Preface

The emergence of ‘Fourth World literatures’ circumscribing the writings of the Natives of America, First Nations of Canada, Aboriginals of Australia, Maoris of Newzealand, Dalits of India is a recent phenomena. As the human civilization has marched towards recognizing the genesis of the human living, the pertinent and perpetual question of accepting the original inhabitant of the all the nations across the world is thoroughly being explored and understood. The general consensus in eventually accepting the social and literary convenient classification of First World Literature (America & European countries), Second world literature (Russia & its allied countries), Third World literature (countries with colonized history) and the Fourth world literature (writings of the Natives/Aboriginals/Dalits) is the great epistemological breakthrough. The thought process of evaluating life beyond the much discussed aspects of race, class, gender etc. in literature and other disciplines of knowledge has come to the extent of reinventing the post colonial and post theoretical aspects in literature and in contemporary streams of literary criticism. The ultimate recognition to Indigenous/ Native/Aboriginal/Dalit identity bestowed by literature and contemporary critical terrain has even initiated a better understanding of Native/Aboriginal/Dalit woman writings. This is the liberation from the burden of post colonial, post modern literary, social and cultural stereotypical paradigms that prevented the Native/Aboriginal/Dalit studies from becoming a victim to pedagogies. It is in the light of this background, Native
Canadian/ First Nations literature and Native Canadian women/ First Nations Women writings are to be studied and understood.

The genesis of First Nations/Native Canadian literature can be traced back to 1830s which produced a wide variety of genres including different themes regarding the geographical landscape and the aspect of Nativity. Apart from the different genres of literature, history has played a significant role in providing the evidences for the beginning of colonialism in Canada. But the exclusive literary history of Native writings in Canada differ radically from those of settler histories. The necessity of problematising the space and time in Anglo Canadian and French Canadian influences and solitudes in Canadian context has not become an obstacle in the evolution and consolidation of Native literatures in Canada. The Native Canadian writings filled with European cultural forces created a pervasive influence on Jewish Canadian, South Asian Canadian streams of literatures in Canada. Traditionally, Native literature in Canada is transmitted and documented primarily through Oral tradition. It has substantiated itself through dramatic productions, dance performances, petroglyphs and other cultural artifacts. The Native ways of recording history and the vast pool of knowledge comprising of unique cultural aspects propagated the distinct Native content. The literary and cultural manifestation of Natives in Canada constitute ‘the Native Canadian Voice’. The oral tradition of Native cultures encompass valuable paradigms and teachings that inspire the whole world. It is considered as the path of transmitting the knowledge from one generation to another generation. The
whole world has come to recognize that Native/Aboriginal knowledge is integral to the survival of human civilization.

Native Canadian literature has never received such a public attention as it is receiving now. Specially with the publication of Penny Petron’s *Native Literature in Canada: From the Oral Tradition to the Present* (1990) and W.H. New’s *Native Writers Canadian Writings* (1990), this has become the much taught and explored area of literature in the Premier Institutions of knowledge. Its journey has been so historic transcending the orality to the wide range of genres such as speeches, letters, sermons, reports, petitions, dairy entries, essays, history, journals, autobiography, poetry, short stories and novels. In its gradual evolution, it has attracted the attention of the serious scholars who interpreted the Native writings placing in the socio-cultural contexts of Native Canadians.

Now, as Native Canadian women have contributed immensely for the enrichment of Native Canadian literature, it is pertinent to recognize the insights and perspectives involved in their writings. In the process of constructing their literature they are confronted with the usual colonial distortion of Natives history and latent gender discrimination that persists within the Native family structures. Confronting the accepted studies and research on the Natives, Native women had to build their own perception of discrimination and culture drawing sustenance from their own experiences. Groping in darkness and burdened with anthropological and historical burdens, they have indulged in self introspection dismantling the patriarchal perceptions
within the mainstream and Native cultures. Seeking information from the oral knowledge of their communities, they had to depend more on recording the personal experiences of the elderly Native women. Taking cue from the emergence of Biographies as the dependable sources to reconstruct history of an individual, a family and a community, Native women writers have created a distinctive narratology that paved the way for the emergence of personal testimonies and Native women biographies.

It is in this context, the thesis “Native Canadian Womanhood and Resilience: A Study of Maria Campbell, Beatrice Culleton & Lee Maracle” takes the works of the popular Native Canadian Women writers who carved a niche of their own. The thesis presented in five chapters provides a critical perception of the autobiographies and the crucial writings of these significant writers. The first Chapter ‘Native Canadian Literary Realism’ traces the evolution of Native Canadian literature. The chapter provides the chronological account of the literary works from the first generation to the contemporary writers. Native literature expressed in the genres of poetry, fiction, short story and autobiography is provided in a synoptic way. The emergence of Native women writings and the brief critical elucidation of their literary works is provided in this chapter. A brief preparatory understanding about the writers chosen for the study which paves the way for the serious elucidation of the chosen works forms the end of the chapter.

