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The belly is a world-maker, is a Fourth world, is my ancestral grounds.

–Joshua Whitehead, *Making Love with the Land* (2022)

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Preface: Acknowledging, Situating, and Naming

Before beginning, I would like to situate myself as a settler on Turtle Island.¹ The place where I was born, grew up, and now continually return to as home is the territory of The Three Fires Confederacy—the Bodéwadmi (Potawatomi), Ojibwe (Chippewa), and Odawa (Ottawa) Tribes. More specifically, I would like to acknowledge the Nottawaseppi Huron Band of the Potawatomi who are the traditional keepers of the lands bracketed between the southeastern shorelines of Lake Michigan and the western shorelines of Lake St. Clair and Lake Erie. I use the descriptor *settler* because it is the simplest way to communicate that my ancestors came from elsewhere and therefore, despite our residence in this territory, our linguistic, spiritual, and cultural traditions are not rooted in these lands. *Settler* is not a moral judgement, but rather a relational category. As a white American settler currently living in Europe, I am embedded within a complex tangle of historical and contemporary power structures governing property relations and dictating Western knowledge production. This means, quite simply, that I cannot produce Indigenous knowledge. Rather I hope this work urgently communicates the importance of taking Indigenous peoples and their knowledges seriously to interrogate Euro-American systems of violence and oppression.

Signaling the word's significance, I use a capital "I" in *Indigenous* throughout this thesis to communicate what Cherokee scholar Daniel Heath Justice calls a "distinctive political status of personhood" (6). According to Kahnawà:ke Mohawk scholar Taiaiake Alfred and Cherokee scholar Jeff Corntassel, the distinctiveness of this political identity that differentiates Indigenous peoples from other population groups is an "oppositional, place-based existence, along with the consciousness of being in struggle against the dispossessing and demeaning fact of colonization by foreign peoples" (597). There are, of course, many such peoples around the world who face ongoing occupation by colonizing settler societies. Throughout this thesis, however, I employ the term *Indigenous* (and less frequently *Native*) mainly in reference to "the First Peoples of North America, the Aboriginal, American Indian, Native, Inuit, Métis, and otherwise identified peoples who remain in relation to the land, the ancestors, and the kinship networks, lifeways and languages that originated in [the Western] hemisphere and continue in often besieged but always resilient forms" (Justice 7). My use of this broad term is *not* intended to obfuscate Turtle Island's First Peoples' incredible cultural, linguistic, and biological diversity, but rather to engage in broader academic, political, and popular discourses which implicate all

¹ Turtle Island is a name for the Indigenous lands now also known as North America that stems from Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee creation stories (Justice 244). I use Turtle Island as a synonym for North America throughout this thesis.

peoples whose ancestral homelands are occupied by the U.S. and/or Canadian settler-colonial regimes.

Most Indigenous peoples have had many names, often mistranslated, or otherwise misinterpreted and imposed on them throughout centuries of colonization. This means that over the years, as names have changed and continue changing, various terms refer to the same group. Whenever possible, I follow the terminology and spelling a person or a community themselves uses to self-identify. It is for this reason I have adopted author Diane Wilson's spelling of 'Dakhóta' (rather than the more common 'Dakota'), which she implements in *The Seed Keeper*, one of my two primary texts. The Dakhóta people, along with the Lakota and Nakota peoples, make up the Oceti Sakowin Oyate or "People of the Seven Council Fires," also known historically as The Great Sioux Nation. From my other primary text, *Jonny Appleseed*, I use 'Oji-Cree' in keeping with protagonist Jonny's self-identification (rather than Oji-nêhiyaw, which author Joshua Whitehead uses in a more recent text). As their name suggests, the Oji-Cree people descend from both Ojibwe (also Ojibwa or Ojibway) and Cree (also nêhiyawak) peoples. Also note that throughout this thesis I have deliberately chosen not to italicize words from Indigenous languages to avoid marginalizing them as 'foreign.' Dakhóta, Anishinaabemowin, and nêhiyawêwin have, after all, been spoken for far longer on Turtle Island than English.

Finally, I would like to return to my use of the term *settler* and its accompanying racial and social complications. As Métis writer Chelsea Vowel notes, no clear consensus exists around a name for all non-Indigenous people living in North America ("Settling on a Name"). As catch-all terms, *settler* and *non-Indigenous* obscure the fact that there are of course U.S. and Canadian residents whose ancestors were kidnapped from Africa and brought to the Americas as property within the system of chattel slavery. Additionally, many non-European immigrants have been forced to leave their homelands to seek refuge in North America where they may face racialization and socioeconomic oppression. According to Unanga scholar Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, the term *settler* nevertheless incorporates non-Black people of color since they "still occupy and settle stolen Indigenous land" (7). While acknowledging these complexities, when I refer to settlers here, I am implicating "the non-Indigenous peoples living in Canada [and the U.S.] who form the European-descended sociopolitical majority," to borrow Vowel's

wording (“Settling on a Name”).² This distinction is useful for contemplating the naturalized and invisibilized Euro-American white supremacist modes of social, economic, and political domination on Turtle Island—*settler normativity* (Dietrich 3-8; Steinman 221). Within settler-colonial nation-states like the U.S. and Canada, Euro-American culture and lifeways are rendered neutral and inevitable. Indigenous literatures therefore resist settler normativity by centering lived Indigenous experiences which both evince ongoing settler-colonial violence and belie the settler-colonial myth that Indigenous peoples and cultures are ‘dying out.’ Even after five centuries of violent occupation and genocide, they are still here.

² I do not mean to suggest that the terms *Indigenous* and *settler* form a neat binary. This terminology is further complicated “[b]ecause settler colonialism is built upon an entangled triad structure of settler-native-slave, the decolonial desires of white, non-white, immigrant, postcolonial, and oppressed people, can similarly be entangled in resettlement, reoccupation, and reinhabitation that actually further settler colonialism” (Tuck and Yang 1). See Andrea Smith’s “Indigeneity, Settler Colonialism, White Supremacy” (2012) for a more nuanced discussion about whiteness, Blackness, and orientalism.

1. Introduction

Genocidal settler-colonial violence is not unique to North America, nor is it confined safely to the past. On 29 February 2024, in what is now known as the “Flour Massacre,” Israeli soldiers fired into a dense crowd of hungry Palestinians in Gaza City, killing 118 civilians attempting to get their hands on humanitarian aid (Nashed et. al). Bags of flour stained with blood have become yet another indelible image of Israel’s brutal seventy-six-year occupation of Palestine. In their essay, “The Road to Famine in Gaza,” Israeli political scientist Neve Gordon and Palestinian human rights lawyer Muna Haddad write that for decades “[Israel] has controlled the Palestinian food basket, engineering the nutritional intake of its inhabitants and using food as a weapon to manage the population” (Haddad and Gordon). Since October 2023 virtually no humanitarian aid has been allowed to enter Gaza and some residents have resorted to grinding up animal feed for flour or even eating grass (Sparks et. al.). According to a UNICEF report, as of 15 March 2024, twenty-three children in Northern Gaza Strip have died of malnutrition and dehydration (“Acute malnutrition”). A recent Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) special brief warns that famine for more than one million people in Gaza is imminent. Israel’s brutal siege on Gaza reminds us that, as always, food remains a lethal weapon in the settler colonizer’s arsenal.

In 1858, ninety years before the state of Israel was founded, its largest ally, the United States federal government had already dispossessed around 166,000 square miles of the Dakhóta people’s homelands and pushed them onto a reservation about 100 miles long and merely ten miles wide (Wingerd 183-191). This narrow strip of land, however, was far too small to maintain their traditional subsistence methods—hunting, foraging, and gardening—which revolved around an “annual pattern of circular migration” (Wingerd 4). The Dakhóta people’s inability to feed themselves was compounded by the steady arrival of Euro-American settlers and the government’s refusal to distribute annuity payments and provisions as stipulated in multiple treaties (Wingerd 292-298). By the summer of 1862, conditions had deteriorated rapidly for the Dakhóta. A harsh winter and pest infestation intensified an already bleak situation, starvation for many was imminent (Fraser 16). Despite this obvious deprivation, U.S. federal agents refused to distribute the remaining rations in government warehouses and most local tradesmen refused to extend credit to Dakhóta men before their annuity money arrived (Berg 26). Andrew Myrick was one white trader who unscrupulously denied Dakhóta people’s appeals to share the food in his storehouse. In a now infamous exchange, he told Mdewakantonwan chief Little Crow that “as far as he was concerned, the Indians could eat grass” (Berg 29). Indeed, some did resort to eating grass as “[t]he elderly were dying and

children cried from hunger” (Wingerd 302). Their desperation peaked on 17 August 1862 when four hungry young Dakhóta hunters attacked a white settler family and unwittingly ignited the cataclysmic conflict now known as the U.S.-Dakhóta War (Wingerd 302-304). This armed struggle culminated in the sensational mass hanging of thirty-eight Dakhóta men (which remains the largest public execution in U.S. history), nullified treaties, the seizure of reservation lands, and the forced removal of all surviving Dakhóta people from their homelands (Fraser 23-24). With the Indigenous population violently removed, Euro-American homesteaders eagerly gobbled up pieces of fertile farmland for themselves.

Both before and after the U.S.-Dakhóta war, the federal government engaged in what historian James Daschuk in his monograph, *Clearing the Plains: Disease, Politics of Starvation, and the Loss of Aboriginal Life* (2013), calls the “politics of famine” (xix). Though Daschuk focuses primarily on settler-colonial expansion in Canada, both Canadian and U.S. officials in the nineteenth century refused to uphold treaty agreements with Indigenous peoples in the Plains and Prairies, exacerbating widespread hunger and tuberculosis outbreaks that both regimes used as a means of population control to “facilitate construction of the railway and opening of the country to agrarian settlement” (xxi). Expeditious Indigenous death through starvation therefore enabled the land occupation and establishment of an agrarian property regime that is foundational to contemporary U.S. and Canadian national hegemony. As settler-colonial nation-states, the U.S. and Canada are guided, in Patrick Wolfe’s frequently invoked words, by a “logic of elimination” (388) vis-à-vis Indigenous nations, cultures, languages, and biological bodies; “[s]ettler colonialism destroys to replace” (388). In the last two decades, as scholarly interest in the topic has grown, most theorists credit Wolfe with articulating settler colonialism’s defining characteristic: it is an enduring structure rather than temporary event which differentiates it from other iterations of colonization predicated on destructive but transitory resource extraction (Dietrich 9; Dorries et. al. *Settler City* 9; Justice 9-10; Tuck and Yang 5). Tuck and Yang emphasize that within settler colonialism, “[l]and is what is most valuable, contested, required. This is both because the settlers make land their new home and source of capital, and also because the disruption of Indigenous relationships to land represents a profound epistemic, ontological, cosmological violence” (5).³ Eliminating Indigenous physical and cultural presence from the land is therefore an ever-present and ongoing imperative within settler-colonial societies. The violence initiated by colonial invasion is reified and multiplied in multifarious ways every day that settlement enabled by dispossession persists.

³ Tuck and Yang clarify that they use “land” to represent “land/water/air/subterranean earth” (5), a practice I adapt throughout this thesis. I examine Indigenous relationships with land more closely in sections 2.3, 3.3, and 5.2.

Aligned with the politics of famine, perpetuating Indigenous hunger by destroying Indigenous foodways remains an integral component of settler-colonial violence that functions to keep Indigenous peoples off their lands.

Indigenous land dispossession furthers both settler colonialism and capitalism, which are distinct but enmeshed systems of oppression. As Tuck and Yang mentioned, “settlers make land their new home and source of capital” (5). Land then not only serves as a place *on* which to settle, but also *from* which to extract the resources needed to accumulate wealth. Transforming Indigenous territories into pieces of private property serves multiple purposes. Within a capitalist system, flora, fauna, and other material on/in land are rendered natural resources available for extraction and transformation into sellable products. Colonizers-turned-settlers who establish permanent residence in dispossessed territories build their wealth in this private property regime through their extended, generational residence on pieces of land.⁴ Settler populations grow to replace Indigenous populations while also providing both the labor base to make and the market to buy products made from exploited natural resources. Agriculture⁵ is therefore an ideal capitalist and settler-colonial system because “it is a rational means / end calculus that is geared to vouchsafing its own reproduction, generating capital that projects into a future where it repeats itself” (Wolfe 395). Specifically, the monocultural agriculture practiced by homesteading settlers transformed North America ecologically and economically. According to food scholars Harriet Friedman and Philip McMichael, nineteenth century settler farming was essential to the U.S. and Canada’s emergence as independent nation-states in a capitalist world economy (98-100). From the perspective of settler-colonial regimes, the family farm unit functioned not only as a taxable entity, but also conveniently reproduced its own labor force to generate profitable agricultural exports (Friedman 236). In North America, monocultural farming once practiced by nuclear family units has since evolved into corporatized industrial farming that further intensifies the ecological degradation of Indigenous homelands initiated by the homesteader’s horse-drawn plow. It is precisely from this point of convergence—North American settler colonialism, capitalism, and (industrial) agriculture as intertwined systems—that this thesis departs to investigate the sustained destruction of Indigenous foodways and consequently Indigenous life on Turtle Island.

The novels *Jonny Appleseed* (2018) by Joshua Whitehead (Two-Spirit Oji-nêhiyaw member of Peguis First Nation) and *The Seed Keeper* (2021) by Diane Wilson (Dakhóta), both

⁴ Logically, generational wealth in North America is closely tied to home ownership (Tyson 2023).

⁵ According to Frieda Knobloch, both conceptually and in practice, agriculture is inherently connected to colonization; early Euro-American colonizers refused to acknowledge Indigenous food cultivation methods as agricultural (4). She writes: “Colonization is an agricultural act. It is also an agricultural idea” (Knobloch 1).

serve as excellent “case studies” that contribute to a better understanding of how settler-colonial food-related violence manifests in both urban and rural geographies across Turtle Island’s Plains and Prairies. In the place now known as Manitoba, Canada, *Jonny Appleseed*’s young queer Two-Spirit⁶ Oji-Cree protagonist navigates life in Winnipeg. In the city, he hustles to make enough money to feed himself and keep a roof over his head. Over the course of seven days, as Jonny saves up to travel back to the reserve where he grew up to attend a funeral, his narrative is interspersed with flashbacks of his childhood featuring his beloved kokum [grandmother] and best friend (and lover) Tias. Despite the pervading food insecurity they face in contemporary Canada, Jonny and his family manage to renegotiate their culture’s traditional foodways to meet their contemporary needs. Humor, poverty, love, and pain all mingle together in Jonny’s enthralling storytelling.

South of the medicine line,⁷ on traditional Dakhóta territory, *The Seed Keeper* follows four generations of Dakhóta women as they fight to survive war, exile, family separation, and cultural disconnection at the hands of U.S. settler-colonial forces. Readers witness protagonist Rosalie Iron Wing’s winding path to reconnect with her ancestors. Having escaped Minnesota’s predatory foster care system, she ends up marrying a white farmer as a young woman. Finally, after two decades of marriage and motherhood, Rosalie eventually finds her way back to her roots through the seeds and plants of her Dakhóta homeland.

Because food is rooted deeply in both settler-colonial violence and Indigenous resilience, I adapt the language of *food sovereignty* for this literary analysis. Food sovereignty refers to a global counter-hegemonic movement and framework mobilized by Indigenous peoples, peasant organizations, migrant workers, climate activists, and other aligned groups fighting for ecologically sustainable, equitably distributed, and culturally appropriate food for all. While environmental humanities scholars Joni Adamson (2011, 2012, 2015) and Janet Fiskio (2015) have begun exploring this juncture between literary analysis and food sovereignty discourse, there is still much room to grow this emergent niche of literary studies. This thesis therefore attempts to sow the seeds, if you will, of a critical food sovereignty framework that, when further cultivated, would nourish Indigenous and settler-colonial studies. The bulk of this

⁶ *Two-Spirit* is a pan-tribal umbrella term that includes lesbian, gay, transgender, or queer (LGTBQ+) in addition to culture-specific or language-specific gender identities and sexualities which existed prior to the enforcement of a colonial heteronormative gender/sex binary. Not every queer Indigenous person identifies as Two-Spirit, nor does every Two-Spirit person identify as LGBTQ+ (Cox 2015). In addition to *Two-Spirit*, author Joshua Whitehead deploys the term *Indigiqueer* to refer to those like him and his protagonist who are Indigenous and identify as queer (*Making Love* 2022).

⁷ The “medicine line” refers to the border that runs between the U.S. and Canada along the forty-ninth parallel. In the nineteenth century some Plains Indigenous peoples referred to the border as the “medicine line” due to its remarkable ability to halt U.S. and Canadian authorities from crossing to the other side (O’Brien 1984).

analysis is divided into three main chapters, each of which corresponds to one of three guiding research questions: (1) How do entrenched settler-colonial policies and infrastructures (settler normativity) prevent Indigenous characters from practicing food sovereignty in the past and present? (2) How do Indigenous characters engage in subversive acts of resistance to feed themselves and their loved ones despite living within a capitalist system designed to exploit them? (3) How do characters (re)generate food-related traditions as acts of resurgence to strengthen their relationships within their communities and with other living beings? Ultimately, I argue that in both *Jonny Appleseed* and *The Seed Keeper*, Indigenous characters engage in embodied practices of food sovereignty to navigate, survive, and even thrive within the predatory structures of U.S. and Canadian settler colonialism.

2. Analytical Framework

This analysis departs from the simple conviction that Indigenous lives matter. Indigenous voices expressed through the medium of text therefore deserve commercial and scholarly attention. This chapter lays out the analytical framework upon which I will build my interpretation of Whitehead's and Wilson's texts. Sub-chapter "2.1 Indigenizing Literary Studies" argues Indigenous knowledges matter and contemplates what decolonizing scholarship might look like. The following section, "2.2 Conceptualizing Food 'Sovereignty,'" examines the development of food sovereignty as a global sociopolitical movement that emerged in response to the current corporate food regime. It then considers the appropriateness of food sovereignty as a concept that aligns with Indigenous self-determination. Finally, sub-chapter "2.3 Cultivating Food Sovereignities on Turtle Island" discusses how some of Turtle Island's Indigenous peoples are creatively negotiating food sovereignty in their efforts to regain control of ancestral territories and improve quality of life within their communities. This chapter ends by explaining the terms *grounded normativity*, *resistance*, and *resurgence*, all of which are foundational to my adaptation of *food sovereignty* for literary analysis.

2.1 Indigenizing Literary Studies?

Before proceeding, it must be acknowledged that the very existence of this thesis, as a fulfillment of a Master of Arts degree requirement, is embedded within the scholarly conventions of the Euro-American academic industrial complex. It would be negligent to ignore how Western knowledge regimes have continually delegitimized Indigenous epistemologies and remain deeply entrenched in colonial logic. The academy's elite institutions uphold and are upheld by settler-colonial practices and policies. What is accepted as knowledge, scientific objectivity, and even 'truth' is culled and codified through the perceived authority vested in the

ivory tower in tandem with other political and corporate entities. For centuries, sanctioned methods of Western knowledge production have excluded Black, Indigenous and other people of color (BIPOC), women, LGBTQ+ folks, disabled people, and generally individuals not white, male, and economically privileged. The Indigenous peoples of North America in particular face a confluence of objectification, exclusion, and suppression as a result of the academy's connivance with U.S. and Canadian settler states. Western academic disciplines have a long, sordid history of treating Native communities and individuals as ethnographic objects—as sources of information to be observed and recorded before their inevitable extinction (Deloria 1998). Even the physical bodies and remains of Indigenous people were/are treated as artifacts to study rather than as human beings (Highet 2005). At the same time, Indigenous people have been excluded from influential positions within higher education institutions—a direct legacy of family separation and forced residential school attendance (Teves et al. 309). Underrepresentation of Indigenous people within academia is also a symptom of disproportionate rates of poverty, mental illness, and criminalization which contribute to widespread educational disenfranchisement among Indigenous youth today (Johnson and Ali 208). Inseparable from the phenomena listed above, territorial dispossession has simultaneously prevented Indigenous communities from participating in tribal-specific knowledge traditions. Communities have lost and continue to lose connections to their cultural ways of knowing when separated from the ecosystems in which those practices were established and carried out, thus further suppressing knowledge transmission to younger generations (L. Simpson “Anticolonial Strategies” 375-381). Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg scholar Leanne Betasamosake Simpson summarizes this onslaught:

the colonial powers attacked virtually every aspect of our knowledge systems during the most violent periods of the past five centuries by rendering our spirituality and ceremonial life illegal, attempting to assimilate our children and destroy our languages through the residential school system, outlawing traditional governance, and destroying the lands and waters to which we are intrinsically tied. (“Anticolonial Strategies” 377)

Recognizing the academy's deeply entrenched position within the matrix of colonial destruction is just the first step towards decolonizing scientific research and knowledge production.

But (how) can we decolonize scholarship? This is a daunting question. It is clear, however, that earnest attempts at dismantling settler-colonial infrastructures must follow Indigenous leadership. One prominent voice among Indigenous scholars is Linda Tuhiwai Smith (Ngāti Awa and Ngāti Porou, Māori) whose work, including her foundational book, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (1999), has appealed to scholars committed to moving away from (neo-)imperial research practices. Smith advocates for a “rewriting and rerighting” of Indigenous presence within the historical and contemporary

imagination—acts of redress which involve turning a critical eye towards Western knowledge formation (28; emphasis original). In the decades since its publication, *Decolonizing Methodologies* has, in the words of Unanga scholar Eve Tuck, “profoundly influenced my generation of critical researchers. It has given us an anti-colonial lexicon of research, and an ethics of *making space and showing face*” (“Commentary” 365; emphasis original). In practice *making space* involves dislodging hegemonic texts, theories, methodologies, etc. to make room for and to take seriously contending ways of knowing that do not align with prevailing Euro-American standards and ideals. *Showing face* requires Indigenous presence—physical and intellectual—in boardrooms, classrooms, laboratories, libraries, etc. The prevalence of Indigenous-centered study programs and courses offered at institutions of higher education around the world has grown significantly since the first edition of *Decolonizing Methodologies* was published (Tuck “Commentary” 367). Within the humanities this has corresponded to an expanding body of scholarship focusing on works by Indigenous creators. Nevertheless, the growing popularity of Indigenous studies programs has had little effect on the imperial structures undergirding academia.

In 2000, non-Indigenous scholar Len Findlay proposed the imperative “always Indigenize!” as a rallying cry urging disciplinary restructuring (308). Findlay advocated for an emergent “radical humanities,” a scholastic shift involving an “Indigenously led, strategic interdisciplinarity, which draws on the fluid, permeable, holistic features of Indigenous knowledge to suspend or renegotiate academic territoriality (and the property regimes that underpin it)” (312). In particular, he expressed optimism for an interdisciplinary alliance between Indigenous studies and English literary studies and their collaborative potential to inform and articulate counter-hegemonic critiques of the current academic regime (322-324). Indeed, English literary studies and Indigenous studies organically converge around Indigenous literatures. First, it is important to recognize the essential cultural and political significance held by Indigenous literary works within the dominant settler-colonial societies of the U.S. and Canada. The existence of Indigenous literatures means that despite centuries of ongoing physical and cultural eradication, Indigenous people have continued to make their voices heard. Text is one of many mediums that enables contemporary Indigenous creators to carry on their specific culture’s storytelling traditions, while at the same time allowing them to speak back to systems of power that have worked to silence them and their ancestors. In his aptly titled book *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter* (2018), literary scholar Daniel Heath Justice (Cherokee Nation) explains,

Our literatures are just one more vital way that we have countered those forces of erasure and given shape to our own ways of being in the world. Our mindful stories, in all their forms and

functions—and whether vocalized, embodied, or inscribed—honor the sacrifices of those who came before us and who made it possible for us to continue the struggle today as specific peoples in relation with the world. They help bridge the gap of human imagination between one another, between other human communities, and between us and other-than-human beings. Fundamentally, they affirm Indigenous presence—and our *present*. That our nations do indeed have a vibrant present gives us hope that we'll have a future, too. (xix; emphasis original)

While literature provides a discursive space in which to imagine Indigenous futures, stories by and about Indigenous people also serve as powerful evidence against the settler normative notion that Indigenous peoples, if not already extinct, teeter on the verge of extinction. Non-Indigenous readers are confronted with the simple fact that Indigenous people still exist *now* as human beings with complex lives and nuanced stories (just like everyone else).

Beyond this essential assertion of humanity, Indigenous literatures matter to literary scholars invested in decolonizing their discipline. The hallowed body that is the English-language literary canon has been saturated by white, male, Anglo(-American) authorship for centuries. Within this canon, when Indigenous people were included as characters at all, they were almost invariably treated as savage villains or mythical beings (Deloria 1998). Narratives written by actual Indigenous writers are therefore critical to “challenge centuries of representational oppression” (Justice xx). While some progress has been made to challenge and diversify the literary canon, many Indigenous stories have not received the attention they deserve. Texts by Indigenous writers who managed to clear the significant hurdles obstructing the path to publication have historically been considered qualitatively inferior to works authored by their Euro-American peers (Justice 16-19). Native writers “face the presumption of deficiency,” according to Justice who declares, “Even with its hard-won advances, Indigenous literatures aren’t ‘literary’ enough for many scholars and critics” (147). Of course, ‘literary’ as a designation of excellence is itself a term embedded in a capitalist-colonial value system. The point I would like to stress now, however, is that Indigenous literatures deserve more than passive acquiescence to exist as such. Rather, as long as the discipline of literary studies is imbued with the authority to analyze and bestow judgement upon published texts, Indigenous stories must be included and taken seriously in those discussions.

As stated earlier, I have chosen to discuss *Jonny Appleseed* and *The Seed Keeper* in this analysis. Though they are works of fiction, both novels tell ‘real’ stories about contemporary life for Oji-Cree and Dakhóta people living on Turtle Island. Reflecting on the process of writing her first book, author Diane Wilson explains that “[she] wanted to take abstract words like colonization and render them with literary tools: show don’t tell the reader what that experience meant to real people” (*Beloved Child* 84). Wilson and Whitehead likewise render other obscured historical and contemporary sociopolitical realities more accessible through

their writing. Their texts do important work to de-invisibilize the violence of settler-colonial occupation. That is, because of their form, works of fiction and creative nonfiction allow writers to craft nuanced and holistic stories that lay bare the complex ways in which settler-colonial structures harm Indigenous people physically and psychologically. For many readers fiction is more compelling and therefore more effective at communicating the intricacies of sustained state violence than straightforward reportage. Works of literature like *Jonny Appleseed* and *The Seed Keeper* provide important narratives of Indigenous lives that disrupt the seeming inevitability and neutrality of settler-colonial presence. This is particularly important for non-Indigenous readers whose intersecting social and/or class privileges shield them from the rampant injustices inflicted on BIPOC populations in the United States and Canada. The following literary analysis necessarily investigates violence and trauma experienced by Indigenous characters because settler-colonial hegemony interminably demands the physical and spiritual diminishment of Indigenous nations and communities. Indigenous literatures and indeed Indigenous lives, however, are not defined by this oppression. Joy, connection, love, and laughter are all woven into the Indigenous experience. In an explicit effort to avoid what Eve Tuck calls “damage-centered research” (409), this literary analysis is “concerned with understanding complexity, contradiction, and the self-determination of lived lives” (“Suspending Damage” 416). In other words, though the Indigenous characters in *Jonny Appleseed* and *The Seed Keeper* face daily existential threats, their lives are imbued with friendship, humor, and hope as they find strength in their respective Oji-Cree and Dakhóta communities.

More than two decades have passed since Findlay published “Always Indigenize!” and many Indigenous scholars have expressed concerns about the ways Indigenization has been co-opted by the academy and rendered ineffectual against systems of oppression upholding Western scholarship (Campbell 2022; L. Simpson 2014). So, while it seems like progress has been made to expand literary canons and other areas of research to take more seriously Indigenous cultural production, the underlying forces guiding the academic industrial complex remain unchanged. Therefore, at its worst “[Indigenization] has become the colonizer’s tool to further acts of racism and displacement: a tool to assimilate and recolonize” (Campbell 133). Indigenous scholars are susceptible to both exclusion from and tokenization within the academy where their inclusion can be weaponized by institutions interested in the optics of diversity without having to unsettle inequitable power relations. Furthermore, Indigenous knowledges, as well as individual people, are targets for assimilation and recolonization through the guise of Indigenization. Leanne Betasamosake Simpson warns against “attempting to ‘Indigenize the

academy' by bringing Indigenous Knowledges into the academy on the terms of the academy itself" ("Land as Pedagogy" 13). Along these lines my concern is that as Indigenous studies is perceived or even explicitly advertised as an 'up-and-coming' discipline, Indigenous knowledges will be approached as untapped scholarly resources from which 'innovative' information can be extracted for scholastic profit in a competitive academic market (L. Simpson "Anticolonial Strategies" 376). As a young settler scholar, I worry about reifying colonial violence through my own engagement with Indigenous literatures. It is especially important that non-Indigenous people come to terms with the fact that "to insist that all things should be available without limit to everyone is to exercise a particularly corrosive kind of universalizing colonialist privilege; claiming entitlement to all peoples' knowledge is, after all, just one of the many expropriating features of settler colonial violence" (Justice 25). If we (settler academics) are truly interested in learning from Indigenous peoples, then we must both respect boundaries around specific knowledges and invest considerable time and energy into cultivating long-term "knowledge-sharing processes" (Smith 16).

