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Reading Native Literature from a Traditional Indigenous Perspective: Contemporary Novels in a Windigo Society

A Thesis
Presented to the
Department of English
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In partial fulfillment
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degree of Master of Arts

by
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ABSTRACT

In this thesis I explore three novels by Aboriginal authors, using a perspective that evolves from traditional Anishnabe teachings about the "Windigo" character. In the Introduction, I elaborate upon the reasons why an interdisciplinary study is necessary for the advancement of Aboriginal education.

In Chapter One, "Literary Colonization," I formulate an Aboriginal literary criticism through "inside" perspectives of Aboriginal social reality and community. I propose that through Aboriginal literary self-determination which includes youth, Elders, community, and Indigenous traditions and stories, one may find an escape from literary colonization. In Chapter Two, "The Windigo," I focus on the Windigo not only as a character but also as a metaphor. I use the Windigo to explain humanity though a traditional Indigenous, multi-layered perspective of human reality.

In Chapter Three, "Silent Words and the Tradition of Respect," I study the novel Silent Words by Ruby Slipperjack for its rejection of Windigo domination and its establishment of respect for community. This chapter promotes Aboriginal pedagogy and traditional teachings through a study of the protagonist's journeys under the guidance of traditional teachers, from whom he learns about balanced, reciprocal relationships.

In Chapter Four, "Ravensong and the Theme of Transformation," I study the novel Ravensong by Lee Maracle in terms of resistance to assimilation and Windigo infection, noting the necessity for and possibility of transformation. Emphasizing the importance of Indigenous community to Indigenous life and identity, this chapter explicates the protagonist's role as a potential "bridge" between non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal cultures.

In Chapter Five, "Slash, Assimilation, and Cultural Survival," I study the novel Slash by Jeannette Armstrong as a challenge to Windigo, opposing assimilation and assisting cultural survival. The protagonist's journeys include political activist events as well as an inner exploration where he must realize internalized oppression in himself as well as Windigo disease in his community and in the greater Canadian society.

In the conclusion and recommendations, I suggest that the Windigo can be overcome through creative acts of literature and through informed reading of Indigenous literature from an insider

perspective. I also recommend that Indigenous perspectives, such as those expressed in this thesis, be accommodated by literary studies as a whole.

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"You're not supposed to preserve wisdom. You're supposed to live it."
— Corbett Sundown, Seneca (Arden & Wall, Travels 299)

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PREFACE - A Note on Names and Labels

This thesis discusses Indigenous North American concepts such as "Creator," or "God." These names are an effort to communicate in the English language something that, for us, is unexplainable in simple words. "Creator" is not simply an anthropomorphic being that dwells outside of human beings and nature, as Christians have come to define the word, but rather, is a being who is a part of everything that exists. Furthermore, although "Kichi-manitou" or "Creator" is often assigned a male gender, Indigenous traditional Elders are quick to note that, as Harvey Arden and Steve Wall indicate,

> These supernatural beings -- who could create worlds and other forms of life -- could be male or female. Taiowa and Wakan Tanka are not male deities. These names represent the sum total of all things. It is what Black Elk described as the spirits of all things living together as one, but even spirit has its limitations in English. The English term Great Spirit attempts to define what is incomprehensible. (Wisdomkeepers 4-5)

In short, neither gender nor language can adequately convey, explain, or describe something so profound as "God," an entity that lies beyond gender or language, and perhaps even thought itself. The late Lakota traditional Elder Matthew King has stated that

> You can call Wakan Tanka by any name you like. In English I call him God or the Great Spirit. He's the Great Mystery, the Great Mysterious. That's what Wakan Tanka really means - the Great Mysterious. You can't define Him. He's not actually a "He" or a "She," a "Him" or a "Her." We have to use those kinds of words because you can't just say "It." God's never an "It." So call Wakan Tanka whatever you like. (qtd. in Arden & Wall, Travels 295-296)

Another entity that is central to this thesis is the "Windigo," a heartless, mechanical creature that lives by overconsuming with an insatiable appetite. The Indigenous concept of Windigo is shared by diverse groups of Algonkian-speaking peoples, stretching from the Northeast coast of North America to the Rocky Mountains. I have selected this example from traditional Aboriginal orature as representative of how traditional people thought, and still think, of an invading, aggressive, environmentally destructive Western civilization. The Windigo figure can teach beneficial lessons to all human beings on how to live and how not to live. In fact, many traditional-minded people at the present time still refer to those who are acculturated in the Western world view as functioning under a "Windigo psychosis." In his book Columbus and Other Cannibals: The Wetigo Disease of Exploitation, Imperialism, and Terrorism (1992), Powhatan/Lenape/Saponi

scholar Jack Forbes describes it as "a plague, a disease worse than leprosy, a sickness worse than malaria, a malady more terrible than the smallpox" (9).

There is some brief mention of "Nana'b'oozhoo" in Chapter Two. Nana'b'oozhoo is a figure whom Anishnabe storyteller/author Basil Johnston describes as "myth only insofar as he performed the fantastic and the unbelievable; otherwise he is real to the extent that he symbolizes mankind and womankind in all their aspirations and accomplishments, or in all their foibles and misadventures [. . .]. He resides in every man, every woman" ("Nanabush" 44).

Throughout this thesis I have used the terms "Indians," "Native peoples," "Native Americans," "Aboriginal peoples," and "Indigenous peoples," to refer to the race of human beings who have occupied the North American continent since the beginning of time. A "traditional" Indigenous person is someone who has attempted to live as best as one can in the way of one's ancestors, and who has retained one's language and much of one's culture, in partial rejection of Western religions and cultures. Traditional people keep Indigenous culture alive by living and embracing the values that they espouse. Many Indigenous people have accepted Western attitudes and behaviours in what has been referred to as "selective retention" or "controlled acculturation," thereby retaining much of their own cultural identity in the process.

One important factor in this definition is that a traditional person strives to reject colonial government jurisdiction in favour of traditional ways. It could be stated that traditional people see through the intents of modern colonial structures. In fact, Aboriginal people in Canada, many of whom are still forced to live under colonial legislation such as the Indian Act of 1876, can be seen as subject to a Windigo society's regime. Traditional thinking is directly related to Aboriginal self-determination and freedom. Therefore, to be a "traditional Indian" is a political as well as a spiritual proposition.

INTRODUCTION

> From all the four corners of America's continent, south, north, west, and east, speaking all languages, Indian, English, French, Spanish, Portuguese, etcetera, we must bring to Mother Earth our souls, minds, bodies, and hearts to fill up the emptiness left by our carelessness [. . .]. This is the ecological, creative curing power of American Indian poets. (qtd. in Francis & Bruchac 36)

This quote from Huron/Wyandot poet/author Eleanor Sioui illustrates a key argument of this thesis: that Aboriginal literature study may have a healing effect and can play a key role in undermining human irresponsibility. In the introduction to Earth's Insights, philosopher J. Baird Callicott argues that "an implicit environmental ethic has existed in many indigenous and traditional cultures" (1). I intend to demonstrate how this "implicit environmental ethic" was, and is, communicated among most traditional indigenous cultures through the medium of literature -- be it through traditional teachings as found in the concept of the "Windigo" figure, or through the awareness that one may discover in the contemporary genre of the novel. In explaining this "traditional" perspective, problems will arise that need to be answered: is the study responsible and ethical? Is it exploitative of traditional teachings? Will it fall under Eurocentric hegemony? I will follow the lead taken by Aboriginal scholars and writers who argue for literary self-determination: Jace Weaver has asserted that "Native internal criticism or theorizing must strive for literary emancipation of Natives and Native communities" (165).

Aboriginal community is what has been missing from this literary criticism. There must be a new dialogue by which we can control our literary study ourselves, from our own community and nation perspectives, for our emancipation. Even non-Aboriginal scholars are aware of this. Penny Petrone states that "the 'purist' attitudes of literary critics in North America have hampered serious critical study of native literatures. Indeed, the history of native literatures has been plagued by this cultural chauvinism" (3). An important element of my study is that, in order to escape dominant approaches that have not been able to develop or accommodate such an understanding, readers of Aboriginal literature should first have to undergo a "transformation" of sorts: they must be willing to consider another way of seeing the world. They must also be willing to take this perspective seriously. In this way, a dialogue with Aboriginal people can be set up, where all voices are heard.

The first Chapter of this thesis, "Literary Colonization," will outline how an Indigenous world view needs to be apprehended in order to understand the actions of characters in Aboriginal literature from our perspective. Through this transformation of conceptual frameworks, one can ascertain that the literature is a reflection of Native philosophy and Native reality. Scholars Dennis McPherson (Anishnabe) and Doug Rabb indicate that Aboriginal philosophy is not a human construct but "is, rather, the land herself speaking through the people of the land. It is this sense in which it is indigenous" ("Native Philosophy" 12). I argue in this thesis that Native literature should be read as a reflection of the realities that have been imposed on Indigenous people and land through colonization. Our land is our community and our culture, our identity and our history. It is our literature, and it is sacred. This must be understood, as Weaver explains: "What McPherson and Rabb said of philosophy, I would claim for religion: that it [the study of elements of Indigenous community] can help the People see themselves as a people, "as experiencing persons, not as mere objects to be experienced or studied by others" (xiv). I also say the same thing for literature: it is ours, spirit words for our communities, not "mere books." It is for our people to know ourselves as the Indigenous people of this land.

The importance of land to Indigenous peoples cannot be underestimated. It provides important relationships with regards to Aboriginal community, culture, and identity. In light of the effects that displacement from our ancestral homelands has had on Indigenous peoples and the disastrous damages on Indigenous culture, economy, and community, a 1981 report to an international conference for the World Council of Indigenous Peoples stated that "An Indian without land is a dead Indian" (qtd. in York 123). Okanagan author/educator Jeannette Armstrong has indicated that Indigenous literature is actually the land speaking through the writing of Indigenous people, and posits an active element in this relationship: "language was given to us by the land we live within" ("Land Speaking," 178). Aboriginal voices are, in this view, the voice of the land. Weaver feels that "this literary output is both a reflection and a shaper of community values. It has assumed an important role for modern-day Native peoples, especially urban Natives separated from their tribal lands and often from their cultures as well" (viii). Even those dispossessed, displaced Indigenous people who are not land-based still struggle to maintain language and

culture, after having been colonized through land expropriation by contemporary Western governments. Their realities are living effects of the Windigo impulse to dominate or colonize the land. Aboriginal philosophy is "out there," in the communities and in the land, where the people live and practice it daily, just as its literature is also not an abstraction, but rather a part of cultural survival.

Chapter One will outline how to arrive at a perspective that will not approach the literature from an "outside" view. An "inside" view can be accomplished through the relevance of Indigenous land, community, and sociopolitical realities. The struggle of Indigenous peoples to survive is synonymous with the struggle for the land to survive. Genocide (the destruction of a people) and ecocide (the destruction of the environment) are intimately linked. It would be most beneficial to approach the literature, therefore, through the lens of an Indigenous perspective of colonization. Native literature is "out there," in the communities, in the realities of the everyday lives of the Aboriginal people around us. Indeed, it may be difficult to apprehend these realities through "ecocriticism," "post-colonialism," or other theory or abstractions. This is why an Indigenous literary criticism is necessary.

Chapter Two, "The Windigo," will focus on the Windigo figure in order to allow this important traditional teaching, which can also function as a metaphor on many levels, a place in contemporary literature study. An important factor tacit in most traditional Indigenous knowledge systems is the notion of respect based on relationships. Respect for all beings on the planet, many traditional Indigenous peoples have thought, is capable of bringing about the respect that human beings need to provide for each other. Sharing, caring, community, and self-sacrifice are key in traditional societies. These contrast sharply with the attributes of the Windigo figure, which is depicted in traditional stories by Algonkian-speaking peoples for the purpose of apprehending an awareness of the dangers of human excess, greed, oppression, and exploitation. The Windigo concept ("Wetigo" in the Cree language) has been, and continues to be, passed down through the generations in stories as a reminder of this basic human impulse that needs to be overcome if all beings are to survive. Chapter Two shows how the Windigo is a key teaching in understanding but one traditional Indigenous approach towards literary study.

Although the traditional ethics studied in Chapter Two are older than any post-contact North American or pre-contact European ethical systems or cultures (they are "prehistorical" and preindustrial), these values are only currently being formally recognized as worthy of study. The mainstream industrial, Eurocentric values that have reigned for so long are coming under increasing scrutiny\1\. For Aboriginal literature, a whole new realm of knowledge is opening up for the twenty-first century and the new millennium, knowledge that is often ignored by contemporary literary theory, but acknowledged by renowned scientists and philosophers such as David Suzuki. In a guest editorial for Gatherings, a Native literature journal, Suzuki comments that

> The waves of immigrants to North America have lacked the respect for the Earth as a sacred place and the spiritual connection to the land that the Aboriginal people have [. . .]. We, non-Aboriginal people, have much to learn spiritually from Aboriginal people [. . .]. It is high time we learned to listen and allow ourselves to benefit from the teachings and perspectives of Aboriginal people. ("Guest Editorial" 8)

Chapters Three, Four, and Five of this thesis take an inside view of three Aboriginal novels, approaching the literature through the reality of the Windigo, the theme of transformation, and the urgency with regards to the issues of ecocide and genocide. The novel Silent Words by Ruby Slipperjack (Anishnabe) provides examples of the tradition of respect and reciprocity that Indigenous peoples hold towards other-than-human persons, as well as revealing aspects of traditional Aboriginal pedagogy. The novel Ravensong by Lee Maracle (Coast Salish) provides insight into an individual's dilemma of feeling the necessity of bridging two cultures, and of personal and social transformation as results of the exposure of Aboriginal people to the dominant society. Jeannette Armstrong's (Okanagan) novel Slash includes material that focuses on contemporary sociopolitical situations facing Indigenous peoples. Read from the perspective of Windigo awareness and other traditional teachings, these three very different novels written by three different authors from three different nations provide a sense of what realities confront Indigenous North Americans in this twenty-first century.

There is a great need for us to realize Windigo and to respect our cultural values and communities, and this is available through Aboriginal literature study. Weaver has proposed the term "communitism" for an approach towards Aboriginal literature: in his view, "Native literature both reflects and shapes contemporary Native identity and community" and what makes it

valuable is its "proactive element to Native community" (xiii). I will argue from a similar place in this thesis, in favour of the writer's responsibility to community, resistance to colonization, and the necessity for activism. Writing and literature, I argue, are sacred healing acts for our people. Noteworthy is the fact that Weaver coined the word "communitism" from the words "community" and "activism." He affirms that "to promote communitist values means to participate in the healing of the grief and sense of exile felt by Native communities" (xiii), and moreover, that "any writing by a Native can serve these communitist ends" (162). Like Weaver, I argue that Aboriginal community includes the pained individual and also the wider community of Creation itself.

Slash is an important novel, particularly for this study, for it not only incorporates most of the issues revealed in Silent Words and Ravensong, such as returning to traditions of respect for cultural identity, self-esteem and individual/community transformation, but it also indicates a solution that may be achieved through social and political activism. Activism is discussed throughout this work as a necessary way of acting on behalf of the Indigenous community as a whole. This approach to reading Aboriginal literature may be described by some as a "panindian" approach -- one where diverse cultures or nations are lumped together as if they were one entity. However, it is important to remember that all Indigenous peoples share the experience of colonization. This pluralistic approach is well-suited for a study of Indigenous writing. According to Kanien'kehaka author Beth Brant, "while the colour and beauty of each thread is unique and important, together they make a communal material of strength and durability. Such is our writing" (20). Imprisoned Aboriginal activist Leonard Peltier has likewise stated, "We Indians are many nations, but one People" (63). Seeing Aboriginal peoples for their similarities also provides a sense of immediacy in that a shared resistance to colonization may be realized. Peltier provides a perspective of this common reality that is useful:

> Books will tell you there are only 2.5 million or so of us Indians here in America. But there are more than 200 million of us right here in the Western Hemisphere, in the Americas, and hundreds of millions more indigenous peoples around this Mother Earth. We are the Original People. We are one of the fingers on the hand of humankind. Why is it we are unrepresented in our own lands, and without a seat -- or many seats -- in the United Nations? (67)

The implications here point toward social and political activism as a solution. This is a vital aspect of the conclusion of this thesis. Clearly, there are new areas to explore in studying

Aboriginal literature that have rarely been discussed or given any thought or respect in the academic community. There are issues and outstanding dilemmas that make for an exciting field of knowledge and literary criticism. These will involve a transformation of thought, which may enrich cultural understanding. As non-Aboriginal researchers Harvey Arden and Steve Wall state, "We weren't looking for herbal secrets -- or, for that matter, any secrets at all -- but only for whatever thoughts and experiences those we met cared to share [. . .]. We weren't after information at all. We were after transformation" (Travels 75).

However, for non-Aboriginal people to "transform" their world view does not mean that they can "be an Indian." It appears as if they never will be: their governments, forces of the dominant society, still impose colonization onto Indigenous peoples. But at least we can set up a dialogue where our "insider" perspectives, our traditions and values, will be discussed, rather than Eurocentric "outsider" perspectives that have no benefit whatsoever to our communities. Non-Aboriginal people can help us with this, otherwise a world beyond Windigo will never be realized. Our cultures and values, our literary images and traditions, are what need verification, for our benefit.

For Aboriginal people, this thesis serves as but one example of a guideline for literary self-determination. Answers to the colonial situation in Canada will have to come from the Aboriginal people. We can do this by following a solution that Metis/Blackfoot architect Douglas Cardinal has suggested: "the answer is in being strong and carrying your own world around with you at all times. Your own Native reality. It is then that you can be in almost any situation and function in a harmonious way. It is being a true warrior" (qtd. in Cardinal & Armstrong 49). The major intent of this thesis is to assist Indigenous people in being such true warriors, explicating Aboriginal realities in Canada through the literary experience by way of a traditional literary teaching (the Windigo).

The conclusion to this thesis is left open-ended much the same way that a traditional story is: can the Windigo be overcome through Indigenous literary perspectives? Will new relationships based on harmony and diversity be celebrated? Will Aboriginal literature study seen through Aboriginal realities gain a place in English literature studies for contemporary students? The

apprehension of an Indigenous reality through harmonious coexistence is directly related to the function of literature and stories in traditional societies. Conclusions were left to the individual to create and to make sense of, which entails a lengthy process of learning that incorporates the individual's imagination and awareness of Indigenous community and nation. My own conclusion is that Indigenous literature and literary criticism offer feasible alternatives to the Windigo impulse, not only in culture, but also in English literature studies. I construct this conclusion using my own independent creative imagination based on traditional values. We all must do this. As Lakota AIM (American Indian Movement) co-founder Russell Means has explained, his grandfather taught him to assume his own distinctive role through non-conclusive traditional literature: "I realized Grandpa John was teaching me the Indian way of thinking, teaching me to use my imagination, to figure things out for myself, to study, to analyze [. . .] to frame questions - and then search out the answers [. . .]. It took years to figure out some of the questions, but still more years to find the answers" (Where White Men Fear To Tread 13).

CHAPTER ONE: Literary Colonization

> Imagine how you as writers from the dominant society might turn over some of the rocks in your own garden for examination. Imagine in your literature courageously questioning and examining the values that allow the dehumanizing of peoples through domination and the dispassionate nature of the racism inherent in perpetuating such practices. Imagine writing in honesty, free of the romantic bias about the courageous "pioneering spirit" of colonialist practice and imperialist process. Imagine interpreting for us your own people's thinking toward us, instead of interpreting for us, our thinking, our lives, our stories. (Armstrong, "The Disempowerment" 240)

This quote from an essay by Jeannette Armstrong illustrates her reaction to "literary colonization," a situation where Aboriginal people and their literature are "colonized" through the appropriation of thought as a result of colonial power imbalances. This situation has created adverse effects on the literary images of Aboriginal people, due to perceptions constructed through texts in which we should be able to define ourselves. The market has become saturated with waves of books about Indigenous peoples, books that can often produce misinterpretations, or "a body of literature focussing on Aboriginal peoples that is based on ethnocentric, racist and largely incorrect presumptions" (Young-Ing 181). The publishing industry has been identified as a site of struggle against literary colonization, as even there racism intrudes. Aboriginal writers such as Beth Brant ask, "why is a white-European standard still being held up as the criteria for all writing? Why is racism still so rampant in the arts?" (11) There must be a direct, active link between the Indigenous community and Indigenous writers' abilities to define identity through literary conceptions, in order to counter the effects of discrimination and to provide for literary self-determination.

Armstrong's solution to escape this literary colonization is to have writers from the dominant society acknowledge the ongoing imperialism maintained by dominant power structures over Indigenous peoples. She calls for a focus on contemporary Canadian perspectives of colonized Aboriginal people. This solution is preferable to the perpetuation of colonial attitudes that are maintained through bias in literary practice where non-Aboriginal people speak for not only their own group, but interpret Indigenous thought as well. Brant expresses the same sentiments: "If your history is one of cultural dominance, you must be aware of and *own* that history before you can write about me and mine" (52). It will take courage as well as honesty on behalf of the non-

Indigenous writer, Armstrong notes, to overcome literary colonization by examining the roots of Canadian racism and colonization.

Most important for the term "literary colonization" is the fact that, due to the dominance of non-Aboriginal writers over the area of literary study, the voices and thoughts of Aboriginal thinkers and writers are often pre-empted. In this chapter, we will explore literary colonization and will suggest avenues where one may escape such an approach. Moreover, in this chapter we will argue the necessity of finding a critical method that incorporates traditional Indigenous perspectives of literature, culture, and words. Such a method reflects traditional Indigenous views towards words and literature, as well as the responsibility and relationship of writers to Indigenous community. Indeed, this route leads to an "insider" approach that is respectful of colonized voices and their current state of social and political oppression, including Aboriginal sociopolitical realities, pedagogical approaches, youth in the present and future, and community needs.

Traditional Elders are, and have always been, the storytellers, historians, and repositories of cultural knowledge for their communities. They are chiefly responsible for the use of words through oral tradition and have ensured cultural survival throughout hundreds of years of genocide. Powerful words, at first spoken and then written, have been extremely important in Indigenous communities, as they convey individual thoughts which influence the community or even the nation as a whole. Traditional Elders are aware that words are an important avenue in communicating values and beliefs such as respect for the land, community, and other-than-human beings. Hence, those speaking or writing on behalf of a larger collective identity must use language wisely.

Douglas Cardinal has acknowledged respect for traditions and the power of Native literature, noting that words themselves are sacred actions.

> Humans are very powerful in this way. To turn the realm of thought, which is abstract potential, into a thing of the physical world, through word, is powerful creativity as a natural act. The essence of creativity in all things is what makes the universe shift [. . .]. The word in that way is powerful [. . .] so it is a sacred act. (qtd. in Cardinal & Armstrong 89)

This quote denotes that making the universe "shift" is important: in Aboriginal thinking, words possess the political potential to alter communities. We will come back to "action" later in this

chapter. Firstly, we must affirm that words are sacred acts. As they are considered sacred, so the literature created must also be considered sacred. If the creation of literature is a sacred act, then a literary theory that arises from the literature should respect this sacred power as well as the effects these words may have on the Indigenous community. Brant states, "I must choose each word carefully, aware of its significance, its truth, its beauty. As a writer, I must honour my ancestors, and the people I love and respect through the written way" (3).

Aboriginal writers, as well as writers engaged in writing about Aboriginal people, have an important role to play in Aboriginal self-definition and should be accountable to Aboriginal communities, since these consist of the people who are going to be directly affected by such writing. Thoughts as words have a sacred purpose and are related to the importance of community in Indigenous life. Kanien'kehaka scholar Taiaiake Alfred has particularly stressed the relevance of the traditional narrative form and "the core message of respect for the inter-relatedness of word, thought, belief, and action" (xvii) in promoting traditional thinking within Aboriginal communities.

The process of much Aboriginal writing itself has been acknowledged as a sacred, healing act. Writing circles are actually an extension of traditional healing. Tewa educator Gregory Cajete notes that "the ability to use language through storytelling, oratory, and song was highly regarded [. . .] because the spoken or sung word expressed the spirit and breath of life of the speaker, and thus was considered sacred" (qtd. in Stiffarm 3). Due to the importance of community to Aboriginal life, "spirit writing" will always involve the greater collective in some way, as in community healing. Sociopolitical realities are therefore also of prime importance to Aboriginal individuals and communities, and should be acknowledged in Aboriginal literary criticism. As with the reference to making the universe "shift" and altering community through words, we need to come back to the place of social and political thought later in this chapter. Both of these concepts will be important in formulating a method by which one can write from "inside" Indigenous communities.

In light of the sacred power inherent in Aboriginal writing, the connection between community and individual actions (such as writing) therefore cannot be underestimated. Cree educator Willie

Ermine has indicated the importance of "community praxis as a way of synthesizing knowledge derived from introspection" (104) in Aboriginal life. In the traditional Aboriginal way of seeing, the physical and inner individual worlds are directly linked. Ceremonies link the individual to their community, and the corporeal to the metaphysical. To exercise inwardness, or to write creatively, "is a capacity to tap the creative force of the inner space" (104) and this inner space "refers not just to the self but to the being in connection with happenings" (104). A critical theory can be formulated if we include the responsibility of writing as a healing act, a sacred act, as well as including the awareness of community. The individual's relationship to community will reveal cultural oppression and sociopolitical realities as keys to "active" writing. As we will see now, Aboriginal writing is almost always political.

Since contact, Indigenous people have been continually engaged in resistance through action and active struggle to maintain their languages and culture. "Action" is therefore an important element in Native literary theory. Indigenous cultures have always held the belief that, when the cultural or physical survival of the community is threatened, then it is time to act. Writing and oratory are the sacred acts of resistance that have been produced. Traditional Elders are among those people in Aboriginal communities who live their lives as examples that embody traditional values and wisdom, their actions providing directions for others to follow. These values are always involved with the well-being of the community. Arden and Wall learned that wisdom "is something you do, an action you take in this world, an effort on behalf of something immeasurably more important than yourself: other people, the Us instead of the Me" (Travels 281). Acting and writing on behalf of others in the community is a responsibility that is deeply engrained in tradition and incorporates an awareness of Indigenous sociopolitical realities, and is one example of an "insider" perspective.

