

“BEAUTIFUL HUNTERS WITH STRONG MEDICINE”: INDIGENOUS MASCULINITY AND KINSHIP IN RICHARD VAN CAMP’S *THE LESSER BLESSED*

Sam McKegney
Queen’s University
sam.mckegney@queensu.ca

Abstract / Résumé

This paper analyzes Richard Van Camp’s 1996 novel *The Lesser Blessed* as an investigation into the potential role of kinship relations in dealing with the contemporary struggles of Indigenous youth in Canada, arguing that the novel illustrates the danger of failing to honor kinship ties as ongoing and dynamic responsibilities. In particular, the paper questions whether the model of masculinity embodied by the character Johnny, which privileges individual freedom over communal responsibility, offers a viable future for socially disenfranchised characters like Larry and whether the type of social capital Johnny boasts translates into a meaningful role in the particular multiethnic community in which the two young men exist.

L’article analyse le roman de Richard Van Camp, *The Lesser Blessed* (1996) comme une enquête sur le rôle des liens de parenté pour composer avec les luttes contemporaines des jeunes Autochtones au Canada en mettant de l’avant que le roman illustre le risque associé à l’échec d’honorer les liens de parenté comme des responsabilités permanentes et dynamiques. En particulier, l’auteur demande si le modèle de masculinité représenté par le personnage de Johnny, qui privilégie la liberté individuelle par rapport à la responsabilité communautaire, offre un avenir viable aux personnages privés de leurs droits sociaux tels que Larry et si le genre de capital social auquel prétend Johnny se traduit par un rôle significatif dans la collectivité multiethnique particulière à laquelle appartiennent les deux jeunes hommes.

"So tell me about being fool blood," he said.
 I sat down. "Whattaya wanta know?"
 He got up and handed me a cigarette. He was saving the joints till later.
 "Well, what tribe are you? Chip? Cree?"
 "Dogrib."
 "I thought they were from around Yellowknife."
 I got a little nervous. "Yeah."
 "What's the scoop?"
 "Well, Jed told me that our tribe came from a woman who gave birth to six puppies." I eyed him while I said that because I knew some people would laugh. He didn't, so I continued.
 "Well, she had to live by herself in the woods so she could raise her pups. One day she left her hut so she could check her snares, and when she came home she could see human footprints in the snow and ashes."
 "No shit," Johnny said.
 "Yeah...so one day she went out like she was going to check her snares but she snuck back and watched her hut. She could hear her pups yapping like this: Yap! Yap! Then she could hear them laughing like children. After a while she could hear kids running around the hut and choo! Out from the hut run six kids, all naked."
 "Whoah!" Johnny said.
 "Yeah! So she watches them and they're playing in the snow all laughing and having a great time. She runs out of the bush and chases them back into the hut. They all make a run for the bag she used to leave them in. Three make it and turn back to pups. A girl and two boys don't. She catches them. They stay human and they're the first Dogribs. She raised them to be beautiful hunters with strong medicine."
 "Hunh. Wait a minute," Johnny interrupted. "What happened to the three that made it back to the bag?"
 "Humph. I don't know. Jed never told me that part."
 "Better find out." (51-52)

-- Richard Van Camp, *The Lesser Blessed*

In his 1996 debut novel *The Lesser Blessed*, Dogrib (Tlicho) writer Richard Van Camp positions the telling of his nation's creation story at the confluence of race and performance. Johnny Beck's inquiry into the experience of "full-bloodedness" connects biology with identity by suggesting that Dogrib protagonist Larry Sole's sense of self might be in-

formed by racial background. However, by articulating his query in the irreverent lingo of the two teenaged friends' multiethnic social sphere in the isolated town of Fort Simmer, N.W.T., and replacing the antiquated colonial categorization "full blood" with "fool blood," Johnny concedes the mediation of identity by discourse and social performance. Larry's rendering of the Dogrib creation story is itself performative insofar as it masks as well as reveals, dramatizing the origins of the group in part to protect its vulnerable teller from providing undue access to a narrative of personal trauma. To shield himself from questions regarding his displacement from traditional Dogrib territory that might solicit painful family history, Larry crafts his response to Johnny's "What's the scoop?" as a depiction of the origins of the People, thereby obfuscating his personal experience as a young Dogrib man while placing that experience within a mythic narrative of nationhood. Yet, as the anxious pause after the sacred tale's opening line suggests, sharing the creation story nonetheless carries social risk (through its articulation of a form of truth claim) and provides both Johnny and the reader with significant information about Larry that transcends the racial inflections of blood quantum.

Larry's storytelling emphasizes cultural distinctiveness by seeking to illustrate to the Métis audience what it means to be Dogrib, but it also fosters intercultural dialogue and alliance through the intimacy of its articulation; Larry invites Johnny (and thus the reader) *in* through story. In this manner, Larry's understanding of what it means to be "fool blood[ed]" is not so much racial as relational; it is not an expression of insurmountable difference but of relational indebtedness and potential kinship. The source for Larry's understanding of the story reinforces the importance of kinship in the scene; Slavey surrogate father figure Jed shares Larry's Dene heritage but is neither a member of the Dogrib nation nor a biological member of Larry's family.¹ Far from rendering suspect or inauthentic the cultural knowledge Larry accrues, Jed's tribal background and role as surrogate father indicate how bonds of kinship that unite not only biological families but also broader relations can participate in the continuance and prospering of Indigenous nations. As Ellen Bielawski asserts, the Dogrib term for one's blood relations, "*Sehóti* ('my people')," is also the term for "one's larger grouping," one's "hunting band," the "group one travel[s] with," and "one's settled community" (503). Cherokee scholar Daniel Heath Justice clarifies what is at stake in understanding Indigenous nationhood through kinship or through lineage and biology: "Kinship is adaptive; race, as a threatened constitutive commodity, always runs the risk of becoming washed out to the point of insignificance" (151). The foundation of Indigenous survival, for Justice, is "our relationships to one another – in other words, our kin-

ship with other humans and the rest of creation. Such kinship isn't a static thing; it's dynamic, ever in motion. It requires attentiveness; kinship is best thought of as a verb rather than a noun, because kinship, in most Indigenous contexts, is something that's *done* more than something that simply *is*" (150). I read Van Camp's *The Lesser Blessed* as an investigation into the potential role of kinship relations in dealing with the contemporary struggles of Indigenous youth in multiethnic and increasingly urban Canada that recognizes the danger of failing to honor kinship ties as ongoing and dynamic responsibilities.²

