The Myth of the Homesteader:
Challenging Saskatchewan Settler Narratives, 1880-1910

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By

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Abstract

At the beginning of Saskatchewan's homesteading period, from 1880 to 1910, the Homesteading Hero Myth – a narrative that celebrates the courageous white farmer who entered an unknown landscape and faced numerous hardships, only to succeed in breaking the land and creating home – took shape. The Homesteading Hero Myth presents agricultural development of Saskatchewan land as an epic quest and casts settlers as the winsome protagonists who prevail despite the challenges they face. This same Myth downplays or ignores the roles of Indigenous peoples who are represented neither as main nor as supporting characters: when they are given a role to play at all, it is minor, on the sidelines, typecast, or silent. Yet, despite the Homesteading Hero Myth relying on the idea of the Canadian prairies being an "open" landscape ripe for the settlers' taking, the settlers who came did not actually see the land as empty. Settlers recognized evidence that Indigenous peoples had recently occupied the territory they now claimed, and in many cases recognized Indigenous peoples as neighbours. Settler family narratives about the homesteading period provide an alternate account in which incoming settlers recognized and understood that they were arriving on Indigenous lands. Ultimately, this thesis argues that homesteader hero narratives need to be "unsettled" and reframed into the uncomfortable reality that they are really stories about imperial dispossession, suppression, and oppression of Indigenous peoples.

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To my grandparents, Lynne and Albert Saas, who first introduced me to the power of a good story – thank you. Thank you for sharing your time and stories, both formally over a recorded interview last summer and informally around campfires and dinner tables.

To my parents, Cori Saas and Alan Levine, for the ongoing and unfailing support – thank you. From an unexpected move home in March 2020 to the day of the defence, you both have been there for me at every turn. I am who I am today because of you. Thank you for always giving me a space where I can rest, panic about chapter structure, and stress-bake cakes.

Dedication

for the storytellers: my grandparents
and especially for my story keeper: my mom

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Introduction

When I arrived at All Saints Church in Seagrave, I was greeted by an elderly couple. They were surprised to see a rain-soaked undergraduate student from Saskatchewan on the stoop of their small parish. I explained that I was in London, England, with my Indigenous Studies class. Under the guidance of our professor, Dr. Coll Thrush, we were tracing the stories of various Indigenous peoples who had traveled to London from what is currently understood as Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the United States. We were looking at the ways in which Indigenous individuals and nations left their mark on the heart of the British Empire. The couple before me, perhaps in confusion or discomfort, merely smiled politely and said nothing in response. They brightened considerably when I shared my reason for visiting Seagrave: I was looking for the grave of my fifth-great-grandfather, Richard Sharp. Richard Sharp's great-grandson had left his family home in Seagrave, arriving in Canada in 1883 and ultimately settling in Saskatchewan along with his wife and their ten children. With great excitement, the couple began to usher me about. "We have Sharps here!" the man exclaimed. I was handed an umbrella and led to the cemetery. An hour later, I had located thirteen Sharp relatives extending from 1724 to the early 1880s.

The couple returned to the church while I remained alone, pausing to reflect and to remember. I stood for a long time looking through the clearing in the cemetery trees, searching the English countryside for resemblances to the Canadian prairies. I wondered if as a boy my great-great-grandfather had ever stood in this exact spot. How different was the view now?

Three days before I traveled to Seagrave, my classmates and I had been welcomed to the New Zealand House and invited to a Pōwhiri[1] by the Māori community in London. We began

[1] A Pōwhiri is a traditional Māori welcome ceremony.

with personal introductions that acknowledged our families' roots. *I am a settler on Treaty 4 land in Saskatchewan, Canada; my grandfather's family is Ukrainian, and my grandmother's family is British.* Our Māori hosts taught us the words and the dance for the Hāpaitia.[2] That night I fell asleep with the sounds of our voices singing, ringing in my ears. I was grateful for the Māori community's welcome, inspired by our conversations, and, most of all, hopeful for the future of reconciliation on a global scale. The next morning, however, we visited the British Museum. At a meeting with one of the curators, a fellow student asked about how the British Museum was tackling decolonization. The curator looked uneasy and replied: "I don't know what that means."

I had expected to think of my grandparents' stories while in Seagrave. Instead, all I could hear was the curator's voice fumbling over the meaning of decolonization. I had foolishly expected to find familiarity in the English Countryside: my ancestors' home. But why would I? My home – a home I claimed because of my ancestors' participation in a process we now identify as settler colonialism – was at least six thousand kilometres away. I was searching for signs of a landscape I would recognize – one akin to the promotional posters of golden wheatfields and endless blue skies used to sell prairie land to prospective homesteaders. A land that looks the way it does because homesteaders like my great-great-grandfather Thomas Sharp(e) broke it.

Figure 1: View from the train to Loughborough, just northwest of Seagrave. 2019. Personal Collection.

[2] The Hāpaitia is a small section of a longer song and dance. The lyrics to the song we were taught go like this: Hāpaitia Hāpaitia / ngā mahi o te iwie / Kia Kaha rā / Kia toa rā / Kei mate Koe te whakamā. For a translation of the lyrics and an audio recording please visit the Te Rarawa's website, https://www.terarawa.iwi.nz/pou/cultural/nga-waiata-o-te-rarawa/hapaitia

I had been raised on my family's stories and records which document our ancestors' settlement on the Canadian prairie. These accounts seemed simple enough. They go something like this: English-speaking white people entered an epic frontier that presented challenges – illness, poor weather, and the relentless battle against the land – that transformed them into heroes. After the experiences the days before at the New Zealand House and the British Museum, my pilgrimage to my forebears' gravesites in Seagrave became unsettling. I was in London with a class committed to tracing Indigenous stories and yet on my day off I had decided to trace settler stories. As I stood in the cemetery, I realized that the responsibility to critique colonization did not fall to public institutions alone; I too had to question the stories I had grown up with and continued to tell myself about my own family's heroic legacy as settlers in Saskatchewan. What I was told around campfires and at dinner tables about homesteading in the olden days was at least incomplete, if not altogether inaccurate, because it failed to acknowledge the role our family played in settler colonization, and ignored evidence of Indigenous claims to this territory, past, present, and future.

