



LITERARY CULTURES:
*THE LAND OF
HOPE AND TOIL*

Special Issue

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ARTICLES

The Hybrid World – WRITTEN BY KAI NORTHCOTT

REVIEWS

'Indian Horse' Film Review – WRITTEN BY DOMINIC

A Review of Billy Belcourt's 'This Wound is a World' – WRITTEN BY EVE COLEY

Film Review of 'Round Up' – WRITTEN BY SA

Canadian History: How Accurate is it? – WRITTEN BY ANDREW AP

'Finding Farley': A Review – WRITTEN BY MADDISON L.

SPECIAL ISSUE EDITORIAL

This Special Issue is a continuation of the academic Journal, *The Land of Hope and Toil*. Given the extensive number of reviews and articles we received, we decided to celebrate the articles and reviews not published in the Journal by having them assigned their own Special Issue.

The theme, *The Land of Hope and Toil*, was formed from the lines of the Canadian National Anthem: 'Thou land of hope for all who toil' and through this our writers have explored Canadian Identity, immigration, and Xenophobia present in Canada and more specifically Indigenous communities. Just like the Journal, the special issue is a collaborative effort based on the interactive, collaboration of poetry, *High Muck a Muck: Playing Chinese*, inspired by Fred Wah's *Diamond Grill*, with the Canadian students from Kwantlen Polytechnic University in Surrey, Canada.

The first review which tackles these themes is written by Eve Coley. Coley reviews Billy Ray Belcourt's poetry collection *This Wound is a World*, which provides insight into the experiences of growing up as a member of the LGBTQ+ community and as an Indigenous Canadian who still feels the effects of colonialism today. Another piece of work which discusses issues of identity is the documentary, 'Speak it! From the Heart of Black Nova Scotia', reviewed by Andrew AP. In his reviews Andrew discusses how Afro-Canadians in Nova Scotia feel undervalued in terms of their history not being included in the curriculum in Canadian schools.

Dominic explores the film 'Indian Horse', based on Richard Wagamese's 2011 novel, and whilst the novel succeeds in bringing to light the harrows of residential schools' Indigenous children were forced to attend and the implications on their lives afterwards, Dominic considers how the film omitting Indigenous culture and traditions is detrimental to the film's narrative and overall influence. Similarly, SA reviews the film 'Round Up', which records Pete Standing Alone's attempt to regain his culture after the devastation the residential schools left on Indigenous culture and traditions. Maddison L. reviews the film 'Finding Farley', in which Leanne Allison and her husband, Karsten Heuer, embark on a journey across Canada to meet author Farley Mowat. The journey itself is a homage to the author. The couple use modes of transport including canoe, van, motorboat, a small prop plane, a train, and a wooden schooner, all once used by the author.

Included in this Special Issue is an article written by Kai Northcott. This article assiduously discusses Cultural Hybridization through reference to *Diamond Grill* written by Fred Wah and *I am a Japanese Writer* written by Dany Laferrière. The inclusion of this article in the Special Issue aims to provide a more innovative perspective on the 'ambiguity of culture'.

As a tribute to the individuality of people, cultures, and beliefs each article and review in the Special Issue boasts a different colour, this is done in the hopes that each varying colour will act as a beacon for readers to be able to find return to the articles they found most inspiring with greater ease.

In addition to the Journal and the Special Issue, the students from NTU and KPU have produced a conference, multiple podcasts, a blog and multiple social media accounts on twitter

and Instagram respectively. The cover art for both the Journal and Special Issue was commissioned to an external graphic designer - [@jaydehankins](#).

Abbegail de Wit and Ellie Jacobson
Editor-in-Chief and Book Reviews Editor

Links to External Sites

Twitter – [@LHT_NTU](#)

Instagram – [@lht_ntu](#)

Conference – Can be found on YouTube: [‘Conference: Land of Hope and Toil’](#)

Blog – [Land of Hope and Toil](#)

Podcast – [Land of Hope and Toil Podcast](#)

THE HYBRID WORLD

CULTURAL HYBRIDIZATION IN *DIAMOND GRILL* AND *I AM A JAPANESE WRITER*

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Abstract

This essay tackles the ambiguity of culture through the lens of *Diamond Grill*, and *I am a Japanese Writer*. These texts deconstruct the concreteness of culture and identity. The world's interconnectivity is producing a fluidity of culture more than ever, and diverse countries such as Canada are struggling to define themselves. Writers such as Fred Wah and Dany Laferrière find themselves in conflict with their own cultural identities, and attempt to navigate this ambiguity through their writing.

