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Canadian First Nation, the History of Injustice

Bakalářská práce

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I declare that I worked independently on my bachelor thesis “Canadian First Nation, the History of Injustice” under the guidance of my supervisor and that I included the complete list of used and cited literature, and other sources.

In Olomouc.....

Signature.....

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## Introduction

As the title suggests, injustice, racism and discrimination have afflicted Canadian First Nations from the very beginning. Despite being the first people to occupy the area, they were forced to change their way of living and abandon their territory. There is a distinction between Canadian First Nations, Indians and Aboriginals and membership to a particular group assigns special rights. The thesis is concerned mainly with the First Nations who are enrolled in the Indian Register and who primarily occupied British Columbia.

In the next section I provide several examples of Aboriginals' harsh treatment, such as a civilizing plan, land confiscation, peasant farming and unemployment. Moreover, Indian children were taken from their families to foster care for assimilation and re-education. On the other side, the living conditions of Indian communities are not always suitable for children either, therefore, the foster families might have been their rescue.

The third chapter deals with the treaties that were signed between Canadian Whites and First Nations. The first treaty was signed in 1701 and soon after that the Indian Department was formed, which protected boundaries of the Indian territory. However, there is also an opinion that Indians do not have any historical right to occupy their land.

The Indian Act, which dealt with Indian classification, was signed in 1876. Many amendments were gradually added with the aim to assimilate as many Aboriginals as possible into Canadian society. The turning point occurred in 1982, when Aboriginal rights were successfully negotiated in Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

The last part of my work is concerned with novels *Slash* and *In Search of April Raintree* and their historical and literary analysis. Short biographies of authors Jeannette C. Armstrong and Beatrice Culleton Mosionier are provided, followed by description of the stories. The main aim is to compare forms of discrimination against the Aboriginals and thus determine if the injustice is a common issue, or if it is rather unique. There are arguments supporting both the Indians and the Whites.

# 1 Injustice and Racism

The terms injustice and racism should be defined at the beginning to truly understand the topic and the issue that I want to focus on. Basically, injustice is a situation in which someone restricts the freedom of someone else and acts against moral and other rules. “A theory of group injustice has the following characteristics. It is applied to groups, it involves consequential harm, and an assessment of the power status of the parties is required within a historical and political context.”<sup>1</sup> In our case, the social group involves Canadian Natives. The examples of consequential harm are shown in the following chapters as well as an assessment of the power status of the parties. There have been many treaties, restrictions and laws that adjusted Natives’ rights and freedom, and therefore we can declare that Canadian First Nations are truly marked by injustice.

A single definition of racism is quite difficult to find, since many historians and philosophers have a different opinion about it. Inequalities may stem from racial origin, social position or ethnicity. As Simon claims, injustice involves an infliction of a harm. It is often forgotten that someone does the inflicting...At the very minimum, injustice requires human agency, however indirect or remote.<sup>2</sup> Thus, even natural disasters or diseases are not the primary source of injustice. The source is a human being.

One of the main points of various declarations dealing with human rights and independence is the statement that all people are equal. However, it is not always a valid rule, and if we notice some marks of inequality, then we are talking about racism. As Satzewich points out, if scarce resources like jobs, wages, and education are not equally distributed, then this is the main evidence of discrimination that stems from racism. Alternatively, if some groups are concentrated in disadvantaged positions in Canadian society, then it is also attributed to unequal treatment, and it can be a case of racism as well.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas W. Simon, *Democracy and Social Injustice: Law, Politics and Philosophy* (United States of America: Rawman & Littlefield Publishers, 1995), 3.

<sup>2</sup> Simon, *Democracy and Social Injustice*, 33.

<sup>3</sup> Vic Satzewich, *Racism in Canada* (Ontario: Oxford University Press, 2011), 15

## 2 Historical Overview

### 2.1 Canadian First Nations, Indians and Aboriginals

To use the correct terminology, it is necessary to understand the difference between Indians, First Nations, and Aboriginals. Indians got their name by the European colonists who came to North America convinced that they were in India. Canada.ca asserts that many people who were misnamed "Indians" now prefer to be called First Nation. First Nations people identify themselves by the nation to which they belong to, for example, Mohawk, Cree, Oneida, and so on.<sup>4</sup> Aboriginal people are represented by Indians, Métis and Inuit people.

Satzewich believes that the membership in one of these groups matters for personal reasons, but it has certain consequences as well. For First Nations, there are several special rights and limitations attached to these identities.<sup>5</sup> It can be summarized as the right to independence through self-determination regarding governance, land, resources and culture.

In this work, the main focus is put on First Nations and according to Canada.ca, there are approximately 901,000 Registered Indians living in Canada alongside 617 First Nation communities. The Indian Register is the official record identifying all Registered Indians in Canada, who are also known as Status Indians.<sup>6</sup> Most of the communities are situated in British Columbia with the total number of 198 and the fewest in Prince Edward Island, where we can find only two communities. To accentuate cultural diversity of the Canadian country, many towns and cities were given names adopted from the original Aboriginal language that was spoken in the area. For example Coquitlam means "small red salmon" and it stands for British Columbia.<sup>7</sup>

To set some basic rules which would define their unique institution, Natives have chosen their own leaders and government. Comeau and Santin explain that the "potlatch" system that followed on the West Coast was known as a gathering of people, who selected their leaders and chiefs during ceremonies and made decisions affecting

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<sup>4</sup> "First Nations People in Canada," *Canada.ca*, <https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1303134042666/1303134337338> (accessed March 13, 2017).

<sup>5</sup> Satzewich, *Racism in Canada*, 55.

<sup>6</sup> "First Nations People in Canada."

<sup>7</sup> "First Nations People in Canada."

the tribe.<sup>8</sup> They also claim the system on the East coast was introduced by the Iroquois and it is called “longhouse”, which means a formalized constitution and a code of laws where male and female leaders were chosen from each family clan and decisions were consequently reached through consensus.<sup>9</sup> The Natives simply developed a working system that was based on democracy, justice and usage of natural resources. They relied on each other and their aim was to live peacefully without any outside interference.

## **2.2 Harsh Treatment - Land and Peasant Farming Policy**

There have been many occasions when Indians were forced to move and leave the land for the benefit of the European Canadians under illegal circumstances. The attempt to seize First Nations’ land is one of the examples of discrimination against the Indians. King states that one of the cases happened in the year 1967 when the construction of the hydroelectric project at Churchill Falls in Newfoundland began. This happened in spite of objections of the Innu, who lost over 1,900 square miles of their traditional hunting and trapping land to the subsequent flooding.<sup>10</sup> Innu had to find a new land, but nobody helped them and nobody was truly concerned if they had a place to live in.

The land is the most important source of self-identification for the Native people. The elimination of reserve lands means termination of status and rights for them. As Notzke points out, the forced change of status of Indian Governments to that of municipal governments, and the change of reserve land status from federal crown land to provincial crown land is a sure means of termination of Indian rights and status and elimination of a land base.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, the main Indian concern was to keep their territory. They raised their children to fight for the land as it was their life mission.

Furthermore, it was quite difficult to visit their relatives and friends, especially for the Status Indians. Satzewich claims that permission for common activities, such as a visit to relatives in another reserve, shopping in town, even selling eggs at a local

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<sup>8</sup> Pauline Comeau and Also Santin, *The First Canadians: A Profile of Canada’s Native People Today* (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, 1995), 70.

<sup>9</sup> Comeau and Santin, *The First Canadians*, 70.

<sup>10</sup> Thomas King, *The Inconvenient Indian: a curious account of native people in North America*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 96.

<sup>11</sup> Claudia Notzke, *Aboriginal Peoples and Natural Resources in Canada* (Ontario: Captus Press, 1994), 176.



market, was required.<sup>12</sup> Voting, liquor consumption, and pool hall attendance were also restricted. Even today, there are some special restrictions on the Status Indians defined by the Indian Act. The potlatch ceremony was banned in 1885. In 1927, Status Indians were forbidden to be represented by a lawyer if they meant to make a claim against Canada.

In 1889, the commissioner Hayter Reed approved a new system of farming based on separation reserves into farms and usage of simple tools. Walker believes that according to Read, labour saving machinery was not required by the Indians. They should be able to cultivate root crops rather than concentrate upon extensive grain growing.<sup>13</sup> This system was called peasant farming. Indians owned only a small acreage since they were believed to succeed in proper cultivation of a small area rather than in cultivation of a larger one.