The purpose of my thesis is to "unsettle" the legacy of homesteader heroism in settler family narratives by recognizing them for what they are: stories about acts of imperial dispossession, suppression, and the oppression of Indigenous peoples as part of a process we now call settler colonialism. I examine the ways in which a culture of settler heroism emerged from the stories of homesteading families who immigrated to Indigenous homelands in Treaty 4 and Treaty 6 Territory (southern Saskatchewan) between the 1880s and the 1910s. To do so, I consider how "preferred" immigrants (British settlers), "less desirable" immigrants (Ukrainian settlers), and Indigenous nations (*nêhiyawak* [Plains Cree], Lakota, Nakota, Dakota, *nahkawininiwak* [Saulteaux], and Métis/Michif) who saw this region as home experienced settler

colonialism at the turn of the century.[3] Saskatchewan's pioneer frontier mythology minimizes any role played by Indigenous peoples to bolster settlers' claim to the land and their right to call it home. When mentioned at all, it is in passing: Indigenous peoples appear in homesteading hero myths as part of the region's flora and fauna (scenery), as a threat that colonizers neutralized (antagonist), as helpmates (supporting role), or as a relic of a bygone era (the "disappearing Indian").[4] This mythology has made it easier for homesteaders and their descendants to deny that they participated in or are responsible for the harm Indigenous peoples experienced as a direct result of settler colonization. My thesis demonstrates that Indigenous peoples and the day-to-day experiences of Indigenous peoples during the homesteading period were in fact far more visible to settlers than this mythology allows.

Settler colonialism strives to permanently remove Indigenous peoples from their land, erasing their claims and eliminating their cultures through displacement, assimilation, or genocide, in order to make room for new owners who will lay exclusive claim to the land and inscribe their own cultural beliefs and practices onto it.[5] Individual farmers may not have created

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[3] While settlers from diverse ethnic backgrounds do have distinctive prairie "origin" stories and experiences following their immigration, it is worth noting that both British and Ukrainian settler family narratives are heavily influenced by the idea of a heroic homesteader. The main difference in these narratives is that British settlers tend to adopt an inherited right to their role in the settlement of prairie Canada, whereas Ukrainian settlers tend to try and justify their place alongside British (and French) settlers as "founding fathers." For more see, Lindy Ledohowski, "'White Settler Guilt': Contemporary Ukrainian Canadian Prairie Literature," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 47, no. 4–5 (2015): 68.

[4] For more on the "disappearing Indian" discourse, see: Sarah Carter, *Lost Harvests: Prairie Indian Reserve Farmers and Government Policy*, McGill-Queen's Series in Native and Northern Studies 3 (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990), 23; Lorenzo Veracini, "Population – Transfer and Settler Colonialism" in *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview,* (New York, New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), 41-42.

[5] For more on settler colonialism see, Lorenzo Veracini, "Introducing Settler Colonial Studies," *Settler Colonial Studies* 1, no. 1 (2011): 1-12; Veracini, "Population – Transfer and Settler Colonialism," 33-53; J. Kehaulani Kauanui, "'A structure, not an event': Settler Colonialism and Enduring Indigeneity," *Lateral: Journal of Cultural Studies Association* 5, no. 1 (2016): 1-8; Maya Mikdashi, "What Is Settler Colonialism? (for Leo Delano Ames Jr.)," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 37, no. 2 (2013): 23-34; Lowman and Barker, *Settler: Identity and Colonialism in 21st Century Canada*; Barker, "Locating Settler Colonialism." Kānaka Maoli scholar J. Kehaulani Kauanui explains how Patrick Wolfe's explanation of settler colonialism as a "structure and not an event" has come to stand in for the entirety of the Settler Colonial Studies field. While Kehaulani Kauanui agrees that settler colonialism "is a land-centred project entailing permanent settlement," Kehaulani Kauanui also argues that scholars engaging in Settler Colonial Studies have to look beyond just Patrick Wolfe's work and examine what

Indian reserves or administered Residential Schools in Canada, but they arrived with the expectation that they would have exclusive title to their land and its resources.[6] The land they claimed would *belong* to them, and they would begin to see themselves as belonging to it too, as Indigenous scholar Eve Tuck and settler scholar K. Wayne Yang explain.[7] Indigenous peoples whose ancestors had lived in the region since time immemorial would thus be uprooted to make way for newcomers' transplantation. These newcomers asserted rights to the land they occupied based on the sweat equity they put into "improving it": the furrows they dug, the crops they planted, and the infrastructure they built. These newcomers also laid claim to the land through the tales they told about the starring role they played as heroes who weathered every storm, both literally and metaphorically.

While "settler colonialism" was not coined as a term or developed as a concept until the 1990s, the processes which settler colonialism describes – understood as imperial dispossession of Indigenous lands to facilitate settlement by newcomers – affected the region now identified as prairie Canada soon after the country's Confederation in 1867.[8] During the decades prior to Confederation, few people of European descent settled in the territory. Most European and Euro-Canadian people who entered the territory prior to the nineteenth century did so as participants in the fur trade.[9] In 1869, the three million square miles of the northwest region was brought under

"indigeneity" means for scholarship as "Settler Colonial Studies does not, should not, and cannot replace Indigenous Studies," 2.

[6] Agricultural land was at the heart of settler colonialism and, as settler colonial historian Patrick Wolfe explains, settler identity was synonymous with agriculture. Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (December 2006): 396.

[7] Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, "Decolonization Is Not A Metaphor," *Decolonization* 1, no. 1 (2012): 15.