By foregrounding the movement from isolation to community, first through the breaking of the mother's solitude by the puppies' birth and then by the metamorphosis of three puppies into the first Dogribs, Larry's version of the Dogrib creation story emphasizes communal values, including those of kinship. As they develop into "beautiful hunters with strong medicine," the first Dogribs illustrate the nation's dependence on the People's performance of social roles and responsibilities, here the provision of physical nourishment by hunting and of spiritual nourishment by administering medicines. The adoption of such roles is depicted through a process of maturation in which the puppies evolve into children who then grow into beauty and strength. The creation story is thus concerned with the treacherous terrain between childhood and adulthood, in which adolescents must negotiate commitments toward and places within various communities by making choices over which they must ultimately take ownership. Larry and Johnny, for instance, are faced with establishing their places in Fort Simmer's high school community, in families (like that of the first Dogribs) headed by single mothers, and in evolving kinship relations with each other and with the novel's love interest Juliet Hope. Such negotiation is seldom easy, and the successful adoption of kinship responsibilities often comes at a cost. For example, the newly human children "playing in the snow" and "having a great time" in the creation story seek to avoid absorption into the fully human world of adult responsibility (represented by the mother who supports the family by trekking daily to her trapline) by retreating to the hut and the womb-like bag their mother "used to leave them in"; they seek a place of perceived safety in which they imagine they can retain the freedom of childhood (represented by their reversion back to puppies). So while the "girl and two boys"³ who become "beautiful hunters with strong medicine" and the first Dogribs offer one horizon of possibility for Larry, Johnny, and Juliet in which they might accept kinship responsibilities and thereby achieve valuable places within the community, alternatively the three might replicate the frantic escape from responsibility enacted by the remaining puppy/children.⁴

In a recent interview, Anishnaabe writer Basil Johnston laments “the loss of the sense of duty” in Indigenous communities, arguing that “the whole emphasis is on rights. ‘My rights are being violated.’ ‘My rights are being infringed upon.’ There’s not a word about duties. To us, a right is *debnimzewin*. But each right is also a duty.... And so we’ve got to go back to some of these values: responsibility, duty, right” (personal interview). Justice concurs, arguing that Indigenous nationhood depends upon an understanding of “common social interdependence within the community, the tribal web of kinship rights and responsibilities that link the People, the land, and the cosmos together in an ongoing and dynamic system of mutually affecting relationships” (151). This essay examines the relationship between Larry and Johnny according to particularized Indigenous principles surrounding kinship. However, because I believe *The Lesser Blessed* takes part in an urgent and evolving conversation among Indigenous writers in Canada about the function of masculinities in contemporary Indigenous communities and urban spaces, I focus my discussion on how particular models of masculinity foster and/or corrode the kinship bonds Justice identifies as crucial to the continuance of Indigenous nations. In particular, I question whether the model of masculinity embodied by Johnny—which privileges individual freedom over communal responsibility—offers a viable future for socially disenfranchised characters like Larry and whether the type of social capital Johnny boasts translates into a meaningful role in the particular multiethnic community in which the two young men exist. In essence, this paper asks whether Johnny’s masculine persona, which is obviously valued as “cool” within the high school setting, fosters empowerment and continuance through its strength and beauty (like the qualities of the first Dogribs) or whether it exacerbates alienation by trapping individuals in states of arrested development (like the imprisoned puppies at the creation story’s close).

A recent report for Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) by Martin Cooke, Daniel Beavon, and Mindy McHardy, applies the United Nations’ Human Development Index to gendered populations among Registered Indians in Canada. Using adapted criteria employed by the United Nations to measure human rights, development, and well-being, the researchers demonstrate that the conditions of Indigenous men are improving at a much slower pace than those of Indigenous women in Canada, leading to situations where the majority of Indigenous men are fairing more poorly than the majority of Indigenous women, according to specific indicators. The report identifies growing “gender disparities in the Registered Indian population..., with Registered Indian women

having considerably higher educational attainment and life expectancy than their male counterparts” (i). Rates of suicide for Indigenous men in Canada peak at 140 suicides per 100,000 people, while rates of suicide for Indigenous women peak at 50 suicides per 100,000 people – still four times the national average (Centre for Suicide Prevention 1).⁵ And it is difficult to speak about the struggles of Indigenous men without mentioning the disproportionate numbers embroiled in the Canadian penal system. According to Corrections Canada, in 2001 Aboriginal men accounted for 14.8% of the male prison population in Canada while making up less than 2.8% of the country’s male population. While these statistics and the Cooke report do not alleviate the deplorable conditions of many Indigenous women, they do suggest a frequently ignored crisis to be unfolding among Indigenous men (one that undoubtedly impacts women, families, and communities).

Mi’kmaq scholar Bonita Lawrence argues that “empowerment for women means...we need to talk about empowering our men” (qtd. in Anderson 276). Some of the “talk” about “empowering...men”—at least in the academy—has yet to occur, I think for several reasons. The first is that recovering traditional male roles and responsibilities and relating them to contemporary reserve and urban realities is an arduous process that needs to be undertaken across a multitude of living, evolving Indigenous nations throughout a huge land mass in Canada. Basically, it is too difficult. Thus, in the academic context, we find several admissions, like Michael A. Robidoux’s, that a researcher has chosen to analyze “First Nations masculinity as understood and described by early European inhabitants of northern North America” rather than by First Nations themselves, thereby “intentionally avoid[ing] trying to provide some definitive notion of what First Nations masculinity entails” (269). A second reason is that focusing on the feminine has been a fertile strategy through which Indigenous thinkers have resisted the hegemony of patriarchal Euro-Canadian thought.⁶ A third reason involves the fickle sympathies of mainstream populations. Looking from outsider perspectives at the crises befalling Indigenous communities, mainstream Canadians are encouraged by media depictions and ingrained paternalist impulses to sympathize more with Indigenous women as worthy victims. Through the production and consumption of images of Indigenous men as criminals, gang members, alcoholics, and absentee fathers, mainstream populations are encouraged to assuage their guilt for complicity by projecting the source of problems in Indigenous communities onto Indigenous men (who become not just victims but victimizers), and then constructing broader Canada as engaged in the protection of the *real* victims through vehicles like INAC’s “Report on Plans and Priorities,” which iden-

tifies as the first of “several broad areas for action in [the] fiscal year 2007-2008: the empowerment of First Nations individuals, *especially women*, to take greater control and responsibility for their lives” (my emphasis).⁷

Despite the proliferation of masculinity scholarship in the past few decades,⁸ Indigenous masculinities in literature have received scant critical attention and then largely in relation to how Indian manliness has been imagined by non-Native artists.⁹ Indigenous formulations of masculinities have been somewhat absent from the critical discourse. The meagre body of academic writing that targets Indigenous masculinities specifically has been in areas like social work, political science, and psychology rather than literary studies and has tended to interrogate how colonization and modern capitalism have alienated Indigenous men from senses of purpose and belonging found in traditional roles and responsibilities.¹⁰ As is too often the case (particularly in the Canadian context), criticism of Indigenous literatures has lagged behind the creative interventions of Indigenous authors who, I contend, grapple with the problem of unexamined masculinities on behalf of their urban and reserve communities and Indigenous peoples generally; one weapon in their arsenal has been dramatization of kinship ties among men.

