



**Towards Sovereignty and Representation: Canadian Indigenous Literary
Writings.**

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Abstract

This paper attempts to examine Canadian indigenous literary activism which started in 1960's, to tell or narrate the stories of their pain and hurt experienced in the hands of White-Europeans. As a new form of resistance, they document their response to various misrepresentations in Canadian historiography and Literature while at the same time emphasize/assert on their sovereignty struggles for the recognition of indigenous distinct rights as a means to define indigenous identity.

Key words- Sovereignty, Representation, Resistance, Survival, Self-government, Identity

Introduction

Over the years the evolving relations between Canada's indigenous peopleⁱ and the country's mainstream society have undergone transformative changes—from cooperation to confrontation, and quite frequently even degenerating into conflict and discord. To some extent the clashes and conflicts between indigenous peoplesⁱⁱ and the White Europeans have stemmed from profound differences between them in respect of their attitudes toward the other as well as the values they attached to their life style. But the larger shift in the relationship can be attributed to changes in the motives of the Europeans and the indigenous as two distinct groups of peoples. Tragically however, indigenous people have been the victims, subject to marginalization, dispossession, and subjugation from the time of their contact with the Europeans. In 21st century, they are subjected to dehumanization, degradation and misrecognition at all levels. Further, poverty, violence, sickness, abuse and early death, shape the daily lives of these people in Canada today.

Prior to the arrival of Europeans on the North-American continent, indigenous peoples of the region were organized into different nations/groups largely based on their ways of life, customs, values, beliefs, and governance system. Generally speaking, they shared common features such as the belief in the spirit of god and nature and shared the view that all of god's creations were interrelated, animate and possessed power. (Bear 2005) Yet for a long period of time the predominant European perception of the indigenous communities was that they were

culturally inferior. Over the past three decades or so, however, there has been a distinct change in the attitude of White Canadians. It has changed from a desire to rid the country of the so called 'Indian problem' through forced cultural assimilation to the imperative of compensating indigenous peoples for the damage inflicted by the early colonizers to their cultures, tradition and values and help establish indigenous self-government as a thirdⁱⁱⁱ sovereign order. (Lusztig 2008)

Being the fastest and youngest growing population today, the Canadian indigenous peoples have not secured a level of socio-economic well-being comparable to the general population^{iv} due to colonial intrusion, subjugation, marginalization, dispossession and displacement. As a consequence, the social, cultural and political status of indigenous peoples deteriorated considerably leading not only to the erosion of their indigenous identity but also to the denial of their primordial territorial and land rights. Infact, the colonization and domination of North America by the French and British commercial and religious interests lead to appropriation of land (indigenous) through the establishment of various European governance policies. In other words, the appropriation of indigenous peoples' sovereign authority and land rights began when French and British "discovered" Canada and initiated a process of appropriation of natural resources which later changed to appropriation of land through the establishment of the western systems of political governance and cultural values.

The Royal Proclamation of 1763 became a prerogative document which gave power to the British Crown to impose authority over indigenous peoples and their lands while on the other hand, it acknowledged the sovereignty of indigenous peoples of Canada over their land. This document also set the stages of colonization of indigenous peoples of Canada. Further, the 'Doctrine of Discovery', gave legal authority for the colonization of indigenous peoples based on

the premise that indigenous rights were deemed to be secondary to those of the White-Europeans. Infact, resentment generated by the loss of land forced Europeans to negotiate treaties. Treaties were public and registered documents signed between the indigenous peoples and Europeans on a nation-to-nation basis, in order to create a relationship of respect and trust, recognizing bilateral sovereignty over a shared territory. However, treaties gave sole jurisdiction to the Crown to acquire land from indigenous peoples and led to their removal from their traditional hunting grounds to isolated and barren land called reservations. Throughout the period of ‘land cession’, Europeans made attempts to extinguish indigenous people’s rights over land. Further, based on the ideology of racial superiority, Europeans changed the nature of nation-to-nation partnership to internal colonization. This was done by ‘domestication’ of indigenous peoples making them ‘dependent’ on welfare of Canada over time. Under the policy of integration by the middle of the twentieth century, indigenous peoples were brought under Eurocentric norms which gave sole authority to White-Europeans to assume power that denied indigenous peoples their cultural rights.

