

**RE-VISITING THE SIXTIES SCOOP: RELATIONALITY, KINSHIP AND
HONOURING INDIGENOUS STORIES**

by

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Abstract

During the Sixties Scoop, there was a mass apprehension of indigenous children from their families and communities during the 1960's and 1980's within Canada. This unprecedented disruption to the fabric of indigenous communities still resonates in the contemporary over-representation of indigenous children within the settler colonial child welfare system. In the field of indigenous studies, there is little research documenting this history and in this thesis I sought to contribute to this existing literature. Drawing upon indigenous and black feminist theories and Foucaudian genealogy I analyze archival materials, memoir and creative texts that explain the Sixties Scoop as part of an ongoing displacement of indigenous peoples. This thesis explores the underlying racist and colonial logics to question the legitimacy of the child welfare system. Coupling this frame, I sought to highlight the significance of relationality and kinship bonds among indigenous and non-indigenous people. The thesis positions the creative writings of Beatrice Mosionier's novel *In Search of April Raintree* (1983) and her memoir *Come Walk with Me* (2009) and my autoethnographic story as narratives that work across as well as outside a colonial frame. Within entangled threads of colonial histories, and through indigenous storytelling we can witness the narrative threads of indigenous peoples surviving displacement and familial separations and practicing cultural continuity. Storytelling allows us to build our communities and envision renewed ways to relate to each other.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Multiple, ongoing colonial processes condition the displacement and over-representation of indigenous children within the child welfare systems of the Canadian settler state. The contemporary child welfare system in Canada is not characterized by a smooth evolution from historical practices of removing and containing indigenous children in Residential and Industrial Schools. The system's management of indigenous life today derives from a series of mass child apprehensions that took place between the decades of the 1960s and the 1980s. During this time, tens of thousands of indigenous children in Canada were removed from their communities to be placed into the child welfare system or adopted predominantly into white middle-class households. Coercive adoptions were executed by the settler-colonial state without the consent or knowledge of indigenous families or communities. Examining archival materials and creative texts that recount the removal of indigenous children, this thesis explains the Sixties Scoop as part of an ongoing process of colonial displacement of indigenous peoples. The thesis argues that the legacies of coercive adoptions and the placement of indigenous children into white homes adhere to a settler-colonial logic of assimilation and elimination that naturalizes and normalizes white adoptive families. This project couples its analysis of child welfare systems based in historical records with original interpretation of representations of child removal in indigenous creative texts. Drawing from indigenous methodologies of storytelling and relationality, the thesis interprets the creative works of Beatrice Mosionier -- her novel *In Search of April Raintree* (1983) and her memoir *Come*

Walk With Me (1999) -- as stories that center the importance of indigenous kinship in the survival and healing of indigenous adoptees and their families. The thesis connects Mosionier's creative writings and my personal autoethnographic story as narratives that work across as well as outside a colonial frame to confront and interrupt colonial narratives and to renew indigenous relationality and community.

METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

My thesis draws primarily from post-structuralist, feminist, and indigenous theories, and also draws from black feminist and postcolonial thought, to present an analytical framework that can interrogate processes of colonial, gendered and racialized violence against indigenous women, children and families. This framework specifically highlights colonial discourse and power relations, on the one hand, and the significance of relationality -- within Indigenous culture, and among Indigenous and non-Indigenous people -- on the other hand. The methodological considerations that frame this thesis are divided into three sections. The first section discusses the tenets of the post-structuralist theoretical tradition. The second section outlines indigenous epistemology, storytelling and interventions in the colonial archive. The third section details the theoretical and genealogical considerations in this thesis through my interdisciplinary analysis of relationality.

Indigenous, feminist and poststructuralist theories acknowledge the importance of historical processes in understanding our contemporary moment. History is important to indigenous communities: it is deemed to be a valuable strategy for "understanding the present" and for "reclaiming lost histories," both of which are considered to be "critical

and essential aspect[s] of decolonization” (Smith 1999). When we tell stories from the past that are grounded within an indigenous epistemology, we are engaging in decolonial work that gives voice to perspectives that are generally marginalized in historical storytelling (Kovach 2009; Maracle 1996; Silko 1977, Simpson 2011, Smith 1999, Womack 1999). Indigenous stories that are engaged in the active process of remembering affirm the collective survival and cultural continuity of indigenous peoples. It is a narrative creation process that allows us to re-envision our existences as indigenous people beyond settler-colonial state recognition.

Poststructuralism and Genealogical Method

Poststructuralism is characterized by its ambivalent connection to the structuralist intellectual tradition. Structuralism assumes an absolute and sustained conceptual structure in language that is without gaps in the production of meaning: it takes interest in the closed linguistic structure of the signified and signifier with its “finite number of elements from which an infinite number of binary oppositions” in language can appear (Callinicos 2007:276). In contrast with this position, Judith Butler (1990) defines poststructuralism by its rejection of “the claims of totality and universality and the presumption of binary structural oppositions that implicitly operate to quell the insistent ambiguity and openness of linguistic and cultural signification” (Butler 1990: 40). Taking up this ‘ambiguity,’ Foucauldian post-structuralism in particular approaches language as an entry point to examining the discourses animating historically-situated institutions and their practices. Throughout Foucault’s analyses, power remains the central concern of his theorizations of discourses and modern institutions.

Foucault brings these laws and determinations in discourse and their social effects to light in his analysis of modern institutions. Foucault's understanding of discourse is distinct from other post-structuralist thinkers in that he is not analyzing a linguistic system, the "formal rules of its construction," or what renders it legitimate, but rather "the law of existence of its terms that has rendered it possible" (Foucault 1968). He is looking at events and the "conditions of their particular emergence; their correlation with other previous or simultaneous events, discursive or not" (Foucault 1968). Throughout Foucault's analyses, power remains the central concern of his theorizations of discourses and modern institutions.

Through an examination of the histories of the modern institution of child welfare in Canada -- from residential schools through the Sixties Scoop and contemporary child welfare system -- this thesis illuminates a complex layering of disparate colonial practices that is suited for genealogical interpretation. This allows us to see colonial oppressions as forms of discursive violence that, at the same time, negatively impact upon and marginalize indigenous communities in Canada. In Nietzsche, *Genealogy, History* (1971) Foucault presents his method of genealogy in the following way:

Genealogy is gray, meticulous, and patiently documentary. It operates on a field of entangled and confused parchments, documents that have been scratched over and recopied many times. It must record the singularity of events outside of any monotonous finality; it must seek them in the most unpromising places. (Foucault 1971: 76)

Foucault's genealogical method is key to his theory of the interconnectedness of power and knowledge. A genealogical perspective builds from Foucault's key theses about power: power is understood not as restrictive but rather as a productive force, shaping social life; and, it is known to be tied up in the production of knowledge.

Genealogy examines how power produces and informs complex historical processes, in their specificity and locality, and in their connectivity across time or space. Genealogy helps explain the Sixties Scoop as a social formation underwritten by colonial logics that at the same time elucidates the historical emergence of coercive indigenous adoption.

The Colonial Archive

In crafting a genealogical analysis of the modern institution of child welfare, I examine the site of the colonial archive. Ann Laura Stoler contends that the colonial archive, as a product of the colonial imaginary “reproduces the power of the state” (Stoler 2002:101). The piecemeal documents of the colonial state are ordered to reflect the “invention” of colonial state practices. In this way, the archive is not considered to be an objective site of “knowledge retrieval” but rather is a “site of knowledge production” (Stoler 2002:101). By producing and storing colonial knowledge, the archive discursively works to ensure control over indigenous peoples through government policies. It further erases the experiences of indigenous peoples by excluding their narratives.

Indigenous Relationality as Story

Indigenous storytelling is a way of ‘bridging’ differences that is based in relationality. Relationality as a worldview recognizes diversity as a pre-condition of life. Inherent in this indigenous philosophical understanding is the expectation of reciprocity and accountability to the collective experience of others. As articulated by indigenous scholar Shawn Wilson, the “essence of ‘being’ is relational” (Wilson 2008: 89). Leanne Simpson (2011) argues that we access knowledge through our stories and that these are

tied to our relationships. Indigenous storytelling is a discourse that embodies a culturally-specific epistemology and is grounded in the oral traditions of indigenous cultures. It is distinct from generalized stories told solely for entertainment, in that it serves a didactic function. Indigenous storytelling bridges “teaching and learning” and transmits historical and spiritual understanding of indigenous lives and social reality (Archibald 2008:12). Traditionally, storytelling revealed tacit and experiential knowledge that provided guidance to indigenous community members in a good way.

Interdisciplinarity: Genealogy, Anti-racism, Relationality

Foucault teaches us that when modern institutions establish discourses they tell us a story about what can be known and said. Incorporating post-structuralism into a theoretical framework complemented by indigenous theories is useful to indigenous people who wish to interrogate and expose the “ready-made synthesis” of colonial discourse that has been created by the state (Foucault 1972: 23). By re-examining the colonizer’s ‘official’ archive not as a “site of knowledge retrieval” but as a “site of knowledge production” (Stoler 2002: 87) we can come to understand how colonial storytelling conceals diverse narratives within the fiction of total knowledge that it claims.

Like modern institutions, indigenous storytelling is discursive: it is immersed in the power relations of knowledge production and community formation. Indigenous stories communicate complex teachings about histories, ethics, spirituality and strategies for survival. Thus, Indigenous storytelling and colonial discourse are both in a sense narratives imbued within “power relations” (Foucault 1978:101). Susan Strega argues

that, “the constitution of language as discourse resonates with indigenous understandings of how language shapes peoples lives ... rules [are] put into operation through discursive practices at a given moment to explain what is seen” (Strega 2005:2012). Yet indigenous storytelling intentionally breaks from reproducing the colonial storytelling that characterizes the colonial archive. Marking distinctions between the colonial storytelling embedded in modern institutions and indigenous storytelling allows me to illuminate differences between colonial and decolonial knowledge production. For example, whereas, colonial histories, as story, attempt to construct our current circumstances as inevitable, indigenous storytelling can reveal to us the unseen within a colonial situation and can shed light on possibilities for transcending what colonial histories have given. In the words of Leanne Simpson, “storytelling, or ‘narrative imagination’ is a tool to vision other existences outside of the current ones by critiquing and analyzing the current state of affairs but also by dreaming and visioning other realities” (Simpson 2011:40). By utilizing an interdisciplinary frame that combines historical, autoethnographic and literary analyse, this thesis brings forth both ‘official’ and ‘unofficial’ stories. In this way the project honours relationality by facilitating connections between creative texts, and the historical dimensions of the Sixties Scoop.

A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ON THE SIXTIES SCOOP

Few academic sources attend to the Sixties Scoop, and most of these have appeared within only the last fifteen years (Adams 2002; Chupik-Hall 2001; Fournier and Crey 1997; Landertinger 2011; Nicholson 1996; Nuttegens 2004; Sinclair 2007; Swidrovich 2004; Timpson 1993; York 1990). Aside from this small body of academic literature, the

Sixties Scoop is a grossly unexplored area. Four main themes appear within the existing literature relating to the Sixties Scoop: identity, adoption breakdown, cultural genocide and racism. While racism was not the primary focus of any of the exploratory studies, interviews with indigenous adult adoptees identified racism as a key theme in their experiences (Sinclair 2007; Nuttgens 2004). I hope to contribute to this small, growing body of academic literature by building on their critiques of the settler-colonial child welfare system and the Sixties Scoop.

In *Native Children and the Child Welfare System* (1983) Patrick Johnston pursued a broad exploratory investigation into the over-representation of indigenous children in the Canadian child welfare system. Using statistical data drawn from the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, Johnston illustrates that between the years 1960 and 1980 indigenous children were removed *en masse* from their communities and subsequently placed into the Canadian child welfare system. Johnston based his analysis on several interviews he conducted with British Columbia social workers as well as on his examination of government documents and statistical information. Data revealed that the apprehension of indigenous children by social workers was executed routinely without the consent or knowledge of the children's families.

A social phenomenon was subsequently coined -- the 'Sixties Scoop' -- based on Johnston's interview with a British Columbia social worker who stated that child welfare social workers would "scoop children from reserves on the slightest pretext" (Johnston 1983: 21). Social workers believed that removing children who came to their attention from their communities was in the children's best interests. Johnston further argued that many of the social workers he interviewed believed that the apprehension of indigenous

children from their communities effectively would save them from the “effects of crushing poverty, unsanitary health conditions, poor housing and nutrition,” which white social workers believed were “facts of life on many reserves” (Johnston 1983: 23). During the Sixties Scoop indigenous children were apprehended and placed primarily into non-indigenous homes. Johnston attributed this to underlying cultural differences between indigenous people and white settlers (ibid). Yet severing familial ties, a practice common in white-settler adoption practices, was not a desirable practice to indigenous communities.

Among scholars there is growing consensus that structural and policy decisions have borne a substantial impact on Canada’s over-representation of indigenous children in the child welfare system (Timpson 1993; Chupik-Hall 2001; Sinclair 2007; Kimelman 1985). To further explore why indigenous children were apprehended in such high numbers, Fournier and Crey (1997) pointed to the impoverished conditions on reserves. Fournier and Crey argue that rather than providing the necessary resources promised to indigenous communities outlined in treaty, state-sponsored child welfare departments removed children who suffered from the lack of resources. Many of the indigenous children subsequently placed into the child welfare system were subjected to racism, physical, emotional and sexual abuse and suffered loss of culture and identity (Johnston 1983; Sinclair 2007; York 1990).

Cheryl Swidrovich’s (2004) dissertation, “Positive Experiences of First Nations Children in non-Aboriginal Foster or Adoptive Care: De-Constructing the ‘Sixties Scoop’” enters into the debate by arguing that Sixties Scoop discourse excludes the positive experiences of adoptees or foster children in non-indigenous homes. Swidrovich

interviewed nine female adoptees and four male adoptees, all well-educated, and examined their positive experiences in non-indigenous homes. The major themes she identified in their narratives concerned love and economic and material security. Swidrovich further critiqued the label of the Sixties Scoop for invoking sinister and calculated 'child snatching,' arguing that it portrayed a process of victimization and homogenized the experiences of indigenous adoptees.

In her dissertation "All My Relations: Native Transracial Adoption: A Critical Case Study of Cultural Identity" (2007) Raven Sinclair conducted several interviews with adult indigenous adoptees to understand how they understood cultural identity as it pertained to the legacy of the Sixties Scoop. Her analysis of their interviews revealed themes of racism, apprehension, reunion and repatriation. Sinclair's study further linked negative outcomes of indigenous transracial adoption to the "socio-cultural context of racism in Canadian society" (Sinclair 2007:2). She found that the turmoil experienced by indigenous adoptees was tied to the intra- and extra-familial racism experienced by adoptees and to the emotional fallout from those experiences of racism (Sinclair 2007: 302). Similar themes of racism and identity also emerged in Nuttgens' (2004) narrative inquiry into the psychological and psychosocial effects of forced indigenous adoption. Narratives of adoptive parents also appear in the Sixties Scoop literature. In her book *Our Son A Stranger: Adoption Breakdown and its Effects on Parents* (2002) Marie Adams describes her adoptive parents' experiences and those of five other couples. While her book critiques the apprehension of indigenous children it appears she often blames the white-settler adoption breakdown on the adoptee.

These diverse approaches to the Sixties Scoop have focused primarily on the psychological outcomes of indigenous transracial adoption and identity, and the healing work attempted vis-à-vis social work. While this literature addressed both negative and positive impacts of forced adoptions on indigenous adoptees, based on making a distinction between ‘forced’ and ‘non’-forced adoption, the social, historical and material circumstances that shape and condition the agency of indigenous women also must be taken into account when examining the Sixties Scoop. The work of Iris Lopez (1993) highlights that the diversity of colonized and racialized women’s experiences and the constraints in their lives put in question the appropriateness of drawing distinctions between ‘forced’ and ‘non’-forced adoption. When considering marginalized indigenous women’s decisions with regards to adoption practices, such distinctions threaten to overlook how colonial histories and processes underwrite their parenting and adoptive choices. As a critical alternative to false distinctions of ‘forced’ from ‘non’-forced, in this thesis I exclusively use the phrase ‘coercive adoption’ to refer to adoptions or placement of indigenous children in foster homes that takes place under settler-colonial conditions.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

In Chapter One, I examine archival materials demonstrating how the Sixties Scoop was produced through a specific social formation. The genealogical work in this chapter grounding my analysis of archival materials draws on Foucauldian thought, but it also is inspired by the intellectual models of indigenous and feminist critiques of state-imposed child welfare systems, incarceration and the prison industrial complex. I demonstrate how the historical trajectory from the Indian Act and residential school eras

that later transitioned into the Sixties Scoop explains the contemporary overrepresentation of indigenous children in the child welfare system. I interrogate how the assimilation of indigenous children is naturalized through the normalization of the white adoptive family as a proper home for indigenous children seized by the settler-colonial state. Underwriting these practices is a white supremacist settler-colonial logic that insists on eliminating indigeneity in order to naturalize and affirm settler colonialism.