Several recent novels by Indigenous writers in Canada scrutinize the relationship between an introverted and unpopular protagonist and a more demonstrably masculine mentor figure with whom the protagonist performs acts of kinship. *Three Day Road* (2005), by Irish/Scottish/Métis writer Joseph Boyden, tells the story of Xavier Bird, a young Cree man transplanted from traditional existence in the northern Ontario wilderness to the allied trenches of World War I. As his anxiety about social role is exacerbated by displacement, Xavier’s relationship with surrogate brother Elijah—who endures no such alienation, having been recognized as heroic and therefore masculine by the military community—becomes a vehicle through which Xavier seeks to decode his spectral identity. *Blood Sports* (2006), by Haisla/Heltsiuk writer Eden Robinson, follows the maturation of Tom Bauer, an economically disenfranchised epileptic growing into adulthood in Vancouver’s Downtown East Side. Abandoned by his father, ignored by his alcoholic mother, and “under the radar” (52) throughout high school, Tom longs for a fulfilling social role for which his cousin Jeremy provides an alluring yet terrifying model. The antithesis of Tom’s poverty and discomfort, surrogate brother Jeremy is wealthy, forthcoming, and in control.¹¹ *A Quality of Light* (1997), by Ojibway writer Richard Wagamese, probes the maturation of Joshua Kane, an Ojibway boy raised by adoptive non-Indigenous parents in Ontario, who seeks out personal understanding through his relationship

with friend and eventual “blood brother” Johnny Gerhardt who, the first-person narrative explains, “shone with the mantle of hero” (4). *Truth & Bright Water* (1999), by Cherokee/Greek writer Thomas King, portrays a surrogate brotherly relationship between the shy and questioning Tecumseh and his slightly older cousin Lum, a violent but compelling marathon runner who carries a gun in the small Alberta reserve community. And *Kiss of the Fur Queen* (1998), by Cree writer Tomson Highway, examines the neurotic efforts of Jeremiah to deal with post-residential school crises of identity in the face of his brother Gabriel’s flamboyance, outspokenness, and masochism.¹² As the protagonist of each of these novels wrestles with self esteem and social role, he is brought into the sway of a more dominant counterpart who models a form of masculinity at once compelling and threatening.¹³ Ultimately, each protagonist must negotiate the siren pull of his surrogate brother’s social capital and resist the captivating draw of that brother’s propensity for violence in order to construct an endorsable masculine identity that values and upholds the interpersonal responsibilities of kinship. This is particularly the case with Van Camp’s *The Lesser Blessed*, which tells the story of Larry Sole, a teenaged Dogrib, during a tumultuous year of high school.

Due to the novel’s multiethnic small-town setting and his parents’ residential schooling, Larry seldom receives cultural knowledge that might explicate male roles and responsibilities within a traditional Dogrib social structure. Those teachings he acquires are either incomplete, like the initial rendering of the Dogrib creation story by Jed,¹⁴ or compromised by the ferocity of their teller, like the introduction to “the drum” he receives from his abusive biological father. At the same time, Larry is denied a functional associative system in relation to which he might position himself because his family is fragmented by alcoholism and violence.¹⁵ In a vacuum of cultural context and domestic cohesion, Larry is profoundly uncertain of his place in the family, the Dogrib nation, and the social environment of his high school. When asked to draw a self-portrait early in the story, he hands in “a picture of a forest.” To his therapist’s response that “there is no one,” Larry responds, “Look, there. I am already buried” (1). The picture betrays a suicidal impulse built on the despair of non-recognition, through a potent metaphor for Larry’s inability to envision his place in the world. Because society offers few models of healthy masculinity he might emulate and those around him fail to validate his existence, Larry imagines himself under erasure beneath the earth, which leads to an unsuccessful attempt at self-immolation by lighting the gasoline he and his cousins are sniffing. To elucidate the sorrow underlying this desperate act, Larry declares, “We wept because we knew we had no one. No one to remember our names, no one

to cry them out, no one to greet us naked in snow, to mourn us in death, to feel us there, in our sacred place. We wept because we did not belong to anyone" (79). With the social and familial fabrics that might have enveloped their lives tattered and torn, Larry and his cousins are wounded by isolation; they have "no one" because they have been abandoned by their parents, the broader community, and the Canadian nation, leaving no dynamic relational space in which to negotiate empowered identities (masculine or otherwise). With "no one to remember [their] names" and thereby acknowledge their personhood, each child comes to feel that she or he is unworthy of remembrance, which fuels the desire for narcosis through fume sniffing or death by fire.

Unlike Eurocentric conceptions of identity formation (where, amongst other things, individuation is achieved through one's independence from a group), most Indigenous nations conceive of identity formation as one's progressive integration into the collective – often celebrated through initiation ceremonies.¹⁶ Thus, whereas mainstream Canadian understandings of identity tend to focus on and distinguish the individual, in most Indigenous nations identity is only discernible in relation to the group. The isolation figured in Larry's surname "Sole" thus marks the insinuation of colonial ideologies into Indigenous communities, which threatens to obscure the threads of interdependence that potentially enable a nation's continuance. Alienated from integrated communal roles, Larry is profoundly unclear not only about his identity but also about appropriate masculine behaviors. Although absent from the novel's temporal present, Larry's biological father provides a dysfunctional model of masculinity compromised by colonialist violence. A product of residential schooling, Larry's father asserts his masculinity through domination and sexual violence. The three most extensive depictions of his behavior in the novel are acts of sexual violation portrayed as performances for his son. In the first of these, Larry peers in a window after returning home late to discover his aunt "passed out" and his "dad fucking her" (88). Viewing the incident like a silent film, Larry sees his father deny the bodily autonomy and free will of another for the gratification of his own sadistic desire. In an even more explicit lesson, Larry is "called ...out of [his] room" by his father—who is "speaking French," which he had "learned...in the residential schools" and only spoke "when he drank"—to find his mother "passed out on the couch...in her bathrobe" and his father "laughing." "Spread[ing] her legs," the father violates Larry's mother with a "yellow broomstick" (58), thereby dramatizing the supremacy of male sexual privilege through the derogation of the female body, while rendering rape and physical assault a joke for the eyes of the male child. In addition, the father's laughter disavows the mother's pain (and in-

deed her humanity) by rendering her a prop in the service of perverse misogynist humor.

