



“Survivance” in Sami and First Nations Boarding School Narratives

Reading Novels by Kerttu Vuolab and Shirley Sterling

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While colonial influences are with us everywhere in the world, the ways in which colonialism operated and continues to operate in different parts of the world vary radically from one another. Each colonial state has implemented various colonial and imperial ideologies in its specific ways that have also changed historically. Despite these often vast differences, the consequences and effects of colonization on subjugated peoples are usually very similar. This is not surprising, considering how the various colonial policies and practices in different parts of the world were and are informed by the same ideology of assumed predetermined inferiority of non-European or non-western peoples and cultures. As Edward Said points out, imperialism and colonialism

are supported and perhaps even impelled by impressive ideological formations that include notions that certain territories and people require and beseech domination, as well as forms of knowledge affiliated with domination; the vocabulary of classic nineteenth-century imperial culture is plentiful with such words and concepts as “inferior,” or “subject races,” “subordinate peoples,” “dependency,” “expansion,” and “authority.”¹

These ideologies—which conveniently legitimated the conquest, usurpation of land, exploitation, and various forms of oppression—were, at the end of the nineteenth century, fueled by a cadre of racist theories such as race biology, eugenics, evolutionary theory, and Social Darwinism.

Educational institutions in particular have played a central role in colonizing Indigenous peoples.² Colonial school system, despite its geographi-

cal location, has also been a very effective tool in implementing these racist theories and indoctrinating them in children (Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike) worldwide. In this paper, I will demonstrate how, despite the vast differences in actual colonial processes, colonial education has produced very similar effects in different parts of the world. These effects include cultural intrusion, conflicts and confusion between cultures and values, and various strategies of survival and resistance.

My particular focus is the way in which these effects are represented through literary works. The novels analyzed here are Kerttu Vuolab's *Čeppari Čáráhus* (1994) and Shirley Sterling's *My Name is Seepeetza* (1992). Such an analysis not only challenges the binary opposition between literary and historical texts and their relationships to the world, but as Gayatri Spivak proposes, literary texts may also provide an alternative site for articulating the histories of subaltern women which are often foreclosed and excluded even in historiography of the subaltern groups themselves.³ This is also suggested by Kateri Damm, who, analyzing Maria Campbell's and Beatrice Culleton's autobiographical novels, notes that they "present an alterNative perspective of the history of Canada and in so doing, affirm and preserve Native views, Native realities, and Native forms of telling, while actively challenging and redefining dominant concepts of history, truth and fact."⁴

Writing by Indigenous women can also offer a powerful counter-discourse that undermines the authority of colonial master narratives such as the official residential school reports written by the school management and other colonial authorities (such as local Indian Agents in British Columbia) and intended to represent the successes and benefits of these schools. As Jeannette Armstrong suggests, "[t]he dispelling of lies and the telling of what really happened until *everyone*, including our own people understands that this condition did not happen through choice or some cultural defect on our part, is important."⁵ Such a counter-discourse also challenges the common misrepresentations and stereotypical images of Indigenous women in mainstream fiction and media.⁶ In a way, Indigenous literature can surely be considered "an act of survivance."⁷ We need to remain cautious, however, of false assumptions that literary representation will automatically result in political representation and empowerment of subaltern or Indigenous women.⁸

In this article I will consider two novels, both telling the story of a young Indigenous girl attending a boarding school. My particular focus

is to discuss the various coping mechanisms and survival strategies the girls employ (and learn to employ) in order to maintain their cultural identities and thus, self-esteem. What kind of internal conflicts do the two girls experience in school? How are they resolved? What is the degree of rejection of, on the one hand, and adaptation to, on the other hand, the values and world that schools represent? Do gender expectations play any significant roles in defining the girls' views of themselves? How does the school become a negotiated space in the lives of these two girls? What is the role of their cultural background and heritage in coping with the attacks in the school and in seeking to find a balance between school and home lives?

The analysis of the forms of resistance and strategies of survival in the novels is guided particularly by Gerald Vizenor's notion of "survivance"—a concept which, combining survival and resistance, challenges dualistic notions of dominance and victimhood; for him, survivance signifies

a Native sense of presence, the motion of sovereignty and the will to resist dominance. Survivance is not just survival but also resistance, not heroic or tragic, but the tease of tradition, and my sense of survivance outwits dominance and victimry. Survival is a response; survivance is a standpoint, a worldview, and a presence.⁹

The strength of survivance is that it is not merely a response or reaction but rather a proactive stance; a willingness to take a stand by drawing upon one's culture and tradition. Survivance could be seen as a strategy that is constantly modified according to the needs and possibilities of both resistance and survival. In boarding schools, opposition took various forms ranging from "passive resistance" to running away, practicing cultural customs in secret, maintaining aspects of traditional social organization (often manifested in gangs), rebellions, and even complete rejection.¹⁰ Passive resistance, however, was probably the most common type, characterized as "a wide range of student behaviors designed to undermine the schools' objectives: willful acts of defiance, disruptive pranks, 'work slow downs,' refusing to participate in competitive exercises, and perhaps most common, adopting a general posture of nonresponsiveness."¹¹

While historically both stories are located in the same period of time—at the end of the 1950s and the 1960s—geographically they are radically apart. Vuolab is a Sami storyteller and writer from the Finnish side of the

Deatnu River Valley. Sterling is a Nlakapamux storyteller and writer from the interior Salish territory, British Columbia. Both authors attended boarding school as children and to a large extent, write about their own and other students' experiences.¹²

One could suggest, then, that the novels represent “fictionalized lifewriting”; a form of writing that allows writers to confront and deal with their own, often painful experiences in an indirect way that is less personal than writing in first person. This practice of weaving together history and fiction may also stem from traditional literary conventions that may not “be as concerned about keeping fiction and fact or poetry and prose quite so distinct from one another as the West has been.”¹³ Arguing that Native autobiographies often differ from Western literary conventions and notions of autobiography, Arnold Krupat recognizes a specific kind of “historicism” in Native literature: “one that allows for human agency . . . but as it engages in struggle to reconcile a maximum degree of individual freedom with a maximum degree of social justice;” this type of human agency, he notes, is quite different from the western “bourgeois ego.” In his view, Native autobiographies are most typically dialogic.¹⁴ The dialogic model “is not constituted by the achievement of a distinctive, special voice that separates it from others, but, rather, by the achievement of a particular placement in relation to the many voices without which it could not exist.”¹⁵

This is particularly the case with Sterling's novel, which, in spite of being written in a journal format, is highly polyvocal, interweaving the voices of her family at home, on the one hand, and the voices of her peers as well as nuns and priests in the school on the other. Clearly, the textual self in *My Name is Seepeetza* is collectively constituted, primarily through her culture but also through interaction with other people and cultures in school. While Vuolab's novel is less dialogic in terms of establishing the main character, Máret, as having a distinctive, individual voice separate from others (her family, peers), there is, however, polyvocality also in *Čeppari Čaráhus* where in her dreams, the protagonist speaks in a radically different voice compared to the scared, lonely girl in hostile surroundings. In some of her dreams, she also has a split personality, representing the confusion and cultural conflicts she is faced with in the school environment. Before taking a closer look at the novels, however, I will provide a necessary historical and geographical context for both stories.

RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL SYSTEM IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

While the legacy of the colonial educational system in British Columbia, and more generally in North America, is in many ways similar to that of the Nordic countries where the Sami people live, the respective histories that lead to the establishment of boarding schools are very different.¹⁶ Colonization of Indigenous peoples is generally thought to have begun in 1492 with Columbus landing on the shores of what is now known as the Americas. In the case of the Sami, however, colonization started hundreds of years before that, arguably as early as 800 AD in the form of taxation and plundering of Sami villages by chiefs living on the coast of present day Norway. Various Indigenous Nations in British Columbia came into contact with explorers and seafarers a couple of hundred years after Columbus. In the Interior Salish and Shuswap (Secwepemc) territories where Sterling's novel is located, the contact with non-Native people intensified after the establishment of trading posts in the area in the early 1800s. In the late 1850s, the discovery of gold by Europeans in the region caused a dramatic disruption in the lives of local Native peoples, as thousands of European and Asian miners rushed into the area. As early as in 1863, a major highway from Vancouver to the Cariboo gold fields was completed, allowing an increasing number of non-Natives to enter Interior Salish and Shuswap territories; the arrival of Europeans and Asians was followed by the smallpox epidemic of 1862–63 which devastated several Native communities in the region.¹⁷

At the same time, administrative colonization was drastically intensified, as a separate sets of laws—first, the British North America Act of 1867 and later, the Indian Act of 1876—were passed to control and manage Native lands and peoples through Canada's self-imposed "responsibility" for Native people, including the responsibility to educate Native children.¹⁸ The Indian Act made Natives wards of the government and a separate bureaucracy, and the Department of Indian Affairs was established to enforce assimilation of Native people into Canadian society.

Officially started in 1879, the residential school system in Canada was operated through a partnership between the state and various churches. The government's role was to provide core funding, set the standards of "care," supervise the school administration and ultimately control "its wards." Churches (mainly Catholic, Anglican, Methodist, and Presbyterian) were in charge of locally running the schools. In the first half of the

twentieth century, there were eighteen residential schools in operation in British Columbia. After amendments to the Indian Act in 1920 had made school attendance compulsory for all Native children in Canada, enrollment in residential school increased radically.¹⁹ The last residential school in British Columbia, the Saint Mary's Indian Residential School in Mission, closed its doors formally in 1985.²⁰

Despite its own praiseful rhetoric as “valuable centers of education” and “places saving the lives of Native children,” the reality of these institutions was a total opposite: “Overcrowding in the schools, lax administration, budget shortfalls, and poor hygiene and diet meant that children by 1907 died in astonishing numbers” particularly of tuberculosis.²¹ Besides neglect and disease, the reality of the residential school system was also characterized by excessive disciplinary regimentation enforced by corporal punishment practices of public and private denigration and shaming. Since the mid-1980s, testimonies, reports, and inquiries have also revealed the system's darkest secret, widespread sexual abuse by nuns and priests who, according to the official rhetoric, were supposed to offer better care of the Native children than their own parents. The real reason for separating Native children from their families and communities, however, was to be able to control and assimilate Native peoples more effectively and bring them into the “circle of civilization.”²² In order to achieve this, the government and church representatives insisted that Native people had to abandon their own religious beliefs and migratory lifestyle.

This was also the objective of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate who established a mission in Fort Kamloops in the late 1800s. Since 1893, the Oblates were also in charge of running the Kamloops Indian Residential School where, like in other places, the Native children's link to their own spiritual and material culture was disrupted through segregation which, in many cases, lasted for years.²³ Native languages, cultural practices and spirituality were banned and any expression of them was punished:

In a systematic and rigid fashion, the Oblates demonstrated that the Shuswap cultural patterns were not accepted in the school. In all aspects of life, from language to sleeping habits, European behaviours were to supplant those which had been followed by generations of Shuswap people.²⁴

Under such an oppressive, regimented system, however, various forms of resistance and ways of expressing one's identity and cultural belonging

were developed by Native students. I will elaborate these forms later, when discussing Sterling's novel. According to Celia Haig-Brown, the most significant aspect of the residential school system was that until the end of the 1940s, Native children attended school only two hours a day, while in public schools; the daily schooling was five hours. This discrepancy caused difficulties to many Native students who wanted to continue their education after grade eight.²⁵ Interestingly, the government's and churches' mission to "civilize" the Native people did not mean educating their children in academic subjects and encouraging them to pursue further studies but rather, "teaching students the skills required for farming, gardening, sewing, cooking, and cleaning."²⁶ Again, there was a different reality behind the rhetoric, as the operation of the Kamloops Indian Residential School was occasionally so profitable that "sums of money were sent to Provincial House in Vancouver."²⁷

Moreover, the manual, unpaid labor of Native children in residential schools was defined according to gender. Girls were trained in various household skills such as sewing, cleaning (though boys were required to clean their side of the buildings), and kitchen chores—all in good European fashion. Despite the tediousness of laboring, it allowed Native children to interact with one another more freely than other times such as in the classroom or daily religious services.²⁸ Many girls, including Sterling's protagonist Seepetza, also participated in the school dance groups which occasionally toured in public, allowing children a welcome break from the confines of the school (though not from the control of the nuns).

HISTORY OF FORMAL EDUCATION OF THE SAMI AND BOARDING SCHOOL EXPERIENCE

For the Sami people, the history of formal education is quite different to that of Native peoples in British Columbia. There is over a thousand-year history of trading and levying of taxes on furs killed by the Sami hunters. Those demanding taxes were various groups living in the southern parts of present-day Scandinavia, Finland, and Northwest Russia, including chiefs from Hålogaland (located along the Norwegian coast), Birkals from Sweden-Finland, and Russians from Novgorod. This was one of the several ways, sanctioned and endorsed by various kings and statesmen, of attempting to increase control over the northern territory and its people where, at that time, surrounding kingdoms of Denmark-Norway, Swe-

den-Finland, and the state of Novgorod competed over taxation and fur trading rights. Sami villages were also frequented by various raiding troops from Russia and Carelia (known as *čudit*) who, particularly during the 1250s to the 1450s, plundered villages, often killing everybody. Another way to claim ownership over the territory was by encouraging settlers to move up north and establish themselves as farmers. This competition resulted in several wars between the Nordic kingdoms and the czar state of Novgorod from the 1300s to 1600s. As a result, Sami *siidas* (community units) within the so-called “shared Sami area” were forced to pay tax to as many as three different kingdoms.²⁹

The second wave in the long, more gradual process of intervention in Samiland occurred in the form of Christianity and missionaries. The earliest churches were built on the coastal areas of Samiland as early as the fourteenth century when the Danish-Norwegian crown also passed a declaration granting smaller fees for criminal charges for Christianized Sami. The Christian influence among the Sami, however, remained limited until the seventeenth century when the competition over Samiland by surrounding kingdoms was at its peak. Establishing missions was viewed as an effective way to consolidate nation building. In 1599, the new the Danish-Norwegian king Christian IV prioritized colonization and missionary activities. A few years later, he wrote to one of his representatives in the north that everyone who is a *noaidi* (Sami shaman, healer, and visionary) must be sentenced to death.³⁰

In a similar fashion, in 1607, the Swedish king Carl IX declared himself also the king of the Sami and started the process of building several churches in the Sami territory under his rule. The year before, sixteen young Sami men were forcibly taken to Uppsala to be trained as priests to serve their own people in their own language. More than half escaped en route and none of them ever became a priest. At the end of the 1600s, the church and state representatives also began to fine and beat up *noaidis*. Also Sami sacred sites were ordered to be destroyed.³¹

