler colonialism—to develop robust ecologies and promote Indigenous futures.

To conclude, I will make an argument for the significance of these texts and the genre of Indigenous SF, which themselves are products of Indigenous futurisms. I argue that Dimaline

and Rice both promote and enact representational agency in their depictions of Indigenous characters, languages, storytelling, and practices. One facet of settler colonialism is the way in which it claims the authority to speak for and about Indigenous peoples, and often perpetuates harmful stereotypes in the process. Reclaiming agency over an individual's and a community's representations, in both fiction and nonfiction, grants them the power to refute regressive conceptions from dominant narratives and define their own identity. This capability is especially important within futurity narratives because the exclusion of Indigenous peoples in stories about the future reinforces colonial myths of victimry and vanishment. Indigenous SF, I argue, is able to both imagine possible futures for Indigenous peoples, and to assist in producing them from within the present.

Indigeneity in Settler Narratives

Before I begin to analyze works of Indigenous SF, it is important to outline what distinguishes the genre from SF more broadly and why, therefore, it is deserving of individual attention. David Higgins argues that since the 1960s, Western SF narratives have “often appropriated the emancipatory momentum of decolonization in order to empower privileged subjectivities” without including any Indigenous characters/perspectives to challenge dominant colonial attitudes (52). Where Indigenous (or Indigenous-coded) characters do appear in Western SF stories, colonial stereotypes and values still persist in their representations. Eve Tuck (Unangax̂) and K. Wayne Yang discuss what they call “settler adoption fantasies,” such as James Fennimore Cooper's novel, *The Last of the Mohicans* (based on a fictional tribe), wherein Indigenous characters pass on their knowledge, practices, and land claim to a settler protagonist for “safe-keeping” before vanishing into pre-modern obscurity (14); these fantasies support a vision of settler futurity that necessitates the disappearance of Indigenous peoples and the

impossibility of Indigenous futurisms. These settler adoption fantasies treat Indigenous peoples and lands as mere resources to be utilized to secure settler futurity and are therefore uninterested in Indigenous sovereignty or decolonization. Tuck and Yang also compare settler adoption fantasies like *The Last of the Mohicans* to more recent Western SF works like the 2009 James Cameron film, *Avatar*. The film depicts a contact narrative set on the fictional planet of Pandora, which is already inhabited by the heavily Indigenous-coded Na'vi. The Na'vi are animalistic and have a spiritual connection to nature; they are garbed in feathers, beads, and warpaint and hunt with bows and arrows; and they are fundamentally ignorant of and uninterested in the humans' technology. Protagonist Jake Sully is literally adopted into the Na'vi and, after saving Pandora, he discards his human body for his Na'vi avatar. While on the surface *Avatar* presents an ecocritical and anti-imperial message, it nevertheless replicates the same colonial stereotypes and tropes that have permeated Western literature since the nineteenth-century.

Avatar's depiction of the dichotomy between the premodern Na'vi versus the technocratic humans echoes the trope of the "vanishing Indian." The image of the "vanishing Indian" was cemented in culture during the American Romantic period, functioning as a symbol of the era's "emphasis on feeling, its interest in nature, its fascination with exoticism, mysticism, and eroticism, and its preoccupation with the glorification of the past" (King 33). The "Indian," as presented in media during this period, is a relic of the pre-modern era with a deeply ingrained connection to nature and spiritualism and who is therefore incompatible with the newly industrialized modern world—and, consequently, is quickly disappearing. One prominent figure to employ the vanishing Indian trope is early twentieth-century photographer Edward Curtis. Curtis took several portraits of Indigenous people across the United States, and to ensure his photographs looked "authentic" he had many of his subjects shave facial hair, wear wigs, and put

on clothing from different tribes (King 36). Curtis was not interested in understanding or capturing contemporary Indigenous identities or cultures; he already knew what an “Indian” should look like and would alter his subjects’ appearances to make them fit that image. The consequence of this vanishing Indian trope, which persists in media to this day, is a limited and misinformed understanding of Indigeneity among settlers and the rest of the world.

The prevalence of the vanishing Indian trope creates a stereotype of Indigenous people that resembles this fabricated image of pre-colonial “authenticity” that dominates depictions of Indigeneity in Western media. Gerald Vizenor (Anishinaabe) and Thomas King (Cherokee) discuss how this stereotype negatively impacts Indigenous people, who have to conform to the static image of the pre-colonial Indian in order for their identities to be perceived by non-Indigenous people as legitimate. Vizenor, drawing a stark distinction between real Indigenous people and “*indians*,” states, “the *indian* is the absence of natives in the course of modernity” (*Fugitive Poses* 42). The simulation of the *indian* traditionalist is “an ironic primitive with no cultural antecedence,” rather than an authentic representation of Indigenous people(s) (Vizenor, *Manifest Manners* x). In *The Truth About Stories: A Native Narrative*, King tells the story of attempting to explain his identity to a group of Germans, who tell him, “You’re not the Indian I had in mind” (48). These men’s idea of “Indian” identity came from the books of German author Karl May, who had also never met an Indigenous person. This story demonstrates Vizenor’s assertion that the “*indian*” is a simulacrum: the idea of what an *indian* is or should be comes not from actual Indigenous people(s), but from works of fiction with no tangible relation to Indigeneity. Thus, the stereotype of an “authentic” Indigenous person not only limits Indigenous identity to the pre-colonial past, but it is a fabrication that does not accurately reflect any Indigenous cultures. Further, this stereotype casts Indigeneity as constantly diminishing, or

vanishing; Indigenous peoples are therefore only able to claim legitimacy by adhering to this image of the *indian* that both replicates and accepts the absoluteness of colonial violence. As Vizenor argues, the “misrecognition of natives as *indians* is both oppressive and a prison of false identities” (*Fugitive Poses* 22).

The stereotype of the vanishing Indian or the *indian* traditionalist is actively harmful to Indigenous people(s) by delegitimizing the identities and self-determination of all those deemed not authentic. The conception that the only authentic Indian is one that conforms to the image of the late nineteenth century Plains Indian put forward by figures like Curtis and May means that Indigeneity in the present (or future) is often cast as “inherently anachronistic”: “To be Indian in the present is to be out of time, in the sense of both being in the wrong era and having no future” (Rifkin 149). Vizenor states that the vanishing Indian trope perpetuates “a theme of absence, cultural dominance, and aesthetic victimry” (*Fugitive Poses* 97). Indigeneity is conceptualized only within the context of premodernism, colonial violence, and/or vanishment.

Within SF narratives the presumption that Indigenous peoples are “stuck in the past” leads to depictions of Indigenous(-coded) characters being alienated from “who they truly are” through the use of advanced technology, as it does in *Avatar*, among many other works (Topash-Caldwell, “Beam us up” 84). *Avatar* consistently juxtaposes technology with nature, mainly through the conflict between the human Resource Development Administration (RDA) and the Na’vi. The limited glimpses the audience is shown of Earth present a crowded, urbanized, cyberpunk-influenced setting; the audience is informed that all resources have been depleted from Earth and there is “no green” left on the planet—a stark contrast to Pandora’s vast wilderness. Pandora is presented as lush and inviting, whereas Earth is grimy and unattractive. Yet, despite its appeal, the natural world (and the Na’vi, by extension) is depicted as defenceless

to the inescapable might of technology, and so it seems that Pandora is destined to transform into another Earth. *Avatar* thus replicates notions of teleological progress: that anthropogenic environmental destruction is inevitable because of the mere existence of harmful technology. Pandora has only been able to maintain its ecology because the Na'vi are not technologically or scientifically advanced enough to understand the value of unobtainium (the fictional mineral being mined by the RDA) or have the means to extract resources from the land. The Na'vi's eventual victory over the RDA prevents Pandora from befalling the same fate as Earth by discarding technology and embracing their spiritual connection to the land and its other non-human inhabitants; the Na'vi are also saved from the same fate as Earth's Indigenous peoples, who are nowhere to be seen in the film. The ecologies of Pandora and the existence of Indigeneity, therefore, can only be preserved if the Na'vi remain ignorant to technology and trapped in the pre-modern era. Western SF narratives like *Avatar* that present their Indigenous(-coded) characters as closer to nature or alienated from modern/future technology are harmful because they directly recall the vanishing Indian stereotype that was/is used to delegitimize Indigenous peoples' self-determination. In most cases, however, Indigenous characters are entirely absent from narratives of futurity—implying that they and their identities are incapable of survival outside of the premodern era.

Where Indigenous characters are present in works of Western SF, their representations often perpetuate colonial capitalist narratives. Mark Rifkin explains that even attempts to include Indigenous people in a “shared present” can be harmful because the idea of the present “is not a neutral designation but is, instead, defined by settler institutions, interests, and imperatives” (vii). That is, these efforts may appear inclusive, but reject any meaningful examination of the history of settler colonialism and therefore foreclose possibilities of Indigenous self-determination. The

prevalence of settler adoption fantasies in works like *Avatar*, for example, replicates the colonial capitalist structures of extraction and assimilation that view Indigenous peoples' lands, bodies, and knowledges as resources to be utilized for the growth and maintenance of those same systems. Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg) warns that the "act of extraction removes all the relationships that give whatever is being extracted meaning" (*Always Done* 75). Reducing Indigeneity to a mere artifact that can be passed on to settlers undermines Indigenous peoples' self-determination and disregards the significance of their cultures and identities.

These misrepresentations of Indigeneity bear similarity to attempts throughout Canadian and American history to diminish Indigenous peoples' identities, perpetuating the narrative of the vanishing Indian. For instance, blood quantum laws defined tribal citizenship based on a required percentage of tribal ancestry (rather than a tribe's own self-determinations) in order to reduce the numbers of legally recognized Indigenous peoples. Danika Medak-Saltzman (Turtle Mountain Chippewa) describes blood quantum laws as a "bloodless genocide" intended to "legally" vanish Native peoples in order to finally and permanently provide unfettered access to Indigenous property (in terms of both land and natural resources)" (145). Similarly, Canada's 1876 *Indian Act* legally vanished status Indians by defining legitimacy as paternally inherited, and further amendments forcibly enfranchised status Indians who obtained a university degree, joined the military, or became a clergyman or lawyer (King 132). In 1920, deputy superintendent general of Indian affairs Duncan Campbell Scott clarified Canada's goal by stating, "Our object is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic and there is no Indian question, and no Indian department" (in King 132-133). Although 1985's Bill C-31 addressed discrimination in the *Indian Act* against Indigenous women and

allowed women and their children who lost their status through marriage to reclaim it, the current structure of the Indian Act could mean that there could be no more status Indians in Canada within fifty to seventy-five years (King 144). This loss of legal status would prevent Indigenous peoples from accessing the benefits, rights, and services outlined in the *Indian Act* (such as education, tax exemptions, and health services) and would diminish their sovereignty on reserve lands. The vanishing Indian trope is thereby rendered into a legal reality.

These legal and cultural presumptions of decreasing authenticity of Indigenous identities are distinct from other methods of racialization—notably, of Blackness—within settler colonialism. Through policies such as the one-drop rule, Blackness and other racializations are expansive, whereas Indigeneity is subtractive: Indigenous peoples become, legally, less Indigenous over time (Tuck and Yang 12). The goal of these subtractive definitions of Indigenous identity is to delegitimize land claims over generations to bolster settler property claims, thereby furthering the colonial project. Settler colonialism expects Indigenous people in the twenty-first century to still resemble the artificial image of Indigeneity that was constructed in the nineteenth century by figures such as Curtis. Indigenous identities are presumed to exist only within the past—to be incongruent with modernity. Within this limited perspective, (supposedly) authentic Indigenous peoples may have legitimate claims to colonized lands, but they can only maintain that perception of authenticity if their cultures and lifestyles have remained stagnant throughout the last several centuries. By necessity, these policies presume “legitimacy as only a past-tense reality—our survival thus undermines our legitimacy, as the only real/fullblood/authentic Indians died in the past, so their descendants are therefore not real *because they survived*” (Daniel Heath Justice in Medak-Saltzman 146). The colonial expectations of authenticity and stagnancy reinforce the vanishing Indian stereotype and cast

Indigenous peoples as the “absolute victims of modernity” (Vizenor, *Fugitive Poses* 91).

Through colonial violence, then, Indigenous peoples’ claims to their own identities are weakened, which, in turn, undermines their self-determination and their calls for decolonization.

Conflicting Temporalities

These narratives of the vanishing Indian and lack of authenticity remove Indigenous peoples’ self-determination and reinforce the predominance of what Rifkin calls “settler time.” This temporality insists that “Native people(s) occupy a singular present with non-natives and that the notion of being-in-time or the potential for change remain contingent on belonging to that shared, unified ‘now’ (which includes a shared ‘then’ of the past)” (Rifkin 1). This teleological framework depicts the pre-colonial past of Turtle Island as a component of Canadian/American history, absorbing Indigenous peoples’ history and culture into settler narratives of progress and liberal democracy. Settler time thereby reduces colonial violence to a historical event rather than an ongoing process—as it is experienced by Indigenous peoples within their own temporalities. The presumption of a singular, shared temporal experience allows settler perceptions of Canada/America to provide “the background against which the movement of time can be registered” (Rifkin 1). The image of the vanishing Indian, then, is not only a common trope within Canadian/American media, but a supposed historical fact used to justify settler colonial expansion.

The framework of settler time is not the only experience of temporalities, however. In response to the hegemony of settler time, Rifkin advocates for an understanding of temporal multiplicity that views time “less as a container that holds events than as potentially divergent processes of becoming” (2). He argues that an exploration of temporal multiplicity “opens the potential for conceptualizing Native continuity and change in ways that do not take

non-native frames of reference as the self-evident basis for approaching Indigenous forms of persistence, adaptations, and innovation” (ix). An understanding of temporal multiplicity provides the possibility for Indigenous self-determination that is not undermined by colonial expectations of authenticity and the modern/traditional binary, within which “*modern* functions less as simply descriptive (later in chronological time) than as normative, a right to inclusion in a certain kind of shared time.” (Rifkin 13). Rifkin notes the various ways in which Indigenous temporalities may conflict with settler time:

modes of periodization; the felt presence of ancestors; affectively consequential memories of prior dispossessions; the ongoing material legacies of such dispossessions; knowledges arising from enduring occupancy in a particular homeland, including attunement to animal and climatic periodicities; knowledges arising from present or prior forms of mobility; the employment of generationally iterated stories as a basis for engaging with peoples, places, and nonhuman entities; the setting of the significance of events within a much longer timeframe (generations, centuries, or millennia); particular ceremonial periodicities; the influence and force of prophecy; and a palpable set of responsibilities to prior generations and future ones. (19)

The framework of settler time casts Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination as premodern plots on the timeline moving toward liberal democracy and capitalism rather than viewing Indigenous peoples as having unique experiences of temporality that differ from the dominant settler colonial one.

The conception of authenticity as a remnant of tradition and the past puts the expectation on Indigenous peoples to remain in stasis over several generations, ignoring the reality of continual change within Indigenous cultures. For example, Kyle Powys Whyte (Potawatomi)

explains that Anishinaabe peoples value fluidity and motion: “historical accounts show that people constantly transformed their identities in relation to other humans and nonhumans to form new strategic kin connections and to take up the projects of ancestors who had walked on” (“Indigenous Science (Fiction)” 228). Similarly, Anishinaabeg understand that “The way in which we interact with the earth, how we utilize the plants, animals and the mineral gifts, should be carried out with the seventh generation in mind. We cannot simply think of ourselves and our survival; each generation has a responsibility to ‘ensure the survival for the seventh generation’” (Clarkson et al. 12). This temporal experience is also reflected in the Anishinaabemowin “expression *aanikoobijigan (yankobjegen)*” which “means ancestor and descendant at the same time” (Whyte, “Indigenous Science (Fiction)” 228). As with the conception of the seventh generation, this expression demonstrates how within native temporality, past, present, and future are intrinsically interconnected. Indigenous temporalities reject notions of teleological progress or a singular and linear temporal experience.