Culture is now confused. We live in an age of complete connectivity. Lines have less meaning, and the world is becoming more fluid. Everything is a spectrum. Individualism is at the forefront of a global movement. Yet, we are still defined by groups such as Canadian, Chinese, Japanese, Black, White, Irish, the list is inexhaustible. As soon as you come to the end, a new identity would be made. How can we navigate this sliding landscape and not tumble into chaos? Who is it we truly are? It is in the literary world we can find the answers, or more useful questions. Both *I Am Japanese Writer* and *Diamond Grill* frustrate notions of culture and identity. They are occupied with the hybridisation of this new world and approach it from different

perspectives. Canada is a place defined by its blended culture. It pretends to be multicultural, but both Laferrière and Wah question the motives behind such terms. It does not seem to represent the fullness of their identity, compressing Chinese, Immigrant, Swedish, Black into a single word. Canadian.

Fred Wah's *Diamond Grill* is an act of rebellion. It is personal, it is experimental, and it is defiant. Wah grapples, tackles, sideways slants the notion of identity. He is an Americanised carbonated diner mixed with bok choy. Fred Wah uses *Diamond Grill* to reclaim his voice, and his voice alone. However, by carving out bark to etch his own ambiguity, it opens the floor for everyone. It

deconstructs the social aspects of culture, allowing for more self-determination. This is the difference between literature and the literary. The literary is occupied not with inclusion, not with true openness, but with argumentation. It speaks through a certain framework, the same voice that props up the status quo in Canada. Writing within the academic structure words are filtered through another culture, the literary world. Academic language imposes itself onto the article. It persists through a Western ideology that can never truly represent the full character of the Canadian experience. It is instead of it's, a formality that supposes superiority, a certain structure of thought which extends beyond the simple condescension of condensing into form and ideas. Laferrière even points out his own Eurocentric thinking, 'I confine myself to semiology' he says.¹ By engaging with the literary world, both Wah's and Laferrière's identities are distorted so that the word Canadian means even less.

The structure of the literary world is a pseudo analytical one, in which stories are intellectualised. Laferrière and Wah reject the normative approach of literary theory and seek to disrupt the status quo. Its formality cannot

adequately represent them. Instead of trying to pin down definition and attach arbitrary labels, values, assign meanings, and decipher texts, they frustrate with an active ambiguity. An ambiguity that is not just an admittance of the unknown but a refusal to know.

However, Wah is a literary academic. He uses Western terms like 'poetics' to frame his arguments on ethnicity.² At its core, Literary criticism is Eurocentric and occupied with a wholeness. It seeks to encapsulate everything. Wah actively speaks against multiculturalism for this reason. It wants flatness, a technicolour blanket woven from our differences, and there is a desperation with which it shawls itself over the problems of the world and tries to be fuzzy and warm. The world is not made of rainbows. People are 'snarls' competing or being drowned out.³ Identity is imposed, and we must fit inside the cultural frameworks around us. For the purposes of a Visa, he is Canadian but inside Canada Wah is everything but.

Diamond Grill does not lay itself out according to convention. The chapters come in snapshots and without a sense of time, it blends between scenes and switches

¹ Dany Laferrière, *I am a Japanese Writer* (Douglas McIntyre: Madiera Park, 2011), p.10.

² Fred Wah, 'A poetics of ethnicity', in *Twenty Years of Multiculturalism: Successes and Failures*,

ed. by Stella Hryniuk (Saint John's College Press: Winnipeg, 1992), pp. 99-110.

³ Fred Wah, *Diamond Grill* (NeWest Press: Alberta, 2006) p.53.

perspectives without warning, without explanation. Text comes in blocks, grafted out, chipped, and chiselled but the language can seep into the poetic and back again. At every turn there is deception, and you cannot know it from looking at its surface. Wah himself is 'camouflaged by [...] colourlessness'.⁴ Comprehension requires contemplation and engagement and listening. What is more important than being understood, is that someone is willing to listen. This contradicts the literary world, which is often obsessed with interpretation, unweaving the blanket, pulling it apart and leaving behind a single thread. A clean line.

Instead, we live in a world of 'polluted rootless living' in which context is lost to the moment.⁵ Our identities are transfused, and the transculturation that can be found in *Diamond Grill* is amplified in the modern age. The present contains so many pieces of the past, some we feel intimately, and others distort like Chinese whispers. You can't be now. Forced to be a culmination, an appropriation of old wounds. Historical turned mythological, some sort of false natural order. Ancestors forgotten but felt, and all inside a cultural battleground.

