Voices of Resistance: Using Indigenous Young Adult Literature as a Pathway for Decolonization

By

Alyssa Froemel

May 2025

Director of Thesis: Dr. Kirstin Squint

Major Department: English

ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the role of Indigenous futurism and Indigenous Young Adult Literature (IYAL) in decolonizing academic and creative spaces that are dominated by Euro-American control. *The Marrow Thieves*, by Cherie Dimaline, *To Shape a Dragon's Breath* by Moniquill Blackgoose, and *Elatsoe* by Darcie Little Badger are all powerful stories of Indigenous resistance that subvert traditional colonial power structures through their depictions of Indigenous epistemologies, knowledge, tribalography, and agency. This thesis utilizes an Indigenous conceptual framework that is centered around the following questions: Is settler colonialism ethical? How does settler colonialism harm Indigenous agency and epistemologies? How do Indigenous epistemologies empower Indigenous agency? IYAL is a powerful tool that allows authors to write back against colonization. This study will further analyze how canonical YA, science fiction, and fantasy perpetuate themes of settler colonialism that seek to eliminate or omit the Native. IYAL allows both Indigenous and non-Indigenous readers to confront colonialism utilizing tools discussed in this thesis, like syncretic multiculturalism and Tribal Critical Race Theory.

Voices of Resistance: Using Indigenous Young Adult Literature as a Pathway for Decolonization

A Thesis

Presented to the Faculty of the Department of English

East Carolina University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in English

By

Alyssa Froemel

May,2025

Director of Thesis: Dr. Kirstin Squint, PhD

Thesis Committee Members:

Dr. Helena Feder, PhD

Dr. Andrea Kitta, PhD

Dr. Miriam Brown Spiers, PhD

DEDICATION

To Zachary and Arianne: For learning and growing alongside me every day.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to start by thanking my thesis director, Dr. Kirstin Squint, for the multiple rounds of revisions and feedback. I expressed wanting to do it in a quick timeline and I always felt supported. I would like to thank Dr. Miriam Brown Spiers for the extensive revisions and book revisions. Lastly, I would like to thank Dr. Helena Feder and Dr. Andrea Kitta for being on my committee—your support is greatly appreciated.

The feedback and book recommendations have made me a better scholar. I could not have done this without the guidance I received from this committee.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

Introduction

> Stories will wait for us until we are ready. Then they will reveal themselves in purposeful, powerful ways, and when this happens, we are in the midst of the sacred—Margaret Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies: Characters, Conversations, and Context*

For centuries, Euro-American society has pushed for continuous control of narratives surrounding Indigenous peoples and their history. These societies continually focused on colonial agendas that prioritized assimilation as well as cultural and resource extraction over humanizing the Indigenous populations. This has been done in several ways, though the most officially known include genocide and the weaponizing of religion, as well as financial and regional control by utilizing colonial systems that perpetuate systemic racism and classism. This thesis explores how the legitimization of Indigenous science and the inclusion of Indigenous futurism within Indigenous Young Adult Literature (IYAL) can decolonize Eurocentric colonial systems and beliefs by analyzing novels by Cherie Dimaline (Métis), Moniquill Blackgoose (Wampanoag), and Darcie Little Badger (Lipan Apache).

To conduct this analysis, I will utilize the foundations and conceptual framework presented by Margaret Kovach (Nêhiyaw) in *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts.* In her discussion of the foundations of Indigenous conceptual frameworks, Kovach posits the four foundations as epistemology, ethics, community, and self. In her conceptual framework, she states that, "An Indigenous conceptual framework is not one but all of its parts. The whole of it" (47). In addition to these frameworks, she employs Indigenous theory, which captures "question and purpose, preparations (protocol and ceremony), literature, story and methods (including ethics approvals), interpretation, and reciprocity and dissemination" (48). In 2022, the *Tribal College Journal of American Indian Higher Education* published the article "The Six Rs of Indigenous Research" which updates the guiding principles

of Indigenous research methods. They listed the guiding principles as “respect . . . relationship. . . relevance . . . reciprocity . . . responsibility . . . representation” (Tsosie et al. 2-3). These concepts by Margaret Kovach and the Tribal College Journal have guided this project and the formation of my conceptual framework. For this research, I ask how legitimization of Indigenous science and futurism can decolonize Eurocentric institutions by using literature as facet of popular culture. Utilizing Indigenous theory and my own conceptual framework, I will analyze the four foundations according to Kovach’s definition of Indigenous theory. This research will be conducted over three chapters, and it will also consider how each framework is affected by settler colonization.

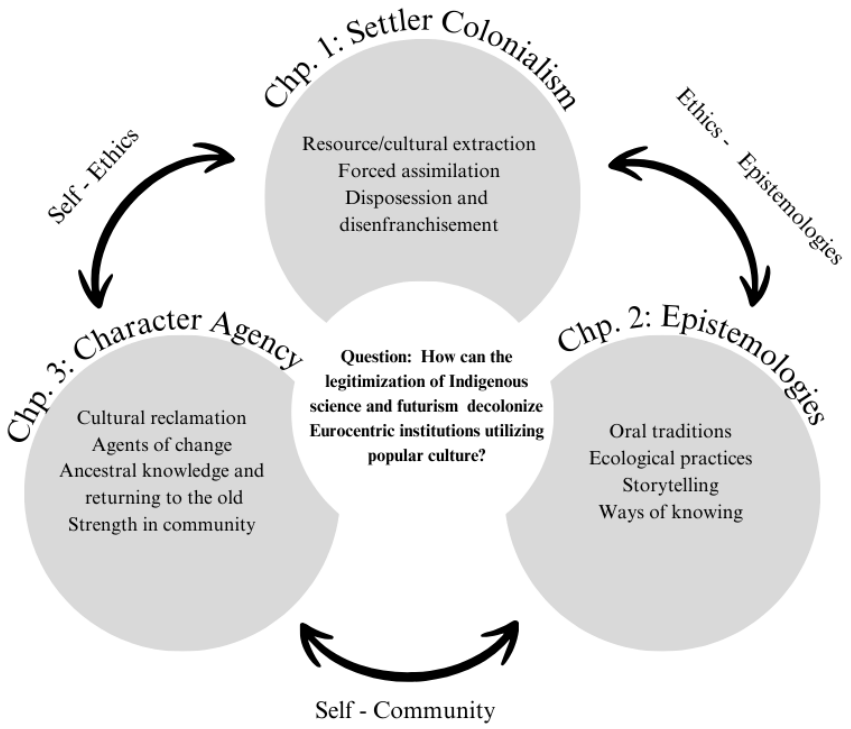

Figure One depicts my conceptual framework for this project. I created this framework as part of my preparations, which will fully integrate Indigenous methodology and theory discussed

by Kovach. I will be analyzing Indigenous Young Adult Literature (IYAL) in tandem with the foundations, which are the pillars of my research. In this research, settler colonialism represents the ethics axiology, as it is settler colonialism that is unethical in its treatment of the other three foundations: epistemologies, community, and self. In chapter one, I discuss the impact of settler colonialism on Indigenous spaces, and how that has presented in IYAL. Settler colonialism was requisite for the disenfranchisement of Indigenous populations. In chapter two, I explore how settler colonialism has harmed Indigenous epistemologies, and how upholding Indigenous epistemologies and ways of knowing has allowed Indigenous communities to share their knowledge and decolonize Euro-American institutions. In chapter three, I will discuss how Indigenous character agency, which represents the foundation of self, differs from agency in canonical Young Adult (YA) literature. Agency is challenged by the ethics of settler colonialism but is empowered through Indigenous epistemologies and communities. Each of the foundations is reciprocal and provides a more holistic perspective on Indigenous methodologies.

This thesis will work to decolonize but maintain an Indigenous focus, at its core. Part of the decolonization process is bringing more attention to settler colonialism. While some scholars have stated that Indigenous communities or territories can be classified as postcolonial, that narrative is false and will be explored in chapter one. It is imperative to remember that Indigenous communities remain in a period of colonization where they are not granted sovereignty, self-determination, or self-identification. It is also important to recognize Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang's article "Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor." The intention of this thesis is not to be metaphorical, but rather to encourage readers to think critically about what they say is decolonization. Decolonization should be considered an action.

To decolonize the Euro-American institutions and rebuild them into more inclusive and comprehensive models, we need to begin with a ground-up approach that prioritizes the inclusion of IYAL in K-12 schooling and mainstream media/popular culture. Popular culture is defined in the journal article "On the Nature and Functions of Popular Culture" as "consisting of the arts, rituals, and events, myths and beliefs, and artifacts widely shared by a significant portion of a group of people at a specific time" (Harmon 4). This thesis established IYAL as a transformative power within popular culture, due to popular culture's ability to provide and introduce role models, increase social consciousness, imagine possible futures, promote social and emotional growth, as well as explore societal boundaries (Harmon 10-12). The YA genre, specifically, is known as a genre of rebellion and innovation, providing strong role models for the young community. In a genre that often defies societal norms, it still lacks the diversity and representation becoming of its popularity. YA novels are an integral part of popular culture – influential series like *The Hunger Games, Divergent,* and *The Maze Runner* swept the industry by storm, challenging power dynamics between the poor and wealthy, or the government and civilians. In Mandy Suhr-Sytsma's analysis of the YA genre, she emphasizes how the protagonists in Westernized YA novels reconcile themselves to the convictions of social institutions that they were previously against; whereas young Native protagonists "experience an increase rather than a decrease in personal agency as a result of that reconciliation" (xvii). The introduction of IYAL to a larger audience is important for representation and decolonization. While IYAL is its own genre, it stands apart from YA as it provides representation for Indigenous communities and offers a new worldview for the settler communities. In this thesis, I will identify how IYAL represents Indigenous ways of knowing, resistance, and Indigenous agency on the path to self-identification and determination. Like YA, IYAL, has the expansive

ability to relay Indigenous experiences and cultures to non-Indigenous individuals, offering a new pathway for decolonization.

In the 2019 National Congress of American Indians study "Becoming Visible: A Landscape Analysis of State Efforts to Provide Native American Education for All," researchers found that more than half the states exclude Native American history from their curriculum. The lack of knowledge available has left many Americans ignorant of the dilemma regarding underfunded reservations, the gruesome history of genocide, and the condition of residential schools, in addition to the growing violence against Native American women and its effects on Indigenous living conditions. The lack of understanding and general misconceptions about Indigenous sciences and epistemologies have compounded, further isolating Indigenous peoples, scholars, and students. To rectify this deficit of knowledge, Indigenous history must be incorporated into K-12 curriculums, which can be done in a variety of ways. Authors Cherie Dimaline, Darcie Little Badger, and Moniquill Blackgoose incorporate Indigenous histories and cultures within the IYAL space, which encourages further inquiry at middle and high school levels.

Cherie Dimaline is the author of *The Marrow Thieves.* In an interview with *Herizon*, she is asked why she made *The Marrow Thieves* YA. Her reply illuminates her motivation: "I asked that it be YA, simply because I really, really wanted it to have a chance at getting into schools. I thought, perhaps arrogantly, that if Indigenous kids had this book, they would feel proud and less alone, and that if Canadian kids had it, they would have the chance to learn and live and love with us – in our ways" (17). Dimaline expertly describes the growing need for IYAL, defining its importance in representation and intercultural collaboration. Her novel is extremely impactful, as it educates about environmental catastrophe from prolonged war and pollution and the re-

creation of residential schools. These residential schools seek to extract and eliminate the Native, rather than assimilate them into Western society. The novel follows a young protagonist, Frenchie, who lives life on the run with other Indigenous individuals. The residential schools in the novel, which are a twist on Canada's historical residential schools, are staffed by recruiters, which are settler soldiers who track Indigenous individuals down and bring them into captivity. In the residential schools, their bone marrow is extracted and given to the settlers.

Darcie Little Badger is the author of *Elatsoe,* which won a Locus award and was a finalist in several other competitions. The novel is an urban fantasy that takes place in contemporary America. Ellie, the main character, has ancestral magic that allows her to talk to spirits and travel to the spirit realm. Early in the novel her cousin dies and begins visiting her in her dreams, aiding her in her investigation on how he died. Her investigation leads her to the killer, who turns out to be a settler that has been using his powers to transfer curse progression from a healthy vampire to vampires that are in his employ. The killer, along with other individuals, engage in exploitative practices that harm Indigenous and impoverished communities. Ellie's actions help her, and her family, redefine what justice means.

To Shape a Dragon's Breath, by Moniquill Blackgoose, is a high-fantasy IYAL about a young girl, Anequs, who finds a dragon. Anequs is Masquisit, part of a tribe from the fictional Masquapaug Island. Their land, which is remarkably similar to North America, particularly the U.S. Northeast, was colonized by the Anglish. The colonization eventually caused the Masquisits' dragons to disappear, so the one Anequs finds is the first in over one hundred years. Anequs becomes a Nampisheweisit, or a person who has a connection to a dragon. Anequs is forced to go to a colonizer-run dragon school, where they attempt to assimilate her and another Indigenous individual, Theod. Anequs is discriminated against, while the administration of the

school utilizes tokenism to parade her around. Anequs must pass the school, or they will kill her and her dragon. Anequs challenges colonizer ideology and practices that they try to draw her into, leading her to be a strong protagonist who is in the pursuit of knowledge to benefit her people.

Each of these novels reinforce LeAnne Howe's theory of tribalography in "The Story of America: A Tribalography." Howe states that "Native stories, no matter what form they take (novel, poem, drama, memoir, film, history), seem to pull all the elements together of the storytellers tribe, meaning the people, the land, and multiple characters and all their manifestations and revelations, and connect these in past, present, and future milieus" (42). In their own way, *The Marrow Thieves, To Shape a Dragon's Breath,* and *Elatsoe* paint a vivid portrait of tribalography in fictional worlds where the authors can tell their own stories that honor the past, present, and future of their respective tribes. Additionally, the identification of tribalography in a fictional world and its relation to popular culture can bridge Indigenous and non-Indigenous characters and readers. Tribalography will be discussed more in depth in chapter two.

The implementation of Indigenous futurism can speak to Indigenous readers by promoting cultural reclamation, spiritual and ancestral connections, and the Anishinaabe concept of biskaabiiyang. Grace Dillon defines biskaabiiyang as "an Anishinaabemowin word connoting the process of 'Returning to Ourselves', which involves discovering how personally one is affected by colonization, discarding the emotional and psychological baggage carried from its impact and recovering ancestral traditions to adapt in our post-Native Apocalypse world" (Dillon 10). Indigenous futurism often involves biskaabiiyang, which can be identified within conceptual frameworks of self, community, and epistemologies. For non-Indigenous readers, these novels

work to bridge the gap of cultural understanding and empathy that exists between the two groups as these stories work to decolonize literature within Euro-American institutions and popular culture.

Grace Dillon was one of the first people to coin the term "Indigenous futurism" in her 2012 book *Walking the Clouds: An Anthology of Indigenous Science Fiction.* When writers began introducing the idea of Indigenous science fiction or fantasy as an isolated genre, the concern was whether there was an Indigenous science' in science fiction. Dillon states that "methods that do not resemble western science are not de facto primitive" (8). Primitive is described by Wendy Makoons Geniusz (Métis) as an assimilation tactic where "native knowledge was 'primitive' or 'evil,' as a result, often prevented its continued dispersal within Native communities" (3). This loss of agency is a distinctive feature in the disenfranchisement of the Indigenous population, where "Native people were also made to view their knowledge as 'wrong' or 'inferior' and nonnative knowledge as 'right' or 'superior'" (Geniusz 3). Dillon's analysis illuminates the everyday presence of Native science within the genre of futurism, wherein Native authors restore Indigenous knowledge and practices. In Dillon's introduction to Indigenous futurism, she elaborates on Indigenous science:

> Liberated from the constraints of genre expectations, or what 'serious' Native authors are *supposed* to write, they have room to play with setting, character, and dialogue; to stretch boundaries, and perhaps, most significantly, to reenlist the science of indigeneity in a discourse that invites discerning readers to realize that Indigenous science is not just complementary to perceived western enlightenment but is, indeed, integral to a refined twenty-first-century sensibility. (Dillon 3)

Indigenous futurism within the IYAL genre is, as Dillon states above, "liberated from the constraints of genre expectations" (3). Both are genres where Indigenous writers write back against colonization, establishing that Indigenous *belong* in the future. YA is popular for many reasons, but one of them is its ability to reach adolescent audiences, which can produce change within an entire generation since it targets specific age groups. IYAL recognizes and contributes to that change.

Indigenous knowledge can be portrayed without the preconceived rules of Eurocentric science. Indigenous futurism can aid in the decolonization of literature, environment, and education. To understand how Indigenous futurism can aid in cultural reclamation, we first must look at what it is doing to *improve* the information that already exists by legitimizing Native science. Further, in *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter,* Daniel Heath Justice states that science fiction (sf) "makes us think more deeply, broadly, and creatively than we might have otherwise done," (151). Justice also notes that fantasy novels are largely consumed by the public, including Indigenous communities, and while there are critics of Indigenous fantasy stories, he urges Indigenous writers to continue under a new genre called wonderworks. Sf and fantasy are presumptive genres that intermingle the 'real' and 'unreal', which tend to diminish any legitimacy in the story. When writing under the genre of wonderworks, Indigenous authors can honor their epistemologies and write in a way that "gestures, imperfectly, toward other ways of being in the world, and it reminds us that the way things are is not how they have always been, nor is it how they must be" (Justice 152). This thesis categorizes *The Marrow Thieves, To Shape a Dragon's Breath,* and *Elatsoe* as IYAL, with distinctive sub-genres within Indigenous futurism and wonderworks.