While some priests worked towards establishing separate schools for the Sami, this was, however, more on an ad-hoc and individual basis rather than a centralized, distinct jurisdiction with explicitly articulated objectives of assimilation as in Canada. One such priest in Samiland was Nils Grubb who, in 1723, successfully lobbied the Swedish government to pass a policy on education aiming to promote Christianity and education in the Sami region. It required building schools, publishing textbooks and

religious texts in Sami, and training priests who were expected to speak Sami and follow reindeer herding families during their biannual migrations. The schools were ordered to teach Christian religion in the Sami language. The Sami also had to have an opportunity to learn Swedish if they wanted to. There were several Sami schools built and established in the eighteenth century, one of them being in Ohcejohka, less than fifty miles from the home of the protagonist of *Čeppari Čáráhus*. The school building was ready in 1728, but due to the lack of funding, it remained unused until 1743. The first teacher, Anders Hellander, also a priest, tried to follow the regulation and teach in the Sami language; the available textbooks, however, were written in a “foreign” Sami language, not Northern Sami spoken in Ohcejohka area.³²

At this time, the two kingdoms were at war (the Great Nordic War 1709–20), after which colonial state borders were drawn. The first border in Samiland was established in 1751, dividing families into two countries. This is also the region where the events of *Čeppari Čáráhus* take place. The attempts of Sweden to strengthen its position in the north was considered a threat by the kingdom of Denmark-Norway; this also further intensified its missionary work in Samiland by establishing a Sami Mission. The first principal of the mission, Thomas von Westen, established a school, *Seminarium domesticum*, for young Sami men to be trained as teachers and priests. von Westen, who ran the school with his private funding, spoke Sami and translated religious texts into Sami. He was successful in converting many Sami to Christianity, who then directed him to their relatives who still practiced their own religion. He also recruited many Sami men to assist him with religious and linguistic duties. Not all authorities, however, supported the use of Sami language; the new Danish bishop, for example, gave a language regulation in 1774 requiring that the language of instruction was to be Norwegian.³³ Throughout the eighteenth century, there was a gradual increase of teachers and priests in Samiland, many of whom were Sami themselves. The teaching was mostly done through an ambulatory system that covered almost the entire Samiland and in many places, lasted until World War II.³⁴

In the nineteenth century, the kingdoms that had competed over Samiland for centuries and finally divided it up among themselves, again sought to reinforce their control in Samiland. This time, it was done in name of the prevailing ideology in Europe, the National Romanticism aiming at the consolidation of the nation and the eradication of all “for-

eign elements.” One effective way to do this was through a school system that would “make the Sami as Norwegian as possible.”³⁵ The aim of the system was to assimilate the Sami children into the majority cultures “in language, culture, and in their overall view of themselves.”³⁶ This ideology and resulting policies were implemented and commonly justified with arguments that the only way for the Sami to become equal with the other citizens was to know the official language of the country. Both Norway and Sweden passed laws prohibiting the use of Sami language in schools and at home.

In Finland (in 1809 it had become an autonomous region under the Russian empire) assimilatory policies were not as explicitly articulated as in Norway or Sweden. At the end of the nineteenth century, the church was still quite supportive of using Sami as the language of instruction in schools.³⁷ After World War II however, policies aimed at taking into account the special circumstances such as long distances in Northern Finland were abandoned. Attending school was made compulsory for everybody, including children living in the most remote regions of the country. This resulted in the establishment of residential schools.³⁸

As the historical overview above demonstrates, by the time of mandatory public schooling after World War II, the Sami had already had a long experience of formal education. Many had also already converted to Christianity at least a couple of generations prior. In other words, while very unsettling in terms of indoctrination of values of the dominant society, including the notion of Sami inferiority, the residential school system in Finland did not signify such an absolute disruption as it did in British Columbia where, at the end of the nineteenth century when the first generation of children were taken to residential schools, many Native people continued to practice their religious and cultural practices and had had very little contact with Christianity and foreign people and values.

Another major difference compared to Canada was that residential schools were not created only for Sami children but, as the result of the new law of mandatory schooling, they were public schools for anyone who lived far enough not to be able to attend school from home. They were, therefore, mixed schools, as is also the case in *Čeppari Čáráhus*.³⁹ These schools were run directly by the government and while many of the teachers came from elsewhere, there were also many local teachers and supervisors. Residential schools in Finland (or in other Nordic countries) were not a part of a separate jurisdiction and bureaucracy to con-

trol Sami and their lives in the same fashion as in Canada or in the United States.⁴⁰ In other words, residential or boarding schools for Sami children did not exist in the Nordic countries as they did in North America. Besides some exceptions (such as special schools for children of Sami reindeer herding families in Sweden), all children, Sami and non-Sami alike, attended public school and those whose homes were further away, stayed at a residence. While there was no explicit, written policy in any of the Nordic countries intending to assimilate and “civilize” the Sami by taking children away from their families, the consequences of forcing Sami children to attend the public school system alongside with Finnish, Swedish, and Norwegian children was, however, in many ways very similar to those in North America, resulting in commonalities of low self-esteem, alienation from one’s cultural background, and difficulties in integrating and adapting in society, whether one’s own or the dominant.

As pointed out by Vuolab, for instance, racism toward the Sami in boarding schools was often so subtle it was difficult to address explicitly. These insidious forms of oppression, however, worked effectively to destroy children’s “self-worth and their knowledge of their mother tongue.”⁴¹ It also had an impact on some Sami children who felt awkward going home “after having been all the time speaking some other language than Sami, after having eaten other types of foods.”⁴² Talking about her own experiences, she notes that “[i]t was a totally different system and world view that we were forced to get rooted in. During that time we lost touch with the things that were happening at home.”⁴³

There are certainly several reasons for placing Sami children in the public school system alongside of others, and as there is no historical research in this particular topic, I can only speculate some possible scenarios. Perhaps the prevailing assumption of the government was that it would provide Sami children an equal education and thus, equal opportunities for employment, while at the same time ensure the integration of the Sami into dominant society.⁴⁴ The fact that, in many cases, no acknowledgment was given to different linguistic and cultural backgrounds of the Sami most likely stemmed from the overt and covert desire to eradicate those differences. I would suggest that it also at least partly derived from a view that did not perceive the Sami as so radically different from the rest of the people in the country. The Sami were not considered a sovereign nation with a special constitutional status with the government as was the case with Native peoples in Canada. The Sami were citizens of

the countries where they lived and had the same rights and responsibilities as others. Even if they were viewed as a “minority group” or “ethnic minority,” they were nevertheless considered Finns, Swedes, or Norwegians who happened to speak a different language.

In short, the understanding of the Sami as a distinct people was (and still is) not commonly shared in the eyes of the majority of the public or government representatives. Probably due to their long history of intervention in Samiland, the Nordic countries created their own specific version of colonialism: the Sami were not made into “wards of the state” but instead, constructed as an integral part of the state, tightly consolidated and integrated into the nation as any other citizen. This form of colonialism appears very benign—if recognized as colonialism at all—but is nevertheless very effective in appropriating the Sami consciousness. In spite of the differences in official policies, the mentality was very similar to other colonial settler states and their administration, including the denigration of culture with a clear message of cultural inferiority.

Besides the differences in incentives behind residential schools in Finland and British Columbia (or North America in general), they also differed in terms of the size, organization, fervor, and also to a certain degree, style. If the “educational crusade” of the Native peoples was “vast in scope, military in organization, fervent in zeal, and violent in method,” the Sami experience was less so.⁴⁵ Boarding schools in Finland were not as regimented and even brutal in terms of disciplinary control as in Canada, most likely because in Finland the boarding school system consisted of mixed public schools and thus also served Finnish students. Moreover, the boarding schools in Finland were generally smaller in size and the focus was on academic training. Manual labor was thus not part of the daily school schedule though children were often required to help with kitchen and cleaning duties, which were also used as punishment.