Not only this, the introduction of White Paper by Trudeau government in 1969, was an attempt to abolish all the remaining rights of indigenous peoples. It tried to end the special status of indigenous peoples in the Indian Act. This was also a time when the policy of Multiculturalism was introduced in the 1970s as an instrument of non-discrimination. The multicultural policy aimed to promote equality of opportunity regardless of race, gender, socio-economic status of all Canadians, in order to accommodate the recent immigrant settlers. It was at this time that the indigenous peoples’ movements peaked in an attempt to establish their distinct and separate identity. It was also the time of indigenous literary ferment in the form of novels, poetry, plays, autobiographies, and prose fiction, traditional and personal narratives.

Indigenous Literary Renaissance: Diversity and Importance

Indigenous literature in Canada had explosive resurgence from the mid-1960's, in the form of indigenous papers, news bulletins, and periodicals for example *The National Indian*, *Nesika*, *Indian Record*, *Akwesasne Notes* and *Indian world*, which "provided venues for resistance poetry as well as journalistic reports, essays and speeches". (Gruber 2008) Known as 'protest writings', further, the politics of 1960's and 1970's, leading to the publication of *White Paper* in 1969 by the Trudeau government, led to the growth of indigenous literature in Canada. These writings were primarily dominated by political concerns- to struggle for indigenous rights and the attempt to reclaim an indigenous identity, which emerged out of experience of colonization and emphasized their [indigenous] differences from the nation-states.(Ibid)

Since indigenous writers contextualized indigenous politics and protest movements/activism of 1960's and 1970's in their works, attempting to 'construct' an identity for themselves, these writings were "confrontational journalistic and essayistic texts" (Ibid) for example Harold Cardinal (Cree) *The Unjust Society: The Tragedy of Canadian Indians* (1969), Howard Adam's *Prison of Grass: Canada from the Native point of view* (1975), George Manuel's *The Fourth World: An Indian Reality* (1974) and so on. Further, in 1960's and 1970's, indigenous creative writings gained momentum through the rise of a new wave of College and University trained indigenous authors/writers and the sudden interest of the publishing house/industry in indigenous writings, led to the publication of a wide range of literary forms

such as traditional and personal narratives, autobiographies, poetry, drama, children's literature and prose fiction.

In spite of publication of wide range of literary forms of writing, indigenous writers were neglected and not appreciated for their work or as art of any kind especially if it was based on oral traditions and modes of representation. Hence, readers "preferred to read them [indigenous writings] anthropologically or as children's fables" rather than artistic creations by indigenous writers. Their [indigenous] writings lacked critical attention by scholars and critics and were considered as "unaesthetic qualities of the works" and read more as cultural type rather than as unique artistic or ceremonial creations". (Cariou 2014) For example, George Clutesi's works, being earliest and the most important texts, were "unjustly neglected by a critical [mainstream] establishment that was not able to appreciate the artistry of orally inflected indigenous literature". Since both of these texts grew out of "traditional Tsehaht [indigenous tribe] stories and ceremonial culture and their prose is marked by the intense combination of philosophical observation, natural imagery and ceremonial structure that is characteristic of Nuuchahnulth storytelling traditions", Clutesi use of English language is strategic, intends to share his culture's knowledge with a wider audience, which he initiates and introduces indigenous protocols and storytelling techniques in English "thus taking a step toward the indigenization of English-Canadian literary culture". As a result, some masterful works were overlooked [by Canadian mainstream] like George Clutesi's works. (Ibid)

Numerous other works by indigenous writers from 1960 to 1990 were written/produced. These were autobiographical fictions or autobiographies that often contained oral narratives. Since these autobiographies revealed harsh and raw truth about indigenous people's lives rather than as examples of artistic expressions, they were often

neglected. For example indigenous autobiographical writer Maria Campbell's *Halfbreed* (1973) retells her story as non-status indigenous (metis/half-breed) and visible humiliation and injustices faced by this indigenous category in Canadian ethnic and multicultural society. Other autobiographical works are Beatrice Culleton's *In search of April Raintree* (1983), Lee Maracle's *Sundogs* (1992), Shirley Sterling's *My name is Seepeetza* (1996), Tomson Highway's *Kiss of the Fur Queen* (1998) and more recently Yvette Molan, Drew Hayden Taylor, Ian Ross and many more. Known as "life writings" or life-narratives, these texts range from the conventional style of autobiography to works usually classified as fictions. However, the powerful thrust of indigenous autobiographical writings and other forms of writings, is the "textual reclamation of identity is an essential part of their larger struggle for political agency in the public sphere".(Zivkovic 2013)

