Chapter One

INTRODUCTION:
GENESIS AND GROWTH OF
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The Native people of Canada occupy a significant place in the Canadian literary imagination and the literature of the Native people has a distinct flourishing presence in the mosaic of human possibility that is called Canada. These past few years have seen the publication of so many books in different literary genres—novels, plays, stories, autobiographies, non-fiction accounts, personal narratives and life histories to justify the rich and variegated literary and cultural tradition of the Native people. Interest in Native literature has found its way into high school and university Canadian literature courses and some Native Studies Departments have Canadian Native literature courses in their programs.

One of the most exciting and vibrant developments of recent years is the flourishing of Native Canadian fiction. In my dissertation, I intend to focus primarily on the Native Canadian fiction and the changing responses to it evidenced in the writings of Native Canadian authors. I believe that emergence of Native Canadian literature in recent years introduces a new theme and story into Canadian literature: the search for the Aboriginal soul lost or disrupted with the arrival of the Europeans on their land.

Until very recently, the cultural history of the Native people was written exclusively from a Eurocentric perspective, from the point of view of those who triumphed in the contest between "civilization" and "savagism" as Roy Harvey Pearce would say. From the past we have such stereotyped images of Cotton Mother's "forlorn and wretched Heather", John Richardson's "blood thirsty savages", Rousseau's "noble savages", and James Fenimore Cooper's "gentle children of the forest".

Out of such stereotypes there had developed a loyalist version of Native literature and culture, and the preponderant influence of this version depended on the construction
of margins. We can understand such construction in the light of what Michel Foucault has said about our recognition of the "system of power" which controls the "Truth" of a culture in the past, present, and future ("Truth and power" 114) or in the context of what Edward Said has noted as "Standard commodities" in his famous book Orientalism (190) to describe and represent the other.

The events of the past few years have marked a shift and the voices on the margins have become more expressive and eloquent. In fact, the Natives in recent years have captured the imagination of the North Americans by radically revising and enlarging versions of the older narrative accounts. No longer do the Natives "move according to the European schedules of arrangement, as faithful friends or savage foes, or as marginal figures the mighty could afford to ignore" (New, 1990, 4).

In these past few years, Native studies have, in fact, intensified and acquired the status and prominence of an institutionalized academic discipline. It is no longer in a marginalized position that earlier worked as position and place of resistance, a reality and a condition essential for all oppressed, exploited, and colonized people. In the opinion of Edward said, the famous US/Palestinian cultural critic, "marginality with its self exclusion from the mainstream was the condition of using a language tries to speak the truth to power" (Said, 1994, XVI).

To speak and write from the margins was to challenge the authority of the white male, heterosexual middle-class, who for so long dominated and wrote the script for the minorities from hegemonic perspective.

The great Canadian historian W.L. Morton used to say that "the individual Indians of Canada had the lives of fireflies: you could see their way across the darkness of time" (cited in Gough, 1991, 176). The events of the past few years have changed all that and the aboriginal presence is now enduring.

The natives are beginning to question the discovery and conquest of America as the greatest feat of Christian west. Questions are also being asked very much by writers like Mario Vargas Llosa as regards the failure of the Post-colonial republics - republics
having a deeper and broader notions of liberty, equality and fraternity in preserving the lives and cultures of their Indian citizens. The voices from the frontier have become eloquent and the shift, evidenced in many Canadian and American journals and periodicals, is reflective of the enduring narrative of the Native Canadian Indians.

Earlier, the field of Native Canadian literature commanded little attention in academic institutions and in popular writings. What university courses existed was normally taught by non-native academics and often from a very Euro-centric and traditional literary perspective. Now there are number of native Indian writers addressing their talents to the native themes, both of an historical and contemporary nature, and in some cases these same writers are beginning to appear as instructors in University Courses. Indeed the natives in recent years have captured the imagination of the North Americans by enlarging and radically revising versions of the older narrative account of their character and experience.

Indeed, lack of contact between the whites and the native helped to foster stereotypical impressions about the Natives. By natives we meant feathered warriors on pinto ponies, laconic chiefs in full regalia, dusky raven-haired maidens, demonic shamans with eagle-claw rattles and scalping knives. But these are picturesque and exciting images, and as the novelist Thomas King said sometime ago, the products of a white imagination. But they have managed to endure, clinging tenaciously to their primordial identities, resolutely refusing to surrender what was most precious to them, their ethnic roots. The native way of life, so ancient and ingrained, so inherently potent, has been transmitted across the generations in the very life substance of the Indian, the blood that runs through their veins, almost impossible to weaken or repress, much less to extinguish. The vitalizing commonalities, the shared bonds of harmonious being which place a great value on equality, tolerance, mutual affection and respect, and their intimate relations with one another, close to the harmony and rhythm of the earth and its creatures, have endured the onslaught of the whites. Perhaps the Columbus quincentennial has lent a new urgency to the attention and research and change of perspectives about the land the Italian
encountered. It has also suggested an expanded change from a celebration of Columbus and the triumph of European Civilization to a new theme - the people that discovered Columbus.

But we find almost no serious reflection of the natives in Canadian literature until well after the Second World War, and not until the 1960's did emerge a strong interest in the natives as a subject of Canadian literature. Howard Adams, the Metis scholar, writer and activist in his interview given to Hartmut Lutz on October 10, 1920, had this to say about the position of the Natives in the 1960's:

"No, there was no literature! Native People were not at all at that level of concern. We were still in the ghettos, and we were still concerned with issue of bread and butter on the table. You cannot talk about culture or literature when you are hungry. So there was no way! I had tried it, and I would only get insulted from my own people. So there was no way that we would talk about literature at all. We were just not there" (Adams, "Interview" 137).

