

“This Is Our Land!”
Indigenous Rhetoric and Resistance on the Northern Plains

by

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Abstract

This thesis examines Indigenous rhetorics of resistance from the Treaty Six negotiations in 1876 to the 1930s. Using methods from Comparative Literature and Indigenous literary studies, the thesis situates the rhetoric of northern Plains Indigenous peoples in the context of settler-colonial studies, Indigenous literary nationalism, and Plains Indigenous concepts of nationhood and governance, and introduces the concept of rhetorical autonomy (an extension of literary nationalism) as an organizing framework. The thesis examines the ways Plains Indigenous writers and leaders have resisted settler-colonialism through both rhetorical and physical acts of resistance. Making use of archival and published works, the thesis is a literary and political history of Indigenous peoples from their origins on the northern plains to the period of political organizing after World War I.

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Introduction

If we are to be part of the Canadian mosaic, then we want to be colourful red tiles, taking our place where red is both needed and appreciated.

- Harold Cardinal (Sucker Creek Cree First Nation)¹

What follows is the report of a journey. In 1999, I took an undergraduate class in history at the University of Toronto, a class about the colonization of the western hemisphere.

Reading about Columbus, Cortez, and Brébeuf – and reading what they had written – introduced me to historical inquiry and working with primary sources. But more importantly, it taught me that almost everything I had learned previously about the history of the Americas was inadequate, inaccurate, and/or distorted. In that class I was also introduced to the writing of Vine Deloria, Jr. (Standing Rock Lakota), the first Indigenous Studies scholar I had read. It was probably the first published work by an Indigenous person I had ever read. By the end of the year-long course, my life had changed. I learned that the University of Toronto offered a major in Aboriginal Studies. From my room in Sir Daniel Wilson residence at University College, I phoned the program's director, the linguist Keren Rice, and asked if I could enroll as a major. The next fall, and for the rest of my degree, I took as many Aboriginal Studies courses as I could, classes on the Ojibwe language, as well as history, law, policy, spiritualities, literatures, and oral traditions. I felt called to use my degree in Aboriginal Studies and History to work toward social justice.

In 2006, after completing a master's at McGill where I was privileged to work with historians who had studied at some of the best universities in the world, I arrived in Amiskwacî, the Beaver Hills region (Edmonton), with a vague idea for a thesis in Comparative Literature, an idea that would morph and evolve until the day I read about the

injustices faced by the Papaschase band – over a year after I had moved to Edmonton – and in a book edited by a Kanien'kehá:ka (Mohawk) graduate of my program and given to me by my doctoral supervisor.² As I dug deeper and conducted research, I learned the reconstituted band had a land claim in progress. I e-mailed the band's chief, Rose Lameman, and walked across the High Level bridge on a bitterly cold night to meet lawyer Ron Maurice, in an attempt to learn as much as I could about the band's claim – which, as I discuss in Chapter Seven, would eventually be rejected by the Supreme Court without a fair hearing. I knew what I needed to write about: the displacement of Indigenous peoples from the Treaty Six region and the peoples' resistance to this displacement. My friendship with Cherokee Nation scholar Daniel Heath Justice, whom I met at the University of Toronto, influenced the way I would conceptualize and frame my work; Indigenous literary nationalism, which I first learned about in a class taught by Simon Ortiz (Acoma Pueblo) and of which Justice was a leading theorist, would guide my thinking over the next several years.

I am a settler-colonist, raised in a working class family in Wendake, the traditional territory of the Wendat confederacy. My maternal grandfather's parents, William Albert Spiker and Sarah Ann (Pilkey) Spiker, moved to Midland, Ontario in the early 1920s, where my great-grandfather opened a barber shop in a hotel near the rail line that brought grain from the west to be loaded on freighters that carried it east via the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence River. My grandfather, Morley Grant Spiker, would work at the shipyards and then at the grain elevator, which would regularly be visited ships owned by Canada Steamship Lines. (I can still picture the *CSL Tadoussac* docked beside the grain elevator that now boasts a huge mural of Jean de Brébeuf.) I am the third generation of my family born

and raised in Midland; as a child I would get my hair cut by my great uncle, and later by my mother's cousin, at Spiker's Barbershop, which my family continues to operate on the town's main street. Aside from touristy visits to Sainte-Marie among-the-Hurons (the recreated 17th century Jesuit mission where my younger sister, Katie, once worked as an interpreter)³ and school projects on "the Hurons" – for which I once borrowed, as a secondary source, a similar assignment my uncle had done in the 1960s – I learned very little about the Wendat people who had built a densely populated horticultural society in the place my family has called home for almost a century. And now I have made a home in Edmonton, where my great-uncle Jack Hendrickson played for the hometown Flyers during the 1957-58 and 1958-59 seasons between brief stints with the Detroit Red Wings. I approach my scholarship with all the privilege that such an upbringing affords me; on one hand I may earn the first doctorate that I know of in my family's history and my grandfather lives in the same six-room wartime house that he and my grandmother bought in 1953. On the other hand, I am white and male and have faced no systemic barriers in my life. So I approach my work with humility and a feeling I call responsibility; I am responsible to the land I now call home, to the people and nations who have allowed me to live here, and I am responsible for doing my utmost to interpret our collective stories in a way that is honest, truthful, and just. What follows, then, is a report of my journey.

This thesis is about resistance and rhetoric on the northern plains until the early 20th century, focused within the Treaty Six region and, more specifically, Amiskwacî, the Beaver Hills, of which Edmonton has become the centre. It is something of a literary history in the tradition of Daniel Justice and Craig Womack (Muskogee/Cherokee). It is a political history,

examining what I've learned about Nêhiyaw (Plains Cree) governance and political traditions. I will point to numerous instances of Nêhiyaw leaders, politicians, activists, writers – as well as many other often unheard voices that emanate from the Plains bands of the Cree nation – who have actively named, described, affirmed, explained, and lived their right to autonomy and separateness. The consistent theme of this thesis will be that despite the physical and rhetorical removals of Nêhiyawak from their lands in the Treaty Six region, removals perpetrated, perpetuated, and justified by Canadian settler-colonists, Nêhiyawak have consistently upheld their inherent right to freedom and autonomy, and rhetorically and physically asserted their presence in this place. Though this should not necessarily be surprising in and of itself, these voices – these presences – have hardly been heard, recognized, or promoted within Canada, not to mention in the field of Comparative Literature or the mainstream humanities and social sciences more broadly. In this Introduction, I would like to problematize the concept of multiculturalism in Canada, situate the following work in the discipline of Comparative Literature, and offer a glossary of keywords used throughout the thesis.

The Cult of Multiculturalism

Growing up and attending grade school from the mid-1980s to the late '90s, a concept I remember learning about is multiculturalism; in seventh or eighth grade we had a multicultural fair where students chose a country, researched it, and created a project display board or made food or presented music from it (my partner and I chose the United States). It was our own multicultural festival. Jo-Ann Episkew, a member of the Riel Local of the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan, writes:

In contemporary Canada, where multiculturalism is enshrined in law, difference is tolerated only in approved venues like the plethora of multicultural festivals that take place in Canada each year. The settlers believe in the inevitability of their culture's dominance and the corresponding demise of Indigenous cultures (with the exception of those aspects that can be displayed at multicultural festivals as quaint reminders of the past) ... Although the contemporary ideology of the neo-colonizers professes to embrace difference, the evidence suggests that in contemporary Canada difference is embraced only when convenient, entertaining, and colourful.⁴

Writing for mediaINDIGENA, Sarah Hunt (Kwagiulth band of the Kwakwaka'wakw) critiques National Aboriginal Day, which is sort of a multicultural day unto itself: "This spirit of celebration and focus on cultural performance is at the heart of this Day's definition and vision, which seems to encourage a singular message: that Aboriginal people are welcomed into Canada only as dancers, singers, and cultural artifacts."⁵ Leanne Simpson (Michi Saagiig Nishnaabe) refers to National Aboriginal Day as "a shallow multicultural education day for Canadians to feel less guilty about their continued occupation of our lands."⁶ According to Hunt, this day works to incorporate and assimilate Indigenous peoples into the Canadian national fabric:

This vision disempowers Aboriginal peoples' struggles to gain sovereignty, to settle land and resource disputes, and to define ourselves not as subjects of Canada but as citizens of our own nations, on our own terms. Defining our cultural traditions as merely part of Canada's history takes away their political significance as our systems of law, governance and identity.⁷

Hunt concludes that she cannot celebrate National Aboriginal Day, choosing instead to continue her daily work (not once-yearly celebration) of contributing toward the building of strong, autonomous Indigenous communities.

Official multiculturalism, which I refer to as mult-cult for its powerful cult-like ideological effect on the minds of Canadians, is one of the major inhibitors of radical, strident critique (and healthy autonomist movements) as it is presumed that "all Canadians, whether by birth or by choice, enjoy equal status."⁸ The notion that all

Canadians do or should “enjoy equal status” runs completely contrary to Indigenous tribal-nations’ demands for autonomy and the recognition of their *sui generis* (one of a kind, unique) treaties with the Crown. (Harold Cardinal’s statement, “If we are to be part of the Canadian mosaic, then we want to be colourful red tiles,” illustrates this perfectly.)⁹ Himani Bannerji reminds us of the colonialist reasons behind Canada’s multicultural policy:

[M]ulticulturalism may be seen less as a gift of the state of ‘Canada’ to the ‘others’ of this society, than as a central pillar in its own ideological state apparatus. This is because the very discourse of nationhood in the context of ‘Canada,’ given its evolution as a capitalist state derived from a white settler colony with aspirations to liberal democracy, needs an ideology that can mediate fissures and ruptures more deep and profound than those of the usual capitalist nation state.¹⁰

Thus, mult-cult arises to persuade Canadians that they have something to protect: a unified, egalitarian, diverse nation that stretches uninterrupted from ‘sea to sea to sea.’ Bannerji continues: “The issue of the First Nations – their land claims, languages and cultures – provides another dimension entirely, so violent and deep that the state of Canada dare not even name it in the placid language of multiculturalism.”¹¹ Eva Mackey ties what I call the ‘Indian problem of multicultural Canada’ to the state’s so-called tolerance of sanctioned difference: “A settler colony with official policies of multiculturalism and bilingualism, Canada has an official national culture which is not ‘homogeneous in its whiteness’ but rather replete with images of Aboriginal people and people of colour. The state-sanctioned proliferation of cultural *difference* (albeit limited to specific forms of allowable difference) seems to be one of the the defining characteristics of Canada.”¹² Similarly, Bannerji writes:

Thus at the same moment that difference is ideologically evoked it is also neutralized, as though the issue of difference were the same as that of diversity of cultures and identities, rather than those of racism and colonial ethnocentrism – as though our different cultures were on a par or could negotiate with the two dominant ones! ... Speaking here of culture without addressing power relations displaces and trivializes deep contradictions. It is a reductionism that hides the social relations of domination

that continually create 'difference' as inferior and thus signifies continuing relations of antagonism.¹³

In creating difference as inferior, the Canadian government can successfully vilify and stifle protest movements via the hegemonic discourse of national unity that is so readily consumed, albeit often passively (i.e.: through singing national anthems at sporting events) by Canadian citizens. It is crucial to understand how Canada's official policy of multi-cult, propagated in the educational system, media, and by governments, ignores systemic inequities and drastically uneven power dynamics among constituents in Canada. Difference is at once celebrated and neutralized. "The nation state's need for an ideology that can avert a complete rupture becomes desperate, and gives rise to a multicultural ideology which both needs and creates 'others' while subverting demands for anti-racism and political equality."¹⁴ It is as though the dismemberment of the Canadian state would be apocalyptic; the state will do anything to maintain itself.

In their book *Happy Slaves: A Duologue on Multicultural Deficit* (2005), William Anselmi and Kosta Gouliamos offer a scathing critique of Canada's multi-cult ideology. These authors, too, recognize the ways Canadian liberal multiculturalism ignores power imbalances, legislates 'visibly ethnic' identities from above, and turns 'exotic otherness' into commodities easily consumed by whitestream Canadians.¹⁵ Rinaldo Walcott makes a similar point, that Western liberal democracies embraced multiculturalism "to manage and neutralize post-World War II struggles for social and economic justice by racial and cultural minorities."¹⁶ For Anselmi and Gouliamos, multi-cult became law precisely because difference is dangerous: "The highly visible multi-ethnic component of Canada started to seem threatening to the status quo and had to be neutralized. When identity comes from below, that is, when it is expressed at the level of ordinary people, it acquires its own

democratic status.” Hence, Canadian governments from Trudeau to Mulroney used liberal multiculturalism such that, “ethnicity and identity were going to be regulated and imposed from above.”¹⁷ And no group of people in the state of Canada has had their identity “regulated and imposed from above” more than Indigenous peoples (the Indian Act being the most obvious evidence of this). Anselmi and Gouliamos also note how Indigenous peoples are meaningfully excluded because of multiculturalism and its omnipresent discourse, which the authors attribute to an erasure of history: “It’s quite interesting to see the way that history is erased ... For example, if you visit Ottawa, Montreal, or Toronto, you will never see a statue showing the Indigenous peoples’ struggle against the colonizers. ... I mean, there is a lack of not just appreciation of history but of political sensitivity. There is a lack of consciousness of historicity.”¹⁸ As Emma LaRocque points out, Native peoples have in fact always been vilified for resisting the invasion of their homelands (and thus called savages); not only that, but they have shown amazing restraint in their resistance against colonial onslaughts.¹⁹ Mult-cult as state ideology allows gestures toward reconciliation, parliamentary apologies, a single day for ‘Aboriginals’ to showcase their cultures before the rest of Canada, and other “sincere, but uncritical” acknowledgements of cultural and political difference, which are at the same time acknowledgements of the state’s continuous suppression of said difference.²⁰ Mult-cult, which is an ideology and, recall, an unenforceable law, has not meaningfully or substantially provided meaningful redress for past and ongoing wrongs (say, by returning stolen land).

Canadians latch on to mult-cult in part because “the possibility of society making its own critical analysis and judgment is voided; any possibility of a true, authentic intervention into a state’s actions is nullified because the answers were already supplied.”²¹

We are lulled, sometimes brainwashed, by the totality of Canadian cultural institutions, to believe what we are told; one need only look at the comments section of any online CBC or *Globe and Mail* news story – or events like the Vancouver Olympics or G8/G20 summits – to see how a majority of Canadians (prompted by Canadian [neo]liberalism, as Rinaldo Walcott notes) rely on mult-cult rather than a critical analysis of Canadian nationalist actions that range from the merely kitschy (e.g.: opening ceremonies of the Olympics) to the genocidal (e.g.: Indian Act).²² The other reason, aside from patriotic self-righteousness or arrogance, would be the guilt most whitestream Canadians feel as a result of their unjust inheritance of the past, and of this land. Audre Lorde provides an astute response to white peoples' guilt:

Guilt is not a response to anger; it is a response to one's own actions or lack of action. If it leads to change then it can be useful, since it is then no longer guilt but the beginning of knowledge. Yet all too often, guilt is just another name for impotence, for defensiveness destructive of communication; it becomes a device to protect ignorance and the continuation of things the way they are, the ultimate protection for changelessness. ... Guilt is only another way of avoiding informed action, of buying time out of the pressing need to make clear choices, out of the approaching storm that can feed the earth as well as bend the trees.²³

Lorde's analysis of guilt as a response to one's actions or lack of action, an excuse for defensiveness and inaction and the impotent maintenance of the status quo pairs well, in my mind, with the flaccid language of Canada's mult-cult law, which aims to do things like "*preserve and enhance* the multicultural heritage of Canadians," "*recognize and promote* the understanding that multiculturalism reflects the cultural and racial diversity of Canadian society," "*encourage and assist* the social, cultural, economic, and political institutions of Canada to be both *respectful* and *inclusive* of Canada's multicultural character" and so on. The italicized verbs and nouns are certainly weak and passive, and the Act does not mention *how* the Canadian government will in practice preserve, enhance, recognize,

promote, encourage, assist – or *enforce* – any of the statements this law contains! No wonder it is so enticing for Canadians (a majority of whom surely have not read the Act itself) to lean on as a moral crutch. Mult-cult as law, with its impotent language, cannot promote meaningful, substantial change.

Mult-cult is much more dangerous than any authentic expression of cultural or political difference *because* it masks oppression and inequality. Bannerji writes that official multiculturalism, “mainstream political thought” and the media “all rely comfortably on the notion of a nation and its state both called Canada, with legitimate subjects called Canadians”²⁴ – it is worth pausing to question why we take Canada (as a nation and state) as real, legitimate, and just, with the right to pursue its aspirations and agendas over and above those of the of Indigenous peoples and nations, not to mention other oppressed and marginalized groups. Bannerji continues and is worth quoting at length on this:

There is an assumption that this Canada is a singular entity, a moral, cultural, and political essence, neutral of power, both in terms of antecedents and consequences. The assumption is that we can recognize this beast, if and when we see it. So we can then speak of a ‘pan-Canadian nationalism,’ of a Canada which will not tolerate more Third World immigrants or separatism, or of what Canada needs or allows us to do. And yet, when we scrutinize this Canada, what is it that we see? The answer to this question depends on which side of the nation we inhabit. For those who see it as a homogeneous cultural/political entity, resting on a legitimately possessed territory, with an exclusive right to legislation over diverse groups of peoples, Canada is unproblematic. For others, who are on the receiving end of the power of Canada and its multiculturalism, who have been dispossessed in one sense or another, the answer is quite different. For them the issues of legitimacy of territorial possession, or the right to create regulations and the very axis of domination on which its status as a nation-state rests, are all too central to be pushed aside.²⁵

I cannot imagine a more accurate description of the real ‘two solitudes’ in this country: those who accept the status quo mult-cult Canadian nationalist-patriotic story, and those who question or resist that story because they have experienced and know the reality. (Well, one of these groups has the privilege of living in solitude, as they mostly feel

represented by the electoral system, do not generally feel threatened by the legal system, they have relatively easy access to stable shelter, food, good health care, etc., etc.)

Kogila Moodley describes how multiculturalism as practiced too often promotes colourful display in the service of tourism, thus neutralizing the political and socioeconomic issues that underlie the reality of sharing space:

The ideological aspect of multiculturalism is best illustrated by its focus on the non-controversial, expressive aspects of culture. As long as cultural persistence is confined to food, clothes, dance, and music, then cultural diversity provides colour to an otherwise mundane monotonous technological society. It even enhances tourism, if one considers how much Indians and 'ethnic' restaurants add to the magnificence of Canadian landscape. As such it serves to be no threat, but on the contrary trivializes, neutralizes, and absorbs social and economic inequalities.²⁶

As Womack writes in *Red on Red: American Indian Literary Separatism* (1999), "America loves Indian culture, America is much less enthusiastic about Indian land title."²⁷ With reference to the study of Indigenous literatures, Kristina Fagan refers to a non-Native critical preoccupation with broader, though occasionally more vague (albeit important) issues such as colonialism or gender; however, scholars typically tend to avoid the time-consuming and often difficult effort of learning "the specific traditions, languages, histories, and political priorities of particular First Nations. Moreover, while it is easy for non-Natives to decry generalized Native dispossession, it may be less easy to support Native people's specific claims to self-determination, claims that have material consequences."²⁸

Comparative Literature and "The material and psychic legacy of dislocation"

"That was my dream, the way young people can have very precise dreams: I wanted to be the next Edward Said! And I was going to do it by studying comparative literature and using it as a basis for social critique." Farouq, a character in Nigerian-American writer Teju Cole's acclaimed novel, *Open City* (2011), recalls his desire to use the critical tools of

Comparative Literature for social criticism. Farouq's dissertation was rejected: "On what grounds? Plagiarism. They gave no reason. ... Plagiarism? The only possibilities are either that they refused to believe my command of English and theory or, and I think this is even more likely, that they were punishing me for world events in which I had played no role."²⁹ Farouq, now working at an internet café in Brussels, says, "I was crushed" and he opted, instead, to do a master's degree in translation.³⁰ Where does Comparative Literature fit in the post-9/11 world? What are the risks and potential consequences of such a critique as the character Farouq was apparently making? The 1993 Bernheimer Report to the American Comparative Literature Association (ACLA) made the following recommendation: "In all contexts of its practice, multiculturalism should be approached not as a politically correct way of acquiring more or less picturesque information about others whom we don't really want to know but as a tool to promote significant reflection on cultural relations, translations, dialogue, and debate."³¹ The ten members of the committee clearly called for more than a merely accommodating, tolerant, politically correct mult-cult. Also under their recommendations for "The Graduate Program," the committee proposed, "that comparative literature departments should moderate their focus on high-literary discourse and examine the entire discursive context in which texts are created and such heights are constructed." They also suggested that, in addition to studying rhetorical and formal structures, "textually precise readings should take account as well of the ideological, cultural, and institutional contexts in which their meanings are produced." They also noted the value in studying other languages for their value in understanding such things as "forming notions of nationhood" and "in articulating resistance and accommodation to

political and cultural hegemony.”³² I wonder, though, if Farouq’s fictional dissertation would be as welcome today as the ACLA committee apparently hoped in 1993.

“The actual possibility of dissensus itself may be an illusion in a world governed by transcoded terror defined as ‘full spectrum dominance’ in the National Defense Strategy of the United States of America of September 2002,” writes Djelal Kadir in his contribution to *Comparative Literature in an Age of Globalization*, the 2004 follow-up to Bernheimer’s report on the state of the discipline for the ACLA. “The pervasiveness of that encoding and its repercussions may well extend to the cognitive map and itinerary of comparative literature also.”³³ Perhaps Teju Cole’s fictional CompLit graduate student has a basis in “Real Life.” Kadir points out the paradoxical individuality of our present moment – when scholars are safely hyper-connected within “one’s individual cyberspace with no undo peril of commitment or risk of compromise” – with the “invisible regimes of control and panoptic lurking” that always underscores or overshadows whatever “safety” we may think we have.³⁴ What will be our collective response? A simple (powerless) shrug, swig of Bud Light, and ... whatever? “‘Whatever,’ then, would appear to be the screen saver of our cultural moment, of our epoch of comparative literature, and of our praxes as comparatists in the global metropolis under the scrutiny of ubiquitous surveillance.”³⁵ *Whatever* is “cool,”³⁶ a willingness to accept the status quo, the mantra of the MTV generation, the impotent explanatory shrug of “same difference.”³⁷ Add to these the omnipresent, “It is what it is,” the ultimate motto of passivity and even complicity.

Kadir urges us to question our methodological complicity in terror (and did I mention I sometimes misread CompLit as Complicit?):

What, in other words, is the ratio of comparativistic activity between the United States of America and the twenty-seven countries on the planet whose citizens are

exempted from the biometric regime of fingerprinting and racial and ethnic profiling, on the one hand, and the level of comparatist focus and activity between the United States and the rest of the planet's countries whose citizens are subject to such management, on the other hand?³⁸

Kadir fails to mention those people of colour U.S. citizens, or those suspected of being “illegal immigrants,” who *are* managed in this way. Further, I would add, how much comparison is occurring between USA/Canadian CompLit scholars and autonomous Indigenous nations (what the U.S. Supreme Court referred to as “domestic dependent nations” a term that almost prefigures today’s bureaucratic terror-speak)? And what about those peoples upon whom citizenship of the United States and Canada was imposed without consultation and against their will? In the age of terror, it is not only foreign nations who pose an apparent threat to Canadian sovereignty, as *The Globe and Mail* reported in October 2011:

The Canadian Forces’ National Counter-Intelligence Unit, meant to address “threats to the security of the Forces and the Department of National Defence” such as espionage, terrorists and saboteurs, assembled at least eight reports on the activities of native groups between January, 2010, and July, 2011.

Assembly of First Nations National Chief Shawn Atleo responded: “The fact that Canada would expend national defence resources to monitor our activities amounts to a false and highly offensive insinuation that First Nation advocacy is akin to terrorism or threats to national security.”³⁹ The terrorist threat, it would seem, may also come from within the borders of the settler-colony.

Kadir asks: “[H]ow far in extremis can the illusion of individuated detachment and free agency move before slipping into a status of vestigial excresency?” He reminds us CompLit scholars that we may easily fall into complicity with regimes of terror, and cautions us about the act of comparing:

Terror thrives on unbreachable difference, on exceptionalism, on the cultural and political monads that lie beyond the plausibility of dissensus and outside the possibility of the negotiable consensus. That is to say, *terror thrives on the eradication of difference* through the hyperbole of self-differentiation into Self-same and of identity as self-equivalence, or as Spivak refers to it, the 'same difference.' It might be more forthright to view this as the indifference that would well infect with deadly banality the execrable default that is the nonchalance of 'whatever.'⁴⁰

Or the nonchalant default, "It is what it is." Terror thrives on the eradication of difference; hence, my insistence on autonomy and, why I see mult-cult as being so dangerous. Why should we all be the same? What would be left to compare? Terror thrives on unbreachable difference, the impossibility of "negotiable consensus," as evidenced by the willingness of Nêhiyawak to negotiate difference (solidified in treaties) and the terror inflicted on them *because of* their difference (confinement to reserves, Indian Act, Residential schools, treaty breaches, etc.). Let us not be indifferent to difference for some peoples' lives hang in the balance.

In *Comparative Literature in the Age of Multiculturalism*, Rey Chow points out that multilingualism can be something like a forked tongue:

[M]ultilingualism can also serve as an ally and accomplice to white liberalism. ... [I]n the liberalist instance, multilingualism is ultimately simply an alibi: the charitable 'openness' to other languages and cultures often goes hand in hand with an utter ignorance of and indifference to the historical and political distinctions among 'ethnic cultures' and 'peoples of colour.' If reactionary politics uses multilingualism for purposes of indoctrination and surveillance, then white liberalism, in a more benign guise, uses multilingualism for embellishment and amusement, for a mere chance of *décors*.⁴¹

Chow reminds us not to tokenize diverse literatures in a liberal mult-cult feel-good stew that's more broth than substance. Few scholars learn Indigenous languages (and my own four university courses in Anishininiimowin and Nêhiyawêwin hardly exclude me from this critique) and they are not generally used in the reactionary sense that Chow suggests.

However, Indigenous languages are made precious by white liberals who don't take the

time to learn them but do fetishize them as museum objects as David Treuer (Leech Lake Ojibway) has pointed out in his writing.⁴² Quite importantly for this thesis, Chow suggests that any critique of Eurocentrism, “must question the very assumption that nation-states with national literatures are the only possible cultural formations that produce ‘literature’ that is worth examining.”⁴³ That Chow places ‘literature’ in quotation marks should give us reason to pause and consider what literatures produced outside, on the margins of, or contained within (and reserved by) nation-states might include.

Haun Saussy writes: “Comparative literature is best known, not as the reading of *literature*, but as reading *literarily* (with intensive textual scrutiny, defiance, and metatheoretical awareness) whatever there may be to read.”⁴⁴ Saussy’s insistence on close reading in a defiant manner resonates with me, guiding, and in a way justifying, my choice to analyze texts that may not initially appear to be ‘literature’ (e.g. treaties, political non-fiction, etc.). Kadir (in a conversation about the state of the discipline in 2014 as he imagined it ten years earlier) expresses concern about, among other things, contemporary disciplinary distance in the field. Referring to contemporary CompLit scholars, Kadir imagines a future scholar saying of us, “They lived under the illusion of distant reading, distant relations, distant learning, and virtual hyperconnectivity.”⁴⁵ This thesis is an attempt at close, rather than distant, readings; my hope is to connect meaningfully (not virtually and not superficially) with local texts and ideas that are of vital importance to ethical citizenship in a particular place, the location of my writing. An area in which comparative literary studies might be of service to local communities is using the discipline’s tools, especially close reading, historical analysis, and studying literary,

linguistic, and cultural comparisons, to educate our students and readers and to advocate, for example, for more accurate and fair interpretations of international law and treaties.

Emily Apter, writing in 1994, suggested that the future of Comparative Literature “‘in an age of multiculturalism’ is bound up with the way in which past and future generations define and lay claim to the material and psychic legacy of dislocation.”⁴⁶ Her apt phrase, the material and psychic legacy of dislocation, could serve as a concise abstract of this thesis. Apter refers to “the restless, migratory thought patterns of the discipline’s theory and methods” and claims that, “Comparative Literature’s very disciplinarity has been and continues to be grounded in exilic consciousness.”⁴⁷ I’m sure my thought patterns may appear restless and migratory and I am curious to examine how exilic consciousness might be grounded here in Cree territory. Being exiled in one’s own homeland is a particular type of dislocation, one that results from settler-colonialism, and I contend that this sort of exilic consciousness can produce rhetoric that resists exile and asserts presence and autonomy.

This thesis is divided into two sections. Section I is comprised of Chapters One to Four, and is a methodological overview and literature review of existing scholarship on settler-colonialism, nations, nationalism, and nationhood (Chapter One) and Indigenous literary nationalism (Chapter Three), situating these concepts within a discussion of Plains Cree governance (Chapter Two) and Plains Cree rhetorical traditions (Chapter Four). Section II puts these methods and concepts into action. Chapters Five and Six offer close readings and analysis of the Treaty Six negotiations in 1876. Chapter Six reads the negotiations according to my understanding of Cree rhetorical protocols in order to view the written negotiation records from a Cree perspective. Chapter Seven examines the ways

rhetoric has been deployed to dismember and displace a treaty band in the Edmonton area and how band members have resisted being displaced both physically and rhetorically. Chapter Eight is an analysis of early twentieth century political organizing and resistance writing, in particular the work of Edward Ahenakew (Ahtahkakoop Cree Nation). What follows is a rhetorical and political history of bands on the northern plains.

Keywords

There are a number of words and concepts, many in Nêhiyawêwin (the Cree language), which I use throughout the thesis that I will define here for reference:

Amiskwacî: Beaver Hills, the Beaver Hills Region. The region is home to present-day Edmonton (see especially Chapter Two).

Môniyâw / Môniyâwak (plural): White person, Canadian.⁴⁸ A student once told me she had been taught the word is an elision of *namôya Nêhiyaw* (not Cree). The diminutive form, *môniyâs* is, according to Wolvengrey, “sometimes derogatory.”⁴⁹

There is a similar word in Anishinaabemowin used by Leanne Simpson, *zhaaganash*. (When I studied in Toronto, I was taught this word had the derogatory connotation of “a fucking white person.”) Simpson writes: “*Zhaaganashiiyaadizi* encompasses the process and description of living as a colonized or assimilated person. ... I would caution against a racialized understanding of this term. My understanding of this word is indicative of the processes or the continual decisions that one might choose to make – decisions and choices which, in this case, supplant all of the beautiful and diverse ways of living as a contemporary Nishnaabeg.”⁵⁰ This is not, then, a racialized term, as even Anishinaabeg people could be overtaken by *Zhaaganashiiyaadizi* – living in colonized ways.

I use *môniyâwak* as a synonym for settler-colonists and to refer to settler-colonial ways of thinking and living.⁵¹

Nêhiyaw (Cree) **Nêhiyawak** (Cree, plural): Brenda MacDougall (Métis) writes that *Nêhiyawak* “are named for the four parts of human beings: emotional, mental, spiritual, and physical.”⁵² I often use these words to replace Cree person/Cree people, and often as an adjective (e.g. *Nêhiyaw* rhetorical tradition, meaning the Plains Cree rhetorical tradition).

Nêhiyawaskî: The Cree Earth, Cree land (*askî*).⁵³

Nêhiyawêwin: The Cree language. Neal McLeod (James Smith Cree First Nation) defines the word as meaning, “the process of making Cree sound.”⁵⁴ I had the privilege of studying Nêhiyawêwin with Dolores Sand, who is a daughter of the late Freda Ahenakew (Sandy Lake Reserve, Ahtahkakoop First Nation). Dolores once mentioned her mother’s language connection to Ida McLeod, Neal McLeod’s grandmother.⁵⁵ This is both an example of the importance of genealogy to Indigenous Studies, and is mentioned here to situate my language learning.

Nêhiyawîwin: Cree-ness (or, Greeness).⁵⁶ I elaborate on this concept throughout the thesis.

Rhetoric: The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines rhetoric as, “The art of using language effectively so as to persuade or influence others.” According to George A. Kennedy, the English word rhetoric derived from the Greek *rhêtôr*, a speaker, especially a speaker in a public meeting or court of law, sometimes equivalent to what we might call a politician.⁵⁷ Kennedy characterizes the ancient Greeks as a “highly argumentative, contentious people,” among whom important decisions were made after a debate in a public assembly (among adult male citizens – any of whom could speak in public).⁵⁸ Civil and criminal cases in ancient Greece were heard before a jury. There were no lawyers, so citizens had to defend themselves and deliver speeches on their own behalf, hence, handbooks of judicial rhetoric were published and could be purchased.⁵⁹

In *On Rhetoric* (ca. 335-323 BCE), Aristotle defines rhetoric as “an ability, in each [particular] case, to see the available means of persuasion” (1.2.1). Also, “its function is not to persuade but to see the available means of persuasion in each case” (1.1.14). Aristotle distinguishes between *atechnic* means of persuasion (facts, witnesses, contracts, testimony from torture) and *entechnic* means (“whatever can be prepared by method and by ‘us’” – e.g. these are invented) (1.2.2).

I use the English word rhetoric to refer to the ways Nêhiyawak have employed language in the broadest sense: from oral traditions to mnemonic texts (e.g. pictographs, tipi designs, beadwork) to public speaking/oratory to written texts. In this thesis, rhetoric is meant in the broadest sense possible. I will define the characteristics of the Nêhiyaw rhetorical tradition throughout the thesis.

Chapter One

“Culture Alone Cannot Change the World”:

Theorizing Nations, Nationalism, and Nationhood

After a few moons, I decided to write a letter to Ottawa, and I explained to the Indian Affairs Department that I had reached my decision to leave Hobbema to inhabit the mountain region. I added that I would not bother them again, and if they wished to see me for something, they would have to come to me.

- Chief Robert Smallboy (Ermineskin Cree Nation)¹

In the early summer of 1968, a group of Nêhiyawak (Plains Cree people) from Maskwacîs (the Bear Hills region, approximately 90 kilometres south of present-day Edmonton) left their reserves to establish an autonomous camp in the Kootenay Plains. First led by Simon Omeasoo, Lazarus Roan, Alex Shortneck, and Frank Nadeau, who erected tents on the Kootenay Plains on June 25, 1968 – the day Pierre Elliott Trudeau was elected Prime Minister – the group was joined on July 4 by Robert Smallboy, hereditary and elected chief of the Ermineskin Band. Smallboy would lead the group, which numbered 25 families, in all about 140 men, women, and children, as they sought refuge from the damaging influences of the reserves: alcoholism, domestic abuse, and widespread material poverty. As Gary Botting, Smallboy’s biographer, explains, the chief insisted that those who joined him give up certain modern influences, such as television, drugs, and alcohol, and would have to follow the “Indian way,” adhering to traditional protocols, ceremonies, and medicine. In addition to speaking English, Smallboy’s followers would have to learn to speak Nêhiyawêwin (the Cree language).²

As evidenced by the epigraph to this chapter, Chief Smallboy not only asserted his people’s autonomy by physically moving to a place of their choosing in order to live the way they wanted, Smallboy made a rhetorical claim to sovereignty and autonomy,

informing the Indian Affairs Department of his people's decision (rather than waiting for the Department's permission), and asserting that The Crown and the Canadian government would henceforth have to meet him on his terms. Further, as this thesis will argue, Chief Smallboy is just one of many Nêhiyawak who have used rhetoric to assert their presence and autonomy in the face of settler-colonial displacement and domination. This chapter will examine the discourses of nations, nationhood, and nationalism, drawing on work of both western academics and Indigenous scholars. Indigenous Studies, which is increasingly using the terminology of nationhood to describe Indigenous assertions of sovereignty, has yet to fully engage with the work of theorists from the western/European tradition. If Indigenous scholars, activists, and leaders are using the language of nationhood, it is important to know the intellectual history behind these powerful concepts. Likewise, as this chapter will illustrate, western scholarship on nationalism has tended to misunderstand or ignore North American Indigenous political formations. It is time to bring these discourses together. Isabel Altamirano-Jiménez (Zapotec) suggests that in order "to understand Indigenous nationalism, we need to move away from Eurocentric theories of nationalism." Like Altamirano-Jiménez, I will argue that Indigenous nationalisms differ from European/North American nationalisms; she writes: "Indigenous nationalism articulates forms of resistance to external threats aimed at destroying peoples' senses of place. Thus Indigenous nationalism is embedded in a dialogic tension between global articulations of both indigeneity and rights discourse, on the one hand, and specific understandings of place and of being a *people* with a history and a distinctive legal order, on the other hand."³ I will attempt to situate the study of Indigenous nations, nationhood, and nationalism within the broader scholarship of these concepts which has tended to

focus on modern European and western nations and nation-states. It is my hope to bridge these discourses of nations and nationhood into a clearer and more sustained dialogue than has previously occurred.

Unsettling the settler nation-state

Altamirano-Jiménez points out that theories of nationalism have been “extensively discussed” though these have “focused on the origins of the nation and have mainly centred on the European and North American experiences at the expense of non-Western and gendered experiences.” These discussions have emphasized the origins and nature of nations and nationalisms.⁴ Daniel Heath Justice (Cherokee Nation) notes, “The idea of ‘the nation’ has fallen into disfavor ... it’s no longer viewed by most scholars as an inevitable or even desirable way of constituting group identity.”⁵ Certainly, some pretty terrible things have been done in the name of “the nation.” Jean Dennison (Osage) asserts that nationalism has been both a site of resistance to colonialism and a “salient demonstration of the power of colonialism to reproduce itself” citing postcolonial nations that have been just as repressive and oppressive as colonial regimes.⁶ So why are Indigenous collectivities employing the language of nations and nationhood in their claims to self-determination? Dennison writes that, “the nation is clearly a necessary entanglement” and suggests it is mostly citizens of the most secure nations who began questioning the idea of the nation; “the rejection of the nation is likely a luxury of empire.” She quotes Ann Curthoys:

Are the critiques of national history strongest in those national intellectual cultures where ‘the nation’ has been relatively secure and where interest in that nation’s history has long extended beyond its borders? Is the rejection of ‘nation’ a luxury, mainly for those intellectuals who inhabit powerful or at least populous nations? Is the desire to go beyond national history only possible when there is little – in terms of historians’ influence on nation politics and policy – to lose?⁷

It is interesting to note that scholarship aiming to deconstruct or destabilize the concept of “the nation” has emerged mostly from the United Kingdom and the United States.

This chapter will examine Indigenous peoples’ claims to nationhood and peoplehood. However, I do not intend to place the burden of proof on Indigenous peoples, nor do I want to suggest that they must argue for their nations and nationhood while it is presumed that settler-colonial nation-states are without question legitimate. Indeed the burden of proving legitimacy *should* fall on settler-states. However, these are terms and concepts that derive from European languages and legal traditions, so it might be useful to examine how Indigenous collectivities fit or do not fit within European theories and perhaps reinvent the nation concept altogether. This thesis focuses on rhetoric and resistance on the Northern Plains. I am interested in the ways settler-colonizers used rhetoric to displace – and justify the displacement of – Indigenous peoples, for example, through means such as treaties, laws, and newspaper editorials. I also attempt to document and analyze the ways Indigenous peoples in the region also used rhetoric, in the form of petitions, treaty negotiations, as well as creative and non-fiction writing to resist settler-colonialism as a particular type of colonial project. Patrick Wolfe provides probably the best-known definition of settler-colonialism, one that has become popular in Indigenous Studies in recent years:

Settler colonization is at base a winner-take-all project whose dominant feature is ... replacement. The logic of this project, a sustained institutional tendency to eliminate the Indigenous population, informs a range of historical practices that might otherwise appear distinct – invasion is a structure not an event.⁸

For Wolfe, settler-colonialism involves the replacement of Indigenous people with settlers, this process is sustained and institutional, and it is an ongoing structure of domination, not a series of distinct events. A defining characteristic of settler-colonialism is what Wolfe

calls, “the logic of elimination.”⁹ Wolfe writes: “[T]he primary motive for elimination is not race (or religion, ethnicity, grade of civilization, etc.) but access to territory. Territoriality is settler colonialism’s specific, irreducible element.”¹⁰ Thus the goal of settler-colonizers is the elimination of Indigenous peoples in order to gain access to, and become the majority owners of, Indigenous peoples’ territories. “Settler colonialism destroys to replace.”¹¹

Writing from a perspective that privileges Native feminist theories, Maile Arvin, Eve Tuck, and Angie Morrill remind us that viewing settler-colonialism as a structure means unsettling the notion that colonialism is an event located in the past:

[S]ettler colonialism refers to the structure of a society and cannot be reduced to, as many nationalist ideologies would have it, the merely unfortunate birth pangs of its establishment that remain in the distant past; settler colonialism and patriarchy are structures, not events. Settler colonialism is a persistent social and political formation in which newcomers/colonizers/settlers come to a place, claim it as their own, and do whatever it takes to displace the Indigenous peoples that are there.¹²

Doing whatever it takes to erase and displace Indigenous peoples has taken many forms in settler colonies like Canada and the United States such as segregating people on reserves and laws that determine who may access Indigenous/Aboriginal/treaty rights (such as blood quantum and tribal enrolment in the USA and the Indian Act in Canada).¹³ Wolfe lists other mechanisms of elimination:

[O]fficially encouraged miscegenation, the breaking-down of native title into alienable freeholds, native citizenship, child abduction, religious conversion, resocialization in total institutions such as missions or boarding schools, and a whole range of cognate biocultural assimilations. All these strategies, including frontier homicide, are characteristic of settler colonialism.¹⁴

There is not one tool of settler-colonialism listed above that has not been part of Canada’s settlement and occupation of Indigenous lands. The purpose behind each is to make Native peoples emphatically *less native* through processes of assimilation and to remove Native peoples from their lands in order for them to be occupied by settler-colonizers. Sarah

Maddison writes that after the initial frontier violence, settler-colonial “efforts became focused less on an attempt to eradicate the human *bodies* of Indigenous peoples than they were on trying to erase their histories and geographies, thereby eradicating their existence *as peoples*.”¹⁵ Building and imagining the settler-nation has required the elimination of Indigenous peoples as peoples, as nations.

Settler-colonizers destroy in order to replace; as Richard Pratt, founder of the Carlisle boarding school famously put it in 1892, “[A]ll the Indian there is in the race should be dead. Kill the Indian in him and save the man.”¹⁶ Or, as Canada’s deputy superintendent of Indian Affairs, Duncan Campbell Scott, wrote in 1920: “I want to get rid of the Indian problem. ... Our object is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic, and there is no Indian question, and no Indian Department.”¹⁷ In 1969, Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau used the tactic of historical and legal erasure: “[P]erhaps the treaties shouldn’t go on forever. It’s inconceivable, I think that in a given society, one section of the society have a treaty with the other section of the society. ... [W]e must not sign treaties amongst ourselves and many of these treaties indeed would have less and less significance in the future anyhow.”¹⁸ These three quotes illustrate how settler-colonial tactics become gradually more subtle: kill the Indian in the child, absorb the Indian into the body politic, make the Indian an equal. Altamirano-Jiménez has similarly described the ways that settler-colonizers have asserted sovereignty and control over Indigenous peoples from their individual bodies to the international level:

At the level of the body, Indigenous peoples’ personal names were replaced by numbers, children were separated from their families, and their languages were outlawed. At the level of the extended family, Indigenous peoples were disciplined through displacement, relocation, and the creation of new settlements. At the level of

their nations, Indigenous peoples were misrecognized and their ancient laws and jurisdictions denied. At the international level, nation-states have created rules and legislation by which Indigenous peoples' concerns and jurisdictions have been undermined.¹⁹

Thus a tool of settler-colonialism is not only to eliminate Indigenous peoples' physical presence on their homelands, but also their names, identities, languages, traditions, histories, legal traditions, and jurisdictions, in addition to peoples' physical removal, relocation, displacement, and community dismemberment.²⁰ My intention in the remainder of this chapter is to conduct a literature review, surveying scholarship on "the nation" and bringing western and Indigenous theories into conversation.

Theorizing Indigenous Nations *as Nations*

"First Nations aren't big enough for true sovereignty," reads the headline of a *Globe and Mail* column by Jeffrey Simpson from the summer of 2009. (Neither Simpson's credentials nor his qualifications for assessing the capabilities of Indigenous peoples and communities are mentioned in the column.) The premise of Simpson's argument against Indigenous nationhood and sovereignty falls apart because he relies on a non-existent parallel, writing that the small towns of Pouce Coupe, B.C. or Estevan, SK. (populations 700 and 10,000 respectively) would never expect to receive, nor would it be "fair, plausible, desirable, or doable to give" these municipalities the responsibilities of administering justice, schooling, health, policing, roads, welfare, and so on.²¹ Simpson is willing to concede that "Indian [*sic*] groups ... have the characteristics of a nation: language (in many cases now lost), cultural specificity, a historical sense of distinctiveness, defined territory (shrunk drastically from centuries ago)." Oddly, this columnist fails to mention the reasons for language loss (which may be more like language *theft*) and "shrunk" territory (again, theft). Simpson does not offer details of the treaties or the nation-to-nation relationship with the Crown

that non-Native Canadian municipalities do not have. Instead, he takes the “size matters” approach to what he calls the “myth in aboriginal policy: that ‘nations,’ in the sociological sense of the word, can be effective ‘sovereign’ entities, in the sense of doing what sovereign governments are expected to do.” Why does Simpson employ scare quotes? Whose expectations is he referring to? Why in his rather limp argument does he place emphasis on size? “When the population of a ‘nation’ is a few hundred people, or even a few thousand, we are kidding ourselves, aboriginal or non-aboriginal, if we think that sovereignty can be anything more than partial.” Simpson’s “we” assimilates those “aboriginal or non-aboriginal” people who *do kid ourselves* with thinking that Indigenous nations can be truly self-determining *as nations*. Indigenous peoples, of course, governed themselves and were *fully* sovereign, for thousands of years. That any Indigenous governance structures have been weakened and territories shrunken is a result of settler-colonizers. Simpson’s argument that nations with small populations can only exercise partial sovereignty ignores countries like the Republic of Nauru and Tuvalu, both of which have populations estimated at 10,000.²² This is indeed a larger population than most reserves, but consider that the reason Indigenous nations’ populations are relatively low is due to colonialism (diseases, genocide, enfranchisement legislation).²³ Self-determining Indigenous nations may (but not necessarily) have much larger populations if they were able to decide who their citizens are and how to distribute resources amongst them.²⁴

In the 2006 census, of 60 First Nations languages spoken in Canada, Cree is spoken by an estimated 87,285 respondents (another 12,435 speak Oji-Cree, a related dialect). 76,460 First Nations people reported having Cree as a mother tongue in 2006.²⁵ The same year, the population of reserve communities in the Edmonton region totaled 10,096

(Alexander, 962; Enoch 1,418; Ermineskin 1,464, Louis Bull 1,180; Montana, 635; Paul 1,110; Samson 3,327); and consider the 52,105 Aboriginal people in the Edmonton Census Metropolitan area (38,170 in the city of Edmonton).²⁶ The Indigenous population in the Edmonton-area easily and obviously numbers in the tens of thousands.²⁷ Simpson conflates reserves with Indigenous nations; for example, there are dozens of reserves that make up the Cree nation (which broadly stretches across what became Canada). Of course, the majority of reserve residents are Status Indians, so Simpson disregards the large numbers of people (mostly women and their children) who do not have Status because of government policies. As Bonita Lawrence (Mi'kmaq) argues, every non-Status Indian (and many people of mixed ancestry) can trace lineage to a band or nation.²⁸ Simpson apparently disregards the large number of Indigenous peoples (nearly 50%) living in cities.²⁹ He also does not take into account those of us who are non-Indigenous and would want to live in truly autonomous Indigenous nations rather than in Canada, if given the choice and ability.

In a lecture at the Sorbonne in 1882 – as Cree Chef Papaschase was waiting for his band's reserve to be surveyed in what became south Edmonton – Ernest Renan asked, “What is a nation?” “What I propose to do today is to analyse with you an idea which, though seemingly clear, lends itself to the most dangerous misunderstandings.”³⁰ The idea of the nation, nationhood, and nationalism is indeed confusing. In light of the risks Renan acknowledges in his task of discussing the nation (“the slightest confusion ... may in the end lead to the most fatal of errors”), he admits: “I shall adopt an absolutely cool and impartial attitude.”³¹ Perhaps as a citizen of an uncontested nation he had this privilege; as we will

see, many Indigenous nationalists could not afford such cool impartiality, as the lives of their citizens hung in the balance.

Renan asserts – in 1882, recall – that nations “are something fairly new in history.”³² For Renan, forgetting is the key to nationalist unity: “[T]he essence of a nation is that all individuals have many things in common, and also they have forgotten many things.” That is, citizens of nations have forgotten massacres, brutality, and even specific genealogies (“There are not ten families in France that can supply proof of their Frankish origin”).³³ This makes sense in terms of, say, state-centric settler-Canadian Anglophone nationalism, but not for Indigenous nations (for whom remembering genealogy is crucial and extremely common). Michael Ignatieff (a small- and large-‘L’ liberal philosopher and politician) would disagree with my use of the term settler-colonials: “To speak this way,” says Ignatieff, “as if settlement were merely a form of imperial domination, is to withhold recognition of the right of the majority to settle and use the land we both share.” Ignatieff alludes to the original Occupy Movement, where the 99% (Ignatieff’s “majority”) has “the right” to settle and use the land of the colonized 1%.³⁴ In *The Rights Revolution*, the published version of his Massey Lectures, Ignatieff takes a stance similar to Renan (and John Locke)³⁵:

Throughout centuries of collaboration between newcomers and aboriginal nations, Native peoples have always accepted, with varying degrees of willingness, the fact that being first possessors of the land is not the only source of legitimacy for its use. Those who came later have acquired legitimacy by their labours; by putting the soil under cultivation; by uncovering its natural resources; by building great cities and linking them together with railways, highways, and now fibre-optic networks and the Internet. To point out the legitimacy of non-aboriginal settlement in Canada is not to make a declaration about anyone’s superiority or inferiority, but simply to assert that each has a fair claim to the land and that it must be shared.³⁶

While Ignatieff recognizes “aboriginal nations,” his emphasis on collaboration erases the history of often violent colonization and the shaky legitimacy of Canada to exist and assert

its ambitions as the preeminent aspirations on Indigenous lands (as I will thoroughly argue in relation to Treaty Six in later chapters).³⁷ Instead of colonialism and, say, the resulting drastic de-population of Indigenous nations and loss of autonomy and suitable/stable land base, Ignatieff insists we must understand that “Native peoples have always accepted” – though not always willingly! – the legitimacy of “newcomers” to possess and use the land. What is Ignatieff’s evidence of this? I have never heard an Indigenous person make the argument that settlers have gained “legitimacy” to the land through their labours (i.e.: I’ve never read anything by a Native John Locke). Ignatieff forgets the actual past in order to celebrate Indigenous dispossession, in the name of so-called progress (cities, railroads, highways, the World Wide Web) in the rhetoric of nation-building. According to Ignatieff, labour and resource extraction lead to legitimate possession, neatly packaged in the multicultural model of collaboration and willing acceptance. There’s no mention of unequal power relations here, which is what makes Ignatieff’s update of Locke’s argument so problematic.

Citizens of nations must apparently do a lot of forgetting and it would seem this is the case in Canada. Roger Epp notes that in Canada, the duty to forget is on Indigenous peoples: “It is up to ‘them’ both to forget and to accept the loss of historically constituted identities, and, by doing so, to release settlers’ descendants from a vague sense of inter-generational guilt.”³⁸ What about nations who are consciously and unapologetically holding onto memory, bringing it forth to counter the forgetting and erasure of colonizing nations? For Renan, a nation cannot be synonymous with the race of its citizens. Race may have been important to the tribes and cities of antiquity, where citizenship was based on kinship; but race, or “ethnographic considerations” have “played no part in the constitution

of modern nations.”³⁹ Historian Patricia Roy has documented Canada’s Father of Confederation John A. Macdonald’s Parliamentary affirmation of the Chinese as “an inferior race” and “semi-barbarians.” Roy asserts: “Macdonald believed the Mongolian and Aryan races could never combine. ... In short, John A. Macdonald was a racist.”⁴⁰ The first Indian Act of 1876, passed while Alexander Mackenzie was Prime Minister, but certainly an act to “consolidate” the preexisting “laws respecting Indians,” included the following definition: “The term ‘person’ means an individual other than an Indian.”⁴¹ So Indigenous people were excluded from personhood under the consolidated Macdonald-Mackenzie laws “respecting Indians.” (Ignatieff, in a more optimistic tone, argues that the Indian Act “excused [Aboriginal peoples] from certain obligations of citizenship, such as paying taxes.”⁴² Can non-persons be taxed? Is this an excuse from – or denial of – full Canadian citizenship?) There is much more to say about the Indian Act; for now it is crucial to note that for the founders of the Canadian nation, the nation was synonymous with the race of its citizens, indeed those who were not white were denied personhood and citizenship, and sometimes entry into the country.

Renan moves his analysis to racial purity, something that was evidently on the mind of Canadian government officials in the late nineteenth century: “The truth is that there is no pure race ... The noblest countries, England, France, and Italy, are those where the blood is most mixed. ... The leading nations of Europe are nations of essentially mixed blood.”⁴³ John Ralston Saul would appear to be Renan’s (again, liberal) intellectual grandson in Canada. “We are a métis civilization,” is the opening sentence of his book, *A Fair Country: Telling Truths About Canada* (2008). Saul, the former special assistant to the founding chairman of Petro-Canada and husband of former Governor General Adrienne Clarkson,

appropriates the term/identity “Métis,” perhaps to indigenize Canadian citizens, perhaps to absolve Canada of its racist past and present: “When I dig around in the roots of how we imagine ourselves, how we govern, how we live together in communities – how we treat one another when we are not being stupid – what I find is deeply Aboriginal.”⁴⁴ Saul is not clear as to where he is digging around, but the stated result of his archaeological undertaking is not what I see in, say, the heart of downtown Edmonton or my hometown of Midland, Ontario. Saul provides no tangible evidence to support his claim, nor does he define what he means by “deeply Aboriginal” (That Aboriginal is a settler-Canadian term, concept, and constructed identity is another matter altogether).⁴⁵ As far as I can tell, no Canadian system of governance (witness Question Period as example of this) is based on consensus decision-making (certainly a hallmark of most “Aboriginal” ways of governing from what I’ve been taught). If we treated one another as “Aboriginals” (whoever *they* are) do or did, would there be such rampant economic poverty and social exclusion in Canadian inner-cities? Or are Canadians just “being stupid” *most of the time*?

For Saul, a major intellectual and social oversight in Canada is that we do not appropriately engage with the place of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples in our society. Saul suggests that, “[t]here is no intellectual, ethical, or emotional engagement with what their place might be at the core of our civilization.” To *whose* singular civilization is Saul referring? Saul quotes Indigenous authors like Rita Joe (Mi’kmaq), Tomson Highway (Cree), and Thomas King (Cherokee) so I presume he understands that Indigenous peoples are indeed engaging with these intellectual, ethical, emotional questions (thus making his assertion that there is *no such engagement* false). If Saul is referring to a lack of engagement by non-Indigenous peoples, what about his own writing? Or the countless self-identified

non-Indigenous people working on such intellectual, ethical, and emotional questions, scholars like J. Edward Chamberlin, Renate Eigenbrod, Peter Kulchyski, Keavy Martin, Sam McKegney, as well as the countless activists, volunteers, parents and grandparents, teachers, and other active community members who are also undertaking this important work on a daily basis? Saul also suggests that Canadian immigration and citizenship policy – which is “non-racial” and “inclusive” – “comes straight from Aboriginal culture.”⁴⁶ Again, Saul should know there is no such thing as a singular Aboriginal culture. I think equating Canada’s immigration policy to the Indigenous values I have been taught is incorrect: did any Indigenous nation or community establish a point system at the time of first contact to determine immigration or citizenship as the Canadian government did? Did Indigenous peoples deny healthcare to new arrivals, the refugees from European nations, as the *current* Conservative government desires?⁴⁷

Saul attempts to claim Indigenous heritage for all Canadians. “Anyone whose family arrived before the 1760s is probably part Aboriginal,” writes Saul.⁴⁸ Having traced my maternal grandfather’s genealogy – my great-grandmother’s maiden name was Pilkey, an anglicized version of Peltier – to an early 17th century arrival in New France, it would be incorrect for me to claim to be “part Aboriginal” (which part of me? which “Aboriginal” nation?) because even if this was the case, such a historical consequence was never mentioned or celebrated in my family (indeed, they would deny even French/Québécois ancestry). Further, Saul’s assertion ignores the history of sexual violence against Indigenous women, the terrorism and rape that Andrea Smith has so thoroughly documented and analyzed (hardly a “fair” foundation for a mixed civilization).⁴⁹ If all of us are Aboriginal, many of these family ties are the result of forced sexual relations by settler

predators against Indigenous women. When read between the lines, Saul isn't wearing rose coloured glasses; he is capturing and claiming Indigenous peoples, domesticating them as Canadian, and giving Canadians the 'status' of "part Aboriginal" or small 'm' métis. Saul refers to Big Bear and Poundmaker – both of whom were Cree nationalists – as among "some of the greatest leaders Canada has produced."⁵⁰ Big Bear and Poundmaker were emphatically *not* Canadian, *and Canada did not produce them*; indeed Canada suppressed and jailed both because of their resistance to Canadian settler colonialism and Big Bear died a year after his release from Canadian prison. Saul claims Louis Riel as a founding father of Manitoba, evidenced by a statue of him outside the provincial legislature. Riel, of course, was a U.S. citizen when he was hanged for treason by the Canadian state. Riel was not a Canadian, neither by citizenship nor allegiance. Saul apparently wants to re-form Canada as a fair (equitable) instead of a fair (pale, white) country, eliding our differences, glossing over power differentials, pretending that Canada has any legal or just basis for occupying Indigenous lands. As Renan suggests, Saul forgets the past in order for his version of "us" to live together peacefully, and Saul glorifies the mixing of blood, incorrectly conflating this with real sharing and true equity. Renan warns his audience about this: "Be on your guard, for this ethnographic politics is in no way a stable thing and, if today you use it against others, tomorrow you may see it turned against yourselves."⁵¹ Perhaps Renan is implying that the oppressed may in the future become the oppressor, that those who are excluded may one day exclude, that "what goes around comes around." He recognizes, perhaps, the dangers of racialized citizenship.

For Renan, a nation is not about race, nor is it about necessarily sharing a common language or religion. Indeed, he says, geography is not that important (for not every single

mountain range interrupts a state's boundaries). What makes a nation is people (or man, as Renan would have it in 1882): "A nation is a spiritual principle, the outcome of the profound complications of history; it is a spiritual family not a group determined by the shape of the earth. ... A nation is a soul, a spiritual principle."⁵² Renan points out that the nation is a construction created out of historical circumstance; but at the same time it is a spiritual principle, perhaps indicating that nationhood involves aspiring or being devoted to principles that are beyond those humans have constructed. He says two things are necessary to make a nation: "One is the possession in common of a rich legacy of memories; the other is present-day consent, the desire to live together, the will to perpetuate the value of the heritage that one has received in an undivided form. ... The nation, like the individual, is the culmination of a long past of endeavours, sacrifice, and devotion." A nation, he says, "is therefore a large-scale solidarity" and a nation's existence relies on "a daily plebiscite" requiring its citizens to continue to (actively) agree to desire to live together as a nation.⁵³ We will see in Chapter Two that this describes pre-reserve Plains Cree band society; using words and phrases like 'rich legacy of memories' and 'present-day consent,' it is interesting to think of Renan, at least somewhat, describing the Cree nation as it was lived on the Plains before the reserve era.

In his 1983 book, *Nations and Nationalism*, Ernest Gellner writes, "[T]here is a very large number of potential nations on earth," though not all of these nations are potentially viable states. Of competing nationalisms, Gellner rightly points out: "The satisfaction of some [i.e. Canada] spells the frustration of others [i.e. Indigenous nations]."⁵⁴ These promising premises soon dissolve with Gellner's definitions: "[T]he problem of nationalism does not arise for stateless societies. If there is no state, one obviously cannot ask whether

or not its boundaries are congruent with the limits of nations.”⁵⁵ Gellner acknowledges that for hunting and gathering bands the question of a state never arises seeing as such societies do not have the “political division of labour” constituted by the state.⁵⁶ However, who is to say that the question of centralized authority never arose for transnomic (formerly known as nomadic) societies?⁵⁷ David Graeber draws on the work of anthropologist Pierre Clastres and poses this question: “But what if ... Amazonians were not entirely unaware of what the elementary forms of state power might be like – what it would mean to allow some men to give everyone else orders which could not be questioned, since they were backed up by the threat of force – and were for that very reason determined to ensure such things never came about? What if they considered the fundamental principles of our political science morally objectionable?”⁵⁸ It is, after all, not so difficult to imagine what the workings of the coercive centralized state look like. Because some societies may have actually opposed creating something that looks like a state, do we thus deny them nationhood and nationality? “The problem of nationalism does not arise when there is no state,” writes Gellner.⁵⁹ In the case of the Cree nation, the “problem” of nationalism indeed *does* arise *because* of the settler-state: namely Canada. However, Gellner’s definition of nationalism, “that the political and the national unit should be congruent,”⁶⁰ as we will see, is indeed correct and fits for Nêhiyawak.

Here is Gellner’s definition of the nation, gender bias notwithstanding:

1. Two men are of the same nation if and only if they share the same culture, where culture in turn means a system of ideas and signs and associations and ways of behaving and communicating.

Prior to the imposition of Canada’s settler colonial regime, Nêhiyawak would have most certainly fulfilled these criteria, and even if today many Nêhiyawak speak only English and

also watch television and eat at KFC, they do share a culture: a system of ideas and signs and associations and ways of behaving and communicating. To dispute this would be to say that Cree people are exactly the same as settler-colonists, which would be an untenable claim. Again, Gellner:

2. Two men are of the same nation if and only if they *recognize* each other as belonging to the same nation. In other words, *nations maketh man*; nations are the artifacts of men's convictions and loyalties and solidarities. A mere category of persons (say, occupants of a given territory, or speakers of a given language, for example) become a nation if and when the members of the category firmly recognize certain mutual rights and duties to each other in virtue of their shared membership of it. It is their recognition of each other as fellows of this kind which turns them into a nation, and not the other shared attributes, whatever they might be, which separate that category from non-members.⁶¹

Most certainly pre-reserve Nêhiyaw communities would fulfill Gellner's requirements to a 'T.' As we will see in Chapter Two, Nêhiyawak "firmly recognize[d] certain mutual rights and duties to each other in virtue of their shared membership" of the nation. What (or more properly, who) changed this was the colonizers.

In *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (1983), Benedict Anderson asserts that nations are modern, arising as they did in Europe in the eighteenth century; for Anderson, nations grew out of and replaced religious communities.⁶² At this time, Anderson notes, "a fundamental change was taking place in modes of apprehending the world, which, more than anything else, made it possible to 'think' the nation."⁶³ These included: (1) perceiving time in terms of simultaneity and history as a chain of events; (2) the rise of the novel and newspaper – through which the nation is imagined – allowing people at great distances to conceptualize and imagine belonging to the same nation; (3) materials printed in the vernacular (which became national print languages) and made cheaply available; (4) the feeling of anonymity, yet

perceiving strangers as connected to oneself.⁶⁴ Other factors in the modernist view of nations include the rise of capitalism and the creation of bureaucracies.⁶⁵ Anderson, unfortunately, completely misunderstands settler-colonialism: “[T]he indigenes were conquerable by arms and disease, and controllable by the mysteries of Christianity and a completely alien culture (as well as, for those days, an advanced political organization) ...”⁶⁶ He provides no evidence that any Indigenous peoples or nations were conquered, that Christianity was a mystery, that the alien culture(s) were completely incomprehensible, nor that settler-colonial political organization was more “advanced” (it wasn’t). Indeed, Anderson apparently only recognizes the Aztecs and Incas as “civilizations” seeing as they are the only ones he lists among Europe’s ‘discoveries.’⁶⁷ Though Indigenous collectivities were called nations by early settler colonials, see the Royal Proclamation of 1763 for example, and contemporary Indigenous peoples are employing the language of sovereignty and nationhood, too often they are excluded from the conversation about what nations are or could be.