Throughout history, Euro-American scientists and philosophers have denied connections between the Western and Native perceptions of science. Native science is not taken seriously for a few reasons, but primarily because Western science is universally accepted, which contributes to the power and knowledge dynamics that we know as the colonial legacy. Approaches to incorporating Indigenous sciences have been rejected due to the Western academy viewing them as unscientific. Additionally, Gregory Cajete (Tewa) states that Native science "may be viewed as little more than primitive animism, sentimentalism and an object of study rather than a 'real' science by practitioners of Western science" (94). Colonial knowledge disrupted and further dismantled Indigenous knowledge through its disregard for the Indigenous experience. Robin Wall Kimmerer (Potawatomi) addresses this disruption and rejection of Indigenous knowledge and experiences in her book *Braiding Sweetgrass.* In her chapter "In the Footsteps of Nanabozho: Becoming Indigenous to Place," she compares her own knowledge of the creation story of Nanabozho to that of the Swedish botanist Linnaeus. Nanabozho was instructed by the Creator to walk the earth and name everything. She states that "Linnaeus explains *Systema Naturae,* a scheme designed to show the way which all things are related" (209) to which Nanabozho replies "Yes, that is also our way: we say 'We are all related'." (209). Kimmerer is one of many Indigenous scholars that discusses the idea "We are all related" (209), which is a core value within reciprocity, which will be discussed at length in chapter two. The saying comes from the Lakota phrase "mitakuye oyasin" (Krawec 1) which Krawec further defines, stating, "I am my relatives, all of them. I am related to everything. All my relations" (1). Indigenous methodologies recognize interconnectedness, and in the creation story of Nanabozho, Kimmerer joins Western and Indigenous thought together to display that. Kimmerer's recognition of Nanabozho and Linnaeus being connected proposes the idea that not only could Western and

Indigenous thought relate to one another, but they could also be reciprocal to one another. Tsosie et al. define reciprocity as a "continuous and intentional exchange process" (2). A negative exchange occurs between settler colonization, Indigenous epistemologies, community, and agency throughout IYAL. IYAL balances both negative (settler) and positive (Indigenous) reciprocity. Recognizing and identifying this exchange enables readers to decolonize Euro-American institutions as well as build better relationships between settler and Indigenous communities.

To understand Native science, we also need to define Indigenous knowledge, which differs greatly from colonial knowledge. The Western paradigms have "not shown an ideological openness to understanding the holism of Indigenous knowledge. As Indigenous scholars advance Indigenous methodologies in academic research, there exists the possibility of a more inclusive science" (Kovach 66). Cajete states that "global decolonization of thinking and acting becomes a central task and challenge for Western science" (92) and defines Native science as "the collective heritage of human experience with the natural world and, in its most essential form, a map of natural reality drawn from the experiences of thousands of human generations" (Cajete et al. 93). Indigenous science expands beyond the material and questions the very thought processes that are present in colonial systems through its inclusivity of both Indigenous knowledge and hegemonic knowledge. With Indigenous science, we not only become more understanding of one another, but more understanding of our interactions with the world around us. Indigenous science changes the way we think about topics as diverse as agriculture, animals, climate change, and spirituality. Understanding of Indigenous science also requires understanding of Indigenous knowledge. Indigenous knowledge is not only constrained to empirical data, but considers past experiences, dreams, kinship, ancestry and more. Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing

will be analyzed in chapter two, alongside Gregory Cajete's *Look to the Mountains: An Ecology of Indigenous Education.* The legitimization of Indigenous science, and the practice and understanding of Indigenous knowledge can both help in decolonization.

Science fiction is rooted in scientific knowledge. In Michael Pinsky's *Future Present: Ethics And/as Science Fiction,* it states that science is viewed "as something that can be articulated as material object" (13). This can cause a barrier between technological knowledge, science, and science fiction and is one of the primary reasons that Western institutions do not always consider intangible elements of Indigenous knowledge as legitimate. These barriers are part of the critical thought processes that causes Euro-American institutions to refute Indigenous science. Pinsky goes on to describe the ethical relationship between science and science fiction as a process, stating "We must find points of intersection, parallel and perpendicular courses, the seemingly chaotic collisions that mark a course towards understanding how individuals might relate to one another in the world" (18). This statement applies to the approach in my research; however, instead of bridging science and science fiction, I aim to bridge Eurocentric science - Indigenous science and Eurocentric YA - Indigenous YA to encourage decolonization and wider acceptance of Indigenous peoples and epistemologies.

Reading *Encountering the Sovereign Other: Indigenous Science Fiction* by Miriam Brown Spiers alongside that of Dillon and Justice will further my discussion of futurism. As Brown Spiers asks, "What separates such texts from the multitude of other Indigenous stories that reflect a 'cultural experience of reality' through interactions with ancestors, wendigos, or tricksters?" (Brown Spiers xv). In the consideration of ancestors, wendigos, and tricksters it is important to identify, ethically, what is considered sf/fantasy vs. what practices are exploitative of Native culture. Not all Indigenous literature is fantastical, and presenting it as so is damaging

to overall Indigenous narratives and cultures. Additionally, many books in the speculative fiction genre from a variety of cultures pull inspiration from the real world, including the folkloric practices of other cultures. Having said that, one can recognize that *The Marrow Thieves*, *Elatsoe*, or *To Shape a Dragon's Breath* may fall under any perceived notion of genre: Indigenous futurism, sf, or wonderworks. Justice further states that "in its most transformative modes, speculative fiction offers a complementary and distinctive range of reading and interpretive strategies that can undo the violence of the deficit modes of 'the real' and offer transformative visions of other lives, experiences, and histories" (Justice 142). Under Justice's definition and analysis of how speculative fiction can be useful in decolonization, these authors challenge the reader to think about their position in this world, and what the future holds under colonial systems as they reimagine the future of Indigenous communities.

This research examines the ongoing impact of settler colonialism and the pathways to decolonization. In chapter one, I argue that Indigenous society should not be defined as neocolonial or postcolonial, as colonization is still ongoing. Dimaline, Little Badger, and Blackgoose write back against colonial systems within the genre IYAL as an act of decolonization. Chapter two highlights Indigenous epistemologies and ways of knowing that provide a more inclusive framework than traditional colonial epistemologies. The ability to recognize Indigenous ways of knowing and methodologies, as demonstrated in chapter two, provides ways of approaching literature analysis which aids in decolonization in academic and creative settings. The continued encouragement and representation of Indigenous epistemologies and ways of knowing in IYAL empowers Indigenous individuals. In chapter three, I contend that the path to decolonization involves the rejection of conventional colonial multiculturalism and argue for its replacement with syncretic multiculturalism and Tribal Critical Race Theory

(TribalCrit). Syncretic multiculturalism and TribalCrit are both useful tools for decolonization that can be utilized in various settings, such as school, popular culture, and social institutions. Through the empowerment and acceptance of Indigenous agency, the path towards decolonization includes the realization of Indigenous sovereignty, self-determination, and self-identification.

The importance of Indigenous futurism is underscored by the abundance of topics that fall outside what is considered science and that are regularly addressed by Indigenous activists: discrimination, violence, underrepresentation, and periods of ethno/genocide. Lou Cornum describes the rise in Indigenous futurism as "A profound deconstruction of how we imagine time, progress, and who is worthy of the future" (2). IYAL departs from Eurocentric generic standards as it explores non-linearity, epistemologies, and cultural reconciliation. Additionally, "Extractive and exploitative endeavors are just one mark of the settler death drive, which Indigenous futurism seeks to overcome by imagining different ways of relating to notions of progress and civilization" (Cornum 3). Dimaline, Little Badger, and Blackgoose are all Indigenous authors who question the status quo of Eurocentric-driven scientific and creative institutions by writing back against colonial institutions with powerful stories of resistance and cultural revitalization.

Chapter One: Indigenous Futurism and the Challenge to (un)Settle Narratives

> What does it mean to live on stolen land? You may not be guilty of the act of dispossession, but it is a relationship that you have inherited. —Patty Krawec, *Becoming Kin: An Indigenous Call to Unforgetting the Past and Reimagining our Future*

The genre of science fiction has long been defined by colonization - many of the most popular series or novels within the genre are centered around potential invasions of the Other, ambiguous technologies, and world-ending catastrophe. Settler societies have a predisposition to engage in settler colonial ethics, with ethics being one of the foundations addressed in this research. I argue that settler colonial ethics is an issue of morality: settler ethics perpetuate discrimination based on race, limit accessibility to social institutions, deny Indigenous populations the right to self-determination and self-identification, and see Indigenous societies as an assimilative and extractive resource populations that 'need' settler leadership. These ethics beset creative and intellectual expression of Indigenous individuals, while setting a precedent that settler creatives must further settler ideology. This chapter establishes that settler colonization and its ethics are harmful to Indigenous populations and suggests that Indigenous futurism and Indigenous Young Adult Literature (IYAL) are valuable tools in decolonizing institutions and practices that have disenfranchised Indigenous populations.

For the purpose of decolonizing Euro-American creative and academic institutions, this chapter analyzes various Indigenous and settler scholars' definitions of colonization, which argue that settler colonization is an ongoing issue. To fully address this, I will discuss how postcolonial and neocolonial are terms that fail to fully address the ongoing concerns related to settler colonialism, as they discredit the reality that Indigenous communities face. Settler colonial ideals reverberate through every institution, bolstering themselves within the fictional narratives of science fiction and fantasy (sf/f). Sf/f and Young Adult (YA) literature are settler driven genres

that promote the idea of settler innocence and attempt to "rescue settler futurity" (Tuck et al. 3), which promotes the ideology that only settlers belong in the future and creative spaces. Further, it establishes that only the settlers can call for social change in genres that have been known for their scrutiny of social institutions. Canada's Centre for Digital Media Literacy claims that currently, popular culture in North America perpetuates harmful settler colonial themes that misrepresent Indigenous populations. This includes omitting Indigenous histories from educational institutions, portraying Indigenous individuals as violent, fetishizing Indigenous women, and demonizing Indigenous spirituality (Media Smarts). Because of this, I have determined that decolonization involves a holistic process where literary genres that are representative of popular culture within Euro-American societies that give preferential treatment to narratives that continue settler colonialism should be replaced with the genres Indigenous futurism and IYAL. These genres bring attention to settler colonial practices that harm the foundations of Indigenous epistemologies, communities, and self, which I define in this research as agency.

The history of how science fiction siphoned inspiration from the colonial era can be tracked to when the genre gained momentum in the mid 1900's. It mimicked how the European empire began looking beyond its borders, where it "mapped the non-European world, settled colonies in it, mined it, and farmed it, bought and sold some of its inhabitants, and ruled over many others. In this process, they also developed a scientific discourse about culture and mankind" (Rieder 21). If we remove "European" from Rieder's explanation, this could easily be part of the synopsis to popular series like *Dune* by Frank Herbert, *The Stormlight Archive* by Brandon Sanderson, and even *Game of Thrones* by George R. R. Martin. In these worlds of sf/f, these authors have created multi-million-dollar franchises where their characters find themselves

perpetuating colonialism and imperialism. The popularity of these franchises is representative of how settler colonial ideologies are imbedded in popular culture. It reinforces the idea that settler colonization is profitable, and the idea that colonization can be sold within these narratives challenges the ability for Indigenous communities to achieve sovereignty.

This chapter again pulls from Rieder's *Colonialism and the Emergence of Science Fiction,* which states "it is not a matter of asking whether but of determining precisely how and to what extent the stories engage in colonialism" (22). The parallels that exist between the legacy of colonialism and the genres of sf/f are inescapable, which is precisely why Indigenous sf/f does not fall within the same genre and calls for its own genre, designated Indigenous futurism. Indigenous futurism is not as restrictive a genre as typical sf/f. Grace Dillon states that "writers of Indigenous futurisms sometimes intentionally experiment with, sometimes intentionally dislodge, sometimes merely accompany, but invariably *change* the parameters of sf" (3). Indigenous futurism is not only about stories that imagine Indigenous peoples in the future, but also about Indigenous stories that resist ideologies that would keep Indigenous peoples in the past. In the context of this research, I identify *The Marrow Thieves, How to Shape a Dragon's Breath,* and *Elatsoe* as belonging to IYAL, with the sub-genre of Indigenous futurism, due to their portrayal of Indigenous epistemologies, agency, cultural revitalization, and resistance within storylines that imagine dystopian settings, fantastical beasts, and supernatural elements. When discussing the presence of colonialism in sf, Dillon describes the phenomenon as a double-bind in her book chapter "Miindiwag and Indigenous Diaspora," stating "you're an alien if we invade your realm for our far-away homeland, and you're an alien if you come to our homeland from far away" (219), which reaffirms Michael Pinsky's thought process that sf/f always involves the Other. Instead of imagining itself as the colonizer, as Euro-American novels

frequently do, Indigenous futurism establishes alternative histories in which Indigenous societies fight against colonization and reconcile with their previous ways of life.

In Grace Dillon's anthology, she establishes Indigenous futurism as an answer to the question "what better terrain than the field of sf to 'engage colonial power in the spirit of a struggle for survival'" the warrior ethic that Taiaiake Alfred (Kanien'kehaka) urges Natives to embrace as "thinkers, teachers, writers, and artists"?" (3) and where the genre can "confront the structures of racism and colonialism and sf's own complicity in them" (11). Dimaline, Blackgoose, and Little Badger confront colonialism in several ways, taking popular topics of sf/f and steering them away from the colonial gaze. While sf/f often depict dystopian settings, include fantastical creatures like dragons, and offer supernatural elements, Indigenous futurism and IYAL allows Dimaline, Blackgoose, and Little Badger to write on their own terms without colonialism dictating where the story should go.

When considering colonialism, it is important to identify the different types and how they affect Indigenous populations. Many Indigenous and settler scholars debate the classification of neocolonialism and post-colonialism in relation to Indigenous nations. Taiaiake Alfred explores these differences in *Peace, Power, Righteousness: An Indigenous Manifesto.* Governments that claim to be postcolonialutilize catchphrases like 'respect', 'understanding', 'trade', and 'sovereignty' to gain trust, while instead ensuring "continued access to Indigenous lands and resources by insidiously promoting a form of neo-colonial self-government in our communities and forcing our integration into the legal mainstream" (xiii). Alfred asserts that for Indigenous relationships to become postcolonial relationships, then colonizing governments would have to "abandon notions of European cultural superiority and adopt a mutually respectful stance" (89). Despite opportunities for settler colonial society to make amends, they are unwilling to do so;

Miigwans, from *The Marrow Thieves,* tells us that there was a time that the settlers had reached out to Indigenous nations to look for Indigenous individuals who would volunteer their bone marrow. Due to the generations of false promises and going back on their word, not many Indigenous people trusted settler governments. The lack of willing volunteers led to the new residential schools being erected, where Miig tells the group "We go to the schools and they leach the dreams from where our ancestors hid them" (90). Settlers were only willing to connect with Indigenous nations on their terms, which usually meant they were still able to assert power over Indigenous peoples.

In *Elatsoe*, Dr. Allerton and the other members of Willowbee are only willing to make amends that benefit them. For Dr. Allerton, that means getting away with killing Ellie's cousin Trevor, as well as several other Indigenous people and young vampires, to benefit himself and those in his inner circle. The vampires in *Elatsoe* are seen as curses that get progressively worse as they age, slowly losing their humanity. Dr. Allerton has commodified vampire curses, swapping curse progression from a young vampire to an older one if they have the means to pay for it. Earlier in the novel, Ellie recalls her last interaction with Trevor, her cousin, where she had to kill a leech. In another dream, Dr. Allerton has leeches tumble out of his mouth, which is foreshadowing her final realization about him. During this last encounter, Dr. Allerton was still in disbelief that he had been bested by a young Indigenous girl, and when begging didn't work, he resorted to trying to kill her, which he is ultimately unable to do. Describing this encounter, Ellie thought "if she tried to return home now, Dr. Allerton would tag along like a tick. Or a *leech"* (Little Badger 335). The correlation between settler colonialism and Little Badgers analogy of a leech is that settler colonialism will take whatever it can, even if it doesn't belong to it. Historically, leeches have been used in medicine to help with blood coagulation, but they also

have a symbolic meaning in religion. In the Book of Proverbs, leeches are seen as greedy parasites who take from people without giving anything (30:15). Little Badger refers to leeching twice in reference to Dr. Allerton, which tells the reader that Dr. Allerton's power of swapping the life-force between two individuals is only beneficial to one person. The presence of vampires as another blood-sucking entity that is a curse alludes to the fact that humanity has now become leeches, which is supported by their need to be sustained by the life of another. While leeches are a prominent symbol in *Elatsoe*, the symbolism in the other novels is more subtle.