The protagonist in *I am a Japanese Writer* is at the centre of this battleground. The book

continuously questions what identity means. It plays with hybridity, that mixed message gene vs environment vs experience vs belief. As a writer he is the nationality of those who read him, but he is Japanese because he reads Basho, but he is indifferent also. The question of authenticity bores him. Then, he later says he isn't a Japanese writer, only that he is writing a book with that title. It also makes clear through constant comparison that concepts such as American and Japanese rely on each other to exist. 'Americans will never become Americans again because they don't realize they're already Japanese.'⁶ It is through opposition they become distinct. Titles, the same as names, decide who we are and say nothing at all.

The question becomes whether we can claim or choose our culture. Both books are occupied with this need for self-definition. Wah employs language and distorts meaning in order to find a new world. Whereas Laferrière simply denies the question, he throws it back at itself. In both texts others try to name them, to apply their views on them. Japan becomes obsessed with Laferrière's book by title alone and it ends up affecting the culture. Through literature culture bleeds into other's veins, so that they are 'impure'.

⁴ Fred Wah, *Diamond Grill*, p.138

⁵ Fred Wah, *Diamond Grill*, p.53

⁶ Dany Laferrière, *I am a Japanese Writer*, p.113

Wah focuses on language. An attempt to reevaluate the language used, to speak about himself as he wants to. To use ethnicity, if he wants to. Influenced by the code switching in his early environment. He recognises the importance of language, that the vowels moan through history, and their etymologies mythologise the present alongside the past. The world is full of a grand generalness group speak that is the opposite of literature. Literature dwells in specificity and the unique. Detailing extensive encyclopaedia of individuals. Paradoxically, it is in this minutia that we find the universal. A story can speak of everyone whilst speaking for only one, and it does so by discarding the general. It is the fwap door slam, a family recipe, the creases of a face blown up.

We look through people and see what we want, and as we look through them, they become self-conscious and they feel like an outline, your eyes imposed upon them, and we are made of other's vision. 'we see ourselves only in other people's eyes, despite our best efforts.'⁷ Can we escape the gaze, especially when they wear suits, and they have the coins, when they are entrenched in the status quo? There is a sense in which Wah is at the mercy of how others see him. It is not for him to decide his own name, it is War or Roy or Was

⁷ Dany Laferrière, *I am a Japanese Writer*, p. 85.

⁸ Lin Fang, Yu-Te Huang, "I'm in Between": Cultural Identities of Chinese Youth in Canada',

and when it is Wah it comes as a comic strip WAH! It is filled with presumptions that make him more, or less, Chinese, that gives him more, or less, privilege, more, or less, freedom. It splits him into pieces. Two aspects connected by a Wah. Being in between, there is a feeling in which he is neither.

That 'in-between' is real. It exists.⁸ A feeling rising amongst the youth. An exchange between them and their environment. Culture is not confined to the individual or family. It is transient. Who has claim to the word Chinese or Japanese or Canadian? However, without definition culture still exists. Untitled our choices, practises, beliefs and so on create a community.

We are connected, and in constant mutation. Reflexively responding to each other. Wah spends a lot of time focusing on the hyphenated. That bridge and separator. It pushes two letters apart or ties them together. Wah is Chinese, but White, but doesn't speak the language. Is it appropriated, or is it that Wah is a hyphen? The question creeps in and out of the text, folds between the binding, and Wah files himself into the miscellaneous file. Bottom of the box, junk. There is no answer only a blurring. A blurring that is even more present in the modern age.

Journal of Contemporary Social Services, 101.2 (2020) 205-218.

Nations and borders are dissolving, disintegrating through web weaving integration, the distinctness of culture is less sure of itself. Now everything is self-aware, memetic and information is downloaded, millions, billions making place less concrete more glass, the reflective sort that shines back at you. We are infused with images, and there is a collective individualism which is bloodily transfused into the streets. Place becomes us, but place is everywhere now. It is beamed up to a satellite and back down, so that the Great Wall of China circles the whole world. It is in your bedroom. The need for words like Canadian is less and less, but people are still permeated by the Canadian borders.

Place infuses with us. China town half housed in a cut-out of the cityscape; the cultural Chinese landscape is different inside Canada. Imported recipes, re-diced and sliced till they there are wafer thin see-through. A 'translucent' world. That ever shifting, sliding between. Lines fall into the sea. Boats have been buried. Immigrants lost in the waves. 'We are born in one spot, and afterwards we choose our place of origin.' says Laferrière.⁹

Except our right to decide ourselves is not so clean. We do not always have power over ourselves. The I of *I am a Japanese Writer* is abused by the police. His race ultimately

defining his power, and thereby limiting his identity. His search to redress himself or be naked is at odds with publishers and police officers alike. They tell him who he is and what being alive means. It means he is the target of violence; it means he must write about being a Japanese writer.

