Depiction of Gender Violence in Eden Robinson’s and Lee Maracle’s Writing
Master’s Diploma Thesis

Supervisor: Jeffrey A. Vanderziel, B.A.

2017
I declare that I have worked on this thesis independently, using only the primary and secondary sources listed in the bibliography.

....................................................

Author’s signature
Acknowledgement

I would like to thank my supervisor Jeff Vanderziel for his support and patience throughout the process of creating this thesis and for sparking my interest in Indigenous studies in the first place. I would also like to thank my parents for their love and support.
Table of Contents

INTRODUCION .................................................................................................................. 5

INDIGENOUS FEMINISM AND GENDER VIOLENCE .............................................. 8
  Indigenous Feminism ....................................................................................................... 8
  Gender Violence in Indigenous Communities ................................................................. 14

GENDER VIOLENCE IN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL WRITING ................................ 21
  Lee Maracle .................................................................................................................... 21
  Patriarchy and Sexism ................................................................................................. 26
  Gender Violence ............................................................................................................. 33

DOMESTIC AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN FICTION .............................................. 42
  Eden Robinson .............................................................................................................. 42
  Sexual Violence and the Legacy of Residential Schools in “Queen of the North” .... 46
  The Rape in Monkey Beach ......................................................................................... 54
  The Legacy of Residential Schools .............................................................................. 60
  The Hill Family and Domestic Violence ...................................................................... 66

CONCLUSION .................................................................................................................... 71

Bibliography ....................................................................................................................... 75

English Resume .................................................................................................................. 80

Czech Resume ...................................................................................................................... 81
INTRODUCION

Gender violence has become a serious problem in Indigenous societies of North America. Contrary to popular belief, Indigenous cultures were not entirely without any gender violence prior to European colonization. This thinking only perpetuates the stereotypical utopic harmonious image of Indigenous life in the past. While Indigenous women did suffer from sexual violence, its occurrences were relatively rare and the perpetrators were severely punished. This has changed, however, with introduction of patriarchy to Indigenous, mostly matriarchal societies which led to disruption of their traditional practices and beliefs. After years of imposing their Christian patriarchal values on Indigenous peoples through forced assimilation and prohibition of Aboriginal languages and practices in residential schools, especially, those values have been internalized and are manifested through an increase in gender and family violence, alcohol and drug abuse, self-hatred and internalized oppression, self-destructive tendencies and suicide.

The goal of this thesis is to look at gender and family violence in Indigenous communities in Canada and whether and how its reality is depicted in two genres of Canadian literature, autobiography and fiction. The authors whose works are analyzed come from different backgrounds and have different approaches to Indigenous writing and use of language. The goal is to look at how those authors illustrate the reality of living in Indigenous communities and issues Indigenous peoples face every day and whether their differences cause any problems in authenticity and intention of the depiction of gender violence.

The following chapters will analyze and demonstrate depiction of the current situation in Indigenous communities in Canada, in particular, sexual and domestic
violence and its causes and consequences. Moreover, this thesis will present Aboriginal Indigenous movement, reasons behind its creation, and its impact on the communities and literature. Primary works analyzed in this thesis are Lee Maracle’s autobiography *Bobbi Lee* and her autobiographical and sociological work *I Am Woman*, and Eden Robinson’s novel *Monkey Beach* and a short story “Queen of the North.” The second chapter provides an overview of feminist movements in Canada and in general. The chapter starts with a chronological overview of the stages of feminist movements and contains brief explanations of their goals and achievements. The chapter then continues to present a divide between mainstream feminist movement and Aboriginal feminist movement in Canada and explains the need for Aboriginal feminism in Indigenous communities. A subchapter provides statistics and several scholars’ opinions on the reality of gender and family violence in Indigenous communities.

The third chapter focuses on Lee Maracle’s autobiography *Bobbi Lee* and her autobiographical and sociological work *I Am Woman* and the depiction and analysis of sexual and domestic violence in those works. Maracle, being one of the most prolific and influential Indigenous authors of today, provides a look into her life and lives of other people around her who have suffered sexual and domestic violence. The chapter starts with a brief introduction of Maracle’s life, her works, opinions on literature and importance of writing. The following subchapter focuses on the depiction and consequences of patriarchy and sexism in *Bobbi Lee* and *I Am Woman* and consequently in Indigenous communities across Canada. In particular, this

---

1 Lee Maracle’s works *Bobbi Lee* and *I Am Woman* will be in in-text citations shortened to *BL* and *Woman*, respectively. Eden Robinson’s works *Monkey Beach* and “Queen of the North” will be in in-text citations shortened to *MB* and “Queen,” respectively.
subchapter deals with the manifestation of patriarchy in tribal communities and in male-female relationships. The second subchapter analyzes occurrences of sexual and domestic violence in Maracle’s life, from growing up in an abusive environment to subsequently creating a similar environment for her own children. This subchapter also illustrates her and her friends’ experience with sexual violence and seeks to understand the causes behind such behavior.

The fourth chapter analyzes two fictional works by Eden Robinson, a novel *Monkey Beach* and a short story “Queen of the North.” The chapter starts with a brief overview of Robinson’s life, her works, and driving factors behind her writing. The following subchapter focuses on her short story “Queen of the North” and analyzes the character of Karaoke and her experience with sexual abuse, the consequences of the abuse, and steps she takes to heal. The last three subchapters analyze the novel *Monkey Beach*. One subchapter focuses on the novel’s main character Lisa Hill and her rape. The last two subchapters look closely at other members of the Hill family whose experience with past domestic abuse and residential school system still continues to impact their lives and actions.

The last chapter offers a comprehensive conclusion of the analysis of depiction of gender violence in two different genres of literature and the influence of Aboriginal feminisms on the authors and their intentions to depict the realities of contemporary Indigenous communities.
INDIGENOUS FEMINISM AND GENDER VIOLENCE

Indigenous Feminism

Feminism is often generally perceived as a fight for equality between men and women. Injustices toward women are deeply rooted in the patriarchal society, in male-dominated spheres of public and domestic life. Those injustices are challenged by feminists, and equal treatment and opportunities are demanded. This, however, is a very broad definition of feminism because it “has always been a dynamic and multifaceted movement” (Gamble viii). Ouellette, an Aboriginal feminist scholar, for example, defines feminism as a “women’s political movement that seeks to liberate all women from oppression and male domination” (26). But because of its various movements, theories, and activities, it is impossible to generalize and apply that generalization to all women. Feminism can be approached from two perspectives; it can be seen as “a theory ... something capable of being studied and debated on an academic level, [and] simultaneously a movement which retains a commitment to change the real world outside the universities” (Gamble vii). Similarly, Ouellette suggests that feminism is an “academic movement that seeks to inform others of women’s oppression through various theories and activities ... to bring about social change for the liberation and betterment of women in general” (26). Both academic and public approaches to feminism are crucially important if “a change [in] women’s position in society” is to happen (Gamble 230-231).

Feminist movement can be divided chronologically into three groups: First Wave, Second Wave, and Third Wave Feminism or Postfeminism. The waves are not clearly separated; there are no concrete dates marking the beginning and end of the waves. What can be considered as time marks delineating the waves, however, are
social impetuses of certain periods that led to changes in the movement. First wave feminism started in 1850s when, a little over a decade after the publication of Mary Wollstonecraft’s *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792), “an organized feminist movement evolved in Britain” (Gamble 233). The term “feminism” was coined later in 1895. First wave feminists were primarily concerned with issues that were familiar to them, i.e. education, employment, and marriage rights (Gamble 232-233). And thus, the focus of first-wave feminists was very narrow because the issues they dealt with were those of single middle-class women; this movement excluded any other groups of women, such as women of color or different sexual orientation. Because the movement was not unified, many differences arose among the various groups of feminism, such as black feminism, socialist, liberal, and lesbian feminism (Gamble 310).

Second wave feminism appeared in the mid-twentieth century, following the Second World War and civil rights movements. Second wave feminists sought to “extend social opportunities ... to women” but also strived to change their private and domestic lives through “intervention within the spheres of reproduction, sexuality, and cultural representation” (Gamble 310). Access to abortion was one of the goals second wave feminists were fighting for. In Canada, abortions were legalized in 1988 when the Supreme Court ruled all restrictions on abortions to be unconstitutional (Ralston and Podrebarac n.p.). The feminists argued that the new wave of feminism was “collective and revolutionary” as opposed to the first wave, which was more “individualistic and reformist” (Thornham 29). That means that they saw a necessity to draw a line between the “new feminism of women’s liberation” and the “old feminism of equal rights” suggesting that if a change was to happen, a
“more radical feminist consciousness” was needed (Thornham 29). Radical consciousness paid off when Royal Commission on the Status of Women with Florence Bird as a chairwoman was established which marked an important landmark in Canadian feminist movement in the 1960s. It was a governmental organization created in response to pressures created by Committee for Equality of Women in Canada that such a commission was needed (Wine 5). It was, however, criticized for its inability to alleviate widespread poverty among Canadian women and for ignoring violence against women (Morris n.p.). Nevertheless, it was a catalyst for social change with results such as maternity leave and equal minimal wage (Morris n.p.).

Third wave feminism or Postfeminism “seeks to destabilize fixed definitions of gender” and, for some feminists, it is a form of aligning themselves with a group of feminists who oppose the current feminist theory as “inadequate to address the concerns and experiences of women today” (Gamble 298). There is, however, a difference between Postfeminism and Third Wave Feminism. Gamble states that the difference might easily be just a semantic one, but while Postfeminism focuses on the battles won and states, that “women have arrived at equal justice and moved beyond it” (Gamble 45), the third wave feminism stresses the importance of the fight and “acknowledges that it stands on the shoulders of other, earlier, feminist movements” (Gamble 54). Postfeminism is a “critique of the feminist movement” (Gamble 45) while the third wave is a continuation of the previous movements and points out the need to “advance [the feminist] cause” (Gamble 54). Whether it is Postfeminism or Third Wave Feminism, the feminist movement in Canada is very polarized, with governmental organization like Royal Commission on the Status of Women on the one hand, and “grassroots” organizations refusing to cooperate with
government on the other. Also, there is a scope of feminist movements going from “far left wing of radical lesbian feminism to far right-wing group and known as R.E.A.L. (Realistic, Equal, Active and for Life) (Ouellette 26-27). This shows that feminism continues to be divided and various feminist groups often contradict and oppose each other’s agendas.

These three waves of mainstream feminism have generally focused their attention on one group of women, white women. Not entirely inclusive, mainstream feminists have not always accommodated the needs of Aboriginal women who have been battling oppression on many levels. One of the most prominent and overarching goals of Aboriginal women has been decolonization and mainstream feminism has distanced itself from such goals (Huhndorf and Suzack 1). The continued refusal to accommodate all women’s right and concerns prompted Aboriginal women to form their own feminist movement. Ouellette states that Aboriginal women have been involved in feminist movements for roughly the amount of time as non-Aboriginal, mainstream feminist movement in Canada existed (29). Ouellette marks the beginning of Aboriginal feminist movement the realization that the Indian Act was discriminatory (29); it was in the 1970s, that various feminist organizations such as Native Women’s Association of Canada, Professional Native Women’s Association, or the Indian Homemaker’s Association of British Columbia were created (Ouellette 29-30). Those groups challenged the discriminatory Indian Act passed in 1869, which had devastating effects on women’s rights until 1985. The Indian Act defined aboriginal inhabitants by marriage; Status women, who “married a non-status man, even a non-status Native or Metis man” automatically lost their status, property, inheritance, burial, medical, educational and voting rights on the
reserve and were never able to regain it (Bear 198), thus adding to the oppression and discrimination of aboriginal women in Canada. In 1985 Bill C-13 was passed by the Parliament and Aboriginal women regained their statues and identity (Bear 199).

Even with several feminist organizations and the achievement of altering the Indian Act in 1985, there are many Aboriginal scholars who view feminism as unnecessary and as a concept fundamentally opposed to the goals of Aboriginal women. Many scholars and women outside the academia do not agree on the definition of feminism, what it represents, and what and whom it serves. Research conducted by Ouellette shows that many Aboriginal women perceive feminism as a white concept constructed for white feminists and “ultimately derived from white culture” (Ramirez 25). Because of their belief that womanhood has a special place in Aboriginal societies and that women have designated roles in the societies, they do not agree with mainstream feminism and see it as a refusal to take up the sacred roles of mothers and wives in the society (Ouellette 74, 76). Some Indigenous women reject the concept of feminism because they believe it is “an imperial project that assumes the givenness of ... colonial stronghold on indigenous nations” (Smith “Native American Feminism” 117). Many Indigenous women are more concerned with “racism, classism and national oppression ... than with the issue of sexism” and seek liberation for all Indigenous people, not just women (Ouellette 42). However, there are some Native women who “consider tribal rights, sovereignty, and colonization to be feminist issues” (Ramirez 33). Renya Ramirez concludes that “race, tribal nation, and gender should be non-hierarchically linked as categories of analysis in order to understand the breadth of [Indigenous] oppression” (23). The oppression of Indigenous peoples is, in fact, based on their race, however, “indigenous women
are disenfranchised simultaneously by race as well as by gender” (qtd. in Ramirez 26). Women suffer from oppression twice as much as men, and thus some Aboriginal women turn to feminism and actively fight to restore their standing within Canadian society and their traditional cultures.