Though writers like Anderson misunderstand Indigenous claims and aspirations to nationhood, a growing number of Indigenous scholars are theorizing sovereignty using similar language as western scholars. “[I]ndigenous thinkers of today are generating new theories of decolonization and new nationalisms,” writes Scott Richard Lyons (Leech Lake Anishinaabe/Dakota) in *X-Marks* (2010), his wide-ranging analysis of Indigenous peoples and modernity.⁶⁸ Lyons asks fundamental questions such as: “What exactly do we mean by nationalism, and how does that apply to Indigenous peoples? What are the historical, epistemological, and moral foundations of nationalism? What are nationalists, what do they do, and why?”⁶⁹ Lyons begins his examination of Indigenous nationalisms noting the

cultural diversity of Indigenous peoples in 1491, in what would become the United States, before asking if these various collectivities were nations and relying on the work of Gellner and Anthony D. Smith.⁷⁰ For Smith, nations are modern creations, however they grow out of pre-existing cultural units he calls an *ethnie*, which is for Lyons, “the raw materials for the making of nations.”⁷¹ It is clear that what I am calling the Cree nation fulfills Smith’s characteristics of what makes an *ethnie*: a collective name (Nêhiyawak), a common “myth” of descent (creation and migration stories), a shared history, a distinctive shared culture, an association with a specific territory, and a sense of solidarity.⁷² For Smith, part of what changes when an *ethnie* becomes a nation would be the people become sedentary agriculturalists and develop an organized religion.⁷³ (This was the hope and mission of the Canadian government and missionaries.) As Lyons writes, an *ethnie* is culturally defined, while “the *nation* emphasizes intersubjective recognition of membership, duties, rights, and responsibilities against the backdrop of a mass public culture and common economy” and the move to ‘the nation’ represents “the conscious decision to move away from kinship and culture toward ‘territorial, educational, and legal aspects’ of community.”⁷⁴ Did Cree leaders make a conscious decision to move away from kinship and culture? No. There is no evidence of this desire on their part, quite the opposite is true, as we will see throughout this thesis. Did Cree people always have territorial, educational, and legal notions of community? Certainly, yes. For a collectivity to be a nation, Gellner requires nationhood (which, as we saw, is cultural) and nationality (which is legal); Smith describes the historical transformation from one to the other. The political movement that makes this happen is nationalism.⁷⁵

Engaging with Gellner and Smith, Lyons attempts to fit Indigenous nations within these debates and according to their theories of how nations come to be. Thus, Lyons says, the nation isn't western; it is modern: "The idea of an Indian nation may be as modern [i.e. as relatively recent] as anyone else's nation, but that doesn't mean its origins [i.e., its *ethnie*] aren't as old as the hills."⁷⁶ There is no need, he says, to insist that Indigenous nations were *nations* in 1491 or 1215 or before. Lyons makes the distinction between Indigenous cultural resisters (what Smith calls "ethnicists") and nationalists: For Lyons, cultural resisters say No, while nationalists say Yes. He says, in particular, that cultural resisters rejected modernity and adhered to separatism. Nationalists chose and choose to modernize their *ethnie*.⁷⁷ (I wonder, then, if it is possible to be a nationalist-separatist? I think 'autonomy' is a more nuanced term than separatist because there are degrees; separatism implies complete withdraw.) To make his point, Lyons quotes an 1822 speech by Pawnee leader Petalesharo, presented to U.S. president James Monroe (an example of inter-*national* diplomacy, as Petalesharo addressed his U.S. counterpart). In the speech, Petalesharo outlines the differences between whites and Indigenous peoples; for this Indigenous leader, Lyons acknowledges, "the most rational thing to do is divide the lands and distribute them fairly, thus allowing different cultures to thrive on each side."⁷⁸ Petalesharo makes an argument for autonomy and co-existence; he does not tell the whites to return to Europe. Lyons asserts, though, that calling him a nationalist is historical revisionism. He was an anti-modernist "who wanted his people to be left alone" (an assertion of autonomy in my mind). Lyons writes: "To be a nationalist, remember, is not only to assert one's separatism, it is to argue for the right of one's group to be recognized as a nation" and this "depends on at least some willingness to modernize".⁷⁹ Refusing to be

dominated by an occupying force is not rejecting modernity outright; it is an example of cultural survival and a demand for a people's sovereignty to be respected.

Lyons notes the role of treaties in constituting both Indigenous and European nations (he suggests the infant United States held its treaties up as evidence of its legitimacy as a nation).⁸⁰ Indigenous peoples before treaty were not nations, he says, but many were cultural resisters. Examples of cultural resistance, he says, would be the Pueblo Revolt of 1680, the 1736 renunciation of Catholic baptism by the Seminoles, and the attempt by the Shawnee prophet Tenskwatawa in 1805 to unify a pan-tribal alliance against the United States.⁸¹ These movements involved protecting a way of life and tribal land/resources. For Lyons, cultural resisters had nationhood – in that they shared a common culture that they wanted to protect – but not nationality. Lyons defines nationality as “an argument about legal status,” which apparently he thinks these resistance movements did not have, though they were defending their laws, lands, and territories.⁸² Are these not arguments about legal status, and hence, nationalism? Treaty signatories were, by conscious intent or by implication, thus nationalists and not resisters because they chose to accept modernity and chose to sign (I will discuss this at greater length in Chapter Six). The scene of writing is when Indigenous *ethnies* started to modernize into nations. I wonder, though, what about writing before treaty signings? What about oratory that made claims to Lyons's dual prongs of nationhood and nationality? What if the treaty was changed after oral negotiation? Perhaps the amount or degree of modernity – or any of the treaty terms – to which a leader agreed is not reflected by the written version of the treaty. Lyons asserts that nationalists state the boundaries of the nation; they write history (or turn ‘myth’ into contemporary history) and they hold it up for the world to see (in a Plains

Cree context, Edward Ahenakew is an example of a nationalist Lyons would recognize, see Chapter Eight).

Nationhood, then, exists for the nation's citizens and is expressed to the outside world. Lyons writes: "An effective nationalism must function on political and cultural levels simultaneously. It will reveal to both the interior population and the exterior world an unbroken line of descent connecting an *ethnie* to a modern community distinguishable from others and hence deserving recognition, respect, and rights." I'm not sure why Lyons uses the word "population" above, seeing as nations have citizens. Likewise I question his use of the term "community"; I would think 'body politic' or even 'nation' would be appropriate here; in discussing Canadian or U.S. American nationalism, one would not refer to these nations as communities. Lyons concludes, culture must be displayed, shared, and written about (and not "sequestered or quarantined") in order for an *ethnie* to be effectively modernized as a nation.⁸³ Here, I think, Lyons unfortunately falls into the conceptual and political trap of recognition; Yellowknives Dene political theorist Glen Coulthard asserts that, "recognition has emerged as the hegemonic expression of self-determination within the Indigenous rights movement in Canada."⁸⁴ (A second, and related, hegemonic concept that has emerged in recent years, due in part to the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, would be reconciliation.)

Coulthard's critique of "the politics of recognition" – which hinges on "mutual recognition" between Indigenous peoples and the Canadian state without accounting for radically unequal power relations – is that this liberal pluralist model seeks "to reconcile Indigenous claims to nationhood with Crown sovereignty via the accommodation of Indigenous identities in some form of renewed relationship with the Canadian state."⁸⁵ In

the reconciliation-accommodation model, the referent is still the Crown, which supposedly has the right to determine and define everyone's aspirations. Coulthard, drawing on Frantz Fanon, notes that the terms of recognition are set by (and in the interests of) the colonizer; further, the colonized internalize these relations, thus maintaining and even strengthening the colonial relationship. Indeed, the politics of recognition does little to address the "generative structures" (e.g.: capitalism and racism) of the relationship.⁸⁶ Because for Fanon the colonized will only be liberated through a complete transformation of society, Coulthard asserts that through recognition, "the colonized simply go from 'one way of life to another, but not from one life to another'; the structure of domination changes, but the subjectivity of the colonized remains the same – they become 'emancipated slaves.'"⁸⁷ Worse still, "the Indigenous society will tend to come to see the forms of structurally limited and constrained recognition conferred to them by their colonial 'masters' *as their own*."⁸⁸ The colonized internalize recognition and accommodation and believe these are changes they have brought about themselves, again strengthening the power of the colonizer. As an example, Coulthard cites recent Supreme Court of Canada decisions that have "secured an unprecedented degree of protection for certain 'cultural' practices within the state, [the SCC] has nonetheless repeatedly refused to challenge the racist origin of Canada's assumed sovereign authority over Indigenous peoples and their territories."⁸⁹ Arguing whether or not Indigenous nations are nations using the frameworks and criteria of western or European nations (and employing the definitions of non-Indigenous or non-colonized theorists to the letter), as though these are universal, will reproduce the same dynamic, entrenching colonial interests and aspirations. Calling a reserve community a First *Nation* is another example of the politics of recognition, especially when these

‘nations’ do not possess the rights of true self-determination – rights that can never be delegated by another government or court. Lyons is correct that Indigenous nations deserve recognition, respect, and rights (*as nations*) but these must be asserted, they are not a gift of the colonizer.

First Nations are not nation-states, and perhaps this obvious fact must be underlined in any discussion of Indigenous nations and nationalisms. Lyons writes (in a critique of Taiaiake Alfred): “The idea of the nation is universal and modern; there are not radically different kinds of nations in the world ...”⁹⁰ Perhaps this is the conceptual problem with Lyons’s book: if Indigenous peoples are not seeking a state or states of their own – and Lyons quotes Ronald Niezen making this point exactly – then perhaps there should be “radically different kinds of nations in the world.”⁹¹ According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, nation has even been used to describe the animal kingdom (in *Faerie Queene*, Spenser refers to the nation of birds; translating Virgil, Dryden mentions the nations of the sea). The first reference to Indigenous nations as nations in the *OED* is from 1650 in Maryland. Lyons says a nationalist has to “speak the language of nations.”⁹² Why? Mostly because of recognition, playing the nation game – as opposed to playing the rejection game of Lyons’s cultural resisters. Conceptual separatism, he says, doesn’t make effective nationalism. I don’t see how emphasizing difference and autonomy can lead to “drop[ping] out of political conversations altogether” as Lyons claims.⁹³ Perhaps it depends on who you want to converse with. And by what rules. Perhaps it all comes down to the vocabulary and concepts you wish to employ.

It would appear from this literature review, then, that one of the dominant scholarly views is that nations are modern constructions, and with Lyons, we see this perspective in a Native Studies context. Derek Sayer urges us to reconsider this:

In the Czech case, a sense of national community is not something unique to modernity. In order to make any sense at all of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, something needs to be said here about earlier Czech history – not simply to provide background or context, but also because that history itself, in the guise of a recovered memory, was to become a crucial ingredient in (and in some cases a serious problem for) the very clear 'consciousness of national identity' that did crystallize among Czechs in the later nineteenth century. Traditions may be invented, nations may be imagined communities. But neither, as a rule, is simply conjured up out of nothing."⁹⁴

As Lyons argues, nations do emerge from traditions that have unfolded over time. Likewise, Sayers challenges the imagined communities theory of nations: "I do not intend to slight Anderson's book, which I consider a major contribution to the literature on nationalism; but the tacit assumption that nations are imaginable as communities only under conditions of modernity, which Anderson shares with many others, needs in my view to be seriously rethought."⁹⁵ However, Anderson provides one key for differentiating Indigenous nations from other types; he suggests nations are imagined communities because, "the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion."⁹⁶ As I will argue below, kin- and clan-based nations are not imagined in this way because citizens do know (or, at least, know of) one another.

Rogers Brubaker suggests scholars "decouple the study of nations and nationness from the study of nations as substantial entities, collectivities, or entities." Brubaker proposes that we "focus on nationness as a conceptual variable," "not as entity but as contingent event." Rather than ask, 'What is a nation,' he suggests we ask: "How does

nation work as a practical category, as classificatory scheme, as cognitive frame?" What makes nation-evoking and nation-invoking more or less likely to succeed?⁹⁷ Perhaps, we should examine nationhood as something that is lived, something that evolves, and something that is contingent on time and geography, rather than something that can be solidly and clinically analyzed with a checklist. Brubaker writes:

[W]e should focus on nation as a category of practice, nationhood as an institutionalized cultural and political form, and nationness as a contingent event or happening, and refrain from using the analytically dubious notion of 'nations' as substantial, enduring collectivities. A recent book by Julia Kristeva bears the English title *Nations without Nationalism*; but the analytical task at hand, I submit, is to think about nationalism without nations.⁹⁸

The notion of nationhood as contingent event or happening, as a category of practice, may be useful in Indigenous contexts. For Lyons, this happening or contingent event was the signing of treaties with colonial governments. However, one would not want to be so dismissive of those people, Elders let's say, who may assert that their nations *are* "substantial, enduring collectivities." Investigating how nationhood works, indeed how it differs through time and place as something that is thought, shaped, and made, may be useful in an Indigenous Studies context as it frees us from static definitions of the nation in favour of nations being living, evolving collectivities.

"Culture alone cannot change the world. The power – and danger – of nationhood is that it *can*," writes Daniel Heath Justice in "The Necessity of Nationhood" (2005).⁹⁹ Justice critiques academics' focus on Indigenous cultures to the exclusion of Indigenous politics (which I discuss in the Introduction) as well as Canadian mult-cult through a comment on Michaëlle Jean's inauguration speech as Governor General, which invoked Canada's founding two solitudes and the need for national unity (a form of forgetting in line with Renan and Saul, the former first man of Rideau Hall). Justice writes: "Jean presents a

multicultural feel-good Canadian Dream that is firmly ahistorical, unabashedly assimilationist, and genealogically dependent upon hundreds of years of brutally repressive public policy toward First Nations and other Aboriginal peoples.”¹⁰⁰ The counterpoint to this feel-good mult-cult is Indigenous nationhood. In a passage that echoes Sayer above, Justice writes: “The political specificities that define the kinship-based ethos of Indigenous nationhood are deserving of a separate consideration.”¹⁰¹ Justice does just this in an essay published in *Reasoning Together: The Native Critics Collective* (2009). He writes that we should not conflate state nationalism with Indigenous nationhood: “Nation-state nationalism is often dependent upon the erasure of kinship bonds in favour of a code of assimilative patriotism that places, and emphasizes, the militant history of the nation above the specific geographic, genealogical, and spiritual histories of peoples.”¹⁰² Conversely, Indigenous nationhood reinforces kinship bonds and emphasizes (in its best iterations) participatory citizenship, not blind patriotism.

Justice notes that instead, Indigenous nationhood emphasizes “a common social interdependence within the community, the tribal web of kinship rights and responsibilities that link the People, the land, and the cosmos together in an ongoing and dynamic system of mutually affecting relationships.”¹⁰³ (Justice is clear to point out that he is not referring to an unchanging, static, primordial, essentialist understanding of Indigenous collectivities.) “The central focus of Indigenous nationhood, then, is on *peoplehood*.”¹⁰⁴ Indeed, Tom Holm (Creek/Cherokee), J. Diane Pearson, and Ben Chavis (Lumbee) argue that what they call “the peoplehood matrix” be adopted as a core theoretical construct of Indigenous Studies, especially toward the goal of extending sovereignty.¹⁰⁵ These authors build on the prior work of Holm and Robert K. Thomas to

delineate the four factors of the peoplehood matrix: that a people share a common language, sacred history, religion/ceremonial cycle, and land. "Some of the elements of peoplehood can be symbolic of identity, as in the case of a group's holy land that is no longer its homeland."¹⁰⁶ Lyons critiques the peoplehood matrix without acknowledging this crucial sentence. "If you do not conform to the model," Lyons writes, "if you happen to live away from your homeland, speak English, practice Christianity, or know more songs by the Dave Matthews Band than by the ancestors, you effectively 'cease to exist' as one of the people."¹⁰⁷ If, as Holm and his colleagues acknowledge, people can be removed from their homelands and still remain a people, then does it not follow that a person can exist as one of the people if they no longer speak their language or have never learned their songs? Who would say that a survivor of residential schools who no longer speaks Cree (or likes music by Elvis Presley) is no longer Cree? Peoplehood is not a checklist on which a person needs to score 100% to be a citizen of a nation-people (Lyons's term).¹⁰⁸ Peoplehood is about behaviour, not essential traits. It is a matrix, "a complete system that accounts for particular social, cultural, political, economic, and ecological behaviours exhibited by groups of people Indigenous to particular territories."¹⁰⁹ As Holm et al. write, "Even English has been adopted and *made an essential part of a given people's sense of group identity*."¹¹⁰

In this thesis I will employ the concept of nation-people; it carries with it the modern, "high" connotations of nationhood, with the concept of "peoplehood" and people who share language, sacred history, religion/ceremonial cycle, and land, even if these are mostly symbolic at times. (Also recall that many Indigenous peoples' names for themselves in their own languages translate to "the people.") Indeed, the critical literary framework I am using – Indigenous literary nationalism, or 'rhetorical autonomy,' as I term it – requires

some engagement with the terminology of nationhood. Like Brubaker, I'd like to think of nationhood as a contingent event or happening, as a category of practice. In the next chapter, I will look at how Nêhiyawak might find these concepts useful in describing their rhetorical and political traditions and existences as distinct bands that make up the Plains Cree nation.

Chapter Two

Nêhiyawaskî (The Cree Earth):

Autonomy and Socio-Political Lifeways on the Northern Plains

This is our land! It isn't a piece of pemmican to be cut off and given in little pieces back to us. It is ours and we will take what we want.

- Pîhtokahanâpiwiyin (Poundmaker)¹

Chapter One examined theories of settler-colonialism, the nation, nationhood, and nationalism from both western/European and Indigenous Studies perspectives. Moving forward, we should keep in mind the idea that nations are modern constructions rooted in earlier expressions of a nation-people's cultural and nationalist expressions. In order to understand the rhetorical production of Nêhiyawak, we should examine their nationhood in light of Chapter One. This chapter will also attempt to provide a sense of place in Nêhiyawaskî (the Cree Earth), or the Cree geocosmos, through time. Both Craig Womack (Muskogee/Cherokee), whose first chapter of *Red on Red* is called "The Creek Nation," and Daniel Heath Justice (Cherokee), who similarly begins *Our Fire Survives the Storm* with an overview of Cherokee government, worldviews, and history (before and after removals) serve as models for this first chapter. Indeed, referring to Muskogee origin and migration stories, Womack relates these narratives to Indigenous tribal-nationhood: "This concept of ancestral memory relates to nationalism in that sovereignty is an intersection of the political, imaginary, and literary. To exist as a nation, the community needs a perception of nationhood, that is, stories (like the migration account) that help them imagine who they are as a people, how they came to be, and what cultural values they wish to preserve."² Likewise, I wish to contribute to establishing a sense of place on Cree land (and naming it as Cree land, Nêhiyawaskî) in support of sovereignty and autonomy.

“The Land That is So Beautiful”: Creation and Migration

[W]e have stories that tell us that people do understand this a long time ago. That life begins somewhere and that animals did live on earth, but no humans. We have those stories. ... Now, it seems like the animals were here, and it seems that there were no humans at that time. But they expected the humans to emerge upon the land. ... We don't know for sure exactly where the first humans were from, but they noticed that there is a land down there, the land that is so beautiful. And they so wished to go and see that land.

- Louis Bird (Omushkego, Peawanuck First Nation [Swampy Cree])³

Historian Winona Wheeler (a member of the Fisher River Cree Nation) refers to one type of Cree story, *âtayôhkêwina*, “sacred stories of the mystical past when the earth was shaped” stating that these “are the foundations of Cree spirituality/religion, philosophy, and world view, and contain the laws given to the people to live by.” Wheeler states, “Some old and great stories handed down through the generations are formally governed by sacred protocols.”⁴ The late Elder Walter Lightning (Samson Cree Nation) similarly writes that certain stories “can only be told by persons who have the authority to do so, during the proper season, and under the proper conditions. Some of the stories in collections of texts in fact fall into this category, even stories that are in collections of texts such as Bloomfield’s.” (He is referring to anthropologist Leonard Bloomfield’s 1930 publication, *Sacred Stories of the Sweet Grass Cree*).⁵ We should be cautious about what stories we publish, quote, and re-tell. Lightning continues:

Keeping constraints on the telling of these stories is for a purpose. It may be said that all of the stories form a huge and complex fabric. The stories cannot be understood unless they are told by persons who know (a) how to put the specific narrative within the context of all the other possible narratives in that complex fabric; (b) how to fit the way the story is told to the specific audience at the specific time; (c) the system of metaphor that is used or adapted in the story; (d) the authority under which the story is told.⁶

Of course, there are Elders, historians, and storytellers like Louis Bird (quoted above) who do possess the knowledge of context and protocols necessary to relate these interrelated and complex sacred stories. However, Cree theorists point to a need for extreme care in terms of the publication and citation of such stories. Wheeler notes, “While all knowledge is intended for community well-being and welfare, to acquire certain kinds [of knowledge] one is obligated to adhere to the rules of its acquisition.” Wheeler, referencing Harold Cardinal (Sucker Creek Cree Nation), suggests such protocols, particularly regarding stories and ceremonies, are a form of “Cree copyright.”⁷ Paul DePasquale (Kanien’kehá:ka, Six Nations of the Grand River), who co-edited Bird’s stories, points out that the publication of oral traditions can aid the process of learning or re-learning them, and hence assist in cultural revitalization.⁸ In a Haisla context, Eden Robinson quotes an account of Elders from Kitamaat:

As clear and complete as we want this discussion of our *nuyem* [Haisla protocols] to be, it is important to recognize that the Old People realized that some things cannot be shared. This was and remains a way of preserving our culture. In times past, it was recognized that whatever the missionaries knew about our culture, they tried to suppress. The less they knew, the safer our traditions remained. Nowadays, we simply realize that there are aspects of our traditional perspective and values that non-Haislas would never be able to understand.⁹

Like DePasquale, the Elders whom Robinson is citing note that Haisla people need to “tell it like it is, because what we don’t get down now will probably be lost.”¹⁰ I hesitate to quote from some Cree stories directly, choosing instead to leave this task to the appropriate individuals within the proper contexts. I am not knowledgeable in the appropriate context of these narratives, and I do not have the authority to tell them.

The histories of Nêhiyawak cannot be detached from the huge and complex fabric of stories, to use Lightning’s phrase. Wheeler asserts, “In the Cree world, everyone’s personal,

family, and regional histories connect and overlap; all are extensions of the past. ... Cree histories consist of many different kinds of overlapping and related stories.”¹¹ Neal McLeod (James Smith Cree First Nation) writes: “Cree narrative memory emerges from the worldview and spirituality of the Cree people, and is grounded in the names of both ancestors and places. It is through our connections to storytellers and *kêhtê-ayak* (elders, old ones) that we are able to access this ancient collective memory.”¹² Cree national memory, grounded in names and relationships, would thus support the concept of Indigenous nationhood built on knowing (or knowing of) the other citizens of one’s nation, contrary to the strict modernist notion that citizens of nations do not know one another as described in Chapter One. When citizens are linked by kinship ties through interconnected bands across the nation, everyone must at least “know of” one another. However, Cree nationhood would support Ernest Renan’s statement that a nation is built in solidarity and is a spiritual principle. For example, McLeod suggests that scholars adopt the concept of “spiritual history” when analyzing stories that emerge from Cree narrative memory, a concept and process that recognizes the sacred connection between Nêhiyawak and Creation, including their sacred homelands. My intent here is not to make a misinformed or inappropriate distinction between *âtayôhkêwina* (sacred stories) and *acimowina*, (stories of events). Nor is it to unravel the threads and undo the fabric of interconnected Cree stories. My aim is to avoid telling de-contextualized stories out of season by limiting my discussion to published *acimowina*, stories that have come to pass outside the mystical time to which Wheeler refers, akin to what we might think of as ‘history’ in the Western sense.¹³

My approach thus takes us beyond the processes of Creation (so as to avoid telling sacred stories) to the time when Nêhiyawak inhabited the Earth. I do this out of respect to Nêhiyawak and their ceremonial and narrative protocols.¹⁴ Deanna Christensen, with the aid of numerous Elders, relates a version of the Cree creation and migration story in her history of Ahtahkakoop (Star Blanket) and his people. In this narrative, she refers to the origins of Anishinaabek (Ojibway and Saulteaux) and Nêhiyawak in lands far to the east. Over time, the people were guided west as their numbers grew, and these ancestors evolved into Sakâwiyiniwak (Woods Cree), Omaskêkowak (Swampy Cree) and Nêhiyawak (Plains Cree).¹⁵ It is important to note that this migration should in no way undermine Nêhiyawak and their claims to their treaty territories or to ancient Indigenous relationships to their homelands. Because the people moved across a huge territory according to a prophesy would only strengthen their connection to it and should be used to argue *for* sovereignty. Scott Lyons (Leach Lake Anishinaabe/Dakota) describes the story of the Great Migration, which “begins in a time when *anishinaabeg* were living as one large, undifferentiated group (we would probably call them Algonquins today) along the eastern seaboard of the United States and Canada.” Lyons describes the movement of people westward – guided by a woman’s prophecy – in the process establishing communities throughout the Great Lakes and establishing the Three Fires, the distinct Potawatomi, Odawa, and Ojibwe nations.¹⁶ Leanne Simpson (Michi Saagiig Nishnaabe) refers to the Great Migration as “a strategic and organized mass mobilization over an incredibly long period of time” which took place in order to spread the nation out and protect the nation, the people, their lifeways, and knowledges from the colonizers.¹⁷ Gerald Vizenor (White Earth Anishinaabe) celebrates Indigenous movement, what he calls transmotion: “The

connotations of transmotion are creation stories, totemic visions, reincarnation, and sovenance; transmotion, that sense of native motion and an active presence, is sui generis sovereignty. Native transmotion is survivance, a reciprocal use of nature, not a monotheistic, territorial sovereignty.”¹⁸ While nomadism has for so long worked to justify the dispossession of Indigenous peoples of their lands, these stories of migration – movement in the service of nationhood and survival – overturn colonial narratives. Instead of limiting Indigenous sovereignty for lack of farms and fences, the concept of transmotion and a migration that was started by prophecy can work to strengthen Cree histories and affirms their sovereignty and stewardship over a huge territory.

Historian Waziyatawin (Angela Cavender Wilson, [Wahpetunwan Dakota]) draws on Vine Deloria, Jr. (Standing Rock Lakota) and anthropologist Keith Basso in affirming the importance of space/place (where an event occurred) over the notion of time (when an event occurred) in many Indigenous historical narratives. “While many historical stories from Indigenous oral traditions do not contain information on when a particular event occurred (especially according to a Julian or Gregorian calendar), the stories often contain detailed information about where specific events took *place*.”¹⁹ As Basso writes of Southwestern Indigenous peoples: “Apache standards for interpreting the past are not the same as our own ... [W]hat matters most to Apaches is *where* events occurred, not when, and what they serve to reveal about the development and character of Apache social life.”²⁰ Basso summarizes Apache historiography: “What it does ... is fashion possible worlds, give them expressive shape, and present them for contemplation as images of the past that can deepen and enlarge awareness in the present.”²¹ I do not want to conflate Apache and Cree traditions; however, it is a provocative point to consider the primacy of place in Indigenous

traditions, and how this can “deepen and enlarge awareness in the present.” Wheeler explains in a Cree context: “The idea of time and its referents are expressed in specific contexts: *Long ago*, *kayâs*, or, *a long long long time ago*, *mitonê kayâs*, or *kayâs kayâs mitonê kayâs*, so far back it doesn’t matter how long ago.”²² Thus, exactly when *iyiniwak* (The People) arrived in homelands they inhabited at the time of European invasion is not necessarily relevant from a Cree perspective, or certainly not as important as time and dates are to Western historiography or to Canadian courts when deliberating on land claims, Aboriginal rights and title, and issues of Indigenous self-determination.

The ethnohistorical record regarding Cree migration would appear to corroborate this lesser emphasis on *when* specific events took place. Ethnohistorian James G. E. Smith has surveyed the early European ethnographic and explorer literature of the Plains, and notes, for example, Alexander MacKenzie’s record of Nêhiyawak living between the Beaver and Athabasca Rivers in the late 1780s, in fact noting a dispute that had been settled between Nêhiyawak and Dunneza people, though, as Smith points out, “not specifying *when* the peace occurred.”²³ Perhaps Mackenzie’s “informants” were not concerned with *when* an event occurred. David Thompson described Nêhiyawak (or Nahathaway, to use the period European term) north of the Saskatchewan River in the 1790s, noting: “The Natives are Nahathaway Indians, whose fathers from time beyond any tradition, have hunted these lands.”²⁴ This reference to “time beyond any tradition” sounds like a long time, *kayâs kayâs mitonê kayas*, indeed.

However, Smith’s article is concerned with when Nêhiyawak began inhabiting territory in what became Saskatchewan and Alberta, partly to dismiss what he calls the myth that Cree people only moved westward just ahead of approaching Europeans and as a

result of the fur trade in the 1690s.²⁵ Smith analyzes the ethnohistorical (including sources not examined previous to his article), archaeological, linguistic, demographic and ethnographic evidence to conclude, “that Cree were the precontact occupants of northern Manitoba, Saskatchewan and the Lac La Biche area of Alberta ... The immediate ancestors of the historical Cree lived there from about A.D. 1400. They may have lived there earlier.”²⁶ Smith quotes archaeologist James V. Wright, who claims: “Archaeological evidence strongly suggests that the Cree had a very long period of cultural development in the region under consideration and that they were not easterners who have pushed to the west and northwest in response to the fur trade.”²⁷ Smith also cites Elders of the Lubicon Lake Band, who “insist that they and their ancestors have always been in the region east of the Peace and west of the Wabasca rivers. They have no oral literature to indicate that their ancestors migrated from the east.”²⁸ Likewise, historian Theodore Binnema has more recently written: “Today archaeologists agree that the modern western Crees developed from the archaeological tradition known as Selkirk. ... The Selkirk peoples resided in the Saskatchewan River Valley below its forks by the 1400s and were expanding westward in the years thereafter.”²⁹ Thus Binnema suggests Nêhiyawak were living almost due east of Edmonton by the 1400s, squarely in the northern Plains. Again, I do not want to claim the final word on when Nêhiyawak began to live on the Plains; indeed, as I have illustrated, this would be contrary to the historical way of understanding that Wheeler and others have suggested appropriate. However, I’d like to acknowledge the historians and archaeologists who have documented Cree peoples’ long occupancy on the Plains.

Anthropologist David G. Mandelbaum wrote his doctoral dissertation at Yale University in the Spring of 1936, after collecting ethnographic data from “his” Cree

“informants” at various reserves in Saskatchewan in the summers of 1934 and 1935.³⁰ I put these words in quotation marks because it seems in those days anthropologists claimed their “informants” (collaborators) as their very own. Mandelbaum spoke to prominent Elders – such as Fineday and Coming-day – in order to construct an ethnography-narrative of Nêhiyaw lifeways between 1860-70.³¹ His book, *The Plains Cree* (1940, republished 1979) remains one of the most cited sources on Nêhiyawak prior to the reserve era.

In the 1930s there were still men and women alive who could tell me, often in vivid and clear detail, about their free-ranging early life as buffalo hunters, gatherers, warriors, and providers. ... [M]any of them remained strong in their personalities, devoted to the aboriginal values and rituals, determined that they and their children were to remain Plains Cree in personal identity and group loyalty despite direct efforts by government officials and constant pressures by others to diminish that identity.³²

During the 1910s and 1920s, Indian Act amendments had brought about changes that allowed for reserve land to be expropriated or moved by municipalities and Status Indians to be enfranchised against their will; ceremonies were outlawed and the residential school system was at approaching its height.³³ Mandelbaum carried out his fieldwork at a time when Cree identities were under attack and the resistance he describes speaks to Cree determination to maintain their lifeways. At that time, he noted: “Cree is the common language; much of the old ceremonialism, and especially the Sun dance, flourishes.”³⁴ Mandelbaum provides evidence, then, of successful efforts on the part of Nêhiyawak to maintain their Cree-ness (*Nêhiyawîwin*) and maintain their distinctiveness in the face of colonial oppression (which, really, should be no surprise). Mandelbaum asserts that Nêhiyawak had lived on the Great Plains “only since the beginning of the nineteenth century” citing as evidence only two pages of a three volume book by Elliott Coues, *New Light on the Early History of the Greater Northwest: The Manuscript Journals of Alexander*

Henry and of David Thompson (1897).³⁵ Mandelbaum suggests that an eastward migration of Cree people onto the Prairies is “amply verified both by documentary evidence and by the testimony of living informants who assert that their parents or grandparents once lived further to the east.”³⁶ I do not dispute claims to a Cree migration, though we might be skeptical as to Mandelbaum’s claims about *when* Nêhiyawak first lived in the Plains. Also, he may not be the most knowledgeable source; he writes: “The Plains Cree called themselves Nêhiyawak, a term which cannot be etymologized to my knowledge.”³⁷ Surely one of his “informants” could have known and told him the etymology of the word in Nêhiyawêwin.³⁸

Mandelbaum surveys the writings of early missionaries, explorers, and traders to trace the expansion of the Woodland Cree onto the Plains. That settlers themselves started in the east and moved westward, means that there is of course no written documentation of Cree people in European languages on the Plains until there were Europeans there to record their presence. A survey of this literature reveals that whenever Europeans moved west there were already Cree-speaking peoples there. For the period beginning with the establishment of the Hudson’s Bay Company in 1670, Mandelbaum presents some interesting evidence that Cree-speaking peoples lived in the west. He cites Father Antoine Silvy, writing from Fort Bourbon (Fort Nelson) in the 1680s who lamented the challenges of converting Cree people who were always on the move; according to Mandelbaum, Silvy claimed “that if a missionary could go to their country, fifteen or twenty days inland,” missionizing to them would be easier. Mandelbaum estimates this village was “supposed to be situated beyond the great lake of the Assiniboin, which is probably Lake Winnipeg.”³⁹ He also cites a 1736 letter from Jesuit Father Aulneau, who claimed that Cree people occupied,

according to Mandelbaum, “all the immense stretch of territory beginning at the Lake of the Woods and extending far beyond Lake Winnipeg.” Mandelbaum again estimates, not knowing which direction Aulneau meant, this “may have been northwest to Lake Athabasca or westward into the plains.”⁴⁰ So according to Mandelbaum’s evidence, it would appear that Nêhiyawak had a long history of living on the Plains.

Mandelbaum also quotes from the writing of Pierre Gaultier de Varennes, Sieur de La Vérendrye, who explored the west for New France for twenty years beginning in 1727; La Vérendrye travelled “deeper into the Saskatchewan Basin than any Frenchman had before.”⁴¹ La Vérendrye refers to the “Cree of the Prairies,” which Mandelbaum notes is “the first authentic and plausible notice in the literature that Cree were living in the plains country south of the Saskatchewan.” A map that accompanies the text refers to a meeting place of the “Cree of the Mountains, Prairies and Rivers.” Mandelbaum concludes: “[I]t appears that in 1730, a good part of the tribe was already out on the prairies.”⁴² Prior to traveling in the western territory himself, La Vérendrye met a Cree chief at the confluence of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers in 1730, who drew a map that “indicates the Saskatchewan, the Red, and the Missouri rivers.” As Mandelbaum points out, “This native had evidently traveled far beyond the eastern forests.”⁴³ This evidence, along with the narratives of David Thompson, leads Mandelbaum to assert: “It is reasonable to infer that the westernmost Cree were out on the plains about 1730.”⁴⁴ Citing the work of Mandelbaum and Arthur Ray, Graham A. MacDonald confirms that Nêhiyawak predated European arrival in the area: “When the Hudson’s Bay Company traders arrived, the Cree were a widely distributed people extending in a great arc across the boreal forest from Labrador to central Alberta.”⁴⁵ As a result of a proactive and prophesied migration, Cree

people established their national homelands across much of what would become Canada, living (as we will see) in interconnected and interrelated bands asserting their sovereignty in these homelands.

Amiskwacî: “The best of all previously known worlds”

In *Red on Red*, Womack suggests criteria that nationalist literary criticism should consider when analyzing and assessing a piece of Indigenous literature in a tribal- or national-specific context. Writing of Muskogee (Creek) literature (in particular, Alice Callahan’s novel *Wynema*) Womack writes: “In what ways does the novel record Creek history, create a sense of place on Creek land, advance Creek culture, or strengthen Creek autonomy? How deeply is it engaged in things Creek?”⁴⁶ These are considerations I extend to Nêhiyaw literatures throughout this thesis. As well, I think this thesis, as a work of criticism, should also meet these criteria; hence, this section aims to establish a sense of place on Cree land, in particular, Amiskwacî, the Beaver Hills region. Though this thesis focuses broadly on the Plains bands of the Cree Nation in Treaty Six territory, it situates the Beaver Hills and present-day Edmonton, as one of the intellectual, political, literary centres of the Plains Cree nation. MacDonald describes the present-day physical geography of the Beaver Hills region, which I quote to give us a sense of the place:

The Beaver Hills rise subtly out of a hospitable and moist mixed-farming region identified with the Aspen Parkland, a web of grasslands and trees running in a broad swath from south-central Manitoba towards Edmonton. Trees characteristic of this region include the Trembling Aspen and the Balsam Poplar, along with willows. ... A variety of other species are found, some associated with the Boreal Forest to the north and others with more southerly climes that favour deciduous growth. Thus, in the Beaver Hills one can find the Paper Birch, White and Black Spruce, and Tamarack. It is a genuinely transitional type of landscape, embodying elements of the somewhat more uniform features which lie to the north and south of the belt. These diverse qualities have made the uplands an important place of resort for many generations of Native peoples.⁴⁷

It was for Indigenous peoples, as MacDonald writes, “the best of all previously known worlds.”⁴⁸ Surveying archeological work completed since the 1950s, MacDonald asserts, “peoples have made use of the Beaver Hills for at least 8,000 years” (though a few pages earlier MacDonald also suggests buffalo pounds, jumps, and traps were in use in the region by 9,000 years ago).⁴⁹ Of course, the region has experienced a great deal of change throughout the millennia. In the words of archaeologist Heinz Pyszczuk, “When we look at the North Saskatchewan River valley today it is difficult to imagine it did not exist. But approximately 12,000 years ago there was only a flat lake bottom here. Prior to that date, the Edmonton area was covered by glacial ice – the last in a series of glacial events that have profoundly altered Alberta.”⁵⁰ According to Pyszczuk, by 12,000 years ago “the Edmonton area was becoming ice-free and was covered by water from melting glaciers. The melt water formed Glacial Lake Edmonton – a short-lived body of water, which drained rapidly away through a channel south of Edmonton, setting the stage for the appearance of the North Saskatchewan River. Water flowing over the old glacial lake bed eventually established a preferred channel, and thousands of years of erosion formed the river valley we see today.” Pyszczuk asserts that evidence of human occupations dating after 8,000 years ago can be found in the river valley of present-day Edmonton, attesting to a long period of Indigenous inhabitation.⁵¹ MacDonald suggests that long term shifts in climate, such as occasional droughts, have affected the presence of both vegetation and perhaps even humans on the Prairies. “So severe was the drought in the period from 1200 to 1400 [CE] that some have argued for a general abandonment by both human and animal in much of the lands to the east of the central and southern Rocky Mountains.”⁵² If this was the case,

we must note another factor in the debate about when Nêhiyawak came to inhabit the Plains – perhaps the environment did not allow any human occupation for a long period.

Archaeologists have identified 780 archaeological sites in the region, including the area known to us as the Rosedale Flats in the heart of Edmonton. Another 225 sites have been located in what is now Elk Island National Park, located approximately 50 kilometres east of Edmonton. (And archaeologists cannot be sure how many sites remain unknown to us within the City of Edmonton covered by concrete.)⁵³ Buff Parry, who has done research on the history of the Rosedale Flats – referred to in Nêhiyawêwin as pêhonânihk, or “the waiting place, the gathering place” – calls the river flats the place that “gave birth to the city of Edmonton.”⁵⁴ The region was thus far from a terra nullius of the hopeful European colonial imagination. In fact, according to archaeologists the Elk Island park area contains more significant sites than they anticipated leading them to conclude, “the area was not a peripheral area or a frontier zone’ but was instead ‘a centre of activities.”⁵⁵ The Beaver Hills region, of which Edmonton is now part, has been a centre of human activities for thousands of years.

Amiskwacî was – as it is now – a major centre of political and economic life in the region. Archaeologists Trevor R. Peck and J. Rod Vickers write: “Alberta is a young province, but an ancient country. ... Aboriginal people have lived in what is Alberta for at least thirteen thousand years.”⁵⁶ In an article that attempts to recreate a year on the Alberta Plains in the years 1004-1005 CE, Peck and Vickers affirm that Plains Indigenous peoples adapted to the seasonal movements of the bison (bison spend winter in the wooded parklands, foothills, and river valleys and summers on the open plains) while supplementing their diets with seasonal foods that they harvested and processed.⁵⁷ Though

the archaeological evidence they analyze apparently belongs to the Blackfoot, we might presume that Nêhiyawak adapted to similar lifeways as they, too, became accustomed to the Plains; indeed, Peck and Vickers write: “we do find that all historic occupants of the area, no matter what their origins, gradually converged toward an area-wide commonality.”⁵⁸ They trace the season cycle of Plains people as they engaged in multiband large scale hunting in the fall, camped in wooded areas in the winter, moved to drier locales in early spring, and spent the summer near rivers and other sources of water.⁵⁹ “Aboriginal people did not ‘follow’ the bison in a strict sense, rather they gathered information and made educated guesses concerning where the animals would move next and ‘intercepted’ the moving herds.”⁶⁰ Indigenous peoples on the Plains developed a highly scientific approach to surviving in their environment, which influenced their seasonal and socio-political band structures (discussed in detail below).

In a 2004 article in *Plains Anthropologist*, David Meyer and Dale Russell attempt to reconstruct the economic cycle, sociopolitical organization, and cultural landscape of the Pegogomaw Crees who lived around the confluence of the North and South Saskatchewan Rivers. According to Meyer and Russell, this band of 600-800 individuals maintained an occupation of the region that “clearly had considerable time depth.”⁶¹ However, the band ceased to exist as a distinct sociopolitical group after the devastating smallpox epidemic of 1781-82, at which time surviving members likely joined neighbouring bands of Cree and Saulteaux peoples – and thus forming “some of the well known Plains Cree bands of the 19th century.”⁶² Relying on fur trade documents, Meyer and Russell suggest the Pegogomaw band utilized the area south and southwest from the upper Saskatchewan River through the region centered on the lower the North and South Saskatchewan Rivers,

occasionally extending west into the lower Battle River and Eagle Hills regions where they camped with Beaver Cree.⁶³ This is corroborated by a map prepared by Buff Parry and included in the Rosedale Flats Oral Histories project, which illustrates the locations of Cree bands in the 1700s that used what became known as the Rosedale flats, and the first nations they became in the 1800s. This map shows the Pegogamaw band using the territory along the North Saskatchewan River and through what became the city of Edmonton.⁶⁴

The lands of the Pegogamaw band encompassed both the boreal forest and open grasslands, an area home to moose, elk, deer, bison, beavers, jack rabbits, woodchucks, porcupines, muskrats, ground squirrels, a variety of fish (including sturgeon, jack fish, pickerel) and fowl (trumpeter swans, geese, ducks). Available plant foods included hazel nuts, chokecherries, saskatoon berries, high bush cranberries, raspberries, black currants, gooseberries, and roots such as water parsnips.⁶⁵ Additionally, Mandelbaum provides a lengthy list of traditional foods available to Nêhiyawak, including: wolves, coyotes, badgers, bears, prairie chickens, various types of ducks, turnips, wood carrots, numerous types of berries, maple sugar, and honey.⁶⁶ Sarah Carter documents the Cree diet was supplemented by horticulture and trade (for example, acquiring corn and tobacco from eastern nations via Great Lakes trading routes).⁶⁷ I refer to these traditional foods to give a sense of place on Cree land, but also because awareness of – and even a return to – traditional Indigenous diets can be an act of decolonization. As Devon Mihesuah (Choctaw) writes: “One symptom of accepting colonization is adhering to the typical [North] American diet, even while it is killing us.” Noting the prevalence of heart disease, obesity, diabetes, and so on, in Native communities, Mihesuah suggests Indigenous people adopt a radical diet based on

traditional foods: “By gaining good health we also gain confidence, pride in ourselves and in our tribe’s rich traditions. ... We can only do so much to combat racism and prejudice, but we can control what we put in our mouths.”⁶⁸ As Mihesuah affirms, part of cultural reclamation, resurgence, and decolonization is the reclamation of traditional diets; perhaps knowledge of these Plains foods can contribute in some way to healthy resurgence.

Autonomy and Citizenship

Any discussion of a nation must take into account its socio-political organization. The Plains Cree nation lacked centralized authority and governance, rather, the band was “the primary political and social unit in which northern plains people organized themselves.”⁶⁹ According to scholar Patricia Albers: “What appears to have been more important in defining the geopolitics of access to land, labour, and resources were social ties based on ties of kinship and sodality in their varied metaphoric extensions and expressions.”⁷⁰ Plains Indigenous peoples operated as “sets of linked bands, which were politically autonomous units – lacking tribal [or national] level political organization.”⁷¹ As anthropologist David Rodnick asserts, “[The band] was autonomous in nature and completely sovereign. Individual affiliation within the band was loose, since it was relatively easy to form new bands, or for an individual to leave one and join another.”⁷² Theodore Binnema writes: “Band societies were not ‘primitive’ or ‘simple’ societies akin to humanity ‘in the state of nature.’ ... [B]and societies achieve through informal means exactly what state societies accomplish in other ways.”⁷³ Thus Plains bands might provide further evidence of anthropologist David Graeber’s assertion, quoted in Chapter One, that band societies actively resisted centralized governance structures; they may not have wanted to become like states at all, particularly if they functioned as well as Binnema claims.

Organized around extended families, bands were flexible, fluid and informal, allowing them to respond and adapt to changing circumstances.⁷⁴ Kin-based citizenship would increase social cohesion within bands and is a sensible way of constituting communities. Daniel Justice writes: "Kinship is adaptive; race, as a threatened constitutive commodity, always runs the risk of becoming washed out to the point of insignificance."⁷⁵ Where the Indian Act's insistence on racialized membership guarantees Indian legislative extinction, kin-based citizenship is adaptive and can be extended in ways that can grow the band and nation-people. Susan Sharrock estimates each band ranged in size from 200 to 800 people, and used a specific portion of the nation's territory, convening in larger units at certain times of the year.⁷⁶ Mandelbaum corroborates this, presumably as a result of the people he spoke to during his fieldwork. He notes that bands were typically named for the territory they occupied and that all band members typically inhabited the same territory.⁷⁷ Mandelbaum also emphasizes that band citizenship was often based on kinship, noting: "every band had a stable nucleus composed of the close relatives of the chief, who would not ordinarily leave his group."⁷⁸ Peck and Vickers assert that bands of a few hundred people were ideal, "large enough to rally a defense against enemies and small enough to sustain themselves on foodstuffs in the immediate area around camp."⁷⁹ It would appear that kin-based bands made sense both practically and politically.

Binnema cites the journals of explorers Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, who remarked that chiefs maintained influence over other band members only through their own exemplary conduct.⁸⁰ Mandelbaum points to the importance of leadership in band governance: "The prestige and power of the leading chief was also an important factor in the cohesiveness of a band. An influential leader attracted more families and held their

allegiance better than a weaker man.”⁸¹ Of course, Nêhiyawak would have their own criteria for judging relative strength and weakness of leadership. According to Mandelbaum: “A man became a chief by virtue of his accomplishments in battle, his ability as a hunter, his liberality, his capacities as an orator and executive. ... A chief had to give freely of his possessions to needy tribesmen and usually set the pace on the occasions for ceremonial gift giving. The chief was more a recognized leader or headman than he was an official.”⁸² According to Matthew Wildcat (Ermineskin Cree Nation) a Cree *okimaw* (chief) exercised power through his/her ability to influence the decisions and actions of individuals and collectives. *Okimawak* possessed political legitimacy:

Legitimacy, in a collective sense, refers to people actively, rather than coercively, binding themselves together in relationships in order to carry out, and be subject to, group rules and decisions. In an individual sense, legitimacy refers to the widespread respect and prestige someone holds among others as a result of a record of prudent and scrupulous behavior.⁸³

A band leader had to possess individual legitimacy in order to influence band members without coercion; importantly, a leader possessed legitimacy based on his/her record of generosity and wise decision making.

In *Big Bear: The End of Freedom*, Hugh Dempsey writes: “Like many other events in the tribe, the selection of a chief was done by consensus. By their actions, the people made known their wishes to be led by a certain person; if anyone else aspired to the position, he would probably move away with some followers and form his own group.”⁸⁴ Dempsey also writes: “This was the way with the chiefs; they did not order their people to move, they simply told them their own plans. A good chief had a faithful following, and they would go with him; but if for any reason his people disagreed with him, they were free to make their own decisions.”⁸⁵ Peck and Vickers characterize bands as being made up of extended

families and “members who joined through marriage or simply the desire to attach themselves to a successful leader. The bands were thus residential units; members could leave and join another band freely.”⁸⁶ Joseph Dion (Kehiwin First Nation) writes: “In some cases many families stayed together the year round. They were governed by an *okimaw* or head man ... These men were usually good wise leaders; they were highly respected by their followers.”⁸⁷ Dion suggests that bands “enjoyed complete freedom.”⁸⁸ This is corroborated by Peck and Vickers, who state: “Each band was essentially independent.”⁸⁹ In a 1983 interview with Gary Botting, Chief Robert Smallboy (Ermineskin Cree Nation) described the attributes of a chief. “Only courageous men could earn the right to become chief. The more courageous, the better equipped (a person) was to be leader. His reputation would precede him. A chief had to prove his capability over a period of years. A body of legend would build up around him.” According to Botting, chiefs were selected rather than elected, and as such had to be a natural leader. Chief Smallboy continued: “There was nothing artificial about this selection. A man became chief based on what he had already done, not on what he was going to do.”⁹⁰ A band leader’s legitimacy, authority, and power stemmed from his record of upstanding conduct and leadership. This speaks to the integrity and ethics of Plains Cree governance systems; the mainstream political system in Canada would do well to study and learn from the Nêhiyaw system.

In addition to each band within the broader nation having autonomous sovereignty, individual band members enjoyed a great deal of autonomy as well. Lewis and Clark remarked, “[E]very man is a chief.”⁹¹ According to Mandelbaum, anyone who lived in a band encampment for a period of time were accepted as members, and that newcomers could usually trace kinship with members of a band or could marry a band member, which

“furnished an immigrant with the social allegiances necessary for adjustment to the course of communal life. Thus the numbers of each band were constantly augmented by recruits from other bands of Plains Cree, or from other tribes.”⁹² Floyd W. Sharrock and Susan R. Sharrock assert: “[I]ndividuals or whole families might separate from one band to join another. A family dissatisfied with its neighbours, simply moved in to camp with relatives in another band. ... Band membership was given any person who lived in and traveled with the camp for some time.”⁹³ Binnema suggests that such fluidity “did not threaten but enhanced the communities’ stability” as this allowed for consensus building: “Dissenters, for instance, were encouraged to acquiesce rather than to agitate when they disagreed with the majority of band members. If they did not accept the decision of the majority, they could vote with their feet by joining another band either temporarily or permanently.”⁹⁴ This would clearly be a check on a leader’s power; if he/she did not exercise power in a way that the people would come to agree (or suspend their disagreement and follow) the band would disintegrate. Peck and Vickers explain: “Bands, although sometimes stable for many generations, were not permanent and might split to form two or more independent bands or simply disintegrate with the individual families joining other bands. Growth to too great a size, quarrels among band members, ineffective leadership, or population reduction due to a disaster, all contributed to limit the permanency of this social group.”⁹⁵ Again, kinship is adaptive and as such band members could flexibly shift their political and citizenship allegiances to another band; such a governance system would strengthen the broader Plains Cree nation, providing stability in areas like conflict resolution, justice, diplomacy, and citizenship law.

Not only were individuals free to join other bands if they wished, band citizenship on the Plains was fluid to such an extent that numerous scholars have characterized Plains bands as multicultural. Neal McLeod writes: "Many Bands in Saskatchewan, for instance, at one time had people who spoke three Indigenous languages: Cree, Saulteaux and Assiniboine." But, according to McLeod, many bands have simplified their identities as either Cree or Saulteaux, as part of a growing trend toward tribe specific nationalism.⁹⁶ He suggests that the tendency toward asserting a "pure, essentialized 'Cree' identity (or even a Plains Cree identity) was extremely misleading and limiting." In particular, the simplification of identity "ignores the other layers of tribal genealogy."⁹⁷ McLeod recognizes that such simplification has happened as a result of the primacy and prestige of Cree language and culture in the region's reserve communities, the lingering fascination with Plains culture in the mainstream imagination (promoted through popular culture), and the emphasis on the Plains Cree in ethnographies and histories.⁹⁸ McLeod affirms: "Before the Reserve period, Bands and people moved freely through a large network of alliances and indeed the composition of Bands changed over time. However, the Reserve system solidified, localized and indeed simplified the linguistic diversity that once existed in Western Canada."⁹⁹ Band citizenship has been consolidated under the Indian Act; today, band members must be registered according to rules mandated by the Canadian government. This has served to solidify and freeze band makeup and self-conceptualization according to exclusive race-based law, again illustrating that race is not adaptive as an organizing concept and kinship is.¹⁰⁰ Canada's legislative colonial mechanisms have worked to unnecessarily oversimplify Plains Indigenous band identities.

Patricia Albers has shown that Plains bands were linked to each other in numerous ways, based on alliances against common enemies, collaboration in trade and ceremony, and intermarriage. She suggests that interdependent bands often “maintained their ethnic integrity and separateness through various structural mechanisms,” but were also tied to one another through strategic merger and collaboration that minimized ethnic differences.¹⁰¹ These configurations range from alliances between bands of distinct ethnicities, to intermarriage and co-residency creating bands with dual or multi-ethnic identities, to the creation of new, blended bands separate from the parent ethnicities.¹⁰² It would appear the Plains Indigenous people created socio-political collectivities based primarily on two factors: sex and survival.¹⁰³ For example, Sharrock points to linguistic evidence of a “mixed language” among intermarrying and co-residing Cree and Ojibwa.¹⁰⁴ According to Dempsey, “The camps of Big Bear, Sweet Grass, and Little Pine were closely intermarried, particularly among the leading families. And these alliances went even further afield, with Little Pine being a brother-in-law of the great southern leader Piapot.”¹⁰⁵ Botting notes that Crow and Cree nations established peace and created an alliance (and hence, a mixed band) in 1886.¹⁰⁶ Intermarriage allowed for bands to make alliances with one another and was one way for an individual to acquire citizenship within a band.

Likewise, Robert Innes (Cowessess First Nation) suggests that shared cultural kinship practices allowed Plains Cree, Saulteaux, Assiniboine, and Métis individuals to be integrated into bands. He contends that bands “were able to maintain multiple cultures,” rather than creating a singular hybridized culture, and those integrated into bands were not forced to acculturate.¹⁰⁷ Thus, the Cree nation and its bands were not homogenous,

they were multicultural. Innes points to ethnohistorical evidence from his own community published in 1914, where thirty years after settling on the reserve, Saulteaux band members still maintained clan affiliations to which Plains Cree members did not belong. Saulteaux members also had distinct story cycles that were Saulteaux in origin.¹⁰⁸ Thus, Innes contends that kinship ties were “the central unifying factor for Aboriginal groups on the northern plains. ... [T]he network of kinship relations was more important than ethnicity for group identity formation.”¹⁰⁹ In situations where a new member could not trace a kinship link to someone in the band, marriage or adoption allowed for their integration.¹¹⁰ The flexibility of the Nêhiyaw kin-based citizenship contained fluid mechanisms for new citizens to be integrated into the band and nation.

According to Innes, historians have often masked the reality of multiculturalism among Plains bands, which is particularly problematic because so many leaders were of mixed genealogy.¹¹¹ McLeod refers to numerous esteemed Plains Cree leaders who had mixed genealogy, including Chief Payêpwât (Piapot) who led a Cree-Assiniboine band, Pîhtokahanâpiwiyin (Chief Poundmaker), whose father was Assiniboine (and Poundmaker himself was adopted by Blackfoot chief Crowfoot), Mistahi Maskwa (Big Bear), whose father was an Anishinaabe leader and medicine person, and Mistânaskowêw (Badger Voice) who, according to Cree history was given the syllabic writing system by Creator, was a member of the Saulteaux Midêwin society.¹¹² Innes and Dempsey point to evidence that Wîhkasko-kisêyin (Sweet Grass) was Gros Ventre and his mother was a Crow woman.¹¹³ According to Dempsey, Little Pine’s mother was Blackfoot.¹¹⁴ Asinikosisan (Rocky Boy), after whom the Rocky Boy Cree Reservation in Montana is named, was of mixed Anishinaabe and Assiniboine ancestry.¹¹⁵ Many prominent Nêhiyaw leaders were of mixed

Indigenous heritage, allowing for bands and nations to create diplomatic alliances, and contributing to multilingualism among leaders and cultural/political diversity. Innes also emphasizes the importance of kinship ties between the Métis and other Indigenous bands on the Plains, citing chiefs' requests to have the Métis be part of Treaties Four and Six as evidence, as well as the fact that many Métis individuals joined their relatives in treaty bands, which would not have been possible if they weren't closely linked by kinship and culture, sex and survival.¹¹⁶

Several themes should be apparent from this chapter that differentiate Nêhiyaw nationhood (nation-people) from Eurowestern nation-states. The Plains Cree nation was made up of diverse bands of autonomous peoples that inhabited their territories for hundreds of years, if not millennia. Bands asserted transitive sovereignty over broad territories, for reasons economic (pursuing bison herds in a seasonal economy), social (bands gathering together at different times to engage in diplomacy and ceremonies), and practical (spreading out in order to withstand the onslaught of settlers). These bands were multicultural, made up of diverse Plains Indigenous peoples, and were kin-based; people joined Plains bands for reasons of sex and survival. Plains bands and their individual citizens exercised a great deal of autonomy within the broader collective of nation-people called Nêhiyawak. Such political decentralization lends evidence to Clastres's and Graeber's claim that bands resisted the governance mechanisms of centralized states. Also, the centrality of autonomy will be brought forth in my articulation of Plains Cree literary criticism in Chapters Three and Four.

Cree peoples' nationhood was only strengthened by their multiculturalism, multilingualism, and adaptive kinship. Indeed, Nêhiyawak shared all the markers of Tom Holm et al.'s "peoplehood matrix": a common language (Nêhiyawêwin), a sacred history (expressed in, for example, *âtayôhkêwina* and *acimowina*), religion/ceremonial cycle, and sacred homeland (Nêhiyawaskî, the Cree Earth). Similarly they fulfilled Anthony Smith and Scott Lyons's conception of an *ethnie* (a collective name, a common "myth" of descent, a shared history, a distinctive shared culture, an association with a specific territory, and a sense of solidarity). The remaining chapters of this thesis will examine how Nêhiyawak expressed their nationhood – their nationhood movement (implying both activism and transmotion) – in resisting British/Canadian settler colonialism. After this sketch of what the Plains Cree nation looked like prior to the imposition of the Indian Act, I will now examine a set of theoretical tools that will help me examine the rhetoric and writing of Plains Cree leaders and writers: Indigenous literary nationalism.

Chapter Three

“A Criticism of Our Own”: Indigenous Literary Nationalism

In Chapter One, I attempted to situate the study of Indigenous nations, nationhood, and nationalism within the broader scholarship of these concepts which has tended to focus on modern European and western nations and nation-states. It was my hope to bridge these discourses of nations and nationhood into a clearer and more sustained dialogue than has previously occurred. In Chapter Two, I aimed to be more specific, and elaborate the Plains Cree nation (or nation-people) in terms of its sovereign claims to nationhood. In addition to establishing a sense of place in Nêhiyawaskî (Cree land), I examined some of the key aspects of Plains Cree governance, such as the importance of both individual citizens' and band autonomy within the broader Plains Cree nation, and how kinship ties constitute and strengthen Plains Cree nationhood. As this thesis is a study of the Plains Cree rhetorical tradition, I will now turn to rhetorical representations of Plains Cree nationhood. First, I would like to situate my work in the broader intellectual context of which it aims to be a part: Indigenous literary nationalism. This chapter aims to be an intellectual history of Indigenous literary nationalism as it has been articulated in North America. This chapter will outline theories of literary nationalism in general, before making more specific theoretical claims about Plains Cree rhetorical autonomy.

Indigenous Literary Nationalism

One of the most provocative theoretical developments in the field of Native/Indigenous Studies, and most specifically in the study of Indigenous literatures, has been the methodology variously referred to as American Indian or Indigenous literary nationalism.

Recent scholarship under this rubric often traces its beginnings to the earliest writing by North American Indigenous peoples after European invasion by writers such as William Apess (Pequot, 1798–1839), Zitkala-Ša/Gertrude Bonnin (Yankton Dakota, 1876-1938), Elias Boudinot (Cherokee, 1802-1839), George Copway (Anishinaabe, 1818-1869), and Samson Occom (Mohegan, 1723-1792). A more recent starting point of explicitly nationalist literary analysis and criticism begins with Acoma Pueblo writer Simon J. Ortiz’s essay, “Towards a National Indian Literature: Cultural Authenticity in Nationalism” (1981). In one way or another, Ortiz has influenced each of the major works that refine and define contemporary literary nationalism, including (in chronological order): Robert Allen Warrior (Osage), *Tribal Secrets: Recovering American Indian Intellectual Traditions* (1995); Jace Weaver (Cherokee), *That The People Might Live: Native American Literatures and Native American Community* (1997); Craig Womack (Muskogee/Cherokee), *Red on Red: American Indian Literary Separatism* (1999); Daniel Heath Justice (Cherokee), *Our Fire Survives the Storm: A Cherokee Literary History* (2006); Warrior, Weaver, and Womack’s, *American Indian Literary Nationalism* (2006); and a collection of essays by The Native Critics Collective, edited by Womack, Justice, and Christopher B. Teuton (Cherokee), *Reasoning Together* (2008). These books, along with several other essays and articles, comprise the main theoretical discussions of Indigenous literary nationalism in a North American context. Here I attempt to provide a summary that is as comprehensive as possible of Indigenous literary nationalism (what Indigenous nationhood *reads* like), and modify it to so as to be useful to the discussion of the Nêhiyaw rhetorical tradition that follows, under a term I prefer to literary nationalism: rhetorical autonomy.

Jace Weaver refers to what he identifies as the “two prongs” of Indigenous literary nationalism:

The first relates to the consideration of Native American literary output as separate and distinct from other national literatures. The second deals with a criticism of that literature that supports not only its distinct identity but also sees itself as attempting to serve the interests of indigenes and their communities, in particular the support of Native nations and their own separate sovereignties. This is an essential component of what I have identified as communitism, a word of my own coinage from the words ‘community’ and ‘activism’ and signifying a proactive commitment to Native community.¹

Weaver’s first “prong” has been discussed at length in Indigenous literary studies, the belief that Indigenous writing represents distinct literatures *as* national literatures. In an oft-quoted statement in *Red on Red*, Craig Womack extends this assertion to canon formation: “I say that tribal literatures are not some branch waiting to be grafted on to the main trunk. Tribal literatures are the *tree*, the oldest literatures in the Americas, the most American of American literatures. We *are* the canon.”² We might notice, then, two corollaries: (1) that Native American or Indigenous literatures are separate and distinct from literatures produced by settlers from elsewhere, and (2) that the individual tribal literatures (literatures produced by distinct tribal nations) are distinct from settler literatures just as they are distinct from each other. Nêhiyaw, Dene, Anishinaabe, Mi’kmaq, Acoma Pueblo literatures, for example, are each distinct from one another. Pointing to millennia of storytelling in this hemisphere, Womack continues: “Let Americanists struggle for their place in the canon. (Understand this is not an argument for inclusion – I am saying with all the bias I can muster that *our* American canon, the Native literary canon of the Americas, predates *their* American canon. I see them as two separate canons.)”³ Womack gets to the crux of the issue here: intellectual sovereignty. He points to the backwardness of trying to argue for the inclusion of Indigenous literature in the established settler-colonial literary

canon (just as it is backwards, I think, that the onus is on First Nations in Canada to argue in land claims cases in Canadian courts that they lived here before Europeans). Rather, it is settler-colonial literatures that should have to justify their place in the canon (just as The Crown via the Dominion of Canada should have to argue for its sovereignty and legitimacy on Indigenous lands according to Indigenous legal protocols). Womack's italicized emphasis on *our* and *their* clearly lays out the battle lines, distinguishing and affirming Indigenous separatism.

The second "prong" of Weaver's definition refers to the deeply political nature of Indigenous writing – as well as to the criticism of that writing – and that our scholarly work should have some utility in supporting struggles for sovereignty in Indigenous communities and nations. I understand this belief to be central to Indigenous Studies. Elizabeth Cook-Lynn (Crow Creek Lakota), one of the undisputed founders and critics of the discipline, points to the First Convocation of American Indian Scholars at Princeton University in March 1970, a meeting at which Indigenous scholars, artists and traditional historians "called for the development by Indians of bodies of Indigenous knowledge, and it called that development 'Native American Studies as an Academic Discipline.' Its major thrust was the defense of the land and Indigenous rights."⁴ Further, "its beneficiaries would be Indian Nations."⁵ Since the late 1960s when Native American and Indigenous Studies grew as a distinct discipline in the academy, there have been likely hundreds of articles and books attesting to the crucial importance – many scholars and communities *demand* this – that scholarship about Indigenous peoples should benefit those people.⁶ Weaver refers to this as "communitism" (community + activism).⁷ It would appear that Weaver's

commitment to scholarship in support of community activism dates to the very founding of Native Studies as an academic discipline.

Indigenous peoples – scholars, writers, citizens, nations, bands, communities – have the inherent right to determine the parameters of Indigenous Studies and to set the criteria for useful, valid, respectful, scholarship in/about Indigenous peoples and communities.

Weaver asserts: “Native American literary criticism (in contrast to criticism of Native American literature) must be in the hands of Native critics to define and articulate, from resources we choose. It must simply be a criticism of our own. This, it seems to me, is the essence of intellectual sovereignty.”⁸ The concept of intellectual sovereignty, which derives from Robert Warrior’s *Tribal Secrets*, prompted the writing of the foundational texts in Indigenous literary nationalism: Weaver’s *That The People Might Live* and Womack’s *Red on Red*, and all of those that came after cite this concept.⁹ Warrior contends: “[I]t is now crucial for American Indian intellectuals committed to sovereignty to realize that we too must struggle for sovereignty, *intellectual sovereignty*, and allow the definition and articulation of what that means to emerge as we critically reflect on that struggle.”¹⁰ Indigenous peoples’ control and sovereignty over knowledge produced about them would appear to be of paramount concern. As this chapter will illustrate, just as Warrior envisioned, scholars of Indigenous studies and literatures have engaged in a conversation that defines and articulates his concept. In *Tribal Secrets*, Warrior considers the work of John Joseph Mathews (Osage) and Vine Deloria, Jr. (Standing Rock Lakota); commenting on Deloria’s writing, Warrior states: “[H]e recognizes that the withdrawal of a group to draw on its own resources does not cut it off from other group’s influences on its future.”¹¹ As Taiaiake Alfred (Kanien’kehá:ka from Kahnawake) writes: “Cultural revival is not a matter of

rejecting all Western influences, but of separating the good from the bad and of fashioning a coherent set of ideas out of the traditional culture to guide whatever forms of political and social development – including the good elements of Western forms – are appropriate to the contemporary reality.”¹² I can hardly think of a better model of Indigenous Studies criticism: selecting analytical and critical tools and methods based on how they are applicable and relevant to contemporary Indigenous communities.