As a result of that, the Indians did not have enough place where to grow their crops and breed their animals and they were not able to compete with the Whites on the market. They were not supposed to be good enough to operate farms as business enterprises. Despite many complaints to the Department of Indian Affairs about unfair subsidies, Aboriginal farming and its technology was not improved. As Pritzker observes, land was sold to non-Indians and mechanized farming equipment was taken away. With this policy, Canadian officials succeeded in dramatically reducing the total land under Indian cultivation and in maintaining the reserves in poverty.<sup>14</sup>

The peasant farming policy also meant destruction of the community ownership system on reserves and improvement of individualism and self-support. As Walker remarks, private property defined in The Dawes Act was a major triumph for humanitarian reformers who believed that individual ownership was the key to the civilization and assimilation of the Indians, but it also appealed to those with overt self-interest in mind.<sup>15</sup> Satzewich confirms that native adults were encouraged to take up agriculture which would lead to a more settled lifestyle, a greater sense of

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<sup>12</sup> Satzewich, *Racism in Canada*, 61.

<sup>13</sup> Barrington Walker, *The History of Immigration and Racism in Canada: Essential Readings* (Toronto: Canadian Scholar's Press, 2008), 111.

<sup>14</sup> Barry M. Pritzker, *A Native American Encyclopedia: History, Culture, and Peoples* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 312.

<sup>15</sup> Walker, *The History of Immigration and Racism in Canada*, 114.

demanded responsibility, and capitalist work ethic.<sup>16</sup> Thus, they would not be rebellious and they would respect all the rules.

On the other hand, the peasant farming policy could be perceived as a way of Indian development. With this policy, Indians were forced to work on themselves and thus become a smarter and more cultivated nation. Walker explains that Reed also drew on aspects of an evolutionary argument to support his peasant farming policy. It was thought that men developed progressively through prescribed stages from savagery through barbarism to civilization. The Indians were perceived to be many stages removed from nineteenth-century civilization, and while they could take the next step forward, they could not miss the steps in between.<sup>17</sup>

### **2.3 Harsh Treatment - Unemployment and Foster Care**

Discrimination against Native women happened as well, and they might have been treated even worse than Native men. Worse job opportunities, restricted freedom and sexual harassment are only a few examples of injustice. Satzewich believes that when Aboriginal women were victimized, there was less sympathy and professionalism from the police and other justice-system authorities like prosecutors and judges.<sup>18</sup> *Historica Canada* reports that although Aboriginal women make up 4.3 per cent of the female Canadian population, they are significantly overrepresented among missing and murdered women. In 2011, the NWAC database included 582 known cases, most of which had occurred between 1990 and 2010.<sup>19</sup> Their lives are not taken as important as the White women's lives.

Native women had almost no rights in hospitals or other state institutions. Doctors could examine and operate them in whichever way they found acceptable. However, they did not really care if they would hurt the Native patients. According to Weisz, in the late 1970s Native women were sterilized without their knowledge. Tubal ligations were performed on older multiparous women when the obstetrician determined that it was in the patient's medical interest. The women simply agreed to whatever the doctor told them to do, because they had always done so in the past.<sup>20</sup> The Natives could not be

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<sup>16</sup> Satzewich, *Racism in Canada*, 59.

<sup>17</sup> Walker, *The History of Immigration and Racism in Canada*, 111-112.

<sup>18</sup> Satzewich, *Racism in Canada*, 72.

<sup>19</sup> "Indigenous Women's Issue in Canada," *Historica Canada*,.

<http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/native-womens-issues/> (accessed March 14, 2017).

<sup>20</sup> George Weisz, ed., *Social Science Perspectives on Medical Ethics* (Montreal: Kluwer Academic

sure if the authority was trustworthy or not, and they realized their disadvantaged position.

A lot of Indian women would like to improve their situation and working conditions by being employed as domestic workers. Their attempts are hindered by the prejudice against them and consequent discrimination. Walker claims that west Indian women in search of domestic service are no longer readily welcomed in Canada.<sup>21</sup> Canadian families have been always believed to prefer White workers since they consider them to be more trustworthy and hardworking. So not only worse medical treatment and limited human rights are the issues they have had to face, but also job opportunities have been restricted. Moreover, in 1869 the Indian Act introduced a law that made Aboriginal women lose their treaty and Aboriginal rights if they married someone without the status. This law was not cancelled until 1985 when Bill C-31 amended the Indian Act.

In general, the employment rate for Aboriginal people is much lower than for the general Canadian population, while the unemployment rate for Aboriginal people is much higher than for their non-Aboriginal counterparts. *Historica Canada* provides data from the 2006 Census that show the employment rate for Aboriginal people of core working age (25 to 54) which increased to 65.8 per cent. Despite this increase, the employment rate for Aboriginals is still much lower than for the general population (81.6 per cent). In addition, Aboriginals are twice as likely to be unemployed than non-Aboriginal people.<sup>22</sup> Even worse situation is there for Native women, who have significant difficulties to find a job. The website adds that in terms of income, Aboriginal workers make considerably less on average than the general population. According to 2006 Census data, the median income of Aboriginals (\$18,962) was considerably lower than that of non-Aboriginal people (\$27,097).<sup>23</sup>

However, Aboriginal people can not claim that Canadian government did not make an effort to improve Indian unemployment. *Historica Canada* confirms that Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) is the federal body responsible for meeting the Government of Canada's obligations and commitments to First Nations,

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Publishers, 2012), 58.

<sup>21</sup> Walker, *The History of Immigration and Racism in Canada*, 266.

<sup>22</sup> "Indigenous People: Economic Conditions," *Historica Canada*, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/aboriginal-people-economic-conditions> (accessed April, 2017).

<sup>23</sup> "Indigenous People: Economic Conditions."

Inuit and Métis. For example, INAC provides an Income Assistance Program for individuals living on reserves to assist people with meeting basic needs and provide pre-employment support.<sup>24</sup> Therefore, Indians might be only careless about finding a job.

Native children were discriminated against as well. Either by other children or state institutions such as schools. Research showed that there was high mortality of Native children in many schools. As King reveals, in 1907, there was an attempt to notify Duncan Campbell Scott, the Superintendent of the Department of Indian Affairs, of the high mortality rate of the Native students, but Scott dismissed the high death rate at schools and insisted that this alone did not justify a change in the policy of this Department, which is geared towards the final solution of our Indian Problem.<sup>25</sup> Since the government did not provide any help, there were not many options left how to solve this problem.

Knopf states that poverty and family problems caused that Aboriginal children are up to six times more likely than non-Aboriginal children to be removed from their Native families and placed in foster care.<sup>26</sup> Comeau and Santin add that by 1985, 6.4 percent of all status children were in care, while the overall Canadian rate remained at 1 percent. These children, once placed in care, usually never returned home. For non-native children, placement in foster homes is usually a temporary solution. In contrast, for the most of native children, the new living situation becomes permanent, as they are shuffled between foster homes for years.<sup>27</sup> They are supposed to find there a better place to live, but the real aim is assimilation and re-education so that they will become more similar to non-Aboriginal children. There is not much chance to fight against the removal.

On the other hand, Indian living conditions are very bad and a placement of Aboriginal children into foster families might even save their lives and assure them a better future. Historica Canada reports that between 2004 and 2014, two-thirds of Indians in Canada lived under at least one water advisory (a public health notice that the water is contaminated). In a well-known case in Ontario, experts reported that 90

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<sup>24</sup> “Indigenous People: Economic Conditions.”

<sup>25</sup> King, *The Inconvenient Indian*, 115.

<sup>26</sup> Kerstin Knopf, *Aboriginal Canada revisited* (Ottawa : University of Ottawa Press, 2008), 12.

<sup>27</sup> Comeau and Santin, *The First Canadians*, 143.

per cent of the population of Grassy Narrows and Wabaseemoong First Nations showed signs of exposure to mercury from the Wabigoon-English River system.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> “Indigenous People: Social Conditions,” *Historica Canada*, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/native-people-social-conditions> (accessed March 29, 2018).

## 3 Treaties Between Native and non-Native Canadians

### 3.1 Arriving Colonists

Throughout history, treaties between the Canadian Natives and non-Natives played an important legal role. They were the only means of maintaining Indian rights and the only chance of survival. Chapman and Smith define the treaties as a way of arranging a peaceful solution to a problem. The parties firstly discuss the problem, then ideally each make concessions to agree on a solution. The solution is written down and then signed. Many treaties concluded between the Aboriginal peoples and settlers to Canada usually involved the transference of land from Aboriginal peoples to settlers in exchange for money, hunting and fishing rights and blocks of land for Native settlement called Indian Reserves.<sup>29</sup>

Nevertheless, if the treaties were truly mutually convenient, there would not be so many conflicts between the Indians and the Whites. As *Historica Canada* remarks, in spite of the constitutional character of treaties, the non-Indigenous peoples who made and implemented them tended to see them as self-serving deals rather than sacred pacts between independent nations. Historically, non-Indigenous treaty negotiators believed treaties were inexpensive and convenient ways to strip Aboriginal title from most of the lands in Canada so that resources could be used by settlers.<sup>30</sup> Therefore, those legal pacts did not guarantee a peaceful coexistence between the Aboriginal people and the settlers.

