Chapter - I
Native Canadian Literary Realism
(Introduction)

Literature is considered to be multi racial and multi ethnic as it accommodates and reflects wide variety of nationalities, races and cultures across the world. Every nation has its own culture and specially the Natives/Aboriginals of all the nations in the world represent their voices through different modes. Literature creates an international platform to all the Natives/Aboriginals across the world. Kelly Graffith in Writing Essays about Literature: A Guide and Style Sheet says: “Literature puts in touch with events, places and people that many of us will never experience in real life” (19). It makes everyone to travel with the power of imagination the unknown world and explore the buried history and mythical aspects of the culture of Natives. Kateri Damn in Says Who reminds Native writers: “When we express ourselves…we must do so from an informed position so that we do not contribute to the confession and oppression but instead, boring into sharper focus who we are” (24). Notable Native Canadian writer Jeannette Armstrong in the Disempowerment of First North American Native Peoples and Empowerment through their Writing advices that “our task …is two fold. To examine the past and culturally affirm towards a new future” (210).

It is pertinent to observe that among the different literatures of Commonwealth, Canadian literature is quite modern and post modern. The popular Canadian writer Hugh MacLenan in Two Solitudes (1967) has stated that
Canadianness is caught in between the French solitude and the English Solitude. It was obvious that in the initial stages of the evolution of Canadian literature, all the genres are dominated by French Canadian and British Canadian writers. Resisting the influence of two solitudes, Michael Greenstein in *Third Solitudes* (1989) claimed that the Jewish writers living in Canada form the third solitude. Apart from these recognized solitudes, there is South Asian Canadian solitude represented like Michael Ondatjee, Uma Parameswaran, Himani Bannerjee, Japreet Sing etc. It is one these lines, towards the end of the post modern and post colonial traits, the emergence of Fourth World literatures has brought in the significance to Native literatures. Though Canadian literature has developed its own unique identity, Native Canadian literature as a representative of Fourth World literatures brought in the issue of Aboriginality/Indigenality into serious representation. It is because of the oral tradition of Native literatures, Canadian literature has become immensely rich. Native literature rooted in the oral tradition of storytelling has circumscribed all kinds of traditional narratives such as myths, legends, fairy tales, animal stories and fables. But Native Canadian literature was subjected to western prejudice and domination. During the 16th century when Canada was under colonialism, much of the understanding of Native culture depended on the deceptive social and cultural formations. Native culture was equated with uncivilized barbaric culture. In the 19th c. Natives were seen as the simple silent child of nature just above anthropoids. Natives were treated with the observation “lo, the poor Indian” (1) by most of the western writers and historians.
The inhabitants of the new world, Natives were living in North America since centuries and centuries much before the arrival of Europeans in the 15th century. Because of the false assumption of Columbus, they were called as ‘Red Indians’. In the 16th c. Spanish were the first intruders into this land. Later in the 17th c. Natives of this land were colonized by the British and French. The white men arrived for the purpose of fur trade and they succeeded in establishing contacts with local Natives and expanded their business empire. The economic and political settlement of the whites, resulted into inter racial marriages which paved the way for the formation of different tribes such as Mikmaq, Mohawk, Anishnabe, Cree, Metis and Okanagan.

Understanding Native cultures is essential in deciphering Native writings, though the Native writers have defined Nativeness in different ways. Thomas King in Introduction to All My Relations: An Anthology of Contemporary Canadian Native Fiction notes that “When we talk about contemporary Native literature, we talk as though we already have a definition for this body of literature. When we talk as though we have process for determining who is native and who is not, when, in fact we don’t” (King . x). The life and culture of the Natives in Canada is regulated by Indian Act. But this Act has become controversial in defining the various identities of Natives as Status Indians, Non-Status Indians, Metis, Inuit, Treaty Indians, Urban Indians, on reserve Indians, Non-status Indians etc. The recognition of these Natives is by different names. But Native Canadian literature reflects common themes. Nativity has become a common theme of the First Nations/Aboriginals, though the Natives have been
existing with different labels and names. The First Nations people of Canada and the other Natives/Aboriginals across the world share certain cultural values related to their land, common experience and history. According to Maria Campbell, the prominent Native Canadian woman writer that Indigenous cultures and languages have survived, because of their relationship to the land which is considered as ‘the mother’. This maternal culture distinguishes the language of the Natives from the patriarchal hierarchy because of their struggle for the land and nativity. The Native writers of Canada are often expected to write about certain issues to share the Native values, symbols and icons. Kateri Damn in one of her essays substantiates this perspective: “To Step outside the reactive mode into which our peoples have been placed so consistently. Through our writing we can continue to break the conventions which have strived to render us voiceless and illiterate. In fact, we are not and never were voiceless”. Emma La Rocque in Writing Circle elucidates this perception. She is of the view: “In Canada as elsewhere much of Native writing, whether blunt or subtle, is protest literature in that it speaks to the process of our colonization, dispossession, objectification, marginalization, that constant struggle for cultural survival and psychological self determination”.