Rather than discussing each theorist of literary nationalism separately, I would like to put them in conversation with one another using various themes that are common to each. Hence, the following sections will rely heavily on the words of these Indigenous scholars in order to appear rhetorically as a dialogue amongst them. My intent is to show, rather than tell, what rhetorical sovereignty and literary nationalism look like as concepts.

Literary nationalism emphasizes community continuity over disappearance. “Our literature is the textual testament to our endurance,” writes Daniel Heath Justice.¹³ Rather than assume that the invasion and occupation of Indigenous lands by settler peoples almost completely altered Indigenous philosophical traditions, or alternatively, that surviving Indigenous traditions are so intertwined (‘hybridized’) with European ways of thinking that they are no longer distinct, I agree with Womack, when he asserts: “[T]here is such thing as a Native perspective and that seeking it out is a worthwhile endeavour. I do not subscribe, in other words, to the notion that a Native perspective is, at best, problematic, if not impossible. I feel that Native perspectives have to do with allowing Indian people to speak for themselves, that is to say, with prioritizing Native voices.”¹⁴ In particular, I want

to emphasize Womack's reference to Native *perspectives*; he is not suggesting the existence of one unified, unchanging pan-Native worldview, but rather a multitude of viewpoints, even (of course) within particular nations. Perhaps Womack illustrates this best in his letters between Jim Chibbo and Hotgun. In one such letter, Chibbo quotes Rabbit: "I think Red stays Red, most ever time, even throwed in with white. Especially around white. It stands out more."¹⁵ In fact, literary nationalist critics have explicitly stated the need for multiple – especially contrary – opinions to make both Indigenous criticism and communities stronger. And Taiaiake Alfred writes that in consensus-based, decentralized Indigenous nations, "active and fractious disagreement is a sign of health in a traditional system."¹⁶ Debate within scholarship, like debate in governance, is a sign of health and vitality.

English is a viable language for narrating Indigenous thoughts and experiences. In other words, as should be obvious, Indigenous peoples are capable of adapting European ideas, technologies, etc. to the benefit of Indigenous communities. This is perhaps best articulated by Simon Ortiz in his essay, "Towards a National Indian Literature." Ortiz describes fiesta days in his Acoma Pueblo community, illustrating how these Catholic celebrations became Indigenized by the Acoma people through their creative alteration of the ritual: "It is Acqumeh and Indian ... in the truest and most authentic sense. This is so because this celebration speaks of the creative ability of Indian people to gather in many forms of the socio-political colonizing force which beset them and to make these forms meaningful in their own terms. In fact, it is a celebration of the human spirit and the Indian struggle for liberation."¹⁷ Mocking the arrival of the Spanish soldiers and their patron saint,

Santiago, as well as offering and receiving gifts, and enacting prayer and song are some of the ways Catholic rituals are adapted and used as tools of resistance. For Ortiz, the same applies to language: "Along with their native languages, Indian women and men have carried on their lives and their expression through the use of newer languages, particularly Spanish, French, and English, and they have used these languages on their own terms. This is the crucial item that has to be understood, that it is entirely possible for a people to retain and maintain their lives through the use of any language." Ortiz refers to this practice as a creative response to colonization, "And this response has been one of resistance; there is no clearer word for it than resistance." Further, Ortiz links this resistance to the ongoing use of the oral tradition in Indigenous communities, as well as writing by Indigenous people: "And it is this literature, based upon continuing resistance, which has given a particularly nationalistic character to the Native American voice."¹⁸ Ortiz thus breaks down preconceived notions of authenticity (see discussion on this below) while emphasizing Indigenous adaptability, creativity, and resistance to forced colonization.

The idea that "English is a Native language," has been taken up by other literary nationalists, including Weaver and Womack.¹⁹ The authors of *American Indian Literary Nationalism* write, "Claiming English as an Indian language is one of the most important, if not *the* most important step toward insuring Indian survival for future generations."²⁰ However, Ortiz does express misgivings about the English language in his 2006 foreword to *American Indian Literary Nationalism* (which commemorates and reprints his 1981 article cited above). Ortiz links the increasing fluency in the English language to the curriculum of U.S. reservation and boarding schools, as well as to U.S. policies of relocation that moved Indigenous peoples to urban areas, often far away from their homelands; when those

community members returned home, they frequently spoke English.²¹ He admits that the more Indigenous people use English, the more Indigenous languages are threatened.²² Similarly, Scott Richard Lyons cautions us from overemphasizing the positive uses of English, as this may undermine the crucial work of heritage language activists, particularly for nationalist political reasons: “There is no more powerful indicator of nationhood than a spoken national language.”²³ Likewise, Emma LaRocque (Plains Cree Metis) states that Indigenous peoples both resisted colonial languages and resisted colonization before they took up writing in English. She makes a point that she does “not want to imply that English literacy is a necessary foundation to resistance.”²⁴ However, Ortiz gets to the core of the issue, asserting: “We must determine for ourselves how English is to be a part of our lives socially, culturally, and politically. We have every power within ourselves to do that, to make that determination and not have that determination made for us.”²⁵ Daniel Justice draws on the oft-quoted title of Joy Harjo and Gloria Bird’s anthology, noting that it is possible to “reinvent the enemy’s language.” For Justice, the assertion of Cherokee nationhood through English represents cultural continuity, and is a “powerful reflection of self-determination and agency.”²⁶ I think the keyword here is agency: colonial languages, like any other tool, must be used on Indigenous peoples’ own terms and not imposed by outsiders. Language use and identity prove to be two sites of not only resistance, but also self-determination and cultural sovereignty. “Aacqumeh people are not identified as Aacqumeh hanoh simply because they are fluent speakers of the Acoma Keres language.” Instead, Indigeneity – Indigenous existence – “is maintained wholly by cultural consciousness.”²⁷

Literary nationalism places emphasis on the content of Indigenous writing. “Indian women and men have struggled to create meaning of their lives in very definite and systematic ways,” writes Ortiz. “The ways and methods have been important, but are important only because of the reason for the struggle. And it is that reason – the struggle against colonialism – which has given substance to what is authentic.”²⁸ I do not take the matter of authenticity lightly, being as it is a word that frequently prompts accusations of essentialism and theoretical naiveté, a point corroborated by Womack:

When discussing authenticity most critics simply throw up a theoretical wall and back away, claiming the topic as impossible. In conversations with classrooms full of Native students, however, I have learned that while a definition that *fixes* a notion of authenticity in a static, timeless vacuum is impossible; nonetheless the *process* of thinking through issues of Native authenticity and even searching for forms of viable Native nationalisms are unavoidable in Indian country – even if we can never provide an absolute definition and end up in discussions fraught with theoretical problems.²⁹

I have had the same experience when working with Indigenous students: questions of authenticity *do* matter. Ortiz’s 1981 essay, subtitled “Cultural Authenticity in Nationalism,” reminds us that it is not simply the language that one speaks (or in which one chooses to write) that marks one’s voice as authentic. Rather, Ortiz points to the content of the literature as a sign of cultural authority. He writes that, “the struggle against colonialism ... has given substance to what is authentic.” That Indigenous cultural authenticity comes from the strident struggle against colonialism is certainly a controversial point, but as Womack says above, it is an interesting process to work through.

Discussing Indigenous fiction writers, Elizabeth Cook-Lynn remarked in 1996 that “little of analytical importance” has been published on the issue of cultural authority, “though in off-the-record discourse among scholars it is a critical interest.”³⁰ (Likewise, Womack states in *Red on Red* that “authenticity and insider and outsider status are, in fact,

often discussed in Native communities.”)³¹ For Cook-Lynn, this lack of discussion on matters of cultural authority creates a problem when the most successful and widely known Native American fiction writers are often claimed to have a “deeply authoritative cultural voice.”³² This is not problematic in and of itself, she argues; rather, it is that these successful writers (usually novelists) produce “writing that thematises colonialism but that does not do so from a strident point of view.”³³ In other words, those authors are typically canonized because their work is easily consumed by non-Indigenous readers (who are not provoked to consider their participation in ongoing colonialism), in that these authors typically ignore their responsibilities to the political and nationalist interests of their specific tribal nations. This plays into the mult-cult version of literature, the pleasing type of “ethnic” writing that is typically championed by liberal scholars. As Weaver notes, “Such critics want death without dying, change without upheaval, revolution without violence. They want an omelet without breaking eggs.”³⁴ Thus, Cook-Lynn lauds Laguna Pueblo writer Leslie Marmon Silko’s ambitious novel *Almanac of the Dead* (1992), calling Silko a writer who “fearlessly asserts a collective Indigenous retrieval of the lands stolen through colonization.”³⁵ As Womack puts it, referencing the wider attention given to Silko’s novel *Ceremony* (1977) compared to the much more revolutionary *Almanac*: “America loves Indian culture; America is much less enthusiastic about Indian land title.”³⁶ As a result, Indigenous writing that is most palatable to a settler audience receives the most attention, critical engagement, and publication opportunities as opposed to work that is strongly and vocally anti-colonial.

The content of Indigenous writing is what should count most. Womack writes: “Native artistry is not pure aesthetics, or art for art’s sake: as often as not Indian writers

are trying to *invoke* as much as *evoke*.”³⁷ Personally, I think the most evocative literature is that which provokes me to see the world anew, as well as to alter my conduct in the world. Instead of asking, as Canadian critic Helen Hoy does, how I should read Indigenous-authored literatures, I’d rather pose the question, how should I *heed* these? Placing an emphasis on content, then, requires the literature to do something beyond entertain and amuse; to be something more than lyrical or beautiful (though it may do and be these things, too). I agree with Womack: “In this study, I will concentrate on the idea that Native literary aesthetics must be politicized and that autonomy, self-determination, and sovereignty serve as useful literary concepts.”³⁸ Throughout this thesis, I will examine texts according to these three concepts Womack mentions while investigating how texts do or do not advance other points such as treaty rights, connections to the land, cultural expression and cultural recovery, spirituality, and the fulfillment of kinship obligations.³⁹ Womack continues: “I will seek a literary criticism that emphasizes Native resistance movements against colonialism, confronts racism, discusses sovereignty and Native nationalism, seeks connection between literature and liberation struggles, and, finally, roots literature in land and culture.”⁴⁰ Womack’s politicized literary aesthetics is in keeping with Ortiz’s insistence in 1981 that Indigenous writers have “a responsibility to advocate for their people’s self-government, sovereignty, and control of land and natural resources; and to look also at racism, political and economic oppression, sexism, supremacism, and the needless and wasteful exploitation of land and people.”⁴¹ Again, we see a commitment on the part of scholars to community activism and a responsibility to amplify those voices who advocate for nation-building and autonomy in the face of ongoing settler colonialism.

Literary nationalism acknowledges the connection between Indigenous nation-building and Indigenous literatures. “[T]here is the legal reality of tribal sovereignty, recognized by the U.S. Constitution and defined over the last 160 years by the Supreme Court, that affects the everyday lives of individuals and tribal nations and, therefore, has something to do with tribal literatures as well,” writes Craig Womack in *Red on Red*.⁴² Similarly, Section 35 (1) of Canada’s *Constitution Act, 1982*, acknowledges, “The existing aboriginal and treaty rights of the aboriginal peoples of Canada are hereby recognized and affirmed.” This section of the Constitution has been the subject of recent Supreme Court cases aimed at defining (from a settler-Canadian legal perspective) both Aboriginal title and Aboriginal rights. In fact, the 1997 *Delgamuukw* decision affirmed the importance of Indigenous forms of evidence – such as oral histories, songs, and stories – and that these must be considered “on an equal footing” with other types of evidence by Canadian courts.⁴³ Likewise, Womack quotes Anna Lee Walters (Pawnee/Otoe-Missouria): “There is an inherent right of tribal people to interpret events and time in their worlds according to their own aesthetics and values ... even when this interpretation is different from that of mainstream history.”⁴⁴ We should understand, then, this connection between the law and literatures. (I will attempt to make similar parallels in Chapter Five in my discussion of nation-to-nation treaties as a literary concern). Referring to the long practice of literary criticism in the Americas, Daniel Justice makes an explicit link between textual analysis and the law: “What were the Indigenous lawkeepers of old if not partially textual interpreters? Text and interpreter work together; the relationship between the two is a living one.” Justice points to wampum belts, Mayan codices, and post-invasion treaties as examples of

nation-building and nation-affirming texts that have always needed rigorous reading, explication, and analysis.⁴⁵

Womack refers to the work of Kelly Morgan (Standing Rock Lakota), who suggests that imaginative literature (such as fiction, poetry, and traditional story cycles) contributes to cultural survival by preserving and disseminating cultural traditions, particularly for future generations. Womack writes, “This kind of nation-building, I believe, is vital to the authorship and critical response of the future.”⁴⁶ In particular, literatures can affirm the vitality and resilient survival of Indigenous peoples. As Justice writes: “When we question the stories that erase us and replace them with stories of both our past and current *presence*, we speak ourselves into an existence that reaches to the future.”⁴⁷ As this thesis will examine those narratives of displacement, erasure, and removal, we should keep in mind Justice’s important claim that Indigenous writing can attest to Indigenous presence. Further, Justice links writing to liberation: “Stories expand or narrow our imaginative possibilities – physical freedom won’t matter if we can’t *imagine* ourselves free as well.”⁴⁸ Elizabeth Cook-Lynn asserts that “imagination plays a functional role in political and social life” and references a number of revitalization activities and decolonization movements in Indigenous nations, suggesting that if these “are examined as essentially literary events, actions, and ideas, it may be that the incorporation of such concrete praxis can affect canon theory and literary theory.”⁴⁹ Political action can have a profound affect on Indigenous literatures, and vice versa. Indigenous rhetorical traditions should be examined in light of – and at the present time, in support of – Indigenous peoples’ movements for justice, self-determination, restitution, and resurgence. This line of thinking is perhaps best exemplified by Ortiz’s statement: “[I]t is the voice of countless other non-literary Indian men and

women of this nation who live a daily life of struggle to achieve and maintain meaning which gives the most authentic character to a national Indian literature.”⁵⁰ As we have seen, the most authentic and authoritative voices in Indigenous literatures express the peoples’ struggle for liberation; peoples’ daily lives of struggle contribute energy to the creative and imaginative acts of nation-building. From a literary studies standpoint, the peoples’ stories contain some of the methods we might use in literary criticism.

Indigenous literatures contain methods and criteria for literary criticism. Womack writes: “As rich as oral tradition is, we also have a vast, and vastly understudied, written tradition. *Red on Red* assumes that attention to this native-authored written tradition should prove valuable toward formulating literary theory.”⁵¹ Womack continues, describing his methodology and intent in writing *Red on Red*:

I would like to think, then, that I have not written *Red on Red* in a rejectionist mode but that, to the contrary, I seek to examine these [tribal-national] histories to search for those ideas, articulated by Indian people, that best serve a contemporary critical framework. More specifically, in terms of a Creek national literature, the process has been based on the assumption that it is valuable to look toward Creek authors and their words to understand Creek writing.⁵²

Womack emphasizes that this not the only approach to studying Creek writing, but that a tribally-specific method of criticism is an important one.⁵³ According to Jace Weaver, this principle of literary nationalism is consistent with Native Studies methods more broadly: “[T]he studying and teaching about Native peoples from an Indigenous perspective” (or, most appropriately, *perspectives*). “American Indian Literary Nationalism attempts to serve the goal of sovereignty for Native nations.”⁵⁴ My hope in the following chapters is that, by examining the vast Plains Cree rhetorical tradition, I might assist in elaborating Plains Cree critical methods rooted in Plains Cree values such as autonomy, thoughtful deliberation,

peaceful co-existence, and resistance to settler colonialism. My intent is that this work will serve a purpose beyond intellectual exercise, that it might assist in serving Plains Cree struggles for autonomy and self-determination.

In his contribution to *American Indian Literary Nationalism*, Craig Womack sets out some principles of what he calls “compassionate American Indian literary nationalism” – tenets for future discussion among literary nationalists and their allies.⁵⁵ Some of Womack’s points have been mentioned in the summary above; others that inform this thesis are very briefly mentioned here:

Reciprocity: Using the example of a feast (or conversation around the kitchen table) Womack reminds us of the importance of giving something back. He specifically cites the importance of senior critics mentoring the younger generation of scholars.⁵⁶

Responsibility: “The compassionate nationalist cannot simply walk away from those things that are killing us in Native communities.”⁵⁷ Like other writers, Womack links intergenerational trauma and community dysfunction to the loss of land – and he acknowledges land reform is not likely to happen in the U.S., asserting instead that “thinking must save us.”⁵⁸

Historical awareness: Womack advocates scholarship that is grounded in history, suggesting that literary scholars should be more familiar with historical particularities, in particular showing “commitment to archival sources.” “The literary nationalist must develop historical methodologies since Native literary criticism has too often be scrutinized along thematic lines rather than historical details.” The problem with the latter approach is its resulting “universal, overarching assumptions about Indians” that are “atemporal,

nonhistorical”⁵⁹ This thesis will rely heavily on historical research and methodology, grounded as it is in specific times and spaces, events and locales. I have conducted extensive archival research. A corollary to this point is Womack’s call for more close reading strategies.⁶⁰ Two methodological tools of Comparative Literature are historicized and close readings, perhaps making this an ideal literary discipline for literary nationalist work.

Activism: “We hope for both a smart theory and praxis.” Womack suggests that literary nationalists might provide much-needed philosophical and theoretical underpinnings for Indigenous movements. “Neither activism nor criticism should be a mutually exclusive endeavour.”⁶¹ The context within which this thesis has been written is my community-based activism in Edmonton’s inner-city, working alongside some of Edmonton’s most marginalized and dispossessed Indigenous peoples. I continue to be inspired and informed by that community’s resilience, vitality, and ongoing resistance. In my own writing and teaching, I have humbly tried to blend scholarship with activism. The Brazilian educational theorist Paulo Freire understood this important connection between theory and praxis. Freire writes in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*: “For the critic, the important thing is the continuing transformation of reality.”⁶² He creates the following formula, as it were, to link theory and praxis:

Action	}	
	}	
Reflection	}	word = work = praxis

Sacrificing action leads to mere verbalism, while sacrificing reflection leads to simple activism. According to Freire, the transformation of society requires both theorizing (reflection) and action:

When a word is deprived of its dimension of action, reflection automatically suffers as well; and the word is changed into idle chatter, into *verbalism*, into an alienated and alienating 'blah.' It becomes an empty word, one which cannot denounce the world, for denunciation is impossible without a commitment to transform, and there is no transformation without action.⁶³

I quote Freire here to state my allegiances: that my work is on the side of denunciation toward transformation.

The strength of women

There is a force among women which I call *âhkamêyimowak*, or persistence, that provides the strength for women to carry on in the face of extreme adversity. *Âhkamêyimowak* is a Cree word and embodies the strength that drives women to survive, flourish, and work for change within their communities. Women are the unsung heroes of their communities, often using minimal resources to challenge oppressive structures and to create powerful alternatives ...
- Priscilla Settee (Cumberland House Cree First Nations)⁶⁴

I share Daniel Justice's concern that "the most cited voices in literary nationalism are men."⁶⁵ In addition to the women quoted throughout my analysis of literary nationalism, I would like to highlight the significant role women scholars have had in articulating, from its beginning, this critical lens. In an overview of literary nationalism in her book, *The Common Pot* (2008), Lisa Brooks (Abenaki) cites Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith (Ngati Awa and Ngati Porou) as an early influence on her scholarly development. Smith's book, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (1999, reprinted in 2012) is widely considered one of the most influential texts in the discipline of global Indigenous Studies. (Both Warrior and Weaver cite Smith in their contributions to *American Indian Literary Nationalism*, as does Cree/Saulteaux scholar Margaret Kovach, whose work I take up in Chapter Four). In this watershed book, Smith outlines the problematic relationship that has typically characterized "Western" scholarship on Indigenous peoples and communities. The first sentence of Smith's introduction summarizes the matter succinctly:

“From the vantage point of the colonized, a position from which I write, and choose to privilege, the term ‘research’ is inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism. The word itself, ‘research,’ is probably one of the dirtiest words in the Indigenous world’s vocabulary.”⁶⁶ Smith asserts that growing up in her community, stories about research and researchers were intertwined with stories about colonization, noting the many occurrences of disrespect on the part of outsider researchers, and most significantly, the official policies and legislation that followed from misguided, paternalistic research.⁶⁷ Indeed, stories and research have a life in the real world. “Gendering Indigenous debates, whether they are related to the politics of self-determination or the politics of the family, is concerned with issues related to the relations between Indigenous men and women,” writes Linda Smith in her chapter on Indigenizing research. In this sense, Smith is discussing the ways colonization has “had a destructive effect on Indigenous gender relations” from home and family life to the public political and economic spheres.⁶⁸ Smith writes: “A key challenge within contemporary Indigenous politics is the restoration to women of what are seen as their traditional roles, rights, and responsibilities.”⁶⁹ In Canada, the brutal effects of settler-colonialism are made apparent through the destructive impact of the Indian Act on the lives of women, and the hundreds of unsolved cases of missing and murdered Indigenous women, especially in the west, to name just two examples.

An earlier foundational text in an emerging tribal-national specific method of criticism is Anishinaabe critic Kimberly Blaeser’s contribution to *Looking at the Words of Our People: First Nations Analysis of Literature* (1993), a collection of essays edited by Jeannette Armstrong (Okanagan). This collection, published as it was by a Native-owned press, should be recognized as a contribution to – and manifestation of – intellectual

sovereignty. Blaeser's essay, "Native Literature: Seeking a Critical Center," has been cited as a significant precursor to contemporary Indigenous literary nationalism. Blaeser begins her essay quoting Luther, a character in Choctaw/Cherokee/Irish novelist Louis Owens's *The Sharpest Sight*: "We got to be aware of the stories they're making about us, and the way they change the stories we already know. ... They're always making up stories, and that's how they make the world how they want it."⁷⁰ We can see immediately a parallel with Linda Smith's critique of European research (story-making) as Luther asserts: "[T]hey change the stories we already know" and "that's how they make the world how they want it." In the latter quote, we might also see the transformative power of stories – when this ability to use stories to "make the world" is harnessed by Indigenous peoples, the world might be remade in a way that is more just. Blaeser asserts that her essay "is a call, and as its title suggests, a search for a way to approach Native Literature from an Indigenous cultural context, a way to frame and *enact* a tribal-centered criticism."⁷¹ I emphasize the word 'enact' as a reminder that ethical research requires not only reading and writing, but also *action* (praxis), and demands *acting* according to respectful protocols. In calling for "a tribal-centered criticism," Blaeser influences future literary nationalists, particularly in asserting, "I have been alert for critical methods and voices that seem to rise out of the literature itself." Instead of approaching Native literatures with already established European-derived theory, she advocates using a "new critical language," one that emerges from Native texts (and communities) themselves.⁷² Blaeser refers to this as "an 'organic' Native critical language."⁷³ Referring to intertextuality in Native fiction, citing authors such as Owens, N. Scott Momaday (Kiowa), and Leslie Silko – and how these authors' novels "invoke" aspects of one another, Blaeser concludes: "[T]he dialogues enacted in and

between Native texts offer scholars not only rich opportunities for interpretation, but much of the organizing principles necessary for the construction of a critical center.”⁷⁴ In other words, recurring themes, intertextual references, shared traditions, and shared perspectives provide methods and models for analyzing Indigenous literatures. Importantly, Blaaser proposes Indigenous critics might best formulate theories from within their own literatures, rather than strictly in opposition to European theories.⁷⁵

Lisa Brooks refers to coming together as one methodology of a nationalist literary criticism. She employs the extended metaphor of gathering, which she calls, “a process in which we are engaged, an activity that sustains us and our families.” However, Brooks cautions, intellectual and artistic gathering requires care and attention, like the gathering of plants (which requires knowledge of our relationship with the landscape, lest what we gather makes us sick or we inadvertently destroy that which we rely on for nurturance and healing).⁷⁶ Further, gathering requires distribution, exchange, “a continual give and take” – the sort of reciprocity that I discussed in the previous section. Brooks writes:

Sometimes it will require us to gather together; sometimes we will want to go out in small groups, to avoid damaging the plants or scaring away our fellow inhabitants; sometimes we will have to disperse, go our own ways, with the knowledge that we will always return. I want to see what kind of ‘national’ space we might build, if the tools, methods, and materials are not ‘determined for us,’ in Jace Weaver’s words, but rather we are allowed the intellectual freedom to determine the process for ourselves.⁷⁷

Via the symbol of gathering, Brooks thus argues for intellectual autonomy; the ability of Indigenous intellectuals to choose their tools, methods, and materials, as well as who has the privilege of using them. Sometimes we will gather together, other times we will “go our own ways.” In any case, we should be attentive to the direction Indigenous peoples want to take, we should follow their map, for example, to know where we came from. For me, one

aspect of this gathering is an awareness of the critical landscape and knowing Indigenous intellectual histories.

In her 2010 article, "Toward A National Literature," Lee Maracle cites E. Pauline Johnson (Kanien'kehá:ka from Six Nations of the Grand River) as "the mother of Indigenous literature north of the 49th parallel"⁷⁸ Johnson's "A Strong Race Opinion: On the Indian Girl in Modern Fiction," published in the Toronto *Sunday Globe* in May 1892, may indeed be the precursor to Indigenous literary nationalism in Canada (Maracle does not analyze the piece in her essay). In a critique of Canadian non-Native novelists, Johnson writes: "[T]here seems to be an impression amongst authors that such a thing as tribal distinction does not exist among the North American aborigines."⁷⁹ She notes not only the de-tribalization of Indigenous women in Canadian novels of the period, but also the gross stereotyping of Native women: they are always called 'Winona,' their fathers are always chiefs, they always have love affairs with white men who refuse to marry wild Indian women, these women betray their nations, and, in the end, commit suicide. "[H]alf our authors who write up Indian stuff," she writes, "have never been on an Indian reserve in their lives, have never met a 'real live' Redman ..." Johnson concludes her piece with a reference to Indigenous militancy:

Surely the Redman has lost enough, has suffered enough without additional losses and sorrows being heaped upon him in romance. There are many combats he has won in history from the extinction of the Jesuit Fathers at Lake Simcoe to Cut Knife Creek. There are many girls who have placed dainty red feet figuratively upon the white man's neck from the days of Pocahontas ...⁸⁰

Strong words indeed from "the most widely anthologized Native poet in north America."⁸¹

From the killing of Jesuit priests in Huronia in 1649 to Cree warrior Fine Day's victory

against the invading Canadian army at Cut Knife Creek in 1885, Johnson – like Maracle would decades later – advocates a strident feminist critique of Canadian colonizers.

Maracle's voice has been as strong as any Indigenous writer in her literary and activist struggle for liberation. She writes: "[O]ur emancipation from our colonial condition and toward some place that will reconnect us to our original historical continuum in the process of modernization is dependent upon the study and reclamation of our original story," writes Lee Maracle.⁸² She stresses the importance of connecting oral traditional stories and knowledge to today's written literatures. Maracle also emphasizes the importance of women to the process of resurgence: "In the past, our societies contained processes through which scholarly debate around law, politics, environmental science, national management of resources, and story (as well as other knowledges) took place. Those institutions barely exist now. They are, however, being revived through the work of Indigenous women across Canada."⁸³ In keeping with the nationalist scholars I have referenced in this introduction, Maracle affirms the importance of praxis and transformation in scholarly and literary work. Writing of her own national traditions, Maracle states:

The object of story in Salish societies is to guide transformation and conduct. Thus, we discuss not how good the story is, whether it is really a story or sociology masquerading as story; rather, the discourse is about whether we see ourselves in the story, and how we make it right with creation. The discourse is about the lessons, the teachings, and the conduct that we must arrive at personally and collectively to make the story work for us and to work with the story. Our discourse centres on the sort of oratory that is largely unacknowledged, such as politics, law, sociology, and medicine.⁸⁴

I do not want to conflate diverse Indigenous national traditions, but Maracle is instructive here in articulating and developing nationalist literary criticism. First, I like her jab at those critics who are dismissive of political and sociological readings of literary texts. Second,

Maracle reminds us that stories have a teaching function and are meant to guide our individual and collective conduct. She points toward what I understand to be the interdisciplinary explication of stories in Salish traditions. I will use these as tools for assessing Cree rhetorical and literary production in this thesis. However, this method could and should be extended to reading settler-colonial Canadian texts: how do texts like “O Canada” or the Multiculturalism Act or Douglas Coupland’s novels guide our conduct and build our collective national character?⁸⁵

Among the critics I’ve read, Maracle comes almost the closest to rejecting outsiders as theorists of Indigenous literatures:

Theorists are comprised of those individuals with a broad and solid foundation in their own society’s knowledge ... We have words in our languages for such people, and we have specific processes for conducting such discourse. They do so through a careful and connected study of old and recent literary products that clearly arise out of the original story base. This cannot be done by disconnected individuals who apply themselves to studying another society’s knowledge, foundations, history ... It cannot be done by those who merely live within the culture either. It can only be done by those who live within the culture and who have studied the base, the oldest texts and the newer literary products, and applied the original theoretical principles along with selected learned theories to the texts.⁸⁶

I presume by “learned theories,” Maracle is referring to academic theorizing (though, personally, I’d refer to “the original theoretical principles” as learned theories). Maracle concludes that “colonial education in and of itself is deficient as First Nations literary criticism” and she is critical of “European and European-educated” scholars studying Indigenous literatures.⁸⁷ I’ve never been to Europe, but I think Maracle is (appropriately) referring to scholars like me. But when she describes the utility of literary study, I see aspects to which I may contribute – and I don’t want to sound defensive here: “The purpose for examining old story is first to understand it; second, to see oneself in the story; and then to see the nation, the community, and our common humanity through the story and to

assess its value to continued growth and transformation of the community and the nation.”⁸⁸ Literary study in the service of Indigenous nation building is a task for all scholars to take up. Maracle places an emphasis on studying the oral traditional knowledge of Indigenous peoples: “Reclaiming our national bodies of knowledge is a precondition for the development of a national literary criticism.”⁸⁹ Maracle urges her reader to reclaim “national bodies of knowledge” in the service of building both critical methods and Indigenous nations. As such, Maracle suggests we turn away from solely critiquing colonialism: “I prefer to speak from within the nation from which I arise and choose not to gaze at the colonizer. I seek to engage Coast Salish people in some form of national/spiritual/cultural revival and renewal through story.”⁹⁰ I can’t think of a more succinct and appropriate description of political, intellectual, and cultural autonomy and resurgence.

Canadian Indigenous Literary Nationalism

In a special issue of *American Indian Quarterly* devoted to “Empowerment Through Literature,” Kristina Fagan provides an important articulation of Indigenous literary nationalism in a Canadian context. Fagan explicitly states, “Criticism of Aboriginal literature in Canada has tended to divide the literature from concrete political issues of law, land ownership, and governance.”⁹¹ Fagan explores, in a literary context, an issue raised by Justice in Chapter One: that settler-colonial discussion of Indigenous peoples in media, as well as the criticism of literatures, “tend to divide ‘Native culture’ and ‘Native politics’ into separate spheres.”⁹² Such modes of analysis tend to privilege “politically soft” symbols of Indigeneity, and present Indigenous peoples as ethnic minorities within Canada’s cultural mosaic.⁹³ This is the sort of criticism to which contributors (myself included) to the volume,

Troubling Tricksters: Revisioning Critical Conversations (2010) were responding. In that book, Fagan writes: “the critics’ trickster became an entity so vague it could serve just about any argument.”⁹⁴ The trickster became just one motif of many, like the ecological Indian, that have been misinterpreted, misrepresented, misused, and depoliticized in mainstream literary criticism, made safe for consumption and critique by non-Natives.

Continuing with the line of thinking above which links literature and lifeways, theory and praxis, Fagan asserts critics must pay more attention to “whether the work exerts a force for change outside the text itself.”⁹⁵ She continues:

If we choose to work with the concept of Aboriginal nationalism, we must consider to what extent we support Aboriginal nationalist claims. And if we do support those claims, what does that mean in terms of literary value? From an Aboriginal nationalist perspective, art should come out of a tribal and communal base. And it should work toward the defense of Aboriginal lands, resources, languages and future, helping to build self-determining Aboriginal nations.⁹⁶

I understand Fagan to mean that we should evaluate Indigenous texts based on how they promote self-determining Indigenous communities and nations. To reiterate, we might see autonomy, self-determination, and sovereignty as useful concepts for literary analysis. How a text functions politically in the world might be of critical importance when studying Indigenous rhetoric. However, in a 2008 article co-authored with non-Native critic Sam McKegney, Fagan appears to revise her previously-held prescriptive opinion. Fagan and McKegney write: “[W]e need to be vigilant in guarding against dictating what Native writers *ought* to write, even if we believe we are doing so in the service of Indigenous communal empowerment.”⁹⁷ While I do not disagree with their claim, nor do I expect a critic to maintain the same unchanging beliefs for all time, their most recent statement runs somewhat counter to Fagan’s previous assertion of what an “Aboriginal nationalist” *should* do. Perhaps this view is more strongly held by McKegney, who in another recent article

(2009), goes so far as asserting, “[W]e risk doing violence to the literature when we *require* it to be a tool for political action.”⁹⁸ Making claims about what makes the best works of Indigenous literature – or a critic favouring some texts and authors over others – is not violence, and I think using that word in this sense could devalue the actual physical violence that has been and continues to be enacted against Indigenous peoples. Just as authors should be autonomous to decide on the aesthetics, content and message of their works, so should critics – and particularly Native communities – enjoy the autonomy of evaluating which texts are of most use to their current needs, desires, and dreams. As Fagan writes in 2004: “[A] written work is not only an object but also an interaction between a writer and a reader, an event with real-life consequences.”⁹⁹ Because of the violence that continues to be enacted on Indigenous peoples – high rates of imprisonment, sexual violence, the theft of children through child welfare, toxic natural resource extraction in communities – the stakes are very high when it comes to the stories we tell. There are life and death consequences to the stories we tell.

Though I don’t disagree with Fagan and McKegney’s call for vigilance and their assertion that we not impose nationalist critical methods as *the only* way to analyze Indigenous literatures, it is their market-based argument that I find difficult to buy. They argue: “[E]conomic conditions in the Canadian literary community (as well as throughout Native Canada) have led to situations in which Indigenous writers, in order to make a living through their writing, have had to publish with non-Native presses in order to capitalize on mainstream Canadians’ thirst for the exotic.”¹⁰⁰ The authors’ conflation of “making a living” with the market economy (having money is but one way of making a living) and the notion that Indigenous writers must “capitalize” on what settler Canadians want or expect to read

undermines any arguments about political, literary, and intellectual autonomy. The recent re-publication of Tomson Highway's plays, *Iskooniguni Iskweewuk* and *Paasteewitoon Kaapooskaysking Tageespichit* in the original Cree language by Fifth House Publishers offers hope that there is an audience and willing publishers for Indigenous writing, in Indigenous languages no less.

Elizabeth Cook-Lynn addressed this issue in 1996, referring to the tendency by some Native authors to orient their writing "toward a contrived 'mainstream'" as "a function of colonialism." Cook-Lynn acknowledges that editors and publishers urge Native writers to make their work more accessible to the whitestream buying and reading public. Beyond issues of accessibility for non-Native readers and peppering one's work with the occasional word or phrase from an Indigenous language, she suggests "stridency" (anger, sarcasm, cynicism) – that is, an anti-colonial or nationalist position – is often a justification for "editorial intrusion." She concludes, "[A]ny kind of postcolonial dialogue seems to be of little interest to the mainstream or too strident." The consequences are that the most successful Indigenous authors "have moved away from nationalistic concerns in order to gain the interest of mainstream readers" – which also means inclusion in anthologies, syllabi, reviews in major newspapers and journals. Further, according to Cook-Lynn, these authors tend to be regarded as having "a deeply authoritative cultural voice, a phenomenon which, in my view, clouds issues of intent and responsibility" to things like land, sovereignty, memory, tradition.¹⁰¹

In 2009, a number of scholars who teach at Canadian institutions published "a collaborative interlogue" (itself the product of a conference roundtable) on Canadian Indigenous literary nationalism. Niigaanwewidam Sinclair, who is Anishinaabe from St.

Peter's (Little Peguis) Indian Settlement points to several well-respected literary critics writing in Canada who have used nationalist tools in their analyses – writers like Emma LaRocque, Thomas King, Basil Johnston (Chippewas of Nawash Unceded First Nation), Lee Maracle, Maria Campbell (Métis), Armand Garnet Ruffo (Anishinaabe), and Jeannette Armstrong (Okanagan) – who “can be viewed as contributing to the intellectual climate in which this movement has developed.”¹⁰² Keavy Martin, whose nationalist-allied work focuses on Inuit literatures, points to the challenges of the ‘nation’ model among Indigenous peoples in Canada.¹⁰³ She asserts that nationalist critical methods “seem to require the pre-existence of an Inuit nation and an Inuit literary tradition – notions which are problematic in their singularity. After all, the Inuit homeland reaches from Greenland across the Canadian Arctic to Alaska and Siberia, and its many regions are naturally distinct in their language, culture, history, and politics.”¹⁰⁴ Though I would prefer to undermine the Canadian government’s claim to sovereignty over the Arctic (and thus refer to the region as something other than the “Canadian Arctic”), Martin raises a very good point about the utility of the ‘nation’ framework for Cree literatures – seeing as Cree territory stretches broadly from Labrador to the Rocky Mountains and from the northern reaches of the occupying Canadian provinces as far south as Montana (and further south if we take into account pre-reserve era territorial uses and understandings). She points out that stories vary across communities and regions, and thus provides evidence for “the inappropriateness of overarching theories.”¹⁰⁵ I will elaborate on this in relation to Cree literatures in the next chapter.

Toward Rhetorical Autonomy

Martin briefly refers to the genealogy of literary nationalism: “Like [Craig] Womack’s initial term for his methodology – literary separatism – the signification of literary nationalism hovers within reach of militarism or at least of militancy.”¹⁰⁶ The idea of confrontation is not something I want to reject outright. However, I think comment on the term ‘separatism’ is necessary. Though Womack’s book, *Red on Red*, advocates “Native American Literary Separatism” in its subtitle, Womack has since explained that this was not his original title for the book. “The [University of Minnesota Press] did not like my own choice of title, *A Creek National Literature: Making a Return to American Indian Communities*.” He continues: “They also said they wanted a subtitle, something that would get people’s attention, raise their blood pressure a little. I said, ‘put something about separatism in there, that always gets everybody going.’” Womack avers that he stands by both his title and the concept of separatism, though he writes: “[M]y separatism has never meant a ‘categorical denial’ of the relevance of western discourse.” Further, he clarifies: “My idea of separatism involved focusing a critical study on works authored by Muskogee Creek people rather than thinking of any particular audience to exclude.”¹⁰⁷ I mention these details because they are part of the intellectual history of Indigenous literary nationalism, particularly seeing as *Red on Red* has proven to be both so controversial and so influential. The index of that book has only one entry for separatism, and Womack himself says, “I was less than responsible when I threw a term like separatism out there without defining it within the book.”¹⁰⁸ The evidence would suggest that Womack was not setting out to start a strictly separatist movement. I also see the need to differentiate separatism (which is a controversial term in Canada) from rhetorical autonomy (a term I prefer to literary nationalism, as well). I think

Womack would agree, as in the same 2006 essay he writes in relation to canon formation: “The solution to this dilemma of asymmetrical power relations, however, is not for the tribes to withdraw from America and go elsewhere, nor for Native Literature to withdraw from inclusion in the American canon. ... Rather than withdrawal, *the solution is seeking greater and higher quality literary autonomy.*”¹⁰⁹ As so many authors have indicated, hybridity, alliance, and inclusion are fine when these are not forced, when Indigenous people have the (inherent) right and freedom to choose – voluntary participation is much different from (forced) assimilation. As with politics and literature, having the autonomous right to be separate or to be included is the key. Autonomy implies agency and deliberation and the right to choose. “Hell, I called the thing Native American literary separatism because I wanted a new story, and I was tired of the one I was stuck to. The meaning of the tribally specific approach of *Red on Red*, and the challenges of such an approach in an era dominated by pan-tribalism and Native diaspora viewpoints, is part of a criticism of difference, rather than sameness, I was searching for.”¹¹⁰ In Chapter Two, I examined pre-reserve Cree governance structures, highlighting the critical importance of (1) both individual citizens’ and band autonomy within the broader Plains Cree nation, and (2) how kinship ties constitute and strengthen Plains Cree nationhood. I would like to extend these governance concepts to the study of the Plains Cree rhetorical tradition under the label rhetorical autonomy, which I will argue is best suited for Plains Cree studies. My theory of rhetorical autonomy will build on the concepts of Indigenous literary nationalism outlined in the present chapter. Chapter Four will outline a theory of Plains Cree rhetorical autonomy, drawing on the work of several Cree orators, storytellers, writers, and theorists.

Chapter Four

Coming Together in Kinship: Autonomy, Nationhood, and the Northern Plains Rhetorical Tradition

My reservation
As I look into your eyes
I realize that we're living out the Whiteman's lies
There was no compromise just deceit as I face the defeat
that was put here long before me
- War Party, "Feeling Reserved II"¹

The members of War Party, a hip hop group from the Four Bands at Maskwacîs (once known as Hobbema), provide a biting critique of colonialism and life on a reserve in their 2002 song, "Feeling Reserved II." The group laments the current situation in Indigenous communities: "I remember the days of way back when / we had no gang fights, we had no crack pipes / and brothers got along in the families / What the hell went wrong with the families?" They refer to the breakdown of family units, a consequence of intergenerational colonial trauma ("The circle just keeps repeating") and express righteous anger about being placed on reserves, while at the same time asserting themselves as contemporary peoples, through their medium (hip hop) and their message:

Now we feeling reserved
Living disturbed, living a life (huh) we never deserved
The Native way of thinking ain't the way of the old
Its time to look toward the future, let our story unfold.

The lyrics protest colonialism – Indigenous peoples are now "living disturbed" a life they "never deserved" – and look to the future as a new story unfolds. In an interview with Craig Proulx, war Party member Rex Smallboy states: "When we write about native issues it is to make our young people proud of who they are. Like in the chorus from "Feeling Reserved," we need to restore pride."² The chorus of the song goes:

I'm feeling reserved
Man that's how I'm living
I gotta do with this mic I was given
To try to get by, no word of a lie
We gotta try to restore pride.

In this lyrical critique, we see the group's attempt to spread a message of empowerment and at the same time offer a forceful anti-colonial critique.

One of the most poignant lines in "Feeling Reserved" is: "Genocide makes me live my native life deadly." Referring to the social issues in reserve communities (drugs, violence) the lyrics correctly point to the source of the problem: genocide perpetrated by settler colonists. I will return to the socio-political context of War Party's lyrics at the end of this chapter. I chose to begin with the group's lyrics as an example of the wide influence Cree writers and thinkers have within academic Indigenous Studies. In her examination of the school shooting at the Red Lake Reservation in Minnesota, Jodi Byrd (Chickasaw) draws on War Party's lyrics to analyze the actions of the shooter; Byrd titles her article, "Living My Native Life Deadly."³ That a prominent scholar would cite War Party in the field's top journal points to the influence of Cree thought in the discipline, but should also be of no surprise. Craig Womack (Muskogee/Cherokee) cites Métis scholar and activist Howard Adams in the introduction to his influential book, *Red on Red*, when formulating the idea of what he calls "Native consciousness" and the importance of "radical Native viewpoints" in Native Studies. In *American Indian Literary Nationalism*, Jace Weaver (Cherokee) refers to Harold Cardinal's (Sucker Creek Cree Nation) book, *The Unjust Society*, as the "seminal manifesto of the 'Red Power' era."⁴ Indigenous Studies scholars continually turn to the literature and politics of the northern plains for methodologies, models of resistance, and powerful expressions of autonomy. One purpose of this thesis is to bring Cree rhetoric and

resistance to the forefront of Indigenous studies and to highlight the contributions of Cree people to literature, politics, governance, and scholarship. This chapter will build on the discussion of Indigenous literary nationalism in Chapter Three, elaborating a theory of Plains Cree rhetorical autonomy based on contemporary Nêhiyaw scholarly methodologies and drawing knowledge from the oral traditions and governance systems of Nêhiyawak.

Nêhiyaw Scholarly Methodologies

Writing from a social science perspective (as opposed to literary studies, though her focus is qualitative/narrative analysis), Margaret Kovach (Nêhiyaw/Saulteaux) provides insight into Nêhiyaw research methods in her book *Indigenous Methodologies* (2009). Kovach takes what she calls “a tribal-based approach with Cree knowledge as the guiding epistemology” as a distinct departure from pan-Indigenous theories of research.⁵ According to Kovach, “the fluidity of tribal worldviews creates distinctive philosophies and practices.”⁶ I take Kovach’s statement about distinctive tribal philosophies as evidence of the importance of autonomous, tribal-nationally specific inquiry. She provides her rationale for using this methodology:

Being Cree, I have an understanding of its epistemological premises and subsequent methods and protocols. A common response has been to ask how a researcher can privilege a specific tribal epistemology and still have meaning for other Indigenous cultures beyond that specific tribe. How can a Cree-centered methodology make sense in a Coast Salish context? Why, for example, did I use a Cree knowledge [sic] for my methodological approach instead of a pan-Indigenous approach? Primarily, these questions have come from non-tribal people who are well versed in matters of methodology and the like, but are new to Indigenous knowledges. Furthermore, there is a political dimension to this problematicizing that has its roots in colonial history, and often manifests itself in discourses of disbelief, and, within research circles, a desire for universal application.

My initial reply is to clarify why identifying a specific tribal knowledge is important. A part of this response is in itself political. Indigenous peoples have never been appreciative of a pan-Indigenous approach that attempts to homogenize our tribal practices. ... The unique aspects of our tribal cultures are held in esteem because they

emerge from those ancestral [sic] interrelationships found in place. Our tribal affiliations must be acknowledged – it is about identity and respect.⁷

As my discussion of Indigenous literary nationalism in Chapter Three revealed, prioritizing a tribal-nationally specific approach is indeed a political act, and one that has been seen as controversial or inappropriate by some non-Indigenous academics.⁸ However, as Kovach asserts, Indigenous peoples have never endorsed a homogenizing discourse that melts their national distinctiveness into a mult-cult mess. My thesis will attempt to illustrate how Nêhiyawak have consistently sought to be recognized as distinct and autonomous – different from both settlers and from other nation-people. Kovach asserts that a tribal-nationally specific approach, “[reveals] shared assumptions about knowledge among tribal societies. ... An Indigenous research framework has transferability among distinctive tribal contexts.”⁹ Thus, using a tribal-national approach, as I am attempting here, can allow for an understanding of knowledge and practices specific to individual bands or nations, while also allowing for comparison with other tribal-national and non-Indigenous ways of knowing – perhaps a step toward creating alliances. We may see both how we are different and what we share.

This methodology also fits with Plains Cree philosophies of autonomy, sharing, and interdependence. According to Kovach: “[T]he use of a self-reflexive narrative research process, in conjunction with a philosophy that honours multiple truths, is congruent with a research approach that seeks *nisitohtamowin* (a Cree word for understanding) or ‘self-in-relation.’”¹⁰ It would appear that any research project undertaken using Cree philosophies, then, should value a multiplicity of perspectives and truths. A research approach that seeks understanding (*nisitohtamowin*) is most certainly evident in Nêhiyaw values, which promotes coexistence and sharing. Writing in the 1950s, Joseph Dion asserts: “The Cree

Indian is a free giver, especially at his dances. ... Generosity was practiced to a fault. ... The Cree was always ready and willing to share his last morsel of food with his neighbor.”¹¹ Dion commented on Cree values: “Other sins which the elders constantly preached against were greed, jealousy, meanness, lying, stealing from the neighbours, and truculence among friends. The values most sought after by fathers in their boys were kindness and hospitality, bravery, in the face of all dangers, honesty, truth, and reliability.”¹² The vices and values that Dion mentions appear to be consistent with Kovach’s prescription for ethical Nêhiyaw research.

The scholarly principle of self-in-relation would require that a writer situate him/herself in relation to the topics they study, stating the limitations on his/her knowledge, and showing great care and humility when discussing topics about which they know very little. I have attempted to work from this perspective in this thesis. Kovach provides further insights into the philosophies and methods of a Nêhiyaw approach to scholarly research. She lists the “key qualities of Plains Cree tradition” which are shared by other tribal-nations: “(a) holistic epistemology, (b) story, (c) purpose, (d) the experiential, (e) tribal ethics, (f) tribal ways of gaining knowledge, and (g) an overall consideration of the colonial relationship.”¹³ This thesis privileges the epistemologies, stories, experiences, ethics, and ways of gaining knowledge among Nêhiyawak (at least as much as possible considering my own social position vis-à-vis the subject matter). Further, Kovach writes: “Nêhiyaw epistemology is a relational methodology, so while I speak of knowledges (e.g., values, language), it should be assumed that they are nested, created, and re-created within the context of relationships with other living beings.” This emphasis on relationships would once again point to the importance of kinship for Nêhiyawak; kinship is one example of a

holistic epistemology, as it can be seen in Cree governance and socio-political life, and in Elders' emphasis on the interrelatedness of all things. Kovach emphasizes the interrelatedness (i.e.: holism) of Plains Cree philosophy, and points to the dangers of separating any aspect of Cree knowledge from the web of which these are a part: "Segregating values from ceremony or segregating either from place or language is done at one's own peril."¹⁴ This sort of segregation is an example of the physical and rhetorical removals perpetrated by settler Canadians (and resisted by Nêhiyawak) that I will describe in this thesis.

Kovach refers to the ethical considerations of a Nêhiyaw research methodology: "(a) that the research methodology be in line with Indigenous values; (b) that there is some form of community accountability; (c) that the research gives back to and benefits the community in some manner; (d) that the researcher is an ally and will not do harm." Of crucial importance is that the researcher "must be prudent and respectful about what one shares." This is in keeping with the Cree philosophy of *miyo-wîcêhtowin*, "having or possessing good relations."¹⁵ Priscilla Settee discusses this concept as a "core value" in a Cree worldview, stating: "people are instructed by cultural teachings to strive to conduct themselves in ways that create positive relationships with our extended community." Settee points out that the idea of relationship is extended to family members, the broader human community, and animals and the natural environment as well.¹⁶ For example, I have followed Kovach's example of using only published narratives by Elders to both protect Cree knowledge and avoid overstepping my boundaries as a scholar and as a non-Cree outsider; like Kovach, I have used these texts (rather than sharing teachings I have heard or seeking this knowledge from individuals) because "these Elders have allowed this

knowledge to be shared in the public domain, and so it is appropriate to share. It is for this purpose that Elders and others have agreed to have their words put into text.”¹⁷ Still, as a non-Indigenous scholar, I have used additional caution, such as not including sacred stories (*âtayôhkêwina*). Not everything that has been published is meant to be shared; for example the Elders texts presented and analyzed by Walter Lightning and Freda Ahenakew (Ahtahkakoop First Nation) were done with permission from and/or in collaboration with the Elders themselves.

Another key component of Nêhiyaw research and scholarship is found in the Cree word *tâpwê* (or *tâpwêwin*). Kovach provides a definition: “In considering research validity, I hear the Elders’ voices: Are you doing this in a good way? There is a Cree word, *tâpwê*, which means to speak the truth. This is about validity or, relationally speaking, credibility. To do this means to tend to the process in a good way, so that no matter the outcome you can sleep at night because you did right by the process.”¹⁸ Leanne Simpson (Michi Saagiig Anishinaabe) describes the meaning of the related Anishinaabemowin word *debwewin* as something like “the sound of the heart.” She quotes Basil Johnston (Chippewas of Nawash Unceded First Nation), that a person practicing *debwewin*, “is acknowledged to be telling what he or she knows only insofar as he or she has perceived what he or she is reporting, and only according to his or her command of the language. In other words, the speaker is exercising the highest degree of accuracy possible given what he or she knows.” Other characteristics of *debwewin* are acknowledging that one’s truth will be different from someone else’s, and that diversity and difference are necessary to the larger whole.¹⁹ Part of preparing the research project in the Cree tradition, doing things in a good way and keeping with the concepts of *miyo-wîcêhtowin* and *tâpwêwin*, involves *miskâsowin*, which

means “going to the centre of yourself to find your own belonging.”²⁰ Finding my own belonging has been part of my own doctoral research journey; from teaching in a reserve community at Maskwacîs and the Faculty of Native Studies, to working in the inner-city with predominantly Indigenous community members, I have tried to speak/write from a place of truth.

Reading the Oral Tradition for Nêhiyaw Literary and Political Theories

Kovach lists the “key qualities of Plains Cree tradition” cited above. This section will emphasize Nêhiyaw epistemologies, stories, ethics, ways of gaining knowledge, and an overall consideration of the colonial relationship as I examine a published book from the oral tradition for critical methods. In *Red on Red*, Craig Womack writes: “[T]he oral tradition has always been a deeply politicized forum for nationalistic literary expression.”²¹ Womack cites story cycles told by Phillip Deere (Muskogee) as evidence that, “stories should be told in order that Creek [Muskogee] people can be good Creeks, knowledgeable of the meaning of their traditions.” Womack illustrates how Deere, for example, connects the Muskogee migration story to contemporary political concerns. “Rather than ethnographic artifact, for Deere, Creek narratives serve as warnings for Creeks if they want to continue as a recognizable nation of people.”²² Nation and narration. The notion that stories can serve as warnings to present-day citizens of Indigenous nations points to their importance beyond ethnographic artifact. Stories are living traditions, serving as testaments to the peoples’ survivance, and a utility in the ongoing project of creating healthy and strong Indigenous nations. Womack asserts: “[S]tudying the oral tradition as political discourse might contribute to a discussion of tribal sovereignty. Sovereignty, it seems to me, like the oral tradition, is an ongoing, dynamic process, rather than a fixed

creed, and evolves according to the changing needs of the nation.” Thus, he sees that the oral tradition, “with its many layers of meaning, contains great possibilities for teaching us about nationalism.”²³ For Womack, looking to the oral tradition for definitions of sovereignty, for example, can allow tribal-nations to regenerate themselves and exercise that sovereignty rather than relying on European or settler-colonial models and systems, and “perhaps advocating for reopening discussions of full national status rather than working within the current limiting legal definitions as if they are set in stone.”²⁴ We might look, then, to the oral tradition for stories of resistance, activism, resurgence, and in particular, how to live as good citizens of the tribal-nation. I also contend, like Kimberly Blaeser, that Indigenous written and oral literatures can offer us potential evaluative criteria for tribal-nationally specific literatures: “I have been alert for critical methods and voices that seem to arise out of the literature itself.”²⁵ Thus, in the following section, I will examine portions of published oral traditions by Cree Elders in order to propose some methods for evaluating literature and governance in Nêhiyawaskî according to Cree philosophical standards.

Winona Wheeler has also discussed the benefits and challenges of working with oral traditions and histories offered by the elders. Oral history “yields insight into the cultural values and laws that they live by and practice in their roles as keepers of community knowledge.”²⁶ Wheeler acknowledges the importance of learning, preserving, and remembering these traditions “in their own contexts.”²⁷ She differentiates different types of knowledge holders in a Cree context: “The most learned of teachers among us is kisêyiniw, ‘an Elder.’ Kisêyiniwak are differentiated from kêhtê-ayak, ‘Old People,’ by their standing the community as people who have demonstrated throughout their lives their generosity,

skills, and wisdom. The word *kisêyiniw* comes from the word *kisêwew*, which roughly translates as ‘protector.’”²⁸ We might infer, then, that just as elders protect their children and grandchildren (as Wheeler notes in quoting a teaching from the late Alex Bonais of Little Pine First Nation) elders are also protectors of the traditions and stories. “The words *kisêyiniw* and *kisêwew* are closely related to *kisêwatisiwin*, which means ‘kindness, compassion, empathy.’”²⁹ If these are elders’ values, then we might also understand them to be aspirational traits in being a good citizen of the Cree nation.

wâskahikaniwiyiniw-âcimowina (1987) is a collection of stories recorded by the late Elders Peter Vandall (Ahtahkakoop First Nation) and Joe Duquette (Mistawasis First Nation) in Saskatoon in February, 1982. According to the late Freda Ahenakew, the book’s editor and translator, these stories are “authentic examples of Cree literature” which “remind the reader why stories are told in the first place: to reflect the wisdom of the Elders, and to amuse both young and old.”³⁰ In her introduction, Ahenakew alerts us that the stories in this collection are *âcimowina*, and therefore, not sacred stories (*âtayôhkêwina*).³¹ I think Douquette and Vandall, particularly in their *kakêskihkêwina* (counseling texts), offer a glimpse of the principles that make up *Nêhiyawiwîn* (Creeness) which should also inform our criticism. As Womack suggests, these stories do in fact provide a powerful critique of Canadian colonialism and assert Cree desires for independence. Douquette says: “You have just heard him [Vandall] speak about these things. It is true indeed, he speaks the truth [*mitoni tâpwê ê-tâpwê*], what the White-Man has been doing to us, robbing us of everything, even our language and also our culture.”³² Douquette clearly places responsibility for the loss of Cree autonomy on *môniyâwak*: “To such a degree, then, have the Whites been going on, so much that today they are destroying

our livelihood entirely; the hunting, and the fish that used to be eaten, there is almost none of that any more, the Whites have poisoned all.” He continues, alluding to the theft of the land: “It is we who owned it [Canada], today the Government [*kih̄c-ôkimâw*] tries to rob us and tries to tear down everything, they do not allow us to think for ourselves.”³³ Settlers and the government (Douquette uses the word, *kih̄c-ôkimâw*, “great leader”) are to blame for destroying the livelihoods of Nêhiyawak, ruining the environment, even disabling the ability of Nêhiyawak to think for themselves.

Douquette makes a statement here about Cree political, economic, and rhetorical sovereignty, and how the Canadian government has limited these. Interestingly, he echoes assertions made by Comparative Literature professor, theorist, and novelist Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong’o in his book, *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (1981): “Imperialism, led by the USA, presents the struggling peoples of the earth and all those calling for peace, democracy, and socialism with the ultimatum: accept theft or death.”³⁴ Compare this with Douquette’s statement in the Canadian context: “today the Government tries to rob us and tries to tear down everything.” Further, Ngũgĩ writes:

But [colonialism’s] most important area of domination was the mental universe of the colonized, the control, through culture, of how people perceived themselves and their relationship to the world. Economic and political control can never be complete or effective without mental control. To control a people’s culture is to control their tools of self-definition in relationship to others.³⁵

Both Douquette and Ngũgĩ tie the oppression, suppression, and domination of people to the mental control employed by colonizers, such that “the Native” is not allowed to think for him or herself (to paraphrase Douquette). Douquette continues identifying the collateral damage of colonialism in Cree territory, noting, for example, the ways children have become detached from Nêhiyawiwîn (Greenness), “so terribly has everything been wrecked

for us by the White-Man.”³⁶ In another story, Douquette refers to the chemicals used in mainstream farming practices as a cause of disease – “the Whites poisoning everything in their farming” – and he comments on Cree postcolonial dependency as opposed to previous times of self-sufficiency, once again naming the reason for this:

They [Nêhiyawak long ago] truly lived off the land, mother earth; that is where they got their livelihood and that was their source of life. ... Today the automobiles are killing us off, they travel so fast; we do not know just how many are killed every day, and the White-Man is the cause of our grief. That is the way it looks, and that is also what I think, how everything has come about – today everything comes easy, that is how the Whites have made it.³⁷

While naming the reason for Nêhiyawak losing their self-sufficiency (“the White-Man is the cause of our grief”), Douquette provides a powerful critique of colonialism: that Nêhiyawak have been hindered in controlling their own diet, clothing, dwellings, and values; “today everything comes easy, that is how the Whites have made it” being a critique of colonialism and the technologies that have, in part, separated Nêhiyawak from their homelands. Referring to the damage contemporary farming has caused the environment – and recall that making Nêhiyawak into farmers was a goal of the Canadian government – Douquette says of non-Native people: “[N]ow they have ruined everything for us.”³⁸

Vandall and Douquette not only courageously name their oppressors, they also make reference to distinctly Cree institutions and lifeways, which I think Womack would agree is an act of resurgence and nation-building. Douquette says: “As for these Crees of old, they had their own education, they knew it well, they taught their children ... they really taught their children ... not to steal anything nor even to take anything by mistake. They were told by their elders that this is not right, and we still follow that (teaching method) today.”³⁹ In addition to affirming that Nêhiyawak have always had their own educational system which continues to the present day, Douquette’s statement might also

be read as a critique of Canada's residential schools and the systematic theft of Indigenous children, especially as Cree children were taught "not to steal anything nor even to take anything by mistake." (Might this also be read as a comment on land theft-via-treaty?) Vandall and Douquette make other statements to affirm Cree separateness: "[T]he Crees were given their own way of worship ... Of course there were no doctors, but they themselves had already been granted medicine to use ... [T]hey too had that (a law), they had everything."⁴⁰ On the matter of law, Vandall says: "And the Crees led a really clean life, very clean. They never did anything very bad, even though it looked as if they were not subject to any formal law when they did do something wrong. But the Crees, too, had their own rules, always to treat one another with respect and for the young people to pay heed to the elders."⁴¹ Throughout the text, the Elders highlight the high ethical/moral standard that Nêhiyawak held themselves to, that "they lived together peacefully," emphasizing the respect people showed for one another, "they naturally took care of another and had compassion for one another."⁴² As Vandall so poignantly puts it: "[T]hey took such pride in themselves, and their journey through life was very beautiful."⁴³ It would be disrespectful and unnecessary to suggest that the elders' stories reflect historical revisionism that glorifies a past untainted by môtîyâwak. The stories reflect the elders' truths and are evidence of Cree values of honesty, generosity, and self-sufficiency.

Autonomy and the Nêhiyaw Rhetorical Tradition

Cree ... did not give birth to a culture of jumbo jets that circumnavigate the globe with the efficiency of clockwork. Nor does it have a national literature that has helped to shape world history; not yet, anyway. But try speaking Cree in a virgin forest on some northern lake and you will find, very quickly, that it is pure genius.

- Tomson Highway (Woodland Cree)⁴⁴

Writer and performer Tomson Highway suggests that there is no such thing as a Cree national literature that has made a global impact. With all due respect to Highway, I would suggest that the rhetorical tradition – oratory, political negotiations, treaties, literary writing – of people from the Cree nation have indeed shaped world history. Sharon Venne asserts that Cree negotiators of Treaty Six negotiated for universal health care (the medicine chest clause) for Nêhiyawak nearly 100 years, and social assistance (the famine and pestilence clause) nearly 50 years before non-Indigenous peoples in Canada would have similar benefits.⁴⁵ In June 1970, Indigenous leaders from across the country gathered in Ottawa and endorsed the Indian Association of Alberta's position paper, *Citizens Plus*, as the official National Indian Brotherhood response to the Trudeau government's White Paper on Indians Affairs.⁴⁶ Wilton Littlechild (Ermineskin Cree Nation) has been called "a significant force at the United Nations for over three decades" and is credited with "[playing] a critical role in developing and securing state support for the treaty provisions in the final *Declaration*" – that is, the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2007).⁴⁷ And then there is Tomson Highway himself, twice a winner of Canada's major theatre award for Best New Play and named by *Maclean's* magazine among the 100 most important people in Canadian history.⁴⁸ It would be difficult to argue that the Cree nation has not made major contributions to Canadian and world history, whether through the work of creative writers and storytellers or the arguments of lawyers and political analysts. And there is the widespread influence of the Cree language itself; Jean Okimâsis (born at White Bear First Nation) writes, "History is in the loud echo of sounds that resonate throughout [Saskatchewan] each day. ... Each day the inhabitants of Saskatchewan make these sounds ... They are the sounds of the Cree

language.” Okimâsis cites 250 place names in Saskatchewan that have an origin in First Nations languages.⁴⁹ Likewise, Tomson Highway says: “[A]t the speed of lightning, say the following: ‘Winnipeg, Manitoba, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Mistassini, Chicoutimi, Chibougamou, Quebec, Temagami, Mattawa, Ottawa, Canada.’ That, in essence, is Cree.”⁵⁰ From poetry to politics to place names, Cree permeates this land called Canada.