Talking about poetry, early poetry of 1960's and 1970's were known as social protest or resistance poetry. However, indigenous "individual poems or forms of lyrical prose appeared scattered throughout the 1960's" for e.g George Clutesi's poem *West Coast Indian*, Tony Mandamin's *On Education* appeared in a book titled *Who is the Chairman of this meeting?* Similarly Sheila Erickson's poems appeared in book *Notice: This is an Indian Reserve* and various other poems. (Lutz 2010) It was not until early 1970's in Canada that poetry anthologies or poetry books by individual authors appeared on the Canadian literary scene. For example, Richard Lewis edited an anthology of Inuit poetry titled *I Breathe a New Songs* in 1971.(Ibid) Later, notable publications include volumes of poetry by Chief Dan George's *My heart soars* (1974); *My spirit soars* (1982), Shoshone-cree salish writer Sarain Stump's volume *There is my people sleeping* (1970), Ojibway poet George Kenny's *Indians Don't cry* (1977), Micmac Rita Joe's volumes *Poems of Rita Joe* (1978) and *Song of Eskasoin*

(1988), Delaware poet and playwright Daniel David Moses's *Delicate Bodies* (1980), Cree poet Beth Cuthand's *Voices in the Water Fall* (1989). (Gruber 2008) Further, the poetic growth in 1990's and 21st century received substantial attention for example Jeannette Armstrong's *Breath Tracks* (1991), Garnette Ruffo's *Opening in the sky* (1994) and *At Geronimo's Grave* (2001) and Joseph A. Dandurand's *Shake* (2003), are some of the well read poems. (Lane 2011)

As far as theatre/drama was concerned, it became the most preferred mode of expression by indigenous authors/writers. According to Drew Hayden Taylor, "theatre is a logical extension of Native storytelling". (Taylor 1998) Hence, 1970's saw the beginning of indigenous theatre in Canada as the most predominant form of expressive vehicle for Canada's indigenous peoples. Since theatre has performative aspects, it is seen as the closest genre to indigenous peoples. The reason behind indigenous peoples preferring theatre over other genres, is what stated by Drew Hayden Taylor, "is the process of taking your audience on a journey onto the stage is merely the next logical step. Because of our oral culture Native peoples gravitate towards theatre more than towards the written word where you have to have perfect English or grammatically correct writing".(Ibid) Therefore, indigenous theatre received and still remains the most popular form. Nora Benedict's one act play *The Dress* (1970), George Kenny's *October Stranger* (1977), Assiniboine-Dakota playwright William S. Yellow Robe's *The Independence of Eddie Rose* (1986)- testify to the vitality of early theatre. It is also due to formation of numerous indigenous performing groups founded around 1980's such as Native Earth Performing Arts in Toronto, Spirit Song in Vancouver or De-Bah-Jeh-Mu-Jig theatre on Manitoulin Island. Yet the popularity of indigenous theatre rose to great prominence in 1987 with the productions of Cree-playwright-Tomson Highway. His play *The*

Rez Sisters got national and international recognition and won Dora Mavor Moore Award for best play, followed with its sequel *Dry Lips Oughta Move To Kapuskasing* (1989). Daniel David Moses's *Coyote City* (1990), *Big Buck City* (1998) and *Brebeuf Ghost* (2000). New voices in indigenous drama also include Ian Ross, Floyd Favel, Yvette Nolan, Marie Clements, Margo Kane, Shirley Cheechoo, are some of the female playwrights whose works have been well received. (Gruber 2008) Recently, Kenneth T. Williams's *Suicide Notes* (2007) was well received by the audience and Kevin Loring's *Where the Blood mixes* (2008) won Governor General Award for 2009. A significant number of writers like Moses, Taylor, Highway and others have made international recognition for themselves but at the political level, like other genres of writing, indigenous Canadians "tend to navigate and negotiate the particular circumstances of Canadian colonialism" and deal with the conditions of colonization, both past and present. (Stirrup 2013)