Beginning with the oral transmission of knowledge, Native have embraced the significance of written alphabetical order. It has a great relationship with Natives of Canada. Bearing the colonial suppression and withstanding the inner urge to resist, Natives have believed in the power of the word and believed that it is their ultimate representation which introduces them
to the external spheres. To the Natives, identity is not simply a matter of genetic makeup or natural birth right. Perhaps once it was a language and now it is both. But rightnow, Natives are out on the edge but not on the road. To many of the Natives identity is a matter of will, choice, a face to be shaped in a ceremonial act.

The Natives of America for a longer period have struggled for their identity and for the recognition of their rights on their own land. Though Native Americans have represented the social and cultural problems through different forms of writings, Native literature in American has been neglected for a longer period due to several reasons. Penny Petrone in *Native Literature in Canada* (1993) has explores the reasons for the late recognition bestowed on Native literatures: “European Cultural arrogance, attitudes of cultural Imperialism and paternalism, European antipathy and prejudice towards oral literatures, the pursuit attitude of western literary critics, difficulty in translating Native literature etc… are the different reasons for the negligence of Native literatures.” Besides the attitude of negligence, the Europeans had thought that the Native tribes may disappear after some period due to their primitive nature. Diamond Jones in *Indians of Canada* (1932) had observed: “doubtless all the tribes will disappear, some will endure only a few years longer, others like the Eskimo, may last several centuries” (1). Despite all these humiliations and suppressions, the Native Canadians struggled a lot to win the freedom and recognition for their rights. The Red River Rebellion and hanging of Louis Reil etc, resulted in the recognition of Natives as civilized people. In mid 19th c. Canadian politicians
and the European population has believed that the Natives are harbingers of civilization and enlightenment in Canada. Keeping aside their assumption that civilization was possible only through Christianity and assimilation into dominant white stream and the history of degradation, Natives were given formation recognition in Canada’s new constitution in 1982.

Native writings in Canada consist of formal narrations, informal storytelling that communicated the specific descriptions of the origin of cosmos and the history of diverse tribes. Western view of Native Canadian literature is mostly based on wild perceptions and assumptions. But many American scholars had strived a lot to recognize traditional oral material as literature. Scholars like Karl Kroeber, Dell Hymes, Jarod W. Ramsey, Alan Dundes and Dennis Tedlock through well intended research proved that oral literatures of North American Indians are as intricate and meaningful as written tradition. Specially, the observation of Karl Kroeber that one must abandon the misconception that Native literature is primitive is crucial in recognizing the importance of Native literatures. In parallel response to this, American Native critics like Paula Gunn Allen, George Cornell have seriously objected to the imposition of western structures to elucidate Native oral traditions and literature. Native writings do not fit the criteria of western literary genres, as context is more important rather than the principles of western literary criticism. All the Native writers firmly believe that context is ritualistic and historical, contemporary and ancient. In the words of Paul Gunn Allen: “what has been experienced over the ages mystically and communally with individual experiences fitting within that overreaching
pattern…forms the basis for tribal aesthetics and therefore of tribal literatures” (5).

Native Canadian literature, apart from its own peculiar way of expressing itself over the course of history, is related to five cultural groups: eastern woodlands, plains, Plateau, sub-arctic and North west coast. Europeans had learnt that the people with the knowledge of the wheel recognize the power of the ‘word’. This power helps the Native to medicate the plants, animals to be caught and human beings to enter the spiritual world. Apart from this, Native literature is secular in nature though it contains spiritual beliefs, traditions, laws, morals and history of the culture group that are transmitted by the elders to the younger ones. Native cultures across the world, hold a variety of narratives to formulate their understanding of the world. The non-native readers in the beginning of the 20th c. developed a superstitious and primitive understanding of the Native cultures. But a majority of the Native writers in the contemporary situation dealt with the thematic issues of survival of individuals, communities and nations. Thomas King in his introduction to Canadian Fiction Magazine argued that Native writers have created historical and contemporary Native characters. He says: “Rather than create characters who are inferior and dying, Native writers have consciously created Native characters who are resourceful, vibrant and tenacious. Like traditional trickster figures, contemporary native characters are frequently tricked, beaten up, robbed, deserted, wounded and ridiculed, but unlike the historical and contemporary
characters in white fiction, these characters survive and preserve and in many cases prosper” (8).