The first treaty, which was signed in 1701, was called The Treaty of Albany. At that time, Britain formed an alliance with the Iroquois, which was mutually advantageous since it helped Britain in the colonial war against France and the Iroquois gained control over the fur trade. They were competing with the Hurons who were in alliance with France. The treaty, known as The Great Peace, ensured the Iroquois peace with other Aboriginals from the Great Lakes and British protection for the same lands. Soon after that, the Iroquois leaders agreed in Albany to sell all the lands of the Great Lakes to Britain in return for British protection from the French attack and the right to hunt in that territory. This treaty was peaceful and favourable for both sides. This trend, unfortunately, did not continue for a long time.

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<sup>29</sup> Brenda Chapman and Wendy Smith, *Aboriginal Peoples of Canada Gr. 7-8* (Canada: On The Mark Press, 1993), 58.

<sup>30</sup> "Indigenous People: Treaties," *Historica Canada*, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/aboriginal-treaties> (accessed March 30, 2018).

To support the alliance with the Iroquois, the British created the Indian Department in 1755. Its superintendent was William Johnson, who ensured a relatively peaceful relationship with the First Nations. As DePasquale points out, recognizing the role of the First Nations as allies in Great Britain's military struggle against France, the Royal Proclamation of 1763 promised not to allow agricultural settlement of Indian territories until Aboriginals first ceded land to the Crown through treaties.<sup>31</sup> This treaty helped to establish boundaries for the Indian territory which was governed and protected by the Indian Department. It was also the first time when the First Nations rights to land were recognized.

### **3.2 British Era**

The end of the War of Independence in 1783 brought legal recognition of the United States. Consequently, British policy in North America was distinguished by two contradictory objectives: to assure friendship of the tribes and to avoid hostilities with the United States. McMillan and Yellowhorn claim that English settlers poured into that area and displaced Native people from the most desirable locations reducing them to squatters on their own land. As the fur trade declined and traditional lands for hunting and fishing were lost, many starved or died as the epidemic outbreaks of disease continued.<sup>32</sup> To compensate the loss of the territory, the Indian Department found new parcels around the Great Lakes and along the Lawrence River, where Indian were allowed to move. By maintaining the military alliance with the Indians, Britain was able to fight against the Americans in the War of 1812.

Following agreements played an important role in land distribution. McKee comments that the Douglas treaties were concluded between the years 1850 and 1854 and their aim was to purchase Aboriginal territory on Vancouver Islands, where the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) was relocated. The treaties were called after James Douglas, the HBC's chief Factor. The treaties provided some support for the recognition by imperial and colonial authorities of the pre-existing land rights of

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<sup>31</sup> Paul W. DePasquale, ed., *Natives and Settlers Now and Then: Historical Issues and Current Perspectives on Treaties and Land Claims in Canada* (Alberta: University of Alberta Press, 2012), xxv.

<sup>32</sup> Alan D. McMillan and Eldon Yellowhorn, *First Peoples in Canada* (Vancouver: D & M Publishers, 2004), 63.

Native peoples.<sup>33</sup> However, it is still unclear if the Native leaders knew exactly the real content of the treaties and Douglas's intention.

In 1950s, the attention was turned to Lake Superior and Lake Huron. Consequently, the Robinson treaties of Upper Canada were signed between the Crown and Ojibwa people and included provisions of annuities, reserves, and the freedom of Native people to hunt and fish over unoccupied Crown lands. The Ojibwa people refused to sell all their reservations, but they were threatened by the British government. McKee explains that the Robinson treaties and the Douglas treaties meant to extinguish Aboriginal title to large territories, reserving Native ownership to small tracts.<sup>34</sup>

However, we could also look at the situation from the settlers point of view and thus we might argue that the land is not the Indian property. As Nelson and Antoinette Nelson propose, First Nations people are undeserving of land title due to societal and cultural differences and disadvantages. Everyone living in Canada must live under the same set of laws, and therefore First Nations must assimilate, and Aboriginals have no temporal or historical claim to land.<sup>35</sup>

### **3.3 Confederation and the Indian Act**

The Canadian power in the nineteenth century was immense as well as the Crown's impact on the Indians. McMillan and Yellowhorn reveal that on July 1, 1867 the Canadian Confederation was established and the Crown colonies of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island became provinces of Canada and administrative responsibility for Aboriginal People shifted to the federal government in Ottawa.<sup>36</sup> The main document of the new Dominion of Canada was the British North America Act. It served to resolve different issues.

The section 91 (24) of the British North America Act was put into effect the same year in order to adjust the relationship with Aboriginal peoples. Boldt admits that although this Act, creating special federal government legislative authority over the Indians and the lands reserved for Indians, has been constructed as policy in the Indian

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<sup>33</sup> Christopher McKee, *Treaty Talks in British Columbia: Building a New Relationship* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2000), 13.

<sup>34</sup> McKee, *Treaty Talks in British Columbia*, 13

<sup>35</sup> Charmaine Nelson, Camille Antoinette Nelson, eds., *Racism, Eh?: A Critical Inter-disciplinary Anthology of Race and Racism in Canada* (Ontario: Captuss Press, 2004), 132.

<sup>36</sup> McMillan and Yellowhorn, *First Peoples in Canada*, 63.



interest, to protect Indians from provincial and private exploitation, the facts do not support this construction.<sup>37</sup> The genuine intention was to use Natives' weak position and trustfulness for the Crown's needs. Boldt adds that section 91 (24) had afforded some protection to the Indians, but the primary reason it was enacted in 1867 was to serve the fledgling national interest by creating central federal control and jurisdiction over the Indians and their territories.<sup>38</sup>

Indians were governed by the Department of Indian Affairs, which endeavoured to consolidate local policies. The consolidation took place between 1868 and 1876, resulting in formation of the Indian Act. One part of the Indian Act dealt with Indian classification. There are three categories which regulate Aboriginal rights: Status, Treaty, and non-Status.

### **3.4 Post-Confederation Treaties**

As has been mentioned above, most treaties concerned Indian land. It was an unfair fight since the Whites had control over the country. According to Shimo, they introduced a series of eleven treaties called Numbered treaties. These treaties were basically agreements between First Nations and the Crown signed across Canada from 1871 to 1921 and modelled on the Robinson Treaty of 1850 which introduced the idea of total surrender of land in exchange for little money.<sup>39</sup> The Natives surrendered their land for almost nothing despite being promised to get resources, money and jobs. Whether the Crown's representatives deliberately deceived the indigenous people is difficult to say. Shimo adds that the government did not make any attempts to clarify any misunderstandings. The Indians were not sure what they were signing since the document was not translated into their language.<sup>40</sup>

Miller mentions that a tragic example of such misunderstanding occurred at Fort Pitt, the second part of Treaty 6, when Big Bear told Morris that he wanted to make a request to be saved from the rope around his neck. Morris's interpreter translated this

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<sup>37</sup> Menno Boldt, *Surviving as Indians: The Challenge of Self-government* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 68.

<sup>38</sup> Boldt, *Surviving as Indians*, 68.

<sup>39</sup> Alexandra Shimo, *Invisible North: The Search for Answers on a Troubled Reserve* (Toronto: Dundurn, 2016), 68.

<sup>40</sup> Shimo, *Invisible North*, 69.

statement as hanging, thereby distorted Big Bear's meaning. In fact, Big Bear was saying metaphorically that he wanted to retain autonomy for his people.<sup>41</sup>

James Bay Agreement from the year 1975 is considered to be the first modern treaty. The event that preceded the agreement was the 1971 decision of the Province of Quebec to create the James Bay Development Corporation that would develop all the territory's resources. Understandably, the Aboriginals who had occupied the region – the Cree, Inuit and Naskapi – objected to the failure of the province to recognize their rights on these lands. The agreement was signed on 11 November 1975. *Historica Canada* states that Aboriginals insisted on special membership criteria (redefining Inuit and Cree status), control over local and regional governments, the creation of their own health and school boards, measures for economic and community development, special regimes for police and justice and environmental protection. Compensation of \$225 million was divided between the Cree and Inuit and paid over 20 years.<sup>42</sup>

The Indian rights and claims were continuously modified and restricted. Cuthand explains that in 1982, First Nations, Métis and Inuit leaders successfully negotiated the recognition of the treaty and Aboriginal rights in Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms. It was considered a turning point in history but also as empty words since the rights were undefined.<sup>43</sup> The leaders made a considerable effort and managed to add two clauses to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The clauses were included in Section 35 of the Charter. The first group of rights goes back to over a century ago when Canada was expanding westward. Cuthand adds that these treaties guaranteed education, health care, and economic assistance, among other rights. The second group includes rights such as preserving Indian language, culture and religion. It also indicates recognition of leadership.<sup>44</sup> The existing Aboriginal and treaty rights were consequently turned to courts to assure their validity and protection.