The importance of sociopolitical thought and awareness of Aboriginal issues, in addition to Indigenous cultural traditions, could very well lead to an "insider" position rather than one that regards the material from the "outside." Armstrong has commented on the transformative, sociopolitical power of words and their relationship to traditional teachings in Native literature and creativity: "harmony-seeking creative thought-constructs [. . .] become symbolic representations

in the arts and are carried out in societal functioning, which in turn changes the world" (qtd. in Cardinal & Armstrong 58). "Changing the world" around oneself certainly implies social and political awareness, if not social and political activism. Indigenous traditions are engaged in a constant struggle to regain harmony and balance in communities that have been altered by colonization. There is great importance in understanding Aboriginal cultures from the "inside," of confronting the realities faced by contemporary Aboriginal people as results of ongoing colonization (poverty, racism, abuse, corruption). These Indigenous realities are social, political, historical, cultural, and ideological, and are crucial in understanding Native thought and literature. It is hoped that literary critics will come to understand the culture that comes through in Native literature, and that Indigenous communities and cultures will become accepted into the human family.

The great imbalance in education and community can be confronted when one sees that contemporary writers who control Aboriginal stories and definitions of self therefore have a huge impact on Aboriginal health and wellness. They should be cognizant of the sacred power of words to Indigenous communities. According to Ermine, "the community [is] paramount [. . .]. Each part of the community [is] an integral part of the whole flowing movement and was modelled on the inward wholeness and harmony" (105). The importance of this individual/community relationship and sociopolitical realities is what Brant sees as the major difference between Aboriginal and Western communities: "We do not write as individuals communing with a muse. We write as members of an ancient, cultural consciousness. Our muse is *us*" (10). The individual may also realize balance and insight into a common humanity and a connectedness with all that lives. Another key difference is that traditional Indigenous conceptions of the world include other-than-human beings as direct relations, rather than simply as community resources. Ermine explains that the greater collective is an important entity in this respect: "the knowledge that comes from the inner space in the individual gives rise to a subjective world view out onto the external world" (108). Through an awareness of this holism, which accommodates subjectivity, creativity, culture, language, and environmental ethics, one can hope to theorize respectfully about Aboriginal literature.

How can Aboriginal criticism be successful through respecting the sacredness of words to community? There has always existed the problem of formulating a critical method: Aboriginal writers and intellectuals have always been hesitant to assume the role of literary critic. Kanien'kehaka educator Rick Monture has explained that "in almost every Native culture, to criticize is to show disrespect for another person, to view another's knowledge, opinions, and emotions as inferior to one's own" (qtd. in Bowerbank & Wawia 226). Thus, the very notion of Western criticism includes issues of domination and alienation. In order to respect the sacred power of words in theorizing, there should exist an Indigenous moral and ethical base to theory. Brant has stated outright that "in putting together this collection of essay, talk, and theory, I hope to convey the message that words are sacred. [. . .] Words themselves come from the place of mystery that gives meaning and existence to life" (3). Rather than criticize or conduct research from the margins, this thesis attempts to develop a critical paradigm based on the meaning of the human experience as seen from a traditional Indigenous perspective.

Some current frameworks have been identified as unacceptable: Laguna Pueblo scholar Paula Gunn Allen has used the term "powertripping" as that which characterizes the practice of literary criticism in the academy - "life-alienating practices that are in vogue" (qtd. in Bowerbank & Wawia 227). Western scholarship conducted from the margins, and research rooted in "powertripping," antithetical to Indigenous traditions of respect, has often produced study that has had damaging, alienating effects on Aboriginal peoples. A critical method that arises from within the Aboriginal culture in question may be better equipped to produce accurate, responsible coverage of literary issues, as it will include Aboriginal realities. Such writing as this could come to be regarded as an "inside" method. It can, and has been shown to be, inherently political since Indigenous culture and spirituality, past and present, are political and community- and land-based. Brant makes note of this through a rhetorical question: "when has our writing *not* been that way?" (38).

Aboriginal realities cannot be disregarded in favour of reading Aboriginal literature through Western criteria. Let us reverse the scenario: how can an Indigenous person discuss, for example, European literature without any knowledge whatsoever of any European language,

culture, history, values, traditions, morals, ethics, norms, philosophies, or sociopolitical realities? The writing produced would be a distanced, unacceptable "outsider" account that most Europeans would find inappropriate in any discussion of their pressing realities, particularly if their voice was being marginalized in favour of intruding outside voices. Then why is this allowed to happen with the literature of Indigenous nations? It is not that non-Aboriginal scholars cannot write about Aboriginal literature. After all, as Brant notes, "we would sometimes like to have their presence when we are trying to protect our land and culture; it would be useful to hear their voices raised in protest" (30). But such scholars should confront colonization, both past and present, and become inter-disciplinary in order that Aboriginal literature may be better understood in its full sociopolitical context. This would produce an "inside" position and approach to Aboriginal literature.

Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai-Smith has recently commented that "feminist research and other more critical approaches have made the insider methodology much more acceptable in qualitative research [. . .]. Insiders have to live with the consequences of their processes on a day-to-day basis for ever more, and so do their families and communities" (137). Although Smith is not referring to literary critics here, the implications of research on and writing about Indigenous peoples are the same. They echo the concerns of other theorists who argue in favour of community awareness. An "insider" who has to live under the same conditions as their "subject" would be more likely to provide literary focus that rests on the realities of Indigenous people today and their relationship to the dominant society. As Armstrong argues in the opening quote to this chapter, North American scholars need to develop a true "insider" approach through questioning the practices of their own governments. They must not disregard the sociopolitical, economic, cultural realities that Aboriginal people have been forced to live under as a result of colonization. These realities are reinforced by hierarchical structures where most non-Aboriginal Canadians live among the world's highest standards of living while Aboriginal health, security, and well-being are constantly threatened. Therefore, as Armstrong urges, it is crucial to understand these realities to attain an "insider" position through awareness of Aboriginal community and nation.

Alfred has stated that what makes an individual Indigenous is his or her situation within a community: "in fact, it is impossible to understand an indigenous reality by focusing on individuals or discrete aspects of culture outside of a community context" (xvi). He asserts that there is a dynamic interaction between the individual and community in Aboriginal cultures, "and this interaction cannot be replicated or properly expressed by a single person "objectively" studying isolated parts of the reality" (xvii). To study literature alone, therefore, is not enough to understand Indigenous peoples. There must be an interdisciplinary focus that includes the social, political, economic, cultural, historical, and ideological facets of the Indigenous experience: "to know indigenous people, those seeking knowledge must interact with indigenous communities, in all their past and present complexity" (xvi-xvii). Active participation in community would ensure a position where one could speak *with* colonized voices rather than *for* them. For Brant, community and culture are literary concepts that are a part of human nature: "the writing being created by First Nations women is writing done with a community consciousness. Individuality is a concept and philosophy that has little meaning for us" (19).

This thesis examines three novels through a traditional Indigenous apprehension of human colonization, an apprehension that arises from concepts of ethics in community, individuality, and relationships. The protagonist in Silent Words is a youth who flees his home to escape domestic abuse, coming to the realization that the many lessons he learns from traditional teachers are unavailable in the town where he lives. In Ravensong the protagonist is a youth who must endure poverty, disease, increasing assimilation, and the need to survive in two opposing cultures simultaneously. Finally, the protagonist in the novel Slash is a youth who must bear the effects of racism, government-enforced assimilation policies, and corruption, as well as ecocide and the problem of urbanization. These three novels are strong examples of the effects that colonization, or the Windigo impulse (as will be explained in Chapter Two), has had on contemporary Aboriginal people in Canada.

These novels also notably all contain youth protagonists. This is quite relevant to contemporary Aboriginal communities, since well over one third of the population of Aboriginal people in Canada are younger than the age of 15, while over one half are younger than 25. On

reserves, 37% are under age 15 while nearly 66% are under 25 (Frideres 119). These numbers are especially important when one considers the fact that the Aboriginal population is the fastest-growing in Canada, with a birth rate several times the national average. An "insider" approach will have to include these young voices in literary studies of the future. No longer will these people be written about and scrutinized as "subjects" if one considers the importance of youth to Indigenous traditions and communities. This will be another effective way to formulate an approach from the "inside."

"Unfortunately Aboriginal youth find it difficult to realize cultural identity and self-esteem in educational institutions that promote non-Aboriginal ideologies and literatures. Even English courses that have begun to include Aboriginal literature tend to perpetuate colonization, interpreting texts in Eurocentric ways, since instructors often lack "insider" knowledge. Chickasaw educator Eber Hampton describes schooling for assimilation as carried out by "Anglos using Anglo models to suit Anglo purposes," in institutions "characterized by high failure rates in literacy and educational attainment, having assimilation rather than self-determination as goals, poor school-community relations, negative attitudes towards Native cultures, and prohibition or non-use of Native languages" (9). The overall education system mirrors that of the English studies curriculum. Material, such as the novels studied in this thesis, is often ignored or displaced. Clearly, the relationship between Aboriginal youth and the dominant non-Aboriginal Canadian society has not been a good one and must be transformed.

"Insiders" are different from "outsiders" in that they possess the ability to see that the realities of the Indigenous youth, as seen in the three novels studied in this thesis, as well as the reality of the traditional teaching found in the Windigo figure, is still invisible to most mainstream Canadians. This reality is currently in a state of transition as new hope is being found in an acceptance of Indigenous peoples in Canadian society through dialogue with other peoples, rather than through a relationship based on termination or assimilation as has been the case for hundreds of years. Anishnabe poet/scholar Armand Ruffo describes the reality of being an Indian in Canada today, as that of a person "under siege":

> We only have to think back to the 1990 Oka Crisis, or the confrontation at Ipperwash and the death of Dudley George (who was shot by an Ontario

> Provincial Police officer) to consider the appalling social conditions in which most Native people are forced to live. Indeed, the situation at the end of the twentieth century for Native people is critical. For many, it is a matter of life and death. In a 1994 interim report, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples documented that the suicide rate among young Native people is five to six times higher than it is among their non-Native peers -- and rising. In a country that boasts one of the highest standards of living, obviously something has gone terribly wrong. (109)

Clearly, non-Aboriginal Canadians must acknowledge the existence of a third-world people who exist in such conditions as a result of colonial relationships. The world that has been created for Aboriginal youth is not a good one; any youth would become suicidal if forced to live in such conditions while the rest of Canada prospers. Education for assimilation ensures that such youth lose identity and self-esteem. Social dysfunction is prescribed in a relationship that mirrors Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal relations in literary colonization, where Aboriginal literature is also "under siege." These youth suicide rate statistics point to the vast erasure of Indigenous perspectives in education systems.

Researchers must assume an active role in the decolonization of education. Cree educator Ida Swan notes that "educators, non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal, must change their instructional methods to accommodate the Aboriginal teaching styles of the communities" (49). Through the coexistence of Aboriginal views with Western, EuroCanadian perspectives, there can be an awareness of the need for balance. This is important at the present time because our youth are important to our communities, and because they are increasingly participating in a post-secondary education where acculturation into Western ideologies still occurs. A balanced education is necessary in order to enhance the possibilities of societal and ecological change, and to enable a higher standard of living for all peoples in light of the effects due to acculturation. The importance of Aboriginal youth to Aboriginal communities is becoming widely discussed in light of Western education that negates their existence and often provides negative stereotypes. English literature studies, which provide definitions of self, must become culturally appropriate. As Swan indicates, "school programs and approaches are as responsible for the erosion of cultures as are the churches and the government" (54). No wonder that aboriginal participation in post-secondary education is still less than one-third of the Canadian national level, with only 8% of Native people between the ages of 18-24 attending universities (Basic Departmental Data, INAC,

1998; qtd. Frideres 164). One must ask, where are the other 82% of 18 to 24 year-old Aboriginal people? What are they doing? The Government of Canada imposed cutbacks on Aboriginal education in 1989 (York 51-52, 260-261), yet this is not the answer or excuse. The other 82% are definitely not in English literature classes. They are not in *any* classes. Have the Native Access programs, begun in the 1990's, failed us?

The decolonization of education is particularly necessary in English literature studies, which provide definitions of self and social identity. According to Mackay and Myles, English studies have failed us miserably, chiefly due to a "dearth of reading activity at home, the dominance of television for recreation, and inadequate or non-existent library facilities on some reserves" (163). Most Aboriginal students would rather read Silent Words than Shakespeare. However it has been difficult to get our books published or our writers recognized. As a result there is a great lack of Aboriginal English professors and Aboriginal literature courses that would be able to help our youth and communities retain cultural values. If this lack were filled, education could become culturally appropriate for Aboriginal students.

Since racism is often unconscious in educational and social institutions, there has been a call for respect as well as ethical research practices in education. For this thesis, literary study is the area that requires transformation. The high dropout rate among Aboriginal university students is a direct effect of non-Aboriginal education for assimilation. Hampton states that "the failure of non-Native education of Natives can be read as the success of Native resistance to cultural, spiritual, and psychological genocide. [. . .] Fortunately, other meanings are possible" (7). Aboriginal students would like to learn about themselves, just as non-Aboriginal students do; however in order for this to happen there must be a decolonization process in Aboriginal education. Possible "other meanings" include transformation of literary studies, requiring an "inside" approach to Aboriginal writing, words, literature, and youth.

The loss of cultural role models in education, Swan notes, has also created social disharmony and dysfunction. Indigenous people do have their own literary, historical, and educational role models; however these are still "invisible" to dominant institutions. Ruffo's implication is that there must be an academic response to the realities that have been created for Native North

Americans. Swan contends that it is the responsibility of every Aboriginal person to ensure that this happens (55). For literature study, such a response will have to incorporate sociopolitical realities, traditional teachings, relevance of youth, and Aboriginal pedagogy. If this does not happen, the current reality will not change. As Ruffo indicates, "it is a reality that for the most part is still unheard and unheeded in a country whose first inhabitants are but a mere afterthought, an anachronism to be dealt with at best" (110).

The third world conditions faced by Indigenous youth are all too obvious in the novels studied in this thesis. Forced to live under colonial conditions, the youths in Ravensong, Slash, and Silent Words struggle to find their identity amidst shifting cultural expectations. For Stacey, the people in "White Town" cannot see Aboriginal realities, as neither can her school friends, notably a non-Aboriginal peer named Steve. For Tommy, solutions are eventually realized as non-Aboriginal people begin to support Aboriginal struggles and causes through spiritual and political action towards the end of the novel. For Danny, cultural identity and self-esteem are developed through his connection to the land and to teachings from Elders and caring community members.

The inclusion of the perspectives of Aboriginal youth and Aboriginal education is of great concern to Aboriginal communities. The Nishnabe-Aski Nation Youth Suicide Prevention Conference held in Thunder Bay on January 25-27, 2000, was a response to skyrocketing suicide rates in northern Ontario Aboriginal communities. Team Work Sessions agreed that solutions are found in the teachings of traditional Elders:

> Elders play a vital role in the education of youth. [. . .] Youth workshops, focussing on self-esteem, traditional skills, (hunting, trapping, fishing, and survival skills using modern technology) have increased youth awareness [. . .] Youth must have opportunities to learn about their cultural history, including the history of oppression and colonization [. . .]. Communities must create opportunities for Elders and youth to join together, to bridge the generation gap and give young people insight into traditional ways. One aspect of this is the need for youth to learn their languages of origin, since culture is most effectively transmitted in First Languages, not English. (Summary of Team Work Sessions 1-4)

These solutions are clearly apprehended by the youth protagonists in Silent Words, Ravensong, and Slash, all of whom gain self-esteem and cultural identity through Elder instruction.

Involvement with Aboriginal education should entail that non-Aboriginal researchers, who are concerned with Aboriginal youth and the stories surrounding them, address insider/outsider

problematics in research and education. There is the need for individuals who will bridge cultures. But as the quote from Armstrong's essay that began this chapter points out, such bridging requires non-Aboriginal Canadians to step out of their "outsider" position and to comprehend the situations facing Aboriginal communities. This appears to have been accomplished in the case of British-Canadian journalist Geoffrey York, who provides a meaningful example of a responsible non-Aboriginal approach. The former *Globe and Mail* Winnipeg bureau chief has written a "classic" work on Aboriginal realities. Although his writing is a sociological rather than a literary analysis, his approach is one that, if applied to English literature studies, would answer Armstrong's challenge. York feels that:

> Canadians know that the early settlers and governments took land from Indians, but it is easy to feel detached from those events of long ago. It is more difficult to deny responsibility for the misguided policies of the twentieth century. And so the ugly events of recent history are buried behind a wall of illusion -- the illusion that progressive thinking and improved attitudes have brought fair treatment for Canada's native people. (xiii)

York writes from the perspective of being "inside" Aboriginal communities and, like some Aboriginal political leaders, in his research he compares Canada's treatment of Indigenous people to the apartheid system practiced in South Africa. His concern for Indigenous community, sociopolitical realities, traditional values, and Aboriginal youth are very "Indian." One wonders if York was aware of the sacred power of his words?

York conducted a lengthy, in-depth investigation of the Peguis First Nation in Manitoba, as well as of other Aboriginal communities across Canada in 1987-89. He could not deny his government's attempts to annihilate Aboriginal cultures. He uncovered "evidence that the South African government had studied Canada's system of Indian administration in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. [. . .] South African officials may have used the Canadian Indian reserves as a model for the South African policy of apartheid" (241). York also conducted much research into the social, cultural, economic, and political history of the Peguis First Nation. He established communication with local chief Louis Stevenson and discovered the denial of basic human rights to Aboriginal people in Canada, a denial that is, for the most part, unknown to non-Aboriginal Canadians. In York's eyes, "the aboriginal people of Canada, like the blacks of South Africa, have always been ignored by the official institutions of their society. It is a peculiar state of

invisibility" (278). His writing is from an ethically responsible "insider" position that not only avoids discrimination, but actively serves to bring a political focus on Aboriginal issues to the international arena. Armstrong has called for this exact same approach to be applied to literary studies. Will the challenge be answered?

Transformation to an "insider" position entails the importance of including Indigenous perspectives in a circular dialogue. A circular dialogue is a forum that incorporates pluralism and diverse ways of knowing. Armstrong notes that "the circular dialogue format also creates a consensus building which is collaborative in the outcome" (qtd. in Marsden 10). The necessity for this approach cannot be understated in light of the current effects of assimilation in Aboriginal education. Terminologies and jargon created by and for an exclusive academic elite ignore Aboriginal realities and Aboriginal conceptions of literature and cultural practice. These contrast with the many conceptions of Indigenous culture that have to be translated from the First Nation language if possible, although many such concepts are difficult to translate. Knowledge of the Indigenous language in question would be a great help to gain "insider" experience of culture, since this is how culture is most successfully conveyed and perpetuated. Swan notes that there is "the need for educators to learn the social traditions, norms, values, and patterns of each community" (57). Learning an Indigenous language is vital to youth and community as well as to cultural survival.

Control over one's identity is a key theme in the three novels studied here, where each of the characters undergoes inner conflict resulting from assimilation and identity loss. Such damaging effects are overcome by each of them through identification with their culture and traditional values. The youth in these novels, as seen in these characters, seek a voice and a position in Aboriginal education. The novels also demonstrate how the Aboriginal voice is a "new" voice to Canada, still unaccepted in many of the dominant society's institutions. Aboriginal literature and its study, in a transformed perspective, can fulfill the need for Aboriginal voice. While the struggle for cultural survival in the face of continuing cultural genocide is a uniting force for Indigenous people, literature and the creative act have been identified as keys in ensuring a culture's durability. Here we return to the sacred, political power of words and literature. Anishnabe theorist

Kateri Damm asserts that "in terms of our roles as Indigenous writers, part of our cultural survival in the future depends on our ability to re-focus our attentions creatively and artistically" (23).

An "ecological" perspective, one that advocates harmony, coexistence, and balance, as well as an awareness of community, is what traditional Indigenous peoples have stubbornly held onto in the face of genocide and imperialism. However, self-determination is a large part of this struggle, as there must also be the ability to name our own issues with regards to Indigenous literary studies. According to Metis/Saulteaux scholar Janice Acoose, "for many indigenous writers, the act of writing thus becomes an act of resistance, an act of re-empowerment [. . .]. Indigenous peoples in Canada tenaciously clung to our cultures, our way of seeing, being, and doing" (33, 35). For Brant, "*telling the truth for ourselves* [is] a novel idea to be sure and one that is essential to the nurturance of new voices in our communities" (13). New ways of seeing, Aboriginal "insider" perspectives, can provide for an enriched understanding, and for empowerment of, these new voices and their contemporary role.

However, these ways of seeing often do not fit into Western educational perspectives. In many ways they are diametrically opposed. One part of a traditional Indigenous perspective that is oppositional to Western viewpoints is the apprehension and respect for other-than-human beings. Traditional teachers feel that human beings can learn non-dominant, non-abusive relationships through respectful relations with all other life forms in a network of individual, interpersonal, and community values that teach respect. Danny, the protagonist in Silent Words, achieves all of his learning of respect and reciprocity and community values through this way. This is quite a "new" area that is in opposition with traditional Western values based on exploitation or domination. As scholar Jim Cheney explains, "epistemologies of domination and control exemplify a highly attenuated form of trust with respect to the nonhuman world, treating it as less-than-human rather than more-than-human. These epistemologies live in a world in which the other-than-human in fact is less-than-human" ("Tricksters" 13). Interdisciplinarity in literature studies could help to develop this area. Many other disciplines have already transformed and have developed this direction.

Furthermore, such Indigenous wisdom is mostly ignored or even denounced when explored by conventional literary criticism. Ecocritic Dominic Head states that "the need to imagine 'nonhuman agents as bonafide partners' is "an apparent mysticism which may actually be another instance of weak anthropocentrism" (33-34). Here one can observe the antipodal worlds of two seemingly opposing value systems. Traditional Aboriginal world views and literature are valuable to the cultural survival and the mental health of Aboriginal people, and even all people and all life, but have yet to be accepted by the majority of non-Aboriginal people. Giving voice to an other-than-human subject, or the land (and hence Indigenous peoples themselves), has been described as "a radical challenge to existing practices, especially in the [literary] fields of novel production and reception" (Head 34). This challenge, one that may benefit all, hitherto has not been encouraged but rather, has been either discarded at worst or ghettoized at best.

Ecocriticism should include Indigenous thought in literary studies in a major way. Ecocritics, scholar Cheryl Glotfelty states, should be asking "what cross-fertilization is possible between literary studies and environmental discourse in related disciplines such as history, philosophy, psychology, art history, and ethics?" (xix). Interdisciplinarity is only beginning to be realized in literary criticism that has, for the most part, not yet expanded to include Indigenous ecocriticism, which, "as a theoretical discourse, [. . .] negotiates between the human and the nonhuman" (xix). Interestingly, the voices in Aboriginal literature -- ignored, "invisible" people who have been defying colonization for over 500 years -- do include such discourse in their continued active resistance to colonization. The connection between contemporary ecocide and genocide is vividly apparent in the character Tommy in Slash, whose political struggles often involve an overlapping of both areas. The urgency with regards to these issues and the present global crisis is made evident through this character's apprehension of the nature of colonizing impulses. Activism and cultural strength provide the necessary impetus for Tommy to confront his own personal values as well as the exploitation of his external world. To confront ecocide through ecocriticism would be to confront genocide and Indigenous peoples in a responsible, community- or nation-based approach.

Because this has not yet occurred to a large degree, much of English literature study has been identified as an alienating practice for Aboriginal peoples. An "outsider" approach has been identified as functional in much contemporary literary theory. According to Lee Maracle, literary theory, with its confusing jargon and scientific analyses of words has only succeeded in producing dispassionate, dehumanized dialogues -- and this may be to blame for the inadequacy of much theory in connecting with Indigenous realities that are based on the sacredness of words and life: "what is the point of presenting the human condition in a language separate from the human experience: passion, emotion, and character?" ("Oratory" 89). The problem of inclusion in literary theory is a matter of colonial power relations that have yet to be resolved:

> For Native people, the ridiculousness of European academic notions of theoretical assumptions lies in the inherent hierarchy retained by academics, politicians, law makers, and law keepers. Power resides with the theorists so long as they use language no one understands. In order to gain the right to theorize, one must attend their institutions for many years, learn this other language, and unlearn our feeling for the human condition. Bizarre. ("Oratory" 90)

In order to escape from literary colonization, there must be a new framework in which all people can discuss Aboriginal literature. Anishnabe author/journalist Richard Wagamese shares this opinion, that "channels clogged with jargon need to be opened and communication based on accessible human terms needs to be established" (The Terrible Summer 80).

Native literature read through Eurocentric perspectives, even through the most promising areas of literary theory, has been rightly criticized by Native scholars. Theories such as "post-colonialism" often exclude traditional Indigenous teachings as well as contemporary community realities from discussion, thereby perpetuating the erasure of the Indigenous voice. Moreover, Aboriginal people in Canada currently do not possess the power to name or define their own realities in the literary academic sphere. It is highly doubtful that any Native person concocted the field of "post-colonial" as a means by which they would endeavour to study their own people who are still suffering from colonist domination. Many Aboriginal writers have elaborated on reasons why "post-colonial" is an inadequate term. Damm has commented that "'Who we are' has been constructed and defined by Others to the extent that at times we too no longer know who we are.

The resulting confusion, uncertainty, low self-esteem and/or need to assert control over identity are just some of the damaging effects of colonization" (11).