Native Canadian literature comprises of different narratologies. Trickster, transformer, culture hero stories are prominent in Native literatures. Among these the trickster is prominent and in North America, it is known by the popular name ‘Raven’. Tomson Highway in *Dry Lips Ought to Move to Kapukasing* says: that without trickster “The core of Indian Culture would be gone forever” (132). Besides these native vibrant characters, Native oral literatures carry the origin of mankind, creation of the earth, migration etc. These traditional narratives include themes like heroic encounters with supernatural powers, animal-wives-husbands-parents-divinities, guardian spirit powers, a world-flood, journeys to the other worlds, animal totems belief in the significance of dreams etc. These old subjective narratives were altered and the new themes that convey the process of cultural exchange in the Native societies are encouraged. Colonialism has initiated the process of cultural exchange with the Native cultures. The intrusion of western culture, has made the Native literature to adopt European folk tales, Christian legends, historical accounts and urban jokes and stories into its narratology. Native Canadian culture is represented by songs, music and dance as they play a vital role in everyday life of the Natives. In Native cultures, every occasion and experience is celebrated with song, dance and music. These are humorous, soothing, instructive and entertaining. Another important aspect of Native culture is the hunting of animals which is considered a religious act. Native writers have tried to present each and every aspect of
their culture. They are of the view that Indigenous thought system is beyond family and is inclusive of animals, plants, rocks and the entire eco system—‘Mother Earth’ and ‘Father Sky’. With the vast cultural and subjective experience Native writers in Canada have emerged with a conviction to establish their identity.

For the convenience of understanding, Native Canadian writers are classified as first generation and second generation writers. The most popular Native Canadian writer was George Copway (Kah-ge-gahbow). He is the first Canadian writer to write a book in English *The Life, History and Travels of Kah=ge=gah-bow* (1847). He has also published *The Traditional History and Characteristic Sketches of the Ojibway Nation* (1851), which is considered the first book on tribal history written by a North American Indian. He has also published a travelogue on his British and European travels: *Sketches of Men and Places in England, France, Germany, Belgium and Scotland* (1851). He became a major spokesman for Native American rights touring the United states. George Henry, an Ojibway, is another significant Native Canadian writer who wrote in favour of Europeans appreciating the religion and praising the development. The European policies of assimilation and the Canadian Govt. policy of confining Indians to reserves with the Indian Act in 1920s, has paved the way for the emergence of protest literature. This took the forms of letters, petitions, reports written to a variety of government agencies with the themes of sense of loss, loss of land, loss of hunting and fishing rights, loss of dignity and nation. The subject of representation that became the form of protest literature
gradually developed into Native literature that dealt with the major social and cultural problems. The first educated Natives in Southern Ontario were produced by the evangelical Christian movement. With little formal education, encouraged by the leaders of the church, they created the first body of Native Canadian literature which is considered to be a source of historical and social information. The natural history of oral literary tradition is completely transformed when Native began to represent their problems in the form of letters, autobiography, travelogue, dairy, journal etc. Arguing for the dignity of Natives, Native Canadian writers have showed a passionate commitment to reconstruct the History of Natives inherited from the past. In the process of evolution, Native literature has enriched itself with communal legends, myths, beliefs and tradition.

Native Canadian writers have effectively given the evidences of their experiences in the colonial and contemporary Canadian society. Brant Sero from Brantford is the most popular early native writer and a strong poetic voice in English. He has combined a sense of enduring past with the realities of the present. Among the Native Canadian women writers Pauline Johnson is the first Canadian woman writer to be honoured by a commemorative Canadian stamp in 1961 on her hundredth anniversary. Most of her poems have appeared in Britian, America and Canadian magazines. Her poems ‘In the Shadow’, ‘At the Jerry’, ‘Marshlands’, ‘Low tide at St. Andrews’ etc. represented the originality and the freshness of Canadian voice. The content of her poems is unique in subject matter and they revealed her deep concern for the fate of Natives, her beloved
Rajani 19

Mohawks. The literary editor of ‘The Week’, Charles D. Roberts wrote to her: “You are the original voice of Canada by blood, as well as taste, and the special trend of your gifts”. Affirming the Native identity, she expressed: “my aim, my joy, my pride is to sing the glories of my own people”. She opined that it is difficult enough to be woman of one world and it is more difficult to be a woman of two worlds. She always perceived the Native cultural and literary identity and followed the western literary forms in her writings.

The period between First World War and 1969 is considered to be a barren period for Native writings due to the suppression and assimilation of European culture over the Native culture. The colonial representation of the Natives was severely resisted by the Native Chiefs across Canada and America. Deshkah, chief of the Bear clan of Cayunga nations has publicly resisted stating that the Natives are self sufficient and can learn and decide on their own. Hence, 1960’s became the decade of protest and radical reforms in Canada. To facilitate the migration of Natives from their dwellings to the urban centres Friendship centres were opened in Toronto and Winnipeg. But the discard of the Govt. and its policies had further forced the Natives into isolated and remote places.