[8] Harris, *A Bounded Land,* 3; Harris, "How did Colonialism Dispossess," 168-169; Saito, "Chapter Three," 53. Of the multiple processes associated with settler colonialism, the "foundational principle" is in colonists' acquiring and possessing land, as explained by Saito, "Chapter Three," 51.

[9] Most of the fur traders who entered the northwest did so seasonally and while engaged in the fur trade. Those who did stay did so because they married into Indigenous communities. Agricultural settlement by people of European descent in prairie Canada began at the start of the nineteenth century but was limited prior to 1870. Bill Waiser, *A World We Have Lost: Saskatchewan Before 1905* (Ontario: Fifth House Publishers, 2016), 4, 213, 270.

Canadian control in preparation for a mass resettlement project.[10] The Canadian government's focus was on agricultural prospects in the newly created North-West Territories. Historian Sarah Carter explains that the government viewed the prairies as an advancement opportunity going to waste since it was not being cultivated in a way that colonial institutions perceived as productive.[11] Between 1871 and 1877, the Numbered Treaties were signed by various Indigenous nations living in the northwest and the Crown, embodied by Canadian parliament. According to the Canadian government, Indigenous signatories relinquished control of and claim to their lands.[12] The Indian Act (1876) and subsequent amendments to it were a means to control and empty the landscape in preparation for settlers, while the Dominion Lands Act (1872) provided a mechanism to distribute quarter-sections of land to incoming homesteaders. In the middle of the nineteenth century, the government of Canada's vision for the northwest territory was shaped by the desire to permanently displace Indigenous people and to replace them with settlers, a process now understood as settler colonization.

While the government of Canada colonized the prairie region when they took possession of it and put policies in place to facilitate immigration and economic development, it is the newcomers on the ground who effected settler colonization by claiming the land as their own, and it is their participation in this process that this thesis addresses. Settlers' participation in this process is consistent with historian Lorenzo Veracini's observation that settler colonization was "sometimes done by people rather than empires."[13] This is true of prairie Canada, where homesteaders played a fundamental role in settler colonialism.

[10] Waiser, *A World We Have Lost*, 102.
[11] Carter, *Lost Harvests,* 20.
[12] Waiser, *A World We Have Lost*, 471.
[13] Veracini's work as summarized in Barker, 3.

This thesis considers the degree to which settlers were aware of the role that they played in the process of settler colonialism, and the actions they took to defend and justify their land claims. Settlers' identity as prairie homesteaders hinged on their connection to the land they physically occupied, and then claimed both legally and ideologically soon after their arrival. Inspired by scholar Natsu Taylor Saito's explanation that settlers seek to "legitimize themselves" and their histories by associating their origins with the land,[14] this thesis scrutinizes the stories homesteaders and their descendants told and still tell about their relationship with the land to demonstrate that settler colonialism became entrenched not only *on* the land, but also in their narratives *about* the land.

In the thirty-year period from 1880 to 1910, southern Saskatchewan was home to multiple landscapes, both natural and constructed. There was the prairie of spear grass, blue grama, wheatgrass, aspen groves, and the prairie of well-travelled trails for Métis hunting parties.[15] There were established fur trade forts, trading routes, and trampled portage riverbanks. Further south, large triangular sod markers were built along the 49th parallel to signal a colonial boundary.[16] The changing seasons brought blizzards, floods, and droughts. The grasslands in southwest Saskatchewan were pressed into service as a cattle range. The prairie fringe in central Saskatchewan turned to grain. Following the grid pattern set up by the Dominion Land Survey in 1871, homesteaders planned, ploughed, and pulled the land into lines using caragana wind breaks, range roads, telephone wires, split-rail fences, and crop rows.[17] It was in these varied landscapes of the 1880s to 1910s that southern Saskatchewan was settled.

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[14] Saito, "Chapter Three," 52.

[15] Waiser, *A World We Have Lost,* 407.

[16] Waiser, *A World We Have Lost,* 444; Garrett Wilson, *Frontier Farewell: The 1870s and the End of the Old West* (Regina: University of Regina Press, 2007), 194.

[17] The physical disruption of land is discussed in Banivanua-Mar and Edmonds' work, as quoted in Barker, as follows: "the impact of settler colonialism...in the landscapes it produces: the symmetrically surveyed divisions of

The changing landscapes of southern Saskatchewan played a significant role in how settlement was enacted and how settlers experienced homesteading. Saskatchewan historian Bill Waiser notes that settlers had drastically different homesteading experiences depending on where their plot of land was located.[18] This is true in three ways. The first relates to the physical landscape. A Ukrainian settler in the marshy wooded park belt around Yorkton had a very different landscape to interact with than a British settler on the grasslands plateau around Moose Jaw. For both, the objective was to establish a farm, but this process manifested differently depending on location. The second relates to the constructed landscape. A constructed landscape is the manipulation of the physical landscape for the benefit of the settlers. Historian Frances Swyripa explains that "for their mental well-being… [settlers needed to] define the land according to their own criteria, reconfiguring it around their experiences and populating it with their heroes and stories."[19] Settlers created landscapes by using place names, building churches, establishing communities, and burying their dead until the constructed landscape become part of the physical landscape.[20] The third relates to the mythical landscape. This is a landscape that belongs more broadly to the frontier myth[21] and to the promotional literature created by government authorities. The mythical landscape is perhaps the most familiar as it calls to mind

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land; fences, roads, power lines, dams and mines.... Land and the organized spaces on it, in other words, narrate the stories of colonization." Barker, 4.

[18] Bill Waiser, *Saskatchewan: A New History* (Calgary: Fifth House, 2005), 101.

[19] Frances Swyripa, *Storied Landscapes: Ethnoreligious Identity and the Canadian Prairies* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2010), 44.