Feminism within Indigenous communities, however, can be considered a dangerous construct; Ramirez explains that “feminist consciousness could cause conflict between indigenous men and women” (25). This potential problem illustrates and highlights the level of sexism that is prevalent within Indigenous communities. Ramirez goes on to suggest that instead of “viewing a Native feminist consciousness as a force that could cause intellectual conflict or as a white construct, it should be emphasized as furthering an essential goal in indigenous communities: to combat sexism” (26). Furthermore, Smith states that because “sexual violence has served as a tool of colonialism and white supremacy, the struggle for sovereignty and the struggle against sexual violence cannot be separated” (Conquest 137). The problem of sexism in Indigenous communities stems from “a long history of colonialism, as well as federal government policy and law, such as Indian boarding schools in Canada and the United States” (Ramirez 28). Sexism is reflected in the tendency of tribal councils to be more male-dominated which disrupts the equality between genders. “Prior to European contact, Aboriginal women enjoyed comparative honor, equality and even political power in a way European women did not the same time in history” [and so] “European interference helped undermine the place of Aboriginal women and their centrality …” (Hylton 10) within traditional societies which resulted in sexism and wide-spread violence.
And thus, because of such problems as oppression, violence, and sexism, some women turn to feminism. In order for feminism to work within Indigenous cultures, Aboriginal scholars stress the need to “claim feminism from Native women’s viewpoints” and “as an intellectual space in order to confront gendered and other concerns ... such as extremely high rates of violence against [Indigenous women] in [the] communities” (Ramirez 23-24). Moreover, feminism can be seen as a way to restore and promote Indigenous cultures, thus being beneficial to the communities on many levels, from fighting to eliminate gendered violence, to preserving culture, to fighting oppression. To some Indigenous women, feminism encompasses traditions and their promotion and continued use, which in turn promotes tribal sovereignty (Ramirez 24). Traditions are crucial to establishing sovereignty, and realizing the potential of feminist movement within Indigenous cultures is an important step that can contribute to decolonization, the main goal for Indigenous scholars.

The following subchapter will present views on why feminism, as a fight for equality, is needed in Indigenous communities. It will describe the reality of gender violence in Indigenous communities by providing statistics and explaining the root causes of the violence.

Gender Violence in Indigenous Communities

Since the colonization of the North American continent and the introduction of Western values and beliefs, violence in Indigenous communities has increased. The portrayal of Indigenous cultures, primarily in popular culture, literature, media, or cinema suggests that Indigenous cultures, prior to European colonization, were
peaceful and gender violence was nonexistent. This, however, has been refuted and many Indigenous scholars are of the opinion that “to deny that violence and sexual abuse were problems of Aboriginal societies would only serve to perpetuate distorted and romanticized images” (Hylton 7). Indigenous feminist scholars such as Emma La Rocque or Andrea Smith have “noted that there is evidence that violence against women did occur in Aboriginal societies prior to European contact,” (Hylton 7) however, it has also been stated, either in written documents or oral traditions, that violence was very rare and if it occurred, the punishment was severe (Smith Conquest 19). The Encyclopedia of Rape states that violence perpetrated on women in Indigenous societies “reflected the socioeconomic status of women” (M. Smith 137). This means that women in societies with matrilineal and matrilocal systems were less likely to experience sexual or domestic violence, conversely, women in patrilineal societies were more likely to experience such violence (M. Smith 137). The lack of widespread gender violence within Indigenous communities is also tied to the fact that Indigenous communities were less authoritarian than the European society. There was a balance between the genders and women had a certain social standing in most societies; they “served as spiritual, political, and military leaders” (Smith Conquest 18) and that meant that gendered violence was very rare. Andrea Smith adds that corporal punishment used against children was unheard of (“Native American Feminism” 126). And so, while not entirely non-existent, gender violence was relatively rare in Indigenous communities prior to European contact and physical violence was not implemented by Indigenous families either as a punishment or as a valid tool for educating children.
With the introduction of Western beliefs and values and teaching practices, in particular at residential schools, the lives of Indigenous peoples changed dramatically. One of the core ideas implemented by the colonizers to subdue the indigenous population was patriarchy. Patriarchy is “a dysfunctional system based on domination and violence” (Smith *Conquest* 17) and it “promotes male privilege by being male dominated, male identified, and male centered” (Johnson 5-6). European societies were based around Christian patriarchy and thus “[they] were thoroughly misogynistic” (*Conquest* 17-18). Through forced adaptation, patriarchal system of European colonizers uprooted Indigenous, mostly matriarchal societies. Because “[patriarchy] is also organized around an obsession with control and involves as one of its key aspects the oppression of women,” (Johnson 5-6) it caused disruption and severe damage to traditional systems of Indigenous societies, created crises of identity and a never-ending circle of violence.

And thus, through patriarchy, Indigenous cultures were introduced to violence as an acceptable tool for subduing and educating subordinate persons, i.e. women and children. Violence, physical, emotional, and sexual, was used at residential schools to punish Indigenous children for speaking their own languages and for practicing their beliefs. The loss of culture together with its violent implementation had a devastating effect on the children and the generations to come. Smith admits that “not all Native peoples see their boarding school experiences as negative, [however] it is generally the case that much if not most of the current dysfunctionality in Native communities can be traced to the boarding school era” (“Native American Feminism” 127). When it comes to violence, Smith also points out that “children at [residential schools] began to mimic the abuse they were
experiencing” (Smith *Conquest* 43) which resulted in even more violence, often perpetrated on their future spouses and children.

And so, decades after the last residential school was closed, the trauma is still present in Indigenous communities and is often manifested as violence. Terms such as family violence, domestic and sexual violence can be used to define prevalent violence within the communities. Family violence is a broad term that includes physical, sexual, and emotional abuse (Bopp 7). Family violence, or domestic violence, as it is often referred to, has become a prominent feature of family life on the reservations, disrupting family harmony, and creating difficult environment for children’s upbringing and education. Fantuzzo in his article “Child Exposure to Domestic Violence” defines domestic violence as a type of violence that typically occurs between two adult intimate partners and can include assault, coercive behavior, physical, sexual, and psychological harm (22). Sexual violence (i.e. sexual abuse or sexual assault) is defined in the “Aboriginal Sexual Offending in Canada” review prepared for Aboriginal Healing Foundation in 2002 “as the use or attempted use of another person’s body for sexual gratification, without that person’s consent” (Hylton 1). Hylton continues to explain that there are two main forms of sexual assault: “rape and child sexual abuse,” however, “these categorizations are not mutually exclusive” (1). Furthermore, the 2002 review states that “contrary to popular beliefs, perpetrators [of sexual violence] are almost always friends, family members or acquaintances who are known to the victim” (Hylton 1). This shows that women are more likely to be attacked at home by a family member rather than outside on a street by a stranger. That does not mean, however, that Indigenous
women are not in danger outside domestic life. Sexual and domestic violence can, in many cases, have effect on children who might witness such violence or, in some cases, are also abused. Studies have shown that the impact of violence on children, either as witnesses or abused, is roughly the same and very damaging i.e. children will continue to display symptoms of PTSD, such as anger, depression, alcohol and drug abuse, suicide attempts, or will become perpetrators of abuse (Bopp 42-43). Background of drug and alcohol abuse and poverty have also been identified as common characteristics of many sex offenders (Hyton 68) which shows that they themselves might fall into the category of victims of domestic and sexual abuse.

An important point to note is that family violence is a “sociological characteristic of whole community and not just of certain individuals and families” it partly stems from historical trauma and “social realities caused by those historical processes” (Bopp 9). Physical and sexual violence was used by the figures of authority at the residential schools and the trauma continues to affect Indigenous people, i.e. gender violence, including sexual, physical, and emotional violence has been internalized within Indigenous communities (Smith “Native American Feminism” 126). It is not ideal to focus on individual cases of violence as it will not solve the issue. The link to the historical trauma suggests that it is important to address the overarching issue, and that is the systemic oppression of Indigenous people which led to more frequent occurrences of gender violence in the communities.

Aboriginal Healing Foundation claims that “violence effects the majority of Aboriginal women and children” (Hylton 49). A study conducted by The Ontario

---

2 Indigenous women of Canada face great danger on the roads. “Highway 16 in Northwestern British Columbia is named The Highway of Tears for the substantial (although uncertain) number of Indigenous women who have disappeared” (Morton 300).
Native Women’s Association in Northern Ontario in 1989 “determined that eight out of ten women were abused [and] fifty-seven percent [of these women] were sexually abused” (Hylton 48). Another study, conducted by the research team of various federally funded initiatives to stop sexual violence, shows that “two-thirds of First Nations respondents ... knew a victim of abuse” and forty percent experience abuse in their communities on a daily basis (Hylton 49). The statistics show even higher numbers in the northern, more remote parts of Canada. A study conducted by the Government of Nova Scotia in 2001 found that the percentage of abused women in Indigenous communities located in the north can be as high as ninety percent (Hylton 50). Regarding an intimate partner violence, a survey conducted by Statistics Canada in 1999 shows that “twenty-five percent of Aboriginal women and thirteen percent of Aboriginal men reported experiencing violence from a current or previous partner over the past five years” (Bopp 26). The numbers are staggering; the epidemic of domestic and sexual violence is difficult to eradicate, considering that the internalization of these destructive values can be dated as far back as colonization and residential schooling.

The damage to Indigenous communities and individuals, namely crises of identity, alcohol and drug abuse, and PTSD, that emerged as results of years of suppressing Aboriginal cultures and an in-depth analysis of sexual violence within the communities will be discussed in the following chapters in relation to the characters in Eden Robinson’s Monkey Beach and “Queen of the North” and also in relation to Lee Maracle’s autobiography Bobbi Lee to illustrate that the crisis of Indigenous communities is depicted and discussed not only in academia. Through autobiography and fictional works, the issues reach a wider audience. The works that will be
analyzed show that the damage has affected everyone, real anonymous people from the statistics as well as real friends and family members of a feminist activist Lee Maracle and fictional residents of Kitamaat Village in Eden Robinson’s works.
Lee Maracle was born on July 2, 1950 in Vancouver, British Columbia. She is a member of Stó:lô nation; her mother was Metis and her father Salish. Maracle grew up in a poor neighborhood of North Vancouver with her seven siblings. Her writing career has been made possible with the support of her family and ancestors, who, she believes, help her create stories. Maracle acknowledges that writing is a demanding job and even with the support from her family, she had to make sacrifices in her personal life in order to become a writer. Those sacrifices and hard work have allowed her to become a prolific First Nations writer and an influential voice in Canadian postcolonial criticism. Among her published works are novels, poetry, non-fiction, and collections of short stories. Maracle states she is drawn most to short stories, because of their ability to express a well-rounded point in just a few pages and their potential to become novels. This uncertainty of what she might produce is due to her belief that it is the story that finds the writer, not the other way around, and it is the writer’s job to uncover the story. Poetry, for Maracle, means mapping out a world of her thoughts, of her heart and the spirit for the readers. With this map, she is able to navigate the readers and herself to a certain place of internal realization. Her least favorite genre to write is nonfiction as such works take her a great deal of time and effort to write. Two of her nonfiction works, *Bobbi Lee: Indian Rebel* (1975) and *I Am Woman* (1988) are the primary works analyzed in this chapter. *Bobbi Lee*, Maracle’s first book, is an autobiographical novel.

---

3 This biographical sketch is based on these sources: “Lee Maracle” in *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, “‘We Have the Same Language, But Definitely Different Rules’: An Interview with Lee Maracle” in *Hazlitt*, “An Interview with Lee Maracle” in *CWILA*, and “Lee Maracle” in *Nineteen Questions.*

In her works, Maracle tackles issues such as gender, race, and class within a feminist framework. She focuses on Indigenous women and their position in North American feminism, on cultural and sexual power and expression, how this power can be used in politics, and what it means to be woman torn between two cultures. Maracle celebrates women and their power and criticizes Western patriarchal system that has been ingrained in Indigenous cultures and eventually led to a disruption of culture. The recovery of harmony and culture is difficult to attain because Indigenous men have been taught Western paradigms about masculinity which impacted their relationships with women. This led to increase of violence and sexism in Indigenous communities. Thus, through her writing, Maracle tries to build bridges between Indigenous cultures and Canadian society in order to reestablish cultural teachings. Her works offer an understanding of cultural boundaries and oppression of the land which is directly ties to the subsequent oppression of the female body (Maracle “Connection”). Maracle believes that all life is sacred but Indigenous peoples, under
the influence of Western beliefs and values, forgot the importance of connection with all living things. The loss of “interconnectedness” (Visvis 47) is tied to the adoption of toxic values that create violence in the communities. These toxic values affect moral, personal, environmental, and political choices of Indigenous people and it can be seen reflected in her writing.