In Chapter Two, I open my analysis of the creative text of the indigenous writer Beatrice Mosionier, *In Search of April Raintree*, complemented by insights from her memoir *Come Walk Me* (2009). I critically examine how representations of indigenous adoptees are juxtaposed with white middle-class adoptive/foster families in the same narrative. I argue that engaging with this indigenous creative text provides in-depth understanding of the specificities of colonial violence that lie within the overarching workings of colonial displacement. Drawing from Homi Bhabha's works on stereotypical images within colonial discourse and Frantz Fanon's model of the colonized and the colonizer, I argue that Mosionier's creative text intervenes in the colonial framing of the colonizer as a benevolent white settler and questions its standards of "truth."

Chapter Three focuses on themes of indigenous survival and cultural continuity by examining the kinship ties formed among colonized people with specific attention to the representation of relationships with others. I situate creative representation and lived experience -- represented by Mosionier's creative text, *In Search of April Raintree* and her memoir *Come Walk with Me* and my personal autoethnographic story -- within an analysis of indigenous storytelling that is informed by conceptualizations of indigenous relationality, to show how such storytelling is entangled in threads of colonial

subjugation, survival and resurgence. I tease out and illuminate the complexities, relations and tensions of literary reflections on the white-settler as colonizer, indigenous relationships and benevolent representations.

Chapter 2

GENEALOGICAL TRACES OF THE SIXTIES SCOOP

In this chapter, inspired by critiques of racial and colonial governmentality by indigenous and black feminists, I outline a “history of the present” (Foucault 1979:31) by adapting Michel Foucault’s genealogical method to think about how “relations of force” shape our contemporary moment (Foucault 1982). I explain how history does not “come about of [itself]” but represents a “profusion of entangled events” that produced the social, political and cultural conditions of the “Sixties Scoop” (Foucault 1971: 89). During the historical period of 1960 to 1980 tens of thousands of indigenous children were removed from their home communities and placed in predominantly white, middle-class homes. I analyze historical documents from this era to tease out the “entangled and confused parchment” and map the “diverse, subtle and complex” power relations and practices that produced the Sixties Scoop (Foucault 1971: 76). My genealogical analysis interrupts colonial discourses that would naturalize the Canadian state-imposed child welfare system as “inevitable” and “immutable” (Foucault 1971:265). By exposing their racist, colonial underpinnings, I question the legitimacy of the child welfare system as an apparatus for the removal of indigenous children from their families and communities. Throughout, I interrogate the normalization of coercive adoptions of indigenous children by explaining its foundation on a white supremacist settler-colonial project that is invested in eliminating claims to indigeneity.

OVERVIEW OF THE CANADIAN CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM

The Canadian settler state currently has a decentralized child welfare system. According to the online Canadian Child Welfare Research Portal Project (2011) by leading researchers in the field of child welfare, child welfare services in this system are based on federal, provincial and territorial legislation and policy, with three hundred provincial and territorial child welfare agencies operating under the jurisdiction of thirteen provinces and territories (CCWRC 2011). Importantly, Canadian provinces have different legislations and policies governing child welfare interventions, with some services provided through governmental organizations and others privately contracted through independent not-for-profit agencies and residential care facilities and group homes. In most cases, these services are integrated for “one-stop” (CCWRC 2011) service delivery and are clustered at the local level. Taken together, these factors indicate the broad, decentralized bureaucratic structure of the Canadian child welfare system.

Academic literature on indigenous children and the child welfare system in Canada reveals a substantial increase in the number of children taken into state custody since the first introduction of child welfare policies and legislation into lives of indigenous families and their communities. According to a legislation session transcript by the Select Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs (1996) in 1959, indigenous children constituted only 1 percent of children in State care; by 1969 this figure had risen to 40 percent (1996:4:30). The unprecedented number of children removed during such a short time frame was nothing short of a drastic disruption to the fabric of indigenous communities. The legacies of this violent intervention continue to reproduce the traumatic conditions of settler colonialism.

In our contemporary moment, the number of indigenous children in the settler-colonial child welfare system is rising. Statistics from 2001 and 2003 indicate the disproportionate number of indigenous children being taken into child welfare custody. During those years, 30% to 40% of children and youth taken into custody were indigenous (Gough et al. 2005). Additional statistics from 2004 demonstrated that there are “approximately three times as many First Nations children in the child welfare system today as there were at the height of the residential school operations in the 1940s” (Blackstock, Trocmé and Knoke 2004). This is an alarming number considering that indigenous children make up less than <3% of the total number of people living in Canada (Blackstock, Trocmé and Knoke 2004). The most recent statistical evidence available reveals that indigenous children account for 87% of all children in Manitoba state care (Milne, Kozlowski and Sinha 2014). This is a disproportionately high number for the removal of indigenous children and alone is enough to indict this system as colonial and racist. These statistics are evidence of a colonial logic operating within the institution of child welfare in Canada.

In addition to the disparity in the number of indigenous vs. non-indigenous children being removed from their families, cases involving indigenous children also are handled unequally by comparison to cases involving white children. Statistical information from the Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Abuse and Neglect (2003) revealed that not only did indigenous children receive more extreme child welfare intervention (i.e., removal from their home, foster care placement) but they were 2.5 times more likely to have a “substantiated” report of mistreatment in the child welfare system, and they were moved more often and stayed longer in the system (Fallon,

MacLaurin, Daciuk, Felstiner, Black, Tonmyr, Blackstock, and Barter 2003:71). This disproportionate involvement of indigenous vs. non-indigenous children in the Canadian child welfare system undeniably shows the significance of racism in the settler-colonial state interventions in families and communities. As Dorothy Roberts notes of black and other racialized youth in the United States context, “if child welfare systems apprehended 1 in 10 white children from their families” (Roberts 2002:23) as they have in some black and other marginalized communities this would overload and crash the systems. Establishing a racial and colonial context for the over-representation and mistreatment of indigenous children in the child welfare system reveals a huge problem that needs to be addressed immediately.

Most indigenous families and communities, both on and off reserve, are serviced by the mainstream child welfare system sanctioned by the Canadian settler-colonial state. Yet other indigenous child welfare delivery models do exist, and most indigenous communities and leaders advocate for a self-determined model of child welfare delivery (National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health 2005). For a working definition of self-determination this can refer to the “desire to exercise our authority in political, social and legal ways” (Monture 1999:30). The ‘ideal’ form for a self-determined model of child welfare is a complicated and contested issue for indigenous people and their communities. The fact that indigenous people reside in both rural and urban spaces compounds the difficulty of establishing a singular model for child welfare for their communities. However, I will briefly discuss some self-determined approaches utilized by a few rural communities, for the purpose of signaling that there are other ways to approach the protection need of indigenous children that do not rely on oppressive settler-

colonial state child welfare models. These services are becoming available and being actively advocated, sought out and developed by some indigenous communities.

Self-determined community-based treatment and support models can be helpful in healing some of the negative impacts of settler-colonial child welfare on indigenous peoples in Canada. For instance, community-based programming run by indigenous peoples has proven effective in addressing social and health-related issues within indigenous communities. A study conducted by Marr, Erskine, McGregor, Larose, Sutherland, Douglas, Shawande and Gordon (2009) revealed that an “innovative, community-based Aboriginal mental health care model had led to various improvements in care in a challenging rural, high-needs environment”. From this finding, it can be inferred that such community services are being implemented effectively and can be successful in partly meeting community needs. Other researchers have concurred with Marr et al (2009) on the effectiveness of self-determination. In *Ending Denial: Understanding Aboriginal Issues* (2008), Wayne Warry attests to this claim by writing that “my own research suggests health and self-determination are integrally related and that personal healing and cultural awareness translate more broadly into community empowerment and control” (Warry 2008:153). If self-determination can have such a positive effect on health and well-being, it can be inferred that similar results can be achieved in other services, including those supporting indigenous youth and their families. Community-based models are an example of the alternatives that some indigenous families and communities are using that align with their aspirations for self-determination.

Support services for reserve-based indigenous children that are self-governed by indigenous communities present another model that has found success in privileging the protection needs of indigenous children while keeping them out of the settler-state imposed child welfare system. Tikinagan Child and Family Services, an indigenous-controlled child and family service program, was created by the chiefs of the Nishnawbe-Aski Nation to privilege the interests of children and to “serve children and families in ways that respect our culture and the unique needs of our children and families” (Tikinagan Report 2009). Community based programs are rooted in traditional teachings and elders are central to developing culturally appropriate support services. Preventive services involve mentoring young parents, crisis support and traditional healing groups. Because of this focus on prevention, Tikinaga Child and Family Services reported a “decrease from 36% of our clients placed outside our jurisdiction in 2007–08 and 2008–09 to 27%” by late 2009. Even more significantly, in 2014 Tikinagan reported the number of children needing *any* support and care through Tikinagan child welfare services “declined from 668 (in April 2013) to 546 (as of June 30 2014) almost a 20 percent decrease in the number of children in care” (Tikinagan Report 2014). Such information supports the effectiveness of child welfare models that center indigenous self-determination and that privilege the protection and community-based needs of indigenous children.

TOWARDS A GENEALOGY OF THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM

The work of radical intellectuals and activists Patricia Hill Collins (2000), Angela Davis (2011), Dorothy Roberts (2012), and Luana Ross (1998) in the U.S. provides the most relevant intellectual models for analyzing state power as inherently gendered, racializing and colonizing for this thesis. Specifically, their works model for my project the ways in which colonial and gendered power relations manifest as a strategy to target black, indigenous and other racialized families, unequally impacting women and children. Given the absence of reference to race, gender and the role of colonialism in the work of Foucault, as explained by Angela Davis (1998) in *Racialized Punishment and Prison Abolition* and by Ann Stoler (1995) in *Race and the Education of Desire*, it therefore remains essential to complement Foucauldian genealogy with scholarship that centers the concerns of indigenous women and women of colour.

While engaged with this body of critical literature from the U.S., my analysis is situated distinctly as a critique of the Canadian settler-colonial state and its treatment of indigenous children within the Canadian child welfare system. There is a particular history here, not only of the coercive adoption of indigenous children but also of indigenous peoples' movements that identify and challenge this practice. These movements have been led by the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) and, to the extent that all of this echoes with calls for indigenous sovereignty, by the Idle No More movement. Idle No More is one of the largest anti-racist and decolonial movements yet to form in Canada. These histories of colonialism and indigenous activism distinguish the context of activist scholarship in the U.S. from my critique of the Canadian settler-colonial state, which highlights the settler-coloniality of the white-supremacist child

welfare system in Canada that affects all racialized people, but that originates in the historical settler-colonial relationship of the state towards indigenous peoples.

Organizing by the Native Women's Association of Canada around systemic colonial violence against indigenous women includes attention to the ongoing coercive placement of indigenous children in the child welfare system. NWAC is a national organization that is dedicated to advancing the well-being of indigenous women and girls through activism, policy analysis and advocacy. NWAC questions the dishearteningly high number of indigenous women in Canada who are "victims of violence," advocating for this to be understood within the context of a colonial strategy to dehumanize indigenous women (NWAC 2014:4). Similarly, this understanding of the diverse ways that colonizing power is directed against indigenous women informs why NWAC is equally invested in challenging physical violence committed against indigenous women and systemic inequalities inherent in the state-imposed child welfare system.

Interwoven Modes of Disciplinary Power: The Prison and Child Welfare Systems

The colonial control of indigenous peoples by the settler-colonial state child welfare system is illuminated by Foucault's account of incarceration as a crucial manifestation of modern institutional power. In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault provides a historical examination of punishment that permits him to explain the specific power relations of the modern prison. His analysis is based on distinguishing a theory of power as domination from an analysis of power as "the multiplicity of relations of force immanent to the domain in which they are inscribed" (Foucault 1977: 187). Using as his central reference Jeremy Bentham's all-seeing model of incarceration, the panopticon, Foucault explains the prison system as a disciplinary apparatus designed to watch over

bodies, vis-à-vis surveillance and thereby produce docile bodies -- in other words, to discipline subjects (Foucault 1975:138). As such, Foucault is concerned with the production of regimes of power through situated apparatuses and institutions. But rather than theorize institutional power as 'top-down,' he understands power to be all-pervading any social field: and his interest in institutions also leads him to link institutions and their exercise of power to diverse nodes throughout social life where power also arises and attaches. Similarly, the child welfare system functions to produce idealized, disciplined subjects. As Foucault (1972) notes in his interview in *Intellectuals and Power*, the prison is a site where power becomes visible in its most "archaic, infantile manner" and seemingly transparent state, given their practices of forcible removal and displacement of the marginalized and disenfranchised (Foucault 1972). Yet, at once, these force relations emerge within the broader context of colonialism, where the everyday production of a white settler society and state, and interactions between colonial institutions and indigenous peoples inform how both 'incarceration' and 'removal' take place.

Following Foucault, the practice of removing indigenous people to the prison and child welfare systems is "justified as moral force" through a framework of morality; as he puts it, "brutal tyranny consequently appears as the serene domination of good over evil, of order over disorder" (Foucault 1972). This binary distinction of good versus evil figures is a colonial, racist logic identified in the work of Luana Ross (1998). Ross examines how the labeling of indigenous people as "savage" and therefore inherently deviant set the stage for the criminalization of indigenous people by the white settler society and state (Ross 1998). In turn, static moral binaries of good versus evil and racial categories of 'us' versus 'them' simplify complex patterns of power to contain the lives

of colonized and racialized peoples in legacies of colonization and trans-Atlantic slavery while rendering the enactment of their violences invisible.

In their accounts of black feminist thought and the prison industrial complex, Patricia Hill Collins (2000), Angela Davis (2011) and Ruth Gilmore (2007) notably explain how structures of privilege interact to disadvantage certain groups on the basis of particular identifications, such as gender, race and class. Collins (1990: 221) notes that this is tied up in a “matrix of domination.” Binaries of good versus evil works render invisible the structural, disciplinary domains of power. They also underwrite the racializing and colonial logic that permits children to be apprehended from their families to ‘save them’ and the incarceration of large numbers of black, indigenous and other racialized youth.

To further illustrate how the state invests in gendered and racializing power and white supremacy we can return to connections between the punishment model of the prison system and the child welfare system. In the U.S. context, Dorothy Roberts (2012) illuminates how the child welfare and prison systems work together to punish black mothers in the service of preserving race, gender and class inequality. Roberts establishes that the child welfare system functions as a precursor to incarceration for black children, while incarceration is a “precursor to foster care for children of parents who are in the prison system” (Roberts 2012). Roberts further points out that the child welfare system is more than a “pipeline to prison” (for children) and that prison is more than a “precursor to foster care for children” of the incarcerated (Roberts 2012). In other words, the process by which people are channelled through white supremacist infrastructures is not direct or linear but has overlapping pathways.

The multiple relationships between the prison and child welfare systems intersect to further marginalize racialized communities by punishing mothers in the neoliberal economy. Tracing the racial disparity in involvement in the child welfare and prison systems, Roberts (2012:1484) describes this punishment as a political choice to investigate and blame black mothers for the cause of startling rates of poverty rather than to tackle the systemic roots of this problem. Similarly, Luana Ross (1998) illuminates the “double punishment” that incarcerated indigenous women undergo as mothers, describing how they draw scorn from judges, prison staff and state social workers in addition to the stigmatization they already receive as inmates (Ross 1998: 215). She also points out that, for indigenous women who are landless and displaced, the situation potentially becomes even more tenuous because they are without support from an indigenous community.

The multiple and intersecting layers of gendered, racial and colonial oppression at work in incarceration and child removal are further illustrated by state punishment of black mothers for failing to adhere to middle-class standards of living and parenting. Roberts’ research points to how the children of incarcerated mothers are often hastily placed into foster care or adopted without their consent. The extreme act of permanently severing ties to the primary parent is often done even when prison sentences are less than five years (Roberts 2002: 1497). In some U.S. states, “incarceration itself constitutes statutory grounds for termination of parental rights” (Roberts 2002: 1497). Black mothers find it difficult to retain legal custody of their children after the children have been placed in the care of child welfare and are met with various legal roadblocks and financial barriers to regaining rights to their children. These realities affirm that violence against racialized bodies in the form of coercive adoption is tied to the “racialization of

punishment” that inheres in the prison system and in the mistreatment of black children in the child welfare system (Davis 1998:105; Roberts 2012: 12). These institutions work together to subjugate, displace, and discipline black bodies.

U.S. black feminist scholarship on institutional racism and child welfare makes connections between racism and institutional power that do not appear in Foucauldian theory, and allows me think through the linkages between the prison and child welfare displacement. These insights can be applied to interpreting the practices of the Canadian settler-colonial state. For instance, data from Statistics Canada shows that “approximately two-thirds of indigenous inmates had been adopted or placed into foster or group homes at some point in their childhood” (Correctional Service Canada 2001). This suggests that the intertwined operations of prison and child welfare systems within Canada upholds a colonial, racist logic that individualizes and ignores the systemic violence committed against indigenous people. It also further lends evidence to the dysfunctional operation of the child welfare system itself, given how many indigenous people who were in ‘care’ of the settler-colonial child welfare system later ended up in prison. If the child welfare system was working and meeting the emotional and physical needs of indigenous children, then logic would presume that they would not be ending up in prison at such an alarming rate. I recognize a correlation between indigenous people being in the child welfare system and then later as adults being incarcerated -- one that suggests how state institutions work together to uphold colonial systems of power.