The toxic model of masculinity enacted by Larry's father betrays the potential aftermath of genocidal practice. Residential schools' decimation of Indigenous societies and families is implied to be ongoing as the father's sexual tyranny leads to his oral rape of Larry, who responds with an attempted murder/suicide. Forcing his penis into his son's mouth, Larry's father objectifies the child as a vehicle for sexual release, inscribing in Larry a sense of worthlessness in his father's eyes.¹⁷ By murdering his father, Larry implicates himself in this doomed masculinist system, which augurs its own demise by placing the desires of one generation over the survival and well-being of the next. This is why Larry claims that "it is every parent's dream to watch his child burn" (10). Absolute hierarchies, unlike kinship relations, create their own usurpers because empowerment in such systems requires another's loss of power; power must be seized because it will never be willingly shared. Thus, Larry's default model of masculinity in a biological sense—his father—overturns itself, fracturing Larry's vulnerable sense of place while foreshadowing the decimation of the broader community through one generation's violation of its successor. Seemingly locked into a cycle of violence that affords him no future, Larry adopts the role of "Destroying Angel," holding aloft lit matches in a propane-filled room "screaming, 'Let's die! Let's die! Let's die!'" (79-80).

In the shadow of suicidal despair, Larry exemplifies the precarious identity formations attendant to crises of Indigenous masculinity: he enters high school with only tenuous access to his Dogrib heritage and no immediately accessible male role models due to his father's death and Jed's absence. Adding to his perplexity, Larry boasts no physical characteristics recognized by his peers as desirably masculine. With "spaghetti arms and daddy-longlegs," Larry is not considered "a threat to anyone and, in turn, people just [look] past [him]" (22). This glossing gaze re-enacts the non-recognition Larry laments before the fire and leads him to seek models of masculinity that are noticed (and thereby potentially respected) in the high school environment. The allure of social validation is actuated for Larry by Johnny Beck, a Métis student with the looks, the words, and the demeanor to seize the kind of public recognition that eludes Larry. Johnny manifests several qualities identified within the teens' predominantly non-Native social circle as masculine and therefore desirable to the socially disenfranchised. Describing his first view of Johnny in the school foyer, Larry reports, "His hair was feathered and long, his eyes piercing and blue.... [T]he thing I remember about Johnny was the look on his face. He looked like he didn't give

a white lab rat's ass about anything or anybody...like he was carrying the weight of Hell. All the girls were saying, 'What's his name? Find out his name!'" (2). Johnny's detached bearing becomes an ironic catalyst to social inclusion as the "look on his face," which suggests indifference toward "anything or anybody," incites efforts to discover his name that thereby validate his performed identity. The empirical command to "Find out his name!" offers the desired antithesis of the perpetual non-recognition Larry and his cousins lament prior to the fire with "no one to remember [their] names." Unlike Larry, Johnny achieves popularity in his new school because his behaviors are perceived by that community as both masculine and "cool." For example, when Johnny defies the authority of Mister Harris and re-arranges the entire classroom as a gesture of non-conformity and resistance, Larry lauds on behalf of the student body, "We had our hero" (12). He is enticingly rebellious, "handsome...in a lost sort of way" (49), excellent at fighting, and highly sexualized – all qualities that lead him to be perceived as "the hottest commodity to come to Fort Simmer in a long time" (24) and render him a potentially useful model of masculine behavior toward which Larry can aspire.

As the two young men become fast friends, readers recognize that Johnny's detachment, apparent indifference, and propensity toward violence have deep roots in a neglected and transient home life. In fact, Johnny's performance of "not giving a white lab rat's ass about...anybody" masks the nurturing affection he displays in private toward his younger brother Donny, for whom he feels significant responsibility and whom he treats more like a son than a sibling.¹⁸ Outside the fractured domestic space, however, Johnny is careful to hide the nurturing and conscientious elements of his personality and to mobilize something akin to what bell hooks theorizes in the African-American context as "cool pose": a performance of masculine self-interest and potential violence that black men are encouraged to "front" or "fake" in order to "mask true feelings" and achieve facades of social dominance that hooks exposes as illusory (148).¹⁹ Johnny's "cool" public persona becomes a beacon for Larry in his efforts to gain social capital in Fort Simmer's high school. By teaching Larry the rules for fighting, smoking drugs, and avoiding venereal disease, Johnny endeavors to pass on elements of this "cool" persona, willingly accepting the position of mentor that Larry seems to require. Van Camp then encourages the reader to view Larry and Johnny's relationship as a form of surrogate brotherhood through a crucial scene in which the two encounter ghostly incarnations of their potential adult selves. The nameless spectral characters are referred to as "Rasp Man," whose "voice was haunting, as if he were a face scream-

ing without a throat" (60), and "the Boxer," who "shadowbox[es] his fists about his brother's head" (61) throughout the scene. Significantly, Larry refers to Rasp Man and the Boxer as brothers despite providing no corroborating evidence for the assertion. Given Johnny's status as a pugilist, he bears an implied connection to the Boxer, while Larry's history of being burned, his earlier description of "swallowing fire" (37), and his cryptic drug-induced declaration "I am my father's scream" equate him readily with Rasp Man. Larry's interpretation of the two as brothers therefore suggests a similar, brotherly relationship to exist between Larry and Johnny, one that is both alluring and dangerous given the image of the Boxer and Rasp Man standing "like lovers in an incredible dance" before "the Boxer thr[ows] his brother on the ground and proceed[s] to smash his sneakers into him" (62).

While the masculinity modeled by Johnny does not approach the ferocious malevolence of Larry's father's, it remains dangerous because it seems to endorse a primary foundation of self-concern. Johnny's cool and detached demeanor, which Larry and others find so attractive, portends the emotional detachment he ultimately betrays in his relationships with Larry and Juliet, the latter of whom he treats like an anonymous vessel for his own sexual gratification. When asked why he moved from his hometown, Johnny replies that "there was no one left to fuck" (23), and although this cheeky statement can be dismissed as jocular teenaged posturing, the lack of worth it ascribes coital partners is echoed in Johnny's flippant description of sex with Juliet, with whom Larry is infatuated: "A bit too bony for me. She did this thing with her hips when she was riding me...man, that hurt. But other than that she was okay...and if she gives me the clap, I'll kill her" (43). The violence augured in "I'll kill her" ultimately manifests in Johnny's abandonment of Juliet after she becomes pregnant (a consequence, like the venereal disease mentioned above, that he fears will infringe on the freedom and autonomy he, like the puppies in the Dogrib creation story, is desperate to retain). Johnny explains his departure in words reminiscent of the perpetual adolescent Peter Pan—"I want to be beautiful just a little bit longer" (117)—betraying a heightened sense of self-interest that is exacerbated by Johnny's fear of obscuring his personal identity through ongoing interpersonal commitments like parenthood. Johnny instead forgoes intimate and ongoing interpersonal relationships, beyond his connection to Donny, thereby replicating his own father's painful absenteeism. Although he does not dehumanize to the extent of Larry's father (showing disinterest rather than brutality), Johnny similarly denies the right of the feminine to restrict masculine autonomy and thereby suppresses responsibilities inherent in the "rights" and "duties" discussed

by Johnston and the kinship relations theorized by Justice.