In *The Marrow Thieves*, Dimaline refers to leeches as an action, rather than a symbol in her first mentions of Story. Story is where characters have a chance to tell their own Stories, and elders can tell the stories of their culture, heritage, and past. During the first Story in the novel, Miig states "eventually, once our homelands were decimated and the water leeched and the people scattered, they moved on to the towns" (25). Once settlers had leeched whatever water they could, they looked toward different ways they could exploit the Indigenous: bone marrow. The term leech in relation to settler colonialism is applicable because settler colonialism does not respect or promote reciprocal relationships. Even if not specifically stated, leeching is implied across the novels. In *Elatsoe*, Dr. Allerton leeched the life-force from young vampires. In *The Marrow Thieves*, settlers leeched Indigenous nations resources, and further, their bone marrow. In *To Shape a Dragon's Breath,* leeching is not directly discussed but the concept is still present. The Anglish frequently leech Masquisits and Nasquisits through the exploitation of their goods and labor. After this occurring for so long, it led to the loss of Indigenous peoples being able to be a Nampeshiweisit, which is a person connected to a dragon,

When discussing themes of settler colonialism, it is important to understand the other forms of colonialism to prevent misrepresentation that could harm the decolonization process. In

Miriam Brown Spiers's *Encountering the Sovereign Other: Indigenous Science Fiction,* she elaborates extensively on Indigenous science fiction within postcolonial studies. On the topic, she says, "Indigenous peoples and those living in postcolonial societies share many experiences of colonization, and thus, many of the arguments established in a critical discussion of postcolonial science fiction may shed light on the possibilities of Indigenous sf" (xix). Indigenous writers who engage in sf are left to question the systems that have oppressed them and continue to oppress in sf/f, as Brown Spiers asks, "are they, too, doomed to repeat and reinforce imperial values? Or might they more successfully resist, given that their very existence is in opposition to the aims of the empire?" (xx). The creation of Indigenous futurism is then a form of resistance as "Indigenous authors may literally write back against a dominant culture that romanticizes colonization, supports an imperial agenda, and alienates Native people" (Brown Spiers xx). Dimaline writes back, utilizing bone marrow extraction as the metaphor that colonial powers will always try to extract what it thinks is culturally or materially exploitable to remain in power and further disenfranchise Indigenous populations. The path forward for postcolonial and Indigenous peoples in North America therefore may be similar, but not identical as Indigeneity deviates from postcolonial viability and into settler colonialism. Dimaline, Blackgoose, and Little Badger actively call out colonial systems in their novels through character resistance. This allows them to take a more expansive role in the dismantling of colonial systems.

In *The Marrow Thieves,* Frenchie's resistance begins after recruiters take Minerva. He tells Miig and the rest of the group "I'm not going north . . . I'm going after Minerva" (Dimaline 153). Frenchie does not want to continue running. He wants to forge a society that defends its fellow Indigenous people, and for him, that starts with Minerva. In *To Shape a Dragon's Breath,* Anequs begins her resistance after being reprimanded for slapping a student making

inappropriate comments, which will be discussed in chapter three. While being reprimanded, Anequs tells Frau Kuiper, her ward, that "I'm here to help my people, Frau Kuiper. I'm not here to make them more like yours" (Blackgoose 204). Her resistance persists throughout the novel as she unravels lost knowledge that she can return to her people. Her intentions to help her people and not assimilate stay true. In *Elatsoe,* Ellie's resistance begins after the first dream she has of Trevor, where she tells her dad "Abe Allerton from Willowbee is a murderer, and he *cannot* hurt anybody else" (Little Badger 25). Ellie's resistance is immediate, and she recognizes that Dr. Allerton has the ability to hurt many people. Dimaline's, Blackgoose's, and Little Badger's resistance of settler colonialism through IYAL can inspire action amongst readers by learning about Indigenous forms of resistance and knowing.

In this chapter, I argue that settler colonialism is the preferential term to postcolonial or neocolonialism when researching Indigenous populations. The reality of Indigenous communities around the world is they are currently living in a period of colonization, as they have not been awarded full sovereignty or their right to self-determination or self-identification. Patrick Wolfe, who has discussed settler colonialism extensively in book chapters "Land, Labor, and Difference: Elementary Structures of Race" and "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," states that "settler colonialism seeks to replace the Natives on their land rather than extract surplus value by mixing their labor with a colony's natural resources. . . the primary logic of settler colonialism can be characterized as one of elimination" (868). While Indigenous peoples shared similar treatment as other minority groups, Wolfe discusses that the logic behind the treatment of Indigenous individuals was different. Wolfe states that "so far as Indigenous people are concerned, where they are *is* who they are" (388). To fully settle on Indigenous land, settlers had to pursue the logic of elimination because Indigenous connection to the land is a part

of their epistemologies, which will be discussed in chapter two. The logic of elimination promoted the removal of Indigenous people from their land while also allowing for the exploitation of Indigenous and Black communities within economic and social structures, forcing them into enslavement and indentured servitude, something that is often overlooked in the discussion of Indigenous history. In *Becoming Kin: An Indigenous Call to Unforgetting the Past and Reimagining Our Future,* author Patty Krawec (Anishinaabe) describes a discussion she had with Dr. Tiya Miles, where Miles stated, "there are gaps in our stories: gaps in Black studies where Native people should be and gaps in Native studies where Black people should be" (18). In *To Shape a Dragon's Breath,* Blackgoose explores these gaps through Anequs's interpersonal relationships. Theod, who is Indigenous and an indentured servant, represents how Indigenous families were forced apart. Liberty, one of Anequs's friends, is also an indentured servant, and represents the enslavement of the Black community. The novel highlights the relationship between the two communities where the white majority oppresses them based on their race and culture.

The colonizers wanted Indigenous people far away from the land they claimed connection to, which usually led to their enslavement occurring in the Caribbean (Kiley 14). Indigenous communities who were displaced were replaced with Black individuals who did not have a relationship to the land. Because of this phenomenon, Wolfe stated "labor that is mixed with the land is not Native but geographically alienated"(868) and settler colonies as where "the colonizers come to stay, expropriating the native owners of the soil, which they typically develop by means of subordinated labor force whom they import from elsewhere" (868). He argues that the issue of settler colonialism is therefore not one of assimilating into a workforce, but a logic of elimination to be rid of Indigenous people entirely.

Settler colonialism has always followed genocide of the Native. Indigenous populations that eventually accommodated the settlers did so with heavy losses. The relationship between settler colonialism and genocide is described as Wolfe's logic of elimination, where "settler colonialism destroys to replace" (388). Elimination is not based on race, but rather territory. Patrick Wolfe explores the potential positives and negatives that this elimination has for settler colonial society:

> Negatively, it strives for the dissolution of native societies. Positively, it erects a new colonial society on the expropriated land base—as I put it, settler colonizers come to stay: invasion is a structure not an event. In its positive aspect, elimination is an organizing principal of settler colonial society rather than a one-off (and superseded) occurrence. The positive outcomes of the logic of elimination can include officially encouraged miscegenation, the breaking-down of native title into alien able individual freeholds, native citizenship, child abduction, religious conversion, resocialization in total institutions such as missions or boarding schools, and a whole range of cognate bio cultural assimilations (388).

Wolfe's definition of the negative and positive impacts is both beneficial to the settler. In his discussion, he takes a nuanced approach that considers what settlers might actually weigh when considering settling and reconciliation. Negatively, Indigenous societies are dismantled, opening the door for new settler communities. Positively, it encourages elimination through assimilation, on a cultural and biological level. Both are beneficial to settler colonialism, so Wolfe's discussion of positive and negative is really not meant to be positive at all, but rather patronizing towards settler morality. *The Marrow Thieves, How to Shape a Dragon's Breath,* and *Elatsoe* demonstrate these effects. In *The Marrow Thieves,* each Indigenous community in the novels

experiences the loss of land and individual sovereignty while facing assimilative pressures. In *The Marrow Thieves,* Frenchie discovers this loss early on after he loses his entire family to recruiters. He recalled that "I knew I'd never see my family if I were captured; we wouldn't be reunited at the school . . . Mitch had sacrificed himself so I could live, so I had to live" (Dimaline 7). Frenchie realizes at a young age that he is now without his family, with nowhere to go. The residential schools were not an option, as their purpose was to eliminate rather than assimilate. In *To Shape a Dragon's Breath,* Anequs attends her first erelore class, which is the study of history for Linmarden. When her professor was teaching about the Anglish discovery of Vastergot, one of the main cities, Anequs remarks "there was already a city at Vastergot . . . the folk who lived there were the Maswachuisit—the great blue hill people—named for the same hill that's called Vaster's Hill now . . . In Catchnet, the people were called Akashneisit, and all-around Gannet Cove there were Naregannisit" (Blackgoose 165). In an interview, Moniquill Blackgoose states that the novel "takes place in southern New England" (American Booksellers Association 8). In this parallel, yet different universe, history repeats itself. In *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States,* Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz brings attention to how settlers brought smallpox, murdered Indigenous communities, burned their lands and homes, all while their population continued to increase (61-64). In *To Shape a Dragon's Breath.,* the Anglish settlers bring the plague, take lands, and murder tribes, causing Indigenous populations to dwindle. This parallel is purposeful, as it exposes settlers attempts to eliminate Indigenous communities.

Daniel Heath Justice also explains settler colonialism in his book *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter*. He asserts that "settler colonialism isn't something one just gets over; it's woven into all aspects of our experience, and those strangling threads are too often invisible and all the more wounding as a result" (48). Like postcolonial societies, the effects of settler

colonialism reverberate far more than the eye can see. Indigenous resistance begins to present itself in a variety of ways. For Grace Dillon, the process of resistance is biskaabiiyang (Returning to Ourselves), while Brown Spiers describes it as writing back. Justice states "Indigenous writers have offered powerful, provocative, and often quite deliberately 'unsettling' visions that chronicle the challenges of rebuilding what settler colonialism has mangled," (48), describing the settler colonialism as the unsettling visions. In "Decolonization is not a Metaphor", authors Tuck and Yang explore how decolonization can be seen as an unsettling vision, stating

> Decolonization in the settler colonial context must involve the repatriation of land simultaneous to the recognition of how land and relations to land have always already been differently understood and enacted; that is *all* of the land, and not just symbolically. This is precisely why decolonization is necessarily unsettling, especially across lines of solidarity . . . Settler colonialism and its decolonization implicates and unsettles everyone (7).

The act of decolonization is not easy. It requires settler colonialism to be addressed on all levels, in ways that would eliminate "settler innocence" (Tuck et al. 10), and further expose actions and events committed by settler societies. Eliminating settler innocence is a necessary step for reconciliation and decolonization. Unsettling, defined by Justice, Tuck, and Yang, can be approached as a polysemy, being unsettle or (un)settle. The first is to provide the unsettling visions of settler colonialism. The second is to provide methods to (un)settle. The visions provided by Dimaline, Blackgoose, and Little Badger offer disquieting accounts of settler colonialism, and these accounts are forms of resistance that involve biskaabiiyang and writing back. The unsettling vision that Dimaline provides is one where Indigenous people suffer

because they are seen as a resource that can be depleted – the vision she explores is one where settlers again pursue the genocide of Indigenous communities while exploiting them and their land. Dimaline brings attention to historical residential schools where Indigenous children were subjects of medical experimentation without parental consent (University of British Columbia Indigenous Health Sciences). Many Indigenous women who sought medical care were sterilized against their will (Mackenzie et al 1). Dimaline's vision to (un)settle is provided in how she discusses settler survival vs. Indigenous survival, which will be addressed in chapter three. The unsettling vision that Little Badger explores is how Indigenous and minority lives are taken without consent through Dr. Allerton's magic that lets him transfer injuries from one body to another. Ellie resists settler colonization by confronting injustices and relying on her familial and community bonds. Little Badger's account to (un)settle in *Elatsoe* is the Lipan Apache's ability to banish non-Indigenous vampires from their land, which will be discussed later this chapter. In Blackgoose's unsettling vision, she reveals how Indigenous identities and cultures become a spectacle to settlers, through forced performative assimilation. Frau Kuiper, who oversees the Academy of Natural Philosophy and Skiltakraft, believes that Anequs and Theod should adhere to Anglish customs to "civilize" Indigenous people for settlers. Several high ranking Anglish had expressed their displeasure with the Indigenous people, specifically the Masquisit and Nasquisit being allowed to train dragons, which led to a violent uprising. Frau Kuiper had been determined to have Masquisit and Nasquisit accepted as dragon riders, so when Anequs and Theod, the only Nampeshiweisit's to exist are told they are meeting the Jarl, the political leader of Linmarden, she expresses to them:

> You will do as you are told, speak when you are spoken to, and answer any questions asked of you in fullness and in truth. I will not tolerate any indiscretions. I have posited

> that it's possible for nackies to become rational, civil people—to be worthy of commanding dragons, to have a place in the modern world. You will not prove me wrong. If you shame this institution, I will not hesitate to allow the Raves of Joden to rip both of you apart—to have your dragons put to death and have you exiled to Nack and Mask Islands respectively. To, ultimately, have both islands razed by dragon fire and rebuilt in the Norslandish image. Do you understand? (475).

While Frau Kuiper thought she was doing them a service by 'civilizing' them, she only wanted to do it on her terms, and if that didn't work, then she believed they had no place in Anglish society, ultimately reinforcing Wolfe's logic of elimination. Despite inviting them to the academy and sponsoring them as their ward, Frau Kuiper wanted to control how Anequs and Theod presented themselves during interviews and in public spaces. In an interaction where Anequs discusses forced assimilation with Theod, he tells her "I have been privileged to live among an enlightened people for all of my life. I've been further privileged to be allowed to come and study at this academy" (Blackgoose 168). This is an example of how settler society will assimilate and attempt to change the mindset of Indigenous individuals. Anequs introduces Theod to Indigenous culture and ways of knowing that help them excel in school and fight against colonial ideologies, which will help them (un)settle.

Evidence of settler colonialism presents differently in Indigenous futurism then it does in Western sf/f. In sf/f, characters perpetuate settler colonization by invading lands and going to war with Indigenous populations. Sf/f also imagines itself as the colonized, painting a false portrait of what it means to be colonized. In Indigenous futurism, instead of characters and societies who colonize or were colonized, Indigenous futurism typically occurs amidst colonization. *The Marrow Thieves* by Cherie Dimaline discusses cycles of colonization,

reinforcing theories by Patrick Wolfe, who states colonization is a structure (388), and Bryan Brayboy (Lumbee), who states that colonization is endemic (429). Miig, one of the elders, leads Story and revisits the colonial history of Canada frequently. He recounted periods of time where the Indigenous people would fight with the settlers, then go into periods of peace, and repeat. Eventually, the settlers looked for a more permanent solution, which led to the establishment of residential schools. Repeating history, residential schools resurface in this post-apocalyptic novel following the Water Wars. When it came time to establish treaties with the settlers, Miig tells them that "the Anishnaabe were scattered, lonely, and scared. On our knees again, only this time there was no home to regroup at . . .Half the population was lost in the disaster and from the disease that spread from too many corpses and not enough graves" (Dimaline 26). This left Indigenous communities to rebuild many times, recovering their culture and languages that had been suppressed by settlers. While *The Marrow Thieves* is a fictional novel, Dimaline integrates historical topics, like the residential schools, to imagine a future that continues to suffer under Euro-American settler rule.

Similarly, in Darcie Little Badger's *Elatsoe,* the characters recount colonization and how it has harmed the Indigenous nations through the years. Little Badger offers a different perspective on the vampire trope, straying from common YA vampire themes like that of *Twilight* or *Vampire Diaries.* She expands on the invitation trope, which states that vampires must be invited into one's home, by defining Ellie's home as Lipan Apache land, and not just her physical house. Additionally, vampires are seen as a curse that progressively gets worse as they age, leading them to slowly lose their humanity. Since all Lipan Apache land is applicable as Ellie's home, she and other Lipan Apache's can either invite vampires onto their land or banish those who have overstayed their welcome. Vivian, Ellie's mother, is able to banish vampires

from their land using Little Badger's new, adapted IYAL vampire invitation trope. This banishment is an example of how Little Badger (un) settles in the novel. This interaction occurs when a vampire is chasing them, with Vivian stating "this is my home, my people's home! You aren't welcome along the Kunétai! You aren't welcome in my home!" (Little Badger 153). In the United States, the government does not recognize previously inhabited Indigenous lands as Indigenous lands unless they are part of a reservation. Additionally, settler society has always perceived itself as entitled to Indigenous land. Since 1749, the Lipan Apache had participated in nine different treaties (Lipan Apache Tribe) where their land was renegotiated. A Yale School of Environmental Study by Justin Farrell found that "Indigenous nations across the United States have lost 98.9% of their historical land base since European settlers first began to lay claim to the continent" (4). In the context of Vivian banishing a vampire, she is referring to previous and current Lipan Apache land since Indigenous epistemologies prioritize relationships with the land. Little Badger gives the power back to Indigenous individuals when she allows them to banish non-Indigenous off Indigenous land, thereby removing and protesting further settler entitlement. When Ellie asked Vivian how the vampire didn't know banishment was possible, she responded saying "not many people do. Probably 'cause it raises uncomfortable facts about dispossession and colonization" (Little Badger 155). In this interaction, Little Badger addresses the effects of dispossession and colonization by addressing it head-on. The fact that the topic could be uncomfortable highlights how there is a perceived innocence amongst settlers who claim they are not at fault for current settler colonialism (Tuck et al. 6), and they would rather feign ignorance then address their part in perpetuating the continued disenfranchisement with Indigenous nations. Despite being dispossessed, the land will *always* be Lipan Apache land.