It was in 1960 that the Canadian Bill of Rights was passed and yet the Indian women suffered by losing their native status on marrying non-native men upon marriage extended their Indian status to the entire family, including non-native wives. The 1960's saw the brutal policy of assimilation that drove so many Native children from their communities to the residential schools, only to be alienated physically, linguistically and spiritually from their homes and families. Canadian Native writers would return to this subject of "ethnocide" many years after through their novels. In the mean while fears persisted among the Native as regard the termination of Indian Status upon enfranchisement after the Indian Act of 1951, by which "any Indian obtaining an University degree would be automatically enfranchised " (DIAND 61). So many Native people came under the spell of the Civil Rights movement and many used the Civil Rights tactics in Canada to advance the cause of the Natives, as they believed that the Native reservations and ghettos are like internal colonies urgently in need of decolonization drives and measures. It was during this tumultuous period of 1960s,
George Ryga, a non-Native author addressed the Native situation in an empathetic way through his play *The Ecstasy of Rita Joe*, first staged in Vancouver in 1967. The play charted through the story of Rita Joe, an aboriginal girl's migration to the city of Vancouver, her subsequent assault, prostitution and shoplifting, her rape and murder – events common to the aboriginal peoples in New Zealand, Australia and Canada. In the play Ryga projects two paths for the Native to escape the vicious circle of their lives: One followed by Jamie Paul's violent, radical and militant approach summed up in his cry "We're gonna have to fight to win" (111) and the other followed by Rita's father David, and expressed through the image of a baby dragonfly waiting patiently to mature and be strong enough to break out of the shell to freedom and independence.

Another non-native writer Rudy Wiebe in his novel *The Temptations of Big Bear* went back to the career of the Cree leader Big Bear and centered his novel around some actual events like the Frog Lake Massacre, the capture of Fort Pitt, the British Military Campaign against Big Bear's band of Crees, the trial of Big Bear and his imprisonment and in the process described the way the territory of the aboriginals came under British rule. In trying to imaginatively reconstruct the circumstances of the actual contact between the aboriginals and the white settlers, Wiebe was also bringing to the fore the thoughts and motives of the historical characters, the problems of the aboriginals fighting against encroachment and assimilation and the struggle for domination. Later in the decades, non-Native white writers like Robert Kroetsch have tried to touch upon the subject of the Natives with empathy and understanding. But, as Penny Petrone wrote: "The decades between the **first World War** and **the 1969 government white paper** on an Indian policy was a barren period for Native writing in Canada" (95).

While writing the literary history of North America, historians were blind and indifferent to the thousands of years of pre-Colombian human life when the Native peoples created and developed diverse civilizations, cultures and varied range of literatures in many languages. Their propensity to equate civilization and culture with Europe and its modes of expression and lifestyles even prompted them to see the
beginnings of North American literature in the colonial period. A book like the academically acclaimed *Literary History of the United States*, edited by Robert E. Spiller and others opens with its actual text with the words:

"The literary history of this nation began when the first settler from abroad of sensitive mind paused in his adventure long enough to feel that he was under a different sky, breathing new air and that a New world was all before him with only his strength and providence for guides — It has provided, ever since those first days an element in our Native literature, whose other theme has come from a nostalgia for the rich culture of Europe, so much of which was perforce left behind" (Spiller, 1963, xvii).

This dominant line of thinking is yet evident in another book, *Democratic Humanism and American Literature* by Harold Kaplan (Univ. of Chicago Press, 1972):

"The strongest root of narrative for the American imagination can most likely be traced to the story of Columbus and the discovery of the New World (1). Again he writes: "It was easy to forget Indians, they were a sparse population, and for the first immigrants they presented nothing that resembled a civilization" (9).

The ethnocentric blindness of these historians did not allow any room for the presence of the vast literature and culture of the Indians who inhabited the land before Columbus set his foot on the North American continent. In fact, the great majority of Europeans who crossed the Atlantic in the early stages of the colonization of the Americans, were stricken by "New World cultural blindness and consequently failed to "discover" the significance, spiritual and esthetic values, and the beauty of the unique and antique literatures of the original Americans" (Chapman 1). Now the voices in the margin have become very expressive and eloquent, and as Arnold Krupat says, "now it is no longer possible to pretend the Other is simply silent or absent because the formerly conquered write-as they fight-back" (3-4).
We have seen how the native Canadian writings have grappled with the problem of the intersection of colonialism and modernity with the life worlds of the Natives. The early narratives in a way explicate strategies and power, which decentre and marginalize the Coyote, Raven and their kind in their own land. Contrary to the claims of the white settlers, the writers appreciated and explained that it was only a resettlement and space was not empty, awaiting discovery; rather sophisticated cultures thrived in the region and the settlers "appropriated" the land and displaced the Native peoples. The Native authors restated this truth through the fiction in a bid to explain the rich variegated world of the natives with their heritage of song, chant, and life-stories.

The Native writings also specify the imposition of a new form of order and a new way of understanding space through a British conception of private property through surveys, grids and maps to parcel, appropriate and manage land. In their attempts to establish a new regime of control based on private ownership of property, the law and the government, the British established a powerful disciplinary regime with the reservation as its integral component to limit and control the mobility of the Natives and also control access to their resources available in Nature around them. The use of space as a strategy of disciplinary power is the chilling reminder of a Foucauldian "carceral" society which divides and bounds, confines and excludes, and Native authors like Beatrice Culleton, Jeannette Armstrong, Lee Maracle and Joan Crate have focused upon this dimension of a reservation system which had uprooted so many natives from their roots and heritage.

That the native land was home to a sophisticated thriving cultural landscape when the Eurasians arrived is amply reflected in the writings of the natives. The richness of the native stories, explorers' journals, Hudson Bay Company accounts, the census of 1830 and the accounts of the smallpox epidemic of 1782-83 which put the population of the British Columbia region well over 200,000 people and after which the Native people declined by 90 to 95 percent, testify to the enduring presence of the First Nations peoples who once were like "fireflies" flickered their way through the darkness of time.
In what follows, I intend to deal with the origin and development of Native literature prefaced by a brief history of the Native peoples of Canada.

II

It is generally believed that Canadian Native peoples are the first inhabitants of the “Turtle’s Island” later named as Canada. They are also called as the First Nations peoples due to their arrival on the land before others. They are “believed to have arrived from Asia thousands of years ago by way of a land bridge between Siberia and Alaska” (Study in Canada 15) A diverse range of Aboriginal peoples before the arrival of the European explorers and traders from France, Britain, Germany, and other European countries populated Canada. The white traders became settlers and administrators of the country once they expanded their settlement permanently. The Aboriginal peoples were mostly hunters and fishermen with a nomadic lifestyle, which largely depended on the weather and climatic conditions of the land.