Despite being appalled by Johnny's casual disregard for Juliet in his sexual tale-telling, however, Larry cannot readily shake his mentor's appeal. Even after calling Johnny a "fucking asshole" — silently, of course — and admitting to no longer being able to "see the Jesus in Johnny," Larry still concludes the night of Johnny and Juliet's consummation with the admiring exclamation, "What a guy!" (44). He is unable to deny the ongoing attractiveness of Johnny's individualist masculinity because it offers the social recognition Larry covets and therefore an ironic sense of meaningful place despite its reliance on detachment.²⁰ Larry desires to emulate Johnny in order to gain analogous notoriety, which is why when he is told that he has been "brought into a circle...for fighters" like Johnny, Larry is "smiling inside" (61). Larry's confession, "If I could perform an autopsy on him,...I'd steal his eyes" (49), exposes a desire to adopt Johnny's perspective that culminates in Larry actually posing as Johnny in order to grope the latter's girlfriend. In a darkened laundry room while she is unaware, Larry runs his hands over Juliet's body — exulting, "I guess she thought I was Johnny. Haha!" (94) — thereby echoing in muted fashion both his father's assaults on unconscious women and his father's masculinist laughter. No longer treating Juliet with the "respect and awe" (29) he had exhibited in the novel's opening, Larry literally performs Johnny's persona and in doing so adopts a similarly self-interested masculinity that disregards Juliet's bodily autonomy. Yet, unlike Johnny, he remains delegitimized socially because it all takes place in the dark; he thus compromises sincere interpersonal bonds with both Juliet and Johnny without ever accessing the social capital he might have expected Johnny's model of indifferent sexual self-interest to bring. Larry's attempted replication of individualist masculinity fails because he becomes neither the envied ladies' man nor the admired fighter. In fact, the only time he achieves the status of spectacle is when he is beaten to the point of hospitalization with Johnny looking on and refusing to intervene. Johnny's seemingly cruel restraint as Jazz the Jackal punches and kicks Larry into submission at once teaches Larry the consequences of entering the circle of fighters (a perverse life lesson in performative masculine codes) and dramatizes the tenuous nature of the bonds of kinship between Larry and Johnny as they are unaccompanied by senses of responsibility for (and to) the other. The model of masculinity through which Johnny gains respect and admiration thus leaves Larry alone and vulnerable, abandoned and broken.

As a response to crises like those outlined by Cooke, Beavon, and McHardy currently affecting many young Indigenous men, the model of Johnny Beck is attractive but illusory. It offers the socially disenfran-

chised an image of empowerment while locking them into cycles of violence and neglect. Larry's emulation of Johnny heightens his alienation by encouraging him to shun meaningful and ongoing interpersonal relationships while continually failing to facilitate his social recognition. Larry thus gets no closer to clarity regarding social role while further obscuring the myriad meanings of responsible citizenship in the Dogrib nation. In this way, Larry dramatizes the dangers of turning to individualist models of masculinity that deny the prescience of kinship concerns. As Larry's wounding under Johnny's neglectful gaze portrays, although such models appear to facilitate status (which is part of the reason why gangs remain so attractive to disenfranchised Indigenous youth), they alienate young Indigenous men from other viable sources of identity, strength, and self-worth.

To return to the Dogrib creation story with which this essay began, readers are clearly encouraged to evaluate Johnny in relation to the first Dogribs, both because of his relationship of triangulated desire with Juliet and Larry and due to the repeated attention drawn to his beauty and strength (the two qualities revered in the "beautiful hunters with strong medicine"). However, Johnny's resistance to the roles and responsibilities of kinship, championed in the creation story through hunting and healing, suggests alternatively that Johnny (and by extension Larry and Juliet) relates symbolically to the puppy/children who revert back to animal form only to be recaptured by their mother. Johnny's efforts to retain his freedom after impregnating Juliet, for instance, elicit a similarly ironic imprisonment to the doomed escape attempt by the puppy/children when his own absentee father (who has returned to facilitate Johnny's departure from Fort Simmer) throws his son forcefully into the pickup truck, slams the door, and speeds off (118). Larry's final image of Johnny trapped in the truck—"crying" and unable to "get away" (118)—eerily resembles the confinement of the three remaining puppies and bespeaks the delimiting nature of the purportedly liberatory masculinity Johnny has endorsed throughout the novel. As Michael Messner notes, "rather than liberating men," "pursuit[s] of...masculinity" like those undertaken by Johnny (and to a lesser extent Larry) tend to "lock men into self-destructive behaviors and into oppressive, hierarchical, and destructive relations with women and with other men" (78-79). Jed's revelation late in the novel that the children who "made it back to the bag" and "turned back into pups" were killed by their mother (105) indicates just how destructive certain quests for freedom can be, particularly those that imagine freedom for the self as a higher value than the well-being of others.²¹

Van Camp provides an alternative to Johnny's individualism in the

relationship among Larry, Larry's mother, and Jed, all of whom identify as kin despite differences in tribal background and lineage. Like the puppy/children from the Dogrib creation story, this relationship involves "a girl and two boys," but unlike the relationship among Larry, Johnny, and Juliet, it is characterized by commitment to a common good.²² Sitting on a hospital bed after his beating, Larry "softly [takes] Jed's hand and place[s] it on [his] mom's," such that their "arms ma[k]e a perfect triangle" (82). The triangle is "perfect" because none of the three attempts to assert her or his will over the others; they gain strength through commitment to balance and harmony, which contrasts starkly the self-concern of Johnny—who, on the following page, is described as "walk[ing] behind us, apart from us" (83)—and the tyrannical individualism of Larry's biological father whose past violence resonates in the scene via the mother's wounded tear duct, which the "father had destroyed [and] would never work again, so even though she made the sounds of crying, nothing came" (82). Overcoming his past performances of individualist masculine poses that conform to the model of Johnny, Larry here intervenes in his family's history of violence through an act, reminiscent of the strong medicine of the first Dogribs, that recognizes the relational nature of healing: "My left hand touched my face where my tears ran hot and wet. I held my wet finger to my mother's right cheek and ran a wet trail where her tears should have been. We cried together" (83). By sharing this emotional response, Larry subdues the urgency of his own immediate pain, diffusing it within a collective grieving process that privileges solidarity, interpersonal commitment, and communal responsibility over the primacy of individual convalescence. In fact, Larry here acknowledges that true healing for the individual demands the strength and well-being of the group. By recognizing the pain of another as his own pain and the healing of another as a source of his own strength, Larry thus inhabits a dynamic kinship role and partakes in the responsibilities that role requires.