Colonization is also a driving factor in *To Shape a Dragon's Breath* by Moniquill Blackgoose. Nasquipaug, which is the island neighboring to Masquapaug, had a rebellion about twenty years before the current setting in the novel. Theod, who is originally from Nasquipaug, is reluctant to learn about the true history of the rebellion because the Anglish have forced their own narrative on him. After his immediate family was killed, Theod was entered into indentured servitude until he accidentally bonded his dragon, Copper. When Anequs confronts Theod on learning about his remaining family in Nasquipaug, he tells her, "My family are murderers, Anequs. There's a reason they were hanged. Your people might not be savages, but mine certainly were. Savage behavior must be met with firm reprisal" (Blackgoose 356). Theod had only been told of the rebellion by the Anglish, but during this interaction, Anequs informs him of what actually happened. Nasquipaug had coal that the Anglish wanted, and when the Nasquisit "wouldn't sell them the land, they started poisoning wells and burning farms, trying to drive everyone off the island" (356). In her novel, Blackgoose demonstrates the differences in how the colonizers, the Anglish, tell history and how the Indigenous, the Masquisit and Nasquisit, are told history. Theod, who grew up in Anglish society, did not know the true history, and his acceptance of the Anglish version of the story was a factor in his own survival. Anequs, whose father is Nasquisit, had told her the correct version of history. Colonizers in the novel often distort the truth for their own gain. The story of the Nasquisits' struggle with settlers over land and resources echoes similarities of how the United States dispossessed and exploited its Indigenous populations. In Tom B. K. Goldtooth's journal article "Stolen Resources: Continuing Threats to Indigenous People's Sovereignty and Survival," he states that "Indigenous territories have been used to: locate mega hydroelectric dams, mines for uranium, coal, and copper and other metals essential to U.S. industry; conduct nuclear weapons testing" (8). Dispossession and

exploitation are common in settler colonialism—their existence beyond fiction emphasizes the need to address this ongoing issue.

Euro-American representations of colonization and Indigenous populations have classified Indigenous peoples as Other, a term that was coined by prominent postcolonial theorist Edward Said. Both Brown Spiers and Wolfe highlight the 'Othering' of Native populations. Brown Spiers states that Native peoples are

> distinct from the assimilative pressures of mainstream Euro-American and Euro-Canadian cultures, which have worked so persistently to erase the presence of Indigenous peoples on this continent. In these capacities, Native peoples are indeed an "Other", remaining outside of categories that have served to elide and deny the distinct cultures, histories, and political realities of tribal nations. (xiii)

Euro-American society and institutions tend to automatically 'Other' what they find different, whether that is based on skin color, religious beliefs, cultural practices, etc. This practice often dehumanizes the 'Other' as well as misrepresents them. In response, Brown Spiers states that "it is important to recognize similarities, to see an unfamiliar Other as a person with dignity, but if we reduce the Other to a mirror for the Self, we may unintentionally assimilate, and thus do ethical violence to, that Other" (xxxiii). Returning to a point made by Dillon, the practice of Eurocentric institutions is to colonize, and while doing so, they designate the population they are colonizing as Others. When they imagine themselves as being colonized, the colonizers become Other. At no point in the Euro-American institutions does the colonizer consider themselves the Other - there is no revelation of disruption; whereas "Indigenous science fiction encourages us to reverse that reading, to see the European as an invasive Other whose presence destabilizes the Indigenous Self" (Brown Spiers xxxvii). It is important to understand the concept of the Other as

it has become a primary tactic in assimilating, eliminating, or omitting Indigenous peoples. Othering has allowed settler society to justify harmful stereotypes that will be discussed throughout this project. By identifying how Indigenous peoples are Othered in these novels, this chapter brings attention to how colonial systems attempt to isolate them. Further, understanding how Indigenous and settler scholars classify Others in Indigenous futurism, or other speculative fiction genres allow us to question the conventions around the Other, and how it is harmful no matter the group it is applied to.

In *To Shape a Dragon's Breath,* all Indigenous people are 'Othered' as the Anglish believe them to be uncivilized and primitive. The Nampeshiweisit are people that are especially concerning to the Anglish. One letter was posted in the newspaper, in which Arjun Stafn publicly condemns the academy for admitting two Indigenous individuals, stating "this species of humanity is not suitable for assimilation into a civilized society" (Blackgoose 243) and alluding to the possibility of Nampeshiweisit to the west, stating "The savage peoples are still very common on the western frontier and because they are in command of a savage breed of dragon, their loathsome presence has greatly impeded the progress of settlements north of the Runesung or west of Enki's Lake. What good can come of the introduction of dragons to the savage peoples of the outlying islands?" (243). This demonstrates that they are Othered not only for the Anglish believing they are savage and cannot adapt to Anglish society, but also due to fear of giving the people that they subjugate power. While Frau Kuiper's intentions are not fully honorable, the struggle between her group and that of Arjan Stafn is an example of how settlers in leadership positions weaponize misinformation to continue to subjugate Indigenous populations. This fear allows them to divide the population by making the Indigenous the fearsome Other. Frau Kuiper recognizes them as Other but believes she can bring these groups

together, which returns us to the fact discussed at the beginning where more 'tolerant' settlers perceive themselves as innocent.

In *Elatsoe,* the Others are outsiders like Ellie. The town of Willowbee is a settlement that has the magical ability to move. Ellie and her friend Jay first noticed it as abnormal when Jay pointed out that "before Texas became a state… before the U.S. government slaughtered us… our tribe helped the settlers. We traded goods. Protected their cities—Houston, for instance—as lookouts. We never had any business with Willowbee. *Never*" (Little Badger 159). When they went to investigate the history of Willowbee and Dr. Allerton, they realized that everyone they saw watched them. For the residents of Willowbee, Ellie and Jay were outsiders who didn't belong, and it was better to watch them and make sure they didn't get into anything. For the members of the town, Ellie and Jay were disrupting the colonial peace they had made for themselves. At the time, Ellie and Jay didn't know but find out at the end that the entire town was aware of Dr. Allerton's practices and had accepted it, becoming complicit in his actions. They had designated Ellie and Jay as Other because they were outsiders.

Dillon describes decolonization by stating it "should be recognized as at least tangential to (post)colonial sf literature as whole, and central to indigenous futurisms as a path to biskaabiiyang" (11). She states, "*Walking the Clouds* returns us to ourselves by encouraging Native writers to write about Native conditions in Native-centered worlds liberated by imagination" (11). Despite the violence and dispossession in *The Marrow Thieves,* the characters still work towards a future where they can achieve sovereignty and the ability to reconnect with their culture. Dimaline does this by utilizing Story and language, which allows the group to question their conditions and look towards possibilities of reclamation. Language is what inspired the characters to take action - Minerva, who had been teaching them the language

little by little, was taken by recruiters, but unlocked a path that would free them. Minerva "called on her blood memory, her teachings, her ancestors. That's when she brought the whole thing down. . . As it turns out, every dream Minerva had ever dreamed was in the language. It was her gift, her secret, her plan" (172). For the characters of Dimaline's novel, their path to decolonization is through embracing their culture and language and using it against the settlers.

Decolonization, defined by Margaret Kovach, is "accepting that Indigenous people have a special relationship with land and country" (256). In *To Shape a Dragon's Breath,* Anequs realizes the path to decolonization lies in her ability to become a Nampeshiweisit and becoming an expert in skiltakraft, the skill needed to shape her dragon's breath. Anequs realized that the dances that the Masquisit performed were actually skilta's—this revelation led her grandma to say "I knew that the Anglish couldn't teach you to be a Nampeshiweisit. I knew it! Daughter of my daughter, you're going to teach us all how to dance with dragons again" (Blackgoose 347). Anequs decides not to tell her Anglish professors about this for fear that they would abuse the knowledge, but she knows that she will be able to help her people more than ever as a fully trained Nampeshiweisit.

Decolonization in *Elatsoe* comes through Ellie's powers. After leaving Dr. Allerton in the underworld, Ellie learns that there are more individuals and communities like him, abusing Indigenous peoples and other disenfranchised groups. When Ellie learns this, she decides that she will become a qualified private investigator to directly dismantle these groups.

While each novel works towards decolonization in different ways, it is evident that the goal is to decolonize by refuting settler colonial ethics and utilizing Indigenous epistemologies. The use of their culture, language, and relation to ancestors is how they can dismantle the settler colonial system. These novels are examples of how "Indigenous science fiction has the ability to expand

and complicate the boundaries of this historically Euro-American genre in ways that are beneficial to both Native and non-Native audiences" (Brown Spiers xi). *The Marrow Thieves* challenges the exploitation of Indigenous individuals while educating non-Native audiences on residential schools and exploitative practices. *To Shape a Dragon's Breath* confronts assimilative tactics of settler colonization, and illuminates what assimilation looks like to non-Native audiences. *Elatsoe* opposes settler colonial systems that designate Indigenous individuals as less important while educating non-Native audiences on the importance of Indigenous ancestry. These novels, as Indigenous futurism and IYAL, decolonize settler colonial institutions through the implementation of Indigenous ways of knowing that emphasize community relationships of kinship and personal agency that leads to self-identification.

Chapter Two: De-Centering Colonial Knowledge by Embracing Indigenous Ways of Knowing in Literature

> Art and activism are a lot alike actually, they're connected for me. In both art and activism, you're really trying to help people understand the world from a different perspective. Art really is like the social conscience of society. While some people might see my art as a diversion from my activism, I see it as being connected, as being another mode of expression. To me, being an artist is equally as important as my life as an activist—Ellen Gabriel, *When the Pine Needles Fall*

To understand Native epistemologies, we must refer back to Figure 1 in the introduction, which establishes that Indigenous epistemologies are intertwined with the four pillars discussed by Margaret Kovach. Specifically, epistemology can be viewed through various lenses; an ethical lens thinks about settler driven ethics discussed in the last chapter, but it can also involve engaging with Indigenous ethics. Indigenous ethics are different from settler ethics as they view the world holistically, recognizing reciprocity and interconnectedness that are necessary in life. Indigenous ethics challenge settler colonial ethics through the use of their epistemologies, the strength of their communities, and the agency of their individuals. In order to de-center colonial epistemes and narratives, this chapter analyzes Indigenous ways of knowing that are present in *The Marrow Thieves, How to Shape a Dragon's Breath,* and *Elatsoe.* By understanding the ways that these novels embody Indigenous epistemologies, readers can understand that Indigenous futurism and Indigenous Young Adult Literature (IYAL) are pathways to decolonization and resistance. In *When the Pine Needles Fall: Indigenous Acts of Resistance*, Ellen Gabriel (Katsi'tsakwas) expresses that "Art is an important medium and tool to express our cosmovision, the roots of our identity, our history, our perspectives, and our realities" (108). Art can be expressed in many different modalities, but the one specific to this research is literature.

In the novels, Cherie Dimaline, Moniquill Blackgoose, and Darcie Little Badger engage in colonial resistance by utilizing Indigenous ways of knowing, which are "embodied ways of knowing, spiritual ways of knowing, and land-based ways of knowing" that "are all forms of knowledge that are violently foreclosed in the name of settler futurity" (Berenstain et al. 286). In the presence of settler colonialism, Indigenous epistemes are always a casualty. In "Decolonization is not a Metaphor," Tuck and Yang explore the dynamic between settler colonial epistemology and Indigenous epistemology, stating "Indigenous peoples are those who have creation stories, not colonization stories, about how we/they came to be in a particular place – indeed how we/they came to *be a place.* Our/their relationships to the land compromise our/their epistemologies, ontologies, and cosmologies" (6). Settlers are not the only individuals that belong in the future. To overcome settler colonialism and promote ways of knowing that aid in decolonization, we must understand how Indigenous scholars, writers, and communities resist settler epistemes through Indigenous knowledge. This chapter will identify forms of Indigenous epistemological resistance in the novels by integrating various foundations of Indigenous ways of knowing as detailed by Gregory Cajete, in his book *Look to the Mountain: An Ecology of Indigenous Education*, by Robin Wall Kimmerer in *Braiding Sweetgrass*, and by Daniel Heath Justices in *Why Indigenous Literature Matters.*

The arrival of colonizers to the shores of the Americas "ushered in a prolonged period of warfare, persecution, social, cultural, and individual oppression and deprivation that is echoed to this day in spirit, if not in actuality, in Indian/White relationships" (Cajete 76). This oppression and disenfranchisement forced Indigenous peoples to make accommodations and sacrifices that would cut them off from their cultures, languages, and communities. Cherie Dimaline explores this in *The Marrow Thieves*, as the characters revisit the past through Story, and endure cyclical

violence and environmental catastrophe. In *To Shape a Dragon's Breath,* Anequs realizes that the Anglish know very little about Indigenous peoples and also hold very low opinions of them. To retain and recover their Indigenous knowledge, both Dimaline and Blackgoose utilize the two factors that, according to Gregory Cajete, will give them a "fighting chance" (79). Cajete states that the "first factor deals with the reintroduction of Indigenous education within the context of their communities and understanding the socio-economic potential inherent in the traditional lifeways of these people. . .The second factor is an honest reassessment of how Indigenous peoples are viewed by everyone" (79-80). Frenchie and Anequs go on parallel journeys, recovering lost knowledge. For Frenchie, his community's lost culture and language are how they defeat the recruiters and destroy the bone marrow extraction machine, which will be discussed later. For Anequs, it is the ability to recover the lost ways of the Nampeshiwesit to the Masquisit so they can recover epistemological knowledge that has been lost. Both characters are forced to address what settlers think of them, as it directly relates to how their people are treated.

Indigenous knowledge can be classified as informal and formal. Informal learning is cultural knowledge that is used daily, while formal learning is utilized for sacred knowledge. Cajete describes Indigenous formal learning in his book *Look to the Mountains: An Ecology of Indigenous Education*:

> Various ceremonial practices, founded upon experience and participation in Tribal culture, formed a complex for the formal teaching and learning of this knowledge. Initiation rites occurred at graduated stages of growth and maturation. Important initiation ceremonies and accompanying formal education were integrated with the natural physical and psychological transitions occurring at the end of early childhood, puberty, early, middle, late adulthood and old age. Ceremony was a lifelong introduction to sacred and

> environmental knowledge, graduated so individuals were presented new levels of knowledge when they were physically, psychologically, and socially ready to learn them. (33)

There are several ceremonies that are present in *To Shape a Dragon's Breath.* One of the earliest alludes to how colonization has affected the epistemologies of the Masquisit, which is the Indigenous population on Masquapaug Island. In the past, many Masquisit individuals were also Nampeshweisit, those who have a bond with dragons. The relationship between the Indigenous individual and the dragon was symbiotic, and often, the dragon's powers correlated with the weather or the environment. The effects of colonization were disastrous, with Anequs recalling that, "there weren't enough people and dragons to dance away the storms of autumn" (Blackgoose 5). Over time, the colonial epistemes eroded the Indigenous epistemes, which left tangible and intangible evidence. The tangible evidence was the loss of life, both Indigenous and dragon, due to diseases that the colonizers brought. The intangible was the colonial policy that placed the Anglish at the center of society, disenfranchising Indigenous communities and knowledge. While the plague was sudden, the gradual erosion of Indigenous epistemes occurred as colonizers slowly replaced Indigenous ways of knowing with their own. The inability to dance the autumn storms away led to their city being washed away, becoming a physical representation of how colonial epistemes cause Indigenous epistemes to erode. The nature of colonial epistemes in the novel follows Patrick Wolfe's logic of elimination discussed in the last chapter: the goal is to not find a way to live with the Indigenous people but rather get rid of them (Wolfe 388). Alternatively, Indigenous epistemologies recognize everything and everyone, and do not seek the destruction of other groups. For Anequs, she must learn exactly how much of the Masquisit's epistemologies have been lost to colonization, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

Apart from informal and formal knowledge, Cajete also categories Indigenous knowledge into different foundations — spiritual, environmental, mythic, visionary, and communal. In Gregory Cajete's discussion of spiritual ecology, he states that

> [knowledge] and understanding of morals and ethics are a direct result of spiritual experiences. Sacred traditions and the elders who possess special teachings act as bridges to spiritual experiences and as facilitators for learning about spiritual matters. This is the basis of the elders' standing and respect for the tribe or community as long as they use their knowledge for the good of the people. (44)

In all three novels, the characters often defer to their elders for guidance. Notably, in *To Shape a Dragon's Breath,* Anequs' first action when she finds the dragon egg is to notify the elders. When Ellie, in *Elatsoe,* has dreams where her cousin Trevor visits her, she also confers with her elders. The deference to their elders is a sign of respect within their communities. Part of the spiritual teachings that Cajete explores is called "thinking the highest thought" (46), which he defines as a "means of thinking of oneself, one's community, and one's environment richly" (46). The highest thought emphasizes Indigenous epistemologies that prioritize community and kinship. The highest thought is emulated in *Elatsoe,* when Ellie utilizes it to return from the underworld. Since the underworld is not a place for the living, it is easy for a living individual to get lost. Her parents and elders warned her of this because her own ancestor, Six-Great, got lost in the underworld. At the end of the novel, Ellie confronts Dr. Allerton where she takes both of them into the underworld. When Ellie was first warned about the risks of traveling to the underworld, she told her mom, "I can escape the underworld. I have to think about home. Real home. It worked the first time, it'll work again" (Little Badger 231). For Ellie, thinking about home emulated the highest thought that Cajete describes. By following this pillar of Indigenous

knowledge, Ellie can ensure that no harm comes to her or those around her while still being respectful of her culture and ancestors.