This is all to say that as we (humanity) step into worsening ecological and social crises in the twenty-first century, Indigenizing the academy will not be enough. According to Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, "If you want to learn about something, you need to take your body onto the land and do it. Get a practice" ("Land as Pedagogy" 17-18). Perhaps ironically, since this is an academic text after all, it is due to this sentiment that I am interested in examining food relations in Whitehead and Wilson's novels. Eating, cooking, and growing food are all inherently physical, embodied practices which function as sites of settler-colonial violence and/or Indigenous resistance and resurgence. In the next section I will therefore take a closer look at the material realities of the global food system in an attempt to more firmly situate my analysis of fiction in the real world.

2.2 Conceptualizing Food 'Sovereignty'

Since 1492 Indigenous peoples on Turtle Island have been engaged in a continuous struggle to maintain their cultural, religious, and linguistic traditions in the face of European invasion and occupation. As First Nations and other Indigenous communities fight to protect their territories from encroaching settler occupation and voracious resource extraction, they also fight to continue cultivating food and feeding themselves from the land that makes up that territory. Though this struggle has been going on for centuries, the specific term *food sovereignty* as a designation of efforts to maintain traditional land-based foodways did not emerge until the 1990s (Desmarais and Wittman 1155). The international peasant organization La Via Campesina is widely credited for leading the charge to establish food sovereignty as a counter-

hegemonic movement aimed at fighting widespread global hunger exacerbated by increasingly industrialized and corporatized modes of food production (Coté 7; Elliot et al. 195; Gupta 530; Wills 105). In 2007 “more than 500 representatives from more than 80 countries of organizations of peasants/family farmers, artisanal fisher-folk, indigenous peoples, landless peoples, rural workers, migrants, pastoralists, forest communities, women, youth, consumers, environmental and urban movements” gathered in Mali for the Nyéléni International Forum for Food Sovereignty (“Nyéléni Declaration” 673). The delegation’s description of the concept, as outlined in the “Nyéléni Declaration on Food Sovereignty,” has become the prevailing definition of the term. The authors emphatically assert,

Food sovereignty is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems. It puts those who produce, distribute and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies rather than the demands of markets and corporations. It defends the interests and inclusion of the next generation. It offers a strategy to resist and dismantle the current corporate trade and food regime, and directions for food, farming, pastoral and fisheries systems determined by local producers. (“Nyéléni Declaration” 673-674)

The declaration clearly establishes food sovereignty as an ethico-political framework that prioritizes the physical and environmental well-being of communities over the profit-oriented interests of multinational corporations and even nation-states.

The food sovereignty movement seeks to rectify the current global food system that is profoundly intertwined with centuries of imperial projects. Food studies scholars Harriet Friedmann and Philip McMichael were among the first to adopt the term *food regime* as an analytic category to discuss distinct phases of international food production and trade. McMichael clarifies that “food regime analysis [...] prioritises the ways in which forms of capital accumulation in agriculture constitute global power arrangements, as expressed through patterns of circulation of food” (140). According to Friedmann and McMichael, the first global food regime emerged in the latter half of the nineteenth century amidst technological advances and shifting relationships between European powers, their remaining colonies, and newly established nation states (95-98). In a later article Friedmann ascribes the name “colonial-diasporic food regime” to this historical period, emphasizing the influential role played by European imperial powers and European colonial diaspora in shaping worldwide food relations (234). Rampant natural resource extraction from the colonial periphery therefore directly shaped the constellation of the first global food regime. With an influx of extracted raw materials, European metropolises expanded industrial infrastructure—a shift that generated wage labor positions within manufacturing and triggered a societal shift away from farming and other small-scale trades (Friedmann 234-235). This proletarianization “facilitated the relocation of

commercial agriculture from Europe to extensive settler frontiers” (Friedmann and McMichael 101). Growing cities also meant an increased demand for cheap dietary staples to feed a new working class. In turn, settler-colonial societies, like those in North America and Australia, required more land to grow the crops to meet this demand (Friedmann 234-237). According to Friedmann, wheat production played a particularly important role in this new constellation of international trade, as it expedited both industrialization and settler expansion; “vast international shipments of wheat made possible what actors really wanted to do—capitalists wanted to build railways, states of the European diaspora wanted to push back frontiers against indigenous peoples and build states to rival (and complement) those of Europe, and the poor and politically repressed of Europe wanted to find a better life in the European colonies” (232). Multiple beneficiaries of the first global food regime therefore had a vested interest in dispossessing Indigenous peoples from their territories on Turtle Island.

The specific social and political conditions shaping the first food regime dissolved with the Great Depression and World War II (Friedmann 237). By this time the U.S. had assumed the authority in global food relations once held by the imperial centers of Europe, namely Great Britain. What food studies scholars consider the second food regime did not take hold until the 1950s and was marked by the “re-routed flows of (surplus) food from the United States to its informal empire of postcolonial states on strategic perimeters of the Cold War” (McMichael 141). The U.S. exercised its global hegemony to become a dominant agricultural exporter through the guise of providing food aid to nation-states in the so-called ‘Third World,’ thus building a considerable neo-colonial empire (Friedmann 240). By the 1960s and 70s the influx of subsidized American grain undermined many local populations’ self-reliance on regional plant species and traditional foods—in many cases forcing peasants and small-scale farmers off their land as governments (often under U.S. influence) pushed for the consolidation and industrialization of domestic agriculture sectors (Friedmann and McMichael 104; Holt Giménez and Shattuck 110). Friedmann notes that American farms during this time also became increasingly reliant on fertilizers, pesticides, and petrochemicals to produce bigger yields as they cooperated with or were subsumed altogether by agribusiness firms (243-244). Meanwhile diets shifted globally as affluent consumers acquired a taste for manufactured food products that relied on new chemical technologies to maintain their shelf-stability (Friedmann and McMichael 108-110). By the second half of the twentieth century, food had become increasingly divorced in the prevailing Western cultural imagination from the plants and animals of which it was made.

Stocked to the brim with an endless selection of ultra-processed edible products, today's grocery store shelves evince food's pervasive commodification. While the existence of a third global food regime is debated among food studies scholars, there is a consensus that the 1980s ushered in a new neo-liberal phase in the second or the beginning of a distinct third food regime altogether.⁸ Regardless of its official classification, the present state of global food relations has been referred to alternately as a "corporate food regime" (McMichael 148), a "neo-liberal food regime" (Wills 96), a "corporate-led industrial food system" (Kepkiewicz 185), among many other variations of similar names. These labels allude to the prevailing economic deregulation, governmental privatization, and trade liberalization of recent decades which have unsurprisingly affected international food governance by solidifying corporate power in food systems worldwide (Wills 97). Despite advanced agricultural technologies and international declarations vowing to eradicate global hunger, much of the world's population remains precariously undernourished (Wills 94-95). *The State of Food Security and Nutrition* (2023), a publication produced by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), states: "In 2022, an estimated 29.6 percent of the global population—2.4 billion people—were moderately or severely food insecure, meaning they did not have access to adequate food" (xix). The term *food security* first emerged in the 1970s as a framework by which to evaluate world food supplies and distribution at a macroeconomic level (Patel 664). The concept has since evolved and is currently defined by the FAO as, "A situation that exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life" (246). Unfortunately, the neo-liberal turn in global food relations has rendered intergovernmental institutions like the FAO "increasingly irrelevant and cosmetic in the decision making around hunger policy" (Patel 664). Now the metric of food security, which has become ingrained in the parlance of international financial institutions (e.g. the World Bank and the World Trade Organization), transnational corporations (e.g. Monsanto and Kelloggs), and hegemonic nation-states (e.g. Canada and the U.S.), reduces food to a commodity to be distributed most efficiently by the mechanisms of a deregulated free market. In the contemporary context, food security functions as a measurable outcome that can be achieved through 'correct' economic choices in

⁸ While food regime analysis provides valuable language for evaluating the historical, social, and political conditions of global food production and consumption, my analysis is not contingent on proving or disproving the existence of a distinct third food regime. I adopt the premise that there has been a transition into a new food regime governed by neo-liberal forces in the late twentieth century and generally refer to this period as the "corporate food regime" or "neo-liberal food regime." However, my argument would not change if I instead considered this a continuation of the previous phase of global food relations. In my opinion global food regimes are useful concepts insofar as they provide another vantage point from which to analyze interlocking but distinct systems of oppression like capitalism and (settler) colonialism.

a capitalist system (Wills 102). Widespread global hunger, according to the logic of the corporate food regime, is neither the responsibility of governments nor corporations, but rather will be solved by advances in biotechnology, more efficient market choices, and philanthropy funded by capitalists (Holt Giménez and Shattuck 114-124).

In stark contrast to the food security paradigm, the *food sovereignty* model embraces food as a fundamental human right. Food sovereignty advocates understand “that the trajectory of this so-called ‘corporate food regime’ is such that it poses a fundamental threat to the survival of a substantial proportion of the inhabitants of the planet (especially those who do not participate in the global marketplace), and to the ecology of the planet” (McMichael 151). Eradicating global hunger is very simply and realistically not in the interests of the few transnational corporations at the top of the global food chain. These companies are beholden to their shareholders to procure maximal profits regardless of the human and ecological casualties incurred along the way (Patel 664). Food sovereignty discourse unequivocally critiques the widespread nutrition inequality, resource extraction, water usage, fossil fuel reliance, and chemical pollution perpetuated by the neo-liberal food regime. As a sociopolitical framework it resists the capitalist logic guiding the corporate-industrial food system. Food sovereignty discourse champions food as a basic human right and seeks to localize agricultural systems to create ecologically sustainable food chains that benefit all people.

La Via Campesina and other earlier organizers intentionally adopted the term *sovereignty* in their name both as a direct challenge to the food *security* paradigm and as a legitimizing strategy to bring their movement into international political discourse by aligning it with the language of liberal democracy (Patel 665). While the term sovereignty may lend a sense of legitimacy to the food movement, the word’s connotation with state-sanctioned power serves as a point of contention for some Indigenous communities (Daigle 304). Activists and scholars have extensively considered sovereignty’s role in Indigenous struggles for self-determination and political independence.⁹ In the simplest terms, Indigenous peoples fundamentally, unequivocally possess the right to self-determination and international political recognition. Centuries-long struggles to regain independence from U.S. and Canadian settler forces on Turtle Island are therefore as dehumanizing as they are demoralizing. Importantly, food sovereignty’s emphasis on respecting localized food practices that honor life, water, and seeds is informed by and aligns well with many Indigenous traditions and beliefs. However, as

⁹ Teves et. al provides a comprehensive overview of these discussions (3-57). Taiaiake Alfred (1999, 2005) and Glen Sean Coulthard (2014) have also written extensively about Indigenous self-determination and political recognition on Turtle Island. With this thesis I hope to show that food sovereignty plays a vital role within broader articulations of Indigenous political sovereignty.

Raj Patel points out, “To demand a space of food sovereignty is to demand specific arrangements to govern territory and space” (668). Of course, for approximately 500 years, the arrangements governing space and territory in North America have been predominately determined and violently enforced by settler-colonial powers. It is natural then that Indigenous peoples would oppose the land reform and resource (re)distribution forwarded by food sovereignty proponents if the authority of that collectivization remains vested in the hands of their oppressor.

Nevertheless, food sovereignty, as a dynamic framework, invites us to rethink legal conceptions of sovereignty as state-executed domination (Desmarais and Wittman 1153). As a diverse social movement, not all expressions of food sovereignty necessarily involve public policy or land reform. Yet it is imperative that non-Indigenous groups working towards food sovereignty follow Indigenous leadership and take their concerns involving land administration seriously. As Nuu-chah-nulth scholar Charlotte Côté observes,

For Indigenous people, sovereignty *does* matter, but it needs to break away from a definition derived from Western political and legal thought and be redefined through and within Indigenous people’s own historical and cultural experiences. To indigenize the term sovereignty thus means reframing it within Indigenous people’s struggles for autonomy, self-sufficiency, and self-determination rather than within assertions of domination, control, and authority over ancestral homelands. (9; emphasis original)

Therefore, any movements fighting for food sovereignty in occupied Indigenous territories must evaluate and reframe their conceptions of *sovereignty* through an Indigenous lens.

Indigenous voices make up a substantial part of the heterogenous coalition of organizations and individuals promoting food sovereignty as a counter-hegemonic alternative to the corporate food regime. At the same time, however, there are of course Indigenous communities that engage in struggles to resist the neo-liberal food regime and reclaim traditional foodways without explicitly identifying themselves with the movement (Desmarais and Wittman 1157; Gupta 531). Turtle Island’s Indigenous peoples have engaged in a continuous fight to maintain their traditional ways of life, including subsistence practices, since European arrival. Though the language of *food sovereignty* has only emerged very recently in the timeline of Indigenous resistance, it offers a discursive framework for all people committed to fighting the intertwined structures of settler-colonialism, capitalism, and the neo-liberal food regime. I agree with Lauren Kepkiewicz’s argument that non-Indigenous proponents of food sovereignty “need to better engage with narratives provided by indigenous food activists” (186). In the following section I will further explore food sovereignty’s decolonizing potential by examining Indigenous-led food sovereignty initiatives taking place within and across the geo-

political borders of the U.S. and Canada, before finally adapting the principles and ideas of the real-life food sovereignty movement for literary analysis.

2.3 Cultivating Food Sovereignities on Turtle Island

In the previous section I examined the broad historical trajectory of international food governance that pushed La Vía Campesina and other aligned groups of small-scale food producers, peasants, migrant workers, and climate activists to fight back against increased industrialization and corporatization of the global food chain. Having sketched the coalition's official stance as outlined in the 2007 Declaration of Nyéléni, I would now like to turn my attention to articulations of food sovereignty in practice. Put simply, there is no single or optimal iteration of food sovereignty. Indeed, food sovereignty practices are necessarily situated in a physical ecosystem and cultural context. While all local initiatives relate to the larger global struggle, articulations of food sovereignty by working-class folks in Winnipeg, Canada will logically differ from those of farm laborers in rural Mexico. To insist on one universal, optimized standard of food sovereignty would be a reification of the colonial-capitalist values that the movement opposes in the first place. Following Christina Schiavoni's lead, I conceptualize food sovereignty as a "historically embedded, continually evolving *set of processes* that are interactively shaped by state and social forces (3; emphasis added). This means that unlike the metric of food security, food sovereignty must be evaluated as a dynamically negotiated *process* or a *practice* rather than an outcome. And it is precisely this malleability that gives the framework such immense decolonial potential. Because Indigenous foodways and subsistence practices are deeply entrenched in a place's specific culture, language, and land, approaches towards food sovereignty will differ from region to region, community to community, and even person to person. Indigenous communities can therefore creatively mobilize food sovereignty discourse to best complement their community's specific struggles for self-determination. Schiavoni succinctly summarizes this expansive capacity: "Since there is no predetermined path for food sovereignty, it must be defined and articulated *as it is being constructed*, through processes that are open-ended, iterative, creative and contentious" (13; emphasis original). As this chapter comes to a close, I will return to literary fiction with the aim of investigating the creative and contentious—messy—paths towards food sovereignty depicted in *The Seed Keeper* and *Jonny Appleseed*.

First, however, I would like to discuss some real-life examples of how Turtle Island's Indigenous peoples are caring for their communities and traditional territories as they creatively negotiate food sovereignty. In *Beloved Child: A Dakota Way of Life* (2011) author Diane Wilson writes about her experience working with Indigenous teenagers at Dream of Wild Health, a

Native-owned “30-acre farm in Hugo, Minnesota [that] serves the Minneapolis-St. Paul Twin Cities Native community” (“History”). The farm provides a place for Indigenous youth from surrounding areas to connect with plant relatives as they practice valuable skills, like seed saving, foraging, gardening, and cooking (“Garden Warriors”). Wilson stresses how valuable Dream of Wild Health is to the region’s Indigenous community, since many young participants, having grown up in inner-city neighborhoods, first arrive at programs like Garden Warriors disconnected from land and ceremony (*Beloved Child* 15-18). Dream of Wild Health not only provides a safe space for children to connect to their personal cultural identities, but through their work on the farm participants also “deepen their connection with the earth, water, pollinators, elders, and peers” (“Garden Warriors”). In addition to their youth programs, Dream of Wild Health does important work feeding their community through an Indigenous Food Share available to low-income families at subsidized costs (“Indigenous Food Share”). Based on a community supported agriculture (CSA) model, they provide monthly shares of seasonal produce, with “an emphasis on Indigenous foods and medicines” that are grown using regenerative and organic farming methods, to households around the Twin Cities (“Indigenous Food Share”). What originally motivated Wilson to get involved with Dream of Wild Health, however, was the organization’s dedication to saving, regenerating, and sharing rare heirloom seeds with Indigenous communities across Turtle Island (*Beloved Child* 18-22). Defending seeds from the ever-present corporate threats of genetic modification and seed patenting is part of the critical work being done at Dream of Wild Health. Wilson emphasizes, “With this work comes a responsibility to protect the seeds as a precious, fragile, gift and to rebuild a relationship with the land that expresses values of respect, reciprocity, and gratitude” (*Beloved Child* 19). Dream of Wild Health is just one of the many vibrant Indigenous-led food sovereignty initiatives throughout the U.S. and Canada striving to make Native communities healthier and safer by revitalizing traditional foodways.

Above the forty-ninth parallel, in northern Manitoba, a project called Ithinto Mechisowin (which translates to “food from the land”) is another example of an Indigenous-led food sovereignty program (Kamal et al. 559). In O-Pipon-Na-Piwin Cree Nation (OPCN), flooding from a hydroelectric dam project in 1976 forced the First Nations and Métis communities around South Indian Lake onto their current reserve with devastating ecological and socioeconomic consequences (Kamal et al. 560). Destruction of plant and animal habitats and contamination of fish populations forced families to rely on expensive commodity foods and government assistance programs to survive (Kamal et al. 563). Facing rampant food insecurity, OPCN established Ithinto Mechisowin in 2014 to increase knowledge about and

participation in traditional harvesting practices (Kamal et al. 566). Many of the animals and plants (e.g. white fish, beaver, muskrat, moose, duck, geese, seagull eggs, berries, and wild mint) that are staples in OPCN's citizens' traditional diets, are threatened by the ecological impacts of the Churchill River dam (Kamal et al. 566-568). Much of the yields produced through these programs are distributed to low-income and otherwise disadvantaged members of the community ensuring culturally significant food and medicine is circulated as widely as possible throughout the O-Pipon-Na-Piwin Cree Nation (Kamal et al. 567). Food distribution among community members is a common component of most Indigenous-led food sovereignty programs. At the heart of the Ithinto Mechisowin program is

OPCN's concept of resource, best expressed through the word *wechihituwin*. *Wechihituwin* refers to any means of livelihood that is shared and used to help another person, family, or the community. The term emphasizes the fact that food in the cultural tradition of OPCN is not a commodity; it is a set of relationships. (Kamal et al 565-566)

Indeed, as the program enabled OPCN citizens to engage in traditional harvesting practices more frequently, participants of all ages strengthened their relationships to both their human and non-human kin (Kamal et al. 567-570). When considered *wechihituwin*, the plants and animals eaten as food are de-objectified; they are not products, but rather relatives who give their lives for the good of the community. Within this framework, sovereignty as a concept is transformed into the right to be responsible for and to take care of the land so all living beings can flourish. By regenerating traditional food practices, groups like Ithinto Mechisowin and Dream of Wild Health are dislodging concepts like *food* and *sovereignty* from their colonial contexts and replanting them within an Indigenous web of reciprocal relationships rooted in gratitude and responsibility.

Participants involved with Dream of Wild Health and Ithinto Mechisowin actively embody what Secwépemc food sovereignty activist and scholar Dawn Morrison refers to as an "Indigenous eco-philosophy" (99). This philosophy, she asserts, "underlies the ability of Indigenous peoples to maintain dignified relationships to the land and food systems in sharp contrast to the Eurocentric belief [...] that humans are to dominate and control nature, and therefore seek to 'manage' the land that provides us with our food" (99). On Turtle Island there are hundreds of Indigenous nations and tribes with their own languages, cultures, and traditions, yet they are united by shared beliefs about humanity's responsibility to the Earth and other-than-human beings (Morrison 98). Of course, each group uses their own language to name their ecological epistemologies which predate European contact. In *Making Love with the Land* Joshua Whitehead writes about the Cree concept of "wahkohtowin—or enacting relationality within a world, here meaning the land, that asks for us all to humble ourselves, moving away

from the hierarchy of being wherein ‘human’ is crowned atop a vertical ladder, and instead link hand and hand as a rhizome, a plurality of linkages that come together horizontally as ‘all my relations’” (65). This English phrase “all my relations” is deployed by many Indigenous cultures to signify a guiding philosophy of gratitude, reciprocity, and respect. In the Dakhóta language, according to Diane Wilson, “*Mitakuye Oyasin*” encompasses this radically reciprocal worldview emphasizing interdependence between humans and other-than-human beings (*Beloved Child* 17). To discuss place-based ethical frameworks (like wahkohtowin or Mitakuye Oyasin) on a broader pan-Indigenous scale of decolonial struggle, Yellowknives Dene political theorist Glen Coulthard established the term *grounded normativity*. Grounded normativity invokes “the modalities of Indigenous land-connected practices and longstanding experimental knowledge that inform and structure our ethical agreements with the world and our relationships with human and nonhuman others over time” (Coulthard 13). While the Indigenous eco-philosophies encapsulated by grounded normativity have existed for centuries, the comparatively young food sovereignty movement offers Indigenous peoples an activist network and contemporary political language to fight for their ways of life in the face of twenty-first century settler colonialism.

It should also be noted that Indigenous food activists have both contributed immensely to broader definitions of food sovereignty and attempted to articulate how *Indigenous* food sovereignty is unique within the overarching movement. Resulting definitions of a specifically Indigenous food sovereignty usually highlight land-based food systems, collectivism, decolonization, and self-determination. According to Morrison,

the concept of Indigenous food sovereignty describes, rather than defines, the present-day strategies that enable and support the ability of Indigenous communities to sustain traditional hunting, fishing, gathering, farming and distribution practices [...]. Through the process of appreciative inquiry, Indigenous food sovereignty also provides a framework for exploring, transforming and rebuilding the industrial food system towards a more just and ecological model for all. (97-98)

Here Morrison highlights three distinctive aspects of Indigenous food sovereignty. First, she emphasizes the utility of the food sovereignty framework as a discursive tool which can be implemented by Indigenous peoples in their efforts to halt the destruction of “Indigenous food-related knowledge systems” (Morrison 103). Second, she highlights the importance of including provisioning practices—hunting, fishing, gathering—which sedentary agriculture-based food sovereignty approaches tend to overlook. And third, she emphasizes the transformative potential that incorporating Indigenous knowledges can have on the global food sovereignty movement’s larger goals to dismantle the corporate food regime. Indeed, as protectors of most

of Earth's remaining biodiversity, Indigenous peoples must play a leading role in the fight to establish ecologically sustainable food systems for the whole planet (Morrison 104).

Nevertheless, as Lauren Kepkiewicz and Bryan Dale have convincingly argued, there remains an urgent need to build solidarities among disparate food sovereignty proponents, especially in settler-colonial nation-states (983-985). Engaging with Morrison's work, Kepkiewicz and Dale assert that "Indigenous food sovereignty frameworks have also underlined the need to change settler relationships to Indigenous lands by engaging with Indigenous cosmovisions, and struggles, as well as ongoing colonial occupation of Indigenous lands" (984). Indigenous approaches to food sovereignty are therefore distinct from settler-led food movements not grounded in a radically reciprocal eco-philosophy, such as the Indigenous framework "all my relations." Unlike state-centric approaches, "The concept of Indigenous food sovereignty is not focused only on *rights to* land, food, and the ability to control a production system, but also *responsibilities to* and culturally, ecologically, and spiritually appropriate *relationships with* elements of those systems" (Mihesuah and Hoover 11; emphasis original). This is not to say that land rights and production systems do not matter within the framework of Indigenous food sovereignty, but rather that foods and medicines are the natural result of revitalizing Indigenous foodways through the cultivation of healthy reciprocal relationships with the plants and animals in a specific ecosystem. In other words, fulfilling cultural, ecological, and spiritual obligations to human and other-than-human relatives on one's land *is* the food production system. On the islands of Hawai'i Native Hawaiians have a more succinct way of encapsulating the central idea of Indigenous food sovereignty with the phrase "aloha 'āina" which contains the central belief that "if you take care of the land, the land takes care of you" (Gupta 530). Language like *food sovereignty*, *Indigenous eco-philosophy*, and *grounded normativity*, though extremely valuable in contemporary decolonial discourse, are simply English signifiers for knowledges and practices that have existed for millennia. These concepts are not merely responses to the environmental and social destruction wrought by (neo-)imperial capitalism, they invoke ways of being that have existed before and alongside settler-colonialism for centuries.

Since its emergence at the turn of the twenty-first century, Indigenous activists and scholars have been integrating food sovereignty discourse into their resistance movements to promote pan-Indigenous decolonial solidarities around food. Dawn Morrison, for example, is a founder of the Working Group on Indigenous Food Sovereignty (WGIFS), a diverse coalition of individuals and community groups striving to raise awareness and mobilize action for Indigenous food sovereignty throughout the territories now known as Canada ("About Us";

Coté 9). WGIFS, in collaboration with the British Columbia Food Systems Network (BCFSN), developed a list of four pillars to serve as uniting principles in pan-Indigenous efforts towards food sovereignty. Charlotte Coté (Tseshaht/Nuu-chah-nulth First Nation) summarizes these principles:

(1) Sacred sovereignty: food is a sacred gift from the Creator; (2) Participatory: is a call to action, that people have a responsibility to uphold and nurture healthy and interdependent relationships with the eco-system that provides the land, water, plants, and animals as food; (3) Self-determination: [Indigenous food sovereignty] needs to be placed within a context of Indigenous self-determination with the freedom and ability to respond to community needs around food; (4) Policy: provides a restorative framework for reconciling Indigenous food and cultural values with colonial laws and policies. (9)

These four principles underscore Indigenous food sovereignty's expansive decolonizing potential. As discussed above, when food is understood as a critical link in the web of "all my relations," the rapacious extraction and commodification of natural resources required to fuel the colonial-capitalist economic engine cannot take place. Focusing on the second principle, participation, Indigenous food sovereignty goes beyond academic theory and political rhetoric as it facilitates the revitalization of Indigenous knowledges through physical acts of food cultivation and consumption.

Having considered briefly the theoretical and grassroots work of Indigenous food sovereignty activists on Turtle Island, I conceptualize Indigenous food sovereignties¹⁰ as creatively negotiated practices, rooted in grounded normativity, which are embodied within specific cultural and ecological contexts. Furthermore, because it is inherently participatory (i.e. involves tangible acts of growing, harvesting, eating, etc.), I suggest that striving towards food sovereignty functions as a "*decolonial praxis*" (Coulthard 48; emphasis original). Coulthard emphasizes that within Indigenous struggles for liberation against settler-colonial tyranny, "the empowerment that is derived from this critically self-affirmative and self-transformative ethics of desubjectification must be cautiously directed *away* from the assimilative lure of the statist politics of recognition, and instead fashioned toward our own on-the-ground struggles of freedom" (48; emphasis original). In other words, struggles for self-determination are fought more productively in spaces like kitchens and gardens, than in the settler regime's own political chambers. Therefore 'mundane' acts like cooking and consuming foods can foster a decolonial praxis at both individual and collective levels. Indigenous food sovereignties go beyond theory and rhetoric as they are creatively negotiated one planted seed, one harvested plant, and one shared meal at a time.

¹⁰ Speaking of food *sovereignties* here emphasizes the diverse manifestations of sustainable, reciprocal Indigenous foodways on Turtle Island and around the world.