Another goal Maracle wants to attain through her writing is to bring about a change in perception of conventional Western ideas about what literature is and should be among Indigenous writers and its readers, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal. Tied to this is her desire to alter English language so Salish thoughts and beliefs can be expressed more easily. Moreover, she points out that Canadian literary scene lacks works written by and about women in Canada (“Connection”). While there are many stories about people coming across the Atlantic to colonize Canada and surviving difficult conditions, there not so many stories where strength of Aboriginal women is highlighted. Maracle desires to see the honor that women deserve reflected in literature they read and write. Furthermore, she believes that books should be written with future generations in mind and authors should strive to reflect the reality as well as provide suggestions how to improve that reality in their works. To erase the reality of inequality and distinction between men and women in Aboriginal societies today, Maracle suggests to read books written by women.

The distinction and inequality between men and women can also be encountered in the publishing industry through apparent lack of women writers and difficulties they face in the process of publishing a book. Maracle had encountered various obstacles before publishing *Bobbi Lee* in 1975. As it is stated on the back cover of the book, *Bobbi Lee* is an autobiography, and this was part of the problem.
Bobbi Lee was deemed “too political to be autobiography” (Beard 74). This difficulty to define the genre of Bobbi Lee is linked to Maracle’s, and other Indigenous writers’, desire to challenge Western notions of literature, social conventions, and “discourses of master narrative and ethnic taxonomy” (Beard 73-74). Turner states that “Western literary traditions prescribe codes of chronology, linearity, the quest narrative,” and together with writing in English, the texts written by Indigenous writers applying these standards “reflect a colonizing agenda” (110). Maracle tries to fight colonization and oppression through her literature by rejecting Western literary notions and inciting her readers to take action as well.

And thus autobiographies by Indigenous writers are, in fact, political and revolutionary. Not only are they vessels to defy Western standards of literature, they also seek to illustrate the realities of Indigenous lives that have been often ignored and suppressed by the systemic oppression and genocide. Autobiographical writing has thus been of historical importance to Aboriginal writers; “it is a reaction against a politically sanctioned attempt at extermination and a denial of culture, language, and beliefs” (Turner 109). Additionally, Indigenous autobiography “looks to future solutions, to revolutionary solutions, and to a transformed society” (Beard 65). Lee Maracle, in her two autobiographical works, presents the current state of Indigenous communities, increased gender violence, disrespect toward women and children, internalized oppression, and her own “personal struggle with womanhood, culture, traditional spiritual beliefs and political sovereignty” (Maracle Woman vii). She also offers her own opinions on the subject and suggestions on what steps to take to combat these problems in Indigenous communities.
Moreover, Indigenous peoples have been mere objects in their stories for centuries. They have been voiceless within the Western concept of literature and in Canadian society, unable to tell their own stories “in a country which revolves around the printed word” (Beard 68). And thus, Aboriginal autobiography can be viewed as revolutionary because in the past, “their words were literally and politically negated” (qtd. in Beard 68). Maracle states in the “Prologue” to Bobbi Lee that there are two voices in the book, one is hers and the other is her editor Donald Barnett’s, who was a white academic and an activist, “a chairman of the Liberation Support Movement, and a comrade of the Native Study Group” (17). She admits that in the end, “the voice that reached the paper was Don’s, the information alone was [hers]” (19). Taking this into consideration, the validity of Maracle’s autobiography as “giving voice to the voiceless,” (Beard 75) can be questioned and can be seen as undermining the opportunity for Aboriginal peoples to have their own voices heard. As it seems, Aboriginal peoples still do not have their voices entirely back.

Nevertheless, Maracle’s works are important additions to Aboriginal studies and she has been recognized as an exceptional author. Maracle was awarded J.T. Stewart Voices of Change Award and an American Book Award from the Before Columbus Foundation in 2000. She has worked at several universities across Canada e.g. University of Guelph, University of Toronto, as a professor, writer-in-residence, instructor, and a director.

The following subchapters will analyze Bobbi Lee and I Am Woman and present Maracle’s depiction of the reality of gender violence in her autobiographical works, the underlying causes, and possible solutions to this pressing and highly damaging issue.
Patriarchy and Sexism

Autobiographies usually present the author’s “life as exemplary, unique, individually significant,” (Beard 65). In case of *Bobbi Lee* and *I Am Woman*, which is an extension of *Bobbi Lee* and a sociological study of feminism at the same time, the story is “of many natives,” of “real conditions which shaped the people like Lee,” of “the harsh realities of the day, seen through the mix of native and non-native values and customs jammed together for survival purposes” (Armstrong 15). The story of Bobbi Lee presents lives of Indigenous men and women trapped in a circle of oppression, violence, and self-hatred. The adoption of Western patriarchal power hierarchies led to “traditional gender roles [being] obliterated [and] women los[ing] their respected roles in the communities” (Boyer 69). The dissolution of traditional gender roles and loss of respect for women is tightly connected to gender violence, sexism, and self-hatred and “as [Aboriginal] people internalize Western patriarchal power hierarchies, violence (as an exercise of power over those more marginalized) has become familiar within Indigenous homes and communities and can be understood as an expression of internal oppression” (Poupart 91). Studies have shown that the percentage of Aboriginal women being victims of gender violence can be as high as ninety percent in some areas of Canada (Chartrand v). This suggests that the adoption of Western patriarchal norms has had devastating consequences for the communities, the families, and the whole social structure, which mostly fell apart. Armstrong points out that “it was through the attack on the power of Aboriginal women that the disempowerment of our peoples has been achieved”

---

4 In *A Recognition of Being*, Anderson explains that she considers the term “traditional” problematic. She thus uses it in reference to land-based societies that rejected Euro-Canadian systems and institutions (34).
(“Invocation” x). The traditional societies have been lost as women have lost their respected positions in the communities and become victims to the oppressive system from both the outside and the inside.

Consequently, the adoption of Western power structures gave rise to sexism within the communities. Western patriarchy promotes strict gender roles and control over the subordinate, i.e. women and children and thus “as [they] buy into these codes [of abject difference], [they] not only apply them to [their] individual selves but also to these within [their] own marginalized group[s] – [their] loved ones and community members” (Poupart 87-88). Male members of tribal councils thus believe that “women are not deserving of power because [they] are emotional beings” (Maracle Woman xi). Hence, the women are often excluded from tribal councils and denied any power in the communities. “For instance, by the 1960s, only six percent of elected council chiefs and council members were women” (Barker 263). What this means is that female-male relationships have become strained, tense, and outright violent; they lack harmony, equality, and balance. Maracle continues to explain that the denial of power is also linked to the belief that women are not as smart as men. “[She] was shocked as a twenty-year-old by concepts of sexism coming from the mouths of young Native men; no one would have dared doubt the intelligence of women ten years earlier” (Maracle Woman ix). Moreover, within the sexist framework, the inequality between men and women is extended to home environment where housework and child-rearing is considered a woman’s job. All these symptoms of sexism within the communities are tied to the subordinate status of women which they unwillingly achieved with the adoption of patriarchal norms.

And because as subordinate beings women need to be controlled, violence is often
implemented to keep them in their place. Indigenous feminism rose to fight this inequality between men and women, however, there were men (and women) who rejected this movement. Maracle’s then-husband Ray believed that “to be a feminist in North America was to be bourgeois, that somehow to be sexist was normal and not to be condemned” (BL 231). Years of internalized oppression have led to the acceptance of subordinate status of women by both men and women within Indigenous communities.

The acceptance of the subordinate status can be seen depicted in Bobbi Lee where Bobbi’s mother “remained loyal to [her husband] until long after he’d left her, always telling [the children] he was a good man who just had too many troubles” (31). This example illustrates women’s tendency to excuse men’s actions. Perhaps Bobbi’s mother feels the need to excuse her husband’s behavior because she feels she deserves it or because she thinks this is the way it is supposed to be. Behavior of Bobbi’s mother suggests deeply ingrained sexism and inequality in relationships between men and women. Similarly, looking at the consequences of men’s assumed superiority in Maracle’s marriage to her first husband Ray, it seems that Ray has adapted to his superior position in the relationship. She recollects: “Ray and I fought over my need to write … suddenly, the inequity between us, his male privilege and my female drudgery entered the argument” (BL 231). Moreover, Ray refuses to “share the work around [the house]” (BL 231); his believed superiority over women and refusal to share housework suggests that he subscribes to the Western values which promote sexism. Maracle explains that throughout her time with Ray, she was “typing for the [activist] group, writing [her] own stuff, typing for [her] husband [Ray], laying out leaflets, newsletters, speaking at demonstrations, organizing
activities, feeding hosts of people, and all the while, laundering, shopping, cooking and cleaning for the family” (BL 222). Even though “[she] had been in contact with the feminist movement off and on over the years … [she] could not relate” and instead of trying to fix the problem she simply rejected it (BL 222). Change in her perception comes when she has children. Then she starts to realize that women should not be expected to do everything and that men should do their share of work. Ray’s behavior toward her and her realization that sexism should not be a part of their relationship eventually leads Maracle to leave him. This act, however, highlights the struggles women go through in cases like this. Because the society believes them to be subordinate to men, there is a lack of support for women who leave their husbands and for single mothers. When Maracle leaves Ray, she is the one who has to move out. She, however, has no money, and because of that, has to leave her children behind with Ray.

While Maracle acknowledges the reality of inequality and condemns it, she is also aware that some women, she among them, have often been guilty of perpetrating gender inequality. When she is a member of a blooming activist organization originally created as a study group, she realizes that “the majority of the men and [herself] and the only other woman that hung in there, were not very interested in what [new women members] had to contribute. The intelligent people in our minds were men and those that thought like them,” she explains (BL 222). Furthermore, she points out that “as women, we do not support each other. We look at males when they speak and stare of into space when a woman steps assertively into the breach of leadership” (Maracle Woman 18). Internalized oppression has led both men and women to assume their imposed gender roles. Men have become
sexist and women have started to believe that they are, in fact, subordinate and perpetuate this idea further by looking down on other women. Consequently, adoption of these power hierarchies causes disruption within the communities; women struggle to find their own voice and standing within the communities.

Identity crises women often seem to struggle with can be seen as consequences of “the societal conflicts caused by having to identify with two hopelessly opposed cultural definitions of women” (qtd. in Beard 77). These lead many women down a dangerous path, a path that often leads to destruction of their homes as they sometimes become perpetrators of violence and a path of self-destruction lined with alcohol, drugs, or suicide attempts. Those two paths are often intertwined and it is so in Bobbi’s life. Already from a very young age, Bobbi’s life is filled with “systemic violence and racism” (Beard 76) so she tries to cope with it in different ways. At school, Bobbi is often attacked by other children. She often experiences violence from her peers at school and as a result she lashes out. “Once a gang of [girls] came down on [her] as [she] walked to school” (Maracle BL 36). A few days later, at a softball game at school, Bobbi “whacked the ball and hit [one girl from the girl gang] right smack in the stomach. She fell down, unconscious, while all her friends came rushing to beat [Bobbi] up” (BL 37). Moreover, domestic abuse she witnesses at home leads her to consider killing her father when she is eight years old (BL 28-29). She feels rage and hate toward many people in her life, at school especially. All those feelings exhaust her and her academic performance worsens. She then turns to alcohol and drugs. Later in her life, when she is an addict living on skid row in Vancouver, she realizes that one of the reasons behind her addiction is her desire to feel numb, to feel nothing and forget about injustices in the world,
those injustices that make lives of Indigenous people difficult, especially. Her numbness and exhaustion from fighting so many battles are reflected in her apathetic tone throughout the book which “underscore[s] her complete sense of alienation from her family ... herself, and her body” (Beard 77). Maracle explains: “This kind of deadening of emotion in me began when I was about thirteen and really started hating school ... I started cutting myself off ... I started getting less and less interested in people and their problems – I didn’t want to get involved” (BL 100). These feelings evolved into believing the “uselessness of [her] existence” (BL 79), and lack of interest in other people, for example, her then boyfriend Dough. “It was hard to tell if I really cared – about anything ... I wasn’t that emotionally involved [in the relationship]” (BL 101). During this period of her life, she was a drug addict who “unconsciously wanted to overdose; [she] really hated [her] existence” (BL 105). She hated herself and did not believe her existence was worth anything.

The apathy she was feeling “[was] a kind of admission of insignificance, a form of self-erasure” and does not apply only to her own particular experience but can be seen in many Aboriginal women across the country (BL 10). This destructive behavior also comes from trying to reclaim traditional roles for women in Aboriginal societies. “Native women are caught in a bicultural bind that has them vacillating between being dependent or being strong, self-reliant and powerless, and they resolve the dilemma in different ways” (Beard 76). As it has been already mentioned in the previous paragraph, the dilemma and confusion over their identity and their status in the community often leads Aboriginal women to engage in self-destructive behavior. Many women turn to alcohol and drugs, become violent toward their children, or consider suicides. However, it also suggests surrendering to oppression
and adopting the centuries-old view of Indigenous peoples who were considered uncivilized, drunks, violent, and promiscuous, thus unfit to live in a civilized society. Indigenous peoples were not entirely eradicated in the past, not through relocation or residential schools but now, however, it is as if they themselves wish to erase their existence. Just as Bobbi, many Indigenous people are apathetic in their lives and because of the confusion over their place in the society, they try to directly destroy themselves.