A crucial part of the Cree rhetorical tradition is the history and use of the syllabic writing system. Syllabics are geometric shapes, each of which represent a vowel or vowel-consonant combination used to represent several Indigenous languages in writing. Winona Wheeler writes that Nêhiyawak, “were the first, and for a long time the only Indigenous peoples in present-day Western Canada with a written language.” Wheeler asserts that, “Cree syllabics arrived among the people in the early 1800s and were used extensively until quite recently.”⁵¹ Though mainstream historians have credited the origins of the syllabic system used by Nêhiyawak and Anishinaabek to James Evans, a Wesleyan Methodist minister, Wheeler explicitly suggests this is a story that “supports colonialist discourse” and reinforces notions of Indigenous inferiority.⁵² Scholar and bibliographer Bruce Peel, who was appointed the University of Alberta’s “Librarian to the University” in 1955, wrote: “Evans used symbols to represent syllables and produced a script so simple that any unlettered Indian could master it within days.”⁵³ The Evans invention theory – which is most common in the historical literature – removes literary, cultural, and spiritual autonomy from Cree people, and ignores Cree peoples’ knowledge about their own traditions. Wheeler suggests that the Evans invention theory is implausible as Evans had only been among Cree and Ojibwe-speaking people for a few months before he started printing in syllabics – far too short a time to learn the language and invent a writing

system.⁵⁴ Wheeler points to the long history of petroglyphs as evidence of the Cree written tradition; we should also note Cree story cycles about the spiritual Indigenous origins of syllabics.⁵⁵

According to Patricia Demers, Naomi McIlwraith, and Dorothy Thunder, most Indigenous people “contest this attribution” of invention to Evans.⁵⁶ David Mandelbaum recorded the Cree origin story of the syllabic writing system as told by Fine Day (Sweetgrass First Nation) in the 1930s. Decades later, Fine Day’s grandson, Wes Fineday, told a version of the story on CBC radio’s *Morningside*, which Wheeler re-tells:

Calling Badger came from the Stanley Mission area and lived ten to fifteen years before [Fine Day’s] birth in 1846. On his way to a secret society meeting one evening Calling Badger and two singers came upon a bright light and all three fell to the ground. Out of the light came a voice speaking Calling Badger’s name. Soon after, Calling Badger fell ill and the people heard he had passed away. During his wake three days later, while preparing to roll him in buffalo robes for the funeral, the people discovered that his body was not stiff like a dead person’s should be. Against all customs and tradition the people agreed to the widow’s request to let the body sit one more night. The next day Calling Badger’s body was still not stiff so the old people began rubbing his back and chest. Soon his eyes opened and he told the people that he had gone to the Fourth World, the spirit world, and there the spirits taught him many things. Calling Badger told the people of the things he was shown that prophesized events in the future, then he pulled out some pieces of birch bark with symbols on them. These symbols, he told the people, were to be used to write down the spirit languages, and for the Cree people to use to communicate among themselves.⁵⁷

In the Cree oral tradition, Mistanâkôwêw (Calling Badger or Badger Call) receives knowledge of the syllabic writing system from the spirit world and he is told that the writing system will be used or stolen by Christian missionaries.⁵⁸ Jo Anne Bennett and John W. Barry, writing about Cree syllabic literacy in Northern Ontario, record a story told to them by a fieldwork assistant:

An old woman I know, she’d dead now, told me there were two men who were lost and they (the people from the community) went for a search party. They didn’t find them. They just found the campsite and presumed they were dead. And about five

years later they came back and people asked them what happened and they said there was a light that struck them and they flew up and they landed somewhere – another village I guess, I don't know – and these people (in the other village) taught them the Hey Hee Ho Ha (syllabary) and religion.⁵⁹

Cree people in Northern Ontario have a similar story about the origins of their writing system, which the storyteller also referred to as a “religion.” Bennett and Barry affirm that the Indigenous origin story of the writing system “removes the initiative from whites and returns it to Native people or at least to a spiritual dimension that is obviously Native in character.” Thus in addition to being a spiritual story, the narrative about Calling Badger contributes to the pride people across the Cree nation feel about their writing system – which is their own separate national system of writing – and explains the widespread historical use of the syllabic system.

According to John Murdoch (who adheres to the James Evans invention theory), in the mid-nineteenth century, “the majority of Crees were literate from the Québec-Labrador peninsula to the Rocky Mountains.”⁶⁰ Suzanne McCarthy adds, “there was a higher incidence of literacy among the Cree than among the English and French communities in Canada at that time.”⁶¹ Perhaps this is one explanation for the popularity of the Evans invention theory; across the country, Cree people were more literate than settlers, which certainly contradicts any notion of Indigenous peoples’ inferiority. The James Evans story might have taken hold, then, to diminish Cree peoples’ mastery of written language.

Bennett and Barry interviewed a number of community members in Northern Ontario about their perceptions of the syllabic writing system. Over 95% of respondents said they wanted their children to learn syllabics because “they are born with it,” “Because they are Native people,” “Because in traditional life they would learn,” “It’s our language. We were given it to use it.”⁶² This last statement (“It’s our language”) should be read as a comment

about Cree autonomy (like Poundmaker saying, “This is our land!”). Cree people take ownership of their written language and desire to maintain control of the stories about its origins. “We were given it to use it.” In the first three chapters, I attempted to bring different scholars, traditions and theories into conversation with one another, while becoming more specific, closer to home; proceeding from a discussion of nationhood, to literary nationalisms, to my own articulation of rhetorical autonomy that follows in this section.

Janice Acoose, whose “roots stem from the Sakimay Saulteaux First Nation and the Marival Métis Community in Saskatchewan,” in her contribution to *Reasoning Together: The Native Critics Collective* (2008), aims to “model a culturally specific way of valuing and critiquing some aspects” of the Nêhiyaw and Nêhiyaw-Métis “historical cultural archive.”⁶³ Acoose makes a strong argument for literary nationalism, though she apparently conflates ‘nation’ and ‘culture’: “I want to suggest that we research our own cultures of origin and, from our respective cultures, initiate cultural restoration projects by building culture-specific literary canons.” (In this passage, I would substitute ‘nations’ for ‘cultures’ for a more nuanced and specific understanding.) It is imperative to do the nation-specific work first, according to Acoose, before moving on to cross-cultural (inter-national) or pan-Indigenous criticism and the potential understanding and dialogue that can follow. The first step, however, is journeying “through life in particular communities/culture-specific places.”⁶⁴ Cree literature and the study of this literature must be, as much as possible, grounded in Cree lands among Cree community members. As part of her “theoretical performance,” then, Acoose substitutes Nêhiyaw and Nahkawê words “in strategic textual places” (much like creative writers Marilyn Dumont, Emma LaRocque, Neal McLeod, Maria

Campbell, and Paul Seesequasis) and thus avoids reliance on an uncritical, singular pan-Indigenous theorizing mode.⁶⁵ She makes use of Nêhiyawêwin as part of the resurgence of Cree literatures and critical methods. Acoose admits to remaining “cautiously guarded about nonindigenous theories that could enclose and stifle the culture specificity of critical/creative work.”⁶⁶ Like the reserves that attempted to enclose, stifle, and annihilate Nêhiyawak – a forced, sterilizing segregation – a naïve reliance on settler-colonial critical theories runs the risk of collapsing specificity into homogeneity (like the Indian Act creates the generic legal identity “Indian”). Autonomy is not about segregation.

As an example of a writer who asserts literary sovereignty, Acoose points to Jeannette Armstrong, who “saturates her creative fiction, poetry, and criticism with cultural values, teachings, philosophies, and in specific cases, her language. Armstrong reaffirms cultural integrity by vitalizing written English with Okanagan.”⁶⁷ The Cree language, Nêhiyawêwin, is similarly paramount in Cree thought. “We have every reason to believe that ours is a beautiful language,” wrote Joseph Dion.⁶⁸ Decades later, in January 1990, Sarah Whitecalf (who was from the Sweetgrass Reserve and spoke only Cree), gave lectures at La Ronge, Saskatchewan.⁶⁹ Whitecalf situated herself and her knowledge firmly in terms of her language: “I never went to school, I never set foot in a school, and because of that I am truly a Cree, I am truly a Cree woman [*êwako ohci mitoni niya nêhiyaw, nêhiyaw-iskwêw mitoni niya*].”⁷⁰ Born in the 1920s, it was exceptional that Whitecalf did not attend residential school; instead her grandparents played a role in raising her after her sister died at the Thunderchild Residential School in Delmas, Saskatchewan.⁷¹ According to Whitecalf, she has authentic Cree knowledge because she did not attend school, this marks

her as being “truly a Cree.” However, she did not disregard the importance of knowing and using English:

We are not going to say we dislike it they [young people] speak English in their work, for it is indeed very valuable for you, you put English to very good use in your work. ... I would thank you if you tried not to let go of our Greeness (*kinêhiyâwiwininaw*), the Cree language, even if you make mistakes when you speak, you should still keep trying like this, you should continue with your efforts to speak in Cree, it is truly valuable; ... we are so very pleased when young people ... come to speak to us in Cree.⁷²

Like Simon Ortiz affirmed in Chapter Three, Whitecalf states that English can be put to very good use. However, she encourages the students to not let go of their Greeness, which she equates with the Cree language. This important link between Cree thought, Greeness (*Nêhiyâwiwin*), and the Cree language (*Nêhiyawêwin*) must be emphasized. “Cree,” writes Tomson Highway, “is a language of the flesh. A physical language.” Though he is describing why Cree is the funniest of all languages, it is important to note that *Nêhiyâwiwin* is emphatically embodied in and by *Nêhiyawêwin*.

In Chapter Two, I discussed the make-up of Plains band societies, which were organized around family groups that were usually related to the band’s *okimaw* (“chief”). Individuals were autonomous within the band as was each band within the larger Cree nation. I also referenced the work of Daniel Heath Justice on why kinship-based citizenship should be understood as not only a viable, but indeed a preferable, way to create a nation. David Mandelbaum reproduces a diagram of a camp circle circa 1870 from a sketch drawn for him by Fine Day. The diagram illustrates the placement of hundreds of tipis around the outer circle, organized by geopolitical designations (e.g. house people, river people, west people, prairie people). Inside the circle are the tents belonging to different societies (e.g.

buffalo dancers, big dog, rattlers) and chiefs (Big Bear, Sweetgrass).⁷³ Sarah Carter

describes the scene:

At their summer encampments, which functioned as their 'intermittent town,' the bands of Cree reinforced their solidarity in language, customs, and ritual. It was a time for visiting friends, for trading, gambling, and competing in sports together. The sun dance, a central ceremony of the Cree ... was held almost annually and was a major integrating force. Unity was achieved as well through the governing councils where the chiefs of the bands met to discuss trade and military policies and strategies. Markets and training programs were also active for these few short weeks, which helped reinforce the connection of an individual band to the larger, complex society.⁷⁴

Such large gatherings would have no doubt required work to maintain peace. Joseph Dion writes of these gatherings that "the strict discipline tended to keep the people on edge and even resentful of the idea of supervising a large village."⁷⁵ It would appear that the large degree of self-discipline required to maintain a village of hundreds of tipis was a deterrent to establishing permanent town sites. Autonomy was preferred to centralized authority. I argue that summer encampments might be seen as the expression of collective Plains nationhood, where autonomous bands "reinforced their solidarity" through trade, ceremony, sports, politics, and language – storytelling. Literature. While other literary nationalists have focused on the literary production of southern nations – the Muskogee and Cherokee peoples, for example – who lived in what we might recognize as permanent 'towns,' the character of northern plains nationhood was expressed in "intermittent towns" each summer when the independent bands came together to renew their nationhood. This is why I would disagree with Scott Lyons – there are, indeed, "radically different kinds of nations in the world." And this is why Plains Indigenous governance might prescribe a new way of understanding literary nationalism, or rather, rhetorical autonomy.

Coming together in kinship. Northern plains governance provides a valuable way to conceptualize literary nationalism as rhetorical autonomy. Our criticism might function similarly, where we gather – to tell stories, debate, participate in ceremonies, renew alliances – as a collective, all the while maintaining our autonomy and distinctiveness, returning to our smaller communities (or, bands) the rest of the year. Sometimes our camps are scholarly conferences, literary and political gatherings, protests, and ceremonies. Individuals enjoy great autonomy within their smaller communities, while individuals and bands make up interdependent parts of the broader nation. Our criticism of northern plains rhetoric might be best based on these concepts of autonomy, freedom, generosity, compassion, empathy, respect, and coexistence. Sometimes we come together and celebrate our nationhood, we tell and re-tell and examine our collective stories. Other times, we quietly gather in small groups, expressing our autonomy and vitality and specificity.

‘Blankets for your land,’ so the treaties attest

I would like to end this chapter with analysis of lyrics by another Cree songwriter, Buffy Sainte-Marie (Piapot Cree Nation). Sainte-Marie is probably best known for her Vietnam-era protest song, “Universal Soldier.” Her song, “My Country ‘Tis of Thy People You’re Dying” appeared on her 1966 album *Little Wheel Spin and Spin*. Sainte-Marie’s lyrics are an answer to Samuel Francis Smith’s 1831 song, “My Country, ‘Tis of Thee” which is sung to the tune of “God Save The Queen” and was one of the de facto national anthems of the U.S.A. before 1931 and the adoption of “The Star Spangled Banner.” Smith’s patriotic lyrics begin as such:

My country, 'tis of thee,
Sweet land of liberty,

Of thee I sing;
Land where my fathers died,
Land of the pilgrims' pride,
From ev'ry mountainside
Let freedom ring!⁷⁶

Smith celebrates paternity and the pilgrims, and the lofty goal of liberty. From the beginning of her response, Sainte-Marie's lyrics address a settler audience: "Now that your big eyes are finally opened / Now that you're wond'ring 'how must they feel?' / Meaning them that you've chased across America's movie screens."⁷⁷ Sainte-Marie is likely addressing the white listeners of commercial folk music, the progressive crowd of the USA's Woodstock generation, whose eyes were finally opening to the genocidal injustices of North American society during the civil rights era. The first reference to Indigenous peoples in her song is their portrayal in western films, those peoples chased across the Canada by pilgrims and progress, then across movie screens by their descendants. Sainte-Marie continues: "You've asked for my comment, I simply will render / My country 'tis of thy people you're dying." She does not sing, "My country, 'tis of thee / Sweet land of liberty." No, she references death.

As activists were beginning to advocate for the environment and bringing awareness to the ecological destruction brought by oil and gas industries, Sainte-Marie points out that it is the essence of her ancestors that fuels contemporary North America:

The past it just crumbled: the future just threatens;
Our life blood's shut up in your chemical tanks
And now here you come, bill of sale in your hands
And surprise in your eyes that we're lacking in thanks
For the blessings of civilization you've brought us
The lessons you've taught us, the ruin you've wrought us!
Oh see what our trust in America's brought us!

As settler governments began to create formal legitimacy to the land and resources in their own colonial courts, Sainte-Marie illustrates the unfairness of such actions (“And now here you come, bill of sale in your hands / And surprise in your eyes that we're lacking in thanks”) noting, sarcastically and with a brilliant rhyme (“the blessings of civilization you've brought us / The lessons you've taught us, the ruin you've wrought us”) before ripping apart the whole colonial assimilationist enterprise. Echoing the “Oh say can you see” of “The Star Spangled Banner,” Sainte-Marie sings, “Oh see what our trust in America's brought us!” The past has crumbled, and there is not much hope for the future – it “just threatens” – America’s civilizing project has wrought nothing but ruin and distrust.

Sainte-Marie exposes the “school propaganda” of the mainstream educational system, while also exposing the work of the residential and boarding school systems of Canada and the United States:

You force us to send our toddlers away
To your schools where they're taught to despise their traditions;
You forbid them their languages, then further say
That American history really began
When Columbus set sail out of Europe! And stress
That the nation of leeches that conquered this land
Are the biggest and bravest and boldest and best!
And yet where in your history books is the tale
Of the genocide basic to this country's birth?
Of the preachers who lied? How the Bill of Rights failed?

Sainte-Marie targets the work of both the church and state in brainwashing Indigenous peoples through the kidnapping and forced miseducation of children, the lies and genocide inherent to the nation’s founding that are perpetuated through patriotic education, that the damage was perpetrated by preachers and educators and legislators. She calls the settler state a “nation of leeches.” Sainte-Marie unequivocally links settler prosperity with Indigenous poverty rooted in deception and dispossession, telling settlers that Indigenous

peoples “starve in your splendor.” She links Indigenous starvation to the discursive deceit of treaties as corrupt land deals: “Blankets for your land,’ so the treaties attest / Oh, well, blankets for land is a bargain indeed” (and these are smallpox infected blankets she’s talking about here.)

Sainte-Marie sings that settlers succeed at the expense of Indigenous peoples: “The white nation fattens while others grow lean, / Oh the tricked and evicted they know what I mean.” And she concludes the song with powerful lines that drive this point home:

That the eagles of war whose wings lent you glory,
They were never no more than carrion crows;
Pushed the wrens from their nest, stole their eggs, changed their story,
The mockingbird sings it ... it's all that she knows,
‘Ah what can I do?’ say a powerless few,
With a lump in your throat and a tear in your eye,
Can't you see that their poverty's profiting you?

My country 'tis of thy people you're dying.

North America’s heroes are not eagles, they are carrion crows that swooped in and built a settler society on Indigenous land (“their nest”), in the process kidnapping their children (“stole their eggs”). Settlers nearly eradicated Indigenous peoples’ languages and changed their stories such that, “The mockingbird sings it ... it's all that she knows.” The mockingbird’s song is the English language. To those whose eyes have been opened, “a powerless few,” Sainte-Marie turns her attention once more at the end of the song, calling on them to see how they privilege from settler-colonialism. Though the newly aware may be emotionally moved as a result of her song, Sainte-Marie puts a stop to easy sentimentalism. She asks directly: “Can't you see that their poverty's profiting you?” It is too easy to feel anger or sadness about colonialism in the past; what Sainte-Marie asks her

audience to do is consider how they – how we – in the present, profit from Indigenous peoples' poverty and dispossession.

In this chapter, I attempted to illustrate the contours of the Nêhiyaw rhetorical tradition, and placing it in the context of contemporary theories of Indigenous literary nationalism. As drawn from Cree philosophy, Cree literary value includes autonomy, sharing, interdependence, generosity, wisdom, kindness, compassion, empathy, and co-existence. In the next section of this thesis, I will examine the Treaty Six negotiations in order to illustrate how these cultural values were expressed rhetorically at the time of the treaty negotiations. I will also look at how Treaty Six was undermined, specifically in Amiskwacî as a recognized treaty band was removed from their treaty territory through what I will call rhetorical removals, while maintaining that Nêhiyawak have consistently resisted the being removed from their homelands and done so using rhetoric.

Chapter Five

“We Have Not Come Here To Take Anything That Belongs To You”: Treaty Six and the Negation of Plains Cree Nationhood

To discuss treaty in the English language is to talk about relationships and rhetoric, ceremony and spirit, land and life. It is to talk about negotiations and reciprocal obligations, nationhood and livelihood. One might think of x-marks and the pipe stem, the extinguishment of title or the extension of hospitality. On the other hand, Gerald Vizenor (White Earth Anishinaabe) calls treaty “a caricature of native sovereignty” and “an invitation to a perverse giveaway,” the result of which was “treaty removal to federal conclaves” (i.e.: reservations).¹ “Yet, those very treaties,” he writes, “are now the foundations of federal court decisions in favour of Native American Indians.”² For Vizenor, a treaty was at once a nineteenth century “perverse giveaway” leading to segregation in what he calls “colonial, constitutional enclaves”³ and at the same time, the basis for contemporary recognition in settler courts – the “politics of recognition” being, like reconciliation, at least, and perhaps, a starting point toward a different relationship, but not in and of itself the signpost of a ‘just relationship.’⁴ When we talk about treaty, we might acknowledge the territory where we are gathered, and do so *meaningfully*, perhaps by offering tobacco, and thanking the past and present stewards of this place. When we talk about treaty we must recognize that the most authentic knowledge about these agreements is embedded and enacted in ceremonies, stories, songs, teachings, traditions, and legal orders that are sacred and enduring.

In this chapter, I will examine the Treaty Six oral negotiations as being integral to the treaty itself, highlighting some key principles of the negotiations: their rootedness in

Cree legal and spiritual protocols, the importance of hospitality and treaty as a ceremony of adoption, the treaty as an agreement to peacefully coexist and share the land. I will also discuss the differing interpretations stemming from the oral/written understandings of the treaty, mistranslation and what I will call “discursive deceit,” and the delicate issue of land cession that sits at the core of the western treaties from an official Canadian perspective. I hope to be more analytical than prescriptive. I will attempt to humbly incorporate the written record of the negotiations, published Elders accounts, and contemporary scholarship in order to arrive at an understanding of Treaty Six that acknowledges not only its complexities but the potential it offers us for an ethical relationship with Indigenous peoples.

“A life lived in solidarity with other peoples”

One might ask why Treaty Six is a concern for literary analysis. In her novel *Ceremony*, Laguna Pueblo author Leslie Marmon Silko writes: “I will tell you something about stories,/ They aren’t just entertainment.”⁵ In a similar vein, Comparative Literature scholar J.

Edward Chamberlin asserts:

[W]e need to keep questioning both the authority and the truth of stories, for some of them tell of taking over other people’s land, destroying their livelihood, and dismissing their very humanity. We can’t just shrug off such stories ... it is useful to turn to the other side, to the stories that tell of what it feels like to have this done to you.⁶

In other words, stories are powerful; they affect the ways we experience reality, and when used to steal and occupy other peoples’ land, stories (and the ways we live them) have the potential to literally bring about an apocalypse. Lawrence Gross (White Earth Anishinaabe) writes: “European invasion brought about the end of the Anishinaabe [Ojibwe] world. ... Though fragments remained that would aid in the later reconstruction of

the culture, the totality added up to an apocalyptic experience from which the Anishinaabe are still recovering.”⁷ Gross asserts that “the loss of land, resources, relatives and heritage” have left Anishinaabe dealing with Post Apocalyptic Stress Disorder, which takes the definition of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder to the level of an entire culture.⁸ Considering what Gross would call the apocalyptic consequences of settler colonialism, we might pause and consider the need for empathy and an attempt at understanding. Chamberlin points to the ability to find and feel a sense of empathy in listening to others’ stories, to imagine how it would feel “to have this done to you.” On the other hand, healing songs and creation stories, for example, have the power to restore health and bring the entire world into existence. Stories, then, are powerful indeed, and should be read closely and attentively.

Lumbee legal scholar Robert A. Williams has discussed the power and importance of storytelling for Indigenous treaty making protocol, thereby emphasizing one reason why treaties should be of concern to literature scholars. In his history of early treaty making, Williams writes in a pan-Indigenous context: “In American Indian visions of law and peace, differing peoples come to imagine themselves as connected through stories. Indians of the Encounter era believed strongly that stories could clear the channels of communication and dialogue that opened the path of peace ... They believed that through stories, we can imagine ourselves as connected to communities at a distance.”⁹ He emphasizes that Indigenous treaty makers used stories to educate a treaty partner about “the expected norms of behaviour between peoples in a treaty relationship.”¹⁰ According to Williams: “The telling of a story sought to build and sustain a common life, a life lived in solidarity with different peoples.”¹¹ Williams highlights an important framework for thinking about

treaties as stories about alliance, solidarity, responsibility, and bridging different worldviews and traditions for the purpose of living together peacefully.

As I will illustrate in this chapter, a major area of contention for analyses of Treaty Six involves competing arguments about the oral and written versions of the treaty. Chamberlin – in his analysis of the 1997 *Delgamuukw* case – reminds us how slippery the oral/written cultural binary is; in fact, he goes so far as to label such distinctions (that there are oral cultures and written cultures) as a “misconception”:

Think about it. All so-called oral cultures are rich in forms of writing, albeit non-syllabic and non-alphabetic ones: woven and beaded belts and blankets, knotted and coloured strings, carved and painted trays, poles, doors, verandah posts, canes and sticks, masks, hats and chests play a central role in the cultural and constitutional life of these communities, functioning in all the ways written texts do for European societies.

And in the case of Nêhiyawak, there is the knowledge that written expression existed prior to European contact (as discussed in the previous chapter). Chamberlin continues:

And, on the other hand, the central institutions of our supposedly ‘written’ cultures – our courts and churches and parliaments and schools – are in fact arenas of strictly defined and highly formalized oral traditions, in which certain things must be said and done in the right order by the right people on the right occasions with the right people present. We are, all of us, much more involved in both oral and written traditions than we might think. And our stories and songs draw on the resources of both.¹²

Conveniently, under the *Canada Evidence Act* (Section 20), The Crown-via-Canada recognizes only the written versions of the treaties published by the Queen’s Printer; thus, it would appear that with regard to the multiplicity of understandings, Cree law is more advanced than its Canadian counterpart, in that it promotes flexibility, nuance, multiple perspectives, and *processes* over codification and strict printed authority.¹³ Canada is presently vesting a great deal of power in only one version of the story. While the Canadian system only recognizes one highly contested written version, Cree law allows for a

multiplicity of understandings, different versions that, when told together, create a story that is more full and more nuanced. Chamberlin uses a specific example to remind us that laws are stories, too: “In the Australian dialect of English, which many Aborigines speak, the words ‘lore’ and ‘law’ sound the same, perfect rhymes in more ways than one.”¹⁴ We must open up spaces to discuss and dismantle the barrier between oral and written; in doing so, we might revisit the “spirit and intent” of the Treaty Six negotiations and discover a profoundly new (and old) way of living together in an ethical way.

Ethical storytelling toward ethical citizenship

Stories aren’t just entertainment. In his analysis of the Supreme Court of Canada’s 1997 *Delgamuukw* decision, Brian Thom alerts us to the rhetorical power that public officials such as judges have in the decisions that they make and disseminate in writing:

Chief Justice Lamer should be considered an author, participating in a discourse around how the relationship between Aboriginal peoples and the state should unfold. The difference ... is that as Chief Justice, Lamer is a uniquely powerful voice in the discourse. His writing, unlike the academics who publish in scholarly journals or the Aboriginal people who make speeches in their communities and to the government, clarifies the law of the land in Canada. When Lamer writes, government officials, elected politicians, Aboriginal leaders, practicing lawyers, newspaper columnists, business leaders, and academic scholars all perk up and listen, adjusting their lives accordingly.¹⁵

Robert Williams’s description of treaty stories in the eastern woodlands parallels many Indigenous understandings of Treaty Six, the agreement first signed in 1876 (with later adhesions) between the British Crown and Nêhiyawak and other First Nations of present-day central Alberta and Saskatchewan. Winona Wheeler, a historian from Fisher River Cree First Nation, reminds researchers that not all information about such important matters should be discussed in public.¹⁶ The students in my Indigenous Studies classes at Maskwacîs Cultural College have been adamant about the importance of following spiritual

protocol when discussing the treaty. Thus, I have attempted to humbly read and analyze the wealth of published sources on Treaty Six. I am not fluent in Nêhiyawêwin and I have only learned a very small fragment about the treaties; yet it is my treaty responsibility to try and understand the spirit and intent of the treaty that grants me the right and responsibilities to live here in Nêhiyawaskî.

“We are all treaty people,” writes Roger Epp, dean of the University of Alberta’s Augustana Campus. Like Epp, I am interested in the ethical dimension of non-Indigenous peoples’ occupation of this territory. He writes: “Whose work is reconciliation? Judges? Ministers of Indian Affairs? Aboriginal negotiators? Or does it extend far beyond them? ... In other words, the subject is not the “Indian Problem” but the “Settler Problem.”¹⁷ I agree with Epp that “the burdens, the opportunities, or, more neutrally, the imperatives of reconciliation are not distributed equally.”¹⁸ To most Canadians, or at least to those who think about such things at all, the Minister of Indian Affairs or the Prime Minister carry the responsibilities of negotiation and renewal with First Nations. Meanwhile, I think it is presumed that every First Nations individual must share in re-visioning the future and changing the trajectory of Native/non-Native relations. Certainly, there is a great deal of misunderstanding relating to the treaty so essential and integral to our relationship on this particular territory. I would argue that such misunderstandings on the part of non-Indigenous Canadians are partly the fault of the Canadian government; a majority of my non-Indigenous students at the University of Alberta admitted to never learning (or even hearing) about the treaty prior to entering a Native Studies class. There have been no television Heritage Moments about the spirit and intent of Treaty Six. Canadian curriculum apparently does not prescribe learning much about our treaty relationship, thus most

Canadians are not so much misinformed as they are uneducated (or at least under-educated) about the treaties. I have had several casual conversations with lifelong Albertans who admittedly have little to no understanding of the contents of Treaty Six or (most annoyingly to me) the fact that treaties are not historical events that should be relegated to the past, but are actually ongoing agreements.

A second argument that Epp makes is that reconciliation is too often couched in the rhetoric and beliefs of paternalistic Canadian liberalism, a “settler political culture, fundamentally Lockean in its philosophical fragments: forward-looking, suspicious of history, or, more likely, indifferent to it, and incorporating into its imagined social contract an almost-willful amnesia about whatever might be divisive.”¹⁹ This point is argued well by Temagami Anishinaabe political philosopher Dale Turner in his 2006 monograph, *This is Not a Peace Pipe*. Turner dismantles the ‘benevolent’ liberal theories put forth since the 1969 White Paper, particularly Alan Cairns’s notion of “citizens plus” (Cairns appropriates the title of the Indian Association of Alberta’s response to the 1969 White Paper) and Will Kymlicka’s “minority rights” view of Aboriginal rights, and succinctly does so by arguing that these theories fail from an Indigenous perspective because:

1. They do not adequately address the legacy of colonialism.
2. They do not respect the sui generis nature of indigenous rights as a class of political rights that flow out of indigenous nationhood and are not bestowed by the Canadian state.
3. They do not question the legitimacy of the Canadian state’s unilateral claim of sovereignty over Aboriginal lands and peoples.
4. Most importantly, they do not recognize that a meaningful theory of Aboriginal rights in Canada is impossible without Aboriginal participation.²⁰

Indigenous theorists, like Turner, have been arguing against the assimilative liberal view of reconciliation, a dominating view in Canada which continues to demand that Indigenous peoples conform to Canadian multicultural norms, a view that is explicitly counter to

Indigenous nationalism and autonomy and the repeated requests for separateness made by Indigenous leaders and intellectuals highlighted throughout this thesis. As Turner points out, this way of thinking fails to take into account domination rooted in colonialism, the unique (*sui generis*) legal relationship created by treaties, and the agency of Indigenous peoples in the treaty relationship. The liberal approach does not call into question the legitimacy of the Canadian state's apparently preeminent aspirations and sovereignty over Indigenous lands. It is important to note how liberal philosophy constrains Canadian understandings of Indigenous treaty-making with the Crown – issues that can be clarified by listening to treaty stories. Epp builds on a quote from Canadian political philosopher James Tully:

‘Canada is founded on an act of sharing that is almost unimaginable in its generosity’ – not only land, but food, agricultural techniques, practical knowledge, and trade routes. Certainly [many Canadians] would not accept [Tully's] conclusion that a post-colonial relationship might be built out of the memory of that sharing. Instead, they clamour for ‘closure,’ for ‘final settlements.’ They want no more surprises.²¹

Settlers apparently do not want any more surprises: land reclamations, road blocks, or flash mobs. Tully's reference to the radical act of hospitality that allowed Canada to become established in Nêhiyawaskî is an important first consideration. Good hospitality is a central concept of Indigenous philosophies in the Western Hemisphere. Even someone so unperceptive as Columbus picked up on this within a day of encountering his first “Indians”: “The people are very gentle and anxious to have the things we bring ... they will give all that they do possess for anything that is given to them.”²² In the “Letter on His First Voyage,” Columbus notes: “If one asks for anything they have they never say no. On the contrary, they offer a share to anyone with demonstrations of heartfelt affection.”²³ Not surprisingly, Columbus set an important precedent for European dealings with Indigenous

peoples across the continent; The Admiral extends hospitality to establish trust with a Native man, but with ulterior motives: “I ordered that he should be given bread and honey and something to drink. I shall carry him to [the Island of] Fernandina and restore all his possessions to him so that he may give a good account of us. Then when, God willing, your Highnesses [Ferdinand and Isabella, to whom Columbus was writing] send others here, we shall be favourably received *and the natives may give us of all they possess.*”²⁴ It has been well-established that Europeans supplied gifts to Indigenous people as part of establishing political, social, and economic alliances.²⁵ Surely not all explorers, missionaries, and other colonists were as cynically inhospitable as Columbus? Regardless of their motives, by the time Treaty Six was negotiated in 1876, Indigenous peoples and Europeans had been solidifying alliances and making agreements for at least 250 years.²⁶ As such, Indigenous peoples in general, and Nêhiyawak specifically, had an understanding of the types of relationships they were entering into with settlers; often, this relationship was rooted in adopting the new arrivals. Treaty was about solidifying alliances and extending kinship to settlers.²⁷

miyo-wîcihitowin, wâhkôhtowin, and wîtaskêwin: Kinship and Treaty Nationhood

When our cousins, the White man, first came to peacefully live on these lands with the Indigenous people, as far as I can remember, Elders have referred to them as kiciwâmaniwak (our first cousins). I have heard from my Elders that the Queen came to offer a traditional adoption of us as our mother. ‘You will be my children,’ she had said.
 - Elder Simon Kytwayhat (Makwa Sahgaiehcan First Nation)²⁸

In 1871, after Britain sold Rupert’s Land to Canada, Chief Sweetgrass, along with other Plains Cree leaders, wrote to Governor Archibald: “We heard our lands were sold and we did not like it; we don’t want to sell our lands; it is our property and no one has a right to sell them. ... We invite you to come and see us and to speak with us. If you can’t come

yourself, send some one in your place.”²⁹ We see in the words of Sweetgrass an emphatic declaration of Cree nationhood and ownership of the land: “we don’t want to sell our lands.” In the same letter, The Little Brother addressed Archibald (using the metaphor of family): “You, my brother, the Great Chief in Red River, treat me as a brother, that is, as a Great Chief.”³⁰ It is clear that these chiefs expected to be treated as equals (i.e.: as relatives) and to have their peoples’ sovereignty over the land respected. This act of rhetorical sovereignty was followed by physical resistance on the part of Nêhiyawak in 1875. After persistent demands to meet with the government – whose inaction, according to Hugh Dempsey, raised suspicion and distrust on the part of Big Bear and others³¹ – chiefs stopped a team heading west to build a government telegraph line through their unceded territories. Dempsey explains: “Star Blanket and Big Child, the two leading chiefs of the Carlton area, protested this incursion. No treaty had been made. No one had told them that the contractors were coming, and no permission had been sought to travel across their lands.” After some discussion, the chiefs allowed the contractors to pass through provided they did not build anything. Sweet Grass, Big Bear, and Little Pine sent three “soldiers” (Dempsey’s term) to stop the contractors as they moved further west. According to Dempsey, these measures “shocked the government into action.” Missionary George McDougall was commissioned to visit Nêhiyawak, informing them that a treaty meeting would take place at Carlton House the next year and “reassuring the Indians about the government’s good intentions.”³²

Treaty Six is one of more than 70 treaties negotiated and signed between Indigenous nations and Crown representatives between 1701 and 1923 in what would become Canada.³³ Like similar agreements, Treaty Six, negotiated and initially signed in the

fall of 1876 at Fort Carlton and Fort Pitt, obligated the Crown to provide reserve land, annuity payments, education, and agricultural assistance; thanks to the foresight and negotiating tactics of Cree negotiators, Treaty Six also includes guarantees of health care (the 'medicine chest' clause) and assistance from the Crown in the event of famine. From the Canadian government's historical and contemporary perspective, these are provided as gifts in exchange for the extinguishment of Indigenous peoples' title to and political jurisdiction over the land that was 'ceded.'³⁴ However, this chapter aims to thoroughly question that such a large scale cession of traditional Cree territory was desired, understood – or, more importantly, even *possible* – from a Cree perspective, particularly in light of the rhetorical situation that typifies the negotiations. Further, we must question whether ceding such a vast amount of territory (121,000 square miles) and sovereignty over it is something Crown representatives made clear to Nêhiyawak during negotiations.

In addition to the written text of the treaty itself and oral knowledge held by Indigenous experts, there are numerous documentary sources on the negotiation and interpretation of Treaty Six, including those recorded or published by First Nations elders, historians, educators, and political leaders. Peter Erasmus, a prominent Metis who served as translator at the Treaty Six negotiations, recorded his memoirs in 1921 which were later published as *Buffalo Days and Nights*. Alexander Morris – Lieutenant-Governor of Manitoba and the Northwest Territories and chief Crown negotiator for Treaties Three through Six – published a book in 1880 that compiled his own recollections, transcripts of the negotiations, and reports submitted to the government. Morris's biographer, Robert J. Talbot, writes: "That Morris saw fit to publish transcripts of the negotiations, and not just the treaty texts, suggests that he had come to see the spoken exchange as part of the larger

agreement.”³⁵ In the introduction to his volume, Morris confirms this connection between the negotiations and the written treaty: “It is the design of the present work to tell the story of these treaties, to preserve ... a record of the negotiations on which they were based.”³⁶ However, the fact that much of Treaty Six (as signed) was written prior to the negotiations may diminish the legal significance of treaty discussions. For Morris, his compilation also served as means of recording the rhetorical traditions of Nêhiyawak, providing “a view of their habits of thought and speech.”³⁷ Morris hoped the written record of the negotiations would “be of great value to those who will be called on to administer the treaty, showing as it does what was said by the negotiators and by the Indians, and preventing misrepresentations in the future.”³⁸

Sharon Venne (Muskeg Lake First Nation) reminds us that Indigenous customs of law and hospitality form the legal basis for Treaty Six; representatives of the Crown came to Nêhiyawaskî to enter into treaty, Native people did not go to London, England.³⁹ According to Neal McLeod, pêhonânihk (Fort Carlton) and wâskahikanis (Fort Pitt) were chosen as negotiation sites because of their importance as gathering sites.

The trading posts have been named *kihç-âtâwêwikamikwa* – literally, the ‘great houses of trade’ – which denotes the function of these posts during the fur trade. ... The treaty process was in many ways an extension of the positive relationships that had emerged during this time. The notion of reciprocity (*miyo-wîcihitowin*, ‘helping each other in a good way’) was the core of this relationship.⁴⁰

It would have clearly appeared to Nehiyawak that Treaty Six was being negotiated on their terms, seeing as commissioners came to their territory, and it was indeed the Crown that had something to gain from negotiations. Further, Treaty Six was negotiated according to Indigenous protocol. Treaty Commissioner Alexander Morris describes what he called “the national stem or pipe dance” – the term ‘national stem’ being an important

acknowledgement of Cree national symbolism: “[T]he [pipe] stem was elevated to the north, south, west and east, a ceremonial dance was then performed by the Chief and head men, the Indian men and women shouting all the while ... The pipe was presented to us and stroked by our hands.”⁴¹ Morris then reports: “the Indians sat down in front of the council tent, satisfied that *in accordance with their custom* we had accepted the friendship of the Cree nation.”⁴² Like the telling of a story, these sacred vows would have connected the newcomers and Nêhiyawak into a “life lived in solidarity” as Williams writes above.

Elder Jim Kâ-Nîpitêhtêw (Onion Lake Cree Nation) recalls the importance of the pipestem to Treaty Six, both in terms of Cree narrative memory of the negotiations and as an instrument that would bind the Crown and Nêhiyawak in relations based on truth and good faith:

He, my late father, used to say this, ‘Well a certain old man in fact foretold it ...: “The people must have something to rely upon as testimony, and we who are Crees do have something to rely upon as testimony; that which is called the pipestem ... When he, our brother the White-Man, made these promises to us he did promise us that no human being walking on two legs upon the surface of the earth would ever be able to break the promises made to us.

According to Kâ-Nîpitêhtêw, this man had asked Morris:

Do you speak the truth in this which you have promised me, that no one will ever be in a position to break the promises which you have made to us? For you have come between us, you have come between the All-Father and us, where he has given us the sustenance upon which we live, you have come between him and us; in coming to promise us that you are going to look after us, do you speak the truth in this which you have promised us; here where you have come representing the Queen, will it ever end, that which you have promised us? ... If you speak the truth, hold then this pipestem.⁴³

Miller affirms: “In effect, the ceremonies drew the Euro-Canadians representing the government into a circle of kinship.” In addition to this act of alliance-making, Miller also notes that the pipe ceremony bound participants to speak truthfully, and that Creator was

evoked as a “party to the proceedings.”⁴⁴ We must recognize the convergence of law, spirituality, and kinship, the interconnectedness of which are vitally important to the worldview of Nêhiyawak.⁴⁵

Venne reiterates that the Crown’s motivation for entering into treaty with Indigenous peoples in this territory were twofold: to establish legal legitimacy for non-Indigenous people to share the land, and to establish a Peace and Friendship treaty – a longstanding Indigenous political arrangement throughout North America – to ensure security for non-Indigenous settlers.⁴⁶ This understanding is reflected in the written version of the treaty:

[W]hereas the said Indians have been notified and informed by Her Majesty's said Commissioners that it is the desire of Her Majesty to open up for settlement, immigration and such other purposes as to Her Majesty may seem meet, a tract of country bounded and described as hereinafter mentioned, and to obtain the consent thereto of Her Indian subjects inhabiting the said tract, and to make a treaty and arrange with them, so that there may be peace and good will between them and Her Majesty, and that they may know and be assured of what allowance they are to count upon and receive from Her Majesty's bounty and benevolence.

The Crown recognized it needed to “obtain the consent” of Nêhiyawak in order to live here and, as in countless peace and friendship treaties leading up to it, an agreement was made to establish a relationship of “peace and good will.” In exchange, the Crown’s bounty and benevolence would be an ongoing obligation. Harold Johnson, who is a member of Montreal Lake Cree Nation and holds a master’s degree in law from Harvard, states that the authority for Nêhiyawak to enter into treaties is derived from the Creator’s law.⁴⁷ One of the ceremonies of the Cree legal system is one for adopting new peoples; Johnson writes: “It is in accordance with the law of adoption that my family took your ancestors [i.e.: non-Native people] as relatives. We solemnized the adoption with a sacred pipe. The promises that my ancestors made are forever, because they were made under the Creator’s law. This

adoption ceremony is what we refer to when we talk about the treaty.”⁴⁸ Johnson is very clear about this ceremony, that the Queen and her children were adopted by Nêhiyawak and therefore received the right to live in Nêhiyawaskî and to farm here.⁴⁹ He writes: “[M]y ancestors showed compassion and adopted your family. We expected that you would behave like relatives and help us in hard times, just as we took the responsibility to help you if you needed it.”⁵⁰ In a 2000 presentation given at the University of Alberta, Venne stated: “Most discussions fail to mention the treaty rights of non-Indigenous people. This is a critical issue. In a treaty relationship, there are two sides and both have rights. ... Every non-Indigenous person should know his or her treaty rights. The simple fact is that, without the treaty, no one other than Indigenous Peoples has the right to live on our land.”⁵¹ Venne maintains that our non-Indigenous treaty responsibilities are the ability to live on Indigenous land, to peacefully co-exist with the original peoples, to maintain a peaceful relationship on Indigenous lands, and to respect the land. She points out that in no way are Indigenous peoples interfering with these non-Indigenous treaty rights and responsibilities: Nêhiyawak are upholding their end of the treaty.⁵² During negotiations at Fort Pitt, Wah-tah-nee stated to the commissioners: “I hope that the Queen will look upon our poverty when she hears that we are poor Indians and have welcomed her people to live amongst us. This is my country where I have lived. I want to make room for the Queen’s men, and I ask her in return to keep me from want.”⁵³ Epp and Tully refer to the incredible act of sharing and generosity that characterize the spirit of Indigenous treaty negotiators; it is clear that from the perspective of Wah-tah-nee a reciprocal relationship was presumed and expected. Those of us not Indigenous to this territory, who are living here because it is our treaty right under the Creator’s law of adoption, might well ask ourselves if we are

being good relatives. Are we treating Nêhiyawak like we would our biological relations? Are we as individuals upholding our end of the treaty? I think these questions require some long and honest self-reflection and action on the part of we who have gained the most from Treaty Six.

Historians Sarah Carter and Walter Hildebrandt have illustrated the ways the Crown's representatives and Nêhiyawak used family metaphors in the 1876 treaty discussions. Governor Alexander Morris referred to Nêhiyawak as the Queen's "red children," stating that the British "respect the Indians as brothers and as men."⁵⁴ Morris spoke to Nêhiyawak as equal members of the family: "You are, like me and my friends who are with me, children of the Queen."⁵⁵ On the second day of negotiations at Fort Carlton, Governor Morris said, "I spoke yesterday as a friend to friends, as a brother to brother, as a father to his children."⁵⁶ Similarly, Nêhiyawak referred to the Queen as mother and her British representatives as brothers, referring to all the reciprocal responsibilities involved in such a relationship.⁵⁷ Morris might have had some knowledge of what these familial metaphors meant to Nêhiyawak. According to Robert J. Talbot, author of a 2009 biography of Morris, the governor "paid close attention to the language of their conversation, especially in negotiations, and often appropriated their symbolism and imagery in his attempts to reach an understanding."⁵⁸ On one hand, Morris might have been respecting Cree rhetorical practices by employing their symbolism; on the other, he may have simply been seeking to manipulate and convince Nêhiyawak of the pre-written terms he had brought to the negotiations.

As Carter and Hildebrandt assert of Cree society, "[B]rothers and sisters are equal, separate and independent. ... [T]he treaties were understood to have created an

irrevocable, perpetual familial relationship with the British Crown, based on concepts, principles and laws defined in [Nêhiyawêwin] as 'Wâhkôhtowin' (good relationships)."⁵⁹ Hildebrandt, along with the esteemed legal scholar Harold Cardinal (Sucker Creek Cree First Nation), define wâhkôhtowin as an unwritten code of conduct for the relationships between family members as well as unrelated persons. Wâhkôhtowin involves mutual respect and reciprocal duties "regulated by the laws of kinship, which [recognize] the close yet separate and independent existence of each [family member] and which provided for the principle of non-interference." Cardinal and Hildebrandt refer to wîtaskêwin, living together on the land, as meaning nations who are strangers to one another entering into agreements to share land or territory with each other. Wîtaskêwin, living together on the land, was to be governed by the laws of wâhkôhtowin, such as reciprocity, independence and non-interference.⁶⁰ Treaty Six did not mention an Indian Act, which has legislated Indigenous identity and citizenship, overthrown Indigenous governments, and attempted to preside over every aspect of life on reserves. The Indian Act is in direct opposition to the principles understood by Nêhiyawak at the time of negotiating the treaties.

J.R. Miller writes: "From the very first days of their presence in northeastern North America, Europeans encountered First Nations well versed in creating political agreements among themselves by means of kinship and ritual."⁶¹ Such treaties built alliances that were ideally irrevocable and built on reciprocity and non-interference (these principles will be elaborated in detail in the next chapter). Indeed, as evidenced by the Treaty Six negotiations, kinship is crucial to Indigenous nationhood; as Daniel Heath Justice asserts: "[T]he dynamics of kinship relationships are the political extension of sovereign Indigenous nationhood."⁶² For Mark Rifkin, the link between Indigenous sovereignty and

kinship is a marker of Indigenous separateness: “‘Kinship’ operates as a threshold concept that is both inside and outside the ideological structure of privatized domesticity, interpellating other kinds of sociality while simultaneously marking their *nonidentity* with respect to the dominant system,” writes Rifkin in *When Did Indians Become Straight?* “As such, ‘kinship’ provides a way for Indigenous people to indicate how their sociopolitical formations, whether officially recognized by the state or not, differ from liberal formations.”⁶³ Thus, the unique and separate character of Indigenous nationhood is affirmed by a reliance on kinship in opposition to the state preoccupation with Indian status, blood quantum, or other legal mechanisms of official citizenship.⁶⁴

“It must be understood, and it must be in writing”

Contemporary interpretations of Treaty Six hinge on the differences between the “official” written version and the spirit and intent of the negotiations. As noted above, Morris viewed the negotiations as integral to the interpretation and implementation of the treaties.

Differences of opinion on the written treaty should not be seen as a way to invalidate the treaty relationship itself, but must be accounted for in understanding the relationship in moving forward. In 1876, treaty official Reverend John McKay stated the importance of writing, particularly in relation to understanding the treaty terms, telling Nêhiyawak: “it must be understood, and it must be in writing, all that you are promised.”⁶⁵ Governor Alexander Morris spoke similarly: “My words will pass away and so will yours, so I always write down what I promise. ... Next year I shall send copies of what is written in the treaty, printed on skin, so that it cannot rub out nor be destroyed.”⁶⁶ Cree Chief Mistawasis had suspicions of the Crown’s representatives and their reliance on the permanence of the written word; Peter Erasmus, the Métis translator chosen by the Cree chiefs, reported,

“Mista-wa-sis had called me aside and told me to keep a close watch on the wording to see that it included everything that had been promised.”⁶⁷ In 1989, elder Pete Waskahat of Frog Lake First Nation expressed his mistrust of the interpreters and the resulting written treaty: “There were interpreters but the Elders were not entirely sure about the interpretation at that time. Was everything the Indian People said interpreted correctly? Were word for word, thoughts and ideas of the Indian People communicated to the Treaty Commissioner? Our old people could not be sure.”⁶⁸ Elder Michael Fineday of Witchehan Lake First Nation, expressed similar concerns about translation: “The unfortunate part of it was this: there was no person to monitor the activities of the people who were translating. Changes were made. Some things that were not said or even mentioned were imposed upon our people in the English version of the treaty.”⁶⁹

According to Arthur Ray, J.R. Miller, and Frank Tough, “A clash over who was qualified to interpret at Fort Carlton highlights this problem of treaty negotiations.”⁷⁰ While the government had brought an interpreter (Rev. John McKay), Mistawasis and Ahtakakoop had selected Peter Erasmus to translate for them. McKay was fluent in Swampy Cree, to which Mistawasis objected: “We are Plains Cree and demand to be spoken to in our own language.”⁷¹ Cree playwright Tomson Highway, himself a native speaker of Swampy Cree, refers to Plains Cree (the “y” dialect) as “the classical dialect” of the language. “If the Queen of England were to speak Cree, for instance, she would speak the ‘y’ dialect, the dialect of oratory.”⁷² Highway calls Swampy Cree, “the funniest of all [Cree] dialects, not so much suitable to high oratory and politics but to fun, parties, to hysterical, knee-slapping gut-busting laughter.”⁷³ Based on Highway’s assessment, we might see why the Plains Cree leaders demanded that the treaty translator speak their dialect and speak it well. In the

end, Erasmus alone was selected to translate and became employed by both Nêhiyawak and the Crown. That the individual upon whom Nêhiyawak were most reliant in their negotiations – the person they requested to clarify and interpret the English treaty terms – was also paid by the Crown, might call into question the validity of the translations. How are we to know that Erasmus did not make the terms sound more appealing in order to satisfy his government employers? Whether we be looking at discursive deceit or mistranslation, the extent to which Nêhiyawak understood the written treaty – and the extent to which the translations would have allowed them to understand to the fullest extent – should be called into question.

Certainly mistranslation on the part of James McKay, who continued to assist with the negotiations, was an issue when Big Bear arrived at Fort Pitt on September 13, 1876 – after Sweetgrass and other leaders had adhered to the treaty.⁷⁴ In a well-known episode recorded in Morris's account, Big Bear said: "I heard the Governor was to come and I said I shall see him; when I see him I will make a request that he will save me from what I most dread, that is: the rope to be about my neck (hanging), it was not given to us by the Great Spirit that the red man or white man should shed each other's blood."⁷⁵ Governor Morris replied: "No good Indian has the rope about his neck" – explaining that Nêhiyawak should not fear hanging if they had not broken the Queen's law. The secretary again misrecords/mistranslates Big Bear: "I have told you what I wish, that there be no hanging."⁷⁶ To this, Morris replies: "What you ask will not be granted, why are you so anxious about bad men? The Queen's law punishes murder with death, and your request cannot be granted."⁷⁷ According to Nêhiyaw scholar Kiera Ladner, Big Bear's phrase *aysaka'paykinit*, refers to the fact that Big Bear "would not give up his freedom, nor the

freedom and sovereignty of his nation, to be led around like a domesticated animal in a *skunkun* (reserve or roped off piece of land).⁷⁸ For Dempsey, the result “was a classic example of a mistranslation creating a chain of confusion.” Big Bear was not referring to a fear of hanging: “Rather, he was using a common expression on the plains that denoted a person giving up his freedom. It was analogous to a wild horse having a rope placed around its neck so that it could no longer wander unfettered and free, making it a prisoner of the one who held the rope.” Dempsey points to similar examples of this usage, including Morris himself who told Nêhiyawak “we do not want to tie you down.” Apparently McKay, who was fluent in Swampy Cree, confused the term *aysaka’paykinit* for *ay-hah-kotit* (hanged by the neck). As Dempsey writes: “Had the words been properly translated, Big Bear might have received an assurance from Morris that could have changed the course of history.”⁷⁹ Having examined the issue of translation, we will examine the negotiations themselves in order to clarify the issue of land cession that is so crucial to contemporary debates about Treaty Six.

Cede, Release, Surrender, and Yield Up?

On the first day of negotiations at Fort Carlton, Alexander Morris acknowledged both the nationhood of Nêhiyawak and the impetus behind the treaty negotiations: “I am here now because for many days *the Cree nation* have been sending word that they wished to see a Queen’s messenger face to face.”⁸⁰ In his own writing, Morris stated: “The Crees had, very early after the annexation of the Northwest Territories to Canada, desired a *treaty of alliance* with the Government.”⁸¹ It is important to note the reciprocal nature of a treaty of alliance: such an arrangement does not remotely imply a relationship based on domination. During the negotiations, the commissioners affirmed that Nêhiyawak would continue their

traditional lifeways – and as an extension maintain their sovereignty – after the treaty was signed. Morris reassured Nêhiyawak: “Understand me, I do not want to interfere with your hunting and fishing. I want you to pursue it throughout the country, as you have heretofore done.”⁸² Morris affirmed this again on the fourth day of negotiations: “You want to be at liberty to hunt as before. I told you we did not want to take that means of living from you, *you have it the same as before.*”⁸³ That Morris emphasized Nêhiyawak would live “the same as before” must have been reassuring to negotiators and may explain one impetus for them to agree and sign.

“Morris dealt heavily in land speculation, a practice he learned from his father,” writes Talbot in his biography of the governor. “Throughout his life, the buying and selling of land provided him with a continuing source of income, allowing him to live at a level of comfort unknown to most 19th-century Canadians. Additionally, Morris’s land dealings helped him develop a set of shrewd and often aggressive negotiation tactics, skills that he would later apply at the treaty negotiations.”⁸⁴ From a position of economic and political power, Morris indeed employed shrewd and aggressive tactics when negotiating Treaty Six, a fact documented in the negotiation records. For example, Morris himself reports withholding rations from followers of Beardy, chief of the Willow Cree “in consequence of the unreasonableness of their conduct” – that is, because Beardy requested that negotiations be held at Duck Lake instead of Fort Carlton due to a vision he had received.⁸⁵ (According to historian John Tobias, this later became a tactic of the Indian Commissioner Edgar Dewdney; for example, in the fall of 1879, he announced that rations were only to be provided to bands who had adhered to the treaty.)⁸⁶ Nêhiyawak may have understood rations as they did the gifts offered by Hudson Bay Company officials over the decades as

part of reciprocal negotiations, and not as something that could be withheld as a negotiating tactic. That Morris would withhold food as punishment, however, places an ugly stain on the process as a whole.

On the first day of negotiations at Fort Carlton, Morris confirmed The Crown's intentions; indeed, he referred to the bounty and benevolence of the Queen: "*We are not here as traders*, I do not come as to buy or sell horses or goods, I come to you, children of the Queen, to try and help you."⁸⁷ Although Talbot asserts, "extinguishment of title remained a principle goal of the treaties," both Morris and McKay repeatedly assured Nêhiyawak that the Crown did not wish to trade for the land.⁸⁸ On the second day of negotiations, Morris once again used family metaphors and reaffirmed The Crown's purpose: "I told you yesterday that I and my brother Commissioners were *not here as traders*."⁸⁹ On the third day, in response to questions from Nêhiyawak, McKay addressed Cree representatives in the Cree language: "It has been said to you by your Governor [Morris] that *we did not come here to barter or trade with you for the land*."⁹⁰ McKay continued: "We have not come here to deceive you, we have not come here to rob you, *we have not come here to take anything that belongs to you*, and we are not here to make peace as we would with hostile Indians, because you are the children of the Great Queen as we are, and there has never been anything but peace between us."⁹¹ Again, Crown representatives made reference to their ongoing familial relationship with Nêhiyawak, implying they were equals (though oddly McKay claimed they were not making peace, contrary to what the pre-written version of the treaty suggests), and repeatedly the commissioners claimed they were not negotiating for the land.

After reassuring those gathered at Fort Carlton that The Crown was not there to trade for the land, the text of Treaty Six reads:

The Plain and Wood Cree Tribes of Indians, and all other the Indians inhabiting the district hereinafter described and defined, *do hereby cede, release, surrender, and yield up* to the Government of the Dominion of Canada for Her Majesty the Queen and her successors forever, and *all their rights, titles and privileges whatsoever, to the lands* included within the following limits ...

The written version of Treaty Six names the boundaries of the 121,000 square mile tract of land that Plains Cree bands were to forever cede, release, surrender, and yield up:

Commencing at the mouth of the river emptying into the north-west angle of Cumberland Lake; thence westerly up the said river to its source; thence on a straight line in a westerly direction to the head of Green Lake; thence northerly to the elbow in the Beaver River; thence down the said river northerly to a point twenty miles from the said elbow; thence in a westerly direction, keeping on a line generally parallel with the said Beaver River (above the elbow), and about twenty miles distant therefrom, to the source of the said river; thence northerly to the north-easterly point of the south shore of Red Deer Lake, continuing westerly along the said shore to the western limit thereof; and thence due west to the Athabasca River; thence up the said river, against the stream, to the Jaspar House, in the Rocky Mountains; thence on a course south-easterly, following the easterly range of the mountains, to the source of the main branch of the Red Deer River; thence down the said river, with the stream, to the junction therewith of the outlet of the river, being the outlet of the Buffalo Lake; thence due east twenty miles; thence on a straight line south-eastwardly to the mouth of the said Red Deer River on the south branch of the Saskatchewan River; thence eastwardly and northwardly, following on the boundaries of the tracts conceded by the several treaties numbered four and five to the place of beginning.

Interestingly, in his recollection of treaty negotiations, the interpreter Peter Erasmus writes of the first meeting between the Chiefs and Morris: "The Governor advanced and shook hands with the chiefs, saying, 'I have come to meet you Cree chiefs to make a treaty with you for the surrender of your rights of the land to the government.'" ⁹² In the historical record, this is the only reference to land cession being discussed at the time of negotiations. Would Nêhiyawak have agreed to this surrender? Did they understand what Erasmus allegedly translated for them? In their book, Ray *et al*, suggest, "The documentary record

explains only imperfectly what First Nations believed they were giving up in exchange for government promises. Most likely, they envisioned the treaty as a pact through which they agreed to share the portions of their ancient territory that lay beyond the boundaries of reserves.”⁹³ However, historian Jill St. Germain’s research has revealed Morris’s true intent in the negotiations, citing an 1877 letter from Morris to Minister of the Interior David Mills. Morris wrote, explaining the famine relief clause of Treaty Six: “We were seeking to acquire their country, to make way for settlement, and thus deprive them of their hunting grounds and their means of livelihood.” According to St. Germain, “These remarks support the contention that Morris had deliberately underplayed the land issue as a negotiating strategy, for clearly he did consider assistance terms as a *quid pro quo* for land title.”⁹⁴ This would appear to be a case of discursive deceit on the part of the Crown negotiators, misleading and untruthful.

“We were seeking to acquire their country,” wrote Morris, contrary to his assurances to Nêhiyawak at the negotiations. Elder John Buffalo of the Ermineskin Reserve stated emphatically in 1975: “When they took the papers back to Ottawa, they made them so that the government could claim all of Canada. ... I myself think it was their own arrangement that the whole of Canada would belong to them.”⁹⁵ One is reminded of Columbus’s plan to endear himself to the Natives with the hopes of acquiring everything. Sacred Cree principles of *wîtaskêwin* and *wâhkôhtowin* would not allow for Nêhiyawak to “cede, release, surrender and yield up” the Creation to which they have sacred responsibilities. Sharon Venne asks: “[W]ho would give away so much? ... Be logical, does that make any sense? Yet, over and over the government officials say to us, ‘You gave up everything. You gave up the land, you gave up your law, and you gave up your government.’”⁹⁶ Cree leader

Poundmaker famously told the treaty commissioners: "This is our land! It isn't a piece of pemmican to be cut off and given in little pieces back to us. It is ours and we will take what we want."⁹⁷ Indeed, who would give up so much? Cree oral traditions present another picture of the spirit and intent of Treaty Six, one that echoes in certain respects what Morris himself prepared for publication, particularly in relation to the land question. It is crucial that we look to elders' knowledge as this is paramount in Cree thought. Roger Spielmann writes: "For most Aboriginal people, questions of tradition depend much more on the examples set by living people, most notably the elders, than on the content of written records. The truth about the traditional values and ways of life of Aboriginal people are to be found in what the elders do, think, and say today, rather than what has been written in books and academic articles by non-Native people."⁹⁸ Similarly, Walter Lightning writes: "One judgment about authenticity comes from knowing where the stories and teaching originate. The Elders deal with this question of authenticity in their own way; in most of the cultures the Elders are the authorities, and authenticity comes from how closely associated the stories and narratives are associated with elders."⁹⁹ Regarding Treaty Six, Elder Jim Kâ-Nîpitêhtêw tells us that while holding the pipestem "the one who had come representing the Queen" promised:

I will never pay you in full for your land, I will forever make continuous payments to you for it. No, I do not buy from you what is deep beneath this land, only one foot deep whence the White-Man makes his living, that is what I buy from you. Indeed, from here on, any monies drawn from beneath the ground, let people understand that this is one benefit which the Crees will continue to be paid from their homeland.¹⁰⁰

According to the Elders, Commissioner Morris continued: "I do not buy the water, nor the lakes, from you, nor the fish; only enough land (i.e., one foot deep) for the White-Man to make his living. ... I am also not buying the Rocky Mountains."¹⁰¹ In a 1974 interview,

Lazarus Roan of Smallboy's Camp recalled what he had learned from his father, Chabachian (Shortback), and two uncles, Wapusaup (Rabbit Eye) and Simacguness (Policeman), who themselves were at the treaty signing. Roan, then 70 years old, recalled the following in Cree as translated by Louis Rain and Richard Lightning:

This is the story they always related to us, the manner by which the chief was dealt with. He would indicate with his hands approximately one foot in depth: 'That is the depth that is requested from you, that is what the deal is, nothing below the surface, that will always belong to you. Only land where agriculture can be viable; other areas where nothing can grow, that will always belong to you. You will always be the owner of that land. ... That is why they were agreeable to treaty because the promises were so good.'¹⁰²

Roan continues: "The word bought was not used."¹⁰³ John Buffalo of Ermineskin Cree Nation corroborates this: "The commissioners were not to take the game animals, the timber, nor the big lakes – that was for the Indians' means of survival. Also anything underground would not be given up, only six inches, enough for the settlers to grow crops."¹⁰⁴ Fred Horse of Frog Lake recalled the treaty stories he had heard from his father: "The commissioner who came with the promises made it sound so good. They even made their promises in God's name (Manitou). He cheated Manitou, the white man did, and all the people to whom he made the promise."¹⁰⁵

"Humility is a primary characteristic of Cree narrative memory," writes Neal McLeod. McLeod alerts us to the humility exhibited by Cree elders, noting that they will often begin their narratives with *namôya mistahi ê-kiskêyih tamân* ('I do not know very much'). McLeod writes: "This simple phrase is important in understanding Cree narrative memory. People did not believe that they had power over the narrative, or owned it; rather, they believed that they were conduits, that there was a balance between the individual and tradition." According to linguist H.C. Wolfart, the expression of humility marks one of "the

classical traits of a formal Cree discourse [which] begins with the twin issues of authenticity and authority, tempered by deference. ... He declares his intention to report the text as faithfully as his limited powers permit.”¹⁰⁶ This humility is evidenced in elders’ stories, such as those delivered in 1989 at the Onion Lake Treaty Six Gathering. Jim Kâ-Nîpitêhtêw recalls: “I really don’t know much about the Treaty.”¹⁰⁷ According to McLeod, no individual understanding can ever be complete, as there could always be more interpretations.¹⁰⁸ Such a multiplicity of understandings should lend legitimacy, authority, and vitality to a text; it should not be seen as a way of discrediting Elders’ knowledge. This trait of Cree narrative also can account for small differences in detail when comparing Elders’ stories. Elders’ accounts repeatedly refer to the land being shared to the depth of a plough (or related measurement, such as an inch or a thumb’s length).¹⁰⁹ Elder J. B. Stanley (Frog Lake First Nation) recalled: “My grandfather was told by the Queen’s representative: That all he wanted was one thumb length of soil. ... The wild game was to remain ours for hunting, trapping, and also the fish were to remain ours.”¹¹⁰ Victor Metchatis of Cold Lake First Nations stated his ancestors assured him: “This land which was negotiated was only the top soil to a depth of one foot.”¹¹¹ Similarly, Elder Marcus Sparklingeyes (Goodfish Lake First Nation) stated that non-Indigenous Canadians “have no business hunting the moose, because it does not belong to them.”¹¹² Sparklingeyes continued: “The whiteman did not buy our lands. ... He asked our forefathers for the use of the land. ... We gave only the top soil to the whiteman for his use to survive on this land of ours.”¹¹³

Elder Michael Fineday (Witchehan Lake First Nation) described the treaty proceedings as such, in Cree translated to English for publication:

I think that the matter of surrender in the terms of land; as I understand the word surrender, after you sign an agreement, you part with something and there is nothing

left over. How can this be true? There was some great intelligence being used by the Indian People at the time of the Treaty-signing. We have, a hundred years after the signing of the Treaty, an argument about the terms of the treaty.

[...]

On the question of surrender: It was garbled in the writing of the Treaty. Now I do not think it makes very good sense for me to give you all my house and then for you to turn around and say: Okay, you can have two chairs, a box to use as a table, and a couple of blankets. I'm generous, I have given my house but I am not going to give you my land.

[...]

We would never surrender our lands.¹¹⁴

Fineday's speech offers a wise analysis of the issue of land surrender. He points to the incredible intelligence of Cree negotiators; how could it be that they would knowingly give up everything in return for a few leftovers? What I take from Fineday's story is that Nêhiyawak, in allowing non-Cree people to live in their territory – that is, in their house, to use Fineday's words – were not giving up everything in exchange for reserves or poverty. "I'm generous," he says, "I have given my house but I am not going to give you my land." Being allowed space to live, being allowed inside the house as it were, does not give us the right to take everything. No one would agree to that.