This temporal perspective is also reflected within Indigenous storytelling: Simpson explains that Anishinaabe stories discuss both the past and the future together in ways that are relevant to current generations (*Always Done* 201). Indigenous SF often reflects this perspective on temporal multiplicity. For instance, “Native slipstream” describes experimental or avant-garde writing that “play[s] with and undermine[s] the [sf] genre” and that include “themes or techniques of estrangement” (Victoria de Zwaan in Dillon, “Native Slipstream” 355). Native slipstream stories involve elements of time travel or alternate realities and depict “time as pasts, presents, and futures that flow together like currents in a navigable stream. It thus replicates nonlinear thinking about space-time” (Dillon, “Imagining Indigenous Futurisms” 3). Native slipstream demonstrates temporal multiplicity by exhibiting a cultural experience of time that

does not fit within settler temporality. Slipstream narratives are characteristic of Indigenous storytelling, and they portray a temporal perspective that is “central to Native epistemologies” (Dillon, “Native Slipstream” 345). These Native slipstream stories provide a forum to analyze the persistence of colonial violence and its effects across several generations, including speculations on what shape colonialism may take in the future.

One example of Native slipstream is Vizenor’s short story, “Custer on the Slipstream,” which depicts the literal/figurative resurrection of General Custer in the modern day. He opens the story by stating:

General George Armstrong Custer, retouching the message that old generals never die, must hold the national record for resurrections. White people are stuck with his name, and his specter, in Custer, South Dakota and other places, but since the battle of the Little Bighorn the loathsome voice and evil manner of this devious loser prevail on hundreds of reservations. He is resurrected in humor and on white faces in the darkness. (17)

Vizenor portrays Custer as figuratively resurrected through the endurance of the same teleological ideologies of settler time and Manifest Destiny that motivated Custer’s actions in the nineteenth century. Custer is also literally resurrected in Farlie Border, described as “a proud and evil white man who exploited minorities and the poor for personal power and income” at his job for the United States Department of Labor (17). Vizenor’s depiction of resurrection “collapses the literal/figurative binary and provokes the reader to consider how a very real resurrection can take place as the result of the reproduction of ideological values within bodies, minds, and institutions” (Higgins 55). The continual resurrection of figures like Custer repudiates the narrative of settler time that claims that colonialism was a historical event by demonstrating the endurance of colonial attitudes in the present day. Furthermore, Vizenor’s portrayal of Custer as

a “devious loser” exploiting Indigenous people for personal gain and profit refutes more heroic depictions of the historical figure common in American media. While not all works of Indigenous SF are Native slipstream stories, many similarly depict temporal multiplicity through their presentations of colonialism as an ongoing process and the persistence of Indigenous identities.

Adam Garnet Jones’ (Cree/Métis) story “History of the New World,” for example, reflects the persistence of colonial attitudes through the ways characters discuss the planet discovered in a parallel universe, deemed the New World. Non-Indigenous characters can only recognize teleological progress and liberal democracy as signs that a land possesses a history or culture: “scientists were keen to report that the planet was without buildings, monuments, or systems of writing. No history at all” (39). They feel secure in their decision to settle on the New World because “None of the species they had encountered showed any evidence that they possessed intelligence or self-awareness” (38). These statements bear striking similarities to the *terra nullius* principle that was used to justify the colonization of Turtle Island and influenced the doctrine of Manifest Destiny; the reasoning behind *terra nullius* was that labour transforms wilderness into private property—that “civilized” Europeans had more claim to a land than Indigenous peoples because only they knew how to properly use it (Curtin 134). The New World is therefore viewed by settlers as empty and available because their limited perspective of civilization and private property causes them to be unable to imagine other forms of kinships with non-human beings. In contrast, Indigenous characters are the “only ones not pinning their hopes on fleeing to some distant planet” to escape the damaging effects of anthropogenic climate change (42). Instead, Indigenous peoples reclaim the lands being abandoned by settlers as part of the ongoing process of rebuilding their cultures and reclaiming their sovereignty.

The differing responses to climate disaster by Indigenous and non-Indigenous characters in Jones' story reflects the disparity between settler time and Indigenous temporality. This conflict is represented through Cree character Em and her white partner Thorah, who are unable to understand the other's temporal worldview. Thorah believes that "humans have always been special," listing spaceships, vaccines, and spreadsheets as examples of human ingenuity; she states, "We've always been smart enough to think and build our way out of anything" (39). In contrast, Em argues that humanity's drive for progress "sounds like compulsion, not success" (40) and that "Only a white girl could step into a completely unknown universe with the blind faith that everything is going to work out" (47). Thorah believes in the myth of progress—that human innovation has and will always be a force for good—and that the discovery of the New World is the product of that momentum. Indigenous characters like Em and her daughter Asêciwan, on the other hand, see the parallels between the colonization of the New World and of Turtle Island. Jones emphasizes these similarities by describing Earth and the New World as "like identical twins. At once the same and altogether different" (38). As with many other works of Indigenous SF, both Vizenor's and Jones' stories contrast settler time with Indigenous temporalities to present a perspective on colonialism that conflicts with dominant narratives of history.

Survivance, *Biskaabiyang*, and Storytelling

Indigenous SF, particularly futurity narratives, reorient the reader into new temporalities; thus, storytelling itself plays an important role in Indigenous futurisms and anti-colonial resistance. Rifkin advocates for the importance of storytelling in expressing and understanding temporal multiplicity by explaining that "temporal experience itself might be understood as intimately imbricated with story" (34). Storytelling shapes one's perspectives by providing a

specific frame of reference that demonstrates what may or may not be possible. I argue that this temporal framework is most relevant in stories of futurity, because they offer a perspective on what is possible based on the author's understanding of both the past and the present—and maybe even what the future should look like. This is why the exclusion of Indigenous identities and perspectives from Western SF is such a pervasive problem: it reinforces settler time and the belief that Indigenous peoples have either lost all authenticity (by being-in-time with settlers) or that they have become the ultimate victims of colonial violence, and therefore have no future of their own.

Vizenor's concept of survivance helps demonstrate the significance of Indigenous storytelling. According to Vizenor, survivance “creates a sense of narrative resistance to absence, literary tragedy, nihilism, and victimry. Native survivance is an active sense of presence over historical absence, the dominance of cultural simulations, and manifest manners. Native survivance is a continuance of stories” (*Native Liberty* 1). Writing Indigenous literature is an act of survivance because it uses story to define a sense of self and Indigenous identity that refutes colonial stereotypes, such as the vanishing Indian. Survivance is the assertion of an active presence and Indigenous sovereignty—that Indigenous peoples are present, that their identities are as authentic as their ancestors', and that they are the survivors, not victims, of colonial violence.

Vizenor demonstrates survivance in “Custer on the Slipstream” through his depiction of the character Crazy Horse (or sometimes Sitting Bull) who challenges Custer's/Border's understanding of settler time by rejecting notions of victimry and absence. Crazy Horse proclaims that “The white man never defeated us... and we will not be talked into defeat” (21). He also has a vision that “The earth will revolt and everything will be covered over with new

earth and all the whites will disappear, but we will be with the animals again, we will be waiting in the trees and up on the sacred mountains” (20). Border is so uncomfortable meeting an Indigenous person who does not conform to his colonial expectations that “before he slipped from consciousness into the deep dark pools of tribal shamanism, he sprang from his chair with the last of his energy, like a cat, leaped across the white carpet and struck at the tribal face with his white fists again and again until he lost his vision and consciousness” (24). The only way he knows how to confront an Indigenous person who rejects victimry is with violence. Border’s temporality is strictly defined by colonial myths, so that when his views are challenged by Crazy Horse, “he loses the security of his boundaries and is caught in a slipstream from which he cannot escape; this slipstream is the forceful inevitability of being drawn into the other’s intolerable alterity in the aftermath of glimpsing the complexity of autonomous personhood which lies beyond racial colonial stereotypes” (Higgins 58). The story ends with Border’s death and him “slipping from grace in a slipstream,” unable to reorient himself within temporal multiplicity (25). Survivance, as demonstrated by Crazy Horse, is thereby presented as a means of overcoming the perpetuity of colonial violence and escaping from settler time.

Similarly, storytelling is also a necessary element to achieving *biskaabiiyang*. According to Simpson, *biskaabiiyang* is an Anishinaabemowin word meaning “to look back” or “returning to ourselves” (*Dancing* 49). She further emphasizes that “Biskaabiiyang does not literally mean returning to the past, but rather re-creating the cultural and political flourishing of the past to support the well-being of our contemporary citizens” (*Dancing* 51). *Biskaabiiyang*, then, requires a resurgence of Indigenous languages and cultures that have been suppressed through colonial violence, as well as a revitalization of Indigenous sovereignty—decolonization, in other words. Simpson argues that “Storytelling is at its core decolonizing, because it is a process of

remembering, visioning and creating a just reality where Nishnaabeg live as both *Nishnaabeg* and *peoples*” (*Dancing* 33). Both survivance and *biskaabiiyang* reject the portrayal within settler time that Indigenous identities are relegated solely to the pre-colonial past, but while survivance focuses on asserting an active presence, *biskaabiiyang* is about building a future for Indigenous peoples by revitalizing language and culture. These concepts are also both reflected within works of Indigenous SF.

Indigenous SF not only articulates an active Indigenous presence, but also affirms a future for Indigenous peoples—potentially one outside of colonial capitalism. Indigenous futurisms push back against the narratives of victimry and vanishment that are dominant within settler culture and temporality by demonstrating how Indigenous people can revitalize their cultures, languages, and relations in order to live in Indigenous contexts despite the endurance of colonial violence and dispossession. According to Topash-Caldwell, “Indigenous presence in speculative fiction is a politically potent mechanism of making Indigenous space in the future as well as asserting a creative form of sovereignty” (“Sovereign Futures in Neshnabé Speculative Fiction” 34). Indigenous SF is therefore a significant part of the movement of Indigenous futurisms. Indigenous futurisms “[offer] a forum to address difficult topics, such as: the long impact of conquest, colonialism, and imperialism; ideas about the frontier and Manifest Destiny; the role of women within a community; and about the perception of time” (Fricke 109). Grace Dillon (Anishinaabe) further asserts that all Indigenous futurisms are narratives of *biskaabiiyang* because they represent a radical resurgence of Indigenous cultures as a method for surviving and overcoming colonial violence (“Imagining Indigenous Futurisms” 10). These narratives reject notions of the tragic and of victimry that confine Indigenous identities and cultures to the pre-colonial era: “Indigenous Futurisms are not the product of a victimized people’s wishful

amelioration of their past, but instead a continuation of a spiritual and cultural path that remains unbroken by genocide and war” (Dillon, “Introduction” 2). Indigenous futurity narratives are thus always engaged in survivance and *biskaabiiyang* because they predict the endurance of Indigenous peoples and their cultures despite the persistence of colonial violence.

Dystopian Environments

One of the strongest areas of contrast between Western and Indigenous SF is in their representation of the threat of global climate change. Most Western futurity narratives, particularly within the newly emerging climate fiction (or “cli-fi”) genre, depict climate destabilization as a narrative of linear degeneration. *Avatar* is one such example of a Western cli-fi narrative, which attempts to warn its audience of impending ecological disaster. Indigenous SF authors, on the other hand, challenge these assumptions by depicting Indigenous peoples’ experiences of climate destabilization as a component of colonial violence (Whyte, “Indigenous Science (Fiction)” 225). Unlike Western authors, Indigenous writers “tend to narrate a sense of ongoing crisis rather than an upcoming one” (Scott 77). Indigenous authors often portray colonization not as a historical event but rather an ongoing process that maintains the subjugation and dispossession of Indigenous peoples, including the dissolution of their living relationships with their lands and the non-human beings on those lands. For example, many of the fears that non-Indigenous writers express in cli-fi narratives, including “ecosystem collapse, species loss, economic crash, drastic relocation, and cultural disintegration,” are ones that Indigenous peoples have already experienced as a result of settler colonialism (Whyte, “Indigenous Science (Fiction)” 226). The effects of this environmental destabilization have irrevocably altered Indigenous peoples’ local living relationships with the ecosystems, plants, and animals that are “the material anchors of our contemporary customs, stories, and ceremonies” (Whyte, “Our

Ancestors' Dystopia Now" 207). Whyte explains that, because of the devastating effects of settler colonialism, "In the Anthropocene... some indigenous peoples already inhabit what our ancestors would have likely characterized as a dystopian future" ("Our Ancestors' Dystopia Now" 207). This is represented in both Dimaline's and Rice's works through the ways that Indigenous characters rely on resources from settler institutions and have to rediscover and revitalize their languages and practices that were disrupted as a result of settler colonial violence. Dillon calls this the "Native Apocalypse," and many Indigenous SF authors use this idea to depict "the ruptures, the scars, and the trauma in [their] effort ultimately to provide healing and a return to bimaadiziwin [balance]" (Dillon, "Imagining Indigenous Futurisms" 9). Climate destabilization is therefore a common theme in much Indigenous SF because of its direct relationship to colonial violence.

While nearly all cli-fi narratives are ecocritical, Indigenous SF presents a unique perspective because it discards the framework of settler time. Due to the difference in temporal perspectives between Western and Indigenous authors of SF, there also exists a strong contrast between the ways these writers present the effects of anthropogenic climate change. Many works of Western SF portray anxieties surrounding climate destabilization through apocalypse, dystopia, and the collapse of modern societies, liberal democracy, and capitalism. These texts reveal the fragility of settler time to transformation; because it is linear and teleological, any event that challenges linear progress is necessarily apocalyptic. In contrast, Indigenous temporalities are more flexible and adaptable, and climate change is simply another facet of the Native Apocalypse that Indigenous people have been enduring since the beginning of colonialism. Thus, many Indigenous SF authors depict the end of settler time as the opportunity for *biskaabiiyang*. In Jones' "History of the New World," for example, Indigenous characters

take advantage of settlers fleeing Earth to reclaim their lands. Here, apocalypse offers the opportunity for decolonization—“Why bother to quash a resistance on a planet that’s about to be abandoned?” (42). The story ends with a brief description of the events following the collapse of the New World: “the plants and animals took back the city with their muscular roots and hungry young.... the High Law was signed by our matriarchs, shared responsibilities between the people and all our relations” and the surviving residents of Earth resolve to “always strive for balance” (60). Where the institutions of global capitalism are unable to meaningfully address the looming possibility of climate destabilization, characters in Indigenous SF find ways to rebuild their living relationships with their environments in ways that reflect Indigenous epistemes.

Jones’ story, as well as many other works of Indigenous SF, represent the necessity of these living relationships to Indigenous futurisms. These texts depict climate destabilization as the direct result of the destruction of humans’ relationships with their environments under global capitalism: humanity is separated from nature, acting upon it. In contrast, Simpson emphasizes the importance of land-based knowledges and practices:

we’ve always known our way of life comes from the place or land through the practice of our modes of intelligence.... We know that our practices code and reveal knowledge, and our knowledge codes and reveals practices. We know the individual values we animate in those lives in turn create intimate relationships with our family and all aspects of creation, which in turn create a fluid and collective ethical framework that we in turn practice. (*Always Done* 22)

While the narrative of settler time celebrates humanity’s mastery over nature, Indigenous temporalities require mutual relations with one’s surroundings. Simpson asserts that “our responsibility as Indigenous peoples is to work alongside our Ancestors and those not yet born to

continually give birth to an Indigenous present that generates Indigenous freedom, and this means creating generations that are in love with, attached to, and committed to their land” (*Always Done* 26). If the Native Apocalypse involved the dissolution of local living relationships, then Indigenous futurisms requires them to be rebuilt. Indigenous experiences of time as nonlinear and spiralic also emphasize the significance of place: “*when* things happened in time becomes less important than *where* they happen(ed) and to which relations; the past and the future are all relevant in the now, what matters is how the events or actions are related to a particular *place*” (De Vos 2). Climate destabilization, then, is relevant not because of how it disrupts humans’ ability to progress, but because it irrevocably alters the relationships in a given place. These perspectives are so often absent from the dominant canon of cli-fi, and I argue that any discussion of portrayals of the effects of anthropogenic climate change to the future is incomplete without the inclusion of Indigenous SF.