The second chapter ‘An Epic Account of Dissenting Cry’ critically examines Maria Campbell’s autobiography *Half Breed*. Dedicated to her
Grandmother Cheechum’s children, Campbell wrote exclusively for Non Natives. Campbell has executed the very brief retelling of the history, the humour, the irony, the understatement as the literary qualities. Campbell’s style reflects the oral tradition and it reflected the similar background of the storyteller. With recurrent allusions to love, peace, beauty and happiness, Campbell’s sense of place is exhibited again and again. Effectively using humour, Campbell effectively recalls the observation of community rituals. The form of anecdotes support much of her humor. Throughout her narration, she distances the Non-Natives. She depicts and renders the things as she knows. She has succeeded in subverting the derogatory meaning of the word ‘halfbreed’ and her work has decided the meaning as ‘a person that lives between two cultures’. The chapter elucidates the autobiographical concerns with the textual illustrations to the best possible extent.

The third chapter ‘The Discursive Narration’ elucidates Beatrice Culleton’s *In Search of April Raintree*. Thinly disguised as fiction, it is also constructed on the lines of autobiography. Dedicated to two sisters of Culleton, formative years of her life are reflected in every phase of the work. Unlike, Campbell, Beatrice Culleton wrote for herself. This narration served as a catharsis and made her come to terms with her personal history. It is in the process of constructing the work, Culleton understood her mother’s alcoholism. She realizes that it is the Natives who cause more sorrow in her life. Culleton has boldly depicted and reported the reflection of reality by including the rape incident, completely to the dismay of the readers. The straightforward depiction
of the rape incident has become exemplary to the other Native writers for writing the velocity of cultural victimization. Culleton’s dispassionate analysis of the life lived by many Native women has become an eye opener to many of the Native women leading the life with romanticized perception. Making a mark with effective prose that has won the appreciation from Margaret Atwood, Margaret Laurence and Gabriel Roy, it proved to be a scathing indictment of the Canadian society. The chapter giving the complete critical elucidation illustrates the content with textual references effectively. It also dealt with the existing criticism on the novel and executed contemporary critical insights.

The fourth chapter ‘Writing Survival& Resistance’ offers a critique of Lee Maracle’s *Sojourner Truth, Bobby Lee, I am Woman & Daughters Are Forever*. Lee Maracle’s *I am Woman* is a book of prose and poetry, essentially it is about one woman’s search for the truth. Confirming the animosity between Non Natives and Natives, Maracle says that her works address the concerns of the Natives in desperate circumstances who need to recover from the broken threads of their lives. She firmly says that all her works come from the people of my passion. All the works discussed in the chapter proclaim Lee Maracle’s attempts to equate Native woman with a sense of strong, passionate and brilliant being. *Bobbi Lee* is a breakthrough in the history of autobiography. The bold depiction of her life at the backdrop of Native woman’s survival has received critical reception at the global level. *Sojourner Truth* as a collection of short stories proved that Lee Maracle’s fiction integrates oratory and European literary forms. Through this she has substantiated that Native oral stories
engage the listener actively, make him part of the story making process and encourage him to think independently. *Daughters Are Forever* depicts, Maracle’s attempt to recontextualize the dysfunctional behaviors of the Natives. She negates with the ‘classic’ mainstream psychology and proves its failure in answering the traumas and mental disorders of many Native Canadians. The narration of *Daughters Are Forever* underlines the failure of standard western psychotherapies. Through Marilyn’s investigation she traces out the genetic links between collective and individual traumas. She makes *Daughters Are Forever* as a representation to depict the soul wound of collective Trauma and the impact of cross generations individual sufferings. The chapter primarily presents the subjective aspects related to the lives of Native women, discussing the content of *Daughters Are Forever* primarily, and other works peripherally.

The fifth chapter ‘*The Enigmatic Native Womanhood*’ critically analyses the issues related to the requirement of Native Womanhood. The social, cultural, religious, philosophical factors responsible for molding the Native womanhood as a distinctive aspect in juxtaposition with the mainstream womanhood is presented in this chapter. The significant presence of Native women in executing every facet of familial responsibility and in executing the decision making is substantiated with social and historical reasons. The chapter presents the foundations of resistance seen in strong Native families, grounding in Native community and particularly seen in relation to the land, language, story telling and spirituality. The chapter also presents the acts of resistance
through which Native women challenge the stereotypes believing strongly in Writing as a social and cultural act of resistance. Native women’s creativity as a source of strength and identity and their attempts of resisting the assimilation policies of colonialism are thoroughly discussed in the chapter. The brief conclusion tries to substantiate the social and literary propositions reflected in the works of Maria Campbell, Beatrice Culleton and Lee Maracle to the complete extent.