In the following, I will consider how these and other experiences are represented by two Indigenous authors in different parts of the world. The two novels, both telling a story of a young Indigenous girl attending a residential school, offer insightful portrayals of emotional effects and individual responses to school and the world it represents. What is more, as personal stories told by the two girls, the novels are inner reflections of the experiences and events that take place in the school. The stories bring forth a unique perspective of Indigenous girls growing up and becoming adults in a period when Indigenous societies were undergoing rapid

changes due to the modernization and increased incursion of the dominant society and its influence. In other words, Vuolab's and Sterling's novels do not offer only a glimpse to the world of residential schools but also to a certain extent, of society of the time.

ČEPPARI ČÁRÁHUS: FINDING STRENGTH FROM DREAMS

The story of *Čeppari Čáráhus* takes place on the Finnish side of Samiland, and although place names are not mentioned, it is possible to assume that the home of the protagonist, a Sami girl called Máret, is along the Deatnu River where Vuolab herself comes from.⁴⁶ Máret's story is told in third person, except for her dreams, which are in first person. This dual structure of the novel gives it a special depth; while the dreams function as an outlet for Máret's anxiety and fears, many of them also represent her growing sense of survivance, guiding her through difficult times.

Vuolab's novel begins with Máret leaving for school for the very first time. Packing her suitcase, she is concerned whether she will manage or not in the strange world on her own without the solace and support of her family. Máret's entry to an unfamiliar and scary world starts on the bus where her Saminess is strikingly contrasted to that foreign world: she is the only one wearing a Sami hat. Other Sami children on the bus might have already learned that to avoid mocking and bullying, it is best not to display such visible markers of their Saminess. In school, she is faced with another aspect of this world, the countless rules and regulations and a supervisor of the school dormitory who openly displays her contempt and dislike toward Sami children and their culture. She also meets two teachers, top-level Finnish athletes—who obviously are supposed to function as role models for children—and her aggressive Finnish roommate Tuulikki who immediately tells her that, "Here nobody speaks Sami. Not even you!" (20).

While Máret does not have difficulties with school subjects—quite the opposite, she does so well that she is praised by some of her teachers, one of them telling other children to follow Máret's example—she suffers tremendously in the hands of her Finnish schoolmates who continue to torment her both physically and verbally for several years.⁴⁷ It is also hard for Finnish children to accept Máret's cleverness and her success in school. For them, she is a dumb Sami who needs to learn her place as inferior to Finns and their culture. One of her main bullies is her roommate, who

together with her friends, relentlessly attack Máret, her Sami culture, and identity.

Once after school when the students are going to the dormitory, Tuulikki and her friends are mocking other students' clothing, including Máret's woolen socks with leather soles made by her mother just before she left for school, which have been her source of great pride. Laughing at her socks, the girls enter her room and start rummaging Máret's things.

They throw her socks, mittens, Sami costume and fur boots on the floor.

"You've forgotten your lasso and shoe hay," sneers Hannele.

". . . In this school we have such an authentic Sami girl that even her clothes smell of smoke!" the girls cackle together.

"I bet you don't even have a house as your home. On which mountain is the hut where your mother and family stayed when your father drove you here with reindeer bulls?" There is no end to the ridicule. Máret does not have a chance to say a word. The girls mock at everything they have heard and seen about the Sami. And as if that was not enough, they also make up all kinds of lies about Máret, most of which she does not even understand. (25–26)

There are several other, even more violent encounters with these same Finnish girls, who on several occasions physically attack Máret. Once, she is attacked so badly that she passes out when the girls lock her up in a cleaning closet for a day. Other times, she succeeds to escape to the toilet and cry. Here Máret is found by a teacher who discovers that her arm is so badly bruised that she is taken to the doctor. Afterwards, she is reproached by the dormitory supervisor.

In *Čeppari Čáráhus*, there is a clear hierarchy among different groups of people. The Sami children are on the bottom of the hierarchy, as they are commonly dismissed and humiliated by school staff and also by their Finnish peers. On the lowest level of the school hierarchy, Sami students have to rely upon one another for support. As Máret's attempts to befriend other children on the playground fail, she is very lonely until she is transferred to another room due to her sleepwalking habits. Her new roommate is Kirste, an older Sami girl and also Máret's relative, who tells her not to listen to what her bullies say. She encourages Máret to resist and fight back rather than accept their aggressive behavior. Kirste herself does not accept any dismissive views of Sami culture. When Máret hesi-

tates to wear her Sami costume at the school's Christmas concert, Kirste contends that the Sami costume is the best, so good that it could be even worn at the president's annual independence ball. Máret, however, dissents:

"But Hannele and her friends ridiculed . . ."

"Because they're jealous! Because they don't have such beautiful clothes themselves. Máret, don't care about those kind of people! It is only a sign of their narrow-minded stupidity. The less people understand, the narrower their world is." (45)

Kirste has not internalized the racist views of the inferiority of her people and primitivity of her culture. For some reason not elaborated in the novel, she has been able to resist the commonplace covert and overt pressures and attitudes of the dominant society to which, no doubt, every Sami was exposed at that time. On the other hand, the pressure has been so strong on Máret that despite the outright violence of her bullies, she has secretly admired them. As a new role model, Kirste, however, is able to teach Máret to ignore her bullies and respect her own culture and in that way, gradually regain her self-esteem.

At school, Máret is caught in the conflict between the Sami and Finnish worlds. She is lonely and misses her family, often crying behind the locked doors in the washroom. Her home life, however, is not without problems either, as she discovers during the Christmas break. Her father is not around and Máret is not told why. She does not ask, as she does not want to further burden her mother. Moreover, she is confused by the process of growing up from a child to a teenager. The longer she stays at school, the more uncomfortable she feels also at home during holidays. At one stage, a sense of ambivalence and emptiness characterizes her life both at home and school. She is let down and disappointed by her short-term friends but also her family, particularly her father whose absence, irresponsible behavior and occasional drinking causes trouble to an extent that Máret feels she cannot share her problems even with her family members.

Máret's dreams play a central role in portraying the level of the various internal conflicts and confusion she is dealing with. In some of them, she has two selves and in one of them, she also has two mothers and two fathers. The confusion between two cultures is particularly clear in one of her dreams where the two Márets have difficulties in communicating

with one another. One Máret is skiing up to the mountains with a heavy suitcase. The other Máret waits on the top, asking why the skier has not put her things, including high-heeled shoes, into a backpack.

“Why on earth are you dragging all that make-up with you? You’ve brought totally unnecessary stuff to the mountains!”

“They work well as a protection behind which I can hide.” (105)

In the dream, the two Márets represent her attempts to cope with and survive in the non-Sami world while remaining a Sami. It illustrates poignantly the confusion in negotiating her identity in a space of conflicting values and expectations. Her grounding is in the Sami world where she knows how to operate and survive. She feels insecure in the non-Sami world yet on a certain level, it also appeals to her. In that world, she needs a shield behind which she can hide from insults and attacks. This “shield” is, however, of the same world she feels the need to be protected from—high-heels and make-up which are not needed for survival in the Sami world as she knows it. Moreover, this “shield” is highly gendered, reflecting perhaps most of all, the pressures to conform not only to the dominant society in general but to the expectations that society places on its women in particular. At home, she is praised by her grandfather because she is very good at fishing but in the world of the school, she is faced with the norms of appearance and body image placed upon women by the patriarchal society.⁴⁸

An indication of the pervasiveness of colonialism and the values it represents, her yearning to the Finnish world also illustrates how colonial process works on several levels, some of which are very subliminal and unconscious. This subtle “colonization of the mind” can have a particularly tremendous effect on children who do not have the tools to understand and analyze their situation. Like any other child, Máret wants to be liked and accepted by people around her. In a vulnerable state and in hostile circumstances, she is open to influences that conflict and contradict the values stemming from her own background and upbringing.

