



Symposium
**Narratives of Resistance
and Radical Resurgence
from Canada / Turtle Island**

UNIVERSIDAD DE SALAMANCA

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BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

Bridging Divides: Centering Indigenous Kinship Ethics in Literature and Criticism.

Ana M^a Fraile

This talk heeds the recent shift in cultural criticism and creative writing toward imagining “a functional ecology of knowledges in Canada” that takes its conceptual lead from Indigenous epistemologies. Through close readings of Thomas King’s novel *The Back of the Turtle* (2014), Wayde Compton’s short-story collection *The Outer Harbour* (2014), and Daniel Coleman’s nonfiction book *Yardwork: A Biography of an Urban Place* (2017), the paper reveals the connection between Indigenous notions of kinship and the turn to trans-systemic epistemologies in contemporary Canadian literature and criticism from distinct Indigenous, Afro-diasporic, and Euro-settler cultural backgrounds. The analysis draws on Indigenous theories on kinship underlying Indigenous resurgence and decolonization, and sets them in conversation with King’s reflections on story-telling and world-building, Compton’s theoretical charting of African Canadian space as Afroperipheral within diaspora criticism, and Coleman’s self-retraining to redefine settler belonging and knowledge. The analysis leads to the conclusion that, by promoting the awareness of the interdependence between the natural environment, humans, and other-than-human beings that is central to Indigenous epistemologies, these works constitute a key contribution to the shift toward the construction of an ecology of knowledges, and hold the potential for renewed decolonizing efforts, social justice and environmental sustainability.

'These people here want me to tell my story': Representing Residential School Testimony in Richard Wagamese's *Indian Horse*.

Sophie McCall

This paper examines how Ojibwe writer Richard Wagamese's novel, *Indian Horse*, approaches the representation of residential school history, and the ethical challenges this history poses to both writers and scholars addressing this subject. While Wagamese has written essays that could be said to defend 'reconciliation' as a framework for addressing social injustices in the context of Indigenous-settler relations in Canada, his novel reveals the complexities of this concept, asking for whom and to what ends reconciliation is advanced as a social policy. Wagamese's novel suggests that reconciliation is best understood not as mending settler-Indigenous relationships, but rather as Indigenous people's reclamation of territories, stories, and kinship ties. Furthermore, the novel demonstrates a larger movement or impulse in artistic and cultural work by survivors and intergenerational survivors to expand what counts as voicing testimony, and to imagine testimony outside of the framework of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Canada (TRC). Wagamese has found new and startling ways to draw attention to the ethics of speaking for, about, and with others, while refusing predetermined frames in the telling of survivors' and their extended family's stories. He has taken control over the structural devices of documentation, confronting the lie of idealism embedded within Christian, liberal-democratic discourses of reconciliation, and insisting upon the material histories of residential schools. This struggle over the frame of how to tell these stories has high stakes when it comes to asserting control over what Stó:lō scholar Dylan Robinson calls the "intergenerational responsibility" of residential schools.

The novel is structured into four parts, dramatizing a recurring pattern of leaving and returning. Part 1 describes the Indian Horse family living on the land within a context Anishinaabe stories, territories, ancestors, and family, even as the family members cope with the intergenerational trauma of ongoing settler colonial incursions. Part 2 focuses on Saul's experiences at residential school and the ethical challenges of speaking on behalf of those who are no longer here to voice their experiences. While Part 3 details Saul's journeys away from Ojibwe territories, stories, and communities, Part 4 stages a return home that necessitates multiple returns to places of pain and dislocation. Through these multiple exiles and returns, Wagamese's novel prompts the following questions: how does the novel engage with current political and social discussions relating to "truth" and "reconciliation" in Canada, particularly in the context of residential school history? How does it represent testimony from residential school survivors, as well as those who did not survive? How does it imagine Anishinaabe-centred cultural resurgence, and how does it reclaim Anishinaabe stories, territories, and modes of healing? And, of course, what does hockey have to do with any of this?