In *Wasáse: Indigenous Pathways of Action and Freedom*, Kanien'kehaka scholar Taiaiake Alfred argues for "actions...that reject individualistic and materialist definitions of freedom and happiness, and that create community by embedding individual lives in the shared identities and experiences of collective existences" (187). In my reading of *The Lesser Blessed*, Van Camp seems to be calling for models of masculinity that are similarly committed to what Alfred might call "radically democratic" principles of Indigenous kinship while critiquing "individualistic...definitions of freedom and happiness"—like those pursued by Johnny—which are steeped in Eurocentric histories of capitalism and patriarchy and which offer illusions of integration while per-

petuating violence and neglect. Both Van Camp and Alfred endorse what Johnston recognizes as the integral connection between “rights” and “duties” and what Justice identifies as “the tribal web of kinship rights and responsibilities,” suggesting in their work that only masculinities built on the freedom *of* responsibility, rather than freedom *from* responsibility, will foster empowered individual identities and meaningful Indigenous continuance.

Sam McKegney is a teacher and scholar of Indigenous and Canadian literatures. He received his doctoral degree from Queen’s University, to which he recently returned as an Assistant Professor. His book, *Magic Weapons: Aboriginal Writers Remaking Community After Residential School*, examines the ways in which Indigenous survivors of residential schools mobilize narrative in their struggles for personal and communal empowerment in the shadow of attempted cultural genocide.

Notes

1. The Slavey (*Dhe Cho*) and the Dogrib (*Ticho*) are Dene nations, along with the Chipewyan (*Denesuline*), Yellowknives (*Akaitcho*), and Sahtu (*Sahtu’T’ine*). In Dogrib orator Vital Thomas’ version of the Dogrib creation story, the Dogrib appear to emerge from one or another of the other Dene nations in the aftermath of a great battle: “At the start there were no Dogribs. There was some kind of war, maybe between the Slaveys and the Chipewyans or Eskimos. We don’t know where the woman came from. Anyway, there was a war and everyone was killed except one girl who hid herself” (qtd. in Helm 289).
2. In this manner, Van Camp’s work is both creative *and* critical, commenting on gender representations, contemporary social conditions, and the political potential of literature while at the same time awakening, inspiring, and entertaining its readership. My analysis of kinship constructions in *The Lesser Blessed* therefore represents, I hope, the implementation of what Kimberly Blaeser calls “critical methods ...that seem to arise out of the literature itself” (53) and thus addresses some of the central themes of this important special issue regarding “responsible, ethical, and Indigenous-centered literary criticisms of Indigenous literatures.”
3. Van Camp’s version of the Dogrib creation story does not distinguish by gender among the first Dogribs in terms of their roles in the community. All three are described as “beautiful hunters with strong

medicine,” which troubles simplistic gender binaries by wedding the stereotypically feminine ideal of beauty with the supposedly masculine act of hunting and the stereotypically masculine ideal of strength with the supposedly feminine act of healing. Van Camp thus implies the inseparability of the masculine and the feminine while suggesting that aspects of both are required for individuals to truly benefit their communities. This contrasts Dogrib orator Vital Thomas’ version of the creation story, recorded by non-Native ethnographer June Helm in *The People of Denendeh*, in which the mother “only caught hold of two boys and one girl...[who] never turned into pups again. And that’s how the Dogrib people started. Those two boys that she raised were the finest hunters and the bravest fighters and the best medicine men that ever lived” (289-91). In Thomas’ version, the female member of the trio of first Dogribs is denied an explicit role in the community while the qualities that distinguish the two male members are presented in decidedly masculine terms as “hunters,” “fighters,” and “medicine men.”

4. The two pathways are not, of course, mutually exclusive as even the puppy/children who become the first Dogribs give in to the initial impulse to flee, which suggests that the desire for individual freedom, although it must be transcended for the good of the nation or community, is natural.
5. Rates of suicide for Indigenous women peak between the ages of 15-19 and those of Indigenous men peak between the ages of 20-25, according to these statistics from 1990-1994 (Centre for Suicide Prevention 1), the period leading up to the publication of *The Lesser Blessed*, which deals intimately and sensitively with the topic of suicide. By contrast, the average rate of suicide for Canada during those years was 13 per 100,000 (M. Kral qtd. in Centre for Suicide Prevention 1).
6. In *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions*, for instance, Allen argues that “traditional tribal lifestyles are more often gynocratic than not and they are never patriarchal” (2). In this vein, Laura Tohe suggests that there is “no need for feminism” in Indigenous societies “because of our matrilineal culture” (110). In the Canadian context, Cree author Tomson Highway has argued rather famously that colonial intrigue in the Americas involved “the killing of one religion by another,...the killing of God as *woman* by God as *man*” (qtd. in Hodgson 2).
7. This is not meant to imply that dangers faced by Indigenous women are illusory or somehow less important than those faced by Indigenous men, or that Indigenous women do not encounter intense

and sustained oppression within their communities and without. The insidious flourishing of misogynist band politics and patriarchal social structures in the wake of colonial policies like residential schooling has created untenable conditions for many Indigenous women (and men). Furthermore, the lateral violence circulating in many Indigenous communities remains clandestinely condoned by—and indeed exacerbated by—the indifference of the mainstream population, as evidenced by the lack of public outcry over the RCMP's lethargy in searching for hundreds of missing women in British Columbia over a ten-year period, which was undoubtedly influenced by the status of many of those women as Indigenous and/or as prostitutes. In 2008 the United Nations called upon the Canadian government to explain why more than 500 cases involving the deaths or disappearances of Indigenous women had “neither been fully investigated nor attracted priority attention, with the perpetrators remaining unpunished” (CBC). For more on these crucial issues, please see *Finding Dawn* (2006) by Métis Filmmaker Christine Welsh and *Black Eyes All the Time: Intimate Violence, Aboriginal Women and the Justice System* (1999) by Anne McGillivray.