Native Canadian literature began to represent the contemporary reality of Natives effectively since 1960s. To fulfill this, the first anthology of Canadian Native literature was published in 1969. Edited by Non Native Kent Gooderham, it was titled as ‘I Am an Indian’. Later 1970s became a decade of creative writing by Indians. Natives have successfully experimented with all the genres of literatures including children’s literature and made the turning point in the
very development of Canadian literature. The period has witnessed a burst of autobiographical works. The personal experiences were recorded and were made powerful narratives with communal legend, myth, beliefs and tradition. The episodic life of the autobiographies, governed by special events with new narrative strategies became the discursive discourse of Native Canadian literature. The intellectual and critical reception paved the way for the emergence of historical and notable Native Canadian autobiographies. *Forbidden voice: Reflections of a Mohawk Indian* (1971) by Alma Greene, *Chiefly Indian* by Henry Pennier, *Reflections of a Mohawk Indian* (1971) by Dan Kennedy, *Devil in Darkness: My life with Grey Owl* by Anahero, *Genish: An Indian Girlhood* by Jane Willis, *The Days of Augusta* (1973) by Augusta Evan, *Forty years a Chief* (1977) by George Barker are some of the significant autobiographies that contested the content of traditional autobiographies. But the most acclaimed Native Woman’s autobiography is *Half Breed* written by Maria Campbell. Campbell essaying the traditional role assigned to Native women and men weaves the personal history to celebrate the life of Metis community. Her account of the autobiographical protest is placed in the larger context of distinctive Metis resistance. It is hailed as the testimony to the racial social history of Canada. The social, cultural and literary significance of *Half Breed* is thoroughly discussed in the following chapters of the thesis. Apart from these autobiographies, short stories by the Native writers are also popular. Basil H. Johnston was considered as one of the leading short story writers. His popular
collection with twenty four short stories _Mouse Meat and Wild Rice_ (1978) has established the dignity of the Native cultures.

Native Canadian literature is also known for the children’s stories. Children’s stories became the most favored medium of expression for many Native writers. Patronella Johnson wrote _Tales of Nokomis’_ (1970), a collection of Ojibway tales that deciphered the social and cultural context of Native children. Maria Campbell wrote _People of the Buffalo_ (1976), _Little Badger and the Fire Spirit_ (1977), _Riel’s People_ (1978) for apt representation of the lives of Metis in Canada. These children’s short stories have carried the accounts of the rebellions and life stories of Louis Riel and Gabriel Dumont. Along with the children stories, Native poetry also made its effective presence. Native Poetry carried the feelings and passions of Natives with great aplomb. Sarain Stump, a popular Native Canadian poet lamented the loss of traditional way of life in the poem _There is My People Sleeping_ (1970). The poems of Duke Redbird _The Beaver, A Red Nation and I am the Redman_ reflected the political turmoil and criticized the insensitive society. An Ojibway poet George Kenny in _Indians Don’t Cry_ revealed the social humiliation and the inconsistence lives of Native Canadians. Rita Joe another Native Canadian women poet said that she writes always with the children in mind, understanding the rights, education and dignity of Natives. Her poems convey a strong sense of self. The anthology of Native Canadian poetry, ed. by non Natives David Day, Marilyn Bowering _Many Voices: An Anthology of Contemporary Canadian Poetry_ (1977) proclaimed native ancestry of many poets.
The social and cultural change that effected the Canadian society during 1980’s found its resonance in Native Canadian literature. Native writers across Canada were imbued with a feeling of optimism and dedication. They were more concerned with the social, political and economic histories that emerged due to the racial discrimination and self fulfilling stereotypes, which naturally became the subject of literature. During this period, powerful native writers Beatrice Culleton, Jeannette C. Armstrong, Ruby Slipper Jack, Jeam Crate, Thomas King, Beth Brant, Harry Robinson came out with influential works that made Native Canadian literature as the most significant streams of Canadian literature. Jeannette C. Armstrong’s *Slash* gave the much awaited recognition to the Native perspective and North American Indian protest movement. She elucidated the misconceptions that arise in reconstructing the Native history with accuracy. Ruby Slipperjack’s *Honor the Sun* set in an imaginary small isolated community depicted the suffering of Native societies from alcoholism and violence of the Canadian community. Joan Crate’s *Breathing Water* narrated the problems involved in proclaiming Metis identity. Thomas King’s *Medicine River* with its wonderful series of stories examines the psychological, spiritual or mythological problems encountered by Natives in a fictionalized village. The novel has exhibited a deep and abiding sense of humor and compassion at the backdrop of historical and cultural perspective of Natives.

Native Canadian writings have succinctly depicted the inter relationship of men and nature, the reverence for all life, the loneliness and rejection of Native child and the theme of estrangement. Grandmothers are always
significant figures of fascination in Native Canadian literature. The role Native women in the protest movement of the history of Canada cannot be neglected. Peter Jones, a popular Native Canadian Methodist known as ‘kahkewaquinby’ comparing the progress of Native woman with the progress of ancient classical civilizations. Janet Silman’s *Enough is Enough: Aboriginal Women Speak Out* (1987), a great collection of interviews with different woman activists from Tobique Reserve in New Brunswick, reflects the similar opinion of praising the progress of Native women. This significant literary expression also helps in elucidating the dynamics of racial injustice in the lives of Native women in Canada in reshaping the destiny of the Nation.