SETTLER COLONIALISM AND THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM

The placement of indigenous children into white homes for adoption adheres to a settler-colonial logic of assimilation and elimination. Absorbing members of indigenous communities into the dominant colonial society as ‘proper’ subjects is a tactic that seeks to naturalize their subjugation and the settler-colonial state’s access to indigenous lands and resources. The contemporary over-representation of indigenous children within the child welfare system is driven by a logic of settler colonialism that actively undermines the growth of self-determined models of child welfare within urban and rural indigenous communities.

Indigenous peoples’ connections to their lands and sovereignty threaten the settler-colonial state. The child welfare system is underwritten by the white supremacist logics of settler colonialism, which work to extinguish the number of indigenous people who can lay claim to their land. According to Patrick Wolfe (2006: 387), settler-colonial power relations represent a “contest for land [that] can be — indeed often are — contests for life”. These contests for indigenous “life” also are premised on a logic of elimination and assimilation (Wolfe 2006: 388). The motivation behind settler colonialism is the desire of the settler state to narrow or erase claims to indigeneity so that “indigenous peoples will disappear [and] the settler nation can replace them” (Lawrence 2004: 123). As explained by Bonita Lawrence, elimination may not necessarily take place through a directly physical genocidal action; it also functions by severing any connections to indigeneity (ibid). All that indigenous people need to do, to get caught up in the settler-colonial project of elimination, is to exist.

Drawing attention to the genocidal logics behind the emergence of the child welfare system allows us to identify harmful colonial legacies such as the Sixties Scoop. Coupling indigenous critiques with critical scholarship on settler colonialism reveals that this form of power is not an event, as Wolfe argues, but a structure: for in this form of colonialism, the “colonizers intend to stay” (Wolfe 2006: 389; see also Alfred 2008). Therefore, theorizing the Sixties Scoop as a settler-colonial formation also illustrates the continuities of settler colonialism: child removal is an expression of a structure, not a temporary set of social conditions. The logics of white-supremacist settler colonialism are an organizing principal beneath the social, cultural and political conditions that produced the Sixties Scoop, serving as an invisible thread knotted to a broader colonial history. Read as part of this broader settler-colonial history, the social conditions that produced the Sixties Scoop cannot be traced to a single government policy or institutional structure. Drawing upon this understanding, I argue that the settler-colonial logic of elimination and assimilation, threaded throughout white settler society during the Sixties Scoop, produced the conditions whereby large numbers of indigenous children could be apprehended and large numbers of indigenous adoptions could occur from the 1960s to the 1980s.

The institutionalization of settler-colonialism is visible within the paternalistic and oppressive effects of the Indian Act and other state legislation pertaining to indigenous people. The visibility of this colonial logic can be seen in the naturalized projection of Western law through legislative policy aimed at eliminating indigenous people: and specifically, how law is linked to the formation of the Sixties Scoop. Patrick Wolfe argues that within the logic of settler-colonial rule, indigenous peoples are recognized with a “provisional humanity for amalgamation by settler nations,” but that in

any “marked return” of the colonized subject, “the native repressed continues to structure settler-colonial society” (Wolfe 2006: 390) . These perspectives inform my examination of how the Indian Act and other state policies set the conditions for the Sixties Scoop.

Indian Act Legislation and the Residential School System

When the Canadian Confederation formed in 1867, the Constitution Act granted the federal government legislative authority over “Indians and land reserved for the Indians” (Hawthorne Report 1966: 21). Part of the policy was premised on confining the “Indian” to the reserve, as the indigenous person was expected “to be born, live and die” there (Hawthorn Report 1966: 21). This policy paradoxically performed the paternalistic ideology that deemed indigenous peoples to be “infantile and inferior” to white settlers, yet it pursued federal administrators’ assimilationist stance. Consolidating prior legislation governing the relationship between indigenous peoples and the federal government, the Indian Act was passed in 1876.¹ These legislative acts joined with education in the form of residential schools in founding Canadian law and society in colonial and racist understandings of indigenous peoples.

According to the 1996 Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, the 1876 annual report of the Department of the Interior expressed a prevailing view of indigenous peoples:

Our Indian legislation generally rests on the principle, that the aborigines are to be kept in a condition of tutelage and treated as wards or children of the State . . . the true interests of the aborigines and of the State alike require that every effort should be made to aid the Red man in lifting himself out of his condition of tutelage and dependence, and that is clearly our wisdom and our duty, through education and every other means, to prepare him for a higher

¹ An act to amend and consolidate the laws respecting Indians, S.C. 1876, c. 18.

civilization by encouraging him to assume the privileges and responsibilities of full citizenship.

Unraveling this ideological foundation of the settler-colonial state helps explain the establishment of residential schools as an assertion of state guardianship over indigenous peoples: not to meet the needs of indigenous children or treaty obligations to sovereign indigenous nations, but to further long-term goals of eliminating state responsibilities to indigenous people and the claim to their lands. The strategies implemented by the residential school system sought to dissolve the notion of the indigenous subject through a process of assimilation. In this institutional context, the focus of policy and practice in post-Confederation settler-colonial society no longer solely pursued the direct, murderous elimination of indigenous people but instead the more subtle practices of assimilation.

In 1879, Prime Minister John A. Macdonald commissioned Nicholas Davin, a Toronto-based journalist and lawyer, to meet with officials from the U.S. Department of Indian Affairs and with indigenous leaders from Minnesota, and then to write a report based on the industrial boarding schools in the United States. The Davin Report of 1879 named the U.S. industrial school a “principal feature” of the policy known as “aggressive civilization.” The pattern of child removal in Canada modeled after the U.S. industrial schools was entrenched within the residential school system. These schools were designed to gather indigenous children from various reserves, separating them from their communities for several years, with the aim of providing them employment skills but also the ultimate goal of their cultural assimilation into white settler society. The settler-colonial state took great interest in this approach to educating indigenous peoples, as it was expected that lengthy separation in schools would weaken indigenous children’s ties

to their communities and would contribute to breaking up their land-based communities (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada 2012: 10). According to the report, Davin was quite persuaded by the U.S. officials that “the day-school did not work, because the influence of the wigwam was stronger than the influence of the school” (Davin Report 1879: 9). Davin reported his findings and put forth several recommendations, including a proposal that the federal government establish a partnership with Canadian churches to operate four live-in industrial schools based on the U.S. model in western Canada.

Following up on Davin’s earlier recommendations, the opening of the Quebec High River, Battleford and Qu’Appelle industrial schools marked the introduction of the federal government’s residential school project (Milloy 1999: 52). From 1892 to 1969, the Canadian federal government and the Roman Catholic Church, the Anglican Church, the Methodist Church and the Presbyterian Church of Canada entered into formal agreements for the education of indigenous peoples (TRCC 2012: 15). According to a report submitted to Parliament in 1889 by the Department of Indian Affairs, the schools they established were designed to prepare older children for assimilation into the settler-colonial society to emancipate them from their “present state of ignorance, superstition and helplessness.” (Canada Parliament 1889: 16). The colonial concepts of spiritually ‘saving’ children and ‘removing the Indian’ from the child for their own good and for the protection of society always underpinned the residential school system.

Motivated by colonial, racist logics, the elimination through assimilation project undertaken by the settler-colonial state through “the elevation of the race” was designed to achieve a lengthy dissociation of their daily cultural life and was considered necessary

to erase indigenous ways of being (Canada Parliament 1889: 52). The settler-colonial state was intent on disconnecting indigenous children for extended periods of time away from their families. Therefore, when industrial schools were introduced they were deliberately placed at a distance from reserves and were intended to complement the smaller church-run boarding schools of the time.

Beginning in 1923, the terms “boarding” and “industrial” began to be phased out and eventually disappeared; thereafter, all the schools were termed “residential” (Milloy 1999:52). Prior to the 1920’s attendance at industrial and residential schools were voluntary, but after facing persistently low numbers and difficulty in recruiting indigenous students, the federal government decided to make attendance at these schools mandatory for children over the age of seven. In 1920, the Indian Act was amended² under the direction of Duncan Campbell Scott, head of the Department of Indian Affairs from 1913 to 1920. The expansion of the residential school was mainly shaped by colonial settler state reactions to pressures from the church (Milloy 1999: 52). In response, the federal government additionally pursued its own interest through an eliminatory agenda by making policy changes to further the long-term goal of relieving itself of treaty obligations and responsibilities.

Segregation of indigenous children in residential schools increasingly fell out of favour in the mid-1940s. There were always critiques of operation costs, appalling living conditions, and premature death that were brought forth by indigenous communities and external investigative bodies, but it was becoming more difficult for settler-colonial state

² An Act to Amend the Indian Act. (1920). S. C. 1919-20, c. 50. (10-11 Geo. V.). Retrieved November 10, 2013.

<http://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/205/301/ic/cdc/aboriginaldocs/m-stat.html>

authorities to ignore. Beginning in 1951, with the heavy influence of the emerging civil rights movement in the United States and changing expectations with respect to the role of government this ignited a policy shift from “segregation to integration” and shaped education reform in Canada (Hawthorn Report 1966: 362). The federal government’s 1951 revision of the Indian Act allowed it to purchase educational services from provincial education authorities, thereby introducing the placement and integration of indigenous children within provincial schools (Persson 1986: 157). This new climate opened up the implementation of non-residential day schools and changed the direction of the federal government’s assimilationist agenda from one of segregation to one of integration.

Transitioning from the Residential Schools to the Child Welfare System

By the 1960s, the Civil Rights Movement was sweeping the United States, bringing public attention to systemic racism and the discrimination experienced by African Americans. As highlighted in the Hawthorn Report, the civil rights movement also led many Canadians to question the discrimination in their own country, particularly the residential school system and the treatment of indigenous peoples (Hawthorn Report 1966: 153). The term and the process of “integration” started to gain ground during this time, replacing the old axiom of assimilation, although the old goals of folding indigenous peoples into the dominant culture remained intact (Hawthorn Report 1966: 28). The settler-colonial state defined integration as the following: “by integration of the Indians, we mean their full participation in the economic and social life of Canada, together with the retention of some of their cultural characteristics such as pride of origin,

knowledge of their history, passing on of their traditions and preservation of their language” (Hawthorn Report 1966: 28). On the surface, this definition appears invested in promoting the interests of indigenous nations. However, although the language surrounding the cultural genocide of indigenous peoples began to shift, the politics behind the shift from ‘assimilation’ to ‘integration’ were still informed by white supremacist, settler-colonial logics.

The settler-colonial state intended to dissolve indigenous rights to sovereignty and nationhood by ‘integrating’ indigenous nations into the settler colonial state as “municipalities within the framework of the provincial-municipal structure” (Hawthorn Report 1966: 28). The shift of indigenous nations from a “state of segregation” to “complete integration” (ibid) to this new indigenous municipality agenda was invested in dissolving indigenous sovereignty. This shift in language was due in part to the appropriation of language deployed by the U.S. state in response to the Civil Rights Movement to the work of the Canadian settler-colonial state. Here it was used as a guise to further its colonial project of eliminating and assimilating indigenous peoples.

A commitment to the rhetoric of integration policy became the preferred conceptual model for assimilating indigenous peoples by the settler-colonial state. This change reflected an increasing “disillusionment with assimilation” and interest in changing the semantics behind the settler-colonial project (Hawthorn Report 1966: 14). However, even with this shift in public consciousness and the increasing awareness of the unjust segregation within the reserve and residential school systems, educational reform affected indigenous youth unevenly. For example, as explained by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada as indigenous children and youth began to attend

church day schools when they were accessible, children in rural communities still attended residential schools so those schools remained in operation, with the last closing only in the 1990s (TRCC 2012: 18). Thus, the role of residential schools in the suppression of indigenous culture continued until this time. From this we come to understand the transition from the residential school system to the introduction of the settler-colonial child welfare system as a technology of cultural genocide was not smooth: both systems were deployed as parallel processes of disciplinary power for several decades until the residential schools were completely phased out.

The colonial conditions under which indigenous peoples lived illuminate why child welfare practices, once taken on by unpaid charitable organizations and volunteers, increasingly relied on trained experts. Until the 1950s, no state-funded or independent child welfare service had been designated expressly for indigenous communities. Although “there was a certain level of activity being undertaken by both the federal and provincial governments, there was no clear legal authority or delineation of responsibilities” (BCRCY 2013). Historically, the constitutional responsibility and delegation of policies between the settler-colonial state and indigenous communities was introduced in Section 91 of the British North America Act, providing the federal government legal authority over “Indians” (BCRCY 2013). Later amendments to the Indian Act in 1951 authorized the federal government to make agreements at the provincial level. Examining Indian Act policies, we can see that the introduction of Section 88 to the Indian Act in 1951 made “all laws of general application from time to time in force with any province applicable to and in respect of Indians in the province”

(Canada Parliament 1951). This amendment made people with registered Indian Status who lived on reserves subject to provincial laws; previously they had been exempted.

Support for this transition was garnered from the release of the 1966 Hawthorn report. This nationwide investigation was the first attempt by the settler-colonial state to carry out a comparative study of the economic status and development of indigenous communities within Canada. One factor of great importance to the report was its claim that the “fostering of the extension of provincial services is the principled opposition to differential treatment along ethnic lines” (Hawthorn Report 1966: 208). The report observed that, until the Second World War, “Indian reserves existed in lonely splendor as isolated federal islands surrounded by provincial territory.” After World War II, the emergence of the “Keynesian welfare state” heavily influenced the growth of welfare programs, which also strengthened the social work profession in the 1960s and 1970s (Hawthorn Report 1966:149). When the federal government transferred responsibility for social welfare programs for indigenous peoples to provincial welfare agencies, the number of indigenous children in the child welfare system increased drastically.

The Catholic Women’s League Adoption Campaigns

The history of the colonial settler state-imposed child welfare system and its imposed intervention into the lives of indigenous peoples is relatively new but is attached to old colonial logics that maintain racist ideas about indigenous peoples. In Canada, prior to the 1960s, very little consideration was given to transracial adoption within the settler-colonial state. Successful adoptive and foster care placements generally were considered unlikely by child welfare agencies, in part because of racial prejudices within

the white settler-colonial society (RCIMAP 1985: 91). As a result, transracial indigenous adoptions were relatively rare prior to the Sixties Scoop. During a public hearing before the 1985 Manitoba Review Committee on Indian and Métis Adoptions and Placements, a representative from the Manitoba Children's Aid Society stated that at that time prior to the Sixties Scoop they had no indigenous children or any "identified placement resources who [had] indicated a willingness to accept a native child into their home." From this evidence we come to understand that the initial disinclination of white Canadian families to foster indigenous children changed at a very particular juncture in history, and this change would forever alter the lives and communities of indigenous peoples in Canada.

Shifting attitudes towards indigenous adoption were generated in part by media coverage and provincial adoption campaigns supported by the Catholic and Protestant Church, child welfare agencies and lay organizations. Between 1955 and 1970, news stories and advertisements in national and provincial newspapers supported by the Catholic and Protestant Church, lay organizations and provincial child welfare agencies began showcasing indigenous, black and mixed-race children as "hard to adopt" and as being "in need of salvation" (Globe and Mail 1959:16). Lay organizations such as the Open Door Society (ODS), a group of Montreal parents, worked steadily to "break down community and apathy or outright resistance to the acceptance of racially mixed children" (Ebony Magazine 1961: 90). To accomplish this goal, the organization distributed "press releases, public lectures, radio broadcasts and television interviews on both a local and national scale" (Ebony Magazine 1961: 90). It also targeted the colonial settler-state and lobbied for government adoption agencies to place indigenous, black and mixed raced children in white homes.

Other aggressive campaigning by the Catholic Women's league in particular brought about "tremendous interest in adoptions" (Globe and Mail 1964:4). In documentation specific to coercive indigenous adoption, a 1964 Globe and Mail article on the CWL adoption program stated that indigenous children who stayed on reserves were often "socially isolated, educationally handicapped, leading hopeless and hapless lives" (Globe and Mail 1964:2). In 1965 the television program "Today's Child" featured children available for adoption, and many children were adopted as a result of appearing on this program (MCSS 1965:6). Such pleas to the white settler society to take in indigenous and black children were underwritten by the white supremacist and settler-colonial logic that racialized families were unable to care adequately for their children and were in need of the intervention of the white settler as colonizer. Another article in The Globe and Mail (1964) stated that the entirety of an indigenous child's connections "with his original parents and family should be completely severed." These examples illustrate the colonial, racist intent behind coercive adoptions: to alienate indigenous and black children from their families and cut any relational ties with their communities. In her book *Our Son a Stranger: Adoption Breakdown and its Effects on Parents* (2002), Marie Adams documents the experiences of adoptive parents of indigenous children, stating:

In general natives were not well thought of, especially in northern Saskatchewan. So it was a conditioning process for us. At that time, native children needing homes were pictured daily in the newspaper. (Adams 2002: 7)

By analyzing the colonial archive, we can come to understand how adoption campaigns were highly effective in pushing the settler-colonial and racial project of displacing and assimilating indigenous and black children into white settler society, which led to their

increasing separation from their parents and communities. At the height of the aggressive adoption campaigns headed by the CWL and lay organizations, Children's Aid Societies began signing agreements to extend their jurisdictions into indigenous communities. For example, in 1962, the Children's Aid Society of Western Manitoba signed an agreement with federal, provincial and band officials granting this agency a contract for delivery of child welfare services to six indigenous bands. This agency became involved in international displacement of indigenous children in 1969 (RCIMAP 1985: 92). From 1962 to 1969 the agency shifted from having no indigenous children in the child welfare system to indigenous children making up "24.6% of all children in care" (RCIMAP 1985). This number continued to increase as the change of policy on the part of the "education arm of Indian affairs led to a [further] jump in children admitted in 1972" (RCIMAP 1985: 92). A number of these children were placed for adoption in the United States as a result of the shortage of adoptive homes in Canada that were available to meet the increasing number of indigenous children removed into the child welfare system. The result was a vicious cycle that spurred even more aggressive campaigning by the CWL and lay organizations, with the consequence of an even higher number of indigenous children being taken from their communities.