'By dressing up as Japanese, she is less herself' remarks the narrator, even though she is Japanese¹⁰. Cultural identity doesn't always match the individual. They are placed in misshapen clothes, sleeves too long, frayed trousers, rips where they step on them and trip. Kimonos that are too cold.

As Laferrière and Wah allude to, names and titles compressing meaning. The meaning of culture has changed, it is the same source of conflict as it has always been. The difference now, is that people are lost and without a sense of home. The questions asked of people are where you come from, who is your family, when were you born? To truly find people you cannot look at them merely as a Canadian, a silhouette, you must be specific. Culture is a prism through which light fractures into all colours. There is no Canadian. There is only the navigation of temporary states of being, in which one is more or less. Through their literature Wah and Laferrière reclaim their details and frustrate their outlines. They resist

⁹ Dany Laferrière, *I am a Japanese Writer*, p. 10.

¹⁰ Dany Laferrière, *I am a Japanese Writer*, p. 8.

the need to be understood. The importance of the unknown cannot be understated.

Acceptance over seeking, acknowledgement before understanding. Misinterpretation.

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INDIAN HORSE FILM REVIEW

Rings it off the crossbar and out

Dominic

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In the wake of the Truth and Reconciliation commission and in an age where the unmarked graves of Indigenous children are being exhumed on the grounds of former residential schools every day, the story of *Indian Horse*, based on Richard Wagamese's 2011 novel of the same name, is more relevant than ever. However, where the novel succeeded in both underscoring the grim reality of residential schools as well as legitimizing Ojibwe culture and the way the protagonist heals as a result of embracing his heritage, the film falls somewhat flat. In being transposed to the big screen, the story—though undoubtedly important—loses crucial details, causing the antagonists to feel two-dimensional and presenting an ambiguous picture of Indigenous peoples.

Indian Horse tells the story of a young Indigenous boy named Saul who is torn from his family and thrust into the abusive, alien world of the residential school system, eventually escaping through his love and talent for hockey before succumbing to PTSD, alcoholism, and the racial hostility he faces as he climbs the ranks of the minor-league. The

film is grim and uncompromising, and the issues with this tonal choice become immediately apparent when compared to the book it is based on. Specifically, where in the book Saul's hockey talent is derived from his Ojibwe heritage and special status as a 'seer', a gift that manifests first as an ancestral connection to his people and later morphs into a prescient hockey vision, the film avoids this detail entirely. Crucially, this power is canonical in the book and is never reduced to hokey mysticism. We share Saul's perspective, we see his visions, and it serves to legitimize Ojibwe culture and establish Saul's connection to his people in the face of the Catholic church's hostility.

Conversely, the movie abandons this narrative thread and instead chalks Saul's prodigious skill up to a 'gift from God' as his coach puts it (an assertion that is never challenged), or else the simple product of practice. In any case, the language of the film directs us to believe that either the Catholic God is literal and powerful in the world of *Indian Horse* and supports the actions of the church, or that Saul can only find escape in white culture and white

institutions, and his own culture is detrimental—or at best irrelevant—to his success.

This theme of narrative and textual hostility towards Indigeneity is further echoed throughout *Indian Horse* across several different characters, notably Lonnie, who is repeatedly punished for speaking his native language, defying the church, and attempting to escape. There are merits to this hostility—painting a raw picture of the residential schools creates a strong emotional resonance and can serve to enlighten uneducated viewers to the brutal conditions that Indigenous children were subjected to. However, it also plays into the underlying narrative that their assimilation was ultimately just. This can be observed in the fates of Indigenous characters in the film, particularly Saul's grandmother, who is a symbol of traditional Ojibwe beliefs and institutions untainted by the white settlers. Early on, her faith clashes with the Christian beliefs of her daughter, and this eventually leads to her frigid death by the side of a highway after she attempts to take Saul downriver. In the end she is unable to save Saul, his brother, or herself in spite of her wisdom, and this serves to further the idea that Indigenous knowledge is nothing but superstition—an implication that could have been avoided had the filmmakers not omitted Saul's seer gift. As the camera pans out to show her body by the roadside, she transforms contextually from an Elder living off the land

into a crazed lady endangering her grandson. As critical viewers we cannot help but compare her crude, seemingly senseless death to the implied death of Saul's Christian parents, who are allowed to float off into the setting sun and symbolically ascend to heaven in the process.