Maracle’s struggle with identity is depicted in both her works analyzed in this thesis. She points out the fact that her destructive behavior is a result of that struggle. The apparent inferior position of women in the society and racism caused her to hate herself and people like her. The mainstream Canadian society and its values affected her, as many other Indigenous people, and “[she] had picked up the arrogant voice of Europe not as a language but as a way of being” (Maracle BL 228). Her feelings and opinion of herself suggest that even though she rejected racism and did not listen to other people’s opinion of her, she succumbed to the oppression and struggled with her identity. “The inside of me was indigenous, but the outside was covered with a foreign code of conduct, its sensibility and its cold behaviour [sic]. I contemplated suicide but not for long” (BL 200). It is writing that helped her come to terms with her identity as a Native and a woman. She started to realize how far she has diverted from the traditional way of living and how negatively it has affected her and those around her. “[She] faced [her] inner hate, [her] anger” (BL 230) which allowed her to eventually heal. Moreover, self-hatred in Indigenous communities is connected to imposed ideas about what warrants a human being, in Maracle’s case it also extends its reach to body image. She recollects: “Not once in my twenty-nine
years had I ever relaxed in the body of me, content with its form, its colour [sic] or its shape” (*BL* 235). At the same time, it is internalized oppression and acceptance of blatant sexism and the inferior position of women in the mainstream Canadian society and tribal communities that consequently create intense inner turmoil in the communities.

Gender Violence

Domestic and sexual violence is one of the main themes in Maracle’s books. Gender violence can be considered yet another result of the adoption of Western patriarchal norms and subsequent disruption of the traditional belief and value systems. Maracle explains that “[Aboriginal] communities are reduced to a sub-standard definition of normal, which leads to a sensibility of defeat, which in turn calls the victim to the table of lateral violence and ultimately changes the beliefs and corrodes the system from within” (Maracle *Woman* ix). Increase of gender violence and child abuse prompted by changes in the beliefs corrupt the whole communities and most importantly, the damage inherited by younger generations can be seen depicted in Maracle’s autobiographical works.

Maracle and many other Aboriginal scholars, such as Razack, suggest that patriarchy and “white domination of Aboriginal communities ha[ve] contributed to the causes and extent of male violence” within Aboriginal communities (Razack 910). Domination of Aboriginal communities is parallel to domination of subordinate members of the society. Many, primarily radical, feminists claim that “rape is not an aberration, but a point on the continuum of male-aggressive, female-passive behavior, and that it reflects the fundamental oppression of women in a patriarchal
society” (Showalter 164). And because patriarchal values have been adopted by Indigenous peoples, women suffer. Gender violence is present in Bobbi’s own life from a very young age. She has abusive parents and experiences sexual abuse. Gender violence is so common in Indigenous communities that at one point, her mother warns the daughters about rape and men. “She wanted [them] to loathe and detest rape and the men who would commit such acts, yet not be cynical about men in general” (Maracle Woman 55). However, later, when Maracle becomes a mother and a wife the violence continues to permeate her life; it affects her and people she knows personally and she discusses it in her books. Several particular cases are discussed in detail and serve as examples of the reality in almost every family and Aboriginal community in Canada. She gives faces to the statistics and presents the damaging consequences of the epidemic that is gender violence in Aboriginal communities.

In *I Am Woman* Maracle presents a story of Rusty, one of Maracle’s friends who had recently passed away. Maracle recollects the stories of Rusty’s life and hardships she had to endure as a child of an abusive father. She was not able to escape the violence even later in her life when she develops a romantic relationship with a man. Maracle explains that “her lover was ... a Native who was anything but a gentle man” (Maracle Woman 51). In the recollection, Rusty remembers that “the first time he beat [her] up was because [she] seriously shamed him. After that, the crimes got smaller until he just whacked [her] as a matter of course” (*Woman* 53). Similarly, another acquaintance of Maracle, who remains nameless, “left her husband not too long ago. He beat her on a regular basis for some fifteen years. Between beatings ... he would get on top of her and without ever looking at her, relieve
himself of sexual tension. Over the years, she was never sure if, every time he had sex, she had volunteered herself up for rape” (Woman 24). Oppression, both internalized and from the outside, often prevents women from fighting violence they encounter at home. On one hand, they might believe they deserve it, as Rusty did at the beginning, on the other, women often have nowhere to turn to for help. Because it is nearly impossible to get out of the clutches of sexual and domestic violence, women continue to suffer. Those are two examples of sexual violence that affected Maracle’s life and touched her personally as it was her friends who had suffered. She acknowledges that “it is the kind of sex that is going on in too many homes of the nation” (Woman 24). These are not isolated incidents and Maracle’s accounts offer a more personal understanding of the alarming statistics.

Additionally, Maracle offers, as an example, her own experience with sexual violence as another example of the horrors women endure in Aboriginal communities. She points out that even though “[her] rapist was a white man … he could have been Indian” (BL 233). Maracle uses her experience to illustrate how deeply Western patriarchal values are ingrained in Aboriginal minds and affect the actions of both men and women. This suggests that Native men who assault and abuse their women are not so different from white men who do the same. Smith explains that “if a Native man rapes someone, he subscribes to white values, because rape is not an Indian tradition” (Conquest 142). She remembers that “as a child, a young boy leaped at [her], tore at [her] clothes and was stopped by another boy - both were Native” (Maracle BL 233). At another time, “some native man had driven [her] son and [her] home from the Center. Outside [her] house he had undone his pants, grasped [her] hand and tried to get [her] to bring him to
gratification” (*BL* 234). It is possible, that by giving this example, Maracle seeks to underline the fact that there are many Indigenous men who assault and abuse their partners and other members of their communities. While to general public, it may often seems that it is only white men assaulting and killing Indigenous women, that Indigenous people continue to live in an almost utopic harmony with each other, the reality appears to be different. Gender violence within Indigenous communities is a real and pressing problem.

Disrespect for women and children can be seen in many aspects of Indigenous lives, widespread domestic and sexual violence, sexism within the communities, even women’s own perception of themselves suggest that Indigenous people have internalized the Western belief in the inferiority of women which often leads the women to use violence against their children, affecting another generation of Aboriginal people. “When marginalized Others internalize the dominant subject position, we become our own oppressors” (Poupart 90). The extent to which family violence has spread in Indigenous communities is alarming. It is clear in the story of Bobbi Lee that domestic violence occurs regularly. Bobbi’s parents married young and “it wasn’t long before they started fighting and getting on badly” (*Maracle* *BL* 22). The violent environment has had a direct effect on the children; “when [the parents] had parties - which was almost every week - dad got drunk and made [the] kids drink beer too” (*BL* 23). Not only are the children witnesses to domestic violence, they are also forced to drink alcohol and some of the children receive physical beatings, from both their parents. Bobbi’s brother Ed is always beaten by his father, probably because the father is doubtful Ed is his child (*BL* 24). Bobbi herself has been physically punished by her mother, she is often spanked and on one
occasion, when she runs away to her school dance, “[her mother] kept pulling [her] around the room by [her] hair and screaming at [her] ... she kept yellin’ “Cut it out! Smarten up!” (BL 46). The mother might be scared for her daughter and thus implements violence as tool and reminder for Bobbi to beware of the dangers of the world. Nevertheless, she beats her own daughter who carries the consequences with herself to her adult life. Similarly, the father of Maracle’s first husband Ray is a violent man. “Bill terrorized everybody in the family when he was drunk” and is “foul-mouthed and obnoxious with the women, pawing them off and things” (BL 177).

Violence in Indigenous communities is inescapable. This reality suggests that “[Indigenous people] internalized Western power structures at many levels and assumed Western dichotomous gender differences that privilege men and objectify women and children” (Poupart 91). Poupart continues to explain that Indigenous people “have internalized constructions of women and children as powerless commodities” which leads to subordination and oppression of women and children within the tribal communities (91). Alcohol is often a vessel that allows Indigenous people to act according to their imposed beliefs, it feeds self-hatred and violent impulses.

As can be seen in Bobbi’s mother, domestic violence is not always perpetrated by men. Domestic violence suffered at the hands of her mother influences Maracle’s child-rearing practices when she becomes a mother. Internalized oppression surfaces and the rage and hate she feels toward injustice are translated into violence against her own children. “My children paid in invisible and visible ways ... violence – pugilistic violence – was always there on the surface of [her] being” (Maracle BL 229). Violence in Indigenous communities is often perceived as something caused by
alcohol, as can be seen in Ray’s father’s behavior, however, Maracle explains that in her case, “[the violence] had nothing to do with drunkenness. [She] was sober and abusive. It had everything to do with racism and self-hate. [She] thought [she] hated white people and in fact, [she] did not love [her] own” (BL 229-230). “The unhappiness and the rage in [her] affected her thinking and actions and it was her children who suffered (BL 229). It is clear that domestic violence is widespread in Indigenous communities, whether perpetrated by husbands and fathers of by mothers, whether driven by alcohol and drug abuse or self-hate, the consequences of such violence on its victims are devastating. “The abyss of internalized violence is very deep” (Maracle Woman 127). This violence does not solve the problems in Indigenous communities, it does not help the people to overcome centuries-old oppression; it only perpetuates more violence and consequently trickles down to another generation.

This problem of gender violence reaches as far back as the introduction of patriarchal system. Gender violence “is also a tool of colonialism and racism [and] when a Native woman suffers abuse, this abuse is not just an attack on her identity as a woman, but on her identity as Native” (Smith “Not an Indian Tradition” 71). This assertion can be applied to gender violence perpetrated by Indigenous people on each other as well, suggesting the internalization of racism and oppression. Because men have subscribed to Western values, they view women though a patriarchal lens, which results in sexism and violence in the communities. Hence, the colonization and the introduction of patriarchy can be blamed for the increase in gender violence. It is a fact “the role of men as protectors and providers for their clan families was dismantled by the invading colonial masculinity ... [and] within this context of cultural
disorientation and colonialism, men struggled to find their place” however, “men decide to commit acts of violence [and] whether to take responsibility for those acts” (Anderson and Innes eds. N.p.). Even though there are historical traumas that may lead many men to abuse the women in their lives, Emma LaRoque states that “political oppression does not preclude the mandate to live with personal and moral responsibility within human communities” (qtd. in CampBell 102). Similarly, Maracle stresses that the abuse needs to stop and “if [the man has] got a problem, [he will] have to solve it” (Woman 25) not relieve his frustrations of his partner or children. And thus, historical trauma and oppression of Indigenous peoples should not be used as an excuse and justification of gender violence within Indigenous communities.

However, road to acceptance and healing for Bobbi and other women and men in Aboriginal communities has been difficult. Bobbi, surrounded by violence her whole life, wants to get rid of that those feelings of rage and hate toward other people and herself. She, as many other Aboriginal women, have been damaged. Their lives and their views and opinions of themselves have been altered by the oppressive mainstream culture and by the hatred, violence, and discontent in Indigenous communities. All this confusion and pressure to act a certain way in a society that views women as second-class citizens, and racism Bobbi encounters at school cause her to have a nervous breakdown. To heal, Bobbi is sent to a psychiatric wing at a hospital where she is supposed to participate in various healing programs. She refuses at first, but to no avail, in order to go home and not to a mental hospital, Bobbi “start[s] playing their stupid games” (Maracle BL 47). Her stay in a psychiatric wing did not help her; taking pills is not helpful in curing ills caused by systemic historical trauma. Poupart says that Aboriginal people should refuse
being treated in mental institutions who treat their problems as unrelated to “Western social and historical forces” (97). Instead of pills and sessions with a psychiatrist to combat symptoms of historical trauma, there should be “services and healing lodges for women and children who are victims of violence” (Razack 911) to help stop violence, its roots and consequences within Indigenous communities. Maracle supports this idea by saying that “along with the physical treatment for [her] well-being, there was love and native spiritual and physical healing” (Woman 7) that helped her. Returning back to traditional roots appears to be the key to healing both men and women. An important step in combating gender violence in Aboriginal communities is establishing “treatment programs for batterers” (Razack 911) where they can, through restorative justice, heal. Moreover, Anderson and Innes claim in their book Indigenous Men and Masculinities that “the original teachings are essential ingredients in the rebuilding and recovery of self-esteem and the empowerment of Indigenous men” (N.p.). Maracle’s partner Dennis serves as an example of a Native man who is confident in his native masculinity which is reflected in his treatment of Maracle and their children. She recollects that “he worked like I had seen only women works. He believed it was all part of our tradition from the past. He believed that all work was just work, not to be exclusive property of one sex or the other and that everyone should do their share” (BL 234). This corresponds to what Anderson claims in her book A Recognition of Being. While work in traditional societies was gendered, the line was not set in stone. When the need arose, men and women would have to do the work usually assigned to the opposite gender (Anderson 35). Meeting Dennis and “accept[ing] the full bloom of kind and gentle love from a man who you know would be so good for you” (Maracle BL 233) nudged Maracle in the
right direction of healing. Additionally, through her writing, she is able to heal and reclaim her place as an Indigenous woman in the society.