There is no written history of these peoples because they are from a rich oral tradition and their life-stories are available only in the form of songs, chants, and tales. Some European anthropologists and sociologists have produced certain documents on the First Nations peoples, their religious beliefs, social customs and cultural values. A small number of philologists-cum-tourists have attempted to translate their stories into the modern European languages and transcribed their native scripts. The real history of Canada is thought to begin with the arrival of European white settlers under the French and then the British rule. There was no Canadian history prior to the contact between the whites and the Natives, i.e. around 1600 AD.

Aboriginal nations were never recognized as sovereign and distinct nations. The Federal and provincial governments passed several Indian Acts after the establishment of the Confederation. The British Crown signed a great number of treaties with the First Nations in order to protect their fundamental rights as legal wards. Till 1982, they were...
never recognized as legal citizens of the country and were exploited in various ways by the representatives of the Crown. The white administrators did not honor the treaties. The White Paper of the Trudeau government (1969) was in favor of the total assimilation and civilization of the Native peoples, but the Native chiefs and bands did not support it. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982) recognizes the Natives and their rights. Article 35 of this Amendment Act outlines the following points:

1. "The existing aboriginal and treaty rights of the aboriginal peoples of Canada are hereby recognized and affirmed”,

2. "In this act, 'aboriginal peoples of Canada' includes the Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada.

Indians are generally thought to be immigrants from the Asian continent, the Inuit are known as Eskimos, and the Métis are the people of mixed blood, originally mostly of the French and Indian origin. These peoples are called "Indigenous peoples" in International law founded by the UNO. The year 1992 was declared to be the "International year of the Indigenous populations of the world." The same year America celebrated the 500th anniversary of Columbus' discovery of the New Land and Canada the 125th anniversary of the establishment of its Confederation. As a signatory to the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights (1948), Canada was under tremendous pressure to re-examine its policies for treating its aboriginal peoples and address their issues on a priority basis. The First Nations are considered to be the ‘second class’ citizens while they are entitled to be regarded as ‘citizen plus’ under the Constitution (Friesen 1997). They are equally treated like other ethnic minorities who have migrated from Asia, Africa and Arab and settled down here. They are considered as the minorities, the marginalized, and the oppressed “other” by the mainstream white society.

It is difficult to find out a definition of Native literature as the subject itself includes lots of complexities. Prof. Hartmut Lutz, a German academician and a scholar of Native literature in Canada, writes in his essay “Native Literature in Canada Today”.
The term ‘Native Literature’ is understood to refer only to texts produced by persons of Native descent, Indian, Inuit, and Métis, not texts about Indians, Métis or Eskimo” (Lutz, 1991, 28).

Many non-Native or white authors have written about Native peoples in their works. They have created various stereotypes or false images about these Aboriginal peoples. These works have not only been considered as the mainstream literature but also as true depictions of Native peoples in Canada. The authors who have produced their works about these peoples include Lynn Andrews, W.P Kinsella, Anne Cameron, and many others. Even writers like Rudy Wiebe, Robert Kroetsch, Margaret Atwood and Margaret Lawrence have also written about the Aboriginal people of Canada in their major works. Some of these European white authors have “stolen” the Native stories and claimed them as their own original works without proper acknowledgement. Recently, a large number of the First Nations writers have protested against such usurpation of non-Natives and raised their voices strongly against the misuse of artistic freedom and cultural appropriation. They have urged that the non-Natives have no claim on Native stories and traditions and they should stop stealing Native stories.

Even to this day the debate over the issue of “appropriation of Native voice” in literature has continued, bringing to the fore the complex dynamics about definitions of Nativeness or Aboriginality. In his introduction to All My Relations: An Anthology of Contemporary Canadian Native Fiction, Thomas King notes that “when we talk about Contemporary literature, we talk as though we have a definition for this body of literature when, in fact, we do not. And when we talk about Native writers, we talk as though we have a process of determining who is a Native writer and who is not, when, in fact, we don’t” (King, X). Earlier in Canada successive colonizing governments have used their authority and control and most important, the power of words to construct and impose labels and definitions of “Indian” identity in an effort to limit and control the aboriginal rights and to promote assimilation and also the elimination of the Indian problem.
Thus we have a complicated and confusing number of definitions of Indian identity, which include status Indians, non-status Indians, Metis, Inuit, Treaty Indians, and urban Indians, on-reserve/off-reserve Indians. To apply a common rubric that encompasses a wide variety of writers, experiences and histories as well as art and literature, which arises from them, is difficult task, as it would only distort by erasing the complex multiplicity of lives experienced by the Native peoples. There is always this danger of falling a prey to the fiction of Indigenous stereotypes as Carol Lee Sanchez notes in her essay “Sex, class and race, intersections: visions of women of colour” in A Gathering of Spirit: a collection by North American Indian women:

“To be Indian is to be considered “colourful”, spiritual, connected to the earth, simplistic, and disappointing if not dressed in buckskin and feathers, shocking if a city dweller and even more shocking if an educator or other type of professional” (Sanchez in Green, 163)

Thomas King, a Native fiction writer, makes the following statement:

“We could simply say that Native literature is literature produced by Natives. This is a competent enough definition in that it covers both contemporary written literature and oral tribal literature, and, at the same time, insists that Native literature is literature produced by Natives and not by non-Natives, recognizing that being Native is a matter of race rather than something more transitory such as nationality” (King, All My Relations, x).

Thus, he has put more emphasis on racial identity rather than national identity. According to him, to define Native literature is a difficult proposition and one should avoid such restricted debates on controversial issues. He further adds, “What we do have is a collection of literary works by individual authors who are Native by ancestry, and our hope, as writers and critics, is that if we wait long enough, the sheer bulk of this collection, when it reaches some sort of critical mass, will present us with a matrix within which a variety of patterns can be discerned” (x).
Julia Emberly prefers to call the works of Native authors as Native writings rather than literature. European literature, as we know, is very much “canonical” and the Native writers try to break these norms of western literary canon. She writes, “Writings that we recognize to be works of ‘imagination’ can tell us stories as a way of representing the experience of people excluded from mainstream literature” (Emberly, 99). According to her, these texts resist the conventional categories, such as, ‘minority’ or ‘ethnic’ and other divisions on the basis of genre, voice, etc. Aboriginal modes of expressions include all forms of graphic markings in writing.