Máret’s other dreams, however, become invaluable sources of survival, teaching her coping mechanisms and survival strategies in her difficulties. The dream that she has on the first night in school is particularly significant, representing a compelling metaphor of Máret’s new life and the challenges ahead of her. In the dream, she is on top of a mountain where flat ground “extends in every direction tens of miles” (21). She in-

tends to reach the highest peak which, she thinks, is not too far away. Suddenly, however, she encounters a deep, wide ravine that seems to be impossible to cross. The slopes of the ravine are slimy and slippery and down on the bottom, there are stormy rapids. Máret is not discouraged but she starts looking for a way to cross the ravine. Soon she finds two bridges nearby, one of which is too old and deteriorated to carry her weight and the other unfinished.

One could suggest that the flat ground and Máret's easy hike in the beginning represents her carefree life before school. Her desire to achieve the top of the highest mountain may symbolize her desire to succeed in school and in her life. The sudden encounter with a ravine and rapids represent the challenges she is faced with at school. Yet there is a way to get out of the troubles. The rotten bridge marks her current situation. She can no longer count on her family for support in the Finnish world. Instead, she needs new ways—a bridge that she needs to construct herself. The unfinished bridge in her dream already has a strong foundation—her Sami identity and culture—and now it is up to her to find ways to complete it.

In her dreams, Máret also looks for solace in the land that becomes her wise teacher. Traditionally, the natural world has played a crucial role in teaching daily survival skills to the Sami, as for many other Indigenous peoples. In her dreams, Máret is able to communicate with trees, plants, and animals.⁴⁹ In the forest, she is much more at ease than at school, to the extent that she wants to stay there with her new friends. An old pine tree, however, disagrees. In its view, Máret, as a human being, cannot live in the forest with plants but has to go to live with other people. A straw called Anne, gives the best advice to Máret: "I also used to be very lonely in this swamp and I felt that everyone is in my way. But then I started to learn to stretch myself towards the sun" (67). Taking the guidance to her heart, Máret also gradually learns to reach out and have the courage to seek friends who further encourage her to take her life in her own hands and instead of accepting the abuse, to contest it. Gradually, she is able to leave the slimy, slippery rocks and threatening rapids behind her and continue building her bridge with solid foundation to get to the other side safely.

Máret's background and culture has an enormous role in negotiating her complex circumstances particularly in school but also at home even though it is never stated explicitly. This comes through, however, in her

dreams loaded with powerful metaphors and messages, revealing the instinctive tendency to rely on her culture and what she has learned at home such as the importance of surrounding natural environment. At the end of the novel, not all her troubles are solved but the process of building the allegorical bridge has come to an end and Máret is able to continue her journey towards the mountains as she planned in the first dream of her story.

MY NAME IS SEEPEETZA: “HOMING IN”

The story of *My Name is Seepetza* is located in interior British Columbia, in the territory of Interior Salish and Shuswap peoples, in the region near places like Kamloops, Vernon, Merritt, and Chase. The protagonist, Seepetza or as she is known at school, Martha Stone, attends Kalamak Indian Residential School, located one hundred miles away from her home.⁵⁰ The school has four hundred Native students and is run mainly by Irish nuns and priests. Unlike *Čeppari*, the novel begins with Seepetza who, at twelve years old, has already been attending residential school for several years. She describes, however, her first days in school, just like Máret, as filled with fear and loneliness. Seepetza is scared about all the strict and violent nuns who punish for every nonobservance of the rules—talking, looking at boys, stepping out of line, to mention only few—by strapping or in some other way. In her journal, she notes: “My mum and dad never hit us” (83). In school, however, physical violence towards the children is so common that they attempt to “get used to it”:

Sister Superior carries the strap in her sleeve all the time. It looks like a short thick leather belt with a shiny tip. When someone is bad Sister Superior makes them put their hands out, palms up. Then she hits their hands with the strap usually about ten times. When you get used to it, it doesn't hurt that much but your hands sting, and you can't help crying. (18)

In the beginning, she is also bullied by an older girl who calls her a “dirty shamah,” a white person (20). Seepetza explains: “They say it like a dirty word. They ask me sometimes if I'm a shamah because I have green eyes. That's one reason I don't have many friends here” (29). And later: “Nobody wants to be friends with someone who looks like a shamah. Even Cookie avoids me most of the time” (85). In Seepetza's story, the

tension between children derives from a different set of dynamics than in Máret's. Seepeetza is bullied by other Native girls because she looks white, while Máret is intimidated by Finnish girls because she is (and clearly looks and behaves) Sami. With Seepeetza, the peer pressure is internal; she is "othered" because she looks like the people representing the oppressive, discriminatory system.

As a first-person narrative written in the form of a journal, *My Name is Seepeetza* compellingly interweaves the lives of school and home together.⁵¹ The way in which the narrator moves back and forth in time and space resembles strategies of other Native oral narrators using past incidents to comment on the present and vice versa.⁵² The activities at school cause her to describe her life at home with her extended family, characterized by joy, freedom, and various charming and humorous incidents. Perhaps due to her obviously strong emotional connection to home, home life, and family (maintained through keeping a journal during the school year), Seepeetza does not experience similar ambivalence between her own and the dominant culture to the same extent as Máret does. She tells about the gangs and bullying in school and although sometimes she is scared, it never grows into similar dimensions of prolonged, systematic oppression by peers as it does in Máret's story. Seepeetza learns quickly to hold her own and dares to tell her bullies to shut up (98).

As the title of the book suggests, names are very important in Seepeetza's story. Her Native identity is reflected in her Nlakapamux name given by her father and her knowledge of other Nlakapamux names in her family. At school, however, she is not allowed to use her name:

After that Sister Maura asked me what my name was. I said, "my name is Seepeetza." Then she got really mad like I did something terrible. She said never to say that word again. She told me if I had a sister go and ask what my name was. I went to the intermediate rec and found Dorothy lying on a bench reading comics. I asked her what my name was. She said it was Martha Stone. I said it over and over. (18)

As an individual's personal name is closely linked with one's identity, Sister Maura's act signifies not only the denial of Seepeetza's Nlakapamux identity but also a denigration of her Nativeness by reducing it into a bad word. The ban on Native names by school authorities has an impact on their usage even at home. After telling about the Native names and their

meanings in her family, Seepeetza notes that, “[w]e don’t use our Indian names much. My parents know we would get in trouble at school if we used them there” (78). The elders, however, know all the names, including white names and nicknames. In fact, “[t]hey know all about us,” as Seepeetza contends in her subtly humorous style (78).

Besides an attack on students’ Native identities, boarding schools placed an additional burden on Native girls in their domesticity training, which, according to K. Tsianina Lomawaima, “prepared them not to labor in their homes but as employees of white women or the boarding schools that trained them;” an integral part of domestic education “was to train Indian girls in subservience and submission to authority.”⁵³ Another important goal was the construction of the “ideal Indian Woman” with new standards of living and health and new desires for material possessions.⁵⁴ To do this, the various school authorities “had to teach Indian girls new identities, new skills and practices, new norms of appearance, and new physical mannerisms.”⁵⁵

In *My Name is Seepeetza* accounts of such domestic training are limited, but the nature of gendered training is nevertheless present. On Saturdays, students are expected to clean the entire school, including scrubbing, waxing, and shining the floors, cleaning the toilets, shining windows, and dusting (26). Seepeetza does not, however, specify whether it is only girls who had to partake in cleaning. Usually the tasks in boarding schools were strictly gendered: besides cleaning, girls were taught house-keeping, patching and needlework, and cooking, while boys had to take care of the farm and the animals.⁵⁶ After cleaning, Seepeetza and other girls have to polish their shoes, and iron Sunday clothes. Some girls curl their hair with bobby pins or curlers and even pluck their eyebrows and shave their legs (54).