Indigenous SF and Imagining/Producing the Future

In the following chapters, I will explore how Indigenous SF reveals the conflict between settler futurity and Indigenous futurisms that is latent within much of Western SF. These texts reorient readers into Indigenous temporalities through their representations of colonial violence as an ongoing experience and their rejection of the teleology of liberal democracy and capitalism—eschewing colonial stereotypes of Indigeneity. The novels I examine in chapters one and two share an apocalyptic vision of Canada’s future, caused by ecological collapse and the failure of capitalist infrastructure, yet these catastrophes are presented as solely threatening settler futurity. Indigenous peoples have already survived the Native Apocalypse, and thus experience these new disasters as part of the ongoing colonial attacks on their languages, cultures, and ecologies. This is reflected in the parallels Dimaline and Rice create between the

events in their novels and the historical experiences of colonial violence by Indigenous peoples, including land dispossession, ecological destruction, the residential school system, and the abuses of the child welfare system. Dimaline and Rice draw on Indigenous peoples' histories of mobility and adaptation to imagine how they would navigate the end of settler time.

Interestingly, both authors also portray settler characters turning to Indigenous peoples in an attempt to salvage settler futurity, either through disingenuous pleas or extensions of colonial violence. While most works of Western SF include the implicit and unchallenged belief in the disappearance and victimry of Indigenous peoples, Dimaline and Rice subvert these dominant narratives by portraying Indigenous futurisms as more certain than settler futurity. In doing so, they also help produce Indigenous futures from within the present. I argue that works of Indigenous SF offer a vital perspective to discussions of anti-colonialism, ecocriticism, and futurity because they reorient readers within Indigenous temporalities that assert the inexorability of Indigenous futures and thereby contribute to the process of *biskaabiyyang*.

Another element shared by both Dimaline's and Rice's novels is their setting on Anishinaabe lands, and their focus on Anishinaabe culture and Anishinaabemowin. I write this thesis from within Treaty One territory, the original lands of Anishinaabeg, as well as the Cree, Oji-Cree, Dakota, and Dene peoples, and on the homeland of the Métis Nation. As a non-Indigenous writer from Canada, my personal experiences with colonialism have been shaped by settler institutions that often perpetuate the same stereotypes I critique in this chapter. When writing about Indigenous literature and cultures, I seek to unlearn assumptions about these topics by listening to Indigenous voices. Throughout my research and in this thesis, I rely on the work of Indigenous authors and academics, especially Anishinaabe writers including Vizenor,

Simpson, Whyte, Dillon, and many others. These perspectives were vital in helping me develop my ideas, and this work would not be possible without their writings.

Chapter 1

“Dreaming You into Existence”: Producing Indigenous Futurisms in Cherie Dimaline’s

The Marrow Thieves Series

In this chapter, I will be analyzing Cherie Dimaline’s *The Marrow Thieves* and its sequel *Hunting by Stars*. The novels are set in the late twenty-first century, after the effects of anthropogenic climate change and the subsequent Water Wars have damaged the global landscape. People across the world begin to lose their ability to dream or to conceive children, except Indigenous peoples who are immune to dreamlessness and infertility. The Canadian government discovers a method to extract the dreams from Indigenous characters’ bone marrow and begins to distribute the dream serum to (settler) citizens as a cure for dreamlessness. Indigenous peoples are forced to go into hiding in the wilderness to avoid being taken by Recruiters from the Department of Oneirology to “schools” where this extraction is performed. Dimaline’s novels represent the conflict between settler futurity and Indigenous futurisms and the differences between settler time and Indigenous temporalities that results in settlers losing their ability to dream. Despite the disruption to their lives through climate destabilization and colonial violence, Indigenous characters begin the process of *biskaabiyyang* by revitalizing their languages and cultures.

Throughout these two novels, Dimaline demonstrates that living in Indigenous contexts helps generate Indigenous futurisms in the present. Her characters learn from the history of Indigenous survivance that living as Indigenous peoples is itself a radical act of resistance against settler colonial violence. Counter to colonial narratives of Indigenous absence and victimry, Indigenous peoples in Dimaline’s works constantly grow and adapt to their surroundings in ways that assures their survival and continuance in apocalyptic settings. It is that

aspect of Indigenous culture, their transmotion, that enables Indigenous peoples to maintain their dreams, their fertility, and their potential futures. I argue that in her *Marrow Thieves* series, Dimaline orients readers within Indigenous temporalities to demonstrate how Indigenous epistememes encourage the transmotion that is necessary to generate Indigenous futurisms and achieve *biskaabiiyang*.

Settler Colonial Violence in Future Settings

The worldbuilding and treatment of Indigenous characters in Dimaline's novels mirrors colonial violence enacted upon Indigenous peoples by the Canadian and American governments. Miigwans, or Miig, tells the younger Indigenous characters that once settlers discovered the process of extracting the dreams from Indigenous bone marrow, "they needed too many bodies, and they turned to history to show them how to best keep us warehoused, how to best position the culling" (*Marrow* 89). Indigenous people are forcibly taken to the "schools" where they are held captive until the extraction process eventually kills them. These characters are acutely aware of how the new schools are "based on the old residential school system they used to try to break our people to begin with, way back" (*Marrow* 5). Similarly, as a result of climate destabilization, Indigenous peoples "were moved off lands that were deemed 'necessary' to that government, same way they took reserve land during wartime" (*Marrow* 88). The environment in Dimaline's novels represents the ways in which "anthropogenic climate change is an intensified repetition of anthropogenic environmental change inflicted on Indigenous peoples via colonial practices that facilitated capitalist industrial expansion" (Whyte, "Indigenous Climate Change Studies" 156). Indigenous peoples' languages, cultures, bodies, and lands are treated by settlers as resources to be exploited to ensure their own futurity; through the lens of settler time, Indigenous futurity is perceived as an oxymoron, which justifies this exploitation as necessary for the endurance of

hegemonic colonial capitalism. In contrast to this perspective, the perpetuation of colonial violence in Dimaline's works portrays a temporal perspective outside of settler time, in which colonialism is not a historical fact but an enduring reality for Indigenous peoples across Turtle Island. Her texts situate the characters and the reader within Indigenous temporalities and demonstrate the ways in which Indigenous peoples can resist colonialism and participate in a resurgence of their cultures in order to create their own futures.

The similarity between the old and new residential schools is not merely aesthetic; Dimaline compares the ways that residential schools were historically used to extract Indigenous languages and cultures from children to the way that the marrow is extracted from the bones of Indigenous characters in her novels. Miig tells the younger characters that the residential schools contained "a book that was like a vacuum, used to suck the language right out of your lungs" (*Marrow* 107). This attack on Indigenous languages and cultures is acknowledged in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's (TRC) final report:

For over a century, the central goals of Canada's Aboriginal policy were to eliminate Aboriginal governments; ignore Aboriginal rights; terminate the Treaties; and, through a process of assimilation, cause Aboriginal people to cease to exist as distinct legal, social, cultural, religious, and racial entities in Canada. The establishment and operation of residential schools were a central element of this policy, which can best be described as "cultural genocide." (1)

Many Indigenous SF works demonstrate that despite the closures of the residential schools, these goals are still visible within the policies of the Canadian and American governments. In Sherman Alexie's (Coeur d'Alene) "The Sin Eaters," for example, Indigenous children are kidnapped by soldiers and taken to a prison-like facility that resembles the new residential schools in

Dimaline's works, the purpose of which is to "take the tomorrow out of our bones" (98). Further, in Louise Erdrich's (Turtle Mountain Chippewa) *Future Home of the Living God* the Indigenous protagonist—a pregnant woman who was herself adopted by white parents—is also kidnapped by government forces who threaten to take her unborn child. These stories demonstrate how the goal of cultural genocide is "the destruction of those structures and practices that allow the group to continue as a group"; just as they were in residential schools, "families are disrupted to prevent the transmission of cultural values and identity from one generation to the next" (The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada 1). Similarly, the events of Dimaline's novels show the ways in which settler futurity is still prioritized over Indigenous futures, and how cultural genocide leads to the disappearance of Indigenous peoples who either die from the marrow extraction process or are assimilated as agents for the Department of Oneirology. Dimaline collapses the distinction between cultural and physical genocide to demonstrate that they have the same goal and effect: that Indigenous peoples cease to exist, and Indigenous futures are impeded.

The Physical and Transformative Effects of Language and Stories

Throughout Dimaline's work, she portrays language, culture, and dreams as tangible, both something that one can carry and something capable of holding objects. Language is not just something one knows, but something one has or carries, and speaking or hearing language has a physical effect on characters' bodies. When French hears new Anishinaabemowin or N hiyaw words he "[feels] those words under [his] ribs" (*Hunting* 261); he wants to "[mouth] each one after it was said, shoving them into [his] pockets like sweets to suck on later" (*Marrow* 121); or he "turns [them] over in [his] throat like a stone; a prayer [he] couldn't add breath to, a world [he] wasn't willing to release. It made [his] lungs feel heavy, [his] heart grow light"

(*Hunting* 39). After Minerva's death, Slopper works to "keep us all alive with the words she'd left us, the ones she'd carried forward against all odds, so we could make sure the new kids coming could curve their tongues around those sounds, could rattle the consonants against their baby teeth" (*Hunting* 348). He has been "collecting [language] like beads on a string" (*Hunting* 186). Minerva further demonstrates the power of language when she uses her voice to destroy School #47E, in which she has been imprisoned. Her song "echoed through her relatives' bones, rattling them in the ground under the school itself. Wave after wave, changing her heartbeat to drum, morphing her singular voice to many, pulling every dream from her own marrow and into her song" (*Marrow* 172). Dimaline explains that, unlike the younger members of the Family, "every dream Minerva had ever dreamed was in the language" (*Marrow* 172). Learning and speaking Indigenous languages has a transformative effect on characters' bodies and their ability to dream, proving them with the means and impetus to resist colonial violence and create Indigenous futures.

Protecting Indigenous languages is vital for decolonization efforts because of the role language plays in shaping one's ontological framework. Lisa Droogendyk and Stephen Wright explain that "by internalizing the language of the colonizer, Indigenous people's understanding of reality itself has shifted. For example, Western ontologies and Western languages are said to hold individuals as the core unit of understanding, whereas Indigenous ontologies and languages are said to center on relationships" (307). Being forced to speak European languages engulfs Indigenous peoples in a colonial capitalist framework, and losing Indigenous languages means losing an important part of that culture's ontology. As Vizenor asserts, "When a language dies, a possible world dies with it" (*Native Liberty* 101). Additionally, using Indigenous languages is itself an act of resistance to colonial violence by maintaining traditional practices and resisting

assimilation and subjugation; speaking Indigenous languages is thus not only “an expression of collective identity, but also an expression of the fact that this identity is inherently tied to collective struggle” (Droogendyk and Wright 306). Learning and speaking Indigenous languages asserts an active presence, and thus demonstrates survivance and *biskaabiiyang*.

Storytelling is another vital element of Indigenous culture that has an equally important role in Dimaline’s work. Miig tells the younger Family members “Story” throughout both novels; he states that “Story is a home, it’s where we live, it’s where we hold everything we’ll need to truly survive—our languages, our people, our land” (*Hunting* 21). Characters in Dimaline’s novels share information about history and culture through storytelling; they also use stories to help define their own identities as individuals and communities. Through listening to Story and learning language, younger Indigenous characters are physically altered—they become bigger and stronger. When Miig tells Story, “The boys always puffed out their chests.... The women straightened their spines and elongated their necks, their beautiful faces like flowers opening in the heat of the fire” (*Marrow* 23). In *Hunting by Stars*, Dimaline juxtaposes this growth in Slopper with Wab’s growing stomach due to her pregnancy while they listen to Story: “He was still a child, but he was working to carry language, and the words he had memorized made him taller.... Wab rested her head on Chi Boy, who rubbed her pregnant stomach” (21). Story can also be potentially dangerous when told to those too young to handle these physical effects. French recalls that after hearing part of Story, “Slopper was pretty messed up for months after. He stopped playing, didn’t want to learn anything, and even stopped sleeping so good” (*Marrow* 28). Miig also stops French from telling the rest of the Family the truth about his involvement as an agent for the schools by reminding him that his coming back story is a weight that the other Family members cannot carry at the moment, so French “folded it over and over

until it was tiny, until [he] could roll it down the inside of [his] ribs like a papier-mâché ball... and into the pocket below [his] heart” (*Hunting* 383). Learning new information can be both salubrious or harmful, and it is the responsibility of the storyteller to present that information only if and when the listener is capable of carrying it.

Storytelling is important not only because it helps the listener understand the past, but also because it affects the ways they perceive the present and the possibilities for the future. The ways in which Dimaline presents the effects of listening to Story reflects Rifkin’s statements on how narratives contribute to an individual’s and a group’s phenomenological frame of reference: “having bodies of stories in common functions as such a previous constitution, helping orient perception in the present as part of a people’s ongoing processes of becoming. Such an embodied sense of belonging as lived through story affects how one situates the present in relation to the past and to future possibilities” (35). For example, during Story, Miig tells the younger characters about the history of Indigenous resurgence following the closure of the old residential schools: “we sang our songs and brought them to the streets and into the classrooms—classrooms we build on our own lands and filled with our own words and books. And once we remembered that we were warriors, once we honored the pains and left it on the side of the road, we moved ahead. We were back” (*Marrow* 24). Miig’s Story emphasizes the same points as Dimaline’s novels: the active presence of Indigenous peoples living in Indigenous contexts. Resurgence requires not only the closure of the residential school system, but also for Indigenous peoples to revitalize their languages and cultures and to be able to live outside of colonial institutions (including education). Dimaline emphasizes the importance of Story and understanding Indigenous history for imagining Indigenous futurisms: “it was imperative that we know.... it was the only way to make the kinds of changes that were necessary to really survive”

(*Marrow* 25). Story in Dimaline's novels functions not only to teach younger characters of their cultural history, but also to orient them within Indigenous temporalities—allowing them to envision possible futures outside of colonial capitalism.

Each character also has their own “coming-to story,” through which they are given agency over their own narrative. Miig assures characters that “everyone tells their own coming-to story. That’s the rule. Everyone’s creation story is their own” (*Marrow* 79). The act of sharing one’s coming-to story creates a deeply personal bond between the storyteller and the listener(s), helping to form community ties within the Family. Characters are given the choice of if/when to share their coming-to story, which provides them with autonomy that is not granted to them within settler colonialism. This agency demonstrates how “All Nishnaabeg are theorists in the sense that they hold responsibilities to making meaning for their own creation and their own life” (Simpson, *Dancing* 43). Similarly, in *The Truth About Stories: A Native Narrative*, King repeatedly emphasizes that “The truth about stories is that that’s all we are” (2). Dimaline’s depictions of storytelling demonstrate Vizenor’s notion that stories of survivance “create a sense of presence, a native self, a teasable self in names, relations, and native contingencies, but not victimry. That sense of self is a creation, an aesthetic presence; the self is not an essence, or immanence, but the mien of stories” (*Fugitive Poses* 20). Storytelling is an essential element of one’s identity both as an individual and as part of a community, and sharing these stories is therefore part of *biskaabiiyang* because it helps Indigenous peoples define themselves within Indigenous contexts rather than as victims of colonial violence.