Emma LaRoque, another noted Native author and Professor of Native Studies in the Manitoba University, writes in the “Preface” to Writing the Circle:

“To discuss Native literature is to tangle with a myriad of issues: voicelessness, accessibility, stereotypes, appropriation, ghettoization, linguistic, cultural, sexual, and colonial roots of experience, and therefore, of self-expression-all issues that bang at the door of conventional notions about Canada and about literature” (Emma LaRoque, xv).

Earlier she has stated that “to be a Native writer of some consciousness is to be in a lonely place” (Ibid.). In the past, Aboriginal peoples were regarded as voiceless, wordless and illiterate due to the failure of the Canadian Education system to impart basic skills of reading and writing to Native youths both in English as well as their mother tongues. Emma is of the opinion that her people are “people of words”. They have owned many amazing words to communicate themselves. They are neither wordless nor illiterate in the context of their linguistic and cultural roots. The origin of Native literature is linked to the origin of the First Nations people in Canada who as the first settlers were already on the land when the Europeans from the west migrated to this place and began to settle down here in the late sixteen and early seventeen centuries. They practiced many religions and customs, spoke many dialects, and lived like independent and sovereign nations. However, they used to share some common values such as a deep reverence for the land and Nature including trees, animals, and other cosmic elements, a strong sense of
community life, and an importance on harmonious living along with the physical and the spiritual universe.

Prof. Agnes Grant states: “Native Literature” means Native people telling their own stories, in their own ways, unfettered by criteria from another time and place”(Grant, 125). According to him, Native literature reveals the depth and status of the culture, explores Native wisdom and world-view and reveals beauty of the Native world Native literature “records oral narratives, values, beliefs, traditions, humour, and figures of speech” (Grant, 125). In her edited anthology of Native works entitled Our Bit of Truth (1990), he states that the stories of Native writers “are so diverse that no definition of a typical Native novel can be developed”(Grant, 254) He again adds that the stories “reflect the diversity of life-styles, geography, social conditions and social change” (254) Native stories and fictions explore how Natives relate to one another and to their environment and how they have a deep commitment to their question of Native identity and values of Native cultures.

The literature produced before the nineteenth century was mostly oral, having its origin in the rich oral traditions of the Aboriginal peoples. The oral traditions include ceremonies and storytelling Storytelling includes all types of myths, legends, and folktales, whereas ceremonies include a wide range of chants, songs, prayers, and oral performances. The oral literature has been termed as ‘oratory’, ‘verbal art’, ‘folklore’, ‘oral narrative and poetry’, etc. Before contact, most of these early literatures were preserved and transmitted orally and aurally from generation to generation. Until the first part of the twentieth century, this oratory has remained as the dominant form of expression and presentation of Natives. It not only affects their daily life but also strongly influences the contemporary written literature It widens the imaginative horizon of the modern writers It reflects the diversity of their beliefs, customs, social structures, life-styles and cultures Hence, it should be studied within the specific context of the cultural group that produces it and its influence on other tribes who come in contact with it
Aboriginal nations essentially believe that human beings must live in harmony with the universe, both physical and spiritual. This is very much central to their traditional way of life and is also one of the central themes in all literatures. Secondly, all aspects of Native life are conducted according to certain rituals and customs. Some religious beliefs are very much essential for their very survival well being of the community. Breath, speech, and verbal art are so closely interlinked that in many tribal cultures the same sign or word is used for them. Thought and word are considered to be the integral part of these tribal peoples. They have the symbolic power to create like the Almighty God, to alter the universe for good, to enable human beings to achieve harmony with the mother Earth. The Aboriginal peoples establish a contact with the Supreme Lord through their songs, prayers, chants and hymns. They pray the Almighty for blessings, for good harvests and good hunts, for healing from physical and mental sickness, and for having healthy relations within the community. They use words with utmost care for their day-to-day normal activities. Silence is also highly regarded by these people, because words are alive and sacred in the domain of silence. That is why these people communicate many things without speaking words or opening their mouths. Thirdly, they have a great reverence for the land. They don’t believe in private ownership of land. They believe that the Mother Earth looks after them and their history is connected with the land. They create their cultural landscape by associating themselves with the land and by joining their identity with the place of their origin and living.

The Aboriginal people put much emphasis on directionality and circularity of the natural order of the universe and of the mankind. Following the route of the globe, human civilization moves in a circle from east to south to west to north to east. The “circle” symbolizes the Sun and its circular path and the human life cycle consisting of infancy, childhood, adulthood and old age. Many tribes consider number 4 very sacred as it represents the cardinal directions, the seasons and the four stages of human life. The circle is used in native tribal ceremonies and dance performances to visually represent the circularity of time and the human life cycle. Even in narratives, the circular structure is
incorporated highlighting such beliefs. For instance, it is seen in many narratives that the protagonist leaves the community in the beginning only to return at the end after facing lots of trials and adventures.

We can also see that the community is more important than an individual for a native person. He believes in cooperation and the betterment of the whole nation even at the cost of his individuality. Aboriginal people always try to maintain a harmonious relationship inside the community behaving properly with others, respecting elders and caring for children and wives. This is reflected in their performances, community-based programs and ceremonies, in decision-making, etc. Adults are usually seen respecting their elders and Medicine men and always seek for their guidance. They make sincere attempts to imbibe the virtues of their grandparents and parents. They depend upon love, generosity, and helpfulness for their very survival against many odds or threats to their lives and communities.

The oral literatures include both works that are performed by native artists within communities that produce them and works that are preserved in written transcriptions. Some tribes have recorded their performed works using pictographic symbols. Although traditional myths, legends, songs and tales follow general pattern of preservation practiced in each tribe, yet individual artists create their own styles and improvise upon the general patterns. So long as the performances are enacted appropriately and given the desired result, many tribes validate such performances and allow such improvisations. However, the singers are very much restricted in doing such improvisations, because the words and tunes are almost fixed in advance and are given by the cultural hero, their Elders.

The oral literatures are of different types, such as, ritual dramas, songs and narratives, and the eloquent speeches of band chiefs as well. Ritual drama is a very sacred form and it contains song, narrative and oratory. It is the current term in use, though tribes use the terms like chants, ceremonies, and rituals. Religious ceremonies are also considered as part of it. Songs are central to all ceremonies and even to non-ceremonial
life of natives. The singer's own voice is the basic instrument and it provides the variety of melody. At times, the singers use the musical instruments like drums, whistles and rattles. Penny Petrone writes, "Every experience in life—every occasion—was celebrated with song. There was no act of life that didn't possess its fitting song, from those experiences that completely transcend the ordinary to those that were commonplace" (Petrone, 19). Songs generally include lullabies, work songs, dance songs, ceremonial songs, war songs, dream songs, etc. They are mostly humorous, entertaining, and instructive. Sacred ceremonial and religious songs are considered to have the power to heal, bless, and save from danger. Songs are always purposeful and have specific functions to perform.