Maracle’s autobiographical and sociological books explore the extent of gender violence in Indigenous communities. She recounts her experience with domestic and sexual violence and explores the roots of this type of violence such as colonization and patriarchy. Western patriarchy disrupted Indigenous lives and they, in turn, lost connection with themselves and all the living things around them. It appears, however, that the lost connection of love and harmony has been replaced with a different kind of connection. Gender violence, self-hatred, oppression link all Indigenous people together and permeate their lives. They have seeped into every fiber of their beings and thus it is difficult to get out of this circle of oppression. Maracle believes that “[Indigenous peoples] are a conquered people. Spiritually dead people … I am certain it is because we have been raped. Our men know that we have been raped. They watched it happen. Some of the rape we have been subjected to was inflicted by them. Some of them were our fathers and our brothers” (Woman 56). But Maracle wants to show that there is hope for the betterment of the society. Women, especially, should seek to reconnect with their womanhood which, ideally, [should come] from a place free of sexist and racist influence” (Woman vii). Through her writing, Maracle seeks to inform about the consequences of the adoption of patriarchal values and inspire people to take up a journey toward healing.
DOMESTIC AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN FICTION

Eden Robinson

Eden Robinson was born in 1968 on Haisla Nation Kitamaat Reserve to Haisla father and Heiltsuk mother. She grew up on the reserve surrounded by family members whose great storytelling abilities inspired her to write stories of her own. The support of her parents, who did not succeed artistically, allowed her to pursue a writing career. Robinson returned to Kitamaat in 2003, after a few years in Vancouver. She has earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts from the University of Victoria and a Master’s degree in Creative Writing from the University of British Columbia. Robinson is the author of a short story collection Traplines (1996) which won the Winifred Holtby Prize for best first work of fiction; “Queen of the North,” one of the short stories in this collection, which is analyzed in this chapter, was published in The Penguin Anthology of Stories by Canadian Women. Her first novel Monkey Beach (2000) won the Ethel Wilson Fiction Prize and is also analyzed in this chapter. Furthermore, she wrote Blood Sports (2006), Sasquatch at Home (2011), and her latest novel Son of a Trickster was released in February 2017.

Her works are considered gothic fiction; among her literary influences are Edgar Allan Poe or Stephen King. “Gothic novels from the outset were designed to draw readers in emotionally and evoke a response of either terror or horror” (Andrews 2). And Robinson’s works achieve this. She writes with certain darkness, presenting characters who are psychotic, sociopaths, or serial killers, but she wants the readers to see that all her characters are human, that they deserve our sympathy.

---

5 This biographical sketch is based on these sources: “Interview with Eden Robinson” by Stephanie Mackenzie, “Eden Robinson: On Writing and Gothic” in The Room, “The Saturday Rumpus Interview with Eden Robinson” in The Rumpus, and “Playing Rough,” a review in Quill & Quire.
and empathy. According to Andrews, *Monkey Beach* is considered Gothic for its supernatural elements, characters’ inner turmoil, “disorder or confusion [and] preoccupation with evil” (10). She supports the argument by stating that the confusion is, in some cases, brought about by the clash of two cultures, Native and non-Native, or by the residential school experience (10). Set in the coastal northern British Columbia, the stormy seas present another danger, danger of the natural world (Andrews 10). Kitamaat, surrounded by the vast sea from one side and interwoven with historical trauma, personal pain, and difficult lives of its inhabitants, certainly proves to be a dark place and a perfect setting for a Gothic novel.

Apart from being categorized as a Gothic writer, Robinson is Haisla, and some readers and scholars expect her to be characterized as an Aboriginal writer. She, however, is adamant about not being “put in the box [as] … a native writer” (Dobson 59). While many readers seem to want to approach her works from a colonial perspective, Robinson “refuses to [speak to a unique authentic Native experience]” (Dobson 54). First and foremost, she writes about what she likes, enjoys, or is intrigued by. She writes personal stories, focusing on individuals living a contemporary every-day life in urban areas or on reservations. Robinson sees her characters as unique individuals who deserve to have their stories told. While she does not focus exclusively on sexual and domestic violence in her works, violence is often present in her stories. As can be seen in the introduction to Robinson’s sci-fi story ‘Terminal Avenue’ in the *Walking the Clouds* anthology edited by Grace L. Dillon, “Robinson offers a snapshot of violent oppression glossed by reflections that reflect the colonized state of mind” (qtd. in Hubbard). Robinson’s stories contain violence in its many forms, physical, mental, and emotional (Hubbard). Her
characters are ordinary people of all ages who have dysfunctional relationships and live their troubled lives as well as they can, failing often, but trying hard. Her characters are traumatized and those living on reservations deal with the realities of alcohol and drug abuse, violence, poverty, crime. She presents dysfunctional families and relationships and people’s attempts to come to terms with the lives they lead. Her stories and portrayals of the characters and the settings are “haunting, dark, and beautiful” (Hubbard n.p.).

Although Robinson’s stories often present violence, her primary interest lies within the characters and their trials and tribulations, dysfunctional families and relationships, rather than in writing about Haisla culture to provide an ethnographic standpoint for her readers. Moreover, she is unable to write about Haisla community and its cultural and spiritual aspects because it is a tricky path as there are “limits placed on her by both the spiritual world and the elders” (Dobson 54). Cultural specific aspects of any community are difficult to translate into English without losing its meaning or authenticity and thus her works cannot be seen as ethnographic and be culturally appropriated. Moreover, some of her characters are not exclusively Native nor does she describe them as Native which furthers her goal in not assigning certain cultural or racial labels to her characters and stories. Robinson’s “resistance to representing the intricacies of Haisla life … renders her work … less culturally specific” (Dobson 56). The ambivalence and lack of cultural-specific aspects that can serve as ethnographic standpoints in reading her books can “frustrate the readers” but also “allow for dynamic, constantly shifting configurations of the Native world” (qtd. in Dobson 59). Some scholars criticize her for this ambivalence because, as Dobson states in his article, Robinson might eventually be fully absorbed into the
mainstream Canadian corpus without being recognized as an Aboriginal author (56). Her novel *Monkey Beach* is, according to Dobson, considered the most problematic. He references Lee Maracle’s comment that Robinson’s novel is not a Haisla novel (57). Nevertheless, Robinson is consistent in her refusal to categorize herself as a Native writer, stating that she wants to “maintain the ability to represent more than just Native experiences” (Dobson 60) and that she should be able to write about characters of other cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

Another important theme in Robinson’s writing is land and the environment; *Monkey Beach* contains detailed descriptions of the country because while living in Vancouver, Robinson wanted to feel connected to her home. Environmental issues subtly come up in some of her stories; among the prominent themes in *Monkey Beach* is water pollution and loss of oolichan, presenting the effect overfishing and aluminum factory has on Kitamaat and the traditions of the Haisla people. Robinson herself is an activist, trying to protect Indigenous lands and the Earth itself. She believes disconnect from the land comes from the loss of collective conscience; profit and economic wellbeing are put in the foreground, while social injustice, sweatshops, factory meat, loss of Indigenous lands are in the background, almost invisible. In 2014 she wrote an essay for *The Tyee* criticizing Enbridge pipeline and its advocates and supporters. She predicts there will be many more essays addressing various social injustice issues that First Nations peoples face. And yet, Robinson believes that our Earth can be saved and that people will sooner or later realize that continuing on this path will mean a destruction of ourselves and what we have created.

The following subchapters will focus on two of Robinson’s works, a short story “Queen of the North” from the short story collection *Traplines* and her first novel
*Monkey Beach* that, while not exclusively, provide an image of violence on the reservation. Robinson provides a glimpse into lives of the residents of the Kitamaat village who have been affected by the residential school system and consequently suffer domestic and sexual violence, either as a result of residential school trauma or as an outward representation of internalized racism and sexism.

Sexual Violence and the Legacy of Residential Schools in “Queen of the North”

In her short story “Queen of the North,” Robinson focuses on sexual violence, incest in particular, as a result of the residential school system and its consequences. Residential schools in Canada and boarding schools in the United States were set up by the government or the church in order to assimilate the children into mainstream Euro-Canadian/American society. “The first schools were opened in the 1840s in Upper Canada (Ontario) ... with the last ones closing during the 1980s” (Hylton 12). The education practices and the mission of the residential school system are explained and discussed in a paper entitled “Race, Tribal Nation, and Gender” by Renya Ramirez. She explains that residential schools were created in order to “insert patriarchy into tribal communities and to socialize children to believe in patriarchal gender norms” (28). She continues to argue that through residential schools and their policies, patriarchal norms have been imposed on Indigenous children and the communities, “encouraging sexism and misogyny and its related potential for violence against women” (29). Taken away from their families, the children were surrounded by primarily white teachers, nuns, and priests whose mission was to educate the children about the Western notions and beliefs such as patriarchy, Christianity, or Western gender roles in English. The education was aimed at erasing
their Indigenous cultures, languages, and spiritual practices and beliefs. The experience in itself was traumatizing, and together with the abuse suffered at the hands of the authority figures at the schools, the children who are now adults, struggle to live peaceful and healthy lives and carry on the legacy through their actions. “The legacy of residential schools includes not only physical and sexual abuse, but also emotional, spiritual, psychological and racial abuse” (Hylton 17) and the trauma that the children experienced at the residential schools is insurmountable.

These past experiences are not forgotten; in fact, the consequences are present and visible on reservations. They are reflected in poor conditions of the houses and poor health of the residents, alcoholism, poverty, crime, and violence. Domestic and sexual violence and emotional abuse have become parts of the daily lives of women and children on the reservations. “After years of colonialism and boarding school experience, violence is internalized within Indian communities” (Smith Conquest 27). The number of Indigenous women and children abused in Canada is unbelievably high, “much higher than the corresponding rates in Canada generally” (Hylton 52). Studies have shown that more that eighty percent of Aboriginal women experienced or were witness to domestic violence and the percentage of sexually abused Aboriginal women surpasses fifty percent (qtd. in Hylton 49).

The legacy of the residential school system and the internalized violence in Indigenous communities is reflected in Robinson’s characters in “Queen of the North.” Karaoke, a teenage girl of Haisla descent, lives a violent life on a reservation and is regularly sexually abused by her uncle Josh, who attended a residential school as a boy. Karaoke learns about his experience when she finds a picture of young
Josh with a priest “with his hand on [the] little boy’s shoulder” (Robinson “Queen” 212). As her mother explains, the priest was Josh’s teacher when he was a student at a residential school but the inscription and the hand on the shoulder suggest to Karaoke a different kind of relationship, rather than one of a student and a teacher. The inscription says “Dear Joshua … How are you? I miss you terribly. Please write. … Your friend in Christ, Archibald” (212). Seeing the picture, Karaoke is reminded of another priest who was charged with molesting twenty-three boys at a residential school and figures out the source of her own traumatizing abuse. Most of the family is unaware of, or unwilling to admit to the extent of the abuse Josh suffered at the residential school; Karaoke’s mother is appalled at the assumption that Josh might have been molested and concludes that “he was a bright student” and that “they were fond of each other” (212). She either has no idea or chooses not to believe it. Coming from the generation of children forced to attend the schools, Karaoke’s mother is aware of the practices and educational techniques the authority figures used. The possibility that the abuse might have happened to her brother or might be happening to her daughter is unthinkable to her. She stays in the dark while, as a result of years of abuse and unresolved trauma, Josh becomes the perpetrator of the violence he suffered. “[He] internalizes the antisocial behaviour [sic] suffered during his specific historic trauma of residential schooling and passes it on to the next generation” (Visvis 43). Freud named it “repetition compulsion” and it is a way for survivors of violence to “resolve inner conflicts” (Visvis 42). This attempt at dealing with trauma, however, is harmful and does not resolve anything.

Unresolved trauma also haunts Karaoke. The attempts to tell someone, her mother, her cousin Ronny, or her boyfriend Jimmy fail and she is left with pain she
cannot process in a healthy way. And thus, Karaoke’s relationships suffer. Through these dysfunctional relationships, Robinson presents and emphasizes the consequences sexual violence has on its victims and the collateral damage it causes. First and foremost, it is her relationship with herself that is highly dysfunctional and damaging for her. It is represented in her self-destructive tendencies such as fighting.

This one’s outside Hanky Panky’s. The woman is totally bigger than me it isn’t funny. Still, she doesn’t like getting hurt. She is afraid of the pain but can’t back down because she started. She’s grabbing my hair, yanking it hard. I pull hers. We get stuck there, bent over, trying to kick each other, neither of us willing to let go. My friends are laughing their heads off. I’m pissed at that but I’m too sloshed to let go (Robinson “Queen” 199).