Departing from this understanding of Indigenous food sovereignties, the following literary analysis of *Jonny Appleseed* and *The Seed Keeper* investigates *how* characters cultivate, prepare, share, and otherwise engage with the plants and animals (and their processed by-products) that constitute food. Though they are ‘only’ works of fiction, these narratives nevertheless shine a light on contemporary Oji-Cree and Dakhóta food relations. As environmental humanities scholar Joni Adamson observes,

literary analysis can be seen as a form of intellectual inquiry that complements and enhances legal, political, or policy discussions [...]. Literary works also contribute importantly to understandings of the cultures and local and global contexts from which [food sovereignty] campaigns emerge, and set issues surrounding the industrialization of production and globalization within more accessible frameworks that illuminate their connections to past and present. (231)

The following chapter, “Surviving Colonization and ‘Wiindigo Infrastructures,’” examines how settler-colonial structures or settlers themselves prevent Indigenous characters from practicing their traditional foodways by inciting hunger, separating families, disrupting ecosystems, and objectifying Indigenous bodies. In chapters four and five the analytical focus shifts from the existential threat of settler colonialism to highlight Indigenous agency and action. Following the lead of geographers Michelle Daigle (Cree) and Heather Dorries (Anishinaabe), I make an analytic distinction between *resistance* and *resurgence* (Daigle 2019; Dorries et al. *Settler City* 2019). Acts of resistance are destructive and degenerative insofar as they undermine and weaken settler-colonial structures; they are necessarily reactive to settler occupation. Acts of resurgence are constructive, generative, and restorative insofar as they (re)build culturally specific knowledge and traditions while strengthening relationships within Indigenous communities. Resurgence both precedes and resists settler colonialism. This means that resurgence and resistance are not opposing categories, but rather interrelated components of decolonization. Indeed, a single action can be simultaneously resistant and resurgent. Chapter four, “Rooting in Resistance,” explores how food provisioning and consumption enacted within the corporate food regime can challenge Euro-American hegemony and colonial-capitalist systems. Finally, chapter five, “Flourishing Through Resurgence,” focuses on how embodied acts of food sovereignty (re)generate Oji-Cree or Dakhóta lifeways. This includes an analysis of how (re)creating food traditions rooted in grounded normativity contributes to a decolonized present and future. Though the characters’ actions are small and seemingly irrelevant to larger political struggles, I argue that they are nevertheless vitally important because, as Taiaiake Alfred (Kahnawà:ke Mohawk) and Jeff Corntassel (Cherokee) argue, “decolonization and regeneration are not at root collective and institutional processes. They are shifts in thinking and action that emanate from commitments and reorientations at the level of the self that, over

time and through proper organization, manifest as broad social and political movements to challenge state agendas and authorities” (611). Therefore, as individual Indigenous people nourish their physical bodies, they ultimately nurture Indigenous resistance against Turtle Island’s occupying colonial-capitalist forces.

3. Surviving Colonization and “Wiindigo infrastructures”

This chapter examines how Oji-Cree, Dakhóta, and other Indigenous characters in *Jonny Appleseed* and *The Seed Keeper* survive in settler-colonial societies designed around their physical and cultural eradication. The term *Wiindigo infrastructure* is adopted from Winona LaDuke (Anishinaabe of the White Earth reservation) and Deborah Cowen who invoke the greedy cannibalistic monster from Anishinaabe oral history—the Wiindigo¹¹—to characterize the seemingly mundane yet essential material, legal, and social structures that enable sustained voracious settler-colonial domination on Turtle Island (244). U.S. and Canadian nation-states have spent centuries attempting to justify and naturalize their existences, which are in fact anything but the inevitable manifestations of destiny. In reality, the United States and Canada are settler-colonial projects whose physical presence on Indigenous homelands must be constantly, violently, and creatively maintained. The legitimacy of these ostensibly democratic nations is thwarted by diverse articulations of Indigenous nationhood across the continent which represent alternative forms of sovereignty on the same territory. “And here is the rub,” points out Kahnawà:ke Mohawk scholar Audra Simpson, “Indigenous political orders are quite simply, first, are prior to the project of founding, of settling, and as such continue to point, in their persistence and vigor, to the failure of the settler project to eliminate them” (2). The infrastructure undergirding settler regimes is therefore designed and continually adapted with the aim of strengthening settler legitimacy through which the deterioration, disappearance, and destruction of Indigenous political and biological bodies are the logical consequences.

The eliminatory logic guiding U.S. and Canadian settler-colonial regimes simultaneously upholds and is upheld by capitalism. Indigenous land dispossession, when followed and reinforced by permanent Euro-American settlement, facilitates the perpetual resource extraction required for (supposedly) infinite capital accumulation at the expense of an enslaved or otherwise exploited labor base. LaDuke and Cowen label this form of extractive

¹¹ Though I spell “Wiindigo” (with a capital “W”) like LaDuke and Cowen do in their paper, there are many other spellings of the word (e.g. wendigo, windigo, etc.) used by speakers of Algonquian languages. Additionally, it is important to acknowledge how European colonists and Euro-American settlers have appropriated Wiindigo myths to delegitimize and demonize Indigenous knowledges and individuals (Tailor 2023). My decision to use the term Wiindigo in this chapter title and throughout this analysis is therefore an attempt to redirect the word’s connotations with insatiable greed and cannibalistic (self-)destruction back towards exploitative colonial-capitalist forces.

capitalism the *Wiindigo economy*. They write: “Wiindigo economics—organized by an ethos of disposability and accumulation—is profoundly destructive to many people and life-forms in the present, and to planetary survival in the long term” (LaDuke and Cowen 253). Indigenous presence therefore poses a double threat to the colonial-capitalist order. Just as alternative forms of governance undermine settler statecraft, Indigenous lifeways rooted in grounded normativity threaten to halt economic growth predicated on exploiting natural resources and human labor. Wiindigo infrastructures are constructed to feed the Wiindigo economy’s insatiable appetite for more—more land, more resources, more profit—regardless of ensuing socioecological violence and destruction. U.S. and Canadian governments have failed egregiously to act upon decades of overwhelming evidence warning against (the now happening) catastrophic consequences of human-caused climate change. This governmental and societal lack of action demonstrates what Jeff Berglund calls “the cannibalistic and self-consuming nature of the colonialist project” (8). In other words, North America’s fossil-fueled extractive economy, which has long brought about the destruction of marginalized populations worldwide, is on pace to set off a domino effect of ecological collapse which threatens the existence of even its own stakeholders.

The ongoing devastation manifested through Wiindigo infrastructures is prolific, though unevenly distributed, across Turtle Island. As direct targets, Native people continue to face the brunt of this multifarious violence. This chapter examines how settler-colonial (infra)structures subject Indigenous characters’ bodies to physical diminishment and destruction. By inflicting damage on individual biological bodies, settler regimes simultaneously weaken the Indigenous collective, thereby affirming settler presence. Attending to the bodily violence inflicted on Indigenous people is critical because, according to Audra Simpson,

part of dispossession, and settler possession meant that coercive and modifying sometimes killing power had to target [Indigenous women’s] bodies. Because as with all bodies, these bodies were more than just “flesh” —these were and are sign systems and symbols that could effect and affect political life. So they had to be killed, or, at the very least subjected because what they were signaling or symbolizing was a direct threat to settlement. (4)

In this passage Audra Simpson refers specifically to Haudenosaunee women who hold political authority within their communities, but I argue her logic can be extended to all Indigenous bodies, especially to the Dakhóta, Cree, and Anishinaabe women and Two-Spirit people who are represented in the novels. Over the course of their centuries-long occupation, Euro-American invaders have engaged in diverse and creative strategies to remove physical and cultural Indigenous presence from coveted territory because, ultimately, destroying Indigeneity affirms settler-colonial existence.

The scale and speed of settler violence inflicted upon Turtle Island’s Indigenous peoples has varied greatly depending on historical and geographical contexts. While this of course

includes blatantly genocidal extermination policies (e.g. the U.S. Indian Removal Act of 1830), other material, legal, and social systems of North American settler-colonial societies function to remove Indigenous people(s) from their ancestral homelands incrementally and therefore relatively invisibly. I assert that the neo-liberal food regime that commodifies plants and animals into profitable products is one such system. Building upon Rob Nixon's notion of "slow violence" (2011) and Lauren Berlant's conception of "slow death" (2011), René Dietrich suggests that settler-colonial regimes invest ideologically in the "deterioration" of Indigenous life to "secure the condition of possibility for the liberal settler state" (15). I suggest then that as generations of Indigenous communities on Turtle Island have been prevented from engaging in their traditional foodways, impoverished without access to affordable nutritious foods, and faced with high rates of diet-related diseases, they have been subjected to "violence that is neither spectacular nor instantaneous, but rather incremental and accretive, its calamitous repercussions playing out across a range of temporal scales" (Nixon 2). The creeping pace at which such violence is enacted renders its effects natural or even invisible from an uncritical perspective. The seemingly inevitable disappearance of Indigenous political and biological bodies from Turtle Island sustains the presence of the U.S. and Canadian settler-colonial regimes.

Indigenous bodies are vulnerable to both immediate and prolonged bodily harm at the hands of the settler state. It is imperative for the structural integrity of settler-colonial regimes to prevent the nourishment of Indigenous bodies across time and space. For the sake of the following analysis, I am most interested in how food relations function as sites of settler violence—fast or slow. The following sub-chapters read *The Seed Keeper* and *Jonny Appleseed* closely to investigate how interlocking Wiindigo infrastructures work dynamically to prevent Dakhóta, Oji-Cree, and other Indigenous characters from practicing food sovereignty.

3.1 Inflicting Hunger

At the height of westward imperial expansion in the nineteenth century, U.S. and Canadian governments directly attacked traditional Indigenous food sources in their attempts to remove populations who very inconveniently held legitimate sovereign claims to their territories (Daschuk 184). By the mid-1800s, intensified Euro-American settlement and the establishment of an agrarian property regime accelerated the decimation of bison herds and disrupted traditional land-use practices, ultimately stoking widespread instability and hunger among Plains and Prairies Indigenous communities (Daschuk 79). *The Seed Keeper* directly addresses these exterminatory policies, as nineteenth century Dakhóta characters are starved and expelled from their homeland by the U.S. military to make room for Euro-American homesteaders in the

newly founded state of Minnesota. Contemporary Indigenous characters meanwhile face less overt, though certainly not less existentially threatening, settler violence. Poverty and food insecurity are part of everyday life for the Two-Spirit Oji-Cree protagonist of *Jonny Appleseed*. Both the urban landscape of Winnipeg and the isolated environment of Jonny's home reserve are governed by the Canadian settler state's eliminatory and extractive policies. In both narratives, hunger is a presence prowling at the perimeter of Indigenous life.

Though *The Seed Keeper*'s protagonist Rosalie Iron Wing was born in the 1960s, the novel spans 140 years from 1862 to 2002 and engages in important work to de-invisibilize the violently genocidal process through which the Dakhóta people were dispossessed of their traditional territory. According to historian Mary Lether Wingerd, Minnesotans have "avoid[ed] confronting the trail of coerced treaties and broken promises that purchased the timberlands and farmsteads so central to Minnesota's subsequent prosperity" (xiii). In addition to Rosalie, the novel features three other female Dakhóta first-person narrators, including Rosalie's great-great grandmother Marie Blackbird. Marie's narrative, which begins during the 1862 U.S.-Dakhóta War, forces readers to confront how settlers, supported by the U.S. federal government, systematically and violently removed Dakhóta tribes from their territories. Sicangu Lakota scholar Sarah Hernandez argues compellingly that missionary colonizers abused their knowledge of the Dakhóta language to mistranslate and misrepresent the Treaty of Traverse des Sioux (1851) and the Treaty of Mendota (1851) to the region's Indigenous residents (xv). These treaties, plus another ratified in 1858, stripped the Dakhóta people of all but a sliver of their traditional homelands and effectually put the remaining millions of acres into the hands of Euro-American homesteaders hungry for a piece of the area's fertile soil and timber forests (Wingerd 292).

Pushed onto a shrinking reservation, the Dakhóta people's capacity to feed themselves in their traditional ways—through a combination of hunting, gathering, and gardening—was severely diminished (Wingerd 270). Marie highlights this direct connection between land dispossession and hunger. Her family was, in her own words, "one of many who lived in the woods that run along the Mní Sota Wakpá, the Minnesota River, in a new reservation too small to feed all of us" (*TSK* 121).¹² Some Dakhóta families, at the urging of the U.S. government, turned to Euro-American farming methods, causing intertribal turmoil (Wingerd 293). Still, many ignored the hunting restrictions imposed by the treaties and attempted to hold on to their traditional provisioning methods. According to Marie, she belonged to "one of the families that

¹² For the sake of readability, when necessary, in-text citations for Wilson's and Whitehead's novels will be abbreviated as follows: *The Seed Keeper* (*TSK*) and *Jonny Appleseed* (*JA*).

kept the old ways, leaving the reservation to hunt for deer” (*TSK* 126). In addition to hunting, the “old [food]ways” Marie mentions include gardening and foraging. Indeed, she laments the disruption to her family’s annual winter preparations: “This time of year, we would usually be gathering nuts, drying venison, [...] drying strips of squash from the garden and wild plants and berries in the sun” (126). By listing the food-related labor she and her family have been prevented from engaging in by reservation infrastructure and settler encroachment, Marie also highlights the existence of an established (and previously bountiful) Dakhóta food system. Marie’s emphasis on seasonal cultivation procedures combined with her memories of having “round cheeks” (121) and “enough [food] to share” (127), belies the popular Euro-American assertion that Turtle Island’s Indigenous peoples were not using the land ‘productively,’ thereby justifying settler occupation. In fact, as Marie makes clear, before they were fenced into a reservation, Dakhóta communities cultivated an abundance of foods and medicines through their semi-nomadic hunting, foraging, and gardening traditions for countless generations. The displacement and acute hunger Marie and her family experience leading up to the U.S.-Dakhóta War are therefore direct consequences of U.S. expansionary policies and infrastructure.

By 1862 conditions for the Dakhóta were deteriorating rapidly. The U.S. government’s refusal to provide annuity payments and rations as stipulated in their treaties, the steady arrival of Euro-American squatters on Dakhóta land pushing wild game further west, and widespread regional crop failures all compounded to fuel hunger and desperation among the Dakhóta population (Daschuk 60; Wingerd 297).¹³ This desperation erupted in violence on 17 August 1862, when a group of frustrated, hungry Dakhóta hunters, attacked and killed seven white settlers, ultimately igniting an armed struggle with the area’s white residents who, backed by the U.S. army, responded with ferocity (Wingerd 303-318). Hungry for retribution, “Minnesotans were screaming for blood” and some settlers, unsatisfied with the government’s response, took matters into their own hands (Wingerd 315). Around this time, Marie and her family return to their home only to find “the corn in [their] garden trampled, the beans uprooted, the dried meat stolen. No food [t]here, and there would be no more rations from the agent” (*TSK* 120). Euro-American settlers, in connivance with the U.S. federal government, explicitly employed hunger—whether by withholding promised provisions, obstructing hunting, or directly destroying crops—as a way of removing Dakhóta bodies from desired land. Even at fourteen years old Marie grasps this eliminatory intent. She recollects, “When I asked Iná

¹³ Wingerd and Berg both suggest that much suffering and violence could have been avoided if the U.S. government had honored its treaty agreements and paid the Dakhóta people the money it owed them. Both scholars also highlight the widespread fraud practiced by federal Indian agents and traders who siphoned off money from annuity payments and refused to supply food rations to hungry Dakhóta individuals (Berg 24-29; Wingerd 292-305).

[mother] what had happened to our village, she could not tell me. But I knew. The settlers had taken the land and allowed us to starve, and now my family was in danger” (122). Marie recognizes perceptively that starvation is a weapon of settler-colonial occupiers.

The Dakhóta people faced both vigilante settler bloodlust and harsh governmental policies of expulsion in response to their attempts at defending themselves against the encroaching occupation of their land (Wingerd 319-331). Starvation was an integral component of the collective punishment inflicted upon most people deemed ‘Indian’ who remained in Minnesota, regardless of their involvement in the conflict (Wingerd 328). Over twenty years later, Marie reluctantly remembers the horrors she endured during the so-called “hungry years at Crow Creek” (*TSK* 200). By 1863, the Indigenous (mostly Dakhóta, but also Ho-Chunk (Winnebago)) captives in Minnesota who managed to survive brutal interment outside of Fort Snelling, and who were not already imprisoned or executed as war criminals, were taken to Crow Creek, a “drought-stricken wasteland” outside of their traditional territory (Wingerd 334). Marie recalls, “Even now it was hard to think of those days. So little to eat, the meat rotten, no woods nearby to gather plants. The hills were covered with small graves, including that of my brother Čhaske” (*TSK* 205). The Dakhóta and Ho-Chunk suffered staggering casualties at the isolated reservation, “nearly half of our people died from hunger and sickness,” remarks Marie (206). The U.S. government, through its failure to provide adequate provisions to the interned population at Crow Creek, bears responsibility for the scale of innocent lives lost there (Wingerd 335). Nevertheless, the abominable conditions were exacerbated by the reservation’s location in an alien environment, which made it impossible for Dakhóta and Ho-Chunk prisoners to even attempt cultivating plants and medicines according to their traditions.

In *The Seed Keeper*, Marie’s narrative voice brings to life the buried history of the U.S./Minnesota’s genocidal removal of the Dakhóta people from their ancestral homeland. Readers must bear witness to how Euro-American settlers, supported by civil and military infrastructure, intentionally attacked Dakhóta food sources and starved innocent people, like Marie and her family, to legitimize their own presence on that land.

A few hundred miles to the north, across the medicine line, *Jonny Appleseed’s* Two-Spirit Oji-Cree protagonist must fight to feed himself in settler-colonial Canada. The novel takes place on Treaty One territory which encompasses traditional homelands of Anishinaabe, Cree, and Métis nations. Unlike *The Seed Keeper*, however, *Jonny Appleseed* does not take readers back to the nineteenth century to directly witness Canada’s theft of these Native lands. Nevertheless, the consequences of historical and ongoing land occupation reverberate through the characters’ lives into the twenty-first century. For Jonny this materializes, among other

ways, as generational trauma and poverty. Growing up on the reserve (“rez”) in Peguis First Nation he experiences some food insecurity. Despite the resourcefulness of Jonny’s primary caregivers—his mom and grandmother—fresh, high-quality food products are difficult to find and often prohibitively expensive on the reserve.

It is as an adult living alone in Winnipeg, however, that Jonny is most threatened by hunger. He acknowledges that urban life presents different challenges than living on the rez: “Sometimes survival can be a hell of a game—we all knew when we moved off the rez, but living in the city was a whole different animal” (*JA* 132). Cities as achievements of national progress are naturalized in the popular imagination as exclusively settler spaces. However, North American metropolises like Winnipeg are, of course, located on Indigenous land. The juncture of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers, where the Canadian city now sits, was the site of thriving First Nations and Metis communities for generations prior to Winnipeg’s incorporation in 1873 (Dorries et. al “Racial Capitalism” 266). Today, Winnipeg’s Indigenous population is larger than in any other city in Canada (Statistics Canada 2022). Yet as settler-colonial spaces, Canadian cities are configured to perpetuate the disappearance of Indigenous bodies and the (labor) exploitation of racialized others to maintain land and capital accumulation (Dorries et. al “Racial Capitalism” 267).¹⁴ This translates to a devaluation of Indigenous life to the point that impoverishing, policing, beating, criminalizing, incarcerating, and under-nourishing Indigenous bodies is normalized as a natural and unremarkable part of settler-colonial progress. Containing, assimilating, or destroying Indigenous physical and cultural presence in urban spaces therefore strengthens what Dorries and co-authors call “settler colonial entitlement to the city” (*Settler City* 2). In other words, settler urban fantasies are soothed when Indigeneity is contained (ideally in a faraway fenced-off reserve (or prison)) or disappeared (through physical death or at the very least social assimilation), thereby neutralizing potential challenges to the settler state’s legitimacy.¹⁵ Despite the large Indigenous population in Winnipeg, residents like Jonny must navigate a settler-colonial urban landscape that is particularly hostile to their survival.

Struggling to make ends meet, Jonny primarily lives off a diet of 7-11 hot dogs, Hamburger Helper, and other ultra-processed foods when he can afford them. His reliance on

¹⁴ While it is beyond the scope of this thesis to investigate the complex and often diverging ways anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism materialize in white supremacist North American societies, it is nevertheless important to point out that “[c]apitalist accumulation is always racial in that it requires the differential valuation of people” (Dorries et. al “Racial Capitalism” 264).

¹⁵ Settler-colonial regimes on Turtle Island are invested in maintaining the artificial dichotomy between (sub)urban and rural/reserve/reservation spaces because it obfuscates the fact that *all* North American cities, towns, and other settlements are on Indigenous territories (Dorries et. al *Settler City* 2-4; L. Simpson “Land as Pedagogy” 23).

cheap convenience store food products is built into Canada's physical infrastructure. Even when Jonny has the cash to purchase groceries, the neighborhood where he lives lacks both reliable public transport and accessible grocery stores, constraining his access to affordable, healthy foods. At places where he can afford to eat, however, he is physically assaulted and left unsatiated. Jonny narrates:

Back at the 7-11, I bought two Big Bites, a chocolate milk, and a pack of cigarettes, and sat on the curb outside eating. [...] "Can't you read?" a voice shouted from behind me. "No loitering!" I brushed the man off with my hand and felt him shove a corn broom against my back. "Goddamn Natives, always sitting around here. Hurry up and leave before I call the cops," The store manager hit me with his broom again [...]. He hit me harder and knocked me off the curb. My milk slipped out of my hand and spilled down my shirt, pooling between my legs and seeping beneath the curb. (*JA* 101-102).

Even as a paying customer Jonny's physical presence near the convenience store is unwelcome and met with violence. His body, like those of his fellow loitering Natives, is a blight on the urban commercial landscape and must be removed, if not voluntarily then forcibly. The manager's threats to involve the cops highlights the police's role in enforcing settler-colonial law, which requires Indigenous removal in numerous forms. Jonny's peaceful meal is invaded by a non-Indigenous man wielding a corn broom weapon who shatters his moment of reverie and knocks his provisions to the ground. Eventually Jonny walks off into the anonymity of the city streets, but the milk seeping into the cracked asphalt evokes centuries-worth of Indigenous blood spilled to build the Canadian settler state.

This instance of violence against Jonny is just one example of how Indigenous life in Winnipeg is surveilled and criminalized to the point that it prevents people from nourishing their bodies. Of course, an undernourished body is more likely to deteriorate, eventually die, and thus be removed as a hurdle to continued land occupation. Winnipeg, as a racialized city ensconced in the scaffolding of Canadian settler colonialism, consistently inhibits Jonny from accessing nutritionally dense, culturally appropriate foods.

Underlying the binary between reserve(-rural) and urban infrastructure that Jonny finds himself navigating in contemporary Canada is the same eliminatory logic that drives Marie Blackbird and her Dakhóta relatives from their home. Settler-colonial powers strategically inflicted hunger and starvation on Indigenous peoples as a means of obtaining their land. Territorial loss also exacerbated widespread hunger among Indigenous populations who were no longer able to practice their food cultivation traditions in the ecological conditions in which they were established. Whether hunger is inflicted explicitly as a punitive measure or the 'natural' result of decades of compounding policies and infrastructure, it is part of the hostile

settler-colonial landscape Dakhóta and Oji-Cree characters must navigate if they hope to survive.

3.2 Uprooting Families

The historical and ongoing hunger endured by Turtle Island's Indigenous populations living under U.S. and Canadian settler-colonial regimes is directly connected to the dispossession of their traditional homelands. Forced starvation, though incredibly effective at literally eliminating Indigenous bodies from the land, became less publicly acceptable the more Euro-American settler populations began to identify themselves as citizens of ostensibly civilized nation-states. Nevertheless, as insatiable forces, settler colonialism and capitalism interminably demand more land and more resources. The structural racism built into Winnipeg as an urban settler-colonial space contributes to Jonny's food insecurity, but it is just one of many entrenched channels of harm which weaken Indigenous bodies and communities. The rampant family separation policies that emerged in the late nineteenth century and lasted until the end of the twentieth century serve as another example. When separated from their families, characters face hunger, disconnection, and dissociation from their Dakhóta or Oji-Cree cultures and even from themselves.

In *The Seed Keeper* Darlene Kills Deer's many attempts to gain custody of her great niece Rosalie are repeatedly rejected by Minnesota's child welfare system. Instead of living with her extended family after her father's death, Rosalie is sent to live with white foster families to whom she has no previous connection. Rosalie's life as a foster child is characterized by abuse, neglect, and food insecurity. She describes her first foster mother Laura sympathetically as a "kind drunk" (TSK 66) who copes with her husband's prolonged absences by drinking. Though Laura is nice, her alcohol dependency makes her neglectful to the point that she often fails to prepare meals for Rosalie. When Laura does manage to cook, her culinary skills are severely lacking. In a well-meaning effort to help Laura, Rosalie puts the trapping skills she learned from living in the woods with her father to use. Years later, in a story addressed to Dakhóta friends she recounts:

Remembering the *tasteless* dinners, I rummaged in the garage until I found a piece of strong rope. In the backyard, near the shrubs, I rigged up a snare where I saw the most rabbit scat. And then I went back inside and waited. That night we ate leftovers. The next night, I fixed a bowl of cereal while Laura dozed off on the couch. Finally, on the third morning, a plump rabbit was waiting in my snare. With a kitchen knife I cut its throat and quickly skinned it, slipping its body from its fur like peeling off a glove. I spread the fur to cure on one of the rose bushes. Already I was looking forward to rabbit stew. *Real food*. (66-67, emphasis added)

Laura's reaction to the skinned rabbit is predictably hysterical. Rosalie continues her story, "Maybe I should have cleaned up first. When I held up *our dinner*, my hands still covered in

blood, she screamed. [...] I tried to explain, to tell her that I brought fresh meat, that we could have a *real* dinner, but she misunderstood my step toward her as a threat” (67, emphasis added). Beside herself, Laura calls the police who promptly take Rosalie away to a different foster home. This scene exemplifies the culture shock Rosalie experiences after being uprooted from her family’s cabin where she and her father lived alone, sustaining themselves primarily through hunting, trapping, and foraging until his sudden death. In addition to her extreme emotional upheaval, Rosalie finds her new diet bland and unsatisfying. She craves the *real* food she cultivated with her father from the land. So, after noticing rabbits in the backyard, she takes what to her is logical action. She decides to snare her dinner as she had done many times before. Proud of the rabbit she eventually catches, she is excited to share a meal of stew—real food—with Laura as a friendly gesture. From her settler perspective, however, Laura interprets Rosalie’s actions as threatening and calls the police on her foster child. Laura’s response reveals broader settler sensibilities towards food and Indigenous people. The skinned rabbit in Rosalie’s hands is not, as it is in Rosalie’s eyes, the main ingredient of a tasty dinner. To Laura the rabbit is not meat, but evidence of Rosalie’s savagery. As a Dakhóta child in a settler home Rosalie’s body is swiftly criminalized and deemed a dangerous threat that necessitates immediate removal.

By the time she arrives at her next and final foster family, Rosalie has learned that trapping animals according to her Dakhóta traditions provokes horror and disgust in her new settler-dominated environment. Though her time with Laura ends disastrously, her life with her second foster mother Shirley is much worse. Rosalie is relegated to sleep in a damp space in the basement and forced to perform free domestic labor. While Laura was well-meaning but negligent, Shirley actively prevents Rosalie from obtaining enough calories to support her tall frame. As the white legal guardian of a Dakhóta child, Shirley knows she can take advantage of Rosalie with impunity and her unchecked, insatiable greed makes her foster child’s life miserable. First-person narrator Rosalie describes Shirley as a predatory monster: “it was the eyes that truly gave her away, that revealed the greedy, open-mouthed demon that possessed her. I meant nothing more to her than a monthly check from the state” (94). Later Rosalie emphasizes again that “[Shirley] could never look at me without dollar signs in her eyes, [she] sometimes gave in to meanness simply because I had no family to stop her” (100). Shirley’s cruel gaze dehumanizes Rosalie, reducing her to a source of income and free household labor, to a resource primed for exploitation. From this mercenary perspective Shirley attempts to minimize any outgoing expenses towards maintaining Rosalie’s physical or mental well-being. She even pettily steals the spare change from her foster child’s pockets. In one instance, when

teenage Rosalie finds herself at a grocery store unable to afford a loaf of bread, she laments: “Twenty-five cents. The distance between me and lunch. The price of my foster mother’s resentment” (52). Shirley’s cruelty leaves Rosalie undernourished and unappreciated, but it is ultimately Minnesota’s child protection services that has robbed Rosalie of a childhood filled with love surrounded by her extended Dakhóta family. Like countless other Native children who were/are separated from their families by U.S. foster care infrastructure, Rosalie was also robbed of years’ worth of cultural teachings, including provisioning and cooking traditions.¹⁶

Unfortunately, Rosalie is not the first child in her family who was taken away from loving Dakhóta relatives and consequently cut off from traditional foods. Rosalie’s grandmother Lorraine and two of her siblings were snatched away from their parents and taken to a federal Indian boarding school in 1920. Their abduction literally interrupts Dakhóta cultivation practices, as the children are taken while helping harvest corn in the garden. The Indian agent’s visit takes the family completely by surprise. The Kills Deer children’s removal is indeed a violent uprooting that interrupts important cross-generational knowledge transmission. Like young Rosalie whose Dakhóta education was halted abruptly by her father’s death, Lorraine’s training to become the family’s next seed keeper is precipitously cut off when she is taken away to school. In 2002 when Darlene, Lorraine’s younger sister, finally reunites with her great-niece, she tells Rosalie stories about Lorraine before boarding school: “Lorraine had a gift for gardening. [...] She had a way with plants, almost like they listened to her. We all knew that one day she would inherit the seeds that my mother and Marie stored in a willow basket” (317). Though Darlene herself was spared removal to the school by a lucky accident, she was likewise separated from her siblings, parents, and grandmother and sent away to live with distant relatives in the city as a precaution against her potential abduction. When the Kills Deer family is finally able to reunite again for the first time in eight years, Darlene recognizes but cannot name an ambient sense of trauma in her siblings that makes them nearly unrecognizable. For Lorraine this pain materializes in her relationship with seeds and plants. Darlene continues her story to Rosalie: “[Lorraine] started gardening again. The plants grew, although not in the way they used to, not like they do when they feel surrounded by love. They could tell the difference: Lorraine was anything but loving in those days” (321). Among the many physical and

¹⁶ During her first visit to the tribal office, Rosalie learns that she was put in foster care just a few years before the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) was passed in 1978, which mandates Native children be taken to live with their own extended families or a family in their tribe before they are placed in foster care (*TSK* 302). While ICWA was an important victory in the fight to keep Indigenous children with their families and tribes, Linjean and Weaver note that, as of 2022, Native children are still removed from their families at much high rates than white children (1037-1040). They write: “The longstanding risk for Native family separation has continued such that in some states it is now greater than the pre-ICWA child removal rates” (Linjean and Weaver 1040).

psychological wounds wrought by years at the boarding school, Lorraine loses her capacity to cultivate plants in the garden and consequently loses her “birthright” (327)—the role of seed keeper—the duty to protect and care for precious seeds that had been carried out by the women in her family for countless generations.