Among the different streams of Native writings, writers with Metis origin are considered to be distinctive in representing the fusion of European and Native cultural paradigms. Beatrice Culleton belongs to Metis culture. Her semiautobiographical novel *In Search of April Raintree* became a classic in Native Canadian literature. The present thesis elucidates the social, cultural and literary significance of *In Search of April Raintree* is discussed in the following chapter. She has created great influence on Canadian culture with other works such as *April Rain Tree* (1984), *Spirit of the White Bison* (1989), *In the Shadow of the Evil* (2000), *Unusual Friendships: A Little Black Cat and A Little White Rat* (2002), *Come Walk with Me: A Memoir* etc. *April Rain Tree* is the revised novel of *In Search of April Raintree* written especially for the students of plus two level. The episodes and language were modified for the sake of the students. *The Spirit of the White Bison* is the story of the young Bison growing up in
plains in the late 1980s. Culleton makes Bison as the narrator of the novel. It is pertinent to observe that North America was one a safe home for countless Bisons. Natives held these animals in reverence, as it provided them food, clothing and shelter. After the emergence of colonialism, Metis too made their living from the plains of bison. But the different value system based on power and control resulted into the deliberate decimation of the plains bison. Though the text is seen as a specimen of Children’s literature, it bears a striking analogy to the colonial violence endured by the Native Canadians, particularly by Metis. The text explores how the spirit of the White Bison became a symbol for the demise of Native and Metis culture. The theme of the novel conveys much more than the decimation of Buffalo. It naturally draws a connection between the killings of plains bison and the destruction of the aboriginal. Towards the end of the novel Culleton resolves: “And Finally, I think it is ironic that one has to fight for peace” (5). Another novel In the Shadow of the Evil is set in the foothills of northern Canadian Rockies. This gripping mystery follows the protagonist, Christine, who struggles to come to terms with the sudden loss of her husband and child. Haunted by her own childhood, Christine’s life unravels to reveal ghosts and events from her past. As the impending drama unfolds, Christine realizes her true friends and succeeds in solving the questions that surrounds the mystery of the death of her family members. On the lines of psychological thriller, with many intricate plots, the novel reveals the experiences of a Metis woman in relation to her prejudice, sexual abuse and foster homes in Canada. Her story is juxtaposed with the struggles of a family of
wolves at the fictional Shadow lake. This novel is focused on the themes of self forgiveness, power, healing and with the past before embraces the future of life. In another work Unusual Friendships: *A Little Black Cat and A Little White Rat*, writing in a complete rhyming pattern, Culleton depicts animals as the characters specially for entertaining the children. The Unusual friendship depicted between a black cat and a white rat is full of colourful Metis affectations. Carrying the subtle reference to the life of a Metis, the black Cat is not accepted at the cat show as she is not considered to be pure bred. The white rat fiddles a tune encouraging all the cats to learn to jig. They all join together and achieve status and respect for which they strived for. In the end the animals create a new jig called the Red River Cat Dance.

*Come Walk With Me: A Memoir* is the first autobiography of Beatrice Culleton. She depicts many of her life’s struggles as a child appended by the Children’s Aid society and placed into foster care. She writes about this period of confusion and struggle with clarity and honesty. This self representation deals with parental alcoholism, abuse, racism, suicide and dysfunctional first marriage. She explains her role as a writer and the circumstances that lead her to open her voice through the act of writing.

On the lines of Culleton, there are many Native writers from Metis culture that produced different works aptly representing the Native culture. Hence, the period of 1980s is understood as the period great literary expression for Metis struggle to be identified as Native Canadians. Duke Redbird’s *We Are Metis* (1980) is described as the first completed history of Metis people written
by a Metis. Another influential work *Kipwa: Portrait of a People* (1982) by Kermot A. Moore describes the changes initiated by fur trade, tourism and it shows how the Natives were displaced from the profession of farming into the industrialization. His second work *The Will to Survive: Native People and the Constitution* (1984) discusses the fundamental rights of the Natives of Canada and the relationship of these rights to the universal declaration of human rights. One has to recognize the inevitable significance of two act play *Jessica: A Transformation* by Linda Griffiths and Maria Campbell, based on Campbell’s Half-Breed. This play has narrated how the Metis protagonist Jessic surives physical and sexual abuse, prostitution, drug addiction and mental breakdown before she comes to terms with her spirituality and strength as a woman. Another popular play *The Land Called Morning* (1986) ed. by Caroline Heath is a collection of three plays that explore the lives of young native people today in the light of traditional native values, Metis history and the domination of white culture.

Taking cue and inspiration from the above literary works that influenced the social, cultural and literary conditions in Canada, more serious works have emerged defying the white stereotypical cultural and literary paradigms. In this way, the most influential book *In Prison of Grass: Canada from the Native Point of View* (1975) was written by Metis patriot Howard Adams. The book has critically evaluated Canada’s Metis policy from earliest times to modern times. Howard Adams grew up in Metis community in Saskatchewan and advocated the sophisticated level of guerilla warfare as a partial solution to Metis
liberation. This book has acquired a classic status in Native Canadian history. Another writer Harold Cardinal in *The Rebirth of Canada’s Indians* (1977) conveyed firmly that the solution for the liberation of Natives lies in the creation of a cultural bridge of understanding between Natives and Non Natives. He proposed number of changes for implementation before Native independence and self determination is declared. Emile Pelletier in *A Social History of the Manitoba Metis* (1974) brought out a record of the social history of the descendents from the inter racial marriages. D. Bruce Sealey amd Antoine S. Lussier traced the history of Metis from their beginning to the modern period in *The Metis, Canada’s Forgotten People* (1975). All these historical works have explored the reasons as to how once individualized and self dependent people who sustained their unique identity are disinherit and disillusioned. All these popular writers made a significant contribution in reconstructing the history of Natives from the distorted situation.