Accompanying the thematic and emotional benefits, the dark, unvarnished narrative of *Indian Horse* has the adverse effect of reducing its villains to stock characters, thus cementing the false notion that the residential school system was an evil, isolated chapter in Canadian history brought about by monsters, and not a systematic cruelty fueled by ignorance, dogma, and all the best of intentions that could easily occur again today. This oversimplification is best represented in the character of Father Leboutilier. Initially he is framed as a sympathetic character who symbolizes the nuance and 'positive' aspects of residential schooling, but is then subverted at the end of the film without any foreshadowing and revealed as a paedophile. While it is true that sexual abuse ran rampant at residential schools, the twist eliminates all the complexity of Leboutilier's character. Both cinematically and realistically, it is far more haunting and relevant to portray the way a 'good', 'moral' person can still participate in an evil system. Furthermore, given that Leboutilier represents the origin and organization of hockey in the film, the reveal undercuts Saul's already complex—albeit

largely positive—relationship with the sport and overshadows more interesting discussions around identity, hybridity, and systematic racism.

Unquestionably, *Indian Horse* is an important film. The cast is comprised of countless talented Indigenous actors, its themes of assimilation and abuse are addressed unflinchingly in a way rarely seen in mainstream cinema, and it honors the legacy of the source novel's author, Richard

Wagamese, who passed away shortly before the film was first screened. Though its narrative may lack nuance, and its characters even more so, its success has undoubtedly awoken some audiences to the reality of the residential school system and the lasting damage they have perpetuated to this day. One should remain hopeful that *Indian Horse* will be the first of many mainstream Canadian films centered around Indigenous stories—with many more complex tales to come.

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A REVIEW OF BILLY RAY BELCOURT'S 'THIS WOUND IS A WORLD'

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I read 'This Wound is a World' knowing very little about Indigenous Canadian culture and literature. Billy Ray Belcourt did an excellent job at immersing the reader into a personal experience of what it was like to grow up as a member of the LGBTQ+ community and as an Indigenous Canadian who still feels the effects of colonialism today. Belcourt eloquently and successfully wrote this anthology with immense emotional intelligence.

CBC Arts describes "decolonial love" as "a way of letting go of the shame and violence which often comes with being Indigenous in Canada" which Belcourt represents encompassing in his poem "Colonialism: a love story", saying "we are still figuring out how to love and be broken at the same time" [CBC Arts].¹ Belcourt's poems vary in structure and style depending on the message and tone of the story being told. Some of the

poems in the collection follow one coherent story, such as in his poem, 'Sacred', where the reader witnesses the rejection the speaker feels from the community as a result of being gay. Arguably, this is Belcourt's strongest style and one of his biggest strengths in the collection. By the end of the tale, we see an emerging sense of self-love, or decolonial love but this is bitter-sweet as there is still an ingrained shame due to the colonialization of indigenous Canadians that taught them that homosexuality is "shameful". However, there is a sense of optimism too amongst the anthology, and a feeling that a more accepting society will emerge from colonialism's ashes.

Other aspects of the collection included poems which were broken down into structured points, again making the content accessible for readers. But poems such as 'Notes from a Public Washroom' were much more complex

¹ Benaway, G., 2021. *Decolonial love: These Indigenous artists are taking back the self-love that colonialism stole* / CBC Arts. [online] CBC. Available at: <[https://www.cbc.ca/arts/decolonial-love-these-indigenous-artists-are-taking-back-the-](https://www.cbc.ca/arts/decolonial-love-these-indigenous-artists-are-taking-back-the-self-love-that-colonialism-stole-1.4189785)

[self-love-that-colonialism-stole-1.4189785](https://www.cbc.ca/arts/decolonial-love-these-indigenous-artists-are-taking-back-the-self-love-that-colonialism-stole-1.4189785)> [Accessed 6 December 2021].

to unpick. The stream of consciousness allows authentic emotions to flow creating a powerful impact. The messages were less direct and instead hidden in metaphors and imagery. Belcourt's wording "I need to cut a hole in the sky to world inside" is very subjective. Does he feel trapped by the earth's boundaries? Or does he just crave an escape? Or is there some other deeper message that as an outsider I cannot find within the lines? While the use of the subjective is an evoking tool, for me it sometimes feels like a weakness in Belcourt's work. How cryptic is too cryptic? However, this does lead me to ask for the writers' intentions, and whether Belcourt isn't trying to relate his poems to a universal experience, but that they are felt by those who know only this distinct type of pain. If these collections of poems were to be published a second time, I think that Belcourt could include an extended biography to give some context to his experiences. This may have made these more complex ideas easier to decipher.