For more than a century, the U.S. boarding school and the Canadian residential school systems forcibly removed Turtle Island’s Indigenous children from their parents, extended families, and tribal communities, causing extensive language loss, cultural disconnection, and generational trauma. Boarding/residential schools not only prevented students from learning and practicing traditional foodways, but pupils also underwent massive changes to their diets. Nuu-chah-nulth food sovereignty scholar Charlotte Côté emphasizes that “[i]n these schools, Indigenous children were forced to eat foods that many had never eaten before, foods such as domesticated meats, cheese, wheat flour, and sugar, and were estranged from their own traditional healthy diets” (3). It is highly probable that the Kills Deer children were forced to eat what Choctaw historian Devon Mihesuah calls the “boarding school diet” (820), a culturally inappropriate and calorically insufficient diet low in nutrients and minerals. Widespread malnutrition and starvation were commonplace among pupils subjected to such inadequate provisions.¹⁷ Even if students were given enough food to sustain their growing bodies, they nevertheless consumed a diet dominated by nutritionally deficient, culturally inappropriate foods which has had demonstrably negative long-term health impacts on generations of boarding/residential school survivors (Côté 3-5).

In *Jonny Appleseed*, Jonny and his kokum, Frances, allude to the nutritional legacy of Canadian residential schools while discussing kokum’s friend Evelyn. Both Frances and Evelyn suffer from diabetes and as Indigenous women who grew up in the mid-twentieth century, their generation’s health struggles are directly linked to the residential school system. Jonny narrates: “Often, my kokum told me, Evelyn would use up a good third, if not half, of the bag [of brown sugar]. ‘But I never stopped her,’ my kokum said. ‘That cereal was hers to enjoy. Know why? Those priests, they used to only feed her Sonny Boy when she was in them schools’” (JA 195). Though the narrative never explicitly states whether Frances is herself a residential school survivor, at least for Evelyn, the malnourishment she suffered as a pupil continues to negatively impact her health into an advanced age. By directly calling out the nutritional neglect students

¹⁷ The nutritional violence perpetrated against Indigenous children in residential schools goes far beyond unhealthy foods and neglect. In his article, “Administering Colonial Science: Nutrition Research and Human Biomedical Experimentation in Aboriginal Communities and Residential Schools, 1942–1952” (2013), Ian Mosby writes about numerous nutritional experiments that were performed on Indigenous school children by the Canadian government.

like Evelyn endured at the hands of school priests, Frances redirects the blame for high rates of diabetes among Indigenous populations away from just individual genetics and lifestyle choices and names the main culprit: residential schools. As exemplary Wiindigo infrastructures, Canadian residential schools and U.S. boarding schools caused prolific damage to Indigenous communities in both the short and long term (Daschuk xxii).

In Canada, a direct line connects the separation of Indigenous families that occurred because of the residential school system to contemporary child welfare policies that continue to keep First Nations, Métis, and Inuit children away from their families and communities. When Indigenous characters, like Jonny's best friend and lover Tias, are snatched away from loving relatives they are not only prone to food insecurity but are also vulnerable to physical and psychological deterioration. Jonny describes Tias as "a boy still living with his rents who are, themselves, living off child-tax credits and food banks" (*JA* 31). Though Tias is technically an adult, he is a "prisoner" (*JA* 32, 210) trapped in the child welfare system. Tias is stuck because, although he is twenty years old, his documents list him as seventeen. Jonny explains: "[Tias] has to live with his momma until he ages out of foster care because she needs the child-tax and he needs the roof. [...] There's funding for him until he's nineteen when he'll age out and be left to his own devices" (32). While his adopted family relies on Tias financially, his life with them is marked by abuse and instability. Jonny recollects multiple instances during their childhood when Tias's white foster father was physically abusive. Nevertheless, despite the domestic violence and food insecurity present in his foster home(s), Tias seems most traumatized by his separation from his biological sister.

"They took her away that day in that white car," [Tias] said, his body wilted like a deflated balloon. "Took me too, in spirit anyway. [...] I can't even begin to tell you how many times I dreamed of her, how many times I could still feel her tiny fist into my hand, my parents used to say they saved me from myself, you know? Like my real family ain't ever been fit to keep me. It's just, you ever feel—" His voice was low in his throat, so low that it faded into the air as soon as it came out of his mouth, so that only the dead could hear him speak. "You ever feel—like you ain't even here anymore?" (209)

In this passage, as Tias recalls the visceral moment when his baby sister was spirited away by a social worker, he spirals quickly into questioning his very earthly existence. This spiritual dissociation manifests as bodily diminishment. His body wilts and his voice fades so intensely that Jonny, as narrating witness, associates him with the dead. Leading up to his nearly unutterable question, Tias repeats the demeaning words he heard from his foster parents growing up. Their boastful assertion that they "saved [Tias] from [him]self" first implies, as Tias mentions, that his biological grandfather, from whom he and his sister were taken, was incapable of caring for his grandchildren. Secondly, their statement also suggests that Tias, as

a young Oji-Cree boy, was/is inherently dangerous to himself and others and therefore his upbringing necessitated state intervention. Tias's foster parents' attitude encapsulates decades of Canada's paternalistic child welfare policies which uprooted Indigenous children from their families, cultures, and sometimes even territories and placed them in non-Indigenous homes, schools, or other institutions to facilitate their assimilation into Euro-Canadian society. Canadian foster care infrastructure has set Tias up for an adulthood of precarity disconnected from his biological family. Permanently separated from his sister and grandfather whom he never sees again, Tias also misses out on an upbringing of cultural teachings and, simply, love. Instead, a childhood dominated by poverty and abuse has left him detached from the world to the point of disembodiment. For Tias, family separation is so traumatic that it initiates a splintering of the (Oji-Cree) self. For the Canadian settler-colonial regime, however, Tias's dissociation ultimately aligns with their objective to rid coveted territory of Indigenous presence.

For over a century, settler-colonial regimes in the U.S. and Canada have institutionalized family separation through school and child welfare systems in order to destroy Indigenous communities and ultimately their sovereign claims to their territories. Malnourishment and starvation were/are the direct results of these predatory policies. As *The Seed Keeper* and *Jonny Appleseed* demonstrate, Indigenous land dispossession, hunger, and the deterioration of culturally specific foodways are all unmistakably interconnected.

3.3 Plowing the Land

After initial land occupation, the continued separation of Indigenous families, whether through educational infrastructure or foster care policies, was essential to the success of U.S. and Canadian settler-colonial projects. Disrupting cross-generational knowledge transmission was/is crucial to prevent the proliferation of Indigenous ecological philosophies rooted in grounded normativity which directly challenge(d) the colonial concept of land as property (Morrison 103). Potawatomi botanist Robin Wall Kimmerer outlines the enduring relationship between Indigenous peoples and land that is fundamentally incompatible with colonial-capitalist logic. Her words are worth quoting here at length.

Children, language, lands: almost everything was stripped away, stolen when you weren't looking because you were trying to stay alive. In the face of such loss, one thing our people could not surrender was the meaning of land. In the settler mind, land was property, real estate, capital, or natural resources. But to our people, it was everything: identity, the connection to our ancestors, the home of our nonhuman kinfolk, our pharmacy, our library, the source of all that sustained us. Our lands were where our responsibility to the world was enacted, sacred ground. It belonged to itself; it was a gift, not a commodity, so it could never be bought or sold. These are the meanings people took with them when they were forced from their ancient homelands to new places. Whether it was their homeland or the new land forced upon them, land held in

common gave people strength; it gave them something to fight for. And so—in the eyes of the federal government—that belief was a threat.” (Kimmerer 17)

Over the course of several centuries on Turtle Island, Europeans and their descendants have creatively invoked a myriad of justifications for occupying Indigenous lands. In cases when *terra nullius* could not be reasonably claimed because the existence of Indigenous nations on their territories were undeniable, settlers legitimized their land theft with assertions that Native populations were not using the land ‘properly,’ thereby denigrating traditional place-based practices like hunting, fishing, gathering, and gardening (Kepkiewicz 189). These assertions ignore the fact that many early Euro-American settlers would have perished if were not for the bountiful cultivation methods and generosity of the Indigenous communities they encountered (Settee 179). Once Indigenous nations were largely dispossessed of their territories, that land could be carved up into pieces of private property. Transforming both the physical landscape and the abstract idea of land was essential for the longevity of settler-colonial projects on Turtle Island. Through the establishment of an agrarian property regime settlers physically and ideologically altered the landscape so drastically that they impeded to an extent Indigenous peoples’ ability to enact the relationships with land that they found so threatening. Introducing a new food cultivation system into an ecosystem this way is “a violent and disruptive process,” and, according to Frieda Knobloch, “The two words [colonization and agriculture] work together: colonization is about enforcing landownership through a new, agricultural occupation of lands once used differently” (5).

As food scholars Harriet Friedman and Philip McMichael argue, establishing an agrarian property regime made up of settler family farms was essential to the formation of nation-states like Canada and the U.S., as agricultural exports ultimately helped them achieve economic and political autonomy in a newly *international* world (93-103). Much of North America’s agricultural infrastructure was underwritten by the Homestead Act of 1862 in the U.S. and the Dominion Lands Act of 1872 in Canada which carved up vast swaths of the Plains and Prairies into 160-acre properties. More than a century later, most of the farmers Rosalie interacts with around Mankato and New Ulm proudly boast that their families arrived in the 1860s (though none seem ready to admit that Rosalie’s ancestors were there long before then). Indeed, her own husband’s farm is situated on his family’s original homestead claim. Though Euro-American invaders were eager to gobble up pieces of land for themselves even before the Dakhóta people were officially exiled from their territories, the U.S. Homestead Act of 1862 expedited the disruptive agricultural occupation of Dakhóta homelands that continues to this day.

In *The Seed Keeper*, after surviving more than twenty years in exile at the Crow Creek and Santee reservations, Marie Blackbird manages to return to her beloved homeland. However, she only accomplishes this because her husband Oliver got a job “teaching farming to Dakhóta families who have returned to Mní Sota” (TSK 204). Unlike the predominately white settlers who were able to take advantage of the Homestead Act and obtain their farmland essentially for free in the 1860s, Dakhóta families like Marie’s are forced to purchase their pieces of property. Marie reflects bitterly, “The hills and fields where I had run as a child, and then known as the reservation where war had destroyed everything, were now broken into 160-acre pieces that we were allowed to purchase. [...] [We] scrimped and saved to buy back parcels of land that belonged to us as our homeland, and by treaty” (243). Here Marie lays out chronologically the transformation undergone by her homeland during her lifetime alone. She charts the progression from when she, and by extension her community, could run freely throughout their territory until this movement became restricted with the U.S. government’s attempts to fence them into a reservation. Finally, the land within this reservation’s borders was “broken” into pieces of private property. From Marie’s Dakhóta perspective, privatizing and sectioning off parcels of land is inherently damaging to her beloved hills and fields. In a biting tone Marie makes clear her resentment towards the settler-colonial regime that forced her to buy back land that belonged to her people in the first place. Though they manage to return home, Marie and Oliver can only do so by actively participating in the settler-colonial property regime as landowners who promote Euro-American agricultural methods. In other words, in the late nineteenth century, the U.S. settler-colonial regime tolerated the presence of individual Dakhóta families on their homeland only when they assimilated into the American farming economy and thus literally bought into the notion of land as property.

Between 1862 when Marie is exiled and her return in 1889, Minnesota settlers also managed to drastically transform Dakhóta territory *physically*. More than twenty years of ‘development’ have turned the region’s woodlands and prairies into productive farmland. To Marie, however, her ancestral homeland is unrecognizable. She recalls, “I couldn’t hardly find my way back because so much had changed. I remembered forests that filled the land between rivers, not all these empty, dug-up fields. Not until we reached the banks of Mní Sota Wakpá [river] did I truly believe I was home” (242). No settlers claimed the land along the river that Marie and Oliver end up purchasing because it is “too steep for farming” (244). In deference to his wife who insists “[she] will live nowhere but [her] family’s home” (244), Oliver rents the acreage he needs for farming a few miles away. On their own piece of property Marie has a garden and gathers wild plants, yet participating in communal provisioning traditions, such as

bison hunting trips, has become impossible for the Dakhóta community. Not only did fallout from the war in 1862 leave the Dakhóta people scattered throughout neighboring states and into Canada, but the settler agrarian property regime destroyed the environment in which most community-sustaining foodways were possible.

The ecological degradation of Dakhóta homelands has continued apace into the present day. Rosalie remembers her father's detailed descriptions of how Euro-American agricultural practices ruined the ecosystem that had sustained their people since time immemorial. Ray Iron Wing passionately explains how the Dakhóta people's cultural identity is deeply connected to their land and foodways. As "his voice shak[es] with rage" (7), Ray tells young Rosalie,

We've lived on this land for many, many generations. Some called us the great Sioux nation, but we are Dakhóta, our name for ourselves, which means 'friendly.' We are a civilized people who understand that our survival depends on knowing how to be a good relative, especially to Iná Maka, Mother Earth. Back in the day, we moved from place to place, knowing when to hunt bison and white-tailed deer, to gather wild plants, and to harvest our maize, a gift from the being who lived in Spirit Lake. *You wouldn't recognize this land back then.* Over thousands of years, the plants and animals worked with wind and fire until the land was covered in a sea of grass that was home to many relatives. The bison gave us everything, from thadó, our meat, to our clothing and thípi hides. His dung fertilized the soil. The prairie dogs opened up tunnels that brought air and water deep into the earth. Grasses that were as tall as a man set long roots that could withstand drought. When my grandfather was a boy, he woke each morning to the song of the meadowlark. The prairie showed us for many generations how to live and work together as one family. *And then the settlers came with their plows and destroyed the prairie in a single lifetime.* (6-7; emphasis added)

As Ray explains, the Dakhóta people sustained themselves physically and spiritually for countless generations by being good relatives to Mother Earth. Euro-American agricultural infrastructure impedes these attempts to live and work together as one family with their plant and animal kin. Ray calls out the plow's devastating effects on the prairie ecosystem, which not only displaced humans, but also their plant and animal relatives upon whom humans rely. His language subtly reveals the agency attributed to other-than-human beings in Dakhóta culture. Even 'things' considered inanimate from a Western perspective, like bodies of water, wind, or fire, collaborate with animals, plants, and humans. Not only can these other-than-human beings assert agency to work collectively, but they also demonstrate generosity; maize and bison are precious gifts. Euro-American settlers, however, literally plowed through this intricately interconnected web of reciprocity when they slaughtered the bison, razed forests, and ripped out seas of prairie grasses by their roots.

By the late twentieth century and early twenty-first century, unrelenting technological advances continue to alter the region's landscape. Glancing around her Dakhóta homeland as an adult, Rosalie remarks, "Everywhere I looked, I saw rectangular fields, long rows in straight lines, and square fence corners, land shaped to fit machines" (115). Long gone are the

homesteaders' horse-drawn plows; running a modern agricultural enterprise requires the latest fossil-fueled machines. In the mid-twentieth century, drastic shifts in global food relations resulted in increasingly industrialized and monocultural American farms (Friedmann 243). Early in their marriage, John tells Rosalie about his father's reluctance to keep up with these developments; "things started changing after World War II. Hybrid seeds, chemical fertilizers, new equipment. Farmers like my dad got left behind" (*TSK* 108). Now over a century since John's German great-grandfather claimed the 160-acre homestead that would become the Meister's farm, it has become impossible for families like theirs to make a living without consistently leasing more acreage, implementing the newest machinery, and dosing their fields with chemical fertilizers and pesticides. By the turn of the twenty-first century, John himself is at risk of falling behind like his father. Like most of the other farmers in the area who have managed to survive, John has taken on large debts to expand operations. So, when sales representatives from the (fictional) chemical company Mangenta approach the farming community promising a "seed revolution, a new *product* that was going to change the lives and incomes of farmers everywhere" (226; emphasis added), they are met with skepticism and apprehensive interest. Some of the elderly farmers distrust these so-called "desk farmers" (229) and oppose using genetically modified (GMO) seeds, but most families gamble with the new technology in hopes that it will ease their significant financial burdens. Even John, despite Rosalie's protestations, decides to partner with Mangenta.

The chemical company's arrival in the rural farming community coincides with international trade liberalization, corporate consolidation, and governmental privatization across the country and globe. In short, Mangenta is a manifestation of the neo-liberal food regime. Agreeing to use proprietary GMO seeds means that the scale of operations at the Meister's farm quickly ratchets up. Rosalie recalls:

[John] agreed to grow the new corn under contract to the ethanol plant, feeding the country's voracious appetite for fuel. The company would provide the schedule, the seeds, the chemicals, and even help with the harvest. They gave John a list of equipment he needed to buy and changes that had to be made to the fields and buildings. Tommy helped negotiate the loan we needed from the bank, more money than John used to make in an entire year. (235-236)

Though John retains legal title to his land, the power to make important decisions on his farm is now securely in corporate hands. Rather than producing vegetables fit for human consumption (i.e. edible corn), the Meisters now produce the biomass needed for agrofuels like ethanol. When not used for agrofuels, GMO grains rarely make their way directly to American families' plates. Instead, most GMO crops are used as livestock feed or are transported to processing plants where they are transformed into ingredients like high fructose corn syrup, soy lecithin, and canola oil before they are finally trucked to grocery stores in the form of "highly

engineered edible commodities composed of denatured and recombined ingredients” (Friedmann 258). Instead of making their lives easier, the “seed revolution” seems only to have further constrained farmers’ choices, intensified food commodification, and driven fossil fuel usage across the country.

Though Rosalie disagrees with John’s decision, and even John wrestles with the repercussions of his choice, Rosalie compares Mangenta to “a freight train rolling downhill” (*TSK* 235), implying their partnership with the company was inevitable. Much like the actual transcontinental railroad’s construction and operation which caused momentous devastation throughout prairie ecosystems, the proliferation of GMO seeds sets off a chain of far-reaching social and ecological consequences. Farmers refusing to purchase GMO seeds put a target on their backs in the eyes of proprietary chemical companies. This is the case with George and Judith, John and Rosalie’s neighbors. Though George grows organic heirloom corn, Mangenta sues him for seed piracy, claiming his crops were cross-pollinated by their patented seeds from a neighboring field. Incapable of competing with Mangenta’s corporate lawyers whose litigation leaves them with daunting legal bills, the elderly couple is eventually forced to sell their property. On the day his farm is auctioned away George gives an impassioned speech:

Don’t you see what’s happening here? Do you think that you all are safe from what’s happened to me? You’ve let accountants and lawyers tell you how to run your farms, how to treat your animals. Now we’ve got corn diseases we’d never heard of before. We’ve got chickens who can’t walk without breaking a leg. We’ve got soil that can’t grow anything without its daily dose of chemicals. And look what we’ve done to our river. (258)

With this emotional appeal to his neighbors, George tries to warn them about the economic and environmental dangers “this new way of farming” (235) poses to their community. In addition to worsening livestock illnesses and novel plant diseases challenging farmers, everyone in the area, whether they work with Mangenta or not, is/will be affected by industrial agriculture’s insidious chemical pollution. As George’s imperative to “look [at] what we’ve done to our river” reveals, chemical runoff already compromises the region’s waterways. According to Rosalie, even before Mangenta’s arrival, “the Minnesota River was already one of the most polluted in the country” (236-237). The damage to the river is yet another assault on the Dakhóta way of life. Rosalie’s and John’s diverging reactions to the contamination encapsulates the underlying difference between Dakhóta and settler perspectives. Rosalie remembers, “As my father had often reminded me, water is our first medicine, allowing us to live, and that makes her sacred. The chemicals used in farming were a risk to all of us” (212). Through her father’s teachings Rosalie recognizes that the land—landforms, rocks, waterways, plants, animals, humans—is an interconnected system of relations in which the well-being of one is tied to the well-being of the collective. Because water plays an especially central role in this web of

relations, Rosalie understands that if the pesticide and insecticide runoff continues unchecked, it will bring about further devastation to her Dakhóta homeland. John, on the other hand, is convinced that “if the chemicals he used weren’t safe, the government wouldn’t have approved them” (163). His confidence in the U.S. government’s benevolence towards its citizens and its capacity to regulate corporate activity is explained by his privileged position as a white, male, landowner who, as a demographic, have influenced and benefited most from settler-colonial policies and infrastructures. Yet, John fails to recognize the degree to which corporate greed and power has soared in the neo-liberal food regime.

George is one of the few settlers in the novel who does acknowledge this growing corporate influence. In a conversation with Rosalie he admits, “Nobody really knows what those chemicals are doing to us. We do know they’re showing up in our water. [...] But if a farm is managed by someone else, like a corporation, then it’s just one more calculated business risk. You keep spraying your fields until someone sues you and wins” (163). Of course, the health and well-being of real humans and other-than-human beings is not considered when calculating these business risks. Companies like Mangenta continue engineering increasingly complicated chemical cocktails, regardless of their products’ adverse effects on human health, as long as their profit margins remain high. John himself serves as an unfortunate example of the possible impact years of exposure to sprayed pesticides and insecticides can have on the human body. Rosalie is convinced that John’s premature death was caused by exposure to toxic chemicals in his fields; “[she] believed that Mangenta had cost John his life” (307). Within the logic of industrialized corporate farming, water contamination or deaths like John’s are incidental, and perhaps even unfortunate, but ultimately permissible if they do not detract from revenue. *The Seed Keeper* depicts particularly salient examples of how colonial-capitalist structures, like industrial agriculture, have evolved to harm even those whose racial and class privileges once protected them.

While lives like John’s are collateral damage in the pursuit of profits, corporations also actively seek to neutralize any perceived threats to their bottom line. Companies profiting from patented GMO seeds are therefore vigilant against farmers like George whom they accuse of seed piracy. Through their team of corporate lawyers, Mangenta punishes the elderly farmer for refusing to settle out of court. Faced with losing his farm, George contends, “This is my goddamn land, where I farmed all my life, where my daddy and grand-daddy farmed” (258). George invokes his ancestors’ lifelong tenure of the land as the ultimate justification for his continued possession of it. Ironically, George and Judith’s removal from their home echoes the removal of the Dakhóta people from that very same land more than 150 years earlier. The same

colonial-capitalist property regime that benefited his homesteading ancestors then has now evolved to punish George for his lack of wealth and inability to keep up with ‘progress.’ In other words, though poor white farmers like George and John no longer profit personally, the industrial agricultural sector is undergirded by the same dispossession and commodification of Indigenous lands that made the 1862 Homestead Act possible. As Lauren Kepkiewicz and Bryan Dale argue, “No matter the length of tenancy on or relationship with land, non-Indigenous people’s claims to belonging on Indigenous lands reproduce colonial logics as long as non-Indigenous presence and jurisdiction over lands relies on laws and property regimes determined by the settler Canada [or U.S.] state” (995). From the horse-drawn plow to the GPS-driven combine, corporate agribusinesses descend from the nineteenth century family farmsteads that originally disrupted Indigenous foodways. In short, North America’s settler agrarian property regime remains existentially threatening to Turtle Island’s Indigenous peoples because it perpetuates the destruction of the ecosystems in which they originally established and practiced community-sustaining land-based foodways.

3.4 Consuming Bodies

The patterns of settler land-use that began as family farms throughout Turtle Island’s woodlands and prairies have since mutated into an agribusiness network that mechanizes resource extraction and exploitation. This industrial agriculture complex feeds the factories that produce the ultra-processed food products lining U.S. and Canadian grocery store shelves. Fossil fuel-intensive nutritional supply chains are not only harmful to planetary ecosystems, but also to the health of individual consumers who ingest large quantities of red meat, refined carbohydrates, and hydrogenated fats which typify the North American diet (Mihesuah 826). Turtle Island’s Indigenous peoples in particular face disproportionate rates of diet-related illnesses and premature death compared to non-Native population groups (Mihesuah 808-810). Cree activist Priscilla Settee emphatically asserts that the extensive health crises plaguing Indigenous communities today are the direct results of land dispossession and the consequential loss of traditional foods (177). In addition to hunger and food-related diseases, substance abuse among Indigenous populations is also a symptom of territorial loss, generational trauma, and institutional racism across North America. Within the prevailing hyper-individualistic logic of a capitalist settler-colonial society however, the prevalence of poverty, addiction, disease, and mental illness among Native communities is attributed to poor personal choices and individual moral failings, thereby obscuring settler liability. Instead of addressing systemic social inequities, nation-states like the U.S. and Canada can foist off culpability for Indigenous suffering onto Indigenous communities and individuals themselves. Of course, as Indigenous

deterioration is normalized, settler regimes simultaneously naturalize and invisibilize their ongoing occupation of Indigenous lands.

For Indigenous people living within U.S. or Canadian settler society, multidirectional threats of violence are an everyday reality. Diet- or substance-related illnesses are prime examples of how slow settler violence consumes Indigenous bodies. In both novels, the first-person narrators often make comments about friends and family members who struggle with diabetes or alcoholism. These casual allusions reflect how common such ailments have become within their communities. In *Jonny Appleseed*, many Oji-Cree residents Peguis First Nation suffer from what Jonny calls “the sugar disease” (JA 194). When he describes his kokum’s experience with diabetes, Jonny frames it as literally eating away at her body; it “consume[s] her feet and legs” (139). Jonny’s “semi-stepdad” (46) Roger, who dies of liver cirrhosis, also endures a drawn-out death marked by physical deterioration. Once Jonny finally makes it back to Peguis to attend the funeral, his mom Karen recalls Roger’s slow decline: “each time he’d come back I’d see how time etched into him, his muscles became sandbags. His calves were thin enough for me to wrap my fucking hand around. [...] He looked like a goddamned skeleton, Jon, my old man walking around dead as a doornail” (198). Karen uses language of decay to describe Roger’s death. Time itself is the grammatical subject that “etche[s]” into his body, indicating his physical disintegration. His still-living body is registered as already “dead as a doornail” and before his passing even Roger himself is resigned to his fate. He knows that as an Indigenous man suffering from alcohol addiction, he will not seriously be considered for a liver transplant. In his words, there “ain’t nothing no hospitals [sic] gonna do” (198). Decades of compounding lifestyle choices have culminated in the breakdown of Frances and Roger’s biological bodies. However, the decisions they made regarding their health, nutrition, and substance-use were obviously constrained by the material realities of living in settler-colonial Canada. For their entire lives, Frances and Roger have been cut off from traditional foods and instead forced to rely primarily on the exorbitantly priced, nutritionally inadequate processed foods (and substances) that transnational corporations produce and sell on occupied land. The destruction of their physical bodies, despite occurring gradually and out of sight, is nevertheless clearly a form of colonial-capitalist violence.