Bill C-31, which adjusted Indian Status, came into effect in 1985. It addressed inequity between Status native men and women. Before the Bill, when Native men with Status married non-Status women, Native or non-Native, the women and children gained Status. Nevertheless, when Native women with Status married non-Status men,

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<sup>41</sup> James R. Miller, *Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens: A History of Indian-White Relations in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017), 112.

<sup>42</sup> "Indigenous People," *Historica Canada*.

<sup>43</sup> Doug Cuthand, *Askiwina: A Cree World* (Regina: Coteau Books, 2007), 72.

<sup>44</sup> Cuthand, *Askiwina*, 72.

Native or non-Native, they and their children lost Status. In this regard, the Indian Act was discriminatory and sexist. King reveals that when Bill C-31 was passed, Native women who had lost Status because of marriage were able to get Status reinstated. The bill also closed the gap of law in which non-Native women gained Status through marriage by legislating that no one could gain or lose Status through marriage.<sup>45</sup>

King adds that it was a very deceptive situation since in case Status Indians started marrying non-Status Indians, the Status of their descendants might be changed. It is called "two-generation cut-off clause" when Indians marry out of Status for two generations, and the children of the second union are non-Status.<sup>46</sup> If this continued, there would not be any Status Indians left in Canada. It is a brilliant plan as there is no need to improve the living conditions on reserves and no reason to build the new health centre that has been promised for the last thirty years.<sup>47</sup> Currently, the Indian Act is an outdated law that, despite of a great deal of opposition, continues to resist change.

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<sup>45</sup> King, *The Inconvenient Indian*, 93.

<sup>46</sup> King, *The Inconvenient Indian*, 94.

<sup>47</sup> King, *The Inconvenient Indian*, 95.

## 4 Slash

### 4.1 Jeannette C. Armstrong

The first novel that will be analysed in a greater detail was written by Jeannette Armstrong. She is a Canadian author born in 1948 on the Penticton Indian reserve in British Columbia's Okanagan Valley. Jeannette speaks both Okanagan and English fluently and as a child she has acted as a translator for members of her community. She attended Penticton Indian Day School on the reserve until grade seven. Then she had to adapt to a new environment at a public school with 2,500 children with non-Native rules and culture. She reflects her bad feelings from that time in her work *Slash*.<sup>48</sup>

In 1978, she continued in her studies of visual arts, completing a Diploma in Fine Arts at Okanagan University College. She received a Bachelor's degree in Fine Arts in 1978 at the University of Virginia. Armstrong also participated in development of education strategy in Okanagan and helped to found the En'owkin Centre in 1979, and Okanagan Indian Curriculum Project. Later, the Theytus Books was established and the En'owkin Centre became International School of Writing in 1989. It used to be the only Canadian writing program designed for Native people. Armstrong also serves as a spokesperson of her community's traditional council. She is internationally known as an advocate of justice for indigenous people.<sup>49</sup>

Armstrong's publications include two children's books, the most famous novel *Slash*, the collection of poems *Breath Tracks* and the novel *Whispering in Shadows*. She collaborated with the Native architect Douglas Cardinal on the book *The Native Creative Process* and edited the book of essays *Looking at the Words of Our People: First Nations Analysis of Literature*. Armstrong was also distinguished with an Honorary Doctorate of Letters from St. Thomas University in 2000.<sup>50</sup> Her interest in the destiny of Native people is immense and she wants to inform the public about the injustice that is happening in Canada.

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<sup>48</sup> Jeannette Armstrong and Lally Graue, eds., *Native Poetry in Canada: A Contemporary Anthology* (Ontario: Broadview Press, 2001), 106.

<sup>49</sup> Armstrong and Graue, eds., *Native Poetry in Canada*, 106-107.

<sup>50</sup> Armstrong and Graue, eds., *Native Poetry in Canada*, 107.

## 4.2 Story Analysis, Historical Background

The work *Slash* is a bildungsroman and a fictional biography of a native man Thomas Kelasket (nicknamed Slash) tracking his personal development from childhood to fatherhood within four chapters. His experiences point to the bad attitude of the Canadian Whites to the Natives via bullying at school, unemployment, poor living conditions, land occupation and high rate of deaths. The book starts with an opening poem in the prologue and finishes with another poem in the epilogue. It is written in the first person narrative with Thomas as a narrator. He is not a hero in a traditional sense and his personal development is not that important as the development of the community as a whole. All in all, there is a weak character description and development and the primary concern is to depict historical events which take place both in Canada and the United States.

The book is full of contrasts and distinction between the good and bad, between the Indians and Whites, and between the individual characters. There is also a clear dominance of male protagonists, who increase their superiority when both significant women die. The novel was written in 1985 and it is thus considered to be one of the first novels by a female Native.

The events in the book are based on actual events but they are not meant to be portrayed as historically accurate.<sup>51</sup> In the story, Slash grows up with the Okanagan language and educative myths as well as strong family values and work ethic. His life is complicated by the legacy of colonization, and, too soon, Slash finds himself adrift. The Natives are not sure if it is better to blindly follow the rules imposed on them by the white community, or be rebellious and fight for their rights. Thomas tries to protect the Indians but he does not have a sufficient support. Many times throughout the story, the smell of home cooking and the texture of the Okanagan hills lead Slash back to his home.

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<sup>51</sup> Jeannette C. Armstrong, *Slash* (Penticton: Theytus Books, 1990), 13.

### 4.2.1 The Awakening

The story starts with an incident when Jimmy Joseph and the narrator Thomas Kelasket are making fun of Mrs. Hosfah called Horseface. This introductory scene points out that Aboriginal people could be truly rebellious and rude, as the Whites often claim. Jimmy and Thomas are both Indians and attend school with other Indians and white children. Thomas is in the last grade and he should continue his studies at residential school.

However, it is not a certain fact because his brother Danny was forbidden to continue. The Indians are very sceptical about residential school since they think that their children would only learn the bad things there. “Dad never let Danny go. I knew I wouldn’t go either. Dad said we would just learn how to steal and lie at that school.”<sup>52</sup> Moreover, kids were beaten up even for talking Indian there.

One day, Thomas is asked to read an important paper which says that Indians can vote for the next leader of the whites. Boldt explains that the right to vote in federal elections was not granted until 1960 and it was imposed by the organization Native Alliance for Red Power in Canada. Before that year, Indians who wanted to vote were required to forfeit aboriginal and treaty rights, thus ceasing to be Indian Act Indians.<sup>53</sup>

Nevertheless, the headman to Indian talking people Pra-cwa is suspicious since the Whites never did anything beneficial for Indians. “They don’t really know what they are doing. They could be getting ready to sell us out of our reserves and make us like white people. You see that last one about paying tax. That’s what I mean. I don’t like it. I don’t agree. You tell the rest not to agree.”<sup>54</sup> Experienced Indian men are respected in the Indian community. In my opinion, their suspicion of the new law is well justified since the Indians were betrayed several times in the past.

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<sup>52</sup> Armstrong, *Slash*, 16.

<sup>53</sup> Boldt, Prologue to *Surviving as Indians*, xvi.

<sup>54</sup> Armstrong, *Slash*, 21

Town schools were another threat to Aboriginal children as Thomas's dad states:

“I want to talk to you kids about school. This year the day school is going to close because the Indian agent wants all Indian kids to go to town school. You are going to have to go to school with white kids. It's going to be hard, because you're different. They will probably treat you mean and make fun of how you talk and how you dress and how you look...”<sup>55</sup>

The words come partly true since the white kids stay away from the Indians at school, they wear brand new clothes but they ran around all over the place too. The discrimination is noticeable even from the side of the principal who speaks to the Indians about the rules: “You Indians are lucky to be here. We'll get along just fine as long as you don't steal from other kids. I want you all to wait here while the nurse comes here to check your heads and ask you some questions. Then I will assign you to classes.”<sup>56</sup> This is the evidence that residential schools are not a good option for Indian children since they are not supported by anyone.

Aboriginal kids do not understand why this is necessary, they think all kids are the same and they should be treated the same way. However, the white kids sometimes tease the Indians and talk dirty. A white boy Humphrey once says: “you frigging Injuns are nothing but thieves, full of lice, everybody knows that!” An Indian kid Monty gets mad and gives Humphrey beating. Unfortunately, it is the last day when Monty is at school. “Monty didn't come back to school after that. We heard the principal kicked him out for good, but Humphrey, who started everything, didn't even get a detention.”<sup>57</sup> The Indian kids cannot complain if someone insults or attacks them since the Whites are always in the right.