Knowledge about the environment is a crucial foundation of Indigenous communities' epistemologies. Cajete explains that "Indian people, in every place they lived, addressed these questions of survival and sustainability in diverse, yet harmonious ways. They thought of their environments richly and of themselves as truly alive and related to their world" (74). This harmony is represented through reciprocity with the environment. Settler colonialism does not share the same perspective; colonial ecological practices are exploitative and do nothing to balance a harmonious relationship with the environment. Dimaline explores these exploitative practices in *The Marrow Thieves*, while Blackgoose explores reciprocal relationships between dragons and Indigenous people. While different approaches, both authors bring attention to important trains of Indigenous thought that emphasize holistic relationships with the natural world.

The initial catalyst in *The Marrow Thieves* is that years of war and pollution poisoned the water on Earth, which eventually led to the Water Wars. This catalyst brings attention to the current trajectory of pollution, which threatens not only Indigenous ways of life but entire ecosystems as well. Climate change has led to hurricanes and flooding that have caused California to be claimed by the ocean, and the Great Lakes are so polluted that they have the consistency of sludge rather than water. Dimaline's novel illuminates a potential future that has severely deteriorated due to environmental injustices created by colonialism. *The Marrow Thieves* advocates for more sustainable practices alongside Indigenous communities that have been at the frontlines of fighting for the planet. This plot line emulates reality. In 2022, the International Institute for Sustainable Development shared a key message that "international

environmental negotiations need to go beyond tokenistic participation of Indigenous Peoples to a genuine integration of their worldviews and knowledge" (Recio and Hestad 1). In 2016, Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities came together to protest the Dakota Access Pipeline that could harm the drinking water of millions (Waterkeeper Alliance 9). Indigenous communities around the world work to bring attention to climate change and biodiversity loss, which has depleted the salmon population significantly (Stefani 3). Indigenous communities in Canada lead the Break Free from Plastic movement, which calls for the elimination of plastics through a Global Plastics Treaty (Break Free from Plastic). Indigenous communities' epistemologies and perspectives situate them as world leaders in sustainable practices. The future that Dimaline imagines is preventable; the only caveat is that the world must accept Indigenous science and knowledge.

One key function we learn in *To Shape a Dragon's Breath* is that there is a dual nature to dragon's breath. In a 2023 interview, Blackgoose describes dragon breath as "pure chaos magic that rips molecules apart rather than 'fire,' 'ice,' or 'acid.' Much more attention is given to the different ways dragons could be utilized by humans depending on their culture" (Blackgoose 12). While the protagonist does not fully uncover this in the first book, she realizes early on how she thinks her dragon should be treated is vastly different from how the Anglish think dragons should be treated. Since a dragon's breath is not inherently destructive, it offers the opportunity to promote ecological harmony. This ecological harmony is hinted at when Anequs realizes the Masquisit's corn dance looks like a skilta if viewed from above. She states, "the corn-planting dance was meant to make the earth of the fields rich" (Blackgoose 344) which hints that the dance, used in conjunction with a dragon's breath, can give the Masquisit a bountiful harvest.

Another of Cajete's Indigenous educational foundation classifications is the mythic foundation. Myths "are filled with metaphors, symbols, images, and creative linguistic and visual forms that are emotionally effective for members of a tribe. They present accounts of the world as experienced and interpreted through the history of the people of a tribe" (Cajete 115). He further describes this foundation by discussing concentric rings of interrelationship, including "symbols of life sustainers such as corn, deer, buffalo, fish, rain clouds, and forests" (121). Examples of this can be found plentily in *Braiding Sweetgrass,* specifically Kimmerer's chapter "Asters and Goldenrod," where she shares that her first experience on her academic journey was her professor criticizing her reasons for wanting to study botany. Kimmerer, who wanted to know why asters and goldenrod looked good together, was told that was not the correct scientific thought. Kimmerer found ways to integrate Indigenous knowledge into her studies of botany, and various chapters in the book detail her success, despite what she was told on the first day. In Euro-American society, western methodologies, especially those that are scientific, are taken more seriously than those that are Indigenous. Kimmerer reflects in this chapter, stating that "it was the bees that showed me how to move between different flowers–to drink the nectar and gather pollen from both. It is this dance of cross-pollination that can produce a new species of knowledge, a new way of being in the world" (47). For Kimmerer, the flowers were appealing to her as well as pollinators, and the cross-pollination was a metaphor for how knowledge can be transferred in a variety of ways. This metaphor is also an example of reciprocal relationships that promote ecological harmony. Expression of Indigenous knowledge in a society that prioritizes Euro-American forms of scientific knowledge causes difficulties for Indigenous communities wanting to engage in their epistemologies on an academic level because they are not viewed as

legitimate. Over time, this has led to a loss in knowledge which is a struggle that Blackgoose explores in the fictional world of *To Shape a Dragon's Breath.*

Blackgoose discusses this struggle through the subject of skiltakraft, which she shortens to "skilta." Skiltakraft is the course where a Nampeshwesit or a dragoneer learns to shape a dragon's breath. A skilta is a diagram where you put an object you want to transform at the center. When Anequs is explaining this to Sigoskwe, her sister, she realizes that the skilta she is drawing is a concentric circle that replicates the corn planting dance, which was discussed earlier. This realization allows Anequs to make the connection that "all of the stories about Nampeshiwe and Nampeshiweisit had to do with dancing" (344). This is a crucial piece of Masquisit epistemology that has been lost. When Anequs tells her elders, her grandmother states "I knew that Anglish couldn't teach you to be a Nampeshiweisit . . . Daughter of my daughter, you're going to teach us all how to dance with dragons again" (Blackgoose 346-347). Anequs viewed her schooling as a way to gain knowledge to bring back to her people. In doing this, she not only learns new knowledge, but recovers knowledge that had been lost. Additionally, Blackgoose's description of skiltas as concentric circles is an example of how Indigenous knowledge can be incorporated into something that helps all cultures. This piece of information also hints to the audience that the concept of skiltas were stolen from the Masquisit or other Indigenous Nampeshiweisits before their relationships with dragons ended.

Storytelling is a large part of cultural revitalization and can be found in all of the Indigenous foundations explored by Cajete, though for the purpose of this research, it will most predominantly apply to the mythic foundation. Kovach states that "Story nurtures relationships. Story kindles reciprocity. Story compels responsibility. Story thrives where there is respect. Story is a gift" (156). In *The Marrow Thieves*, Miigs and Minerva are the elders for Frenchie's

group, and Miigs often tells the kids Stories. Dimaline capitalizes the first letter of Story because it is a sacred event; each Story is important. In this research, Story will remain capitalized throughout the discussion, although it is important to note it is not capitalized in *To Shape a Dragon's Breath* or *Elatsoe.* Kovach states that there are generally two kinds of stories: "there are stories that hold mythical elements, such as teaching and creation stories, and there are personal narratives of place, happenings, and experiences as the kokums and mosums (aunties and uncles) experienced then and passed them along to the next generation through oral tradition" (157). While Miig generally leads Story, each of the kids has a chance to tell their "coming-to story," (Dimaline 79), which highlights the importance of each person being the one to share their journey with the group. In *The Marrow Thieves,* Story exemplifies Kovach's definition of it; Story is a part of the character's entire being. The significance of the message that Dimaline is sending is that "living storied lives has become important for culture and language recovery and revitalization and for appreciating Indigenous people's resiliency and resistance to colonization which has disrupted this storied memory through legislation, education, and policy" (Archibald and Xiiem 238).

Story also plays a pivotal role in *Elatsoe.* She learns about her ancestor, Six-Great, who had the same spiritual powers as her. Ellie utilizes the stories of Six-Great to inform her decision-making throughout the novel. Her first dream about Trevor reminds her of the story where Six-Great had to investigate the death of Indigenous children along the Rio Grande River. Ellie tells her father that "Cuz spoke to me in a dream. Told me who killed him. Same way that drowned boy told Six-Great-Grandmother about the river monster" (25). Similar to Ellie's companionship with her dog, Six-Great also had several dog companions. This knowledge helps Ellie defeat Dr. Allerton in the end when she is able to summon the dog of her ancestor, who

help her to defeat the town's evil. Ellie learns about Six-Great's resistance through story, which informs her own resistance in the novel.

For Dimaline and Little Badger, dreams play a pivotal role as catalysts in the novels. Dreams are part of the visionary and artistic foundations in Cajete's book. He states, "dreams were deemed important avenues for glimpsing the future, finding that which had been lost, understanding the cause of psychological disharmony, and the origin of needs and wishes that must be honored" (143). In *The Marrow Thieves*, the settlers no longer have the ability to dream, while in *Elatsoe,* it is in Ellie's dream that she talks to her cousin and learns he has been murdered. When Minerva destroyed the extraction machine in *The Marrow Thieves*, it was because she sang, "pulling every dream from her own marrow and into her song . . . As it turns out, every dream Minerva had ever dreamed was in the language. It was her gift, her secret, her plan" (Dimaline 172). Through Minerva, Dimaline asserts that by embracing their language and culture, Indigenous people can destroy colonial systems. Minerva's ability to recall her dreams to destroy the extraction machine becomes one of the first signals of hope that the Indigenous characters have. At the end of the book, Frenchie encounters Miig's husband, Isaac. To verify that Isaac is not a recruiter, Frenchie asks him what his dreams sound like, and Isaac responds by saying, "I dream in Cree," (Dimaline 228). Realizing that their dreams could be a vehicle of change, Frenchie says "I understood that as long as there are dreamers left, there will never be want for a dream. And I understood just what we would do for each other, just what we would do for the ebb and pull of the dream, the bigger dream that held us all. Anything. Everything." (Dimaline 231). Through Minerva, Frenchie, and Isaac, Dimaline communicates to the reader that dreams have a deeper, cultural meaning that Euro-American institutions are reluctant to accept. In the novel, when the settlers lose the ability to dream, they look to extract the dreams

from Indigenous people rather than identify their own cultural deficits that could have led to the phenomenon.

For Ellie in *Elatsoe,* her dreams connect her to her ancestors. She first learned about Trevor's death in a dream, and he continued to visit her. One night, Ellie dreamed about her family, where "her parents, grandparents, aunties, and uncles stood in a straight line" (253). In this dream, her family was there to protect her, as a dark spirit had started to consume Trevor. This version of Trevor asks her "how many generations will there be, after us?" (Little Badger 254). Ellie's dreams allow her to glimpse into the past to understand what happened to Trevor, and it also foreshadows Ellie's decision at the end of the book, when she decides to confront individuals who abuse both Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. Ellie's dreams gave her direction and are also an example of how the visionary foundation connects Indigenous individuals to their ancestors.

When establishing "We Are All Related - The Affective/Communal Foundation of American Indian Education" chapter, Cajete references the Lakota tribal saying Mitakuye Oyasin, which means "we are all related" (164) in his description of Indigenous community. When Patty Krawec describes the path of resistance as learning how to be good relatives, she recognizes "we are all related" (18). In *Braiding Sweetgrass,* Kimmerer tells us of Nanabozho, who she imagines would tell Linnaeus that "we are all related" (209). Cajete asserts that relationships are "the cornerstone of Tribal community; the nature and expression of community are the foundation of Tribal identity. It is through community that Indian people come to understand the nature of their personhood and their connection to the communal soul of their people" (Cajete 164). These examples highlight how interconnectedness is a cornerstone of Indigenous community and are similar to what Daniel Heath Justice describes as being a good

relative, ancestor, and neighbor, which is largely done through kinship. Daniel Heath Justice introduces his audience to the idea of kinship by stating that kinship is part of humanity: "kinship isn't just a thing, it's an active network of connections, a process of continual acknowledgement and enactment. To be human is to practice humanness" (41-42). Part of this interconnectedness in the novels is represented through tribalography, which was introduced in the introduction. Tribalography is a story that represents Indigenous identities and history through collective narratives. In understanding Indigenous communities and the complex issues they are faced with, the authors portrayal of tribalography is a valuable tool.

Métis author Cherie Dimaline stated in a 2020 CBC interview that in her community, "storytellers are considered leaders, so it's a position with a lot of responsibility" (4). Dimaline uses her role as a storyteller to offer forms of resistance, but also to share with the world the story of her tribe. *The Marrow Thieves* takes place in Northern Canada, which is similar to where Dimaline is from in Penetanguishene, Ontario. Her portrayal of residential schools is nearly parallel to the Métis experience—the only difference is in the novel, they are harvested for their bone marrow. The Métis Nation National Council stated that the residential schools "have had a large effect on the Métis community at large and the descendants of the survivors of residential schools. The Métis Nation and its citizens are faced, to this day, with the lasting repercussions of the residential school system and the intergenerational trauma that residential schools caused" (4). For Dimaline, she discusses having her own worries that her people were forgetting their culture, and when thinking about culture as a living thing, she states "the land will always remember, it's not going to change. It will find ways to crack its fingers through and it will always be there" (Dimaline 15). Frenchie and the rest of the group worry about their own connections to their culture and how they can rebuild it. In a fictional novel, Dimaline narrates

the experience of the Métis people against the historical backdrop of colonization and residential schools. Through her characters, she explores cultural resilience and resurgence through kinship, which I will discuss later.

In "The Story of America," LeAnne Howe states that "teaching the stories of Native authors along with stories of historians will be both illuminating, and at times, illusionary" (48). Fiction does not mean you cannot learn—something that Moniquill Blackgoose explores in *To Shape a Dragon's Breath.* In each of these novels, the authors incorporate where they are from into the story. Blackgoose is from New England and bases her novel around the region, which I discussed in chapter one. Anequs represents traditional Indigenous community, with Blackgoose stating in an interview that "one of my greatest goals in telling Anequs' story is to get the readers to comprehend how fundamentally different the European/colonist perceptions of the world are from Indigenous perceptions" (American Booksellers Association 11). It is important to express and portray Indigenous identities in a variety of ways. Blackgoose contrasts Anequs' knowledge with Theod's, to demonstrate how harmful colonial perceptions and assimilation can be. Further, Blackgoose states that the academy is "antithetical to the values of her culture" (American Booksellers Association 13), which represents not only residential schools, but the assimilative pressures that Indigenous individuals still face. Anequs' experience with the academy is similar to Robin Wall Kimmerer's book chapter "Asters and Goldenrod", where Kimmerer's first professor dictated how and what she could learn.

Darcie Little Badger's tribalography also covers her personal life. She studied geological and geospatial science at Princeton, and oceanography at Texas A & M (Princeton Alumni Weekly 5). Her interest in the natural environment is evident through the character Ellie, who accidentally summons an ocean while in a park in Texas. Little Badger states in the novel that

"Ellie was submerged in the sea of the dead" (170). In *Elatsoe,* Little Badger also discusses the history of Lipan Apache land through stories of dispossession and banishment, which was discussed in chapter one. These tribalographies are important—they share history, tradition, and Indigenous identity with the audience. Understanding tribalography is important as we recognize how each individual Indigenous Nation has its own culture, language, and practices. Tribalography resists the stereotype that all Indigenous cultures are the same, while still recognizes the ways that separate Nations and non-Indigenous peoples can come together as a community.