Capitalism’s pervasive violence also means that Indigenous bodies are targets for consumption as discardable products in the marketplace. In other words, the commodification of the Indigenous bodies for visual or sexual consumption occurs in tandem with their physical decline and disappearance. As a sex worker, Jonny understands that the Wiindigo economy has an insatiable appetite for the “NDN” as a commodity. He finds ways to leverage this to his

financial advantage by transforming himself into versions of popular Indigenous stereotypes—he “play[s] NDN” (25)—to attract online customers. In order to make an income and survive within a capitalist society, Jonny markets his body for sexual consumption. He acknowledges that this means entering a relationship with clients who consume images and videos of his body for their sexual gratification; they take on an inherently extractive role. Jonny reflects: “Every customer wants to think he’s taking your purity—that his dick is the first to penetrate and populate your canals” (151). This drive to conquer, vis-à-vis Jonny’s Oji-Cree body, aligns with Audra Simpson’s central claim that settler-colonial regimes demand the subjugation, exploitation, and, ultimately, death of Indigenous biological bodies because they represent alternative sovereignties and connections to land which undermine settler legitimacy (5-8). Positioned at the intersection of capitalism and Canadian settler colonialism, Jonny’s body, like treaty territory, is subjected to invasion, extraction, and destruction. His body, “like land [is] matter to be extracted from, used, sullied, taken from, over and over again, something that is already violated and violatable” (A. Simpson 7). The nature of sex work means that to keep making money, Jonny must continually offer himself up for consumption, which leaves him vulnerable to physical and psychological exhaustion. Indeed, his clients are insatiable; they “exhaust [him] and [his] body and still want more” (*JA* 25). Jonny recognizes but cannot fully escape all-consuming settler-colonial greed.

Though he does most of his work via the internet, Jonny sometimes meets clients in person. As a queer Indigenous sex worker, Jonny is particularly vulnerable to (sexualized) violence and disappearance in Winnipeg’s white-supremist, heteropatriarchal, settler-colonial landscape. Walking through the streets near his apartment, he passes the hotel where “that Nate boy, Pratt went missing, the same night that [Jonny] too was walking by there” (55). Colten Pratt was a young Indigenous man who disappeared on 7 November 2014 in downtown Winnipeg (Albanese). Like Jonny, Colten identified as Two-Spirit and despite his family’s desperate appeals to Winnipeg law enforcement, little information has been uncovered about his disappearance in the almost ten years since it occurred (Albanese). Again, Canadian society’s failure to take seriously the crisis of Missing or Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirit People (MMIWG2S) aligns with Audra Simpson’s thesis. Both Colten’s disappearance and the authorities’ ineffectual response are unfortunately consistent with the fact that “Canada requires the death and so called ‘disappearance’ of Indigenous women [and Two-Spirit people] in order to secure its sovereignty” (A. Simpson 1). Disappearances like Colten’s or Lisa Fontaine’s, a fifteen-year-old girl from Sagkeeg First Nation who was eventually found dead in Winnipeg’s Red River on 17 August 2014, are not isolated incidents (Dorries 26). Jonny

knows that if he were to go missing, his disappearance would be met with similar inaction and indifference from the hegemonic settler authority and society at large. Later, when an elderly woman threatens to call the police simply because he is smoking in front of his own apartment building, Jonny narrates:

Cops, I thought, everyone's always threatening me with cops. I waved my keycard at her and rolled my eyes. She huffed and closed her window. I could still feel her eyes watching me from behind the blinds. I wondered who she thought I was. Do people think I'm another ghost on the boulevard? Am I a vanishing NDN? If I disappeared, would they look for me like they did that woman, Thelma Krull? Would they rally behind my death like they did for that dead lion, Cecil? Nah, I thought. I'd become another name on the registry. (*JA* 103)

Jonny acknowledges cynically that his life is valued less within settler-colonial society than a white woman's or even an animal's.¹⁸ Again, as he was outside the 7-11, Jonny is surveilled and criminalized simply for existing in his Oji-Cree body. Settler-colonial regimes invest significant money and manpower towards policing Indigenous bodies, until, that is, they are victims of crimes. While the settler state has always had the administrative capacity to record Indigenous death in its ledgers and registries, it refuses to invest seriously in Indigenous life. In this scene Jonny reads himself briefly as the "vanishing Indian," a stereotype that, like the 'drunken Indian,' renders Indigenous bodies legible within the settler-colonial imaginary only as degenerate and disintegrating.

Just as settler institutions and individuals perpetuate the deterioration of Indigenous life, settler-colonial geographies—spaces like cities and reserves—are also voracious in their consumption of Indigenous bodies. Chapter 3.1 touched briefly on how Winnipeg's (lack of) infrastructure prevents its Indigenous residents from nourishing themselves. Jonny's narrative, however, goes even further. He uses language that personifies the landscape into a consumer of Indigenous life. As he contemplates Winnipeg's Red River, for example, he observes, "The water in Winnipeg was just as feral as the rapids in Peguis—the only difference was that this river ate children, not crawfish" (66). While Jonny never explicitly mentions Tina Fontaine, it is likely that since he knows of Colten Pratt's disappearance, he has also heard about Tina, whose body was found in the river just a few months earlier.¹⁹ The Red River indeed "[eats] children" insofar as it has been used by predatory settlers in their attempts to dispose of

¹⁸ Thelma Krull was fifty-seven-year-old white woman whose disappearance outside her Winnipeg home in July 2015 received much media and police attention (Gibson). Cecil was a lion who was killed by an American trophy hunter in Zimbabwe in July 2015, sparking international outrage (J. Hall).

¹⁹ Heather Dorries also notes that "Tina's body was in the same spot where another Indigenous woman was found murdered in 1961. The only marker of exception in Tina's story is that unlike the vast majority of Indigenous women who have been killed in Winnipeg, her death was publicly grieved" (37). This is significant because there is clearly a precedence for settlers attempting to dispose of Indigenous peoples' bodies in the Red River. It also supports my supposition that Jonny is referring to Tina in this passage because the media attention surrounding her death would have been difficult for him to avoid.

Indigenous bodies. Jonny clarifies that the waters flowing through Peguis and Winnipeg are equally “feral,” meaning uncivilized, untamed. He recognizes that though it is caged in by Winnipeg’s urban infrastructure, the Red River nevertheless remains a sacred waterway that has flowed through Turtle Island for millennia. Despite the river’s sanctity, the concentrated Euro-Canadian settlement surrounding the water makes all the difference. As in Tina’s case, the settler-colonial logic of elimination and the capitalist logic of disposability converge at the point of discarding Indigenous bodies in waters sacred to them. Canadian settlers have transformed the life-giving force of the Red River into a receptacle for Indigenous death.

Though the risk of violence from individual settlers is minimized on the rez, reserves as settler-colonial infrastructure still facilitate Indigenous death. Unlike in the city where Indigenous residents are continually under threat of police surveillance and physical assault, the rez’s inhabitants are in danger of disintegration. According to Jonny’s description, the reserve has become a bleak and hostile place antagonistic to life:

This rez is like a haunted house now. In my mind I’m there, and I look up at the empty sky that’s glazed with stars that look too much like sugar. The land is barren save for the howling-talk of rez dogs and sometimes coyotes. The spring water puddles around the rez like a blanket—the muggy fog a polluted haze that reminds me of Venus, even the air hurts us now. [...] I look at the nothingness, at the wasteland of filth, a holy hell if there was one. (21)

Again, Jonny compares himself to a ghost. He and his community members are disembodied people living in a “haunted house.” He emphasizes this again later when he says, “the reservation is a ghostworld, a prison, a death camp” (46). Despite promises made to signatories that they would be able to sustain themselves on treaty territories, Jonny’s description reveals that by the twenty-first century, that land is “polluted,” “barren,” and like another planet. Who bears the responsibility for this pollution? How can any community sustain themselves from a “wasteland of filth”? As I discussed earlier, North American settler-colonial regimes have been able to maintain their prolonged occupation of Indigenous lands in part because they have altered the physical landscape so drastically that Indigenous peoples are prevented from enacting their traditional relationships with the land. For Jonny this means that the ecological destruction wrought by the settler-Canadian occupation has rendered his Oji-Cree homeland unrecognizable and made practicing traditional land-based foodways nearly impossible. Instead, when he looks up at the sky, he is reminded of the colonizer’s foods. He sees the white refined sugar of the “sugar disease” that consumed his beloved kokum’s body. He continues his contemplation: “They always said our fate was to disappear and here I am thinking by god, we’ve mastered the art of dissolution” (21). “They” in this context are evidently Turtle Island’s settler colonizers who, as a society, have legitimized their existence as nation-states upon the

myth of the “vanishing Indian.” Unfortunately, for Jonny the rez is indeed a place where many of his people, whether through diabetes, alcoholism, or other afflictions, vanish.

The longevity of the U.S. and Canadian settler-colonial projects is predicated on the perpetual appropriation of land, but also on the continued exploitation and expedited destruction of Indigenous physical and cultural presence on that land. Throughout North America, Wiindigo infrastructures materialize in diverse and adaptable forms to facilitate this ongoing assault against Indigenous life. When Indigenous people suffer physically from the effects of poverty, malnourishment, and disease, their subjugation and objectification within settler-colonial society becomes easier. Logically, with an undernourished body, a person simply cannot efficiently defend themselves or their families from coordinated settler-colonial attacks. As individual Indigenous bodies are weakened, so too are Indigenous families, communities, and, ultimately, Indigenous ways of life which are antithetical to extractive capitalist systems.

While their disappearance and death are normalized across all settler geographies, Indigenous peoples have incessantly insisted on their survival. Jonny contemplates this unfatiguing resilience: “Maybe Nates stay on the rez because they’ve been pushed too far already. But wherever we end up, we can take pride in knowing that we can survive where no one else can” (196). Despite the onslaught of settler-colonial violence aimed at eliminating them and their communities, the Indigenous characters in the novels are alive to narrate their stories; they are survivors.

4. Rooting in Resistance

Settler-colonial regimes, like those in the U.S. and Canada, will always (be) invest(ed) in eliminating Indigenous presence from the land because that presence will always threaten the legitimacy of the state. Despite the extensive ideological and financial investments funneled toward their eradication, Turtle Island’s Indigenous peoples are still here. As *The Seed Keeper* and *Jonny Appleseed* demonstrate, Indigenous lives may be shaded by hardship and pain, but these lives are also illuminated with joy, friendship, and beauty. The previous chapter investigated how predatory settler-colonial (infra)structures facilitate the deterioration and ultimately disappearance of Indigeneity from the land. It examined the Wiindigo-like forces that starve Indigenous characters, separate them from their families, pollute their land, and consume their bodies. As environmental humanities scholar Janet Fiskio observes, “In literature of indigenous food sovereignty, the suffering of the indigenous body is clearly depicted as a result of colonization, a situation in which daily acts of cooking and provisioning are forms of resistance” (245). Therefore, in the current and following chapters, the analytical focus shifts

from how settler-colonial states enact food-related violence upon Indigenous characters to how those characters exert agency, practice ingenuity, and demonstrate resilience through embodied food sovereignty practices.

Quite simply, the persistent presence of Indigenous political and biological bodies on Turtle Island is proof of the settler-colonial project's unfinished business. In the words of Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg scholar Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, "It is not happenstance or luck that Indigenous peoples and our lands still exist after centuries of attack. This is our strategic brilliance. *Our presence is a weapon*, and this is visible to me at every protest, every mobilization, every time a Two Spirit person gifts us with a dance at our powwows, every time we speak our truths, every time we embody Indigenous life" (*As We* 6; emphasis added). Following this logic, when an Indigenous person nourishes their body, it is an act of resistance, a refusal to disappear. As a decolonial praxis rooted in action, negotiating food sovereignty nurtures Indigenous resistance against settler-colonial domination. I mentioned previously that acts of resistance are necessarily reactive because they are responses to settler colonization. Indigenous resistance is often critiqued precisely because of this inherent reactivity and individuals who engage in resistance are often targets of derision for their 'negativity' or 'resentment' (Coulthard 169). Coulthard, however, addresses this criticism by affirming the importance of Indigenous resistance. He writes: "Through these actions [of resistance] we physically say 'no' to the degradation of our communities and to the exploitation of the lands upon which we depend. But they also have ingrained within them a resounding 'yes': they are the affirmative *enactment* of another modality of being, a different way of relating to and with the world" (Coulthard 169; emphasis original). So, while resistance may contain within it a refusal, this is a productive act that affirms Indigenous presence while (re)negotiating or declining altogether settler-colonial ways of being. Leanne Simpson sums this up as "generative refusal" (*As We* 36).

Again, returning briefly to my earlier discussion, I would like to emphasize that food sovereignty is a heterogeneous movement and flexible framework that is necessarily contextualized within a specific culture and ecosystem. The characters in *The Seed Keeper* and *Jonny Appleseed* therefore individually and dynamically negotiate Indigenous food sovereignty when they grow, trap, buy, steal, cook, share, and eat food on their peoples' traditional homelands—lands which are currently being occupied by the U.S. and Canada respectively. Because these articulations of food sovereignty are necessarily embodied within a settler-colonial context, they are often fraught with complexity and contradictions. This chapter examines the following questions: How do characters, to use Jonny's language, "hustle" within

settler-colonial structures to feed themselves? Stuck in a hyper-individualistic capitalist economy, how do they improvise community provisioning networks? How does recognizing and refusing settler-colonial foodways contribute to decolonial subjectivities? And how does food, even when considered ‘culturally inappropriate,’ facilitate healing in the characters’ lives? Ultimately, despite living in a system designed to exploit their land and bodies, the Indigenous characters in the novels undermine settler-colonial hegemony by nourishing themselves and their loved ones through subversive acts of food-related resistance.

4.1 Foraging in Food Deserts

Indigenous characters in both narratives work hard and find creative ways to feed themselves despite living in spaces where nutritious food is not readily available and/or affordable. Jonny and Rosalie are conscious that their meals and hopes of improving their immediate living situations are dependent on their capacity to sell their labor. Unfortunately, experience has taught them that despite their dogged work ethics, they cannot always earn enough to support themselves through wage labor alone. Therefore, when necessary, they engage in subversive acts like shoplifting or dine-and-dashing to obtain sustenance. Rather than criminalize this behavior through the lens of settler-colonial law, I assert that Indigenous characters engage in embodied acts of resistance when they reject such capitalist codes of conduct. Foraging within (sub)urban North American landscapes requires resourcefulness and resilience.

Both Jonny and Rosalie are acutely aware of their disadvantaged position within settler society’s predatory capitalist economy and this awareness drives them to work harder and smarter than their white settler counterparts. In *The Seed Keeper* Rosalie, as a recent high school graduate, is determined to get away from her abusive foster mother Shirley to start a new life. While living under Shirley’s ‘care’ Rosalie barely receives enough food to sustain her tall frame. Before they met in high school, Rosalie’s friend Gaby, who is also Dakhóta, wondered about her strange lunchtime habits. Gaby recalls, “maybe once I saw [Rosalie] with an apple. Hardly ever saw her eat” (*TSK* 57). Indeed, Shirley nutritionally neglects her foster child. Rosalie tells Gaby, “Shirley’s family would often eat dinner without me, leaving me to forage in the fridge for leftovers” (87). Though her foster family does not make it particularly easy, Rosalie generally manages to scrounge up enough food for herself from their pantry. It is tobacco, not food, that she ‘steals’ from Shirley to resist her foster mother’s abuse. While he was still alive, one of the many Dakhóta traditions Ray Iron Wing imparted onto his daughter was the importance of spreading tobacco and offering prayers to other-than-human relatives. At her foster home, because she no longer has access to the red willow plant that she and her father gathered in the woods to make traditional tobacco, she improvises by stealthily taking cigarettes

from Shirley. As she breaks up a cigarette and offers a prayer to the Minnesota River, Rosalie emphasizes the tobacco is “[n]ot stolen but taken, balancing [their] relationship in ways Shirley had never understood” (104). Teenage Rosalie engages in small but meaningful acts of resistance as she feeds herself and continues practicing her Dakhóta traditions despite living in an environment dominated by abuse and neglect.

After she graduates, Rosalie’s literal hunger, combined with her anxiety to get out from under Shirley’s thumb, drives her to pick up work as a farmhand where she labors much harder than her two white coworkers. She remembers, “Only the thought of a paycheck kept me going, kept me moving long past the point when my muscles burned, my hands shook from fatigue, and sweat poured down my face” (73). Rosalie’s physical and mental endurance eventually opens a path to escape, though it is not ideal. After just a few weeks of working together, John Meister, the farm’s young owner, suggests a marriage of convenience. Both he, as the lonely single surviving member of his family, and Rosalie, as a young woman in need of a safe home, stand to benefit from the arrangement. As she contemplates her decision, Rosalie imagines her father’s reaction to her potential marriage to a white man: “He wouldn’t have approved of this, not one bit. But I didn’t appreciate him dying on me, either. Sometimes we just have to make the best of it, the way things were” (97). When Rosalie eventually agrees to John’s plan, she does so with the intention of leaving after a few months. As a Dakhóta adolescent attempting to survive in settler-colonial America without her family or community, Rosalie pragmatically makes a choice that provides her with a safe home and regular meals. The material realities of North American settler-colonial societies create precarious situations for Indigenous people who are forced to make impossible choices. By finding a way to survive, Rosalie stubbornly refuses to disappear from her Dakhóta homeland.

Like Rosalie, Jonny is eager to move on after graduating high school. While he loves his mom and kokum, he feels pushed to leave the rez in large part because of the prevalent homophobia and harassment he experiences as a queer person there. Though earning enough to cover his expenses in Winnipeg as an online sex worker is hard work, Jonny pushes himself and his body to its limits and manages to get by. His dogged work ethic stems from advice his mother gave him when he was just eight years old. When Karen sees her son beading, she is impressed with his skills but angry when Jonny tells her he plans to give the final product away as a gift rather than selling it. She addresses him sternly,

You’re good with your hands [...] If you want to survive out there, boy, you got to learn how to sell yourself. Work like this? Shit, you could earn an easy ten dollars selling it to them touristy white folk. Hell, maybe twenty if you looked sad enough. Listen, m’boy, if you’re good at something, don’t you ever go doing it for free, you hear me? When you grow up, you’re gon’

learn all sorts of things—find what you good at and put a number to it, you hear? And when you get that number, you double it. That how you gonna make it. (*JA* 63)

At the core of Karen's advice is a pragmatic understanding of the colonial-capitalist economy. She recognizes the pervasive objectification inflicted upon Indigenous peoples and their cultures but encourages Jonny to leverage this tokenization for his own financial benefit. She knows that if he were to sell his beadwork to "touristy white folk," they would pay a premium for its 'authenticity,' especially if, by appearing "sad enough," Jonny were to play into the stoicism stereotypically assigned to Indigenous people. As part of the underclass, Karen knows that they cannot afford to perform any labor for free. She continues, emphasizing the importance of self-confidence, "Creator, he made you for a reason—you girl and you boy and that's fine with me, but what's not fine is you selling yourself short. You gotta leave if you wanna survive, and when you do you're gonna need the steadiness of those hands, m'boy" (63). Perceptively, Karen recognizes that while she accepts Jonny exactly as he is, he will someday need to leave the rez to fully embrace his queerness. Over a decade later, this advice still guides Jonny's life in Winnipeg where he puts his unique skillset to use and consistently rebrands and markets himself to keep a roof over his head and food on the table.

Karen's advice comes from years of her own experiences hustling to feed her family. Jonny recalls in wonder how his mom could make just a few dollars stretch to create multiple meals: "She was as economical as they come; she could turn seven dollars into a meal for eight" (100). Jonny tries to emulate his mom's skill to make meals and money stretch, especially in Winnipeg where his access to fresh groceries is extremely limited. Decades of inadequate funding for Winnipeg's northern neighborhoods have resulted in concentrated poverty for the city's large Indigenous population (Dorries 32). Jonny relies on food banks and convenience stores like the Dollar Tree and 7-11 for most of his meals. Wal-Mart, the grocery store closest to his apartment, is only realistically accessible by car, which Jonny does not own. On one occasion Jonny invites Tias over to his place to share the meatballs he has cooked. With no food left in the apartment for a side dish, Tias scrounges up enough spare change to buy a few boxes of stuffing from Wal-Mart. To get all the way there and back, however, they end up taking a cab. This is only possible because, as Jonny explains, "Tias's mom had an account with the cab companies that she said was for emergencies, but we figured having a side dish to go with our dinner was excuse enough—so we charged our bill to her account" (*JA* 142). In contemporary Canada, staggering food prices, lack of reliable public transportation, and car-centric urban planning leave people like Jonny and Tias food insecure. Yet, as Jonny's narrative demonstrates, through resourcefulness and ingenuity, they make the most out of the food products they can get their hands on.

For Indigenous characters, surviving a predatory capitalist economy sometimes involves engaging in transgressive acts, like stealing, to obtain food. I suggest that when Indigenous characters shoplift food from corporations or dine-and-dash at fancy restaurants they are participating in a form of contemporary foraging. Though these acts are considered criminal within a settler-colonial legal framework, settler law has never protected the well-being of Indigenous people, but rather enshrined their subjugation. Therefore, when characters ignore settler laws to care for themselves and nourish their bodies, they are resisting a legal system that actively works to do them harm.

Jonny and his friend Jordan strategically employ this non-traditional gathering method when they go out to celebrate Jordan's bingo win at a fancy French restaurant. Jonny and Jordan's experience at the Fort Garry restaurant encapsulates key differences between Indigenous and settler attitudes towards food in Canada. Even the name of the hotel where the restaurant is located directly evokes nineteenth century Canadian imperial expansion. According to the organization Heritage Winnipeg, "The hotel name comes from Upper Fort Garry, which acted as the Hudson's Bay Company Headquarters until 1882" (Costen). The pair's presence in the restaurant sparks confusion and judgement among the staff and other patrons whose clothes, in stark contrast to Jonny and Jordan's jeans and casual shirts, indicate their upper-middle class status. Jordan recognizes this class disparity, but reminds Jonny, "Don't let these mōniyāw [white people/settlers] intimidate you, Jon, fuck 'em" (*JA* 156). Though they come to the restaurant with the intention and capacity to pay (thanks to Jordan's bingo win), they quickly realize the food is not worth its exorbitant price tag and decide to dine-and-dash. The food's minuscule portion sizes are what shocks them the most. Having grown up in poverty, Jonny and Jordan cannot understand why tiny portions and barely cooked meat are considered gourmet. They are unfamiliar with the foodie sensibility that compels diners to pay high prices for what Jonny calls, "basically the amount of food we put out as an offering to the spirits at a smudge" (157). They are likewise unimpressed at the restaurant's advertising strategy, which promises food "from the land" (157). Their meal pales in comparison to the food they normally eat on the reserve. By dining at the French restaurant Jonny and Jordan assert their right to occupy the same space and enjoy the same service as wealthy white settlers. The judgmental white customers and staff likely attribute the pair's departure to intrinsic criminality or greed. However, Jonny and Jordan base their decision not to pay on the quality and size of their meal. They recognize they are being charged for more than the food is worth and decide to not let themselves be ripped off. Jonny and Jordan symbolically (and in a sense literally) breach a military fort to secure rations for themselves. Their refusal to pay is an act of

food sovereignty that allows them to nourish their bodies, albeit with a small amount of food, while rejecting settler-colonial notions of class and refusing to put money into the capitalist economy in exchange for an underwhelming product.

Rosalie and Jonny recognize that in order to eat within a hostile colonial-capitalist society, they must hustle to make money. Despite their intense work ethics, wage labor alone often fails to cover their basic necessities, which drives them to engage in creative foraging practices throughout their (sub)urban landscapes. As Rosalie, Jonny, and their friends and family continue to find creative ways to nourish their bodies, they also continue to resist the physical and cultural elimination of their peoples and thus undermine the ultimate settler-colonial objective.

4.2 Improvising Provisioning Networks

To supplement their hustling and gathering lifestyle, the Indigenous characters in *Jonny Appleseed* improvise relationship networks to help provide each other with food (plus alcohol, tobacco, and drugs). These provisioning networks exist outside of settler-capitalist social norms and instead resemble what Cree geographer Michelle Daigle calls “alternative economies of food harvesting, sharing and gifting” (312). Through these informal and improvised systems, characters can establish or strengthen friendships and obtain vital resources together that they otherwise would not be able to acquire on their own. While these provisioning networks materialize in a variety of diverse arrangements, all are rooted in the struggle to survive the Wiindigo economy and all participants exemplify ingenuity and resourcefulness.

In *Jonny Appleseed*, the character Peggy (in)famously facilitates the delivery of a range of goods and services to both the Peguis and Winnipeg’s Indigenous communities. Jonny considers Peggy a good friend and an indispensable part of his Peguis-Winnipeg social network. He explains, “See, Peggy is our best NDN smuggler, she’ll take a list of items you want from any department store—Wal-Mart is her favourite target—steal those items, and sell them to you for a hardcore discounted price. It benefits everyone. Momma always said that woman was the epitome of resource” (*JA* 31). Building off the previous sub-chapter, rather than evaluating Peggy’s shoplifting through a settler-colonial lens, I argue that she resists predatory capitalist systems by procuring necessities for herself and community without putting money directly into the hands of corporations. Evaluated instead through an Oji-Cree cultural lens, this arrangement “benefits everyone,” as Jonny makes clear. His statement strips companies like Wal-Mart of their corporate personhood and emphasizes that those who count as ‘everyone’ are the individual members—the actual humans—who make up Peggy’s provisioning network. Karen’s praise is also well-deserved since Peggy’s operation demands her consistent patience

and resourcefulness. As Peggy makes a living for herself while obtaining goods people in her community need and want without contributing to corporate profits, she pushes back against colonial-capitalist exploitation.

Though Peggy charges cash for the goods she sells in her smuggling operation, something other than profit drives her actions, unlike the multinational corporations she steals from. Peggy cannot maintain a traditional wage-labor position because she has, according to Jonny, “a criminal record for assaulting the social worker that scooped up her babies” (31-32). Though her inability to remain steadily employed means she relies on the income she makes through her smuggling ventures, her actions are also guided by principles of reciprocity and respect. She genuinely looks out for her fellow Oji-Cree and other Indigenous community members and tries to help ease their suffering whenever possible. Yet not all the materials she sells contribute to healthy coping mechanisms. Peggy makes a significant amount of her money by supplying alcohol and prescription drugs to the people in her network. Jonny knows, for example, he can always count on her to provide him with liquor. Recalling one such occasion, he explains, “I called up ol’ Peggy and had her sell us a bottle from her stash; she gave me a discount like usual because she had been so close with my kokum. [...] She always delivered her goods in person—brought cigarettes to the moms who couldn’t make it out of the house, Percs to the kids who were ‘feeling no pain,’ McDonald’s to the crews of Nates hungover as all hell” (130). Jonny’s description shows that Peggy performs care labor for the wider community by delivering sources of comfort to those who are isolated or otherwise immobilized. Jonny’s anecdote also reveals Peggy’s enduring loyalty to her friends, which she shows by giving them discounts on products. Nevertheless, Jonny addresses her prescription drug dealing with cynical ambivalence. He rationalizes Peggy’s actions: “She thought she was doing a good thing, selling clean Percs to people who needed them, saving them from a fentanyl overdose, but we all knew she was enabling others—hell, sometimes you have to do what you have to do to survive” (132). This is neither a judgement nor a condemnation of her Perc-selling business, but rather an acknowledgement of the precarity Indigenous people must navigate within the hellish reality of capitalism and settler colonialism.

Jonny is sympathetic rather than judgmental towards Peggy’s behavior and recognizes what a vital role she plays in her community, especially among the other young adults like him who are new to the city and just trying to survive. After delivering a bottle of whiskey to Jonny, Jordan, and Tias before a night out, Peggy kindly urges them to call her if they need a ride later. Jonny reflects on her concern: “She had this way about her, a motherly instinct that she extended to everyone she knew. [...] if you knew someone who OD’d or needed a ride to rehab, she had

your back—free of charge. We all needed Peggy, even if we rarely said so” (132). Indeed, Peggy does more to support those in her social network than just smuggling goods. In addition to her bountiful, though unorthodox, hustling and gathering practice, she provides a vital transportation service to members of her community. Most Indigenous populations in Canada, among other socioeconomic inequities, lack reliable modes of transport, both within and between cities and reserves (Hanson et. al 2021). Inadequate public transportation options and crumbling roadways between metropolitan areas and First Nations contribute to isolation, cultural disconnection, and psychological distress among Indigenous residents of urban areas who cannot (regularly) travel to their reserve (Alhassan 4). Therefore, by driving people around the city and to Peguis, Peggy transports them to essential services (e.g., hospitals, grocery stores) and helps them maintain their connection to the reserve community. Jonny explains how her operation works: “Before Uber was a thing, Peggy offered rides to people for a few bucks and if you needed a lift down to the hospital or if an Elder needed to head into town, she’d give you a ride for free so long as you threw her a few smokes and a slab or two of bannock. Momma says she’s sort of the folk hero of the rez, everyone has mad respect for her” (JA 31). Unlike Uber, Peggy calculates her rates through a matrix of data derived from kinship ties, necessity of the ride, and age and community standing of the rider. This means she accepts gifts of tobacco or food in cases when someone urgently needs a ride and cannot pay. Or, as Jonny mentioned, Peggy provides this discount as a way of showing respect to her Elders. For Jonny and other Indigenous folks in Winnipeg, Peggy is a lifeline that connects them to their home community on the rez. She traverses urban and reserve spaces by transporting food and people back and forth while earning both livelihood for herself and the respect of her community. Peggy “rupture[s] colonial constructions of space and borders, including binaries between the rural and urban, as [she] simultaneously embod[ies] alternatives to a capitalist economy” (Daigle 312). Not only does Peggy demonstrate ways of transgressing capitalist systems to engage with her community, but she also proves it is possible to use food and medicine as currencies of community care.