Poems such as 'Colonialism: a love story' are written more with the reader in mind to guide us and help begin to understand something that many can never experience or empathise with. Colonialism is one of the core themes Belcourt's work explores and its lasting impact that is still felt and experienced in modern day. The need for decolonial love only emphasises

how strongly colonialism instilled the belief that the indigenous people of Canada were not worthy of beauty, love or appreciation.

Belcourt offers a personal definition of what colonialism means to him; a way of "turning bodies into cages that no one has the keys for". This personification reveals the complete objectification of the indigenous people in the eyes of the colonials. They were reduced into relics of a painful history, where the 'cages' represent a trapped and forgotten identity.

What Belcourt brings to the table for Canadian literature is invaluable. Through his poetry, the reader is able to hear a first-hand voice emerge from the injustice of colonialism, one that not only felt this oppression due to his heritage as an indigenous Canadian, but also as a homosexual. Belcourt's poem, "A Cree word for a body like mine is a weesageechak" is one of the stronger poems in the collection. The use of the native 'weesageechak' which translates to 'the trickster; a person who can change into any form or disguise' [Belcourt] both grounds the piece in Canadian identity while being accessible to readers.² The natural imagery draws us in and is symbolic of Belcourt's feelings of identity and the constructs of gender. The overarching message of Belcourt's collection is decolonial love. The painful yet essential road to creating a more positive environment for emerging generations

² Belcourt, Billy-Ray, *This Wound Is a World*, First University of Minnesota Press edition.

(Minneapolis, Minnesota; London: University of Minnesota Press, 2019).

of Indigenous Canadians to celebrate their true identities and heritage.

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FILM REVIEW OF 'ROUND UP'

The Journey to Cultural Reclamation

SA

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Narcisse Blood's *Round Up* captures the redemptive journey of Pete Standing Alone as he reclaims his culture and spiritual ways following the genocide that took place at residential schools. With age and wisdom, Pete Standing Alone's goal is to guide other Indigenous people to do the same. This documentary displays the overarching theme of cultural reclamation, as Pete Standing Alone details his journey in regaining the culture of his people. Another theme of *Round Up* is recovering the spiritual ways of Standing Alone's Nation, and how vital it was for him renounce Catholicism and recover the spiritual ways of his ancestors.

Scars are designed to show where someone has been, but they do not dictate where someone is going, and these words have never been more applicable than in the case of Standing Alone. The documentary *Round Up* displays how he reclaims his culture and rediscovers the spiritual ways of his people, even after the government and church's joint operation to aggressively assimilate the Indigenous peoples of Canada.

Standing Alone, like many other Indigenous people throughout Canada, experienced an

attempted genocide at the hands of the Canadian government and Catholic church. This calculated genocide was carried out by residential schools, which were designed to remove the cultural connection and assimilate Indigenous children. The documentary *Round Up* explains how Standing Alone was able to reclaim his culture and rediscover the spiritual ways of his people after surviving residential schools. Just surviving was an accomplishment in itself, because now we understand many Indigenous children lost their lives while attending residential schools. Standing Alone's journey began as an individual, but now his goal is to show other Indigenous people that they too can regain what was once stolen.

Standing Alone explained the goal of residential schools was to remove the cultural connection and assimilate Indigenous children, because the Canadian government and church felt Indigenous people were nothing more than savages. In order to reform these so-called savages, the government and church forced children to renounce their cultural ways and practices. By doing so they could assimilate them into what they deemed an acceptable culture, which was a Eurocentric culture.

Round Up perfectly illustrates the theme of reclaiming one's culture, as *Standing Alone* explains that he could not fit into the 'white man's world'. His logic for cultural reclamation is simple, his people already have a culture, and their Indigenous culture was designed for Indigenous people, by Indigenous people. Also, this culture served his people for centuries, long before colonization.

Round Up also displays how healing reclaiming one's spiritual ways can be. *Standing Alone* explains that residential schools deemed their spiritual ways as 'pagan'. He goes a step further and describes how residential school teachings were designed around fear. How children were told if they continued with their spiritual ways, they would go straight to hell. *Standing Alone* explains that, as a result, he would rather be a spiritual man than a Catholic. He notes his life was not better off when he was forced into Catholicism, and he only found real change in his life when he returned to his peoples' spiritual ways. In the documentary, the audience is given access to one of the spiritual ceremonies. We see Pete *Standing Alone* and fellow Indigenous people smoking from a pipe and speaking in their native language as they exhale the smoke. So, not only do we see Pete *Standing Alone* rediscover his ancestor's spiritual ways, but we see him guiding other Indigenous people as well. By regaining his true religion, Pete *Standing Alone* can experience true change in his life; this could be

directly correlated to his deep connection with his ancestor's spiritual ways, along with him renouncing a religion that was forced on him through fear.