The "post-colonial" area of study is another that has become problematic to Indigenous scholars and academics who claim that it contains little if no value at all to the peoples being studied. As Linda Tuhiwai-Smith states:

> there is...., among indigenous academics, the sneaking suspicion that the fashion of post-colonialism has become a strategy for reinscribing or reauthorizing the privileges of non-indigenous academics because the field of "post-colonial" discourse has been defined in ways which can still leave out indigenous peoples, our ways of knowing and our current concerns. (24)

Even non-Indigenous scholars have acknowledged the limitations of this field. It has been described as ethically irresponsible, with theories that can be "useless, arrogant, disrespectful, ignorant, ethnocentric, imperialistic. Very often there is a logic of domination at work in the theorizing of the Other" (Cheney, "Environmental Etiquette" 112). If this area could be transformed to include Indigenous conceptual frameworks, then the problem could be overcome. If not, it will continue to be a largely alienating experience. Indeed, the continued use of the label "post-colonial" itself is an act that ignores the pressing contemporary realities of Aboriginal peoples in Canada, who are still forced to live under heavily colonial conditions.

Aboriginal author/scholar Thomas King explains that the term "postcolonial" is a colonial term, "an act of imperialism" (248) that "reeks of unabashed ethnocentrism and well-meaning dismissal" (242), and that despite its aims to promote diversity, "postcolonial" study is writing that "effectively cuts us off from our traditions, traditions that were in place before colonialism ever became a question" (243). If the Aboriginal literary forum became accountable to Aboriginal communities, with terminology and discourse that give agency to Aboriginal people, then this problem could be solved. Maracle asserts that "post-colonialism presumes that we have resolved the colonial condition, at least in the field of literature. Even here we are still a classic colony. Our words, our sense and use of language are not judged by the standards set by the poetry and stories we create. They are judged by the standards set by others" ("The 'Post-Colonial' Imagination" 13). What is needed clearly is a truly "post-colonial" literary theory that emerges from Native culture's own literary paradigms, which "post-colonialism" does not yet provide.

To construct a dichotomy of "otherness" between colonizer and colonized would go against the traditional Indigenous conception that all people have contributions to make towards the construction of knowledge in the advancement of universally applicable ideas that promote a world where all may coexist, no matter how diverse the concepts. It must be remembered that the Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal relationship was not created by Aboriginal people, nor do they benefit from it in the current colonial treatment of them as aliens on their own home soil. Aboriginal people did not sail to Europe, claim land, and appropriate thought and literature. Yet they now must struggle for balance and equality in a dichotomy that is not of their making. Non-Aboriginal Canadians are not required to endure such a struggle. The "post-colonial" world is actually an illusion created and perpetuated by the dominant society, one that must be exposed as such. It is a "promise" that has not been granted. According to Alfred, "our reserves are still poor, our governments are still divided and powerless, and our people still suffer. The post-colonial promises cannot ease this pain" (xiii).

One answer to this problem can be found in the transformation of literary studies for Aboriginal people. Anishnabe scholar Kimberly Blaeser has promoted "a search for a way to approach Native literature from an indigenous cultural context, a way to frame and enact a tribal-centred criticism [. . .] rather than an external critical voice and method which seeks to penetrate, appropriate, colonize or conquer the cultural center, and thereby, change the stories or remake the literary meaning" ("Native Literature" 53). Perhaps, considering the role and function of transformation in Native cultures and ceremonies, this solution is not surprising. According to Blaeser, "we should neither "ignore" the knowledge/power relations inherent in literary theory and canon formation nor merely "resist" them; we must "transform" them" ("Native Literature" 55).

In my thesis, an "alternative" view or conceptual foundation comes directly out of the study of Native literature from a traditional perspective -- the Windigo impulse exhibited by human beings and taught through traditional stories. In my study, the reader's responsibility remains central as does necessary action to counteract the Windigo impulse. "Transformation" is not simply a term that means "change." It also entails, as Maracle states, that "you become the trickster, the architect of great social transformation at whatever level you choose" ("Preface" 13). It implies

activism, the sacred power of words, healing, community, youth, sociopolitical realities, traditional thought, and, as Brant's definition states, "the act of changing the function or condition of" (44). The level of Maracle's "social architecture" chosen here is that of English literature study. We need to change the function and condition of Aboriginal literature study. Power relations must be transformed so that Aboriginal people can assert definitions of their own identity. Brant notes that this is "*not* a reaction to colonialism [;] it is an active and new way to tell the stories we have always told" (40). The Windigo is one such story and teaching that has always been told.

Therefore, rather than project Western thought onto Indigenous literature, this thesis enacts a revolutionary methodology that is Indigenous at its base:

> What can be said on behalf of this method, at least, is that it does not treat Indigenous thought as sets of artifacts to be filed away. It treats that thought as vitally alive. It invites dialogue. And, with its emphasis on differences that at the same time speak to contemporary Western thought, it opens the door for the revolutionary impact of Indigenous thought on Western philosophy. (Cheney, Tricksters" 1)

In a study such as this, Western hegemony is recognized and cautioned against while a call for the "revolution" in thought that Indigenous thinking creates is promoted in an active, inclusionary stance. Through culturally appropriate education, "educators become active learners of the traditional teaching patterns" (Swan 49), and as Swan calls them, "active participants in changing the educational scene by reflecting on the curricula and its approaches" (51).

Others, such as scholar Renate Eigenbrod, have advanced the idea that the role of the non-Native critic in "post-colonial" studies would be to acknowledge "responsibility as a key notion" ("Can 'The Subaltern' Speak?'" 97). If the "post-colonial" critic were to align him or herself with the "subaltern," or Native critical voices, then he/she would contribute "to a circular organization of scholarly literary work in which equality of all voices is guaranteed" ("Can 'The Subaltern' Speak?'" 98). Here, the non-Native would "join as an ally," inviting dialogue rather than participating in hegemonic discourse. Eigenbrod also mentions the need for "moral accountability," "responsible scholarship," and "the need to personalize literary criticism" ("Can 'The Subaltern' Speak?" 99). In this way, the whole privileged space requires transformation, or as Eigenbrod proposes, "restructuring." Swan refers to this process as one where "non-Aboriginal

educators would benefit from learning the Aboriginal modelling approach from community members and apply it, in and out of their classrooms" (57).

The inclusion of the Aboriginal voice in the classroom and in the lecture hall, in seminars and in workshops, in term papers and in thesis topics, should be developed with respect to specific community and tribal concerns. The inclusion of traditional stories and beliefs would ensure that there is a place for Aboriginal people in contemporary literary study. Blaeser notes that "we must first "know the stories of our people" and then 'make our own story too' [. . .]. We must 'be aware of the way they change the stories we already know' for only with that awareness can we protect the integrity of the Native American story. One way to safeguard that integrity is by asserting a critical voice that comes from within that tribal story itself" ("Native Literature" 61). There is healing and transformation inherent in Indigenous tradition when it is applied to Indigenous literature, and this does have the potential to be very political as it involves the study of human oppression in all of its forms. One needs to be aware of the sacred power of words, the maintenance of traditions, the responsibility of the writer, the importance of community, the relevance of youth, and of current sociopolitical realities. Therein lies one form of transformation through a solution, that of Aboriginal literary self-determination. One way that this solution may be accomplished is through not only hearing, but also listening to, the voice of the Windigo storyteller.

CHAPTER TWO - The Windigo

> Nana'b'oozoo is a manitou, but even manitous, as our ancestors believed, were bound by human needs and passions and by physical laws of the world. The instant that he heard of the abuse of his people by the Weendigo, Nana'b'oozoo left his home and village to avenge his tribal brothers and sisters. When he got to the Weendigo's camp, Nana'b'oozoo dared the enemy warriors to battle, but, on seeing the evil aspect of the manitous and their number, ran in terror for his own life. With winter coming on, the tribe's stock of food would not carry the people through the winter, and Nana'b'oozoo counselled rationing and sharing the meagre supply. But secretly Nana'b'oozoo had no intention of sharing his food. Later, all Nana'b'oozoo found was a pile of dried fungi where he had stored his own meats. For the rest of the winter, until the first berries ripened in spring, Nana'b'oozoo was forced to eat dried berries that he found still clinging to trees. -- Basil Johnston, Anishnabe ("How Do We Learn Language?" 48-49)

This small section of a story is an excerpt from a presentation given by Anishnabe author/storyteller Basil Johnston. In it we see two major figures in Anishnabe oral tradition acting out an impulse that is both contrary and dangerous to the traditional sense of community, an impulse known as Windigo (spelled "Weendigo" in Johnson's story or "Wetigo" in Cree). As with all oral stories, the community was meant to apply this story to their own individual situations, learning how to behave respectfully. It is significant that even Nana'b'oozoo, the Anishnabe "culture-hero," cannot always overcome the powerful Windigo impulse. And yet, this thesis is not about Nana'b'oozoo per se, but about the manifestation of Windigo and its effects. This chapter describes the driving force of the Windigo and the importance of restoring balance to human life, showing its relationship to Indigenous land, community, culture, individuals, and literature study.

The Windigo is described in traditional narratives, and also by contemporary storytellers such as Johnston, as an ever-hungry and constantly growing entity that feeds on everything it can. It is a creature whose attributes are strikingly similar to the institution of capitalism:

> As the Weendigo ate, it grew, and as it grew so did its hunger, so that no matter how much it ate, its hunger always remained in proportion to its size. The Weendigo could never requite either its unnatural lust for human flesh or its unnatural appetite. It could never stop as animals do when bloated, unable to ingest another morsel, or sense as humans sense that enough is enough for the present. For the unfortunate Weendigo, the more it ate, the bigger it grew; and the bigger it grew, the more it wanted and needed. (Johnston, The Manitous 222)

It is interesting to note that in the Western Hemisphere, our capitalist, industrial civilization has grown in much the same manner. The concept of "Windigo" thus fits in quite well in a discussion of Aboriginal response to the current global crisis, and indicates the need for increased attention to morals and ethics found in Indigenous literature and traditional stories. For not only is the

Windigo grotesque in appearance and of enormous size, but it is "a being devoid of any personality, larger than life, having an enormous head and having gigantic teeth in a twisted mouth. Within the malformed body lies a heart of ice" (Asikinack 4-5). Quite simply, the Windigo is an awareness of the inhuman, or rather the large inhuman appetite that exists as contrary to community. Johnston asserts that an awareness of this contrasting human capacity, an awareness of human nature in general, leads to harmony and the survival of communities. This is an "environmental ethic" that is communicated in traditional stories, and in the later chapters of this thesis we will see this community awareness extended through contemporary novels.

Some studies have pointed toward a creation/destruction duality: "wihtikow [Wetigo] was the proper name of a single evil deity conceptually opposed to the benign creator being Kihcimanitow in a dualistic cosmology" (Brown & Brightman 160). This approach comes close to a God-Creator/Satan-Windigo duality, and is but one example of a non-Aboriginal misrepresentation of Aboriginal culture. It was easiest for Europeans to single the Windigo out as the "Devil" of North American Native culture, since that was already a familiar concept. Nevertheless, no good/evil duality existed on the continent prior to contact with Europeans. In the traditional Indigenous world view, all things are necessary, and all have a part in the totality of existence.

As the word "Windigo" was misunderstood and misinterpreted by non-Native scholars who lacked knowledge of Indigenous cultures from the "inside," it was not applied in relation to sociopolitical contexts and realities, or to Aboriginal community. Non-Native scholars have misinterpreted it as merely a "cannibal." Although in narratives the creature could take on the form of a cannibalistic demon, Anishnabe scholar William Asikinack indicates that it could also be described as any "personality which expresses itself in contrary ways to the norms of Anishinabe society" (4). In his description of oral narratives, Asikinack offers the Anishnabe meaning of the word: it "refers to a person who is engrossed in him/her self, by being self-engrossed is selfish to excessive extremes, and by being selfish will become monstrous in respect to the norms of a sharing society" (5). A Windigo could then be perceived as alive in any person who, like Nana'b'oozoo in Johnston's little tale, is absorbed by material self-interests, the accumulation of personal wealth at the expense of others, or any pursuit that has the potential to endanger the

well-being of the community. Johnston offers the view that the word "may be derived from *ween dagoh*, which means "solely for self," or from *weenin n'd'igooh*, which means "fat" or "excess" (The Manitous 222).

Jack Forbes has conducted a study of the Windigo impulse as the central problem in human life today. This impulse that human beings exhibit, he argues, is a human "disease" that involves pettiness and the oppression of people:

> I call it cannibalism, and I shall try to explain why. But whatever we call it, this disease, this wetiko (cannibal) psychosis, it is the greatest epidemic sickness known to man. The rape of a woman, the rape of a land, and the rape of a people, they are all the same. And they are the same as the rape of the earth, the rape of the rivers, the rape of the forest, the rape of the air, the rape of the animals. (10)

In examining this human "psychosis," Forbes investigates the nature of early European explorers and their mandate of genocide, greed, deception, brutality, materialism, corruption, colonization, and imperialism over Indigenous lands and peoples. Prior to contact with these explorers, Indigenous people, through their awareness of necessary respect and relationships with community and other-than-human persons, had been striving to live in harmony, justice, and compassion, in a life free of human pettiness. "The Indian, born of the land, had no need to own or control it because there is no ownership of something of which you are an active part" (Wagamese, The Terrible Summer 36). They lived in inter-communal, inter-national relationships where individual freedom was a reality in community. The Windigo did exist in their lives, but was constantly cautioned against through stories such as the one at the beginning of this chapter. Europeans are regarded as "infected" people who imported the full-blown "disease" to the Western Hemisphere through colonization. Connection to the land and to other-than-human beings as family relations rather than resources enabled Indigenous people to maintain cultures as long as they could.

Connection to the land is an important tenet in traditional Indigenous thought. The land is actually a family member, the Mother who gives life to the people. The absence of control over the land is a central difference between Western and Indigenous thinking, as Richard Wagamese explains: "the white man has always believed that something that can't be controlled is wild. The Indians who sought to live in harmony with all things simply believed that all things were free"

(The Terrible Summer 35). Contact with this Indigenous world view, of course, changed European life forever. Both cultures were affected immeasurably as land ownership became an issue that extends to this day.

After contact, the Windigo impulse began to contaminate Indigenous lifestyles and world views as traditional ways were slowly abandoned and the land, their mother, was expropriated from Indigenous people. Indigenous people ceased to be a part of the land. A large part of their identity was stripped away. Western-style social and political organization absorbed Indigenous land and cultures thorough Windigo control and colonization. According to Taiaiake Alfred, Western political values are fundamentally different from Indigenous political values: "traditional indigenous nationhood stands in sharp contrast to the dominant understanding of "the state": there is no absolute authority, no coercive enforcement of decisions, no hierarchy, and no separate ruling entity" (56). Indigenous peoples have been, and still are, forced to accept values that are directly opposite to their nature. The Windigo sickness itself is what must be studied in order to regain balance. Dennis McPherson and Douglas Rabb indicate a 1989 anthropological research report focusing on the effects of hydroelectric power development on the Whitesands Anishnabe community in northern Ontario, showing that "in sharp contrast to EuroCanadians [sic], whose prestige is based on the accumulation of wealth, Ojibway foragers acquire prestige through the distribution of wealth" (qtd. in Indian from the Inside 87). There is, therefore, a fundamental difference between traditional Indigenous and Western conceptions of land, community, and human morality. One is fundamentally non-adversarial while the other has simply come along and swallowed it up!

Seeking a cure, Forbes studies and describes the twentieth century from a traditional perspective that is founded upon cognizance of the Windigo disease:

> Many people have examined the subjects of aggression, violence, imperialism, rape, and so on. I propose to do something a little different: first, I propose to examine these things from a Native American perspective; and second, from a perspective as free as possible from assumptions created by the very disease being studied. Finally, I will look at these evils, not simply as "bad" choices that men make, but as a genuine, very real epidemic sickness. Imperialists, rapists, and exploiters are not just people who have strayed down a wrong path. They are insane (unclean) in the true sense of that word. They are mentally ill and, tragically, the form of soul-sickness that they carry is catching. (11)

Rather than stand outside the Indigenous culture and impose alien concepts onto its people, Forbes seeks freedom from Western assumptions, or what have been referred to by McPherson and Rabb as "outside view predicates": "To apply an outside view predicate to yourself is much more than merely seeing yourself as others see you [. . .]. It is in a sense giving up your freedom, your self-determination, to others; becoming what they want you to become rather than becoming what you have it within yourself to become" (Indian from the Inside 21). The loss of control over definition and creation of identity in studies of Aboriginal literature, as we have seen in Chapter One, is one area where power has been lost and Indigenous people have become alienated. This has contributed to colonization immensely, as these scholars indicate how contemporary treaties and legislation imposed upon Indigenous peoples are all, and have always been, outside view predicates founded in domination. In a way, academic self-determination is an attempt to overcome the Windigo imbalance in contemporary education that excludes Indigenous perspectives of the human experience. The Windigo explanation of Aboriginal experience is one path where re-connection to culture can occur so that alienation can be thwarted and ideological freedom can prosper.

Western infatuation with material gain can be viewed as both excessive and selfish, and our society's excesses are indeed monstrous and destructive to the societal norms of traditional Indigenous peoples as well as to all life. Tradition-minded Indigenous peoples consequently think of Western environmental degradation and destruction as contrary to their own values and norms, upon which their lives and cultures are based. The control or oppression of one human being over another is likewise contrary. Thus it would be beneficial to read contemporary Aboriginal social, political, economic, and cultural realities into the Windigo in order to make sense of this teaching. The industrial system, capitalism, materialism, colonialism, and imperialism, all threaten Indigenous peoples, particularly those in the Canadian North, with either extinction or assimilation. These "isms" can all be read as representations of the Windigo from which Nana'b'oozoo attempts to defend his people in Johnston's narrative. All life on the planet is threatened by this human imbalance, and the unfeeling, insatiable, mechanical Windigo is out of control.

On the metaphoric level, then, the parallel between Western industrialism and the Windigo is quite clear. Johnston has described the Windigo as "afflicted with never-ending hunger," because it "could never get enough to eat, it was always on the verge of starvation [. . .] loathsome to behold and [. . .] loathsome in its habits, conduct, and manners" (The Manitous 221). A tradition-minded Indigenous person would indeed view advancing industrial technology with its wreaking of environmental destruction as loathsome, terrifying, and seemingly never-ending. If one is to study the Windigo in this way, it becomes apparent that the impulse for domination or colonization is present in all "isms" known in oppressive relationships, including sexism and racism. It is present in any instance where control over another entity disrupts an initial state of balance and harmony. It is a human disease that must be cured.

Oppositional as "insider" Aboriginal perspectives are to Western traditions, they present a fresh challenge and can lead to healing. As we saw in Chapter One, they must be included in a dialogue in which Western hegemony is not asserted. A sociopolitical interpretation of Windigo from a traditional perspective indicates that this impulse is alive and well in contemporary society. Johnston has offered the view that the Windigo have not died out, but they have simply assumed new forms in our contemporary society:

> They have only been assimilated and reincarnated as corporations, conglomerates, and multinationals. They've even taken on new names, acquired polished manners, and renounced their cravings for raw human flesh in return for more refined viands. But their cupidity is no less insatiable than that of their ancestors. One breed subsists entirely on forests. When this particular breed beheld forests, its collective cupidity was bestirred as it looked on an endless, boundless sea of green. These modern Weendigoes looked into the future and saw money -- cash, bank accounts, interest from investments, profits, in short, wealth beyond belief. (The Manitous 235-236)

Could the Windigo be the ugly, cold, impersonal machines that Aboriginal peoples see, currently destroying immense tracts of their sacred lands and forests in the name of Western culture's insatiable thirst for natural resources? Tommy Kelasket, the protagonist in Slash, appears to be working against forces such as these in social and political movements designed to protect his Okanagan homeland from environmental degradation. Or could the Windigo be the cold, impersonal, concrete institutions erected by colonial bureaucracies in their desire for conquest and control over Indigenous peoples? Here too, Tommy struggles against the BIA

(Bureau of Indian Affairs) in the United States, and DIAND (Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development) in Canada, both of which are institutions that have created the genocidal, colonial conditions in which Aboriginal people have been forced to live. Non-Aboriginal people, as Armstrong's quote at the beginning of Chapter One asserts, need to realize this. They must also come to the realization that if this happens in their own country to Aboriginal people, then it can happen to them just as easily. For a long time now, however, the reality of the Windigo has been absent from discussion in literary studies.

Forbes is highly critical of modern bureaucracies and false democracies that only enhance domination and further colonization. The great human problems of imperialism and exploitation are a centuries-old contagion that is constantly spreading in our own backyard. "The people who rule the world today are, on the whole, highly educated [. . .]. In spite of this, they have given us the most brutal epoch in history and, currently, a collection of military dictatorships, totalitarian societies, racist-exploitative "representative" republics (e.g., South Africa), and resource-gobbling states" (12). Considering the importance of the relationship between Indigenous communities and their land, values, and literature, it is necessary at this point in time to focus a transformed literary conceptual framework on the apprehension of the Windigo impulse and its effects on Aboriginal society and life in Canada. According to Metis scholar Howard Adams,

> We Aboriginals are dying every day in greater numbers than the colonist population because we are the colonized. Starvation is the life of the oppressed; it is as natural to us as sleeping. It is the disease that makes up our life and wipes out our existence. This is the capitalist system [. . .]. This is not the life of some unknown person in some unknown third-world country. This is the life of the Aboriginal in Canada. [. . .] The nation that cheers and applauds its international nature made of humanitarianism, human rights, anti-apartheid, aid to the suffering third-world Native masses. Bullshit -- Canada's a liar. It's hypocritical and two-faced. Look in Canada's back yard, its crimes, inequities and injustices are there to see. Of course, all this is hidden. That is one of the main occupations of Canada's capitalist governments [:] to keep the grisly offences, and ugly injustices hidden from view [,] especially from the international scene. (x)

This reality and awareness of genocide can be easily ascertained through contemporary novels such as the ones studied here.

In the novel Silent Words, Danny Lynx flees from his home in fear of further physical abuse from authority figures such as his stepmother and father. Learning respect through connections to traditional teachings, his case is one where a clear example of countering the effects of Windigo

psychosis can be drawn. Danny relearns, revitalizes, and rediscovers those values that were denied him and his family by assimilation into the dominant society in the town where they live. Danny's family has internalized the effects of colonization. This novel gives specific examples of Anishnabe beliefs and conditions that still exist in many communities in the North. In Ravensong, Stacey's dilemma can be compared to that of many Aboriginal youth who must be exposed to the dominant culture in order to survive. Her connection to community and cultural values is what keeps her strong, as many of her people still cling to traditional ways of knowing. In Slash, Tommy sees the colonization process of his own people and land through assimilation, but also comes to perceive the Windigo as functional in the eyes of his own people: Native leaders who have been co-opted by the dominant culture. In this way, Tommy must endure a "double" colonization.

The allowance and maintenance of sacred relationships based on the interdependence of all beings, against which the Windigo works, is one focal point for Aboriginal literature. Discussion of this basic principle of Indigenous tradition can function as beneficial in decolonizing approaches towards Indigenous people. In order to avoid Windigo, it should not be circumvented in discussions of traditional Indigenous cultural beliefs and literature. The Windigo, simply put, is the antithesis to coexistence, harmony, and balance, and as such it is a human impulse that requires balancing in order to restore harmony. Despite the fact that it is often presented as a contrary that exists in a duality, it must be noted that the Windigo has a place in the natural order of things in the world. Although the Windigo is a dangerous entity, it does perform a didactic function, contributing to the establishment of balance.

A culturally appropriate, traditional Indigenous interpretation of "balance" is one that can be applied to contemporary Indigenous realities in an active, healing way, such as that used by Kanien'kehaka author Beth Brant in her discussion of imbalance and transformation. Her way of seeing "balance" incorporates healing and the act of writing. She places alcohol abuse, which involves Windigo attributes such as overconsumption, self-destruction, violence, and oppression, on the level of "colonization through addiction": "In my stories, as in my life, Creator brings gifts of the natural to 'speak' to these characters. It then becomes a choice to live on the Good Red

Road, or to die the death of being out of balance" (18). Interestingly, those under the control of substance abuse build up a tolerance and progressively require more and more to feed their appetite, just like the Windigo.

Moreover, Brant has used the term "disease" to refer to human racial oppression: "I believe passionately in my people and in our continuing resistance to colonialism and the effects of the disease of racism" (3). Like Forbes, she also makes use of the term "rape" as a descriptor for the exploitative colonial relationship (33), and in her reality as a Two-Spirited Aboriginal woman, she includes multiple oppressions in resisting colonization, such as "racism, sexism and homophobia" (30). Other critics of Slash such as Noel Elizabeth Currie, likewise speak of "racism, sexism, and classism as the by-products of colonialism," noting that this novel gives a "thorough and complex description" of such oppressions (138). To tackle the Windigo is to confront the reality of oppression. Brant thus advocates "the act of taking control over the forces that would destroy us. [. . .] The disease of homophobia [. . .] has devastated my Indian family as surely as smallpox, alcohol, glue-sniffing and tuberculosis" (43-44).

The colonization processes of Aboriginal people, with all of the tactics that have been a part of governmental attempts to assimilate or terminate them, are Windigo. Indigenous North Americans all share the suffering from the effects of what psychologists have coined "residential-school syndrome" (York 37), where generations of children were physically, sexually, and spiritually abused at the hands of Christian churches and government agents who wished to destroy Aboriginal cultures. By the time that the last residential school in Canada closed, in 1988, many Aboriginal people had lost the language and tradition of their communities. The residential school system was, in effect, what Brant would refer to as a "community rape."

As we saw in Chapter One, community is ever-present in the Indigenous mind. Even Nana'b'oozoo, greedy and self-serving as he is, sought to avenge his community from the Windigo. Brant and other traditional thinkers would concur that Aboriginal communities are indeed raped and torn apart by "alcoholism, drug addiction, disrespect for women, incest, suicide, homophobia [;] these evils are the result of the self-loathing that imperialism has forced into our minds" (68-69). Traditional teachers confirm that these colonial attitudes, which were not present

prior to contact with Europeans and are thriving today, must be confronted so that balance can be restored. To achieve balance, Brant suggests that "presenting ourselves to Creator means realigning ourselves within our communities and within ourselves to create balance. Balance will keep us whole" (45).