The high concentration of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit residents in Winnipeg means that Jonny inevitably encounters people with different tribal affiliations than his own. Nevertheless, he quickly becomes enmeshed in this pan-Indigenous community. Solidarity among the urban Native community extends to a degree to other BIPOC segments of the population who are also exploited (though in different ways) by the capitalist settler state. These shared affinities mean that members informally look out for one another and are prepared to break capitalist codes of conduct to help each other out. He summarizes this informal network

with the simple description: “we all fished for catfish in the Red and tried to look out for one another at house parties” (*JA* 118). Jordan, Jonny’s closest friend after Tias, knows how to successfully navigate this unofficial network to secure cheap food for herself and her friends. Jonny recalls the first time he and Jordan shared a meal at a fast-food restaurant,

Inside McDonald’s, she pulled out a giant book of coupons she was carrying around in her backpack. “Work smart,” she said, “not hard.” Half those coupons were old as shit but she knew where to take them, the right fast-food joints and grocery stores—places where she could either befriend or intimidate the other brown-skins. At the counter she marched right up to the cashier, this young Nate kid, slapped down her coupon, and said, “Two Big Macs and large fries, cuz—and don’t forget, it’s two-for-one.” Her coupon had expired but the boy rang her through anyway—maybe out of respect, maybe out of fear. (118-119)

The size of the coupon book indicates Jordan’s extensive geographic knowledge of Winnipeg’s gastronomic infrastructure. She knows when and where to employ her combination of friendliness and intimidation on other BIPOC workers to procure discounted food on a regular basis. Her mantra “work smart, not hard” encapsulates her innovative spirit as she hustles to feed herself and her relatives within a hostile urban landscape.

For the Indigenous characters in *Jonny Appleseed*, surviving settler-colonial Canada, whether on the rez or in the city, means engaging in informal provisioning networks to obtain material resources which might otherwise be unavailable to them. Jonny benefits immensely from his relationships with Peggy and Jordan who, as Oji-Cree women, creatively engage with and defy colonial-capitalist systems to nourish themselves and their kin. Peggy, Jordan, Jonny, and anyone else who conspires with them in their unsanctioned food-gathering systems, defiantly refuse to follow settler-colonial rules and standards. (Re)negotiations of Indigenous foodways across urban and reserve spaces are acts of resistant food sovereignty. Though they might be situated within an environment of hyper-individualism and late-stage capitalism, the provisioning networks that feed Indigenous bodies are rooted in principles of community and reciprocity.

4.3 Finding Identity

Simply existing as an Indigenous person in settler-colonial nation-states like the U.S. and Canada is a dangerous endeavor that consistently requires resourcefulness and ingenuity to survive. The characters in *Jonny Appleseed* and *The Seed Keeper* recognize the physical and cultural damage that settler colonization has violently wrought on Anishinaabe, Cree, and Dakhóta nations. This recognition logically leads to feelings of anger and resentment towards the institutions and people who have enabled centuries of structural and interpersonal violence against their Native communities. While Indigenous anger is generally met with dismissal and incredulity from individual settlers and the settler state, Coulthard calls this emotional response

“*righteous resentment*” (126; emphasis original). Righteous resentment is a crucial component of resistance to settler colonialism because “Indigenous people’s anger and resentment can generate forms of decolonized subjectivity and anticolonial practice that we ought to critically affirm rather than denigrate in our premature efforts to promote forgiveness and reconciliation on terms still largely dictated by the colonial state” (Coulthard 128). Recognition, resentment, and refusal of settler-colonial structures are therefore productive actions that undermine colonial subjugation. For the characters in the novels, this means that recognizing, resenting, and refusing Euro-American foods and foodways helps them connect to their individual Ojibwe or Dakhóta identities and stay alive despite the Canadian and U.S. settler forces designed to eradicate their dissenting existences.

In *The Seed Keeper*, Rosalie knows very little about her mother and her extended family until she is in her forties. Discussing her newly unearthed family history with Wilma, a Dakhóta Elder, Rosalie wonders if her life would have turned out differently if her grandmother had never been taken away to boarding school. Wilma answers her enthusiastically, “Oh, hell yes. Strong, loving families were the backbone of Dakhóta communities. Our *tiospaye* [extended family] included our aunties and uncles and elders who made sure that each child grew up knowing they were loved. All the addiction and abuse you see today, that came over with the Europeans” (*TSK* 333). Rosalie, who lived in hostile foster homes as a child and then married a white farmer at eighteen, has been disconnected from her Dakhóta community her entire adult life. By avidly accrediting the high rates of disease and abuse among Indigenous communities to Euro-American colonization, Wilma helps Rosalie correctly identify the source of her family’s struggles, which in turn helps her begin to come to terms with her own state-imposed separation from her extended family and its immense impact on her life. During this exchange Wilma and Rosalie, as two Dakhóta women, tap into what Lori Campbell (Two-Spirit *nēhiyaw āpihtākosisān*) calls, “a shared rage that drives our resistance” within the context of Indigenous feminisms (127). Wilma gives Rosalie tacit permission to embrace her anger as a reservoir that feeds resistance.

Contemplating her experience in foster care, Rosalie can retrospectively voice her righteous resentment towards her foster families and their disavowal of her Dakhóta culture. Significantly, the inferior quality of the white families’ food is a key point on her list of grievances. Rosalie remembers: “They wanted me to forget everything about my life before that day, [...] I was supposed to be grateful for a bed with real sheets, for a flushing toilet, for a place in a family of ghosts who needed me to fill their emptiness. I had lost everything, but they told me I was ungrateful if I looked sad, if I pushed their bland food around my plate” (*TSK*

65). In her recollections Rosalie makes an important distinction between the processed, unappetizing foods her foster families purchased at places like Kmart and the “[r]eal food” (67) she and her father trapped and gathered from their land when he was still alive. The possessive plural pronoun “their” differentiates the colonizer’s food from real Dakhóta food; she refuses to eat “*their* bland food” (65; emphasis added). On another occasion, she recalls, “How *their* food stuck in [her] throat until [she] gagged and was sent away from the table (291; emphasis added). Rosalie’s memories of her time in foster care include negotiations of food sovereignty on two distinct levels. First, as a child when these events took place, Rosalie embodies food sovereignty by physically refusing to eat the tasteless food forced on her by her white foster families. Second, as an adult narrating these memories, she has the agency to vocalize her criticism of their “tough,” “lumpy,” and “limp” foods (66). Rosalie both recognizes and resents the abuse and neglect she experienced at the hands of the U.S. foster care system. By defiantly rejecting the supposed superiority of the manufactured food products produced by the corporate food regime, she takes a tiny, but crucial step towards reclaiming Dakhóta food sovereignty.

In the early years of her marriage to John Meister, Rosalie spends her energy getting accustomed to her new role as a farm wife and mother, which includes trying to stay afloat financially. Not until her son is a few years old does she start questioning some of the farming methods practiced by John and their neighbors. Gaby, through her environmental activism, brings the negative ecological impacts of farming chemicals to Rosalie’s attention. She reminds Rosalie, “You may be living on a farm, Rosie, but you still have to think like a Dakhóta. You can’t sit back and let others poison the river or the land or fuck around with our seeds. Think about the sacrifices our ancestors made. You have to make a choice” (172). Inspired by Gaby, Rosalie makes the conscious choice to resist industrial agriculture’s degradation of her people’s homelands in the little ways that she can. This includes trying to warn her local farming community about the environmental implications of using patented GMO seeds. In the late 1990s, despite his wife’s protests, John decides to sign a contract to purchase and grow GMO seeds from the chemical company Mangenta. Dismayed and enraged at her husband’s decision, Rosalie decides to stop purchasing seeds for her garden. She reasons with herself, “after nearly two decades of gardening, I could save money if I learned how to save my own seeds. And, in a small way, push back against our partnership with Mangenta” (238). By saving seeds Rosalie avoids paying for both seeds and vegetables at a store. Seed saving functions as an embodied food sovereignty praxis that simultaneously resists predatory agribusinesses and helps Rosalie feed her family.

Like Rosalie, who eventually finds fortitude in her Dakhóta identity, Jonny draws strength from his Oji-Cree heritage to navigate and push back against settler-Canadian standards. In particular he recognizes and rebels against the heteropatriarchal values that have infiltrated his culture's traditions and ceremonies. As a self-proclaimed "urban NDN, Two-Spirit femmeboy" (*JA* 45), Jonny's identity transgresses both contemporary Euro-Canadian and post-contact Oji-Cree norms. While his Indigeneity subverts white supremacy, Jonny's queerness is met with disdain on the rez. Jonny laments how Oji-Cree traditions have been influenced by the Western gender binary: "It turns out that tradition is an NDN's saving grace, but it's a medicine reserved only for certain members of the reservation, and not for self-ordained Injun glitter princesses like me. This tradition repeats throughout my life: I'm expected to chop wood for ceremonies rather than knead frybread, learn how to hunt with my uncles rather than knit with my aunties" (79). Enforced through centuries of assimilation projects, like Christian missionaries and residential schools, heteropatriarchal gender roles that confine women to the domestic sphere remain present in contemporary Oji-Cree food-related traditions. According to Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, the crushing exclusion Jonny faces as a young queer person on his reserve is all too common across Indigenous communities (*As We* 120). Though he was assigned male at birth, Jonny would personally rather spend time engaging in activities like cooking and baking with his female relatives, than go hunting or fishing with his male relatives. Yet some members of his Oji-Cree community disdain his participation in 'feminine' activities. Despite the acceptance he receives from his kokum, mother, and close friends, Jonny still faces rejection and exclusion from others on the rez due to his gender expression and sexuality. Jonny feels sadness and resentment towards "the home that squeezed the queer right out of its languages" (*JA* 213). Nevertheless, he recognizes that the homophobia and hate he experiences on the rez stem from colonization. One of the small, but powerful ways Jonny actively resists the settler-colonial elimination of his Indigiqueernes is by spending time in the kitchen with his kokum and aunties.

Recognizing, resenting, and refusing settler-colonial norms is a powerful form of Indigenous resistance. Therefore, as Dakhóta and Oji-Cree characters in the novels reject settler foods or gendered food-related traditions, they loosen internalized colonization and undermine external settler-colonial hegemony. Wilma, Rosalie, Gaby, and Jonny all demonstrate an "awareness of and unwillingness to reconcile [them]selves with a structural and symbolic violence that is still very much present in [their] lives" (Coulthard 126). As they embody righteous resentment, they further embrace their decolonial Dakhóta and Oji-Cree identities.

4.4 Transforming Relationships

While some powerful expressions of Indigenous food sovereignty involve rejecting settler-colonial standards, Indigenous characters in *Jonny Appleseed* and *The Seed Keeper* also resist Euro-American hegemony when they transform their colonizer's foods into something meaningful within their Oji-Cree or Dakhóta cultural contexts. While most definitions of food sovereignty, including the one in the Nyéléni Declaration, specify that peoples have a right to "culturally appropriate food" (673), I argue that culturally *inappropriate* food can also be incorporated into articulations of Indigenous food sovereignty. Most Indigenous food sovereignty scholars on Turtle Island write about the importance of returning to "traditional harvesting strategies" (Morrison 97) and a "traditional diet" (Mihesuah 811). The specific foods or harvesting strategies considered "traditional" logically vary from tribe to tribe and nation to nation. However, this broadly refers to foods made from the plants and animals that were available in a tribe's territory prior to European contact (Mihesuah 811-819). Yet, evaluating foods by this standard is complicated by the centuries-long "exchange of goods, flora, fauna, people, and microbes" that took place on Turtle Island post contact (Daschuk xi). Indigenous communities' attempts to adapt to these newly introduced organisms were impeded by land dispossession and displacement. Nevertheless, foods made from non-native plants and animal species can still have cultural significance among contemporary Indigenous peoples. In both novels food, culturally appropriate or not, serves as an essential element in establishing and maintaining relationships between characters. Stronger Indigenous friendships mean a greater capacity to resist settler-colonial subjugation. Additionally, food products that are physically harmful to the body can be paradoxically healing in other aspects of an Indigenous character's life. This subchapter explores the often-fraught connections between non-traditional foods and creative iterations of Indigenous food sovereignty.

Despite its cultural 'inappropriateness,' processed 'junk' food associated with the working class plays an important role in many contemporary Indigenous social gatherings. Jonny announces a pan-Indigenous disdain for upper-middle-class settler tastes. Remembering a date he had at a fancy steakhouse, he explains:

That's the problem with white guys, they think they can impress you with fancy meals and expense accounts if you let them. [...] If you want to impress a neechi, you need to take them out to an Applebee's or Montana's or even Foody Goody's Chinese Buffet and let them enjoy a smorgasbord of food for \$12.99. And if you really want to impress them you could swing by a Co-Op and split a carton of white mini-donuts. No Cree boy gives a rat's ass for escargot or lobster tails. Shit's nasty. (*JA* 101)

Jonny disregards food-related symbols of wealth and status within Euro-Canadian society. As he criticizes "fancy meals" of "escargot or lobster," he undercuts settler-colonial cultural

hegemony, while also providing a glimpse into contemporary pan-Indigenous attitudes towards food. According to him, friendships with and among Oji-Cree or other First Nations, Métis, or Inuit individuals are formed while sitting in the booths of chain restaurants rather than around the white-clothed tables of fine dining establishments. His experience with Jordan at the Fort Garry restaurant helps solidify this for him. When the pair refuse to pay, they refuse the settler values which prize the French restaurant's cuisine more highly than what is served at "Applebee's or Montana's," whose food is implicitly lower class. Questions of race, class, and land occupation all overlap in the Fort Garry scene to highlight the fact that even 'healthy' organic food "[f]rom the land" (157) is nevertheless a product of the neo-liberal food regime. The restaurant markets their food to "white suburban classy" (157) patrons who consume their miniscule portions of food "from the land" as a sort of performance of their wealth and disdain for the unhealthy 'junk' food at chain or fast-food restaurants. Among contemporary food movements in North America there are settler-led groups working to raise awareness among consumers about how their food is produced, encouraging people to support local, more sustainable products (Kepkiewicz 191). Yet, as Lauren Kepkiewicz points out, "Without attention to and intervention in how food and food production intersects with the appropriation of land and history of settler agriculture, food movement actors, whether intentionally or not, engage in colonial processes of erasure by further invisibilising the ways that dispossession occurs" (191). To Jonny and Jordan, it is obvious that the restaurant's white, upper-middle class, settler patrons are not interested in confronting the agrarian property regime or race and labor relations in Canada that make it possible to get food from the farm all the way to their table.

For Jonny, sharing meals at 'low class' restaurants, where they serve cheap, greasy, calorically dense, and low nutrient (i.e. culturally inappropriate) foods, functions as an important mechanism for establishing and/or repairing friendships. His relationship with Jordan, for example, starts out on rocky footing since both she and Jonny are romantically involved with Tias. Jonny recounts, "Jordan and I only became real friends when she finally found out that I had been sexting her man—prior, I think she kind of knew [...]. She gave me a damn good lickin, that's for sure, but afterwards, when she felt my debt had been paid, she helped me up and said, 'So, you wanna get lunch, 'er what?'" (*JA* 118). After their altercation Jonny and Jordan end up eating at McDonald's where Jordan uses an expired coupon to get them a discount. As the pair laugh together over their meal of Big Macs and fries, Jonny's fear of Jordan transforms into admiration and regard. Through this embodied act of eating their relationship is strengthened; the two become "real friends." Despite the negative health effects associated with frequent fast-food consumption, the meals consumed at places like McDonald's

nevertheless contribute to stronger relationships between Indigenous characters in *Jonny Appleseed*. While middle-class settlers might denigrate fast food for its poor nutritional value, Winnipeg's urban infrastructure inhibits Jonny's access to healthy, affordable groceries. Therefore, eating a filling meal while enjoying the company of a friend is a healthier alternative to going hungry.

In *The Seed Keeper*, teenage Rosalie is starved for both food and friendship. Luckily for her, Gaby Makespeace is eager to befriend the "new Indian girl" (*TSK* 56) at school and invites her over for dinner. Rosalie's appetite surprises Gaby who recalls, "When we sat at the kitchen table, first thing I learned was that this girl could eat, wolfing down two bowls of soup and at least two large wheels of fry bread, smothered in butter and honey" (61). Among Indigenous food sovereignty activists and scholars, fry bread is a controversial food.²⁰ In her 2005 article titled "Fry bread: Cultural icon or high-calorie curse?," Angie Wagner outlines the emotional debate among and across Native communities about fry bread's place in Indigenous life on Turtle Island. Even though "fry bread is synonymous with Indian culture," many criticize the food's role in widespread health crises (i.e., high rates of type 2 diabetes) and urge fellow Indigenous people to cut it out of their diets (Wagner). Hopi journalist Patty Talahongva, who "call[s] fry bread 'Die Bread,'" demands an end to its holy status among Indigenous communities in favor of tribal-specific traditional foods. Talahongva clarifies that "[fry bread] has become, for many Indians, something almost sacred. Some even call it 'traditional food.' Yet it is not traditional and it is killing our people" (147). Choctaw scholar Devon Mihesuah has been similarly outspoken in her work about fry bread's adverse health effects and admits that "[a]lthough fry bread has been around for centuries, it is not truly 'traditional,' because wheat was brought from the Old World to the New in 1602" (823).²¹ Despite these disavowals of the dish, the Dakhóta and Oji-Cree characters in the novels nevertheless speak about their experiences with fry bread in positive terms. Just as Jonny and Jordan repair their friendship over McDonald's, Gaby and Rosalie cement their newly established bond over a meal of Gaby's Auntie Vera's fry bread. Both instances suggest that even low-nutrient, high calorie, non-traditional foods can play a central role in establishing or strengthening relationships, and thus contribute to iterations of Indigenous food sovereignty.

²⁰ Though there are varying recipes, fry bread is generally made from white flour dough, shaped into round discs, and then fried in hot oil (Mihesuah 823). It is popular among many Indigenous nations and tribes across Turtle Island. "Fry bread stands can be found across the country at powwows and county fairs" (Mihesuah 822).

²¹ It is outside this scope of this thesis, not to mention inappropriate for me as a white settler, to take a definitive stance on the virtues/evils of fry bread as a pan-Indigenous cultural food. Instead, I offer only an analysis of fry bread's role in the narratives.

In *Jonny Appleseed*, fry bread is just one of the many foods Jonny associates with his family on the rez. Another processed food, corn syrup, helps Jonny feel close to his late kokum. Remembering her, he narrates, “If you asked me what my kokum tasted like, I would tell you Bee Hive corn syrup. She put that thick golden syrup on everything: on our French toast, in her tea, drizzled over her jello cake” (JA 139). Believing in its widespread utility, Frances not only uses the corn syrup in her recipes, but also in her skin and hair care routines and even as a first aid remedy. Once, after using it to help a relative recover from a low blood sugar spell, she emphatically tells her family, “This here is some magic in a two-dollar can” (139). In a way, the corn syrup still works its magic on Jonny, who occasionally eats a bit of it to feel connected to his beloved grandmother. He confesses, “Every time I’m sick, I still take a spoonful—and when my taste buds fizz with that familiar sweetness, it feels like I’m with Kokum again in her too warm home” (139). In this example, the sugary substance contributes to Jonny’s emotional comfort during times of physical illness. Yet, Jonny is also conscious of the fact that his kokum’s excessive consumption of the syrup contributed to her declining health and ultimately her death. Even when her diabetes progressed to the point of consuming her limbs, Frances refused to change her eating habits. Like her friend Evelyn, a residential school survivor who loved brown sugar, Frances’s corn syrup consumption likely helps her cope with her own trauma. While kokum’s use of the Bee Hive syrup may be considered an expression of food sovereignty, it is fraught with a glaring contradiction: while it harms her physical body, it nourishes her spirit. Jonny comes to terms with his kokum’s behavior with simple logic: “that woman had lived through some intense shit—most of which will remain unknown to me. That’s her business and those were her strategies” (42). By exerting agency over her eating habits, Frances resists further settler-colonial infringement upon her bodily sovereignty.

Whether it is fry bread, mini-donuts, or corn syrup, the characters in the novels reveal how culturally inappropriate ‘junk’ food can be incorporated into negotiations of Indigenous food sovereignty. Though they may be nutritionally ‘unhealthy,’ foods like fry bread nevertheless play a central role in fostering pan-Indigenous solidarities. The negative biological health effects of consuming such foods must be individually weighed against the emotional or psychological benefits. Surviving capitalism and settler occupation necessitates making ‘unhealthy’ choices. The above examples only reiterate the fact that food sovereignty is a set of processes that are dynamically negotiated in real time.

North America’s hyper-capitalist settler-colonial landscape is designed to extract labor and life from Indigenous bodies. Therefore, when Oji-Cree and Dakhóta characters fight to feed themselves and their relatives within this predatory system, even with non-traditional foods,

they resist eradication. Food-related resistance comes in many forms. Whether appropriating the colonizer's food or rejecting it altogether, both strategies pose subversive potential. As Jonny, Rosalie, and their friends demonstrate, navigating the predatory structures of Canadian and U.S. settler colonialism requires resourcefulness and resilience. In their refusals to disappear, their lives are rooted in resistance.

5. Flourishing Through Resurgence

The previous chapter examined how Indigenous characters in *The Seed Keeper* and *Jonny Appleseed* creatively resist U.S. and Canadian state violence as they feed themselves and their relatives from *within* the colonial-capitalist food regime. Shifting slightly, this chapter investigates how Indigenous characters (re)generate Dakhóta or Oji-Cree knowledges through resurgent acts of food sovereignty initiated *outside of* settler-colonial structures. It is important to emphasize that though I have separated the two terms *resistance* and *resurgence* to structure this literary analysis, they are interconnected practices that both contribute to decolonial struggle. Resistance is primarily reactionary as it seeks to undermine colonial-capitalist hegemony, while resurgence is primarily generative as it restores and enacts Indigenous cultural traditions. Of course, one action can and often does incorporate both resistance and resurgence. The key distinction I would like to highlight here is that Indigenous resurgence is rooted in knowledges and practices that predate settler occupation. It is not (only) a reaction to colonization, but its antecedent. Or, in the words of Leanne Betasamosake Simpson regarding her Nishnaabeg way of life, “resurgence is our original instruction” (*As We* 24). While resistance makes surviving colonization possible, resurgence allows Indigenous excellence to flourish. It is therefore resurgence, more than (only) resistance, which offers a sustainable path forward for Indigenous inhabitants of Turtle Island (Alfred *Wasáse* 21-23).

At its core, resurgent approaches to decolonization will embody Indigenous traditions and ways of knowing enacted within a specific ecosystem. This means Indigenous liberation can only be sustained by enacting place-based ways of life rooted in reciprocity and respect. Yellowknives Dene political theorist Glen Coulthard explains that “Indigenous peoples tend to view their resurgent practices of cultural self-recognition and empowerment as *permanent* features of our decolonial political projects not transitional ones” (23; emphasis original). In other words, resurgence is not merely a temporary strategy employed to reach a decolonial destination, but rather resurgence itself is both a means and ends. Indigenous scholars use language like “self-sufficiency” (Alfred *Peace* 1999: xii), “self-actualization” (L. Simpson “Indigenous Resurgence” 26), and “self-transformation” (Coulthard 38) to emphasize that

resurgence comes exclusively from Indigenous knowledge systems. In an essay authored together, Glen Coulthard and Leanne Betasamosake Simpson also underscore the defining role of *grounded normativity* in articulations of Indigenous resurgence (254). As I mentioned in chapter two, the term grounded normativity encompasses various Indigenous eco-philosophies which have in common imperatives for ethical, reciprocal, and non-exploitative human behavior within an ecosystem (Coulthard 60).

Interpreted through the lens of resurgence, embodied acts of Indigenous food sovereignty are crucial for cultivating vibrant Indigenous communities while also fighting to stop the insidious ecological and interpersonal violence perpetrated by settlers and settler-colonial structures. This chapter therefore examines how characters in the novels embody resurgent acts of food sovereignty to (re)claim, (re)construct, and (re)generate their Dakhóta or Oji-Cree traditions while strengthening relationships within their communities. It also investigates how (new) food traditions rooted in grounded normativity contribute to a decolonized present and future. The following questions guide the remainder of this analysis: In what ways do Indigenous characters use food to engage in creative kinship practices while connecting to a sense of home? How does practicing land-based foodways help protect traditional Oji-Cree and Dakhóta territories from ecological exploitation? Treated as alien Others, how do Indigenous women and Two-Spirit characters nourish their bodies and practice bodily sovereignty? And, finally, as future ancestors, how do Oji-Cree and Dakhóta characters adapt and revitalize their foodways for future generations? With an implicit rejection of settler colonialism, the Indigenous characters in *Jonny Appleseed* and *The Seed Keeper* find self-affirmative and regenerative articulations of food sovereignty to nurture themselves, their communities, and ultimately their homelands.

5.1 Reconnecting to Home

Planting, harvesting, cooking, consuming, and sharing (traditional) foods allows Indigenous characters in both novels to nurture creative kinship networks and connect to a sense of home. According to Daniel Heath Justice, “Kinship is the complex, embodied practice of sovereign belonging. It’s not just about ties to one another, but to the willing, intentional re-creation and reaffirmation of those ties in daily interactions—we choose to be kin, and we’re chosen” (104). Jonny, Rosalie, and their friends and families actively recreate and reaffirm their kinship ties with one another through everyday interactions involving food. Stronger kinship networks translate to healthier communities who in turn are better able to take care of their traditional territories to cultivate a place where all human and non-human kin can thrive—home.

Both Rosalie and Jonny take physical journeys back to their homes by the end of their respective narratives. In *The Seed Keeper*, her husband's death awakens something in Rosalie who finally returns to her family's land and her childhood cabin after more than twenty-eight years. By returning to the "place [her] spirit called home" (TSK 304), Rosalie unknowingly recreates the homecoming undergone by her great-great grandmother Marie Blackbird when she returned after her exile following the U.S.-Dakhóta War of 1862. When she and her husband Oliver are finally allowed to return in 1889, Marie insists they purchase a hilly property along the Minnesota River where she lived as a child before the war. Marie insists on living near the river not only because water is a sacred relative in the web of life, but also because of the land's connection to her mother, father, and baby brother. Upon arriving she buries a lock of her mother's hair, reasoning, "In that small way, my Iná returned home with me" (243). Returning home allows Marie to both honor her ancestors and work towards a better future. In the following decades, Marie's daughter Susanne marries and has four children. The members of the multi-generational household work together under Marie's leadership as she imparts her cultural knowledge onto her daughter and then grandchildren to cultivate a garden and forage in the woods for food and medicines. Though sustaining themselves requires intense work, the large family manages to produce and enjoy an abundance of food and medicines cultivated according to Dakhóta traditions. Tragically, Marie's hard-earned stability is shattered when an Indian boarding school agent snatches her grandchildren away. For both Rosalie and Marie, returning home initiates healing, even when, in Marie's case, that healing is violently cut short.

Even at ninety years old Darlene Kills Deer still holds onto the teachings she learned from her grandmother Marie. She deploys that food-related knowledge to reconnect with her great-niece Rosalie. Darlene cultivates "Dakhóta corn, wamnáheza" (326), which has not been planted by anyone in her family since the summer she and her siblings were separated from their parents. These sacred seeds, which generations of her female ancestors have fought to protect, were "a gift from [Darlene's] great-grandmother Maḥpíyamaza to Marie, and then to [her] mother, Susanne" (326). Despite her age and limited mobility, Darlene does the best she can and plants the corn in buckets strewn across her tiny apartment. The sight shocks Rosalie as she walks into the living room. Darlene tells her,

It was for you I started growing these plants, with the hope that they could help me. They have their own way of talking, you know. It's not the same here as in a garden, where they share stories through their roots, through the soil, talking with their leaves and their tassels, sending love pollen on the wind. But it was something I could do. I could ask the plants for their help. I could ask the crow for her help. I could talk to the oak trees on the boulevard outside my apartment and ask them to watch for you. Year after year, we kept this vigil. [...] it was the plants, and the trees, and the crow that brought you home. (3)

Darlene's actions are rooted in grounded normativity and more specifically in the Dakhóta concept Mitakuye Oyasin, "all my relations" (Wilson *Beloved Child* 17). As she invests her time and kinetic energy—hauling soil, offering water, pruning leaves—Darlene fulfills her obligations to the seeds as their relation. Furthermore, she acknowledges the sovereignty of the corn, the crow, and the oak tree by asking them for help as their relative, not their superior. In their turn the plants honor Darlene's appeals for help. They exert agency by "watching" for and "talking" to Rosalie. As she plants, waters, and harvests the sacred seeds, Darlene embodies resurgent acts of food sovereignty. She then passes down Marie's willow basket on to Rosalie, connecting her with at least four previous generations of their family's seed keepers.