Native women and children continue to suffer from the shades of colonialism even in contemporary Canadian society. They are the victims of racism, sexism and of perpetual domestic violence. The current legal system and democratic compensations have done very little in liberating Native women from these unending social, cultural, political and literary assaults. Native women traditionally played a central role in Native families and culture. They had enjoyed considerable personal autonomy and continue to perform vital functions for the survival of Native communities. They are viewed as life givers and caretakers of the Native tradition. The thesis deals with the crucial aspect of the
reconstruction of Native womanhood in one of the chapters elaborately. The Native women’s literary expression is best found in Drama, Poetry and Fiction. The works of Beatrice Culleton, Maria Campbell and Lee Maracle are discussed thoroughly in the following chapters. To pave the way for a better understanding of Native women’s resistance reflected in fiction as a means of liberation from the cultural aggrandizement, it would be appropriate to develop a synoptic view of Native Drama and Poetry.

Native Drama and Poetry are considered as the best means of resistance by the Native Canadian women writers. Linda Griffiths and Maria Campbell in *The Book of Jessica* analyzing the significance of Drama had observed the uncertain social and cultural situation in which Native women were compelled to lead their lives:

I’d feel the conqueror, the oppressor, making me use his language, and I know I’d never use it as well as him and I’d feel sp powerless and Think. They stole everything and we can’t just speak any more, the old language is almost gone and we don’t know the knew language well enough to help each other, heal each other … we are just hanging their in the middle (1997).

This makes us observe that though Drama is one of the earliest form of literature, its development is only of recent origin, in the Canadian First Nations society. The society which was instrumental in establishing the Trickester helped a great deal of development to First Nations Drama. Despite the mild recognition in the development of Native Drama, one should understand that a
great deal of development is due to the presence of Trickester, who is considered a conscious awakener. In its usual succession, it was not free from the influence of English and French Drama.

The establishment of various theatres of Drama like the Red Roots Theatre group in Winnipeg, the De-ba-jeh-mu-jug Theatre group in Manitoulin island Ontario, Native Earth Performing Arts Theatre Passe Muraille in Toronto, th eUpisask theater of Ille-a-la-cross, Saskatchewan are some of the theatre companies that acted as the catalysts in the development of Native Canadian Drama. It is not surprising to observe that men dominated the field of Native Canadian Drama and women dramatists are few in number. The notable Native Canadian women writers who made a niche in this sphere are Maria Campbell, Monique Mojica, Yvette Nolan and Margo Kane. Maria Campbell in *The Book of Jessica: A Theatrical Transformation* (1989) explores the issue of the appropriation of the Native culture. Collaborating with a non-first Nations actress Linda Griffiths, Campbell has depicted the problems faced by an actor of one culture to represent the experiences of a person of another culture. Marlene Nourbese Philip in One Act Play ‘Coups and Calypso’ stresses the crude problems of racialisation that prevent the relationships between the human beings. Cree writer Shirley Cheechoo rendered the traumatic experiences of Native girl in the residential school in her plays. Cheechoo has experimented with monologue. The protagonist, a school girl name Shirley, is found locked up in a room when the play begins. She speaks to the audience and the objects she sees before her and tells her experiences revealing the horrors of the Residential
school system. Another Native Woman playwright Monique Mojica in *In Prince Pocahontas and the Blue Sports* (1990) exposes the European imposed cultural paradigms on the Native women juxtaposing with contemporary reality. She contests the negative definitions of Native women. Countering the white defined stereotypical identities she presents the representatives of contemporary Native reality. Another Native Woman Play Wright Margo Cane’s *Moonlodge* (1990) also exemplifies the similar content.