While all this was happening, indigenous community representatives and families struggled with and actively contested this invisible assault on their communities. Indigenous people held the position that their children had an inherent right to be a part of their heritage and to experience an atmosphere of caring and acceptance within their communities. Prior to the intervention of the settler-colonial state, indigenous families took care of temporary or permanent placement of children within their communities.

Often, children were reared and cared for by extended family members when parents were unable to care for their children; this allowed children to have significant interaction with important familial and kinship bonds (Kimelman 1985). Many families tried to get their children back by filing with the Canadian federal courts, but the restrictive, bureaucratic organization was unfamiliar to indigenous families and the hierarchical structure of the white-settler court system was not designed to service the needs of indigenous communities. Institutional and language barriers meant that the system functioned as a colonial apparatus implicated in perpetuating the displacement of indigenous children. Indigenous families found themselves on the receiving end of systemic racism as the Sixties Scoop severed important bonds and caused much pain and suffering for marginalized families. The institutional barriers and colonial mechanisms embedded within the settler-colonial court system disallowed indigenous families from equitably participating in active contestation of the removal of their children.

The Manitoba Kimelman Report

A legal inquiry into the Sixties Scoop by the Canadian settler-state was undertaken in the province of Manitoba between 1982 and 1985. This inquiry was spurred by concerns raised by indigenous communities about children in Manitoba being placed for adoption in non-indigenous homes in the United States and in other provinces and territories in Canada. A commission report sponsored by the federal government led to an inquiry of all Manitoba adoption and placement files for the year 1981 (Kimelman 1985). At that time, Judge Edwin Kimelman was appointed to chair the advisory

committee to examine the evidence provided by representatives from several indigenous and non-indigenous family service agencies, the Dakota Plains Reserve, Manitoba Métis Federation, the Native Alcohol Council of Manitoba and Dr. Arthur Blue of Native Studies at Brandon University. The advisory committee's role was to make recommendations regarding the number of indigenous children being placed for adoption and into foster care.

The Kimelman inquiry found that when settler-colonial child welfare authorities apprehended children their bands only obtained "accidental knowledge" that these indigenous children were the subject of a child welfare proceeding in court (Kimelman 1985: 366). Without knowledge of these foster care or adoption proceedings, the indigenous communities were unable to find a relative or an alternative home in the community for the child. Data collected within indigenous communities showed that community members condemned these child apprehensions and conceived of them as abductions (Kimelman 1985: 267). His conclusion was that the child welfare system was functioning as an apparatus for assimilation and cultural genocide. Judge Kimelman stated in the committee's 1985 final report:

Having now completed the review of the files . . . the Chairman now states unequivocally that cultural genocide has been taking place in a systematic, routine manner. The chairman now repeats: If a child has been placed out of the province, where there was no need for it, then cultural genocide has occurred (Kimelman, 1985: 329)

In the final report to the Ministry of Community Services, Judge Kimelman elaborates on routinized violence of colonial displacement. This offers supporting evidence of the connection between adoption campaigns and their role in driving the interest in transracial adoptions of indigenous children by white-settler families. As

highlighted earlier, prior to the Sixties Scoop there was no marked public interest among white-settler families in adopting indigenous or black children (Fournier and Crey 1997). However, as the final report to the Ministry of Community Services shows, “the placement of children out of the province has not been the exception. The placement of children out of province constituted a regular ongoing practice which took advantage of a readily available pool of adoptive parents” (Kimelman, 1985: 329). Taken together, these lines of evidence indicate that adoption campaigns were influential and are implicated in supporting the colonial mechanisms of indigenous child displacement.

Given the converging power relations that produced the Sixties Scoop, indigenous child displacement was not an act of genocide in the traditional sense of physical annihilation. Such an overt strategy of indigenous elimination was undesirable to the settler-colonial state; it would have jeopardized state legitimacy and the liberal values held by the emerging welfare state. Rather, the historical massacres of indigenous peoples were replaced by more subtle methods of social control to carry out the settler-colonial project, reflecting Foucault’s insight that repressive violence in modern law and government pursued a more subtle route of “normalization” (Foucault 1972). Rather than being outright murdered, indigenous peoples were to be assimilated for the purpose of building the settler-colonial nation state and maintaining the colonial status quo.

Normalization of colonial violence characterizes the institution of child welfare, specifically in its logic of assimilation. By assimilation, I refer to a “one-way process of absorption” whereby a settler-colonial society imposes its “culture, authority, values, and institutions on sub-dominant sectors” (Fleras 2010: 12). However, as demonstrated earlier, I do not argue that the Sixties Scoop was a calculated plan carried out by the

Canadian settler-colonial state. Although oppressive colonial bureaucracies are enacted by the state, power is not downloaded onto the masses but rather, as Foucault points out, operates productively within all social relations (Foucault 1978: 94). Therefore, the colonial domination of indigenous peoples must not be described as the result of a ‘top-down’ power relationship between rulers and ruled (Foucault 1978: 94) but rather as the result of interrelationships among competing and complementary forces (Foucault 1978: 94).

In the child welfare system and in indigenous communities in Canada, bureaucratic structures are created by the settler-colonial state to profit the state and settler society at the expense of indigenous communities. Simultaneously, colonial power relations naturalize the continued subjugation of indigenous communities through a patronizing white supremacist discourse of ‘lifting indigenous people out of their tutelage’: a discourse originating in the Enlightenment era and later introduced in Indian Act policies and the rhetoric of ‘saving’ indigenous children by apprehending them from their families and adopting these children into white homes. The child welfare system in Canada reproduced the conditions of coloniality by drawing upon the colonial discourse previously enacted in Indian Act policies and expanding its interventions into indigenous communities through new procedures. A move from the residential school system to the child welfare system did not make oppression more humane; it only transferred the locus of punishment from the level of institutional force to the normalization of disciplinary power within the everyday practice of colonial governmentality. White families representing the settler colonial state became the loci of colonial power: now, less visible,

and in some ways more difficult to resist because of their power to normalize the colonial reality.

Neoliberal Intimacies of Adoption

An examination of power in its naked institutional form (prison, the child welfare system, the rule of law) is important, but it is also crucial to make connections to the intimate modes of power circulating within interpersonal life. In everyday personal relationships, practices of domination, control and oppression are readily rendered invisible. The institutional and punitive practices of the child welfare system view the family as a private institution in which the state, operating via statutory law, takes over “functions normally carried out by parents for their children,” such that the child welfare system “replaces the functions of parents” (McCall 1990: 347). The child welfare system focuses its intervention more on the “controlling and enforcing of standards of care” and on aspects of parenthood that include “limiting and directing children’s environments, opportunities and activities”; it focuses less or not at all on the caring aspects of parenting, and leaves responsibility for financial maintenance and discipline (of indigenous children) with adoptive parents (McCall 1990:21). These processes are both sustained and elaborated in the current neoliberal era. David Harvey maintains that the “emergence of neoliberalism ... transfers services from the welfare state to the private realm of family and market while promoting free market conditions conducive to capital accumulation” (Harvey 2007: 9), processes that also become visible within the white, adoptive family. Like all forms of capitalism before it, but also in new ways, neoliberalism in a settler-colonial state produces a large degree of economic, social, and

political inequality that greatly impacts the most marginalized, including indigenous people.

The decentralized child welfare system -- run by federal, provincial, and municipal governments, as well as not-for-profit and private institutions -- creates a loophole for the state to defer its treaty responsibilities to indigenous communities and to connect white adoptive families with private child welfare services, which then manage indigenous transracial adoption and foster care. These practices are both facilitated and encouraged in a neoliberal moment, when indigenous transracial adoption enables a redistribution of capital from indigenous communities to the white-settler society. As suggested by Bonita Lawrence, the discourse of eliminating the ‘Indian problem’ by assimilating indigenous people into the settler-colonial state has framed policy pertaining to indigenous people since the enactment of the Indian Act (Lawrence 2004: 106). The subsequent control and assimilation of indigenous peoples is significant to the continuation of settler-colonial capitalism. Removing indigenous children from their families and having them adopted into white families reaffirms settler colonialism, as a project seeking the dissipation of indigenous communities and the exploitation of indigenous land. Yet indigenous child removal also is intertwined with neoliberal concerns for growing the settler-colonial state through the privatization of social services and the focus of national growth on individual capital accumulation and the normative family.

Because the indigenous subject is linked to the family, to social systems and to the settler-colonial state, following Foucault, we find that complementary “sovereign” and “disciplinary” power relations are at play, particularly as they affect the indigenous

subject's experience of family. The displacement and assimilation of the indigenous subject is naturalized through the sovereign and disciplinary power operating within the adoptive/foster white family. According to Foucault, the family, like state institutions, is situated as a sovereign institution (Foucault 1977). The "right, law and jurisprudence" idea of power, however, distinguishes itself from "disciplinary power" (Foucault 1975: 35), a form of control that exerts force through normalizing judgement and, in this case, by correcting undesirable indigenous ways of being in the white-settler home. This colonial, racist process was previously carried out in residential schools through disciplinary means by deploying dehumanizing methods such as cutting indigenous children's hair and forbidding them to speak their language. However, the family is not a disciplinary institution in the same sense as the school, military or prison systems. The family does not justify its power exclusively through the state but through its ability to produce disciplined subjects for the modern settler-colonial state. As adults, indigenous adoptees have often reflected on how their lives were impacted by this expectation of their emergence as disciplined subjects amid their prevailing exclusion from the settler-colonial society.

The demand upon indigenous adoptees to be disciplined through the family into the settler-colonial state is tied to mechanisms of control and normalization. One adoptive mother said of her son: "Tim often voiced his anger with us for adopting him. He said he had learned the white man's values but he did not fit in either native or white society. He called himself an apple Indian" (Adams 2002: 21). The normalizing judgement and 'correction' of undesirable indigenous ways of being is one of the most harmful impacts on indigenous children who are removed from their families and communities and

adopted into white settler families. Issues with cultural identity, racism and adoption breakdown are prevalent throughout the academic literature and public discourse on indigenous adoptees (Adams 2002; Sinclair 2007; Timpson 1993; Nuttegens 2004; Nicholson 1996; Chupik-Hall 2001; York 1990; Fournier and Crey 1997; Lawrence 2003). These issues, and their social normalization implicate many white settlers in maintaining the oppression of indigenous peoples and the project of settler colonialism. In an interview published in the (1971) *Partisan Review* Foucault articulates his understanding of society in “terms of its systems of exclusion, of rejection, of refusal in terms of what it does, and does not want” with the secondary function of “integration” being in play (Foucault 1971:b). Similarly, removing indigenous children from their parents and communities and placing them in the child welfare system serves a dual function: as a “short circuit” for colonial subjects considered “undesirable” by the settler-colonial society, which then permits “[reintegrating] them into a sort of marginal circuit” (Foucault 1971:b). This “ritual of exclusion” places the indigenous subjects outside of their communities and excludes them from their own cultures, while transmitting what the settler-colonial society considers more desirable models of being. The result is that this ritual of exclusion finally takes on the value of inclusion (Foucault 1971:b). This severing of ties between families and children causes grave emotional, spiritual and physical harm to indigenous communities. Children are effectively detained, sentenced and incarcerated within the child welfare system, when their only ‘crime’ is residing in a settler-colonial society bent on the elimination of their indigenous subjecthood.

Power dynamics within the family interact with the broader colonial politics of the settler society. An indigenous family or community that fails to produce indigenous

subjects that are properly disciplined to colonial norms may lose authority over its members through the interventions of the settler-colonial state. This has devastating effects on their communities, as the “removal of children from their homes and families [is] conceivably the most severe institutional intrusion into the lives of children and families possible” (Roberts 2002: 17). Reforms of the settler state’s colonial child welfare system offer only a superficial fix that does not address the roots of the problem. And while there are some positive stories arising from the child welfare system and the Sixties Scoop (Swidrovich 2004) these are rare exceptions, with the failure rate of adoption of indigenous children into non-indigenous families remaining extraordinarily high. Evidence that was gathered through her interviews with adoptive parents revealed that 95% of those indigenous transracial adoptions broke down in adolescence with many of these placement no longer viable (Adams 2002). Furthermore, as highlighted earlier, the high correlation of incarcerated adult indigenous people who were in ‘care’ of the child welfare system as children shows the failure of this system. The child welfare system in Canada has failed miserably at addressing the needs of indigenous peoples in Canada, raising the question of the value of upholding a system that fails 95% of the people it claims to serve.

The contemporary overrepresentation of indigenous children in the state-imposed child welfare system is naturalized by the transfer of indigenous children outside their home communities and into white families. There is also an intertwined connection between the prison system and the child welfare system as demonstrated in the over-representations of indigenous inmates who also spent time child welfare. The contemporary child welfare system founded upon earlier Indian Act policies, legislation,

aggressive adoption campaigns and the residential school system is tied to the legacy of the Sixties Scoop. The Sixties Scoop resulted in thousands of indigenous children being uprooted from their homes and communities. The Sixties Scoop performed an active colonial project for Canadian settler society and the state.

Chapter 3

REPRESENTING COLONIAL SUBJECTIVITY IN CREATIVE TEXTS

Complementing the knowledge obtained through the colonial archive, in this chapter I offer a literary analysis of Beatrice Culleton's novel *In Search of April Raintree* (1983) alongside a reading of her memoir *Come Walk with Me* (2009) and the postcolonial theories of Frantz Fanon (1961) and Homi Bhabha (1983:1994). I critically examine the texts' juxtapositions of representations of indigenous adoptees with those of white middle-class adoptive/foster families, and child welfare workers. To examine these representations I draw on the insights of Fanon and Bhabha to demonstrate how processes of subjectification under colonial conditions are intimately informed by and inform the colonizer-colonized relationship. Building from my previous account of the overarching workings of colonial displacement, this chapter asks how creative texts illuminate the specific locations and experiences of colonial violence.

In Search of April Raintree (1983) tells the story of two Métis sisters who are apprehended by child welfare authorities and who experience many injustices in the child welfare system. In the narrative, April and Cheryl are separated from their family and each other. They mostly rely on their bond to survive their childhood experiences in the child welfare system. Over the years, as the Raintree sisters enter into adulthood, an emotional distance grows between the sisters and the sisters' move in different directions. April marries a wealthy white man in Toronto. Eventually, April and her husband divorce and she moves back to Winnipeg. Meanwhile Cheryl embraces her indigenous cultural roots and volunteers at a local native friendship center. She later finds herself in an

abusive relationship and spirals into a dark place. Cheryl sells her body for sex to appease her boyfriend and pay their rent. At this point in the novel, after April's divorce the sisters are living together in Winnipeg. Mistaken for Cheryl, April is sexually assaulted in the parking lot by a group of men. She survives the assault, but this causes a rift between the Raintree sisters. The case eventually goes to trial and April first realizes her sister Cheryl was working as a sex worker. April feels betrayed by her and this causes an argument. Cheryl's drinking problem escalates and in a drunken haze she confesses to April she found their dad living on the street. She also tells April about their mother's suicide. Shortly, after she leaves the house, readers learn that she commits suicide. April becomes distraught with grief over the loss of her sister. At the close of the novel the reader learns that Cheryl has an infant son, Henry, who is being raised by her close friends, and that Cheryl left her sister a letter asking that she take care of her child. April resolves herself to raise Cheryl's son and create a new life that her sister would have wanted for them.

Before attending to the literary analysis of the novel, it is important to establish how the story is relevant to the history of the Sixties Scoop. Storytelling together with its representation of different character perspectives can support historical facts we cannot know from a limited one-sided view. Stories such as *In Search of April Raintree* (1983) can connect creative representations of different perspectives together to produce an expanded understanding of historical representations. Taking up this understanding my analysis of this novel, explores a Métis adoptee identity and white settler narrative in a way that additionally draws attention to a criticism of the Sixties Scoop. Moreover, through storytelling *In Search of April Raintree* (1983) reveals truth about the

experiences of the child welfare system from the subject position of the indigenous foster/adoptive child that I have not found in examining the colonial archive.

In the story of the Raintree sisters, Mosionier explores what it means to be a Métis ward of the white-settler child welfare system during the late 1950's and 1960's and demonstrates the importance of storytelling in the production of indigenous knowledge and histories. Incorporating anecdotal information from the author's own life, *In Search of April Raintree* (1983) foregrounds indigenous voices speaking against the colonial violence of child welfare displacement. As Deena Rymhs (2008) notes, creative writings provide marginalized people an opportunity to intervene in colonial representations and expose the failings of colonial institutions (Rymhs 2008:24). Such works challenge ideas about fictional literature as solely a vehicle for entertainment by recognizing how indigenous storytelling functions as a creative space to build and strengthen community.