Transmotion in Indigenous History and Epistemes

Importantly, both Story and characters’ coming-to stories are shared through oral tradition. French even rejects the importance of the written word by claiming “it was ridiculous

to think the book was the important thing and not the words themselves that should live inside you” (*Hunting* 200). Colonial institutions privilege written records over oral history because these records more easily fit within the framework of settler time. Vizenor argues that “The notion, in the literature of dominance, that the oral advances to the written, is a colonial reduction of natural sound, heard stories, and the tease of shadows in tribal remembrance” (*Manifest Manners* 72). Oral history necessarily creates a sense of active presence through the connection between speaker and listener, whereas written records create only a passive connection to the reader. Additionally, Julie Cruikshank states that viewing “oral tradition as a social activity rather than as some reified product” allows for an understanding of storytelling as “part of the equipment of living rather than a set of meanings embedded within texts and waiting to be discovered” (in Rifkin 34-35). To demonstrate the difference between oral tradition and written records, King contrasts an Indigenous creation story with the story of Genesis from the Christian Bible. In the former, he attempts to recreate a conversational tone used in oral storytelling that “highlight[s] the exuberance of the story but diminishes its authority, while the sober voice in the Christian story makes for a formal recitation but creates a sense of veracity” (22-23). The distinction between these forms of storytelling reflects the differences in the audiences’ perception of the world being narrated:

a world in which creation is a solitary, individual act or a world in which creation is a shared activity; a world that begins in harmony and slides toward chaos or a world that begins in chaos and moves toward harmony; a world marked by competition or a world determined by co-operation. (King 24-25)

These differences in the form of storytelling reflect and are shaped by the respective worldviews of the cultures in which they were created.

Oral history is more fluid and personal than written works, and it encourages listeners to engage with it by creating their own meanings through retelling these stories. Dimaline's portrayal of oral history also reflects Vizenor's definition of transmotion as "a spirited and visionary sense of natural motion" ("The Unmissable" 65). Transmotion reflects Indigenous peoples' experience of continuous change and adaptation in response to shifting environments and conditions; this natural motion is in harmony with Indigenous temporalities, but resists the confines of settler time. Unlike written history, oral storytelling is not static or fixed, but able to be adapted to reflect the transmotion in the lives of the storytellers. Miig emphasizes the importance of treating Story as an ongoing process rather than a finished product: "Like any home, Story has to be renovated—extended or repaired or even torn down from time to time" (*Hunting* 22). Dimaline's portrayal of Story and coming-to stories demonstrate how "Repertoires of shared stories of all sorts, transmitted and added to across generations, provide a means of engaging with extant circumstances in ways that generate continuity while remaining open to addition, revision, and adaptation" (Rifkin 35). Each character's narrative about their experiences is called a "coming-to story" to emphasize the importance of transmotion in their lives. These personal histories represent the characters' understanding of how the events in their lives have transformed and shaped them into unique individuals; this process of becoming is continuous because the characters have embraced transmotion. In contrast, the chapter in which French's brother Mitch tells him everything that happened to him since they were separated is called "Mitch's Going Away Story", demonstrating how his trajectory differs from the other characters' (*Hunting* 78). While others characters learn and grow through their experiences to become more developed versions of themselves, Mitch has rejected transmotion in favour of conforming to the stagnant colonial capitalist worldview of the settlers who imprisoned him.

Dimaline demonstrates the history of Indigenous peoples' transmotion throughout her texts. For example, French's mother explains that "There were generations in our family where all we did was move. First by choice, then every time the black cars came from town to town and burned out our homes along the roadside" (*Marrow* 11). Miig's Story also contains the history of colonial violence through the residential school system and other means, while also emphasizing the survivance of Indigenous peoples throughout that history. According to Vizenor, "That sense of survivance in stories is native transmotion, not an escape to tradition or futurity" (*Fugitive Poses* 44). If Indigenous peoples were able to survive centuries of colonial violence and begin the process of *biskaabiiyang* during the Native Apocalypse, then they can certainly continue the resurgence of their cultures in the dystopian future. As French's mother says, "running only works if you're moving toward something, not away. Otherwise, you'll never get anywhere" (*Marrow* 217).

Indigenous peoples' transmotion is also the cause of their ability to keep dreaming after settlers lose their dreams. Like Dimaline's descriptions of language and Story, dreams are similarly tangible concepts that reside in one's body, specifically in their bone marrow: "Dreams get caught in the webs woven in your bones" (*Marrow* 18). In *The Marrow Thieves* and *Hunting by Stars*, characters' ability to dream represents their ability to imagine possible futures outside of colonial capitalism. Dimaline shows that any possible future can only be created if one can first dream it. Through learning language and Story, Indigenous characters gain an understanding of Indigenous temporalities and futurisms that is expressed through their dreams. According to Simpson, "Dreams and visions provide glimpses of decolonized spaces and transformed realities that we have collectively yet to imagine" (*Dancing* 35). Dimaline has stated that "cultural survival is as imperative as physical survival, and, in fact, [both are] intertwined" and rely on

Indigenous peoples' "ability to keep dreaming" (in Diaz 22). Dreams are an important part of one's identity, and they are "the other thing besides pain that [assures one they are] alive, truly alive, all-the-way-dialed-up alive" (*Hunting* 8). Dimaline begins *The Marrow Thieves* with an epigraph from William S. Burroughs: "*The way to kill a man or a nation is to cut off his dreams, the way the whites are taking care of the Indians: killing their dreams, their magic, their familiar spirits*" (v). The residential school system and the new schools in Dimaline's novels both use violence to destroy Indigenous people's dreams, foreclosing the potential of Indigenous futurisms in order to ensure the futurity of settler colonialism.

Dimaline directly ties settlers' inability to dream with their inability to change and adapt to the failures of capitalism and global climate change. She explains that "After the rains started and the lands shifted so that some cities fell right into the oceans, people had to move around. Diseases spread like crazy. With all this sickness and movement and death, people got sad. One of the ways the sadness came out was when they slept. They stopped being able to dream" (*Marrow* 29). This devastation threatened settler futurity because capitalism cannot meaningfully address or solve the problems caused by climate destabilization; this failure creates a sense of hopelessness, and as a result "People can't dream because their way of life is gone and they can't accept it" (*Hunting* 183). These characters are experiencing a form of solastagia, or "the pain or sickness caused by the loss or lack of solace and the sense of isolation connected to the present state of one's home and territory" (Albrecht 48). Solastagia represents one's distress at any perceived attack on their sense of place, which is often connected to one's sense of identity and belonging, as well. As Glenn Albrecht states, "It is an intense desire for the place where one is a resident to be maintained in a state that continues to give comfort or solace" (48). This is a feeling that is familiar to many Indigenous peoples because of the ongoing history of forced

migration and environmental injustice perpetuated through colonial violence. Their solastagia does not result in dreamlessness in Dimaline's novels, though, because their framework of Indigenous temporalities and transmotion allows them to envision possible futures on their lands despite their present experiences of climate destabilization.

Despite the pervasive dreamlessness and infertility, non-Indigenous people in her novels are unwilling to accept the necessity of change. Miig explains how the Council had hoped they would be able to convince the government that “the system had to die and a new one be built in its place. Like that wasn't scarier to those still in the system than all the dreamlessness and desert wastelands in the world” (*Marrow* 141). The colonial capitalist system that settlers are desperately trying to protect is the cause of the disastrous climate destabilization; this system is inextricably connected to settler time and the myth of progress. The threat to settler futurity motivates the acts of colonial violence in Dimaline's text—French notes that “it didn't take depth to build cruelty, only a profound lack of hope” (*Hunting* 305). Settlers' dreamlessness creates a desperation that motivates their actions throughout both novels.

In contrast, Indigenous characters have maintained their dreams because of their history of transmotion and the multiplicity of Indigenous temporalities and futurisms that allow them to perceive and generate new worlds. As Whyte writes,

Indigenous peoples often imagine climate change futures from their perspectives (a) as societies with deep collective histories of having to be well-organized to adapt [to] environmental change *and* (b) as societies who must reckon with the disruption of historic and ongoing practices of colonialism, capitalism, and industrialization.

(“Indigenous Climate Change Studies” 154)

Whyte further emphasizes the importance of identity fluidity for Indigenous peoples who “constantly transformed their identities in relation to other humans and nonhumans to form new strategic kin connections and to take up the projects of ancestors who had walked on” (“Indigenous Science (Fiction)” 228). Unlike the settlers who misunderstand or reject transmotion, Indigenous characters are still capable of dreaming and therefore of making Indigenous futurisms a reality.

Reimagining Reproductive Futurity

The interconnectedness of past, present, and future within Indigenous temporalities is emphasized in Dimaline’s works through her depiction of the importance of both elders and children. Throughout her novels, both Indigenous and settler characters reinforce that “babies are the most important thing we have to move ahead” (*Marrow* 182). As Simpson explains, “Resurgence movements... must be movements to create more life, propel life, nurture life, motion, presence and emergence” (*Dancing* 143). However, Dimaline also stresses the crucial role that elders play as sources of knowledge. Story would not be possible without Miig to share it from one generation to the next, and while French initially pities the younger Family members who have to stay back with Minerva while the others go hunting, he becomes jealous when he realizes that Minerva has been teaching them language. When Indigenous characters die, they “join [their] ancestors, hoping [they] left enough dreams behind for the next generation to stumble across” (*Marrow* 90); this description suggests an active presence of one’s ancestors that eschews linear temporality. Similarly, Simpson asserts that “My Ancestors are not in the past. The spiritual world does not exist in some mystical realm. These forces and beings are right here beside me—inspiring, loving, and caring for me in each moment and compelling me to do the same” (*Always Done* 192-193). When Minerva destroys the school, her singing “echoed through

her ancestor's bones," demonstrating her connection to different generations (*Marrow* 172). After the loss of both RiRi, the youngest Family member, and Minerva, the Family is "without deep roots, without the acute need to protect and make better" (*Marrow* 154). *The Marrow Thieves* ends with Miig's husband Isaac reuniting with the Family—another elder who dreams in the language—and with the discovery that Wab and Chi Boy are expecting a baby; these new Family members do not replace the loss of Minerva or RiRi, but they do provide hope for the possibility of Indigenous futurisms despite the losses endured through colonial violence.

This focus on children and reproductive futurism is common within many works of Indigenous SF because of the ways that they portray how government policies, including the residential school system, have enacted colonial violence on Indigenous children and parents. The TRC explains that one justification given for the necessity of residential schools was the belief that Indigenous parents were "indifferent to the future of their children" (4). The belief that Indigenous parents were less capable than non-Indigenous parents also contributed to the "Sixties Scoop," in which Canadian child-welfare authorities removed thousands of Indigenous children from their families and placed them in non-Indigenous homes (The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada 138). Indigenous SF often represents the ways that "reproductive futurism has and continues to act as a space through which the colonial projects have asserted themselves via practices such as forced sterilization and child removal" (Kirne and Potter 958). Works such as Dimaline's *Marrow Thieves* series, Alexie's "The Sin Eaters," and Erdrich's *Future Home of the Living God* all focus on stories of Indigenous children being forcibly removed from their parents in attempts to rescue settler futurity. These texts critique the ways in which cli-fi novels tend to use "the nuclear white family... as not only a synecdoche for society, but for the fate of humanity itself" by instead focusing their narratives of climate

destabilization on Indigenous reproductive futurisms (Kirne and Potter 964). Dimaline's novels also reject this centering of the nuclear white family by portraying stories of Indigenous families who are bonded through care and support rather than genetics. The members of French's family come from different nations (Anishinaabeg, Cree, Métis, etc.) and the parental figures are two queer men, Miig and Isaac (Turner 107).¹ Furthermore, the settler characters are rendered infertile as a result of their dreamlessness; Chi Boy explains that he dreamed his daughter "into existence"—his ability to imagine a future for his child is what made her existence possible (*Hunting* 50). Lacking the ability to dream, settlers are unable to create a future for their children, and so settler futurity is rendered unviable as a result of the same colonial capitalist system they are trying to uphold.

Dimaline repeatedly emphasizes that the motivation for all Indigenous and non-Indigenous characters in *The Marrow Thieves* and *Hunting by Stars* is survival and futurity. Miig tells the Family that settlers "are dying. Mostly killing themselves, mind you. And so they are motivated by the need to be able to survive. And they see that solution in us" (*Marrow* 54). However, where Indigenous characters in Dimaline's novels reinforce that Indigenous futurisms require communities, settler characters (and Indigenous characters who align themselves with settlers) are solely concerned for themselves and their own children. Colonial capitalism promotes rigid individualism, and the protection of other people and nonhumans is not prioritized. The Mothers of Meaningful Slumber (MOMS) is a movement created by settler mothers in the United States to advocate for the same policies of dream extraction as Canada is

¹ This perspective on relationships formed through action and choice can also be applied to kinships between the characters and the nonhuman beings they interact with. The significance of these kinships within Indigenous epistemes and SF is discussed in more detail in chapter 2 of this thesis.

currently enacting. The group's central principle is that "Moms do what is best for their children. Always" (*Hunting* 311). MOMS demonstrates the same focus on protecting children as the Indigenous characters do, but members of MOMS only care about the lives and well-being of their own children. The majority of the group's members belong to a conventional nuclear family, and they look down on and demean the one member who is a teen mother. When MOMS successfully kidnaps French and his family, they immediately begin backstabbing one another by attempting to extract bone marrow in secret and forming a deal with the Canadian government to repatriate the kidnappees in exchange for Canadian citizenship (and the benefits of the dream serum). The quick dissolution of MOMS demonstrates the failures of an individualist approach to futurity.

This linear and individualist perspective on futurity is also shared by Indigenous characters like Mitch who join the Department of Oneirology for their own security. Referring to the other residents, Mitch says, "They are the rejects, the holdouts, the past. We... are the now, the future" (*Hunting* 140). The perception that Indigenous peoples are inherently anachronistic means that "they cannot be understood as participants in current events, as stakeholders in decision making, and as political and more broadly social agents with whom non-natives must engage" (Rifkin 5). Instead, Indigenous bodies are viewed as commodities or resources for settlers to utilize to ensure their own futurity. Mitch celebrates that the proposed changes to the school systems to focus on newborns rather than adults would allow Indigenous people the opportunity to become "productive members of a reborn society" and that he and French could secure their own futures by turning over Wab and her baby (*Hunting* 288). French is, of course, disgusted by Mitch's lack of compassion because he remembers Miig's lesson that "No one is

more important than anyone else” (*Marrow* 58). French’s family endures throughout both novels because of their emphasis on community and mutual respect.

The distinction between settlers and Indigenous peoples is also reflected in Dimaline’s use of imagery. She consistently uses mechanical imagery to describe settler characters. The non-Indigenous people who survived the Water Wars “worked longer, worked harder.... The suburban structure of their lives had been upended. And so they got sicker, this time in the head. They stopped dreaming. And a man without dreams is just a meaty machine with a broken gauge” (*Marrow* 88). French’s mother asserts a similar sentiment: “Without the magic in the marrow, we’re just machines.... And you can’t reason with mechanics” (*Hunting* 10). French speculates that the dreamless die by “just shutting off like factory machines at the end of a shift: functioning, purposeful, and then just out” (*Marrow* 14). To Indigenous characters, being machine-like and dreamless is a horrifying prospect, whereas settlers (and those aligned with them) view automation and efficiency as admirable and desirable goals; Mitch, for instance, proudly describes everyone at the school “work[ing] together like a well-oiled machine” (*Hunting* 72). Dimaline uses this mechanical imagery to represent the capital colonialist worldview of the settler characters: machines are designed for efficiency; they serve a singular function and are incapable of adapting to new circumstances or creating new life.

In contrast, Indigenous characters are always referred to by settlers using imagery of nature, animals, and products. The proposed locations for extracting marrow from infants are referred to by Mitch as “Farms” (*Hunting* 305), Dimaline calls the process of extracting marrow “harvesting humans” (*Hunting* 14), and French states that settlers view Indigenous people as “little more than a crop” (*Marrow* 26). Furthermore, the Agents at the school view Indigenous people living in the wild as “cockroaches” (*Hunting* 218), and Miig is “deboned like a

smallmouth bass” (*Hunting* 352). Once settlers discover that Indigenous people are the only ones who can still dream, they began to see them “now for what [they] were: dreamers, providers, fuel” (*Hunting* 5); the community who captured Tree and Zheegwon view the twins as their “personal reservoir” of dreams (*Marrow* 98)—here, Indigenous peoples are natural resources to be utilized for extraction. The imagery of farms, animals, and oil demonstrates how settlers dehumanize Indigenous characters, but also relates the ways settlers exploit nature to the ways they exploit Indigenous knowledges and practices.