Despite their exclusion, Confederation had a significant impact on Indigenous communities. In 1867, the federal government assumed responsibility over Indigenous affairs from the colonies. With the purchase of Rupert's Land in 1869, the Dominion of Canada extended its influence over the Indigenous peoples living in that region. Seeking to develop, and claim these lands, the Dominion signed a series of 11 treaties from 1871 to 1921 with various Indigenous peoples, promising them money, certain rights to the land and other concessions in exchange for their traditional territories.

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<sup>55</sup> Armstrong, *Slash*, 23

<sup>56</sup> Armstrong, *Slash*, 23-24.

<sup>57</sup> Armstrong, *Slash*, 24.

Most of these promises went unfulfilled or were misunderstood by the signatories. The years following Confederation witnessed increased government systems of assimilation, including reserves, the Indian Act and residential schools.<sup>58</sup>

#### 4.2.2 Trying It On

In the course of the story, most Indians quit school as they usually feel they do not fit there and they are underestimated all the time.

“Most of the time, when I got into a new class the teacher would automatically think I was dumb. I knew that by their remarks. Like one teacher, who explained what she wanted in slow Hollywood talk. She said, ‘You fix’um little story, Tommy, about how you live.’ To the other kids she asked, ‘Please prepare a short biographical sketch of yourself.’ Man, that time everybody in the class looked sick. You can guess how I felt.<sup>59</sup>

Not even the teachers try to encourage Indians to study and become educated. They treat them as inferior human beings.

In 1969, the Native Alliance for Red Power released their mission statement for Red Power Now. Its eight points refused the taxation of the racist government that has robbed the Indians; demanded education that exposed the true history of decadent Canadian society; called for an immediate end to the arrest of Native people since freedom for all Indigenous people who were unjustly held in the prisons of the country; and a trial for Native people to be conducted before judges and officials of their Aboriginal peers. Moreover, Red Power insisted that Aboriginals should be paid foreign aid to allow them to develop territories.<sup>60</sup>

Consequently, new young leaders are elected and they want to make their reserves and ways of living more modern. However, Dad and Pra-cwa do not like that idea, they blame schooling and sending children to town schools for forgetting how to cultivate the land and take care of animals. The threat is that all Indians would just be drinking all the time because they would not have anything else to do. Eventually, they will all die from drinking. This is exactly what the Whites intended to do. They want the Indians to bring about their own destruction.

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<sup>58</sup> “Indigenous People,” *Historica Canada*.

<sup>59</sup> Armstrong, *Slash*, 38-39.

<sup>60</sup> Bryan D. Palmer, *Canada's 1960s: The Ironies of Identity in a Rebellious Era* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2009), 406.



There are various opinions about the modern way of living of the Whites and Indians are no longer sure who is right about it. Some of them, like Jimmy, starts to hate being an Indian. The reasons are a lack of food, a dirty house, parents who drink and argue, no new clothes or a bike. Moreover, Indians are interested in marijuana and try it. It is difficult to stay proud of being an Indian when the advantages of Whites are so visible. That is the reason why many Native children start using drugs and drinking alcohol – to forget their unjust destiny.

At some point, Tommy is gratuitously stabbed in the shoulder which is one of the many Indian attacks of this kind. In fact, it is him who is charged with assault and resisting arrest. This incident changes Tommy's life and he decides to fight for Indian rights. He also starts reading to pass the time.

“I read in one of them bulletins about that the Government of Canada was proposing a new policy that would phase out Indian reserves in five to ten years. A lot of Indian people were pretty angry about that because they had been led to believe that consultations with them had been held to actually listen to their recommendations and do some good for Indians. The bulletin referred to this policy as the White Paper.”<sup>61</sup>

The White Paper was proposed by Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development Jean Chrétien and Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau and subsequently delivered on the Indian Policy to the House of Commons on 25 June 1969. It managed to do what centuries of past oppression could not: it brought Canada's Indigenous people together in a broad consensual opposition to the white state. But this shift also tended to drown the young and militant voices of Red Power into deeper waters of Aboriginal negotiation with various levels of government. The Red Power momentum of 1967–1969 sank in the post-White Paper Aboriginal activism, which moved increasingly back into a state funded series of chiefs' conferences and other usual developments.<sup>62</sup> The paper meant to depict Aboriginals and Canadians as fully equal by eliminating “Indian” as a distinct legal status.

Tommy hopes it could help to bring the Indian people together. He gets 18-month sentence in a jail where Indians are treated like dogs. Thomas even thinks about hanging himself because he feels awful. “Inside the prison there was a rehabilitation

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<sup>61</sup> Armstrong, *Slash*, 60.

<sup>62</sup> Palmer, *Canada's 1960s*, 407

program but it was mostly bullshit. We were treated like animals in lots of ways. To me it was that we were denied all kinds of things that were just basic to humans. It sure didn't have any bearing on rehabilitation.”<sup>63</sup> Indians usually got maximum sentence in jail because they could not afford a lawyer. Moreover, the prison conditions were much worse for the Indians than for the Whites. The aim was to make the Native prisoners kill themselves or to change their rebellious character completely.

Thomas also decides to attend an inquiry which deals with an Indian who was brutally killed by the police. As King reports, on February 6, 1973, 200 American Indian Movement (AIM) members and the police confronted each other at the courthouse in Custer. A local Angloman Schmitz attacked Wesley Bad Heart Bull and stabbed him to death. Schmitz even admitted to killing him. However, Schmitz was charged only with manslaughter rather than first-degree murder, and immediately released.<sup>64</sup> When the local officers refused AIM request to alter the charge, violence ensued and several AIM members were arrested but not Schmitz, who never went to jail. It led to a 71-day armed confrontation at Wounded Knee, the site of 1890 Wounded Knee massacre. It is an incident that is related to American Indians but it still clearly points to injustice against Indians in general.

### **4.2.3 Mixing It Up**

Tommy wants to help the American Natives and starts the recapitulation of the Trial of Tears. The aim of the trip is to educate themselves as Indians since a lot of people dies on that journey. They want to make the public aware of these horrible things that happened in the United States and vote for a different leader. Finally, they are promised that a task force will be set up a to review the demands. As for me, I find it very impressive how patient and ambitious the Indians are. They know that keep forcing the government to agree on their demands is their only chance for survival.

Later, Thomas's girlfriend is killed because she was an obstacle in the Canadian government program. Many Indians were wrongfully killed if they had not obeyed the government program and the Indians could not stop it. Tommy hears on the radio that AIM leaders are calling Indians from all over North America to converge at Wounded Knee. He goes there with his friends but then they are suddenly stopped by the police

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<sup>63</sup> Armstrong, *Slash*, 72.

<sup>64</sup> King, *Inconvenient Indian*, 102.

with guns and they are asked where they are going. The police do not want to allow them to go to the US at first but then let them go.

“Armed ranchers roamed between roadblocks hoping to get an Indian trying to sneak in. They called it “rabbit-hunting” and joked about it, over their citizen’s band radios, while we listened. A lot of people got their heads busted in that way. A lot of Indian women were raped and beaten and old people battered around. Many of them were even not connected with Wounded Knee, but they were Indian.”<sup>65</sup>

Tommy goes back home after a long time and attends meetings where they talk about cut-off lands, which are taken away from Indians without their permission. “All lands have been cut-off from us. Not just them little pieces off the reserve. There never was a good agreement on any of our lands. They lied to us. They never kept their promises. They make laws and they break them.”<sup>66</sup> There have not been any land treaties that would fully ensure Indians’ land claims. On the contrary, Indians have been always deceived and lost their territory. To support the Whites, some historian claim that the Indian do not have any historical right to seize their land and thus, they should be willing to negotiate it. Indians have mixed feelings from the meetings. They are happy that even non-Indians are interested in their story but also angry that some Indians do not realize the threat from the Whites.

In the end of this chapter, Tommy’s sister tells him that Danny has died. He was drunk and hit by a car on the highway hence Tommy is very sad and depressed about it. The family has changed because of the death, the parents think they have failed.

#### **4.2.4 We Are a People**

Things slow down with no easy way to money and everybody begins to be suspicious of everybody else. “The leaders were busy blaming one another over everything that went wrong. Many people accused the Movement renegades of acting without direction from duly elected Chiefs and Councils.”<sup>67</sup> Tommy is in the situation when he loses hope again, he drinks too much alcohol and ends up in jail or detox

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<sup>65</sup> Armstrong, *Slash*, 115.

<sup>66</sup> Armstrong, *Slash*, 134.

<sup>67</sup> Armstrong, *Slash*, 188.

centres. Unfortunately, Indians usually cope with a bad situation in this way and they become the alcoholics as the Whites portray them.