Toward a mutually acceptable record

The Cree, Dene, Assiniboine, and Saulteaux elders quoted by Cardinal and Hildebrandt also affirm that our understanding of the numbered treaties must take place within the "theoretical perspective dictated by the spiritual foundations and processes upon which the First Nations negotiated the treaties." Cardinal and Hildebrandt note that First Nations people had prophecies of the arrival of newcomers, and the elders assert that the "first and foremost objective in the treaty-making process was to have the new peoples arriving in

their territories recognize and affirms their continuing right to maintain, as peoples, the First Nations relationships with the Creator through the laws given to them by him.”¹¹⁵ The elders “explained that when promises, agreements, or vows are formally made to the Creator (*wiyôhtâwîmâw*) through ceremonies conducted in accordance with the laws governing them – the promises, agreements, or vows so made are irrevocable and inviolable.”¹¹⁶ Further, the authors write: “The Elders are emphatic in their belief that it is this very special and complete relationship with the Creator that is the source of the sovereignty that their peoples possess. It provided the framework for the political, social, educational, and cultural institutions and laws of their peoples that allowed them to survive as nations from the beginning of time to the present.”¹¹⁷ It would appear to me that The Crown/Canada’s disregard of this relationship between Nêhiyawak and Creator displays the utmost arrogance and certainly evidences a lack of the cultural sensitivity on which the multicultural state prides itself. Significantly, the Elders focused on the “nature and character of the treaty relationship” rather than on the contents of the written treaty text, emphasizing the importance of relationships and processes.¹¹⁸

According to Elder Bart Dzeylion (Hatchet Lake Denesuline Nation): “[T]he land, the wildlife, those are the things that were relevant to our people of the day. When our people were assured that those ways of life would not be altered or changed or that we would not be deterred from exercising those ways of life, then I know that from the information that I have, that our people agreed through that process. ... Our land, our way of life, would always be protected, would always be there.”¹¹⁹ Consistently throughout the texts that acknowledge Indigenous perspectives on the numbered treaties we see (1) the commitment of First Nations people to maintaining their political sovereignty (including

the rhetorical sovereignty to interpret the treaties according to their understandings) separate lifeways as they had before; and (2) their understanding that this is what was promised at the time of negotiations – which is indeed the case, as seen in Morris and McKay’s statements above. Drawing on Canadian Supreme Court cases and the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, Cardinal and Hildebrandt summarize Indigenous understandings of the numbered treaties: treaty First Nations “did not intend to consent to the blanket extinguishment of their Aboriginal rights and title by entering into the treaty relationship,” First Nations “intended to share the territory and jurisdiction over it, as opposed to ceding territory, even where the text of an historical treaty makes reference to a blanket extinguishment of land rights” and First Nations did not intend to give up their inherent right of self-governance and sovereignty by entering into a treaty relationship, in fact, “the act of treaty making is regarded as an affirmation rather than a denial of that right.”¹²⁰

The elders with whom Cardinal and Hildebrandt consulted continually affirmed that Indigenous treaty negotiators were concerned with maintaining their liberty, freedom, independence, and economic self-sufficiency.¹²¹ These elders assert that the aims of the treaty negotiations were: (1) to equitably share the land among treaty signatories, (2) *not* to completely transfer Indigenous lands to the Crown, (3) only land suitable for agriculture was to be shared by non-Indigenous signatories, (4) the rights to natural resources within their territories, either renewable or non-renewable, surface or sub-surface, were not to be owned by non-Indigenous people, (5) water resources on their territories were not to be relinquished, (6) Indigenous peoples did not agree to share wildlife, waterfowl, or fish with the Crown. Further, the initial treaty negotiations are and were seen as establishing a

framework for future land sharing agreements between Indigenous peoples and the Crown.¹²² Oral traditions are fairly consistent on these matters, and in order to pursue any sort of reconciliation or equitable and just co-existence in treaty territories in Western Canada, these principles must be understood and lived up to. Carter and Hildebrandt write, “For the Elders, what is at issue is not whether or not treaties exist, but whether a mutually acceptable record of them can now be agreed upon and implemented.”¹²³ Part of achieving this “mutually acceptable record” should involve examining the treaties according to Cree perspectives (which have for so long been ignored). In the next section, I attempt to perform an analysis, using Cree philosophies of rhetoric and conversation, to better understand the dialogue that occurred between representatives of the Crown and Nêhiyawak.

In this chapter, I have examined the Treaty Six negotiations as being integral to the treaty itself, and noted some key principles of the negotiations: their rootedness in Cree legal and spiritual protocols, the importance of hospitality and treaty as a ceremony of adoption, the treaty as an agreement to peacefully coexist and share the land. I have also discussed the differing interpretations stemming from the oral/written understandings of the treaty, mistranslation and discursive deceit, and the delicate issue of land cession. I have attempted to humbly incorporate the written record of the negotiations, published Elder’s accounts, and contemporary scholarship in order to arrive at something more like a “mutually acceptable record” of Treaty Six. The next chapter will expand on these ideas by performing a rhetorical analysis of key aspects of the negotiations, doing so using an explicitly Nêhiyaw rhetorical theory.

Chapter Six

“How dangerous it is to breach sacred undertakings”: Treaty Nationhood and the Nêhiyaw Rhetorical Tradition

In May 2008, the Beaver Lake Cree Nation issued a declaration: Nisitohtamohiwêwin ohci Kêuskêno. The document, written in Cree and English, is printed over a map of what is now known as north-central Alberta and Saskatchewan. The territory that is highlighted on the map goes beyond Beaver Lake Reserve number 131, encompassing some of the original jurisdiction of Cree bands in this area. The Kêuskêno Declaration reads:

Let it be known that we, the Beaver Lake Cree Nation, are the keepers of the lands shown on the map attached, which form part of our traditional territory. ...

Our responsibility to this land, our ancestors and our future generations cannot be surrendered or abandoned. We have an obligation to ensure that the lands, waters, and resources in our traditional territory are used sustainably and responsibly. As such, we declare that no activities are to occur here that will destroy these lands, habitats and waters or their animals, fish, plants and medicine, such that we can no longer sustain ourselves through our traditional way of life.

We cannot allow any activities that would make our traditional rights, which have been partly recognized by treaty and constitutional documents, meaningless. We require deep consultation and accommodation where an activity has the potential to impact our rights.

We, the keepers of this land, will share it with those who respect our obligations and our traditional, constitutional and treaty rights.¹

The declaration is signed by the Indian Act chief and councillors of the Band, “in honour of our ancestors and on behalf of our future generations.” The Band issued the declaration as part of a lawsuit against the governments of Alberta and Canada, claiming 15,000 infringements on the Band’s treaty and constitutional rights, mostly related to oil and gas “development” in the area, activities that have damaged traditional territories and the Band’s ability to maintain their distinct lifeways.

The Kêtuskenô Declaration is an assertion of Indigenous political sovereignty, what Scott Richard Lyons (Leech Lake Ojibwe/Dakota) defines, in part, as “a people’s right to rebuild, its demand to exist and present its gifts to the world.” A key aspect of what Lyons calls “rhetorical sovereignty” is the “adamant refusal to disassociate culture, identity, and power from the *land*, and it is precisely this commitment to place that makes the concept of rhetorical sovereignty an empowering device for all forms of community.”² Lyons writes: “Rhetorical sovereignty is the inherent right and ability of *peoples* to determine their own communicative needs and desires in this pursuit [of self-determination], to decide for themselves the goals, modes, styles, and languages of public discourse.”³ The Kêtuskenô Declaration is written in Cree and English, it asserts Indigenous responsibilities and obligations to the ancestors and traditional territory beyond the reserve, and, importantly, it demands “consultation and accommodation” – it does not *ask* for these things. “The first part of self-determination is the *self*,” asserts Taiaiake Alfred (Kanien’kehá:ka from Kahnawake):

In our minds and in our souls, we need to reject the settlers’ control and authority, their definition of who we are and what our rights are, their definition of what is worthwhile and how one should live. ... We need to rebel against what we’ve become and start remembering and acting on who our ancestors were, what they were like, and the things they believed in. This is the spiritual revolution that will ensure our survival.⁴

Though the Declaration makes reference to rights recognized and guaranteed by Canada’s Constitution, the Band is clearly asserting its inherent rights outside the framework of imposed settler law. However, the Band offers to share with those who will respect and honour the land and the sovereignty of its original peoples – a reassertion of the hospitality agreed upon in Treaty Six.

To take Cree rhetorical sovereignty seriously, we must attempt to understand the treaty relationship from Cree points of view, particularly noting that those Cree leaders who negotiated and signed Treaty Six, who were speakers of Cree and not English, were inhabitants of a Cree world and participants in a Cree rhetorical situation (as we saw in the previous chapter, the treaty negotiations were surely understood to be taking place within traditional Cree legal and socio-political contexts). For Lyons, Indigenous rhetorical sovereignty is affirmed by the treaties signed between the United States and Indigenous nations; he points to the U.S. treaty era (the years 1778-1868) when the U.S. signed and ratified 367 treaties with Indigenous nations, “which presumed a sense of sovereignty on the part of Indian groups.”⁵ As we saw in Chapter One, Lyons asserts that Indigenous nations became modern nations with the negotiation and signing of treaties. I subtitled the previous chapter “the negation of Plains Cree nationhood,” because in many ways, especially the land cession clause of the written treaty, Cree nationhood was disrespected and dismantled through discursive deceit that attempted to limit Cree sovereignty for future generations. In this chapter, taking a closer look at the rhetorical situation from a Plains Cree point of view, I would like to examine ways that Nêhiyawak attempted to negotiate their nationhood and assert themselves as part of a modern, autonomous Plains Cree nation.

The Rhetorical Situation of Treaty Six Negotiations

“I believe we can understand each other,” Alexander Morris said to Nêhiyawak gathered at Fort Carlton on the first day of treaty negotiations in 1876. “If not, it will be the first occasion on which the Indians have not done so.”⁶ From Morris’s perspective, it would then seem the onus for understanding fell on Nêhiyawak. We must seriously ask if

understanding was even possible – and did Morris comprehend the rhetorical situation in which he found himself? Would it really be possible to translate British treaty concepts into Nêhiyawêwin (translator bias notwithstanding)? Neal McLeod (James Smith Cree First Nation) asserts that in order for Nêhiyawak and settlers to peacefully coexist, “the Cree understanding of the treaty process must be taken into account. It is impossible to have genuine respect for people, and for different ways of seeing the world, without taking important cultural differences into account.”⁷ One way of including Cree understandings of the treaty process is to perform a rhetorical analysis of the treaty negotiations, one that is grounded in Cree philosophies. In her 1991 article, “Thirty-nine Postulates of Plains Cree Conversation,” anthropologist Regna Darnell elaborates “what the Cree take as the premises of the social space in which ‘we’ [non-Native people] expect to find conversation. According to Darnell, talk is not a focus of attention in this implicit system; it is an occasional and in many contexts not highly valued side-effect of more general values about the nature of human persons (or even more accurately, living beings) when they come into contact.”⁸ It would seem there is as much to be found in what was not said during negotiations, and we should try and understand why these things were not said. “The postulates are normative, reflecting the way people ought to behave, ideally.” Further, Darnell notes these postulates “are closely related to behaviour and the wish to look well in the eyes of others.”⁹

Darnell asserts that in a Cree rhetorical situation, “a direct question is disrespectful. To ask a question is inherently to impose upon another. ... Grammatically, the imposition of an obligation to respond is often phrased in terms of an open-ended construction beginning with ‘I wonder about ...’”¹⁰ Darnell continues:

An open-ended question often fails to receive a reply. A direct question often receives a trivial or inaccurate reply, which is not rude because the question was rude in the first place. Response may be made on a future occasion with no sense of disjuncture or transition. (The implication is that conversations or interactions are not bounded by particular events or occasions.) People assume that it takes time to decide how to respond to a serious question, that it may not be answerable at a given moment ..."¹¹

Roger Spielmann similarly observes in an Anishinaabe context: "People who asked direct questions were often seen as being very rude in the community where we lived [Pikogan], especially when non-Natives asked questions which suggested doing things the way a non-Native would." He maintains that Anishinaabe responses to direct questions in Pikogan would often be some form of 'I don't know,' which can be simply a profession of ignorance, but is also used to deflect the question or to say, 'It's none of your business.'¹² The Crown's method of negotiation might then be seen as an impolite and imposing series of direct questions that pressured Nêhiyawak to respond in an unnecessarily hurried fashion. What, then, should we make of Cree responses to these direct questions?

The following sections examine the Treaty Six negotiations using some of the most pertinent aspects of Cree rhetoric defined by Darnell: the importance of individual and band autonomy (with a discussion of Nêhiyaw political legitimacy and authority); protocols around disagreement and closing negotiations; and protocols of respectful deliberation and direct questioning.

Individual autonomy

In Cree philosophy, the autonomy of the individual is of great importance:

The personal autonomy of living beings precludes attempts to interfere with or control their behaviour or opinions. Each individual's integration of his or her personal experience is unique and should not be interfered with. Controlling someone's opinion or participation in a conversation or interaction is an imposition on that person's autonomy. It is disrespectful to all living beings and the harmony of

the world as well as to the individual person ... Each individual has the right to his or her opinion and should not be contradicted directly. ... It is better to agree non-committedly and continue talking until the desired answer emerges naturally from further consideration. It is also polite to answer the question that should have been asked if the questioner had good manners.¹³

Thus it would be unacceptable to influence or coerce another individual's opinion, and Darnell goes so far as to suggest such an action would cause an imbalance in the harmony of the world (which it most certainly has considering the consequences of the numbered treaties). According to Spielmann, respect for personal autonomy "helps to promote positive interpersonal relationships in a small community or extended family setting." At Pikogan, for example, Spielmann observed this principle with regard to invitations: "Very rarely would someone try to solicit a definite commitment from somebody ... Rarely, if ever, would you see someone create a tense moment or disrupt the harmony of a relationship by trying to force someone to make a commitment."¹⁴ Therefore, respecting individual autonomy is about maintaining harmony within the community. Also, individuals should not be contradicted directly, and it is important to note Darnell's suggestion that non-committal agreement is preferable to contradiction. Perhaps this explains, in part, the willingness of Nêhiyawak to agree with the treaty terms. Also of importance is the notion that a person would politely respond to *the question that should have been asked* – again, to what extent were Cree leaders responding to the questions they presumed should have been asked (or thought were being asked but were mistranslated)? These rhetorical protocols which exist outside of speech cannot be determined for sure, but should remain in our minds as we attempt to understand what was happening from Cree perspectives. Darnell continues: "Interaction cannot be satisfying or meaningful if it does not acknowledge that all persons are different ... The notion that everybody should be

equal is extremely uncomfortable.”¹⁵ The Cree rhetorical tradition would value personal opinion and autonomy, would discourage direct contradiction and interference, and would ideally seek agreement that might arrive through conversation. The respected autonomy of individuals and bands would thus make any notion of factionalism relatively unimportant; a multitude of perspectives and opinions would be typical and welcomed.

The commissioners aimed to manipulate what they saw as the different ‘factions’ among Nêhiyawak, as Talbot suggests: “Morris’s strategy was to deal firmly with those who opposed the treaty, and accommodate as far as possible the more moderate elements of First Nations leadership.”¹⁶ According to Hugh Dempsey, “the pressures both for and against a treaty were present within the camps.”¹⁷ Throughout the negotiations, we see individuals express a hesitation to speak for everyone, exemplifying the importance of individual autonomy. On the second day at Fort Carlton, after the leading chiefs had been presented to the commissioners, a messenger from Beardy’s band, who were camped at Duck Lake, arrived and shook hands with the governor, before stating: “I am at a loss at this time what to say, for the Indians’ mind cannot be all the same.”¹⁸ On the fourth day, “Joseph Thoma, speaking for The Red Pheasant, chief of the Battle River Indians,” stated: “This is not my own desire that I speak now, it is very hard we cannot all be of one mind. You know some were not present when the list of articles mentioned was made.”¹⁹ Morris responded to Thoma: “What I have offered was thought of long before I saw you; it has been accepted by others more in number than you are. I am glad that so many are of our mind. I am surprised you are not all.”²⁰ However, Dempsey maintains that individuals such as Poundmaker, Badger, and Thoma “together represented a goodly number of people in the camp,” indicating they were not a rogue minority.²¹ Morris’s subtle persuasion once again

ignores personal autonomy among band members and it implies that all “Indians” are or should be alike in their needs and requests. Morris also attempts to pressure those who disagree by stating, “As for the little band who are not of one mind with the great body, I am quite sure that a week will not pass on leaving this before they will regret it.”²² It would appear that the treaty was a one time, take it or leave it offer. Further, Morris contradicts the fact that treaty is an act of negotiation when he stated: “I want the Indians to understand that all that has been offered is a gift.”²³ Ray, Miller, and Tough assert that the Crown’s treaty obligations may have symbolically resembled the diplomatic gifts of the fur trade.²⁴ However, from a western perspective, are not gifts and negotiated agreements entirely different matters, the former being benevolently given, the latter being discussed and deliberated? Perhaps the implication here is that the Crown is the provider of “bounty and benevolence” while Nêhiyawak are now as a consequence indebted.

These examples raise other questions about the ability of a few chiefs to speak for the group. Morris’s secretary counted over two thousand people assembled at Fort Carlton, or 250 lodges.²⁵ Scholar Matthew Wildcat (Ermineskin Cree Nation) describes pre-reserve political legitimacy among Nêhiyawak:

Legitimacy describes the ideas of respect, or the admiration that people may have for one another. Closely related to respect is that legitimacy was based on a person’s ability to hold oneself up to the highest standards of ethical and just behaviour, and make decisions in a prudent and conscientious manner. Next, the ideas of influence and persuasion, which is the ability to convince someone of your position, or in the event of not fully convincing them, to bring them on board with an idea to the extent that they can repress or let go of their desire to dissent. Also associated with the idea of legitimacy is the idea of an established record of excellence, whether it be through war exploits, hunting, medicine, spirituality, or the force of ones [*sic*] character and charisma. As some have put it, an all around air of prestige. This also involves accruing wealth in order to help out the poor and destitute, resolve conflicts through the distribution of goods, and share with the multitude of visitors who sought out the advice and help of leaders. Finally, a person having legitimacy implies that one is

considered to be fair or open handed in dealing with others, have compassion, be a generous and sharing person, and has the ability to resolve conflicts.²⁶

It is important, then, to note that legitimacy derived from community respect, highly ethical conduct, and the ability to rhetorically influence band members (the factors affecting how *okimawak* were selected before the reserve era is discussed in Chapter Two).

According to Wildcat: "In Nêhiyaw society, people who held authority could only do so because they had legitimacy."²⁷ The leading chiefs at Fort Carlton and Fort Pitt possessed both legitimacy and authority among their people; however, the treaty commissioners only possessed authority, and did so because of their titles and positions. Perhaps from a Cree perspective the commissioners must have had (or *should have had*) legitimacy in their own systems, otherwise, why were they sent to negotiate on behalf of the Crown? Despite possessing legitimacy, however, the leading chiefs could not have spoken for those who were not present, due to Cree beliefs in autonomy (of both individuals and bands). Wildcat writes: "[M]any Plains Cree people were not represented at the negotiation. Plains Cree political authority was not consolidated into a single entity. Rather, bands were the primary political unit of Plains political life. As such, the bands who did sign the treaty had no authority to speak on behalf of other Plains Cree people who were not present."²⁸ Big Bear exemplified this principle when he arrived at Fort Pitt after the treaty adherence, stating: "I find it difficult to express myself, because some of the bands are not represented. I have come off to speak for the different bands that are out on the plains. It is no small matter we were to consult about. I expected the Chiefs here would have waited until I arrived. The different bands that are out on the plains told me that I should speak in their stead; the Stoney Indians as well. The people who have not come, stand as a barrier before what I would have had to say."²⁹ Big Bear acknowledges that the

unusual responsibility to speak for others constrained his ability to say what he himself had intended. “While he had a mandate to speak for the bands still out hunting, he did not think he had authority to accept the treaty for them and his own followers.”³⁰ Big Bear was also clearly disappointed that Sweetgrass did not wait for him to arrive before adhering to the treaty. According to Neal McLeod: “*mistahi-maskwa* must have been profoundly disappointed in *wîhkasko-kisêyin* ... because the latter signed the treaty before waiting for him to come and speak. ... From the outset, leaders who were struggling to preserve the old Cree way of life” – such as Big Bear and those individuals who were hunting while the treaty negotiations were taking place – “were marginalized and excluded from the process.”³¹ According to Dempsey’s reading of the evidence and negotiations, based on the decision of the Carlton chiefs, “before the sessions even started, [Sweet Grass] made up his mind.” Thus, “the sessions themselves were almost a formality.”³² It is not clear how an enduring and just relationship might be built on an agreement that was hastily explained and negotiated, allowing future bands to simply adhere to it.

As an illustration of the difference between authority and legitimacy, the leading chiefs exercised their ability to persuade, which was related to their political legitimacy, to influence the others in attendance (this is well illustrated, as we will see below, in the council they held at Fort Carlton on August 21). Wildcat cites the example of Sweetgrass and the other leaders who adhered to the treaty after the negotiations finished at Fort Carlton: “While the Chiefs at Fort Pitt were under no obligation to follow the lead of Atahkakoop and Mistawasis, this event shows how Chiefs of prestige and legitimacy could influence people across band lines.”³³ However, from a Crown perspective, after the negotiations at Fort Carlton, the only option available to other chiefs was to adhere to the

Fort Carlton treaty – they were not able to negotiate or alter the treaty itself. This should be seen as a major weakness of Treaty Six from a Cree political philosophical standpoint. Morris writes of the Fort Pitt gathering: “I told them what we had done at Carlton, and offered them the same terms, which I would explain fully *if they wished it*.”³⁴ It would seem that in his haste to finish negotiations, a full explanation of the treaty terms was a requirement only if Nêhiyawak demanded it, not as the right thing to do from a nation-to-nation legal or ethical position. That bands across the Plains held out adhering to the numbered treaties illustrates a wish for both rhetorical and political autonomy. M. G. Dickieson, a clerk in the Indian department, recalled the resistance shown by Yellow Sky, the Anishinaabe leader of a mixed band: “After some little time their spokesman rose and said they desired to be independent, that they did not wish to take anything from the Government, or to come under the law. He said I was not to think it was because they were unfriendly to the Government or to the white man that they do not join with the other Indians but *they wished to remain as they were*.”³⁵ Dempsey notes that Big Bear, too, recognized his followers’ individual autonomy and “would not act without their consensus.”³⁶

The treaty commissioners consistently created factions and divisions among the bands with whom they were negotiating. This fact contradicts the treaty relationship as it infringes on the rights of Nêhiyawak to determine their own citizenship. Evidence suggests that Plains bands were indeed made up of citizens from diverse ethnic backgrounds: Cree, Ojibwe, Assiniboine, Métis, and others (see Chapter Two). As the negotiations at Fort Carlton concluded, Mistawasis inquired about “some Half-breeds who wish to live on the reserves.” Morris responded that the Crown had acted benevolently to the Métis at Red

River, and asserted: “[W]e did not come as messengers to the Half-breeds, but to the Indians. ... The Half-breeds of the North-West cannot come into the Treaty. The small class of Half-breeds who live as Indians and with the Indians, can be regarded as Indians by the Commissioners, who will judge of each case on its own merits as it comes up.”³⁷ (As we will see in the next chapter, the ability to appropriately “judge” each “case” proved problematic for the Canadian government and Indigenous peoples.) As another example, McLeod writes: “Morris did not understand the complexity of the ethnicity of the Plains Indians at the time of treaty signing, particularly the relationship between the *nêhiyawak* and Saulteaux, describing them as disjoined groups.”³⁸ Morris had the audacity to proclaim to a band of Anishinaabek (Saulteaux) who approached him after the negotiations at Fort Pitt: “You could no more stop me than you could the river itself.”³⁹ (It would appear Morris had a Trudeau-esque ‘Just watch me’ attitude.)

Dempsey notes the influence of *Nêhiyawak* who were Christian at the negotiations, quoting missionary John McKay: “It was very gratifying to notice that the influence of the Christian Indians, although a small minority with regard to numbers, seemed to preponderate in the deliberations of the whole body.”⁴⁰ Big Bear’s granddaughter recalled that the leading chiefs could not have spoken for all *Nêhiyawak*, and that Sweet Grass was punished for his disregard for band members’ individual autonomy: “Chief Sweet Grass signed the Treaty and was given a beautiful gun. Upon his return, Chief Sweet Grass was killed by his brother-in-law. ... It must be further explained that the Prairie Indians were not consulted before this Treaty was signed. Therefore, it is obvious that our people resented being sold out of land which rightfully belonged to us all.”⁴¹ Alexander Morris feared that with the death of Sweet Grass, a Christian, the government had lost his

important influence over other bands, which would “render the task of obtaining the adhesion of the Plains Crees who were not present at Fort Pitt, much more difficult than it otherwise would have been.”⁴² In a 1975 interview, Richard Lightning asked John Buffalo about the influence of missionaries at the treaty negotiations. Buffalo responded: “They encouraged them in the wrong direction; what they did was harmful to us. They did not help us to any great extent. ... They were amongst the Indians teaching them prayers and other things, and thus they managed to discourage the people. That is how the elders told the story.”⁴³ Neal McLeod quotes Alex Stick, whose father was present at the Fort Pitt negotiation/adhesion: “[Sweetgrass] did the business on the sly, he didn’t notify any of the old people ... The old people had a lot to say there, but it was too late as Sweetgrass had already given his commitment.”⁴⁴ As we will see below, Sweetgrass relied on missionary John McDougall to advise Nêhiyawak on what course of action they should take. Noting that the bands around Fort Pitt were still “entirely buffalo-hunting Indians” (while those at Fort Carlton were apparently more amenable to starting to farm right away), Dempsey speculates, “Had the commissioners gone to Fort Pitt first, the negotiations might have taken a different turn.”⁴⁵ Thus, the commissioners’ disrespectful treatment of Nêhiyawak – using rhetorical coercion, silencing critical voices, refusing (or being unable) to negotiate – should raise questions about the validity of Treaty Six. I do not want to suggest the treaty be considered void; however, the negotiation record indicates the commissioners were unscrupulous and missionaries exerted unnecessary influence. Further, it would have been extremely rude for Nêhiyawak to directly contradict the commissioners or leading chiefs in public. But a consensual relationship must be based on more than a ‘no means no’ dynamic. Consent must be clear and not coerced.

Disagreement and closure

Cree protocols of respect and beliefs about the open-endedness of discussions would certainly make European-style negotiation strategies difficult, if not impossible, to reconcile. Darnell writes:

Because it is so important not to offend other persons by disrespect, it is good to avoid confrontation – where it seems likely – by substituting non-verbal responses. The individual who is unhappy need not say something that he or she will regret, and the relationship can be repaired when consensus is ideally reached ... Talk under conflictual circumstances is dangerous because it cannot be changed or negotiated once a commitment is made.⁴⁶

In his study of Anishinaabe discourse, Roger Spielmann makes a similar observation:

“[P]ersonal confrontations are avoided whenever possible. Maintaining harmony in one’s relationships is the important thing. Among adults especially, anyone who tries to control or coerce another person to act in a certain way is viewed as doing something intrinsically bad.”⁴⁷ Avoiding confrontation is thus tied to the principle of non-coercion and respecting individual autonomy. So we may speculate that Cree individuals might not have publicly objected to or disagreed with members of the treaty commission or with the respected Cree leaders who negotiated on behalf of all Nêhiyawak. One reason for this, aside from respect, would be the belief that because consensus was presumed to be the end goal, potentially impolite and regretful objections would be unnecessary. Further, there is a Cree belief that negotiations are never – or never should be – closed and concluded such that they may not be amended or continued. In his examination of Elder Louis Sunchild’s text, Walter Lightning discusses the impossibility of analytical closure: “I could not write a summary called a ‘conclusion’ without violating the principles of interpretation of text for the culture in which it was written, because the interpretation is never concluded.”⁴⁸ Thus

we see a pattern in Cree rhetoric more generally: closure is not possible, or desired, as it would violate the potential for a multiplicity of interpretations, and makes future discussion and agreement impossible. According to Darnell:

Closure means that further negotiation of conflict and elaboration of consensus cannot take place. Politeness requires leaving all discussion open-ended so that its thread can always be picked up on a later occasion. ... Whites often summarize what has been agreed upon in a discussion, without realizing that the closed summary makes it impossible to continue discussion later.⁴⁹

Morris clearly believed that treaty negotiations could be closed (indeed, closure is the basis of western negotiating). On the second day of negotiations at Fort Carlton, he told Nêhiyawak: "When the treaty is closed, if it be closed, we will make a present to every man, woman and child."⁵⁰ His statement, "if it be closed," refers to if the treaty were to be signed, not if (rhetorically speaking) a negotiation could ever really be concluded according to Cree understandings. Talbot writes: "Following the practice of the time, most of the [treaty] text was prepared before the negotiations actually took place."⁵¹ The fact that the treaty was mostly pre-written and thus constraints were placed on the Crown's negotiators also impeded any ability for those present to reach anything like an ideal consensus. Erasmus recalls that Morris stated, "I cannot go any further in regard to the terms I explained yesterday."⁵² After some disapproval from Poundmaker and his supporters, Erasmus recalled: "The Commissioner was visibly shaken by this demonstration that erupted at the beginning. His assumption had been that the Indians had completely adopted his treaty terms, which by his own words he was not authorized to change in any form. I thought to myself, 'A boxer sent into the ring with his hands tied.'"⁵³ Even Erasmus realized that Morris had very little power to accommodate the treaty terms proposed by Nêhiyawak.

James McKay, who addressed Nêhiyawak in Cree, indirectly acknowledged this aspect of Cree rhetoric: “Now my reasons for explaining to you are based on my past experience of treaties, for no sooner will the Governor and Commissioners turn their backs on you than some of you will say this thing and that thing was promised and the promise not fulfilled ...”⁵⁴ McKay might provide evidence here for broken promises on the part of the Crown in previous treaties, as apparently other Indigenous peoples were protesting the Crown not living up to their treaty obligations. However, he is indirectly alluding to the fact that from an Indigenous legal-rhetorical standpoint, negotiations should ideally remain open. On the fourth day of negotiations, after the Cree chiefs made some additional requests, Morris replied: “I am ready now to answer you, but understand well, it is not to be talked backwards and forwards. I am not going to act like a man bargaining for a horse for you. I have considered what you have asked for, and my answer will be a final one.”⁵⁵ Undoubtedly, Morris realized he was limited as a negotiator, seeing as he was expected to convince Nêhiyawak to agree to the pre-written treaty.⁵⁶ However, his eagerness to close negotiations illustrates bad hospitality from a Cree point of view, and he fails to recognize that such summary and closure would not have been desirable from a Cree rhetorical or legal position. Also, Cree rhetorical practice suggests that the repetition of old information is desirable and respectful in discourse: Darnell writes:

Old information is preferred over and subordinated to new. If new information is to be conveyed, politeness requires that it be couched in terms of what is already known among the persons interacting. Conversations between traditional adults thus often sound quite trivial because they are confirming the information they share and the bond this creates between them.”⁵⁷

What was for Morris talking “backwards and forwards” may have been interpreted as polite affirmation of what has been said and further creating a treaty relationship and

bond. Regardless, after acknowledging what of the Cree requests he was able to grant, Morris stated: "It now rests with you, my friends, and I ask you without hesitation to take what I have offered you."⁵⁸

Respectful deliberation

"After someone has spoken ... that speaking becomes a text open to exegesis. ... Such exegetic commentary [including disagreement] is not considered appropriate at the group level or in the presence of the respected speaker."⁵⁹ This aspect of Cree rhetoric is related to the importance of open-endedness in negotiations. According to Darnell, a spoken text should be deliberated and this should be done in private. We see numerous examples of this during the treaty negotiations. On the first day at Fort Carlton, when asked to present their Chiefs to the commissioners, "the Indians requested adjournment until the next day in order that they might meet in council."⁶⁰ Erasmus noted that on this evening, "The Indians had retired to their teepees or were sitting in groups discussing the treaty terms."⁶¹ Likewise, on Saturday, the second day, and after Morris had outlined his treaty promises, Mistawasis replied: "We have heard all he has told us, but I want to tell him now how it is with us as well; when a thing is thought of quietly, probably that is the best way. I ask this much from him this day that we go and think of his words."⁶² Sunday and Monday were spent in quiet deliberation to allow individuals to confer with each other. Erasmus recalled, "The Indians did not hold a council on Sunday. The main chiefs said it was better to let the people have time to talk things over among themselves before calling a meeting."⁶³ This council, described below, adjourned with Mitawasis saying: "It is good that my brothers go back to their teepees and study these matters with care. We will not be hasty. You will have a chance to ask questions on things you want cleared up."⁶⁴ At Fort Pitt, John McDougall

noted that Chief Sweetgrass requested time to deliberate in private: “[Sweetgrass] said also that he and his fellow chiefs and head men having listened would now, with the consent of these great men representing the government, retire to their council lodge. He hoped that on the third day from that time that they would be ready to come before the great men with their answer.”⁶⁵ Wildcat notes that in such rhetorical situations, “Everyone was welcome to speak, and it was likely that people spoke in order of legitimacy and prestige.”⁶⁶ That Cree leaders sought time for quiet deliberation also highlights the importance of personal autonomy.

According to Spielmann, there is a different set of what he calls culturally-based “timing expectations” at play in Anishinaabe interactions. He notes that in public interactions Anishinaabek often will not respond to questions or speak right away, but will most often (in a way that is different from non-Native communication styles) take time to think and deliberate before responding.⁶⁷ On the third day at Fort Carlton, after some public deliberation, the chiefs requested the afternoon “to hold further council”:

To this, the Governor said, ‘I grant the request of the Indians but I give them a word of warning, do not listen to every voice in your camp, listen to your wise men who know something of life, and do not come asking what is unreasonable, it pains me to have to say no, and I tell you again I cannot treat you with more favour than the other Indians. Tomorrow, when we meet, speak out your minds openly, and I will answer holding nothing back. Be ready to meet me tomorrow, as soon as my flag is raised, for remember I have a long journey before me and we ought to come to a speedy understanding.’⁶⁸

There is much Morris’s response that negates Cree hospitality (indeed, he must have appeared so rude) and directly contradict Cree protocols: (1) his warning not to listen to “every voice in your camp,” ignores the individual autonomy that would have been so highly valued, (2) this warning, along with his reference to other Indians would have implied that every one is or should be the same, (3) his insistence that an agreement be

speedily made completely contradicts Cree negotiation strategies that would have valued deliberation, exegesis, consensus, and that negotiations never be closed.

Further, Morris's desire for "a speedy understanding" is surprising as the commissioners arrived nine days early at Fort Pitt, so they clearly had more time to negotiate at Fort Carlton. Crown representatives arrived at Fort Pitt on September 5, and Morris noted that, "[Nêhiyawak] expressed good feeling," – a polite response considering Morris's bad hospitality – "and said they would like to have waited until the 15th, the day named for my arrival there."⁶⁹ After the bands adhered to the treaty at Fort Pitt, Morris acknowledged: "I knew that some of the chiefs were absent."⁷⁰ Repeatedly Morris ignored the right of Nêhiyawak to deliberate and determine their own futures, as well as the importance of individual autonomy to Cree people (Morris clearly knew that important leaders were absent). Likewise, earlier at Fort Carlton, he wrote that the treaty was signed "though many Indians were absent."⁷¹ On one hand, Morris wrote that the commissioners gave Nêhiyawak "all the time they desired" to negotiate and discuss prior to signing the treaty.⁷² However, the commissioners repeatedly hurried the negotiations. On the third day, when the Crees asked for an adjournment, Morris writes: "The Commissioners granted this, but I warned them not to be unreasonable, and to be ready next day with their decision."⁷³

I do not want to imply that Crown representatives and Cree negotiators could not have arrived at some agreement or had irreconcilably different rhetorical practices that could not be bridged. Perhaps at some point these were indeed reconciled, and Morris was such an experienced negotiator that he might have known some of these Cree rhetorical protocols. However, these protocols were seriously disrespected, and I argue that Cree

rhetorical protocols may not have allowed for counter-negotiating that might have been recognizable to Crown negotiators. Considering these examples from the site of negotiations, I wonder how we might live a treaty relationship in the present that is just and fair. In any case, the documentary record suggests that Nêhiyawak did indeed deliberate on the terms presented and the leading chiefs decided to sign. Apparently, they placed their x-marks and agreed to a different way of life.

Assenting to the new?

“[T]he Cree were both flexible and active in promoting their own interests, and *willing to accommodate themselves to a new way of life.*”

John L. Tobias, “Canada’s Subjugation of the Plains Cree”⁷⁴

“Whether the treaty was actually misunderstood or deliberately misconstrued, I know not ...”

Peter Erasmus, *Buffalo Days and Nights*⁷⁵

In his analysis of treaty negotiations in his book *X Marks*, Scott Richard Lyons writes: “An x-mark is a treaty signature. ... Many an Indian’s signature was recorded by the phrase ‘his x-mark,’ and what that x-mark meant was consent.” Lyons continues: “An x-mark also signified coercion. As everyone knows, treaties were made under conditions that were generally unfavourable to Indians, and as a result they were often accompanied by protest. ... At treaty councils individuals retained a right to withhold their x-marks, and many did. But most did not. Most made their x-marks.”⁷⁶ Lyons comments on the agency of Indigenous people during the treaty era:

An x-mark is a sign of consent in a context of coercion; it is the agreement one makes when there seems to be little choice in the matter. To the extent that little choice isn’t the quite [*sic*] same thing as no choice, it signified Indian agency. To the extent that little choice isn’t exactly what is meant by the word *liberty*, it signifies the political realities of the treaty era (and perhaps the realities of our own complicated age as well).⁷⁷

The x-mark is a “coerced sign of consent made under conditions that are not of one’s making. It signifies power and a lack of power, agency and a lack of agency. It is a decision one makes when something has already been decided for you, but it is still a decision.” Lyons suggests, “it is always possible ... that an x-mark could result in something good. Why else, we must ask, would someone bother to make it? I use the x-mark to symbolize Native assent to things (concepts, policies, technologies, ideas) ...”⁷⁸ So in the x-mark, we might see a sign of hope, an agreement to face the future together. Regarding Cree motivations for signing Treaty Six, historians Ray, Miller, and Tough write: “Taking treaty – accepting the Queen’s hand – meant establishing a relationship with the powerful people who were inexorably invading their lands, a relationship that would bring them protection and assistance during a transitional period that was expected to be very difficult.” They assert, “Cree negotiators hoped to link their people’s future with their past by means of a treaty relationship with the Crown.”⁷⁹ This interpretation firmly correlates with Lyons’s theories of the x-mark. However, it is important not to overstate the legitimacy of the x-marks made on Treaty Six. McLeod quotes Julian Moses speaking at a 1975 gathering in preparation for the centennial commemoration of Treaty Six: “When reading about the various treaties, all we see from the Indians are X’s which may or may not belong to the same person, or even to Indians. Possibly the Indian people who were present at the signings had never held a pen before and did not know how to use one. We have never seen proof that the Indians did sign Treaties.” McLeod himself is also suspicious of the authenticity of the treaty’s x-marks: “Moses was correct in that only two headmen signed the treaty with their own hand: one signed in syllabics; the other, my grandfather Bernard Constant, signed using the English alphabet; others simply touched the pen of the clerk, who then made X’s on their behalf.”⁸⁰

We might speculate what it means when one says, 'yes' in a Cree context. Darnell writes: "'*Ehe*,' yes', is a conventional acknowledgement of hearing the words of a speaker. It is inserted frequently at pause junctures in narrative. It does not commit the listener to agreement, simply to attentiveness."⁸¹ Consent implies something more assertive than simply, no means no. Yes has to mean yes; but what if 'yes' signals attentiveness and openness to future negotiations, and not a commitment to agreement? On the fourth day of negotiations at Fort Carlton, Ahtakakoop spoke: "Now I ask my people, those that are in favour of the offer, to say so." The commissioners report noted, "They all assented by holding up their hands and shouting." However, Poundmaker had reservations: "I do not differ from my people, but I want more explanation."⁸² Perhaps Nêhiyawak shouted agreement because it would have been rude to disagree in public, or perhaps it signified they were listening and open to further negotiating – as Poundmaker's statement indicates. On the same day, when Joseph Toma requested more assistance on behalf of Red Pheasant's band, Morris writes: "I asked the Red Pheasant how ... when I asked if that was their unanimous voice he had assented, and yet now put forward new and large demands."⁸³ Certainly this is evidence that 'yes' does not imply closure, seeing as Nêhiyawak continued to make requests after, for example, Red Pheasant's band had offered "unanimous" assent. Was Treaty Six actually signed by Nêhiyawak? Did 'yes' mean agreement and closure? These are important questions, with serious consequences for mean Canadian sovereignty and the treaty relationship that is upheld as the basis of a just relationship.

Lyons's theories of the x-mark are indeed illustrated in speeches made by Cree leaders during deliberations on Treaty Six. As mentioned, Nêhiyawak held a council at Fort

Carlton on August 21 to discuss the treaty and draw up their own requests; this was a meeting that their translator Peter Erasmus attended and later recorded the discussions in his memoir. "There were immediate objections to my taking part in the council," Erasmus recalled. Perhaps over the course of negotiations, Erasmus had done something to earn the mistrust of some Nêhiyawak. Perhaps it was that Erasmus was also employed by the Crown as translator? In any case, Ahtahkakoop made the case for Erasmus to stay.⁸⁴ "Indian eloquence had full play that day," Erasmus recalled. "Many of the council men spoke in addition to the chiefs."⁸⁵ Acknowledging the resistance to the treaty terms by many among those gathered, Mistawasis (after apparently sitting silently all afternoon) said, "I speak directly to Poundmaker and The Badger and those others who object to signing this treaty. Have you anything better to offer our people? I ask, again, can you suggest anything that will bring these things [i.e.: the bison economy] back for tomorrow and all the tomorrows that face our people? I for one think that the Great White Queen Mother has offered us a way of life when the buffalo are no more." At this point, Erasmus recalled hearing "loud groans and exclamations of despair at the latter statement from many places among the group."⁸⁶ I wonder if this means that not everyone agreed with Mistawasis, that not everyone was convinced that taking the Queen Mother's hand was the best course of action. Mistawasis continued, outlining the ways U.S. traders had dealt with Blackfoot bands to the south – plying them with alcohol and killing those who resisted – and suggesting British protection would prevent the same from happening to Nêhiyawak. He stated his faith in the Queen's law, once again using family metaphors to affirm the place of Cree people alongside the British: "we the children are counted as important as even the Governor who is her personal speaker" – a notion he must have grasped from Morris's speeches.⁸⁷

Mistawasis continued: “Even if it were possible to gather all the tribes together, to throw away the hand that is offered to help us, we would be too weak to make our demands heard. ... The prairies have not been darkened by the blood of our white brothers in our time. Let this always be so. I for one will take the hand that is offered. For my band, I have spoken.” Of course, Mistawasis exercised his autonomy with this speech; but, in a pre-reserve Cree world, his followers who disagreed could simply join another band if they felt he did not speak for them. According to Erasmus, “There was a deep silence after Mistawasis had taken his seat. No one appeared to have anything to say.”⁸⁸ In such a situation, and I wonder if Erasmus knew this, it would have been extremely impolite to publicly disagree with a respected leader. Darnell writes: “Respect for other human persons is often expressed by silence. Silence is virtually obligatory in many contexts for the domain of power. To use language casually in the presence of power, also an attribute of most respected persons, is dangerous.”⁸⁹ Recall also that silence may signal disagreement, as Darnell notes that to avoid a disrespectful confrontation individuals who disagree may remain quiet until consensus is reached.⁹⁰

Next to address the council was Ahtahkakoop, who spoke of the missed opportunity to ally with Blackfoot bands, as such an action might have strengthened Plains Indigenous peoples, allowing them to make more demands of the treaty commissioners. Ahtahkakoop clearly frames negotiating and accepting the treaty – that is, making their x-marks – as a choice rather than a predetermined fact, and powerfully emphasizes Cree rhetorical and political sovereignty: “Can we stop the power of the white man from spreading over the land like grasshoppers that cloud the sky and then fall to consume every blade of grass and every leaf on the trees in their path? I think not. Before this happens let us ponder carefully

our choice of roads.”⁹¹ Comparing European settlers to swarming grasshoppers that consume everything in sight is certainly a forceful act of rhetorical resistance; it is also clear from Ahtahkakoop’s statement that preserving a land base for Nêhiyawak was a motivation for negotiating the treaty. The chief also placed his hope in a new economy, citing again the potential disappearance of the bison: “Will our people live as before when this comes to pass? No! They will die and become just memory unless we find another way.” He expressed confidence that Nêhiyawak could learn to farm and raise cattle and prosper like Europeans. “Let us show our wisdom by choosing the right path now while we yet have a choice.” According to Erasmus, after Mistawasis and Ahtahkakoop had taken their seats: “Other chiefs among the assembly spoke a few words in agreement. The greater majority with a few exceptions had accepted the views of the two main chiefs.” Mistawasis adjourned the council, suggesting the people “go back to their teepees and study these matters with care.”⁹² It may have been inappropriate for dissenters to speak their parts directly to the main chiefs. This may explain what Erasmus noted next: “Dismissed, many of the chiefs came up and shook hands with Mistawasis and Ahtahkakoop, thus expressing their unanimous approval of the speeches of the two men that had swung the meeting in favour of treaty terms. I noticed that Poundmaker and The Badger were not among those who came forward to shake hands.”⁹³

A similar council evidently took place at Fort Pitt, as recorded (with less detail) in missionary John McDougall’s memoir, written 37 years after the treaty was signed.

Sweetgrass summoned McDougall on the second day of negotiations:

I was taken forward to sit immediately beside the head chief. Sweetgrass introduced me as an old friend and the one white man he had found with an Indian heart. He had known my parents who were, without doubt the true friends of the Indian peoples. ‘Moreover this young man speaks and understands our language just like ourselves. I

have sent for him to tell us what the proposals of the treaty mean, to give us fully what the white chief said, to go over all his promises and interpret them to us so that I and you, my people, may truly understand what was said to us yesterday. Remember that this young man whom I call my grandson has my full confidence and when he speaks I always believe him.”⁹⁴

McDougall went over his notes of what Morris had said the previous day, “explaining fully and causing my audience to see and understand what it meant.” Sweetgrass then made a request of McDougall: “Now I want you to go further and put yourself in our place. Forget that you are a white man and think you are, for the time, one of us, and from that standpoint speak out your mind as to what we should do at this time.” McDougall records his response:

For a moment I felt embarrassed. Then bracing up I first thanked the chief for his confidence and spoke fully of British justice and Canadian government fair play. I told these chiefs and warriors what I had seen among the Indians of Eastern Canada. There they held their reserves among the white people and were living in peace. I predicted that the same conditions would come to pass in this country. I strongly advised them to go before the commissioners on the morrow and signify their acceptance of the proposals brought to them. When I was through I retired with a feeling of deep satisfaction that after sixteen years of association and intercourse with these western tribes that they had thought me to be worthy of their utmost confidence in deciding these affairs so vitally important to them and their descendants for generations to come.

The next day, “with great form and ceremony, [Nêhiyawak] appeared once more before the treaty table.”⁹⁵ McDougall records the speech that Sweetgrass made at this time:

‘I thank our Great Mother for sending you here. I am glad to have you as a brother and friend who will help lift us up from our present condition. I thank you for your offer and I am not afraid. I accept gladly.’ Then, placing the governor’s hand on his heart, he said, ‘God is looking down on us today. He has opened a new world for us. He pities those who have to live by the buffalo. ... I want you to commence to protect the buffalo. I myself will commence to prepare a piece of land and my kinsmen will do the same.’ Then placing one hand over the governor’s [heart] and the other over his own he said ‘May the white man’s blood never be spilt on this earth. I am thankful that the white man and the Indian can live together. I hold your hand and touch your heart. Let us be one. Do your utmost to help me and my children that they may prosper.’ The chief’s speech was agreed to by all his followers. After this the treaty was formally signed.⁹⁶

In the words of Sweetgrass we see compassion for the settlers and a desire to live peacefully together as relatives. We also see the role of missionary McDougall; based on his influence and advice, Sweetgrass did not even attempt to negotiate. Thus in more ways than one the Fort Pitt signing was only a formality, an adhesion. And adhesion was the only option open to Nêhiyawak in the future. Signing. Or, of course, not signing.

“Our country has done its duty by the red men”

Alexander Morris concludes his book with recommendations on how the treaties should be administered and implemented by the Crown, a chapter that is quite revealing of Morris’s understanding of the Crown’s treaty relationship with First Nations. He writes: “The Indians have a strong attachment to the localities in which they and their fathers have been accustomed to dwell, and it is desirable to cultivate this home feeling of attachment to the soil.” Morris also advised the government to “assign to each family parts of the reserve for their own use, so as to give them a sense of property in it, but all power of sale or alienation of such lands should be rigidly prohibited.”⁹⁷ Clearly after his years among Indigenous peoples, Morris understood the importance of their attachment to their lands; indeed, he suggested the government encourage it. Morris warned against Indian enfranchisement as well as the wholesale surrender of reserve lands. Under the heading, “Machinery of Government,” he describes the emerging Indian Affairs bureaucracy, which he expects “will be perfected and adapted to the growing exigencies and wants of the native population.”⁹⁸ Morris’s conception of the Indian Department, as chief Crown negotiator, was apparently that it should serve the needs and aspirations of Indigenous peoples. Morris expressed his confidence in the Canadian government “to carry out the provisions of the treaties” and he looked forward to seeing Indigenous peoples – “faithful allies of the Crown” – as they

gradually became “self-supporting,” which we may generously interpret as maintaining their autonomy.

Morris concludes his book as such:

Let us have Christianity and civilization to leaven the mass of heathenism and paganism among the Indian tribes; let us have a wise and paternal Government faithfully carrying out the provisions of our treaties, and doing its utmost to help and elevate the Indian population, who have been cast upon our care, and we will have peace, progress, and concord among them in the North-West; and instead of the Indian melting away, as one of them in older Canada, tersely put it, ‘as snow before the sun,’ we will see our Indian population, loyal subjects of the Crown, happy, prosperous, and self-sustaining, and Canada will be enabled to feel, that in a truly patriotic spirit, our country has done its duty by the red men of the North-West, and thereby to herself. So may it be.⁹⁹

That Morris wrote about the triumph of Christianity and civilization, that he saw Indigenous peoples as a burden “cast upon our care,” that he envisioned Indigenous people as “loyal subjects” of the Crown’s “wise and paternal Government,” should all be of no surprise. Perhaps, in nineteenth century terms, he was more or less describing a fiduciary relationship. For Morris, upholding the treaties was Canada’s patriotic duty, and he envisioned the treaties should enable Indigenous peoples to be “happy, prosperous, and self-sustaining.” A generous reading of his words might imply that the treaties would ensure Indigenous survival – rather than “melting away” – and self-sufficiency. And Morris recognized the potential consequences of the Crown not delivering on its treaty obligations: “The Canadian system of band reserves has a tendency to diminish the offensive strength of the Indian tribes, should they ever become restless, a remote contingency, if the treaties are carefully observed.”¹⁰⁰ On one hand, Morris wanted to diminish the solidarity of autonomous bands as parts of strong Indigenous nations; on the other, he knew that if the Crown failed to live by its treaty, the “tribes” would become restless. Doing right by Indigenous peoples would mean Canada had done right by her self.

Treaty Six was not well received in Ottawa. The Minister of the Interior, David Mills, was openly hostile about the terms granted to Cree negotiators, “such as ought not to have been made with any race of savages.” Mills found the famine relief clause “extremely objectionable.”¹⁰¹ In her comparative study of 19th century treaty making, historian Jill St. Germain writes:

Unlike the United States, which operated in the long shadow of guilt generated by a national reputation for breaking treaty promises, Canada basked in the glow of a different tradition. Canada had assumed the British mantle of justice and fair treatment of indigenous peoples – so perceived by the colonizers of the British Empire, at any rate. Having done nothing to merit it and with little appreciation for what was required under it, Canadian governments simply asserted that their Indian policy was good by definition, and severe scrutiny or critical assessments were not required. The effect was to minimize Canadian interest in an exacting account of treaty compliance.¹⁰²

It is not controversial to state that the terms of Treaty Six have not been upheld by the Crown/Canada. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples recommended that “It is time to return to the spirit of the treaties and to set a new course to correct the legalistic and adversarial attitudes and actions that have contributed to the badly deteriorated treaty relationships that exist between Aboriginal nations and Canada today.”¹⁰³

The treaty elders of Saskatchewan have reiterated the dangerous consequences of breaking the treaty between the Crown, Nêhiyawak, and the Creator. Carter and Hildebrandt write: “Breaking these vows can bring about divine retribution and grave consequences. This concept is known in Cree as ‘*pâstâhowin*.’”¹⁰⁴ Elder Jacob Bill of Pelican Lake First Nation stated at a treaty gathering: “How dangerous it is to breach sacred undertakings ... [the Elders] told us that it was very dangerous to breach treaties ... that something will happen ... the consequences ... will be punishment similar to that which accompanies the use of a big whip.”¹⁰⁵ Words have the power to bring the world into

existence or to bring about an apocalypse. Neal McLeod repeats the words of Elder Edwin Tootoosis: “*môy ê-kistawê’t* (‘It does not echo’) ... referring to the land, and the fact that the land no longer had sound in the same way as before.”¹⁰⁶ Stories have the power to transform the landscape. Elder Norman Sunchild of Thunderchild First Nation, stated in 1989: “The Treaty should stay with the Queen forever and not have us passed over to the Federal Government. When the Prime Minister brought the constitution back to Canada, you saw the weather. It was raining. There were tears from somewhere, tears from the sky because the Queen had let us go. The treaties were supposed to stay in England.”¹⁰⁷ We have the choice to be responsible with our stories, to live our lives according to stories about sharing, reciprocity, peaceful coexistence – or stories about surrendering land, confining people to reserves, stealing their children and forcing the people into the worst poverty imaginable while others grow rich on their land. Which story promotes a healthy future and which guarantees extinction?

In this chapter, I have attempted to read the Treaty Six negotiations from the standpoint of rhetorical sovereignty using what I hope is a framework representative of Plains Cree rhetorical practice. I have examined the ways Nêhiyawak responded to the Crown’s negotiating strategies and attempted to understand these responses according to Cree rhetorical protocols. My aim has been to show that Nêhiyawak did indeed negotiate for their nationhood, as should be particularly apparent after reading the account of the deliberations made by Mistawasis and Ahtahkakoop at Fort Carlton. However, I have wanted to problematize the extent to which Nêhiyawak and Morris may have understood the negotiations and to what extent Crown representatives could have understood the Cree rhetorical situation. I want to illustrate that the telltale signs of agreement from a British

perspective – for example, saying “yes,” and not raising a vocal protest – do not necessarily mean enthusiastic consent on the part of Nêhiyawak. Further, consent to live in a new way, in peaceful coexistence with settlers, in no way means that the written version of Treaty Six is what Cree negotiators agreed to. And certainly the written treaty has not been upheld by the Crown. The next chapter will look at one such case in particular, the systematic dispossession and dismemberment of the Papaschase Cree in what is now south Edmonton, noting that removals are often more than physical, they are also rhetorical.

Chapter Seven

“Nothing To Be Gained by Being Indians”:

Rhetorical Removals and the Papaschase Band

One great complaint we have is that the government interpreters of this country, with few exceptions, will scarcely or never tell our exact words to the agents, when they fear that the agent, who is very often a man of peevish disposition, would be offended, and so we seldom say what we desire. But in this letter we have given you in plain talk a short sketch of our position, which we beg you to attend to at once, and we conclude by saying that the half is not told yet.¹

These two sentences conclude a letter sent by Cree chiefs Bobtail, Samson, Ermineskin, and Woodpecker (variously Papastayo, Papaschase, Passpasschase), among others, to the Minister of the Interior, Prime Minister John A. Macdonald. The letter was dated at Fort Edmonton on January 7, 1883, and was translated and transcribed by Father Constantine Scollen.² The letter was sent to the Minister and also printed in the February 13, 1883 issue of the *Edmonton Bulletin*, as well as other newspapers across Canada.³ Historian Jill St. Germain writes that the letter, “was a sweeping indictment of Canadian-Cree relations under Treaty Six, significant not only for the breadth of its allegations and a determination to take action in the event of failure to achieve redress, but also for its elaboration of the Cree understanding of the treaty. It was equally important in the response it evoked, for existing patterns grounded in misunderstanding remained infuriatingly present.”⁴ As a statement delivered to the Canadian government, which we might also think of as a sort of public notice to citizens of the Edmonton area due to its publication, the letter is an act of rhetorical and political sovereignty. The chiefs expressed urgency: “[W]e hold that our very existence is involved in the promptitude with which a remedy shall be applied to the grievances we here undertake to expose to you.” These words were meant to bring about change that would ensure their peoples’ survival. It is a document of protest, a moment of

rhetorical sovereignty in the archives, an example of Indigenous presence. In writing “we seldom can say what we desire,” the chiefs refer to the incomplete and perhaps incompetent work of government translators in the area – I wonder what these chiefs knew and thought of Peter Erasmus – we might presume, then, that the signatories were pleased with Scollen’s text. The chiefs address the Minister “out of our dire poverty, our utter destitution” and accuse the government of providing “little or no help, and apparently less sympathy.” So much for the bounty and benevolence promised in the written version of the treaty.

St. Germain refers to the chiefs’ petition as “the clearest statement of the Cree position on Treaty Six yet made” and it is important to read it as a Cree diplomatic text, as evidence of the Cree understanding of their relationship with the Crown that was in fact enhanced by their entering into a treaty relationship.⁵ The men introduce themselves as “the chiefs and representatives of the different Indian bands in the district of Edmonton, treaty No. 6,” a treaty which they question the Crown’s motives and intent in signing: “[I]f no attention is paid to our case now we shall conclude that the treaty made with us six years ago was a meaningless matter of form and that the white man has indirectly doomed us to annihilation little by little. But the motto of the Indian is ‘If we must die by violence let us do it quickly.’” That the chiefs at the time framed this as a treaty issue with the Crown (“the government representatives ... said [the treaty] was in the name of the great mother”) should urge us to do the same at the present time, as I will argue throughout this chapter. “The white man had it all his own way. He made the conditions both for himself and for us. We were treated as so many children, unable to judge for ourselves, although we claim a certain amount of the faculty of reasoning in our own interest, and especially when there is

a question of the very first law of nature, self-preservation.” (In this sense, the chiefs are referring to themselves as children vis-à-vis a paternalistic government, not as respected family members of the Queen.) The chiefs who sent this letter had signed an adhesion to Treaty 6 in 1877, and thus had no opportunity to negotiate with the Crown in this binding agreement. “How simple we were! We have found to our cost that the binding exists all on one side, and the impunity all on the other.” The chiefs proceed to address particular treaty breaches on the part of the Crown, for example, that farming tools, seeds, or cattle had not been provided as promised to support the livelihood of Nêhiyawak. “We have never yet been supplied with one-half of what has been promised in the treaty.”

St. Germain suggests that this petition from the Edmonton-area chiefs was unique for several reasons: seven Cree and two Stoney chiefs came together to make a united demand for redress, the chiefs did not direct their petition through the regular channels (i.e.: local Indian affairs officials) but directly to the Minister of the Interior (the Prime Minister), and the chiefs proposed that Canada had deliberately breached Treaty Six, as well as promising to take action if the situation was not rectified, which according to St. Germain, marked “a radical and ominous shift in the tenor of Canadian-Cree relations.” She writes:

To this point, though taxed beyond endurance by Canada’s behaviour, the Cree leaders had given Ottawa the benefit of the doubt in intent, blaming ignorant, corrupt, or incompetent officials for the failures in implementation ... Bobtail, Samson, Ermineskin, and their compatriots now were willing to accept the more insidious explanation that perhaps Canada had deliberately duped them at treaty time and had a hidden agenda of annihilation. ... The commitment to declare the treaty null and void in the event that they continued to be ignored also indicated an end of a passive role by the Crees. In the past they had relied on Canada to meet its obligations, resorting only to prompting. Now they were prepared to take action in their own interests.⁶

I would argue that these allegations against the Crown/Canada were not entirely new or radical, recall that there were always Cree individuals who opposed the treaty and were suspicious of the Crown's intentions and ability to fulfill the treaty commitments. Also, Nêhiyawak had always acted "in their own interests" – as evidenced by their request for a treaty in the first place and their desire to negotiate for the best possible terms. In their 1883 letter, area chiefs wrote: "We are reduced to the lowest stage of poverty. We were once a proud and independent people and now we are mendicants at the door of every white man in the country; and were it not for the charity of the white settlers who are not bound by treaty to help us, we should all die on government fare. ... Our young women are reduced to starvation to become prostitutes to the white man for a living, a thing unheard of before amongst ourselves ..." The chiefs ask: "What then are we to do? Shall we not be listened to?"

While my previous two chapters have comprehensively examined the Treaty Six negotiations and compared Crown/Nêhiyawak understandings of the treaty, this chapter will look at how the treaty relationship played out after the 1876 and 1877 negotiations and adhesions. That local Cree leaders were pointing to their destitute situation, that a once independent people were now reduced to economic poverty, begging, and prostitution, should raise concern for us today. These conditions also attest to the long history of economic poverty on the part of Indigenous peoples in the Edmonton area, conditions that have existed as a result of dispossession and displacement subsequent to the treaty. For Scott Richard Lyons, a concept that is contrary to rhetorical sovereignty is that of rhetorical imperialism, what he defines as, "the ability of dominant powers to assert control of others by setting the terms of debate."⁷ This is akin to what Daniel Heath Justice (Cherokee) has

called “rhetorical removals,” defined as an “insidious” function of texts about Indigenous people that “rhetorically remove Indians from any place in the critical discussion.”⁸ For Justice, such rhetorical maneuvers make absent such important concerns as tribal nationhood, treaty rights, land claims, cultural recovery, spiritual expression, and fulfillment of kinship obligations.⁹ This chapter will employ Justice’s framework to examine the dispossession of a treaty First Nation following their 1877 adhesion to Treaty Six and into the contemporary period as their descendants have sought restitution and redress.

Bounty and benevolence?

Edmonton Bulletin, April 8, 1882

[-Indian Reserves-]

As spring is now opening, and the surveys of the Indian reserves in this vicinity will soon be made, we beg to enter still another protest against the location of reserves close to the settlements. The band of Indians under chief [Papaschase], which make Edmonton their headquarters, wish to take their reserve on the south side of the Saskatchewan [River], the northern limit being within three miles of Edmonton. ... There is no doubt that in the near future it will be found necessary to remove this reserve to some other locality ... It is well known that an Indian reserve located near a town is a cause of trouble and general demoralization to both whites and Indians. It would be far cheaper, then, for the Government to arrange the matter with the Indians now, before the reserve is finally located, than it will be in the future when every foot of it has become valuable, and thereby prevent a gross injury being done to this flourishing settlement.¹⁰

Though the land surrendered in the text of Treaty Six included amiskwacî (The Beaver Hills region) the chiefs and headmen of Edmonton-area Cree bands adhered to the treaty on August 21, 1877 at Fort Edmonton.¹¹ On that day, Chief Papaschase and his brother Tahkoots (the band’s headman) signed an adhesion, guaranteeing his Cree Band annuity payments, medical assistance, relief and rations in extreme conditions, and permanent reserve land in a place of the band’s choosing. As Morris promised Nêhiyawak at Fort Carlton:

We wish to give each band who will accept of it a place where they may live; we wish to give you as much or more land than you need; we wish to send a man that surveys the land to mark it off, so you will know it is your own, and *no one will interfere with you.* ... We would send next year a surveyor *to agree with you as to the place you would like.*"

The only caveat Morris admitted was that pre-existing non-Native claims to land within proposed reserves must be respected.¹² The text of Treaty Six states that the government will "send a suitable person to determine and set apart the Reserves for each band, *after consulting with the Indians* thereof as to the locality which may be found to be most suitable for them." Apparently expecting the Crown would honour the treaty, Chief Papaschase chose land near Two Hills, which is located in present day South Edmonton, directly across the North Saskatchewan River from Fort Edmonton as it was then located (site of the present Alberta legislature). The Chief and many of his approximately 250 followers were descendants of mixed-blood Cree people from the Lesser Slave Lake region who had moved south to Fort Edmonton in the 1850s to work and hunt near the Fort.¹³ Jaimy Miller, a descendent of the band, notes that "it is also possible that the band's association with Beaver Hills ... goes back even further."¹⁴ According to historian Kenneth Tyler, members of the band were Wâskahikaniwiyniw (House People) and Woods Cree mixed with Plains Cree and the band acted in concert with Plains Cree chiefs.¹⁵ The Papaschase band would appear to be an example of the multicultural Plains bands described by Neal McLeod and Robert Innes in Chapter Two. This is important to note, as we will see that the band's multicultural makeup would be one justification by Edmonton settlers for dispossessing them of their treaty land. As the hunting economy in the region collapsed, and early efforts at farming failed to be effective, Indigenous peoples in Edmonton came to rely on rations. Another reason for choosing reserve land near the Fort, then, was access to these rations,

“since the bands closest to the agency often received the most rations and their concerns with respect to their transition to agriculture were more likely to be addressed.”¹⁶ The band considered this area to be home and it was their treaty right to live there.

The terms of Treaty Six guarantee reserve land based on the number of registered band members; reserve size was proportionate to band population.¹⁷ Thus, a tactic of the Canadian government was to systematically reduce the population of the Papaschase band, particularly in response to the chief’s demands for fair treatment. Between 1880 and 1884, the size of the Papaschase reserve was reduced by nearly 10 sq. miles. In 1880, the government inspector miscalculated the Band’s original land entitlement. The day that inaccurate survey began, August 2 1880, Chief Papaschase refused to accept the year’s annuity payments until his starving people were given rations. The inspector, T. P. Wadsworth, refused to pay relief, and the next day “exacted his revenge” – arbitrarily creating a new Band on the north side of the river, calling them the “Edmonton Stragglers.”¹⁸ Wadsworth removed 84 Papaschase Band members to this new Band list and paid them their treaty annuity. According to Miller, Wadsworth “stated that the Stragglers were merely Indians who ‘loitered’ around Edmonton, and could not expect any land to be set aside for their benefit.”¹⁹ The following day, the inspector returned to Chief Papaschase, paid him annuities for fewer Band members, and once again decreased the area of the reserve, this time to 40 square miles. When Chief Papaschase realized this less than a month later, he stopped the survey, going so far as to physically remove the surveyor’s instruments from the reserve.²⁰ The Band was then told the survey would not be completed in 1880, if ever. The band could apparently be denied their treaty land at the whim of government officials. These maneuvers must have done little to instill trust in the

chief and band members, and as I will argue, this may be seen as a pivotal moment in the long history of Indigenous displacement and 'homelessness' in Edmonton.