Whether it is the school or mainstream society in general, the girls in Seepeetza’s story are instilled with a sense of a certain appearance—clean and tidy appearance within the limits of modesty. This is perhaps most obvious in Seepeetza’s accounts of their dance training and performances during which girls are even allowed to use make-up. In fact, dance performances play a bigger role in Seepeetza’s story than domestic education as such. On the one hand, she enjoys it: “It is always exciting to put on a concert. I like the smell of the ironed costumes, the colourful look of the folk dances, the sound of the applause when it keeps going for a long time” (59). On the other hand, she occasionally hates

being a dancer. Sister Theo just called me one day and told me I was to be a dancer. We have no play time. The other girls hate us because they say we are Sister's pets. The worst thing is that the audience can see our bloomers when we dance because Sister makes us lift our legs high. (63–64)

In the most indirect ways, Native girls are taught to be what is considered real or proper women. In *My Name is Seepeetza* they are not only taught to appear clean, they are also expected to perform and look pretty. The greatest irony and tragedy is, of course, that Seepeetza and other girls are immersed in Irish, Dutch, Ukrainian, Danish, Spanish, and Mexican dance traditions while they are not taught anything about their own cultures. No wonder that Seepeetza's great-grandmother had not wanted her mother and her siblings to attend school.⁵⁷ In the great-grandmother's view, "school would turn them into white people. They wouldn't be able to hunt or fish or make baskets or anything useful anymore" (30).

Seepeetza is, however, able to remain grounded in her culture and family relations, for instance, by bringing aspects of her cultural practices to school. One day, when the children are given some old dolls by someone from town, she takes one and buries it into a hole in order to save it from the cold. Another girl sees this and suggests to her that she can be a grandmother who has *stsa-wen*, dried fish. The two girls sit down on the playground, chewing an old dried piece of pinewood, acting as if they were at a real funeral. They share dried salmon, basic food for the Native peoples of the region, and talk a few words in their own language as they have seen their parents and other adults do at the funeral potlatch. In this way, acting out customs and practices that they have learned at home, Seepeetza and other Native children are able, although in secret and through playing games, to reenact their social and cultural conventions even at residential school where these practices are banned.

Moreover, in her journal, Seepeetza frequently tells about incidents related to the customs, ceremonies, and traditional knowledge of her people, demonstrating the living and continuing connection to her cultural heritage and background. The time spent with her extended family, whether it is working with her parents, listening to stories or riding horses, defines her Native identity in contrast to her new life at residential school. She also emphasizes the significance of stories in her life. At home, learning takes place in the form of stories. Seepeetza describes how stories are

told at various occasions such as around the campfire, during preparing meals, visiting other people, berry picking, and hunting. Some of the stories are origin stories, such as Seepeetza's grandmother Yay-ah's story about a spider who brought the skill of weaving to her people.

It could be suggested that Seepeetza constructs her survivance through what William Bevis has called "homing in," or returning home—a common characteristics of Native American novels; as he points out, most Native American novels are "'incentric,' centripetal, converging, contracting."⁵⁸ Even if Seepeetza does not leave home voluntarily as the protagonists in the novels analyzed by Bevis, the idea of returning home, in the form of journal entries, is nevertheless very similar. Through her almost daily writing, Seepeetza "homes herself in" during the school year when she cannot physically go home. By "homing in," she is able to maintain a strong sense of belonging to her Native self and culture.

Moreover, humor is an important strategy of survivance for Seepeetza. In spite of her physically, mentally, and spiritually hard experiences at the residential school, she manages to maintain a certain level of cheerfulness which helps her to resist her role as a victim. In her writing, she also writes about funny and positive incidents with the nuns and priests, making them appear more human. The underlying sense of humor in her narration style sets it apart from many other stories about residential school.⁵⁹ When asked if humor was something she wanted to consciously include into her story, Shirley Sterling replies that it came naturally as it is a central part of her people's storytelling.

Many Native people have indicated the power of humor in daily survival and it is also a central part of Vizenor's notion of survivance.⁶⁰ It is considered a strategy of addressing complex and even painful issues related to colonialism and its consequences. Paula Gunn Allen notes:

Humor is widely used by Indians to deal with life. Indian gatherings are marked by laughter and jokes, many directed at the horrors of history, at the continuing impact of colonization, and at the biting knowledge that living as an exile in one's own land necessitates.⁶¹

"Laughing off" oppression is a dimension of using humor as a coping mechanism and strategy. Wayne Tefs remarks how allowing fears and anxieties "to emerge as self-reflexive fun, rather than as fury and anger, oppressed groups give themselves a chance to alter their conditions without resorting to violence and bloodshed."⁶² In *My Name is Seepeetza* hu-

mor does not undermine the seriousness of the topic, as one might assume. In effect, it is quite the opposite: humor stresses the often-painful adaptation into the extremely regimented colonial school system with its arbitrary rules and regulations. As Seepetza is unable to change her circumstances at school, humor may function as subversion and a distancing mechanism to shun part of the pain away. Her underpinning sense of humor ameliorates the harshness of her daily life in school.

There are many similarities in the stories of Máret and Seepetza, indicating particularly the power and pervasiveness of colonial and racist ideologies worldwide in the mid-twentieth century. The Indigenous identities of both girls were put under erasure by the colonial educational system which, despite their differences in Finland and Canada, resulted in similar reactions and effects. The girls, however, do not remain passive recipients of this education but actively seek to find ways to cope with new challenges and to negotiate a balance between the lives of home and school. Despite the odds, both girls are also very smart and successful in school. Further, their stories are similar in their experiences of loneliness, although generally Seepetza has more support from her siblings in particular, but also her friend Cookie.

Both Máret's and Seepetza's stories are characterized by a pull between resistance and accommodation which is a common trait among boarding school attendees.⁶³ This does not mean, however, submission to the values and views that school represents. As David Wallace Adams notes, adaptation and accommodation were not synonymous with surrender.⁶⁴ This is also pointed out by Sally J. McBeth, who stresses the elusive nature of concepts of acceptance and resistance.⁶⁵ The pull between various forces often manifests itself as internal ambivalence which is particularly palpable in *Čeppari Čáráhus* and in Máret's dreams where she often has two selves, one who is clearly Sami and another, who attempts to belong in the dominant, non-Sami society. Oscillating between two worlds and cultures, the protagonist in Vuolab's novel finds solace in nature. While not an overt form of resistance, it is a coping mechanism reflecting the perception of the world in which the land is considered a relation, common to many Indigenous peoples.⁶⁶ Seepetza, on the other hand, finds a companion in writing and keeping a secret journal with which she is able to relate and connect with stories of her extended family and relations. In this way, she is able to balance her life—while physically in the residential

school, mentally she is with her family on her home ranch participating in daily activities and listening to the numerous stories by various family members. She is also able to look at the incidents in school with a distinctive sense of humor which functions as a very intricate form of criticism, making the nuns and priests and their habits appear, besides appalling, also confoundedly ridiculous. Seepetza's wry sense of humor also is an ingenious way of appearing on the surface as simple or even childish while it is very revealing in what it leaves untold.

In spite of the pressures of assimilation and racism, the underpinning motives in both *Čeppari Čáráhus* and *My Name is Seepetza* is the persistence of culture manifested through various coping mechanisms and subversive strategies, however subtle, in a situation where neither culture nor survival skills are encouraged but rather suppressed. Both stories emphasize survivance, the fusion of survival and resistance, refusing to remain victims of the oppressive system and mentality. In Máret's and Seepetza's stories the emphasis is on skillful mediation and the discovery of the occasionally fragile balance between the worlds of home and school.