In Ravensong, the protagonist Stacey is unbalanced, confronted by the assimilation of the people in her community into "white town." Members of her family are aware of the dangers that their community members have to face there thanks to the Windigo impulse by which most of the people in "white town" are possessed. This awareness, as well as an awareness of the cultural values of her community, enables Stacey to become cognizant of how non-Aboriginal people are so different. She even recognizes the Windigo impulse in violent incidents in her own community, as it becomes imported through alcohol and disease. Although she does not name the Windigo, she understands the teachings about community balance. Stacey sees that people in white town have no sense of the values that her community exercises. Aboriginal literature read from this perspective shows contemporary novels as existing in a Windigo society.

As a didactic figure, the Windigo does have its rightful place in the scheme of things, and is described in literary teachings as an entity that would prevent inappropriate behaviour in people, and thereby promote living in a proper manner. As noted earlier, the community is always kept in mind. "These stories were told to prevent the Anishinabe person from hoarding in an excessive way. When one hoards in a sharing society, then that person indirectly 'feeds' off the flesh of her/his fellow human-beings, and in Anishinabe society the concept of feeding off human flesh (cannibalism) was considered an aberration and was dealt with in severe ways" (Asikinack 11). If "Windigo" is to be interpreted as "cannibal," then in this sense one is a cannibal when one overconsumes at the expense of one's fellow human beings. Nana'b'oozoo exhibits perhaps the most dangerous form of cannibalism, since although he professes concern for his community, what he really seeks is to fulfill his self-serving interests. Therefore, in the traditional Indigenous world view, we of Western culture, with our aggression, colonization, oppression, and environmental destruction, all live in a Windigo society and we are all Windigo ourselves. Stacey's mother cries when hearing about how people living in large urban centres simply ignore

the bodies of the dead on sidewalks, walking over them. Indigenous people have argued for many centuries in favour of the need for balance. The framework that has been suggested for a recovery, a return to a state of balance, is that of transformation.

Anishnabe scholar Winona LaDuke speaks of the need for Western culture to transform back to the natural from the synthetic, or "transforming the synthetic reality of a death culture into the natural reality of a culture of life" (vi). Russell Means, like LaDuke, refers to the dominant Western culture as a "death culture" ("Same Old Song" 31). The Windigo stories were told in order to prevent people from succumbing to the selfishness inherent in death culture. Canada, with its high standard of living and abundance of wealth accumulated through the expropriation and colonization of Indigenous lands and peoples, has fallen prey to the Windigo and needs to hear such stories. Canada needs to resist Windigo and restore life to the people on whom it has fed. The reality of Indigenous peoples, the suffering they endure, is no less than the reality of ecocide and the destruction of all other beings and the earth.

There is much to learn about the Windigo from studying "inside" Aboriginal perspectives, as we have seen in Chapter One. The truths and wisdom that youth and community learn are reflections of the speaker's (writer's) sense from inside the community. Scholars such as Johnston elaborate on the great responsibility of the speaker/writer/word-user: "to the old people truth, insofar as a person could know and express it, was sacred. A person who spoke what was within his knowledge was trusted and respected" ("How Do We Learn Language?" 47). This also reflects the importance of traditional teachings and literature for youth, individual, and community: "youth learned from the stories what to expect from life, what was good for the tribe, what for the individual" ("How Do We Learn Language" 48). Not only is the healing power of words, as well as their political significance -- "action and wisdom and accountability" ("How Do We Learn Language?" 50) -- important in the stories, but this healing power is also crucial to Aboriginal literature study. Casting knowledge by means of words through literature and oral stories is evident in the contemporary novels studied here, where the Windigo is but one metaphor of which Indigenous traditions made sense.

The Windigo is not exclusive to specific situations or communities. It can be applicable to any situation at all that involves exploitation or aggression. It will grow to monstrous proportions if not countered by a return to balance. Brant sees balance as occurring when "the legacy of our community rape is being transformed into a new legacy of hope, truth, and self-love" (73). The Windigo is not simply another word for "colonization," but is rather a teaching about colonization. Aboriginal literature is written in a colonial society in which characters feel the effects of colonization. As a metaphor, the Windigo is layered beyond the many areas that are touched upon briefly in this chapter. Of importance to note is the fact that there is room for all people to counteract the Windigo impulse. Traditional Indigenous beliefs are not restricted to a specific race and they are not based on genetic coding but rather, are embodied in a way of life, a way of seeing the world. Through respect for Aboriginal traditions and respect for all life in this world, the Windigo can be defeated in the realization of *real* power. Aboriginal epistemology, literature, and thought will play a key role in this powerful decolonization process of healing. This power, Brant notes, is "not power *over* anything. Power. Power that speaks to hearts as well as minds" (8); the power of respect.

CHAPTER THREE - Silent Words and the Tradition of Respect

> I don't know how to save the world. I don't have the answers or The Answer. I hold no secret knowledge as to how to fix the mistakes of generations past and present. I only know that without compassion and respect for *all* of Earth's inhabitants, none of us will survive -- nor will we deserve to.
>
> The future, our mutual future, the future of all the peoples of humanity, must be founded on respect. Let respect be both the catchword and the watchword of the new millennium we are all now entering together. Just as we want others to respect us, so we need to show respect for others. — Leonard Peltier, Lakota/Anishnabe (201)

The novel Silent Words (1992) by Anishnabe author Ruby Slipperjack offers the reader a view of Indigenous community that functions on the tenets of respect, harmony, and sharing in a lifestyle that conforms with the ways of traditional teachings. We will see that these teachings are the antithesis of the Windigo impulse that was described in Chapter Two. The novel's protagonist is an Anishnabe youth who, while on a quest of self-discovery, learns such teachings from an Elder as well as from the other people whom he encounters in the novel. Respect, one of the Seven Teachings in traditional Anishnabe culture (Alfred 134), is utilized by these teachers as the primary necessity, along with reciprocity, to maintain balanced and healthy communities. This chapter will show how such teachings make a difference, contributing to transformation. In the process, we will also examine other arguments from Chapter One, such as Indigenous realities, institutions that need to accommodate the Aboriginal voice writing in English, and Aboriginal pedagogy, in particular how youth can find cultural identity through education.

Danny Lynx, the youth in question, has little knowledge of the traditional ways of his people, being raised in the town of Nakina, Ontario. As a result, he becomes vulnerable and is forced to flee family abuse in his household. Danny lives in a space where he is physically abused by a violent stepmother, who encourages his father likewise to take part in the abuse. Danny has no siblings and is quite alone in the world. In Nakina in 1969, there are no opportunities for him to counter the effects of assimilation. He experiences racism from his best friend, who calls him a "stupid Injun" (9) and by the boys in the town who spit upon him and beat him up (1-2). After he runs away, however, the possibilities for understanding the necessity of community, respect for all people and other-than-human people, as well as the virtues of sharing and caring become

available to him. This is achieved mainly through his exposure to traditional ways of life through experiential learning, and "modelling" shown to him by an Elder named Ol' Jim. Ironically, Danny, who is also the novel's narrator, is more vulnerable at home than he is while traveling. However, while traveling he is initially quite afraid of oppression of any kind, and is constantly running away from Windigo sickness he sees in the world.

The novel's plot follows Danny's escape from Nakina on a train to the town of Armstrong, where an Anishnabe family feeds him. He then leaves in a boxcar only to end up on the railway tracks, and then the community of Jacobs. Another Anishnabe family takes him in; Charlie, the father, takes him fishing. Danny then leaves to find his mother in the town of Savant Lake. However, instead of finding his mother he befriends an elderly Anishnabe couple who teach him much in the way of traditional learning and values. Again, he must leave to find his mother in the community of Collins, but instead only befriends another Anishnabe family that consists of a boy named Henry and his father Jim, with whom he stays and from whom he learns. A young man named Billy adds to this "family." Danny lives in Collins for weeks until he accidentally sets fire to Billy's cabin and flees, fearing the blame. Fortunately, on the tracks he meets up with Ol' Jim, with whom he stays and learns many lessons over the summer, traveling by canoe through Smoothrock Lake, Whitewater Lake, and Best Island. In the novel's concluding chapters Danny travels back to Collins where he once again stays with Henry, Jim, and Billy, and then on Ol' Jim's winter trapline.

This novel places great emphasis on the establishment of cultural identity, which Danny does not possess at the start. Renate Eigenbrod suggests that the establishment of identity becomes necessary as a result of colonial abuse: "displacement and abuse, often traumata in the lives of colonized peoples, make it even more necessary for him to tell his story in order to establish a sense of identity" ("Reading Indigenity" 79). Storytelling, or word-use, does have a definite function in Indigenous culture, as seen in Danny's telling. The restoration of his identity enables Danny to ascertain traditional values such as respect. The novel conveys this material successfully by following him on his search for culture and identity, although he had started out

on a search for his mother. The lessons he learns from Ol' Jim succeed in countering the effects of assimilation.

The importance of such lessons with respect to cultural identity in Aboriginal literature cannot be underestimated. According to Apache philosopher Viola Cordova: "The Native American gives voice not only to who he is but where he is coming from" (3). Awareness of this positioning of voice and establishment of identity can enable the reader to view the novel with sensitivity toward the contemporary realities that have been imposed upon displaced Indigenous people. For example, scholar Dee Horne asserts that through land dispossession, Danny's father has "experienced social and personal alienation as well as spiritual impoverishment" (124). Abused in turn, Danny embarks on a healing journey that confronts Windigo disease through identity construction and spiritual renewal. He does acknowledge "how gentle and happy my father was when we were in the bush. Then when we moved to the reserve, he was never home. When he did come home, he was always irritable and angry [. . .]. Then we moved to town. Things got worse. [. . .] I didn't think it was my own father any more" (95). Danny's father had become imbalanced, infected by Windigo sickness through forced alienation from his cultural values. The dispossession of Indigenous people from their land and the effects of displacement onto reserves are obvious results of Windigo control. Geoffrey York's studies from inside communities show how alcohol and inhalant abuse, violence, and other social conditions in northern communities are caused by cultural upheaval:

> Economic influence of the outsiders has forced an ethnic group to move to foreign place, or it has surrounded and besieged the indigenous culture, destroying the traditional economy and social harmony. In each case, members of the minority group are stripped of their identity and their traditional way of life, and they descend into a pattern of self-destructive behaviour. [. . .] The Cree of Shamattawa suffered the trauma of a sudden dislocation. Their traditional culture was virtually destroyed and replaced by a new culture of dependency, and they lost the ability to control their fate. Foreign institutions took control of their education, their justice system, and their way of life. (16)

York notes that these conditions cannot be overcome through therapy or financial compensation alone. Self-esteem can only be regained through cultural renewal.

Aboriginal youth such as Danny, who are searching for identity and balance, can respond to contemporary realities caused by dislocation by realizing that they have an important role and a responsibility in their culture. He learns this from being fed and sheltered unconditionally in various communities: "without question, she handed me a bowl with a smile" (31). He also learns this through the old people that he meets and their awareness and dedication to community: "every child is my grandchild" (31). In his travels among these northern communities, Danny is lucky enough to experience traditions of sharing and caring that have survived.

In Chapter Six, he befriends and takes up residence with two elderly Native people in the town of Savant Lake, doing household chores for them in return for room and board -- in their world where clocks and calendars are non-existent. The first teaching with regards to colonization that he receives in the novel is from the old man, whom he refers to as "Mr. Old Indian": "To honour da Eart, boy, is you mus' un'erstan dat it is alibe. Da men wit da machines are like lice dat feed on da libin' scalp o' Mudder Eart'" (55). This image of human beings with their environmentally destructive, disrespectful machines as "lice" feeding on an alive planet Earth is one that comes very close to the concept of the Windigo explained here in Chapter Two. Although the Windigo itself is not mentioned in the novel, this imagery includes indications of the need for social change or transformation:

> Today, man is bery much use' to da manmade tings dat dey know nuttin else. Dey are born in a manmade place, an dey die in a manmade place. You mus' un'erstan dese tings, boy. We are da chil'en of da Eart. [. . .] Da chile of da Eart is someone o' as learnt dat da ting dat gib em life is da groun' dey walk on. It is da groun' dat gib all life, an all life reach up to da sun. We 'ab da knowledge to talk to an un'erstan da Creator, an we 'ab da knowledge to lead da res' of da worl' to peace an 'eal da sufferin Eart'. (56)

This passage also explicates a traditional understanding of Aboriginal peoples' place in the global "family," and the importance of such contributions. Horne views this as a teaching that "all human beings are part of the web of creation and, like 'da leaf,' follow the natural cycle from birth to death" (129). For Danny, such knowledge builds both identity and self-esteem in that he is better able to envision a place for himself in the larger web of creation, the entire external world.

The realistic dialogue in passages such as this enhances the distinct voice of this novel. The non-standard English dialect that is used signifies a non-assimilationalist point of view -- a literary voice that better describes Indigenous reality. Metis scholar Emma Larocque refers to a "power struggle between the oral and the written, between the Native in us and the English" (qtd. in "Writing Voices Speaking" 60). Through this different language and communication, Danny learns how to apprehend the silences that lie between spoken words. In the cadence, the repetition, and the slow savouring of the knowledge in Mr. Old Indian's speech, a sense of another reality emerges. Horne notes that "throughout the text, dialect validates Ojibway variants and offers an alternative discourse, one that writes over colonial language and foregrounds Danny's Ojibway culture" (129). The novel is thus an "inside" reflection of Anishnabe community in that it does not conform to "outsider" English language limitations. It is a resistance to dominant language structures in English, what Kimberly Blaeser refers to as "writing the voices" of Native peoples: "Native writers have learned to use the literary forum to their own ends" ("Writing Voices Speaking" 58). Also, the language is significant in that it is an expression of Indigenous traditions that are, by nature, non-aggressive and non-coercive. The tradition of respect is apparent in interpersonal communication. The whole "language of silence" that Danny learns from the Old Indian couple and later from Ol' Jim is "non-intrusive, non-directive, and non-authoritarian" (Horne 128).

The idea that the Earth is alive and is suffering from human exploitation is widespread among traditional Indigenous people who have attempted as best they can to resist assimilation into what they perceive as a Windigo society controlled by disrespect. The notion that they, as "children of the Earth," can lead the way to spiritual enlightenment for the rest of humanity is also one that is being proposed to mainstream culture. Far from being stereotypical "noble savages," Aboriginal people possess a profound insight into human nature. This novel is therefore an extension of the insight once gleaned from traditional stories, and displays the importance of Indigenous thought through the words of Mr. Old Indian. Bowerbank and Wawia identify the novel as a work that may fit in with suggestions that human beings must become dedicated to the land in order to relearn

respect, coexistence, and balance: "[Slipperjack's] novels celebrate the distinctness of knowing and caring for one specific place; one's home ground" (225-226).

Mr. Old Indian's words address the Windigo impulse with regards to environmental ethics and the place of traditional Indian ways in contemporary society. What he focuses on is the traditional value of respect and the responsibility of an individual towards community. Like other Aboriginal authors, Slipperjack has translated not only his language, but also what Blaeser indicates as "form, culture, and perspective." She notes that "within their written words, many attempt to continue the life of the oral reality" ("Writing Voices Speaking" 53). Inserted as Mr. Old Indian's words are in the midst of a thunderstorm that is taking place, they serve to jolt both Danny and the reader out of complacency and force us to ponder the meaning of human beings who have lost their connection with the Earth in the modern destructive age in which we live, an age where oppressed traditional Indian people still maintain respect for sacred relationships. This jolting into awareness is one effect that the oral reality has as an expression of Indigenous perception. Danny becomes dumfounded by the power of Mr. Old Indian's words, which are addressed to an imaginary audience of, perhaps, Windigo:

> Who are you! Da people who poison da air! Who are you dat poison da ribers an lakes! You people who dig deep into da guts of our Mudder an slash an rip into 'er flesh an keep on poisonin' da air she breathes for ebry day you lib. You lice who feed on da scalp of da libin Eart! You 'ab los'! You 'ab gibin up da honour dat was gibin to you by da Creator! It is da people you 'ab spat on an pitied who will stan up an show you da way. We 'ab not forgodden! (56-57)

Land is a central element throughout this entire novel as setting, focus, and centre. Indigenous people who retain important links and communication with the land and all of its inhabitants are those who "have not forgotten," and are capable of maintaining a strong sense of cultural identity. Richard Wagamese asserts that "the most basic human right in the world is the right to know yourself. For the Indians, the single most important element that defines them as individuals, bands, clans and nations is the land" (The Terrible Summer 60). For Danny, this is an important element indeed as all of his teachings are derived from the land. Brant acknowledges that the dominant society often places a wedge between Native people and this sense of identity,

resulting in conflict that arises from the resistance to assimilation: "We have been forced to reject and thereby forget what made us real as Native peoples. The dominant society longs for this forgetfulness on our part" (73-74).

The assimilation of Aboriginal youth into the dominant society is partly responsible for the high numbers and increasing rates of youth suicides as well as low educational attainment. These deaths and failures often result from a lack of self-esteem and cultural identity, which have been stripped away and replaced by negative stereotypes imposed by media, education, literature, and other institutions of the dominant culture as well as the effects of urbanization: "life in the city and existence in cosmopolitan society has a sly way of taking you away from the philosophies and traditions of centuries. It's not long before the frantic sweep of modern living erases the recollections of the wisdom of the Old Ones" (Wagamese, The Terrible Summer 118). Danny conquers physical displacement by reconnecting with Anishnabe land and values, becoming a valuable community person who "has not forgotten."

He leaves the old Indian couple after hearing from someone in the town that his mother is in the settlement of Collins. Upon arrival there, he learns that he has missed her, but befriends Henry and his father Jim. Surprised by the level of generosity he has encountered in his travels thus far, Danny is also made aware of the fact that the Native people who inhabit the northern Ontario bushland communities still reflect on age-old traditions regarding the relationships between human beings and the non-human beings with whom they live. However, at this point he still has not totally shed his assimilated perspective, and cannot understand why Henry and his father ponder the nature of these relationships: "They were talking about the meaning of a fish's life. [. . .] I didn't see what the big deal was. What's alive is alive. Why try to figure out why?" (72-73). Horne explains that "while he initially views the world through assimilated eyes, he later has a heightened awareness and sees it from First Nations perspectives" (129) as learned through Elders and other teachers.

There are many lessons he learns from Elders in this novel. When the community comes together to share a killed moose, Danny and Henry help out in carrying the meat back home.

However, they begin clowning with the task and forget about the respect they should be showing to their fallen brother, who had sacrificed his life so that they may live:

> I burst out laughing and tried to swing the meat out to throw at him, when suddenly, Henry's face changed. He put his head down and I turned to see Shomis. He stood there glaring at us, then turned around. I slowly put the meat down and asked Henry, "What's with him?"
> Henry shook his head. "I should not have done that. We should not be playing with the meat." (85)

Although the Elder does not speak, his disapproval of the profane laughter is quite clear. In this case, the boys are mistreating a sacred relationship as if it were a game or a joke. They are unaware of the life-and-death struggle that exists in order that all beings may survive, and of the respect that must be upheld.

The laughter that Danny and Henry are engaged in is completely different from another incident in the novel concerning laughter and respect for slain other-than-human beings that has raised some questions among academics. Comments have been made on a supposed lack of respect shown, for example, in a passage where Danny kills a duck (154-155). Following Danny's struggle to end the duck's life, there is laughter between him and Ol' Jim that has been interpreted as disrespect and even cruelty. The difficulties in communicating and perceiving cultural values are apparent, as Bowerbank and Wawia report:

> At a conference at McMaster University in October, 1992 [. . .] one person in the audience protested the prolonged suffering of the duck and the cruelty of the passage. For most of us, our culture's slaughter of animals and birds remains an invisible and depersonalized process. [. . .] Danny's duck is not a meat product, but a worthy adversary who fights for his life. In the context of the novel, this is a significant moment in Danny's education. He is learning not only a survival skill, but also a complicated code of etiquette in relation to animals. Ol' Jim's laughter at Danny's fumblings and the pleasure they both feel about breakfast is a great and personal tribute to the duck who has died to feed them. (235)

In this incident, the two human beings are not making a joke, but are actually respecting and acknowledging the relationship between human beings and ducks. Here, the human being fumbled ridiculously and then laughed at his own ineptitude, while the duck remained admirably strong as long as it could, until its moment of death. Taken out of the context of Indigenous thought, the passage was seen as a merciless slaughter when it was an actually an indication of

the learning experiences and the failings that may occur in traditional survival. That the duck allowed itself to be taken as a food source is indicative that the human beings who took it were worthy of its life. This is quite different from the Western "conquering sports-hunter" relationship that exists between most non-Indigenous people and the other-than-human beings that they kill. Danny learns survival skills that are crucial to life in the bush, and in doing so slowly separates himself from the Windigo impulses of the town he escaped from. At the same time, he is learning that we must be able to laugh at ourselves. Eigenbrod indicates that perspectives such as these are unacknowledged by non-Indigenous critics such as Eve Drobot, who "summarizes the novel as a "log book of wilderness meals," suggesting "the mere linearity of "chronicling" -- a word she uses often -- and devalues the literary or artistically constructed quality of the novel" ("Reading Indigenity" 81).

Traditional teachings as seen in Aboriginal pedagogy are also significant in this novel, and are important considerations for this thesis. Balance, respect, and community are apparent in Danny's relationships. On the canoe travels, he learns about leaving tobacco offerings for other-than-human beings as a sign of reciprocal respect:

> He took a pinch of tobacco and mumbled to himself, then reached out and put it on a rock ledge. The canoe rocked to the side, and I figured he must feel it was important enough to send both of us into the water. Then a thought occurred to me. "Ol' Jim, is there someone there? Why would you leave tobacco if there was no one there to take it?"
>
> "You are right, son. There is someone there. There are a lot of beings here. The Memegwesiwag live here. They see us go by. Long ago they were able to communicate with us when there were people who could see and understand them. Now we have lost our communication, so all we can do is know that they are here. It is our fault that we have lost the level of thought and knowledge to be able to see and talk with them. Now all we have left is to acknowledge their existence by leaving "ahsamah." [. . .] We must remember to leave something when we travel past the homes of these people because they are our relatives." (97-98)

Awareness of the Memegwesiwag as relatives, as well as the knowledge that human beings have lost communication with them, is an important part of Danny's teaching, as is the necessity of a reciprocal offering. Leaving tobacco for the Memegwesiwag would ensure that their canoe would not capsize, or that they might have luck in fishing. This idea of respect and reciprocity among all

beings, even those who inhabit the spiritual world, is common to most Indigenous traditions. Winona LaDuke has stated that "one cannot take life without a reciprocal offering, usually tobacco [. . .]. There must always be this reciprocity" (qtd. in Whitt 244). Reciprocity has always been one method by which Indigenous peoples maintained respect, balance, and coexistence between all entities.

The oneness with all of nature extends not only to other-than-human beings and spirits, but includes the actual earth itself -- the rocks. Some special rocks are considered by traditional Anishnabe people to be more sacred than others. In Chapter 14, Danny and Ol' Jim come upon such rocks. When Danny wants to stop to look at them, Ol' Jim tells him: "No. They are sacred rocks. We would stop to offer tobacco if we had to pass by them. But right now we have no business going there" (157). Later on, Danny reflects that the leaving of tobacco offerings during these travels became a "now familiar routine" (162). In honouring the sacred this way, Danny slowly begins to grasp the importance of respect and what it means to Anishnabe people. Certain places and rock formations are viewed as important, powerful sites that should not be disrespected. In this way, respect is maintained between the earth and people as well as on the other "levels," namely the animal and spirit. This awareness of the many dimensions of existence is vital to Aboriginal thought and pedagogy.

Traditional instruction is a vital element in the life of Aboriginal youth, an element that many have had to be educated without. Danny is only one of so many Indigenous people who have had to connect with Elders later in life. Community and the youth/Elder connection, as stated in Chapter One of this thesis, is a crucial part of Aboriginal pedagogy. Ol' Jim is a role model for Danny, in what has been described by Ida Swan as a "reality-oriented" approach that "involves every aspect of Aboriginal culture" (49). "Modelling" himself after his mentors, Danny connects with his physical, mental, psychological, and spiritual worlds by learning respect and reciprocity. Modelling is an important dimension of Aboriginal education because it is non-aggressive and non-coercive, and demonstrates respect and reciprocity rather than forcing them upon the learner. Eber Hampton asserts that "far too few Indian students have contact with Indian

educators who are attuned to their culture and who can serve as models of educational achievement" (6). If this concept is applied to Aboriginal literature studies in light of what we outlined in Chapter One, then we must agree with Hampton that "Native educators are needed both to encourage Native children who want to go to college and to teach them once they get there" (6). Ol' Jim, rather than filtering out hope and self-esteem, which is what Aboriginal youth encounter in Western education, instead instills these qualities in Danny. Danny overcomes Windigo by becoming empowered as an active participant in his own education. He takes ownership of his own learnings in an interactive-participatory learning process, and also develops his spiritual sense, which are two basic tenets of "modelling" (Swan 50).

Another aspect of Ol' Jim's pedagogical approach that is most apparent in this novel is that of experiential learning. Before the invasion of instruction based on Western paradigms that negate an Aboriginal child's existence, children in Aboriginal communities were always taught through experiential learning. The example where Ol' Jim leaves tobacco for spirits without first explaining why is but one example. In many sections of these chapters, the narration consists of Danny watching Ol' Jim perform tasks such as breaking a camp: "I watched his every move" (91), or setting a net: "I watched him impatiently" (111). Experiential learning is something that many animals do to teach their young. Evidently, it works, and it is obviously related to modelling. Often, Danny has to experience his lessons in order to learn from them, as with taking the life of the duck, or burning his socks in the fire (130). Experiential learning contrasts with Western education in that personal growth is promoted rather than professional growth.

Community respect for Elders is another key difference between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal societies, and one that is necessary to an Aboriginal pedagogical approach. It is beneficial to involve traditional Elders in the education of Aboriginal youth at all levels of education, including even the post-secondary. Silent Words is a novel that shows how beneficial, in fact necessary, Aboriginal Elders and community are to youth education. Community should be a part of Indigenous educational development. According to educator Agnes Grant, "Elder wisdom is at the core of Native education, although [. . .] a dichotomy exists because white middle-class society

devalues the elderly. [. . .] Obviously, a great gap separates mainline societies from traditional societies in attitudes towards elders. This presents a great challenge to the university" (212-213). The challenge is most likely due to the fact that Aboriginal pedagogy embodies ways of thinking that Euro-Canadians cannot understand or accept (219). The teachings Danny learns from Mr. Old Indian and Ol' Jim must become available to all Aboriginal students at all levels of education.