[20] Swyripa discusses how settlers projected institutions and ceremonies that were familiar to them onto to the landscape as a way to possess and claim identity and relationship to the land. See Swyripa's second chapter, 43-74.

[21] The frontier myth is often discussed in relation to frontierism in the United States beginning with the widely known *Frontier Thesis* by Fredrick Jackson Turner. This concept is still widely used and applied to American histories as seen in David Alexander Smith's work *Cowboy Presidents: The Frontier Myth and U.S. Politics Since 1900* (Oklahoma, Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2021). Scholars such as Elizabeth Furniss have shown how the frontier myth can be applied in the Canadian context too. Elizabeth Furniss, *The Burden of History: Colonialism and the Frontier Myth in a Rural Canadian Community,* (Vancouver, British Columbia: University of British Columbia Press, 1999).

the agricultural utopia of golden wheatfields.[22] Unlike constructed landscapes, the mythical landscape can never become a physical reality.

The physical, constructed, and mythical landscapes intersect in what this thesis calls the Homesteader Hero Myth. Within the Homesteader Hero Myth, there is a very specific narrative being (re)told, one that is identical to the settler story described earlier: an English-speaking white person enters the frontier (mythical landscape) only to by confronted by hardships (physical landscape) and, in the end, triumphantly overcomes adversities by succeeding in making a home (constructed landscapes).[23] The Homesteader Hero Myth has a similar fundamental definition as the frontier myth, which historian Elizabeth Furniss explains as "a historical epistemology consisting of a set of narratives, themes, metaphors, and symbols that has emerged within the context of North American colonization, that continues to define the dominant modes of historical consciousness among the general public."[24] Settlers' continued belief in the settler-hero narrative arc propels the legacy of homesteader heroism. My thesis seeks to explain how and why the Homesteader Hero Myth and, by extension, settler legacy, were created and maintained.[25]

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[22] Not only was the agricultural utopia the preferred image promoted by government authorities and a key factor in the frontier myth, but the land was further sensationalized through literature, such as the writings of Sinclair Ross or W.O. Mitchell. For more information on the landscape and how it plays into the identity of the pioneer image as well as the influence of literary works on this process, please see R. Douglas Francis, "Regionalism, Landscape, and Identity in the Prairie West" in *Challenging Frontiers: The Canadian West*, edited by Lorry W. Felske and Beverly Jean Rasporich (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2004): 29-50

[23] The mythical landscape of the Canadian prairies started before settlers arrived and before settlers started constructing landscapes for themselves. The mythical landscape was prompted and created through propaganda literature distributed by the Canadian government, colonization companies, and the national railways. The landscape presented to potential settlers was an imagined ideal that was taken up by arriving settlers with little resistance. Chapter one discusses the creation of the mythical landscape in more detail.

[24] Furniss, 54.

[25] It is important to note that this thesis is not attempting to prove that homesteader hero narratives are "false" or "incorrect." Instead, this thesis demonstrates that homesteader hero narratives are usually incomplete because they fail to take into consideration everyday Indigenous-settler relationships and homesteaders' acts of settler colonialism.

Western Canada was deemed "open" by the colonial government in the late-1870s. However, it was not until the mid-to-late 1890s that the Canadian government began to aggressively advertise prairie settlement opportunities.[26] Railway companies marketed lush wheatfields and discounted train tickets. Government agents in metropolitan cities, such as London, encouraged citizens from the overpopulated working-class areas to relocate to western Canada. Privatized colonization companies tried and failed to entice settlers to the prairies in the 1880s, due in part to scathing critiques of the agricultural and environmental realities by newspapers such as *The Globe* and *The London Standard*.[27] Individuals actively recruited settlers, as Isaac Barr did for British colonists in 1903 and as Dr. Josef Oleskow did for Ukrainians from 1895 to 1900.[28] Throughout these efforts, Western Canada was represented as an agricultural utopia.[29] Under the guidance of Ministers of the Interior Clifford Sifton (1896-1905) and Frank Oliver (1905-1911), the vision for settlement of the Canadian prairies was grounded in creating an agricultural society reflecting British-Canadian identity ideals. Land was divided into 160-acre homesteads that any eligible male could own, so long as he was of age,

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[26] Waiser, *A New History*, 63.

[27] A. N. Lalonde, "Colonization Companies in the 1880's," *Saskatchewan History* 24, no. 3 (1971): 101-114. For particular newspapers critiquing the environmental realties in Western Canada see page 110.

[28] Waiser, *A New History,* 68; Anthony W. Rasporich, "Utopian Ideals and Community Settlements in Western Canada, 1880-1914" in *The Prairie West as Promised Land*, ed. by R. D. Francis and Chris Kitzan (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2007), 135; Orest T. Martynowych, *Ukrainians in Canada: The Formative Period, 1891- 1924* (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 1991), 61-64.

[29] Waiser notes that "Saskatchewan was the land of opportunity." Bill Waiser, "'Land I Can Own: Settling in the Promised Land," in *The Prairie West as Promised Land* ed. by R. D. Francis and Chris Kitzan (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2007), 155. For more on the agricultural formation of Saskatchewan see Doug Owram, "The Promise of the West as Settlement Frontier," in *The Prairie West as Promised Land* ed. by R. D. Francis and Chris Kitzan, 3-28 (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2007).

was not Indigenous,[30] and was willing to become a British subject.[31] During Treaty 6 negotiations in 1876, a commissioner made it clear to the *nêhiyawak* that thousands of homesteaders were expected to arrive on the prairie.[32] The commissioner's prediction was correct. During Sifton's eight years in office, 115,479 homestead entries were filed in Saskatchewan alone.[33]

The policies Sifton and Oliver enforced influenced who settled in Saskatchewan, and where their claims were made. Yet, it was the Canadian government's efforts to contain and restrict Indigenous peoples that made settlement possible. It was because of federally administrated policies and institutions – Residential Schools, reserves, the Pass System, Métis scrips and road allowances, and forced removal (such as the *nêhiyawak* from Cypress Hills) – that settlers could take their places in territory now identified as Treaty 4 and Treaty 6.[34] When settlers arrived on the plains, they arrived in the midst of ongoing Indigenous dislocation.