Through causing pain to others and herself, she is able to, at least temporarily, to forget the physical and emotional pain from the abuse. Karaoke is ruthless when fighting, whether she is actively participating in hurting other people or it is her on the receiving end of the violence. She welcomes this violence because when she fights, she can focus on the immediate pain rather than the trauma she tries to avoid. Karaoke also turns to alcohol and drugs and does other health-threatening, dangerous things, such as amateur tattoos, without thinking of consequences that those actions might have for her, her health, and people around her. She wants to forget and enjoy herself, and one night, “after ... tequila shots that’s exactly what [she] did” (190).

Moreover, the fight in front of Hanky Panky’s can also be read as an analogy of the violence in the communities and the internal fight of Aboriginal people. Violence is a constant in the communities. Robinson depicts family members, friends, and people from the same community turn against each other in an attempt to figure
out who they are. Neither of them is willing to let go because that would mean bowing down to the stronger opponent, it would mean giving up the fight and giving in to the oppression. And Karaoke, as other Indigenous people, does not want to give up fighting, even though it often leaves her hurting, and not wiser. Violence in Indigenous communities is a vicious circle and Karaoke is unable to get out.

Furthermore, Karaoke’s relationship with her boyfriend Jimmy suffers. It is evident that Karaoke does not feel worthy of Jimmy’s love and affection. This ties in with the physical trauma inflicted on her body. “As a consequence ... of abuse of [the Aboriginal peoples’] bodies, [they] learn to internalize self-hatred, because body image is integrally related to self-esteem. When one’s body is not respected, one begins to hate oneself” (Smith Conquest 12). Karaoke and her body are not respected by her uncle and thus she refuses to believe that another man, Jimmy in this case, would behave otherwise. She cannot accept the fact that Jimmy respects her, her body, and loves her. When he tells she is beautiful and kisses her, she pulls back. “I thought it was just a line, the polite thing to say after a one-night stand, so I didn’t answer” (Robinson “Queen” 193). To be able to accept his words, she would have to believe that a woman and her body can be respected. Considering the violations she has suffered, she knows is not possible and thus becomes distant and appears to be indifferent to Jimmy’s words and actions.

The constant fighting and alcohol abuse serve to numb the pain caused by Josh. She cannot escape the trauma, however. The trauma is part of her and unless she takes steps toward healing, she will continue to suffer. She is unable to tell anyone about the abuse. Once, she is tempted to confide in her cousin Ronny. Once, when Karaoke finds an envelope with money on her dresser, she knows who it is
from and at that moment considers telling Ronny about Josh. She realizes, however, that Ronny does not care. “She was already making phone calls” and arranging a party that Karaoke’s money will pay for (189). Moreover, if she told Ronny, everyone in the community would know immediately, and she would have to face judgment and most probably disbelief. Another time, she contemplates telling Jimmy but she is scared because she believes “he’d probably pull away from [her] in horror, disgusted, revolted” (200). It is evident there is a need to tell someone, “a commitment to the ‘talking cure’ … a desire to bear witness, so she can discharge constraining affect” (Visvis 45), however, there is no one she could confide in who would understand her or listen to her. Karaoke suspects that her mother knows of the abuse she suffers but since they never talk about it, since Karaoke never confides in her mother, it is just an assumption. However, when Karaoke says grace at breakfast and Josh leaves the table without looking at her, “from [her mother’s] expression [Karaoke] knew that she knew” (Robinson “Queen” 213). No one says anything afterwards, however. As Smith in her book *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide* explains, “Because the abuses have not been acknowledged or addressed by the larger society … silence continues within Native communities, preventing Native peoples from seeking support and healing” (52). There is a lack of general support of sexual and domestic violence victims on reservations. Fear of rejection and judgment and potential lack of understanding prevent Karaoke from confiding in anyone, even those closest to her.

A possibility for potential healing for both Karaoke and Josh emerges the moment Karaoke learns about Josh’s abuse and lets him know. After finding the picture she realizes she might finally have some leverage and be able to free herself
from him and the constant abuse. When he is opening the door to her bedroom, she says: “Father Archibald? ... I’ve said my prayers” (Robinson “Queen” 212). Similarly, the next morning at breakfast, she starts by saying grace. Uncle Josh is unable to look her in the eye after the incident at the bedroom door and the moment she starts praying at the table takes him back to the residential school and he is reminded of the horrors he suffered there. These acts free Karaoke from Josh’s abuse but they also have a potential to free Josh from his past. To intensify Josh’s realization that he has turned into Father Archibald, Karaoke decides to send him package as a reminder

I paste his face onto the body of Father Archibald and my face onto the boy. The montage looks real enough. Uncle Josh is smiling at a younger version of me. My period is vicious this month. I’ve got clots the size and texture of liver. I put one of them in a Ziploc bag. I put the picture and the bag in a hatbox. … The note inside the box reads, “It was yours so I killed it” (213).

The package is meant to show him that the abuse he suffered at the hands of Father Archibald he has been inflicting upon his own niece. The violence Karaoke has suffered created her own violent impulses. Apart from the fighting and other self-destructive tendencies, those violent impulses are shown when she resolves to get an abortion. The whole process of traveling to Vancouver and getting an abortion has a debilitating effect on her and her health. The circle of violence seems to be never-ending. It might be almost impossible to get out. For Josh, the act of violence is “a spontaneous attempt at healing” (qtd. in Visvis 42). However, it is unsuccessful and does even more harm. But because Karaoke acknowledges his traumatic past, Josh might realize now that his actions have horrible consequences for Karaoke and it might bring him to potential healing.
As for Karaoke, she believes she is free of him now. Another step toward potential healing for her is the decision to help her aunt Erma make fry bread for Helping Hand Society in East Vancouver. This act represents for Visvis “interconnectedness” (47) which means going back to her roots and connecting with the culture. Being involved in the community has a potential to help her forget her pain and it might also be helpful in the future healing. Traditional healing is practiced within the community and Karaoke finds herself surrounded by the culture at the powwow, making fry bread for a good cause, being with her aunt and cousins. However, because the years of colonization succeeded at erasing most of the traditions and cultures from people’s lives and minds, “healing the spiritual, emotional, mental anguish is a ‘new’ but ‘old’ way of living [and] forging and new/old life for communities by undertaking healing work can be tough” (Boyer 62). In their “First Nations Communities at Risk and in Crisis,” Boyer and McCaslin argue that “in the long term, culturally appropriate mechanisms are the best way to resolve domestic violence. This is consistent with the traditional practice of communities holding themselves collectively responsible for the well-being of both the community as a whole and all their members” (75). Healing is a community action and should include everyone, from the victim, the perpetrator, to the extended family and tribal council members. Because this has become problematic, silence in the communities prevails. The internalization of Western values and internalized racism prevents the victims of sexual and domestic abuse from telling anyone and the community from dealing with the sexual abusers the traditional way, or any other way. The powwow and fundraising for the charity, participating in the traditions, the culture, and
engaging herself in a community can be viewed as a first step toward Karaoke’s journey to heal.

The Rape in *Monkey Beach*

The following subchapters focus on Robinson’s novel *Monkey Beach*. The focus of this subchapter is on Lisa’s rape, the second subchapter deals with the legacy of residential schools in the Kitamaat village where the story primarily takes place. The last subchapter analyzes domestic violence and its effects on the Hill siblings and their mother.

*Monkey Beach* (2000) is Eden Robinson’s first novel and tells a story of Lisamarie, a girl living on Kitamaat reservation five hundred miles north of Vancouver. Lisamarie is a warrior, a “monster” as her uncle Mick calls her. She is a wild tough tomboy, who enjoys fighting, fishing, and constantly asking questions. She is not just an ordinary tough girl. Lisa, as she is familiarly called, sees ghosts and has premonitions. The book is a coming-of-age story and explores her relationships, with her family and with her brother Jimmy whom she sets out to look for after he is lost at sea. “[Robinson] focuses on discomfitures of Lisa’s growing up in a non-cohesive Indigenous community that has lost much of its self-understanding and whose violence closely mirrors that of white communities nearby” (Dobson 61). Robinson presents complex characters living on the reservation, struggling with ghosts of the past, present, and future and dealing with pain which often leads them to inflict even more pain on themselves and on the others. A coming-of-age story set on a reservation where historical trauma is translated into violence and dysfunctional relationships.
When Lisa is fourteen years old, she is drugged and raped by her friend Cheese. Their relationship has been strained since Lisa’s refusal to go out with him. He likes her and is very nervous when asking her out, but she declines and “burst[s] out laughing” (Robinson MB 248). Lisa’s actions hurt his feelings and his ego, so after she is done laughing, he suggests that “[they] could make out in front of Frank and Julie … make him jealous” because “everyone knows [she] like[s] him” (248). Even though he suggests this to save face, to show that he would be willing to go out with her as a favor to her as opposed to asking her out because he actually cares about her, it is clear that he carries a grudge. Lisa’s rape is a premeditated, cold, revenge act. Cheese is Lisa’s friend, but her rejection blinds him and he obviously cannot think straight because he proceeds to lace her beer with a drug which makes her sleepy and incapacitated. He offers her the beer at a party as a sign of truce. After taking a sip, Lisa starts feeling dizzy and later “chunks of memory are gone” (258). They say goodbye, with Lisa heading home because she is not feeling well, and Cheese going the opposite direction. But as she is on her way home, “the bushes moved;” then “[she is] lying on the ground” and “someone [is] breathing over [her]” (258). Coming from behind the bushes, he attacks her, not caring it is his friend he is hurting. He goes and exerts power over her because he can, because his pride was hurt and now wants to punish her, or take what he thinks should be his. Lisa knows it is Cheese even though she does not see the face of the attacker. His hand covers her mouth so she cannot call out for help. She remembers “it ha[d] the feeling of a dream” (258). She is drugged and half-way asleep while she is being raped.
Lisa is shaken when she gets home. Her head hurts and her mouth is dry, she stinks after alcohol, and is tired. Her state is obvious to her cousin Tab who asks what happened but Lisa realizes she “[doesn’t] want to talk about it” (259). “While denial and self-blame are common responses to rape, Lisa’s response has an added dimension that is specifically tied to her identity as a Native girl” (Campbell 86). As Trudy has explained to Lisa, “no one [gives] a flying fuck” (Robinson MB 255) if a Native girl is raped or killed. Perhaps, Lisa feels shame and blames herself for what has happened to her because she has been warned about Cheese. Tab has explained to Lisa that she should not be hanging out with him because he is believed to have stolen some panties from the clotheslines around the reservation and Tab considers him a pervert and maybe a possible danger to Lisa. Whether it is because of the shame, self-blame, or the fact that no one would care, Lisa decides not to tell anyone about the rape. She decides to keep it a secret, even though Tab wants to help her and might be a receptive listener, “an addressable other” (qtd. in Visvis 45). Lisa does not even want to tell her friends, Frank or Pooch, who both come by to see her and ask her about Cheese. Frank might have gotten the admission of guilt from Cheese, because he “gave him a black eye and a fat lip” (Robinson MB 267) but it is not explicitly stated. Pooch is worried about Lisa and continues to ask her about what happened between them but Lisa does not tell anything. There are clearly many factors that might be keeping Lisa from telling, from ”bearing witness“ (Visvis 46). She might be scared to tell because she fears that everyone in the village would learn about it. “You can’t really hide things in the village (Robinson MB 185). Eventually, people learn about things. The village is a close-knit community and just through observation, people can deduce whether someone is going through a rough
time. Whomever she chooses to confide in, she fears she would be judged, not believed, or even blamed, and thus she decides against it and keeps it a secret instead.

Waking up the following morning, Lisa is brimming with rage. She has a bag filled with the clothes she was wearing that night. Standing by a barrel with a lighter fluid in her hand, her goal is to burn the clothes and forget about what happened. “[She] didn’t want any reminders” (261) but burning the clothes proves to be of no help. While she is standing by the barrel, for a fleeting moment, she thinks she sees Cheese lurking at the edge of the clearing. As the clothes burn, the fire ignites even more anger in her and Lisa wishes Cheese “pain and unending agony” (262). The rage she feels is so strong that “if he comes near [her] again, [she is] going to kill him” (263). The threat shows Lisa’s disgust and hatred she feels toward Cheese, however, it also shows that she is scared of what might happen to her if they are together ever again. The fear is so strong that she might kill him if it meant she could be free of that fear. Their friendship is now ruined and Lisa’s mental health will inevitably decline. She might burn the clothes and get rid of everything that reminds her of Cheese and that night, but the pain will stay with her, nonetheless, and it will haunt her on her journey to forget and heal.