Both Máret and Seepetza are able to find a way which is not merely a response to dominance, but as Vizenor emphasizes, an active standpoint and a presence. In their presence, Máret and Seepetza are not, however, in search of an authentic self. Instead, they actively engage in the process of finding meaningful existence in their current circumstances. The girls' negotiation of their survivance in the challenging context of residential school constitutes a standpoint through which they both learn to view their world multidimensionally with a new sense of strength and self-respect.

NOTES

1. Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 8.
2. See Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London: Zed, 1999), 64.
3. See, for instance, Chakravorty Gayatri Spivak, "A Literary Representation of the Subaltern," *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (London: Methuen, 1987).
4. Kateri Damm, "Dispelling and Telling. Speaking Native Realities in Maria

Campbell's *Halfbreed* and Beatrice Culleton's *In Search of April Raintree*," in *Looking at the Words of Our People: First Nations Analysis of Literature*, ed. Jeannette Armstrong (Penticton BC: Theytus Books, 1993), 95. The autobiographies of Maria Campbell and Beatrice Culleton are: Maria Campbell, *Halfbreed. A Proud and Bitter Canadian Legacy* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1978); Beatrice Culleton, *In Search of April Raintree* (Winnipeg: Pemmican, 1983).

5. Jeannette Armstrong, "The Disempowerment of First North American Native Peoples and Empowerment through Their Writing," in *An Anthology of Canadian Native Literature in English*, ed. Daniel David Moses and Terry Goldie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 209.

6. Compare to, Janice Acoose, *Iskwewak—Kah' Ki Yaw Ni Wahkomakanak. Neither Indian Princesses Nor Easy Squaws* (Toronto: Women's Press, 1995), 6.

7. Gerald Vizenor and A. Robert Lee, *Postindian Conversations* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), 91.

8. Compare to, Spivak, "A Literary Representation of the Subaltern."

9. Vizenor and Lee, *Postindian Conversations*, 82, 91.

10. David Wallace Adams, *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience 1875–1928* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1995); Brenda J. Child, *Boarding School Seasons: American Indian Families, 1900–1940* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998); Michael C. Coleman, *American Indian Children at School, 1850–1930* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1993); Celia Haig-Brown, *Resistance and Renewal: Surviving the Indian Residential School* (Vancouver: Tillicum, 1988), 29–32.

11. Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 231.

12. In the introduction of her novel, Vuolab notes that although the story is not an autobiography, the story stems from her own experiences. This is the case also for Sterling who has fictionalized her own story into the story of Martha Stone/Seepeetza. Kerttu Vuolab, *Čeppari Čáráhus* (Kárásjohka: Davvi Girji, 1994); Shirley Sterling, *My Name is Seepeetza* (Toronto: Groundwood/Douglas & McIntyre, 1992).

13. Damm, "Dispelling and Telling," 109; Arnold Krupat, *The Voice in the Margin: Native American Literature and the Canon* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 161–62.

14. Krupat, *The Voice in the Margin*, 132.

15. Krupat, *The Voice in the Margin*, 133.

16. The Sami are the Indigenous people of Northern Europe who, in the course of colonial history, have been divided by the nation-states of Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russia. Previously called as the Lapps or Laplanders by outsiders, the Sami have claimed their right for their own collective term deriving from their own languages (*sápmelaš* in Northern Sami). Moreover, the terms "Lapp" or "Laplander" is considered negative and derogative and today, is used particularly

by Finns living in Northern Finland (a.k.a. Lapland) to refer to themselves to further confuse the already complex and conflicting issue of Sami land rights.

17. Elizabeth Furniss, *Victims of Benevolence: The Dark Legacy of the Williams Lake Residential School* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 1992), 7, 8.

18. Furniss, *Victims of Benevolence*, 11-12; John S. Milloy, *A National Crime: The Canadian Government and the Residential School System 1879-1986* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1999), xiii.

19. Mary-Ellen Kelm, *Colonizing Bodies: Aboriginal Health and Healing in British Columbia* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1998), 59.

20. Terry Glavin and Former Students of St. Mary's, *Amongst God's Own. The Enduring Legacy of St. Mary's Mission* (Mission BC: Mission Indian Friendship Centre, 2002), 11.

21. Milloy, *A National Crime*, xv.

22. See Milloy, *A National Crime*.

23. Haig-Brown, *Resistance and Renewal*, 29-32. According to Haig-Brown, until the 1950s, Native children were kept in the residential school eleven months of the year (79).

24. Haig-Brown, *Resistance and Renewal*, 52.

25. Haig-Brown, *Resistance and Renewal*, 61. Only a chosen few boys were carefully chosen to attend "semi-private dialogic meetings with stimulating instructors." This kind of practice seemed to support the hierarchical system and thinking embedded in European society according to which "a special few are entitled to privileges unfit for the general population" (Haig-Brown, 73).

26. Haig-Brown, *Resistance and Renewal*, 64.

27. Haig-Brown, *Resistance and Renewal*, 64. Analyzing the psychological and social consequences of residential schools in Canada, Roland Chrisjohn and Sherri Young point out that the common discrepancy between the rhetoric and reality with regard to residential schooling prevails still today and is also evident in what the researchers call "the Standard Account." As an act of contrition, this account neatly eliminates all the problems and concerns related to residential schools. It is, however, "a pernicious, misleading, and immoral myth" and in effect, represents another crime. In reality, the residential school system was one of many attempts of genocide that continues today in present-day policies and practices but also in the conceptual worldview that gave rise to it. To justify and engage Canadian society in genocide, a number of social, legal, religious, political, and economic rationalizations were created and mobilized. Note Chrisjohn and Young: "The creation of Indian Residential Schools followed a time-tested method of obliterating Indigenous cultures, and the psychosocial consequences these schools would have on Aboriginal Peoples were well understood at the time of their formation." Roland David Chrisjohn, Sherri Lynn Young, and Michael Marun, *The Circle Game: Shadows and Substance in the Indian Residential School Experience in*

- Canada (Penticton BC: Theytus Books, 1997), 4.
28. Haig-Brown, *Resistance and Renewal*, 64-67.
29. Aage Solbakk, *Ávjovári-Kárásjoga historjá 1. 1553–1900* (Kárásjohka: Davvi Girji/Kárásjoga giealda, 2000), 32–52.
30. Solbakk, *Ávjovári-Kárásjoga historjá 1*, 428.
31. Solbakk, *Ávjovári-Kárásjoga historjá 1*, 258–62.
32. Solbakk, *Ávjovári-Kárásjoga historjá 1*, 267–75.
33. Solbakk, *Ávjovári-Kárásjoga historjá 1*, 429–49.
34. Teuvo Lehtola, *Lapinmaan vuosituhanhet: Saamelaisten ja Lapin historia kivikaudelta 1930-luvulle* (Inari: Kustannus Puntsi, 1996).
35. Jon Todal, “Minorities With a Minority: Language and the School in the Sami Areas of Norway,” *Language, Culture and Curriculum* 11 (1998): 354–66.
36. Todal, “Minorities With a Minority: Language and the School in the Sami Areas of Norway,” 354–66.
37. Samuli Aikio, *Olbmot ovdal min. Sámiid historjá 1700-logu rádjái* (Ohcejohka: Sámi Instituhtta/Girjegiisá, 1992), 213. Some scholars have argued that there have always been two different approaches to Sami language and culture by the church and surrounding kingdoms; one of assimilation and eradication, and another of preservation and protection. See H. Salvesen, “Sami Ædnan: Four States—One Nation. Nordic Minority Policy and the History of the Sami,” in *Ethnicity and Nation Building in the Nordic World*, ed. Sven Tägil (London: Hurst, 1995), 120–21. It is possible, however, to consider these apparently contradictory approaches as two sides of the same coin—insidious colonial practices promoting interests of the states over the Sami territory. Occasionally, there have also been representatives of the clergy who have candidly spoken against the assimilation of the Sami, especially during the official assimilation policies in the nineteenth century. See Einar Niemi, “Sami History and the Frontier Myth: A Perspective on the Northern Sami Spatial and Rights History,” in *Sami Culture in a New Era. The Norwegian Sami Experience*, ed. Harald Gaski (Kárásjohka: Davvi Girji, 1997), 74.
38. Veli-Pekka Lehtola, *Saamelainen evakko. Rauhan kansa sodan jaloissa* (Vaasa: City Sámit, 1994), 217–23.
39. There were also some mixed schools in Canada. See, for instance, Jean Barman, “Separate and Unequal: Indian and White Girls at All Hallows School, 1884–1920,” in *Indian Education in Canada. Vol. 1: The Legacy*, ed. Jean Barman, Yvonne Hébert, and Don McCaskill (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1986), 110–31.
40. K. Tsianina Lomawaima summarizes the history of federal Indian education as follows: “The United States government established off-reservation boarding schools in the late 1800s as part of its civilizing plan to transform Native American people. Federal policymakers and administrators cooperated to remove thousands of Native American children and young adults from their families, homes