As outlined in Chapter One, attention paid to community Elders can lead to education for self-determination. Elder education is thus successful and redeeming. For example, in this novel, Ol' Jim practices the Indigenous ethics of non-interference and non-judgementality in his education of Danny. Danny is not battered by instructional learning: "Elders encourage and support; they do not hover and give advice or criticize. A learner is given ample time to work on skills without supervision or evaluation. Even wrong decisions, and the person's right to make them, are respected" (Grant 220). Ol' Jim watches as Danny, inexperienced as he is, nearly loses his balance getting into the canoe: "He could have warned me!" (93). Danny's decisions are observed with the belief that he will eventually find his way.

This information also relates well to the role of literature and stories in Indigenous cultures, as well as the sacred role of the storyteller. Not only children, but adults of all ages listen to oral tradition: "no one told the child what the stories meant. [. . .] The elders did not comment on human conduct. [. . .] It was for the child and each individual to seek that morsel of understanding and to draw his own inferences" (Johnston, "How Do We Learn Language? 46). The role of Elders is clearly of prime significance for Aboriginal communities striving to shed the negative influences of Western educational methods as well as generations of abuse in residential schools. It is worth noting that the teaching methods practiced by Indigenous Elders were so effective that in order for the colonization process to be successful, children had to be taken away by the dominant society in order to learn Windigo sickness. The Windigo is not present in traditional Aboriginal education because the Elders' "teaching techniques are so loving, so non-directive, and so non-coercive" (Grant 221). Important for Danny especially is that the concept of

failure, in the Western sense of the term, does not exist -- another feature of Elder instruction (222).

Danny's other role models are Charlie, Jim, and Billy. They are what Hampton would describe as "adult role models who exemplif[y] the knowledge, skills, and values being taught" (8), a primary facet of traditional Indian education. When Danny goes to live in Collins, lessons continue. Jim's teachings for the young boys echo those of the Elders in their focus on respect. He is all too aware of how Anishnabe people have been assimilated into Christian traditions. In order to instill in the boys some respect for the trees whose lives people often waste at Christmas, he instructs them:

> After Christmas when you are finished with the tree, take off all the branches and put them by the doorstep for people to wipe their feet on, then saw the thing into stove-lengths to be used for firewood. Don't waste any part of the tree. It looks so sick -- the tree skeletons that people throw on the sides of the road, waiting for garbage collection. It is not garbage, it is a tree! It was a living thing! It ought to be treated with more respect. (207-208)

Trees, often neglected and disrespected by the human world, are crucial to survival in traditional Indigenous life. In Chapter Two, through Basil Johnston, we saw a glimpse of the particular breed of Windigo that subsists on a diet of trees. The pedagogy here is similar to the leaving of tobacco offerings in that it places emphasis on balance, non-dominance, respect, and reciprocity.

This respect and reciprocity is shown not only to nature and to the Memegwesiwag, but also to the spirits of the deceased. Ol' Jim demonstrates these important lessons to Danny, instilling a sense of "Nativeness" in the youth, a sense of the Indigenous tradition of respect that he is to carry with him always and never forget. This respect cannot be taken lightly, if one is to consider the implications of the Windigo impulse. Aboriginal philosopher Laurie-Ann Whitt has identified it as diverging "from that of the dominant culture [. . .]. Within the dominant philosophical tradition, it is possible to respect only what is human or potentially human. [. . .] The instrumental reduction of what is intrinsically valuable lies at the heart of disrespect" (244-245). Reciprocity of the human towards the other-than-human ensures that non-dominant relationships and respect in everyday living are maintained. According to Whitt, disrespect "lies at the heart of oppressive cultural

practices [. . .]. Since the land and its inhabitants have been devalorized, deprived of significant moral standing, there is nothing to check their sustained, systematic abuse" (245).

Perhaps the greatest lesson that Danny learns, and the most empowering one, is the one that concerns respect and reciprocity towards his protectors, the wolves. When they save him from dying in the snow by alerting the other people to his presence in the forest, Ol' Jim offers a pouch of tobacco and tells him: "You leave this to thank the wolves who helped you last night. Once they know you know them, they will always be here to help and guide you. They will know you recognize them. They don't forget, it is the humans who do" (226). Throughout the novel, in fact, Danny has been noticing wolves around him, not yet aware of this special link. The capacity for remembrance and forgetfulness that human beings possess, an awareness of community that is often forgotten, is thus apparent in the novel. Eigenbrod indicates Danny's evolving social awareness as well: "contrary to the runaway Huckleberry Finn whom Toni Morrison considers "othered," Danny is always part of a community (although he does not always know it). The tension in the novel [. . .] lies between a nurturing and an abusive environment which are both part of the Native setting of the novel -- and of the Native social reality" ("Reading Indigenity" 15). One of the goals of my thesis is to show that a traditional Indigenous perspective of the Indigenous social reality that Danny does not realize, involves a connection not only to the human community, but to other-than-human communities as well. Through Ol' Jim's teachings and "nurturing," he learns a vital aspect of human life as expressed in Indigenous philosophy: reciprocity, which accompanies the tradition of respect. Whitt describes this as "an acknowledgment of the reciprocal relationships that bind human to human, and what is human to what is not" (244).

The ultimate goal of Aboriginal pedagogy is similar to that of Aboriginal writing and literary self-determination: healing, community responsibility, transformation, and balance. These must be perpetuated from one generation to the next. Ol' Jim is not engaged in teaching Danny merely for the sake of the youth's learning. He is teaching in order for tradition to be continued, in the hopes that respect for all beings will persist through communication and relationships. The connection

between youth and Elders in Aboriginal communities has always been an important one. In many communities, children were raised by grandparents instead of by their parents. The social responsibility of the storyteller, as well as the importance of language, words, and communication for the purpose of cultural survival are evident where Ol' Jim tells Danny, "It is important to remember exactly what is said so that you in turn, when you are an old man, can tell it to a little person like you" (143-144). After Ol' Jim dies on the winter trapline, Danny acknowledges the lessons and instinctively communicates with him: "I picked a large pinch of the tobacco and slowly filtered it over the embers. Smoke came up immediately and I whispered, 'That is for you, Ol' Jim. Happy journey'" (233). It is clear at this point that he has adopted and established a new sense of himself, a strength in his own cultural identity and self-esteem. This strength, that Danny's father is unable to grant him, is one reason for the shooting at the end of the main story. By the epilogue, Danny is able to remember Ol' Jim's teachings and can forgive his father, thus ending the cycle of abuse or self-destruction.

In this novel, Danny's experiences with fish, birds, wolves, winds, storms, insects, moose, and other entities enable him to find a part of himself that he would never have found in a town or on a reserve. This part of himself is natural and necessary for an Aboriginal person. However, this sense of identity is not limited to the Anishnabe people, or even to Native North American people. In Chapter 13, Danny and Ol' Jim encounter a non-Aboriginal person who inhabits the same area, who pays the same amount of respect, according to Ol' Jim:

> The man lives on the island. There are cabins in the woods that you can't see from the water. He makes sure that he doesn't disturb the natural surroundings. I wish there were more people like him. (149)

Indigenous traditions can be of benefit to all people who wish to live in harmony, and their impact has yet to be made on Western culture. Transformation is required in order to escape Windigo oppressions and to attain a state of balance. As Taiaiake Alfred states:

> Polarization of Indian and European values suggests that white people are incapable of attaining the level of moral development that indigenous societies promote among their members with respect to, for example, the land. Not only does this dichotomization go against the traditional belief in a universal

> rationality, but it offers a convenient excuse for those who support the state in its colonization of indigenous nations and exploitation of the earth (20-21).

This makes it all the more important that Indigenous world views are developed. The colonizer/colonized, insider/outsider dichotomy remains as a result of ongoing assimilation and annihilation of Indigenous cultures by the dominant society; however, there is the hope that someday transformation will be realized by all peoples.

Danny's quest demonstrates the possibility that Windigo sickness can be overcome. In the epilogue, we see that he survives his experience and over the years has become a community member. He connects with community and Elders, heeding role models through whom he discovers self-esteem and cultural identity on psychological, spiritual, mental, and physical levels. He learns from the land and community in traditional Aboriginal ways. The title of the novel itself, which includes the other than verbal, other than human languages, includes all of creation. In the novel, the Windigo spirit of colonization and abuse is counterbalanced by traditional values of respect and reciprocity. Danny learns to see beyond adversarial, Windigo thought constructs towards those that are dynamic, inclusive, holistic, and healing.

However, the novel is not merely Danny telling his story. Silent Words is similar to an oral story in many ways. We as readers can model on Danny, in turn following his journey with our own journeys towards respect and reciprocity. This novel can be regarded as an example of a story that has political reasons encoded into it. Blaeser explains that "the task of interpretation, the task of unravelling [their] significance or revolutionary meaning, rests with the listener or reader" ("Writing Voices Speaking" 53). The absence of political messages in oral stories, Blaeser notes, is actually a presence, "inviting or alluding to a greater political message. In that sense, the stories are, as oral literature has always been, alive" ("Writing Voices Speaking" 53). There are many such teachings that were left behind on the trail, leaving messages to unravel, for Native youth to find. They must be accommodated though active resistance to Windigo forces through cultural renewal and survival. Aboriginal writing is one of the ways in which resistance can be written. But how are we to do this in an environment that is becoming increasingly urban, eaten by the Windigo, where traditional lands are often unavailable? Through the transformation of culture as well as of community and individual?

CHAPTER FOUR - Ravensong and the Theme of Transformation

> The difficulty is being able to follow the philosophy of total harmony in what we are doing at all times. I see it as culture shock. An attempt to move from one reality into another. It literally tore me up. I understand the whole thing now. The separate reality of what being a Native is. It is very difficult for any Native who wants to do anything in this society, because to do so separates us so much from who we are internally that they can't be a part of society. It destroys them internally and they get sick. The problem is how to be a Native in this harmonious sense and live in adversity. The problem is to know how to be in harmony and be a Native in the true sense and be able to live and work and contribute to a society that has its roots in a foundation that is totally different, totally adversarial. — Douglas Cardinal, Metis/Blackfoot (qtd. in Cardinal & Armstrong 44)

The novel Ravensong by Metis/Salish author Lee Maracle is the story of a Native youth growing up in British Columbia in the 1950's. Like the protagonist Danny in Silent Words, this character comes to value her culture and traditional ways in the face of assimilation into mainstream society. Although Stacey experiences more of the dominant society and its civilization than does Danny, her resolve and struggle is similar and clear: to maintain traditional values of respect, harmony, and caring in the face of Windigo sickness and genocide. Both Danny and Stacey learn valuable lessons from the traditional lifestyles of their people, and these models guide them throughout the novels as they confront themselves, their cultural identities, and their personal problems. Moreover, other-than-human persons and the natural environment play an important role in the development of traditional values and beliefs, helping Stacey balance the need to assimilate into mainstream society with the necessity of maintaining her traditional belief systems.

The main theme that this chapter will examine, in light of the Windigo disease described in Chapter Two, is that of transformation. If we use Beth Brant's definition, that transformation involves "changing the function or condition of," then transformation must occur not only on the individual level that Danny accomplishes in Chapter Three. The function and condition of Aboriginal literature study itself must be transformed, as was argued in Chapter One, but so must the individual's (both Indigenous and non-Indigenous) social situation in light of Windigo impulses all around them. Furthermore, we must also remember Maracle's comments regarding transformation as "social architecture," an Indigenous expression of the connection between

individual, community, and nation. In Ravensong, Stacey's thoughts are always resting with the fate of her community and how it will be transformed.

Ravensong is set on the Northwest Coast in the post-World War Two boom. Unlike Danny in Silent Words, Stacey is part of an Aboriginal community that has been in constant contact with the dominant society. The "white town" in the novel is just across the bridge from the Aboriginal village. Stacey, a high school student, must cross this bridge each day, experiencing the suicide of a non-Aboriginal schoolmate early on in the novel, as well as problems with the dominant society's education system. She must maintain a continual balancing act, her own traditional cultural values juxtaposed with values of the dominant society, as a result of her exposure to non-Aboriginal society. In the midst of Stacey's confusion, there is the looming threat of a deadly influenza epidemic that decimates her community. As this epidemic ravages her community, Stacey gains a greater awareness of the ever-present gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. The non-Aboriginal people in white town are unconcerned with the situation, and send no medical attention. Stacey, unlike Danny, gauges the reactions (or rather, non-reactions) of non-Aboriginal people as well as the immediate responses of her own people, and plays a role in helping her people survive the illness.

Significantly, the role Stacey has in her community holds greater sociopolitical weight than does Danny's: she is preparing to attend the University of British Columbia, so that she can attain a degree in education. Her goal is to return with the degree and teach the children of her village. Her community is aware of the negative effects that Western education for assimilation has on their children, and is looking towards control over local education. For Stacey to fail in this would be a loss in the struggle to maintain culture and to resist Windigo encroachment over the youth and children.

Throughout the novel, she must balance her own personal growth with her knowledge of the greater community transformation that results from contact with white town. In the later chapters, Stacey's community must confront a fire, one of her non-Aboriginal friends in town must endure her parents' divorce, and her community must deal with a domestic shooting. Finally, in the last

chapter, Stacey prepares to leave her community in the hopes of returning to educate the youth. By the end, she is able to tell her children the story of her community, noting that the influenza was Raven's "wild idea" to wake the people up. The epilogue shows us a story outside the story, where the storytellers tell how other-than-human people in this novel cognitively stimulate transformation. They bicker amongst each other as Indigenous land expropriation continues. In fact, Raven often reflects on ways in which she can "wake the people up."

Raven and Cedar are uneasy with the way that human beings have ravaged the earth, and Raven in particular focuses on Stacey as a potential link between the two human groups that have opposing worldviews. Raven is aware of the damage that exposure to the dominant Windigo society can cause to Indigenous youth, and the possibility of her "song" going unheard. She hopes to make Stacey understand the value of maintaining cultural identity and cultural self-esteem. When the youth broods that life in her village was "empty for anyone," Raven becomes agitated, since Stacey doesn't see how full Native life is compared with non-Native life. This blindness on the part of Raven's potential "bridge" leads to a variety of other-than-human perspectives:

> Stacey's last thought made Raven want to spit. Stacey might not be as bright as she had supposed, cedar sighed. Stacey will learn; if not Stacey, then one of her children. Be patient, she cautioned Raven. Crow cawed loudly. It annoyed her to think that cedar thought she knew something about the human spirit that Raven didn't recognize (13).

Eventually, it becomes clear that Stacey's confusion is a result of functioning in two separate, and seemingly opposing, cultures. This culminates in her awareness that non-Aboriginal students in her school lack her double consciousness: "I am obsessed with living like these [non-Native] people but I can't stand them anymore" (37). Her desire to act like her non-Aboriginal peers causes her to judge her village as lesser. This imbalance serves to dull Stacey's clarity, straining the contact that Raven is trying to establish with her. Raven's "song" is one that creates a constant tension in the novel; the reader wonders whether or not Stacey will eventually hear the message regarding transformation. When news of the suicide Polly, a schoolmate, reaches

Stacey, Raven attempts to communicate, but "the words of Raven reaching Stacey were too complex for her to sort out. She had no idea where they were coming from" (39). It takes most of the novel to open Stacey's eyes and ears to the transformation that Raven seeks to encourage.

Raven's "song," or message, implies bridging and communication between Native and non-Native people. It implies that the latter need to learn traditions of respect, community, sharing, and caring among human persons as well as between human persons and other-than-human persons. However, the Aboriginal community also has a function in that it is not to forget these traditional values, and is to maintain them in the face of assimilation. For Raven, the task is largely due to the inability of all people, especially the chosen Stacey, to hear her song:

> Raven saw the future threatened by the parochial refusal of her own people to shape the future of their homeland. [. . .] She had to drive them out, bring them across the bridge. She was beginning to doubt this was possible, however. Stacey, the child who had all the advantages of Dominic's and Nora's good sense and the knowledge of the others, was unable to hear Raven sing, no matter how obvious her song. (43-44)

The inability of "others" and "villagers" alike to hear, and to address the pressing issues in environmental ethics, is a tension that has been commented on extensively by traditional Elders. Raven is resisting the Windigo impulse through the hope for social transformation. Indeed, Raven regards non-Aboriginal people as human beings who simply forgot original instructions on how to live, warping Christian doctrines in order to suit capitalism and colonization in the process. Raven's anti-oppressive message mirrors Winona LaDuke's notion of a return to the natural from the synthetic: she remarks that "these others had to be rooted to the soil of this land or all would be lost" (44).

One theme that is apparent throughout the novel is that those who are "uprooted" immigrants need to become "rooted" to the land. For Maracle, becoming "rooted" entails an awareness of Aboriginal realities past and present:

> I think people in this country have to get real. I don't think academia is much different than the outside world, to tell you the honest truth. There's no serious attention paid to the history of this country. [. . .] The history of this country is thousands and thousands of years old. And I think people should either sink roots here or go back where they come from. Get real. (qtd. in Kelly 84)

This is the message of transformation that Raven would like to impart. The responsibility of Indigenous people, especially Stacey as a potential word-user, as well as the responsibility of non-Indigenous people is to listen to Indigenous realities, to be "insiders," to understand Indigenous land, history, and world views.

Other-than-human beings in this novel reach out towards the human species in the hopes that Indigenous thinking can be promoted in the Windigo society through transformation. Raven is aware that there is an immediacy that is conveyed by human beings speaking for the land, as we have seen through reading Aboriginal literature as the land speaking. Like Danny, Stacey's realities are Indigenous expressions that counter the brutal destruction of other-than-human brothers and sisters, a key facet of traditional Indigenous thought. We only need reflect on the important link between thought, word, and social and political action as well as community responsibility that were outlined in Chapter One. The urgency of Raven's message of transformation as activism is characteristic of the teachings of traditional Elders:

> Raven was convinced that this catastrophe she planned to execute would finally wake the people up, drive them to white town to fix the mess over there. [. . .]
> "Be patient," Raven repeated. "There isn't much time. These people are heading for the kind of disaster they may not survive. You, cedar, should think before you speak. You'll be the first to perish." (14)

Raven is engaged in establishing a bridge (Stacey) so that white town can be aware of its damaging appetites. As Richard Wagamese notes, land is essential for Indigenous people "to ensure their continuation as unique nations and circles of people [. . .]. These days it might be a good idea for the Indians to pass on this profound connection to the land" (The Terrible Summer 36).

Stacey's imbalance and proximity to non-Aboriginal values does serve to cloud Raven's song. Although she becomes aware of "the possibility of Raven having some design on her" (75), she quickly dismisses such thoughts. At one point "the wind whispered an eerie deep sound which Stacey imagined to be the song of Raven calling transformation from the deep" (83). However, her younger sister Celia appears to be more in tune with Cedar and Raven than the conscientious, worried Stacey. Raven's message that "Death is transformative" (85) actually

reaches Celia instead, who wonders what is happening to Stacey, the air, and the village. Stacey, the potential university graduate and educator, is the hope that the other-than-human entities hold in the human world. Stacey, and not Celia, is of age and social standing and preparation for the task of transforming community.

Had Stacey been more aware of the transformative power of Raven as a "trickster," she would have known that Raven "carries the power between worlds," as Jim Cheney indicates:

> Raven is not a *static* and conceptually tidy link between surface people and the patterned ecological worlds of which they are a part but which -- in an *epistemic*, not ontological sense -- goes beyond them, catches them up, as the rhythms of evolution go beyond the individuals who carry that evolution. ("Tricksters" 31)

In this view, Raven has a direct sociopolitical function and purpose in evolving human society. Stacey's awareness of this cultural figure alone appears to be enough to strengthen her ties to her community and identity. Maracle sees Raven as "the harbinger of social transformation" who "sings when the world itself is amiss. And some people hear that song" (qtd. in Kelly 85).

Raven is most engaged with the act of communicating to Stacey the necessity of retaining her cultural values, despite the fact that it is necessary to assimilate partly, to give up a part of herself, for the greater good of her people. This is not assimilation, but rather, education for self-determination. If Stacey can maintain her cultural values and balance these with Western education, she could come back to the community to teach youth and children how to do the same. Eber Hampton states that "No aspect of a culture is more vital to its integrity than its means of education. As I have been taught, nourished, and sustained by my culture, so it is my duty and privilege to transmit it. I value my Anglo education and respect its necessity and power in this society, but my deepest values and my view of the world were formed within an Indian culture" (7). Stacey's community invests their hope in such a person, who will be able to impart cultural survival. Later in this chapter, we will see more clearly exactly to what this vision of a "transculturated" individual contributes.

Scholars such as Eigenbrod have noted how the transformer character has always occupied a particular place in Aboriginal literature: "Canadian Aboriginal writers consider the transformer

character a symbol of cultural rebirth because he or she communicates values that are essential in Native cultures" ("The Oral in the Written" 96). However, we need to develop the idea that revitalized Indigenous cultural values are also quite often sociopolitical, community values. Raven therefore functions not only as a bridge between opposing cultures in the hopes of establishing linkage, but also, paradoxically, as a resistor to Stacey's assimilation into white town. In being exposed to the Windigo society, Stacey's access to Raven's messages is hindered, as Maracle indicates: "because Stacey crossed the bridge and went to the other side, she stopped hearing Raven's song" (qtd. in Kelly 86). The paradox is both bridge and resistance: Raven encourages transformation even though this means that there is a danger that her song will no longer be heard.

Stacey's imbalance as a result of exposure is apparent where she constantly reflects on the differences between the ways of life in her village, and the ways that the non-Aboriginal people live in white town. On the one hand, she feels that the "obsessive contrasting of their own dingy little hall to white town's community centres with lavish stone floors" (18) is an unavoidable negativity. Half of her life is spent in white town. Yet on the other hand, she feels that the positive aspects of the contrast should be made known to her people in order to instill in them a sense of pride in the affirmative values and language they retain as a people. There is a "lack of connectedness between white folks [that] was difficult to express in her language" (17), that "made Stacy want to get up to tell everyone how it is in white town" (20). This affirmation would be an acknowledgement of hearing Raven's song. However, the confusion Stacey feels, a direct result of the assimilation process, is that of being torn between the need to continue her education and the need to retain her village lifestyle. She concludes that "her context was too different. She knew she could never be satisfied with village life now" (22).

At times Raven sees Stacey's exposure to white culture as a threat: "Stacey behaved as though she did not share the context of her clanswomen. [. . .] Stacey was lacking something" (22). However, Raven also sees that human beings are headed for certain destruction with the only hope being in the traditional Aboriginal people who have the ability to transform the dominant

society's institutions, remain balanced, and maintain systems founded on respect. Raven sees all people living in what can be described as Windigo societies, as plagued by a "drought":

> It was a drought of thought. They had not retreated for some time to the place of sacred thought. Their thinking sat at the edges of their lives, rested on the periphery of the everyday, engrossed itself there and became shallow. Their thoughts avoided depth [. . .]. How to get the people to awaken was the dilemma which harassed Raven. If Raven could cut them loose from their obsessive focus on the now, deep thinking could be restored. (23)

A Western-style obsessive focus on the "now" serves to subtract from any focus on an Indigenous vision of the future, children, and community.

Stacey comes to realize that there is also a lack of deep thinking in her Indigenous culture, as a result of exposure to non-Aboriginal culture. She becomes so frustrated with the need to assimilate that she almost rejects her traditional ways. A degree of internalized racism is distinguishable when she curses her parents "for not going to school, she cursed them for continuing to live like her grandparents had" (24). Stacey feels that her parents "were caught in some strange time warp they refused to be freed of" (25). The frustration that Aboriginal children without depth of tradition or appropriate education must endure, which others do not, cannot be underestimated. Stacey's exposure to the dominant society causes her to question her people's beliefs, which deep inside she knows are valid but which are on the verge of assimilation.

Stacey is fortunate that her parents have not assimilated into the mainstream society, but retain their sense of cultural values in the face of genocide and assimilation. Jeannette Armstrong indicates the problem of "attempting to assimilate so that your children will not suffer what you have," only to find that "assimilationist measures are not meant to include you but to destroy all remnants of your culture" ("The Disempowerment" 240). Even when Aboriginal youth such as Stacey attempt to assimilate, they are still open to ridicule because of the fact that they are not white. Education for assimilation only blurs Raven's song and confuses and frustrates Aboriginal youth, community, and culture. As Raven's message goes unheard, social transformation is not achieved.

This tension created by Raven's song and Stacey's inability to hear it is loosened when Stacey affirms her cultural values. This is most apparent when the sense of traditional values and interconnected community are further threatened by the deadly flu epidemic. In this case, through contact with non-Indigenous people, the Windigo literally is a disease. It shatters Stacey's community, causing her to reflect on the importance of community relationships. Materially resisting the disease actually strengthens cultural belief and spiritual resistance. Stacey realizes that each individual death is significant in that "everyone lost a family clown, an herbalist, a spirit healer or a philosopher who seemed to understand conduct, law, and the connection of one family member to another" (26). The interconnected web of all beings and all people in Aboriginal communities and likewise in Aboriginal literature is dependent upon such interdependence, coexistence, harmony, and balance as a way of life. Stacey remembers that "every single person served the community, each one becoming a wedge of the family circle around which good health and well-being revolved. A missing person became a missing piece of the circle which could not be replaced" (26). Aboriginal writing about such interconnections is therefore active resistance to genocide.

Although Danny in Silent Words communicates actively with other-than-human persons as well as with the land, throughout Ravensong Stacey's inner thoughts are reacted to in a form of one-way communication: "Raven shrieked. This last remark was a specious one, a delusive one aimed at Stacey's preoccupation with realizing her educational future" (28). The monitoring of the behaviour and thought of human beings is one way in which Indigenous cultures believe that other-than-human persons, including ancestors, are aware when communication does occur. Similar to Danny's awareness of his wolf protectors, or of the Memegwesiwag, Stacey notices that her mother "rarely missed addressing the mint like old friends as she entered the house" (31).