Then he meets Joe who offers him a helping hand and sends him to a centre, where Tommy is supposed to stop drinking completely. There is a medicine man who encourages Tommy to continue fighting because the whole Indian community needs him. Tommy comes home and a man says to him:

“You know, in every Indian family, it don’t matter how modernized the family has become, there is always one who is a keeper of the ways. That person is drawn to Indian ways like a magnet. That person sometimes suffers the worst because of it, but inside that person knows the rightness of it. I can’t explain it to good, but I have seen it to be true, no matter where in the country you go as long as there are Indians, it is true. These ones find their way eventually, to the things that they need to help them be what they are intended to be. Some of them don’t even know it and spend much of their lives in frustration because things pull them in other directions. You are one of those.”<sup>68</sup>

This is the evidence of how supportive the Indians can be and how important it is not to lose hope. Otherwise, most of the Indians would end up in detox centres or would become homeless.

The government starts taking Indian children and putting them into non-Indians homes so Indians protest against it. Tommy thinks that Indians protest in the wrong way.

“What I think is, our people really want to have our rights recognized with our ownership over the land understood. That is what we mean by settlement of land claims and rights. That’s not what the government means. They mean extinguishment and sell out. I, for one, am against that. If they never settle the land claims question, that’s fine with me. It still belongs to us. It leaves something for our descendants. Someday they will achieve their rightful inheritance if things are left that way.”<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Armstrong, *Slash*, 205.

<sup>69</sup> Armstrong, *Slash*, 241-241.

It is one of the final moments of the novel that consists of a sustained discussion of whether Indigenous people should participate in the patriation of Canada's constitution of 1982.

Nevertheless, some of the Indians do not agree since it does not guarantee any rights for the Indians. In the very end, Thomas's lover dies and he becomes desperate and wonders where he should find strength to fight again. The novel does not have a happy ending and we do not know what happens with Thomas and other Indians. Hopefully, the Indians do not lose the hope and continue fighting for their rights.

It is also important to mention the Vietnam War, which took place at the same time as the novel *Slash*. Canada was involved in that war from 1954 to 1975 and officially played the role of neutral peacemaker, but secretly backed the American effort. The aim was to discredit North Vietnam while exonerate South Vietnam from its obligations to uphold the Geneva Agreements. Ten thousand men were sent from Canada with a large representation of the Indians, who could not protest against it.<sup>70</sup>

Not surprisingly, the book was published through Theytus Books, a native Press located in Penticton, British Columbia. While Armstrong's choice to publish the novel through a Native Press might have limited the audience her novel would reach, she crystallized her commitment to protect Native writers, including herself, from exploitation and exclusion. As Hoagland states, in the project's planning stages, many non-Native writers expressed their interest in participating; Armstrong made clear that she would bury the project if Native writers were excluded, and after that she walked out on the initial meeting, the non-Native writers and consultants left the project.<sup>71</sup> Her primary worry is assumed to be the fact that non-Native writers create a false image of the contemporary Native people.

In my opinion, the book describes truthfully a life of an ordinary Indian. As children, Indians are rebellious and disobedient at school. However, sending them to residential schools is not a solution since they only learn there that they are different and thus discriminated. Even the teachers, who should be unbiased, make fun of the Indians and do not offer any support. Therefore, many Aboriginal children start taking drugs or drink alcohol to forget their bad situation and unfavourable future. On the other hand, the teachers can not stop the Aboriginals from graduating, so if the

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<sup>70</sup> "Vietnam War," *Historica Canada*.

<sup>71</sup> Ericka A. Hoagland, *Postcolonializing the Bildungsroman: A Study of the Evolution of a Genre* (PhD diss., Purdue University, 2006), 79-80.

Aboriginals are ambitious enough and if they obey the rules, they could finish the residential school and ensure themselves a better life.

There are also cases when the Whites try to introduce a new law but the older Indians are suspicious and do not want to accept it. In this cases, I am on the side of the Indians because they were betrayed a lot in the past and their trust in the Whites is rather poor. In my opinion, there should be a group of Indians in the Canadian government who would truly fight for Indian rights. There is the statute Indian Act pact but it is obviously not enough.

## 5 In Search of April Raintree

### 5.1 Beatrice Culleton Mosionier, Story Background

The second analysed novel is called *In Search of April Raintree* and it was written by Beatrice Mosionier. She was born in 1949 in St. Boniface, Manitoba. Sinclair and Cariou report that Mosionier grew up in foster homes. After the second suicide in her family, she decided to write what is now considered to be her most famous novel *In Search of April Raintree*. The book has become a Canadian classic and has been reissued several times. Beatrice worked as a publisher at Pemmican Publications – a publishing house featuring Aboriginal and Métis writers. She is also the author of several children’s books including *Spirit of the White Bison*. Mosionier’s second novel is entitled *In the Shadow of Evil*, and she is also the author of the book *Come Walk With Me: A Memoir*, which is about her life.<sup>72</sup>

*In Search of April Raintree* (1983) is a novel set in Winnipeg that explores, through a first-person voice, the process of maturation of two fictional Métis sisters, who are taken from their family, separated and put into different foster homes. The story is based on Mosionier’s life. It validates the horrible experiences of Native children living under the welfare of Government’s Child Welfare System and shows discrimination against Native people via inhuman treatment, unfair job opportunities, or fear to accept Métis identity. Beatrice combines imagination with experience to articulate the experiences of Native lives. She might have wanted to articulate her memories publicly in order to make the writing therapeutic. The novel’s simplicity emphasizes its authenticity and artlessness.

I will compare the forms of discrimination against Native people in the novel *Slash* and *In Search of April Raintree*. Thus, we could ascertain, if the discrimination against Indians is a common issue and the Indians cannot do anything about it, or if the discrimination is rather exceptional and does not make Indian lives any harder.

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<sup>72</sup> Niigaanwewidam James Sinclair and Warren Cariou, eds., *Manitowapow: Aboriginal Writings from the Land of Water* (Winnipeg: Portage & Main Press, 2011), 218.

## 5.2 Story Analysis

The narrator of the story is April Raintree who is a mixed blood Indian and does not really look like a Métis, unlike her sister Cheryl. The first difference from *Slash* is in parenting. While Thomas's parents are good role models, April's parents drink a lot of alcohol and make their children believe that they take an important medicine which influences their behaviour. Unfortunately, spending all the time taking the medicine, dancing, or sleeping they do not have time to take care of their children and to provide them with proper living conditions. There we can blame only the Indians for destroying their lives, not the Whites.

Due to the parents' alcoholism, the sisters spend a lot of time in a park where Indians play together with white kids who bully the Indians. The theme of bullying is also used in *Slash* where Indian children are mistreated at school. Since the parents neglect April and Cheryl, the girls must be taken to orphanage. When a social worker comes to their house, April starts panicking:

“I clung to my Mom as tight as I could. They wouldn't be able to pull me away from her and then would leave. I expected Mom to do the same. But she didn't. She pushed me away. Into their grasping hands. I couldn't believe it. Frantically, I screamed, “Mommy, please don't make us go. Please, Mommy. We want to stay with you. Please, don't make us go. Oh, Mom, don't!”<sup>73</sup>

In this case, social workers are in the right since the living conditions are too bad for April and Cheryl. Indians complain that their children are often unjustly taken away but this is a piece of evidence that it can be also a fault of the Indians.

Later, the girls are sent to two different foster homes. April is lucky to get to a nice family of Dions where she is accepted as a rightful member. This family is in fact more caring than her own. Thus, this is an example of a good foster family which contradicts Indian arguments.

The sisters can meet at the Children's Aid office where they are also visited by their parents. However, the parents announce to April and Cheryl that they cannot take them home yet. In the course of the story the girls ascertain that it was never their parents' intention. The parents even stop visiting them at the Children's Aid office

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<sup>73</sup> Beatrice Culleton Mosionier, *In Search of April Raintree* (Winnipeg: Portage & Main Press, 1999), 17.



which is yet another example of them being bad role models who are indifferent to their children.

Moreover, April must leave her nice foster family due to Mrs. Dion's illness. She is sent to Mrs. DeRosier who makes clear that April is rather an inferior servant than a rightful member.

“You will get up at six, go to the hen house and bring back the eggs, While I prepare the breakfast, you will wash the eggs. After breakfast you will do the dishes. After school, you'll have more chores to do, then you will help me prepare supper. After you do the supper dishes, you will go to your room and stay there. You'll also keep yourself and your room clean. I know you half-breeds, you love to wallow in filth. You step out of line once, only once, and the strap will do the rest of the talking. You don't get any second chances...”<sup>74</sup>

In this case, the family does not fulfill the idea of a satisfactory foster family and I cannot blame the Indians for fighting against such a kind of foster families. Furthermore, Mrs. DeRosier's children make fun of April and force her to obey them. April realizes the disadvantage of being an Indian and does not want to admit that she is one of them. Cheryl, on the contrary, is proud of being Métis and wants to support them. It is another resemblance to *Slash*. Many Indian children are confused about their race. They want to help other Indians and fight for their rights but they also realize their disadvantages.