Brother: kinship, violence, and narrative form.

David Chariandy

This will be a reading from *Brother* for the event on Wednesday 12th, focusing on how I explored key questions such as kinship, Black masculinities, suburban space, state violence, racial trauma, and 'turntabalism' (hip hop) as a writer.

An Overview of Contemporary Black Canadian Literature: A Writer's Perspective

David Chariandy

In recent years, Black Canadian writers like Esi Edugyan, Lawrence Hill, and Dionne Brand have penned some of the most celebrated and internationally prominent works of contemporary literature in English. Yet Black Canadian literature is by no means a recent phenomena. It boasts a 200 year archive which includes slave narratives; and it references a deeper 400 years of complicated Black presence in 'the Americas.' In this seminar, I will offer an overview of Black Canadian literature as both a critic and writerly contributor to the field, drawing attention to its cultural and formal plurality, and highlighting its unique contributions to urgent global debates on diasporic identity, cultural memory, social justice struggle, and the politics of 'race.'

“The idea of what's possible”: Reading for Resurgence in Wagamese's Novel *Indian Horse*.

Aubrey Hanson

Is *Indian Horse* a novel of resurgence? In the context of contemporary Indigenous self-determination, resurgence is a powerful framework, describing (re)growth and (re)generation from strong Indigenous roots into vital Indigenous futures. Resurgence refuses colonial boundaries, emphasizing the continuity of Indigenous knowledge systems and lifeways: Indigenous people are knowing, being, and doing, “as we have always done” (Simpson, 2017). Indigenous literary writings are often beautiful vehicles of resurgence, depicting Indigenous resilience in the face of colonial violence and dreaming better futures growing from Indigenous communities' strengths. In the context of the ongoing impacts of the Indian Residential School system, this visioning and rebuilding work is essential for Indigenous people (McKegney, 2007).

Richard Wagamese's 2012 novel *Indian Horse* tells the story of Saul Indian Horse, who endures immense loss in his family and horrific years in the deeply oppressive environment of St. Jerome's Indian Residential School. Saul also possesses a magical gift passed down from his great-grandfather, one that enables him to flourish as a uniquely skilled hockey player. While hockey at first lifts him up out of the violence experienced at St. Jerome's and toward a bright future, it also leads Saul into dark confrontations with racist structures in 20th-century Canadian society, halting his upward trajectory. This session explores the possibility of seeing resurgence in Saul's journey and in the novel's conclusion. As Saul grapples with “the idea of what's possible” in his own life path (Wagamese, 2012, p. 210), is it possible for us, as readers, to identify moments of resurgence in his story?

Works Cited

McKegney, S. (2007). *Magic weapons: Aboriginal writers remaking community after residential school*. Winnipeg, MB: University of Manitoba Press.

Simpson, L. B. (2017). *As we have always done: Indigenous freedom through radical resistance*. Minneapolis, MN: U of Minnesota Press.

Wagamese, R. (2012). *Indian Horse*. Vancouver, BC: Douglas & McIntyre.

Politics, Poetics, and Protest: The Incarceration of Poet Rita Wong.

Kit Dobson

This talk examines the intersection between poetics and politics, animated in part by Joan Retallack's concept of poethics. In August of 2018, Vancouver-based poet and faculty member Rita Wong was arrested during a protest against a pipeline expansion in the suburb of Burnaby. In August of 2019, after entering a not guilty plea and mounting a defense of necessity, Wong was found guilty and sentenced to 28 days in prison in a court decision condemned by Amnesty International. Wong's poetry is evidence of a commitment to water, to Indigenous rights, and to an aesthetic practice that sees political action and artistic practices as coterminous. This talk argues that Wong's poethical engagement with water provides a means of understanding what is at stake in her incarceration. I will focus in particular upon her sentencing statement, published online by both her publisher and PEN Canada, in order to unpack what is at stake for Wong, for the environment, and for poetry in this recent event.