The differences between traditional Indigenous beliefs and those of the dominant society are continually juxtaposed: the people in white town think of the powerful healing comfrey root, dandelion, plantain, and mullein as garbage weeds, "tossed on a heap to disappear in a strong

black garbage bag out of sight of the public" (31) while in Stacey's community they are valuable beings. This contrast between cultures is another example of her values that enables Stacey to struggle to maintain her convictions that her culture is not inferior, but just different. She attempts as best she can to avoid her inner confusion: "it struck her as pathetically funny that these people should invest so much time in throwing living creatures away while they were still perfectly good. She paid no attention to the paradox of emotions spawned inside her by her resentment toward her mother for nurturing weeds and her recognition of the pathos of white folks discarding wild food growing" (32). This paradox of emotions is constant. Awareness of ecocide is a large part of Raven's message that Stacey is able to hear.

The paradox of exposure to white culture is that Stacey can learn good things about her own values through cultural comparison. She becomes aware of teachings that are similar to Jim's teaching to Danny and Henry regarding the christmas trees in Silent Words, or Mr. Old Indian's teaching about Windigo ecocide and the need for Aboriginal people to teach non-ecocidal values. She visits regularly the household of her white friend Carol, and notices the contrast with her own mother's values. Carol's mother "threw dandelion salad-makings away [and] served stingy portions of food to her children at mealtimes" (33). Stacey also observes contrast in the behaviour of Carol's father towards his wife. She wonders how non-Aboriginal people can be so dispassionate towards one another. It holds true that oppressions are all linked, as we saw in Chapter Two. In Indigenous thinking, disrespect for other-than-human persons does in fact bring about disrespect for human persons as well. To end male domination of women, there must also be an end to the human domination of the Earth. "Stacey could not understand why Mrs. S. had no more rank in her own house than the children" (35). This relationship contrasts with the respect given to the powerful clanswomen in her own community.

One important part of the theme of transformation that is dominant throughout Ravensong is the need for a willingness on the part of both non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal to see the world view of the other. "Everyone cudgelled themselves with the dilemma of getting the people out of the houses to immerse themselves in the transformation of the world of the others. [. . .] The people

behaved as if they would have no part of the others' world" (44). The necessity of transformation is to teach non-Indigenous people about Indigenous values in a dynamic, changing world. Scholar Terry Huffman refers to the people who bridge both cultures as "transculturated" individuals, who enjoy generally successful college experiences. They "have strong identification with traditional Indian culture and have no desire for assimilation. Yet, transculturated students also value the education and skills offered by the mainstream college. The challenge for these students is to interact on two cultural levels simultaneously" (76). Huffman notes that such individuals tend to make stronger bridges between cultures than those immersed in Western culture. Those who have learned cultural values from the "inside" tend to be able to hear Raven's song.

Non-Aboriginal transformation is also one of necessity and survival. In order to ensure an anti-oppressive, exploitation-free existence for all beings, there must be a recognition of Indigenous realities and land issues in order to bring about a renewed balance and coexistence. Stacey does not yet comprehend these realities in the 1950's, although they are increasingly becoming realities today. Stacey only realizes that she is "unable to get under [the others' world] to expose it enough to find the key to its transformation. She was unable to say the words that might jar White Town from its own sleep" (44). The characters from white town are unable to see Aboriginal reality, evidenced particularly in the non-reaction to the influenza epidemic. Nor are the Aboriginal characters willing to see non-Aboriginal reality, in a Windigo society imposing genocide upon them through colonial legislation.

Stacey becomes aware of cultural genocide when talk of "Naturalized Canadians" comes about. The notion that one is "not an Indian anymore" is ludicrous: "you can give our people all the papers in the world. It won't make us one of them" (52). Although this is "too ridiculous a notion to contemplate" (52), the loss of Aboriginal fishing rights, as well as endless prohibitions designed by the federal government in order to starve Aboriginal people into assimilation, are realities that help Stacey and others to see the reality of genocide. The unfair legislation sets up an exploitative relationship whereby Aboriginal resistance to non-Aboriginal culture is actually a

perception of Windigo: "the villagers were convinced white people wanted them to die" (53). In fact, the differences are so great that Stacey's mother comments on how they barely noticed the Great Depression -- a lifestyle that, for many Aboriginal people, was (and still is) an everyday reality.

One turning point in the novel where Stacey realizes the inability of white town to comprehend Aboriginal reality occurs when she stops on the way home from school to see two salmon spawning. A revelation about the truth of Creation and death follows. Not only do non-Aboriginal people in general lack the sensibilities necessary to comprehend necessary values, she thinks, but "white folks, even her friend Carol, all seemed to be so rudderless. Because of that the kids at school seemed to suffer from a kind of frantic desperation. Maybe no roots was the problem" (61). Maracle, LaDuke, and others see the idea of "no roots" as a result of a lack of awareness of Indigenous culture, contemporary realities, and history: "people here don't take this being here seriously" (qtd. in Kelly 84). Stacey realizes she must not become one of those who are living yet sleeping, "rudderless," with no roots in the "creative process." This creative process, it is argued in Chapter One, entails sacred words, power, community, traditions, Elders, and other-than-human people. The challenge is for Stacey to maintain her sense of "creation" and "creativity" in the Indigenous way of thinking that we outlined in Chapter One. The threat that arises from exposure to a "rootless" people may influence her to the extent that she loses her ability to take "being here" seriously.

When the time comes for Stacey to leave the community to attend university, she receives some Elder instruction related to Aboriginal pedagogy. Dominic's advice to her is that "The world needs a combined wisdom, not just one knowledge or another, but all knowledge should be joined. Human oneness, that's our way" (67). This advice is one example of someone from Stacey's community who encourages transformation through the bridging of cultures, a transculturated identity, and an increased awareness of Aboriginal realities which may lead to the revitalization of culture and harmony. There must be a blending of perspectives, a transformation at the educational level in order that Indigenous peoples become accepted into the human family.

The importance of traditional Elders, teachings and traditional literature is described through brief sketches of the characters Grampa Thomas, Dominic, and Sadie. Stacey comes to realize their worth and interconnectedness to the vitality and maintenance of Salish culture.

When Dominic dies, Stacey reflects that he "had been the caretaker of the law and philosophy of the village. As yet no other had come forward to take his place and now the village had no law-giver, no philosopher to consult. They were all like a rudderless ship wandering aimlessly in the fog" (95). With so many traditional Elders having passed away and the Salish language dying out, the community becomes increasingly focused on money as a means for survival, as well as on assimilation into the dominant society. The imbalance of Windigo values infects the community just as the flu had. Stacey succeeds in retaining her faith in her cultural heritage, reinforcing self-esteem and a sense of purpose and identity. However, she has no idea of her naïve innocence -- or of the fact that many families in her village have already been altered for the worse by assimilation: "she couldn't know that her own clan was the last of the families to cling to their ancient sense of family and that this was going to break down steadily as white town invaded their village" (150). Later in the novel, "it was the last time for a long time that anyone in the village would offer tobacco, but Stacey could not know that" (190). She only begins to see that "the young women were changing; so were the men. What was the attraction of white town? Why did it so quickly transform our own into miserable wretches?" (150). Unlike Danny, who could maintain distance from the abusive effects of contact with the town of Nakina, Stacey and her people cannot so easily avoid the negative aspects of assimilation due to their proximity to white town.

Still, Stacey manages to resolve her problem with an amorous non-Aboriginal boy named Steve. She is always taken aback by his actions and opinions, despite the fact that he is attempting to bridge cultures. Stacey addresses the issue of the dominant society's (and Steve's) antipluralism, wondering "where do you begin telling someone their world isn't the only one?" and informs him outright that "You love your point of view so much that you make sweeping pronouncements about everyone else's behaviour" (72). Stacey regards Steve as annoying and

self-absorbed, unable to comprehend her complex personal difficulties despite his efforts to cross the bridge into her way of life. In this way, Steve is a metaphor for non-Indigenous society while Stacey functions as a metaphor for Indigenous culture. The gulf, the difference between them is too deep to cross simply due to the fact that Steve does not possess the desire to confront Aboriginal reality from the inside: "until you have experienced the horror of an epidemic, a fire, drought and the absolute threat these things pose to the whole village's survival -- and care about it, care desperately -- you will be without a relevant context" (186). It is clear that Steve is an "outsider" whose approach toward Indigenous people does not force him to leave his own privileged "insider" world to which he can escape conveniently at any time.

In Ravensong, Steve may have been perceived by Stacey as a threat, but what is most important is the implication Maracle makes regarding the nature of the relationship between non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal people, in terms of colonizer and colonized, where spirituality, respect for traditions, literature, and even academic research are concerned. Although Steve is genuinely interested in Aboriginal culture, Maracle implies that "outsider" perspectives are potentially as exploitative, and harmful as literary colonization is (Kelly 82-84). Linda Tuhiwai-Smith reminds us that:

> Insider research has to be ethical and respectful, as reflexive and critical, as outsider research. It also needs to be humble. It needs to be humble because the researcher belongs to the community as a member with a different set of roles and relationships, status and position. The outside "expert" role has been and continues to be problematic for indigenous communities. (139)

Instead of seeing humility in Steve's questions about her ways, she only sees his arrogance: "there was a thin-sounding edge to his voice, a smugness" (184). While Stacey's people died in great numbers from the flu, Steve's father, a doctor, would not come to the village to treat them. It is clear to the reader that transformation, for "outsiders," is not possible. Important, life-altering issues for Aboriginal people can often be trivialized by "outsiders" who are not directly affected by the same issues, who can discard them at will. Stacey wonders "what else he did not have to think about. How much of the information he owned inspired thoughts in him, how much just gets filed in his mind without him ever thinking about it again?" (184).

And yet, Ravensong does present one example of transformation in a non-Aboriginal person. Stacey learns to trust "German Judy," despite her mother's initial distrust, because Judy lives as an insider with Rena. Judy aids in the flu epidemic and also participates in the community food-gathering. Unlike Steve, Judy exhibits a certain level of humility, feeling "disempowered by the powerlessness of her girlfriend and this young woman," and furthermore she can see how "the ignorance of Stacey had power in it" (112). Rather than feeling superior in her knowledge of Western culture, Judy instead chooses to feel how some aspects of her non-Aboriginal knowledge base have no meaning in the Indigenous world. Judy feels more ignorant about Salish people than Stacey and Rena do about non-Aboriginal culture. The comfort that Stacey and Rena feel in Judy's presence because of this non-dominant attitude ensures that "the gulf between them ceased to be a threat" (113). In contrast with the situation that Stacey has with Steve, with Judy "they were all equal in their lack of knowledge" (113) in a non-dominant, non-judgemental relationship. Domination, the Windigo impulse, is a powerful stream that needs to be overcome if one is to perceive an Indigenous perspective. To resist Windigo is a part of Indigenous culture, and is necessary for the act of transformation.

As with Silent Words, some academic criticism of Ravensong is ethnocentric and limiting. For example, scholar Isabel Schneider has commented on Stacey's disorientation as something readers of English literature are unaccustomed to: an "unfamiliar perspective [. . .]. A critical reflection of Euro-American values and modes of behaviour [. . .] often come[s] as a surprise for non-Native readers" (96-97). Schneider seems unaware that decolonization from Windigo can only occur when Euro-American values and modes of behaviour have been critically reflected upon. Moreover, unlike Silent Words, which does not openly condemn non-Aboriginal culture, Ravensong has been identified as a political novel that does. Some critics such as Hartmut Lutz have indicated Stacey's own prejudices towards white town as Maracle's own, claiming that the novel is "overly political and takes a strong anti-colonialist and sometimes openly anti-white stand" ("First Nations Literature" 65) and that "there are few passages within the novel to tell readers that the author does not share Stacey's prejudice" (qtd. in Schneider 97). What is needed

is an Aboriginal literary theory that communicates issues concerning the realities of Indigenous peoples that have yet to be considered by mainstream literary theory.

The reality of the Indigenous experience does have the potential to estrange non-Indigenous readers -- yet it is this very reality that must be acknowledged to hear Raven's song, a reality that results from unequal power relations in societies which force Indigenous peoples to live under colonial conditions. Schneider sees Stacey's reactions to white colonization as Maracle's own "obvious bias" which hampers the effect of a non-Indigenous reader attempting to ascertain a perspective of colonization. Schneider doesn't see that Maracle's reactions are actually sacred expressions of her self and her responsibility as a word-user, orator, writer, and community model for youth. Schneider also refers to an apparent weakness in the cast, an unconvincing and unrealistic portrayal of Stacey's level of intelligence as a 17-year old, and a lack of humour. These are indicated as having a hindering effect. During the flu epidemic, Stacey's descriptions of her cultural values in the form of inner monologues are regarded as limited: "it is told rather than shown. [. . .] Maracle never identifies her nameless village as an actual community nor does she reveal the villagers' tribal affiliation" (97-98). Schneider adds that the novel covers so many issues that "their large number simply results in an overload of themes and topics which weakens the effect of the novel" (106). Ironically, European novels with many themes and topics would be considered richly complex.

As with some criticism of Silent Words and Slash, it is apparent that transformation is a necessary prerequisite in perceiving an Indigenous world view. Without that, Ravensong is not regarded in its totality -- missing the fact that Raven's song is inclusive of all people. Misunderstanding of the ability of Aboriginal people to express and create their own identity, their own reality, and their own perspectives of the colonial experience, hinders both transformation as well as Raven's song. In "outsider" criticism such as this, the experience of an Aboriginal youth is expected to be communicated through a Eurocentric lens, through Western criteria, for Western readers. Little wonder they feel discomfort by becoming "othered" by Aboriginal literature -- a defense mechanism which ignores the fact that Indigenous peoples have always been "othered."

Measuring Aboriginal literature according to Eurocentric standards should be indicated as a form of cultural superiority in which the reader does not desire transformation, or seek to understand the world view of his/her "subject." This approach towards "Native Studies" comes dangerously near to systemic racism -- and in fact, has been identified as, albeit unconscious, racial discrimination in the academic sphere. As McPherson and Rabb have indicated, "not realizing that disassociation from their own Western world view is required, university administrators and academics may think they know what is best for Natives" ("Walking the Talk" 92). As Dominic tells Stacey, dominant cultures often evaluate according to standards set by themselves. To encourage diversity, McPherson and Rabb suggest that academics must change: "to enter into such a radically different network of inferential associations it may be absolutely necessary to become dissociated from our own familiar conceptual schemes" ("Walking the Talk" 90). Transformation, or changing the function and condition of education through bridging cultures and world views, is Raven's message. This message enables a culturally appropriate reading of this novel that escapes literary colonization.

Maracle's writing is expressive of the Windigo expansion outlined in Chapter Two. Stacey's mother sees non-Aboriginal people as "inhuman" beings (193), people who have been resisting Raven since they arrived, spreading bleeding of the earth as an "ulcer" (191). Transformation has been denied since first contact, after which these European Windigo "gobbled up the land, stole women, spread sickness everywhere [. . .]. With each sickness the silence of the villagers grew. The silence grew fat, obese" (191). The silence, the unwillingness of Aboriginal people to accommodate "outsider" approaches will continue to grow until their communities, realities, and cultures are affirmed. This is why an Aboriginal literary theory is also so important: to stimulate awareness of the "insider" and to create the possibility of respect for Aboriginal voices. Reacting to literary colonization, Maracle has asserted her hopes for the future, for non-Indigenous transformation, for writing from the "inside":

> I hope some white people [. . .] start writing about epidemics from the point of view of the person who watched us die. I hope they write about the effect that racism has had on them. I hope we're through with the kinds of novels that focus on writing about us from a distance and not about themselves from within their racial context, a white supremacist context. (qtd. in Kelly 87).

The process of colonization, the Windigo, must be studied in order for decolonization to occur. If it is not, there is the danger that transformation may become violent. Times have changed since Stacey's day in Ravensong, but not all that much. Aboriginal people still have quite a distance to go in decolonization movements. Self-governance, land issues, self-determination in education, and health and welfare are but a few areas where pressure is placed on the dominant society so that structures and institutions are forced to transform to accommodate our young population. This pressure is evident in the contemporary militant Indigenous "radicalism" that will force transformation. A perfect example of this process for change in the life of an Indigenous youth is outlined in Jeannette Armstrong's novel Slash, as we will see in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE: Slash, Assimilation and Cultural Survival

> We "traditionals" don't recognize the Hopi and Navajo tribal councils that your government set up like puppets so they could sign away our land. It's all because the mining companies want the coal, and even more they want the uranium to create nuclear weapons. [. . .] Our Prophecies tell us in the last stages the White Man will steal our lands. It's all happening now. [. . .] The Purifiers are coming. – Thomas Banyacya, Hopi traditional Elder (Arden & Wall, Wisdomkeepers 95)

This quote from an Elder illustrates social and political divisions that have been apparent in most Aboriginal communities in North America since colonial regimes have been enforcing control through legislation. Internalized oppression of this sort can also be described as "Indian fighting against Indian." More often than not, land issues are involved as a focus. Jeannette Armstrong's novel Slash (1985) illustrates these and other problems faced by Indigenous people who wish to retain traditional values and resist assimilation into the dominant society. This novel is also a valuable example of the clash between traditional Indigenous cultures and Western civilization -- an opposition that includes the struggle over ecocide as well as genocide. In responding to this novel, Lee Maracle asserts that a study of these oppressions is especially important to Aboriginal youth: "Slash comes from that inevitable fork in the road that every Native youth faces" ("Fork in the Road" 42). This chapter looks at the fork in the road between assimilation and cultural survival, considering Armstrong's novel in relation to youth, community, and political activism.

Like Ravensong and Silent Words, transformation is at the forefront of Slash. Tommy, the protagonist who earns the name "Slash" in a knife fight, undergoes transformations that reflect those occurring in his chaotic society. The novel's chapter headings are therefore relevant in that they delineate the stages he undergoes: "The Awakening," "Trying It On," "Mixing It Up," and "We Are A People." This series of transformations refers to Tommy's childhood, adolescence, and adulthood, but is also indicative of the degrees of awareness through which he passes towards addressing the social and political problems faced by Indigenous peoples in North America. In the process, he comes to terms with traditional spirituality, connection to community, responsibility as an Okanagan person, and most important -- himself. Tommy's transformations, like those of his

community, are transformations that resist assimilation and foster cultural survival in the face of Windigo sickness.

As scholar Margery Fee notes, Slash indicates that "the process is as much the result of large-scale social changes as of individual will" (177). Slash is also like Ravensong and Silent Words in that Indigenous community, education, traditional teachings, social and political awareness, and the awareness of other-than-human persons, are a large part of Tommy's development. However, Tommy's transformations are unlike Danny's or most of Stacey's, in that they are direct results of, even reactions to, political legislation, activism, and the social upheavals that assimilation and genocide created in his time and place. Tommy is "Awakening" from a state where he was a young child on an Okanagan reserve, unaware of the social, political, and economic issues facing his people. The evolution from a state of initial dormancy mirrors the sudden politicization of Indigenous North Americans in the mid- to late twentieth century.

As he becomes an adolescent, Tommy is "Trying On" the social and political activism that results from his recently acquired consciousness of Aboriginal issues and sociopolitical realities. He gains this consciousness through a youth club after school, which will be discussed more fully in the following pages. Activism comes in the greater collective of Indigenous people of which he is a part, actions that have much to do with the American Indian Movement (AIM) in the 1960's and 1970's in their responses to genocide. Tommy soon joins AIM and travels all over North America, participating in protests and getting involved with substance abuse. Who Tommy and AIM are "Mixing It Up" with, is the dominant society's government, as well as with corrupt tribal officials that support genocide and ecocide. Internalized oppression is a large part of this struggle.

Finally, when Tommy realizes that "We Are a People," his personal development reflects the many transformations that were occurring in Aboriginal communities across North America during this time. He gets married and has a son, recognizing the power of community, unity, female gifts, respect, and the importance of traditional Indigenous perspectives. The anger and frustration of the 1970's became replaced by an even stronger sense of Indigenous traditional spirituality. Yet oppressive impulses are still constantly confronted in Slash's struggles with social and

governmental apathy, his wife's activism, and the horror of her death. One can say that Tommy and his fellow revolutionaries of this time period were actively engaged in battling against the Windigo disease that infected their people, and even themselves.

Slash is quite different from Ravensong or Silent Words in that the focus on sociopolitical realities is paramount throughout, providing impetus for the action. Divisions among Aboriginal people are prevalent throughout the novel, and because of this there is constant tension and the need for healing. In the 1960's and 1970's, perhaps the most apparent social reality in Aboriginal communities was the split between people who chose to assimilate into the dominant society, and those who wished to maintain traditional values and perspectives. The Elders in Tommy's community are the first to notice the effects of education for assimilation on Aboriginal children. Tommy's grandfather Pra-cwa explains that:

> Ever since those young people went to school away from home, they are changed. They don't like our ways. Maybe it's because they only know English. They are ashamed of everything Indian. [. . .] They got no pride. Everything was given to them at that school and they got to liking to live like white people in white painted rooms with electric lights and shitters inside their houses. (26)

Even today, many traditional Elders believe that Aboriginal youth are being slowly assimilated and alienated from their communities and their identity through Western education. As indicated in Chapter One, it has been discovered that this acculturation and identity loss is one direct cause of the current high rates of Aboriginal youth suicide. The situation is thought to be changing through Aboriginal control over Aboriginal education; however, this chapter focuses on a novel where we see that such control is quite an ideological and philosophical challenge to the dominant society's educational institutions.

Slash illustrates the negative effects of Western education that are apparent in Ravensong, but it critiques them even further in elaborating on the divisions that resulted among Aboriginal groups themselves. Some came to support assimilation into the dominant society. Terry Huffman's (1993) study shows that assimilated students do not feel threatened, simply because they have already been absorbed into the mainstream. However, they do feel "bitterness and even resentment towards more traditional Indians. These individuals want little to do with the "old

ways" and feel that "reservation Indians" are ignoring the obvious necessity of adopting a lifestyle more in line with the mainstream" (72). Such attitudes towards a traditional lifestyle are exhibited by some of the characters who attend youth meetings in Slash, the most apparent being Tommy's friend Jimmy.

Jimmy refers to traditional people on the reserve as "stupid and old-fashioned. Nobody needs to talk Indian anymore. My Dad and them are smart. They are up-to-date. We are gonna get a T.V., too. My Dad is working at the sawmill now" (26). Tommy's inner conflict begins when he wonders why his family is so stubbornly traditional. Nevertheless, he does realize the benefits of cultural identity and self-esteem, acknowledging that "there was lots learned because of talking Indian that the other kids missed out on. A lot of it had good feelings tied to it. Like when Uncle Joe and me talked about the hills and all the animals and plants, their names and the legend stories about them" (26). Although Tommy feels the temptation and pull of assimilation, he has learned traditional Okanagan teachings, social ethics, and language to such an extent that his traditional values are simply too strong for him to succumb. He is different from Stacey, who knows that she has to accept the dominant culture into her life for the betterment of her people. Because of Jimmy and others in the community, Tommy rather feels the need to reject the institutions of the dominant society.

Tommy would be classified as what Huffman refers to as a "marginal" student. These individuals encounter difficulties with education because they can identify with both groups as a result of some exposure to traditional ways: they "feel ill at ease with the college setting. On the other hand, these students believe they are not accepted by the mainstream" (73). Tommy is not accepted by non-Aboriginal peers, and does not value his education as a result. What the colonial assimilation process has created is an additional divide-and-conquer mechanism among Indigenous people. The loss of self-esteem and self-respect that result from education for assimilation is a direct result of institutionalized, systemic racism. Moreover, the loss of self-esteem is the very seed that is planted for Tommy's own problems of internalized oppression.

The traditional people in the novel stand in sharp contrast with the assimilationist people. Tommy encounters a young man from Vancouver who is so assimilated that he tells the Youth Club, "young Indian people who were educated were now ready to "shape the future. [. . .] We must learn to use new ideas and open up our lands to development, because lack of money is at the bottom of all of our social problems" (43). Not only does this assimilated character promote ecocide of Indigenous lands, but he also stipulates that the future is dependent on the accumulation of material wealth. Later in his life, Tommy comes to realize that "the putting back together of the shambles of our people in their thinking and attitudes" (148) is more important than politics or money. Finances and funding, or money acquired through treaties and "deals" are not solutions to the social ills that face Aboriginal communities. This has been proven by, for example, the Cree people of Hobbema (York 88-106) whose massive revenues from oil royalties led to massive suicide and large-scale corruption. Fee asserts that "economic power is dangerous without recognizing the need to remedy the effects of cultural dispossession" (174).

Control over people, over wealth, and disrespect for relations are Windigo attributes; however, Tommy's confusion results from the fact that these Eurocentric characteristics are exhibited by an Aboriginal person. Jimmy's attitude is Tommy's first glimpse into the internalized political oppression that is captured in the quote at the beginning of this chapter. The traditionalist/assimilationist split eventually comes to manifest itself in increasing internal conflict in Aboriginal communities. On Tommy's later travels, he is told that "maybe lots of money would just cause more people to die a lot faster. [. . .] The dissatisfaction would still be there" (149). Raised with his Okanagan traditional values, Tommy naturally feels a strong sense of community, connectedness to the land, and responsibility. His reaction must have been representative of many youths: "I really felt confused. I agreed with the young man but I also agreed with Pra-cwa" (43).