According to historian Melanie Niemi-Bohun, "In Treaty Six, the term [straggler] was applied by Indian agents to Native individuals who did not reside with or belong to a designated band at the time they entered treaty, and to individuals or groups who initially refused to enter treaty."²¹ Niemi-Bohun suggests in these cases Indian agents were "creating a category to pay individuals who wished to receive annuities but did not belong to a band."²² She continues: "In Treaty Six the term 'straggler' was used to refer to individuals who moved from band to band to receive annuities and who refused to settle on reserves" and as such the category was "created as an expedient solution to a bureaucratic problem."²³ Noting that in nineteenth century usage the term straggler denoted individuals who "displayed some form of perceived deviant social behaviour," Niemi-Bohun also links the term, via the *Oxford English Dictionary*, to "someone who is 'left behind.'"²⁴ This historian's theorizing of the term raises some interesting questions when looking at how it was applied to Indigenous peoples living in the Edmonton area. Despite Niemi-Bohun's claim, 84 people whom Wadsworth identified as Edmonton Stragglers were indeed citizens of the Papaschase band – they resided with a band and were not resisting adhesion to the treaty.²⁵ These 84 individuals were indeed citizens of a particular band. Seeing as Chief Papaschase was demanding that the Crown live up to its end of the treaty, perhaps Wadsworth did in fact see members of his band as 'deviants.' Still, he was certainly not acting benevolently.

Rhetorical Removals in South Edmonton

A series of events in the 1880s worked to finally dispossess the Band of their Treaty land.

In 1881, Edmonton citizens, led by Frank Oliver, who was active with the Edmonton Settlers' Rights Movement, sent two petitions to the Prime Minister protesting the placement of reserves near their settlement (settlers also began to illegally cut timber on the reserve).²⁶ The *Edmonton Bulletin* – which was edited by Oliver – reported that at a meeting “crowded with settlers” in January 1881, non-Native citizens gathered to discuss “the Indian – or more properly speaking – half-breed reserve on the south side of the river.”²⁷ As we will see, commenting on the band's level of “Indianness” was a tactic used to deny the band their treaty lands. Oliver wrote:

This reserve, although not yet completed, is claimed by a chief who has gathered around him six or seven lazy brothers, one or two Indians and all of the old squaws who generally hang around each of the Company's forts. Why they should have a reserve is not very patent – and why they should have it in a place utterly unsuited, for it is still more unintelligible. A motion was adopted to memorialize the Government to have the reserve located twenty miles back from the river, on the west side of Hay Lakes, which is their hunting grounds, and a place which also contains more than enough farming land to do them and their descendants for all futurity.²⁸

In the same 1881 issue of the *Bulletin*, Oliver editorialized:

The reserve comes to within three miles of the Fort, in the heart of the settlement, and includes a great deal of the best land in the country ... it is surely [the Government's] right and duty to look after the interests of the settlers, both present and future, for whom the land was bought, and out of whose earnings it is expected ultimately to be paid for, as well as those of the Indians, who will be a bill of expense and a drawback to the country for an indefinite period. If the Indians take the reserve as at present surveyed a lasting injury will be done to this settlement, without any corresponding benefit accruing to them. Now is the time for the Government to declare the reserve open and show whether this country is to be run in the interests of the settlers or the Indians.²⁹

Using a rhetorical removals lens, Oliver denies the band its right to ancestral lands and, most importantly, treaty rights.

Another rhetorical maneuver employed by Oliver was to claim that the Papaschase treaty land might be better used by non-Indigenous settlers, again denying the band their right to land. In a September 1882 editorial, Oliver wrote: "For some time past the people of Edmonton have been glad to believe that the Indian reserve on the south side was likely to be relocated at some more distant point, equally or more suitable for the Indians and where it would not interfere with the growth of the settlement."³⁰ Oliver's rhetoric cleverly excludes band members from a definition of community: they are presumably not "the people of Edmonton" who were so anxious to see the reserve moved. The Indian Act of 1876 made similar distinctions; the Act defines "a person" as "an individual other than an Indian."³¹ Indians, then, are excluded from citizenship and personhood. According to Oliver's logic, band members only interfere with the (non-Native) settlement. Oliver recognizes that the band's claim to their reserve is based on the treaty, when he writes: "and they are of course legally entitled to the land." However, to Oliver, allowing the band to exercise their treaty entitlement will only hinder non-Natives: "[I]f allowed to remain for years, they will have retarded the progress of the settlement." He notes the land will only increase in value, and thus the Band should be induced to move, predicting that in the future, "thousands of dollars will be required to do what a few sacks of flour could do now."³² Oliver completely undermines the sacred and enduring obligations the Crown assumed at the time of treaty. He implies that the band could – and should – be paid off with a few sacks of flour, arrogantly presuming the right of settlers to determine a just relationship with Indigenous peoples.

In an 1884 editorial, Oliver referred to "the supposed Indian reserve" on the south side of the river. This particular piece encapsulates Oliver's arguments for the removal of

the Papaschase band. Oliver once again points out that the reserve contains the best land and timber in the area, and proposes that the land is not actually a reserve as it was not labeled as such on Department of the Interior maps. He continues with a familiar argument:

What right this band of Indians (if such they can be called) has to a reserve, even in this part of the country, is hard to conceive. The principal portion of the band belong to Slave lake and have but recently come here to reside. ... It is a matter of the greatest importance to the town that the Indians should be induced to remove from their present situation. It would be for the benefit of the Indians to remove them further from civilization, as the too close communication with whites is not conducive to making them good agriculturalists.³³

Oliver proposes that the small settlement on the south side needs room to expand, which “can only be done by throwing open the supposed reserve for settlement.” His position is ludicrous. That Oliver himself was only born in 1853 – in *Ontario* – he had certainly “but recently come here to reside.” What right does he have to question the so-called legitimacy of the band and to suggest what would “benefit” them? It is purely his right as a settler that makes his aspirations somehow preeminent.

In a rare moment of legal and ethical awareness, Oliver refers to the band’s treaty rights, though still rabidly advocating their dismemberment as a sovereign community of Nêhiyawak:

If this land has been promised to these Indians they, in justice, should have it. The government cannot afford to break faith with the Indians. But the most feasible way and likely means to do away with the supposed reserve, and the one which would be satisfactory to all parties concerned, would be to give each Indian settled on and improving his land, the same to an amount of one hundred and sixty acres free, and in course of time enfranchise him.³⁴

Oliver’s editorial seemed to prefigure Canada’s assimilation policy that would focus on forced enfranchisement and the surrender of reserve land that emerged fully in the decades to follow. Indeed, as a federal Liberal politician, in 1911 Oliver proposed and passed amendments to the Indian Act that allowed municipalities and companies to

expropriate portions of reserves without legal surrender.³⁵ The law also allowed for a judge to move an entire reserve away from settler communities; as such, these amendments are referred to as the Oliver Act.³⁶ Oliver's future as a politician was tested out on the citizens of the Papaschase band. Oliver concludes the editorial urging non-Native citizens to "be alive to their own interests and present their case regarding the band of Indians in the strongest and most favourable light at the earliest opportunity, thereby enhancing the future prospects and value of the town and in reality doing the Indians an everlasting service."³⁷ Couched in the rhetoric of benevolent paternalism, Oliver implies the presence of the band *reduces* "the future prospects and value of the town" and presumes that he is speaking for all settlers when he states what is the best interest of the town. For Oliver, only settler colonialism will enhance the prospects and contribute to the value of the community of Edmonton.

"An exodus from treaty"

In 1882, the Passpasschase Reserve No. 136 was divided into quarter sections, which was not done on any other reserve in the northwest, and in 1884 the survey of the reserve was completed, totaling 39.9 sq. miles. (While the survey was completed in 1884, the land was not confirmed as a reserve until 1889, six months after it was surrendered, and it was not withdrawn from Dominion Lands Act until 1893, four years after surrender).³⁸ The traumatic poverty in which the Edmonton bands found themselves in the mid-1880s must have influenced the decision of Papaschase members when the Half Breed Scrip Commission arrived in the district in 1885 and 1886. Scrip was a government certificate that could be redeemed in Crown land, or in money to purchase land, and the Commission offered it to people of mixed ancestry, including band members with Indian status.³⁹ Jaimy

Miller explains: "Beginning in 1880, Treaty Indians who could claim or 'prove' that they were the children of 'half-breeds,' or of mixed European and Indigenous parentage, were allowed to withdraw from treaty status and take scrip."⁴⁰ According to an 1888 Department of Indian Affairs document, 799 people withdrew from Treaty Six between 1885 and 1888.⁴¹ Scrip was the government's way of dealing with the 'half-breed problem' following the resistance of 1885. In a speech before the House of Commons in 1885, Prime Minister John A. MacDonald acknowledged his reluctance to offer scrip, and stated his well-meaning intentions which guided the policy: "I said, 'Well, for God's sake let them have the scrip; they will either drink it or waste it or sell it; but let us have peace.'"⁴² It is unclear if MacDonald's parliamentary statement was influenced by his own well-known alcoholism.

The Scrip Commission was accompanied by shrewd non-Native land speculators, who encouraged status Indians to apply for scrip, which could then be sold to speculators for cash.⁴³ In 1886, the *Bulletin* reported on the Scrip market in the Edmonton area: "The scrip buyers are on hand in full force and scrip goes chiefly at from 70 to 75 cts and sometimes reaching 80 cts on the dollar." Two weeks later, scrip was being bought from Natives for as low as 62 cents on the dollar.⁴⁴ Scrip offered immediate cash money to starving people whose traditional hunting economy had been nearly destroyed, people who had virtually no power to obtain the rations they needed, people who were still largely unfamiliar with the cash economy.⁴⁵ Both the Papaschase and Enoch bands had even moved to camp at the Scrip Commission.⁴⁶ The majority of the Papaschase Band repealed their Treaty Indian Status and accepted half-breed scrip: a total of 114 Papaschase members did so in 1885 and '86 – including Chief Papaschase himself.⁴⁷

As part of the government's makeshift scrip policy, Edgar Dewdney arranged for Indian agents and clergy to determine whether or not a person was eligible to withdraw from treaty and receive scrip, based on whether or not the applicant was considered "civilized" enough. Thus, as Niemi-Bohun asserts, "Unable to equate status identity with racial classification, the Canadian government instead equated it to an individual's mode of living." Therefore, those who lived as Indians, following their "customs and habits," were considered Indians.⁴⁸ In 1885, John A. Macdonald stated: "If [half-breeds] are Indians they go with the tribe; if they are half-breeds they are whites, and they stand in exactly the same relation to the Hudson's Bay Company and Canada as if they were altogether white."⁴⁹ However, this was not the case with the government's treatment of the Papaschase band, as individuals who lived with a recognized *Indian* band were encouraged to relinquish their treaty rights and identify as half-breeds. Band members were re-defined in the eyes of the Canadian government as what we now call Métis, despite their predominantly Plains Cree lifestyle, and evidence that Papaschase Band members required scrip applications be translated into Cree. According to Tyler, one woman was discharged from treaty despite the fact that she could not claim any European ancestry.⁵⁰ Indian Department correspondence from the 1880s reveals officials at the time knew land speculators were taking advantage of Indigenous people during the scrip commission, and that scrip was being offered to people who should rightly keep their Indian Status.⁵¹ According to Tyler, the government made it increasingly easy and attractive to give up treaty and take scrip.⁵² The Papaschase Band, whose chief no longer had Indian Status, were now drastically reduced in numbers – Tyler refers to this as an exodus from treaty.⁵³ Miller concludes: "The diasporic nature of the band today can be traced to this event. Indian Affairs agents even

had the authority to use the North-West Mounted Police to evict scrip takers from the reserve, and when faced with the agent's power, the chief and headmen left. Other Papaschase Band members then moved to other reserves such as Enoch's, Samson's, Louis Bull, Saddle Lake, Onion Lake, Kehewin, Beaver Lake, and many others." Band members also moved to Métis colonies. By the end of 1887 all members had left the reserve.⁵⁴ Using the lens of rhetorical removals, Papaschase members were denied their right to fulfill their kinship obligations, at least in part, as families were no doubt separated and dispersed due to the government's powerful legislative rhetoric.

Thus one consequence of this policy was the Papaschase band became divided along lines of Status Indians and Métis, or Indians and *not-Indians* – that is, individuals without Indian Status and thus access to Indigenous treaty rights.⁵⁵ Jo-Ann Episknew (Riel Local of the Metis Nation of Saskatchewan), in a thorough examination of the Canadian government's "policies of devastation," describes how one of the first actions of the colonial state was to assign rigid identities to Indigenous peoples. "Often it was impossible to tell 'pure' Indians from 'mixed,' especially in those communities where members of both groups lived virtually the same lifestyle, spoke the same languages, and were often blood relatives."⁵⁶ The government's treatment of the Papaschase Band exemplifies Episknew's general analysis:

Little did they know that, by accepting halfbreed scrip, and thus being identified as 'not-Indians,' these Indigenous men and women would inadvertently assist the colonial powers in speeding their people on a journey into a legal oblivion where they would have no rights. Some more inflexible authorities allocated identities, in effect, by whim in the same way as they would allocate food rations or trade goods. Their actions forever divided families and communities.⁵⁷

Contrary to the spirit of nation-to-nation treaties, the Canadian state through its scrip policy and the Indian Act created arbitrary divisions; "the very act of defining who are

'Indians' implies the presence of their opposite, 'not-Indians.'"⁵⁸ Bonita Lawrence (Mi'kmaw) connects these artificial state-imposed definitions of indigeneity to the colonial land grab: "Definitions of Indianness almost from the start controlled who was recognized as an Indian band, who could get any land under the treaties, and who could live on this land."⁵⁹ Limiting the number of bands and the number of Status Indians (i.e.: citizens of bands) thus decreases the amount of reserve land and allows more land to be claimed by the state. Lawrence refers to "the arbitrariness of the various regulations, their utter indifference to traditional Indigenous ways of evaluating who was a member/citizen of the nation and who wasn't (which was precisely their purpose, in terms of shaping Indigenous identities)."⁶⁰ It is also crucial to point out how the Indian Act undermined the treaties by conflating Status with treaty rights such that the discourse is often confused by Indigenous peoples themselves today:

"It is important to be clear that while status is currently being used to promote Native heritage and defend treaty rights, *status is not 'heritage' and it is not the same thing as treaty rights*. ... Having Indian status means having your identity regulated by the federal government; there can be no greater violation of the nation-to-nation relationship specified implicitly in the treaties, when Indigenous citizenship in every sense of the word is currently defined by a body of colonial legislation."⁶¹

As I will illustrate at the end of this chapter, these colonial tactics invented at the time of treaty continue to have serious implications for Indigenous communities like the Papaschase band, as Lawrence writes: "[T]he question of past classification as 'half-breed' or 'Indian' is still shaping how contemporary Native people struggle to reclaim their ancestral land base" and as such, "colonial regulation of Native identity still controls the future of Indigenous nations."⁶² All too often, the future brings dispossession, 'homelessness,' economic poverty, and marginalization.

“Nothing to be gained by being Indians”

We can see clear evidence, then, of how the Canadian government undermined the leadership of the Papaschase band and created citizenship divisions in order to remove the people from the land and open it up for non-Native settlement. One way this was done, both legally and rhetorically, was through the claim that band members were not from the area and were not “pure Indians.” In 1884, as the survey of the Reserve was finally underway, Oliver wrote an editorial outlining the reasons why the reserve should be moved and the South Side land opened up for settlers. His first paragraph contains the presumption that his interest in moving the reserve is shared by “nearly the whole population of the Edmonton district.”⁶³ Oliver discredits and disparages Chief Papaschase and his followers, saying “they are not pure Indians ... The band is composed for the most part of stragglers ... A large proportion of them get their living by begging and other questionable means around the town.” The notion that members of the Papaschase band were not really “Indians” was a rhetorical tactic used by Oliver throughout the decade. In an 1882 editorial titled, “Indians?”, Oliver writes: “when a treaty was made with any band of Indians in the Saskatchewan many of the lower class of half-breeds in the vicinity, for the sake of the treaty money, caused themselves to be enrolled as Indians.” Oliver continued:

These people, although they may live with the Indians and take the treaty money, and, although they are not whites, have not the same nature as the true Indian, and join the bands not because they do not know and cannot do any better, but because they think they can live easier in that way than by working honestly for their livings as they had always been obliged to do before. To give these men treaty money is simply putting a premium on laziness. ... To allow such men to join the bands gives them a chance to exercise an influence over the real Indians which must of necessity be anything but good.

Oliver disregards the inherent right of Cree bands to determine their citizenship and to have their relatives live with them as citizens of the band, thus denying them their right to

fulfill kinship obligations. Further he clearly ignores the material realities of Indigenous people at the time, that they were facing starvation, rapid settler encroachment on their lands, etc. He explicitly points to the “bands of alleged Crees” in the Edmonton area and proposes: “Let these people understand that there is nothing to be gained by being Indians and they will soon cease to claim to be such.”⁶⁴ Oliver employs the usual settler rhetoric (e.g.: laziness, racial purity) while dramatizing it with his hope for the future: “there is nothing to be gained by being Indians.” Though this was not really the case, Oliver hoped to make his prophecy come true through his editorials, and later, through law.

Further, there was no need to deny the band’s Cree-ness. The Papaschase band associated with other Cree bands in the area, were distinct from local Métis communities, and in most ways lived a lifestyle similar to other bands of the Plains Cree nation: they had a traditional government, spoke the Cree language, participated in a hunting economy, and practiced Cree spirituality.⁶⁵ Even Edgar Dewdney recognized the band as Indians.⁶⁶ Miller notes, “the Papaschase reserve was the centre of ‘Indian religious dances and festivals.’”⁶⁷ Thus, Oliver’s rhetorical removals deny the band their inherent right to spiritual expression. For example, the *Bulletin* reported that a “religious – or heathen – meeting” (more properly a Sun Dance) was held in July 1882 “on the flat below the fort.” According to the *Bulletin*, the ceremony was attended by the region’s political leaders: “The following were the chiefs attending with parties of their bands: Pah-pa-stay-ow, of Edmonton, Bob Tail, Ermine Skin and Sampson of Peace Hills, Kata-ta-wis-kum of Lac La Nonne, Ma-me-now-wah-tow, of Stony Plain, and Soo-soo-wah-ka-ya-wat, representing Sharphead, the Stony Chief of Pigeon Lake. There were about sixty tents present.” Indian Jack and Tahkoots of the Papaschase Band are recorded as participants. “Tah-koots

afterwards made a speech and presented a horse which was taken by Bob-tail.⁶⁸ In March 1883, the *Bulletin* reported: "The tum tum [of the drum] is kept going every night and has been all winter; and was all summer and the whole of the year before; and the one before that and as far back as the memory of man or the records of the H.B.Co. extend. When the tum tum is civilized out of hearing of the residents of Edmonton it will seem as though the place has lost its familiar spirit."⁶⁹ Amidst the vile rhetoric of settlers and the attempted decimation of the band's treaty right to land, life, and freedom; amidst the ongoing erosion of their lifeways and socio-political and economic structures, the people maintained their ceremonies, music, and dancing. In the face of settler ignorance and arrogance they lived their autonomy, through culture and politics, and did so in such a beautiful way that even Frank Oliver acknowledged that without Cree cultural expression and vitality, Edmonton would not be the same.

The 1886 Indian Act, in effect at the time of the apparent surrender of Indian Reserve 136, stipulated what was required to surrender a reserve under Canadian law: assent by a majority of the male members of the Band who are at least 21 years old, held at a meeting for the purpose of land surrender, and those who vote must regularly live on the Reserve in question.⁷⁰ This law was not adhered to while Band members continued to live on the Papaschase Reserve. Instead, local officials persuaded the remainder of Status Indians of the Papaschase Band to move to the Enoch Reserve located further west of Edmonton. The department inspector reported in 1887 that the Papaschase band "has been wiped out by removing the few remaining members to the reserve of Enoch's Band at Stony Plain."⁷¹

On November 19, 1888, local Indian Department officials claimed to have obtained a surrender of the Papaschase reserve from only three adult male members of the Band then living at Enoch, whom the agent claimed were the only eligible people who could surrender the land. However, there is evidence that agents knew of ten male members of the Papaschase band over the age of 21 at Enoch just six weeks prior to the surrender, and there is no evidence that notice was given to other members of the Papaschase band living on other nearby reserves – recall that the Indian Act stipulates a proper meeting was to have been called. From 1890 to 1930, the Government of Canada sold all of the Papaschase lands to third parties and received monies as a trustee of the Papaschase band and their descendants as per the terms of the Indian Act. Descendants still have not received this money.

“Facts shrouded in the mists of time”

The descendants of the Papaschase band have been active since the 1970s in reclaiming their collective identity and history. In 1999, an election was held to elect a chief and council for a reconstituted Papaschase Band; the band received recognition from the Treaty Six Confederacy, and has also been recognized by the Assembly of First Nations and the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations (who acted as interveners in the band’s land claim against the Canadian government).⁷² Jaimy Miller also points out that the band has been recognized by the City of Edmonton as part of the Rossdale/Fort Edmonton Reburial project and the Band was the host band of the Day of Commemoration held by the Aboriginal Healing Foundation in Edmonton in July 2004, where distinguished delegates and attendees were officially welcomed by then-Papaschase Chief Rose Lameman, who is a direct descendent of Chief Papaschase himself.⁷³

In 2001, the Band began legal action against the Crown. According to the Supreme Court of Canada's decision in *Canada v. Lameman* (2008), the land claim was launched by individuals "*claiming* to be descendants of Chief Papaschase and other Papaschase Band members" – explicitly calling into question both the genealogy of contemporary descendants and the legitimacy of their claim.⁷⁴ Miller writes: "Rather than being considered Cree people from the Edmonton area, historian Clint Evans [who was an expert witness] and Justice Frans F. Slatter declared them 'Métis from Lesser Slave Lake' without a 'cohesive' community (due to the dispersal) and therefore with no legitimate claim to land in Edmonton."⁷⁵ Interestingly, and in regard to another case, Arthur Ray has recently written that 'expert' witness Clint Evans's "doctoral degree had not been concerned with any topic in the field of Native history; nor had he ever published in the field."⁷⁶ Slatter found that Papaschase descendants had no basis for a claim because they were claiming the collective rights of a band that ceased to exist (under the Indian Act) and that the descendants did not meet criteria for Papaschase band membership (though the band wasn't officially 'recognized' anyhow) because their ancestors had taken scrip (thus abandoning their Indian status) or because others now belonged to other bands (again, as a result of the dispersal itself). Slatter found the only triable issue was the claim for accounting of any proceeds from the sale of the reserve that the Crown still might possess. In 2006, the majority of the Alberta Court of Appeal overturned Slatter's decision and found that all or most of the issues raised were genuine, triable issues, citing the "circularity and unfairness of denying Band status for purposes of litigating the destruction of the Band" and held that the government bore the burden of proving that descendants had no right to a claim.⁷⁷ Thus the decision went to the Supreme Court of Canada.

The Supreme Court's 2008 decision, authored by Chief Justice Beverley McLachlin, summarizes the Band's claim:

Their claim alleged that the government had wrongfully allowed Papaschase Band members to take scrip without properly advising them of the consequences; that the government had wrongfully pressured the Band to surrender the Reserve under the influence of the Edmonton settlement's lobbying; and that the government had thereby caused the dissolution of the Band. The claim also alleged that the government did not follow the rules to obtain a legal surrender of the Reserve; that the government had not sold the Reserve land for market value; and that the government had mismanaged the sale proceeds, in particular by distributing them to the Enoch Band. Finally, the claim alleged that the government had breached its treaty obligations by not granting the Band all the land to which it was entitled under the Treaty; and by failing to provide the Band with farming implements, and food in times of famine. These allegations, it was said, gave rise to causes of action for breach of fiduciary duty, fraudulent and malicious behaviour, and treaty breach.⁷⁸

Although of course open to interpretation, these issues are indeed verifiable, a fact even the Supreme Court does not deny. The evidence quoted in the sections of this chapter above point to misunderstanding on the part of band members as to what they were relinquishing when they took scrip. Certainly the language they spoke (Cree) was a barrier to understanding, and the fact that many members returned to the reserve to live there after taking scrip indicates they did not understand what taking scrip meant. There is indeed evidence that band members were pressured to take scrip by government agents and that individuals who were ineligible for scrip were given it. The issue of pressure by Edmonton settlers has been argued above, and it cannot be underscored enough that the influence of Frank Oliver must have had some influence on the government's decision to dismember the Band and open up the reserve for settlement. Oliver was not only an influential businessman and newspaper editor, but a member of the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories from 1883-1896 and would later serve as the Minister of the Interior and Superintendent-General of Indian Affairs in the federal Laurier government from 1905-

1911. The 1911 amendment to the Indian Act, which allowed for the expropriation of reserve lands for public works (the Oliver Act), was announced by Oliver in Parliament, who claimed that Indian reserves would no longer be able to impede the economic development of the nation.⁷⁹ Therefore, Oliver had immense power, not only rhetorically, but as a high-ranking member of the government. Indeed as we have seen, even government officials held disparaging opinions of Papaschase Band members, opinions possibly influenced by Oliver's petitions and editorials. It is clear that the government did not follow its own laws (the Indian Act of 1886) regarding the surrender of Indian Reserve 136. Local chiefs, including Papaschase, claimed in 1883 that the government was not providing rations as promised and asserted that instead the burden of assistance was falling unfairly (according to the chiefs) on local citizens.

The reconstituted band's land claim was argued in terms of the government's breach of Treaty Six. The Supreme Court's 2008 decision should have been guided by case law on Aboriginal rights since the 1970s. In the case *R. v. Sparrow* (1990), the Supreme Court affirmed that the Crown/Canada has a fiduciary (trust-like and non-adversarial) relationship with Aboriginal peoples and that contemporary recognition of Aboriginal rights must be defined in light of this relationship. The Court found that the Crown bears the burden of justifying why it is necessary to infringe on Aboriginal and/or Treaty rights.⁸⁰ The decision in *R. v. Van der Peet* (1996) found that in Aboriginal rights cases, courts must take into account the perspective of Aboriginal peoples themselves and that courts must approach the rules of evidence in light of the evidentiary difficulties inherent in adjudicating Aboriginal claims. The court also found in *Van der Peet* that courts must take into account both the relationship of Aboriginal peoples to the land and the distinctive

societies and cultures of Aboriginal peoples.⁸¹ The decision in the 1996 *Delgamuukw* case found that “the Crown is under a moral, if not a legal, duty to enter into and conduct ... negotiations in good faith.”⁸² None of the above cases are cited in the Supreme Court’s decision regarding Papaschase, perhaps because the court claimed that a constitutional challenge was not brought forth by Papaschase descendants.

In the decision *R. v. Lameman* (which was to decide whether or not the case should even go to trial) rather than take into account any of the above legal precedents and dictates, rather than taking into account the evidentiary difficulties inherent in adjudicating such claims, rather than taking into account the band’s attachment to their land, their distinctive society and culture, and their perspectives, rather than negotiating in good faith and upholding the Crown’s fiduciary duty, the Court found: “We are of the view that, assuming that the claims disclosed triable issues and that standing could be established, the claims are barred by operation of the *Limitation of Actions Act*. There is ‘no genuine issue’ for trial.”⁸³ Citing the case *Wewakum Indian Band v. Canada* (2002), the court affirmed that “the rules of limitation periods apply to Aboriginal claims.”⁸⁴ In the unanimous Papaschase decision, McLachlin writes: “It is argued that the causes of action here advanced were discoverable as early as the 1880s and 1890s” – as though starving and dispersed Papaschase Band members not fluent in Canadian law (and possibly not fluent even in the English language) should have launched their claim at that time, despite all the systemic biases and challenges they then faced. But the Chief Justice continues: “We do not find it necessary, however, to go back so far. The evidence filed by the government establishes that in the 1970s the causes of action now raised would have been clear to the plaintiffs, exercising due diligence.”⁸⁵ That the descendants of the Band did not file a land

claim in the 1970s, when they initially thought about doing so, and that these issues were known at that time (partly due to Tyler's research, which included oral history, toward his MA at the University of Alberta), the claim is now statute-barred by the *Limitations of Actions Act*. The Court thus blames the descendants for not exercising due diligence. McLachlin writes, "The facts are shrouded in the mists of time and some details are disputed."⁸⁶ Rather than dealing with and assessing the evidence and acknowledging (in good faith) the many challenges that have faced the Band since they adhered to Treaty Six in 1877, the court dismissed the Band's right to a trial outright, relying conveniently on historical amnesia and facts "shrouded in the mists of time." Eugene Meehan, one of the lawyers who represented the Band, told the Canadian Press: "There is no middle ground between the right thing to do and the wrong thing to do. There is no statute of limitations on the right thing to do. The bottom line is this: a treaty is an ongoing obligation and a breach of a treaty is an ongoing breach."⁸⁷ Treaty obligations are enduring and ongoing, and the Supreme Court of Canada utterly failed in their decision not to proceed to trial. As we will see, Edmonton's media reacted to the decision in a way that honoured Frank Oliver's journalistic and settler aspirations.

Contemporary Rhetorical Removals

The morning that the Supreme Court's decision was announced, April 3, 2008, I watched the early morning CTV News, anticipating good news. I recall the live television reporter in Ottawa saying something to the effect, 'Residents of Edmonton can breathe a sigh of relief,' suggesting that all Edmontonians shared the sentiment that the Papaschase Band should be ruled against and suggesting that the Band was asking for all of the land in South Edmonton to be returned to them. Media coverage of the band's land claim once again worked to

rhetorically remove Band members from their entitlement and privileging settler interests for the land. Further, reporters and columnists in 2008 relied on arguments very similar to those made by Frank Oliver in the *Edmonton Bulletin* in the 1880s. Media bias on Indigenous issues should not be a surprise. In 1996 the report of Canada's Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples asserted, "When the media address Aboriginal issues, the impressions they convey are often distorted."⁸⁸ In a statement to the Commission, the Canadian Association of Journalists stated:

Canada's Aboriginal peoples are, in general, badly served by national and local media. . . . The country's large newspapers, TV and radio news shows often contain misinformation, sweeping generalizations and galling stereotypes about Natives and Native affairs. ... The result is that most Canadians have little real knowledge of the country's Native peoples, or of the issues which affect them.⁸⁹

Scholar Craig Proulx has used the methods of critical discourse analysis (CDA) to examine news reports about Indigenous peoples in Canada. Proulx notes how the rhetorical and lexical decisions made by even those apparently well-meaning columnists fail to provide the objectivity and agency to readers that would be necessary for them to make clear judgments about Native issues.⁹⁰ Proulx writes: "Newspaper professionals presume that their audience share common values, interests, and concerns and, therefore, they select what to report based upon their audience's common-sense knowledge and values."⁹¹ Proulx's method of critical discourse analysis encourages critical readers to examine news reports for an author's lexical choices and semantic strategies; reporting on the Papaschase decision warrants such close reading for contemporary rhetorical removals of the band's treaty rights and aspirations.⁹²

In an article published in the national *Globe and Mail* titled, “Edmonton Stragglers’ have come home to collect,” journalist Bill Curry questions the legitimacy of the Band and its claim, using the types of rhetorical and lexical choices mentioned above.⁹³ Even the headline, referring to the Band as the Edmonton Stragglers (not all Papaschase band members today descend from the Stragglers list) and suggesting descendants are somehow cashing in on their misfortune at the expense of contemporary non-Native Canadian society, demeans and defiles band members. The *Globe’s* subheading, “Three natives were tricked into giving up their reserve in 1889, and their descendants deserve compensation, lawyers to argue today,” ignores the obligations of the treaty relationship and casts doubt on the claim; it was not the descendants of *only three* Natives who were seeking compensation, but the 895 descendants of a band of originally nearly 250 people.⁹⁴ Further, using the word ‘tricked’ to refer to the three band members who surrendered the reserve in 1889 grossly oversimplifies (and borders on parodying) this complex legal issue, an issue that in fact highlights Canada’s breach of its own (Indian Act) law. Curry writes, “natives will argue that Ottawa swindled their ancestors into surrendering the land” – hence categorizing the *Cree* band vaguely as ‘natives.’ As the Court later would, Curry questions the fact that the plaintiffs are indeed descendants of the original Band members or that the Band today is legitimate: “About 40 aboriginals *claiming to be descendants* of the Papaschase Indian Band,” “Ms. [Chief] Lameman *recreated* the Papaschase Indian Band in 1999.” The reporter apparently does not recognize Lameman as elected Chief (which she was), and ignores the fact that reconstituting the band was not a one-woman show (are we to believe, as a result of Curry’s rhetoric, that Chief Lameman is somehow in this merely for personal gain?)

Curry's word choices consistently imply that verifiable facts and evidence are merely assertions of the descendants: "*They say* the federal government, under pressure from Edmonton's white settlers, tricked three of their ancestors," – which, simply put, the government did – "The land has been developed to the point where it is worth at least \$2.5 billion, *they say*" – could this dollar value be verified? – "The *Edmonton Bulletin* newspaper, owned by politician Frank Oliver, launched an aggressive public relations offensive at the time that *natives say* proved very damaging to their rights" – Oliver *did* launch such a media campaign with the explicit intent of removing the Band and opening the land, so the campaign *was* damaging – "*The natives claim* Indian Affairs 'maliciously and arbitrarily' reclassified 84 band members in 1880 as 'Edmonton Stragglers' to reduce the band's population" – the decision *was* apparently arbitrary and did reduce the number of band members (and when contextualized in light of Chief Papaschase's resistance strategies, appear to indeed be malicious on the part of the government agent). Curry refers to Lameman as "one of five status Indians" suing Ottawa, a decontextualized classification that erases the reasons why some Indigenous peoples, and more specifically decedents of Papaschase Band members, no longer have Indian status, as well as making some claim to Lameman's and her co-plaintiffs' authenticity or authority – *as* Status Indians. Curry claims that "800 people have signed affidavits *claiming* to have *some ethnic connection* to the band" – a statement that, in emphasizing ethnicity, ignores the complex ways Cree bands defined citizenship prior to the Indian Act, as well as the inherent right of Indigenous peoples to choose membership based on factors beyond ethnicity. Finally, though Curry quotes Ron Maurice, a lawyer for the Band, he only allows Band members to speak indirectly, paraphrasing their "claims." The descendants launching the lawsuit are not

allowed to speak for themselves. Such instances of indirect speech (via paraphrasing) are examples of how, according to Proulx, reporters “manage the readers’ perceptions and their definition of the situation.”⁹⁵ As a result, the perspectives of Papaschase members are silenced and contemporary readers unfamiliar with the case are not given a fair chance to form an opinion on the court’s decision.

Columnist Lorne Gunter – being, evidently, an expert in Aboriginal law – handed down his assessment of the land claim in the *Edmonton Journal* on April 4, 2008, in a column titled, “Too late for 120-year-old case,” with the sub-headline, “As memories fade and stories differ, Papaschase claim *rightly* rejected by court.”⁹⁶ (After reading the *Journal*’s headline, how are readers to believe anything other than the Court’s decision being somehow right or just? On what basis/knowledge/arguments is Gunter’s apparently authoritative judgment made?) Though he acknowledges the case is not “clear-cut,” Gunter writes: “The preponderance of official evidence indicates the bands that once had lands that are now part of the city or suburbs long ago gave up those parcels and were justly compensated for them.” Gunter’s choice of the phrase “long ago” ignores historical specificity (why does he not cite specific years or dates?) and the fact that these events actually occurred, relatively speaking, not that long ago. He ignores our present-day responsibilities to the actions of our ancestors in the past (regardless of how distant in the past those actions took place) and from the outset of his column relegates these events to ‘the mists of time.’ Gunter does not refer to the land in question as a reserve, but simply as “parcels.” He erroneously claims that band members and their descendants were compensated for the land (this being the one and only detail the provincial and federal courts reasoned to be questionable, i.e.: that the band was indeed fairly compensated).

Further, his reference to the “official evidence” ignores and even denigrates Papaschase descendants’ knowledge or opinions of their own history, and fails to take into account the “official evidence” that indeed supports the Band’s claim (cited throughout this chapter).

“There may have been few compunctions about dissolving nearby reserves and rushing the aboriginals away,” writes Gunter, reflecting on the fact that in the late nineteenth century commerce was expanding and “white settlers were piling into the immediate vicinity.” The evidence suggests that local officials indeed had little compunction about dissolving reserves and removing Indigenous peoples. Gunter continues: “At the same time, it is not clear that native bands always wanted to keep their lands. Some, *undoubtedly*, were only too happy to get away from the expanding city.” Gunter’s claim that Native people did not want land on which to live is certainly false; his claim that “undoubtedly” some Band members “were only too happy” to leave the Edmonton area is not attributed to any evidence or source. Regardless, the fact that Papaschase band members had to be forced off the reserve indicates their desire to live on it, which is a right acknowledged by treaty, and in the end means nothing to the present land claim, in which descendants were explicitly arguing for the right to keep their land! “Many natives abandoned their reserves,” writes Gunter, without citing numbers or other concrete evidence/examples, ignoring the limited choices Cree people had at the time, and forgetting that even apparently “abandoned” reserves would have required *legal* surrender under Canadian law.

Gunter, perhaps with all the empathy he can muster, and relying no doubt on his understanding of historical theory, writes: “The truth about what happened,” – as though there is one truth, one clearly accurate and correct version of events – “almost certainly lies

in that grey area between the official version and the modern aboriginal victimology that their ancestors were robbed and tricked by unscrupulous whites.” Gunter puts “the official version” (i.e. the “truth about what happened”?) in opposition to “modern aboriginal victimology,” and thus erases the very real histories, experiences, ongoing realities of – and Indigenous peoples’ historical and continuous efforts to recover from – settler colonialism in what became Canada. Gunter certainly implies that the Papaschase band’s claim for compensation falls on the “victimology” end of the spectrum. For Gunter, unlike those of us who take years to assemble and assess evidence, “the official records are clear.” These official records are easily summarized: “The Papaschase band gave up its reserve nearly 120 years ago. Its members either moved to the Enoch Reserve or scattered.” That the Band’s members “scattered” should give us reason to pause: we are talking about people removed and dispersed from their homes, their land, from life as they knew it. We might, like Gunter, attribute any sore feelings about this to “aboriginal victimology” and collectively move on. Or we might not.

Gunter itemizes notable landmarks on the land that was once the reserve, such as malls and schools and part of Anthony Henday Drive. He also points out that “ironically” more than a dozen neighbourhoods in the land claim area “have native or native-related names” including Tipaskan, which “is actually Cree for reserve.” Lost on our budding linguist is that *tipahaskân* “is actually” the term for a reserve that is most palatable to white ears, as opposed to *iskonikan* (portion, leftover land) or *askîhkân* (fake/artificial land, as the –*kân* suffix refers to something that is artificial or man-made).⁹⁷ Gunter proceeds to quote from documents filed with the Supreme Court to provide a lengthy (by newspaper standards) one-paragraph description of the land claim. He then states, “The native

version,” as though there is *just one*, “is a little less cut and dried.” He then provides the URLs for “two good versions” (via the website of the Maurice Law firm and the Papaschase band itself). He does not state his criteria for assessing what makes a “good” version, nor does he define what would, could, or should be cut and dried in relation to such matters. Quoting from the Supreme Court document on one side, while merely directing readers to an internet site for the other, clearly privileges one version, and we must ask how many readers (particularly of the print version of the newspaper) in 2008 would bother to visit these websites. Regardless, and based again on qualifications he does not directly state (a degree in History? Native Studies? Law? Lengthy, in-depth research into any or all of the above?), Gunter writes: “Ultimately, I find the aboriginal versions less credible.” Why? “Their chronologies seem out of order.” However, rather than provide examples or cogent analysis of how this is the case, Gunter writes: “Ottawa’s agents at the time, though, said they knew for a fact that most of the 10 or so adult men living there [i.e. on Indian Reserve 136] in 1886 left with the chief and that many could be found at Enoch.” Why our knowledgeable columnist refers to a vague “10 or so” adult men is unclear, as is his reason for not stating that the reason those individuals “left” was because they were forcibly removed. Gunter concludes: “Therefore, the three still remaining in 1889 would have constituted a majority making the sale proper.” Even if the sale were “proper,” it certainly was not just. On this matter, Gunter writes: “As I mentioned above, Ottawa’s Indian agents were not above cooking the books a bit to cover hurried or resisted land sales. But even if they did (which does not appear to be the case here), we will never know the truth.” He does not cite one concrete example of Indian agents ‘cooking the books’ even though he claimed it happened. His claim that any charge of ‘cooking the books’ “does not appear to

be the case here” is not supported by any evidence or even argument, it is simply stated as fact. His simple conclusion that “we will never know the truth” eases every settler’s (and perhaps *Journal* reader’s) conscience: Is someone at fault? Should someone be compensated? How can we know “the truth”? We simply cannot, according to Gunter’s ruling. And, therefore, in lieu of seeking the truth that cannot be found, justice has been served.

“Whose history is correct: aboriginal, government or neither?” Gunter asks. (And I presume, rather than “aboriginal,” Gunter means Cree, seeing as we are referring to a specific Cree band in this instance, not a vague category of “aboriginals.”) Gunter concludes that the existence of such a question “is why we have limitation statutes.” “This may seem unfair to the plaintiffs, but the court was correct,” our well-informed and obviously empathetic columnist writes. (Again: what are Gunter’s qualifications for assessing Supreme Court cases on matters of Aboriginal rights?) Gunter concludes his column with the following sage words: “Since the truth fades with time, delayed claims that are allowed to proceed *often* lead to decisions that are unfair to the defendants.” A fitting conclusion: if the case were “allowed to proceed” the defendants (in this case, the Crown as proxy for well-meaning Canadian settlers) would, based on precedents not cited, but implied by Gunter as *often* taking place, be unfair to Canada/settlers. And the reason why such unfairness should not be allowed: because “the truth fades with time.” As an unofficial member of the Supreme Court of Canada, Gunter surely upholds the party line using such sad clichés.

Journalists from the 1880s and 2000s rely on the same rhetorical removals, as do, apparently, the Edmonton settlers’ rights movement and the Supreme Court of Canada. For

well over 100 years in this region, rhetorical removals have been employed to dismember and dispossess Indigenous peoples of their treaty lands. The denial of peoples' right to tribal nationhood and treaty rights, their right to ancestral lands, cultural recovery, spiritual expression and to fulfill kinship obligations has all taken place out in the open, explicitly, and has been undertaken by some of the most prominent people in Edmonton, from Frank Oliver – who has at least a dozen monuments celebrating him in the city – to recent columnists in the daily newspaper (and don't forget the Supreme Court!). Whether or not the "truth" actually does fade with time (Gunter) or facts can indeed be "shrouded in the mists of time" (McLachlin et al.), the descendants of the Papaschase band were denied a just hearing in the courts, and were thus denied both compensation and land. They were denied their inheritance as treaty people. It would appear in Edmonton in 2008, as in 1882, "there is nothing to be gained by being Indians."

Chapter Eight

“Our Newly-Stirred Consciousness of Nationhood”:

Early 20th Century Political Organizing and Rhetorical Resistance

If the spirit of loyalty should die out amongst us, Indian national life would have no meaning; we would only be small and separate bands of people.

- Edward Ahenakew (Ahtahkakoop Cree Nation)¹

The previous chapter examined the ways the treaty relationship was undermined in Amiskwacî in the years immediately following the Treaty Six negotiations. Using Daniel Heath Justice’s theoretical lens of rhetorical removals, I exposed the ways politicians, Supreme Court justices, and journalists – over the course of thirteen decades – dispossessed Nêhiyawak of their treaty territories in Amiskwacî. I also attempted to illustrate the acts of resistance on the part of Chief Papaschase, acts that were both physical and rhetorical testaments to Cree sovereignty. In this chapter, I would like to turn to early twentieth century acts of rhetorical resistance, looking at the interrelated political organizing and writing of the first generation of Nêhiyawak to grow up in the Indian Act era. In doing so, I will look at ways that Indigenous political organizers used the language of nationhood and nationalism to unify Indigenous peoples in seeking a more balanced and just relationship with the Canadian government. I would characterize this as the first modern, nationalist Indigenous resurgence movement. Once again, the movement was strongly supported and defined by Nêhiyawak. First, I would like to situate this political organizing and writing within broader theorizing of righteous anger and resistance writing.

Seeing Red: Theorizing and Historicizing Indigenous Resistance Writing

“Rebels don’t play at re-writing history; they make history by taking to the streets, peacefully at times, violently at times, but always in paramilitary style – conscious that it is

a fight to the finish,” writes Lee Maracle (Stó:lō) in her essay, “The Rebel.” “While the educated Natives sit in comfy, respectable kitchens, amicably discussing the historical options open to our people and trying to conceive of the best possible deal they can finagle from the State on our behalf, the rebels are honing their knives in joyous anticipation of the final day of reckoning.”² No doubt many of us, frustrated with the current order, wish to be sitting at a kitchen table like the one Maracle describes. On the other hand, a more nuanced theory of anti-colonial violence may best complement this chapter’s analysis of Cree political writing as resistance. Taiaiake Alfred suggests that, rather than armed resistance directed at settlers, Indigenous peoples might “choose to perform rites of resurgence.”³ For Alfred, physical violence is not the best option for Indigenous peoples because, for instance, it turns many people against Indigenous struggles and it is contrary to an Indigenous ethic – enshrined in numerous treaties – of peaceful coexistence.⁴ However, he does support righteous anger as a tactic of resistance: “Raw anger against the settler society is potentially a good thing because it is a force capable of driving us to action – altruistic action.” Anger, he writes, “must be restrained and channeled through a deliberate and voluntary discipline. ... [I]t may be that the most suitable term is *non-violent militancy*, meaning remaining firm in the face of fear, doing what is necessary for what is right, yet not allowing negative thoughts and emotions to control us.”⁵ Alfred’s conception of non-violent militancy might perfectly describe the resistance writing of Nêhiyawak analyzed in this chapter.

Adam Gaudry (Métis) defines a similar concept, insurgent research, as rooted in Indigenous methodologies in four ways. Insurgent research employs Indigenous worldviews, orients knowledge creation toward Indigenous peoples and communities,

emphasizes scholarly responsibility exclusively toward communities, and “promotes community-based action that targets the demise of colonial interference within our lives and communities.”⁶ Like the Indigenous scholars quoted in previous sections on methodology, Gaudry’s approach involves responsibility to communities and emphasizes community empowerment toward anti-colonial action. Resistance writing, like insurgent research should be focused on “an insurgency – a collective challenge to the oppressive status quo ... carried out at the grassroots.”⁷ I cannot think of a better way to describe the work of Edward Ahenakew and the League of Indians following World War I. However, more context on resistance writing is necessary prior to examining that moment of insurgency.

In his book, *Writing Home: Indigenous Narratives of Resistance* (2008), Michael D. Wilson writes that Indigenous peoples “have a long history of voicing resistance through literature to destructive policies and attitudes of colonialism.”⁸ Scholar Barbara Harlow, writing in a Palestinian context, notes that resistance literature is defined by “a people’s collective relationship to a common land, a common identity, or a common cause” and “presupposes furthermore an ‘occupying power’ which has either exiled or subjugated, in this case both exiled and subjugated, a given population and has in addition significantly intervened in the literary and cultural development of the people it has dispossessed and whose lands it has occupied. Literature, in other words, is presented by the critic as an arena of *struggle*.”⁹ Surely we can see parallels with the situation in the western hemisphere; North American Indigenous writers have repeatedly, since they began writing in European languages, asserted their relationship to a common land, and often, a common identity and common cause (decolonization, anti-colonialism, restitution, resurgence, etc.)

and are certainly using writing as an arena of struggle against the dispossession of the people and occupation of their lands. According to Emma LaRocque (Plains Cree Metis), “a critical review of contemporary Native writing shows that Natives have been resisting colonizing practices as long as they have been writing.”¹⁰ Certainly exile and occupation have altered the cultural and literary trajectory of Nêhiyawak, as well as other Indigenous peoples and tribal-nations in the Americas. Harlow quotes Palestinian writer and critic Ghassan Kanafani in making a crucial point; in 1966, Kanafani wrote: “No research of this kind [i.e.: into resistance literature] can be complete unless the researcher is located within the resistance movement itself inside the occupied land, taking his testimony from the place in which it is born, lives, and is propagated: the lips of the people.”¹¹ (Hence, the situatedness of this thesis in one of the places where the struggle for Nêhiyaw autonomy is ongoing.) Harlow continues: “Resistance literature calls attention to itself, and to literature in general, as a political and politicized activity. ... Whereas the social and the personal have tended to displace the political in western literary and cultural studies, the emphasis in the literature of resistance is on the political as the power to change the world. The theory of resistance literature is in its politics.”¹² Indigenous fiction and non-fiction writers have in many cases called attention to the explicitly political nature of their works.

This thesis aims to pair the concrete political struggles of Nêhiyawak for autonomy and liberation along with the oratory and writing that have been part of these struggles. Part of this project is a reclamation of interpretations of the past; Harlow quotes writer and political leader Amílcar Cabral: “The national liberation of a people is the regaining of the historical personality of that people, it is their return to history through the destruction of the imperialist domination to which they have been subjected.”¹³ On this point, Harlow

concludes: “The struggle over the historical record is seen from all sides as no less crucial than the armed struggle.”¹⁴ In a book on what she terms “Native resistance discourse,” LaRocque comments on the applicability of Harlow’s definition of resistance literature to Indigenous nations in what became Canada: “Certainly, many Native works cannot be considered works of resistance in the tradition of liberationist Third World thinkers and writers or the explosive American Black writers of the 1960s, such as Eldridge Cleaver or Malcolm X, but, as I have argued, a simple assertion of one’s (Native) humanity is a form of resistance, given the magnitude of dehumanization over a span of 500 years.”¹⁵ I agree with LaRocque’s latter point. Although there has (yet) been no widespread textual argument for armed rebellion against the Canadian state (perhaps aside from Louis Riel, who LaRocque cites as the closest example we have in Canada to Harlow’s definition), Cree writers, like those analyzed in this thesis, have indeed engaged in discourse that rivals “Third World” and Black Power writings.

LaRocque echoes many of the literary nationalists cited in Chapter Three when she writes of the need to recognize, or even emphasize, the importance of politics to Indigenous writing: “Native writing is much more the story of strategic contestation than it is of ethnographic testaments, and when cultural information is provided it is usually a device of contestation.”¹⁶ Further, LaRocque asserts that the separation of writing/scholarship from politics and personal experience (i.e.: apparent scholarly “objectivity”) is contrary to Plains Cree-Metis philosophy: “[S]uch airs of detachment are in direct contrast to my Plains Cree-Metis socialization, which encourages integration between the ‘self’ and the ‘word.’ ... One’s own voice is never totally one’s self, in isolation from community.”¹⁷ We see again Nêhiyaw values of *miyo-wâhkôhtowin* (good relationships) in action and it would appear that

LaRocque's statement aligns with Jace Weaver's notion of communitism (community + activism).

A discussion of overtly politicized scholarship and resistance writing toward liberation must reference anger as an anti-colonial literary device. LaRocque resists the pathologization (by some settler-colonial critics) of appropriately used anger on the part of oppressed writers:

'Anger' as used by oppressed people is not a psychological problem to be diffused by therapy; it is not just a feeling, it is an expression of moral outrage against injustice. ... Of course, anger can be dangerous. Oppressed people in a politically unaware state tend to internalize this anger and turn it upon themselves. Then, too, it can be externalized and turned into a revolution (as Fanon so brilliantly explicated), and so is threatening to all, perhaps even more so for the colonizer.¹⁸

In her book, *Seeing Red* (2008), non-Native literary scholar Cari M. Carpenter analyzes the literary categories of anger and sentimentality and how Indigenous women writers mobilized these in 19th century works. Surveying some of the secondary literature on anger, Carpenter notes the relationship between anger and power, that anger is often a response to something that has been denied or taken away. "The degree of entitlement that one is thought to possess relates to one's race and gender; those in 'variant' categories are more likely to be judged as inappropriately hostile than those in the 'norm.'"¹⁹ LaRocque suggests, in light of the history of over 500 years of brutal colonization by settler-colonizers, evidenced most horrifically by the dramatic loss of population suffered by Indigenous nations in the Americas "should put into perspective how restrained Native peoples have been in their resistance."²⁰ Physical restraint, as Alfred points out, is an ethic of a disciplined warrior. In addition to force, Nêhiyawak have also used words to resist ongoing Canadian colonialism.

In her book, *Killing Rage* (1995), African American scholar bell hooks reflects on a sequence of personal “racialized incidents,” moments when black women (herself included) were subjected to racist treatment at the hands of whites.²¹ Sitting on an airplane beside a white man who had been complicit in one of these racialized incidents, hooks writes: “I felt a ‘killing rage.’ I wanted to stab him softly, to shoot him with the gun I wished I had in my purse. And as I watched his pain, I would say to him tenderly ‘racism hurts.’”²² hooks asserts that white people must become able to hear black rage; that rage has been repressed and contained and becomes “reserved for life at home – for one another.”²³ hooks writes of the positive uses of rage:

Confronting my rage, witnessing the way it moved me to grow and change, I understood intimately that it had the potential not only to destroy but also to construct. Then and now I understand rage to be a necessary aspect of resistance struggle. Rage can act as a catalyst inspiring courageous action. By demanding that black [or Indigenous] people repress and annihilate our rage to assimilate, to reap the benefits of material privilege in white supremacist capitalist patriarchal culture, white folks urge us to remain complicit with their efforts to colonize, oppress, and exploit.²⁴

hooks forcefully urges oppressed people to resist material comfort in favour of struggle against white peoples’ overwhelming “refusal to acknowledge accountability for racist conditions past and present.”²⁵ For hooks, whites offer victimhood as a placebo for oppressed peoples’ rage and “encourage passivity by rewarding those black folks who whine, grovel, beg, and obey.” Having oppressed people feeling and acting like victims “comforts many whites precisely because it is the antithesis of activism.”²⁶ hooks links rage and militancy to social transformation: “As long as black rage continues to be represented as always and only evil and destructive, we lack a vision of militancy that is necessary for transformative revolutionary action.”²⁷ In the analysis of the League of Indians and Edward Ahenakew’s writing that follows, I will argue that early 20th century Indigenous writers

and activists in Canada (like their ancestors) sought societal transformation over victimhood, self-determination over charity, righteous anger over assimilation.

“My response to racism is anger,” writes Audre Lorde. “I have lived with that anger, ignoring it, feeding upon it, learning to use it before it laid my visions to waste, for most of my life.”²⁸ In her well-known essay on anger, racism, and feminism, Lorde writes:

Every woman has a well-stocked arsenal of anger potentially useful against those oppressions, personal and institutional, which brought that anger into being. Focused with precision it can become a powerful source of energy serving progress and change. And when I speak of change, I do not mean a simple switch of positions or a temporary lessening of tensions, nor the ability to smile or feel good. I am speaking of a basic and radical alteration in those assumptions underlining our lives.²⁹

Social transformation cannot be about merely “a simple switch of positions” – e.g., having more Indigenous members of a colonial Parliament – but rather a complete reorganization of society. Writing years before hooks and LaRocque, Lorde affirmed the importance of anger in struggles against racism and white supremacy: “Any discussion among women about racism must include the recognition and the use of anger. ... We cannot allow our fear of anger to deflect us nor seduce us into settling for anything less than the hard work of excavating honesty ... Anger is an appropriate reaction to racist attitudes, as is fury when the actions arising from those attitudes do not change.”³⁰ Likewise, Carpenter refers to the importance of anger to 1970s feminist movements, stating that “women’s anger [can be viewed] as a vital tool for their empowerment.”³¹ Carpenter quotes Carol Tavris, whose statement about women’s anger can also apply to other oppressed groups: “Rage, I believe, is essential to the first phase of a social movement. It unifies disparate members of the group against a common enemy; the group becomes defined by its anger.”³² I would not argue that a majority of Indigenous movements in North America were “defined” by anger; however, the following investigation of the League of Indians will evidence how having a

common “enemy” (i.e.: the colonizing forces of Canada and its non-Indigenous citizens) did work to unify diverse bands and First Nations, with varying degrees of success.

Carpenter notes how the 19th century women authors she analyzes used themes of anger and sentimentality to argue “in the defense of an Indigenous nationhood.”³³

Carpenter states that political writing and activism were not born in the 1960s, rather, the turn of the 20th century “witnessed Indigenous protest literature and other forms of political activism, such as the Métis rebellions in Canada. These actions are an important, and often overlooked, element of the late 1800s.”³⁴ (Once again, a USA literary critic looks to Plains Indigenous history for an example of political resistance to settler invasion and occupation.) Carpenter’s link between anger, activism, writing, and nationhood proves useful for the following analysis of early 20th century Indigenous political organizing in Canada, as organizers like Frederick Loft and writers like Edward Ahenakew made similar connections to argue for Indigenous autonomy and in defense of nationhood (both pan-Indigenous and tribally-specific).

Early 20th Century Indigenous Political Action and Writing

“The period from 1885 to the First World War was one of relative political inactivity for the Nêhiyawak,” writes Neal McLeod in *Cree Narrative Memory*. “Many people were simply in survival mode, dealing with mainstream culture and the continual erosion of their land base.”³⁵ Of course, in the face of attempted cultural and physical genocide at the height of the residential school era, survival is indeed a political activity; likely McLeod is referring to recognizable political organizing and resistance like what had existed prior to increased Canadian suppression of Plains Indigenous peoples after the resistance at Frog Lake (*ê-mâyahkamikahk*, “where it went wrong”) and throughout the Northwest.³⁶ “But there were

still elders who could remember in precise detail the times before the reserve period; these keepers of ancestral memory refused to be overwhelmed and sought younger people to hold and pass on the ancient memory.”³⁷ This chapter aims to document the central role of Nêhiyawak in Indigenous struggles against the Canadian state in the period following World War I. In particular, Cree writers played a major role in articulating a national (sometimes pan-Indigenous) rhetoric advocating autonomy and an end to the government’s brutal assimilation policy, the Indian Act, forced enfranchisement and the residential school system.

At the Treaty Six negotiations, on the subject of military service, commissioner Alexander Morris promised Nêhiyawak: “In case of war you ask not to be compelled to fight. I trust there will be no war, but if it should occur I think the Queen would leave you to yourselves. I am sure she would not ask her Indian children to fight for her unless they wished.”³⁸ Despite this promise, large numbers of Indigenous people voluntarily enlisted and fought in the First World War. According to Timothy C. Winegard, 24,062 Indians enlisted in the Canadian military as of November 1916, or 4.9% of the male Indian population between the ages of 16 and 65.³⁹ According to McLeod, military service both raised Indigenous peoples’ expectations of how they should be treated in Canada and also inspired them to seek aspects of Canadian citizenship that they had been denied. McLeod writes: “At the same time, [Nêhiyawak] wanted to protect their treaty rights and maintain their status as a separate nation.”⁴⁰ However, returning Indigenous veterans found little had changed in Canada while they were fighting it war. As Winegard writes in *For King and Kanata* (2012), “Indian soldiers returned to the position of unwanted peoples and did not receive equitable treatment as veterans. ... Indians accrued little direct benefit from service,

aside from military pay or the fulfillment of individual motivations for enrolment.”⁴¹

Winegard documents how, for example, Indigenous veterans received unequal pensions and were often not approved for the financial or land grants to which they applied.

Ironically, at the same, time returning non-Indigenous veterans received thousands of acres of “unused” reserve land that were sold or confiscated under the *Soldier Settlement Act*.⁴² Returning to racism and mistreatment in Canada, a number of veterans used their war service as a way to advocate for a different relationship with the country for which they served.

A new national political organization, The League of Indians, was one such way that Indigenous peoples advocated for themselves better treatment by the government as well as recognition of the autonomy of Indigenous nations. The League was, according to historian Peter Kulchyski, “largely the construct of one man, Frederick Ogilvie Loft.”⁴³ Loft, a Kanien'kehá:ka war veteran from Ohsweken (Six Nations of the Grand River) was concerned about Canada’s Indian policy, including the 1911 amendments to the Indian Act, also known as the Oliver Act. Named after Edmonton’s Frank Oliver, then Minister of the Interior and Superintendent-General of Indian Affairs, which allowed a judge to issue a court order to move a reserve within or adjoining a municipality if it was “expedient” to do so. The consent of the band was not required. Similarly, Oliver’s 1906 Indian Act amendment allowed up to 50% of the proceeds from a surrender or sale to be distributed immediately to band members.⁴⁴ These two amendments were aimed directly at dispossessing bands of their treaty lands. A Toronto newspaper covered the League’s founding meeting, December 20, 1918 at Ohsweken:

The foremost issue and discussion was the fear so generally entertained by all delegates, the possible operation of the so-called Oliver Act which makes it possible

to remove bands from their ancient and cherished homes by sale of their lands even though it may be against their will and protest. This is regarded as a serious encroachment upon their tribal rights and liberties secured to them in ancient covenants and treaties with the British Government.

They are seriously apprehensive in the possible violation of their lands by the introduction of measures to dissolve their communities of ownership, which seems to be the only safeguard against their final disintegration and eventual national extinction.⁴⁵

From the outset, the League had an Edmonton connection as delegates expressed anxieties over Oliver's Indian Act amendments. These anxieties were expressed in terms of treaty rights and the long-term survival of Indigenous communities on Indigenous-controlled lands.

Loft's political organizing across the country took a nationalist tone. He sent letters to reserves across the country urging their citizens to support the League's efforts, "to stabilize our interests, protect and advance them in ways that will be of national benefit":

We as Indians, from one end of the Dominion to the other, are sadly strangers to each other; we have not learned what it is to co-operate and work for each other as we should; the pity of it is greater because our needs, drawbacks, handicaps and troubles are all similar. It is for us to do something to get out of these sad conditions. The day is past when one band or a few bands can successfully – if at all – free themselves from the domination of officialdom and from being ever the prey and victims of unscrupulous means of depriving us of our lands and homes, and even deny us of the rights we are entitled to as free men under the British Flag.

Loft appealed to leaders for unity based on their common oppression at the hands of the government and their common strength: their treaty lands. He also drew on their treaty relationship and appealed to unity under their common rights as allies of the British Crown. Loft's letter outlined the aims of the League:

The first aim of the League then is to claim and protect the rights of all Indians in Canada by legitimate and just means; second, absolute control in retaining possession or disposition of our lands; that all questions and matters relative to individual and national wellbeing of Indians shall rest with the people and their dealing with the Government shall be by and through their respective band Councils at all times to be consulted, and their wishes respected ...

The League aimed, then, to legitimately protect Indigenous rights and lands and did so from a pan-Indigenous position, while maintaining the autonomy and authority of individual citizens and band councils. (Loft's focus on unity rooted in band autonomy must have appealed to Nêhiyawak, which may explain why the League had success organizing in the west). Loft's letter continues:

Union then has started it; it is for all who are not yet members to join with the forces to create a permanent national brotherhood with a great national policy of progress and advancement to lift ourselves up by our own efforts to better conditions, morally, socially, politically and industrially. The aim also is to demand better educational advantages for our children, also to encourage our people to be farmers, stay on the land and work it, for it is the most independent way of living. We will co-operate with the Government, but we must have its sympathy, encouragement and assistance so as to make good. To force or coerce us will do no good; justice and fair dealing is what we ask for. We are men, not imbeciles; from our view and standpoint we must be heard as a nation when we have to speak for ourselves.⁴⁶

The League's aims clearly reflect a desire to be modern and autonomous Indigenous peoples, independent and industrious, educated and rooted in Indigenous territories. Indeed, historian Brian Titley calls Loft's circular "an impassioned and articulate appeal for autonomy."⁴⁷ Loft expresses a desire to be encouraged and assisted by the government – not coerced or oppressed by it – in a manner reminiscent of the chief's requests during Treaty Six negotiations. His reference to "a permanent national brotherhood" prefigures the National Indian Brotherhood established in the 1960s, and situates the League's aims firmly in nationalist discourse.

The League's first national convention was held in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario in 1919 (when the above aims were drafted), with subsequent conventions held in Manitoba (1920), Saskatchewan (1921), and at Samson Cree Nation (Maskwacîs, 1922) where 1500 delegates were in attendance. Conventions were also held in Ontario (1925) and Saskatchewan (1928).⁴⁸ Loft's activities with the League quickly drew the attention and ire

of Duncan Campbell Scott, deputy superintendent of Indian Affairs. When League circulars began appearing on reserves, Indian agents notified Scott, suggesting that these were “causing considerable unrest among the Indians.”⁴⁹ The Department of Indian affairs began denying Indigenous leaders’ requests for funds to host and travel to League meetings.⁵⁰ Scott’s attacks soon turned personally against Loft. In June 1920, Scott wrote: “it would seem essential that the Department should as far as possible curb or at least keep informed as to Loft’s activities.”⁵¹ In October of that year, Scott took the unusual step to personally recommend Loft for enfranchisement under the recently amended Indian Act.⁵² To this, Loft responded in writing:

It is my desire most respectfully to submit to you my most earnest dissent and disapproval of being enfranchised, on principle and ethics of it which involves denationalization. ... For the sake of my race I hold exceptional pride in my present status. ... We should be encouraged rather than discouraged by being made alien by force of law to foreswear our nationality.⁵³

Loft forcefully framed his dissent in terms of nationhood: that enfranchisement (i.e.: Canadian citizenship) would make him an alien in his own nation. He defended his Indian Status, not because it was fair and just, but because it guaranteed him the rights of citizenship in his own nation; enfranchisement would have forced him off his reserve territory, and denied him access to his community. He reminded Scott that Indigenous peoples should be encouraged to maintain their proper citizenship, not to foreswear their nationalities. (Loft was able to withstand this attempt, and maintained his Status.)