Cheryl moves to DeRosier family and her wild personality causes several troubles. She argues with a teacher about alleged Indian massacre and must go to the principal afterwards. He threatens her to strap her if she does not stop acting like that. The Indian children are threatened and mocked by the teachers and the principal as in *Slash*. However, Cheryl promises to control her behaviour in order not to be separated from April.

The sisters attempt to escape from the evil Mrs. DeRosier but they are caught by the police and taken to the police station. The social worker there calls Cheryl a troublemaker and tells the girls about “native girls' syndrome”:

“It starts out with the fighting, the running away, the lies. Next come the accusations that everyone on the world is against you. There are the

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<sup>74</sup> Mosionier, *In Search of April Raintree*, 32.

sullen uncooperative silences, the feeling sorry for yourselves. And when you go on your own, you get pregnant right away or you can't find or keep jobs. So you'll start with alcohol and drugs. From there, you get into shoplifting and prostitution and in and out of jails. You'll live with men who abuse you. And on it goes. You'll end up like your parents, living off society..."<sup>75</sup>

This is an example of psychological manipulation. The social worker tries to make Cheryl believe that having a bad life is in fact the Indians' own fault. As in *Slash*, the Indians do not have any assistance from governmental organizations. Cheryl is consequently sent to a new family and April stays with DeRosiers. Fortunately, the girls are given a new social worker and they are sent to a new family.

When April is eighteen, she finds an apartment and lives there with Cheryl. As they grow up, their attitude towards being an Indian changes as well. Cheryl introduces April to her new Native friend Nancy who was a prostitute and who was raped by her own father. They sometimes go to restaurants together.

"I began to notice what being native was like in middle-class surroundings. Sometimes service was deliberately slow. Sometimes I'd overheard comments like, "Who let the Indians off the reservation?" Or we'd be walking home and guys would make comments to us, as if we were easy pick-ups."<sup>76</sup>

April feels ashamed of Cheryl because she looks like an Indian and does not want to be seen with her in public. Thus, Cheryl resembles Thomas in *Slash* more than April because they keep fighting for Indians' rights and do not try to assimilate.

April marries a non-Indian businessman despite Cheryl's disagreement. She wants to assimilate to the Canadian society and use their advantages. Her decision might be understood since the life in the white community is believed to be more promising. However, she gets divorced soon and changes her opinion about the Whites.

Cheryl is beaten by her boyfriend and ends up unconscious in Health Science Centre. April is asked to collect Cheryl's clothes at the boyfriend's flat and when she gets there she is raped by three men. These are illustrations that demonstrate how the women, especially Indian women, were abused by men. This horrible experience affects April's subsequent relationship and she cannot be too intimate with other men.

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<sup>75</sup> Mosionier, *In Search of April Raintree*, 67.

<sup>76</sup> Mosionier, *In Search of April Raintree*, 107.

April discovers Cheryl's prostitute past and addiction to alcohol. These undesirable activities are also mentioned in *Slash*. Indians in these novels tend to taking drugs and drinking alcohol when they lose their hopes, which is also Cheryl's case:

“Mother, you know what happened to our poor, dear Mother ? She jumped off the Louise Bridge, is what she did. Committed suicide...They were bums, you know. Gutter-creatures. Dad took all that money from me. He didn't care where it came from. Drug pusher, bootlegger, stealing, breaking and entering, pimping, if it was illegal, he was in it. And guess who was right there in it with him ? Your little sister, Cheryl Raintree. Your baby sister. Pardon me. There was another one after me. Baby Anna. Did you know about her ? Well, she died when she was still a baby. She was the luckiest one of us.”<sup>77</sup>

Unfortunately, Cheryl commits suicide as well. April finds out that Cheryl has a son and her friend's mother takes care of him. April begins to take care of the son on her own and this experience makes her accept her Métis identity. Although the novel ends with a death, there is also hope for a better future.

As the above analysis shows, there are many similarities between *Slash* and *In Search of April Raintree*. There are themes of school bullying with no support, threat of foster homes where Indian children act like servants, drug and alcohol addiction of hopeless Indians but also endeavour to fight for Aboriginal rights. The main difference is the role model of parents. In *In Search of April Raintree* the parents neglect April and Cheryl so that the girls must be placed into foster homes. Moreover, the parents are not interested in their daughters' lives and stop visiting them. In *Slash* the parents care about Thomas and his siblings and support them. However, in case of being maltreated, they should have a right to complain. The evidence of their discrimination is large and there should be a fair government that would protect Indian rights.

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<sup>77</sup> Mosionier, *In Search of April Raintree*, 198-199.

## Conclusion

The final section of the work is intended to summarize and clarify the overall topic about injustice and racism and thus determine if the Indian complaints are well justified. Despite the well-known rule “all people are equal”, Canadian First Nations have been forced to confront injustice from the first time they encountered the Whites and this work is rich in evidence of discrimination and unjust treatment of the Indians as well as their constant effort for equality. There are also arguments that support the Whites.

In the second chapter, it is explained that there is a difference between First Nations, Aboriginals and Indians and different rights and obligations are assigned to each group. Indians got their name by colonists who came to Canada with a conviction of being in India. Aboriginals are formed by Indians, the Inuit and Métis and First Nations are distinguished according to the nation they belong to. As to Indian Register, there are approximately 901,000 Registered Indians living in Canada.

Many Canadian politicians wanted to eliminate the Indians and the rest had the intention to civilize them and make them behave like the Whites. Therefore, Canadian children were taken from their families and put into the foster care which, in defence of the Whites, might have been a rescue for the Native children. The adults were meant to be assimilated through a new method of farming based on the use of simple tools. They were supposed to invent new ways how to cultivate the ground but it was impossible to cope with. To make the Indian lives even harder, the Canadian government would steal Aboriginal land and allow them to possess only a small area. On the other hand, there is also an argument that the Indians do not have any historical rights for the land and thus, they should be willing to negotiate it.

There were many pieces of evidence considering the discrimination of Aboriginal women and children. Native women had worse working possibilities and lacked rights in the state institutions, including hospitals. Unemployment in general is a serious issue that the Natives have to face. On the other hand, Canadian federal body INAC is proved to provide pre-employment support for unemployed Aboriginals. It is evident that the Aboriginals have opportunities, they only have to accept them. Native children were confronted with injustice at school which led to high mortality. The ones who survived the bullying were proved to have serious mental problems later in their lives.

The third chapter summarizes the important treaties signed between Aboriginals and the Whites which were not often mutually convenient. The first treaties met all the legal requirements, were respected by both sides and their subject matter was a fur trade. The Iroquois formed an alliance with Britain and the Great Peace treaty assured their protection by the Crown. It was confirmed by the creation of the Indian Department in 1755. The Royal Proclamation treaty established boundaries for the Indian territory and for the first time, Indian rights to land were recognized.

The legal recognition of the United States in 1783 caused the loss of Aboriginal territory. New lands were founded by the Indian Department around the Great Lakes and along the St. Lawrence River. From that time, the majority of treaties has dealt with land possession as the primary source of conflict between Aboriginal and White people. It was the case of Douglas treaties, Robinson treaties, Oliver Act and many others. The problem was that the documents were usually not translated into Native language and the Natives did not know what they signed.

A seemingly mutually advantageous treaty was signed in 1867 and was called the Indian Act. It was assumed to improve the protection of the Indians but the primary reason was to create a federal control over the Indians and their lands. This act also divided Indians into Status, Treaty, and non-Status Indians. More amendments were further added which aggravated the lives of the Native people. Duncan Campbell Scott made residential school attendance compulsory, and thus caused removal of Aboriginal children from their families. Currently, the Indian Act is an outdated law that, despite of a great deal of opposition, continues to resist any change.

The Charter of Rights and Freedoms finally allowed First Nations, Métis and Inuit leaders to recognize their rights. However, not all promises came into effect. Another important document was Bill C-31 that reduced inequity between Status Native men and women. The Inherent Right to Self-Government Policy was launched in the year 1995. It enabled the Indians to control their own lives and make decisions related to their communities and cultures.

The fourth chapter analyses the novel *Slash* and provides basic information about the author Jeannette C. Armstrong. She was born in British Columbia's Okanagan Valley and spoke both English and Okanagan. Armstrong became globally known as an advocate of justice for Native people and received an Honorary Doctorate of Letters from St. Thomas University in 2000. *Slash* is her most famous novel. It is a fictional biography of a native man Thomas Kelasket divided into four

chapters that follow his development from childhood to adulthood and accentuate important events at that time.

The forms of discrimination in *Slash* are compared to those in another novel, *In Search of April Raintree*, which is analysed in the last chapter. The forms of discrimination are composed of bullying at school, harsh treatment at foster homes and in jail, land confiscation and inconvenient treaties. However, there are also arguments denigrating the Indians, such as alcohol and drug addiction, poor living conditions for children, and neglecting parents. These facts therefore suggest that the Natives should be blamed as well. Nevertheless, they have been unjustly treated as inferior human beings and the Canadian government should change its attitude to them. A new administrative body supporting the Indians could be a solution.