Over time, Indigenous populations struggled to maintain community as Euro-American institutions sought to dismantle Indigenous communities. Justice concludes that "the dominant colonial stories about kinship are designed to destroy Indigenous peoples' ties to our homelands to one another, and to our other-than-human relatives, and ultimately serve to transform those lands into exploitable resources and diverse peoples into memories" (84). This separation has taken its toll, which is described by Kimmerer in her chapter "Putting Down Roots" where she states "braids were cut off and Native languages forbidden . . . The government's goal of breaking the link between land, language, and Native people was nearly a success" (255). Justice and Kimmerer's analysis that to break Indigenous people, the government would have to break the land, re-emphasizes points made by Patrick Wolfe that I discuss in the previous chapter. The American government was aware of the value of Indigenous communal relationships. To break this connection, they would first break the land, as in *To Shape a Dragon's Breath.* To gain power over the Nasquisit, the Anglish poisoned the land and waterways. In *The Marrow Thieves,* the settler governments exploited Indigenous resources. To break Indigenous people's relationship with one another, they attempted to divide them, which is evident in all three of the

novels. In *To Shape a Dragon's Breath,* the Anglish gain control over Theod by telling him their own version of history, which isolates Theod from the Indigenous community until he meets Anequs. Because the settlers controlled the narrative, the Indigenous community on Masquapaug and the survivors of Nauquipaug are the only ones aware of what actually occurred, which is that the settlers poisoned the water and cornfields and unleashed dragon fire on the town in order to gain access to their natural resources. In *Elatsoe,* this division is highlighted when Ellie confronts the Indigenous vampire, Glorian. Following her mother's actions, Ellie attempts to banish him when he tells her "I have cut all ties to my family and culture, but because this land was once mine, it will always be home" (279). Through the character Glorian, Little Badger challenges Indigenous individuals who would push colonial agendas. Despite rejecting his Indigenous heritage, Glorian is still Indigenous, which we see in the way Glorian still claims Lipan Apache land as home. In *The Marrow Thieves,* this division is shown through Indigenous people who work with the recruiters to save themselves. Miig makes a point to tell the group that "not every Indian is an Indian" (Dimaline 55). Settler colonialism attempts to divide Indigenous people to destroy both their unity to the land and one another. In Little Badger's and Dimaline's novels, those who engage in settler colonial methodologies are defeated by Indigenous individuals. In Blackgoose's novel, Theod's understanding of the truth allows him to reconcile his Indigenous identity. The concepts of kinship, good relatives, ancestors, and neighbors have allowed characters to persevere through the hardships imposed by a settler colonial society.

As Indigenous people learn how to live with settlers, Kimmerer questions if "settlers can be trusted to follow Nanabozho, to walk so that 'each step is a greeting to Mother Earth?'" (211). Can settlers learn Indigenous epistemologies that seek to unite, rather than divide? IYAL provides a backdrop in which settlers can decolonize their own epistemologies and learn

Indigenous epistemologies that benefit everyone. In *Why Indigenous Literature Matters,* Daniel Heath Justice teaches concepts that improve Indigenous relationships and opens a door for settler learning through kinship.

Justice defines a good ancestor as "imagining beyond the wounding now into a better tomorrow, working, writing, and dreaming a future into being" (Justice 156). Throughout *The Marrow Thieves,* Frenchie and the other characters learn to be good ancestors, despite the challenges they face. During Story one night, Miigs tells the characters about how their ancestors hid their dreams in their marrow, stating "we join our ancestors, hoping we left enough dreams behind for the next generation to stumble across" (Dimaline 90). This Story is important because it unites the characters across generations and reminds them that someday, they will also be ancestors. Despite the challenges they face, this relationship to future generations is important because it carries on the action of preservation by learning to be a good ancestor, which is also important for cultural and language revitalization. With revitalization and the connection to their dreams, Indigenous communities honor their ancestors and pave the way for the future. In *Elatsoe,* the power to see and interact with spirits is passed down through matriarchal lines, which is how Ellie learned how to be a good ancestor. Six Great is the ancestor who we learn about, who commanded the spirits of a pack of six dogs. Often, she would use her abilities to help others. In the end, Ellie was able to call to the dogs of her ancestors in her final stand with Dr. Allerton.

Dimaline, Little Badger, and Blackgoose all incorporate kinship into their novels, whether it is kinship with other characters, animals, or the environment. These novels reignite kinship that had been lost to assimilation over the years. As Zanella notes, "*The Marrow Thieves* foregrounds an expansive understanding of kinship, which includes all of creation, and uncovers

the apocalyptic tracks settler colonialism seeks to hide" (29). When Frenchie and the rest of the group meet up with the Indigenous resistance, Frenchie learns that his father is still alive. Despite that, he decides to stick with his found family. They were surprised that Frenchie was staying with them and not his dad, with Frenchie asking, "I'm still a part of this family, aren't I?" and Zheegwon responding "it's just you have a real family now" (Dimaline 177). Zheegwon insinuates that since Frenchie still has a living biological family member, then that is who his "real" family is. Frenchie's found family and biological family are in juxtaposition to one another, as Zheegwon assumes that Frenchie will abandon their group for his father, with whom he is assumed to have a stronger relationship. Kinship is not just who you are related to or who you grow up with. It is from bonds that form in a reciprocal relationship, as discussed by both Cajete and Kimmerer. Frenchie is a character who has had to grow up thinking his entire family was dead. Although his dad is alive, it does not erase the bonds that he has formed with the group. Kinship can occur between biological families or other reciprocal bonds. It does not have a limit or hard boundaries because in Indigenous communities, relationships can be formed with all living things.

Kinship between a human and other-than-human person is highlighted within the relationship of Anequs and her dragon, Kasaqua. This unique relationship allowed them to sense the emotions of one another, though they could not speak directly into each other's minds like in other well-known dragon series *Eragon, Priory of the Orange Tree,* or *Fourth Wing*. After Anequs and Kasaqua completed their end of year exams, Anequs "didn't feel restless at all, because Kasaqua felt… calm. Accomplished. Triumphant. It was a buoyant feeling" (Blackgoose 504). Ellie's dog, Kirby, is another example of other-than-human kinship, as Kirby is the spirit of her dog. Much like Ellie, Kirby utilized the highest thought after he was left in the underworld

when Ellie confronted Dr. Allerton. Kirby's highest thought was thinking about Ellie, with Ellie telling Jay "I knew that Kirby would find a way home" (Little Badger 352). Ellie's relationship with Kirby transcended the realm of the living because Kirby was able to find his way back to her from the underworld.

Ellie's friendship with Kirby is an example of how other-than-human kinship can also be a part of being a good ancestor. Indigenous writers work every day to be good ancestors and create a better future, and this is clear from the approaches taken by the writers discussed here. When describing Indigenous suffering, Justice states that "ceremonies, bones, genes, blood: whether belonging to the dead or the living– or both– there is a continuity in Indigenous experience across time and space, as death itself is no sanctuary from colonialism" (131). This powerful statement is illuminated in *The Marrow Thieves, Elatsoe,* and *To Shape a Dragon's Breath.*

While Indigenous epistemologies are harmed by settler colonialism, they remain a source of Indigenous resistance. The novels by Dimaline, Little Badger, and Blackgoose are testaments to the way Indigenous individuals can reimagine their communities in a creative setting that allows space for cultural reclamation. As Brown Spiers states, "by acting for the good of the community instead of the individual –a value that is inherent to many Indigenous cultures– it becomes possible to combat the effects of imperialism and, ultimately, save the world" (41). Indigenous epistemologies strengthen Indigenous communities. Both are essential parts of character agency, which will be explored in the next chapter.

Chapter Three: The Formation of Agency in Indigenous Young Adult Literature

> We belong to this time, as we belong to those that came before, and as we will belong to those times and places and relationships that come after us—in all our difference and uniqueness, in all the ways our diverse peoples recognize meaning and belonging, in this world that our kin have inhabited since before spoken word and inscribed thought. – Daniel Heath Justice, *Why Indigenous Literature Matters*

The Indigenous methodological framework I have established places the Indigenous research foundations of self and ethics as reciprocal to one another. Kovach states that "Indigenous-informed ethics on research find commonalities of shared values of respect for relationships with the human and natural world" which will be the basis of how I analyze ethical practices within the novels as well as comparing ethics within the established Young Adult (YA) space (98). The self is defined by character agency, which involves individuals own self-determination, identification, and call-to-action. Self, in Indigenous contexts, is supported by Indigenous epistemologies and ethics that relate culture, environment, community, and decolonization. Self, in a settler context, utilizes settler colonial ethics that harm the foundations of Indigenous methodologies. Settler colonial ethics focus on settler futurity (Tuck et. al 3; Berenstain et. al 286) and settler innocence (Tuck et al 10). When analyzing this idea alongside Figure 1, self is sustained through Indigenous epistemologies but can also be diminished by settler ethics. This chapter will explore how self, represented by character agency, is part of a tool used in Indigenous Young Adult Literature (IYAL) to decolonize academic and creative spaces.

YA literature became solidified as a genre as early 1970's, establishing the generic conventions that it is known for (Suhr-Sytsma xvi). The path to its own genre was rocky as parents often wanted to dictate what their children read. As these stories gained popularity, it became clear that YA was an important genre for adolescents to critically examine societal issues

(Blakemore 4). While non-Indigenous communities struggled over what topics were acceptable, Indigenous communities had long been including their youth in storytelling practices, such as oral stories or wampum belts. When Indigenous authors began writing YA, it was clear that the generic confines of canonical YA did not fully capture Indigenous identities or experiences, as it often furthered colonial systems that harm Indigenous populations. In "Indigenous Young Adult Novels: An Introduction" Eric Gary Anderson, Angela Calcaterra and Christopher Pexa state that "the YA genre deals with power and youthful resistance . . . In Indigenous YA, resistance and rebellion are fundamentally linked with decolonization through overt refusal of and resistance to settler societies" (267). In their analysis of IYAL, Anderson et al. "reveal the diverse ways in which Indigenous YA recenters and reimagines sovereignty—both at the level of the individual person and of the Indigenous communities or peoples" (268). The Young Adult Library Service Association (YASLSA) asserts that YA literature fosters understanding by "offering vividly realized portraits of the lives - exterior and interior - of individuals who are unlike the reader. In this way, young adult literature invites its readership to embrace the humanity it shares with those who - if not for the encounter in reading - might forever remain strangers or - worse - irredeemably 'other'" (Cart 3). YASLA's definition of YA literature disregards the fact that many YA novels continue themes of settler colonialism as discussed with sf/f. Canonical YA literature perpetuates a generalized colonial agenda of multiculturalism that does not always recognize the sovereignty of Indigenous peoples or territories, and frequently groups Indigenous peoples as one population, with the same cultures, ideals, values, etc. To embrace humanity, as YASLA states, settler authors should question whether their work perpetuates harmful stereotypes or repeats colonization. Embracing humanity and recognizing sovereignty in their fictional texts would contribute to the decolonization of YA. Many YA novels omit Indigenous

characters and practices, with most of the representation being for individuals of Euro-American descent. This further enforces the idea that Indigenous individuals are Other but offers the potential to change that. In Stephen Graham Jones's essay "Letter to a Just-Starting-Out-Indian-Writer—and Maybe to Myself," he discusses how Eurocentric institutions expect Indigenous literature to highlight their Indigeneity to prove they belong and encourages Indigenous writers to "get out there, traffic the genres typically denied to Indians. That we're not allowed to do fantasy, or science fiction, and the rest" (Jones 3). Indigenous writers can write on their own terms, without settler colonial expectations of what they can write about. Simultaneously, non-Indigenous authors can refrain from omitting, stereotyping, removing, or assimilating in their own works. I contend that IYAL deconstructs harmful YA tropes that echo subliminal colonial messaging, and rebuilds them through reconciliation of Indigenous self-determination, self-identification, and epistemologies. YASLA's definition, at face value, fails to recognize the complexities that Indigenous authors face, from society, publishing houses, and the government. Framing YA to be more inclusive, and critiquing themes of settler colonialism is important for reconciliation. In this chapter, I propose that reconciliation can be achieved through the syncretic multiculturalism and Tribal Critical Race Theory (TribalCrit) that are portrayed in *The Marrow Thieves, To Shape a Dragon's Breath,* and *Elatsoe.* Syncretic multiculturalism and TribalCrit are important tools within the IYAL genre that can assist both Indigenous and non-Indigenous readers in engaging with critical concepts that involve race, culture, and conflict. Both tools are represented in character agency as they help empower characters through identity formation, belonging to a community, recognizing sovereignty, resiliency, and the critique of colonialism.

While colonial multiculturalism is often seen in a positive light due to its encouragement of cultural diversity, it is critiqued by many in the Indigenous community. Colonial

multiculturalism can be harmful to agency and identity because it causes harmful stereotyping, homogenizes Indigenous cultures, and promotes dominant narratives. While many find colonial multiculturalism to be beneficial to today's society, Indigenous communities still find themselves along the margins of society as colonial multiculturalism fails to address colonial systems, patriarchy, racism, privilege, etc. In David MacDonald's article "Reforming Multiculturalism in a Bi-National Society: Aboriginal Peoples and the Search for Truth and Reconciliation in Canada," he seeks to define multiculturalism into two categories: colonial or syncretic (67). Syncretic multiculturalism seeks to create a balance between what the world knows as colonial institutions and Indigenous forms of collective governance. It would further mean that there are no attempts to assimilate Indigenous people into colonial systems, instead respecting them for their different beliefs and allowing them to participate in multiculturalism at will (MacDonald 89). MacDonald discusses that a path forward for Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples involves the "achievement of syncretic multiculturalism [which] can be facilitated by moving towards a reimagined binational foundation for Canada based on recognition of the *sui generis* rights of Aboriginal peoples and their nation-to-nation relationships" (MacDonald 67). Under the colonial multiculturalism that is prevalent today and portrayed in *The Marrow Thieves, To Shape a Dragon's Breath,* and *Elatsoe* , this inequality leads to a future that is only beneficial to the settlers. When Miig tells the group that Indigenous people and settlers are both motivated by survival, he explains that they see the solution to their survival in Indigenous individuals (Dimaline 54). In *To Shape a Dragon's Breath,* Anequs and Theod receive a letter while visiting Masquapaug Island, stating that "when a worthy jarl is once again chosen, your kind will again be declared nithings and it will be permissible to kill you on sight . . . We demand that both of you relinquish your dragons to a collection and exile yourselves back to Mask Island"

(Blackgoose 409). While Frau Kuiper makes attempts towards colonial multiculturalism by admitting Anequs and Theod to the academy, this fails as many settlers only see Indigenous peoples in a negative light. They would rather kill Indigenous people then give them equal rights, which reaffirms Wolfe's logic of elimination. In *Elatsoe*, Dr. Allerton and the townspeople view themselves as more important than Trevor. Dr. Allerton tells Ellie and the spiritual emissary posing as Trevor that "the people in this room understand why your death was *necessary"* (Little Badger 322). Dr. Allerton's powers can be traced back for generations. The view that he and others are more important allowed them to abuse Indigenous and impoverished groups without repercussions. If we instead look towards the cultural revitalization and agency in these novels and other IYAL, then society can learn to implement syncretic multiculturalism as a step towards a more equitable future.

In *Self-Determined Stories: The Indigenous Reinvention of Young Adult Literature*, Mandy Suhr-Sytsma states that multiculturalism has "tendencies to mask white privilege and to render cultures as static entities" (26*)* while also assuming that discrimination based on racism and classism no longer exist. Suhr-Sytsma's solution for this is employment of Tribal Critical Race Theory (TribalCrit), which is discussed by Bryan Mckinley Jones Brayboy (Lumbee) as being "rooted in the multiple, nuanced, and historically- and geographically located epistemologies and ontologies found in Indigenous communities" (427). Both syncretic multiculturalism and TribalCrit will be important in recognizing how Indigenous identities have been governed by colonialism.

TribalCrit allows us to identify how the protagonists Frenchie in *The Marrow Thieves*, Anequs in *To Shape a Dragon's Breath*, and Ellie in *Elatsoe* form autonomy, while syncretic multiculturalism shows them the balance between their conflicts and culture. Brayboy has stated

that “TribalCrit is the notion that colonization is endemic to society. By colonization, I mean that European American thought, knowledge, and power structures dominate present-day society” (430). Colonization has played out repeatedly in society as well as in fictional literature. In *The Marrow Thieves*, it is how Indigenous people's bone marrow is seen as a resource for colonizers to exploit. In *To Shape a Dragon’s Breath,* it is how the colonial systems attempt to assimilate Anequs and Theod while displaying overt racism. In *Elatsoe,* disenfranchised groups, like Indigenous people and those in poverty, as well as land, are seen as resources. Historical trauma caused by colonization is evident; Indigenous people are dispossessed from their lands, forced to assimilate, and given limited agency and sovereignty. Analyzing these situations through the TribalCrit lens allows us to identify recurrent themes of colonization and imperialism, while returning cultural and narrative control to Indigenous individuals.

Cherie Dimaline, Moniquill Blackgoose, and Darcie Little Badger all employ narrative control to decolonize YA literature. Suhr-Sytsma clearly defines YA literature and IYAL as inherently different; canonical YA maintains that adolescent protagonists experience the loss of individual agency, and either reconcile with societies or become disillusioned about society (xvi-xvii). She otherwise describes Indigenous YA as increasing individual agency, stating, “their rebellion against colonial ideologies does not diminish but instead intensifies as the narratives draw to a close” (xvii-xviii). Dimaline’s and Blackgoose’s novels end after periods of conflict that have not been fully remedied, alluding to the fact that rebellion against colonial ideologies will continue to unravel in the subsequent books, *Hunting by Stars* (Cherie Dimaline) and *To Ride a Rising Storm* (Moniquill Blackgoose). For Little Badger, Ellie is driven to continue her resistance against colonial ideologies into adulthood. She receives a message from a fan saying “Abraham Allerton is not alone. There are other wizards on our land, self-worshipping people

who corrupt reality itself" (351). Ellie wants to go to college and establish a private investigator business with her friend, Jay. This speaks not only to Ellie's personal agency, but the collaborative agency that is a part of Indigenous community which will be discussed later in this chapter.