In the 1990's and early 21st century, many indigenous writers "continued to experiment with new ways of rendering oral epistemologies into literature". (Cariou 2014) For example "Kateri Akiwenzie-Damn and Marvin Francis created spoken word poetry and integrated elements of performance into their work. Richard Van Camp drew on his skills as an accomplished storyteller to create short stories that are shape changers [trickster stories] taking the forms of jokes, puzzles, confessions, and philosophical reflections. Richard Wagamese chose a ceremonial oral form for his memoir *For Joshua* and he utilized oral narrative techniques in the first-person narration of his novels". (Ibid) Eden Robinson, on the other hand, tried to strike a balance between traditional storytelling protocols and novel form in her novel *Monkey Beach*. Louise Halfé's long poem titled *The Crooked Good*, is a retelling and reinterpretation of the traditional cree story. Joseph Boyden's novel *Three Day Road*

draws its plot from rich Omushkego cree storytelling tradition. Interestingly, what these writers and other scholars have tried to do-is to explore “the ethics and the practical questions surrounding the representation of oral stories in textual form”.(Cariou 2014)

Such diversity of indigenous writings mentioned above is evident of the fact that indigenous literary writings in Canada, is a self-determining effort on the part of indigenous peoples. All writings redefine what it means to be indigenous demanding indigenous rights to self-determination and land rights. These demands are based on historical claims and through large scale production of indigenous histories, memoirs, literary texts and documentaries attempt to portray the realities of indigenous life. Infact, writings, for indigenous peoples has become a central mode of retrieving indigenous past in postcolonial literature through reconstructions of their cultural and national histories and identities.

Towards Sovereignty and Representation

For indigenous writers, literature is not a leisure time or pleasure writing. It is considered as a means to record their glorious past before the advent of the colonizers along with the days of colonization. Writing for indigenous peoples is liberation, healing and medicine to deal with their historical trauma- a path towards survival . It’s also becomes a tool to condemn, “the other” who is “othering” the indigenous Canadians. (Bharti 2013) Thus, *writing back*, for indigenous peoples, is an attempt to tell their histories from indigenous point of view, which involves recovering their stories of the past and asserting their epistemological foundations as well as documenting processes of colonization from the perspectives of those who experienced it. (Lawrence 2010) As a literary genre, *writing back* allows indigenous peoples to “reposition themselves socio-politically into an undominated role” for which “the

old colonial vantage point must be targeted, revealed and indicted for its false teachings on the public mind”. Symbolically and literary, indigenous authors “take[s] back the pen and paper from the colonizer” and show/write their political resistance. (Coleman 2013) which Renee Hulan, a scholar posits-leads to indigenous decolonization “by revising postmodern literary techniques, to resist the ways in which they [indigenous] have been represented and to articulate a historical consciousness in which past and present are continuous”. (Hulan 2014)

Calling indigenous literary movement which picked up pace and agility in 1980’s as “indigenous literary nationalism” to emphasize on “interconnectedness of Native peoples with other cultures through treaties, nation-to-nation sovereignty struggles, cultural adaptation, and linguistic exchanges”, Niigonwedom James Sinclair, an indigenous belonging to Anishninaabe tribal group states that as sovereign people, “native peoples are treated not only as storytellers and creative thinkers but as intellectuals with abilities to articulate and devise dynamic, complex and sustaining philosophies, theories and approaches to their own lives, literature and laws”.(Sinclair 2009) Therefore, indigenous literatures, in all forms, are “connected to community, nationhood and sovereignty”.(McKegney 2009) So much so, intellectual sovereignty “is about our [indigenous] responsibilities: to one another, to the earth and the web of kinship that binds us to the human and other-than human world, to the ancestors and the spirits, to rational thought that is tempered with respect and an appreciation for mystery and unknowable, to the cause of truth and the purpose of balance and growth, to ourselves and our communities, and our mutually-constituting intellectually, spiritual and moral integrity”.(Justice 2009)