Among the male Native Canadian Playwrights is Dre Hayden Taylor who provided the downright critique of the policies of the mainstream government. Taylor’s *Someday* (1993) deals with the cultural cruelty of residential school system. This popular play dealt with Anne, the first Nations mother who waits for a lifetime for the return of her first born child Grace, who had been taken away from her by the Children’s Aid Society. The child grows unattached to its biological parents and culture. The play ends with the grown up woman Grace, called Janice leaving promising to return to her mother *Someday*. Taylor’s another play *Only Drunks and Children Tell the Truth* (1996) is a sequel to *Someday*. The play presents Janice (Grace) hating her biological mother and refusing to see her. She is imposed with the image of biological mother as alcoholic like other lost women of reserves. She finds the reasons for her brought up by the white adopted parents. Realizing the truth, towards the end of the play Janice comes to her mother’s grave to ‘seek forgiveness’ (76) from her. Taylor has suggested that Native life is the life of contentment. He is of the view when a community discards its culture and way of life, it faces problems and
fails to fit in any frame work. In *Toronto at Dreamers Rock* he says that this situation is being experienced by the Natives. Daivd Diamond in his play “No Xya” reclaims First Nations culture and practices. He has incorporated the Native ritual of invoking the God for protecting the actors by drawing the circle. Maria Campbell also suggested the need for protecting the actors by doing the circle every morning and every night. By subverting the Eurocentric theatrical practices, Native Canadian writers have succeeded in reworking the canonical renditions of Shakespeare. As a part of counter discursive strategies, justifying Gayathri Spivak chakravarthy’s term ‘epistemic violence’ and Helen Tiffin’s term ‘Canonical counter’, in 1989, Skylight Theatres of Toronto demonstrated a discursive performance of Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* depicting Caliban and Ariel as Natives/First Nations of Canada. First Nations/Native themes were integrated into the character of Ariel as Raven, the Trickster, who is the cultural hero of the Natives. Traditional cultural elements like the ‘Potlatch’ were incorporated into the presentation, where the Europeans were presented as ‘Visitors from Hell’ whose presence ended up in the death of the lives and obliteration of the culture of Natives (Gilbert and Tompkins 26). Native plays have effectively carried out the incorporation of regional rituals fulfilling the post colonial traits. Such kind of Native plays are considered as sites of resistance, attempts to assert their culture and performed according to the specificities of the regional theatre. They have prohibited the perusal of the complex representational matrix of colonial cultures.
In this battle of registering a strong resistance, Native playwrights have even subverted the Biblical discourse. Reworking on the Biblical myths, they have exposed the hegemonic concepts of European culture. Metis writer Yvette Nolan challenged the racial issues of Christianity through the play *Job’s Wife or the Delivery of Grace*. She has challenged the Christian practice of confession for absolution. This sort of resistance is discernable and almost echoes the subversion in the similar velocity I the Aboriginal playwrights of Australia. Jack Davis, the most popular Aboriginal playwright in *In Our Town* (1990), lashes at the very functioning of Christian missionaries. He cautioned: Wetjala cunning fellow alricht. When they come (sick) here they had the Bible and we had the land, (now) they’ve got the land and we’ve got the Bible” (44). Another popular Native playwright Thompson Highway in *Dry Lips Oughta Move to Kapuskasing*(1989) depicts Native youth Dicke Bird’s rape of a First Nations woman. It is suggestive of Christianity’s assault on the space of Natives. His another play *Rez Sisters* points to the experiences of Seven sisters of a first Nation’s family. The dislocation and displacement of the seven sisters in the realm of Canadian context is depicted. Highway upheld the view that Native mythical figure ‘Nanabush’ undermined the significance of Christian Gods. In both the plays the characters with speech impediments are cast by Tomson Highway. The muteness of these characters is the symbol of linguistic suppression effected by Colonialism. Daniel David Moses who writes in Cree interpreted this situation in his ‘*Almighty Voice and His Wife* as the loss of language.
Native plays have also subverted the body politics of colonial presentation. Most of the Native playwrights downplayed the white superiority. Jack Davis’s in *Kullark* pointed out that finding of Europeans as unnatural. Drew Hayden Taylor in the play *Toronto at Dreamers Rocks* questioned: “Why is he (White man) White? Is he not Well?” (39). In the colonial discourse the body is the site of codification, supervision and constraint. In the process of recuperating the colonized subjects, Native Feminist writers have subverted the artistic and psychic surveillance. This has reinforced the reclaiming of the body. Tomson Highway in *Rez Sisters* dismantled the colonized perception of linking the body of the woman and the land. The rape of the central character Ryga by three women becomes the symbol of assault on the Native territory and culture. Highway delineates from these symbols of gender subordination. Most of the plays by the Native writers articulated for the liberation of gender roles subjected under colonial configurations, which has eventually led to the self definition of Native women in the post colonial world.