The process of assimilation is so strong that, like Stacey, even a strong-willed youth such as Tommy begins to feel the effects of internalized racism: "sometimes I sure hated my looks and my clothes, especially when I wished I could join in some of the lunch hour or after school games

the other kids played." (24). Perhaps most harmful are the Hollywood images of Indians as savages, paradigms created by the dominant society that shape the perceptions and attitudes of his non-Aboriginal peers. Tommy's "awakening" is important in that he becomes aware that assimilation is only a way of being accepted into the non-Aboriginal society. Thinking of the assimilated youth club speaker, he even states that "the only time you are talked to is if you dress and talk like whites and act real smart and rich like that guy at the meeting" (44). He knows that his family has no need for wealth, that they are happy in simple clothing and with living simple lifestyles. Jimmy, however, does hate himself, and assumes a stance of internalized racism: "I feel good when white friends of mine talk and joke with me as if I were like them. They only do that if I wear smart pants and shoes and have money to play pool with. [. . .] Their dads make lots of money and they buy anything they want. [. . .] I hate being an Indian. I hate Indian ways" (44). When Tommy asks why Jimmy's family won't live the way his family does, Jimmy replies that "it's too damn Indian, that's why" (45).

The issue of self-defeating discrimination is one that has become prevalent in many Aboriginal communities. It has also resulted from colonial legislation (eg. Bill C-31, 1985) in which further divisions are created between recently reinstated band members, most of whom had been living in the dominant society for their entire lives, and resident band members. Many members still await status in order to "prove" they are band members. Self-defeating discrimination is a result of Windigo control, of outsiders' laws and regulations that create imbalance in Indigenous community. Further divisions and fragmentation have been created by a system that does little to acknowledge the complexities of diverse issues in Aboriginal sociopolitical realities: urban and non-urban Indians, Aboriginal women and men, and Eastern and Western nations (Wagamese, The Terrible Summer 120, 158). In Tommy's adolescence, these community divisions were only "awakening."

The novel makes direct reference to 1969, when the issue of assimilation became unavoidable. The Government of Canada sought to eradicate all Indian reserves and Indian rights through its "White Paper" legislation. The age-old strategy of "divide and conquer" was again at

work in the colonizers' needs to expropriate Indigenous lands. The Elders in Tommy's community acknowledge the traditionalist/assimilationist schism: "our people are two now. There is us and there is them that want to try all kinds of new stuff and be more like white people. They don't even think like us anymore" (42). Even in Tommy's Youth Club, some young people begin turning against their Elders, calling them "old-fashioned" (42). The White Paper legislation, however, was significant for Aboriginal peoples in Canada because it served as a catalyst for subsequent political mobilization. It provided one's identification as an "Indian" first and foremost. This unified diverse elements of Aboriginal societies into a common whole which was necessary in light of the struggle against genocide.

Tommy's political awakening occurs during his sixth grade of school, when he experiences his first taste of Indian politics in Youth Club meetings. Such meetings, according to scholars Robert Allen Warrior and Paul Chaat Smith (Comanche and Osage) discussed relevant topics in light of the efforts of North American governments to eradicate Indigenous cultures. In particular, Clyde Warrior, a Ponca activist from Oklahoma who was president of the NIYC for much of the 1960's, was instrumental in generating dialogues:

> It wasn't until the workshops and his involvement with the Southwest Regional Indian Youth Council -- a group that started in New Mexico in 1955 with the purpose of drawing young people from various tribes together for educational activities, that he started talking much about that world in terms of where it was headed socially, politically, and economically. (40-41)

In the novel Slash, such meetings are organized by Tommy's community (31, 35-36) and various relevant social and political topics are discussed. One of these topics concerns "fish-ins" on the Northwest Coast in order to protect Indigenous fishing rights -- events that are also apparent in Tommy's subsequent "Trying It On" (70-71).

Tommy is exposed to the rise of social and political consciousness that became a continental phenomenon for Indigenous people in the 1960's. The subject of "fish-ins" figures as a unifying force, where political activity serves to unite all Indigenous people. Even Tommy's own community becomes involved: "it seemed like maybe there was a chance of our people getting together after all" (71). He encounters groups of young, college-educated Native people such as

the NIYC who organize under the "Red Power" banner (40). This early phase of activism, however, was not as effective as were the later actions of AIM. Indeed, compared to the activity of the 1970's, this "awakening" was only a precursor to the larger movements. The rise of political awareness among Aboriginal youth and Aboriginal people in general during the 1960's did not erupt on a large scale until a later date. It was still primarily secular, and did not yet embrace traditional Indigenous conceptions of community, spirituality, and social responsibility. "Red Power groups strongly advocated a policy of Indian self-determination, with the NIYC in particular emphasizing the psychological impact of powerlessness on Indian youth" (Johnson et al 294). This is the adolescent, somewhat premature step towards what Tommy would eventually "mix up."

Unlike most early Red Power leaders and advocates (with the exception of Warrior, who was an outcast for promoting traditional values), AIM leadership proved to be spiritual and also community-based. Rather than simply arriving for fish-in protests and then leaving, the membership consisted of actual community members, who suffered the effects of colonization with their people. Tommy and AIM confront the challenge of extinction throughout Slash. There are references to various AIM activities that draw parallels with what occurred across North America in Indigenous spiritual revitalization, political activism, and growing environmental concerns. Like Tommy's own personal political development, in its embryonic stages the movement was urban. Tommy, however, does not completely accept his spirituality and community until after he learns about himself and his own internal oppression.

Tommy becomes politicized not only through community awareness and youth meetings, but also through the people from whom he learns. Mardi, an urban outreach worker and AIM activist whom he befriends in Vancouver, teaches him much that helps him to understand contemporary genocide and the assimilation process. Mardi is aware of the Windigo disease and traditional perspectives, despite the fact that she was raised and exists in an urban environment: "there is nothing wrong with our ways. Just because our people hate to be grabby, just because they don't knock themselves out like robots at nine-to-five jobs" (69-70). This is information that Tommy comes to value not only because it is a way for him to conquer the schism that his people face,

but also because he faces the threat of a jail sentence. His drug trafficking is a result of his dislocation from community, social frustration, and political confusion. Scholar Noel Elizabeth Currie notes that "it is only after his political "failures" that he falls into binges of drugs and alcohol (and cynicism), although he knows that the partying is self-destructive" (146). He was headed for the "gutter," until Mardi informs him that the reason so many Indians end up there is because they think it is their only alternative other than assimilation: "You see they only give us two choices. Assimilate or get lost. A lot of us are lost" (70).

Mardi advances Aboriginal social and political movements as a "third choice" for the new generation. It is an escape from being assimilated into the dominant society, and also an escape from the poverty-alcohol-urbanization-suicide option born out of despair, pain, anger, frustration, and hate. Mardi's "solution" for Tommy is explained by Currie as an expression of self-determination: "one way to escape the internalized oppression, [of course, is] to revolt against the material oppression. [. . .] Direct political action to change the conditions of oppression" (143). This method implies a level of self-determination and responsibility that was largely unheard of prior to AIM's era, save for some NIYC actions. Tommy seriously ponders this third choice: "I thought about Pops and them. They were neither assimilated nor lost. They were just Indian and they didn't mind one bit" (70). This "third choice" that became available at this point in history has been commented upon more extensively by Douglas Cardinal:

> The current image of Native people is that there is no hope for them as Native people in this new world. We have been programmed for self-destruction. We must understand that a programmed inferiority complex means that someone else has written the script. We must understand that as Native people we have one hundred percent responsibility for our lives. (qtd. in Cardinal & Armstrong 20).

Healing power over cultural definition, the responsibility for programming, and proactively "writing our own script," point towards Indigenous self-determination, culturally appropriate education, and social and political action. It implies transformation, changing the happenings not only of the world but also the function and condition of the community without surrendering identity or culture. Although one impetus for his actions is the search for Mardi after he is let out of prison, Tommy

senses that "it felt good to be with just Indians, young ones, who were seriously attacking a problem only they seemed to understand" (77).

As we saw in Chapter One, Aboriginal writing itself is an act of resistance and responsibility that exerts healing power through self-created definitions of self. It changes, or transforms programming so that Aboriginal people and their cultures may survive. Interestingly, it was in the late 1960's and early 1970's that Aboriginal literature in Canada began to impact mainstream culture. Reference is made to the first staging of George Ryga's The Ecstasy of Rita Joe, which Tommy thinks is an "honest" theatrical production that "kind of looked inside us [Indians], I guess" (54). This willingness of Ryga, a non-Aboriginal, to "look inside" Aboriginal people, to accept Aboriginal definitions and perspectives as valid, entails that the oppressor is acknowledged. This was a step towards Armstrong's solution from Chapter One -- to get non-Aboriginal writers to acknowledge their roles as beneficiaries of Canada's exploitation of Indigenous lands and oppression of Aboriginal peoples. One important part of the reaffirmation of culture, resistance to colonization, and healing power in the arts is an understanding of the colonization process and the oppressor. Thus the education that Tommy receives from Mardi is fundamental for his need to understand contemporary genocide: "They [the government] just want us out of the way, no matter how. It's called genocide. It's what's happening to our people right now. We are dying off because we can't fit in. Help is offered only to the ones that are so-called brown white men. The ones that fit in. Soon there will be no more true red men, with their own beliefs and ways" (69).

Mardi's rhetoric is necessary for Tommy because it provides greater depth and purpose for his activism than merely overcoming the factions and schisms in the Indian world by running away from his community. Maracle has stated that "once we understand what kind of world they have created then we can figure out what kind of world we can re-create" (I Am Woman 116). The first step, then, is acknowledging what Currie calls "the roots of [. . .] oppression on the basis of race, sex, and class in Canada's colonial history" (138). Mardi does this. Decolonization is only possible, she implies, through a study of what I have here called the Windigo sickness of human beings, and how this disease has affected individuals and communities.

As Mardi succeeds with her instruction, she teaches not only Tommy but also the reader. Armstrong's novel thus provides a political education through creative literature, resisting assimilation and promoting cultural healing. Fee notes that such resistance and healing through literary creativity are usually accompanied by what Deirdre F. Jordan refers to as "an ideology and a program of action," or a "*site* for theorizing" for Indigenous youth (qtd. in Fee 169). Mardi has found her site on the street, within Armstrong's novel-site. Maracle is thus correct in asserting that this novel is a guidebook for Aboriginal youth. Fee likewise herself regards Slash as a "work[] not so much aimed at educating white audiences as at strengthening Native readers' sense that there must be a better way to think about themselves than that presented in the dominant discourse" (169).

Ironically, Mardi is a woman who reinforces "male gifts" in Tommy -- some of which are toughness and action -- when what Tommy really requires at this stage is someone who can teach him "female gifts" -- nurturing, caring, and community. Significantly, Mardi is the one who gives him the nickname "Slash" which for him will be a constant reminder of his knife-wound, his prison sentence, and his violent rage. She inadvertently helps lead Tommy closer towards where he is already headed, to an intense anger and hate. Her instruction is beneficial for him, yet it is an exchange that lacks the spiritual dimension he needs. He notices that "she mostly wanted to listen about my home life, about Uncle Joe, and how it used to be on the farm" (61). Mardi is lacking in rootedness to a solid Indigenous community, something that does not escape Tommy's eye for community and tradition. As Currie notes, "Slash sees complexities that Mardi does not, and is therefore unsatisfied with merely material answers. Mardi's understanding is incomplete" (143). Indeed, her instruction that "political activism is [. . .] the means for overcoming internalized as well as material oppression" (Currie 144) cannot function as an Indigenous teaching as it does not include a spiritual dimension. It is imbalanced.

Tommy does overcome the prison experience through his sense of Okanagan spirituality. It is significant that Armstrong chose a prison cell as the site for his spiritual revitalization in light of the developments in recent Indigenous history that were created in prison. In 1968, two Anishnabe men, Edward Benton-Banai and Clyde Bellecourt, met while in the Stillwater State Prison in

Minnesota and formed what would become known as AIM. Bellecourt 's situation closely mirrors Tommy's:

> Bellecourt went on a hunger strike, vowing to die. Fortunately for him and for the Indian movement a young Ojibway spiritual leader, Edward Benton-Banai, was also in Stillwater at the time. Benton-Banai tried throwing food into his Indian brother's cell, but Bellecourt refused to eat. Then Benton-Banai began to teach Bellecourt about Ojibway history, and started to throw literature into the cell. [. . .] Before long the two men were organizing an Indian awareness program in the prison, teaching the spiritual history of their people and preparing Indians to stay out of jail once they got out. (Weyler 35)

For Tommy, cultural identity becomes salvation as it helps him to regain strength and self-esteem, and to endure the pain and injustices of his prison life. In his cell, he undergoes a transformation where his cultural values are reaffirmed:

> In my mind I heard the songs and smelled the fire smoke in the big room where the dances were held. [. . .] I felt tears, warm and real, wet my cheeks and I heard someone singing Uncle Joe's dance song. All at once I heard my cellmate ask softly, "You okay, Tom?" and I realized it was me singing that song. [. . .] I shouted and I knew that everybody in the cell block heard it and felt it. [. . .] I didn't care. I felt okay for the first time in about three or four years. Even the pigs heard it because one of them walked over and stood outside my cell and looked in. I knew they had been watching me close. I guess they know the signs when a man isn't making it. (67-68)

However, it is telling that upon his release he does not return to his community for long. Tommy leaves once again in another attempt to strike out against oppressive forces. He becomes sick with alcohol addiction throughout his "Mixing It Up" in AIM, even though he is aware that the political actions by themselves are lacking. He knows that some activists who promote toughness are "off-key," noting that "something important was missing. They put a whole lot of emphasis on violence and very little on spirituality" (108). His situation mirrors those in most Aboriginal communities, where people have endured so much that "angry young people want to do something. They weren't interested in the Indian tradition aspects so much" (120). Tommy does know that there are others who reinforced the belief that AIM is a spiritual movement, against violence except for defense, and for the guidance of traditional Elders. Tommy sees all these tenets, but asserts that "I wouldn't hear what was being said. [. . .] I was hurting too much inside" (121). Youth who do attend ceremonies, he notes, are "usually quiet and soft-spoken. [. . .] I couldn't face them people too good. [. . .] I guess it was the hate in me" (121).

Tommy's anger is accompanied by a disrespect for women as well as for himself. As his violence burns inside him and the anger builds, he self-destructs with drugs and alcohol. He becomes controlled by Windigo that lights the fires of anger, hate, violence, and self-abuse through addiction inside him. He falls victim to what Beth Brant calls "colonization through addiction" (18). He comes to disrespect the very things that he is trying to protect: his people and culture, and himself. Strikingly, he is aware of the role of women in Indigenous tradition: "it is the women who are the strength of our people. We all know it was the women, too, who shake up the system if they get riled" (153). However, he still rejects this in favour of male dominance. Likewise, he is cognizant that he must return home out of respect for his responsibility as an Okanagan wisdom-keeper, but he rejects this as well.

As Tommy's desires take hold, he becomes unbalanced and the Windigo sickness eats away at him. He admits to being "pretty arrogant in the way we treated them [women]" (122). Maracle affirms that in AIM leadership "the worst dominant, white male traits were emphasized. Machismo and the boss mentality were the basis for choosing leaders. The idea of leadership was essentially a European one" (I Am Woman 126). Female activists often look "silly" to Tommy while the men show a desirable "mean look. [. . .] A mean image" (152). While he hopes and dreams for widespread violence, he also realizes that he is staying away from home, running from something that is within himself: "All I cared about was to keep moving, to keep doing things so I wouldn't have to stop and think" (123).

When occupations and demonstrations are too peaceful and nonviolent, Tommy cannot feel for those events (126). He cannot see how endless talk with no action will solve anything, and as Fee notes, "he does not yet realize how gradual, painful, and repetitive the process of forming a counter-discourse can be" (171). Currie states that at this point, "he will neither transform himself to fit in nor erase himself to avoid offending any of the white middle class. Rather, he will resist in any way that he can -- even to the point of self-destruction" (146). Brant describes this choice as "a choice to live on the Good Red Road, or to die the death of being out of balance -- a kind of 'virtual reality,' as opposed to the real, the natural" (18). Ironically, Tommy, who is supposed to be the "hero" of this novel, conducts his behaviour much in the same way that Nana'b'oozhoo did in

the beginning quote to Chapter Two: he becomes Windigo himself in the midst of protecting his own people from the Windigo. His own uncontrollable selfish desires for control and disrespect are hidden under a self-imposed illusion. This is all apprehended, however, by his Uncle Joe. In the manner of traditional Elder instruction outlined in Chapter Three, he does not judge or scold Tommy but instead guides him towards spiritual beliefs: "don't let the drink and drugs and hate win you over" (133). This provides a spark within Tommy while on his visit home, helping him to begin to feel better.

Tommy's gradual awareness takes place in the 1970's, when many people were beginning to uncover ways in which they could heal their broken communities. Social and political activism, as well as spirituality, were practiced in resistance to genocide, for Indigenous survival in the face of annihilation. AIM activist Leonard Peltier indicates conditions that have been and are still apparent in many Native communities:

> Indian reservations in South Dakota have the highest rates of poverty and unemployment and the highest rates of infant mortality and teenage suicide, along with the lowest standard of living and the lowest life expectancy -- barely forty years! -- in the country. Those statistics amount to genocide. Genocide also disguises itself in the form of poor health facilities and and wretched housing and inadequate schooling and rampant corruption. (54)

To solve these problems, AIM traveled across North America, often in caravans. The novel makes specific reference to the 1972 Trail of Broken Treaties Caravan (95-107), the 1973 Wounded Knee Incident (109-118), the 1974 Kenora Anicinabe Park standoff (143-145), and many other political events. Helping Aboriginal people was AIM's driving impetus, restoring awareness of their control over their own destinies. Tommy realizes that AIM is a blending of Aboriginal cultures, a unifying force of rebirth where all nations retain their distinctness in a communal, political/spiritual renaissance. AIM activists created their own supportive "community" where traditional Indigenous values that advocate harmony and coexistence through respect for solidarity, plurality, and diversity could overcome internal colonization. Currie notes that exposure to the problems of other Aboriginal peoples provides Tommy with insight into how to solve those in his own community.

The threat that this movement posed to internal colonization is perhaps one factor that led to AIM's demise. It may have been internal colonization that led to the movement's demise, or else

infighting within the movement itself. Tommy sees the Windigo in the faces of his own assimilated people: "I thought that was crazy. How in the hell could Indians back up the B.I.A. against their own people, I wondered?" (109), a phenomenon that still occurs throughout North America where Aboriginal communities are ministered to by corrupt tribal band councils and the BIA or DIAND. Although there are many chiefs, councils, and tribal chairmen who have not been co-opted, there are still many who are involved in colonial control over their own people through colonial legislation such as Canada's Indian Act. Taiaiake Alfred notes that:

> Not all Native leaders are bad [. . .]. More and more, however, we find our leaders looking, sounding, and behaving just like mainstream politicians. [. . .] The people who dominate in most Native communities and organizations today model themselves on the most vulgar European-style power wielders. (xv-xvi)

In this form of genocide, the dominating colonial force retains control and power, while cleansing itself of the situation as the colonized struggle against each other, a situation that subjects traditional Indigenous people to a "double" colonization and abuse through nepotism. Maracle has remarked, "I think the survival of all Native people depends on the struggle with that phenomenon in our communities, because we're killing each other" (qtd. in Kelly 87). Currie sees this happening in Slash where "Indian organizations, made up of people who suffer from internalized repression [. . .] hire 'some ex-DIA goat for the cream jobs'" (143). In the United States, the situation is similar: with the implementation of the Indian Reorganization Act in 1934, "the actual net effect -- and probable hidden agenda all along -- was to usurp traditional authority based on a lineage of chiefs or elders, and to replace that authority with governments manageable from the offices of the U.S. Department of the Interior" (Lane 460).

Howard Adams refers to this level of Windigo as "neocolonialism": "By using Aboriginal reactionary regimes, governments can hide their colonial domination behind Native organizations which they finance and support" (130). Such neocolonialists have quite an influence on the community through control of massive government funding, and can easily threaten cultural survival. To complicate the situation further, they have taken to looking "Indian." No wonder that the novel Slash, then, is such a troubling book to many people. Tommy realizes the need "to understand what [internalized oppression] was about so that I could go home and try to do something about it" (110), but he won't acknowledge his own inner divisions.

The entire issue of "full-blood" versus "mixed-blood" Indians is an outside view predicate that has had negative effects on Tommy's community as well as other Indigenous communities. It has only served to further the divide-and-conquer tactics that colonizing governments use to control Indigenous people. The ideology behind such racial distinctions provides a basis for discrimination and runs counter to traditional Indigenous philosophy. Such an ideology has been dividing Indigenous nations since contact. As Smith and Warrior explain,

> The U.S. government egged it on through divide-and-conquer tactics such as rewarding the more pliable group with more rations or, later, educational opportunities, political clout, and jobs. The designations of these groups -- full bloods versus mixed bloods and traditionals versus nontraditionals -- have often been taken as ironclad, biological distinctions, when in fact they are shorthand for a complex set of political, social, religious, and economic differences that have not always held true. (120-121)

Divisions such as this have led to the aggression and violence which are so prevalent in Slash, revealing the Windigo force of colonial legislation. In the process, an "Aboriginal Bourgeois," as Adams refers to them, retains "semi-apartheid" control over the Aboriginal population (124), threatening to suppress and even annihilate traditional people who are connected to Indigenous land bases, and who respect traditional values.

In this respect, Slash highlights another form of contemporary genocide, another form of Windigo, that is intertwined with ecocide: the destruction of Indigenous lands accompanied by the destruction of Indigenous peoples. The novel is a true expression of the land speaking through the realities of Indigenous people. The AIM era eventually came to centre on "wars" between Indigenous land claims and corporate government interests, most notably, uranium mining interests. Tommy's own community is threatened by this development, while B.C. land claims are a prevalent issue throughout the novel. (They still are, as nearly all of B.C. is located on unceded Indigenous land). The most frustrating element about these land wars, though, is that colonial governments have divided the Indigenous people by actively supporting the assimilated Indians, as seen in the Hopi quote at the beginning of this chapter.

Connectedness to the land as a vital part of Indigenous cultural identity plays a major role in an individual's creation of strength in culture. It strengthens resistance to assimilation and genocide and aids the return to traditional values based on respect and community. Tommy's

return to the land of his family and community provides him with a sense of respect that he did not pursue previously: "I moved with my people in the dance of friendship. I felt so strong at that moment, so good, so clean" (138). Here he learns from his cousin Chuck to resist feeding the Windigo, as Chuck says, "I just don't think it's a good idea to feed anger and hate" (141). It is at this time, towards the end of his "Mixing It Up" phase, that Tommy begins to slow down enough to realize some personal truths: "I always felt there was something missing, like there was something wrong about the way things were being approached. It seemed like anything we built on anger and hatred was just as bad" (160). The internalized Windigo sickness that he feels is further identified and opposed by the power of his mother, the female power of his land, and the female power in the nurturing of his family and community. When he returns home to the death of his brother Danny, his mother asks him why "you do the very stuff that you are fighting against?" (166).

Winona LaDuke's new ethic, that people become "patriotic" towards the land, rather than towards a nation, entails that "we must all relearn a way of thinking, a state of mind that is from this common ground" (i). This inclusive statement is in line with a perspective of the teachings that must be relearned in order that all may survive. The ironic "development" of Indigenous peoples is also the divorce from their former lifestyles. A new future would entail an entirely different world view and perception of human relationships with other beings and with the land. Tommy realizes balance from returning to his home ground to stay: "I asked myself some questions that I hadn't wanted to think about before. I asked myself what I was and what I was going to be from then on" (179).

The ways of traditional Indigenous people are deeply connected to the land; however the mere preservation of land is not enough. As an Elder tells Tommy, "in using it, you understand it. That's what our culture is. You protect it by using it" (211). Preservation of a people, of a culture, of a land, are one and the same. In Aboriginal literature one sees a people's realities, and through these realities one can hear the land itself speaking. Tommy finds his own identity in connection to his traditions, people, and community: "I didn't know a lot about really Indian things [....] It seemed to be a big part of what was missing from inside of me" (180).

The land speaks through the words of Tommy's people. It constantly calls him home throughout the novel, throughout his travels, yet he does not listen and suffers an imbalance. For a long time he does not honour the youth connection to Elders, or even the youth connection to land, community, and traditions. By the end, he does, however, come to see "a new feeling or attitude surfacing, different from the early seventies. A strong undercurrent of spiritual awareness seemed to be there, rather than the sheer anger and frustration which seemed to be the motivation before. It was much stronger" (213). What he discovers is female strength and power through traditional spiritual connections to land and community.

Spiritual connection to one's land will always involve politics not only because of colonization, but also because of the commitment and responsibility to one's home community. Peltier states that "You can't really separate the two in Indian Way. The political and the spiritual are one and the same [. . .]. In Indian Way, if you see your people suffering, helping them becomes absolutely necessary" (103). Not only do Tommy's transformations mirror the spiritual transformation of a greater Aboriginal collective, but in this novel the condition of the land also mirrors the condition of Indigenous people. One Elder tells him, "them spirits are crying out to the people, the young people, because the land is in pitiful shape and with it, our people" (133).

Tommy's detoxification and his reconnection to the female power of creation are finally realized through the help of a male teacher named Joe, who "had a gentle strength in a peaceful way [. . .]. You felt his caring [. . .]. I wanted to be like Joe. I wanted to feel again, to care, to love" (199). Joe guides Tommy to sweat lodge purification ceremonies. He is transformed, reborn, through a return to female energy, the Mother Earth. McPherson and Rabb indicate that "the sweat lodge itself, that low dome-shaped structure, dark, hot, and moist inside is associated with the womb. To emerge from a Sweat, at least when it is a healing ceremony, is to be reborn, transformed spiritually" ("Walking the Talk" 97). Tommy learns to appreciate sacred ways which are connected to the land, approaches that Currie notes "he has long been unable to integrate into his politics" (147). Part of what Tommy realizes about identity and spirituality is the role of "the Okanagan notion of feminine 'soft power'" (Blackfoot student, qtd. in Hodne & Hoy 76). As one character, who is a traditional Elder in a novel by Richard Wagamese, points out:

> Women got more power than men on accounta they can give life. More power. Spirit power. The old people taught that women were more holy than us men an' us we had to treat them with the most respect we had inside us. [. . .] We get told as men that we gotta be strong, gotta be fearless. Lotta us kinda start ignorin' the gifts of our mother. Go through life just usin' gifts of the father. Bein' tough, makin' our own plans, livin' in the head. But if you do that you can't be whole on accounta you gotta use both of them equal setsa gifts to live right [. . .]. Like gentleness an' nurturin', livin' in the heart. That's where the female power comes from. [. . .] Busy bein' incomplete [is] not our way (Keeper'N Me 114-115)

What Tommy has required all along for healing and balance is available to him in his home community. It is even prescribed to him by Uncle Joe and others throughout the novel. Currie notes that his search "could have been avoided if he had only accepted the example of his parents" (148). One important fact she makes note of is that Slash is never truly accepted into militant politics; he is always an outcast because he is aware that something is missing: "he sees that something is missing and he asks too many questions about it" (145). He eventually becomes aware that he requires transformation just as much as his society does. He is so caught up in Windigo infection from the dominant society, and the constant dislocation as a result of leaving his home, that he is part of "the sad, dominant society that embraces death even as it fears it, does not understand that recovery is transformation, and transformation is an act of love" (Brant 47).