The hunting and killing of animals is also a religious act for natives. The dead animals are worshipped first before they are consumed. There are hunting songs for performing such rituals. The medicine songs are sung to obtain healing powers. The young lovers sing romantic love songs to adore each other. Similarly, oral narratives produced by natives are not only vast but also varied. Penny Petrone writes, "Each linguistic group has its own particular set that accords with its own regional ecologies, its own values, customs, and tastes, embodying its own religious and philosophical beliefs. As a consequence, tribal literatures are unique and culturally specific" (Petrone, 10).

George Copway, an English educated Ojibway Indian, produced his major work entitled The Traditional History and Characteristics Sketches of the Ojibway Nation in 1830. While emphasizing on the impact of these narratives, he writes, "The Ojibwas have a great number of legends, stories, and historical tales, the relating and hearing of which form a vast fund of winter evening instruction and amusement" (10). Native children enjoy these tales and narratives. While listening to their elders night after night, they are haunted by the spirits and voices of the characters the following days.

Oratory has been a highly regarded skill since the beginning of Native civilization. It plays an important role in Indian life. Native leaders are very eloquent and skillful in delivering their political speeches. Along with their hunting and fishing skills,
they put much more emphasis on their oral ability. The band chief is usually elected due to his skill of eloquence and presentation. George Copway writes, "Our orators have filled the forest with the music of their voices, loud as the roar of a waterfall, yet soft and wooing as the gentle murmur of a mountain stream. We have had warriors who have stood on the banks of lakes and rivers, and addressed with words of irresistible and persuasive eloquence in their arms" (Petrone, 26).

Oral speeches can be ceremonial and non-ceremonial. It depends on the context in which the chiefs deliver them. They are associated with every kind of public ceremonies. They are considered as important means of settling political and legal disputes arising between Natives and white settlers. They are also mostly metaphorical and rhetorical, as the chiefs have immense knowledge of history and traditions of their tribes. In 1761, Minweweh, as the chief of the Ojibwas on Mackinac Island makes the following speech to the English trader Alexander Henry:

"Englishman, it is to you that I speak, and I demand your attention!

Englishman, you know that the French king is our father. He promised to be such; we, in return, promised to be his children.

This promise we have kept.

Englishman, we are informed that, our father, the king of France (Louis XIV) is old and infirm, and that being fatigued, with making war upon your nation, he is fallen asleep. During his sleep, you have taken advantage of him and possessed yourselves of Canada. But his nap is almost at an end. When he does awake, what must become of you? He will destroy you utterly!

Englishman, although you have conquered the French, you have not yet conquered us! We are not your slaves. These lakes, these woods and mountains, we are left to us by our ancestors. They are our inheritance; and we will part with them to none..." (Petrone, 30).

Indian oratory thus has a significant role in native-white relationship in Canada during the post-contact period. Native assemblies used to last for many days and the Indian
chiefs continued to deliberate on various subjects like tribal history and traditions, the usurpation of Europeans of Native land and colonization of Native peoples. Pontiac and Tecumseh have given such influential and persuasive speeches full of metaphors and symbols. In Penny Petrone's book we can have an illustration of these speeches. As Penny Petrone writes in the conclusion:

"Whether these early orators spoke in the contexts of war, the fur trade, or missionary activity, they spoke as free man. Pitted between two great rival European powers in their struggle for a continent, Canada's natives held the balance of power" (34).

Contemporary Native writers have been greatly influenced by this oratory of their earlier generations. They repeatedly fall back upon this oral tradition to develop their own writings, their plot, content, diction and style.

Native authors have begun to produce written literatures of various kinds since their contact with the European settlers. Due to the missionaries who arrived in North America to educate and 'civilize' the red savage Indians, many talented young natives were trained to read the Bible and to write in French and English. From the early nineteenth century to the present days, they have produced many forms of literature including biographies, autobiographies, poetry, drama, short fiction and novels. They have written both in conventional and non-conventional ways like their western counterparts. However, they are immensely influenced by the rich oral traditions of their people. Many contemporary writers, in fact, don't consider themselves as writers at all rather as storytellers and community workers.

Some important native authors who were trained by the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society are Peter Jones, George Copway, George Henry, and Peter Jacobs. They together form the first literary coterie of Indians in Canada. Their writings include journals, diaries, life histories, reports, letters, travelogues, and sermons. Their works were published widely either as missionary publications or circulated through newspapers and in book forms. Peter Jones, for example, wrote a large number of letters to the
government officials as the first Indian Methodist minister. He traveled widely and delivered lectures, sermons, and speeches during his England tours. He even translated The Book of Moses called Genesis into Ojibwa. Two of his important works published posthumously are Life and Journals of Kah-Ke-Wa-Quo-na-By (Rev. Peter Jones) Wesleyan Minister (1860) and History of the Ojibway Indians with Special Reference to Their Conversion to Christianity (1861). These books are about the history, religion, languages, and life styles of his Ojibwa people.

George Copway wrote some remarkable books and became the most popular native writer of the century. His books are The Life, History, and Travels of Kah-ge-ga-gah-bowh (1847) which was reprinted several times as it received wide readership and The Life, Letters, and Speeches of Kah-ge-ga-gah-bowh (1850). These books are considered as missionary narratives focusing on his spiritual confessions. He was regarded as a noble savage and he had high regards for Christianity and western education. He believed that Indians could get salvation by means of western education and adoption of Christianity. He has blended myth, history, and personal experiences in the above works.