Throughout the 1920s, the Indian department attempted to limit Loft’s organizing abilities.⁵⁴ W. M. Graham, the Indian Commissioner at Regina, wrote to Scott in 1921:

“Would it not be advisable to prohibit this man from visiting Reserves, for meetings of such a nature must tend to unsettle the Indians?”⁵⁵ In response, the Indian department

monitored Loft's activities and deployed the RCMP to conduct surveillance. Scott ordered the RCMP to patrol the Samson Cree Nation in 1922 "during the week of the meeting of the League of Indians, and for a few days thereafter."⁵⁶ J. D. McLean, the assistant deputy and secretary of Indian Affairs, wrote to an Indian agent in Quebec: "I would state that you should warn your Indians that it is not in their interests to encourage any Indian of another reserve to come amongst them with the object of disaffecting them against the Government. If you find that such an [*sic*] one uses seditious language it might be advisable to lay an information against him before a magistrate."⁵⁷ Clearly, the League posed a significant threat to Indian Affairs hegemony; the archival correspondence contains numerous references to fears that the League was attempting to turn First Nations people against the Canadian government. Responding to a proposed League meeting in July 1928 at the James Smith First Nation, Scott wrote to Graham in Regina: "While it is annoying, I do not think that we can prevent this affair, but I would like you to have an Inspector go there. I have also asked the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to detail two of their men to be present at the proceedings."⁵⁸ Much to Scott's admitted annoyance, Loft could not legally be stopped, whether by enfranchisement or the outright repression of meetings on reserves. However, by 1927, Loft had moved to Chicago to attend to his wife who was ill.⁵⁹

As Kulchyski notes, the formation of the League took place during the first years of the Canadian state's hegemony and prior to the 1951 amendments to the Indian Act when some of the most oppressive measures were altered. Kulchyski writes: "the League's struggle represents an early attempt at structured, non-violent opposition to the Canadian state." He correctly suggests that it was early 20th century political organizing that led to the formation of provincial and national advocacy bodies that culminated in the 1960s.

(The Indian Association of Alberta were an off-shoot of the League of Indians of Western Canada, and the roots of the National Indian Brotherhood/Assembly of First Nations can certainly be traced to the League.)⁶⁰ According to Kulchyski, by the time Loft had moved to Chicago (he later returned to Toronto, where he died in 1934), the League strengthened considerably in the west. The 1931 convention at Saddle Lake, Alberta boasted an attendance of 1,344 delegates from Saskatchewan and Alberta, and western conventions were subsequently held in 1932 (again at Saddle Lake) and 1933 (at Poundmaker Reserve and in Duffield, Alberta).⁶¹ Neal McLeod writes that the League of Indians was promoted and led in the west by Edward Ahenakew, who was born at the Ahtahkakoop Cree Nation (Sandy Lake Reserve).⁶² Ahenakew held elected positions in the League, and served as president of the Saskatchewan chapter beginning in 1934. Thus it is important to consider the League's aims and ideology as the background to Ahenakew's political fiction that I will analyze in the following section. Like Loft, Ahenakew advocated for pan-Indigenous unity, he called for First Nations to embrace modernity on their own terms, and he was also critical of how Canada held up its end of the Crown's Treaty Six and of Canada's residential school system.

Ahenakew's *Voices of the Plains Cree*

Voices of the Plains Cree by Edward Ahenakew (1885-1961) was compiled and published in 1973, and is comprised of two sections composed several decades earlier. The first section, narratives of kâ-pitikow (Chief Thunderchild, 1849-1927), were collected and translated from Nêhiyawêwin to English by Ahenakew during an extended stay on the Thunderchild Reserve in Saskatchewan in 1923. kâ-pitikow had been a follower of Mistahi Maskwa (Big Bear) in his resistance to Treaty Six, and Ahenakew was eager to record the Cree leader's

narratives.⁶³ The second section, which will be examined here, is entitled “Old Keyam” after the semi-autobiographical character of the same name created by Ahenakew.⁶⁴ Ahenakew defines keyam (kiyâm) as Cree for “What does it matter?” or “I do not care,” which “expresses the attitude of many Indians who stand bewildered in the maze of things, not knowing exactly what to do, and hiding their keen sense of defeat under the assumed demeanor of ‘keyam!’ – while in fact they do care greatly.”⁶⁵ The “Old Keyam” text was written while Ahenakew recovered from an illness – which he referred to as a “nervous breakdown” in a letter to his friend the scholar Paul Wallace – following three years studying medicine at the University of Alberta after the influenza epidemic of 1918, which was devastating to the Indigenous communities where Ahenakew had been living and working as an Anglican minister.⁶⁶ Perhaps it was stomach ulcers that caused Ahenakew to abandon his studies; David R. Miller proposes it was in fact food poisoning, referencing Ruth Buck’s 1973 introduction to *Voices of the Plains Cree*, who states that Ahenakew subsisted by eating frozen meat kept outside his U of A dorm window.⁶⁷

Miller suggests Ahenakew started to write in earnest after moving to Edmonton. According to Miller, Ahenakew belonged to a literary club where both he and Wallace – who became Ahenakew’s friend, collaborator, and a sort of literary agent – were students at the University of Alberta. Miller writes: “In Edmonton, Ahenakew’s participation in the local literary club, composed of people from the university and the local community, might have caused him to seriously consider writing, possibly as a means to supplement his meager income” as an Anglican minister.⁶⁸ Ahenakew moved to the Thunderchild Reserve to convalesce, where between 1921-23 he would visit the elderly Chief Thunderchild and record the stories that make up the first section of *Voices*. Images of Ahenakew’s notebook

in the published edition show that he recorded the chief's stories in both English and Cree syllabics.

While it is impossible to know when Ahenakew began formulating ideas for the "Old Keyam" manuscript, according to Miller and Stan Cuthand (Little Pine First Nation), Ahenakew had submitted it to Ryerson Press in Toronto prior to August 1922.⁶⁹ The press was experiencing financial difficulties, and according to archival research conducted by Brendan Edwards, publisher Lorne Pierce sought assistance from the Department of Indian Affairs to publish Ahenakew's manuscript. Edwards quotes a 1924 letter to Pierce from Duncan Campbell Scott regarding this request: "I regret very much that we would have no funds to meet your suggestion with reference to Mr. Ahenakew's manuscript, much as I would like to assist."⁷⁰ As we will see below, Ahenakew offered a stinging critique of the Indian Affairs department in "Old Keyam" and the author was clearly aligned with both Loft's ideas and the League of Indians. Thus, it should come as no surprise that, in Edwards's words, "Scott essentially quashed the publishing hopes of Ahenakew." The text was not published in the author's lifetime.

Ahenakew did see some of his work published: a collection titled "Cree Trickster Tales" in the *Journal of American Folklore* (1929) as well as the *Cree Monthly Guide*, which he edited and published in the Cree language for Cree-speaking Anglicans beginning in 1922. (The Guide's title page read: "A monthly paper published in the interests of the Cree nation" – another reference to Cree nationhood.)⁷¹ Edwards writes that the *Cree Monthly Guide* contained religious news and reflection, but also articles about politics, elections, the monarchy, and changes to the Indian Act; Edwards writes: "The vast majority of the content and commentary originated from Ahenakew's pen, and reflected his views and opinions."⁷²

It is clear that Ahenakew viewed writing and publishing as a way to engage with and inform Nêhiyawak – recall the *Guide* was published in Nêhiyawêwin – in a way that was overtly political, yet also beyond the reach of settlers who did not speak Cree. Writing, translating, and publishing were political and cultural activities, aimed at bringing Nêhiyawak and their traditions into the modern context. Ahenakew was also Richard Faries’s consultant for the revision of *Dictionary of the Cree Language* by E. A. Watkins (1865, repr. 1938).⁷³ Ruth Matheson Buck, who was a long-time friend of the Ahenakew family and daughter of the priest under whom Edward Ahenakew served, was given a small collection of the author’s papers and, according to Miller, “was given free rein to structure, order, shape, and edit the stories.”⁷⁴ Buck’s 1973 edited version was republished in 1995 with the introduction by Stan Cuthand.⁷⁵

Miller emphasizes Ahenakew’s “status as an Indigenous expert, akin to an elder’s role as an intellectual grandfather,” owing to his fluency in Nêhiyawêwin and because he had worked closely with Chief Thunderchild and elders.⁷⁶ (Recall the assertion of Walter Lightning, and others, that Cree knowledge be evaluated based on the knowledge-holder’s proximity to elders.) Miller asserts Ahenakew “had authentic knowledge.”⁷⁷ Both Cuthand and Deanna Reder (Cree-Métis) suggest how thoroughly “Old Keyam” is representative of the Cree rhetorical tradition. Cuthand, who knew the author personally, refers to Ahenakew’s “strong Cree upbringing.” According to Cuthand, “[Ahenakew] understood Cree thinking. He spoke Cree fluently and had a very good sense of humour. ... He had that Cree ethos.”⁷⁸ Reder argues that Ahenakew employs “specifically Cree concepts of relationship and authority” and that the text should be “considered as resistance literature full of coded messages for a Cree audience.” Drawing on the work of Maria Campbell (Cree-

Métis) and Winona Wheeler, Reder suggests, “it is only the Cree reader who can decipher Ahenakew’s embedded codes” which includes the author’s “references to sacred stories in High Cree.”⁷⁹ Thus we see in *Voices of the Plains Cree* an example of what Neal McLeod calls *nêhiyâwiwin*, or Cree-ness: “Within *nêhiyâwiwin*, people are constantly weaving their personal narratives and traditional narratives. My family’s stories were about surviving and remembering.”⁸⁰ According to McLeod, Cree narratives, in which *nêhiyâwiwin* is embedded, “provide the basis for an anti-colonial political imagination that struggles to preserve the Indigenous political perspective and identity.”⁸¹ I will argue that Ahenakew’s “Old Keyam” text offers us an explicitly anti-colonial critique rooted in *nêhiyâwiwin*. Such a reading is corroborated by Reder, who asserts, “reading the text with a knowledge of Cree philosophy has the potential to correct the wrongs of colonization.”⁸² As such, Ahenakew’s text is an excellent Plains Cree example of the work Indigenous literary nationalists have been examining as part of their decolonizing scholarly endeavors.⁸³

“Old Keyam” offers a glimpse of the socio-political life at an important time in Plains Indigenous history. Reder writes: “The character Keyam represents the early twentieth-century generation of *Nêhiyawak* who, unlike Chief Thunderchild, was born and raised on reserves and never knew the tribal life before colonization and the interfering presence of the Canadian state.”⁸⁴ This is significant because it is a perspective that has yet to be amplified in the creative and scholarly literature, the voices and experiences of the first and second generations to grow up on reserves and in the decades when the consequences of Treaty Six and its implementation were sure to be felt in Cree communities. Miller notes Keyam “personified a range of behaviour that, on the one hand, was pained and angry and, on the other, humorous and satirical. Ahenakew’s Keyam criticized manifestations of the

white man's sensitivities toward Indians that contributed to their dispossession but also voiced protest against the presumed passivity of Indians to the fates they often unwittingly accepted."⁸⁵ "Old Keyam" is thus a critique of settler-colonialism and what Ahenakew perceived as Indigenous peoples' acceptance of the new and unjust settler-Canadian order.

On Ahenakew's use of the character Keyam, Miller writes: "Certainly, Keyam was more than semi-autobiographical; rather, Ahenakew consciously constructed the persona as a literary device that would permit him to comment freely on a range of topics that would have been difficult for him to discuss directly. Ahenakew created Keyam, in part, to get around the church's censure of his political activities and its attempt to strangle his political voice." According to Cuthand, Ahenakew's bishop forced him to quit his activities with the League of Indians.⁸⁶ The Keyam character thus represents what Ahenakew himself wanted to say, and that he sought publication in the 1920s must be evidence of his desire to affect the opinions of his Cree and non-Indigenous audience as well as to influence Canadian government policy. I would argue that "Old Keyam" is the literary manifestation of the League of Indians started by Loft in 1919. Indeed, Keyam mentions the League in one of his stories and in doing so makes an explicit claim to Indigenous nationhood: "[The League] is the first such organization of Indians in Canada; it is a sign that we are thinking of being more than silent dependents, that we are ready to give expression to our newly-stirred consciousness of nationhood."⁸⁷ From Ahenakew's Plains Cree perspective, nationhood emerged out of the desire for pan-Indigenous unity across the country, the coming together of "tribes far apart, once unknown to each other." Much like autonomous bands made up the larger Plains Cree nation, the union of Indigenous nations across Canada would "give expression" to a pan-Indigenous nationhood.⁸⁸

Ahenakew points to not only the newly-stirred Indigenous nationhood as evidence of a growing anti-colonial consciousness, but also to Indigenous peoples taking a stance against paternalism and doing so in increasingly public ways. He writes: “[The Indian] will never again be content to stand aside like a child, with no voice whatsoever in matters that affect him. The spirit of unrest has taken hold of him, has stirred up in him desires that he never dared to express before. He chafes under the conditions that render him dumb before the public.”⁸⁹ Based on readings by Cuthand, Reder, and Miller, we should look at “Old Keyam” as a piece of resistance writing that is at once a biting critique of Canadian settler-colonialism and the Department of Indian Affairs, and at the same time, a rallying cry for Indigenous peoples to unite and assert their autonomy. As musicians, writers, and orators inspired and fuelled the Idle No More movement in the winter of 2012-2013, perhaps Ahenakew’s text might have done the same were it published during the height of League organizing in the 1920s.

In the first chapter, Keyam situates himself and his storytelling within the Cree rhetorical tradition. “I know that as the story-teller of this band, I tread but humbly and falteringly in the steps of those abler men of old who had great influence in the encampments. Their eloquence is not mine, for the song of the bird in the open tree is the one that brings true music to the ear, while that of the one in the cage is but a sad imitation.”⁹⁰ Keyam takes the rhetorical protocol of showing humility even further, noting that he must “tread humbly and falteringly” in relation to the past storytellers of his tradition, but acknowledging this is a result of colonization and the confinement of Nêhiyawak on reserves. His metaphorical reference to the caged bird’s song as being “but a sad imitation,” is made even more poignant by considering one Cree word for reserve:

askîhkân, fake or imitation land (the -kân suffix referring to something artificial). In fact, freedom and confinement are themes that run throughout “Old Keyam,” allowing Ahenakew (through Keyam) to directly challenge the policies of the Canadian state following the signing of Treaty Six: “We were to become farmers, it was decreed. ... But the Indians had been nomadic through countless centuries, through all our history; to settle down as farmers meant the complete reversal of habits bred into us by our previous way of life. ... We were hobbled like horses, limited to our reserves, and quite unfitted for any life outside.”⁹¹ Ahenakew’s metaphors of caged birds and hobbled horses illustrates the great difficulties faced by Nêhiyawak in the years immediately following Treaty Six: the people had their freedom limited by Canadian law and they were left to stumble on their reserves. For the storyteller Keyam, independence and freedom are virtues that are linked to the land and lifestyle of Plains peoples; taking the buffalo hunt and raids to enemy territories as examples, he says, “It is the nature of one’s country, its effect through many generations, that makes the difference in men. ... It was Plains Indians who had never been dependent upon the white man, and who had resisted Treaty as long as possible.”⁹² For Ahenakew, who had studied with kê-pitikow (a follower of Mistahi Maskwa), resisting the treaty was sign of independence and autonomy.

As Reder asserts, “Old Keyam” represents the power of Cree narrative to “correct the wrongs of colonization.” The old man tells his audience: “The imagination of the Indian can become so strong that it can create a world quite of its own, giving to scenes and events life that is not as others see it. Such imagination can be a blessing; we can create a wondrous place of our own out of this intensely real and sordid earth.”⁹³ Through Keyam, Ahenakew makes an explicit comment about the power of Cree rhetorical sovereignty and

rhetorical autonomy when he refers to creating a world and a place “of our own.” This place can exist both in Cree narrative (as evidenced by Ahenakew/Keyam) and in the physical world that is called into being through narrative, whether it is political circulars or fictionalized stories. Keyam uses narrative as a form of resistance: “When I talk to you, it is to make you know yourselves and your people; and sometimes I hope that my words may reach out to others in this country. Indians have been too long without a voice in the affairs of Canada ... Sometimes I feel I must shout to make these others hear; words burst out from me as though I were speaking directly to them, and not to you only.”⁹⁴ We hear a sense of urgency and even anger in Keyam’s voice – clearly not indifference as his name implies – as he addresses both Nêhiyawak and the broader Canadian society.

Further, Keyam encourages Nêhiyawak to employ vision in order to be self-determining: “I would not have Indians become white men in mind and feeling, yet you must change your outlook, you must learn to depend on yourselves. You who are young men should not look to the past in order to boast. The future is yours. Take it and hold it, with faith in your manhood, as Indians.”⁹⁵ Gender bias notwithstanding, Ahenakew is making a strong stand against assimilation, which is the opposite of autonomy. In one story, Keyam tells of a “progressive reserve,” whose people were peaceable and closely tied to the HBC, and who were now building their own church. On this reserve, the roads and houses were well-built, the people were farming, and the children attended school (“one is a clergyman; another has begun the study of medicine” – both could describe Ahenakew). “The young people mix freely with the white settlers.” Keyam tells his audience: “Why, it seemed to me, the last time I went to that reserve, that the Indians had even become a shade fairer in complexion. They have a fearless, and yet not an insolent look; a manner

more usual to Indians long ago, in the freedom of the plains.”⁹⁶ On one hand, Ahenakew jokes that the citizens of this progressive reserve are becoming fairer as they mingle with white settlers and build their own church. On the other hand, he links the peoples’ self-sufficiency and hard work to the ways and appearance of the ancestors, that they indeed do look more like the “Indians long ago” who enjoyed their freedom on the Plains. Assimilation is not the answer, but adaptation is; take hold of the future but do so “as Indians,” says Ahenakew, for whom this means hard work, independence, and self-reliance just as in the days prior to the treaty.

Though Keyam proposes that Nêhiyawak pursue education as one means of maintaining autonomy, he is incredibly critical of the residential school system, precisely because he thought it made Indigenous peoples less autonomous and more dependent on Canadian government authority. In one story, Keyam talks about watching a group of youth play soccer, and comments on the way “the Indians had made the game their own,” telling of their teamwork and finesse on the field. That is, all except one young player, “a tall slim fellow who raced about the field, shouldering others away, kicking the ball great distances, stopping often as though to make sure that his achievements were recognized.” This young man displayed an individualistic style, was overly competitive, and was eager for the spotlight. Keyam tells his audience:

That young Na-pwa-in, he’s the product of a boarding school – all show – speaks English like the preacher, writes a better hand than the Agent, figures like a Hudson’s Bay Company clerk, knows a little about many things – and can’t even play football unless there’s someone right there to direct him and make him listen.

I’ve watched men crank a car to make it start. They tell me that the new cars start without a crank, that something inside turns the engine, and the car goes. Na-pwa-in is not like that. He is not a self-starter. He needs a crank that will start him, and perhaps another to keep him going.

For Keyam, the young man has all the markers of someone who has been assimilated: he has mastered the tools of the whitestream culture, but has lost his innate ability to be a “self-starter,” that is, to be independent. Despite all that he has learned, Na-pwa-in needs someone “to direct him.” Says Keyam: “The boarding school has taken from him all the initiative there may be in an Indian. He will only work when he feels like it. He will never take advice from the elders amongst us.” The young man has lost his ability to think independently, he has lost his initiative, as indicated by his unwillingness to learn from his elders.

Keyam uses this example to reflect on how education might actually benefit Nêhiyawak:

Na-pwa-in has become a useless fellow. If he had stayed on the reserve, he might have been as useful as his brother who stayed at home. The more I think about the education of the Indians, the more I think that it is wrong to take them away to make something like white men of them. You find such on every reserve.

Ahenakew – the Anglican clergyman who had studied at Wycliffe College (Toronto) and University of Alberta, as well as with Cree elders – uses Keyam to make a strong critique of the residential school system because it is a tool of assimilation. “This is what I ask: is it wiser to take an Indian boy away to civilization, or to bring civilization to him where he is in his natural surroundings? Civilization, I mean, as represented in education and training.” In other words, Keyam is addressing the central question of Indigenous peoples during the treaty era and immediately after: what is the best way to enter modernity as Nêhiyawak? How should Indigenous peoples assent to the new? For Keyam, the answer is in bringing modernity to Indigenous homelands, “to bring civilization” to Indigenous children in their “natural surroundings” rather than having them kidnapped in order to kill the Indian in the child. A residential school education only takes away a person’s initiative, he says: “They

have just enough learning to think themselves a plane above the rest of the band.” Keyam says of people who have been to residential school: “They are like children, and when suddenly given their freedom they do not know how to use it.” Keyam exposes residential school education as a tool of assimilation, which gives the student a false sense of superiority, but strips away their independence. Freedom is the most important thing a Cree person possesses; with a residential school education, Nêhiyawak no longer know what to do with their freedom.

The importance of Ahenakew’s anti-assimilationist stance cannot be emphasized enough. In 1920, the time Ahenakew was writing “Old Keyam,” the Canadian government passed an amendment to the Indian Act that allowed for compulsory enfranchisement of Status Indians at the discretion of a board of examiners. And it was in 1920 that the deputy superintendent of Indian Affairs, Duncan Campbell Scott, wrote: “I want to get rid of the Indian problem. ... Our object is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic, and there is no Indian question, and no Indian Department.”⁹⁷ Keyam’s statement, “The future is yours. Take it and hold it, with faith in your manhood, *as Indians*,” must be read as a direct response to Scott’s statement of Canada’s official assimilation policy. Keyam addresses enfranchisement directly:

“Enfranchisement is offered to us all, but at a price that many of us do not want to pay, for it means that we must leave our reserves, cut ourselves off from our own people. Why should we leave Treaty in order to have a say in the affairs of the land?”⁹⁸ Keyam understands the reasons behind Scott’s plan for enfranchisement, compulsory and otherwise: “To the Indian this seems to be a way of breaking up the reserves. He knows the unhappy condition today of those who are only part Indian and who have wandered from place to place because they

sold their original homestead rights, their scrip.”⁹⁹ In addition to hastening assimilation, enfranchising large numbers of Status Indians would indeed result in breaking up the reserves – one effect of the Indian Act is to mandate rules for reserve lands and how these are surrendered – and Ahenakew is aware that one need look no further than bands who, like the followers of Chief Papaschase, gave up their status and were left as wanderers when they took scrip.

In “Old Keyam” Ahenakew offers an understanding of Treaty Six from the perspective of his generation of Nêhiyawak. Keyam states:

There were many who could not agree to the signing of the Treaty, though they were over-ruled in the decision. Some said that it was the liberal distribution of money and they easy purchase of many things in the Hudson’s Bay Company posts at that time that made an impression on the people, so that even the dissenters wavered.¹⁰⁰

Keyam speculates on the reasons for signing Treaty Six, the factors that might have swayed dissenting voices, such as money to buy the necessities for a new life. Again, keeping in mind that Ahenakew had studied with kâ-pitikow, we should likely take these speculations seriously. Keyam continues:

I am not discussing the justice or injustice of the Treaty. I am simply speaking of things as they appeared to the untrained mind of the Indians at that time. They could not realize what the signing over of their land meant. Only in this present age is it understood that abrupt change can bring about serious shock, with harsh effects upon a human being. The Indian could not know that he was totally unfitted by previous training for a settled agricultural life.¹⁰¹

Keyam leaves out the fact that the Canadian government did not provide the agricultural assistance and training that was expected.¹⁰² However, he does refer to the trauma that must have resulted from settling on reserves, and uses this – and not innate defectiveness or laziness – as an explanation for the situation in which Nêhiyawak found themselves in the 1920s. “The Treaty had been made in due and proper form,” says Keyam, and again this

may reflect the understanding of Thunderchild and other chiefs. “There had been justice apparently, and kindness too on the part of those who represented the Crown. Yet at the signing there were men, both white and Indian, who were sick at heart because they knew the almost certain outcome, yet could see no alternative.”¹⁰³ This certainly reflects the speeches of the leaders at Fort Carlton as recorded in the account of Peter Erasmus (see Chapter Six), the feeling among the chiefs that there was little choice left for them but to sign the treaty.

At times, Keyam is much more forceful in his critique of Treaty Six.

[W]hen I was young I listened to the talk of the old Chiefs who signed the Treaty, when they discussed its terms so that everyone would understand. Those old Chiefs and all who listened to them believed, without a single exception, that these reserves belonged to us entirely. They do belong to us, but not in the fullest sense of that word.¹⁰⁴

The literary character Keyam, like Ahenakew, sought knowledge about the treaty from chiefs who were present at the negotiations. Keyam’s concern is the way the treaty was implemented such that Nêhiyawak lost control of their lands – even their reserve lands – and were forced to live under Canadian laws. “[W]e are under constant rules and regulations, and we must conform. ... The Treaty talk sounded different when the old Chiefs signed.”¹⁰⁵ During the treaty negotiations, it was stated that Nêhiyawak would maintain and live by their own laws. “No more did [the Indian] recognize that he would have to live within a definite code of laws that would fence his spirit utterly, and that this ever-tightening hold of the law would come to rouse his deepest resentment.”¹⁰⁶ As Indigenous peoples’ bodies were fenced in on reserves, their spirits were fenced in by Canadian laws. The result of this physical and spiritual enclosure, even for mild-mannered Keyam, is resentment. In 1885, this resentment led to the so-called Frog Lake Massacre and the

violence directed at settlers by members of Big Bear's band. Keyam leaves us with an important question, still pertinent in our own time: "What people, unless totally devoid of spirit, unless slavish for a thousand years, would not have felt bitter resentment, would not have blamed the white man for it all, for all the misery and all the degradation?"¹⁰⁷

At the end of the text, Keyam addresses his audience with final questions about Treaty Six:

I would ask all of you: when we signed the Treaty did we sign it with the understanding that we were giving away all freedom until such time as 'in the opinion of the Governor-in-Council' we should be ready to be enfranchised? Is it lawful to withhold the real meaning of a treaty from one party, when that party is not in a position to understand? ... Freedom is the most precious thing on earth. God gave it to all men, without exception. Was it such a small thing that it could be overlooked in the discussions at the time of the signing of that Treaty, when the actual withholding of it from one party was at the basis of all negotiations?¹⁰⁸

Keyam asks his audience to consider the consequences of Treaty Six; for him, the treaty signaled the loss of freedom. The great threat to Nêhiyawak was enfranchisement, which would result in the diminishment of citizens on-reserve as well as the size of the Indigenous land base. Was freedom "such a small thing" that it was not discussed at the treaty negotiations, especially considering that the withholding of it was "the basis of all negotiations" from a Crown perspective? It was the loss of freedom that Big Bear feared when he said he did not want a rope around his neck. For Ahenakew – speaking through the fictional Keyam – freedom was "the most precious thing on earth." If the erosion of Cree peoples' freedom is the result of the treaty relationship (if indeed it was the impetus behind the Crown's negotiations) how do we rebuild the relationship between settler-colonists and Indigenous peoples? When activists are calling on the Canadian government to honour the treaties, what would this look like in light of these Indigenous critiques of the treaty?

The activities of the League of Indians mark the beginning of the modern Indigenous rights movement in Canada. For the first time we see people from diverse nations organizing according to a philosophy of pan-Indigenous unity, and calling their philosophy nationalism. The League of Indians expressed itself in writing, through circulars and letters aimed directly at the Indian Affairs administration and Duncan Campbell Scott. The League also had a literary expression, fiction written by Edward Ahenakew who was active in League organizing in the west. This body of rhetoric was critical of the treaty relationship while at the same time relying on the treaties as the basis of a more just relationship – one that the Crown had apparently agreed to. As well, writers were both critical of the residential school system and proponents of education and training as tools for self-sufficiency. People like Fred Loft and Edward Ahenakew were modernists, but they insisted that modern life be adapted to Indigenous values. Modernity should mean independence and autonomy.

As the League of Indians of Western Canada evolved into separate provincial organizations in Alberta and Saskatchewan, we see a period of relative quiet once again. No doubt Indigenous peoples across the country set about the political act of mere survival. By now the third and fourth generations of residential school students were returning to their communities changed people. That is, those students who survived the brutality of the schools. A new era of political activism and writing would emerge in the 1960s as Indigenous poets and novelists began to gain more attention and as the Trudeau government in Canada began a new assault on Indigenous peoples' rights. Once again, this resistance would be led by writers and activists from the Cree nation. I'll touch briefly on

that next era of rhetoric in the following coda. It was a new era, one built on the foundation of decades of resistance and rhetoric centered on the northern plains.

Coda

“The great aim of our civilization has been to do away with the tribal system and assimilate the Indian people in all respects with the inhabitants of the Dominion, as speedily as they are fit for change.”

- Prime Minister John A. Macdonald (1887)¹

“A nation that would do such a thing to other groups of people is not a nation of tolerant, industrious, god-fearing peacekeepers, but one of greedy, grasping, homicidal thieves.

-Roland Chrisjohn (Onyota’a:ka), et. al. (2006)²

I. Truth and Indignation

The title of Ronald Niezen’s recent book on Canada’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) is titled, *Truth and Indignation* (2013). Niezen writes that indignation is “a close emotional correlate of injustice. And, in the context of the truth commission, it is all-pervasive.”³ For Niezen, indignation is linked to other emotions, and is “set in motion by simultaneous feelings of love, loyalty, and compassion. Indignation builds energy through personal or personalized relationships that are close to the source of error or harm at its origin.” We feel indignation at injustice the closer we are to it. “Indignation concentrates its energy through the human relationships that are closest to its source.”⁴ The first half of Chapter Eight examined what I referred to as righteous anger, which is another way of describing indignation. Anti-colonial writers have used anger or indignation to promote resistance and resurgence against colonialism and the colonizers. Indignation is so often provoked, for me at least, by the most vocal settler-colonists among us, people who receive attention that is apparently disproportionate to their level of critical self-reflection. “We’re the one country in the room everybody would like to be,” Prime Minister Stephen Harper told a press conference at the 2009 G-20 summit in Pittsburgh. “We are one of the most

stable regimes in history ... We also have no history of colonialism. So we have all the things that many people admire about the great powers but none of the things that threaten or bother them.”⁵ Harper’s comments – delivered just one year after he stood in Parliament and made an apology on behalf of Canadians to all the former students of the Indian Residential School system – should have provoked more indignation than they did. Frantz Fanon writes: “Colonialism is not satisfied with snaring the people in its net or of draining the colonized brain of any form or substance. With a kind of perverted logic, it turns its attention to the past of the colonized people and distorts it, disfigures it, and destroys it.”⁶ Oh, Stephen Harper and his perverted logic.

As I write this, the TRC is about to host its final national event in Edmonton, at a convention centre built into the river bank overlooking parts of the river valley where Indigenous peoples have gathered and lived for thousands of years. The TRC continues to battle the Canadian government in court, attempting to force the Harper government into supplying records they are withholding. “We also have no history of colonialism,” Harper says. In their book, *The Circle Game: Shadows and Substance in the Indian Residential School Experience in Canada*, Onyota’a:aka scholar Roland Chrisjohn et. al. provide a provocative discussion of the residential school system:

In the beginning the goal of obliterating [Indigenous] peoples was connected with stealing what they owned (the land, the sky, the waters, their lives, and all that these encompassed); and although this connection persists, present-day acts and policies of genocide are also connected with the hypocritical, legal, and self-delusional need on the part of the perpetrators to conceal what they did and what they continue to do.⁷

For Chrisjohn et. al., the ongoing crime of the IRS system is that the perpetrators (the government, the churches, the individuals who worked in the schools) have not been properly held to account for their actions, there have not been trials and prosecutions;

indeed, the Canadian government continues to conceal as much of the story as it can. Chrisjohn et. al. assert: "With regard to genocide and theft, moreover, Canada as a whole is implicated, and the cost of compensating Aboriginal Peoples for these crimes may be, literally, incalculable."⁸ We must understand Canada's long history of colonialism as representative of the nation's founding and foundation. The residential school system was a system, a defining characteristic of the Canadian state for decades, a representative action. In "Regarding the Torture of Others," Susan Sontag writes:

What makes some actions representative and others not? The issue is not whether the torture was done by individuals (i.e. 'not by everybody') but whether it was systematic. Authorized. Condoned. All acts are done by individuals. The issue is not whether a majority or a minority of Americans performs such acts but whether the nature of the policies prosecuted by this administration and the hierarchies deployed to carry them out makes such acts likely.⁹

For well over a century, the terrorization and torture of Indigenous peoples was systematic, authorized, condoned. Canadians' complicity in the system made torture likely. We have never been indignant enough.

II. *The Unjust Society*

This thesis has traced moments in the history of the Nêhiyaw rhetorical tradition, from the negotiation of Treaty Six through the activities of the League of Indians; and the reclamation of stories about Creation, migration, and the peoples' right to their stories and the land. For centuries, Nêhiyawak have affirmed their right to live as autonomous peoples in their homelands, and this tradition of rhetorical resistance would gain momentum in the second half of the twentieth century. In June 1969, following months of consultations with First Nations, the Government of Canada released its White Paper, *Statement of the Government of Canada on Indian Policy, 1969*. Despite these cross-country consultations,

the Trudeau government proposed a termination policy, similar to the one the United States had abandoned in 1961, and similar to what anthropologist Diamond Jenness had proposed to the government in 1947 in his “Plan for Liquidating Canada’s Indian Problem in 25 Years.”¹⁰ Sounds like the policy direction of a tolerant nation indeed. The 1969 attempt at termination, proposed by Trudeau and his Minister of Indian Affairs Jean Chrétien, would turn Status Indians into equal Canadians by abolishing the Indian Act and Department of Indian Affairs. As Sally Weaver writes, “By implication, the result of the policy would see Indians with ‘Indian problems’ become provincial citizens with regular citizens’ problems.”¹¹ The White Paper reads: “Indians must be persuaded, must persuade themselves, that this path will lead them to a fuller and richer life.”¹² Trudeau offers a typical rhetorical removal: Indians “must be persuaded” that equality will improve their lives; they “must persuade themselves” that termination is in their collective best interest.

Harold Cardinal (Sucker Creek Cree Nation), the 24 year-old president of the Indian Association of Alberta, would lead the rhetorical resistance to the White Paper. Cardinal had evidently spent time with Chief Robert Smallboy, the hereditary and elected chief who had led his people to the Kootenay Plains in 1968 to live as an autonomous Cree band.¹³ In 1969, Hurtig Publishers in Edmonton published Cardinal’s *The Unjust Society*, a tour de force manifesto that provides an Indigenous perspective on the history of Canada’s relationship with Indigenous peoples, and an indictment of the White Paper. *The Unjust Society* is not only an Indigenous polemic, it is clearly Cree. Cardinal’s book echoes Cree leaders and writers from Big Bear to Edward Ahenakew: “Indians have aspirations, hopes, and dreams but becoming white men is not one of them,” he writes.¹⁴ As in past decades, Cardinal affirms the autonomy of Indigenous nations. “It is necessary to emphasize that the

question of establishing a positive Indian identity does not mean political separatism – not yet, at least, not if the white man will agree to be reasonable – nor does it mean a return to the days of yesteryear.”¹⁵ Cardinal does not rule out political separatism (this is dependent on settler-Canadians being reasonable), nor does he imagine a return to a primordial, pre-colonial utopia. No, like other leaders and writers, Cardinal envisions Indigenous peoples as modern peoples:

Before we can take our place in a larger society, we must regain our confidence and self-respect. To do this we must be allowed to rebuild our own social institutions, torn down by their white counterparts. We must rebuild our structures of social and political leadership, demoralized and undermined for a hundred years by the Department of Indian Affairs; we must restore our family unit, shaken and shattered by the residential school system; we must rebuild communications between the younger and older generations of our people.¹⁶

For Cardinal the correct path is resurgence and revitalization, of social and governance structures, of families, of communication between generations. He calls for a regeneration of “our own social institutions.” He makes the case for autonomy, not separation or termination. The force of Cardinal’s rhetoric in both *The Unjust Society* and the Indian Association of Alberta’s *Citizens Plus* (the Red Paper) led to the retraction of the government’s termination policy and the formation of a permanent political body, the National Indian Brotherhood.¹⁷ The power of nationhood is, indeed, that it can change the world.

III. If at first you don’t secede

In 2007, Joseph Boyden (who is of Anishinaabe heritage) delivered the inaugural Kreisel Lecture at the University of Alberta. Published as *From Mushkegowuk to New Orleans: A Mixed Blood Highway*, Boyden’s lecture makes comparisons between the histories of Northern Ontario reserve communities and his adopted city of New Orleans. Boyden has

become an established Indigenous writer. Some might even say he is an establishment writer. He publishes regularly in the *Globe and Mail* and counts among his fans John Ralston Saul and Blackberry co-founder Jim Balsillie. (Blackberry is *kaskitêmin* in Nêhiyawêwin.) However, Boyden ended his lecture with a manifesto, the most separatist piece of writing I will cite in this entire thesis. His manifesto is called, “If At First You Don’t Secede, Try, Try Again”:

When in the course of events, human and otherwise, it becomes necessary for two different but equal populations and people to break the political chains which have bound them to others, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal place to which the Laws of Nature entitle them, a half-hearted respect for the opinions of the rest of the world requires that these two different but equal populations should declare the causes which impel them to separation.¹⁸

Playing on the foundational document of the world’s great settler-colonial power, Boyden lays out the terms of separation – that is, the reserves in Canada and the city of New Orleans – from North America. Boyden runs through the list of shared oppression: economic marginalization, environmental degradation, cultural appropriation, *Dances With Wolves, The Big Easy*.¹⁹ “The history of North America is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct Object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over this city and these reserves.”²⁰ In the name of the People and the Gitchi Manitou of the world, Boyden declares the city and the reserves separate from North America, united together, with “full power to levy war, conclude peace, contract alliances, establish Commerce, determine our own holidays, identify our own Heroes, and to do all other Acts and Things we damn well please.”²¹

I quote from Boyden’s manifesto because it is humourous, because it shows, I think, that the separatists are not all activist whackos. I cite it because it was delivered in Edmonton, the centre of the northern plains intellectual and political world. I also hope that

it is never forgotten that one of Canada's cherished CanLit writers authored the rallying cry for Indigenous secession. When the Dominion of Canada eventually dissolves, you now know whom to blame.

IV. And the victory

There is a painting by the Woodland Cree artist Frederick R. McDonald called "Big Bear's Dilemma, Paper Promises ..." (1998).²² In it, Mistahi Maskwa stands beneath a nighttime sky, the Milky Way swirling beautifully above his head. He is wrapped in a colourful blanket and we see the collar and sleeve of a shirt that he is wearing underneath. Because of an often-reproduced photograph, we know this is how Big Bear appeared when he was imprisoned after the so-called Frog Lake massacre, or (*ê-mâyahkamikahk*, "where it went wrong").²³ Unlike the photograph, in McDonald's painting we do not see the chain that imprisons Mistahi Maskwa. He stands in a field of tall grass, a row of colourful tipis in the distance behind him. Perhaps he has just returned from jail, and these are the days before he died.²⁴ In the sky are ten white sheets. They are paper promises, as the title suggests (and the ellipsis in the title indicates something yet to come). Big Bear had adhered to Treaty Six in 1882, but he had yet to see the Crown truly live up to its obligations.²⁵ Big Bear appears to look to the future, seeing what these paper promises may bring for Nêhiyawak. Paper would be a tool of assimilation and removals; legislation, editorials, court decisions, treaties. Writing on paper would contribute to the oppression of Nêhiyawak. However, writing would also be a tool of resistance for Cree people; through petitions and poetry, Nêhiyawak would assert their presence in Nêhiyawaskî and to claim another vision of the future.

Beth Cuthand (daughter of Stan, who was a family friend of Edward Ahenakew) is a Cree poet, columnist, and activist.²⁶ In her collection of poems, *Voices in the Waterfall*, Cuthand creatively documents the history of oppression and resistance in Nêhiyawaskî. When I read her poem, “This Red Moon,” I think of McDonald’s painting of Big Bear.

Tonight
the moon is a hard red disk.

Passpassces predicted it would be so.

Your Grandpa told me the Old Man
fasted for twelve days
with my Great-Grandfather, Missatimos
at Manito Lake
the time of the
hungry pup when the people
were starving and fearful.

Passpassces dreamed and saw many things.²⁷

Cuthand links her own family history (“Your Grandpa” being, presumably, Cuthand’s own father) with Chief Passpassces (Papaschase) who had fasted with her ancestor Missatimos. When I picture Papaschase dreaming and seeing many things, I picture Big Bear in McDonald’s painting, waiting at night for a sign of things to come. As his people were starving and fearful, Papaschase sees much in the future: ““The people shall suffer a long war,” he said.” The great leader prophesies the damage forthcoming in this long war: residential school (“groping hands in the night, / children crying / keeping secrets too, / too shamed to know // it was not their fault”), domestic abuse (“men beating women, they / mirrored their own self hate”), alcoholism (“the black water / invading our sacred spaces, / drowning our knowing”). As with much of the writing examined in this thesis, Cuthand documents the destructiveness of settler-colonialism on the people of her nation. However, like other Cree texts, the people in the poem turn to the land and their

spirituality. The poem builds greater force and momentum as “our relations cried ... cradled in our land / covered in sky. // In that night they called / creation / and they smoked and prayed.” In their love, the people cried and prayed as their leader held the pipe that night. Papaschase speaks: “the way back to life will be / by doing battle inside ourselves.” The way ahead lies in how Nêhiyawak will construct a future for themselves. He predicts many will die in this new war, and “many will try to escape the colour of their skin.” Perhaps Cuthand means these ones will assimilate willfully, they’ll sell out? They’ll feel shame about who they are? The way back to life is doing battle within, fighting the damage done by residential schools, domestic abuse, alcoholism.

But many more people, Papaschase predicts, will become warriors, “more will sing their way to freedom.” The way to survival rests in stories, the people singing their way to freedom:

There’s no way forward
but through
this red moon blood
memory
and the telling of it, son.

And the victory.

And the victory.

The way forward is through “the telling of it,” as Cuthand tells her son. Freedom will come through words: songs, stories, poetry. Rhetoric. Daniel Heath Justice (Cherokee Nation) writes: “Stories expand or narrow our imaginative possibilities – physical freedom won’t matter if we can imagine ourselves free as well.”²⁸ Some stories erase and displace, justifying settler-colonialism. Other stories are assertions of presence that aim to

regenerate traditions, reframe history, and seek the restoration of land and autonomy.

There's no way forward but through the telling of it. And the victory. And the victory.

Notes

Introduction

¹ Harold Cardinal, *The Unjust Society: The Tragedy of Canada's Indians* (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1969), 15.

² Paul W. DePasquale, ed., *Natives and Settlers, Now and Then: Historical Issues and Current Perspectives on Treaties and Land Claims in Canada* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2007).

³ Part of the reason I chose Comparative Literature at the University of Alberta was learning that my prospective supervisor had also worked at Ste-Marie. See Jonathan Hart, *Columbus, Shakespeare, and the Interpretation of the New World* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), xii.

⁴ Jo-Ann Episknew, *Taking Back Our Spirits: Indigenous Literature, Public Policy and Healing* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2009), 25.

⁵ Sarah Hunt, "National Aboriginal Day: Friend or foe?," *mediaINDIGENA*, June 21, 2012. <http://www.mediaindigena.com/sarah-hunt/issues-and-politics/national-aboriginal-day-friend-or-foe>

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⁷ Hunt, "National Aboriginal Day."

⁸ Preamble to *Canadian Multiculturalism Act*, 1988 (R.S.C. , 1985, c. 24 [4th Supp.]). See Kogila Moodley, "Canadian Multiculturalism as Ideology," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 6, no. 3 (1983): 320-331.

⁹ Cardinal, 15.

¹⁰ Himani Bannerji, "On the Dark Side of the Nation: Politics of Multiculturalism and the State of 'Canada,'" in *Canadian Cultural Studies: A Reader*, ed. Sourayan Mookerjee, Imre Szeman, and Gail Faurschou (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 328.

¹¹ Bannerji, 328.

¹² Eva Mackey, *The House of Difference: Cultural Politics and National Identity in Canada* (London: Routledge, 1999), 8. Emphasis in original.

¹³ Bannerji, 328-29.

¹⁴ Bannerji, 329.

¹⁵ Scholars have used the term *whitestream* when referring to the North American mainstream in order to underscore the reality that the dominant- dominating culture (i.e., the self-appointed "mainstream") remains inextricably linked to whiteness. See, for example, Sandy Grande (Quechua), "Whitestream Feminism and the Colonialist Project: Toward a Theory of Indigenista," in *Red Pedagogy: Native American Social and Political Thought* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004), 123-57. Grande uses the term to signify the differences between white mainstream feminist theory and theorizing by radical women of color. Luis Urrieta Jr. uses the word in a Chicano/a context in his article, "Dis- Connections in 'American' Citizenship and the Post/Neo-Colonial: People of Mexican Descent and Whitestream Pedagogy and Curriculum," *Theory and Research in Social Education* 32, no. 4 (2004): 433-58.

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- ¹⁷ William Anselmi and Kosta Gouliamos, *Happy Slaves: A Duologue on Multicultural Deficit* (Toronto: Guernica Editions, 2005), 10.
- ¹⁸ Anselmi and Gouliamos, 57-58.
- ¹⁹ Emma LaRocque, *When the Other is Me: Native Resistance Discourse, 1850-1990* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2010), 74.
- ²⁰ The phrase "sincere, but uncritical" is from Anselmi and Gouliamos, 38-39.
- ²¹ Anselmi and Gouliamos, 39.
- ²² See Walcott, 15-18, 20, 24.
- ²³ Audre Lorde, "The Uses of Anger," in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Freedom, CA: Crossing Press, 1984), 130-31.
- ²⁴ Bannerji, 330.
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- ²⁷ Craig Womack, *Red on Red: Native American Literary Separatism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 11.
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- ³¹ "The Bernheimer Report, 1993, Comparative Literature at the Turn of the Century," in *Comparative Literature in the Age of Multiculturalism*, ed. Charles Bernheimer (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 45.
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- ³⁷ Kadir, 68, 69; Gayatri Spivak, *Death of a Discipline* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 4.
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- ⁴² See, for example, *Native American Fiction: A User's Manual* (Saint Paul, MN: Graywolf Press, 2006), 56-68.
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- ⁴⁴ Haun Saussy, "Exquisite Cadavers Stitched from Fresh Nightmares: Of Memes, Hives, and Selfish Genes," in *Comparative Literature in an Age of Globalization*, ed. Haun Saussy (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 23. Emphasis in original.
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- ⁴⁶ Emily Apter, "Comparative Exile: Competing Margins in the History of Comparative Literature," in *Comparative Literature in the Age of Multiculturalism*, ed. Charles Bernheimer (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 86.
- ⁴⁷ Apter, 94.
- ⁴⁸ Arok Wolvengrey, *Nêhiyawêwin itwêwina/Cree Words*, Vol. 1 (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 2001), 115.
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- ⁵¹ Wolvengrey also lists the word, *môniyâhkâsow* (s/he acts like a white-man)
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- ⁵⁴ Neal McLeod, *Cree Narrative Memory: From Treaties to Contemporary Times* (Saskatoon: Purich Publishing, 2007), 6.
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Chapter One

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- ¹⁴ Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism," 388.
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- ⁵² Renan, 18-19.
- ⁵³ Renan, 19.
- ⁵⁴ Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), 2.
- ⁵⁵ Gellner, 4.
- ⁵⁶ Gellner, 5.
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⁶³ Anderson, 22.

⁶⁴ Anderson, 22-36.

⁶⁵ See Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1986), 8-9.

⁶⁶ Anderson, 47, 58.

⁶⁷ Anderson, 69.

⁶⁸ Scott Richard Lyons, *X-Marks: Native Signatures of Assent* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 113.

⁶⁹ Lyons, 113.

⁷⁰ Lyons, 114-115.

⁷¹ Lyons, 119; Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, 13.

⁷² Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, 22-30.

⁷³ Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, 32-37.

⁷⁴ Lyons, 121,

⁷⁵ Lyons, 121.

⁷⁶ Lyons, 121.

⁷⁷ Lyons, 122, Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, 50-57.

⁷⁸ Lyons, 122.

⁷⁹ Lyons, 123.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 118.

⁸¹ Daniel Heath Justice cites the Seminole example in "Kinship Criticism," 148. Justice cites Patricia Riles Wickman's *The Tree That Bends*.

⁸² Lyons, 113.

⁸³ Lyons, 131.

⁸⁴ Glen S. Coulthard, "Subjects of Empire: Indigenous Peoples and the 'Politics of Recognition' in Canada," *Contemporary Political Theory* 6 (2007): 438.

⁸⁵ Coulthard, 438.

⁸⁶ Coulthard, 439, 446.

⁸⁷ Coulthard, 449.

⁸⁸ Coulthard, 450.

⁸⁹ Coulthard, 451.

⁹⁰ Lyons, 135.

⁹¹ Despite his problematic liberal worldview, Michael Ignatieff does indirectly support the secession of Indigenous nations from Canada. "[S]elf-determination does not necessarily imply a right of secession," he writes. "Secession, with full statehood, is justified when nations are threatened with destruction, when only the possession of state power can

guarantee their survival." When people face "unquestionable oppression," they have a valid claim "to both self-determination and secession;" Ignatieff uses the Kosovars as an example. See Ignatieff, 133.

⁹² Lyons, 136.

⁹³ Lyons, 136.

⁹⁴ Derek Sayer, *The Coasts of Bohemia: A Czech History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 29.

⁹⁵ Sayer, 328n2.

⁹⁶ Anderson, 6.

⁹⁷ Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the national question in the New Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 16.

⁹⁸ Brubaker, 21.

⁹⁹ Daniel Heath Justice, "The Necessity of Nationhood: Affirming the Sovereignty of Indigenous National Literatures," in *Moveable Margins: The Shifting Spaces of Canadian Literature*, ed. Chelva Kanaganayakam (Toronto: TSAR Publications, 2005), 151.

¹⁰⁰ Justice, "Necessity of Nationhood," 144.

¹⁰¹ Justice, "Necessity of Nationhood," 145.

¹⁰² Justice, "Kinship Criticism and the Decolonization Imperative," 151.

¹⁰³ Justice, "Kinship Criticism and the Decolonization Imperative," 151.

¹⁰⁴ Justice, "Kinship Criticism and the Decolonization Imperative," 151 Emphasis in original.

¹⁰⁵ Tom Holm, J. Diane Pearson, and Ben Chavis, "Peoplehood: A Model for the Extension of Sovereignty in American Indian Studies," *Wicazo Sa Review* 18, no. 1 (2003): 11. See also Billy J. Stratton and Frances Washburn, "The Peoplehood Matrix: A New Theory for American Indian Literature," *Wicazo Sa Review* 23, no. 1 (2008): 51-72; and Jeff Corntassel, "Who is Indigenous? 'Peoplehood' and Ethnonationalist Approaches to Rearticulating Indigenous Identity," *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 9, no. 1 (2003): 75-100.

¹⁰⁶ Holm et al., 12.

¹⁰⁷ Lyons, 139. Emphasis added.

¹⁰⁸ Lyons uses the term "nation-people" in *X-Marks*, 139.

¹⁰⁹ Holm et al., 12.

¹¹⁰ Holm et al., 13.

Chapter Two

¹ Quoted in Peter Erasmus, *Buffalo Days and Nights, As Told to Harry Thompson* (Calgary: Glenbow-Alberta Institute, 1976), 244.

² Craig Womack, *Red on Red: Native American Literary Separatism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 26.

³ Louis Bird, *Telling Our Stories: Omushkego Legends and Histories from Hudson Bay* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 69, 78, 82.

⁴ Winona Wheeler, "Reflections on the Social Relations of Indigenous Oral Histories," in *Walking a Tightrope: Aboriginal Peoples and Their Representations*, ed. Ute Lischke and David T. McNab (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2005), 201-202.

⁵ Walter Lightning, "Compassionate Mind: Implications of a Text Written by Elder Louis Sunchild," (master's thesis, University of Alberta, 1992), 3. Lightning also points to

photographic reproductions of Indigenous spiritual items, such as sacred pipes, as offensive: “[M]any Native people would be uncomfortable with the reproduction of the photographs” (9).

⁶ Lightning, 3.

⁷ Wheeler, 203. In an Anishinaabe context, Leanne Simpson writes, “It is not ethically appropriate for me to tell these stories here.” See *Dancing On Our Turtle’s Back: Stories of Nishnaabeg Re-Creation, Resurgence, and a New Emergence* (Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring Publishing, 2011), 35.

⁸ DePasquale in Bird, 65.

⁹ Eden Robinson, *The Sasquatch at Home: Traditional Protocols and Modern Storytelling* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2011), 13. For an annotated description of the source from which Robinson is quoting, see Robinson, 47.

¹⁰ Robinson, 15.

¹¹ Wheeler, 198, 201.

¹² Neal McLeod, *Cree Narrative Memory: From Treaties to Contemporary Times* (Saskatoon: Purich Publishing, 2007), 18.

¹³ On the danger of telling stories out of season, see Gerald Vizenor, *Manifest Manners: Narratives on Postmodern Survivance*, 2nd ed. (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), 52 and *The People Named the Chippewa: Narrative Histories* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 1984), 27.

¹⁴ Creation stories of Cree people appear in Vern Dusenberry, *The Montana Cree: A Study in Religious Persistence* (1962; repr., Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998), 62-74.

¹⁵ Deanna Christensen, *Ahtahkakoop* (Shell Lake, SK: Ahtahkakoop Publishing, 2000), 13. The Creation and migration story is related on pp. 3-14. On Indigenous bands’ migration and adaptation, see Hugh Dempsey, *Big Bear: The End of Freedom* (Vancouver: Greystone Books, 1984), 11-13, 26.

¹⁶ Scott Richard Lyons, *X-Marks: Native Signatures of Assent* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 3.

¹⁷ Simpson, 65.

¹⁸ Gerald Vizenor, *Fugitive Poses: Native American Indian Scenes of Absence and Presence* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 15. See also Lyons, 5.

¹⁹ Angela Cavender Wilson, *Remember This! Dakota Decolonization and the Eli Taylor Narratives* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 31. Emphasis added.

²⁰ Keith Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language Among the Western Apache* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996), 31. Emphasis in original.

²¹ Basso, 32.

²² Quoted in Wilson, 31. Emphases in original.

²³ James G. E. Smith, “The Western Woods Cree: Anthropological Myth and Historical Reality,” *American Ethnologist* 14, no. 3 (1987): 437. Emphasis in original.

²⁴ Quoted in Smith, 437.

²⁵ For example, John Milloy, in his oft-cited ethnohistory *The Plains Cree: Trade, Diplomacy and War, 1790-1870* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1988) suggests “a Plains Cree nation evolved” following a “migration [that] began with the fur trade.” (Milloy, 5).

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- ²⁶ Smith, 439. Anthropologist and Native Studies scholar Regna Darnell cites Smith in making the same claim. Regna Darnell, "Plains Cree," in *Handbook of the North American Indians*, Vol. 13, ed. Raymond J. DeMallie (Washington: Smithsonian, 2001), 640.
- ²⁷ Quoted in Smith, 439.
- ²⁸ Smith, 443.
- ²⁹ Theodore Binnema, *Common and Contested Ground: A Human and Environmental History of the Northwestern Plains* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001), 76-77.
- ³⁰ David Mandelbaum, *The Plains Cree: An Ethnographic, Historical, and Comparative Study* (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 1979), xiii.
- ³¹ Mandelbaum, 3.
- ³² Mandelbaum, xiv.
- ³³ On the Indian Act amendments in this period, see Sarah Carter, *Lost Harvests: Prairie Indian Reserve Farmers and Government Policy* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990), 245-253. At their "high point" in 1931, there were 80 residential schools in Canada, of which the most (20) were in Alberta. Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, *Report*, Vol. 1 (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1996), 333-365.
- ³⁴ Mandelbaum, 5.
- ³⁵ Mandelbaum, 7, 12n1.
- ³⁶ Mandelbaum, 7.
- ³⁷ Mandelbaum, 15.
- ³⁸ Brenda MacDougall notes Nêhiyawak "are named for the four parts of human beings: emotional, mental, spiritual, and physical." MacDougall, "The Myth of Metis Cultural Ambivalence," in *Contours of a People: Metis Family, Mobility, and History*, ed. Nicole St-Onge, Carolyn Podruchny and Brenda MacDougall (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012), 455n24.
- ³⁹ Mandelbaum, 22.
- ⁴⁰ Mandelbaum, 24.
- ⁴¹ Mandelbaum, 25.
- ⁴² Mandelbaum, 26.
- ⁴³ Mandelbaum, 25-27.
- ⁴⁴ Mandelbaum, 32.
- ⁴⁵ Graham A. MacDonald, *The Beaver Hills Country: A History of Land and Life* (Edmonton: Athabasca University Press, 2009), 28.
- ⁴⁶ Womack, 120-121.
- ⁴⁷ MacDonald, 1.
- ⁴⁸ MacDonald, 31.
- ⁴⁹ MacDonald, 27, 23.
- ⁵⁰ Quoted in Linda Goyette, ed. *Edmonton in Our Own Words* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2004), 14.
- ⁵¹ Quoted in Goyette, 14. See also MacDonald, 9-12, 23-28.
- ⁵² MacDonald, 12-13.
- ⁵³ Goyette, 8-9.
- ⁵⁴ Goyette, 20-22.
- ⁵⁵ MacDonald, 27-28.

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- ⁵⁶ Trevor R. Peck and J. Rod Vickers, "Buffalo and Dogs: The Prehistoric Lifeways of Aboriginal People on the Alberta Plains, 1004-1005," in *Alberta Formed Alberta Transformed*, Vol. 1, ed. Michael Payne, Donald Wetherell, and Catherine Cavanaugh (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2006), 55.
- ⁵⁷ Peck and Vickers, 55-56.
- ⁵⁸ Peck and Vickers, 58. Likewise, David Meyer and Dale Russell suggest that the historical lifeways of the "neighbouring Cree groups" they studied "were very similar." Meyer and Russell, "'So Fine and Pleasant, Beyond Description': The Lands and Lives of the Pegogamaw Crees," *Plains Anthropologist* 49, no. 191 (August 2004): 220.
- ⁵⁹ Peck and Vickers, 60.
- ⁶⁰ Peck and Vickers, 62.
- ⁶¹ Meyer and Russell, 217-219. The quote is from page 219.
- ⁶² Meyer and Russell, 219.
- ⁶³ Meyer and Russell, 220.
- ⁶⁴ See *Rossdale Flats Oral Histories Project* (Edmonton: City of Edmonton, 2004), Appendix F.
- ⁶⁵ Meyer and Russell, 221-222.
- ⁶⁶ Mandelbaum provides lists of traditional foods in both English and Nêhiyawêwin, 68-76.
- ⁶⁷ Carter, 38.
- ⁶⁸ Devon Mihesuah, "Decolonizing Our Diets By Recovering Our Ancestors' Gardens," *American Indian Quarterly* 27, no. 3 (2003): 807, 827-828.
- ⁶⁹ Robert A. Innes, "Multicultural Bands on the Northwestern Plains and the Notion of 'Tribal' Histories," in *Finding a Way to the Heart: Feminist Writings on Aboriginal and Women's History in Canada*, ed. Robin Jarvis Brownlie and Valerie J. Korinek (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2012), 125.
- ⁷⁰ Patricia C. Albers, "Changing Patterns of Ethnicity in the Northeastern Plains, 1780-1870," in *History, Power, and Identity: Ethnogenesis in the Americas, 1492-1992*, ed. Jonathan D. Hill (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1996), 91.
- ⁷¹ Robert A. Innes, *Elder Brother and the Law of the People: Contemporary Kinship and Cowessess First Nation* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2013), 76.
- ⁷² David Rodnick, "Political Structure and Status Among the Assiniboine Indians," *American Anthropologist* 39, no. 3 (1937): 408; Peck and Vickers, 66.
- ⁷³ Binnema, 11.
- ⁷⁴ Binnema, 11; Carter, 28-31.
- ⁷⁵ Daniel Heath Justice, "Kinship Criticism and the Decolonization Imperative," in *Reasoning Together: The Native Critics Collective*, ed. Craig S. Womack, Daniel Heath Justice, and Christopher B. Teuton (Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008), 159.
- ⁷⁶ Sharon R. Sharrock, "Crees, Cree-Assiniboines, and Assiniboines: Interethnic Social Organization on the Far Northern Plains," *Ethnohistory* 21, no. 2 (1974): 101.
- ⁷⁷ Peck and Vickers, 59; Mandelbaum, 105.
- ⁷⁸ Mandelbaum, 105.
- ⁷⁹ Peck and Vickers, 66.
- ⁸⁰ Binnema, 11.
- ⁸¹ Mandelbaum, 105.
- ⁸² Mandelbaum, 106.

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- ⁸³ Matthew Wildcat, "Restorative Justice at the Miyo-Wahkotowin Community Education Authority," *Alberta Law Review* 48, no. 4 (2011): 923.
- ⁸⁴ Dempsey, 29.
- ⁸⁵ Dempsey, 48.
- ⁸⁶ Peck and Vickers, 58.
- ⁸⁷ Joseph Dion, *My Tribe the Crees* (Calgary: Glenbow-Alberta Institute, 1979), 19.
- ⁸⁸ Dion, 15.
- ⁸⁹ Peck and Vickers, 58.
- ⁹⁰ Gary Botting, *Chief Smallboy: In Pursuit of Freedom* (Calgary: Fifth House, 2005), 94.
- ⁹¹ Quoted in Binnema, 11.
- ⁹² Mandelbaum, 105-106.
- ⁹³ Floyd W. Sharrock and Susan R. Sharrock, "A History of the Cree Indian Territorial Expansion from the Hudson Bay Area to the Interior Saskatchewan and Missouri Plains," (New York: Garland, 1974), 8-9.
- ⁹⁴ Binnema, 12. Dempsey provides the example of Thunder Child's band, who separated as a family unit from Big Bear's band in order to find food at a time of starvation (Dempsey, 51).
- ⁹⁵ Peck and Vickers, 58-59. See also Mandelbaum, 105.
- ⁹⁶ Neal McLeod, "Plains Cree Identity: Borderlands, Ambiguous Genealogies and Narrative Irony," *Canadian Journal of Native Studies* 20, no. 2 (2000): 438.
- ⁹⁷ McLeod, "Plains Cree Identity," 439.
- ⁹⁸ McLeod, "Plains Cree Identity," 439-440.
- ⁹⁹ McLeod, "Plains Cree Identity," 441.
- ¹⁰⁰ See Pamela Palmater, *Beyond Blood: Rethinking Indigenous Identity* (Saskatoon: Purich Publishing, 2011), 28-100, 143-210.
- ¹⁰¹ Albers, 92.
- ¹⁰² Albers, 93-94.
- ¹⁰³ I am grateful to Nêhiyaw and Kanien'kehá:ka scholar, activist, and radio host Jodi Stonehouse (Michel First Nation) who provided the phrase "sex and survival" while reading an earlier draft of this chapter – at the same time we were reading Mark Rifkin's *When Did Indians Become Straight?: Kinship, the History of Sexuality, and Native Sovereignty* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).
- ¹⁰⁴ Sharrock, 117.
- ¹⁰⁵ Dempsey, 45.
- ¹⁰⁶ Botting, 83.
- ¹⁰⁷ Innes, "Multicultural Bands," 124. See also, *Elder Brother and the Law of the People*, 70-89.
- ¹⁰⁸ Innes, "Multicultural Bands," 124-25.
- ¹⁰⁹ Innes, "Multicultural Bands," 125, 127.
- ¹¹⁰ Innes, "Multicultural Bands," 128-129.
- ¹¹¹ Innes, "Multicultural Bands," 131.
- ¹¹² McLeod, "Plains Cree Identity," 444-445. On Big Bear's genealogy, see also Dempsey, 11. Dempsey states that Big Bear's father, Black Powder, "was the leader of a small mixed band of Cree and Ojibwa who normally camped near Jackfish Lake, ranging onto the edge of the Plains for buffalo in the summer and into the woods to trap and hunt in winter. The man

was a wanderer; one day he might turn up at Edmonton House, and two months later he could be back in his skin lodge in the Eagle Hills" (11). Thus, Dempsey emphasizes both the mixed and mobile nature of bands. Dempsey asserts, however, "Although Big Bear's father was an Ojibwa, the boy probably considered himself to be a Cree. He learned Cree as his first language, though he could also speak Ojibwa. Like others in the band, his life was divided between the plains and the woodlands."

¹¹³ Innes, "Multicultural Bands," 131; Dempsey 29.

¹¹⁴ Dempsey, 29.

¹¹⁵ Botting, 38-39.

¹¹⁶ Innes, "Multicultural Bands," 133-135.

Chapter Three

¹ Jace Weaver, "Splitting the Earth: First Utterances and Pluralist Separatism," in *American Indian Literary Nationalism*, ed. Jace Weaver, Craig Womack, and Robert Warrior (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006), 15.

² Craig Womack, *Red on Red: Native American Literary Separatism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 6-7. Emphases in original.

³ Womack, *Red on Red*, 7. Emphases in original.

⁴ Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, "Who Stole Native American Studies?," *Wicazo Sa Review* 12, no. 1 (1997): 9.

⁵ Cook-Lynn, "Who Stole?," 10.

⁶ See Cook-Lynn, "Who Stole?," 9-28; also Marie Battiste, Lynne Bell, and L.M. Findlay, "Decolonizing Education in Canadian Universities: An Interdisciplinary, International, Indigenous Research Project," *Canadian Journal of Native Education* 26, no. 2 (2002): 82-95, Jack D. Forbes, "Intellectual Self-Determination and Sovereignty: Implications for Native Studies and for Native Intellectuals," *Wicazo Sa Review* 13, no. 1 (1998): 11-23, Darren J. Ranco, "Toward a Native Anthropology: Hermeneutics, Hunting Stories, and Theorizing from Within," *Wicazo Sa Review* 21, no. 2 (2006): 61-78; Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, 2nd Ed. (London: Zed Books, 2012); Waziyatawin Angela Wilson, *Remember This! Dakota Revitalization and the Eli Taylor Narratives* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 37-50.

⁷ Weaver cites as influences for this neologism Gerald Vizenor (who popularized the term survivance), Robert Warrior's conception of intellectual sovereignty, and Georges Sioui's Indigenous autohistory. See Weaver, *That The People Might Live: Native American Literatures and Native American Community* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), xiii. Also Sioui, *For An Amerindian Autohistory*, trans. Sheila Fischmann (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995).

⁸ Weaver, "Splitting the Earth," 17. Emphasis in original.