Figure 2: View of Saskatchewan from a plane. 2005. Personal Collection of Dr. Ashleigh Androsoff.

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[30] An Indigenous person could have the title to a section of land only if they gave up status. While it was extremely rare, an enfranchised Indigenous person could obtain a land deed by the "location ticket" system which was administered through the Indian Act. This allowed for an Indigenous person on a reserve to receive a "location ticket" (if their reserve allowed for such) and once they proved they were capable of farming the plot and willing to give up their status then they gained land title. However, to qualify, the Indigenous person had to be literate in English or French, debt free, and of "good moral character." This was an assimilation tactic. As well, in the 1876 amendment of the Indian Act, all Indigenous peoples in Manitoba and the North-West Territories were excluded from enfranchisement through this system. Carter, *Lost Harvests*, 194-196.

[31] Waiser, *A New History,* 104-105.

[32] Waiser, *A World We Have Lost,* 473-474.

[33] Alan B. Anderson, *Settling Saskatchewan* (Regina, Saskatchewan: University Regina Press, 2013), 6.

[34] Waiser, *A World We Have Lost,* 506-509; Waiser, *A New History,* 50; Carter, *Lost Harvests,* 123.

Land had been secured from Indigenous peoples through Treaty-making and coercion, and then surveyed and cut into paper-perfect square quarter sections: a patchwork quilt landscape that is now considered quintessential to Saskatchewan.[35]

Most histories of Saskatchewan have focused on the achievements of people of British and French descent who entered the northern grasslands as explorers, fur traders, and settlers. Prior to the 1970s, little scholarly attention was paid to the historical experiences of ethnic minorities such as the Ukrainians. When the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism reported its findings in 1969, it highlighted the importance of contributions made by "allophones" (immigrants and their descendants who were not of British or French descent) and Indigenous peoples. Social historians such as John Lehr (1982), Orest Martynowych (1991), Sonia Mycak (1996), Frances Swyripa (2010), and Lindy Ledohowski (2015) began to publish work that focused on ethnic minorities like the Ukrainians.[36] Recent scholarship, such as Alan Anderson's *Settling Saskatchewan* (2013) and Gregory P. Marchildon's edited collection, *Immigration & Settlement, 1870-1939* (2009), considers how ethnic bloc settlements like the Ukrainians' influenced Saskatchewan's development.[37] This project builds on the work done by these scholars by discussing Ukrainian participation in settler colonialism.

Collections such as *Challenging Frontiers* (2004), *A Heavy Hand of History* (2005), and *The Prairie West as Promised Land* (2007) grapple with the settler's place in history. Many contributing authors note the challenges of western prairie expansion, focusing primarily on

[35] The physical manipulation and alteration of land is a visual reminder of settler colonialism as discussed by Banivanua-Mar and Edmonds in Barker, 4. For direct quote see footnote 25.

[36] Martynowych; John C. Lehr, "The Landscape of Ukrainian Settlement in the Canadian West," *Great Plains Quarterly* 2, no. 2 (1982): 94–105; Sonia Mycak. "'A Different Story' by Helen Potrebenko: The Prairie Pioneer Myth Re-Visited." *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 28, no. 1 (1996): 67-88; Swyripa, *Storied Landscapes*; Lindy Ledohowski, "'White Settler Guilt': Contemporary Ukrainian Canadian Prairie Literature," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 47, no. 4–5 (2015): 67–83.

[37] Anderson; *Immigration & Settlement, 1870-1939,* ed. by Gregory P. Marchildon (Regina: University of Regina Press, 2009).

rushed settlement and failed efforts to use foreign agricultural practices that were ill-adapted to an unfamiliar climate. From discussions on the challenges of western prairie settlement – such as environmental, economical, and social challenges – stem the optimistic image and courageous characteristics of a heroic settler: an image reinforced by early traditional western historical studies. While contemporary historians skeptically critique these heroic settler characteristics, the origins of these heroic traits and the lasting impacts they have had on the general public's historical understanding of Saskatchewan are rarely critically examined. Many essays within *The Prairie West as Promised Land* (2007) use descriptions of settler prosperity, bravery, selflessness, and strength when discussing prairie history. Yet, most of the authors engaging in this language do not follow with an analysis of why those particular character traits are foundational to the colonial Canadian West.[38] As an indirect answer, Bill Waiser (2005 and 2006),[39] David Jones (1984), and Dale Eisley (2005) explore the impact of the Saskatchewan myth or "ideology" that emerged during the settlement period on contemporary public understandings of Saskatchewan's history.[40] I will contribute to the work already being done to

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[38] As an example of an author that does engage with a critique of the heroic language used to talk about homesteader history, Catherine Cavanaugh, when quoting Richard Slotkin, discusses the impact of "myth-historiography" in American History. According to Cavanaugh, western Canadian historians "tended to minimize the symbolic role of the frontier," preferring to compare Canada's west with the well-developed image of the American west. Catherine A. Cavanaugh, "'No Place for a Woman': Engendering Western Canadian Settlement" in *The Prairie West as Promised Land*, ed. by R. D. Francis and Chris Kitzan (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2007), 263.

[39] Waiser writes on this on at least three separate occasions: once as a chapter in his book, once as an article, and once as a talk given at a centennial conference. Bill Waiser, "Our Shared Destiny?" in *The Heavy Hand of History: Interpreting Saskatchewan's Past,* ed. by Gregory P. Marchildon (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, University of Regina, 2005), 7; Bill Waiser, "Our Shared Destiny? Saskatchewan in 1905 and 2005," *Acadiensis* XXXV, no. 2 (Spring 2006), 157; Waiser, *A New History*, 458.