Emily Pauline Johnson achieves critical acclaim as a poetess and woman performer at the turn of the century. She not only produces a great number of poetry but presents them through her live performances in Canada, the USA, and the UK. Her works really mark the beginning of Native literature in Canada according to historians. Primarily educated at home by her mother and governesses, Pauline was introduced to the classics of English and American literatures. Her literary career begins in 1892 at a Toronto literary evening when she recites her own poem titled “A Cry from an Indian Wife” based on the first mixed-blood rebellion of 1869 led by Louis Riel against the government. She charms and shocks her audience with her romantic and melodramatic poetry. Some of her songs like “Song My Paddle Sings”, “As Red Men Die”, “The Corn Husker”, and “Morrow Land” depict Indian life in Canada and are anthologized again and again. These poems are mainly autobiographical and political.
Emily has also excelled in fiction writing. She has written many remarkable short stories focusing on the problems of her people. They deal with major themes, such as search for identity, self-dignity, love relationship, and natives’ relation with land. One of her popular stories titled “A Red Girl’s Reasoning” dramatizes the dilemma of a mixed blood woman who must choose between her marriage and her values.

During the following decades, there was absolutely no literature produced except few as-told-to stories published with the white scholars and collaborators. There are many reasons for such barrenness in Creativity of Indians. Some reasons are the government’s control of native life, land occupation, the assimilation policies, the confinement of natives in reservations, residential schools and foster homes for small children, etc. Due to many social problems like alcoholism, poverty, and disease, the Natives couldn’t concentrate on their creativity. Some of these as-told-to narratives are Canadian Wonder Tales (1918), Canadian Fairy Tales (1922) by Cyrus Macmillan, Grey Owl’s Tales of an Empty Cabin (1936) and Pilgrims of the Wild (1935). Some autobiographical works of this period include From Potlatch to Pulpit (1933) by Rev. William Henry Pierce, Smoke from Their Fires (1941) by Charles James Nowell. In 1960, an anthology of three biographies titled Canadian Portraits: Brant, Crowfoot, Oronhyatikha came out. George Clutesi published his book Son of Raven, Son of Deer in 1967, Canada’s centennial year. As a tribal orator, he narrated the traditional stories of his community to the audience on radio and TV. The first anthology of Native literature is I Am an Indian (1969), edited by Kent Gooderham and it includes different kinds literary writing by Duke Redbird, Dan George, Howard Adams, and George Clutesi who were the first generation of residential school products.

During the last three decades of the twentieth century, the Native literature saw its renaissance. A large number of books belonging to various genres such as poetry, drama, autobiography, short fictions, novels, and children’s literature came out. More and more Canadian, American, and British publishers showed interest in Native writings. Some of the reasons for such an outburst of Native creativity include the government’s policy of
"multiculturalism", the government's funds to publishers and native organizations, the stipends given to writers and artists, the critical and academic reception of Native writings in universities and other institutions

III

The Native novel as a distinct literary form originates in Canada in the year 1973 with the publication of Maria Campbell's semi-autobiographical fiction, *Halfbreed*. This autobiography is in the form of a fictional narrative and many critics consider it as a novel. Beatrice Mosionier Culleton, the Canadian Métis writer, produces her first semi-autobiographical fiction titled *In Search of April Raintree* in 1983, again revised and published as *April Raintree* in the following year 1984. She has published her second novel titled *In the Shadow of Evil* in 2001. The other fictional autobiography is Basil Johnston's *Indian School Days* published in 1988. However, Jeannette Armstrong's *Slash* (1989) is regarded as the first Canadian Native novel published by a Native publishing company named Theytus Books. Then a good number of Native novels have appeared one after another. They include Thomas King's *Medicine River* (1990), Ruby Slipperjack's *Honour the Sun* (1987), Joan Crate's *Breathing Water* (1989), Lee Maracle's *Sundogs* (1992), Jan Hudson's *Sweetgrass* (1984), Richard Wagamese's *Keeper'n Me* (1994), and a collection of three novellas titled *Brothers in Arms* (1989) by Jordan Wheeler. In the last few years, some of these authors have already produced their second and third novels.

All these Native writers admit that they never intended to be writers or creative artists. They are not only Native in blood or race but also firmly rooted in their rich Native heritage. When they see their people suffering from colonial oppression and racial exploitation, they start to react against it strongly. They try their best to preserve their past, their rich oral tradition and Native cultural heritage. At the same time, they are aware of their problems and the complexities of the modern times. In fact, many of them are well educated, having university degrees and highly paid jobs. They are well versed in the western literature including the English and the French. They are also very much acquainted with the western philosophy and literary criticism. We can say that they are assimilated and acculturated into the mainstream society living in big cities and leading a life in the western ways. They are outside their reservations and struggle for survival like any other modern day human being. Following the western genres, they produce their creative works such as poetry, dramas, novels and short stories.

All these writers are greatly influenced by the rich oral tradition of storytelling, of songs, of myths and legendary tales. They draw most of their themes and subject matter from these stories of the past and from the real lives of their peoples. Although they are considered to be a part of the Euro-Canadian society, their works are entirely based on the Native life and community with all its challenges and social problems. Earlier the Aboriginal peoples were depicted as "faithful friends" and "savage foes" in the non-Native works. Either they were portrayed as noble savages or uncivilized and barbaric savages. Similarly, the Native women were described either as "Indian princess" or as "Native squaw".

The white traders and administrators treated them as prostitutes. In order to justify the western notion of racial superiority, the first Nations peoples were portrayed as dispossessed, illiterate, uncivilized, degenerate, and barbaric peoples without a past or a culture and heritage. There was no history of these peoples because they did not know writing. Despite their oral traditions, they were declared as speechless and rootless people. European settlers believed that they were the only civilized ones and others
around them were savages. They created the binaries such as Us and Them, the colonizer and the colonized, the civilized and the savage, the majority and the minority, the mainstream and the Other, the Center and the Margin(s)

The Europeans in their attempts to occupy the new lands and establish new colonies throughout the world deliberately “excluded” the Aboriginal peoples from power and administration. They considered these uneducated masses as “the white man’s burden” and treated them like their wards. Giving them some gifts like blankets and western wines, they took away their primary assets like land and language. The Master’s territories were founded on the burial grounds of these Native peoples. The white European’s theory of “exclusion” not only silenced these peoples but also did not care for their culture and traditions. Their customs and values were underestimated and replaced by western values. They were marginalized and forced to assimilate and acculturate into the mainstream as soon as possible. The government planned and implemented many policies such as conversion into Christianity, English education in boarding schools, bans on use of Native languages and practice of Native customs like singing and dancing. They were banned from fishing, hunting, and berry-picking outside the reservations.