Tommy finds land, healing, political activism, community, and traditional spirituality are all available in an Okanagan woman named Maeg, who helps him to integrate all of these into his life. Beth Brant notes that all people who seek wholeness can find it through "activism. Political involvement in issues that threaten land and peoples. [. . .] It is no surprise that First Nations writers are also activists" (32, 39). When the land speaks through the realities of the people, true power and healing, balance, and coexistence are realized. Tommy's life is altered considerably as he sees that Maeg concentrates her activist efforts not on destruction, anger, hate, and violence, but on child welfare issues, Constitutional issues of 1981-82 (to entrench Aboriginal rights in the Canadian Constitution for future generations), and environmental concerns. Armstrong states that "the way he comes to terms with real strengths, in terms of human strength [. . .] *that* development is an important one for males! [. . .] It's important from my point of view

that I'd take a male and transform him into that, through female power" (qtd. in Lutz, Contemporary Challenges 18).

Concern for growth and community becomes Tommy's main concern after he and Maeg create a son. His social thinking changes noticeably: "maybe it's not too late after all. Maybe the seed is starting to sprout finally. Maybe it will grow" (249). This female power of life and growth was so strong in Indigenous cultures that, especially in societies that were matrilinear and matrilocal, "attempts at cultural genocide of gynocratic tribal peoples were and are in part attempts to destroy gynocracy" (Currie 140). Maeg is a strong symbol of healing and decolonization for Tommy, who can now realize a healthier, more balanced revolution that affirms life. The importance of children, youth, community, and land to Indigenous thinking is apparent through the pair's activist work, "which includes protecting the rights of their child (who is, like the land, their stake in the future), [thus] they plant the seeds which can make revolutionary changes" (Currie 149).

This controversial novel does have the potential to distance non-Native readers, as Manina Jones has demonstrated with her critical survey. Slash has been identified by Helen Hoy as "not readily assimilable into a Western literary tradition" due to the fact that it "necessitates a confrontation for non-Native and feminist readers with questions of subject position and cultural hegemony" (Hodne & Hoy 68). It does not fit into any Western framework, being a true expression of Indigenous realities. Betsy Warland has stated that "as a white woman, I have no context in which to accurately place this book" (qtd. in Jones 50), while Frank Davey has noted that there is "difficulty in white reception of the novel" (qtd. in Jones 50). Finally, Lynette Hunter has stated that the novel is incapable of being understood because it is "too different" (qtd. in Jones 50). Dealing with the themes raised in Slash ranges from anxiety to what Jones describes as "critical embarrassment" (51). Many have considered the novel to be unworthy of literary merit (51), which seems to be a typical reaction to some Native literature that Renee Hulan describes as "too political" (qtd. in Jones 52). Similar to some reactions to Ravensong and Silent Words, the non-Aboriginal reader can encounter difficulties with Indigenous realities and perspectives as a result of their being "othered." Beth Brant has long acknowledged that "our work is considered

'too political' and we do not stay in our place -- the place that white North America deems acceptable" (8).

However, some critics do see the transformative nature of Slash. Hoy notes that some students "welcome the book's decentring power and [. . .] question the limitations of western literary standards" (72). Fee has acknowledged her own limitations, and the need for Indigenous literary perspectives: "as various 'experts' carry on discussing their ideas without reference to the ideas, opinions, and feelings of their 'subject(s)'; I cannot believe that my writing is immune" (178). Fee, like Maracle, notes that this novel provides a story and site for Aboriginal youth. Aboriginal readers finally receive a literary voice, "what white Canadians take for granted -- a first-person voice that does not implicitly exclude them" (172). Maracle feels that this novel is an answer to what Chapter One verified as literary colonization: namely empowerment and employment of Aboriginal people through their own literature. She states that "pedagogy for Native people has always focussed on the story that would help to sort out youthful confusion. [. . .] Slash is a modern such story, written for our youth" ("Fork in the Road" 42).

Slash is different from Ravensong in that it focuses solely on Aboriginal issues, completely ignoring the non-Aboriginal reader. Instead, it performs one of the functions that Mardi's instruction did for Slash. As Fee suggests, the "fiction provides both a mode and a site for theorizing that will reach these young people" (170). The ideal readers, then, are Aboriginal youth who are caught in the same anger and hopelessness to which Slash succumbs. Critics must be aware of the extent to which this novel gives them hope. As Hoy indicates, an "alternative" method of reading this novel is required; following "the intrinsic approach" called for by Armstrong and Maracle: "reading from the inside out" (70). Hoy is also aware of a danger she refers to as "cultural impersonation" (80) in this approach. Armstrong herself, Hoy indicates, has elaborated on the cultural appropriation and cultural imperialism that occurs when non-Aboriginal people speak with a voice that sounds as if they have experienced the Aboriginal perspective. The solution is similar to what we proposed in Chapter One: Aboriginal people must assume positions in educational institutions that do not practice education for assimilation.

The lack of character development that non-Native critics have discussed with respect to Aboriginal literature is, in Slash, an expression of Tommy's connectedness to his "outer world." Armstrong felt that "in the writing process I couldn't isolate the character and keep the character in isolation from the development of the events in the community, and the whole of the people" (qtd. in Lutz, Contemporary Challenges 16). She has claimed that it is impossible to perform both tasks. In fact, this aspect of the creative process, of an Aboriginal character's development being a part of community development, is "how we are as a people, in terms of our thinking and doing things" (qtd. in Lutz, Contemporary Challenges 16). Fee likewise acknowledges the importance of seeing beyond individual characteristics in favour of seeing characters as part of a generation, and beyond to the reader: "the characters in the novels *and* their Native readers, are hailed as precious members of a threatened group" (172).

We identified the Indigenous community as part of the Indigenous creative writing process in Chapter One. This communal factor, however, can be difficult to define when attempting to evaluate Aboriginal literature through Eurocentric frameworks since individual and community healing are linked. Currie is aware that to overcome internalized oppression, self and community must be reconnected: "it is through understanding and acceptance of the traditional ways that healing can begin for the community" (147). It is therefore best to read this literature through an "inside" position. The "Indian approach," Currie notes, is more productive because it involves individual, community, the writer's responsibility, and transformation -- what we outlined in Chapter One as parts of an Aboriginal "insider" approach. Currie agrees with Maracle that not only does it provide "a sense of self and our importance to community" (I Am Woman 50), but also "a sense of responsibility and a sense of power [;] it improves the analysis and proposed solutions" (148).

Furthermore, politics and Aboriginal literature are closely related. They are what connect Slash to his community: "A return to tradition and spirituality does not isolate and disconnect Slash from the physical world and those painful political realities; rather, it connects him to himself" (Currie 150-151). As we have seen in Chapter One, Aboriginal epistemology involves a continuous connecting circle of the inner and outer worlds. Arden and Wall noticed this in their meetings with

spiritual Elders: "We were looking for the spiritual, not the political, but were quickly discovering that the two are often one and the same" (Travels 83). This connection between traditional thought, pedagogy, politics, and literature has always been present in oral narratives and forms a powerful part of Native literature today:

> Native authors show similarities in the way they attempt to encourage a response-able way of reading -- an imaginative, interactive, participatory creation of story. More than that, I believe that Native literatures have supra-literary intentions. They want to come off the page and effect life. [. . .] Native stories have goals beyond entertainment just as their predecessors in the oral literatures did. They work to make us into communities, form our identity, ensure our survival. Native authors, like authors of many postcolonial cultures, write revolution. (Blaeser, "Writing Voices Speaking" 65)

Tommy's experience is an example of Indigenous sociopolitical realities being manifested in the individual's inner world. He actively reaches out to change his world, or alter his universe, through the many dialogues and actions that he shares. These active elements of survival and identity are alive in Aboriginal literature because it is resistance writing as well as healing power. The spiritual dimension is a large part of Aboriginal pedagogy and life that cannot be forgotten, but neither can the physical dimension relating to the land, as the reader learns from Tommy's experience. The physical dimension leads to dispossession, socioeconomics, and legislation. Armand Ruffo asserts that "as the tradition of Native spirituality is inherent in the literature, beginning with European contact, so, too, is the tradition of addressing historical, secular concerns" (110).

Not only does Aboriginal story blend individual identity with community or nation, and spirituality with history or politics, but it also blends fiction and nonfiction. Cree publisher Greg Young-Ing notes that most Aboriginal stories are strongly connected with nonfictional social and political concerns:

> For example The Fourth World by George Manuel, Maria Campbell's Halfbreed, Harold Cardinal's Unjust Society and Howard Adam's Prison of Grass. They were talking about political, social, and cultural issues, but they were also telling stories of their own lives and how the two blended together. There was even some storytelling in those books. So it was creative non-fiction. The tradition has continued to the present day and Aboriginal authors have always blended genres. I think it comes from the Oral Tradition, partly. Another thing I think it comes from is that, as Aboriginal peoples, one thing that distinguishes us from others is that we have a sense of multi-levels of reality in our lives. (qtd. in Marsden 30-31)

Armstrong asserts that Slash is "eighty-five percent [. . .] non-fiction and fifteen percent [. . .] fiction. The part that's fictionalized is the main character who carries the story but the rest of it is all non-fiction" (qtd. in Marsden 27). The novel is thus a blending, "insider" account of Indigenous social, political, cultural, historical, spiritual, and ideological realities.

A solution was available to Tommy the whole while, but he did not see it. The Red Power activists of the 1960's sought solutions for Aboriginal youth through creative political acts resulting from transformation. Clyde Warrior described this as "genuine contemporary creative thinking [. . .]. The guidelines and cues have to be *based on true Indian philosophy geared to modern times*" (qtd. in Steiner 306), in effect a blending of traditional world views so that they can adapt to contemporary situations through activism. Re-connection with traditional perspectives is what the later politically active youth struggled to implement in AIM, to promote cultural survival and to resist assimilation. This is what we have applied throughout this entire literary analysis.

CONCLUSION

> The continued survival of future generations depends upon the health of the rest of creation. Protection and survival of the land with its natural inhabitants is a supreme imperative of life. [. . .] Greater imagination and creativity is required to recognize and maintain the long term benefit inherent in the principle of peace than to abandon it for short term victory [. . .]. Native peoples are contributing to the vision of a world which is non-adversarial and a world in which all cultures, all peoples and all life is cherished. It is a vision which I strive toward and which I believe is the intent of creation. — Jeannette Armstrong, Okanagan (qtd. in Cardinal & Armstrong 50, 119)

I am concluding here with the voice of Jeannette Armstrong, whose views stress the importance of creativity on the part of all people in order to overcome Windigo disease. As the previous chapters have demonstrated, we do live in a Windigo culture, a death culture, which seeks to swallow not only land but also language, culture, and literary voices. According to Eleanor Sioui, "we're all wounded, not just Indian people, but all of us have been wounded by the culture that has split us from the natural world, from our inner lives, and from our dreams" (qtd. in Francis & Bruchac 36). Indigenous people have particularly been ravaged by the Windigo advances of European colonization and are struggling to preserve land and culture through resistance and survival. Non-Indigenous people need to recognize this when approaching our literature. Moreover, as Armstrong asserts, writers from the dominant society must acknowledge the ongoing colonization of Indigenous lands and peoples. The inclusion rather than exclusion of Indigenous views, sociopolitical realities, and ways of thinking, is a solution that holds potential because we can then study colonization for the purpose of decolonizing, for healing, to realize a world beyond Windigo where we all can heal.

As we saw in Chapter One, Aboriginal theorists such as Sioui demonstrate the therapeutic capacities of Indigenous literature, which does require examination through its own "insider" perspectives. Too many critics are working from outside Aboriginal cultures, missing the communal meanings of the texts and the connection to the land. Thus they colonize Aboriginal literature with their own Eurocentric interests and values. My alternative is to suggest an Indigenous literary criticism that reads Aboriginal literature as a challenge to the Windigo impulse as manifest in Eurocentrism and in contemporary realities and sensibilities. To take up this sacred challenge is itself part of a transformation process. Tommy in Slash acknowledges his self-

determination through transformation: "the only way that we can really gain control is for us to really change. It means we're going to have to rebuild ourselves" (218). Therefore, we won't have the non-adversarial world until Windigo sickness is cured through transformation.

A part of this change entails what Tommy discovers as "the responsibility of Indian people to educate the ignorant non-Indians about our role as human beings on this earth" (204). Mr. Old Indian stresses this same sentiment in Silent Words, as does Raven in Ravensong. It is what Danny learns from the land, and is the driving principle behind Raven's song. We must all become "new people." However, we must also see that transformation does not entail Indigenous people "converting" non-Indigenous people to our ways. It does have very much to do with formulating a new dialogue, with creating a new site for cultural exchange. The current site is unacceptable. As Beth Brant states,

> A person does not become an Indian by participating in a sweat, or observing a Sun Dance, or even working on political issues that affect our nations. One cannot choose to be Indigenous like one chooses new clothes or chooses a new brand of toothpaste. One is not Indigenous because they believe in our values. But the prophecy of New People *can* mean the beginning of a different kind of discourse between nations and races. (89)

Non-Indigenous people are drawn to Indigenous identity because there is something lacking in their own culture. This element in them that is lacking is what must be studied -- not us. Knowledge of their own culture as Windigo is not meant for them to reject a part of themselves. This behaviour would create an imbalance. Rather, it must be accepted and studied and transformed so that we all can move on. Rather than seeking unconditional acceptance in Indigenous community, or else appropriating Indigenous voice and culture, they should help us defeat Windigo through their own honesty and courage. They should dialogue with us on our literary terms, and not theirs: they should criticize their own governments and structures that hold us down, under colonization. We will control the mode and method of exchange, we will "gain control for us to really change" so that "we can rebuild ourselves" in the midst of ongoing colonization. Aboriginal literature is, after all, our words, our spirits, our literature, our culture, our stories, and our healing, not theirs. Until our realities are accepted, transformation will not occur and colonization will continue.

Chapter Two shows how the Windigo is a teaching that embodies a move towards coexistence and balance. We are all living in a Windigo society that will remain Windigo until all people have acknowledged it as such. Everyone will heal when Aboriginal thought, our medicine, is accepted by the dominant society. We must be able to offer our gift of vision to the world. The world is unbalanced without it. All other races have contributed their own gifts to humanity; now it is our turn to offer our gift of vision. This will defeat Windigo. This thesis demonstrates how this gift is available in our literature. Brant sees that our "writing does become the Good Medicine that is necessary to our continuation into wholeness. And when we are whole our voices sail into the lake of *all* human experience" (13).

Chapters Three, Four, and Five focus on three novels that show the importance of respect for the land, transformation of everyone for the future of our youth, and resistance to assimilation in the struggle for cultural survival of the community and our sense of values. All three novels seek to bridge tradition with modernity without losing sight of these values. Youth such as Tommy, who are aware of themselves and the dominant society, are the solid bridges that Raven wants Stacey to be. Tommy's whole life is an effort to bridge out to all peoples. Could Steve have been a bridge, for the non-Aboriginal people? Perhaps, but he wouldn't listen to Stacey's Indigenous reality, so she sent him back across the bridge to his own people. Could Danny be a bridge? Definitely, if governments will one day end their Windigo psychosis and listen to people like Mr. Old Indian or Ol' Jim.

The novels, particularly Slash, show that assimilation and cultural survival are still top priorities for us. We still must struggle as aliens in our own land, under the dominant non-Aboriginal majority. Noel Elizabeth Currie understands that breaking generations of silence "by naming the oppressors, the process of oppression, and the effects of that oppression is part of the political and spiritual path to healing and change" (150). Currie believes that this is a new creativity that will arise from our own people. It will be "based on a people's own definition of their priorities and integrated with political analysis and activism [;] this faith is the foundation for pro-action rather than re-action" (150). As we have seen, Aboriginal literature accomplishes this through its connection to land and community, its political nature, its focus on healing, power and future

generations. Aboriginal literary criticism should do the same. This is what I have done in this thesis: defined my people's priorities, and integrated these with activism and analysis in a spiritual, pro-active sense that advocates healing and transformation.

Equality must happen, or else the "insider/outsider" dichotomy will remain. Our communities and youth will continue to suffer. Notably, these novels all end with epilogues that follow violence, deaths, or suicides: Danny shoots his father, Stacey's nephew commits suicide, and Maeg is killed in an accident. This is Aboriginal reality, disturbing to many non-Aboriginal people but everyday reality for us. We must all confront this and not use "postcolonial" jargon that does not benefit our communities. We must read these epilogues this way: over one-third of all Aboriginal deaths are due to accidents and violence, compared to 8% for the general population (Frideres 181). Why? As Weaver explains, the criticism and theory dominating literary criticism "most often has been merely form or source criticism, scrutinizing texts for elements taken from orature or ceremony and for indices of Indianness as defined by the dominant culture" (164). As non-Aboriginal people scrutinize our literature this way, all the while our realities go unheard, and we die in greater numbers.

Youth, community, land, and literature are things that we must protect. We must be aware of how the fragile sense of self-esteem and identity of Aboriginal youth is too often shattered by insensitive English teachers who don't acknowledge our own unique language and literacy skills. This is an important issue in each of these novels. In Slash and Ravensong, both Tommy and Stacey are intelligent individuals, yet they struggle with teachers and school administrators. In Silent Words, Danny dreads returning to school life in the town. The characters in these novels could all have easily become suicidal through shattered self-esteem and identity. In fact, Ravensong is actually a story that Stacey is telling twenty-five years later, as the answer to a question of why her nephew shot himself. "Because," she explains, after she received her education degree, "they would not let us build our school. No one in white town would hire me either" (198). Her nephew did not want to go to school in white town. Unfortunately, the modern education system still has much work to do before Indigenous students feel fully at home there. In fact, Eber Hampton notes that students who see the non-Aboriginal teacher "as an enemy" have

a "more realistic, and, in some ways, more hopeful view" (7) since they are aware of the ongoing colonization and are able to oppose that with their traditional sense of values.

As I have argued in this thesis, it is time for a pro-active theory of Aboriginal literature that avoids the Windigo impulses of colonization. We need to work hard to enable transformation in education and in the community. A 1995 study by Ron Mackay and Lawrence Myles shows that English literature study has been identified as one area that contributes greatly to Aboriginal student dropout. Avenues such as this thesis call on Aboriginal students to drop "in" rather than "out." Weaver indicates how, "in a recent exchange, Robert Warrior asked Joy Harjo how Native intellectuals could make their work part of their communities. She replied that the Native writer should always be responsible to community" (166). That responsibility is the key to insider participation, and hence to transformation.

Furthermore, Indigenous youth and community are inseparable, as Taiaiake Alfred notes:

> From any perspective, indigenous or mainstream, it is dangerous to ghettoize "youth" concerns as a separate set of issues [. . .]. The truth is that there is no separating the problems facing young people from those of the society as a whole. To take indigenous traditions seriously means to have a vision for the future; and the current situation of indigenous youth provides a crystal-clear picture of the general state of our communities. (129)

Our youth are in danger. We must address the dismal rates of Aboriginal withdrawal from post-secondary education: only 9% of 40 000 students graduate (Frideres 165). Education for assimilation is directly related to dropout, as we noted in Chapter One, since Eurocentric educational institutions too often cause us to lose our identity. A 1996 study of American Indian college students conducted by Terry Huffman showed that at one particular university,

> Many American Indians are culturally closer to the mainstream than some ethnic non-Indians. [. . .] None of the assimilated students had participated to any great extent in American Indian traditional ways. This was true even for those raised on reservations. None of the students could even marginally speak a native language. [. . .] Their cultural background can be characterized as nominal to no association with traditional life and ways. (237-239)

There are varying levels of cultural background, where both assimilated and marginal students, and all the ranges in between, must struggle. However, the Western education system's goals have always remained constant: to assimilate us into the mainstream society. Marginal Aboriginal students have particular needs that are neglected, such as the use of non-standard English "with

little exposure to the academic English commonly used in textbooks and classrooms" (Mackay & Myles 164). For many of us, English is a second language that threatens to displace Aboriginal languages and cultures. Yet avoidance is not the answer. Pedagogical problems in the English discipline negatively affect the social life of Aboriginal youth:

> Educators suggested that discomfort with English leads to avoidance behaviour. Students with weak language skills may remain silent in class and this may be interpreted by teachers as unwillingness to participate or even to pay attention in class. (Mackay & Myles 164)

Clearly, chances of finishing university are quite small for disadvantaged Aboriginal people.

However, when an Aboriginal person connects with his or her cultural identity, he or she becomes "a valuable member of a meaningful universe. [. . .] The individual can be judged of value [. . .]. Self-esteem therefore consists of viewing oneself as a valuable participant in a meaningful cultural drama" (Solomon et al 97). The novels studied here can help youth to change their functions and positions in the world. To avoid vulnerability, they can "focus[] on maintaining self-esteem, which requires some internalized world view, and satisfaction of culturally prescribed standards of value" (Solomon et al 97). Self-esteem must be realized for us in literature studies that are transformed by insider awareness of Aboriginal realities into a site of theorizing that will accommodate us. Through contact with Elders/2/, transformation and Aboriginal self-determination in education can offer self-esteem and cultural identity.

On a positive note, one result from Huffman's study of assimilated Indian students showed changes:

> Some of the assimilated students who began their college careers as disinherited actually became inherited during the course of their studies. [. . .] It is possible for assimilated students to alter the nature of their ethnic identity. In a few cases those who started out as assimilated/inherited endeavoured to become bridges between traditional American Indians and non-Indians. (250-251)

This demonstrates that Raven's song is heard by some transformers, by some social architects. Transformation, rather than static culture, is the key to this solution. There is the potential for all people to learn healing and transformation through Native literature as studied through traditional, community knowledge-based, Indigenous perspectives. In this form of literary self-determination,

"Native literature, and the criticism that surrounds it, needs to see more attention devoted to specifically tribal concerns" (Womack 1). Literary theories emanating from the core of the culture in question, such as the Windigo teaching of human oppression, would be able to engage Indigenous people in a dialogue about their literature, rather than dictating the terms of such a dialogue. Building on past generations of Native thinkers and writers, one can hope to formulate theories from Indigenous tradition. There are so many to formulate! Creek Scholar Craig Womack has claimed that this solution is inevitable. Theories will "rise out of a historical reality wherein Native people have been excluded from discourse concerning their own cultures, and Indian people must be, ultimately will be, heard" (5). The land will be allowed to speak through us in open-ended visions rather than closed dictates or strict prescriptions.

I will conclude in an open-ended style, much in the same way as a traditional story, leaving questions for the reader to realize and answer. Traditional stories, such as Windigo narratives, have been told on the North American continent long before the arrival of Europeans. They predate any non-Indigenous canon. Can Windigo be realized, confronted, defeated, and passed down through the generations, so that it can be avoided, and we can all live in respect? Will we be able to recognize Windigo when we see it in people? This is what we always did. This is what I am attempting to do here. Recognizing Windigo is only one of the ways that helped us to see and to live in coexistence, harmony, peace, and balance. I believe that traditional orature, prophecy, and teachings will serve as what Lee Maracle calls a "well-spring for Native writing" (qtd. in Hodne & Hoy 74) and as entry points for Aboriginal literary theory. Yet to realize this vision, we must remember that Aboriginal literature is not "some branch waiting to be grafted onto the main trunk. Tribal literatures are the *tree*, the oldest literatures in the Americas [. . .]. We *are* the canon" (Womack 7).

NOTES

/1/ The coming decades will be crucial times, particularly for North Americans, as Juaneno scholar M.A. Jaimes indicates:

> The destruction wrought by the technology and the homogenizing tendencies of modern post-industrial society is staggering. The statistical picture in terms of human overpopulation on the planet is bleak. There are presently 5.4 billion people on the planet today. Between 2030 and 2050, 10 billion people will be competing for the Earth's resources. In addition, developed countries, such as the U.S. and Canada, greatly contribute to the destruction of the planet through over-consumption, which itself is a result of overpopulation and over-consumerism. This is illustrated in a sobering trend. With only five percent of the world's people, the U.S. used one-third of the world's flow of non-renewable resources and one-fourth of the gross planetary production of goods and services. The average U.S. citizen uses nearly three hundred times as much energy as the average citizen, for example, in Bangladesh. In 1992, as many as 17,500 plant and animal species will disappear forever. The number of endangered animals on the list maintained by the U.S. Department of the Interior has grown from seventy-eight species on the original 1967 list to more than 1,200 which are facing imminent extinction today...Although extinction is considered a natural phenomena, what is unnatural is the rapid and alarming rate at which this is occurring in the modern age. Humans are the primary cause of this mass extinction. In the dystopia of modern technology society, there is a tendency to downplay the overall ecological blight of the modern world or to reduce the discussion of the issue to a federal budget problem (273-274).

/2/ Recent studies in psychology have confirmed the importance of self-esteem and cultural identity in human survival. The inevitability of death has been identified as a particular human awareness. It is the cognizance of a situation that is the source of perpetual anxiety, and as a result, human beings have confronted this problem "symbolically, through the creation of culture [. . .]. To minimize the anxiety associated with the awareness of death" (Solomon et al 96). Human beings who share a conception of the universe that is culturally maintained with other humans are buffered from the terror and uncontrollable reality of death, as cultural world views can offer meaning, order, stability, and permanence.

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