Returning home not only leads Rosalie to Darlene, but in her efforts to find her great-aunt, she also makes connections with people at the nearby Dakhóta reservation who become her found family. Though she is an adult, the people in her newly established kinship network take care of Rosalie, in a way she never experienced as a child in foster care. When her seedlings grown from Marie's precious corn seeds are destroyed in a storm, Rosalie falls into despair and eventually a serious fever. When she wakes up, she is surprised at the bustle of activity happening around her. The Elders Wilma and Carlos have come to stay at the cabin to nurse her back to health. As Wilma plies her with "foul-smelling tea" (*TSK* 349), Rosalie's friend and settler neighbor Ida drops in to bring them wood and other supplies. Even Gaby arrives with a bowl of freshly picked blackberries to lend a helping hand. Both women are pleasantly surprised to see each other again after so many years. One of the ways Rosalie's community cares for her during her illness is by helping her nourish her body with tea and other foods. These acts of kindness provide Rosalie with both physical and spiritual sustenance. For the first time since her husband's death, she can see a path forward. Rosalie contemplates, "It was easier to think about a future now that Gaby was back in my life. Our friendship had had its ups and downs over the years, but we still fit together, the mouth and the ears, needing each other. With Ida living nearby, and Wilma and Carlos just a short drive away, I felt the comfort that comes with belonging to a circle, to a community" (354). The bonds between Rosalie and her found family members are strengthened through resurgent acts of food sovereignty. She and the people in her circle embody Dakhóta principles of reciprocity and respect as they simultaneously nourish each other as individuals and by extension nurture their community.

In *Jonny Appleseed*, cultivating a small found family of his own helps Jonny manage the homesickness he feels living away from the rez. Tias and Jordan are the main members of this small kinship network. The pair help Jonny move into his second apartment where they bring him a crock pot and sweet grass as housewarming gifts. These gifts encapsulate two

essential processes through which he begins to transform his impersonal, white-walled apartment into a home. Jordan's gift of sweet grass, as a sacred medicine, helps him cleanse his new space. While the crock pot Tias gifts Jonny enables him to make filling meals to nourish himself and others. Indeed, Jonny and Tias often eat dinner together at Jonny's apartment, a ritual that strengthens their already strong bond. One of the meals Jonny cooks for them is his kokum's sweet and sour meatballs. Though his supplies are limited, Jonny lovingly attempts to recreate this beloved dish. While cooking he reflects:

Kokum usually used ground-up elk or deer meat, but all I had was some regular hamburger. I cracked an egg, crushed up some saltine crackers, diced a week-old onion, and kneaded it all together. I tried to be meticulous, like Kokum taught me to be—patience makes for a delicious dinner. I folded the meat mixture into itself, then rolled it into fat little balls, trying to keep them as uniform as possible, and then I fried them up in a pan, giving each one the love it deserved. I layered them gently in my crock pot, sprinkled salt and pepper over them, and closed the lid. (JA 140)

As is often the case when trying to feed himself in Winnipeg, Jonny must practice resourcefulness by substituting 'traditional' ingredients with what he has on hand. Yet the cooking process reminds Jonny to embody behaviors encouraged by his kokum, as he carefully and patiently forms the meatballs. Jonny further demonstrates generosity by inviting Tias over to share the meal together, rather than saving everything for himself. As the sauce simmers in the slow cooker, Jonny and Tias combine their limited resources to get to Walmart and buy a couple boxes of Stovetop stuffing as a side dish. Since it is one of the only foods he can cook well, Tias takes the lead preparing the stuffing. Jonny continues, "Tias made his stuffing and took pride in his work as he fluffed it up with a fork. We then gorged ourselves on our meal, which basically was hamburger and wet croutons—but it hit the spot" (142). Even though it is 'just' boxed stuffing, Tias takes pride in his culinary work. One of the ways Jonny and Tias demonstrate their love for one another and affirm their relationship is through the care they each invest in preparing this shared meal. By putting their skills and resources together, Jonny and Tias manage to make a filling meal for themselves in a landscape that works against the nourishment of their Oji-Cree bodies. Shared meals with Tias are just one of the many ways Jonny makes a home for himself in Winnipeg and finds belonging among his chosen kin.

Despite cultivating this small urban kinship network, homesickness still intermittently finds Jonny in the city. Another way he makes Winnipeg feel more like home is by cooking and eating foods that remind him of the rez and the relatives he misses there. Jonny muses, "Nobody prepares you for the sting when you're about to leave home. [...] Leaving hurts. It's not glamorous like Julia Roberts makes it seem. I can't *eat* anything other than fried bologna or Klik for breakfast" (20; emphasis original). Indeed, Jonny makes himself a breakfast of fried

bologna and eggs on the same day he makes this comment. Later he remembers his beloved auntie's "morning routine of frying up bologna and yesterday's mashed potatoes" (59-60). This suggests his breakfast choice connects him to home not just because he often consumed the meal as a child, but also because it is a food he associates with his late aunt. Jonny goes on to emphasize the sensory connection between food and home: "You have to feel home and to feel it, you have to sense it: smell it, taste it, hear it. And it isn't always comfortable—at least, not an NDN home. In fact, quite often, it's uncomfortable. But it's home because the bannock is still browning in the oven and your kokum is still making tea and eating Arrowroot biscuits" (20). Because food can be smelled, touched, and tasted, it enables Jonny to truly sense home even when he is not physically there. Though he is geographically distant in Winnipeg, Jonny accesses memories of his relatives, childhood, and home in Peguis through culturally and/or personally significant foods like fried bologna, bannock, and Arrowroot biscuits.

By the end of his narrative, when he arrives back in Peguis to attend Roger's funeral, Jonny finally achieves the goal he has been working towards for the last seven days. The first thing he does upon arriving home, after hugging his mother, is share a small meal with her. He recounts, "We held each other like that for a while, then she made us tea and ripped us a slab of bannock, which we sloppily slathered with butter and jam" (197). Sharing the tea and bannock gives Jonny's mom an opportunity to express her grief about losing her partner. She speaks without interruptions about the details of Roger's decline. Her speech is broken up in the text only by Jonny's commentary as first-person narrator describing in detail how he prepares and eats the bannock. The following quote leaves out most of Karen's dialogue in order to highlight Jonny's actions while she talks.

"I was in hell," she said in between bites. "Straight up hell, Jon." I wanted to say me too, tell her ain't nothing straight about hell, but instead I sliced another piece of bannock in two. [...] I didn't say anything, just kept spreading the margarine hard across the two bannock halves, spilling crumbs everywhere. [...] I spread the raspberry puree on the bannock next, that dark red jam oozing into the newly formed crevices. [...] I took a bite from one half of the bannock and slid the other half across to her. (197-198)

Interjecting 'mundane' moments of eating into a painful story dilutes its intensity, making it more bearable. In the scene Jonny listens without interrupting, only as a narrator does he insert details about "spreading the margarine" and "spilling crumbs" which replicate for the reader the bannock's importance in the moment. It becomes a complement to their grief. While not magically healing their pain, sitting down to tea and bannock creates a context in which Jonny and his mother can reconnect after extended time apart. These moments between them are precious and, they both acknowledge, increasingly rare now that Jonny lives in Winnipeg. Yet

sharing a culturally significant food like bannock together helps them cherish the time they have left.

Through resurgent acts of food sovereignty involving sharing, consuming, preparing, and cultivating foods, characters in both novels reaffirm kinship ties with beloved friends and family. As they nourish their bodies and their relationships, Oji-Cree and Dakhóta characters connect spiritually and physically to home.

5.2 Practicing Land-based Foodways

Connecting to home—receiving community support and having physical access to traditional territory—is essential for characters attempting to practice land-based foodways. According to both Oji-Cree and Dakhóta traditions, if humans fulfill their responsibilities to plant and animal kin, all members of the interconnected web will flourish. Unlike colonial-capitalist food production systems which seek to produce the highest yields for the lowest costs, Indigenous foodways transcend mercenary concerns of economic profit predicated on perpetual ecological exploitation. Instead, Indigenous food-related knowledges are built upon a foundational understanding of “the land as a system of reciprocal relations and obligations (grounded normativity)” (Coulthard 78). Nutritional sustenance is therefore the natural consequence of honoring non-human relatives with whom the land is shared. When Indigenous characters in *Jonny Appleseed* and *The Seed Keeper* cultivate food directly from the land to feed themselves and their communities, they are regenerating their culture’s food-related traditions and thus engaging in resurgent acts of food sovereignty. In other words, by cultivating food in accordance with Oji-Cree or Dakhóta traditions, characters fulfill their obligations to their plant and animal kin who in turn provide them with the sustenance to flourish.

Before moving away from Peguis, Jonny’s diet comes from a mix of grocery store food products and plants and animals cultivated from the land. This is why he scoffs at the Fort Garry restaurant’s use of the phrase “from the land” (*JA* 157) on their menu. The few bites of rare meat they serve him there contrast the “rabbit stew, elk burgers, deer steaks, carrots and onions straight out of the ground, homemade berry jam, [and] Saskatoon pies” (157) he is used to eating on the rez. Procuring food from the land is much more work, but more sustainable and rewarding than eating the tiny, overpriced plates served in the city. Jonny knows first-hand the physical labor required for traditional harvesting practices. In a flashback from his childhood, he remembers a summer day when he and Tias amused themselves by poking and prodding a dead porcupine with a stick. When he tells his kokum about their game, she reacts angrily and makes Jonny come with her to dequill and harvest the animal for meat. After demonstrating what to do, kokum tells Jonny to continue:

“Now you,” she said, and passed me the knife, forcing me to shave its body clean from ass to neck so that we could harvest its quills. Damn thing stuck me a bunch, and cut my hand up in a few spots, but my kokum just stood over me, arms crossed. “An eye for an eye,” she said. “Hope you learned your lesson.” We filled up both buckets, and when we were done I carried them back home, my arms sore from scraping, while my kokum carried the porcupine which now looked like a giant chicken breast, all pimples and loose skin. “Good for eating,” she said, “and quill work.” At home she skinned the rest of the porcupine and cooked it in a stew, which she made me eat for three days straight, breakfast, lunch, and dinner, until we finished the pot. “Always respect the animal,” she said after the stew was all gone, “and use everything if you’re going to kill one. They give their life for you, so you honour their entire body, y’hear?” I nodded, angry as all hell then, but forgiving because my kokum had a way of being easy on me even when she was punishing me. “Now, you want me to fix you a sandwich? Fry you up some eggs?” “Heck no, gran, I’ll be full for a year!” She laughed, and I ran to put my shoes on. “You know, Jon,” she said as I made my way for the door, “porcupine was a kokum once too.” (36-37)

Dequilling and harvesting the porcupine is physically strenuous and bloody work. While Jonny does not enjoy it at the time, the experience is significant enough that he remembers it vividly years later. Though the porcupine stinks and Jonny bleeds from the quills that stick in his skin, his relationship to his kokum is strengthened through their shared physical labor. Harvesting the porcupine produces a huge portion of a ‘culturally appropriate’ food that provides them with nutrient and calorically dense meals for multiple days. Jonny’s complaints of fullness contrast with other times in the narrative when he goes hungry because he cannot afford to buy food products at a grocery store. The meals of stew, on the other hand, were acquired outside of the capitalist food regime. Frances also demonstrates her love for Jonny by teaching him important food-related skills and cooking/offering to cook food for him. Finally, Frances (re)informs Jonny about Oji-Cree cultural beliefs towards animals as she reminds him that he must honor porcupines as relatives. As they harvest, cook, and eat the porcupine together, Jonny and his kokum embody Oji-Cree food sovereignty.

Like the porcupine, corn is a Khún̄jši [grandmother] who must be honored and treated with respect according to Dakhóta traditions. As children, Darlene and her siblings help their Khún̄jši Marie and mother Susanne harvest corn from their garden. Annoyed by her younger brother who keeps throwing dirt at her, Darlene retaliates by flinging an ear of corn in his direction. Appalled by her daughter’s action, Susanne quickly reprimands Darlene. Marie narrates this scene: “[Susanne] stared at Darlene as if not believing what she had done. ‘Pick up that corn,’ she said, sternly. [...] ‘Would you throw Khún̄jši in the field?’” (*TSK* 249-250). Susanne equates corn with a grandmother to make it easier for her young daughter to understand why the plant must be respected and handled with care. More than eighty years later, Darlene tells Rosalie, “I never forgot that lesson. Those seeds were sacred, and I was disrespectful to them” (318). While her father teaches her to honor the sovereignty of plant and animal relatives as a child, Rosalie learns first-hand about the sacredness of seeds while working in her garden

on the farm. Rather than viewing them as the means to a harvestable yield, she recognizes seeds as intelligent beings whose lives are intertwined with those of the humans who care for them. Though she originally began seed saving to push back against her family's contract with Mangenta, Rosalie quickly realizes that "the tiny seeds [she] had taken for granted were actually unique living beings with their own history, story, and family" (238). Through the physical labor she devotes to patiently tending her garden, Rosalie honors her sacred seed relatives.

Through gardening Rosalie engages in radical acts of resurgent food sovereignty as she provides her family with nutritious foods and connects to her ancestors. During a conversation as young mothers, Gaby voices her doubts about Rosalie's new hobby. She tells her, "Rosie, I just don't get what the fascination is with you and farming. People still remember how the government tried to force us into becoming farmers" (169). Rosalie is quick to defend her actions and differentiate between how she cares for her plants and the large-scale industrial farming methods practiced by her own husband. She responds, "I'm not farming, at least not the way it's done in the big fields. Gardening is different. It's a way to feed my family. [...] I like being with plants" (169). Indeed, the way Rosalie cares for her garden is much different than the way John works the fields. When he offers to spray the plants with a pesticide to get rid of weeds, she angrily chases him away. Instead of relying on chemical fertilizers and machines, Rosalie does everything by hand. She recalls, "I poured my time and energy into caring for *her*, feeding the soil with manure I spread with a shovel, watering the plants by hand. Some days I sang to them, serving up a mix of my father's old powwow songs" (237; emphasis added). In this passage, Rosalie personifies and genders her garden with the personal pronoun 'her,' a subtle indication that she treats the garden as living relative with whom she is in a reciprocal relationship. To do her part within this relationship Rosalie provides water, nutrients (by spreading manure), and love (by singing) to help the plants in the garden flourish. As a result of the hours of sweat and care she pours into her garden, Rosalie is rewarded with an "overflowing harvest" (*TSK* 237).

Despite Gaby's skepticism, by cultivating a garden Rosalie follows in the footsteps of generations of their Dakhóta ancestors. As a young Maire Blackbird remarks, "My family had always kept a garden, even before the Indian agent tried to make farmers of the men" (119). Again, the Euro-American style of agriculture practiced by the white settlers occupying Dakhóta land is differentiated from the gardening practiced by Dakhóta women. Back in Mní Sota after years of exile, Marie passes down her knowledge to her daughter and grandchildren. As an extended family they tend a garden together which, unlike the plowed monocultural fields

on the settler farms nearby, is a vibrant, interdependent community of diverse plants nestled in the woods. An elderly Marie describes their bustling garden:

Across the clearing, we had planted young cedar trees that would grow tall enough to help protect the garden from deer. A dense stand of maple trees gave us syrup each spring. Sunflowers lined the north side of the garden, their broad faces turned toward the sun. Our corn grew from low mounds, the slender stalks wrapped by vines loaded with dry beans. Nearby, the round shells of pumpkins and squash peeped out from beneath wide leaves. Before anything else, we offered čhaŋšáša [tobacco], and I spoke a prayer in Dakhóta, thanking the Creator for the abundant harvest. (248)

The abundance their garden brings them comes from practicing the Dakhóta planting traditions that Marie learned from her mother and other extended family members before they were violently forced off their land. They utilize, for example, the Three Sisters method to plant corn, beans, and squash together to the mutual benefit of all three plant species. Additionally, they sing songs and practice ceremonies to help the plants grow. Nevertheless, the only reason they can plant wamnáheza (Dakhóta corn) at all is because Marie and her mother acted quickly and sewed seeds into their clothing as they fled the war in 1862. These are the same seeds Marie protects throughout her exile and later passes down to Susanne, who entrusts them to Darlene, who finally presents them to Rosalie. When Rosalie receives the seeds in 2002, she is aware of how precious they are, not least because of the generations of women who made tough decisions to protect them, but also because other than her great-aunt Darlene, she cannot find anyone else growing wamnáheza. Through the act of planting and tending the wamnáheza seeds, Rosalie connects to and honors generations of her human and non-human relatives.

As she embarks on the precarious journey of growing the precious wamnáheza, Rosalie relies on her newly established community and the Dakhóta teachings she learned long ago from her father to support her. Upon returning to her family's land, Rosalie's thoughts are dominated by memories of her father who taught her how to gather plants, fish, and trap wild game as a child. Nearly thirty years later, Rosalie navigates the land through the map of those memories. Moving through the forest she reflects fondly,

As the seasons changed, he showed me the plants that he knew well, which ones were ready to be gathered and which parts to use for tea, for eating, for medicine. We searched for wild greens in spring, along with early asparagus, leeks, watercress, and morel mushrooms. In summer we traveled to find a thick grove of chokecherries, which became wasna [pemmican] when combined with dried deer meat and fat. I learned to use purple coneflower for a wasp sting or toothache. My father bartered for fall wild rice with the game he trapped. Each winter, after the leaves had dropped, we gathered čhaŋšáša, red willow, to make the traditional tobacco that he used in his cigarettes. He was strict, in his way, teaching me from the time I was little how to ask each plant for permission to gather it. (24)

As a single father who has isolated himself and his daughter from much of the outside world, Ray relies on traditional Dakhóta provisioning methods to sustain his small family. Through a

combination of traditional cultivation practices and bartering, Ray manages to largely avoid participating in the Wiindigo economy to feed himself and his daughter. They manage to cultivate a wider range of fruits, vegetables, herbs, and protein sources than otherwise available for purchase at the local grocery store. To reap their diverse bounty, Ray teaches Rosalie to follow the seasons, to respect and thank each plant or animal who gives up their life, and to never take more than she needs. Rosalie also learns to recognize the agency of all other living beings. Rosalie remembers, “Back then plants stood tall when I approached, spreading their leaves and displaying their gifts. I talked with them and knew that they liked the sound of my voice, that the attention made them happy. They were even happier when I sang, imitating my father’s songs or making up new ones” (32). Within Dakhóta tradition, singing is a way to show respect to non-human relatives. Rosalie’s songs make the plants happy and in return they offer her their gifts. Her reciprocal relationships with the plants and animals in the woods demonstrate how all members in the web of relations move beyond survival and can thrive when obligations to non-human kin are met by showing respect, asking permission, and devoting (kinetic) energy to their cultivation.

Visting the forest for the first time in almost thirty years, Rosalie is painfully reminded about what happens when these responsibilities to the land are not met. Her beloved maple trees that gifted her their delicious sap have been chopped down and turned into valuable lumber, taking with them the birds and other creatures who called the trees home. This realization moves Rosalie to tears. Recognizing yet another harm wrought on her non-human relatives by settlers, Rosalie seeks to protect her plant and animal kin beyond what she could do in her garden on the farm. By regenerating the food cultivation practices she learned from her father and by growing her ancestors’ wamnáheza corn, she takes important steps towards reaffirming her relationship with her homeland. At the same time, by stewarding healthy ecosystems through traditional Dakhóta food practices, Rosalie promotes biodiversity and helps prevent further ecological destruction of her ancestral territory.

Regenerating culturally and ecologically specific food practices helps individual characters strengthen ties to their ancestors and communities and supports those communities’ attempts to prevent further environmental degradation of their traditional territories. Oji-Cree or Dakhóta land-based foodways are rooted in a foundational understanding that “humans [hold] certain obligations to the land, animals, plants, and lakes in much the same way we hold obligations to other people. And if these obligations [are] met, then the land, animals, plants, and lakes [will] reciprocate and meet their obligations to humans, thus ensuring the survival and well-being of all over time” (Coulthard 61). Therefore, it is by engaging in place-based

food cultivation methods that characters fulfill ancient agreements with their other-than-human kin, who then help humans flourish.

5.3 Serving Bodily Autonomy

By engaging in land-based foodways, Indigenous characters nourish their physical and spiritual bodies. Nurturing what Audra Simpson calls the “fleshy body” (7) is an essential component of Indigenous resurgence, especially when the individuals inhabiting those bodies identify as women, Two-Spirit and/or queer. Because U.S. and Canadian settler regimes are entwined not only with extractive capitalism, but also with white supremacy and heteropatriarchy, those regimes have always had a vested interest in eradicating cultures and individuals who transgress the white heteronormative gender binary and its accompanying patriarchal gender roles (L. Simpson *As We* 126). This of course includes First Nations cultural practices in which women and Two-Spirit citizens hold political, social, and economic power within their communities. Despite centuries spent attempting to enforce compulsory Christianity through missionaries, residential schools, and other violent policies, gender expressions and sexualities which do not align with the Western gender/sex binary remain particularly threatening to hegemonic settler-colonial society. Logically, when their bodies are nourished, Indigenous characters can practice bodily autonomy and feel empowered in physical bodies that settler-colonial society treats as deviant and deficient. In other words, Rosalie, as a Dakhóta woman, and Jonny, as a queer Two-Spirit Oji-Cree person, express resurgent Indigenous life through their “fleshy bodies” (A. Simpson 10).

Indigenous characters in both *The Seed Keeper* and *Jonny Appleseed* nurture their physical bodies when they engage in resurgent food sovereignty practices such as consuming, preparing, and provisioning food. Through the physical labor she devotes to harvesting corn Rosalie’s body becomes stronger. She recounts, “My skin, roasted to a rich brown, smelled of corn pollen; my hair was streaked by sunlight. I grew even taller, my awkward slump straightened by the act of reaching for the tassels. Corn made me strong. Every day she whispered her greetings in a flutter of green leaves” (*TSK* 92). Again, Rosalie genders and personifies the plants she tends, indicating corn is a female relative with whom she shares a mutually beneficial relationship. As Rosalie becomes taller, stronger, and more confident in her body she enacts bodily sovereignty in her relationship with John. Though it takes her a few months to feel truly safe in her new home on the farm, she eventually develops strong trust in John and initiates their physical relationship.

Through a combination of her physical labor in the fields and simply having regular access to nutritious foods, Rosalie grows stronger and healthier, preparing her body for

motherhood. While her pregnancy comes as a surprise, Rosalie understands the importance of carrying on her family line as a Dakhóta woman. Rosalie recounts her early vow to “[...] keep this baby safe. This child would be born into a hostile world, instantly marked as a threat. With the first stirrings of life, I finally understood what it meant to be afraid for the future” (143). Rosalie recognizes the hostility that will be directed at both her pregnant body for its ability to reproduce Indigenous life and at her child himself for simply “being brown in a white Christian community living on Dakhóta land” (185). Violence perpetrated by white, Christian Minnesotan society is responsible for “the generations [of Rosalie’s family] who had suffered and disappeared without a trace” (143). It is therefore imperative to Rosalie that she protect herself and her child from a similar violent removal from their homeland.

Audra Simpson addresses this disproportionate eradication of Indigenous women from their territories; “Indian women ‘disappear’ because they have been deemed killable, rapeable, expendable. Their bodies have historically been rendered less valuable because of what they are taken to represent: land, reproduction, Indigenous kinship and governance, an alternative to heteropatriarchal and Victorian rules of descent” (7). As a pregnant Dakhóta woman, Rosalie’s body explicitly embodies the double threat of Indigenous kinship and reproduction which makes her more vulnerable to disappearance. Despite her fear, she knows that keeping her child safe requires her own transformation into “a woman who [is] harder and stronger, who [is] ready to become a mother and raise a child” (*TSK* 142). To achieve this mental and physical strength Rosalie embodies resurgent reciprocal relationships with her plant and animal relatives. This includes harvesting corn, tending to her garden, foraging in the woods with her young son, and preparing meals for her family with those foods. By regenerating land-based foodways she not only nourishes her physical body, but she also nurtures her relationship with the land itself.

As a queer Two-Spirit person Jonny’s body is considered similarly deviant and therefore expendable within Euro-Canadian society. As I discussed briefly in the previous chapter, Jonny resents how the colonizer’s heteropatriarchal values have infiltrated Oji-Cree customs and traditions. Prior to European contact, most First Nations and Native American societies on Turtle Island recognized more than two genders and embraced expressions of sexuality and romantic relationships beyond heterosexual monogamy (Cox 84-87). Importantly, Jonny’s identity as a Two-Spirit person is rooted in his Oji-Cree culture. Though he experiences homophobia and discrimination from both fellow Indigenous people and settler society at large, his kokum validates his identity as part of their Oji-Cree cultural traditions. When Jonny finally gathers enough courage to come out to her, his kokum replies, “Jonny, m’boy, your kokum old but she ain’t dull. You’s napêwisk-wewishot, m’boy, Two-Spirit. You still my beautiful baby

grandkid no matter what you want to look like or who you want to like” (*JA* 48). Jonny’s fears about coming out stem in part from rejection and violence he experienced growing up on the rez because he failed to conform to heteronormative gender roles. By affirming his Two-Spirit identity first in Cree then in English, his kokum confirms subtly that prior to and outside of colonization Jonny’s queerness has precedence, has a name in their Oji-Cree lifeways. In other words, Jonny’s gender expression and sexuality exist outside of Western epistemologies. With this affirmation from his kokum and her expression of unconditional love, Jonny can move forward feeling validated in his sovereign body.

In addition to feeling supported by his kokum and mom, Jonny feels empowered to embrace his Indigiqueerness because of his plant and animal kin. By recognizing his place within the web of all creation and witnessing how his relations embrace sensuality and sexuality to obfuscate rigid settler binaries, Jonny confidently does the same. Describing a recurring dream, Jonny observes, “The buds drip a lavender dew and even the rods are golden and erect. All the land is horny as fuck. The treaty land has awakened and the berries are thick with juice that threatens to burst out of their infant seeds” (69). The plants’ (sexual) ripeness indicates their readiness for (human) animals to consume them. Indeed, the non-human animals nearby are busy nourishing their bodies: “Little squirrels gather nuts around [Jonny] and a doe walks by with her fawns, the little ones suckling on their mother’s leather nipples” (69). Nutritional sustenance is saturated with its own corporeal sensuality. The land literally provides Jonny with erotic pleasure as his dream continues and he is topped by maskwa [bear]. This encounter is not imbued with shame as it would be when viewed through a Western Christian lens wherein sex is vilified as ‘impure.’ Though this scene occurs as a dream, Jonny nevertheless engages in a real enactment of relationality or with his non-human relations. This dreamscape proves that the erotic sensations he experiences with his fleshy body are, like the buzzing of the birds and the bees, simply a normal part of a flourishing ecosystem. Contemplating the significance of Jonny’s dreams in the novel, author Joshua Whitehead writes, “I held steadfast to keeping those dream sequences. They are, in my opinion, the ‘realist’ senses of Jonny’s world as compared with the hellish ‘reality’ he inhabits as a queer-femme-Indigenous nâpew [male]” (*Making Love* 28). In his dreamed Oji-Cree reality Jonny is not marred by labels of deviance as he is in a Christian settler-colonial society, but rather his physical body, through his senses, allows him to access the land’s fecundity. By embracing his Indigiqueerness Jonny cultivates what Mark Rifkin calls a “sensuous connection to place” (35). Jonny therefore enacts radical resurgence as he finds bodily and spiritual sustenance within his ancestral territory.

For Jonny, celebrating his Indigiqueerness means embracing and nurturing his fleshy body. This includes simply consuming enough nutrients to allow his biological systems to thrive. Back at the rez, as Jonny and his mom cook together, she compliments him: “My mom put a hand on my upper arm. ‘Heck, you’re just getting buff, m’boy.’ I smiled and shadow-boxed her and she pretended to faint. ‘Looks like you’re eating well out there in the city’” (*JA* 204). Despite the food insecurity he often navigates in Winnipeg, his mom’s comments suggest that, at least from her perspective, Jonny is thriving. Indeed, having returned home to attend Roger’s funeral, Jonny exudes a confidence in himself that often evaded him during his youth there. As he and his mom get ready for the service Jonny narrates,

I admired the two of us in the mirror. “Damn, Mom, if we weren’t going to a funeral we’d have all the boys,” I joked. “We’re serving fish!” My mom had given up trying to learn the weird phrases I brought home, so she just nodded in agreement and continued applying her lipstick. We may have been the saddest duo in the world right then and there, but we were radiant in our own ways. I decided that if I was going to feel anything, I’d experience both the pain and the joy—I’d be sullen and sexy, I’d walk into St. Peter’s and own those wooden floorboards, I’d show the kids how it’s done with a strut as mean as Naomi’s and a face as fierce as Ashley Callinbull’s. Serving fish? Hell, I was serving pickerel on a platter. (201)

The phrase “serving fish” stems from drag and queer culture more broadly. According to journalist Ashley Clarke, “Serving fish is—to quote the reputable source *Urban Dictionary*—a term ‘used in drag culture to refer to a queen that has a very feminine appearance.’ I would add that, from my personal experience, the term is also typically used as a compliment” (Clarke). Contextually, Jonny uses the phrase to praise both his and his mom’s appearances which shows he now feels confident enough to conspicuously embrace his femininity on the rez, a place where he has faced violent homophobia. His readiness to “show the kids how it’s done” demonstrates his willingness to act as a model for other queer children in the community and defy those who bullied him in the past. Furthermore, his unapologetic celebration of his Two-Spirit identity in a Catholic church is itself an act of radical Indigenous resurgence. By strutting through St. Peter’s, Jonny defies centuries of forced assimilation and clerical abuse inflicted against his people *and* the church’s long history of excluding and persecuting queer people. His fierce presence as he channels Black supermodel Naomi Campbell and Cree model Ashley Callinbull is both a refusal to disappear and an embodiment of bodily sovereignty. Intensifying the phrase “serving fish” to “serving pickerel on a platter,” as Jonny does at the end of the passage, indicates a corresponding intensification of his self-confidence. Pickerel, a commonly consumed fish native to Treaty One territory, is a culturally appropriate food to the region’s First Nations. Thus, Jonny frames the confidence he feels in his fleshy body in the language of traditional foods.