The White writers also either obliterated their presence in the literature of the land or just positioned them as “totems” with a marginal existence. They existed as showpieces for the sake of artistic beauty and for the representation of savagery and barbarity. These fanciful creations of the White writers or artists were made totally voiceless in their works. They were thought to be the members of a “vanishing” race, and would be extinct or wiped out soon from their own land. However, the Native peoples survived and are not extinct totally. Even they have increased their number and are seen all over Canada. They face every challenge to prove their power to survive, and to claim their rights further. They have not only adopted the Master’s language and religion but also begun to express their inner selves by using the same language and different forms. They realize that they have to be articulate first to present themselves to the outside world. Then they believe that their native languages wouldn’t help them in this important
task To reach out to a wider audience all over the world, they begin to write mainly in English and in different genres. They have no other choice but to invent new genres improvising upon the western canonical forms, create a special kind of English diction and syntax to suitably express their thoughts and emotions. They continue to do so for the last hundred years and have succeeded partially in their attempts to reach out to others. Their voices are heard everywhere and the Whites don’t have any other choice but to listen to their voices.

Autobiography is a genre about one’s life. When the story of one individual becomes too stark, it can only be narrated through fiction. In the mid-point of one’s life, one can’t chronologically present her or his life’s experiences. Then, he has no other option but to recreate his own life’s experiences in the fictional mode. He has to use the narrative form as a therapy to recover from his traumas and rediscover his selfhood. It is only the novel that would co-operate with such an enterprise. It is not really the telling of one’s story in all stark realities, but a way to overcome one’s inner conflicts and tensions. It works as a kind of transcendence from personal emotions and feelings.

Novel as a fictional narrative includes many other forms such as romances, letters, mythical tales, folktales and legends. It is broad and complex in form, with no set conventions of writing. The North American Native novelists break away from any set western conventions to express their traumatic experiences and to transcend themselves. As a literary genre, the Native novels have expanded their scope to embrace autobiographical accounts, historical details of their native communities, fantasy and dreams, oral tales and many other archival documents. As a result of such process of creation, the individual is not portrayed as the chief protagonist of the work, but he becomes a single entity or a member of the larger collective entity called the Native community. The Native character is very much different from the European *picaro* He becomes the representative of the Native way of life and can be well considered as a type character. He is created for safeguarding the native traditions and values, and to preserve the native culture and heritage. His main objective is not only to preserve for himself but
also to transfer to his future generation for use again and again. That is the reason why the Coyote or the Trickster figure is considered to be so important as the cultural hero with all human and super-human traits.

Maria Campbell’s *Halfbreed* is not only an autobiographical account of the character named Maria but also a description about the close-knit Métis community. She dedicates this work to her “grand mother’s children”, her future generation to know about their past history. Her grand mother named Cheechum is regarded as the spiritual center of her family and the only source of her courage and strength in her life full of many struggles. When she is separated from her parents due to some unwanted circumstances and is left with her young siblings to look after on her own, she tries to face the realities and challenges in different ways. Every time, she falls back upon her grand mother for her strength and moral support. She searches for peace not within her own self but in the noise and disorder of her Métis people. She goes away from her community on the reservation to live with her siblings marrying a white man. She spends her days in the urban world with lots of attendant problems such as alcoholism, racial prejudices, drug abuse and prostitution. However, she is strong enough not to be defeated because of these challenges. She decides not to assimilate herself or surrender into the white urban racial society. Her grand mother’s spirit hovers all over to give her confidence in herself and enables her to regain her real power. She finds out her true place in the modern world and reclaims her true identity as a community worker or healer. She is never frustrated and healing helps her to be optimistic and hope for a bright future of her people in Canada.

Beatrice Mosionier Culleton’s *In Search of April Raintree* is a novel about two Metis sisters, April and Cheryl, who are separated from their parents in their early childhood. They grow up in different foster homes separately and get education boarding schools or residential schools. They subsequently become the victims of racial exploitation, colonial oppression, and other social problems such as alcoholism, suicide and assimilation. They follow their lives in the route of “native girl syndrome” and become half breed squaws or Indian prostitutes. Cheryl instead of becoming a social
worker takes up prostitution as her career and ultimately commits suicide like her mother being unable to cope with the social system of the mainstream. April who tries her best to assimilate herself totally into the white world because of her fair skin doesn’t succeed. Her sister’s death brings her back to reality and she then acknowledges her true identity as a native person in Eurocentric Canada. Affirming her position, she accepts her self-determination and determines to join the Native struggle for survival. She promises to give Cheryl’s son Henry a better future and also hopes for a better condition of her people in future.

Slash, the first Indian novel by the Okanagan Indian author Jeannette Armstrong, is also semi-autobiographical like the other two novels. It is about a male protagonist, Thomas Kelasket, also nicknamed Slash. He spends his life on and off the reservation in order to “see the world” outside her community and family. He is initially sent to a white school at a distant place to have higher education. Subsequently, he uproots himself from his people to “know many things” happening around. Being a troubled teenager, he doubts the truth of everything and raises a number of questions about his own self and about others. The writer has reproduced the history of the American Indian Movement that happened during the 1960s and 1970s in North America in a fictional mode. Her intention is to rewrite the history from the Indians’ point of view. She also narrates about its impact on contemporary native people and particularly the native youth who have no dreams of their future in this multicultural but racial white dominated country. Slash encounters a number of strange and new challenges everyday and grows up with fresh experiences. He is caught between several conflicting voices. The novel, as a matter of fact, is a bildungsroman in which the protagonist grows up educating himself in the society around him. He finally listens to the voices of his parents and relatives, returns back home to accept his true identity and Native nationhood. He takes a decision to continue his struggle for survival along with his people on the reservation. He takes the role of a native leader among the youth of his tribe. He totally rejects assimilation into the white society and embraces his own roots and wisdom of his people. Armstrong portrays
him as a matured native young man in favor of change, not a radical and orthodox native person on the reservation and unwilling to share his cultural values and heritage with others/outsiders. He empowers himself and his people, regaining self-determination and reclaiming sovereignty. His son is considered to be “an Indian of a special generation” and he is well prepared to pass on his entire knowledge and wisdom to make him a proud Native in future.