Jessica Clark and Igrid E. Castro's *The Legacy of Children's Agency in Popular Culture* categorizes agency in three ways: political, social, and generational (xviiii-xxiii). While Clark and Castro analyze agency in the context of canonical children's and YA books, this chapter will expand on these concepts and reframe them within an Indigenous methodology to further the conversation on how IYAL is a method of decolonization.

Political Agency is described as a child's agency being left up to the nation-state, which often strips them of their individual agency (Castro and Clark xviii). Choices are made for them, but not with their best interest in mind. Moniquill Blackgoose addresses this in *To Shape a Dragon's Breath,* where Anglish leaders are often appointed over Indigenous communities to govern them. Following an attack that left six dead, the Jarl who oversees the entire region of Linmarden invites Anequs and Theod to a meeting with various important government members to investigate the ongoing issue and resolve any future conflicts. During this meeting, it is made clear that the current Anglishman in charge of Mask Island, Wilhelm Hasenjager, does not go to Mask Island to hold votes or communicate with the Masquisit, leading to their underrepresentation. To remedy this issue, the Jarl suggests visiting and finding out the needs and wants of Masquisit, but still does not suggest replacing the government representative there with a Masquisit leader (Blackgoose 486-487).

Social Agency is agency where interpersonal relationships are developed (Castro and Clark xx). While Frenchie in *The Marrow Thieves* loses his entire family early on, he forms tight

connections with his newfound family. They empower each other through their friendship and shared cultural revitalization. Frenchie described the group, stating "us kids, we longed for the old-timey. We wore our hair in braids to show it. We made sweat lodges out of broken branches dug back into the earth, covered over with our shirts tied together at the buttonholes" (Dimaline 21-22). Doing this helped them honor their culture and feel connected to one another, and this desire to connect with the "old-timey" also helped them with their interpersonal relationships throughout the novel – they loved learning how to hunt, learning their language, and participating in Story.

Generational Agency relates to "biological and kin connections to their families, communities, and cultures" (Castro and Clark xxiii). Often, this can be restrictive to individual agency as family and culture can be restrictive on individual growth. Generational Agency is something that empowers Ellie in *Elatsoe*. The stories told to her by her mother about her life, her grandmother, and Six-Great is how Ellie was able to inform most of her decision making. In Ellie's family, their generational agency also connects them with their ancestors' other-than-human kinship relationships, like her grandmother's mammoth. While Ellie and Six-Great had spiritual companions in the form of dogs, Ellie's grandmother had a mammoth. Her mother, Vivian, recounts how her grandmother's mammoth saved her life when a man attempted to kidnap her (Little Badger 312). Ellie contemplates summoning the mammoth when fighting the Indigenous vampire, Glorian (Little Badger 281). Generational agency in *Elatsoe* not only connects ancestors, but also companions, through kinship.

If we consider Political, Social, and Generational agency in an Indigenous context, we can see how these things can become a driving factor in building character agency. In a colonial context, the unique challenges that Indigenous communities face are not recognized. To

empower Political Agency, there would need to be representation and self-governance, which is typically only partially met as Tribal communities and territories are still attached to colonizing entities and not afforded their own sovereignty. Social Agency is maintained through cultural revitalization and community support, and not under a guise of assimilation to be part of the larger "melting pot" that is the United States or Canada. Generational Agency is accomplished through intergenerational knowledge, which can be provided through communication with elders, knowledge of ancestors, and knowledge provided by ancestors. The deference to elders and desire to honor their ancestors through their connections help Frenchie, Anequs, and Ellie be good ancestors, which is discussed by Daniel Heath Justice. Indigenous literature and stories are often not just about the present. They are stories about the past, present, and future. Their political, social, and generational agency can be strengthened through their epistemological practices, like being a good ancestor. By empowering Indigenous youth through literature, Dimaline, Blackgoose, and Little Badger instill a new agency that prioritizes Indigenous values and responsibilities.

Indigenous epistemologies are important to consider when discussing the formation of Indigenous agencies. First, they influence the development of Frenchie, Anequs, and Ellie by giving them an understanding of how everything is connected. They deeply root them in their cultural practices and beliefs and show them how to be a part of a collective, community identity. In IYAL, this collective agency differs the greatest from canonical YA. Collective agency gives characters shared responsibility, showing them that they need to work together as a unit and not as individuals. In *The Marrow Thieves,* this is accomplished through two ways: the first is when Frenchie suggests that they start to fight back and find other Indigenous peoples. The group agrees with him and eventually find themselves a part of a larger community that relies on the

input and action of several individuals. The second is best seen during the rescue of Minerva, where several individuals work together to save her. In *To Shape A Dragon's Breath*, this is done through Anequs's mentality that she will bring back everything that she learns to give to her people. Anequs is never thinking of just herself, but all of the Indigenous communities and how this knowledge can improve things like their defense and harvest. In *Elatsoe,* she often relies on the help of other characters who are not always Indigenous, like her best friend Jay. She applies the theory of collective agency not just in her Indigenous community, but in the way that she interacts with people, which is an example of how Indigenous epistemologies are beneficial to everyone, and not just Indigenous peoples.

In these three novels, settler colonialism serves as the backdrop where the characters' realities are formed. Agency and ethics then become undeniably linked. According to settler colonial ethics that rule these worlds, Indigenous peoples are viewed as unable to have autonomy. In *The Marrow Thieves,* the characters are forced to hide their Indigeneity as they are constantly hunted by colonizers who have become self-assured that their ability to dream is more important than an Indigenous person's life. The settlers do not try to find a less destructive path when they realize their only way to survive is by taking Indigenous bone marrow. The twisted morality of settler colonialism finds ways to justify these oppressive and destructive actions by believing they are the superior race, class, religion, etc. The dominant presence of settler colonialism divides individuals, therefore when a catastrophe happens, the division grows causing family vs family, neighbor vs neighbor, and Indigenous vs Indigenous.

In *The Marrow Thieves,* characters like Travis and Lincoln, who are Indigenous, become complicit in settler colonial ethics as they choose personal survival at the expense of other Indigenous individuals. In *To Shape a Dragon's Breath,* settler colonial ethics harm Anequs as

they force her and Theod to assimilate, by threatening to harm their family or dragons if they do not cooperate. Frau Kuiper and Frau Brinkerhoff attempt to parade them around to "humanize" Indigeneity. Colonial powers dictate the paths that Anequs can pursue as a Namesheweseit; she can either assimilate into colonial school with her dragon, or they will kill her dragon and likely her too. Anequs is warned of this for the first time after she is reprimanded for slapping Ivar Stafn, with Frau Kuiper telling her that Captain Einarsson, one of her teachers, "recommended that your dragon be put to death, and that if your people offered resistance that the resistance should be put down in the same manner as the Nack Island uprising" (Blackgoose 203). In the anonymous letter that Anequs received while on Masquapaug Island, the writer demands both Anequs and Theodore relinquish their dragons or "your dragons will be shot and you will be hanged as an example to the rest of your kind" (Blackgoose 409). Anequs is acutely aware of the exploitation her people have faced for years and recognizes how her dragon could help her people reclaim some of the knowledge they have lost. Anequs makes a promise to herself, and her people, that she will take the knowledge that she learns and find a way to improve it for her people. While Ellie has been challenged in *Elatsoe,* often forced to revisit the historical trauma associated with dispossession and discrimination, she is on her own path to bring justice to her people. Her choices honor her people and her ancestral heritage although they place her in positions of personal danger. When she confronts Dr. Allerton in the ballroom, Trevor's emissary causes everything to explode. Ellie knew this was dangerous, stating "she threw herself over Jay . . . Wood, glass, metal, and stone exploded outward" (Little Badger 324). Ellie put herself and Kirby in harm's way to protect her friend Jay. Her actions consistently show that she wants to protect those around her and those who are innocent. Settler colonial ethics attempts to

determine what is considered right and wrong, but each of the characters help dismantle this system by their resistance.

Suhr-Sytsma points out that current IYAL that discuss residential schools has a positive legacy of resistance, where "Indigenous children and young adults in the boarding/residential schools did not simply lie down and accept the dehumanizing and assimilationist ideology and practices of those schools; they resisted" (32). This resistance is seen most prominently in *The Marrow Thieves,* where new residential schools have been erected. In the days following RiRi's death, Minerva is taken by the recruiters, which ultimately shifts the trajectory of their destination. Instead of retreating further into the North, they instead decided to fight back. On this decision, they find a group of Indigenous people who are said to be the "resistance" (Dimaline 154). Minerva gave the group and the resistance hope, and even after she died, her legacy was left with them, giving them the power to continue the fight. Anequs, who attends Anglish school, a different kind of boarding school, is often seen as a sort of amusement for the Anglish students. In an early interaction, her classmate Ivar Stafn asked, "Is a 'woman' of thirteen considered old enough to engage in such congress, with or without being married?" (Blackgoose 199), referring to her potential "carnal congress." (Blackgoose 202). This question was highly inappropriate, and Ivar would not have asked this to an Anglish girl his age. He tells Frau Kuiper that "this kind of savage can't be *tamed!* It's the nature of the nackie species to be inclined to rage and violence. They have no innate desire to be civilized . . . There's no point in pretending that a wild save is equal to a Norswoman and deserving of the same decorum" (Blackgoose 202). He asked Anequs specifically to insinuate that Masquisit were promiscuous and deliberately disrespect her in front of their peers. This insinuation and stereotyping is a common colonial ideology in which Indigenous women are viewed as "promiscuous squaw"

(Croisy 4) where the "over-sexualized Indian woman has become a global object of desire from the sexy Halloween Indian costumes for women available on clothing websites to contemporary 'sexy squaw' performances found in fashion and music shows" (Croisy 5). Anequs, who throughout the book does not back down from a fight, slapped Ivar for his inappropriate question. Anequs refuses to be the spectacle that the Anglish try to make her into, whether that spectacle is for amusement, assimilation, or to dehumanize. At times, her resistance is more subtle, and the school she attends does not resemble the residential schools that were prevalent in the United States and Canada; she is still expected to assimilate and tolerate discriminatory behavior.

Resistance in *Elatsoe* is different than in Dimaline and Blackgoose's novels due to Ellie's supernatural ability to communicate with and travel to the spirit realm. Ellie, from the beginning, is an active agent as her character faces challenges that seek to harm her family and culture. Ellie, who already has deep connections to her ancestry and culture, refuses to be passive after her cousin dies. Ellie's investigation involves contacting mediums, visiting the location of his death, and researching the town in their library, among other things. When she uncovers the truth, she tells her family that the miracles Dr. Allerton performs "must come at the expense of the victims. Maybe some are willing. They can't all be. He's not a healer. He takes money from the sick to make other people sick" (Little Badger 236). Trevor had been in "the wrong place at the wrong time" (Little Badger 235). When Ellie uncovers the truth, she realizes how many innocent people have likely died from Dr. Allerton's powers, and she refuses to be a bystander. Dr. Allerton's money and power were not cause enough for Ellie to back down.

In my analysis of these novels, I come to the same conclusion as Suhr-Sytsma in *Self-Determined Stories: The Indigenous Reinvention of Young Adult Literature:* these texts tackle

colonialism and its intersections with other forms of oppression, Indigenous self-determination, identity, adaptation, and cross-cultural interaction in a range of ways. But there are many issues within and beyond these topics that they do not deeply engage, including those related to recognition, enrollment, multiple citizenships, adoption, and foster care. (Suhr-Sytsma 150). The more Indigenous authors write, the more they will be able to bring attention to the deeper issues of recognition, enrollment, and child welfare because IYAL is not confined to generic conventions. As Indigenous authors grow in popularity, IYAL will engage larger audiences to address issues that may not be covered in speculative fiction. Additionally, while *The Marrow Thieves, How to Shape a Dragon's Breath,* and *Elatsoe* may not address all these issues, it does not mean that other Indigenous novels do not—this research is also to encourage readers to pick up more novels by Indigenous authors.

Self-determination is the right for an Indigenous community to govern themselves, which is a right not afforded to them in current society, and in the novels. In the beginning of *To Shape a Dragon's Breath,* when a captain asked Anequs why there hadn't been notification of a dragon hatching, she told him "We don't have a local representative, not that I know of. No Anglish people live on Masquapaug" (74). Anequs having to explain that the Masquisit are not aware of any Anglish government representative for their people happens recurrently throughout the novel. She explains it to her roommate, Marta, and the Jarl of Linmarden at separate points in the book. This recurrent issue highlights why political agency is important. In *To Shape a Dragon's Breath*, the Indigenous characters lack political agency due to the lack of accurate and fair representation in political matters. While the Anglish do not let the Masquisit govern themselves, they are also not sufficient leaders, as it takes until the end of the book to learn who really governs Masquapaug. Even the term self-determination is ambiguous, as European countries

have used the term to declare independent statehood, while Indigenous communities are still not afforded that right. Self-determination for a European/Western nation-state is the full realization of the nation's sovereignty and ability for self-governance. The current self-determination that exists today does not provide Indigenous communities with total sovereignty. These communities have not received land repatriation and often do not have the final say when it comes to the extraction of natural resources. Tribal sovereignty and its limitations and liberations can still be dictated by Congress, which means they do not have total sovereignty.

Indigenous self-identification means an Indigenous individual is accepted by themself and their community. Throughout *The Marrow Thieves*, Frenchie battles internally and worries that he will lose Rose to someone 'more' Indigenous. By introducing the analysis of self-identification in the novel, it also opens more discussion to self-identification in the real world. Here, their group is faced with their own self-consciousness on their relationship with their culture. Frenchie struggles with a boy his age, stating that since his braids were longer, "that made me a better Indian" (Dimaline 190). Frenchie comparing himself to another Indigenous boy his age made him feel like he wasn't Indigenous enough. After Minerva dies, Rose feels as if she is unable to stay with the group and leaves before they find Isaac. Wab, on the other hand, is finally able to relax, opening up about her relationship with Chi-Boy. At the beginning of summer, it is discovered that Wab is pregnant (Dimaline 213). Each character has their own period of growth that differs greatly from person-to-person, which highlights how nuanced the formation of the Indigenous adolescent identity is. There is no structure to how much or what someone needs to heal from trauma, but it is evident that embracing their culture is an important step. For Frenchie and Rose, Isaac gives them hope that they can resist recruiters (Dimaline 229).

For Wab and Chi-Boy, being immersed in their culture makes them feel safe enough to embrace their love for one another.

Indigenous self-determination and self-identification are both important parts of agency and cultural revitalization. To start, self-determination gives Indigenous communities a Political Agency, which is needed to properly defend themselves against forced colonial assimilation as well as make their own decisions about lands and resources. The ability to have self-identification is empowering, and helps Indigenous people define what being Indigenous is *to them,* and not some colonizer rulebook. Self-identification ultimately strengthens Social Agency, and both self-determination and self-identification strengthen Generational Agency. At the root of these agencies and how they can be empowered are Indigenous epistemologies that promote better ways of understanding the world. These agencies are important when it comes to characters being able to subvert structures of power. For Frenchie, it is his resilience to fight against the recruiters while embracing his culture. Anequs subverts structures of power by learning how to navigate and challenge traditional societal expectations. For Ellie, she subverts power through her ancestral knowledge. Agency is about empowering individuals by showing them how to subvert colonial powers and and embrace their Indigenous identity.

Decolonization is a multistep process. To decolonize, one must dismantle colonial educational, environmental, and political policies. Literature has always been an avenue to do this, and YA specifically is the genre of rebellion and change. IYAL writes back against colonial systems and conventional YA tropes that would diminish the very significant issues that occur within these novels and within society. As Miriam Brown Spiers warns, “Only cultures that place a high value on individualism will be threatened by the existence of anything beyond the

individual" (xxxv), which is evident within these novels as colonizers work to isolate the Indigenous communities to take their strength away.

Conclusion

> Decolonization is not an 'and'. It is an elsewhere.
> —Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, "Decolonization is not a Metaphor"

The dominance of oppressive colonial institutions is harmful to Indigenous peoples, culture, and knowledge. Western society has prioritized methods of learning, researching, and teaching that continue to perpetuate a colonial agenda, refusing to recognize methods that deviate from those models. This practice is culturally divisive as it fails to recognize how every system of learning, government, and environment is interconnected. By incorporating Indigenous science into Euro-American institutions, we can decolonize fields and practices that harm the sovereignty of others. Additionally, Indigenous science is an important topic in the study of science fiction and fantasy. Often, these genres draw inspiration from the real world. To encourage Indigenous science fiction and fantasy in popular culture, we must understand all avenues of Indigenous learning.

A large part of Indigenous Young Adult Literature (IYAL) features biskaabiiyang, defined in the introduction as "returning to ourselves" (Dillon 11). Biskaabiiyang and other elements of Indigenous epistemologies cause IYAL to stand out against canonical Young Adult (YA) literature that tends to perpetuate harmful colonial systems. Authors Cherie Dimaline, Moniquill Blackgoose, and Darcie Little Badger challenge this by also writing back against these systems. To non-Indigenous readers, this practice promotes cultural understanding that can bridge the gaps that currently exist between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. Frenchie, Anequs, and Ellie all participate in cultural revitalization by actively learning their language, incorporating their culture and existing knowledge into their everyday lives, and taking steps to fight against oppression. Through these characters, Indigenous readers can see how they can empower themselves through cultural revitalization. Non-Indigenous readers can learn about

Indigenous experiences and epistemological practice provides an alternate world view: one where colonizers must confront their duplicity in settler colonization, providing an opportunity for reconciliation.