Mosionier's memoir *Come Walk with Me* (2009) builds on her account of indigenous and Métis histories by addressing the question of how much the novel mirrors her own life. The memoir's detailed descriptions of her experiences of the child welfare system often parallel her novel. As argued by Helen Buss (2002) memoir works to "construct dialogue, metaphors and other literary tropes" that are similar to creative writings (Buss 2002:23). Memoirs encapsulate an "event, institution, or class identity" and give "primacy to the narrative over the literary aesthetic" (ibid). For Buss, memoirs present knowledge differently from the mirrored reality of narrative when they invite the "active participation of the reader's own revision of history and memory" (Buss 2002: 24). Mosionier addresses herself directly to the reader in her memoir, distinguishing this form of writing from the mode of address in her novel.

Complementing the archive, and taken together, the novel and memoir offer us insight that expands beyond and clarifies the written record of colonial history. Indigenous storytelling allows me to bring forth unofficial accounts of the Sixties Scoop that illuminate the voices of the displaced and marginalized. Where colonial discourse was meant to define and contain indigenous subjectivity, indigenous storytelling creates a potential space for agency on the part of the indigenous writer. The novel and memoir work across as well as outside a colonial frame to confront and interrupt colonial narratives. Indigenous storytelling lends perspective to understanding colonial institutions, processes and experiences by foregrounding the subjective experience of living with the impacts of child displacement during the Sixties Scoop.

POSTCOLONIAL THEORY AND INDIGENOUS STORYTELLING

Building from the work of Frantz Fanon, Homi Bhabha in *The Other Question: The Stereotype and Colonial Discourse* (1983) and *The Location of Culture* (2004) explains stereotype as the “primary point of subjectification in colonial discourse” and as a medium for exacting discrimination against marginalized groups (Bhabha 1983:107). Rather than simply signifying a false image of colonized people that justifies their oppression, for Bhabha colonial subjectification is predicated on the paradoxical “recognition and disavowal of racial/cultural/historical differences” (Bhabha 1983:34). Colonial discourse appears to recognize differences while naturalizing their “fixity” within a cultural and racial hierarchy (Bhabha 1983:23). Drawing from insights of Fanon, Bhabha writes that the fixation of racial inferiority within stereotype stays with the colonized subject “wherever he goes” (Bhabha 1983:108). The stereotype and “its fixity

of racism” (Bhabha 1983:108). justify the subjugation of colonized people as degenerate and inferior and establish colonial systems of power no matter the circumstance or situation.

As the central discursive strategy in colonial discourse, the stereotype serves to index an unchanging order: that is, for Bhabha, for the stereotype to exist it must be repeated. Yet the very demand that the stereotype be repeated for it to exist as a ‘truth’ undermines its own validity and reveals its false nature. Furthermore, extending Lacanian mirror self-identification, Bhabha argues that the totality of the stereotype -- “its image as identity” -- is always threatened by lack” (Bhabha 1983:110). Within this unstable composition of colonial discourse, the subversion of the stereotype becomes possible. Moreover, colonial discourse and its mischaracterizations of the colonized subject can be thwarted and displaced, along with the practices and infrastructures that uphold colonial logics. Bhabha models a challenge to the stereotype that turns from focusing on whether it is positive or negative and towards closely examining the process through which its images are constructed. Following Bhabha’s understanding, I examine how Mosionier’s novel *In Search of April Raintree* and her memoir *Come Walk With Me* present literary representations of processes of colonial subjectification and of the relationship between the colonized and colonizer. My reading highlights how indigenous storytelling clarifies the colonial encounter between child welfare authorities and indigenous adoptees and creatively challenges false assumptions about indigenous peoples.

Both *In Search of April Raintree* and *Come Walk With Me* are situated within a long line of important contributions by indigenous creative writers that creatively challenge colonialism. Maria Campbell’s autobiographical text *Halfbreed* (1973) opened

a pathway for other aspiring indigenous writers such as Emma LaRocque, Jeannette Armstrong, Lee Maracle, Richard Wagamese, Ruby Slipperjack, Tomson Highway, Thomas King, Leanne Simpson and others. Their creative works intervene in colonial epistemic frames and challenge existing racist attitudes to “inspire generations of the strength of the culture” (Kovach 2009: 15). Such works often centre a political consciousness so as to offer a (re-)construction of culture that can challenge colonial subjectification in dominant public discourse. However, this critical engagement with colonial representations in indigenous literature is often messy, marked by tensions and conflicted negotiations.

Literary representations cannot be assumed to fully encompass the complexities of a life or a culture. As Janice Acoose says of colonial representational strategies, to “suppress the voices of indigenous women is to use one person’s life as representative of a whole culture” (Acoose 1995: 67). Mosionier’s creative texts do not offer testimony of a universal truth or experience. To frame them in this way would be to impose a false universality over indigenous peoples lives, and to silence the important voices and experiences of other child welfare system survivors. To ensure that I do not replicate the oppressive structures that silence indigenous survivors and to ensure that a space exists for others to speak, I do not claim that either *In Search of April Raintree* or *Come Walk With Me* represent all indigenous children who experienced colonial displacement during the Sixties Scoop. They do, however produce important knowledge about a part of colonial history that is often silenced, and offer insights into processes of colonial subjectification that are harmful to indigenous communities.

Come Walk With Me (2009) focuses on the highlights of Mosionier's life, from her struggles during her time as ward of the Children's Aid Society to what happened in her life afterwards as an adult. It also makes intergenerational connections by presenting a narrative of Mosionier's birth mother. Mosionier discusses her journey as a published indigenous writer, community activist and advocate for children's rights. Importantly, her memoir also provides some explanation and interpretation of her novel. For example, without the insights from her memoir the reader of *In Search of April Raintree* may be inclined to assume that the characters April and Cheryl are fictional representations of herself and her sister Vivian. In the memoir, Mosionier writes, "like us, the girls will be placed in foster homes by the children's aid. When April is five and Cheryl is three. While mine were pretty good foster homes, bad things happened to me. I didn't know if similar bad things happened to my brothers and sisters" (Mosionier 2009:138). Mosionier does draw inspiration for the development of these characters from her life, as in her desire to represent Cheryl as "lovable" in a similar way to her feelings about her real-life sister Vivian (ibid). Nevertheless the Raintree sisters and some of the other characters are composite representations of different people from her life and are informed by Mosionier's political reflections.

In Search of April Raintree is located significantly in the city of Winnipeg. This city, where Mosionier lived for most of her childhood, has the largest population of indigenous people in Canada and had one of the highest levels of child welfare apprehensions during the Sixties Scoop (Episkenew 2009: 114). Mosionier's storytelling complements the existing literature on the Sixties Scoop by depicting how colonial child welfare displacement works within an urban location. The narrative further makes

connections between the urban center and rural indigenous communities by indicating that the poor living conditions and lack of adequate medical care that often plague rural indigenous communities serve as a catalyst for colonial child welfare displacement.

Mosionier's memoir explains that the residential school system forced many indigenous people, including Mosionier's birth mother into urban centres after they reached the age of maturity (Mosionier 2009: 6). As indicated in the archival research discussed in the previous chapter, many of the people who lived in residential schools spent extended periods of time away from their communities. As children many exited the schools unable to speak the language of their families. Lengthy disconnection from their community often turned indigenous people exiting the residential school system into strangers to their own people. Many residential school survivors ended up moving into urban areas, and in their new location subsequently built a life there and had children. As such, they would have been some of the first indigenous people to experience child welfare intervention from the settler-colonial state, before legislation changes introduced child welfare intervention on reserves. Mosionier's creative text sheds light on the people affected by child apprehensions who no longer lived in their home communities because of other settler-colonial state pressures.

In the novel, the Raintree family's substandard living conditions and their connection to the ill health experienced by the father, Henry Raintree, set in motion the eventual apprehension of his children April and Cheryl by the child welfare system (Mosionier 1983:1). By depicting their removal in this way, Mosionier draws the reader's attention to how state removal of indigenous children so often has been tied to factors beyond the control of indigenous families and communities: specifically, dislocations

from home communities due to poor living conditions and poor medical care, which lay the foundation for events that culminate in state apprehension of children. Mosionier points to how the failure of the settler-colonial state to meet its obligations to indigenous peoples produces the initial colonial displacement of the Raintree family: one underwritten by the logic of settler colonialism that desires that indigenous peoples “disappear” so that white-settler society can claim the land.

In place of “blaming the victims” for the historically-determined conditions forced upon them, Mosionier’s storytelling offers resistance to racist stereotypes of indigenous people. For example, Mosionier challenges the trope of the “lazy” Indian through her portrayal of Henry and in so doing so, illustrates how differently indigenous peoples understand their experience from those who hold racist conceptions of them. Read through a colonial, racist view, Henry’s character may be conceived as just another lazy Indian who refuses to work. But Mosionier represents Henry as being unable to work because of a chronic illness that is beyond his control, not because he is disinclined to enter the workforce. The compounding discrimination and stress experienced by his partner Alice further limits employment possibilities for the Raintree family. The poverty and substance abuse struggles that Henry and Alice experience are portrayed candidly; the author does not gloss over late-night partying or the occasional lack of supervision the Raintree daughters receive in her characterizations (Mosionier 1983:13-14). As the lack of necessary resources appears to strain the Raintree family’s ability to cope, Henry and Alice turn for support to other families and adults in the neighbourhood who are struggling with similar problems with money and alcohol abuse. Mosionier’s storytelling thus connotes that Indigenous people are not averse to finding and holding stable

employment but rather face an interplay of factors initiated by colonial dislocation. As a storyteller, Mosionier appears to be attempting to unsettle stereotypes of indigenous people drawing on knowledge from her own life to offer readers insight into the circumstances facing some marginalized indigenous families during the time of the Sixties Scoop. Her grappling with deeper connections among colonialism, displacement and the indigenous family foreshadow the eventual apprehension of the Raintree sisters.

Alongside Henry's ill health and inability to work, Alice Raintree in the novel struggles to cope with racism. After moving to their new location in Winnipeg, the family members find themselves in a world that seems to have little regard for indigenous people. Rare shopping excursions and errands in the city are marred by cold stares and outward hostility. Daughter April observes these dynamics when she says, "It was rare when mom would go down to the department stores where they had ride-on stairs. Mom didn't like to go out shopping, I guess it was because sometimes people were rude to her. When that happened, Mom would get a hurt look in her eyes and act apologetic" (Mosionier 1983: 13). Everyday, normalizing interactions with a hostile settler society are represented as a source of negativity and strain for the Raintree family.

In highlighting the racism that further isolates and marginalizes the Raintrees after their displacement to the city, Mosionier impels her readers to feel the impact of living amid the realities facing displaced indigenous people in Canada during the time of the Sixties Scoop. The author illustrates these persisting conditions as a subtle, detrimental colonial tactic that wears down the Raintrees' ability to cope with crushing oppression. Mosionier represents Henry's and Alice's substance abuse as an escape from the harsh realities of their circumstances as they struggle to make sense of their new circumstances

without the important support that they had at home (Mosionier 1983:12). The portrayal of alcohol use as a coping tactic for dealing with poverty, displacement and racism also appears in Mosionier's memoir *Come Walk with Me* (Mosionier 2009:9). An interview with Mosionier's Métis mother Mary Clara Pelletier details her similar struggles, which include her difficulties finding employment in the aftermath of World War II, and her disconnection from community and family support due to the residential school system and persistent poverty (ibid). In presenting these representations in the novel and memoir, Mosionier deploys indigenous storytelling as a "discursive practice that brings together material realities and imaginary possibilities" (Buss 2002:212), informing the reader of her personal history and fitting this into the larger colonial histories and processes impacting indigenous communities. Although the weight of oppression impacts the Raintrees, Mosionier depicts them surviving displacement and trauma in a manner that does not appear to demonstrate failure but rather commendable strength in the face of dire and extraordinary circumstances.

The Colonizer / Colonized Dichotomy

To advance my analysis of the shaping effect of colonial discourses in the lives of indigenous peoples and in representations about them, I turn to the work of Frantz Fanon. For Fanon, the colonizer cannot develop an understanding of colonial conditions in the same way that it is known to the colonized, because the colonizer claims to already "know" the colonized through dehumanizing stereotypical constructions of the "native" (Fanon 1961: 43). In light of this analysis, Mosionier's narrative arguably shows us how to critically read representations of indigenous people through the lenses of both

indigenous adoptees and white middle-class adoptive/foster families. False images of the colonized promulgated by the colonizer bar the possibility of ever knowing the colonized subject, whose perspective is always filtered through colonial narratives. However, with Fanon's insight, I argue that Mosionier's positionality as a colonial subject and her creative portrayal of that positionality throughout her texts provide a lens for perceiving the complex negotiations of power within the colonized-colonizer relationship in a way that the colonizer's narratives cannot.

Indigenous foster children and adoptee narratives of experience with the child welfare system differ from dominant understandings of that system's benevolence and illuminate the colonized-colonizer relationship. *In Search of April Raintree* highlights those differences when it portrays critical awareness of colonial power among indigenous foster children and adoptees. Mosionier emphasizes how the desire for the disappearance of indigenous people within the settler society underwrites the Raintrees' engagements with state child welfare workers and workers' failure to appreciate the Raintrees' lives in their complexity. We learn that the strengths of the Raintree family are invisible to the colonial eye, while their shortcomings are placed under a microscope for dissection by state workers, who intervene with little understanding of the dynamics within the Raintree household. Read in this way, Mosionier's representation illuminates how the colonial conditions of indigenous peoples' lives are erased when they are blamed for circumstances beyond their control. In the novel's portrayal, the child welfare workers appear to filter their encounter with the Raintrees and justify the removal of their children through the logic of white-supremacist settler colonialism that seeks Indigenous disappearance as a desirable outcome.

The novel portrays the Raintrees as failing to meet state authorities' standards for keeping their children when their household is investigated. When April's and Cheryl's baby sister Anna becomes ill, their parents Henry and April take her to the hospital for medical attention. Reflecting back on this moment with Cheryl later in the story, after the Raintree sisters are grown, Henry recounts, "You don't know about Anna? Oh, course not, you were just a baby yourself when she died. April must remember her. Maybe not. She was just little, too, and Anna wasn't with us very long. She was your baby sister. But she was a sick baby. They should have kept her in the hospital longer, but no, they sent her home too early and she died. They blamed your mama and me. That was their excuse for taking you girls away from us" (Mosionier 1983: 200). Mosionier here attempts to show her reader how state workers individualize systemic colonial oppression when Henry and Alice, representing indigenous families, are framed only through racist and colonial blame for parenting 'failures,' despite their demonstrated concern for their infant daughter's well-being. The Raintrees are held to rigid standards that fail to ethically accommodate their situation by maintaining family cohesion and avoiding the extreme measure of physically removing children from their homes. This similar angst and pain is described by Mosionier's mother in the memoir when her mother is informed by the court that she would not be getting her children back: "And we had to go to court. And when they told me I couldn't have my kids I burst out crying-right in the courtroom. I said if I had a gun I would have shot the whole damn works of them. That's how I felt. Oh my heart was torn to pieces. That's why today, I pity any mother if their kids were to be taken away like I had, had" (Mosionier 2009:8). The colonizer's racist conceptions predict that it *must* without exception be the fault of indigenous parents if something bad

happens to their children. Mosionier also speaks here to the lack of effort by state workers to keep indigenous families together during the Sixties Scoop. To recall Fanon, Mosionier's text shows how the colonizer claims to "know" the colonized through fallacious misrepresentations that mean to justify the imposition of colonial power (Fanon 1961: 43). Constructions of the Raintrees through the logics of white supremacy and settler colonialism underwrite the colonial apprehension of the Raintree sisters.

In creating the apprehension scene between the Raintree family and state child welfare workers, Mosionier depicts a shared reality among many indigenous peoples who experienced this form of state intervention during the Sixties Scoop. The relationship between the colonizer and the colonized also structures the novel when Mosionier illustrates how the Raintrees internalize oppressive constructions of their experience, and how their vulnerability is exploited by state child welfare workers. Recalling Bhabha, we can ask how colonial subjectification is portrayed as emergent within close relationship with the colonizer. The novel suggests this reading when the Raintree parents wonder if perhaps the state workers are right to take their children away. Despite the narrative having made readers painfully aware of the spiraling decline in the family's well-being, caused by colonial displacement and by a lack of support networks, Alice and Henry appear to succumb to the recommendation of the state workers that April and Cheryl should be placed in a foster home. Recalling Fanon and Bhabha, it appears here that the colonial and racist stereotypes of the Raintrees and of indigenous families grossly over-determine the characters' engagements with state child welfare workers. Bhabha argued that false representations subjectify when they influence perception. As the primary point of subjectification within colonial discourse, stereotype is dangerous not because it

mischaracterizes indigenous peoples but because it assumes a “totalized fixity” (Bhabha 1983: 162) that constitutes the colonized as innately degenerate and oppression as justified. Mosionier’s creative portrayal of colonial child displacement illustrates how colonial constructions of indigenous parenting justify the removal of indigenous children for state child welfare workers and, potentially, for indigenous people themselves.