⁹ For Warrior's influence on Weaver's work, see *That The People Might Live*, xiii. For Warrior's influence on Womack's methodology in *Red on Red*, see Womack, "The Integrity of American Indian Claims: Or, How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love My Hybridity," in *American Indian Literary Nationalism*, ed. Jace Weaver, Craig Womack, and Robert Warrior (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006), 155 and *Red on Red*, 4. See also

Daniel Heath Justice, *Our Fire Survives the Storm: A Cherokee Literary History* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 9-10, 210.

¹⁰ Robert Warrior, *Tribal Secrets: Recovering American Indian Intellectual Traditions* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 97-98.

¹¹ Warrior, *Tribal Secrets*, 92.

¹² Taiaiake Alfred, *Peace, Power, Righteousness: An Indigenous Manifesto*, 2nd ed (Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press, 2009), 52.

¹³ Justice, *Our Fire Survives the Storm*, 7.

¹⁴ Womack, *Red on Red*, 4.

¹⁵ Womack, *Red on Red*, 24.

¹⁶ Alfred, 116.

¹⁷ Simon J. Ortiz, "Towards a National Indian Literature: Cultural Authenticity in Nationalism," *MELUS* 8, no. 2 (1981): 8.

¹⁸ Ortiz, "Towards a National Indian Literature," 10.

¹⁹ Weaver, "Splitting the Earth," 34; Womack, "The Integrity of American Indian Claims," 120.

²⁰ Weaver, Womack, and Warrior, "Preface" in *American Indian Literary Nationalism*, ed. Jace Weaver, Craig Womack, and Robert Warrior (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006), xviii. Emphasis in original.

²¹ Simon Ortiz, "Foreword: Speaking-Writing Indigenous Literary Sovereignty," in *American Indian Literary Nationalism*, ed. Jace Weaver, Craig Womack, and Robert Warrior (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006), ix-x.

²² Ortiz, "Foreword," xi.

²³ Scott Richard Lyons, *X-Marks: Native Signatures of Assent* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 158-160.

²⁴ Emma LaRocque, *When The Other Is Me: Native Resistance Discourse, 1850-1990* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2010), 19.

²⁵ Ortiz, "Foreword," xiv.

²⁶ Justice, *Our Fire Survives the Storm*, 12-13.

²⁷ Ortiz, "Foreword," xii.

²⁸ Ortiz, "Towards a National Indian Literature," 9.

²⁹ Womack, "The Integrity of American Indian Claims," 123. Emphases in original.

³⁰ Cook-Lynn, "The American Indian Fiction Writers: Cosmopolitanism, Nationalism, the Third World, and First Nation Sovereignty," in *Why I Can't Read Wallace Stegner and Other Essays: A Tribal Voice* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996), 78.

³¹ Womack, *Red on Red*, 5.

³² Cook-Lynn, "The American Indian Fiction Writers," 81.

³³ Cook-Lynn, "The American Indian Fiction Writers," 79.

³⁴ Weaver, "Splitting the Earth," 28.

³⁵ Cook-Lynn, "The American Indian Fiction Writers," 89.

³⁶ Womack, *Red on Red*, 11.

³⁷ Womack, *Red on Red*, 16. Emphases in original.

³⁸ Womack, *Red on Red*, 11.

³⁹ These concepts are from Daniel Heath Justice, "Rhetorical Removals," *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 17, no. 4 (2005): 144-152.

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- ⁴⁰ Womack, *Red on Red*, 11.
- ⁴¹ Ortiz, "Towards a National Indian Literature," 12.
- ⁴² Womack, *Red on Red*, 6.
- ⁴³ *Delgamuukw v. British Columbia* (1997), 153 D.L.R. (4th) 193, at 232: "Notwithstanding the challenges created by the use of oral histories as proof of historical facts, the laws of evidence must be adapted in order that this type of evidence can be accommodated and placed on an equal footing with the types of historical evidence that courts are familiar with, which largely consists of historical documents."
- ⁴⁴ Walters, quoted in Womack, *Red on Red*, 9.
- ⁴⁵ Justice, *Our Fire Survives the Storm*, 208-209.
- ⁴⁶ Womack, *Red on Red*, 15.
- ⁴⁷ Justice, *Our Fire Survives the Storm*, 46. Emphasis in original.
- ⁴⁸ Justice, *Our Fire Survives the Storm*, 206. Emphasis in original.
- ⁴⁹ Cook-Lynn, "The American Indian Fiction Writers," 86.
- ⁵⁰ Ortiz, "Towards a National Indian Literature," 12.
- ⁵¹ Womack, *Red on Red*, 2.
- ⁵² Womack, *Red on Red*, 4.
- ⁵³ Womack, *Red on Red*, 4.
- ⁵⁴ Weaver, "Splitting the Earth," 42-43.
- ⁵⁵ Womack, "The Integrity of American Indian Claims," 168.
- ⁵⁶ Womack, "The Integrity of American Indian Claims," 169.
- ⁵⁷ Womack, "The Integrity of American Indian Claims," 170.
- ⁵⁸ Womack, "The Integrity of American Indian Claims," 170.
- ⁵⁹ Womack, "The Integrity of American Indian Claims," 171.
- ⁶⁰ Womack, "The Integrity of American Indian Claims," 172-173.
- ⁶¹ Womack, "The Integrity of American Indian Claims," 172.
- ⁶² Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (New York: Continuum, 2000), 92.
- ⁶³ Freire, 87.
- ⁶⁴ Priscilla Settee, *The Strength of Women: Âhkamêyimowak* (Regina: Coteau Books, 2011), iii.
- ⁶⁵ Justice, in Kristina Fagan et al., "Canadian Indian Literary Nationalism?: Critical Approaches in Canadian Indigenous Contexts – A Collaborative Interlogue," *Canadian Journal of Native Studies* 29, no. 1 & 2 (2009): 26.
- ⁶⁶ Smith, 1.
- ⁶⁷ Smith, 3.
- ⁶⁸ Smith, 152.
- ⁶⁹ Smith, 153.
- ⁷⁰ Owens, quoted in Kimberly Blaeser, "Native Literature: Seeking a Critical Centre," in *Looking at the Words of Our People: First Nations Analysis of Literature*, ed. Jeannette Armstrong (Penticton: Theytus, 1993), 53.
- ⁷¹ Blaeser, 53. Emphasis added.
- ⁷² Blaeser, 53-54.
- ⁷³ Blaeser, 56.
- ⁷⁴ Blaeser, 60.

⁷⁵ Blaeser, 57-58.

⁷⁶ Lisa Brooks, "At the Gathering Place," in *American Indian Literary Nationalism*, ed. Jace Weaver, Craig Womack, and Robert Warrior (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006), 244-245.

⁷⁷ Brooks, "At The Gathering Place," 245.

⁷⁸ Lee Maracle, "Toward a National Literature: 'A Body of Writing,'" in *Across Cultures/Across Borders: Canadian Aboriginal and Native American Literatures*, ed. Paul DePasquale, Renate Eigenbrod, and Emma LaRocque (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2010), 78.

⁷⁹ E. Pauline Johnson, "A Strong Race Opinion: On the Indian Girl in Modern Fiction," in *E. Pauline Johnson (Tekahionwake): Collected Poems and Selected Prose*, ed. Carole Gerson and Veronica Strong-Boag (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 178.

⁸⁰ Johnson, 183.

⁸¹ Margery Fee, professor at the University of British Columbia, on the book's back cover.

⁸² Maracle, "Toward a National Literature," 79.

⁸³ Maracle, "Toward a National Literature," 82.

⁸⁴ Maracle, "Toward a National Literature," 83.

⁸⁵ Anishinaabe critic Jill Carter advocates using Indigenous critical tools to evaluate non-Indigenous literatures, which she calls performing "red readings." James Cox uses this method in *Muting White Noise: Native American and European American Novel Traditions* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2006), 12, 203-249.

⁸⁶ Maracle, "Toward a National Literature," 84.

⁸⁷ Maracle, "Toward a National Literature," 84.

⁸⁸ Maracle, "Toward a National Literature," 85.

⁸⁹ Maracle, "Toward a National Literature," 90.

⁹⁰ Maracle, "Toward a National Literature," 93.

⁹¹ Kristina Fagan, "Tewatatha:wi: Aboriginal Nationalism in Taiaiake Alfred's Peace, Power, Righteousness: An Indigenous Manifesto," *American Indian Quarterly* 28, no. 1 & 2 (2004): 12-13.

⁹² Fagan, "Tewatatha:wi," 13.

⁹³ Fagan, "Tewatatha:wi," 14.

⁹⁴ Kristina Fagan, "What's the Trouble with the Trickster?: An Introduction," in *Troubling Tricksters: Revisioning Critical Conversations*, ed. Deanna Reder and Linda Morra (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2010), 3.

⁹⁵ Fagan, "Tewatatha:wi," 15.

⁹⁶ Fagan, "Tewatatha:wi," 17.

⁹⁷ Fagan and McKegney, "Circling the Question of Nationalism in Native Canadian Literature and its Study," *Review: Literature and Arts of the Americas* 41, no. 1, (2008): 42. Emphasis in original.

⁹⁸ McKegney, in Fagan et al., "Canadian Indian Literary Nationalism?," 29.

⁹⁹ Fagan, "Tewatatha:wi," 24.

¹⁰⁰ Fagan and McKegney, "Circling the Question of Nationalism," 34. The authors' evidence of the latter claim is the exotic biographical description of Tomson Highway in the 1988 publication of *The Rez Sisters* by non-Native press Fifth House – an outdated example in my

mind. Further, in 2010 Fifth House Publishers reissued *The Rez Sisters* in the Cree language as *Iskooniguni Iskweewuk*.

¹⁰¹ Cook-Lynn, "The American Indian Fiction Writers," 80-81.

¹⁰² Sinclair, in Fagan et al., "Canadian Indian Literary Nationalism?," 21.

¹⁰³ See Keavy Martin, *Stories in a New Skin: Approaches to Inuit Literature* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2012).

¹⁰⁴ Martin in Fagan et al., "Canadian Indian Literary Nationalism?," 23.

¹⁰⁵ Martin in Fagan et al., "Canadian Indian Literary Nationalism?," 24.

¹⁰⁶ Martin, in Fagan et al., "Canadian Indian Literary Nationalism?," 22-23.

¹⁰⁷ Womack, "The Integrity of American Indian Claims," 162.

¹⁰⁸ Womack, "The Integrity of American Indian Claims," 162.

¹⁰⁹ Womack, "The Integrity of American Indian Claims," 163. Emphasis added.

¹¹⁰ Womack, "The Integrity of American Indian Claims," 167-68.

Chapter Four

¹ War Party, "Feeling Reserved II," *Greatest Natives from the North*, (Maskwacîs: Warparty Recording Company, 2002).

² Craig Proulx, "Aboriginal Hip Hoppers: Representin' Aboriginality in Cosmopolitan Worlds," in *Indigenous Cosmopolitans: Transnational and Transcultural Indigeneity in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Maximilian C. Forte (New York: Peter Lang, 2010), 46.

³ Jodi Byrd, "'Living My Native Life Deadly': Red Lake, Ward Churchill, and the Discourses of Competing Genocides," *American Indian Quarterly* 31, no. 2 (Spring 2007): 310-332.

⁴ Jace Weaver, "Splitting the Earth: First Utterances and Pluralist Separatism," in *American Indian Literary Nationalism*, ed. Jace Weaver, Craig Womack, and Robert Warrior (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006), 37.

⁵ Margaret Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 9.

⁶ Kovach, 14.

⁷ Kovach, 37.

⁸ Most notably, the nationalist approach has been critiqued by non-Indigenous academic Elvira Pulitano, *Toward a Native American Critical Theory* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003).

⁹ Kovach, 46.

¹⁰ Kovach, 27.

¹¹ Joseph Dion, *My Tribe the Crees* (Calgary: Glenbow-Alberta Institute, 1979), 41, 12, 8.

¹² Dion, 57.

¹³ Kovach, 44.

¹⁴ Kovach, 47.

¹⁵ Kovach, 48; Harold Cardinal and Walter Hildebrandt, *Treaty Elders of Saskatchewan: Our Dream Is That Our Peoples Will One Day Be Clearly Recognized as Nations* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2000), 79.

¹⁶ Priscilla Settee, *The Strength of Women: Âhkamêyimowak* (Regina: Coteau Books, 2011), iv.

¹⁷ Kovach, 46, 48.

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- ¹⁸ Kovach, 52.
- ¹⁹ Leanne Simpson, *Dancing On Our Turtle's Back: Stories of Nishnaabeg Re-Creation, Resurgence, and a New Emergence* (Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring Publishing, 2011), 59.
- ²⁰ Kovach, 49.
- ²¹ Craig Womack, *Red on Red: Native American Literary Separatism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 51.
- ²² Womack, 55.
- ²³ Womack, 59-60.
- ²⁴ Womack, 60-61.
- ²⁵ Kimberly Blaeser, "Native Literature: Seeking a Critical Centre," in *Looking at the Words of Our People: First Nations Analysis of Literature*, ed. Jeannette Armstrong (Penticton: Theytus, 1993), 53-54.
- ²⁶ Winona Wheeler, "Cree Intellectual Traditions in History," in *The West and Beyond: New Perspectives on an Imagined Region*, ed. Alvin Finkel, Sarah Carter, and Peter Fortna (Edmonton: Athabasca University Press, 2010), 47.
- ²⁷ Wheeler, "Cree Intellectual," 48.
- ²⁸ Wheeler, "Cree Intellectual," 48.
- ²⁹ Wheeler, "Cree Intellectual Traditions in History," 48.
- ³⁰ Peter Vandall and Joe Douquette, *wâskahikaniwiyiniw-âcimowina: Stories of the House People*, ed. and trans. Freda Ahenakew (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1987), vii.
- ³¹ Vandall and Douquette, xi.
- ³² Vandall and Douquette, 39, 41. Words in Nêhiyawêwin are from the Cree versions in SRO.
- ³³ Vandall and Douquette, 41, 43.
- ³⁴ Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong'o, *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1981), 3.
- ³⁵ Ngũgĩ, 16.
- ³⁶ Vandall and Douquette, 43, 45.
- ³⁷ Vandall and Douquette, 57.
- ³⁸ Vandall and Douquette, 61.
- ³⁹ Vandall and Douquette, 39.
- ⁴⁰ Vandall and Douquette, 43, 55, 53.
- ⁴¹ Vandall and Douquette, 51.
- ⁴² Vandall and Douquette, 47, 55.
- ⁴³ Vandall and Douquette, 49.
- ⁴⁴ Tomson Highway, "Why Cree is the Funniest of All Languages," in *Me Funny*, ed. Drew Hayden Taylor (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 2005), 164-65.
- ⁴⁵ Sharon Venne, "Understanding Treaty Six: An Indigenous Perspective," in *Aboriginal and Treaty Rights in Canada: Essays on Law, Equity, and Respect for Difference*, ed. Michael Asch (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997), 194, 198-199.
- ⁴⁶ Sally Weaver, *Making Canadian Indian Policy: The Hidden Agenda, 1968-1970* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), 183. See Indian Association of Alberta, *Citizens Plus*, June 1970.
- ⁴⁷ Jackie Hartley, Paul Joffe, and Jennifer Preston, "From Development to Implementation: An Ongoing Journey," in *Realizing the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: Triumph, Hope, and Action*, ed. Jackie Hartley, Paul Joffe, and Jennifer Preston (Saskatoon:

Purich Publishing, 2010), 15. See also Jens Dahl, *The Indigenous Space and Marginalized Peoples in the United Nations* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 169, 179, 182.

⁴⁸ See "In Conversation with Tomson Highway,"

<http://www2.macleans.ca/2013/09/30/in-conversation-with-tomson-highway/>

⁴⁹ Jean Okimâsis, "As Plain(s) as the Ear Can Hear," in *Plain Speaking: Essays on Aboriginal Peoples and the Prairie*, ed. Patrick C. Douaud and Bruce W. Dawson (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre/University of Regina, 2002), 23, 27.

⁵⁰ Highway, "Why Cree is the Funniest of all Languages," 161.

⁵¹ Winona Stevenson [Winona Wheeler], "Calling Badger and the Symbols of the Spirit Language: The Cree Origins of the Syllabic System," *Oral History Forum* 19-20 (1999-2000): 18.

⁵² Stevenson, 21.

⁵³ Bruce Peel, "How the Bible Came to the Cree," (1958) quoted in Stevenson, 21. The Evans invention theory is also discussed in John D. Nichols, "The Composition of the First Cree Hymnal," in *Essays in Algonquian Bibliography in Honour of V. M. Dechene*, ed. H.C. Wolfart (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba, Department of Native Studies, 1984), 1-21.

⁵⁴ Stevenson, 24. Dusenbury shares a similar view in *The Montana Cree: A Study in Religious Persistence* (1962; repr., Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998), 271.

⁵⁵ Stevenson, 24.

⁵⁶ Patricia Demers, Naomi McIlwraith, and Dorothy Thunder, *The Beginning of Print Culture in Athabasca Country* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2010), xi.

⁵⁷ Stevenson, 20-21. I had the privilege of hearing Wes Fineday discuss the Calling Badger story at a panel titled, "Northern Great Plains Elders-Circle of Teachings," at Native American and Indigenous Studies Association annual meeting, University of Saskatchewan, June 13, 2013. Anthropologist Verne Dusenbury recorded a similar version of the story, told to him by a man named Raining Bird, at the Rocky Boy Reservation in 1959. See Dusenbury, 267.

⁵⁸ Stevenson, 21.

⁵⁹ Jo Anne Bennett and John W. Barry, "The Meaning and Value of the Syllabic Script for Native People," in *Actes du 20e Congrès des Algonquinistes*, ed. William Cowan (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1989), 41.

⁶⁰ John Murdoch, "Cree Literacy in Formal Education: A Problem in Educational Innovation," in *Papers of the 13th Algonquian Conference*, ed. William Cowan (Ottawa: Carleton University, 1982), 23.

⁶¹ Suzanne McCarthy quoted in Jennifer S. H. Brown, "The Wasitay Religion: Prophecy, Oral Literacy, and Belief on Hudson Bay," in *Reassessing Revitalization Movements: Perspectives from North America and the Pacific Islands*, ed. Michael E. Harkin (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 116.

⁶² Bennett and Barry, 38-39.

⁶³ Janice Acoose, "Honouring Ni'Wahkomakanak," in *Reasoning Together: The Native Critics Collective*, ed. Craig Womack, Daniel Heath Justice, and Christopher B. Teuton (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008), 218.

⁶⁴ Acoose, 219.

⁶⁵ Acoose, 221-222.

⁶⁶ Acoose, 223. She does not disregard European derived theory outright, she quotes Ruffo in advising critics to “apply and contextualize such theories within ‘Indigenous ways of knowing.’”

⁶⁷ Acoose, 222.

⁶⁸ Dion, 2.

⁶⁹ She responded to students’ questions about Nêhiyawêwin, and protocol was followed (students offered tobacco to Mrs. Whitecalf when they posed a question)

⁷⁰ Sarah Whitecalf, *The Cree Language is Our Identity: The La Ronge Lectures of Sarah Whitecalf*, ed. and trans. H.C. Wolfart and Freda Ahenakew (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1993), 26-27.

⁷¹ Whitecalf, x.

⁷² Whitecalf, 25-29.

⁷³ David Mandelbaum, *The Plains Cree: An Ethnographic, Historical, and Comparative Study* (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 1979), 371, also 105-138 on camp life.

⁷⁴ Sarah Carter, *Lost Harvests: Prairie Indian Reserve Farmers and Government Policy* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1990), 28.

⁷⁵ Dion, 18.

⁷⁶ See Robert James Branham and Steven J. Hartnett, *Sweet Freedom’s Song: “My Country ‘tis of Thee” and Democracy in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

⁷⁷ Buffy Sainte-Marie, “My Country,” in *American Culture: An Anthology*, 2nd ed., ed. Anders Breidlid, Fredrik Chr. Brøgger, Oyvind T. Gulliksen, and Torbjorn Sirevag (London: Routledge, 2008), 21-23.

Chapter Five

¹ Gerald Vizenor, *Native Liberty: Natural Reason and Cultural Survivance* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009) 22, 106.

² Vizenor, 137.

³ Vizenor, 116-117.

⁴ See Glen Coulthard, “Subjects of Empire: Indigenous Peoples and the ‘Politics of Recognition’ in Canada,” *Contemporary Political Theory* 6 (2007).

⁵ Leslie Marmon Silko, *Ceremony* (1977; repr. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986), 2.

⁶ J. Edward Chamberlin, *If This Is Your Land, Where are Your Stories?: Finding Common Ground* (Toronto: Knopf, 2003), 51-52.

⁷ Lawrence Gross, “The Comic Vision of Anishinaabe Culture and Religion,” *American Indian Quarterly* 26, no. 3 (2002): 452. See also Daniel Morley Johnson, “(Re)Nationalizing Naanabozho: Anishinaabe Sacred Stories, Nationalist Literary Criticism, and Scholarly Responsibility,” in *Troubling Tricksters: Revisioning Critical Conversations*, ed. Deanna Reder and Linda Morra (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2010), 212.

⁸ See Johnson, 212.

⁹ Robert A. Williams, *Linking Arms Together: American Indian Treaty Visions of Law and Peace, 1600-1800* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 87.

¹⁰ Williams, 88.

¹¹ Williams, 89.

¹² Chamberlin, 19-20.

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- ¹³ See Harold Cardinal and Walter Hildebrandt, *Treaty Elders of Saskatchewan: Our Dream Is That Our Peoples Will One Day Be Clearly Recognized as Nations* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2000), 48-59.
- ¹⁴ Chamberlin, 51.
- ¹⁵ Brian Thom, "Aboriginal Rights and Title in Canada After *Delgamuukw*: Part One, Oral Traditions and Anthropological Evidence in the Courtroom," *Native Studies Review* 14, no. 1 (2001): 3.
- ¹⁶ Winona Wheeler, "Reflections on the Social Relations of Indigenous Oral Histories," in *Walking a Tightrope: Aboriginal Peoples and Their Representations*, ed. Ute Lischke and David T. McNab (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2005), 202.
- ¹⁷ Roger Epp, *We Are All Treaty People: Prairie Essays* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2008), 126.
- ¹⁸ Epp, 127.
- ¹⁹ Epp, 126.
- ²⁰ Dale Turner, *This Is Not a Peace Pipe: Towards a Critical Indigenous Philosophy*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 7. See Allan Cairns, *Citizens Plus: Aboriginal Peoples and the Canadian State* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2000) and Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).
- ²¹ Epp, 133.
- ²² J. M. Cohen, ed. and trans, *The Four Voyages of Christopher Columbus* (London: Penguin Books, 1969), 57.
- ²³ Cohen, 117-118.
- ²⁴ Cohen, 63. Emphasis added. An excellent comparative literature study of Columbus's work is Jonathan Hart, *Columbus, Shakespeare, and the Interpretation of the New World* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).
- ²⁵ For the ceremonial and legal role of gift giving in European-Indigenous treaty making since the time of contact, see J. R. Miller, *Compact, Contract, Covenant: Aboriginal Treaty-Making in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 17-25.
- ²⁶ See Miller, 3-149.
- ²⁷ On Indigenous peoples and treaty making with settlers, see also Francis Paul Prucha, *American Indian Treaties: The History of a Political Anomaly* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); Vine Deloria, Jr. and Clifford M. Lytle, *The Nations Within: The Past and Future of American Indian Sovereignty* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984).
- ²⁸ Quoted in Cardinal and Hildebrandt, 33.
- ²⁹ Quoted in Alexander Morris, *The Treaties of Canada With the Indians of Manitoba and the Northwest Territories* (Toronto: Willing and Williamson, 1880), 170-171. See also Arthur J. Ray, Jim Miller, and Frank Tough, *Bounty and Benevolence: A History of Saskatchewan Treaties* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000), 135 and Robert J. Talbot, *Negotiating the Numbered Treaties: An Intellectual and Political Biography of Alexander Morris* (Saskatoon: Purich Publishing, 2009), 95, 105-107. Sweetgrass also acknowledged his translator: "We send these words by our Master, Mr. Christie, in whom we have every confidence" (171). The letter was sent by Sweetgrass, Ki-he-win, The Little Hunter, and Kiski-on. Hugh Dempsey suggests that Big Bear might have accompanied the chiefs to Edmonton House at that time, "though he was not important enough to sign the document." Hugh Dempsey, *Big Bear: The End of Freedom* (Vancouver: Greystone Books, 1984), 44. See

also John L. Tobias, "Canada's Subjugation of the Plains Cree, 1879-1885," *Canadian Historical Review* 64, no. 4 (1983): 521.

³⁰ Quoted in Morris, 171.

³¹ Dempsey, 61.

³² Dempsey, 62-63. See also Miller, 153-155.

³³ Yale D. Belanger, *Ways of Knowing: An Introduction to Native Studies in Canada* (Toronto: Nelson Education, 2010), 74.

³⁴ For an overview of Treaty Six, see Ray et. al., 130-147, 234-243; Jill St. Germain, *Broken Treaties: United States and Canadian Relations with the Lakotas and the Plains Cree, 1868-1885* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 101-131; Talbot, 93-116. Miller places Treaty Six in the context of the numbered treaties negotiated during the 1870s (see Miller, 150-181).

³⁵ Talbot, 167.

³⁶ Morris, 11.

³⁷ Morris, 11.

³⁸ Morris, 195-196.

³⁹ Sharon Venne, "Understanding Treaty Six: An Indigenous Perspective," in *Aboriginal and Treaty Rights in Canada: Essays on Law, Equity, and Respect for Difference*, ed. Michael Asch (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997), 187. Miller has also thoroughly documented the ways European nations adapted to the legal protocols of Indigenous nations, particularly as a result of trading relationships (see Miller, 11-32).

⁴⁰ Neal McLeod, *Cree Narrative Memory: From Treaties to Contemporary Times* (Saskatoon: Purich Publishing, 2007), 35.

⁴¹ Morris 179, 183.

⁴² Morris, 183. Ray, Miller, and Tough – citing John Taylor – note that neither Morris, nor his secretary, acknowledged that the pipestem ceremony was "a sacred ritual that was performed before any matter of importance and that it committed the participants to speaking only the truth." Ray et. al., 133.

⁴³ Jim Kâ-Nîpitêhtêw, *The Counselling Speeches of Jim Kâ-Nîpitêhtêw*, ed. and trans. Freda Ahenakew and H. C. Wolfart (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1998), 109, 111. Jim Kâ-Nîpitêhtêw makes a similar reference to the importance of the pipe stem, as does Elder J.B. Stanley (Frog Lake First Nation) in *Honour Bound: Onion Lake and the Spirit of Treaty Six. The International Validity of Treaties with Indigenous Peoples* (Copenhagen: IWGIA, 1997), 60. Linguist H.C. Wolfart notes the seriousness of the pipe, extending it to rhetorical practice: "to make a mistake in speaking about the pipestem would constitute a serious offence against the sacred." ("Commentary," in Kâ-Nîpitêhtêw, 182).

⁴⁴ Miller, 177-179. On the importance of the pipe ceremony to several Indigenous nations in trade and diplomacy, see also Miller, 17-20.

⁴⁵ On the importance of the pipe stem to the treaty relationship, see also Sarah Carter and Walter Hildebrandt, "'A Better Life With Honour': Treaty 6 (1876) and Treaty 7 (1877) with Alberta First Nations," in *Alberta Formed, Alberta Transformed*, vol. 1, ed. Catherine Anne Cavanaugh, Michael Payne, and Donald Grant Wetherell (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2006), e.g., 25, 28, 31.

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- ⁴⁶ Venne, "Understanding Treaty 6," 186-187. On the history of peace, friendship, and alliance treaties between Europeans/Euro-Canadians and Indigenous nations from invasion to the 1760s, see Miller, chapter 2, 33-65; also Belanger, 74-80.
- ⁴⁷ Johnson, *Two Families: Treaty and Governance* (Saskatoon: Purich Publishing, 2007), 27.
- ⁴⁸ Johnson, *Two Families*, 27.
- ⁴⁹ Johnson, *Two Families*, 29-30.
- ⁵⁰ Johnson, *Two Families*, 30.
- ⁵¹ Sharon Venne, "Treaties Made in Good Faith," in *Natives and Settlers, Now and Then: Historical Issues and Current Perspectives on Treaties and Land Claims in Canada*, ed. Paul W. DePasquale (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2007), 5.
- ⁵² Venne, "Treaties Made in Good Faith," 5-7.
- ⁵³ Morris, 243.
- ⁵⁴ Morris, 212, 231, 232, 234, 235, 236.
- ⁵⁵ Morris, 254.
- ⁵⁶ Morris, 203.
- ⁵⁷ Morris, 225, 227, 235, 236, 237.
- ⁵⁸ Talbot, 56. Morris suggested "the Indian mind was oppressed with vague fears; they dreaded the treaty" and so in response, he writes, "I accordingly shaped my address, so as to give them confidence in the intentions of the Government, and to quiet their apprehensions" (see Morris, 183).
- ⁵⁹ Carter and Hildebrandt, 256.
- ⁶⁰ Harold Cardinal and Walter Hildebrandt, *Treaty Elders of Saskatchewan: Our Dream Is That Our Peoples Will One Day Be Clearly Recognized as Nations* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2000), 41. On the importance of familial metaphors, see Carter and Hildebrandt, 33-34, and Talbot, 67-68.
- ⁶¹ Miller, 34.
- ⁶² Daniel Heath Justice, "The Necessity of Nationhood: Affirming the Sovereignty of Indigenous National Literatures," in *Moveable Margins: The Shifting Spaces of Canadian Literature*, ed. Chelva Kanaganayakam (Toronto: TSAR Publications, 2005), 148.
- ⁶³ Mark Rifkin, *When Did Indians Become Straight?: Kinship, the History of Sexuality, and Native Sovereignty* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 16. Emphasis in original.
- ⁶⁴ In using the framework of kinship, I am not envisioning the patriarchal, heteronormative version of family that Rifkin critiques, but rather I see kinship a fluid concept that has the potential to be more inclusive, adaptive, and expansive. Like Maile Arvin, Eve Tuck, and Angie Morrill, I reject "the heteropaternal organization of citizens into nuclear families, each expressing a 'proper,' modern sexuality" and "the presumption that heteropatriarchal nuclear-domestic arrangements, in which the father is both center and leader/boss should serve as the model for social arrangements of the state and its institutions." See Arvin et al., "Decolonizing Feminism: Challenging Connections Between Settler Colonialism and Heteropatriarchy," *Feminist Formulations* 25, no. 1 (2013): 13-14.
- ⁶⁵ Morris, 212.
- ⁶⁶ Morris, 208.
- ⁶⁷ Peter Erasmus, *Buffalo Days and Nights, As Told to Harry Thompson* (Calgary: Glenbow-Alberta Institute, 1976), 254.
- ⁶⁸ Quoted in *Honour Bound*, 66.

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- ⁶⁹ Quoted in *Honour Bound*, 73.
- ⁷⁰ Ray et. al., 134.
- ⁷¹ Erasmus, 240-41.
- ⁷² Tomson Highway, *Paasteewitoon Kaapooskaysking Tageespichit* (Markham: Fifth House, 2010), ix.
- ⁷³ Highway, xi.
- ⁷⁴ John McDougall notes that McKay was the translator at the Fort Pitt adhesion. See McDougall, *Opening The Great West: Experiences of a Missionary in 1875-76*, ed. Hugh Dempsey (Calgary: Glenbow-Alberta Institute, 1970), 58.
- ⁷⁵ Morris, 240. Dempsey asserts the translator was McKay, as Erasmus had already left for White Fish Lake.
- ⁷⁶ Morris, 241.
- ⁷⁷ Morris, 241.
- ⁷⁸ Kiera Ladner, "Aysaka'paykinit: Contesting the Rope Around the Nations' Neck," in *Group Politics and Social Movements in Canada*, ed. Miriam Smith (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 230. For a similar interpretation, see Tobias, 525.
- ⁷⁹ Dempsey, 74.
- ⁸⁰ Morris, 199. Emphasis added.
- ⁸¹ Morris, 168. Emphasis added.
- ⁸² Morris, 204.
- ⁸³ Morris, 218. Emphasis added
- ⁸⁴ Talbot, 32.
- ⁸⁵ Morris, 182.
- ⁸⁶ Tobias, 526.
- ⁸⁷ Morris, 201. Emphasis added.
- ⁸⁸ Talbot, 57.
- ⁸⁹ Morris, 207. Emphasis added.
- ⁹⁰ Morris, 211. Emphasis added.
- ⁹¹ Morris, 212. Emphasis added.
- ⁹² Erasmus, 237-238.
- ⁹³ Ray et. al., 130.
- ⁹⁴ St. Germain, 103-104.
- ⁹⁵ Quoted in Richard Price, ed., *Spirit of the Alberta Indian Treaties*, 3rd ed. (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1999), 120.
- ⁹⁶ Venne, "Treaties Made in Good Faith," 8.
- ⁹⁷ Quoted in Erasmus, 244.
- ⁹⁸ Roger Spielmann, *"You're So Fat!": Exploring Ojibwe Discourse* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 24.
- ⁹⁹ Walter Lightning, "Compassionate Mind: Implications of a Text Written by Elder Louis Sunchild," (master's thesis, University of Alberta, 1992), 2.
- ¹⁰⁰ Kâ-Nîpitêhtêw, 111.
- ¹⁰¹ Kâ-Nîpitêhtêw, 111, 113.
- ¹⁰² Price, 115.
- ¹⁰³ Price, 116.
- ¹⁰⁴ Price, 119.

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- ¹⁰⁵ Price, 124.
- ¹⁰⁶ Wolfart, "Commentary," in Kâ-Nîpitêhtêw, 168.
- ¹⁰⁷ *Honour Bound*, 60.
- ¹⁰⁸ McLeod, 16.
- ¹⁰⁹ Elder Pete Waskahat references "one thumb length of top soil" (*Honour Bound*, 67)
- ¹¹⁰ Quoted in *Honour Bound*, 60-61.
- ¹¹¹ Quoted in *Honour Bound*, 64.
- ¹¹² Quoted in *Honour Bound*, 68.
- ¹¹³ Quoted in *Honour Bound*, 69-70.
- ¹¹⁴ Quoted in *Honour Bound*, 72-73.
- ¹¹⁵ Cardinal and Hildebrandt, 6-7.
- ¹¹⁶ Cardinal and Hildebrandt, 7.
- ¹¹⁷ Cardinal and Hildebrandt, 11.
- ¹¹⁸ Cardinal and Hildebrandt, 25.
- ¹¹⁹ Cardinal and Hildebrandt, 44.
- ¹²⁰ Cardinal and Hildebrandt, 58. Quoting *Calder v. British Columbia (Attorney General)* [1973] S.C.R. 313.
- ¹²¹ Cardinal and Hildebrandt, 61.
- ¹²² Cardinal and Hildebrandt, 62-67.
- ¹²³ Cardinal and Hildebrandt, 59.

Chapter Six

- ¹ Beaver Lake Cree Nation, "Kêtuskenô Declaration," <http://www.beaverlakecreenation.ca/upload/documents/declaration.pdf>. Thank you to Prof. Dwayne Donald for bringing my attention to the Declaration.
- ² Scott Richard Lyons, "Rhetorical Sovereignty: What Do American Indians Want from Writing?," *College Composition and Communication* 51, no. 3 (2000): 457.
- ³ Lyons, "Rhetorical Sovereignty," 449-50. Emphasis in original.
- ⁴ Taiaiake Alfred, "Warrior Scholarship: Seeing the University as a Ground of Contention," in *Indigenizing the Academy: Transforming Scholarship and Empowering Communities*, ed. Devon Mihesuah and Angela Cavender Wilson (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 97.
- ⁵ Lyons, "Rhetorical Sovereignty," 451.
- ⁶ Alexander Morris, *The Treaties of Canada With the Indians of Manitoba and the Northwest Territories* (Toronto: Willing and Williamson, 1880), 202.
- ⁷ Neal McLeod, *Cree Narrative Memory: From Treaties to Contemporary Times* (Saskatoon: Purich Publishing, 2007), 36.
- ⁸ Regna Darnell, "Thirty-nine Postulates of Plains Cree Conversation, 'Power,' and Interaction: A Culture-Specific Model," in *Papers of the Twenty-Second Algonquian Conference*, ed. William Cowan (Ottawa: Carlton University Press, 1991), 89. I note here the apparent irony of arguing for Indigenous rhetorical autonomy while citing a non-Indigenous anthropologist. Darnell's article presents the most comprehensive published scholarly description of Plains Cree discourse I could find, and it is based on her years of fieldwork in Cree communities. I was unable to find criticism of this article in the

Indigenous Studies literature, and the numerous Cree people I shared this research with in the classroom, at the 2013 NAISA conference, and in conversation affirmed that the postulates I refer to here make sense from a Cree perspective.

⁹ Darnell, 90.

¹⁰ Darnell, 94.

¹¹ Darnell, 95.

¹² Roger Spielmann, *"You're So Fat!": Exploring Ojibwe Discourse* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 35.

¹³ Darnell, 92.

¹⁴ Spielmann, 37-39.

¹⁵ Darnell, 93.

¹⁶ Robert J. Talbot, *Negotiating the Numbered Treaties: An Intellectual and Political Biography of Alexander Morris* (Saskatoon: Purich Publishing, 2009), 94.

¹⁷ Hugh Dempsey, *Big Bear: The End of Freedom* (Vancouver: Greystone Books, 1984), 67.

¹⁸ Morris, 203.

¹⁹ Morris, 220.

²⁰ Morris, 221.

²¹ Dempsey, 69.

²² Morris, 221.

²³ Morris, 221.

²⁴ Arthur J. Ray, Jim Miller, and Frank Tough, *Bounty and Benevolence: A History of Saskatchewan Treaties* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000), 147.

²⁵ Morris, 197.

²⁶ Matthew Wildcat, "Miyo Wahkotowin: Self-determination, Colonialism and Pre-reserve Nehiyaw Forms of Power" (master's thesis, University of Victoria, 2010), 52-53.

²⁷ Matthew Wildcat, "A Teaching Aid for an Introduction to Indigenous Studies at Maskwachees Cultural College," (unpublished manuscript, 2011), [51-52].

²⁸ Wildcat, "A Teaching Aid," 40.

²⁹ Morris, 239.

³⁰ Ray, et. al., 142.

³¹ McLeod, 40.

³² Dempsey, 71.

³³ Wildcat, "A Teaching Aid," 41.

³⁴ Morris, 190. Emphasis added.

³⁵ Quoted in Dempsey, 79. Emphasis added.

³⁶ Dempsey, 79.

³⁷ Morris, 222.

³⁸ McLeod, 39.

³⁹ Morris, 223.

⁴⁰ Dempsey, 72.

⁴¹ Quoted in Dempsey, 77-78.

⁴² Quoted in Dempsey, 78.

⁴³ Richard Price, ed., *Spirit of the Alberta Indian Treaties*, 3rd ed. (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1999), 121-122. On missionary influence over the chiefs, see also Ray, et. al., 141.

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- ⁴⁴ McLeod, 40-41.
- ⁴⁵ Dempsey, 70. On the influence of missionaries at negotiations, see also Miller, 160-161.
- ⁴⁶ Darnell, 92.
- ⁴⁷ Spielmann, *You're So Fat!*, 31.
- ⁴⁸ Walter Lightning, "Compassionate Mind: Implications of a Text Written by Elder Louis Sunchild" (master's thesis, University of Alberta, 1992), 74.
- ⁴⁹ Darnell, 96.
- ⁵⁰ Morris, 207.
- ⁵¹ Talbot, 112.
- ⁵² Peter Erasmus, *Buffalo Days and Nights, As Told to Harry Thompson* (Calgary: Glenbow-Alberta Institute, 1976), 244.
- ⁵³ Erasmus, 244-245.
- ⁵⁴ Morris, 212.
- ⁵⁵ Miller, 216.
- ⁵⁶ Dempsey affirms: "Commissioner Morris ... had come with the intention of offering them the same terms accepted by the Qu'Appelle Indians, *and nothing more*" (Dempsey, 69, emphasis added).
- ⁵⁷ Darnell, 95.
- ⁵⁸ Morris, 219.
- ⁵⁹ Darnell, 97.
- ⁶⁰ Morris, 202.
- ⁶¹ Erasmus, 243.
- ⁶² Morris, 208.
- ⁶³ Erasmus, 245.
- ⁶⁴ Erasmus, 250.
- ⁶⁵ McDougall, *Opening The Great West: Experiences of a Missionary in 1875-76*, ed. Hugh Dempsey (Calgary: Glenbow-Alberta Institute, 1970), 58.
- ⁶⁶ Wildcat, "A Teaching Aid," 41.
- ⁶⁷ Spielmann, 40-41.
- ⁶⁸ Morris, 213-214.
- ⁶⁹ Morris, 189.
- ⁷⁰ Morris, 191.
- ⁷¹ Morris, 187.
- ⁷² Morris, 177.
- ⁷³ Morris, 185.
- ⁷⁴ John L. Tobias, "Canada's Subjugation of the Plains Cree, 1879-1885," *Canadian Historical Review* 64, no. 4 (1983): 520, emphasis added.
- ⁷⁵ Erasmus, 246.
- ⁷⁶ Scott Richard Lyons, *X-Marks: Native Signatures of Assent* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 1.
- ⁷⁷ Lyons, *X-Marks*, 1. Emphasis in original.
- ⁷⁸ Lyons, *X-Marks*, 2-3.
- ⁷⁹ Ray, et. al., 132.
- ⁸⁰ McLeod, 37.
- ⁸¹ Darnell, 97.

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- ⁸² Morris, 219.
- ⁸³ Morris, 186.
- ⁸⁴ Erasmus, 246.
- ⁸⁵ Erasmus, 246.
- ⁸⁶ Erasmus, 247.
- ⁸⁷ Erasmus, 248.
- ⁸⁸ Erasmus, 249.
- ⁸⁹ Darnell, 92.
- ⁹⁰ Darnell, 92. On southwestern Indigenous peoples' rhetorical uses of silence, See Cheryl Glenn, *Unspoken: A Rhetoric of Silence* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2004), 107-149.
- ⁹¹ Erasmus, 249.
- ⁹² Erasmus, 250.
- ⁹³ Erasmus, 250.
- ⁹⁴ McDougall, 58-59.
- ⁹⁵ McDougall, 59.
- ⁹⁶ McDougall, 59-60.
- ⁹⁷ Morris, 288.
- ⁹⁸ Morris, 293.
- ⁹⁹ Morris, 297.
- ¹⁰⁰ Morris, 288.
- ¹⁰¹ Quoted in Jill St. Germain, *Broken Treaties: United States and Canadian Relations with the Lakotas and the Plains Cree, 1868-1885* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 103.
- ¹⁰² St. Germain, 179.
- ¹⁰³ Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, *Report*, Vol. 1, *Looking Forward, Looking Back* (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1996), 179.
- ¹⁰⁴ Harold Cardinal and Walter Hildebrandt, *Treaty Elders of Saskatchewan: Our Dream Is That Our Peoples Will One Day Be Clearly Recognized as Nations* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2000), 7.
- ¹⁰⁵ Cardinal and Hildebrandt, 8.
- ¹⁰⁶ McLeod, 6.
- ¹⁰⁷ Quoted in *Honour Bound: Onion Lake and the Spirit of Treaty Six. The International Validity of Treaties with Indigenous Peoples* (Copenhagen: IWGIA, 1997), 76.

Chapter Seven

- ¹ *Edmonton Bulletin*, February 13, 1883.
- ² Hugh Dempsey writes that Scollen was "anti-British." Hugh Dempsey, *Big Bear: The End of Freedom* (Vancouver: Greystone Books, 1984), 40.
- ³ Kenneth James Tyler, "A Tax-eating Proposition: The History of the Passpasschase Indian Reserve," (master's thesis, University of Alberta, 1979), 60-61.
- ⁴ Jill St. Germain, *Broken Treaties: United States and Canadian Relations with the Lakotas and the Plains Cree, 1868-1885* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 238.
- ⁵ St. Germain, 239.
- ⁶ St. Germain, 240.

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- ⁷ Scott Richard Lyons, "Rhetorical Sovereignty: What Do American Indians Want from Writing?," *College Composition and Communication* 51, no. 3 (2000): 452.
- ⁸ Daniel Heath Justice, "Rhetorical Removals," *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 17, no. 4 (2005): 151.
- ⁹ Justice, 151.
- ¹⁰ *Edmonton Bulletin*, April 8, 1882.
- ¹¹ Jaimy L. Miller, "The Papaschase Band: Building Awareness and Community in the City of Edmonton," in *Aboriginal Peoples in Canadian Cities: Transformations and Continuities*, ed. Heather A. Howard and Craig Proulx (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2011), 55.
- ¹² Alexander Morris, *The Treaties of Canada With the Indians of Manitoba and the Northwest Territories* (Toronto: Willing and Williamson, 1880), 204-05. Emphases added.
- ¹³ The population of Edmonton in 1892 was 700, and grew to 1,165 in 1895. John F. Gilpin, "The City of Strathcona 1891-1912," (master's thesis, University of Alberta, 1978), 156.
- ¹⁴ Miller, 55.
- ¹⁵ Tyler, 58.
- ¹⁶ Miller, 55.
- ¹⁷ Treaty Six obligates the Crown to provide 128 acres per band member, or 1 sq. mile per family of 5.
- ¹⁸ Tyler, 47. The phrase "exacted his revenge" is from Miller, 56.
- ¹⁹ Miller, 56.
- ²⁰ Tyler, 48.
- ²¹ Melanie Niemi-Bohun, "Colonial Categories and Familial Responses to Treaty and Metis Scrip Policy: The 'Edmonton and District Stragglers,' 1870-88," *Canadian Historical Review* 90, no. 1 (2009): 73n.5.
- ²² Niemi-Bohun, 75.
- ²³ Niemi-Bohun, 75.
- ²⁴ Niemi-Bohun, 75.
- ²⁵ Niemi-Bihun claims: "In 1880, facilitating the government's goal of categorizing and organizing Aboriginal peoples, Inspector of Indian Agencies Thomas Wadsworth compiled a list of individuals who did not identify with a particular band and categorized them as 'Stragglers living about Edmonton with no recognized Chief.'" (78). Similarly, she suggests that individuals on the Edmonton Straggler list had "one main factor in common - they did not identify with an established band" (91). Niemi-Bohun thus performs her own rhetorical removal.
- ²⁶ Linda Goyette, ed. *Edmonton in Our Own Words* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2004), 98. Tyler 50. For more on Oliver, see Dwayne Donald, "Edmonton Pentimento: Re-Reading History in the Case of the Papaschase Cree," *Journal of the Canadian Association for Curriculum Studies* 2, no. 1 (2004): 36-40.
- ²⁷ "Mass Meeting," *Edmonton Bulletin*, January 17, 1881. See also Donald, 37-38.
- ²⁸ "Mass Meeting."
- ²⁹ "Indian Reserves," *Edmonton Bulletin*, January 17, 1881.
- ³⁰ "That Reserve," *Edmonton Bulletin*, September 30, 1882.
- ³¹ Indian Act, 1876. S.C. 1876, c. 18 (39 Vict.), section 12.
- ³² "That Reserve."
- ³³ "South Side Reserve," *Edmonton Bulletin*, August 2, 1884.

³⁴ "South Side Reserve."

³⁵ Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, *Report*, Vol. 1, *Looking Forward, Looking Back* (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1996), 283-284. Sarah Carter writes that, "hundreds of thousands of acres [of reserve land] were alienated" as a result of Frank Oliver becoming superintendent general of Indian Affairs in 1905. Sarah Carter, *Lost Harvests: Prairie Indian Reserve Farmers and Government Policy* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990), 245.

³⁶ See Brian Titley, *A Narrow Vision: Duncan Campbell Scott and the Administration of Indian Affairs in Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1986), 21; and Carter, 245.

³⁷ "South Side Reserve."

³⁸ Tyler, 55.

³⁹ Goyette, 101; Miller 56-57.

⁴⁰ Miller, 56.

⁴¹ Niemi-Bohun, 72n3. The author notes this number does not take into account the number of requests that were denied (82).

⁴² Canada, *House of Commons Debates*, 6 July 1885, pp. 3117-3118, quoted in Niemi-Bohun, 80.

⁴³ Miller, 56. Tyler, 90.

⁴⁴ Bulletin, July 17; Aug. 7.

⁴⁵ Niemi-Bohun, 74. Elder John Buffalo recalled that at the time Treaty Six was signed, "the majority of Indians did not know money" (*Spirit of Alberta Indian Treaties*, 122).

⁴⁶ Miller, 56.

⁴⁷ Miller 56. According to Niemi-Bohun, approximately three-quarters of the individuals listed as Edmonton Stragglers between 1880 and 1885 filed scrip applications immediately after withdrawal from treaty (74).

⁴⁸ Niemi-Bohun, 82.

⁴⁹ Quoted in Niemi-Bohun, 83.

⁵⁰ Tyler, 94.

⁵¹ For a full discussion and references to the government correspondence, see Tyler, 82-107.

⁵² Tyler, 86-87.

⁵³ Tyler, 98.

⁵⁴ Miller, 56-57.

⁵⁵ Tyler 91.

⁵⁶ Jo-Ann Episknew, *Taking Back Our Spirits: Indigenous Literature, Public Policy and Healing* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2009), 27.

⁵⁷ Episknew, 28.

⁵⁸ Episknew, 28.

⁵⁹ Bonita Lawrence, *"Real" Indians and Others: Mixed-Blood Urban Native Peoples and Indigenous Nationhood* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004), 31.

⁶⁰ Lawrence, 45.

⁶¹ Lawrence, 222-223. Emphasis in original.

⁶² Lawrence, 44.

⁶³ "South Side Reserve," *Edmonton Bulletin*, August 2, 1884.

⁶⁴ "Indians?," *Edmonton Bulletin*, April 15, 1882, 2. See also Donald, 38.

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- ⁶⁵ Miller, 55-56. Tyler 33.
- ⁶⁶ Tyler, 34.
- ⁶⁷ Miller, 56.
- ⁶⁸ "Ooh-ne-pah-qua-see-moo-we-kah-mik," *Edmonton Bulletin*, July 8, 1882.
- ⁶⁹ *Edmonton Bulletin*, March 17, 1883, 1.
- ⁷⁰ Indian Act, R.S.C. 1886, sec. 38 and sec. 39.
- ⁷¹ Letter dated September 7, 1887 from Inspector Wadsworth to Indian Commissioner Dewdney.
- ⁷² Miller, 57. *Canada v. Lameman*, 2008 SCC 14.
- ⁷³ Miller, 57-58.
- ⁷⁴ *Canada v. Lameman*, para 4.
- ⁷⁵ Miller, 57.
- ⁷⁶ Arthur J. Ray, *Telling it to the Judge: Taking Native History to Court* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2011), 125.
- ⁷⁷ Quote from *Canada v. Lameman*, para 8.
- ⁷⁸ *Canada (Attorney General) v. Lameman*, 2008 SCC 14, para. [4].
- ⁷⁹ Donald, 39.
- ⁸⁰ *R. v. Sparrow* [1990] 3 C.N.L.R. 160.
- ⁸¹ *R. v. Vanderpeet* [1996] 4 C.N.L.R. 177.
- ⁸² *Delgamuukw v. British Columbia* [1998] 1 C.N.L.R. 14.
- ⁸³ *Canada v. Lameman*, para 12.
- ⁸⁴ *Canada v. Lameman*, para 13.
- ⁸⁵ *Canada v. Lameman*, para 17.
- ⁸⁶ *Canada v. Lameman*, para 2.
- ⁸⁷ Canadian Press, "Court rejects Edmonton Land Claim," <http://www.thestar.com/news/Canada/article/409844>
- ⁸⁸ Canada, Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* (Ottawa: Canadian Communication Group, 1996), 5:103. See also 3:621-47 for a detailed discussion. I originally quoted this statement in Daniel Morley Johnson, "From the Tomahawk Chop to the Road Block: Discourses of Savagism in Whitestream Media," *American Indian Quarterly* 35, no. 1 (2011): 104-134.
- ⁸⁹ Canada, Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, *Report*, vol. 5, 103-4.
- ⁹⁰ Craig Proulx, "A Critical Discourse Analysis of John Stackhouse's Welcome to Harlem on the Prairies," in *Aboriginal Peoples in Canadian Cities: Transformations and Continuities*, ed. Heather A. Howard and Craig Proulx (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2011), 144.
- ⁹¹ Proulx, 145.
- ⁹² Proulx, 144.
- ⁹³ Bill Curry, "Edmonton Stragglers' have come home to collect," *The Globe and Mail*, February 22, 2008.
- ⁹⁴ Miller cites 895 registered voters in the Papaschase Band elections as of 2006 (Miller, 54).
- ⁹⁵ Proulx, 159.
- ⁹⁶ Lorne Gunter, "Too late for 120-year-old case," *Edmonton Journal*, April 4, 2008.

⁹⁷ Arok Wolvengrey, *Nêhiyawêwin itwêwina/Cree Words*, Vol. 1 (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 2001), 1:39.

Chapter Eight

¹ Edward Ahenakew, *Voices of the Plains Cree*, ed. Ruth Buck, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973), 87. Unless otherwise noted, subsequent references will be to the 1973 edition.

² Lee Maracle, *I Am Woman: A Native Perspective on Sociology and Feminism* (Vancouver: Press Gang Publishers, 1996), 94.

³ Taiaiake Alfred, *Wasáse: Indigenous Pathways of Action and Freedom* (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2005), 22.

⁴ Alfred, 46-55.

⁵ Alfred, 55.

⁶ Adam J. P. Gaudry, "Insurgent Research," *Wicazo Sa Review* 26, no. 1 (2011): 114.

⁷ Gaudry, 122.

⁸ Michael D. Wilson, *Writing Home: Indigenous Narratives of Resistance* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2008), ix.

⁹ Barbara Harlow, *Resistance Literature* (London: Methuen, 1987), 2. Emphasis in original.

¹⁰ Emma LaRocque, *When the Other is Me: Native Resistance Discourse, 1850-1990* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2010), 25.

¹¹ Quoted in Harlow, 3.

¹² Harlow, 28, 30.

¹³ Quoted in Harlow, 30.

¹⁴ Harlow, 7.

¹⁵ LaRocque, 23.

¹⁶ LaRocque, 24.

¹⁷ LaRocque, 29.

¹⁸ LaRocque, 70.

¹⁹ Carpenter, *Seeing Red*, 7-8.

²⁰ LaRocque, 74.

²¹ The idea here is not to unnecessarily conflate Indigenous and African-American uses of anger or experiences of racism. Indeed, Carpenter notes that the meaning of anger differs among people from different ethnicities/cultures and across Native cultures as well. Carpenter, *Seeing Red*, 8-9.

²² bell hooks, *Killing Rage: Ending Racism* (New York: Henry Holt & Co, 1995) 11.

²³ hooks, *Killing Rage*, 14.

²⁴ hooks, *Killing Rage*, 16.

²⁵ hooks, *Killing Rage*, 17.

²⁶ hooks, *Killing Rage*, 18.

²⁷ hooks, *killing rage*, 19.

²⁸ Audre Lorde, "The Uses of Anger: Women Responding to Racism," in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Freedom, CA: The Crossing Press, 1984), 124.

²⁹ Lorde, 127.

³⁰ Lorde, 129.

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- ³¹ Cari M. Carpenter, *Seeing Red: Anger, Sentimentality, and American Indians* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2008), 13.
- ³² Quoted in Carpenter, 13.
- ³³ Carpenter, 15.
- ³⁴ Carpenter, 3.
- ³⁵ Neal McLeod, *Cree Narrative Memory: From Treaties to Contemporary Times* (Saskatoon: Purich Publishing, 2007), 83.
- ³⁶ At their “high point” in 1931, there were 80 residential schools in Canada, of which the most (20) were in Alberta. Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, *Report*, Vol. 1, *Looking Forward, Looking Back* (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1996), 333-365. On federal nutritional experiments conducted on students in residential schools that began in the early 1940s – some of which involved deliberate malnourishment – see Ian Mosby, “Administering Colonial Science: Nutrition Research and Human Biomedical Experimentation in Aboriginal Communities and Residential Schools, 1942–1952,” *Histoire sociale/Social history* 46, no 91 (May 2013): 145-172.
- ³⁷ McLeod, 83.
- ³⁸ Alexander Morris, *The Treaties of Canada With the Indians of Manitoba and the Northwest Territories* (Toronto: Willing and Williamson, 1880), 218.
- ³⁹ Timothy C. Winegard, *For King and Kanata* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2012), 76.
- ⁴⁰ McLeod, 83.
- ⁴¹ Winegard, 166. See also Brian Titley, *A Narrow Vision: Duncan Campbell Scott and the Administration of Indian Affairs in Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1986), 101.
- ⁴² See Winegard, 153-166, Peter Kulchyski, “‘A Considerable Unrest’: F.O. Loft and the League of Indians,” *Native Studies Review* 4, nos. 1 and 2 (1988): 105-106.
- ⁴³ Kulchyski, 99.
- ⁴⁴ Royal Commission on Aboriginal People, 283-284. Sarah Carter writes that “hundreds of thousands of acres [of reserve land] were alienated” as a result of Frank Oliver becoming superintendent general of Indian Affairs in 1905. Sarah Carter, *Lost Harvests: Prairie Indian Reserve Farmers and Government Policy* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1990), 245.
- ⁴⁵ See Library and Archives Canada, “Formation of a Canadian League of Indians,” http://collectionsCanada.gc.ca/pam_archives/index.php?fuseaction=genitem.displayItem&lang=eng&rec_nbr=2083016&rec_nbr_list=2083016,2060733,1835778,2045493,3811466,103993,104983,116288,350552,101709. “Indians decide to form league,” Unidentified Toronto newspaper, Dec. 21, 1918.
- ⁴⁶ Loft, Nov. 14, 1919.
- ⁴⁷ Titley, 104.
- ⁴⁸ Kulchyski, 99-100; Titley, 106-107.
- ⁴⁹ Sergeant Enright at the Piegan reserve to Scott, December 1919, quoted in Kulchyski, 103.
- ⁵⁰ Titley, 103. See, for example, an August 22, 1919 letter from the Indian Affairs department to the Indian Agent at Sault Sainte Marie, Ontario denying \$100 to the Garden River band to host a League of Indians council meeting. The Department’s decision was based on the local Indian Agent’s opinion: “I cannot recommend the granting of their

request, and I am very much opposed to their having the Meeting on this particular reserve as I have trouble enough with the Agitators already on the reserve without trouble makers from outside." (Indian Agent, Sault Ste Marie, August 20, 1919).

⁵¹ Scott, quoted in Kulchyski, 106.

⁵² Titley, 104-105; Kulchyski, 106-107.

⁵³ Loft to Scott, quoted in Kulchyski, 107.

⁵⁴ On this period in the League's history, see Kulchyski, 102-111.

⁵⁵ Graham to Scott, November 1921, quoted in Kulchyski, 109.

⁵⁶ Scott to CW Kirby, Indian Agent at Hobbema, June 5, 1922.

⁵⁷ J.D. McLean to E.S. Gauthier, Indian agent, Maniwaki, August 30, 1922.

⁵⁸ Scott to W.M. Graham, Indian Commissioner, Regina, June 26, 1928.

⁵⁹ Titley, 108.

⁶⁰ Kulchyski, 96-97, 100; Titley, 109.

⁶¹ Kulchyski, 100.

⁶² McLeod, 84.

⁶³ Cuthand, "Introduction to the 1995 Edition," in Edward Ahenakew, *Voices of the Plains Cree*, ed. Ruth Buck (1973; repr. Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 1995), xiv-xv.

⁶⁴ Stan Cuthand, in his introduction to the 1995 edition of *Voices of the Plains Cree*, refers to "Old Keyam" as "a fictionalized account of Edward Ahenakew's personal vision" (see Cuthand, xiii).

⁶⁵ Ahenakew, 75. Wolvengrey provides a definition of kiyâm: "oh well, it's okay, never mind, think nothing of it; so much for this", Arok Wolvengrey, *Nêhiyawêwin itwêwina/Cree Words*, Vol. 1 (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 2001), 69-70.

⁶⁶ Cuthand, xii-xiii.

⁶⁷ David R. Miller, "Edward Ahenakew's Tutelage by Paul Wallace: Reluctant Scholarship, Inadvertent Preservation," in *Gathering Places: Aboriginal and Fur Trade Histories*, ed. Carolyn Podruchny and Laura Peers (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011), 252, 268n13.

⁶⁸ Miller, 252.

⁶⁹ Cuthand, xiii. See also Miller, 254.

⁷⁰ Brendan Edwards, "A War of Wor(l)ds: Aboriginal Writing in Canada During the 'Dark Days' of the Early Twentieth Century," PhD diss., University of Saskatchewan, 2008, 138.

⁷¹ See illustration, Cuthand, xvi.

⁷² Edwards, 142.

⁷³ Miller, 249, 258-260, 266.

⁷⁴ Miller, 249.

⁷⁵ For more on Ahenakew's published and unpublished writing output, see Edwards, 132-158, especially a list of published titles, 146n39.

⁷⁶ Miller, 251.

⁷⁷ Miller, 257.

⁷⁸ Cuthand, x, xii. See also Edwards, 133. On Ahenakew's publications in the Cree language, see Edwards, 134n9.

⁷⁹ Deanna Reder, "Understanding Cree Protocol in the Shifting Passages of 'Old Keyam,'" *Studies in Canadian Literature* 31, no. 1 (2006): 50-51.

⁸⁰ McLeod, 54.

⁸¹ McLeod, 78.

⁸² Reder, 63.

⁸³ See, for example, Womack's study of Alexander Posey in *Red on Red: Native American Literary Separatism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 131-172, and Warrior's study of John Joseph Mathews in *Tribal Secrets: Recovering American Indian Intellectual Traditions* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995).

⁸⁴ Reder, 50.

⁸⁵ Miller, 254.

⁸⁶ Miller, 254. See also Cuthand, xvii-xviii.

⁸⁷ Ahenakew, 122-123.

⁸⁸ Ahenakew 122-123.

⁸⁹ Ahenakew, 122.

⁹⁰ Ahenakew, 80. Neal McLeod writes of the humility found in traditional Cree storytelling: Listeners or readers must also acknowledge the humility that old people have in Cree narrative. While there may be oral narratives that are very close to the original, old people hesitate to claim that they know one completely. Many begin with 'namôya mistahi ê-kiskêyihtamân' ('I do not know very much'). This simple phrase is important in understanding Cree narrative memory. People did not believe they had power over the narrative, or owned it; rather, they believed they were conduits, that there was a balance between the individual and tradition. See McLeod, 16.

⁹¹ Ahenakew, 105.

⁹² Ahenakew, 85.

⁹³ Ahenakew, 80.

⁹⁴ Ahenakew, 103.

⁹⁵ Ahenakew, 90.

⁹⁶ Ahenakew, 90.

⁹⁷ Quoted in Bonita Lawrence, *"Real" Indians and Others: Mixed-Blood Urban Native Peoples and Indigenous Nationhood* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004), 31-32.

⁹⁸ Ahenakew, 151.

⁹⁹ Ahenakew, 152.

¹⁰⁰ Ahenakew, 105.

¹⁰¹ Ahenakew, 105.

¹⁰² See Carter, 237-258.

¹⁰³ Ahenakew, 106.

¹⁰⁴ Ahenakew, 153-154.

¹⁰⁵ Ahenakew, 154.

¹⁰⁶ Ahenakew, 105-106.

¹⁰⁷ Ahenakew, 106.

¹⁰⁸ Ahenakew, 156.

Coda

¹ John A. Macdonald quoted in Alan C. Cairns, *Citizens Plus: Aboriginal Peoples and the Canadian State* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2000), 17.

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- ² Roland Chrisjohn and Sherri Young with Michael Maraun, *The Circle Game: Shadows and Substance in the Indian Residential School experience in Canada*, Revised ed. (Penticton: Theytus, 2006), 75.
- ³ Ronald Niezen, *Truth and Indignation: Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission on Indian Residential Schools* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 16.
- ⁴ Niezen, 17.
- ⁵ David Ljunggren, "Every G20 nation wants to be Canada, Stephen Harper insists," Reuters, September 26, 2009.
- ⁶ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove, 2004), 149.
- ⁷ Chrisjohn et. al., 21.
- ⁸ Chrisjohn et. al., 74.
- ⁹ Susan Sontag, "Regarding the Torture of Others," in *At The Same Time: Essays and Speeches*, ed. Paolo Dilonardo and Anne Jump (New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 2007), 131.
- ¹⁰ Sally Weaver, *Making Canadian Indian Policy: The Hidden Agenda, 1968-1970* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), ix, 4.
- ¹¹ Weaver, 4.
- ¹² Canada, Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, *Statement of the Government of Canada on Indian Policy, 1969* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1969), 5.
- ¹³ Cardinal acknowledges Robert Smallboy in *The Unjust Society: The Tragedy of Canada's Indians* (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1969), ix.
- ¹⁴ Cardinal, 3.
- ¹⁵ Cardinal, 24.
- ¹⁶ Cardinal, 25.
- ¹⁷ Weaver, 183-204.
- ¹⁸ Joseph Boyden, *From Mushkegowuk to New Orleans: A Mixed Blood Highway* (Edmonton: NeWest Press, 2008), 28.
- ¹⁹ Boyden, 28-30.
- ²⁰ Boyden, 29.
- ²¹ Boyden, 31.
- ²² Frederick R. McDonald, *Ancestral Portraits: The Colour of My People* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2002), 45.
- ²³ Hugh Dempsey, *Big Bear: The End of Freedom* (Vancouver: Greystone Books, 1984), 150-192.
- ²⁴ Big Bear's release from prison was approved on January 27, 1887 and he was released a week later. He died on January 17, 1888. See Dempsey, 193-198.
- ²⁵ Dempsey, 111.
- ²⁶ William H. New, ed. *Encyclopedia of Literature in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 272.
- ²⁷ Beth Cuthand, *Voices in the Waterfall*, New Revised ed. (Penticton: Theytus, 2008). The poem appears on pp 42-44.
- ²⁸ Daniel Heath Justice, *Our Fire Survives the Storm: A Cherokee Literary History* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 206. Emphasis in original.

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