Land-Based Practices and *Mino Bimaadiziwin*

Despite settler characters’ attempts to inhibit Indigenous futurisms, they nevertheless try to appropriate aspects of Indigenous culture to sustain colonial capitalism. During *Story*, Miig tells the younger Family members about these attempts when settlers first lost their ability to dream:

At first, people turned to Indigenous people the way the New Agers had, all reverence and curiosity, looking for ways we could help guide them. They asked to come to ceremony. They humbled themselves when we refused. And then they changed on us, like the New Agers, looking for ways they could take what we had and administer it themselves. How could they best appropriate the uncanny ability we kept to dream? How could they make ceremony better, more efficient, more economical? (*Marrow* 88).

The New Agers are incapable of understanding the intention behind these ceremonies, instead enfolding these practices into a capitalist framework that prioritizes efficiency and output over the process itself. Dimaline provides a clearer example of this behaviour with the Chief and his wives in *Hunting by Stars*. She describes the Wives as “the ones who were too ‘liberal’ to take part in the marrow consumption but too ingrained in the system to find a different way to

survive” (146). Like the New Agers, the Wives hope that by following the Chief they will be able to reclaim their ability to dream and even conceive children. However, even though they do not use the dream serum provided by the Canadian government, they readily drink Derrick’s and Rose’s blood, assuming it will provide the same benefit. Dimaline’s portrayal of the Wives criticizes liberal white Canadians who believe themselves to be anti-racist allies while simultaneously and uncritically participating in the same systems of colonial oppression. These characters enact the settler adoption fantasy described by Tuck and Yang that “absolves them of settler crimes and that bequeaths a new inheritance of Native-ness *and claims to land* (which is a reaffirmation of what the settler project has been all along)” (14). In *Hunting by Stars*, the Family members flee to the United States in order to protect Wab and her unborn child from the schools because there the extraction of Indigenous bone marrow is illegal. This portrayal of the United States as (somewhat) safer than Canada conflicts with the common perception of superiority among Canadians on issues of social justice despite the long history of colonial and racial violence in the country.

Dimaline’s depiction of the New Agers and the Wives demonstrates how even when settlers perform (or attempt to perform) practices that come from Indigenous cultures, they remove those practices from their original land-based contexts. These contexts are based in principles of relationality and are a crucial component of Indigenous temporalities. As Rifkin states,

the practices, knowledges, and forms of collective identification often characterized as *tradition* can be understood as distinctive ways of being-in-time. They emerge from material processes of reckoning with an environment and are open to change while helping provide an orientation and background for everyday Native experience. (29-30)

Relations between humans and nonhumans develop over time and place; disrupting these relations while maintaining the practices in which they were formed removes them from their original temporality. For example, Simpson discusses how settler appropriation of the process of making maple syrup disrupts the context of the Nanabush story:

we should be concerned with re-creating the conditions within which this learning occurred, not just the content of the practice itself. Settlers easily appropriate and reproduce the content of the story every year when they make commercial maple syrup in the context of capitalism, but they completely miss the wisdom that underlies the entire process because they deterritorialize the mechanics of maple syrup production from Nishnaabeg intelligence, and from Aki [land]. They appropriated and recast the process within a hyperindividualism that negates relationality. The radical thinking and action of this story are not so much in the mechanics of reducing maple sap to sugar but lie in the reproduction of a loving web of Nishnaabeg networks within which learning takes place. (*Always Done* 154)

This passage demonstrates how the same action, when performed within settler time, prioritizes progress and efficiency over relationality. Similarly, Miig describes in *Story* how the New Agers attempted to make ceremony more “efficient” and “economical,” rather than understanding the importance of land-based practices and intelligence. Simpson states that motion and action are necessary elements in the creation of knowledge: “the only thing that doesn’t produce knowledge is thinking in and of itself, because it is data in dislocation and isolation and without movement” (*Always Done* 20). Transmotion, then, is a necessary component in building land-based practices and relationality; the goal is not efficiency or linear progress, but rather forming dynamic and reciprocal relationships within their environments.

Furthermore, *biskaabiiyang* is dependent on rebuilding land-based practices. Indigenous elders teach the younger children that “We have the knowledge, kept through the first round of these blasted schools, from before that, when these visitors first made their way over here like angry children throwing tantrums. When we heal our land, we are healed also” (*Marrow* 193). Indigenous futurisms thus rely on these land-based practices and relationships. Rose directly relates Indigenous people’s ability to dream to their connection to their lands:

Where exactly do you think our dreams come from? My dreams are full of lakes and the small islands that skip across them like a heartbeat. They are all that I am. They are *my* land. Ours are different, I’m sure. If you’re from the north, they are all the colors of freeze, as deep and devastating as their stories. In the south, they are red sands and hills cut from the glass formed under a red sun. Our lands are who we are. (*Hunting* 160)

At the end of *Hunting by Stars*, the Family finds itself in a new environment, and therefore they must discover and build new relations and new land-based practices by understanding “who the original people are so we can honor the lands we are on” (378). The ways that Dimaline’s Indigenous characters enact land-based practices reflects Simpson’s discussion of their importance: “This *procedure* or practice of living, theory and praxis intertwined, is generated through relations with Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg land, land that is constructed and defined by our intimate spiritual, emotional, and physical relationship with it.” (*Always Done* 23). Simpson further asserts that “The land, Aki, is both context and process” (*Always Done* 151). Indigenous peoples’ connection to land is defined by relationality rather than possession, which requires temporal multiplicity and transmotion.

Living in Indigenous contexts represents *mino bimaadiziwin* which Simpson defines as “living life in a way that promotes rebirth, renewal, reciprocity and respect” (*Dancing* 27). *Mino*

bimaadiziwin is essential for *biskaabiiyang*, as Dimaline demonstrates throughout her novels. For example, while out hunting, French sees a moose and has a clear shot to kill it. He considers all the benefits to him and his family if he does: “This was food for a week. Hide and sinew to stitch together for tarps, blankets, ponchos. This was bone for pegs and chisels. This was me, the conquering hero, marching into camp with more meat than all of us could carry, taking the others back to field dress this gift” (*Marrow* 49). However, French also realizes that because they cannot stay in one place too long, if he kills the moose they would “be leaving half, at least half, behind to rot” (*Marrow* 49). Ultimately, French leaves the moose behind because he believes that *mino bimaadiziwin* is more important than satiating his and his family’s hunger for a short period of time, and he has internalized Indigenous teachings that “individuals could only take as much as they needed... and no part of the animal could be wasted” (Simpson, *Dancing* 112-113). In contrast, later in the novel, the characters meet two Indigenous men, Travis and Lincoln, who initially appear to be in hiding from the Recruiters, like French and his Family. The men offer the Family some venison stew because their “hunt was good” (*Marrow* 122). Unlike French, who refuses to waste any food even if it means he and his family may go hungry, these men seemingly take no issue with hunting enough food to feed twelve people. French soon learns that the two men are in fact agents working for the Recruiters. Although these two men are Indigenous and do speak some Anishinaabemowin, their lack of *mino bimaadiziwin* serves as foreshadowing of their real intentions, which are revealed when the pair kidnap RiRi.

Dimaline emphasizes the importance of *mino bimaadiziwin* throughout her novels by demonstrating the significance of a character’s actions over their identity. Indigenous characters in her works must remind themselves that “Not every Indian is an Indian” (*Marrow* 55). Many Indigenous people, including Mitch and eventually French, work as agents for the schools to

ensure their own safety and protection at the expense of others. When French learns that his brother has been working for the schools during the several years since they were parted, he asks him if he is still able to dream, to which he replies, “It’s... quiet now. I’m not really sure” (*Hunting* 77). Similarly, the Chief’s “colorful and sacred and Indian-y” visions actually come from Nam’s dreams rather than his own; Nam tells Rose that “Before he was the Chief, he was just plain old corrupt Chief Henry Williams, a stereotype. He had the biggest house on the rez and two brand-new boats. He was in tight with the oil dudes, living a good life with the consultation money meant for the Band” (*Hunting* 184). Thus, Dimaline informs the reader the dreams are a product of *mino bimaadiziwin*. This idea is further demonstrated by how French’s actions affect his dreams: after French decides not to hunt the moose, he recognizes that “In a way, [he] still got that moose. He visited [French] in [his] dreams” (*Marrow* 52). In contrast, French has a dreamless sleep after he kills the Indigenous agent whom he views as partially responsible for RiRi’s death (*Marrow* 139). Ultimately, then, Dimaline shows that living in accordance with traditional Indigenous values is vital for generating Indigenous futurisms.

Throughout *The Marrow Thieves* and *Hunting by Stars*, Dimaline demonstrates Simpson’s argument that “living in a good way is an incredible disruption of the colonial metanarrative in and of itself” (*Dancing* 41). Simpson emphasizes that:

how we live, *how* we organize, *how* we engage in the world—the process—not only frames the outcome, it is the transformation. *How* mold and then gives birth to the present. The *how* changes us. *How* is the theoretical intervention. Engaging in deep and reciprocal Indigeneity is a transformative act because it fundamentally changes modes of production of our lives. (*Always Done* 19)

Through engaging with land-based practices, Indigenous peoples begin to live within their own temporalities and therefore begin to create Indigenous futurisms. Whyte further explains that “our actions today are cyclical performances; they are guided by our reflection on our ancestors’ perspectives *and* on our desire to be good ancestors ourselves to future generations” (“Indigenous Climate Change Studies” 160). Living in Indigenous contexts, though language, storytelling, and *mino bimaadiziwin*, creates physical changes to Dimaline’s characters, enabling them to dream and therefore to begin the process of *biskaabiiyang* and to create Indigenous futurisms from within the present.

Chapter 2

Don't Look Back: Sovereignty, Self-Determination, Futurity in Waubgeshig Rice's *Moon of the Crusted Snow*

Moon of the Crusted Snow, written by Anishinaabe writer Waubgeshig Rice, is set in the fictional Gaawaanagkoong First Nation, north of Gibson, Ontario. Shortly before the first snowfall of the year, all the electricity in the reserve fails and shuts off permanently. After decades of becoming increasingly dependent on energy and resources from the South, the community members must rely on traditional Anishinaabe knowledge and on each other for their survival during the long, harsh winter. Rice demonstrates how the community's reliance on settler colonial infrastructure functions as another form of containment that precludes Indigenous sovereignty, and without it, characters instead become more self-reliant by rebuilding land-based practices and forming kinships with the humans and non-humans in their ecology. While the fate of those living outside the reserve is left largely to speculation, Rice shows how the history of Indigenous transmotion enables his characters to adapt to this newfound precarious situation in ways that settlers cannot—similar to how Dimaline's Indigenous characters maintained their ability to dream and reproduce. At first, the community manages the energy catastrophe by reinforcing their values of balance and moderation, until they are threatened by the arrival of Justin Scott, a settler who causes conflict by undermining Indigenous sovereignty and attempts to reinstate settler time onto the residents of the reserve. Rice's novel demonstrates that *biskaabiiyang* relies on Indigenous sovereignty and land-based practices that are fundamentally tied to Indigenous temporalities and transmotion.

Apocalypse in Indigenous Temporalities and Settler Time

Rice clearly situates the temporality of his novel within the contexts of colonial violence and *biskaabiiyang*. The effects of colonial capitalism are found in all aspects of their lives, yet at the same time many of the characters are working towards *biskaabiiyang* by relearning their language, culture, and ceremonies. Many of the elders in the community are residential school survivors, and even though protagonists Evan and Nicole went to school on the reserve they were not taught Anishinaabemowin because of the lasting effects of cultural genocide:

Evan and Nicole had grown up in an era when Ojibwe wasn't spoken much with the younger generation at home. It was only two generations before Nicole and Evan that speaking Ojibwe was punished at the church-run schools that imprisoned stolen children, and the shame attached to it lingered. Evan and Nicole had vowed to make things different for their kids. They had given them Anishinaabemowin names with pride—
Maiingan meant 'wolf' and Nangohns 'little star.' (128)

Simpson calls shame “an insidious and infectious part of... cognitive imperialism” and states that “shame can only take hold when we are disconnected from the stories of resistance within our own families and communities” (*Dancing* 14). Evan and Nicole, in addition to many others in the community, are teaching the younger generation the language, stories, and culture that was nearly lost due to colonial violence to ensure that their children never feel this shame.

Throughout the novel, characters practicing *mino bimaadiziwin* acknowledge the limitations of their knowledge of their own language and culture. Evan feels “a little awkward” speaking his prayers mostly in English, for example, because he does not yet know enough Anishinaabemowin, though “it still made him feel good to believe that he was giving back in some way” (4). The community members do not have direct experience with many of the

ceremonies they practice, but Rice emphasizes that the context and intentions of these actions are far more important than their historical accuracy.

As in Dimaline's works, the younger generations in the community rely on the knowledge and teaching of their elders to help them achieve *biskaabiiyang*. For example, Evan's father Dan tells Maiingan and Nanghons a Nanabush story to teach them the lessons "Don't be greedy" and "always be ready for winter," the same lessons the characters in *Moon of the Crusted Snow* must remember to survive the energy catastrophe (174). The eldest member of the community, Aileen, is Evan's "surrogate grandmother, his go-to elder whenever he had questions about the old ways" (192-193). Unlike Evan or his father, Dan, who were raised speaking English, Aileen "was the last of the generation raised speaking Anishinaabemowin, with little English at all. She was one of only a few dozen left who could speak their language fluently. She remembered the old ways and a lot of the important ceremonies" (146-147). While discussing the energy catastrophe, Aileen depicts a perspective of the Native Apocalypse that is common throughout Indigenous SF works; she tells Evan:

The world isn't ending.... Our world isn't ending. It already ended. It ended when the Zhaagnaash came into our original home down south on that bay and took it from us. That was our world. When the Zhaagnaash cut down all the trees and fished all the fish and forced us out of there, that's when our world ended. They made us come all the way up here. This is not our homeland! But we had to adapt and luckily we already knew how to hunt and live on the land. We learned to live here.... But then they followed us up here and started taking our children away from us! That's when our world ended again. And that wasn't the last time. We've seen this... apocalypse... over and over. But we always

survived. We're still here. And we'll still be here, even if the power and the radios don't come back on and we never see any white people ever again. (149-150)

Her speech emphasizes Indigenous peoples' survivance throughout centuries of colonial violence, including the loss of their lands and the ecology of kinships within it and the cultural genocide enacted upon them through the residential school system and the child welfare system. While the energy catastrophe—like the dreamlessness in Dimaline's texts—represents an existential threat to colonial capitalism, it is merely one of several hardships faced by Indigenous peoples within their own temporalities.

Rice's depictions of Indigenous temporalities are also deeply invested in the roles of dreams and prophecy. There are four different dream sequences in *Moon of the Crusted Snow*, each representing a character's prophecy of a possible future. The first two dreams in the novel are narrated to Evan by his father, Dan, and his partner, Nicole, and both provide a warning to the dreamers about the upcoming winter and the energy catastrophe: Dan sees members of the community weak and hungry, while Nicole dreams that she is struggling to run through heavy snow. Dan's dream shows what will happen to the community if they rely solely on settler resources and infrastructure for their survival (and what eventually does happen to characters who do) while Nicole's dream also provides her with reassurance that the younger generation will be able to survive the forthcoming hardships through *biskaabiiyang* when she is saved by her children, who appear to her as elders and speak to her "in the old language" (70). The third dream presents the first dream sequence that is not narrated by a character, but instead by Rice's omniscient narrator. There is no transition into the dream and it is instead presented as any other scene; it is only when Evan discovers piles of bodies in the complex that it becomes clear that these events are not happening in real time and that Evan is predicting the deaths of the

community members before they happen (even showing where the bodies will be stored until spring). In the final dream sequence, Evan sees Justin Scott, the novel's antagonist, transformed into a monster, warning Evan not to trust the man and predicting his eventual turn to cannibalism. Rice does not depict Evan waking up, however, leaving it to the reader to decide whether or not this event was real or part of Evan's imagination. As the novel progresses, there are fewer distinctions between reality and dreams, representing a view on temporality and prophecy that "eschews a vision of unidirectional, linear development in favor of a sense of multiplicity that does not dichotomize continuity and change and that connects chronologically disparate sites" (Rifkin 157). Dreams present the characters with visions of possible futures (as they do in Dimaline's novels) and provide them with the opportunity to change their actions to either work towards or to avoid these futures. Present and future overlap and intermingle in ways that elude the strict linearity of settler time.