Mosionier’s portrayal of indigenous children’s removal from their homes clearly rejects this as a “benevolent” action. This is evident in the scene when April realizes that child welfare workers are taking her and Cheryl away:

The man with the box leaned over and whispered something to my mother. She forced herself to stop sobbing, slowly got up, and came over to us. I could see that she was struggling to maintain control. “April, I want you and Cheryl to go with these people. It will only be for a little while. Right now, Daddy and me, well, we can’t take care of you. You’ll be all right. You be good girls, for me. I’m sorry...”She couldn’t say any more because she started crying again. I didn’t like to see her this way, especially in front of these people. She hugged us, and that’s when I started crying, too. I kind of knew that she was really saying goodbye to us, but I was determined that we were not going to be taken away. I clung to my mom as tight as I could. They wouldn’t be able to pull me away from her. And then they would leave. I expected Mom to do the same. But she didn’t. She pushed me away. Into their grasping hands. I couldn’t believe it. Frantically, I screamed, Mommy, please don’t make us go. Please, Mommy. We want to stay with you. Please don’t make us go. Oh, Mom, don’t! (Mosionier 1983:18)

This pivotal moment shapes the rest of the narrative, as the separation of the Raintree family appears repeatedly as an irrecoverable, devastating loss for all of its members (Mosionier 1983: 18, 21, 30, 207). In her memoir Mosionier also depicts apprehension by child welfare authorities as a catalyst of pain for herself and family (Mosionier 2009:11). In each text, Mosionier makes the ramifications of indigenous child welfare displacement within families central to understanding her narrative and her own personal history.

DEBUNKING CONTENTMENT: COLONIAL ENCOUNTERS IN LITERARY REPRESENTATION

Mosionier portrays the aftermath of the removal of indigenous children by troubling the benevolence of white adoptive families. In the novel, Cheryl and April encounter several foster families in the child welfare system before the storyline transitions to depict their adulthood. Mosionier indicates in her memoir that the novel introduces the Desrosier family as a representation of white-settler adoptive families that mistreat and abuse indigenous children (Mosionier 2009:145). Mosionier simultaneously complicates the portrayal of the abusive white adoptive family with her humanizing representations of other white-settler adoptive families -- the McAdams, Steindalls and Dions -- as 'good' foster homes. In a creative text that exposes racial tensions to such a large degree, portraying multiple benevolent white foster and adoptive families is thematically provocative, drawing our attention to complexities in the interpretation of indigenous and adoptee relations. Furthermore, Mosionier appears to portray the tension between valuing or devaluing white-settler adoption as one that does not readily lend itself to easy resolution.

The Desrosier family stands in for the representation of the abusive white foster and adoptive home. The Desrosier family and the mistreatment of the Raintree sisters in their home reflect the abuse that often took place in white foster and adoptive homes. While living with the DeRosiers, April finds herself in an emotionally unavailable, hostile family whose members constantly degrade her for her indigenous roots. April's interactions with the DeRosier family make abuse, neglect and racism a daily reality. Mrs. DeRosier disparages April's parents for their struggles with alcohol and taunts her with insults. Mrs. DeRosier's children, Maggie and Ricky, sling hateful, hurtful words at

April: “Your parents didn’t know how to take care of you. They just know how to booze it up” (Mosionier 1983: 44, 45). In these representations, Mosionier exposes the colonial views of indigenous peoples that are adopted by and circulated within white middle-class foster and adoptive families. Mosionier also takes time to elucidate indigenous adoptees’ unique perspectives on such narratives, as when April retorts that her parents are sick, not drunks who don’t love her (Mosionier 1983:47). In this moment in the novel, April is confronted with the clashing disparity between her own understanding of her parents and those of the white-settler family, and she faces the difficulty of reconciling what she knows with what the white adoptive family members are communicating to her.

April learns very clearly that she is not considered a member of the family or even a respected houseguest; she is treated like an unwanted interloper. Mrs. DeRosier’s children, Maggie and Ricky, are demeaning and cruel towards April, calling her a “half-breed” and a “dirty ape bitch” (Mosionier 1983:39). The constant reminders that she is not part of their family include her being delegated household chores and duties that the other children are not required to do. She is often ordered to clean up after them to earn her keep. In the novel, Mosionier through the point of view of April captures the dehumanizing manner in which indigenous foster children often were treated as wards of the child welfare system. Insults about April’s parents present examples of colonial representations and of the feeling arising out of them, which together justify the removal of indigenous children by the state without having to account for the colonial processes that subjugate indigenous families or condition substance abuse within them.

In juxtaposing April’s perspective with those of the white-settler family members, Mosionier also conveys the naturalization of white supremacy under settler-colonial

conditions. The DesRosier family members imagine that they are superior to the indigenous family for having taken in one of their ‘poor’ children. They talk about April as though she is invisible despite the fact she is standing right there with them during their conversations. In such scenes we see how proximity to whiteness under colonial conditions enables the white-supremacist project of assimilation: it is this “proximity to whiteness that allows indigenous people to disappear into white society” (Smith 2010). Paradoxically, a white supremacist logic predicated on including indigenous peoples within the settler society actually excludes indigenous people and denies their access to full humanity.

Perceptions of indigenous sub-humanity and of their demand to disappear lie in sharp contrast to the character April’s understanding of life in the DeRosier home as abusive and oppressive. As she recounts:

On Sunday morning, we all went to Mass. After the services, while Mr. DeRosier and the two older boys waited in the car, Mrs. DeRosier chatted with some neighbours. I was by her side and she explained my presence, adding that I was a lovely little child, and we all got along well. She wallowed in their compliments on what a generous, good-hearted woman she was to take poor, unfortunate children like myself into her home. I just stood there meekly, too scared to say different. (Moisonier 1983:41)

In this portrayal of April’s experiences with the foster family, I perceive the methods by which April’s understanding of her experience is silenced by white-settler disavowals of her humanness or her capacity to name her own experience. Both the ‘white saviour’ trope and a colonial imbalance of power manifest in this representation, which leaves the reader with April’s sense of being silenced. In these ways, Moisonier’s representation implicates white-settler adoption in the colonial project. The mother in the family, Mrs. DesRosier, appears in particular to be an emblem for the cold, unwelcoming

and neglectful foster parent. She is a dominating figure who holds racist conceptions about indigenous people and subjects April and Cheryl to dehumanizing emotional, verbal and physical abuse (Mosionier 1999:38). In one scene, after Cheryl resists the mistreatment in the home, Mrs. Desrosier cuts off her hair in punishment. As Mosionier explains in her memoir, Mrs. DesRosier is a symbolic agent of the historical processes of colonialism and state violence, “the ‘indian agent’” whom “the government appointed ... to maintain dictatorial control on reserves” (Mosionier 2009:145). Here Mosionier ties Indian Act policies and the reservation system to life within white-settler adoptive homes. Historically, the indian agent governed the mobility and daily life of indigenous people and enforced colonial policies on reserves (Brownlie 1997:9). Mosionier appears to be drawing parallels between the colonizing role of the indian agent and the controlling restrictions placed upon indigenous foster children and adoptees in adoptive families during the Sixties Scoop.

While such critical accounts of the colonized-colonizer relationship appear significant to *In Search of April Raintree*, I suggest that the novel’s representations of that relationship cannot be reduced to a set of viewpoints in binary opposition. Mosionier juxtaposes her portrayal of the DesRosier foster family as a negligent, abusive home with scenes in other foster families characterized by contentment and benevolent declarations of colonized humanity. Mosionier’s portrayal of the benevolent white-settler as colonizer could be read as a decolonial attempt to interrupt colonial representation by humanizing more supportive white foster families. Yet it also draws our attention to the complexities of racial tensions that encompassed indigenous and white settler relations. In this way, I suggest that Mosionier’s novel is attempting to redefine the colonial conditions that

produce indigenous people's subjugation, by creating alternative narrative threads about indigenous experiences with colonialism.

Representations of the benevolent white foster family appear, for example, in the characterization of the Dion and MacAdams families. Shortly after the Raintree sisters' apprehension into the Dion family home, April finds some momentary solace in the new material comforts and support offered there. For instance, after April's character leaves a state-supervised visit with her parents and sister Cheryl, April is distraught and cries to Mrs. Dion who offers her some kind words and emotional support (Mosionier 1983:30). April's character is elated to have brief, state-supervised visits with her family, even if these visits can only take place under the surveilling gaze of state child workers. But this short time with her family is not enough for April: she is despondent for days after these visits from the pain of missing her family (Mosionier 1983:29). After refusing to eat, Mrs. Dion brings her a plate of food, for which she is portrayed as feeling grateful. However, even the good intentions and comforts April finds in her foster home are not enough to alleviate her longing for her family.

Cheryl finds that the MacAdams make concerted efforts to facilitate her relationship with her sister April, such as by helping her write letters to stay connected to her during a time when the sisters are living in separate foster homes (Mosionier 1983:69). Cheryl is cared for and supported by the MacAdams family during her brief time with that family. The family members display positive regard for her Métis identity and family ties. Benevolent white foster homes, in the case of the Dion and MacAdams households, represent the acts of kindness and support the Raintrees sisters experienced during their time as wards of the child welfare system (Mosionier 1983: 30). Their

representation breaks from the overarching colonizer and colonized theme of the novel by drawing attention to the complexity and contradictions of relationships within indigenous child removal and white-settler fostering.

Reading Mosionier's portrayals of white-settler benevolence demands considering how scenes of presumed good-will by the white foster family as colonizer are wrapped up in domination and constrained agency. White benevolence appears in the narrative as fraught and entangled within a colonial narrative thread. Elaborating on this tension in her memoir, Mosionier explains, "although the Dions, April's first foster family are well-intentioned, they are part of the assimilation process: let native children see what they can have with us and they will be happy to abandon what they had. It worked on me. It will work on April. But it will not work on Cheryl" (Mosionier 2009:145). While white benevolence appears in the novel in the form of support from white foster families, we learn from her memoir that, from Mosionier's perspective, benevolence does not erase white settlers' complicity in the coercive displacement of indigenous children. Moreover, Mosionier expands on this critique by locating her own experience as a former ward of the child welfare system. Upon reflection, Mosionier complicates the 'good foster home' and thinks through how the people who purported to care for her are also implicated in white settler colonialism.

Many years after *In Search of April Raintree* was written, Mosionier became involved in public presentations, activism and advocacy work. As she recounts in her memoir, Mosionier complicates her understanding of the 'good foster home' and thinks through how the people who purported to care for her are also positioned as white settlers within the colonizing project. Largely, her foster parents cared for her and were

supportive, but she also noticed a discrepancy in the expectations made of her and the other Métis foster children vis-à-vis her foster parents' biological children, and moments surfaced that spoke to their negative views of indigenous people. In her memoir she describes a scene in which her foster mother attempts to wash away the colour of her brown skin. While Mosionier recalls that this was not intended to hurt her, knowing that her foster mother viewed brown skin as “dirty” revealed the stereotype and caused her harm (Mosionier 2009:182). Mosionier comes to realize how intimately and subtly racializing violence pervades the life of an indigenous child in the child welfare system.

Chapter 4
RELATIONAL TIES IN INDIGENOUS STORYTELLING
AND AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

In this chapter, I create a relationship between creative representation and lived experience in indigenous storytelling: represented by Beatrice Missioner's novel *In Search of April Raintree* (1983) and her memoir *Come Walk with Me* (1999), and by my personal autoethnographic story. Inspired by indigenous theories of relationality (Simpson 2011; Justice 2008; Wilson 2008) and autoethnography (Chang 2008; Bouchner, Ellis 2002; Pratt 2007; Reed-Danahay 1996), I look to foster concepts and practices of relationality that are at play in the face of persisting legacies of colonial practices. I write myself into the research through 'autoethnographic expression' to construct a relationship between lived experience and theoretical meaning. Here, interlocking and entangled threads of subjectivity are inseparable from broader histories and stories of colonial subjugation and resistance (Pratt 2007:9). To explore my experience as a daughter of a Sixties Scoop survivor and to add my voice to the Sixties Scoop literature, I choose autoethnography as a method to illuminate and interpret my story. Utilizing autoethnography as an approach is complementary to indigenous storytelling and relationality and intervenes in colonial discourses constraining the agency and subjectivity of the colonized; it is a decolonizing process that bridges subjectivity with an indigenous imaginary. As articulated by Leanne Simpson (2011) indigenous storytelling is at its "core decolonizing, because it is a process of remembering, visioning and creating a just reality" (Simpson 2011:33). It is a form of

knowledge production that allows us to re-visit our past, and present and to re-envision what could be.

THEORIZING RELATIONALITY AND AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

As an overarching indigenous worldview, relationality acknowledges the multiplicity ways of being in the world. Relationality respects difference and the uniquenesses of the distinctive traditions, histories and protocols that make up various communities. Relationality embraces a traditional indigenous ontology and epistemology. Based in this understanding, I am not claiming a pan-indigenous way of knowing or of doing research, but rather attempting to focus on relational ways of engaging with the world that indigenous peoples, across their differences, often describe as being “at the heart of what it means to be indigenous” (Wilson 2008:80). To illuminate relationality as an indigenous methodology, Shawn Wilson (2008) suggests that “rather than viewing ourselves as being in relationships with other people or things, we are the relationships that we hold and are part of” (ibid). Contemporary indigenous theorists and methodologists ground subjectivity within an awareness of our shared relationships to the land, water and communities and in recognition of the importance of our relationships (Alfred 2009:39; Simpson 2011:18; Smith 1999: 148; Wilson 2008:80). Moreover, Leanne Simpson (2011) suggests, to apply these principles and live as indigenous people in a “good way” we can take up an embodied understanding that our relations are shaped by the past, grounded in the present and looking forward (Simpson 2011:51). Part of unlearning colonial influences is grasping how we are impacted individually by colonial

histories and working to release these toxins while reclaiming the fluidity of cultural being in relation to others.

I invoke relationality as a framework that bears a conceptual relationship to the understanding that Anishinabek people call Biskabiyyang, a “verb that means to look back” and that signifies “returning to ourselves” as part of “both an individual and collective process” (Simpson 2011:49). I draw upon these ways of knowing to offer a literary analysis of the kinship ties that appear within *In Search of April Raintree* -- ties that appear situated in the ‘past’ -- that can connect to my autoethnographical narrative in the ‘present.’ This self-reflective turning inward aligns my analysis of Mosionier’s creative writing with the principles of Biskabiyyang and relationality. “Finding the way back to our culture and lifeways” through a critical engagement with storytelling allows me to connect these different narrative threads together in way that respects indigenous relationality. Foregrounding this form of relationality as a way of life in our work necessitates that our stories are connected to other stories. As Leanne Simpson (2011) highlights, there is an importance in maintaining the quality of our relationships as one of balance (Simpson 2011:107). Therefore, I am suggesting that when we examine indigenous narratives about forced adoption, we need to connect them back to other indigenous resurgence struggles and community stories. Storytelling alongside and through autoethnography makes these connections and honours indigenous relationality by creating a bridge between indigenous creative texts and western research methods.

For instance, autoethnography is a self-reflective form of ethnography that investigates the self in relation to others to understand a wider culture. As primarily a form of relational writing, autoethnography privileges dialogue, affect and narrative ties

to history and social structure, which are revealed “through actions, feelings, thoughts and language (Ellis 2004:38). Autoethnography blends characteristics of autobiography and ethnography. In autobiography, the writer retroactively draws from key moments from their life, detailing pivotal experiences that had an impact on the person (Chang 2008:35). Ethnography is interested in studying cultural phenomena, events, and common values and beliefs for the purpose of understanding cultural systems and the persons and groups that emerge within them. Taken together, writing autoethnography encompasses both of these qualities: it observes and critically reflects upon personal experience in order to illuminate the broader cultural significance of that experience. In this way, by grounding knowledge “within the reality of lived indigenous experience” (Wilson 2008:60), autoethnography is complementary to indigenous ways of knowing as an approach that draws on “personal experiences to understand a particular cultural context” (Chang 2008:46). As Leanne Simpson (2011) highlights for us, “indigenous thought can only be learned through the personal; this is because our greatest influence is on ourselves, and because living in a good way is an incredible disruption of the colonial meta-narrative in and of itself” (Simpson 2011:41). We access our living knowledges through “the quality of our relationships, and the personalized contexts that we collectively create” (Simpson 2011:42).

Relationality as an indigenous way of being and interacting with the world is premised on the idea that “we are the relationships we hold” (Wilson 2008:80). Key within this relational indigenous worldview is the importance of kinship ties. Kinship is one of the most treasured characteristics of indigenous life, both experienced and imagined. Daniel Heath Justice (2008) suggests that kinship provides a critical lens for

reading indigenous literatures. Kinship represents the reciprocal bonds that develop within our relationships. From this perspective, our kinship ties are reflected in our reciprocal relationships with others, rather than being based on racial classifications made by the settler-colonial state. As highlighted by Justice, “kinship is adaptive; race, as a threatened constitutive community, always runs the risk of becoming washed out” (Justice 2008:17). Put differently, reading indigenous identity and community through a race lens participates in the assumption of the eventual erasure of indigenous existence. For example, fallaciously characterizing Métisness as ‘mixed-blood Indians’ erroneously overshadows Métis people’s unique historical and cultural experiences and connections to land (Lawrence 2004:83). Investments in racial identifications such as blood quantum play into the hands of the settler-colonial state that seeks to eliminate any claims to indigenous identity or community. For Justice, our continuity as indigenous peoples lies in “enduring as a people, through our obligations to kinship and balanced relationships” (2008:18).