[40] David C. Jones, "'There Is Some Power About the Land' — The Western Agrarian Press and Country Life Ideology," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 17, no. 3 (August 1982): 96–108; Dale Eisler, "The Saskatchewan Myth," in *The Heavy Hand of History: Interpreting Saskatchewan's Past,* ed. by Gregory P. Marchildon (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, University of Regina, 2005). Other disciplines, such and English and Literary Studies, have also started to do this work. For examples, please see: Frances W. Kaye, "Little Squatter on the Osage Diminished Reserve: Reading Laura Ingalls Wilder's Kansas Indians," *Great Plains Quarterly* 20, (Spring 2000): 123-40; Bethany Schneider, "A Modest Proposal: Laura Ingalls Wilder Ate Zitkala-Sa," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 21, no. 1 (January 2015): 65-93; Sheelah McLean. "'We Built a Life from Nothing': White Settler

analyze and problematize the heroic settler images of courage, grit, and prosperity that emerged in the homesteading period. Specifically, my work will address the origins of these images, explain how they fueled settler legacy, and describe the lasting impacts these characteristics have had on understanding Saskatchewan's history.

Bill Waiser wrote two survey texts on the province's history to mark the province's centenary in 2005: *Saskatchewan: A New History* (2005) and *A World We Have Lost: Saskatchewan Before 1905* (2016). *A New History* covers the creation of the province, both World Wars, the Great Depression, the rise of the CCF, and considers the future of Saskatchewan. Waiser spends a substantial amount of time discussing political figures, colonial events and presenting an optimistic outlook for the future of Saskatchewan: one that is grounded on mutual Indigenous and settler relations.[41] On the other hand, Waiser's award-winning *A World We Have Lost* focuses on Indigenous knowledge and experiences of the region prior to settlement in an attempt to "indigenize" the region's history. Waiser takes a successful first step towards reframing and decolonizing Saskatchewan's conventional history by balancing Indigenous knowledge and histories with colonial archival sources. Traditionally, colonial sources have been used to romanticize the fur trade period, a narrative Waiser does not reproduce.[42] I build upon Waiser's work by utilizing Indigenous methodologies and challenging the dominant narratives in colonial sources.

Prior to the 1990s, scholarship that considered Indigenous Plains peoples focused mainly on their participation in the fur trade, treaty making, and armed conflict. In 1993, Sarah Carter broke new ground by concentrating on Indigenous participation in the federal government's

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Colonialism and the Myth of Meritocracy," *Our Schools/Our Selves: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives*, (Fall/Winter 2018): 32-33.

[41] Waiser, *A New History*.

[42] Waiser, *A World We Have Lost.*

flawed Reserve Agriculture program in *Lost Harvests* (1993). Her work inserted Plains Indigenous peoples back into the narrative of the settlement period. Contrary to the colonizers' and settlers' expectations, Indigenous peoples had not disappeared, even if stories told from the perspective of people of European descent were framed so narrowly as to render Indigenous peoples invisible.

Recently, scholars researching Indigenous history in Saskatchewan have focused on Indigenous experiences with processes of settlement during the homesteading period. Cheryl Troupe's work on Métis land use and kinship relations between 1850 and 1950 makes Indigenous peoples visible as survivors of colonization and prairie resettlement.[43] Neal McLeod uses *nêhiyawak* narrative structures and worldviews to tell the history of the *nêhiyawak* nation from 1870s to the early 2000s, while Derek Whitehouse-Strong reframes Treaty 6 negotiations through Indigenous understandings and how the federal government's failure to recognize Indigenous understandings impacted the experiences of Indigenous nations in Treaty 6 territory during the early settlement period.[44] James Daschuk's award-winning *Clearing the Plains* (2013) explains how the Canadian government contributed, both actively and passively, to the oppression of Plains Indigenous peoples by enacting policies and withholding remedies, allowing them to suffer the effects of starvation and disease to weaken their capacity to resist colonization.[45] Whereas Daschuk focuses on the effects of government policy on Plains Indigenous peoples, I am focusing on the relationships between settlers and Indigenous peoples.

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[43] Cheryl Troupe, "Mapping Métis Stories: Land Use, Gender and Kinship in the Qu'Appelle Valley, 1850-1950," Doctoral thesis, University of Saskatchewan, 2019.

[44] Neal McLeod, *Cree Narrative Memory: From Treaties to Contemporary Times*, Saskatoon: Purch Publishing Ltd., 2007; Derek Whitehouse-Strong, "'Everything Promised Has Been Included in the Writing': Indian Reserve Farming and the Spirit and Intent of Treaty Six Reconsidered," *Great Plains Quarterly* 27, no. 1 (Winter 2007): 25-37.

[45] James W. Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains: Disease, Politics of Starvation, and the Loss of Aboriginal Life* (Regina: University of Regina Press, 2013).

Story and storytelling are at the centre of my theoretical and methodological approach. As Indigenous scholar Thomas King asserted in his Massey Lectures in 2003, which focus on Canada's flawed relationship with Indigenous peoples and reflect on his own life experiences as an Indigenous person living in Canada and the United States: "the truth about stories is that that's all we are."[46] In each of the five lectures, King begins with a variation of a creation story reflecting an Indigenous epistemology. He then explains how Canadian policies and perspectives concerning Indigenous peoples have affected him personally and have served to reinforce settler hegemony over Indigenous peoples. Each lecture concludes with a variation of the line: "don't' say in the years to come that you would have lived your life differently if only you had heard this story. You've heard it now."[47]

Stories are essential to my thesis, both as primary source material and as expository devices. I challenge the settler-as-hero narrative in Saskatchewan history using my own family's stories about homesteading as a starting point. Whether creation stories, family stories, or myths about homesteading heroes: stories shape who we are and how we think. As King states, "stories can control our lives."[48] I have heard my family's stories throughout my childhood and have been exposed to the Homesteader Hero Myth as a person born and raised in Saskatchewan. These stories are "loose in the world," to borrow King's framework.[49] Stories are how we make connections to each other, to the world, and to the past. The stories we choose to tell and how we choose to tell them matter as they determine how we form and understand these connections. Stories, both true and false, are foundational to identity and understanding of self. Since stories are "all we are," unpacking, critiquing, and reconstructing our stories is often a difficult process.