This accentuation of prophecy is reminiscent of the Seventh Fire Prophecy in Anishinaabe culture. Edward Benton-Banai states that, according to oral tradition, the seven prophets told the Anishinaabeg about different eras (or Fires) in the future. The prophet of the Sixth Fire predicted the residential school system and the effects of colonial violence:

Those deceived by [the promise of the Light-skinned Race] will take their children away from the teachings of the *chi'-ah-ya-og'* (elders). Grandsons and granddaughters will turn against the elders. In this way the elders will lose their purpose in life. At this time a new sickness will come among the people. The balance of many people will be disturbed. (90)

Many Anishinaabeg believe that the current era is the Seventh Fire, in which the "*Osh-ki-bi-ma-di-zeeg'* (New People) will emerge. They will retrace their steps to find what was left by the trail" (Benton-Banai 91-93). The seventh prophet prophesized that during the Seventh Fire:

the Light-skinned Race will be given a choice between two roads. If they choose the right road, then the Seventh Fire will light the Eighth and Final Fire—an eternal Fire of peace, love, brotherhood and sisterhood. If the Light-skinned Race makes the wrong choice of roads, then the destruction which they brought with them in coming to this country will come back to them and cause much suffering and death to all the Earth’s people.

(Benton-Banai 93)

These two roads are often interpreted as the choice between technological development or spiritualism (Benton-Banai 93)—or between the prioritization of linear progress under settler time or the ethos of *mino bimaadiziwin* within Indigenous temporalities. Rice’s novel, as with many SF works by Anishinaabe writers, portrays the Seventh Fire as an era imbued with the potentiality for apocalypse and/or *biskaabiiyang*, depending on the choices made by people in the present.

In Indigenous SF, apocalypse or dystopia reveals the differences between settler time and Indigenous temporalities. In their work, Whyte et al. challenge the dominant assumption that there is a distinct and universal Holocene and Anthropocene period, and that the Holocene is “an ecologically stable period” while the Anthropocene is “one involving dramatic environmental changes owing to the increase in the impacts of human collective actions, such as industrialization and global capitalism” (321). Heather Davis and Zoe Todd similarly critique Eurocentric conceptions of the Anthropocene that suggest that all peoples are equally to blame for anthropogenic climate change. They argue that our understanding of the Anthropocene must acknowledge that “the ecocidal logics that now govern our world are not inevitable or ‘human nature’, but are the result of a series of decisions that have their origins and reverberations in colonization” (Davis and Todd 763). These assumptions of universality and the tacit centering of

Eurocentric narratives do not reflect the periodizations of Indigenous peoples, who interpret their histories as defined by constant transmotion; Whyte et al. explain that “Indigenous-told histories often do not privilege the past or recent past as a stable period, with the present being a uniquely unstable period within recent memory” (321). In contrast, they state that “Anishinaabe philosophies often involve migratory themes such as constant motion, change, transformation, mobility, and adjustment”, and that the presence of these themes “suggests that relationships of interdependence and responsibility are not grounded on stable or static relationships with the environment” (Whyte et al. 322). Instead, relationships between different humans or between humans and non-humans are context-dependent and therefore subject to constant motion. In his text, Rice emphasizes the role of transmotion in Anishinaabe history, despite the persistence of colonial violence and displacement:

Despite the hardship and tragedy that made up a significant part of this First Nation’s legacy, the Anishinaabe spirit of community generally prevailed.... Survival had always been an integral part of their culture. It was their history. The skills they needed to persevere in this northern terrain, far from their original homeland farther south, were proud knowledge held close through the decades of imposed adversity. They were handed down to those in the next generation willing to learn. (48)

As both Dimaline and Rice demonstrate throughout their writing, survivance and *biskaabiiyang* depend upon the participation of the entire community. Transmotion involves Indigenous peoples constantly building and negotiating kinships with other humans and nonhumans in ways that adapt to changing ecologies, including the energy catastrophe in *Moon of the Crusted Snow*.

Kinship and *Mino Bimaadiziwin* in Precarious Environments

The opening chapter of Rice's novel emphasizes the importance of land-based practices and kinships to *mino bimaadiziwin*. Evan is hunting a moose whose meat he will share with his father and other elders on in the community. He leaves an offering of tobacco and says a prayer: "Great spirit, today I say miigwech for the life you have given us.... Miigwech for my family. And for my community. Miigwech for our health. Chi-miigwech for the life you have allowed me to take today, this moozoo, to feed my family" (4). While doing so, he notices some beads missing on his tobacco pouch and reminds himself to ask his Auntie to re-bead the design. As Rice follows Evan through the process of hunting the moose and bringing it back home, the reader sees the various ways the community members support one another—including Evan's partner, Nicole, taking care of their two children while he is out hunting or Evan sharing portions of the moose meat with elders in his community. This communal support becomes even more important to their lives after the energy catastrophe and the members must rely on one another to survive the harsh winter without the resources from the South.

The energy catastrophe provides the possibility for *biskaabiiyang* not by returning to the pre-colonial past, but rather by allowing for Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination outside of settler colonial institutions and infrastructures. Many of the Indigenous characters in *Moon of the Crusted Snow* rely on resources from the South for their survival during the harsh winters on the reserve. When it becomes clear to the community that no food or energy will be coming from the South, the community members must rely on themselves and each other and must practice *mino bimaadiziwin* to survive without intervention from settler colonial institutions. Evan, for example, has spent the fall hunting "three moose, ten geese, more than thirty fish..., and four rabbits," more than he and his family can eat alone, but he plans on giving

much of it away because “It was the community way. He would share with his parents, his siblings and their families, and his in-laws, and would save some for others who might run out before winter’s end and not be able to afford the expensive ground beef and chicken thighs that were trucked or flown in from the South” (6). Rice emphasizes the time and effort it takes Evan to hunt and prepare such a large animal—hunting the animal, bringing it back home, stripping the hide, storing and freezing the meat, etc.—compared to the ease of buying meat that is shipped from the South. Evan only eats packaged meats when he has to because “he felt detached from that food”; hunting takes more time, but it is “more economical and rewarding. Most importantly, hunting, fishing, and living on the land was Anishinaabe custom, and Evan was trying to live in harmony with the traditional ways” (6). Furthermore, residents of the reserve do not like hunting in the winter unless necessary because the moose tend to stay in one location throughout the season: “it’s kinda like cheating. It’s not the Anishinaabe way to take more than you need. Back in the day, before beef roasts were shipped in here, we only did it when we needed to. Only during the desperate times” (125). Evan demonstrates the importance of the relationships between humans and the animals they hunt when he tells his children, “A moose—a moozoo—gave himself to us yesterday” (14); his choice of language suggests a mutual relationship between himself and the moose, where the agency is given to the animal, and therefore he must show gratitude by giving thanks for meat the moose will provide for him and his family. Rice’s descriptions of hunting emphasize land-based practices—forming “relationships that are based on consent, reciprocity, respect, and empathy” (Simpson, *Always Done* 61)—whereas eating packaged goods is an act disconnected from time or place. As Simpson explains, engaging in these land-based practices “changes us because it constructs a different world within which we live. We live fused to land in a vital way. If we want to create a

different future, we need to live a different present, so that present can fully marinate, influence, and create different futurities” (*Always Done* 20). Therefore, Indigenous characters in Rice’s text are able to generate Indigenous futurities by relying on Anishinaabe knowledges to rebuild kinships despite the challenges they face during the energy catastrophe.

Cathy Smith’s (Mohawk) “Oìènkwáon: we” similarly demonstrates the process of building living relationships by giving agency to non-human beings. The short story follows Haudenosaunee character Sky Bear, a xenobiologist who works for the Imperial Botanical Society with hopes of one day training to be a medicine man. The story is set several years in the future, after the Pangalactic Empire colonized Earth and humanity “just when the Onkwéhon: weh [Haudenosaunee] were in the process of decolonizing five hundred and thirty years after Columbus’s arrival” (56-57). The Elder Races of the Empire believed that Earth had to be annexed “because of its leaders’ short sighted ecological management policies” (56) and that humanity was therefore “incapable of ruling themselves” (58). These future events recall the justifications of *terra nullius* used against Indigenous peoples to colonize Turtle Island. Sky is part of the Human Delegation working with Count Orso to apply for a charter to grow ambrosia, “the chief medicine plant of Imperial space” (58). When meeting with the alien Egrets, Orso is astonished to learn that “The ambrosia is extremely self-willed. It makes the final decision of who will be its custodians for itself” (63). He does not understand or respect the plant’s agency in forming mutual relationships with those who harvest it, and the ambrosia plant wilts upon hearing his insults. Sky manages to secure the contract with the Egrets by harvesting the ambrosia with Haudenosaunee practices: “My people... believe that medicine plants are eager to serve humans and only ask for their efforts to be acknowledged and appreciated. We also believe you never ask for anything from a medicine plant without giving a gift of oìènkwáon: we—

Indian tobacco” (64). Even after Sky is commended by the Egrets for his ability to care for the ambrosia plant, Orso dismisses him as superstitious. Smith’s story demonstrates how colonial attitudes, represented through Orso, are responsible for ecological collapses under global capitalism, whereas Indigenous perspectives on mutual relations will help revitalize robust and diverse environments. This same rejection of anthropocentrism and emphasis on the agency of nonhuman beings is represented in Rice’s novel through the disparity between Indigenous characters like Evan who strive to build meaningful kinships and Indigenous and non-Indigenous characters who are so deeply embedded within settler time that they do not see the value in *biskaabiiyang*.

While many characters in *Moon of the Crusted Snow* are attempting to reclaim their culture and are committed to *mino bimaadiziwin*, others appear content with their dependence on resources from the South. This contrast is demonstrated in the differences between Evan and his younger brother, Cam: “When Evan had been out on the land learning real survival skills with his father and uncles as a teenager, Cam had chosen to stay behind, learning simulated ones in video games” (34). Unlike Evan, Cam does not know how to hunt or even how to start the furnace by himself. These skills become necessary after the energy catastrophe, and characters like Cam are either reticent or unable to help their community members survive the winter. Rice criticizes characters who refuse to participate in this communal effort, either by their reluctance to learn how to provide for themselves and others without resources from the South or by their irritation at the prospect that others might receive more assistance than themselves due to their need; one of the residents at the meeting is upset that they spent “all summer fishing and all fall hunting to feed [their] family in the winter, and the lazy-ass people in this rez get food for free?” (113). Evan, too, is “disappointed to discover how few hunted anymore,” though he is still

committed to ensuring all community members have the resources they need (120). When the shipments from the South stop and the local store sells out of canned and packaged goods, about a quarter of the community relies exclusively on the weekly food rations from the council band.

The energy catastrophe reveals the precarity of humans' reliance on capitalist infrastructure. Anna Tsing defines precarity as "life without the promise of stability" (2) and "the condition of being vulnerable to others" (20); survival in states of precarity requires collaboration among many species. Because previous notions of modernity and progress no longer hold the same sense of stability they did in the twentieth century, Tsing argues that precarity has become an earthwide condition. Amidst the ruination of capitalist destruction, landscapes become patchy: "a mosaic of open-ended assemblages of entangled ways of life" (Tsing 4). Precarity is not inherently negative, but it does require collaborative survival, built upon "patchy landscapes, multiple temporalities, and shifting assemblages of humans and nonhumans" (Tsing 20). Indigenous peoples' history of transmotion allows them to live within precarity by constantly building and negotiating kinships within their changing ecologies. Simpson explains that Indigenous peoples do not relate to the land through concepts of possession, but rather "through connection—generative, affirmative, complex, overlapping, and nonlinear *relationship*" (*Always Done* 43). Settler time, in contrast, is linear and teleological; the logic of colonial capitalism necessitates constant expansion and accumulation—a denial of precarity. Yet, as Rice's novel demonstrates, lives that rely on settler colonial infrastructure are the most precarious and vulnerable. Unlike land-based practices, which are context-dependent and require constant renegotiation, the systems needed to produce and maintain the energy and packaged goods upon which many people, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, depend are

inflexible and necessitate stable growth. The failure of any one part of those systems could lead to the catastrophic events depicted in Rice's work.

Indigenous characters' dependence on products manufactured within settler colonial institutions makes it increasingly difficult for the community to gain sovereignty and self-determination. Whyte explains that settler colonial campaigns:

include both war-like violence and the tactics for suppressing populations that are used alongside belligerence, from assimilative institutions (e.g., boarding schools) to containment practices (e.g., reservations) to the creation of dependency (e.g., commodity foods). ("Our Ancestors' Dystopia Now" 208)

Unlike hunting and other land-based practices, commodity foods do not require building or maintaining kinships within one's ecology, and instead create a dependency on institutions and infrastructure over which Indigenous peoples have little control. Through Rice's depictions of these dependencies, he demonstrates the ways in which, as Whyte argues, "Colonially-induced environmental changes altered the ecological conditions that supported Indigenous peoples' cultures, health, economies, and political self-determination"; these changes disrupted the natural transmotion of Indigenous peoples' lives, leaving them "vulnerable to harms, from health problems related to new diets to erosion of their cultures to the destruction of Indigenous diplomacy" ("Indigenous Climate Change Studies" 154). Rice demonstrates how the cause of a great deal of generational trauma within the reserve is directly linked to colonial violence:

Young people had been committing suicide at horrifying rates in the years leading up to the [alcohol] ban, most abetted by alcohol or drugs or gas or other solvents. And for decades, despairing men had gotten drunk and beaten their partners and children, feeding a cycle of abuse that continued when those kids grew up. It became so normal that

everyone forgot about the root of this turmoil: their forced displacement from their homelands and the violent erasure of their culture, language, and ceremonies. (44)

Rice demonstrates how *biskaabiiyang* helps the community heal from this cycle of poverty and violence. Characters who engage in *mino bimaadiziwin*, by practicing Anishinaabe traditions and rebuilding kinships, work to overcome the shame older generations felt because of the cultural genocide they endured at the residential schools. Evan feels connected to his community and his culture by sharing resources with and assisting his neighbours and through his efforts to practice *mino bimaadiziwin*. He is proud to see his children learning Anishinaabemowin from a young age, and both he and Nicole imagine their children as future leaders within their community.

Furthermore, the characters who are working towards *biskaabiiyang* are resisting the domination of settler colonialism. Whyte et al. characterize settler colonialism as “a structure of domination that arranges institutions to undermine Indigenous motion, mobility, and adaptation” (325). They argue that the goal of settler colonialism is to efface Indigenous social-ecological contexts and instead inscribe their own institutions in order to “eliminate themselves as a settler by remaking the land into their own social-ecological context” (326). If Indigenous peoples are unable to live on the land in their own contexts, then they have (supposedly) lost legitimacy in their claims of Indigeneity. This settler colonial goal requires the containment of Indigenous mobility, such as through the disruption of Indigenous ecologies. Many Indigenous peoples had their lands “shrunk exponentially through the creation of the reserves, either in Indigenous peoples’ homelands or in faraway places... where Indigenous peoples were forcibly relocated” (Whyte et al. 327). A study on the “Effects of land dispossession and forced migration on Indigenous peoples in North America” shows that the effects of colonial displacement resulted in a 98.9% reduction in cumulative coextensive lands, and Indigenous tribes faced an average

migration distance of 239 kilometers (Farrel et al. 578). Indigenous reserves are also more susceptible to the effects of anthropogenic climate change, due to:

(1) procedural injustice, or a lack of input into development decisions...; (2) containment, or the ending of high mobility as an adaptive strategy (via sedentarisation)...; and (3) settler centralisation, that is, decision-making and political power [are] shifted outside the local community.... (Whyte et al. 330)

In other words, Indigenous peoples are more vulnerable to precarity when they lack sovereignty and self-determination. Sovereignty is also necessary for Indigenous peoples to be able to address the precarity in their environments—such as how Evan and his community are able to band together to survive the energy catastrophe through communal support or how French and his Family are able to evade the Recruiters and protect each other through *mino bimaadiziwin*.