As a responsibility, indigenous writers have taken the initiative to write back to assert their relationship with Canadian state and to their ancestral land, which leads indigenous

peoples to emphasize on self-government of their community. In other words, as part of postcolonial literatures, indigenous literary writings, as a new form of resistance, often talk about indigenous sovereignty in their writings. What emerges from the demand for recognition of indigenous sovereignty is that, it is an essential step to self-determination and self-government, an expression of distinct identity and a way of achieving empowerment, autonomy and equality. It is indigenous peoples “right to self-government or self-rule which Aboriginal people neither surrendered nor lost by way of conquest. It is those rights which they have had since time immemorial and those which they continue to possess”.(LaForme 1991) Thus, indigenous writers and critics like Emma LaRocque, Thomas King, Basil Johnston, Lee Maracle, Maria Campbell, Armand Ganet Ruffo, Tomson Highway, Jeannette Armstrong and others have strongly, today, in Canada, are demanding self-government right to exercise their sovereignty and “freedom as non-interference” as Iris Marion Young states that, “self-government or self-determination means that a people or government has the authority to exercise complete control over what goes on inside its jurisdiction, and no outside agent has the right to make claims upon or interfere with what the self-determining agent do. Reciprocally, the self-determining people have no claim on what others do with respect to issues within their own jurisdictions, and no right to interfere in the business of the others”. (Young 2007) It is in this sense that indigenous peoples of Canada wish to exercise their sovereignty.

Since the emergence of indigenous literature took place at a particular stage in postcolonial Canadian history, indigenous writings especially with the popularity of autobiography or life narratives which gives “historical accounts of colonial invasion, settlement and cross-cultural relationships from individual and communal memories and

experiences” was “to empower postcolonial indigenous people so that they might effect a change in the public sphere” and at the same time to arouse increased public interest in the issues of human rights. (Zivkovic 2013) Such writings also serve as representing indigenous peoples belonging to different cultural background. Thus, the uniqueness of each indigenous culture in Canada lies not only in their traditional practices but also in the ways by, “which aboriginal people have resisted, responded to, adapted, and incorporated non Aboriginal ways of life into their collective identities”. Further, “aboriginal cultural difference exists by virtue of the distinctive content of the cultures in which indigenous people participate” or engaged themselves with, before the contact with White-Europeans. It is in this sense that, indigenous cultural difference is exclusive to indigenous people which merits constitutional protection. (Macklem 2001) In addition, the myth that indigenous people abandon their culture when they move to city or urban areas in their conscious attempt to acquire mainstream values, becomes false. Today, urban indigenous people retain a strong sense of belonging to their traditional culture and spirituality and are more oriented towards knowing indigenous knowledge system indicates the survival and revival of indigenous cultures.

Indigenous peoples, thus, retain their socio-cultural identity and interest in indigenous issues being faced by them in their day to day lives despite infusion of foreign religious views, European education, political culture, economic culture, and values. As a result, the contemporary state of indigenous cultures has become complex and diverse. They have started speaking English, are well educated, practice Christianity, and aspire to professional careers. Their contemporary tribal life has become multicultural. Indigenous writers, in their works whether its fiction, non-fiction, poetry, memoirs or autobiography, document their cultural revitalization as a means to survive in contemporary Canadian society. Called as ‘literature of

survivance' by Gerald Vizenor who in his book *Fugitive Poses* writes that, "survivance, in the sense of native survivance, is more than survival, more than endurance or mere response; the stories of survivance are an active presence....The native stories of survivance are successive and natural estates; survivance is an active repudiation of dominance, tragedy, and victimry". (Vizenor 1998)

Tomson Highway's *Kiss of the Fur Queen* is one such effort to portray survival after the colonial violence inflicted on the indigenous psychological makeup. In 1988 when Multiculturalism Act was passed by Canadian federal government to accommodate different ethnic groups in Canadian society, it allowed more space for the indigenous literary canon to be culturally different. Indigenous writers of Canada like Thomas King, Tomson Highway, Beth Brant and others, included mythical figures of indigenous origin such as the 'trickster' in their work giving it a strong indigenous flavour. Given this sense of "difference" in indigenous writings, it has become a culturally appropriate means of approaching indigenous literature. (Fagan 2010) The trickster is a sort of cultural hero who is hard to define but is an important figure who plays a prominent role in indigenous folklore, and is depicted as a non-human entity taking the shape of a fox, turtle, hare, spider or coyote. According to Winnebago indigenous tribe, trickster is a chief demi-god. Thus, there is no standard form to define or describe this mythical figure in indigenous cultures. (Nicholas 2009) The trickster, in different indigenous cultures appears under different animal names and at times appears as a human being. (Bharti 2013)