Additionally, Lisa tries to deal with her uncle Mick’s death and those two traumatizing events generate a great deal of psychological problems and difficulties for her. Lisa has trouble sleeping and concentrating, she loses her spark, her passion, and a goal in life and eventually sets down the road of drug abuse. While she is able to hide the rape from her friends and family, the fallout from her emotional trauma is visible and obvious to everyone. Her mother notices that Lisa
starts to struggle with ordinary day-to-day life. Worried that Mick’s death has taken a
toll on her health, she sends Lisa to a psychiatrist, embracing the Western culture
and Western healing practices. Lisa’s mother is more inclined toward the Western
practice of talking to a professional, a stranger, which somehow positions the
problem outside the family and the community and leaves Lisa to deal with the
problem alone, not providing any security or support. However, “in the traditional
way, the victim, the abuser and the community all have an important role to play in
resolving the dispute and healing the wounds” (Hylton 7). Even though Lisa’s mother
does not know about the rape, her solution to Lisa’s psychological distress does not
reside within the community or even the family. At the office, Ms. Doris Jenkins, the
psychiatrist, starts by setting a friendly tone and then asks questions about Lisa’s
premonitions. She is obviously fishing for a certain kind of answers. It is impossible
for the psychiatrist to allow Lisa to believe in ghosts and premonitions, as Lisa clearly
states she does. In the end, Lisa surrenders and says she does it for attention. Lisa
says what she believes the psychiatrist wants to hear, just to get out of the office.
The psychiatrist is not helpful to Lisa; she belongs to a different culture, one that is
removed from the supernatural world and distant from the Haisla world. Thanks to
Ma-ma-o, Lisa has a certain connection to the Haisla world and thus abandoning it
completely in order to heal is unacceptable for her. The gap between those two
cultures and Lisa and the psychiatrist renders it impossible for Lisa to heal the
Western way.

Because of Lisa’s psychological problems caused by the rape and the death of
her uncle Mick, her academic performance at school worsens and she gets to a point
when she tells her parents she does not need a high school diploma and wants to
work in a cannery. After hardly finishing grade ten, working in a cannery is no longer appealing to her, instead, she moves to Vancouver where she stays for two years, drinking, partying, and doing drugs. “It’s a blur. A smudge. Two years erased, down the toilet, blotto” (Robinson MB 296). Lisa is lost and hurting. The party life and drugs give her what she needs, an escape from her life on the reservation and her feelings and provide her with an illusion of being in control over her pain. She finds that in Vancouver she can also be in control of everyone else around her which might be a way to keep herself safe from any possible harm. She is popular and buys alcohol and drugs for her friends. “Being Queen Bee” is appealing to her; “friendship on [her] terms, with [her] pulling the strings, in control” (302). This escape proves to be more harmful to her. It erases two years of her life, makes her an addict and distances her from her family. In the end, she ends up alone. Tab reminds her that those people are not her friends and that she needs to move on. She is angry and demands that Lisa stop “wallowing in misery” (300). Nevertheless, Vancouver is part of Lisa’s recovery. Albeit unsuccessful, it shows Lisa taking life into her own hands and trying to deal with the pain on her own terms, unlike the psychiatrist, which is her mother’s idea. Her escape to Vancouver might be perceived as cowardly, running away from her problems, from Cheese, her family, from the reminders of her pain, but it also might seem brave, for exactly the same reasons. One way or the other, the time in Vancouver helps Lisa realize that she needs to go home and start another chapter of her healing. She tries to reconcile herself with her parents, her brother Jimmy, and her friends and decides to go back to school so she can graduate from high school together with Jimmy. Lisa slowly gets back to her former self, to the feisty, determined, and brave girl she once was.
It seems, however, that Lisa’s healing journey never reaches a satisfying end, or any end at all. The ending is open, leaving Lisa at the crossroads. After she sets out to look for Jimmy who is lost at sea, Lisa ventures into the afterworld, where she is faced with a decision, to either go back to her life or to stay in the after-life with Mick, Ma-ma-oo, and possibly Jimmy. Pain never leaves her, the struggle to live and the trauma are still present in Lisa’s life, even in the end. She has to live with it, has to learn how to function even when the weight of her trauma seems unbearable, and that shows her strength. After a few years wallowing in self-pity, she is able to get back on her feet and fight again. Fight for her life, fight for her brother’s, for her family’s, and in the end for the whole community’s. Because the wellness of an individual is reflected in the wellness of the community and when the individual struggles to deal with their trauma, the whole community suffers.

The Legacy of Residential Schools

The suffering of individuals and consequently of the community is presented through several members of Lisa’s family, such as Mick and Trudy, who attended a residential school as children and the experience still haunts them. The after-effects of the years spent at the residential school are devastating. “In many cases, the separation of children from their parents as well as the resulting ideological shifts caused riffs in families that were never repaired” (Campbell 54). Both Trudy and Mick are detached from the family which results in strenuous relationships among the siblings. Trudy and Mick feel that their siblings, Albert and Kate, do not understand them and what they went through. They feel judged for their life choices and thus choose to distance themselves from the family. Moreover, Trudy feels resentment
toward their mother for sending them away. She believes that her mother is responsible for what she had to endure at the residential school and so she tries to avoid her, even to the very end. Trudy and Mick are also detached from their emotions and seek numbness which they can attain by drinking. On top of the disruption in families, “the residential schools led to disruption in the transference of parenting skills ... many survivors have had difficulty in raising their own children ... and often inflict abuse on their own children” (Hylton 17). The consequences of residential school abuse trickle down and find their way to the next generation. And thus, the whole communities suffer because “the undermining of traditional Aboriginal practices and beliefs, particularly though the establishment of reserves and residential schools, left many communities without even a basic way of teaching community members about healthy living” (Hylton 8). Violence, alcoholism, and drug abuse have spread to the whole communities. Indigenous people do not only struggle to deal with the past trauma, they also struggle with their identity. The identity of Indigenous people that had been tied to their cultural heritage was damaged and eradicated at the residential schools through physical, sexual, and emotional abuse. The ties have been broken, the Western beliefs and perception of Indigenous people has been internalized, rendering it difficult to create and lead a healthy life.

The Hill family is greatly affected by the residential school system. The extent of the abuse Trudy may have suffered at the residential school is not explicitly stated. She explains to Lisa: “There were tons of priests in the residential schools, tons of fucking matrons and helpers that ‘helped’ themselves to little kids” (Robinson MB 255). It shows that she was, at least, aware of the practices. It is also possible,
however, that she experienced the abuse herself. She is traumatized either way, and it is evident she struggles with coming to terms with it. The trauma and her inability to fight it has negatively affected her life and all her relationships. Trudy has self-destructive tendencies; she is an alcoholic, perpetually angry, and resentful. Her home is usually occupied by “unsavory people” (Campbell 68) and her boyfriend Josh is a child molester\textsuperscript{6} and an alcoholic. When Lisa is visiting her cousin Tab, Trudy’s daughter, “[Trudy is] vomiting in the upstairs bathroom, then clomping down the stairs ... hungover and cranky ... saying [Lisa] could damn well eat out someone else’s fridge” (Robinson \textit{MB} 51). Nevertheless, Lisa likes going to Tab’s “because her mother [doesn’t] act like [she is] going to break something” (50). However, at the same time, Lisa realizes what it actually means that “[Tab’s mother] isn’t anything like [hers]” (51). She recognizes that even though she and Tab can do anything around Trudy and the house, the mother-daughter relationship is dysfunctional, lacking love and care, and the house is in terrible condition, with holes in the walls and cigarette burns all over the carpet (50). The house is cold just like the relationship between Trudy and Tab, which mostly consists of yelling and name-calling. One time, when Trudy has been drinking with her boyfriend Josh and some of their friends, she accuses Tab of being promiscuous, calls her a whore, and demands to know who she has been sleeping with (128). Tab, however, makes nothing of this behavior; it is not the first time it happened and she reassures Lisa that her mother will not remember anything when she sobers up. And she truly does not. Trying to forget and drown her past, Trudy drinks to such an extent, that her memory is gone the following day. The fallout from Trudy’s traumatizing experience

\textsuperscript{6} Robinson’s stories are connected. The character of Josh in \textit{Monkey Beach} and in “Queen of the North” is the same person.
effects Tab directly, and thus, she is much more aware of what the two of the Hill siblings went through. The past and the present come together and Tab has to learn how to manage her mother, who is unable to deal with her trauma in a healthy way.

Furthermore, Trudy’s relationship with her mother is strained. She resents her mother for sending her to the residential school. Similarly, Ma-ma-oo might resent Trudy for the blame. It is possible that she was sent to the school because of the violence at home. Understanding is lacking on both sides of this relationship and it is the most obvious, when they are in the same room. “As soon as she saw Aunt Trudy, Ma-ma-oo’s wide smile hardened into falseness” (57). Trudy blames her mother for the abuse she suffered. She blames her for choosing the abusive father over her own children and for letting them suffer at the residential school. When Ma-ma-oo explains to Lisa that she has to show respect to people who are speaking by being quiet and listening to them, Trudy interrupts her by saying that she should “be a good girl ... be a fucking little lady. See what that gets you” (57). Because of her residential school experience, Trudy refuses to adhere to the rules that were forced on her and consequently becomes everything she should not have become, an abusive alcoholic with no husband and a disputable boyfriend. Trudy struggles to break free from the traumatizing past and live in the present. She is stuck, fighting the demons with alcohol which only makes her more miserable and ruins her relationships. Because Lisa’s father Albert was too young to go to the residential school and their sister Kate was already married, there is disconnect in their relationships; they do not understand what Trudy and Mick went through. Kate, especially, has no understanding for Trudy. “She always has to have someone to blame ... Nothing’s ever her fault” (285). Putting blame on anyone is tricky. Trudy is
in a vicious circle. She always blames someone else for her misfortunes because she sees that the origin of the hardships she has gone and is still going through can be traced to the school, the church, the government, or even further back to the colonizers. However, at the same time, it is only in her power to change, and as Kate suggests, she should be responsible for being a drunk and consequently neglecting her relationships with her mother and her daughter.

Additionally, her romantic relationships are far from ideal or even healthy; she is with Josh who is a child molester and a self-proclaimed “boozehound” (308). Josh’s story has already been analyzed in regard to Karaoke, however, since the stories are connected, his actions, while not explicitly stated, affect people in this novel too. When Tab runs away from home and finds refuge with Lisa, her mother sends Josh to pick her up after she learns of her whereabouts. Tab, however, states “[she] would rather hitch” (207) suggesting that she does not like Josh and does not wish to be alone in a car with him. “Tab laugh[s] bitterly” (208) when he mother explains that hitching is dangerous. Tab’s bitter laugh might suggest the irony of the situation, as driving with Josh seems to be more dangerous to her than hitching. At Pooch’s funeral, Karaoke implies that the reason he killed himself is that Josh had been abusing him. Moreover, Josh is not very supportive of Trudy who decides to enter a rehabilitation program. “[He] told her, old boozehounds like us can’t change” (308). He does not support her decision and does not believe in her. Conversely, he believes that the state he, she, and their relationship is in, is acceptable and change is thus unnecessary. Maybe Josh believes, just as Trudy does, that he is not to blame for his actions because they are caused by the trauma. Trudy is clearly in an unhealthy relationship based around alcohol abuse, and has dysfunctional
relationships with every member in her family. She carries the traumatizing memories with her and is unable to get out of the circle that keeps her involved in violence. Despite all the negative elements in her life, at one point, she takes the first step and decides to treat her addiction and hopes to get better.

Mick is the second one of the Hill siblings who attended a residential school. Mick is an activist, a fighter. As a member of the American Indian Movement, he travels a lot and is in constant danger of being imprisoned or killed. He is very outspoken about the injustices the government has caused Indigenous peoples, even around Lisa; her parents are of a different opinion. They want to protect Lisa from the cruel reality for as long as they can. Mick, however, manages to get his points across and teach Lisa about the history of Indigenous peoples by playing songs such as “FBI Lies” or “I Shot Custer” to her. He also teaches her to stand up to injustice. He feels strongly about the issues Indigenous peoples face every day and is proud of being Indigenous. He often wears expressive T-shirts with slogans such as “Free Leonard Peltier!” or “Columbus: 500 Years of Genocide and Counting” with a “claw [dangling] from his bone choker” (56). Lisa’s parents cringe at the sight of him and people turn and look at him, he is, however, unfazed and continues to fight the injustice. Through his activism, he also fights the internalization of Western values within Indigenous communities and the apathy toward change and fighting. On the other side of this coin, however, is his unwillingness to talk about the AIM and his time away from the family. When Lisa asks questions about what he does and expresses desire to be a warrior just like him, he simply states: “Fighting didn’t get me anything but lots of scars” (96). He acknowledges the importance of fighting, nevertheless. However, it is evident that the fight is never ending and very tiring for
its participants and might not be as impactful as he may have thought. The secrecy about his experience fighting with the AIM might be fueled by shame and rage. Shame for not being able to get the results he wants, rage for having to fight in the first place. His anger is rooted in his residential school experience where it was the establishment that betrayed Aboriginal people. “Mick is unapologetically angry at the institutions of colonialism and oppression” (Campbell 67) but his anger is also aimed at everyone who continues to perpetuate the beliefs. He gets into a fight with aunt Edith and uncle Geordie about “[their] precious church” and yells at them that “they’re buying into a religion that thought the best way to make us white was to fucking torture children” (Robinson MB 109-110). The anger is translated into his relationships, and he, just as Trudy, feels disconnected from people who did not attend residential schools and do not know what he went through. And thus, on one hand, “Mick’s response to his traumatic childhood experience is to become a passionate and dedicated activist” (Campbell 68), and on the other, he becomes an angry man who loses harmony and peace within himself and contact with his family.