and tribes in order to educate them in a new way of life. Indian education flowed far beyond academic or vocational boundaries, soaking the child's growing up in the cleansing bath of Christian labor. Tribal/communal identity, primitive language, heathen religion: these pernicious influences would be rooted out and effaced in the construction of a new kind of American citizen" (xi). The boarding school system in the United States thus largely corresponded to the structure and ideology of its Canadian counterpart. In the U.S. however, not all boarding schools were run by churches. K. Tsianina Lomawaima, *They Called it Prairie Light: The Story of Chillico Indian School* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994).

41. Kerttu Vuolab, "All Situations Were Occasions for Stories," in *No Beginning, No End. The Sami Speak Up*, ed. Kaarina Kailo and Elina Helander (Edmonton: Canadian Circumpolar Institute/Nordic Sami Institute, 1998), 49.

42. Vuolab, "All Situations Were Occasions for Stories," 50.

43. Vuolab, "All Situations Were Occasions for Stories," 50.

44. Haig-Brown, *Resistance and Renewal*, 119.

45. Lomawaima, *They Called it Prairie Light*, xi. As far as I am concerned, there are no records of Sami children dying in boarding schools in similar numbers as those in Canada or the United States. As with other aspects of the Sami residential school experience, there is very little research on this. In order to get a better understanding of this period of history that radically changed Sami society, more studies are urgently needed.

46. Vuolab's novel has not been translated into English, and I have translated the quoted material that appears in this essay from the original text.

47. Children in the school yard call her a *Čeppari Čáráhus*, *Čeppari* meaning "a student who is too good-natured and smart." *Čáráhus* is "an ancient figure of Sami oral tradition which annoys people in their dreams, being both a burden and shame for people." Vuolab, *Čeppari Čáráhus*, 5.

48. There is another instance in *Čeppari Čáráhus* where Máret envies the tall, skinny looks of her bullies and their fashionable clothing.

49. Though the ability to communicate with the natural environment could be viewed as a child's vivid imagination, it also is an important aspect of many Indigenous philosophies that consider the natural world as part of the interconnected web of relations in which human beings are only one element among many. The significance of land for a people whose survival has been directly linked to it is clear, but cannot, however, be idealized or romanticized. Warning against the mystical, misty-eyed discourse of Indigenous peoples and land, Linda Tuhiwai Smith points out that "our survival as peoples has come from our knowledge of our contexts, our environment, not from some active beneficence of our Earth Mother. We had to know how to survive." Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 12–13.

50. Kalamak is a fictionalized place. Shirley Sterling herself went to the Kamloops Indian Residential School. Seepetza is Sterling's own Nlakapamux name.

51. A comparison here could be drawn to Australian Aboriginal writer Anita Heiss's novel *Who Am I? The Diary of Mary Talence*, which is written in the form of a journal and tells a story of a young girl who is removed from her family and placed in a Aboriginal children's home. Anita Heiss, *Who Am I? The Diary of Mary Talence Sydney 1937* (Lindfield NSW: Scholastic Press, 2001).

52. Greg Sarris, *Keeping Slug Woman Alive: A Holistic Approach to American Indian Texts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Julie Cruikshank with Angela Sidney, Kitty Smith, and Annie Ned, *Life Lived Like a Story: Life Stories of Three Yukon Native Elders* (Vancouver: University British Columbia Press, 1990).

53. Lomawaima, *They Called It Prairie Light*, 81.

54. Kelm, *Colonizing Bodies*; Alice Littlefield, "Learning to Labor: Native American Education in the United States, 1880–1930," in *The Political Economy of North American Indians*, ed. John H. Moore (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993), 43–59; Lomawaima, *They Called It Prairie Light*.

55. Lomawaima, *They Called It Prairie Light*, 90.

56. See Lomawaima, *They Called It Prairie Light*.

57. Parents' opposition to boarding schools and white schooling in general was widespread, as noted by Adams, *Education for Extinction*, see especially chapter 7.

58. William Bevis, "Native American Novels: Homing In," in *Recovering the Word: Essays on Native American Literature*, ed. Brian Swann and Arnold Krupat (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 582. As Bevis suggests, this practice stands in contrast to white American literary tradition where "number of American 'classics' tell of *leaving home* to find one's fate farther and farther away" (581; emphasis added).

59. Also in *Geniesh*, Jane Willis's (1973) autobiographical story about her residential school experiences, humor plays a significant role in her survival. As Barbara Godard points out: Willis's "sense of humour frames her bitterly ironic anecdotes" (1985). Barbara Godard, "Talking about Ourselves: The Literary Production of the Native Women of Canada," *The CRIAW Papers* No. 11. (Ottawa: Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women, 1985); Jane Willis, *Geniesh: An Indian Girlhood* (Toronto: New, 1973).

60. As survivance repudiates victimry and tragedy and dominance, it celebrates comic narratives. Vizenor asserts that "tribal cultures are *comic* or mostly comic. Yet they have been interpreted as tragic by social scientists . . . not tragic because they're 'vanishing' or something like that, but tragic in their worldview—and they're *not* tragic in their worldview . . . in tragic worldview people are rising above everything. And you can characterize Western patriarchal monotheistic manifest-destiny civilization as tragic . . . because of acts of isolation, their heroic acts of conquering something, always overcoming adversity, doing *better than* whatever, proving something, being rewarded for it, facing the risks to do this and usually doing it alone and almost always at odds with nature." Gerald Vizenor,

25 wide x 41.6 deep

6 x 9 with 4.6 pi head, 5 pi gutter, 25 pi, **verso**, template 6x9-4x25f.ptf

“Follow the Trickroutes: An interview with Gerald Vizenor,” in *Survival This Way: Interviews with American Indian Poets*, ed. J. Bruchac (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1987), 287–310, 295.

61. Paula Gunn Allen, *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986), 158.

62. Wayne Tefs, “Reaching and Grasping,” review of *Truth & Bright Water*, by Thomas King, *Border Crossings* 18:4 (1999): 87.

63. Sally J. McBeth, *Ethnic Identity and Boarding School Experience of West-Central Oklahoma American Indians* (Washington: University Press of America, 1983).

64. Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 240.

65. McBeth, *Ethnic Identity and Boarding School Experience*, 128.

66. Adams tells about Charles Eastman, a Lakota who later became a doctor and writer, who also used to go to the woods to clear his mind while attending Santee Indian School. Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 240.