Ruby Slipperjack writes the manuscript of her first novel and puts it on shelf for many years before she publishes with the title *Honour the Sun* in 1987. It is about a ten-year-old Indian girl named the Owl, who grows up among her people in her community and experiences the hard facets of her young life at a tender age. The title is a recurrent phrase depicting her mother’s voice and the close relationship between the Nature and the Native. The man-made world based on the principles of materialism destroys the Nature and its grandeur. It pollutes the native way of life that is lived in a close contact with the Nature and its constituents. The social evils such as alcoholism and disease bring disintegration to her family and community. She is deeply inspired by her mother’s words despite her alcoholism. She is always found to be optimistic and never affected by the evils of the white world. There is no possibility of her assimilation into the other world as her people fear it in her community in recent times. In the words of her mother, she lives only with a purpose to “honour the sun” every morning against all odds.

Thomas King’s *Medicine River* is about Will’s existence in both the worlds—White and Native. He is a contemporary Indian who struggles for his survival. He comes back to his past through his childhood memories, his father’s letters to his mother, and some old family portraits. He fails to establish himself in the urban white world and returns back to Medicine River, his own place and root, where he is also a stranger. He becomes the first native photographer there opening his studio. The author creating this character of Will as a photographer breaks down the stereotype images of Natives in Canada created by the white artists and writers. His power to observe his past gives him a grip over his present life and enables him to understand the strength of his Native
heritage and cultural values. Thomas King has not explicitly described everything about Native life and culture, but has certainly revealed Will's regard for his family, community, and people through several incidents in the novel. He has also dealt with contemporary challenges faced by a modern Native person. He has carefully avoided the ongoing cold war between Natives and whites and only highlighted on the Native ways of persons like Will and Harlen Bigbear.

Joan Crate's *Breathing Water* portrays the life of its chief narrator Dione. She marries Bob, the white guy, but doesn't have a happy conjugal life. She is very much depressed due to her failure as a wife and as a mother to a boy. She searches for a Voice that can save her, reshape her and empower her to be proud of her Native identity and selfhood. She is uprooted from her Native ways and community. She tries her best to assimilate herself into the mainstream society with the materialistic way of life, but it doesn't hold her back there. She finally returns to her own native ways, native rites of celebrating life and occasions. The Eagle Woman becomes a winner at the end. She boldly faces the disasters that happened in her life and ultimately succeeds to survive being in close proximity with her own family and traditions. She always sees dreams and has flashbacks of her past life and childhood experiences with her parents, sisters and friends. She also recalls her father's tales which help her to regain her true identity. She is no longer an assimilated and acculturated Indian in the white world, but adopts her Native ways, very much distinct from white ways. She promises to pass on her knowledge and wisdom gathered from her Father's tales to her little son. Thus, he own Native customs and values can be preserved and properly respected by her future generations. She has named her son after her own father to exemplify symbolically the continuation of her tradition and culture. She revives the oral tradition of her people at the end by telling the stories of her Father to her son. She finally appears as a grown-up character, very much matured and experienced, adhering to her native values and accepting her native identity. They are real people and they have to survive against many odds. She has this realization and she is no more depressed or frustrated. Rather, she is
empowered totally and she becomes an instrument for the revival of her native traditions and social values

Jordan Wheeler published his first monograph titled *Brothers in Arms* in 1989. It is a collection of his three novellas, which are about three pairs of Native brothers separated and reunited due to certain forceful circumstances. The first novella, “Hearse in Snow”, is about two brothers who don’t get along with each other. One stays in Vancouver and the other on the reservation. The old father dies and they are united to have the funeral together. The brothers take the corpse of their dead father in a hearse to the reserve. There is a severe blizzard on the way and both are held up in the hearse with the dead body throughout the deadly dark night. Their lone sister plays the role of a connective between them and they regain their Native identity at the end. The second one is titled as “Red Waves”, in which there are two brothers, one is a journalist and the other is a terrorist. The terrorist brother blows away a church, a brewery, and the Hudson Bay Company in Winnipeg in order to have the revival of the “Red power”. The journalist brother explores the matters assuming these as the work of a Native activist group. The elder brother stays in his apartment to carry out his plans effectively, but the younger brother has no idea about his activities. Finally, the police take his help to arrest his brother. The elder brother reveals the mother’s rape case by the RCMP in their childhood and her subsequent death. Then, he goes to the Indian Affairs building to meet with the minister loaded with dynamite to blow it up.

In the third one titled “Exposure”, we see two Native brothers who have been divorced from each other for a long period. One of them suffers from AIDS and he wants to return back and to take his last breath on his reservation. He calls his brother to give him company and transport him to the reservation. He wants to “fix up” the old house where they spent their childhood before Father’s death and mother being sent to an asylum due to her insanity. His family and friends due to the disease do not receive him properly. He struggles to get financial support from his band to repair his dilapidated house. His brother accompanies him everywhere, to the hospital and to the band’s office...
for the welfare cheque and free medicine. He loses his life in the hospital and his mother who isn't willing to touch him initially comes to meet him and allow him to die in her lap.

Lee Maracle has published her two novels titled *Sundogs* (1992) and *Raven Song: A Novel* (1993) on the life of the Metis people in Canada, their challenges and their reactions to issues faced in real life. The first novel deals with the Oka Crisis that happened in the summer of 1990. This historical event depicts the struggle for the Aboriginal rights in Canada. The First Nations peoples came out to the road for the first time and expressed their anger and frustration towards the federal and provincial governments through demonstrations. Marianne, the chief woman protagonist of this book, is a student of sociology and doing research on the divorce and marriage of a Native tribe. She comes to know that her family lives on welfare aids and burns inside out of shame and disgust. She is confused with her ambiguous identity: "At home, I am not an Indian enough and at school I am much too Indian" (*Sundogs* 10). Her mother is not happy about the federal government's policies of Cultural genocide and always shouts at the Premier when he appears on the TV or she listens to the news bulletins. She has decided to buy a big house for her family and Marianne reacts as follows: "Us? Buy a house. The whole notion is painful, absurd. Here we are a bunch of rag-tags trying to create a life from the ashes of a stolen land and stolen dreams..." (36). She doesn't want to "erase" herself by consenting to white propositions and alienate herself from her community by assimilation and acculturation. She joins the Run for Peace organized by the Okanagan Indians. She regains her self-determination and reclaims her Native identity like a warrior. Her mother and people are proud of her action and she gets her doubts clarified at the end of the book.
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