Through the trickster figure, indigenous artists/writers have infused humor in their works as a means to deal with indigenous sufferings and pain. Interestingly, in Toronto, Tomson Highway, a theatre artist, novelist and dramatist, along with Daniel David Moses and Lenore

Keeshig-Tobias establishment a 'Committee to Re-Establish the Trickster' in 1987. The reason for establishing such a Committee according to Margery Fee, "was to get attention for their work and that of other indigenous artists". Through the traditional figure, "Trickster" borrowed from indigenous mythology, indigenous writers are combating stereotypes which often freeze indigenous culture in a traditional past. (Fee 2010) Thus, to combat such stereotypes and reveal the importance of indigenous culture, the indigenous writer's political demand for indigenous self-government is the road towards the preservation of their cultures and traditions which will establish their sovereign social and cultural identity, separate from that of the White European.

Hence it can be said that there are two different kinds of claims that indigenous peoples make—historical and cultural. On one hand, indigenous peoples view their rights as flowing from historical precedence, as they had self government prior to contact and as a sovereign nation they never gave up their rights. On the other hand, rights which flow from the source of indigenous cultural difference. Considering themselves to be the original inhabitants of Canada [refers to their ancestors who inhabited Canadian land before the arrival of white-Europeans], indigenous peoples claim that they had lived a life in ways consistent with spirituality, culture, and traditions, claiming that indigenous communities are culturally distinct. (Schouls 2003)

Historically, indigenous peoples of Canada never thought of themselves in terms of a single label or a single nation. It was only after the encounter between White-Europeans settlers and indigenous peoples on North American^v land, the idea and the image of "the Indian" was established who was thought to be lazy and less bright. This image downgraded indigenous peoples "to the category of 'others' which is representative entity outside one's own culture. As a member of the 'other' the binary opposite of 'us' (meaning civilized), Aboriginal people quickly became defined as less than civilized. As such, all of their behaviour was evaluated using

‘us’ as the standard”. Since, then, indigenous peoples’ identity has been affected by cultural and political influences of White-Europeans. So much so, “Aboriginals are faced with the ever-present problem of assuming an identity and hoping that it will be ratified by others”. They often “see themselves as they believe others see them”, and this has “become the controlling factor in the way Canadians recognize people and the identity of the individual”.(Frideres 2008) Thus, indigenous identity is complex and is often linked to their collective identity rather than individual identity. Hence, indigenous writers are advocating and countering such negative and stereotypical image of indigenous peoples in favour of positive one.

Today, Canadian Indigenous writers are known as ‘First Nations^{vi} Writers’, have tried to re-establish their lost voice, create a space for themselves through revival of indigenous culture, and emphasize on their “long term occupancy” on Canadian land. (Spring 2007) This is done to stress the importance of their unique spiritual relationship with Earth [Canada] and to carry on their struggle within the structure of domination using the techniques of the government with the aim of modifying the system in the short term and transforming it from within in the long term. (Tully 2000) They also employ the ‘Fourth World’^{vii} identity. The term was coined by George Manuel^{viii}, in Canada, in his book *The Fourth World: An Indian Reality* in 1974, to differentiate and emphasize the common marginalized position of indigenous peoples be it in “rich and powerful "first world" countries, second world, and poor "third world" countries” in relation to the political power structures.(Churchill 2003)

Vine Deloria, Jr^{ix} in the foreword to the book *The Fourth World* by George Manuel writes:

But having grasped Manuel's vision of the Fourth World, we come to realize that it calls forth in us the morality of law and human existence in a more profound manner than any other vision of the world has ever done. The Aboriginal peoples can only argue the morality of their case. Overwhelmed by the European peoples, they cannot look forward to the day when they regain control of their lands. Their cause is not less important and the legality of their demands should invoke no less a response. (Vine Deloria Jr 1974)

Talking in context of North American cultures, Manuel advocates that indigenous peoples of Canada, are still internally colonized. However, their traditional cultures are not dead but living, and play a vital role in shaping the future. They belong to the Fourth World nations subjected to imperial domination from within. He adds that "Indian institutions are as capable of growth and adaptation as any others" and "we are neither the beginning nor the end". (Manuel 1974) What Manuel's vision offers, is an alternative for indigenous peoples of Canada—"a geopolitical identity beyond the boundaries of the nation". (Rymhs 2008) Hence, Fourth World discourse accords indigenous peoples/writers power to understand their indigenous identities as different from the world's other life ways and their culture and traditions as important and integral to their survival.