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[46] Thomas King, *The Truth About Stories,* (Toronto: Dead Dog Café, 2003), 2, 32, 62, 92, 122, 153.
[47] King, 151.
[48] King, 9.
[49] King, 10.

I am committing to the uncomfortable and necessary work of repositioning settler stories, even if it means unsettling my own family's lore.

In an effort to decolonize my approach and my interpretive lens, I work with Indigenous research methodologies, drawing particularly from local plains-based epistemologies. As *nêhiyaw* scholar Margaret Kovach explains in *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts,* acknowledging one's own identity and positionality is both important and necessary when working with Indigenous research methodologies.[50] I identify as a sixth-generation settler. While I believe that it is both ideologically and methodologically appropriate to work with Indigenous research methodologies in this project, I am aware that there are limits to what a cultural outsider can do in this regard. My thesis focuses on "unsettling" narratives about homesteaders who arrived on Treaty 4 and Treaty 6 territory which have been constructed to privilege settler perspectives and ignore Indigenous ones. In doing this work on settler colonialism, it is necessary to seriously consider how I am approaching my research. Weaving Indigenous ways of learning and knowing into my research is important not only as a gesture of respect for the Indigenous communities included in my study, but also because it exemplifies the type of work this project is aiming to do. Challenging Saskatchewan's history as a settlers' history must prompt individuals – academics and non-academics alike – to consider *how* they are thinking as much as *what* they are thinking.

Kovach has written extensively on Indigenous research methods that are grounded in *nêhiyaw kiskêyihtamowin* (Cree epistemology). Indigenous methodology is relational, reflexive, and centered on tribal knowledge.[51] Kovach outlines the key qualities of a *nêhiyaw*-centred

[50] Margaret Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 18.

[51] Kovach defines tribal knowledge as the understanding of specific Indigenous nations, 20. See also footnote 50 for more information.

methodology: tribal epistemology,[52] decolonizing aim, researcher preparation, research preparation, making meaning, and giving back.[53] Specifically, I engage with researcher preparation through "self-location"[54] and "self-recognition"[55] and with decolonizing aims by, as Kovach recommends, decolonizing theoretical perspectives by thinking with land as "place-based knowledge."[56] According to Kovach, an Indigenous research framework can take three distinct structures: tribal methodology (Indigenous knowledge, such as *nêhiyaw kiskêyihtamowin*, is the sole focus of research), decolonization theory (considered to be closer in line with Western qualitative methods), or a hybrid of the two.[57] In my thesis, I work with the third structure: a hybrid. The reason for this choice is that it allows my work to be guided by elements of *nêhiyaw kiskêyihtamowin* – particularly the importance of place, language and story which relies on a holistic approach to conducting research – while acknowledging my positionality as a settler researcher.[58] As a person who is not Indigenous, I will, as is called for in the Indigenous research methodology Kovach describes, continuously reflect on how my ethnic and cultural backgrounds affect the way I engage with research – a process understood in *nêhiyaw kiskêyihtamowin* as "self in relation."[59]

Recognizing my own positionality while being aware of how I think, write, and engage with my research connects to narrative methodologies. As King demonstrates with his

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[52] Kovach describes tribal epistemology in relation to *nêhiyaw kiskêyihtamowin* which is based on seven qualities: holistic epistemology, story as research, clear purpose, experiential, tribal ethics, tribal ways of gaining knowledge, and consideration of colonial relationship, 44.

[53] Kovach, 45.

[54] Kovach, 18.

[55] Janice Cindy Gaudet, "Keeoukaywin: The Visiting Way – Fostering an Indigenous Research Methodology," *Aboriginal Policy Studies* 7, no. 2 (2019): 47-64.

[56] Gaudet, 56. Land is also identified by Kovach as being key to the blending of a tribal epistemology and a decolonization lens in Indigenous methodologies. Kovach, 35.

[57] Kovach, 80-82.

[58] Kovach, 61-68.

[59] Kovach, 50.

conversation on origin stories, we all find meaning in the world through story. As a written culture, Western societies approach conducting oral histories with the mindset of bringing them into the existing physical record (whether a digital recording or a transcript). Western oral history practices are concerned about the reliability of memory and focus on the genre of the narrative such as myth, event, or personal experience.[60] For instance, in the beginning of his book on oral histories from rural Saskatchewan, Randy Widdis acknowledges that memory is highly contested and unreliable, though he ultimately chooses to present the participants' stories as if they are the truth.[61] On the other hand, Indigenous nations in the territory I am studying are oral cultures with a different understanding of truth in oral histories which do not adhere to the "conventional categorical boundaries" set in the Western scholarly canon.[62] Rather, as *nêhiyaw* scholar Winona Stevenson explains, Indigenous oral histories include everything from religious teachings to personal memory, history to cultural understandings. Whereas Widdis had to justify interpreting his participants' oral histories as the truth, in *nêhiyaw kiskêyihtamowin* the "truth is bound in a sacred commitment"[63] and oral histories are grounded in *tapw*ê (truth) regardless of the topic.[64]

In tandem with Indigenous methodologies and storytelling approaches, I am also using an autoethnographic approach. Autoethnography is a methodology that considers "self… in relation

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[60] Alessandro Portelli, "Chapter Three: What Makes Oral History Different" *in The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History* (New York, New York: State University of New York Press, 1991,) 49.