Round Up is a redemption story of the ages, as it shows that no matter how dark days become, there is always a light at the end of the tunnel. *Standing Alone* shows how one man can arise from the darkness of residential schools to reclaim his Indigenous culture and recover his ancestor's spiritual ways, while simultaneously guiding others to do the same. Following the destructive teachings at residential schools, he was able to reclaim a culture that was designed for him and suited his people long before the settlers arrived. The documentary shows how vital it is for Indigenous people to reclaim their culture, and through reclamation they can reverse the damages of residential schools that sought to destroy the Indigenous people's way of life. What many may fail to understand is Pete *Standing Alone*'s life is not just a one off; there are thousands of Indigenous people in Canada who endured residential schools, and it is important to understand that even though *Standing Alone*'s journey is exceptional, there are many other lost souls who did not experience such an incredible triumph. However, by watching *Round Up* it could spark other Indigenous people to rise of up and reclaim their people's way of life.

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CANADIAN HISTORY: HOW ACCURATE IS IT?

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Canada has often been portrayed as a liberal, accepting, and multicultural society. Although that may be the case, racism does exist in this country. *Speak it! From the Heart of Black Nova Scotia* is a documentary that highlights how Afro-Canadians in Nova Scotia feel undervalued in terms of their history not being taught in Canadian schools. The narrator of the documentary – Shingai Nyajeka, a then sixteen-year-old boy – detailed how lost at sea Black Nova Scotians felt about their history not being taught in schools. In this review I shall critique the essence of the film, as well as summarizing key points from the documentary – such as anti-Black racism and solutions offered to reduce racial injustice.

A notable aspect of the film was the overwhelming resentment many of the Black Nova Scotians had towards White Canadians. It seemed to them that Black people were forgotten in Canadian history – and were more of a burden to Canadian society. As mentioned by the narrator “It is a lot harder to find something about us” (5:14-5:18). Due to the

sensitive nature of the majority of Afro-Canadian history – such as slavery and racism – such information is either concealed or simply not mentioned. The consequence of this creates an inaccurate reality of Canadian history, and thus presumes a better reputation for Canada. The essence of history is to learn from the past, to not make the same mistakes in the future.

Towards the end of the documentary there is a debate towards the reaction of *Jungle Fever* – a film about an interracial relationship. A middle-aged Black woman’s stance on the film was that there are serious complications in regard to such a relationship, and she preferred to only be with someone of the same race. Shingai challenged her view and argued that there are a lot of mixed-race people in the audience, and that love has no colour (20:51-21:51).

Another notable aspect of the documentary was that most of the issues shared in the documentary still exist today, such as institutionalized racism and overt racism. In

the documentary, the narrator mentions the annual march against racism, which draws parallels with today's *Black Lives Matter* Movement. It would seem that, as time passes, racism would become less frequent as before, but in actual fact, one could argue it has become worse. It is important to note that racism is a mentality issue; the more people change their attitudes towards race, for the better, and the less racism exists in society.

A notable misconception that could be taken from this documentary is that Black people are playing the victim – where all the problems that occur in society are perceived to be to the detriment of Black people. Unfortunately, due to the consequences of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, many Black people who are descendants of slaves from the Americas are often lost on the cultural identity of their ancestral motherland. The narrator highlights this issue when he visits Zimbabwe at aged twelve, as he was star-struck by a society solely governed by Black people. By default, he previously regarded Black people at the bottom of the societal ladder, who were not involved at all in making governmental decisions. This visit ultimately questioned Shingai on whether institutionalized racism exists in Canadian society. For a race that has settled in Canada for hundreds of years – opportunities are perhaps few and far between.

Therefore, these reasons above prove the seriousness of racism in society. Often misled as a problem between only Whites and Blacks,

racism is a mentality issue that has been institutionalized in Western societies for hundreds of years. This documentary highlights this issue and provides possible solutions to improve the way society implicitly and explicitly deals with race issues and racism. Many of the issues of the documentary resonate today, such as marches against racial discrimination. This documentary is ultimately an essential measure of whether progress has been made today, or whether society has regressed. In English professional football, for instance, players take a knee before a match starts to highlight that racial discrimination will not be tolerated in sport and, most importantly, society. These actions have been supported by sections of the press, as well as being criticised as progressively reducing the meaning of its significance. It is important to realise that, in order to eradicate racism, there must be an emphasis on altering mental attitudes towards race. This can be administered in education – in creating a discrimination-free environment as much as possible.