8. The terrain of the masculine, according to Ronald Jackson, is mapped out by “social ascriptions and prescriptions” rather than “biologically conceived characteristics” (130). For Gail Bederman, “manhood” is a “*historical, ideological process...[that] creates ‘men’ by linking male genital anatomy to a male identity, and linking both anatomy and identity to particular arrangements of authority and power*” (original emphasis, 7-8). These structures of power are negotiated socially—often reinforced, at times innovated—through systems of conditioning that reward certain types of behavior, speech, and thought among biological males while punishing others. Although such systems are neither closed nor coherent, they remain historically and culturally specific; behavior conceived as masculine by one society (or segment of society) will not necessarily be so conceived by another (or even by the same society over time). Social scriptures particular to the time and place of a male's growth thus tend to become familiar to him, even though he need not internalize them fully. This process is complicated by the subtle differences in permissible masculine behavior among overlapping communities to which an individual might belong. For example, an individual might receive conflicting signals regarding what constitutes male identity from his nation, his cultural community, his dominant political environment, his social peers, and his family. This is why people learn to inhabit different identities (or at least display different elements of

their identities) in different social contexts. In *Masculine Migrations*, Daniel Coleman argues that “when men emigrate, they take a familiar, though not necessarily unified, set of masculine practices with them; when they immigrate, they encounter a second, less-familiar set of masculine practices. Migration thus involves a process of *cross-cultural refraction*” (3). For most Indigenous nations in Canada, the colonial process has involved forced migration through the imposition of the reserve system and other factors; at the same time, vehicles of assimilation have sought to supplant traditional Indigenous gender roles leading to situations akin to those Coleman describes. However, whereas *Masculine Migrations* examines the tensions created when a familiar set of masculine practices comes into contact with an unfamiliar set, for contemporary Indigenous men like Larry such collision, although present, is obscured by myriad factors that can render neither set entirely “familiar.” The decimation of Indigenous social and political structures through assimilative education and legislation has obscured traditional masculine roles and responsibilities, while mainstream Canadian masculinities tend to resist Indigenous meanings because they have been forged largely in opposition to an imagined Indigeneity, which leads to an “untenable predicament,” identified by David Eng in the Asian American context, “of wanting to join a mainstream society that one knows clearly and systematically excludes oneself [and thereby] becoming the instrument of one’s own self-exclusion” (22).

9. Works in this regard include Terry Goldie’s *Fear and Temptation: The Image of the Indigene in Canadian, Australian, and New Zealand Literatures* (1989), Elizabeth Cromley’s “Masculine/Indian” (1996), David Anthony Tyeme Clark and Joanne Nagel’s “White Men, Red Masks: Appropriations of ‘Indian’ Manhood in Imagined Wests” (2001), Brian Klopotek’s “‘I Guess Your Warrior Look Doesn’t Work Every Time’: Challenging Indian Masculinity in the Cinema” (2001), and Michael T. Wilson’s “‘Saturnalia of Blood’: Masculine Self-Control and American Indians in the Frontier Novel” (2005).
10. Works in this regard include Eduardo and Bonnie Duran’s *Native American Postcolonial Psychology* (1995) and Taiaiake Alfred’s *Wasasé: Indigenous Pathways of Action and Freedom* (2005).
11. Making a characteristically bold creative move, Robinson populates her second novel almost entirely with non-Indigenous characters, frustrating critics hoping to take a facile cultural approach to her work. “Robinson resists the label of ‘Native writer’ for herself,” notes Helen Hoy, “and of ‘Native stories’ for her fiction” (154). *Blood Sports* can be read as a creative departure that resists attempts to collapse

textual significance with authorial background and culture. However, while I agree with Hoy that critics must be wary of the “potential violence” of “imposing...racialized reading[s]” upon texts that “seem to have repudiated” such readings (30), I consider *Blood Sports* a powerful Indigenous text because it engages with crucial concerns of contemporary Indigenous communities and urban Indigenous populations. In Cherokee scholar Jace Weaver’s analysis, texts such as *Blood Sports* attempt to “participate in the healing of the grief and sense of exile felt by Indigenous communities and the pained individuals in them” (xiii), despite the fact that it doesn’t limit its discussion to Indigenous people or to particular tribal environments. Tom’s alienation from sources of meaning and masculine self-worth allegorizes for Robinson’s Indigenous audience (and others) the need for inspired engagement with male roles and responsibilities, particularly in contemporary urban contexts, even though he is depicted as a non-Indigenous character.

12. Although it deals with biological rather than surrogate brothers, Highway’s *Kiss of the Fur Queen* builds from a similar premise as the other texts mentioned through the initial fragmentation of the family. The brothers are torn from their home in Northern Manitoba to attend residential school in the South, which forces them to rebuild a relationship in the aftermath of trauma outside the safety of a familial space. The relationship between Gabriel’s social grace, beauty, and violent sexuality and Jeremiah’s introversion thus resonates with several other recent Indigenous novels.
13. The danger is suggested most powerfully by the fact that the majority of the more demonstrably masculine surrogate brothers mentioned above are deceased by the close of the novels they inhabit.
14. When asked about a seemingly crucial part of the creation story, Larry replies, “Humph. I don’t know. Jed never told me that part” (52).
15. In fact, after his father’s death, Larry expresses desire for his mother and Jed to “get together” as a “family” because he “really needed some stability. I know that sounds lame, but it’s true” (3).
16. In an early article, Arnold Krupat noted this discrepancy through the concept of “synecdochic identity.” The divergent social foundations of liberal individualism and “radically democratic” Indigenous kinship (Alfred 45) have been theorized more recently by Indigenous thinkers like Taiaiake Alfred and Jace Weaver.
17. The father’s actions thus replicate several traumatic elements of residential school experience by imposing a patriarchal system of absolute male authority like that practiced by the Jesuits, by engag-

ing in pedophilic sexual violation—which historical works have established occurred in epidemic proportions within the walls of these institutions—by decimating the Indigenous family in a violent act that forever destroys the bond between parent and child, and by instilling in the child a profound sense of his own inadequacy.

18. To Donny's complaint that their father had permitted him to avoid doing homework "if [he] didn't want to," Johnny responds in a raised voice, "You don't listen to him, okay? You listen to me." He later asks Larry in an exasperated paternal fashion, "Man, what am I gonna do about that kid?" (48). Johnny is forced into a surrogate parental role due to the instability of his home life and the neglectful nature of both his parents, which informs, at least partially, his desire for freedom from responsibility in the high school setting.
19. hooks illustrates the profound disjuncture between such contemporary performances of "cool" and the origins of "cool" in the modern history of black masculinity: "Once upon a time black male 'cool' was defined by the ways in which black men confronted the hardships of life without allowing their spirits to be ravaged. They took the pain of it and used it alchemically to turn the pain into gold. That burning process required high heat. Black male cool was defined by the ability to withstand the heat and remain centered. It was defined by black male willingness to confront reality, to face the truth, and bear it not by adopting a false pose of cool while feeding on fantasy; not by black male denial or by assuming a 'poor me' victim identity. It was defined by individual black males daring to self-define rather than be defined by others" (147).
20. Larry's continued gravitation toward his mentor, despite recognizing profoundly negative aspects of Johnny's personality, resonates with other instances of masculine power and domination in the story. Discussing the school bully Darcy McManus, who has beaten Larry horrifically in the past, Larry confesses, "I'd be a liar if I told you he didn't scare me, but something about guys like [that] always intrigued me. I knew he had had his share of drugs, booze, and fights. He was everything I wasn't. He was bad news, but still..." (36).
21. We must caution ourselves, however, against considering Johnny's transgressions encapsulated by the act of child abandonment and therefore assuming that an attempt by Johnny and Juliet to forge a nuclear family unit would constitute an optimal final scenario for the novel. In the words of bell hooks, such a reading "buy[s] into the romantic myth that if only there was a... man in the house life would be perfect," and neglects "the evidence that there are plenty of homes where fathers are present, fathers who are so busy acting out, being