The Hill Family and Domestic Violence

The reason behind the decision to send Mick and Trudy to a residential school was probably their father’s violence. “Ba-ba-oo was an asshole. He beat Gran. Instead of sending him away, she sent Mick and Mom to residential school” Tab explains to Lisa (Robinson MB 59). Whether Ma-ma-oo had any say in deciding who goes to residential school or whether it was stipulated by the government, Trudy believes her mother picked Ba-ba-oo over her own children (254).
Ba-ba-oo’s name was Sherman and “he was a good man,” (272) Lisa’s grandmother says. They fell in love when “he was thirteen, maybe fourteen” (272). He fought in the Second World War, lost an arm and “when he came home, he couldn’t get a job or get the money he thought he should get from Veterans Affairs” (81). It was a difficult situation, impossible to resolve. The Veterans Affairs referred him to Indian Affairs who told him that in order to get the veteran benefits, he should “move off the reserve and give up his status” (81). They already had three children, and with Albert on his way, they could not afford to lose the house. “[Sherman] worked hard all his life” (81) but he felt useless. Sherman felt powerless because one of the prime expectations Western societies have of men is to provide for their families. “Perhaps it is the frustration and confusion over the loss of traditional gender roles and the adoption of white society values that has contributed to spousal abuse and tension between the sexes and Natives today” (qtd. in CampBell 93). The internalization of this expectation and his inability to do so, as a disabled Indigenous veteran, frustrated him and drove him to abuse his wife (CampBell 99). His inability to take care of his family is translated to the inability to take care of himself and save himself. This vicious circle of frustration and violence ends, ironically somewhat violently, with him drowned in a bathtub. This accident released him from his frustrations and freed his family from the shackles of violence. However, “frustration from cultural loss” (CampBell 100) gives the Indigenous men who abuse their families an excuse who are, in turn, not held accountable for their actions. “In this context [of cultural loss] there are only victims, but they are certainly not all equally placed” (Razack 909). Sherman’s actions cannot be excused on the grounds of colonization and its consequences. “Abusers are always in control
of their actions, no matter their past influences” (Campbell 103). He should be held responsible for the violence he inflicted on his family. His death, however, absolves him, to some extent and is thus not punished accordingly for his crimes.

Being a victim and a survivor of domestic abuse, Ma-ma-o0 shows enormous strength. She survived the beatings. She tried to protect her children from the violence; sending Mick and Trudy to residential school might have been an act of protection. She persevered. And in the end, bears no resentment or hatred toward him. She loves him and regularly visits his grave where she brings him food and talks to him. However, “understanding the reasons why her husband is frustrated does not change Ma-ma-o0’s decision to free herself from him” (Campbell 99). While she is unable to consciously stop the abuse, when the opportunity arises, she takes it.

She had a dark purple bruise covering her left cheek and smaller bruises on her arms. Ba-ba-o0 was singing in the shower. A thud came from the bathroom and then there was silence. But instead of moving or asking if everything was alright, she sat and gripped her mug of tea tightly between her hands. ... ‘Nothing’s wrong,’ she whispered, even when the water seeped under the door. ‘Nothing’s wrong’” (Robinson MB 355-356).

The decision to leave him drown in a bathtub is not easy for her. She “gripped her mug of tea tightly in her hands” (355) because she knew what she was doing. She was letting a man she loved die. However, the man she loved abused her and the desire to be free of him was stronger. Maybe it was not stronger than her love for him, because she is obviously still very fond of him, but it was stronger than her willingness to prolong the suffering. And when Ma-ma-o0 watches TV, she somehow connects to the women characters and maybe, deep down, is reminded of her own life. She shouts at the TV: “Leave him, he’s no good for you ... Wah. She’s taking him
back” (77) and sadly shakes her head, as if realizing that she was once stuck in a similar situation, just as helpless and unable to act as the women on TV.

The healing strategies implemented by Karaoke, Lisa, or her mother’s attempt to help Lisa heal by sending her to a psychiatrist are criticized in Visvis’s article. She argues that the need to bear witness and accuse the perpetrator “are not always positioned as therapeutically efficacious in Native culture” (Visvis 46) but “make sense within white, western, twentieth-century notions of justice and psychological health” (qtd. in Visvis 46). Moreover, she states that “[they] are the antitheses of the traditional ethics of many Native tribes” (Visvis 46). Whereas, Andrea Smith, an Indigenous feminist and an activist fighting against violence against Indigenous women argues that to heal, it is necessary “to involve all parties (perpetrators, victims, and community members)” (139-140) suggesting that bearing witness is a crucial step toward healing. Furthermore, Visvis considers silence a Western concept within Indigenous communities and consequently ineffective in healing. The presence of silence in Indigenous communities is, however, a result of the internalization of Western beliefs. “[LaRocque] expresses disgust with the apathy of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities toward dealing with domestic violence” (Campbell 102).

The apathy can be unconscious, a result of the internalization of racism and sexism but it can also be conscious. Mihesuah explains “there is a push for Native women to keep silent about their experiences with domestic or sexual violence on Native lands so as not to air a tribe’s dirty laundry” (qtd. in CampBell 92). Taking this into consideration, silence might be a Western notion, however, it has been adopted by Indigenous communities and prevents them from dealing with domestic and sexual abuse in a traditional way, or any other way for that matter. This “conflicting cultural
“stance” that Visvis mentions can be tied to the idea that Robinson’s works are not exclusively native, or Haisla (Dobson 56-57). Not having a clear stance and fluctuating between Native and mainstream cultures are Robinson’s conscious aims. She refuses to be considered a Native author and so she incorporates Western notions into her works. It, however, also reflects the reality.
CONCLUSION

This thesis presents depiction of gender violence in Indigenous communities in Canada in three parts: statistics, autobiography, and fiction. Statistics inform the readers about the current situation in Indigenous communities and the causes behind the epidemic of gender and family violence. Opinions of several Aboriginal feminist scholars are offered to illustrate the consequences of colonization and internalized oppression, the direct link to increased gender and family violence in Indigenous communities. Among those feminist scholars is Lee Maracle, who not only presents her academic views on these issues and condemns patriarchal system and colonization as sources of internalized oppression and self-hatred among Indigenous peoples but also provides examples of her own experience with domestic and sexual violence. She reiterates that gender violence is ever-present in the lives of Indigenous people and it is a manifestation of years of oppression, loss of culture, and lack of respect.

The goal of thesis is to look at the depiction of domestic and sexual violence in Indigenous communities in Canada in two distinct genres, autobiography and fiction, and by two different authors, Lee Maracle and Eden Robinson. In the subchapters detailing the authors’ lives, it is clear that Robinson and Maracle come from different backgrounds and view themselves differently in relation to Indigenous writing. While Lee Maracle considers herself an unapologetically indigenous author who foregrounds her heritage and sees it as an integral part of her stories and her experience, Eden Robinson appears to be her polar opposite. Robinson refuses to label herself a native author and wishes to write about topics and people of all ethnic backgrounds and not be constrained by her background and experience or by any
rules and notions about literature, either Western or Indigenous. Hence, most of her writing cannot be confidently described as Indigenous as her characters and settings are ambiguous; her stories are universal and she has been criticized for it by Maracle.

With different approach to depict Indigenous life, these two authors also come from two different settings of Indigenous life. The analyzed works of Eden Robinson take place on Kitamaat Reservation in British Columbia while Maracle’s life story unfolds in Vancouver, depicting urban life of Indigenous people. The autobiography of Lee Maracle Bobbi Lee and autobiographical and sociological work I Am Woman depict struggles of urban Indigenous people. She focuses on sexual and domestic violence, poverty, alcohol and drug abuse, and crime. Regarding gender violence, Maracle depicts her personal experience with sexual and domestic violence, recounts stories of her two friends who have suffered at the hands of their husbands, and reiterates causes of gender violence and its consequences for the next generation. She points out that those are just examples of incidents that happen in almost every Indigenous household across Canada. Her life story shows that all those statistics are more than just numbers and that it is real people who suffer. To illustrate the reality and consequences of domestic abuse in Indigenous communities, she talks about her time growing up in an abusive household which left a mark in a form of her adopting violence as she became an abusive mother to her own children. Maracle has been able to overcome those hardships and is now a proud Indigenous woman who seeks to empower other women and lead them down a path to understanding and healing. This can be partly achieved by writing and writing in Indigenous languages. She believes that Indigenous languages are true vessels of expressing Indigenous
thoughts and are crucial to understanding and reclaiming Indigenous cultures. And thus, Maracle is critical of authors who distance themselves from Indigenous languages and notions of writing.

One of those criticized writers is Eden Robinson who seeks to write universal stories. Incidentally, the works analyzed in this thesis, her novel *Monkey Beach* and a short story “Queen of the North” are clearly stories about Indigenous peoples living on Kitamaat Reservation in Canada and present issues that plague contemporary Indigenous people, who try to live their best possible lives while struggling with the past. Robinson’s stories do not focus primarily on gender violence, but also on the legacy of residential schools and how it still continues to affect the lives of Indigenous people. Alcohol and drug abuse and identity crises are also part of Robinson’s stories. In *Monkey Beach*, several members of the Hill family experienced abuse at residential schools which left them traumatized and struggling in their lives. Oppression internalized at residential schools led to self-hatred, alcoholism, and consequent neglect of their children. Patriarchal system of gender roles adopted by men in the community brings about disrespect for women which often escalates to sexual abuse, even among family members, as can be seen in “Queen of the North.” In her fictional stories, Robinson addresses issues that are common in Indigenous communities today, however, she does not present them as the core of the Indigenous life.

The differences between Maracle and Robinson are clear. They were born decades apart, come from different backgrounds, and their works depict life in different places across Canada. While Maracle is vocal about her Indigenous heritage, Robinson refuses to be labeled in any way and is cautious when writing
about spiritual life of Haisla people. In spite of their differences, those two authors end up depicting one pervasive theme, sexual and domestic violence, and are brought together. Looking at the issue of gender violence from their own particular points of view, it can be concluded that their differences do not make them so different in regard to addressing the issues of Indigenous peoples. Each author foregrounds different issues and causes of gender violence in Indigenous communities in Canada e.g. Maracle explains that the root cause of the increased gender and family violence is colonization and internalization of oppression, racism, and sexism while Robinson illustrates the residential school system and its legacy as a cause of the disruption in Indigenous families. However, both authors see that it was the introduction and internalization of Western values that led to disruption of Indigenous lives and illustrate, Maracle through her own experience and Robinson through the character of Lisa, that to heal, traditions need to be restored.

Even the authors’ different backgrounds and ideas or decades dividing these works do not change the fact that Maracle’s experience with sexual and domestic violence is in parallel with the experience of Robinson’s characters. It can be thus concluded that regardless of the authors’ different ideas and intentions, the issue of gender violence occurs in their works and shows that it has been an integral part of Indigenous life for decades.
Bibliography


Cullingham, Haley. “‘We Have the Same Language, But Definitely Different Rules’: And Interview with Lee Maracle.” Hazlift 10 June 2016. Web. 8 April 2017.


English Resume

The aim of this thesis is to demonstrate the depiction of gender and family violence in Indigenous communities in two different genres of Canadian writing. Gender and family violence has been a serious problem in Indigenous communities, and thus, this thesis looks at how two Indigenous authors tackle this problem in their writing and whether it can be stated that their works reflect the reality.

The first chapter introduces feminist movements in Canada and in general and ties their fight to gender and family violence in Indigenous communities. The following chapters analyze works of Lee Maracle and Eden Robinson, two authors whose works belong to different genres of literature. The analysis includes character analyses of both works and a closer look at the root causes of gender and domestic violence and its consequences for the characters in the books.

The analysis of selected works leads to a conclusion that even though the authors write different books with different intentions and decades apart, gender and family violence remains a pervasive theme in works in both of these authors. It is a real problem and authors look for possible solutions in their writing.
Czech Resume

Cílem této práce je demonstrovat vyobrazení rodového a rodinného násilí v domorodých komunitách v Kanadě ve dvou různých žánrech kanadské literatury. Rodové a rodné násilí je vážným problémem domorodých komunit, a proto se tato práce zabývá tím, jak dvě původní (domorodé) autorky tento problém řeší v jejich psaní a zda lze konstatovat, že jejich díla odrážejí realitu.

První kapitola představuje feministické hnutí v Kanadě a zbytku světa a zkoumá boj proti rodovému násilí a násilí v rodině v rodinách domorodých komunit. Následující kapitoly analyzují díla Lee Maracle a Eden Robinson, dvou autorek, jejichž tvorba spadá do několika literárních žánrů. Studie zahrnuje analýzy postav a bližší pohled na příčiny rodového a domácího násilí a jeho dopady na jednotlivé knižní postavy.

Analýza vybraných děl vede k závěru, že i když autorky píší různé knihy s různými záměry a jejich tvorba je od sebe vzdálená desetiletí, rodové a domácí násilí zůstává všudypřítomným tématem v pracích obou těchto autorů. Ve svých textech se pak autoři snaží nacházet možná řešení tohoto reálného problému.