In this chapter, the central focus of my analysis of *In Search of April Raintree* (1983) and of my interpretation of my autoethnography will be on relationality, kinship ties and, more specifically, their manifestation within relationships in practice. Kinship as an analytical category is more responsive than race to the complexities of indigenous identity and to indigenous people’s relations with others (Justice 2008:18). I argue that kinship allows displaced indigenous people who experienced or who were directly impacted by the Sixties Scoop a space to reclaim their culture. Many indigenous people have become disconnected from their families and have had direct ties with their indigenous territories severed because of the histories of forced adoption (Lawrence

2004:105). Therefore, when a return to a home community is no longer a possibility, I am suggesting that kinship ties with other displaced indigenous people in urban settings, and the alterative communities supports they can offer, present opportunities for re-building and re-creating indigenous relationality and resurgence as peoples who exist beyond state recognition.

KINSHIP BONDS: RELATIONALITY AS RESISTANCE WITHIN *IN SEARCH OF APRIL RAINTREE*

Broadly speaking, four main themes have emerged from the literary criticism of *In Search of April Raintree* (1983): identity, racism, violence and healing. In the first, literary critics examine the text in relation to critiques of the representation of Métis identity (Acoose 1999) as expressing a crisis of “identity” (Kardynal 1999), as well as the role of dis-identification in multiculturalism (Bar-Shalom 2002) and the ways that familial separation impacted indigenous fostered children’s cultural identities (McKenzie 2000). Scholars also characterize the text with respect to a second theme, racism, by examining how racial stereotypes affect identity formation (Lundgren 1995) and they interrogate hegemonic relations of domination (Hanson 2002). The theme of violence has been emphasized by scholars who argue for its importance to the novel when analyzing the representation, or censorship of sexual violence (Cumming 1999) and the existence of systemic racism and sexual violence against indigenous women (Smulders 2006). Finally, the theme of healing has been privileged by scholars who examine storytelling as healing (Episkenew 2009) or the motifs of indigenous women as healers in the novel (Gillis 1994). Portrayals of kinship in the text connect to each of these themes. However, I argue that kinship represents a distinctive theme of *In Search of April Raintree*: one that

Mosionier uses to model indigenous survival and resilience in the face of colonial displacement.

In the novel, when the situation within the DeRosier home escalates to a volatile confrontation between the Raintree sisters and the other household members, the Raintree sisters rebel against their mistreatment, but their act of defiance is quickly thwarted by their foster parent and met with retaliation. Mrs. DeRosier informs the Raintree sisters' social worker Mrs. Semple that April is engaging in promiscuous and inappropriate behaviour. When April tries to counter the untrue accusations, her social worker declares that the sisters are "not good for each other" and unilaterally places the Raintree sisters back into separate foster homes (Mosionier 1983:64). April recognizes the injustice of this act and refuses to allow this separation to break the relational bond she shares with her sister. April turns to Cheryl and tells her, "when we're old enough we'll be free. We'll live together. We're going to make it. Do you understand me? We are going to make it, we are not going to become what they expect of us" (Mosionier 1983:64). From this we learn that their kinship gives them a sense of purpose to draw as a source of strength to resist and endure their colonial condition of child welfare displacement and living in a foster home. From a close reading it gives us insight into how the sister's understood their location within the system and clearly indicates to the reader the foster home was never experienced as a safe place for them.

When the Raintree sisters no longer see their Métis parents Henry and Alice during state-supervised visits, the kinship bond between April and Cheryl becomes more central to their survival. Removed from their family and community, and living as wards in a settler-colonial institution, the Raintree sisters do not have access to images of

indigenous people outside the limits of colonial culture. They therefore turn to their relationship as a sounding board to test their understandings of their experiences in foster homes. Their efforts to validate and affirm positive ideals of themselves act as a form of resistance against internalizing the racism that threatens to disempower them as indigenous girls. For instance, they refuse to accept that they will inherit the “native girl syndrome” their social worker Mrs. Semple condescendingly claims April and Cheryl will live out as part of their pre-determined fate (Mosionier 1983:62). For the characters this means heading down a path of fighting, lies and eventual drugs and incarceration. The Raintree sisters decide that the adults who govern their lives are wrong and the sisters try to find humour in their situation. April’s character turns to her sister, “Cheryl? I said quietly. What? I’m sorry. You’re not the one who should be sorry. All of them are the ones who are doing wrong. They’re the ones who ought to be sorry, Cheryl said, vehemently. After a few minutes, she said, I guess I’m going that syndrome route, huh? Of course not. Why do you say that? Cheryl smiled. I just kind of accused everyone of being against us, didn’t I? We both laughed.” (Mosionier 1983:63) Continually relying on the strength of their kinship as Métis children helps them refute the racism they experience in the DeRosier foster home.

The relationship between April and Cheryl also allows both sisters to remain tied to their indigenous roots during their time in foster homes, when their kinship bond is their only surviving tie to their Métis identity. While in the custody of the child welfare system, Cheryl in particular, actively seeks out indigenous knowledge and community (Mosionier 1983:78). As Cheryl develops an increasing awareness of Métis peoples and the historical impacts of colonialism, she eagerly tries to convince April to share her

passion for their culture. However, it appears from the text April does not share this enthusiasm for Metis culture and is mostly invested in using her light skin tone to pass into whiteness. While April is attending St Bernadette's, a boarding school for adolescent girls, a part of her appears to be relieved when Cheryl decides to stay with the Steindalls instead of transferring to St. Bernadette's, because this allows April to continue passing as white (Mosionier 1983:84). Their continued separation also allows April to momentarily forget the painful loss of her parents. During this period, April embraces white values and wants to live with a white identity because it is easier for her than dealing with the scorn of racism. For April's character, "there were no hassles about belonging to a family all the time. There was no one who made fun of my parents. Of course, that was due to the lie I had told. I might not have known a family life as I had at the Dions, but I would not have known the cruelty of the Desrosiers either" (Mosionier 1983:85). As a reader we learn that as a 'white' boarder April does not have to deal with the settler-colonial racism that she experienced in the DesRosier foster home.

The narrative continues to portray the importance of the sisters' kinship bond as a medium for resolving conflicts over indigenous identity within a settler-colonial situation. Cheryl's desire for her sister to see herself as Métis and April's decision to live as white leads to several arguments in the text. Colonial beliefs about indigenous people that April internalized while in foster care impact her ability to embrace her culture to the same degree that Cheryl does. The sisters' incongruent acceptance of Métis or white settler cultural values appears as a consistent point of contention in the narrative.

However, Mosionier foregrounds kinship ties as the medium through which the Raintree

sisters work through most of their differences and mutually survive the child welfare system: Mosionier portrays kinship bonds as a stabilizing force within colonial situations.

For example, after taking a history class, Cheryl realizes the ways in which indigenous peoples are erased or mis-represented in the school textbook, and she voices her critique of this exclusion to April (Mosionier 1983:78). Sharing the history of Louis Riel in a letter to April, Cheryl writes, “I’ve enclosed my historical piece on Riel at the Red River Insurrection. History should be an unbiased representation of facts. And if they show only one side, they ought to show the other side equally. Anyways, that’s why I’m writing the Métis side of things” (ibid). In her memoir, Mosionier explains that in this scene, “I want to give the essay to April, the survivor but it belongs to Cheryl’s character, as she’s the one who values her indian heritage. It will also show that Cheryl is the thinker, trying to make April see the Indian point of view” (Mosionier 2009:140). Mosionier centers the sisters’ kinship bond and Cheryl’s commitment to educate April as mediums for sustaining indigenous identity. In this way she portrays kinship as a “mutually affecting relationship” that is interactive and adaptive, and that inspires responsibility to sustain its integrity (Justice 2008:6).

At the halfway point of the storyline, the characters shift from childhood to adulthood and April and Cheryl, having grown up in the child welfare system, follow separate pathways. From this point forward the Raintree sisters appear to keep in touch by writing letters. Cheryl gets involved with the Native Friendship Centre and develops close relationships with other indigenous peoples in the community (Mosionier 1983:123). She later tracks down their parents Alice and Henry and shares this information with her sister. Meanwhile, April’s embodiment of whiteness is sustained for

most of the novel as she appears comfortable living with a white identity in the settler-colonial society apart from other indigenous people. She appears not to be invested in the cultural continuity of indigenous people or in maintaining her kinship ties to her Métis parents, whom she feels abandoned her and Cheryl.

Although Cheryl and April exchange monthly letters, April receives fewer letters from Cheryl over time and the sisters increasingly grow apart. Cheryl is admitted to hospital for a concussion after an incident, while she was intoxicated. April flies into Winnipeg from Toronto and visits her sister in the hospital after a two-year separation. April learns in a letter that her sister's life has been difficult and that she has been struggling, which shocks April (Mosionier 1983:127). While Cheryl is in the hospital she decides to stay at her sister's apartment. April is picked up in the parking lot and raped by two men who mistaken her for Cheryl. Eventually, police find the suspect and April testifies against her assailants in court. During the trial it comes out Cheryl was working as a sex worker. April's character feels betrayed by her sister because she kept this secret from her. In the aftermath of the rape trial and because of Cheryl's severe drinking problem their relationship becomes tense. After the trial, April tries to re-establish a good relationship with her sister but Cheryl balks at April's attempts to reach out to her (Mosionier 1983:179). After an altercation over Cheryl's excessive drinking, April leaves the house and slams the door behind her. Conflict over Cheryl's behavior and the strain of their relationship continues as a narrative thread towards the end of novel.

As portrayed in the novel, April is outraged and hurt. The tension between the two sisters continues to escalate into an argument over Cheryl's drinking and destructive behaviour. Slurring her words, she spits "So, April Raintree, you think you got all the

answers, eh? But you can't tell me a goddamned thing, can you? Because in reality you know fuck all. I'm the one who knows what life is really about. Me. That's who. I got the answers. I found the answers all by myself. You lied to me and I lied to you. I did find out precious dear ol' Dad. He's a gutter creature, April. A gutter creature! All the tricks I turned, well, that helped him, you know? That kept him in booze. Not only that, I joined him, too. Ah, but that's not all. The best part is still to come. Mother do you know what happened to our poor, dear mother? She jumped off the Louise bridge, is what she did. Committed suicide. You know why she stopped seeing us? Because she couldn't bear the pain" (Mosionier 1983:180). This is painful for Cheryl and shortly after this emotionally charged conversation with her sister she leaves the house. April and her friend Roger go out looking for her sister and are tragically later informed by police that Cheryl jumped from the same bridge as their mother. This is a devastating realization for April and she deeply mourns her sister.

When Cheryl dies, April reads the written journals Cheryl leaves behind. From reading the journals, April continues to learn about Cheryl's journey in finding their dad living on the street. It becomes clear to April how sad, and distraught her parents were over losing the girls. As readers we learn they had stopped going to child welfare visits because they were ashamed and couldn't face their children (Mosionier 1983:201). From these journal entries written by her sister, she is reminded of how painful this was for Cheryl to discover. It appears this revelation, coupled with her drinking and past wounds of the child welfare system, overwhelmed Cheryl's ability to cope and led her to take her own life. In turn in her memoir, this scene is reflected in Mosionier's loss of her own two sisters Vivian and Kathy.

In her memoir, Mosionier reflects on the tragic suicides of her siblings Kathy and Vivian and her love for them. She thinks about her time in the child welfare system. She recounts, "I am Metis. Everything in my childhood, everything in my past has happened so I could come to this moment. I can wallow in self-pity or I can do the special thing that I was meant to do. So what is that special something? It has to be figuring out the whys. Why did my sisters kill themselves? Why were my parents alcoholics? Why did we grow up in white foster homes? Why is there racism? Why? As I think about these questions, anger builds in me: first Vivian, now Kathy. I will have to figure out the answers and write them down. That's what I have to do: I have to write a book" (Mosionier 2009: 135). It appears Mosionier own kinship ties to her sisters and Metis parents actually inspired her to write *In Search of April Raintree*, for several reasons: out of love for her siblings, her own search for healing, and to garner understanding into their shared experiences in the children welfare system (Mosionier 2009:134). It becomes clear, ultimately, that this is a story that speaks to enduring kinship ties, culture and endurance. April survives the loss of her sister. She survives the loss of her family. She survives violence. She lives. And not only does she survive, but she finds herself again as a Métis woman with a re-discovered hope for cultural continuity for herself, her sisters' son and her people.

Back to the narrative, April wakes up one day, and sees the sun shining through the window. The birds begin to sing. She notices there is a letter in the mailbox. It's a letter written by Cheryl. From the letter she realizes that Cheryl had a child. April decides to raise her child as her own. In this decision, there appears to be a rebirth of the broken ties between April and Cheryl upon her death, a symbolic gesture in the renewal of their

bond, love and devotion for each other. April smiles to herself, and is comforted that her sister lives on in Henry (Mosionier 1983:205). Henry Liberty Raintree is a symbol of the endurance of Métis kinship ties and the future of cultural resurgence and continuity.

Henry Liberty Raintree, named after their indigenous dad, is part of the promise of hope for April. Echoing this in her memoir Mosionier writes, “In the novel, I write words that promise hope--and the child, Henry Liberty Raintree is part of that hope for April”.

(Mosionier 1983:148). The novel’s portrayal of April’s connection to indigenous spirituality allows April to “dream her sisters dream” for her, and reclaim who she is as a strong Métis woman by creating a beautiful life for Henry and herself (Mosionier 1983:206). In the hope of looking towards a better future, April finds peace and a renewed sense of life. In surviving as a Métis woman April alongside, her kinship ties, this is a source of her strength reflecting the power in indigenous culture.

Indigenous collective survival lives within the promise our kinship ties to one another as represented by Mosionier in the novel. Henry Liberty Raintree’s young life forms a relational bridge from the prior trauma of child welfare displacement and symbolizes renewed hope for collective indigenous futures. From a close reading of the novel we learn the significance of the representation of kinship ties, specifically the relationship between the Raintree sisters Cheryl and April. Throughout their ordeal as wards of the child welfare system, the Raintree sisters attentively work to maintain their kinship bond under the circumstances of their displacement and the removal from their family. This active process is exemplified by the letters April and Cheryl both write to each other when living in separate foster homes, and by the oath the sisters plead in response to their will to survive the system. Later on in the novel, Cheryl lives with April

in the DeRosier foster home. These representations are shown to provide the Raintree sisters a platform to endure the child welfare system and are evidenced throughout the dialogue in the novel and from insights from Mosionier's memoir. These representations importantly unsettle racial classifications predicated on race by emphasizing the role of kinship in maintaining connections to indigenous cultural identity. This is pointing to how living relationships through kinship ties during colonial displacement, loss of land and the severance of familial proximity can provide an entry point for re-establishing those connections in the future. It shows us the strength of indigenous and Métis people and the promise of cultural continuity.

While previous critical analyses of the fictionalized novel by literary scholars were fruitful, my analysis shifts the scholarly attention given to cultural identity and, to a lesser extent, to survival and healing by emphasizing the importance of relational kinship ties, specifically in the relationship between April and Cheryl. Indigenous cultural identity is important to the story as it underwrites the novel's themes of racism and child welfare displacement and it serves as a platform for April's healing. The strength and will of the Raintree sisters to endure their displacement is represented frequently in the novel by their relational bond. Mosionier often represents identity for the sisters as a contentious issue, complicated by their fraught relationship, their differing worldviews and the divergence of their narrative threads (Mosionier 2009:138). April struggles with accepting herself as Métis and often embraces a white identity while pursuing goals of status, money and whiteness. Dissimilarly, Cheryl strongly identifies with a Métis identity and commits to her culture and kinship ties. However, when Cheryl tragically commits suicide at the end of the novel, April revisits her understandings of indigenous

cultural identity and decides to raise her sister's child in their Métis culture. Regardless of these tensions and heartbreaks in the narrative, their loving bond and mutual goodwill is often represented as an anchoring force throughout most of the novel.

A DAUGHTER OF A SIXTIES SCOOP SURVIVOR: AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC STORYTELLING

The Sixties Scoop impacted parents who were taken from their communities as children and this legacy can be seen in the imprint on the next generation. I came to this project as a result of my own familial history with the Sixties Scoop. I sought answers to questions that were similar to the ones Mosionier posed her in memoir (Mosionier 2009:135). Fundamentally, I wanted to understand: Why did this happen? How did this happen? From the archival research and through Mosionier's indigenous storytelling, I have come to understand the social and cultural power relations that shaped the history of the Sixties Scoop history and impacted my own family. Thinking through this history and the relationality present in my life, in this final section I follow the autoethnographic method (Bouchner, Ellis 2002; Ellis 2004; Chang 2008; Reed-Danahay 1996; Spry 2011) and explore memory, experience and culture from first-person reflections on interconnected stories. Situating my story within the broader Sixties Scoop history, and as the daughter of a Sixties Scoop survivor, I revisit the "past" through "remembered experiences" to explore how lived experience informs the present (Denzin 2014:32). I bring voice to my experiences, interpretations, and perceptions within the dynamic urban indigenous kinship and intergenerational histories of indigenous child welfare displacement.