controlling, being abusive, that home is hell” (102). Larry’s relationship with his biological father clearly fits into the latter category. hooks stresses that “the father-hunger” felt by children like Larry “is as intense as the father-hunger children in fatherless homes feel” (102). The prelude to Johnny and Juliet’s first sexual encounter is depicted as play-acting of parental roles, with the two flirting in the domestic space of the kitchen before Juliet leads Johnny off to the bedroom with the words, ““Let’s go check on the kids.... I gotta go check on the kids’” (39). Larry’s comment that “it was like a movie, only real” (39) recognizes astutely how Johnny and Juliet are dramatizing parental roles portrayed in popular cultural media like film as natural. Yet, their performance is ironic because Johnny has no intention of settling into a parental role (and presumably, at the time, neither does Juliet). What Larry sees as “real” is illusory, which suggests that the naturalization of the nuclear family as *the* dominant mode of social organization in modern Canada is itself a construct, a suggestion corroborated by the number of dysfunctional biological relationships depicted throughout the novel. Van Camp’s focus in *The Lesser Blessed* on kinship relations indicates the inadequacy of narrow biological conceptions of the family, independent of the interwoven threads of communal obligations. Thus the naturalization of the nuclear family as “real” is exposed in the novel as dangerous because it devalues the larger social space in which roles and responsibilities need to be modeled by those invested in the continuance of the community or nation while encouraging competitive social relations in which those outside the immediate family fail to be recognized as one’s relations.

22. This relationship is not, however, without its pitfalls, and Larry’s mother—much like Larry himself in some of his behaviors toward Juliet—demonstrates significant lapses in kinship responsibility throughout the novel. For example, after her husband’s rape of her sleeping sister, Larry’s mother reportedly “talked her out of” believing she had been assaulted even though Larry claims she “fuckin’ knew!” (88), and when Larry is bleeding out his ears after the beating and needs maternal care, she “steps back” from his outstretched arms with “revulsion in her eyes” (81).

References

- Alfred, Taiaiake
2005 *Wasáse: Indigenous Pathways of Action and Freedom*. Toronto: Broadview.
- Allen, Paula Gunn
1986 *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions*. Boston: Beacon.
- Anderson, Kim
2000 *A Recognition of Being: Reconstructing Native Womanhood*. Toronto: Second Story.
- Bederman, Gail
1995 *Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917*. Chicago: U of Chicago P.
- Bielawski, Ellen "Dogrib (Tlicho)"
2005 *Encyclopedia of the Arctic* V.I (A-F). Ed. Mark Nuttall. New York: Routledge.
- Blaeser, Kimberly
1993 "Native Literature: Seeking a Critical Center." *Looking at the Words of Our People: First Nations Analysis of Literature*. Ed. Jeannette Armstrong. Penticton, BC: Theytus. 53-61.
-
- 2009 "Canada Must Probe Cases of Slain, Missing Aboriginal Women: UN." *The Canadian Press*. November 2008. 23 July. <<http://www.cbc.ca/canada/story/2008/11/24/missing-women.html>>.
- Centre for Suicide Prevention, The
2003 "Suicide Among Canada's Aboriginal Peoples." *SIEC Alert* 52, September. pp. 1-2.
- Coleman, Daniel
1998 *Masculine Migrations: Reading the Postcolonial Male in 'New Canadian' Narratives*. Toronto: U of Toronto P.
- Cooke, Martin, Daniel Beavon, and Mindy McHardy
2004 "Measuring the Well-Being of Aboriginal People: An Application of the United Nations' Human Development Index to Registered Indians in Canada, 1981-2001." Ottawa: Indian Affairs and Northern Development Canada.

- Correctional Services Canada
 2007 "Aboriginal Offender Statistics." 7 July 2006. 18 Sept. <http://www.csc-scc.gc.ca/text/prgrm/correctional/abissues/know/4_e.shtml>.
- Eng, David L.
 2001 *Racial Castration: Managing Masculinity in Asian America*. Durham: Duke U P.
- Helm, June
 2000 *The People of Denendeh: Ethnohistory of the Indians of Canada's Northwest Territories*. Ithaca: McGill-Queen's U P.
- Hodgson, Heather
 1998 "Survival Cree, or Weesakeechak Dances Down Yonge Street: Heather Hodgson Speaks with Tomson Highway." *Quill & Quire* 64.11: 2-4, 46.
- hooks, bell
 2004 *We Real Cool: Black Men and Masculinity*. New York: Routledge.
- Hoy, Helen
 2001 *How Should I Read These? Native Women Writers in Canada*. Toronto: U of Toronto P.
- Indian Affairs and Northern Development Canada
 2007 "Report on Plans and Priorities, 2007-2008." Ottawa: Government of Canada.
- Jackson II, Ronald L.
 2006 *Scripting the Black Masculine Body: Identity, Discourse, and Racial Politics in Popular Media*. New York: State U of New York P.
- Johnston, Basil
 2007 Personal Interview. Toronto: 4 Dec.
- Justice, Daniel Heath
 2007 "'Go Away, Water!' Kinship Criticism and the Decolonizing Imperative." *Reasoning Together: The Native Critics Collective*. Eds. Craig S. Womack, Daniel Heath Justice, and Christopher B. Teuton. Norman: U of Oklahoma P. 147-168.
- Messner, Michael A.
 1997 *Politics of Masculinities: Men in Movements*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Robidoux, Michael A.

2006 "Historical Interpretations of First Nations Masculinity and Its Influence on Canada's Sport Heritage." *International Journal of the History of Sport* 23.2: 267-84.

Robinson, Eden

2006 *Blood Sports*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart.

Tohe, Laura

2000 "There is No Word for Feminism in My Language." *Wicazo Sa Review* 15.2 (Autumn): 103-10.

Van Camp, Richard

1996 *The Lesser Blessed*. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre.

Wagamese, Richard

1997 *A Quality of Light*. Toronto: Doubleday.

Weaver, Jace

1997 *That the People Might Live: Native American Literatures and Native American Community*. New York: Oxford U P.