Conclusion

Canadian indigenous political activism and movements for indigenous autonomy in 1960's and 1970's led to rise of indigenous literatures in Canada in the form of philosophical essays, journalistic prose (reports, periodicals and newspapers) and autobiographies. Indigenous writers, in a rough, angry and bitter tone/ manner, wrote about the injustices done on indigenous

peoples by the dominant White society. Further, with the rise of University and College trained indigenous authors and sudden interest of various publishing houses in indigenous writings, led to phenomenal explosion of creative writings, in the form of biography, novels, poems, plays and short stories from wide range of authors like Eden Robinson, Daniel David Moses, Thomas King, Tomson Highway, Maria Campbell, Jeannette Armstrong and others. By delving deep into their rich culture and tradition, indigenous writers/authors, through their writings, have enriched the body of Canadian literature and thereby contributed new perspectives and insights into mainstream Canadian literary scholarship.

Contemporary indigenous writers make use of English language and its literary traditions to narrate indigenous contemporary issues being faced by them on and off reserves, share indigenous experience under colonialism in order to heal themselves and their readers/audiences from the colonial trauma and revive their cultures to survive. That's why the concept of self-government advocated by indigenous peoples orally or in written forms, is linked to restructuring of indigenous nationhood. Therefore, it can be said that Canada's indigenous writers show extreme vitality and commitment and they don't want to be evaluated with Eurocentric lens.

Notes

ⁱ In this article the word 'native', 'Indigenous' and 'Aboriginal' are used interchangeably however section 35 (2) of the Constitution Act 1982, Canada, uses the word 'aboriginal' to define different groups namely Indians (Status and Non-Status), Métis and Inuits.

ⁱⁱ Indigenous peoples refers to specific/distinct groups of people who draw their rights based on their historical ties to Canadian land.

ⁱⁱⁱ The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples of 1996, Canada, proposed representation of indigenous peoples in the parliament as third party-indigenous government alongside the House of Commons and Senate.

^{iv} According to Statistics Canada, 2006 census, “Canada’s Aboriginal population is younger and faster growing than its non- Aboriginal one. In 2006, the median age for Aboriginal people was 27 years compared with 40 years for non-Aboriginal people”. “From 1996 to 2006, the Aboriginal population increased 45%, nearly six-times faster than the 8% growth rate for the non-Aboriginal population”. Aboriginal people are also less likely to complete high school, post secondary education, less employment, poor health etc. For more information see www.statcan.gc.ca.

^v Before Canada and United States became two different countries, they were together known as North America.

^{vi} The term ‘First Nations’ came into common usage in 1980s, to designate indigenous peoples and their long term occupancy of Canadian land before the advent of French and British invaders.

^{vii} The Fourth World is a term used for indigenous peoples, who today are completely or partly deprived of the right to their own territory and its resources. The peoples of Fourth World have only limited influence or none at all in the national states to which they belong. The peoples to whom we refer are the Indians of North and South America, the Inuit (Eskimos), the Sami people, the Australian aborigines, as well as various indigenous populations in Africa, Asia and Oceania. For more information see Ortiz, Roxanne Dunbar (1984), *Indians of the Americas: Human Rights and Self-Determination*, London: Zed Books-pp:81-82

^{viii} George Manuel was a member of the Shusway Nation of the Neskonlith Indian Band in British Columbia. He was the National Chief of the National Indian Brotherhood (later the Assembly of First Nations) from 1970 to 1976. He also served as the president of the World Council of Indigenous Peoples. George Manuel and Michael Posluns introduced the concept of 'Fourth World' in 1974 in their book *The Fourth World: An Indian Reality*, which gained prominence in 1975 during the First General Assembly of the World Council of Indigenous Peoples (WCIP).

^{ix} Vine Deloria Jr. in foreword to Manuel and Posluns, *The Fourth World: An Indian Reality* compares Third World thinking with Fourth World thinking.

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