Characters throughout Rice's novel discuss the ways life on the reserve has changed over the last few decades because of the availability of, and increasing reliance on, energy and new technologies. When Evan and Nicole were young, homes relied on diesel, but now "the hydro lines from the massive dam to the east now powered homes" (29-30). While many of the homes in the reserve have wood-burning furnaces and the ability to run on diesel, "homes that had been built or bought in pre-fabricated in the last decade... relied heavily on electric appliances" (29). These homes are more vulnerable to the precarious situation created by the energy catastrophe when electric appliances are the first to fail. In contrast, Evan's and Nicole's parents had grown up relying on wood-burning furnaces and boiled snow, rather than baseboard heaters and running water. The challenges faced by the community in the wake of the energy catastrophe reveal how the introduction of electricity and other energy infrastructures "became a settler colonial political tool to govern the lives of Indigenous people, rather than to provide for those lives" (Martens

197-198). Rice demonstrates the extent of this dependence by showing that even “Evan’s subjectivity is enabled and sustained by hydrocarbons in ways he fails to acknowledge,” including his use of plastic-packaged tobacco and diesel-burning vehicles (Martens 201). Packaged goods and hydroelectric energy present obstacles to *biskaabiiyang* because they create a dependence upon settler colonial infrastructures.

When these infrastructures suddenly fail, the precarity of characters’ lives is suddenly revealed to them. Rice’s novel presents a strong critique of energopolitics—which “value[s] energy over life, following neoliberal capitalist logics of unlimited accumulation, where human life is only valorized to the extent that it provides energy” (Martens 194). Reuben Martens states that humans’ dependence on infrastructures demonstrates that “energopolitics is about providing infrastructures that *sustain* life, yet without very much regard to what facilitates those infrastructures and how it does that (not to mention what lives suffer for it)” (194). Within Western petroleum culture, “fossil fuels equal freedom, and they have become a fundamental part of not just culture but personal subjectivity too” (Martens 195). Within the framework of settler time, easily accessible energy represents teleological progress, and the threat of global climate destabilization as a result of its use challenges that narrative. Stephanie LeMenager argues that Western culture’s dependence on fossil fuels over the course of the twentieth century has led to the twenty-first century problem of petromelancholia: “The feeling of losing cheap energy that came relatively easily, without tar sands extraction, ultradeep ocean drilling, and fracking” (102). Petromelancholia can be held back within a functioning infrastructure “because it directs affect and libido elsewhere: it removes from the equation the idea that energy resources are scarce and obfuscates a direct interaction with hydrocarbons that otherwise might bring to the fore an attention to one’s embodied petroaffordances (and their precarity)” (Martens 196). While

the community in Rice's novel relies more on hydroelectric energy than fossil fuels (though they do depend on diesel generators when that hydroelectricity fails), the experience of many Indigenous and non-Indigenous characters in response to the sudden loss of that available energy mirrors the effects of petromelancholia—at first, many people are in denial that these infrastructures could fail, and then they slowly start to feel anxiety and despair at the prospect of life without these systems and goods. These characters' petromelancholia makes them more vulnerable to the machinations of the novel's primary antagonist.

Windigo Thinking in Settler Time

A few weeks after the power shuts off, a white man named Justin Scott arrives at the reserve seeking refuge. Scott is a survivalist who calls himself “a man of the land” and an “outdoorsman” and reveals he has been preparing for this scenario for a long time (103). Evan is immediately wary of Scott and his over-familiar friendliness, his arrogance, and the feigned respect he shows to Terry and Walter, the chief and one of the councillors of the band. Scott attempts to prove his worthiness to join the community by telling the men, “I’m a hunter, much like you are, I assume. I can help provide for your community. I’m a survivalist. I know how to live on this land without the comforts and luxuries people in the South have become too dependent on. I know all about emergency management. I can help your people adapt to this situation” (107). He tries to assure them that his only goal is “survival and the hope of being part of a community” (107-108). This appeal reflects Tuck's and Yang's description of the settler adoption fantasy as “the desire to *become without becoming [Indian]*” (14). Scott's assertion that he is “a man of the land” and his attempts to point out the similarities between himself and the Anishinaabe men seem to be an effort at claiming some sort of Indigenous identity that would, therefore, grant him access to their land and resources. As Rice reveals throughout the rest of the

novel, Scott has no respect for the sovereignty of the community or the authority of the council (he often acts in ways that benefits himself and ignores the instructions of the council) and he holds deeply racist views on Indigenous peoples and their culture (he calls the residents of the reserve freeloaders and deadbeats, decries their “ceremonies and voodoo and shit” (201), and tells Evan not to “get all Indian on me now” (202)). When Scott goes out hunting with the group, the Indigenous men say a “prayer with a miigwech and [place] the tobacco in front of the dead moose with care and respect,” while “Scott mimicked the motions of the others” (126). Rice suggests that Scott is merely “mimicking” their actions rather than being invested in *mino bimaadiziwin* or *biskaabiiyang*. Similar to the New Agers in Dimaline’s novels, the intentions behind the actions are not replicated by settlers who mimic or appropriate Indigenous culture. At the end of the novel, when Evan finally confronts Scott, Scott contends that without him, “You guys woulda been wasting away up here by now.... White man always saves the day!” (200). He also explains to Evan that he believes that “Far away from so-called civilization seems like the best place to be right now” (101), implying that the reserve and its inhabitants are uncivilized. Scott’s insistence that his culture is superior to Indigenous culture is rooted in settler time, a perspective in which Indigenous identities were irrevocably weakened by the introduction of capitalism and the inevitability of teleological progress. His actions reveal that his desire to join the community was merely a means to secure settler futurity under the presumption that Indigenous futurity is already foreclosed. Despite Scott’s arrogance, Evan is not intimidated by him because he understands his vulnerability—that “*He needs us more than we need him*” (116). Although Scott would not have been able to survive without the assistance of the community, he refuses to accept the precarity of his situation due to his insistence on conforming to settler time, and he therefore refuses to participate in kinships of mutuality.

Rice's portrayal of Scott reflects descriptions of the Windigo in Anishinaabe oral tradition. According to Basil Johnston, the name Weendigo "may be derived from *ween dagoh*, which means 'solely for self,' or from *weenin n'd'igooh*, which means 'fat' or excess" (222). The Weendigos were once human, but their immense hunger during the winter endows "them with an abnormal craving, creating an internal imbalance to such a degree as to create a physical disorder. The Weendigo has no other object in life but to satisfy this lust and hunger" (Johnston 224). This hunger causes them to eat human flesh in an attempt to satisfy their cravings, but "having eaten human flesh, the Weendigos grew in size, so their hunger and craving remained in proportion to their size; thus they were eternally starving" (Johnston 247). Rice's description of Scott in Evan's final dream sequence closely resembles stories of the Windigo: the large figure has a "pale, heaving emaciated torso under sparse brown body hair.... His cheeks and lips were pulled tight against his skull. He breathed heavily through his mouth, with long incisors jutting upward and downward from rows of brown teeth. His eyes were blacked out" (187). In Anishinaabe tradition, stories of the Windigo are told to warn listeners to avoid self-interest and instead practice moderation and balance—values encouraged by *mino bimaadiziwin*. In the modern day, Johnston says, the Windigo has not disappeared but has "been assimilated and reincarnated as corporation, conglomerates, and multinationals" (235). The same self-interested motivations and insatiable hunger as the Windigo are represented in the ethics of consumption and accumulation found in settler colonial capitalist institutions and in Rice's depictions of Scott's selfishness and his rejection of community and kinship.

Scott's role in Rice's novel is to represent the intrusion of settler worldviews and practices that undermine Indigenous sovereignty and thus impede *biskaabiiyang*; these worldviews are associated with depictions of the Windigo. Johnston explains that historically,

“To keep from starving before winter was over and to avoid having to hunt and thereby putting oneself at risk of death at the hands of the Weendigos, men and women labored mightily throughout the summer and fall to store enough food to last them until spring. Work was the chief ethic” (xix). This ethic is reflected in characters such as Evan, Dan, and others who begin the novel hunting to ensure they have enough food for the long winter. Those who are unable to—or neglect to—prepare for the upcoming season are more vulnerable to the Weendigo. While Evan and others work to ensure that the entire community is cared for, Scott begins to befriend those who believe his “promises of easier living under his authority” (151). Scott ingratiates himself with some of the members of the community, including Cam, and quickly becomes “the man to go to if you’d run out of smokes or alcohol” by offering up the products he brought from the South (131). Like Johnston’s description of the Windigo, Scott prevails upon these characters by promoting consumption and self-interest. When going to check on his younger brother, Evan finds Cam with Scott, drinking with some of the other younger community members; the next morning, two of the women who were at Cam’s home are found frozen—the first of twenty-two residents who die throughout the winter. Evan blames Scott for their deaths, believing that the women were too drunk to safely find their way home. This event is followed shortly by the suicides of two young men. These deaths show how “one suicide often led to another among the young people, and the compounding tragedies squeezed the stammering heart of the reserve” (Rice 156). The fact that Scott’s enabling of alcohol consumption is the catalyst for these tragedies demonstrates how “the current epidemic of self-destructive practices—addiction to alcohol, drugs, gambling, technology, and more—[is] a sign that Windigo is alive and well” (Kimmerer 306). As the harsh winter continues, Evan begins to suspect that Scott and his followers are stealing supplies from the band office that are intended to provide for the whole

community; their greed and rejection of moderation puts the whole reserve at risk for starvation. In the climax of the story, Evan and his friends confront Scott about his apparent plan to steal and eat a body from the makeshift morgue. If survival within precarious environments requires collaboration and kinships, then the denial of precarity encourages rigid individualism, which in turn promotes the same self-interest that the Wendigo stories warn listeners to avoid. Robin Wall Kimmerer (Potawatomi) argues that Windigo thinking is visible in settler colonial institutions that “continue to embrace economic systems that prescribe infinite growth on a finite planet, as if somehow the universe had repealed the laws of thermodynamics on our behalf. Perpetual growth is simply not compatible with natural law” (308). Instead of learning to live within precarity by maintaining kinships within their changing ecology, Scott and his followers adopt Windigo thinking—and in doing so, they perpetuate colonial violence on Indigenous bodies in an attempt to rescue settler futurity.

Rice’s novel ends with a glimpse of the future of the community, once most of the buildings and infrastructure have been abandoned and Nicole leaves behind her home with her children to “begin this new life nestled deep in the heart of Anishinaabe territory” (213). It is unclear just how many members of the community managed to survive without settler colonial institutions and infrastructure. Martens argues that Rice’s novel “refuses to offer redemption through decolonization; it recognizes its impossibility in the face of the petrocultural implication of Native peoples in settler colonial (social and physical) infrastructures of energy” (207). Scott seems to echo this idea when he tells Evan, “Most of [the community] don’t even know how to trap! When I took some of those kids out there, they didn’t know what the fuck they were doing. If that’s your future, then... huh” (202). This does appear to be true for some characters, like Cam, who adopt Scott’s Windigo logic and, Rice implies, resort to cannibalism to satiate their

selfish appetites. This argument, however, relies on the presumption that decolonization can only be realized through a return to the pre-colonial past, and ignores the significance of transmotion in Indigenous peoples' lives, both historically and in the present. Rather, as Rice demonstrates in his text, decolonization—*biskaabiiyang*—is dependent on Indigenous sovereignty and land-based knowledges and practices. The existence of modern technologies and the reality of anthropogenic climate change are not threats to Indigenous sovereignty, colonial violence is. The epilogue to *Moon of the Crusted Snow* reminds readers that the Anishinaabeg:

were never supposed to last in this situation on this land in the first place.... Their ancestors were displaced from their original homeland in the South and the white people who forced them here had never intended for them to survive. The collapse of the white man's modern systems further withered the Anishinaabeg here. But they refused to wither completely, and a core of dedicated people had worked tirelessly to create their own settlement away from this town. (212)

When the energy catastrophe first begins, and cell phone towers and satellite televisions fail, Evan thinks to himself, "*We may as well be going back in time*" (20). Yet, this represents only a reversal of settler time, not of Indigenous temporalities. The lived experiences of transmotion empower the Anishinaabe characters to adapt to their new reality by embracing sovereignty and self-determination and rebuilding kinships based on mutuality and reciprocity. When Nicole and her family leave behind their old home for good, she stores "a small collection of mementos in a corner of the basement in case they could someday come back for them" (210), yet as they walk away, "They didn't look back" (213). Nicole recognizes and accepts her past and her memories as constituent part of her person, but her transmotion enables her to move forward and adapt to her new environment without clinging to a way of life that will not return, the way Scott and

Cam had. Rice demonstrates how *biskaabiyang* provides Indigenous peoples with the impetus to produce Indigenous futurisms within precarious environments and work towards building the Eighth Fire.

Conclusion

Representational Agency: The Metatextual Significance of Indigenous SF

Dimaline's and Rice's texts demonstrate the importance of temporal multiplicity and transmotion in challenging the hegemonic ontologies of colonial capitalism and settler time. *The Marrow Thieves* and *Hunting by Stars* show how living within Indigenous contexts is itself a radical act of resistance against colonial violence, and *Moon of the Crusted Snow* depicts the necessity of Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination for *mino bimaadiiziwini*. Furthermore, Indigenous SF not only portrays the circumstances for *biskaabiiyang*, it also helps create those circumstances through its presentations of survivance and *mino bimaadiiziwini*. Just as characters in Dimaline's and Rice's novels are empowered by living within Indigenous contexts to generate Indigenous futurisms, readers of these works are similarly situated within Indigenous temporalities by engaging with these stories. In this conclusion, I argue that representational agency, Indigenous writers having control over representations of Indigenous identities, is a powerful and necessary means of promoting *biskaabiiyang*. Through analyzing works of Indigenous SF in particular, we see the importance of granting Indigenous peoples representational agency over the narratives of their histories and their cultures.

In my introductory chapter, I discussed the ways in which much of Western literature, and especially SF, ignores the existence of Indigenous peoples or treats them as a backdrop to Canadian/American history. These stories are deeply entangled within colonial epistemes and notions of settler time in ways that foreclose the possibilities of temporal multiplicity or Indigenous futurisms. This erasure of Indigenous temporalities and perspectives contributes to ideological diaspora, which Neil McLeod (Cree) defines as "the alienation from one's stories...: this alienation, the removal from the voices and echoes of the ancestors, is the attempt to destroy

collective consciousness” (172). McLeod identifies ideological diaspora as the internalization of the physical diaspora of Indigenous peoples that resulted from colonial violence, including the residential school system. Cultural genocide is/was one means of confining Indigeneity to the annals of history in order to uphold settler futurity. Colonial violence has left Indigenous peoples without an ideological home, and, as McLeod explains:

An ideological home provides people with an Indigenous location to begin discourse, to tell stories and to live life on their own terms. An ideological home is a layering of generations of stories, and the culmination of storyteller after storyteller, in a long chain of transmission. To be home, in an ideological sense, means to dwell in the landscape of the familiar, collective memories, as opposed to being in exile. ‘Being home’ means to be part of a larger group, a collective consciousness; it involves having a personal sense of dignity. Furthermore, an ideological home, housed in collective memory, emerges from a specific location, spatially and temporally. An ideological home needs to have a spatial, temporal home as well. (172)

Where Indigenous peoples are absent in dominant narratives, when they lack an ideological home, it becomes impossible to envision an Indigenous present, let alone Indigenous futures.