IYAL is an important part of popular culture. It has the ability to engage with large audiences, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous. Dimaline, Blackgoose, and Little Badger offer possibilities of syncretic multiculturalism that supports reciprocal relationships by encouraging Indigenous ways of knowing for indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. Indigenous epistemologies emphasize a collective agency, offering non-Indigenous readers a new perspective on how to approach academic and creative relationships with Indigenous communities. In Deborah O'Keefe's book, *Readers in Wonderland: The Liberating Worlds of Fantasy Fiction*, she states that "reading these stories is a practice and example of making sense of a world—discovering interrelations of individual, community, and cosmos; past, present, and future; feeling, thought, and action; the human, the natural, the supernatural" (18). Her description of sf/f is similar to Ellen Gabriel, who states that "Indigenous cultures have always had storytellers as part of the foundation of our cultural identity, the stories that we listen to, our legends, our Creation Stories, the cosmology, those were all handed down to each generation. It's about strengthening the link to our ancestors, their stories, their language, their experiences, and understanding the cosmovision" (117). Indigenous futurism, fantasy, IYAL are sources of liberation—they are one of many steps towards biskaabiiyang (returning to ourselves). There is strength in stories and the similarities that we can draw from telling stories from Indigenous and Western authors. Tribalography is one form of biskaabiiyang, which provides readers with a unique, historical perspective. The use of tribalography in Indigenous futurism and IYAL informs the reader of how Indigenous values and histories are woven into their stories.

Colonization has been part of the larger status-quo within the genres of science fiction and fantasy (sf/f). Due to that, Indigenous sf/f and IYAL with sf/f elements should be recognized for how they confront harmful stereotypes. The incorporation of more Indigenous futurism and IYAL within schools, libraries, and mainstream media/popular culture can help decolonize the largely popular genres of sf/f and YA literature. Indigenous futurism is a widely accepted term in the Indigenous community that allows Indigenous authors to write on their own terms without the structures of complicit racism and colonialism in mainstream sf/f. In order to decolonize in academic and creative spaces, society needs to recognize that for Indigenous populations, the era of colonization has not ended. Dimaline, Blackgoose, and Little Badger resist within their novels, issuing their own call-to-action with their characters and to their readers– One that prioritizes Indigenous epistemologies. While sf/f and YA literature are often applauded for themes of escapism, Indigenous futurism and IYAL is not escapist—it is resistance through education, confrontation, and creative liberation.

By engaging in unsettling visions, authors offer ways that can (un)settle the colonizer in two ways. The first is that the settler must come to terms with the violence and pain that has been brought about by their actions and refusal for reconciliation. The second is that by imagining and participating in (un)settling, settlers are going to feel *unsettled* because they have always put their needs ahead of others. To reconcile with Indigenous communities and work away from settler colonization, society will have to get used to feeling unsettled.

Settler colonialism sought to abolish Indigenous epistemologies through assimilation and elimination of Native cultures. Epistemologies are not something that can be removed because the novels in this study demonstrate how epistemologies are a part of Indigenous being, and not just a tangible element that can be removed. In *The Marrow Thieves,* it is in their bone marrow.

In *To Shape a Dragon's Breath,* it is in their ability to persist in their cultural practices, despite losing much of their Indigenous knowledge. In *Elatsoe,* it is in Ellie's family's continued connection to the spirit world and her ancestors. There are various Indigenous ways of knowing that can aid in decolonization due to their ability to critique and oppose settler ways of knowing. They include ecological thought, dreams, kinship, and reciprocity.

Character agency is one of the most important factors in YA literature, and it remains so in IYAL, though they differ. Canonical YA utilizes the same colonial structures that are present in sf/f, and in most cases, the character's growth is reliant on their growth as an individual. Mandy Suhr-Sytsma points out that IYAL texts "differ from mainstream texts in positively representing protagonists' coming of age as a communal experience" (xvii). IYAL's character agency is unique, as the characters at times grow with their community, while further connecting with their culture and dismantling colonial systems that seek to isolate and omit Indigenous individuals.

Critiquing YA and analyzing IYAL utilizing a lens of syncretic multiculturalism and Tribal Critical Race Theory provides readers with the critical skill needed to decolonize. By utilizing these lenses, we can promote a reciprocal method of decolonization, where Indigenous authors are able to tell their history and stories without colonial objections, and non-Indigenous have the ability to identify how settler colonization is harmful. Decolonizing within academic and creative spaces is can further encourage Indigenous self-identification and self-determination that is not affected by harmful stereotypes and policies.

Today, there are many ways to learn. In the era of social media, the common phrase 'you have the world at your fingertips' becomes abundantly true. Platforms like TikTok have increasing reading amongst young adults, through the popular hashtag BookTok. In an article by

Arizona State University, Megan Neely points out that book talk has about 37.5 million hashtags and bookstores have "dedicated 'As Seen on BookTok' sections" (2). Social media has the ability to influence popular culture due to its ability to promote and engage individuals. The rising renewal of reading means IYAL can reach more audiences. People learn through various modes of popular culture, like T.V. shows and movies, or through other movements like We Need Diverse Books. Indigenous knowledge can be presented and shared in any of these formats and have new opportunities to reach larger audiences than what it may have been able to do previously. This increased representation can create spaces for unlearning harmful colonial ideologies while fostering cultural empathy and understanding. Popular culture then becomes an important tool for decolonization alongside the understanding of Indigenous science.

The YA genre has long been the genre dedicated to rebellion and a call for social change. Its transformative power is a representation of the power that all youth, anywhere, have to change the world. IYAL in K-12 and higher education has the ability to give momentum to decolonization and pave the way for a more equitable future. IYAL goes beyond the normal call for social change– it calls for inclusion of everyone, to (un)settle, and find out what it means to live reciprocally in the world.

References

Alfred, Taiaiake. *Peace, Power, Righteousness: An Indigenous Manifesto*. Oxford University Press, 2009.

Anderson, Eric Gary, et al. "Indigenous Young Adult Novels: An Introduction." *Studies in the Novel*, vol. 54 no. 3, 2022, p. 265-273. *Project MUSE*, https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/sdn.2022.0022.

"Becoming Visible - NCAI." *National Congress of American Indians*, 2019, archive.ncai.org/policy-research-center/research-data/prc-publications/NCAI-Becoming_Visible_Report-Digital_FINAL_10_2019.pdf.

Archibald, Jo-ann, and Q'um Q'um Xiiem. "INDIGENOUS STORYTELLING." *Memory*, edited by PHILIPPE TORTELL et al., Peter Wall Institute for Advanced Studies, 2018, pp. 233–42. *JSTOR*, https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvbtzpfm.30.

Blackgoose, Moniquill. "An Indies Introduce Q&A with Moniquill Blackgoose." *The American Booksellers Association*, 26 Apr. 2023, www.bookweb.org/news/indies-introduce-qa-moniquill-blackgoose-1629444.

Blackgoose, Moniquill. *To Shape a Dragon's Breath*. Del Rey Books, 2023.

Blakemore, Erin. "A Brief History of Young Adult Fiction ." *JSTOR DAILY*, 2015, daily.jstor.org/history-of-young-adult-fiction/.

Borsheim-Black, Carlin. "Reading Pop Culture and Young Adult Literature through the Youth Lens." *The English Journal*, vol. 104, no. 3, 2015, pp. 29–34. *JSTOR*, http://www.jstor.org/stable/24484453. Accessed 19 Mar. 2025.

Brayboy, Bryan McKinley Jones. “Toward a Tribal Critical Race Theory in Education.” *The Urban Review*, 2005, nau.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/49/2018/04/Toward-a-Tribal-Critical-Race-Theory-in-Education.pdf.

Brown Spiers, Miriam C. *Encountering the Sovereign Other: Indigenous Science Fiction*. Michigan State University Press, 2021. *JSTOR*, https://doi.org/10.14321/j.ctv21ptzb1. Accessed 14 January, 2025.

Cajete, Gregory, et al. “Indigenous Knowledge — Indigenous Science.” *Geteiltes Wissen – Wissensentwicklung in Disziplin Und Profession Sozialer Arbeit*, edited by Michaela Köttig et al., 1st ed., Verlag Barbara Budrich, 2023, pp. 91–102. *JSTOR*, https://doi.org/10.2307/jj.2840669.10. Accessed 16 June 2024.

Cajete, Gregory, and Vine Deloria. *Look to the Mountain: An Ecology of Indigenous Education*. Kivakí Press, 2003.

Castro, Ingrid E., et al. *Representing Agency in Popular Culture: Children and Youth on Page, Screen, and in Between*. Lexington Books, 2021.

Champagne, Duane. “What Is Indigenous Self-Determination and When Does It Apply?” *NNI Database*, 2014, nnigovernance.arizona.edu/what-indigenous-self-determination-and-when-does-it-apply.

“Common Portrayals of Indigenous People.” *MediaSmarts*, mediasmarts.ca/digital-media-literacy/media-issues/diversity-media/indigenous-people/common-portrayals-indigenous-people. n.d. Accessed 18 Mar. 2025.

Croisy, Sophie. “Fighting Colonial Violence in ‘Indian Country.’” *Angles. New Perspectives on the Anglophone World*, Société des Anglicistes de l’Enseignement Supérieur, 1 Nov. 2017, journals.openedition.org/angles/1313.

Dillon, Grace L. "Miindiwag and Indigenous Diaspora: Eden Robinson's and Celu Amberstone's Forays into "Postcolonial" Science Fiction and Fantasy."*Extrapolation (pre-2012)*, vol. 48, no. 2, 2007, pp. 219-243,215. *ProQuest*, https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/miindiwag-indigenous-diaspora-eden-robinsons-celu/docview/234915869/se-2

Dillon, Grace L. *Walking the Clouds: An Anthology of Indigenous Science Fiction*. University of Arizona Press, 2012.

Dimaline, Cherie. "The Marrow Thieves Author Cherie Dimaline Is Back with a Novel for Adults Inspired by a Métis Legend | CBC Radio." *CBCnews*, CBC/Radio Canada, 6 July 2020, www.cbc.ca/radio/thenextchapter/full-episode-july-6-2020-1.5279266/the-marrow-thieves-author-cherie-dimaline-is-back-with-a-novel-for-adults-inspired-by-a-m%C3%A9tis-legend-1.5279329.

Dimaline, Cherie. *The Marrow Thieves*. Cormorant Books Incorporated, 2017.

Gabriel, Ellen, and Sean Carleton. *When the Pine Needles Fall: Indigenous Acts of Resistance*. BETWEEN THE LINES, 2025.

Geniusz, Wendy Makoons. *Our Knowledge Is Not Primitive: Decolonizing Botanical Anishinaabe Teachings.* E-book, Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2009, https://hdl.handle.net/2027/heb40306.0001.001.

Goldtooth, Tom B. K. "Stolen Resources: Continuing Threats to Indigenous People's Sovereignty and Survival." *Race, Poverty & the Environment*, vol. 11, no. 1, 2004, pp. 9–12. *JSTOR*, http://www.jstor.org/stable/41554413. Accessed 19 Mar. 2025.

Harmon, Gary L. “On the Nature and Functions of Popular Culture.” *Studies in Popular Culture*, vol. 6, 1983, pp. 3–15. *JSTOR*, http://www.jstor.org/stable/45018100. Accessed 19 Mar. 2025.

Howe, LeAnne. “The Story of America: A Tribalography.” *Clearing a Path: Theorizing the Past in Native American Studies*, 1st ed., Routledge, New York, NY, 2002, pp. 29–47.

Iyer, Niranjana. "The Importance of Dreams." *Herizons*, vol. 32, no. 4, Winter, 2019, pp. 28-29,31-32. *ProQuest*, https://www.proquest.com/magazines/importance-dreams/docview/2208620389/se-2.

Justice, Daniel Heath. *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter*. Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2018.

Kiley, Gillian. “Colonial Enslavement of Native Americans Included Those Who Surrendered, Too.” *Brown University*, 2017, www.brown.edu/news/2017-02-15/enslavement.

Kovach, Margaret. *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts*. University of Toronto Press, 2022.

Krawec, Patty. *Becoming Kin: An Indigenous Call to Unforgetting the Past and Reimagining Our Future*. Tantor Audio, 2022.

Little Badger, Darcie. *Elatsoe*. Levine Querido, 2023.

MacDonald, David Bruce. “Reforming Multiculturalism in a Bi-National Society: Aboriginal Peoples and the Search for Truth and Reconciliation in Canada.” *The Canadian Journal of Sociology / Cahiers Canadiens de Sociologie*, vol. 39, no. 1, 2014, pp. 65–86. *JSTOR*, http://www.jstor.org/stable/canajsocicahican.39.1.65..

McKenzie, Holly A et al. “Indigenous Women's Resistance of Colonial Policies, Practices, and Reproductive Coercion.” *Qualitative health research* vol. 32,7 (2022): 1031-1054. doi:10.1177/10497323221087526

O’Keefe, Deborah. *Readers in Wonderland: The Liberating Worlds of Fantasy Fiction*. Continuum, 2004.

Pinsky, Michael. *Future Present: Ethics and/as Science Fiction*. Fairleigh Dickinson University Press ; Associated University Presses, 2003.

“Plastics Treaty.” *Break Free From Plastic*, n.d. , www.breakfreefromplastic.org/plastics-treaty/.

Price, Madeline Day. “Young Adult Literature and Empathy.” *A Journal of the Texas Council of Teachers of English Language Arts*, 2023, files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1403373.pdf.

Recio, Eugenia, and Dina Hestad. “Indigenous Peoples: Defending an Environment for All.” *International Institute for Sustainable Development*, 2022, www.iisd.org/system/files/2022-04/still-one-earth-Indigenous-Peoples.pdf.

“Research Guides: Indigenous Health Sciences: Residential & Day Schools.” *Residential & Day Schools - Indigenous Health Sciences - Research Guides at University of British Columbia*, 2025, guides.library.ubc.ca/c.php?g=743718&p=5377187.

“Residential Schools.” *Métis National Council*, https://www.metisnation.ca/what-we-do/irss N.d. Accessed 19 Mar. 2025.

Rieder, John. *Colonialism and the Emergence of Science Fiction*, Wesleyan University Press, 2008. *ProQuest Ebook Central*, https://www.proquest.com/legacydocview/EBC/1162034?accountid=10639.

"Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.. Speaks at Standing Rock Reservation in Protest of Pipeline." *Waterkeeper Alliance,* 16 Nov. 2016, waterkeeper.org/news/robert-f-kennedy-jr-speaks-at-standing-rock-reservation-in-protest-of-pipeline/?gad_source=1&gclid=Cj0KCQjw4cS-BhDGARIsABg4_J1vfizAB8Ii-umNEa3LKEjdPl ecjCnH8wUhJpIaWGzyE8vI9lB3WgaAi0sEALw_wcB.

"Sayings of Agur." *Proverbs 30:15,* biblehub.com/niv/proverbs/30.htm. Accessed 11 Mar. 2025.

Schneider, Margot. "Leeches in Modern Medicine." *ANU Research School of Biology*, 2020, biology.anu.edu.au/news-events/news/leeches-modern-medicine.

Stefani, Giulia. "Indigenous Leaders at the Frontlines of Environmental Injustice and Solutions." *Be a Force for the Future,* 11 Oct. 2021, www.nrdc.org/bio/giulia-cs-good-stefani/indigenous-leaders-frontlines-environmental-injustice-and-solutions.

Suhr-Sytsma, Mandy. *Self-determined Stories: the Indigenous Reinvention of Young Adult Literature.* East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2019.

"Treaties." *Lipan Apache Tribe: Our Sacred History-Treaties,* www.lipanapache.org/LAT/treaties.html. Accessed 11 Mar. 2025.

Tsosie, Ranalda L., et al. "The Six Rs of Indigenous Research." *Tribal College Journal of American Indian Higher Education,* vol. 33, no. 4, 2022, https://doi.org/https://tribalcollegejournal.org/the-six-rs-of-indigenous-research/.

Tuck, Eve, and K. W. Yang. "Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor." *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society,* 2012, clas.osu.edu/sites/clas.osu.edu/files/Tuck and Yang 2012 Decolonization is not a metaphor.pdf.

"We Need Diverse Books." *We Need Diverse Books,* 1 Oct. 2024, diversebooks.org/.

Wolfe, Patrick. “Land, Labor, and Difference: Elementary Structures of Race.” *The American Historical Review*, vol. 106, no. 3, 2001, pp. 866–905. *JSTOR*, https://doi.org/10.2307/2692330. Accessed 12 Jan. 2025.

Wolfe, Patrick. 2006. “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native.” *Journal of Genocide Research* 8 (4): 387–409. doi:10.1080/14623520601056240.

Zanella, Patrizia. "Witnessing Story and Creating Kinship in a New Era of Residential Schools: Cherie Dimaline's *The Marrow Thieves*." *Studies in American Indian Literatures*, vol. 32 no. 3, 2020, p. 176-200. *Project MUSE*, https://doi.org/10.1353/ail.2020.0023.