If, as Leanne Betasamosake Simpson observes, “every body is a political order and every body houses individual self-determination” (*As We* 112), then Jonny as an Oji-Cree “Two-Spirit femmeboy” (*JA* 45) and Rosalie as a Dakhóta woman both present threats to the heteropatriarchal settler-colonial state. As they nourish their fleshy bodies with nutritious foods, they likewise nurture Oji-Cree and Dakhóta resurgence. By exerting their individual bodily sovereignty, they “reclaim [their] bodies as part of the land to which [they] belong and are responsible” (Cox 92). Regenerating individual bodily autonomy is an essential condition in collective struggles towards Indigenous food sovereignty.

5.4 Sowing New Seeds

Resurgence, through (re)generating specific place-based ways of being, is also about breaking cycles of poverty, abuse, and victimhood to foster vibrant Indigenous presence and futures. According to Kahnawà:ke Mohawk scholar Taiaiake Alfred, Indigenous resurgence involves “a living commitment to meaningful change in our lives and to transforming society by recreating our existences, regenerating our cultures, and surging against the forces that keep us bound to our colonial past” (*Wasáse* 19). Alfred specifies that for Indigenous people, this terrain of struggle has already been traversed by ancestors who fought to survive. It is therefore the current generation’s responsibility to carry on this resurgent fight to forge a better future. As Indigenous characters renegotiate their culture’s traditional foodways to meet their contemporary needs they contribute to Oji-Cree or Dakhóta futurities.

Characters in both *Jonny Appleseed* and *The Seed Keeper* demonstrate healthy interpersonal reciprocal relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people as they live and work together on Turtle Island. When a grief-stricken Rosalie first returns to her family’s cabin in the woods after twenty-eight years, she feels lost. During her first walk through the forest, she runs into Ida Johanson, a settler woman about her own age who lives alone on the bordering property. From the very first moments of their encounter, Ida perceives Rosalie’s fragile state. Rosalie narrates, “this stranger asked, in a voice so gentle that I nearly broke apart, ‘I don’t mean to be nosy, but when did you last eat?’ I couldn’t remember” (*TSK* 35). Ida quickly builds an impromptu fire and gives Rosalie the “bread and venison sausage” (36) she has with her. Rosalie reciprocates by sharing her thermos of coffee. Thus, through this simple yet kind exchange between strangers, the pair begin their neighborly relationship. Upon parting ways, Ida promises to drop off venison at Rosalie’s cabin later. She quickly fulfills that promise when she delivers “dried berries, cedar for tea, and a container of soup, as well as packages of venison steaks, sausage, chops. Enough meat to keep [Rosalie] through the winter” (40). As the snow starts to melt, Rosalie finally feels well enough for social interaction. She

hosts Ida in her cabin and presents her with one of her father's books as a meaningful gesture of thanks for her shared provisions. Their blossoming friendship is itself framed in the language of food. Rosalie recounts, "For the rest of that afternoon, we talked like two people who have been *starved* for the *taste* of words" (291; emphasis added). They further cultivate their friendship in the spring as Ida helps Rosalie with her garden and they forage for wild plants together in the woods. Though she is a settler, Ida practices place-based food provisioning methods and actively engages in relationships with the local Dakhóta community. In many ways Ida follows the examples her Dakhóta friends set for non-exploitative ways of living on their ancestral territory. As they mutually care for their shared land, Rosalie and Ida provide each other with physical and spiritual sustenance.

Jonny's grandparents also fostered reciprocal relations with some of their settler neighbors through a similar mutual engagement in land-based foodways. Jonny explains, "My grandpa and kokum became well known for their pelts and dried meats and were popular with the Ukrainian colony that was situated next to the rez; my grandpa would trade them for their chicken eggs and potpies. My grandparents became good friends with the Ukrainians that way" (JA 165). Jonny's grandparents' relationship with their settler neighbors shows that trading food and other supplies at an individual level facilitates healthy interpersonal Indigenous-settler relationships while encouraging non-exploitative land-use practices to maintain the availability of the resources being traded. Resurgent embodiments of Indigenous food sovereignty therefore model ways for *everyone* to interact responsibly with one another in a shared ecosystem. As Secwépemc food activist Dawn Morrison observes, "Indigenous food sovereignty provides a restorative framework for health and community development and appreciates the ways in which we can work together cross-culturally to heal our relationships with one another and the land, plants and animals that provide us with our food" (100).

Nevertheless, it is important to stress that these friendships serve as examples of positive Indigenous-settler relations at an *individual* level. Though healthy relationships like this are possible on interpersonal and perhaps even local scales, achieving peaceful and just relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations requires radical systemic change—decolonization—across Turtle Island. In their article "Decolonization is not a metaphor," Eve Tuck (Unangax̂) and K. Wayne Yang emphasize that "decolonization in the settler colonial context must involve the repatriation of land simultaneous to the recognition of how land and relations to land have always already been differently understood and enacted" (7). Moving beyond rhetoric and dismantling the settler-colonial property regime is therefore a prerequisite for lasting justice. Yet, North America's capitalist and settler-colonial structures are so

entrenched that repatriation seems like an impossibility. While recognizing the need for radical systemic change, I argue that the above-mentioned Indigenous-settler relationships, though ‘only’ singular examples, nevertheless model restorative ways of living as neighbors on shared land which, when spread and normalized over time, would make repatriation more feasible. It is also essential to highlight that these friendships, in particular Ida and Rosalie’s, exemplify healthy Indigenous-settler land use practices because Ida, as a settler, follows Rosalie’s lead. While Indigenous food sovereignty is, according to Morrison, “an approach that people of all cultures can relate to” (100), settler proponents must step back and follow Indigenous leadership if they hope to contribute towards positive social and ecological change on Turtle Island.

Beyond repairing relationships with settlers, reclaiming ancestral relationships as they regenerate traditional foodways is a far more significant part of food sovereignty for the Indigenous characters. In *The Seed Keeper*, when Rosalie receives the willow basket containing the wamnáheza seeds that were saved and protected by at least four generations of her grandmothers and aunties, she becomes the next seed keeper in her family line. While this role facilitates connection to her maternal ancestors, it also comes with an enormous responsibility to her family, her people, their land, and the seeds themselves. During the 1862 US-Dakhóta War, as she fled the fighting with her two children, Marie’s mother still managed to protect her people’s sacred seeds. She and Marie sewed them into their skirts to keep the seeds hidden and protected. Years later, in her own garden on the Santee Reservation in Nebraska, Marie reflects, “Every day I offered a prayer of gratitude for my mother’s quick thinking, for the corn that had helped feed us through the winter” (*TSK* 201). After moving back to Mní Sota, Marie’s daughter Susanne eventually takes on this essential job of growing, saving, and protecting their seeds. In 2002, after losing her first two attempts at planting wamnáheza, Rosalie is distraught. Eventually the Dakhóta Elder Wilma Many Horses comforts Rosalie by reminding her,

You know that your great-grandmother Susanne was a gardener. [...] Susanne was a seed keeper, and not only her family, but our tribe, relied on women like her. They were the ones who took care of Corn’s gift. After moving back here, she spent every morning in her garden hoeing, planting her precious seeds, weeding. Feeding her family was hard work. [...] She was a warrior, that one. Every year, by summer’s end, she had enough food to feed her family for the winter. [...] You know what the grandmothers went through to save the seeds. That’s how tough you have to be as an Indian woman. And as a seed keeper. (351-352)

Wilma recounts Susanne’s struggles to highlight how Dakhóta women underpin the tribe’s existence and to encourage Rosalie to carry on for the sake of her people’s future. Indeed, the women in Rosalie’s family demonstrated tremendous strength and resilience as they kept their seeds safe throughout war, exile, draughts, flooding, and much more. As she perseveres in growing the wamnáheza on her family’s land for the first time since Susanne’s children were

taken away in 1920, Rosalie regenerates traditional Dakhóta foodways and contributes to vital healing for herself and her community. She not only regenerates the literal seeds, but she also revitalizes her Dakhóta culture and land. As she tends to the wamnáheza seedlings she observes, “History might have cost me my family and my language, but I was *reclaiming* a relationship with the earth, water, stars, and seeds that was thousands of years old” (343; emphasis added). As she devotes her songs, sweat, and tears to nurture the wamnáheza, Rosalie resurges her ancestral Dakhóta lifeways into the twenty-first century.

Like Rosalie and her Dakhóta community, Indigenous characters in *Jonny Appleseed* also reclaim their cultures’ traditions to fit their contemporary lives. As a child Jonny is afraid of the spirits or “little people” who visit him at home. Rather than dismiss Jonny’s concerns as childish, his stepfather figure Roger helps Jonny face his fears by passing down knowledge he learned from his own grandmother. He tells Jonny, “I used to see little people too. [...] But my gran told me that it was a blessing to see the mannegishi. They say that only children and medicine people can see them. And if you treat them right and offer them tobacco, they’re supposed to help you” (JA 166). Roger eases Jonny’s anxiety by admitting he experienced something similar as a child and by contextualizing their shared experience within an even broader cultural history. Roger then helps Jonny leave offerings for the mannegishi, but instead of offering traditional foods, they use the materials most readily available to them in the late twentieth century. He instructs Jonny: “This here tinfoil will attract them. They’ll take the jelly beans as an offering. To them, in the spirit world, a jelly bean is like the equivalent of receiving an entire elk—a little goes a long way. They’ll be full and sugar high for a while yet. Give them more in a few months and you’ll be okay, Jonny” (167). Young Jonny is astonished when he wakes up the next morning and finds the jellybeans gone. This adapted ceremony quells his anxieties while strengthening his relationship with Roger. By recreating a traditional offering with contemporary foods, Roger and young Jonny creatively renegotiate food sovereignty together.

Later as a young adult, Jonny’s Indigiqueerness gives him a particularly important perspective from which he reclaims and regenerates Oji-Cree lifeways in the twenty-first century. Again, dreams play an important role in informing his reality. This time it is his mother’s dream which reveals ancestral knowledge that helps him, and his community, move towards a decolonized future. After Roger’s funeral, Karen recounts a dream she had in which Jonny defies settler-imposed heteropatriarchal gender roles and uses the knowledge uniquely accessible to him as a Two-Spirit person to feed their hungry tribe. Karen prefaces her dream retelling by attributing its origin to her mom, Jonny’s kokum. Before Frances passed away, she

predicted Karen would have an important dream about Jonny one day and made her promise to tell him when she did. By invoking Jonny's kokum in her introduction, Karen situates her resurgent vision across three generations. Her dream braids together the past, present, and future.

In Karen's dreamscape she and Jonny witness "big-ass Native men in regalia" (205) attempting but failing miserably at spearfishing. When Jonny moves closer to offer help, the men prevent him, repeatedly insisting that this job is "only for *men*" (205-206; emphasis original). But when Jonny and Karen laugh at their continued failure, one of the men in "heavy way paint" frustratedly thrusts out a "dinky little spear" (206), challenging Jonny to give it a try. Karen continues,

They all laughing at you, call you girlboy. And I'm telling you to just let it go, that you ain't gotta prove nothing to no one. But you shake your head and walk deeper into the water and I can see those fish slapping you with their gills and tails. And then you ready your spear like you been doing this a hundred years and jab it into the water; when you pull it up, this big-ass fish is stuck to it. And all those men gasp and the women cheer because they hungry as all hell. (206)

Before Jonny arrives, the community is strictly divided by gender. The men outwardly embody heteropatriarchal masculine ideals of physical strength and violence in their war paint and regalia. Yet, as hunters they utterly fail to provide for their families whose "bellies [are] rumbling like thunder" (206-207). The men dismiss Jonny, calling him "girlboy," assuming he will fail at spearfishing because he refuses to conform to their masculine ideals. Despite their doubts, Jonny confidently wades into the water and spears a fish "like [he has] been doing [it] a hundred years" (206). With this comparison Karen frames her son's provisioning skills as century-old generational knowledge. After his catch, Jonny confidently announces to the men and women gathered around him, "See, I ain't only a gatherer, I'm a hunter too!" (206), emphasizing the fluidity of his Two-Spiritedness and flouting the colonial gender binary that relegates men and women to separate spheres of food-related labor. Leanne Betasamosake Simpson argues persuasively that this dichotomous labor division is a colonial implantation because it hinders chances of survival in the wilderness. She writes that "from within the reality of so-called hunting and gathering societies, [the gender binary] makes no sense in terms of the ethical systems grounded normativity sets up. Further, it is at odds with the practicality of life in the bush because it restricts and prevents relationships, productivity, and, in many aspects, actual survival" (L. Simpson *As We* 128). The dreamscape community's precarious state before Jonny's arrival serves as a prime example of this. Because they adhered strictly to a division of labor wherein men hunted exclusively and women gathered exclusively, they impeded their own capacity to sustain themselves as a collective. Jonny's Indigiqueerness, however, equips him with knowledge to break through this artificial divide and help nourish his community.

In Karen's dream, Jonny does not just catch a single fish for the hungry men and women, but he teaches his community how to sustain themselves long-term. Abandoning their exclusionary heteropatriarchal attitudes, the men now eagerly follow Jonny's leadership as they go back into the water and listen to Jonny's instructions until finally "they've all caught a fish themselves. And everybody cheers" (JA 06). Following his teachings, Jonny's community also begins regenerating a key relationship with their non-human kin—the fish. The men's inability to "catch a single damn fish" (206) despite their high density throughout the water signals a fundamental problem with their provisioning strategies. The community's widespread hunger serves as an example of what happens when reciprocal obligations to plant and animal relations are not upheld. Jonny's intervention succeeds at filling the men and women's hungry bellies because his queerness gives him access to knowledge from which the others, through their colonially imposed homophobia, heterosexism, and heteronormativity, have been cut off. The very thing that originally marked his deviance in their eyes, his self-identification as an "NDN glitter princess" (64), associates Jonny more closely with the "fish glittering like comets in the water" (206). As in his own dream sequence, Jonny "learn[s] both *from* and *with* the land" (L. Simpson "Land as Pedagogy" 7; emphasis original). Not just surviving but thriving within an ecosystem involves continual reciprocal interactions with all relations. In other words, Jonny does not just passively receive knowledge as uploaded information, but rather he generates Oji-Cree knowledge collaboratively with his plant and animal kin as he devotes time and kinetic energy to their relationships. The dreamscapes in *Jonny Appleseed* serve as important narrative spaces for Oji-Cree characters to embody radical resurgence with all their relations.

In both dreamed and non-dreamed realities, Jonny's actions foster an environment of joy throughout his community and facilitate emotional healing within his immediate family. At the end of Karen's dream sequence Jonny's kokum emerges out of the celebrating crowd smiling proudly at her grandson. Karen recounts, "She walks up to me and says, 'That boy of yours, Karen, he is his own best thing.' And I'm crying and saying, 'Momma, I'm so sorry,' and she says to me, she says, 'Me too baby, me too, but you're here, Karen, you're finally here'" (JA 207). Through this emotional exchange, their mutual love and pride for Jonny's joyful, Two-Spirited presence helps Karen and Frances reconcile their previously strained relationship, something they were unable to do before Frances passed away. In this resurgent dreamscape three generations come together to heal. Frances's phrase describing Jonny as "his own best thing," echoes other moments outside of the dream when Jonny declares, "I am my own best medicine" (80). Indeed, as an integral member of his family and tribe, Jonny embodies ancestral

knowledge by leading the way toward intergenerational healing in the present and into the future.

In *Jonny Appleseed* and *The Seed Keeper* protagonists Jonny and Rosalie connect to a sense of home as they embody reciprocal land-based foodways on their ancestral territories. By fulfilling their obligations to their other-than-human kin they likewise strengthen their connections to the Indigenous and non-Indigenous humans with whom they share their lands. Jonny and Rosalie honor their ancestors by nourishing their physical bodies so they can more effectively engage in the essential work of confronting settler colonialism and regenerating their Oji-Cree and Dakhóta lifeways. Through resurgent acts of food sovereignty, characters thrive in the present while fighting, as future ancestors, for their descendants' chance to flourish in the generations to come.

6. Conclusion

The Indian civilizations crumbled in the face of the Old World not because of any intellectual or cultural inferiority. They simply succumbed in the face of disease and brute strength. While the American Indians had spent millennia becoming the world's greatest farmers and pharmacists, the people of the Old World had spent a similar period amassing the world's greatest arsenal of weapons. The strongest, but not necessarily the most creative or the most intelligent, won the day. (Weatherford 215)

As humanity stares down the barrel of a worsening global climate crisis, soaring wealth inequality, and escalating military hostilities, taking seriously Indigenous peoples and their knowledges is more important now than ever. Contemporary Indigenous literatures not only play a vital role in transmitting Indigenous stories to a wider audience, but, as a medium, written texts enable Indigenous people to push back across time and space against settler-colonially imposed narratives about their peoples' deficiency and deterioration. Fictional texts like *Jonny Appleseed* and *The Seed Keeper*, though not 'real,' nevertheless provide essential insight into the lived experiences of Indigenous people fighting to survive in a hostile settler-colonial, capitalist, white supremacist, heteropatriarchal North American society. As textual bodies, the novels unapologetically assert and affirm Oji-Cree and Dakhóta presence, not only in Canada and the U.S., but around the world.

Food—nutrients derived from plant and animal matter—is not just essential to human life on a biological level, but food is also inextricably interwoven into culture. In North America, in addition to violently removing Indigenous peoples from their homelands, settler-colonizers often destroyed the ecosystems in which Indigenous foodways, and therefore cultures, languages, and spiritualities, were rooted. For Turtle Island's Plains and Prairies peoples, this manifested as an "orgy of ecocide," to use Anthony J. Hall's colorful language,

the “mass slaughter [of the bison herds] stands as the pre-eminent symbol of the genocidal assault on Indigenous people through the elimination of the ecological basis of their political economy” (218). This elimination continued, however, with the homesteader’s plow. U.S. and Canadian regimes carved up dispossessed Indigenous territories into individual (Euro-American) family farms, which conveniently fed their growing nation-states and circumvented any serious threats of land repatriation because settlers so drastically transformed the ecological conditions necessary for community-sustaining Indigenous foodways. Predicated on the logic of infinite growth, the agricultural infrastructure designed around individual family farm units has since metastasized into today’s industrial agribusiness complex, a key player in the neo-liberal food regime. This corporate food system not only perpetuates settler-colonial land occupation, but also alienates *all* people, Indigenous or not, from the plants and animals that make up our food. As author Diane Wilson points out, “most of us take for granted that our food needs will be met; seldom do we wonder how and at what cost to the earth and ultimately to our own well-being” (*Beloved Child* 20).

In the late twentieth century, alarmed at the increasingly negative environmental and social impacts of the privatized and industrialized global food chain, a diverse coalition of Indigenous peoples, peasant organizations, migrant workers, climate activists, and many other aligned groups, mobilized around making localized, ecologically sustainable, and culturally appropriate food production systems—food sovereignty—a reality for all. Since then, various Indigenous communities across Turtle Island have helped shape the global movement’s language, philosophy, and objectives, while at the same time adapting its discourse to complement their own specific centuries-long struggles to reclaim their traditional lands and lifeways. Underway throughout the U.S. and Canada are numerous Indigenous-led food sovereignty programs aimed at revitalizing traditional harvesting methods and providing community members with affordable nutritious foods. These initiatives do important work to help individual participants foster an embodied decolonial praxis as they engage in physical acts like seeding, planting, trapping, cooking, and eating. For scholars interested in food sovereignty’s role in Indigenous resistance and resurgence, organized programs like these lend themselves nicely to academic research. However, even when researchers share participant interviews, as Michelle Daigle (2019) does, for example, so many intricate details about a person’s lived experience are obscured by time and space. Paradoxically then, by narrating the thoughts, emotions, and physical sensations of fictional characters, Indigenous literatures provide another analytical plane on which to engage critically with food sovereignty’s role in

repatriating land, restoring ecosystems, promoting equality, and achieving political self-determination throughout Turtle Island.

With this thesis I have demonstrated how Oji-Cree and Dakhóta characters in *Jonny Appleseed* and *The Seed Keeper* creatively negotiate food sovereignty to navigate, survive, and thrive within the greedy, cannibalistic—Wiindigo—structures propping up U.S. and Canadian settler-colonial regimes. Though acts like cultivating and consuming food seem small and irrelevant to broader geopolitical discourses, when characters nourish their bodies and feed their families, they undermine colonial-capitalist hegemony and regenerate their Oji-Cree or Dakhóta knowledges into the future. While rooting in resistance signals a productive refusal of colonial domination, capitalist exploitation, heteropatriarchy, and white supremacy, flourishing through resurgence implicitly rejects these matrices of violence and emphasizes (re)generating self-affirmative Indigenous lifeways. As a framework for literary analysis, this conception of Indigenous food sovereignty holds tremendous potential because it evaluates dynamically negotiated processes embodied within specific cultural and ecological contexts. I am therefore optimistic that food sovereignty analysis will soon engage with a much wider variety of literatures from First Nations, Métis, Inuit, Native American, Native Hawaiian, Native Alaskan, Aboriginal, and Māori communities (among many others).

Those of us privileged enough to spend our time learning, reading, and writing about decolonization also have a responsibility to live the theory we write about. Or, as Leanne Betasamosake Simpson puts more eloquently, “We cannot just think, write or imagine our way to a decolonized future. Answers on how to re-build and how to resurge are therefore derived from a web of consensual relationships that is infused with movement (kinetic) through lived experience and embodiment” (“Land as Pedagogy” 16).²² At the time of this writing, across the United States and Canada, droves of college students are bravely embodying the decolonial theories they learned about in lecture halls as they call for their universities to divest from Israel’s genocidal apartheid regime (Kestler-D’Amours). Yet, unsurprisingly, these peaceful protesters have been met with vilification and police brutality (Bedi et al.). As the death toll in Gaza approaches 40,000 and the U.S. approves another billion-dollar aid package to further arm its settler-colonial ally Israel, it is clear now more than ever that there is an urgent need to build

²² As one final note, when thinking about extrapolating this analytical distinction between resistance and resurgence for current on-the-ground struggles, I want to be clear that resurgence must be initiated by Indigenous people(s) because it is rooted in specific Indigenous cultures, traditions, knowledges, and ecologies. Meaning as settlers we cannot necessarily embody resurgence. *However*, settlers can and indeed have a responsibility to leverage our racial and economic privileges to engage in resistance against settler-colonial forces and institutions. This is essential work to relieve Indigenous peoples and other BIPOC communities of some of the intense physical and emotional labor demanded by survival and resistance.

solidarities across disparate groups to fight back against increasingly fascist regimes in North America and around the globe (AJLabs; Lopez). If we (humanity) are serious about creating a more just, peaceful world for all, then we cannot forget, in Joshua Whitehead's words, that "[t]he belly is a world-maker" (*Making Love* 15). Nourishing bellies and bodies, feeding communities in the face of violence, exploitation, and domination is therefore nurturing resistance.

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English Abstract

“Nurturing Resistance: Food Sovereignty in *Jonny Appleseed* and *The Seed Keeper*” investigates how Indigenous literary characters engage in subsistence practices—growing, preparing, and consuming food—as a means of resisting the resource extraction, industrial agriculture, and ecological degradation perpetrated by settler-colonial powers on traditional First Nations and Métis territories in present-day Manitoba and Minnesota. This master’s thesis reads works of fiction by authors Diane Wilson (Dakhóta) and Joshua Whitehead (Two-Spirit Oji-nêhiyaw member of Peguis First Nation) as “case studies” that contribute to a better understanding of the real-life struggles Indigenous people face to reclaim their ancestral lands and lifeways. North American settler society’s aggressive consumption of land, resources, and even Indigenous bodies looms large in both novels. In Wilson’s and Whitehead’s texts, Indigenous characters undermine these exploitative Euro-American power structures and challenge cultural hegemony by exerting bodily autonomy, nurturing familial relationships, and cultivating (traditional) foods. Multiple generations of Dakhóta women in *The Seed Keeper* (2021) struggle against the cultural and environmental destruction inflicted upon their traditional territory by Euro-American settlers. Ripped from her family by the predatory policies of the U.S. foster care system, Wilson’s protagonist Rosalie eventually finds her way back to her roots through the seeds and plants of her Dakhóta homeland. In *Jonny Appleseed* (2018) Whitehead’s protagonist similarly connects to his ancestors and sustains friendships through sharing meals. This literary analysis explores characters’ fraught relationships with highly processed foods which simultaneously bring them and their relatives closer together while also contributing to high rates of diet-related diseases within their communities. Despite the pervading food insecurity he experiences in Peguis First Nation and in Winnipeg, Jonny and his family manage to renegotiate and resurge their culture’s traditional foodways to meet their contemporary needs. In both novels the struggle for food sovereignty reaches far beyond physical survival. For Indigenous characters, cultural survival is inextricably rooted in food sovereignty.

Deutsche Zusammenfassung

„Nurturing Resistance: Food Sovereignty in Jonny Appleseed and The Seed Keeper“ untersucht, wie sich indigene literarische Charaktere mit Subsistenzpraktiken – dem Anbau, der Zubereitung und dem Verzehr von Lebensmitteln – auseinandersetzen, um sich der Ressourcengewinnung, der industriellen Landwirtschaft und der ökologischen Degradation zu widersetzen, die von Siedler-Kolonialmächten auf den traditionellen Territorien der First Nations und der Métis im heutigen Manitoba und Minnesota verursacht werden. In dieser Masterarbeit werden Werke der Autoren Diane Wilson (Dakhóta) und Joshua Whitehead (Two-Spirit Oji-nêhiyaw Mitglied von Peguis First Nation) als „Fallstudien“ gelesen, die zu einem besseren Verständnis der realen Bemühungen, die indigene Völker aufbringen, um ihre historischen Territorien und ihre traditionellen Lebensweisen zurückzufordern, beitragen. Der aggressive Verbrauch von Land, Ressourcen und sogar indigener Körper durch die nordamerikanische Siedlergesellschaft ist in beiden Romanen ein prominentes Thema. In Wilsons und Whiteheads Texten untergraben indigene Charaktere diese ausbeuterischen europäisch-amerikanischen Machtstrukturen und fordern kulturelle Hegemonie heraus, indem sie körperliche Autonomie ausüben, familiäre Beziehungen pflegen und (traditionelle) Nahrungsmittel anbauen. Mehrere Generationen von Dakhóta Frauen kämpfen in *The Seed Keeper* (2021) gegen die kulturelle und ökologische Zerstörung, die von euroamerikanischen Siedlern auf ihrem traditionellen Territorium verursacht wird. Wilsons Protagonistin Rosalie, die von der räuberischen Politik des amerikanischen Pflegesystems aus ihrer Familie gerissen wurde, findet ihren Weg zurück zu ihren Wurzeln durch die Samen und Pflanzen der Heimat ihres Dakhóta Stammes. In *Jonny Appleseed* (2018) verbindet sich Whiteheads Protagonist ebenso mit seinen Vorfahren und pflegt Freundschaften durch gemeinsame Mahlzeiten. Diese Literaturanalyse untersucht die komplexen Beziehungen der Charaktere zu industriell verarbeiteten Lebensmitteln, die zum einen sie und ihre Angehörigen einander näherbringen, zum anderen aber gleichzeitig zu einer hohen ernährungsbedingten Erkrankungsrate in ihren Gemeinschaften beitragen. Trotz der ständigen Ernährungsunsicherheit in Peguis First Nation und in Winnipeg gelingt es Jonny und seiner Familie, die traditionellen Ernährungsweisen ihrer Kultur zu adaptieren und neu zu beleben, um den heutigen Bedürfnissen gerecht zu werden. In beiden Romanen geht der Kampf um die Ernährungssouveränität weit über das physische Überleben hinaus. Für diese indigenen Charaktere ist das kulturelle Überleben untrennbar in der Ernährungssouveränität verwurzelt.