As a conceptual bridge to situating myself within the broader Sixties Scoop narrative, I draw on the traditional Anishinaabeg concept of “Biskaiiyang.” In *Dancing On Our Turtle’s Back* (2011) Leanne Simpson describes Biskaiiyang as a relational concept “in the same way Indigenous scholars have been using the term decolonizing to pick up the things we were forced to leave behind, whether they are songs, dances, values or philosophies, and bring them into existence in the future” (Simpson 2011:49). Understood in relation to other histories, relationships and selves, Biskaiiyang seeks to transgress dominant power relations -- those that constraint and limit possibilities for marginalized groups -- through a focus on relationality. In positing a connection between myself, the Sixties Scoop and intertwined indigenous histories, I participate in a practice of indigenous relationality in my research by considering the experiences of a child or grandchild of a Sixties Scoop survivor whose relatives’ experiences affect the person’s own life (Bombay, et.al 2009). I begin by outlining my historical family connections to the Sixties Scoop, and then in my story I consider how the daughter of a Sixties Scoop survivor negotiated the historical legacies of child welfare displacement and dislocations of home. In particular, I think through the ways in which relationality informed my experiences and helped me find a place in a territory outside my family’s own. I chose to present my autoethnographic story in a creative style of storytelling to shape a narrative that reflects the kinship ties in my lived experience. I am not claiming to represent a comprehensive life history, nor I am trying to erase the colonial violence that the Sixties Scoop enacted on indigenous families and their descendants by privileging only the relational moments from my life. My childhood and adolescence often resonated with this destructive colonial history. However, my objective in this chapter is to think through

the ways in which relationality can be restored through kinship bonds and community. As such, this story does the work of highlighting relational moments from my life.

By telling my mother's story and explaining how it connects to my own, I engage in a process of "memory work" to access an archive of memories. The purpose of memory work is not to recall perfect, mirrored reflections of the past but rather to engage in "recollecting the past the way you remember it" (Chang, Ngunjiri, and Hernandez 2013:75). Drawing from stories shared by my mother, I make connections between her story and my own based on a mixture of her memories with my own. Often these were fragmented moments or oral stories about my her childhood and family history that my mom shared with me over the years and that I have pieced together here in narrative form.

My mom was born and raised on the Ermineskin Cree territory as Valerie Doreen Ermineskin. When she was seven years old, she and her six siblings were separated and apprehended by the state. My mother was subsequently removed from the Ermineskin Cree community and the only home she had ever known. When she remembers that day, she recalls there was an open jar of strawberry jam on the kitchen counter. It was a morning. Her mom said, she was stepping outside to get the mail, but when the sun started to set and light faded from the window, together with her siblings she began to wonder, what had happened to her? Social workers appeared soon after. From what she remembers, my mom was shuffled to different foster homes and eventually was adopted by my now-deceased adoptive grandparents and given a new last name, Stirrett, and a new identity. It appears she was one of the lucky ones during the Sixties Scoop; she was adopted out close to her home territory. However, given the lack of connection with her

community and the lack of efforts made by her adoptive family to facilitate one, it might as well have been across the country. The Stirrett family owned a modest horse ranch outside of Edmonton, Alberta. Trophies and ribbons littered my mother's room from the horse barrel racing competitions she won. My adoptive grandfather embodied many of the stereotypes of a cowboy and often even dressed the part complete with a cowboy hat and boots. The irony of cowboys adopting Indians is not lost on my mother she often has conveyed this to me. For quite some time, my mom continued to live with this new family and their daughter for several years, but there was always something amiss. Something that was never quite right for her. She grew to love her new sister, but found her relationship with the Stirrett parents strained and cold. She has often relayed this was a strict household with rigid rules and her adoptive parents often placed severe restrictions on her mobility and choices. From what I understand her kinship with her indigenous mother and siblings was never mentioned in the Stirrett home. It was almost as though the Stirrett adoptive family wanted to erase any memory of their existence. She remembers that shortly after she came to live with the Stirrett family, a woman came to the door with two of her siblings. My mom painfully remembers the experience of watching her adoptive mother shoo them away, and still recalls seeing them leave through a tear-stained window. She does not have many memories of them but mostly I think this is because the separation was so painful she has often spent most of her life trying to put this past behind her and move forward.

During her adolescent years, the arrangement with her white adoptive family began to break down and she and my adoptive grandparents were often at odds with each other. The disconnection she experienced in the home eventually forced her out when she

sixteen. She was on her own. When her adoptive sister died in a car accident when my mom was eighteen; that left little reason for my mom to stay in Alberta. My mom eventually met my dad while he was working at a local work camp in Edmonton. My white Irish dad was from a small rural area outside of Cornwall, Ontario. He grew up in a farming family with sixteen siblings who shared many of the farm chores. My parents decided to live in Edmonton for a year and I was born shortly thereafter.

My parents lived in Edmonton together for a short time before moving to a small border town in Ontario when I was a toddler. As such, I grew up dislocated from our home indigenous territory and moved into the traditional Akwesasne Mohawk territory. The town where I grew up is in a culturally dynamic area, in some ways fraught with its own haunting colonial legacy and racial tensions between non-native and Mohawk people and histories of relationality. The Mohawk have a historical relationship with the local region that extends over millennia (Johansen and Mann 2000:12). As an area Cornwall is a port-of-entry town through the Three Nations Crossing that connects Kawehno:ke to the city of Cornwall and Rooseveltown, New York. The early colonial settler community of Cornwall in the late 1700's was distrustful of the state and was collectively oriented because of the harsh wilderness and environmental conditions. According to Parham's archival research "the border location of Cornwall and Massena forced residents to become self-sufficient, made them vulnerable to foreign invasion and encouraged them to develop different social and political institutions from those in the heartland regions" (Parham 2012:7). Cornwall also was isolated from the rest of the settlements of Upper Canada, due to its location. This condition created "a unique community based on environmental factors" (Parham 2012:8). It also assisted in fostering

a community that blended the white settler community with Mohawk indigenous culture, and some of those qualities are still retained in the area.

As a person who was coded and read in this area as a mixed indigenous youth, my experience as a youth and later as an adult with my own family often proved to be challenging, particularly in context of my and my family's legacy of colonial displacement. My positionality as a native kid from a Sixties Scoop survivor in a predominately non-native environment required constantly constructing, negotiating and maintaining a sense of self in the face of encounters with racism and questions about my identity and kinship mainly by white people. I was read as native but identifiably not as Mohawk, and this often raised questions by people. Most times, the question was innocent and generated out of curiosity, and I was subsequently asked, "Where are you from?" Initially, I was confused until I understood what the question required from me as a response. This form of situating indigenous identity and belonging was generally customary to Mohawk people in the area. Audra Simpson explains the practice in her ethnography *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life on the Border of Settler States* (2014) as a means of placing people within the "social, historical, or cartographic universe of the community" (Simpson 2014:38). In addition, it was a custom often picked up by non-native people in the area but the intent was different when asked by white people. In this case, the question was often framed with racial lens as opposed to Mohawk people, thinking through relationality. The complexity of my familial and cultural background made this form of questioning an often-awkward situation.

Growing up, my mother often wore the effects of child welfare displacement and often carried her pain in ways that I could perceive. As a child, I would often observe her

in quiet moments of melancholy. She had a restlessness about her that always seemed searching. I'm not sure if she was aware of it but, as her child, I felt the presence of a history that predated my birth, forming an invisible, looming presence that filled the room but yet, remained empty. However, in spite of the struggles, poverty we often faced as a family and the specter of a haunting legacy, we were bonded and I was loved.

When reflecting on my family history alongside the stories shared by Mosionier's storytelling and my mom's story, I have considered what distinguished my experience from that of those who experienced child welfare displacement and white adoption. When I think about it, kinship ties and love appear to characterize my experience. I also, did not experience the trauma of separation from important loved ones as a child. Additionally, the kinship bond with my family allowed me to access who I was as an indigenous person and provided me with a sense of belonging. While at home, I grew up with love. I knew deep and abiding unconditional love: non-judgmental, free, and non-possessive love. As kids, my brothers and I often ran the neighbourhood freely. We were a working class family and often struggled economically. There were many material things we did not have. But I knew love, acceptance and belonging. This lived experience stood in stark contrast to my mom's experience living with a white, middle class adoptive family during the Sixties Scoop. My parents favoured a hands-off, trial and error approach in their parenting. Our home was a place with few rules and limitations placed on our behavior and appeared to be shaped by my mothers' previous experiences prior to adoption with her indigenous family, and her disdain for the parental practices of her white, adoptive parents. When recalling her time with the Stirrett family, she often spoke of her dislike of their parenting approaches that contributed to her leaving their home at a

young age. This seemed to shape how she approached parenting with her own children and encouraged my dad to adapt a similar parenting style.

My experience of the importance of practices of relationality in my family also resonated with the social context in which we lived. As an indigenous youth and later young adult living in an urban, marginalized community, I had a fair degree of interaction with working class white families and with native kids living in the urban or in the Akwesasne community. I encountered relationality as an approach to life often reflected in the appreciation of diversity and difference within the Mohawk community.

Relationality appears in the ways that Mohawk people demonstrated their critical agency and asserted their connection to the land and water in the midst of imposed colonial conditions. I also often grew up experiencing native and non-native communities attending the same social events, schools, and activities. Mohawk kids often were bussed into Cornwall from Akwesasne to attend elementary schools and high schools. A large portion of the Akwesasne territory is on Cornwall Island, a small island situated between the U.S. and Canadian state. As a result, waterways are an important part of existence for Mohawk people at Akwesasne. People often use boats to cross over to Cornwall; this way they circumvent hassles at the Canadian state border. Some natives use Skidoos to cross during the winter season, but with noticeably increased warming in recent years this mode of transportation has become dangerous because of thinning ice. In these and more ways, people often transgressed the colonial borders imposed by the state and fostered many forms of relationship and kinship. Many of my non-native friends have children with indigenous people and they also encourage their children to sustain kinship bonds with extended family members. In turn, many native people invite non-native people into

their homes and communities as friends and partners. These practices are common and many of the relationships that develop are long-standing and ongoing.

My relationship with both the urban and reserve communities provided opportunities for me to identify with my indigenous roots. Interacting with other urban native kids living in Cornwall and with those living in Akwesasne gave me a sense of shared values and appreciation of community. I often spent time learning and growing with my peers and sharing experiences, such as by spending time with native and non-natives friends on the Island and going to school together. The Mohawk community had as much influence on shaping my experiences as the non-native community in Cornwall, and in many ways left more of an impression on me. In grade eight, I was asked to attend a mini-enrichment program at Ottawa University. Our teacher also invited my native friend who lived on the Island. My parents couldn't afford to pay the fee, so my Mohawk friend's dad paid for my spot. On the surface, this seems like a minor gesture, but upon reflection I realize that there was a deeper cultural significance in this gesture. Mohawk people of Akwesasne share a collectively oriented culture and extend generosity in ways that differ from the practices of most white families in Cornwall. Mohawk people tend to share material wealth more freely among their relations. Moreover, it is unlikely that the parents of one of my white friends would have offered to pay my fee to attend the mini-enrichment program. I attribute the differences to underlying cultural understandings of shared responsibility and community. White families living in Cornwall are often more heavily influenced by Western values of individualism and the nuclear family, whereas Mohawk families appear to embrace a broader sense of kinship and belonging within their community. From many of my native peers and from the community I learned and

internalized these and other, similar indigenous ways of being in the world and in relation to others. Looking back now, I realize how much Mohawk community values instilled in me a similar appreciation for the importance of community.

The freedom granted to me by my parents meant I spent much time in public space alongside the other kids of the working class neighborhoods where we lived. The spaces we negotiated were not always safe, because of the availability of drugs, booze and cheap cigarettes and bootlegging and smuggling throughout the area. In this context, relationships with non-native kids and with other native kids were important for my and our safety. There was an old powerhouse down by the St. Lawrence River where my friends and I would go and hang out during the summers. Not only was this space structurally unsafe, with wide-open potholes of swirling water fifteen feet deep, but its location was unsafe as well. There was a lot of smuggling across the water from the border and adult strangers would hang around the area at night, so my friends and I often looked out for each other. We always stayed in groups of two or more. These relationships often kept me safe, and I still have close friendships with many of the people I knew.

In these times when indigenous ways of being and indigenous sovereignty remain under threat from the Canadian state, building connections and alliances among indigenous nations, indigenous people living in other indigenous territories, urban indigenous people and non-natives is increasingly important to indigenous collective survival, both on the ground and in broader political arenas. During the recent 2015 Canadian federal election, indigenous people from a variety of nations and political persuasions pulled together to ensure that the Conservative government was not re-

elected for another term. People who were not generally political mobilized others to vote. For some, it was the first time they had ever voted. This speaks to the political capacities of indigenous communities as well as to possibilities for other forms of collective organizing in the future. Resurgence as indigenous people is embedded in fostering relationships with the land, and with other nations, communities and people based in mutual interests so that our communities not only survive but flourish.

Indigenous kinship is an expression of agency that intervenes in colonial erasure and violence and is a practice of indigenous resurgence. By expanding what indigenous kinship means across indigenous people's differences in location, histories and belonging, and by bringing non-natives into the relationality of indigenous kinship, we can continue to alter colonial limits on indigenous ways of being.

THE SIXTIES SCOOP: COMING FULL CIRCLE

My kinship bond with my mother inspired me to do this research and to write my thesis on the intergenerational narrative of the Sixties Scoop. I aspired to shed light on the harm the child welfare system is inflicting on indigenous communities and to raise awareness of its long-reaching impacts. Given that many displaced families do not live in their communities of origin, I wanted my story to draw attention to other pathways for connecting to indigenous culture and for building community in urban areas. The goals of the settler-colonial state to eliminate indigenous people as peoples through the Sixties Scoop were unsuccessful. We are still here.

Writing about relationality in the midst of colonial practices and histories is an act of social transgression, in that it delegitimizes the colonial narrative that 'natural'

boundaries of difference separate us. My autoethnographic reflections on my time growing up in Cornwall indicate that, entangled within that complex space, and haunted as it is by histories of contested boundaries, practices of relationality were formed among local and displaced indigenous peoples and non-native people. Within the spirit of relationality and my kinship ties with those around me, I found a home.

Storytelling through autoethnography allowed me to make connections to scholarly and creative narratives of the Sixties Scoop and to illuminate the practices of relationality acted upon in the face of persisting legacies of colonial practices. Many indigenous people have been disconnected from their families, extended relatives and direct ties with their indigenous territories because of histories of forced adoptions (Lawrence 2004: 105). Returning to their communities of origin after a lengthy displacement is not always possible due to a number of complex reasons: language barriers, fears of rejection, and barriers to mobility may hamper indigenous people from re-connecting with their original communities or land bases. In some cases, a return to a rural community may not be desired. In interviews with residential school survivors Bonita Lawrence (2004) found that “almost none of the family members who attended residential schools returned to their communities afterward” (Lawrence 2004:107). Based on my studies, I can understand how alienation could become a major theme within the stories told by and about Sixties Scoop survivors and their kinship ties. Reflecting on these histories, I want to consider options apart from alienation that may be taken up by residential school and child welfare survivors and by their descendants. I argued that kinship ties to other displaced indigenous people and support from communities of

diverse indigenous people and non-natives can offer opportunities for re-building and re-creating relationality.

Foregrounding an indigenous way of life in our work necessitates that our own stories connect to other stories. By highlighting the creative works of Beatrice Mosionier -- *In Search of April Raintree* (1983) and *Come Walk With Me* (1999) -- and my autoethnographic story, this thesis illustrates the importance of indigenous practices of storytelling and relationality in recalling and renewing indigenous histories and lifeways. Indigenous storytelling was foundational to my process of knowledge production. By weaving indigenous representations of colonial discourse and power relations, on the one hand, and the significance of relationality to indigenous culture and indigenous / non-indigenous ties, on the other, I interpreted indigenous narratives about coercive adoption as evidence that indigenous peoples are not powerless but constantly negotiate and resist coloniality. Indigenous storytelling lends important perspective to understanding colonial institutions, processes and experiences. We learn that the settler-colonial child welfare system is not a benevolent solution to indigenous people's struggles that betters their lives, and that indigenous people challenge this view. I supported my interpretation of indigenous storytelling by illuminating the multiple and overlapping historical processes that produce coercive indigenous adoption and the over-representation of indigenous children in the child welfare system. I argued that the child welfare system in Canada is predicated on a white supremacist settler-colonial project that is invested in eliminating indigenous peoples to gain access to land and resources. Yet amid ever-present and entangled colonial histories, we can witness the narrative threads of indigenous peoples surviving dislocations and separations and practicing cultural continuity. Storytelling

gives us tools to re-create our communities and futures as indigenous people, allowing us to envision new ways to relate to each other and to imagine new collective beginnings.

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