## Resumé

Cílem mojí bakalářské práce bylo sepsat příklady diskriminace a bezpráví páchaném na kanadských původních národech a z toho následně vyvodit závěr, zdali jsou stížnosti Indiánů oprávněné. Přestože lidská práva se vztahují na všechny lidské bytosti bez výjimky, kanadští domorodci museli čelit krutému zacházení od první chvíle, kdy se dostali do kontaktu s bílými kolonisty. Definice skupinového rasismu se vztahuje na určité skupiny, zahrnuje působení škody a hodnocení síly společenského postavení dané skupiny v historickém a kulturním rozsahu. Můžeme tedy říci, že rasismus byl páchan i na kanadských původních národech, jelikož se na ně vztahují všechny části této definice. Tato práce je bohatým zdrojem důkazů dosvědčujících diskriminaci, nespravedlivé zacházení kanadských domorodců, stejně tak jako jejich nepřetržité snahy o rovnocennost. Na druhou stranu jsou ze také argumenty, které mluví ve prospěch bělochů.

Druhá kapitola vysvětluje rozdíl v názvosloví mezi kanadskými původními národy, domorodci a Indiány. Správné názvosloví je důležité, protože připisuje jednotlivým skupinám jiná práva a povinnosti. Indiáni dostali svoje jméno od kolonistů, kteří do Kanady přišli s přesvědčením, že se nachází v Indii. Domorodci jsou tvořeni Indiány, Inuity a Métisy a původní národy se rozlišují podle příslušnosti k určitému národu. Podle Indiánského registru žije na území Kanady přibližně 901 000 registrovaných Indiánů. Tito Indiáni se také nazývají Indiáni se statusem a tvoří dohromady 617 komunit.

Většina kanadských politiků měla za cíl eliminovat Indiány, nebo alespoň zcivilizovat a přimět je chovat se jako běloši. To je důvod proč domorodé děti byly odebírány z jejich rodin a posílány do pěstounské péče, kde měly být naučeny novým zvykům a způsobům chování. Nutno říci, že životní podmínky Indiánů jsou někde tak špatné, že pěstounská péče může být naopak nadějí domorodých dětí na záchranu. Dospělí Indiáni měli být do společnosti asimilováni prostřednictvím nových metod farmaření, které bylo založeno na používání výlučně jednoduchých strojů a nářadí. Předpokládalo se od nich, že vynaleznou nové způsoby obdělávání půdy za použití tohoto jednoduchého nářadí, což bylo ovšem nesplnitelné. Aby toho nebylo málo, kanadská vláda neustále zabavovala Indiánům půdu a dovolovala jim vlastnit pouze malá území. Někteří historikové však tvrdí, že Indiáni nemají žádné historické právo na vlastnění jejich území a tudíž by měli přistoupit na smlouvy navržené bělochy.

Plno případů diskriminace se týká domorodých žen a dětí. Domorodé ženy měly vždy horší pracovní možnosti a nedostatek práv ve státních institucích, včetně nemocnic. Nezaměstnanost obecně je vážným problémem, kterému kanadští domorodci musí čelit. Na druhou stranu je doložené, že kanadský federální orgán INAC poskytuje podporu nezaměstnaným domorodcům před nástupem do zaměstnání. Je to důkaz, že domorodci mají příležitosti, musí je pouze přijmout. Domorodé děti čelily bezpráví ve školách, což vedlo k velké úmrtnosti. Ty děti, které se dožily staršího věku, pak trpěly psychickými problémy.

Třetí kapitola shrnuje důležité smlouvy uzavřené mezi bělochy a kanadskými původními národy, které však často nebyly oboustranně výhodné. Pouze ze začátku byly všechny dohody vzájemně dodržovány a respektovány a jejich předmět zájmu byl obchod s kožešinou. Irokézové se spojili s Británií a jejich ochrana byla potvrzena smlouvou s názvem Velké smíření. Británie pak na důkaz spolenectví nechala v roce 1755 vybudovat Indiánský odbor. Královská proklamace pak stanovila hranice Indiánského území.

Právní uznání Spojených států amerických v roce 1783 způsobilo ztrátu teritoria domorodců. Indiánský odbor pak pro Indiány našel nová místa v oblasti Velkých jezer a povodí řeky svatého Vavřince. Od této doby většina dohod řešila vlastnictví pozemků, jakožto primární zdroj konfliktu mezi domorodci a bělochy. Problém byl v tom, že většina smluv nebyla přeložena do jazyka domorodců, a proto nevěděli, co vlastně podepisují.

Další důležitá a zdárně prospěšná smlouva byla podepsána roku 1867 a jmenovala se Indiánský zákon. Předpokládalo se, že tato smlouva zvýší ochranu Indiánů, ale hlavním záměrem byla větší kontrola jejich půdy. Tento zákon také rozdělil původní obyvatelstvo na Indiány se statusem, Indiány bez statusu a Indiány podle smlouvy. Postupem času se ke smlouvě přidávaly další dodatky, což ještě více ztížilo život všech Indiánů. Jeden z nejvýznamnějších autorů těchto dodatků byl Duncan Campbell Scott, který zavedl povinné internátní školy, a tím způsobil odebrání domorodých dětí z jejich rodin.

Listina základních lidských práv a svobod konečně umožnila vůdcům kanadských původních národů, Métisů a Inuitů uznat jejich práva. I když ne všechny sliby byly nakonec splněny. Dalším důležitým dokumentem byl takzvaný návrh zákona C-31, který redukoval nerovnosti mezi domorodými muži a ženami se



statusem. V roce 1955 získali Indiáni vlastní právo na politiku samosprávy a mohli tak lépe řídit jejich životy a dělat vlastní rozhodnutí týkající se jejich kultur a komunit.

Čtvrtá kapitola rozebírá a popisuje román *Slash* a poskytuje základní informace o jeho autorce Jeannete C. Armstrong. Jeannette se narodila roku 1948 v části Britské Kolumbie Okanagan Valley a mluví jak jazykem okanagan, tak anglicky. Proslavila se také jako obhájkyňe spravedlnosti pro kanadské původní národy. Jejím nejznámějším dílem je fiktivní biografie *Slash*, která ve čtyřech kapitolách popisuje vývoj kanadského domorodce Thomase Kelasketa a zaznamenává významné historické události této doby.

Formy diskriminace v knize *Slash* jsou srovnávány s formami diskriminace v knize *In Search of April Raintree*, která je analyzována v poslední kapitole. Patří sem šikana ve škole, kruté zacházení v pěstounských rodinách a ve vězení, zabavování půdy a nevýhodné smlouvy. Existují však také argumenty očerňující Indiány, jako je alkoholová a drogová závislost, špatné životní podmínky pro děti a zanedbávající rodiče. Tyto skutečnosti naznačují, že domorodci by měli být také vinni, ale držím se názoru, že jsou nespravedlivě považováni za méněcenné lidské bytosti a kanadská vláda by k nim měla změnit svůj postoj. Nový správní orgán, podporující Indiány, by mohl být řešením.

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## **Anotace**

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Cílem mojí bakalářské práce je doložit fakta, která potvrzují diskriminaci a bezpráví kanadských původních národů a tak určit, zdali jsou stížnosti Indiánů oprávněné. Jsou zde také argumenty podporující bělochy. První část práce se zabývá rozdělením těchto domorodých obyvatel a přiblížením jejich životního stylu. Následuje souhrn nejvýznamnějších historických dohod uzavřených mezi domorodci a kolonisty, které ovšem nebyly vždy dodržovány a nezaručovaly oboustranný prospěch. Celá práce je zakončena analýzou románů *Slash* od autorky Jeannette C. Armstrong a *In Search of April Raintree* od autorky Beatrice Culleton Mosionier. Zaměřuji se na srovnání forem diskriminace v obou románech, které by měly určit závažnost naší problematiky.

## **Annotation**

**Author:** Denisa Krausová

**Department:** Department of English and American Studies

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**Supervisor:** PhDr. Matthew Sweney, Ph.D.

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The aim of my Bachelor's thesis is to give an evidence of discrimination and injustice of Canadian First Nations and thus determine, if the complaints of the Indians are well justified. There are also arguments supporting the Whites. The first part of the thesis deals with classification of those Aboriginal people and it describes their way of living. It is followed by a summary of the most important historical treaties, signed by both the Aboriginals and the colonists. However, those treaties were not always observed or mutually profitable. The whole thesis is concluded by analysis of the novels *Slash* written by Jeannette C. Armstrong and *In Search of April Raintree* written by Beatrice Culleton Mosionier. There is a comparison of the forms of discrimination in both novels which should determine the relevance of our issue.