Even where Indigenous peoples (or Indigenous-coded people) appear in Western fiction, these characters often reproduce colonial stereotypes. Although themes of colonialism, capitalism, and oppression are common within Western SF, these works often fail to imagine possible futures outside of settler time—instead negotiating relationships within this framework. In *Avatar*, for example, technological progress inevitably leads to the destruction of Indigenous-coded identities and spirituality; the film presents the only possibilities for the future as the Na’vi remaining stuck within a pre-colonial and pre-modern era or their complete annihilation.

Ultimately, *Avatar* uses Indigenous coding (but not any actual Indigenous perspectives) as a means of portraying its ecocritical message without engaging in ideas of sovereignty, self-determination, or the significance of Indigenous values and practices. Indigenous identities are conflated with the environment itself; protecting the diverse ecology of Pandora requires saving the Na'vi. Tuck and Yang criticize the tendency towards treating decolonization as a metaphor for broader social justice movements, arguing that “When metaphor invades decolonization, it kills the very possibility of decolonization; it recenters whiteness, it resettles theory, it extends innocence to the settler, it entertains a settler future” (3). Decolonization, or *biskaabiiyang*, can only occur within Indigenous temporalities—which are not found in works of Western fiction. Vizenor argues that “Representation, and the obscure maneuvers of translation, ‘produces strategies of containment’” (*Manifest Manners* 70). Dominant narratives inform audiences of what is possible, and therefore inform future reality.

Silencing narratives of resistance is a powerful means of suppressing resistance in the real world. For example, Vizenor decries the ways in which “The oral stories of *naanabozho*, the tricky cousin in the east, were expurgated as educative moral lessons in the translations of missionaries; moreover, these stories, once liberative, were abated as mimetic evidence in social science studies” (*Fugitive Poses* 1). As with Simpson’s example of settler appropriation of making maple syrup, the process of translation strips trickster stories of their original context to fit within a dominant colonial narrative. The *indian* simulacrum replaces the reality of Indigenous peoples in order to conform to epistemes that support settler time. The *indian* is confined to the precolonial past, and present-day Indigenous peoples are expected to align with the values of liberal modernity. Rifkin criticizes this presumption of coevalness and argues that “the notion of temporal sovereignty operates as a negative dialectical provocation, suggesting the

ways that treating time as singular, neutral, and, thus, a basis for including Native peoples within a shared modernity, may limit possibilities for envisioning and enacting Indigenous self-determination” (186). Therefore, it is necessary not only for Indigenous peoples to be represented within narratives of futurity, but for Indigenous writers to exercise agency over the character of that representation—to write Indigenous peoples in Indigenous contexts and temporalities.

Representational agency not only redresses the errors and limitations of colonial stereotypes, but also helps Indigenous peoples to establish their identity and presence within their own frameworks. Vizenor explains that “Natives have always created their own presence and sense of existence, and were teased in certain communities to announce their personal identities in oaths, nicknames, visions, and stories” (*Fugitive Poses* 104). As Dimaline demonstrates in her depictions of “coming-to” stories, having agency over one’s narrative is a fundamental aspect of forming identity—both individual and collective. Dimaline’s characters map the transmotion of their lives through storytelling, creating both a strong sense of self and community with those whom they choose to share their stories. When Indigenous peoples lack agency over their representations, then the sources of their identities are controlled by the same settler colonial narratives that seek to vanish them legally and physically. Indigenous fiction asserts an active presence of Indigeneity within Indigenous contexts—itsself an act of colonial resistance:

words are like arrows that can be shot at the narratives of the colonial power.

Wordarrows have transformative power and can help Indigenous people ‘come home’; wordarrows can help establish a new discursive space. Every time a story is told, every time one word of an Indigenous language is spoken, we are resisting the destruction of our collective memory. (McLeod 182)

Characters in both Dimaline's and Rice's novels use storytelling to help achieve *biskaabiiyang*; these stories pass along Indigenous knowledges and values to younger generations, teaching how to resist settler colonialism through *mino bimaadiizwin*. At the same time, these knowledges and values are shared with their readers and these examples of storytelling present the same themes as the novels themselves. Dimaline portrays language as having a tangible and visceral effect on listeners, while Rice demonstrates the outcome of that transformation in the contrast between Indigenous characters who are capable of living outside of settler colonial infrastructure and those who are desperate to rescue settler futurity. The goal of many Indigenous writers is to "use the Native present as a way to resurrect a Native past and to imagine a Native future. To create, in words, as it were, a Native universe" (King 106). Indigenous fiction is an expression of survivance because it acknowledges that Indigenous peoples "are the actual authors of the politics of resistance and cultural conversions on this continent, a distinctive, literary modernity" (Vizenor, *Native Liberty* 162). Representational agency leads to the formation of strong Indigenous identities defined on their own terms, outside of settler colonialism; doing so asserts an Indigenous presence and opens the door for Indigenous futurisms.

Depictions of oral storytelling in Indigenous fiction represent the ability for narrative to assist in forming identities and resisting settler colonialism. Portrayals of storytelling in Dimaline's and Rice's novels shows how sharing narratives helps younger characters build their individual and collective identities and demonstrates how oral storytelling is more conducive to transmotion than written records. Dimaline's characters use both "Story" and "coming-to" stories to develop personal and communal histories. In *The Marrow Thieves*, both Miig's and Wab's coming-to stories present a warning to the younger characters to be wary of strangers, which "influences the youth to be rightfully wary towards the newcomers—and underscores the

importance of individual storytelling to the protection of the wider community” (Childers and Menendez 215). In *Moon of the Crusted Snow*, Dan uses Nanabush stories to teach Maiingans and Nanghons the value of *mino bimaadiiziwin*. Similarly, Gabriel Castelloux Calderon’s “Andwànikàdjigan” portrays the transformative effect of oral storytelling as marks that appear on the listener’s body: “The only reason elders told stories was in order for the memory marking to appear.... [W]hen someone shared a story and you truly listened, listened with all your heart, by the end, strange red marking would appear on your skin” (97). When a person touches their memory marking, they can recall the story verbatim. These storytellers are all killed by those in power, who attempt to maintain control by destroying all writing and thereby becoming the sole authority over information and narrative. As with many other works from Indigenous writers, Calderon’s story privileges oral storytelling over written records as a means of communicating between generations. Unlike the marked ones, who “*always listened when someone shared a story, and... always shared the stories [they] carried,*” non-Indigenous characters could only learn stories from books, and “*they didn’t listen to each other, so they never learned to share either*” (110). The significance of listening “with all your heart” in Calderon’s story demonstrates how oral storytelling forms an active connection between speaker and listener, whereas writing is a passive form of communication. Thus, oral storytelling promotes transmotion through the ways listening to these stories physically alters the audience—much like how Dimaline’s young characters grow while listening to Story. Furthermore, “Andwànikàdjigan” portrays the importance of narrative control and representational agency; those in power seek to destroy the storytellers because their transformative means of communication threatens the dominant narrative. These representations of storytelling in Indigenous SF narratives demonstrate that “Attending to story as a constitutive element of

perception emphasizes the variability and changeability of Native experiences while also addressing the ongoing (re)construction of collective frames of reference, suggesting less the transmission of static narratives than active and ongoing dynamics of perceptual (re)orientation” (Rifkin 34). Narratives influence the possibilities we imagine for our realities, making it vital to read and experience stories from a variety of perspective to encourage temporal multiplicity.

The goal of enforcing dominant colonial narratives, and of the settler moves to innocence discussed by Tuck and Yang, is to establish colonialism and settler time as hegemonic and settler futurity as inevitable. Simpson argues that “If we accept colonial permanence, then our rebellion can only take place within settler colonial thought and reality, and we also become too willing to sacrifice the context that creates and produces cultural workers” (*Always Done* 153). Returning to these contexts, and living within Indigenous temporalities, is therefore central to working towards *biskaabiiyang*. Works of fiction written by and about Indigenous peoples offer agency over their own representations and provide perspectives that clash with the dominant narratives about Indigenous peoples and about the possibilities for the future. Speculative fiction is an especially useful genre for this goal because it “provides the language to conceptualize a world outside of colonial influences, beyond the loss of homeland, resources, and the unethical treatment of the population” (Fricke 109). Therefore, I argue that Indigenous SF itself is a tool for anti-colonial resistance because narrating possibilities outside of settler time can help generate those futures within present reality. As Topash-Caldwell states, “Claiming that Indigenous peoples are not just relics of the past, but have viable futures is a powerful assertion of Indigenous agency and it has material effects on the possibilities that Indigenous communities envision for themselves” (“Sovereign Futures” 32). Reading narratives of Indigenous futurisms existing outside of settler colonialism can empower Indigenous readers to help build those

futures from within the present and challenges the implicit assumptions of non-Indigenous readers, who are encouraged to consider perspectives outside the dominant settler one.

Futurity narratives are especially useful for the goal of *biskaabiiyang*. If, as McLeod asserts, “To tell a story is to link, in the moments of telling, the past to the present, and the present to the past” (170), then telling a story about the future links the past, present, and future together in ways that imitate transmotion. The futurity narratives of Dimaline and Rice portray colonial violence as an ongoing process rather than a discrete historical event, but also demonstrate the history of Indigenous survivance and transmotion to argue that Indigenous futures will be secured through *mino bimaadiizwin* and *biskaabiiyang*. As Simpson argues, “this way of living necessarily continually gives birth to ancient *Indigenous* futures in the present” (*Always Done* 21). Indigenous peoples have already survived the Native Apocalypse and continue to resist colonial violence by living within their own frameworks and contexts, meaning they are better prepared to survive future apocalyptic events or ecological destabilization than settlers who are stuck within a temporality of linear progress. Indigenous futurisms exist outside of settler time and reject colonial stereotypes of Indigenous victimry and disappearance.

Indigenous SF portrays not only the possibility for *biskaabiiyang*, but also the ways readers can engage in their everyday lives to support it through *mino bimaadiizwin*. In her novels, Dimaline intentionally uses only “rudimentary” language to show that “even when you use a word or phrase as a beginner, as long as you are fighting for its survival, language is powerful, that it encompasses an ideology and life that are worth protecting at all costs” (Dimaline in Diaz 22). Dimaline and Rice write Indigenous characters who live in the wake of the Native Apocalypse and, therefore, do not begin the texts with a complete understanding of their own cultures: Evan feels “a little awkward” speaking Anishinaabemowin because of his

limited knowledge of the language (Rice 4), and French fails to recognize the important role that Minerva plays in their Family as an elder and knowledge-keeper. They must engage in a communal form of learning that does not shame them for their inexperience or mistakes, acknowledging them as part of the process of Indigenous resurgence (Lypka 35; Zanella 189). Characters in these novels feel a strong sense of pride in reclaiming their languages and cultures, undermining the “insidious and infectious” shame of “cognitive imperialism” (Simpson, *Dancing* 14). Dimaline has stated that her goal in writing the novel was for “Indigenous youth to see themselves in the future, and not just holding on by the skin of their teeth kind of surviving, but being heroes and leaders” (in Diaz 22). *The Marrow Thieves* series is targeted to a young adult audience, allowing Indigenous youth to see themselves in leadership positions within their own communities and emphasizing the roles that young people play in “intergenerational forms of caretaking, the transmission of knowledge, and the creation of future knowledge-keepers” (Samuelson and Evans 276). Similarly, Evan and Nicole are proud of their children, Maiingan and Nanghons, for learning Anishinaabemowin at a younger age than they could. Evan is hopeful that his daughter will “grow up to be strong and intelligent. He wanted her to be a leader” (Rice 15). The ways in which these characters resist settler colonialism by speaking, telling stories, and other quotidian experiences demonstrates the ways in which “Theory and praxis, story and practice are interdependent, cogenerateds of knowledge. Practices are politics. Processes are governance. Doing produces more knowledge” (Simpson, *Always Done* 20). Engaging in *mino bimaadiiziwin* is survivance, and a necessary aspect of *biskaabiiyang*—a message Dimaline and Rice imbue within their readers.

Indigenous SF works, including those of Dimaline and Rice, portray the frictions between settler time and Indigenous temporalities. Whereas much of Western SF reflects a teleological

perspective on settler futurity, Indigenous SF challenges the narrative of linear progress. The hegemony of settler time limits the possibilities of understanding the past and envisioning possible futures:

More than offering invidious portraits of Indians as backward and disappearing, non-native accounts, governmental and popular, treat the space of the United States [and of Canada] as a given in which to set the unfolding of events, and in this way the political union functions as something of an atemporal container for the occurrence, movements, conjunctures, periodicities, and pulsations of history, providing the background against which the movement of time can be registered. (Rifkin 1)

Within this framework, Western SF often depicts apocalypse as an impending future catastrophe; in these stories, the past is disregarded because of the emphasis on linearity, and history is deemed irrelevant to discussions of futurity. Indigenous SF offers a perspective wherein apocalypse is an ongoing event, perpetuated by colonial violence—the past, therefore, is treated as a valuable resource for learning how to adapt to the challenges of the present and the future through transmotion. Moreover, Western SF treats the present as existing in a state of stability, where the apocalyptic future necessitates a disruption to this stability. Indigenous SF, on the other hand, demonstrates that colonial violence is/was a disruption to Indigenous transmotion, and therefore the apocalyptic future is already being generated from within the present. Like many Indigenous authors, Dimaline and Rice demonstrate how the goals of cultural genocide that motivated the residential school system are still visible within settler colonial institutions today, and how this colonial violence impedes *biskaabiiyang*. When settler futurity is threatened, settler characters react by exploiting Indigenous bodies, lands, and knowledges for their own personal gain—either reopening new “Schools” to steal Indigenous peoples’ dreams and futures

or undermining Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination with Windigo thinking. Both Dimaline's and Rice's novels demonstrate how colonial values of possession, extraction, accumulation, and consumption are unsustainable, while Indigenous perspectives on mutuality and transmotion allow for humans and nonhumans to adapt to changing ecologies.

Each story creates its own temporal framework through the storyteller's perspective on events that have happened, those that are currently happening, and those that may happen. In demonstrating the tensions between settler time and Indigenous temporalities, Indigenous SF shows the ways that:

people's accreting connection to a given place and neighboring peoples over generations (and the ways life in that space is affected by the interweaving climatic, vegetative, animal, social, and diplomatic dynamics at play there) [creates an] experience of being and becoming whose textures, regularities, and negotiations cannot be captured through reference to a universal chronology. (Rifkin 30-31)

The insistence upon coevalness erases temporal multiplicity by enforcing the hegemony of settler time—and, therefore, the certainty of a settler future. McLeod states that “The process of ‘coming home’ through stories could be thought of as the experience of discerning the liminal space between Cree culture and the mainstream society” (172). Indigenous fiction creates a “‘discursive space’ to mediate these two worlds and sets of knowledge and experience” (McLeod 174). Representational agency encourages readers to consider a plurality of temporal experiences and possible futures. Indigenous SF not only depicts these multiple futurisms, but also demonstrates the processes through which readers can engage in their surroundings to help generate those futures from within the present. What all these works of Indigenous SF demonstrate is that the strongest resistance against colonialism and the strongest strategy for

biskaabiiyang is living within Indigenous contexts. Simpson argues that “Nishnaabeg thought provides us with the impetus, the ethical responsibility, the strategies and the plan of action for resurgence.” (*Dancing* 20). Granting Indigenous peoples sovereignty and self-determination over representations of their histories and their identities can therefore reorient non-Indigenous readers into temporalities that refute the linearity and teleology of settler time and persuade Indigenous readers to fight against settler colonial violence for their sovereignty and self-determination in their present-day experiences, the same way characters like French, Evan, and Nicole work to create Indigenous futures in these fictional works.

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