On the lines of First Nations/Native Drama, First Nations/Native Canadian poetry is overtly critical about colonialism and the contemporary neo colonialism. Native poets have presented the eco feminist perspectives of the culture and subverted the eccentric social and political concepts. Jeannette Armstrong has effectively used poetry to represent the empowerment of the Natives. Armstrong’s ideology is rooted in the Native oral traditions and the concept of ecological balance. In Native tradition, Poetry is orally transmitted. Adhering to the rhythmic pattern, poetry has to be sung or to be performed on
the stage. Subscribing to this ideology, Armstrong had performed some of her poems on the stage to be within the circle. In her collection poems *Breath Tracks* (1991) land is symbolized as the grandmother and is presented as a binding force with its children. Most of her poems serve as vehicles to her political ideology of resistance. The technique of juxtaposition is employed in the poem ‘High Bracken Mountain’. The poem ‘Blood’ traces the descend of the community, the resilience and the unity of the people in the social and cultural uncertainty. In the poem ‘Keeper’s words’, Armstrong celebrates the power of the word, which withstood the onslaught of colonization: “There will be now new words/ In man-designs/To break up what is sacred and/Leave forget in its place/We are keeper we must not change” (Breath Tracks. 91). The danger in discarding one’s language is thematised in another poem ‘Threads of Old Memory’. Armstrong instructs the readers that to discard the language is like losing one’s identity. Claire Harris another Native women poet urges the child to recuperate the lost Native tongue in *Drawing Down Daughter* (1992). Marily Dumont challenges the received notions of superiority of English language and calls it in the poem *the Devil’s language*. Rita Joe another popular Native Canadian Woman poet in the poem *Micmac Hieroglyphics* observed that micmacs had employed the method of preserving their language. Greg Young-Ing in the poem *Earth Memory* depicts the earth as the oldest, wisest elder, teacher and the ultimate survivor and also a creative warrior. Murray porter in the poem ‘500 years’ accuses the Europeans for exploiting the earth and warns that humans to make use of the earth according to his needs. Nora Devenhauer Sati in the poem
‘Geocide’ ridicules white governments measures to preserve certain species when they are on the edge of extinction. Another poem ‘Life Rhythms’ by Dan Crank celebrates the inseparability of the people and the land:

(…) in the land is reality

There is warmth, growth,
And bountifulness.
And all around, there are the life rhythms.
Like in living room: Plants stretch

To hear the pulse of the music. (Perrault and Vance.138).

Armand Garnet Ruffo in his poetry depicts how the Europeans made the Natives landless and powerless even to resist. Garnet Ruffo’s poetry on Grey Owl explored the mythical nature of Grey Owl. Bren Kolsen another native Canadian women poet bewails the loss of Metis land: “We are the daughters of the Metis. Don’t have any land”. She indulges in nostalgic reminiscences to contest the past of the Metis that is lost with the arrival of the colonials. Nourbese Philip resorts to discursive devices to contest the arbitrarily imposed identities on the colonized. Mohawk writer Pauline Johnson’s poem ‘The Corn Husker’ depicts the predicament of the present day Native woman. The Native woman who labours in the fields remembers her past. Pauline has portrayed how the white have slaughtered Indian chief –Eagle Chief- for thieving the cattle. She blames the colonials that they have exploited the natural resources of Native lands: “You have cursed and called his a Cattle/Theif, though/You robbed him first of bread/Robbed him and robbed my people.” (Moses and
Another poem of Pauline Johnson ‘The Song of My Paddle Sings’ depicts the outdoor life of the Natives. It describes the beauty of nature and the joy of paddling in the river. Another Native Canadian woman poet Columpa Bopp in the poem ‘Screaming’ expresses her raging agony at the denial of opportunities to Natives: “Let me hold the world in my crying hands/envelope her in my pain/with the world I shall scream/the ages of pain away” (Young-Ing 246). Doris Deale encapsulates the predicament of the Natives of contemporary Canadian society and her desire to dismantle the hegemony of the European impostors in the poem ‘Will I too Am Through With All That Stuff’. She criticizes the European owned publishing industry’s discriminatory practices. Gail Tremblay, another Native Canadian woman poet in the poem ‘Reveal His Name’ upholds that a person who crosses sea and reaches a strange land, destroying the people and culture cannot be called explorer. She implicitly suggests that his name is ‘butcher’.

The thematic concerns of the Native poetry yearns for the nostalgia of the precolonial life and explicitly registers its wrath at the destruction of the contented existence. Leonara Hayden McDowell in the poem “Where Eagles Soar” longs for the past life of the Natives. She expresses her desire to be part of the Native world that is not stained by the European ingression: “When my soul is ready to/Leave this poor shell/Of shriveled skin and aching bone/My last request to go back home/Where tall trees grow and eagles fly” (Perrault and Vance.182).
It is to this extent, the post colonial era has witnessed the emergence of First Nations/Native literature in all the genres as a counter discourse against the colonial subversive interpretation of Native cultures. The agenda of Native literary representation is to reconstruct from the dismantled position for the sake of the survival of Native cultures in the contemporary world. In the broader context, Native literatures in the post colonial times is protest literature. Like the African, Afro American and West Indian writers, Native Canadian writers have appropriated the colonizers language. They have subverted ‘English’ to suit their creative and artistic needs. Locating the material in their Native history, recording the protest and anger, they have evolved a new genre by transforming ‘life writing’ and ‘self writing’ modes of expressions.

A unique development in the Native literary scene is the emergence of Native Canadian Women’s writing. The form of semi autobiographical representation has been the forte of many Native Canadian women writers which subverted the Eurocentric novels on the lines of African slave narratives. Maria Campbell’s Half Breed (1973), Beatrice Culleton’s In Search of April Raintree (1984), Lee Maracle’s I Am Woman (1988), Bobbi Lee; the Indian Rebel (1990), Sundogs (1992), Daughter’s Are Forever have become the voice of the doubly and triply marginalized Native Women of Canada. The following chapters will elucidate the works of these Native Canadian women writers analytically and critically to the complete extent defining sustenance of Native womanhood.