Furthermore, in aspects such as social media, there must be serious punishments towards those who use hate speech on those platforms, such as being banned from said platform, or even jail time. Although these seem very extreme and harsh, in order for society to progress, these sorts of solutions must be implemented.

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FINDING FARLEY: A REVIEW

A Journey Through Canadian History

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The film *Finding Farley*, which debuted in 2009, is a film by Leanne Allison and her husband, Karsten Heuer. Together, they document their expedition of a lifetime. We embark on the journey with their two-year-old son Zev and trusty dog Willow on a 5-month 5,000 km trip across Canada, to meet their favourite author, Farley Mowat. They travel from Canmore, Alberta to Nova Scotia by canoe, van, motorboat, a small prop plane, a train, and even handmade wooden schooner. They do this all to pay homage to the author himself, as he once made many journeys such as this one.

Mowat is a Canadian author whose works include *Born Naked*, *Owls in the Family*, *People of the Deer*, *Never Cry Wolf*, *The Boat Who Wouldn't Float*, *A Whale for the Killing*, all of which were used as references when planning the trip. Many of these works are centered around various aspects of Canada, including Indigenous communities, animals, and the natural landscape. Heuer and his family were heavily influenced by Mowat's work and they had grabbed the author's attention after Heuer and Allison completed a

much shorter trip, also inspired by some of his books. As a result of that, they were invited to visit Mowat in Nova Scotia, and instead of flying directly there, they decided to take a more meaningful path. However, Mowat's work has been called controversial in some regards, as many of his stories were seen to be heavily exaggerated and fabricated, despite his claims they are an accurate retelling of his experiences.

This film thoroughly highlights many of the alluring aspects of Canada, from the people to the environment around them, and how they all interact to form a symbiotic way of life. The cinematography features the landscape in its untouched state, capturing the emotions and the beauty within each frame; in turn, this captures the attention of the audience. The images of the wildlife the family encounters show how the humans, and the animals interact with each other as they all fight for their survival.

In addition to highlighting the natural beauty of Canada and how we interact with the land, there is an unexpected additional focus of the

film. The film also covers the evolving development of cities, as well as the people within them and their effects on the entire country. The family also found it difficult in the beginning to remain true to the original path laid out in the books, as the construction and new development in the city changed most of the natural land. In addition, highlighting communities that are not directly influenced by the changes shows the diversity of Canadians in how they interact with one another as well as their individual ties to the land. Indigenous communities and smaller fishing towns that are becoming abandoned, or forced to drastically change, or move further out to avoid the reaches of the modern world. As the family experienced themselves, this forced isolation can be difficult, both in terms of sustainability of resources and their own mental health.

With these great expanses and variety in Canada's geographical profile, capturing even a small fraction can be difficult but, the elements chosen were all used in a meaningful way. The simple premise to share such a meaningful event in their lives has helped explore what makes up their own Canadian identity, and that of many others. There is no singular way to portray Canada and its people; by using this journey to travel across the country, the family was able to share the beauty of the country that many are not able to.

However, in the film's attempt to display this incredible journey, Allison and her family displayed a large bias when it came to the discussion of Mowat's work. When the controversy came up in discussion with a couple along their journey, they refused to hear any criticism about Mowat. Their personal connection to him, along with their ever-growing idolization of the author, leads them to deny any wrongdoing from the author and ignore any proof that suggests anything opposing their views. While on the same pathways and trails that Mowat had taken all those years ago, their story shifted slightly to suggest that there was some loose interpretation of the stories; they suggested that they were simply heavily inspired by nature and wildlife around them. In theory, this means they accept the controversy as true, but they still deny that Mowat was in the wrong for creating this false narrative. When they deny the potential wrongdoing by Mowat and put him on a pedestal, it changes the overall narrative of the film. Instead of highlighting the natural beauty of Canada and the stories of those in isolated parts of the country, which they already had done, it puts the priority on one individual. While that may have been the intended goal, it takes many of the people's voices they took the time to hear and makes them seem redundant and unnecessary. This film portrays the Canadian experience for a variety of individuals in different regions of Canada, but because of the

bias, this accomplishment appears
unintentional and unwanted.

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