[61] Randy William Widdis, *Voices from Next Year Country: An Oral History of Rural Saskatchewan* (Regina, Saskatchewan: University of Regina Press, 2006), 2.

[62] Kovach, 101.

[63] Alessandro Portelli stated that "there are no formal oral genres specifically destined to transmit historical information; historical, poetical, and legendary narratives often become inextricably mixed up." Storytelling within Indigenous epistemologies does this work. In Nêhiyawak traditions there are two main types of stories, personal narratives and ones with "mythical elements." Both stories have teachings, both pass along knowledge systems, and both, ultimately, are true stories. Portelli, "Chapter Three," 49; Kovach, 95.

[64] Kovach, 102.

to culture."[65] In other words, autoethnography is the study of a culture which includes the author who provides their own reflections as a subject of the study. As Kovach explains, autoethnography is a form of "self-in-relation" which is tied closely to a *nêhiyaw kiskêyihtamowin* holistic research approach, as it asks the researcher to acknowledge their positionality, their past, and their relationships to others, including people, self, stories and landscape.[66] I use a combination of reflexive, layered, and personal narrative autoethnography approaches.[67] Reflexivity is akin to self-in-relation which, according to Kovach, is "the meaning-making process" of a *nêhiyaw*-centred Indigenous methodology.[68] Autoethnography is an avenue for story. Autoethnography also supports *bildungsroman* narratives – coming-of-age stories where the researcher-participant engages in self-reflection by sharing how past experiences led to personal understandings of what was and what will be.[69] By engaging with my maternal grandparents' family records, my project shows how personal, familial stories can be used to

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[65] Kovach, 33. Jeong-Hee Kim also emphasizes that the key to autoethnography is that the researcher's own stories are critically analyzed and reflected upon. Jeong-Hee Kim, "Chapter 4: Narrative Research Genres: Mediating Stories into Being" in *Understanding Narrative Inquiry: The Crafting and Analysis of Stories as Research,* (Sage Publications: 2016), 123-125.

[66] Kovach, 33. While my research practices are aligned with Indigenous research methods and methodologies and are well-suited to a topic that considered Indigenous peoples and experiences, these research practices – such as positionally and reflectivity - are not necessarily exclusive to Indigenous peoples - many cultures use similar approaches.

[67] These categories are borrowed from Carolyn Ellis, Tony E. Adams, and Arthur P. Bochner, "Autoethnography: An Overview," *Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 12, no. 1 (2011) http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs1101108.

[68] Kovach, 32.

[69] *Bildungsroman* (education story) is a methodological and literary tool used in tandem with autoethnography. Scholar Elena Michelson defines *bildungsroman* as "how people learn and grown and how the capacity for cognitive self-awareness, that is, self-reflection, developed through experience." Michelson goes on to explain that a key aspect to bildungsroman is researchers can use it as a way to understand the present through the past. Elena Michelson, "If the Self Is a Text, What Genre Is It? Structure and Ideology in Narratives of Adult Learning," *Adult Education Quarterly* 63, no. 3 (2012): 202, 206; David T. Culkin, "Chapter One – Prologue" in "A Need to Heal: An Autoethnographic Bildungsroman Through the Shadows," Doctoral thesis, Kansas State University, 2016: 5, 8. Often bildungsroman is a literary tool used by scholars discussing "lived experiences." For more on lived experiences and narrative inquiry as a research method see: Michelson, 199-214; Culkin, 1-17; Kim, 117-153; F. Michael Connelly and D. Jean Clandinin, "Stories of Experience and Narrative Inquiry," *American Educational Research Association* 19, no. 5 (June/July 1990): 2-14; Cori Saas, "Coyote Stories: Attending to Narratives as Life-Making," Master Thesis, University of Regina, 2017. In particular, part of Saas' work uses narrative inquiry to investigate her own story and her parents' stories – stories that I share as Cori Saas's daughter.

unsettle existing colonial culture. Autoethnography allows me, as a descendant of British and Ukrainian homesteader families respectively, to utilize our familial settler narratives to connect and enhance my archival research and to reposition myself in the process.

Māori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith explains that methodology is the research framework, and method is the research process.[70] Therefore, I am working with autoethnography and Indigenous research practices as a methodology and story as a method. As Smith outlines in *Decolonizing Methodologies,* there are Twenty-Five Indigenous Projects – ways in which Indigenous communities and academics engage with decolonization – that researchers can employ in their work. The third project is storytelling. Smith writes, "the story and the storyteller both serve to connect the past with the future, one generation with the other, the land with the people and the people with the story."[71] Therefore, most of my research uses sources that tell stories, including local history books, family history books, oral histories, memoirs, and the Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan's Pioneer Questionnaires. I focus on sources discussing experiences that occurred between the 1880s and 1910s. When writing, I divert from the academic standard and refer to all primary sources' authors by their first name. I do so to avoid confusion as there is usually more than one family member mentioned and I purposely use first names as a storytelling technique to make the narratives, and those sharing them, more personal to the reader. The settler family stories discussed stem from a homesteader history where the government, provided certain conditions were met, gave land to the male head of the family. To decolonize this narrative, I consult maps, consider Indigenous landscape understandings, and

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[70] Linda Tuhiwai Smith, "Chapter 8: Twenty-Five Indigenous Projects" in *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London: Zed Books, 2012), 143.

[71] Smith, 145.

study the location and proximity of reserves to show how the legacy of the setter-as-hero is complicated by colonialism and why it is necessary to challenge these setter legacies.

It is noteworthy when settler families' primary sources, which were created to preserve and often celebrate their own stories, acknowledge Indigenous presence, culture, and history. This inclusion of details about Indigenous neighbours, when so many other details of daily life were left out, suggests the importance and significance of Indigenous presence to settler families. One of the main sources I use is the Pioneer Questionnaires, which consist of eleven thematic surveys distributed by the Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan in the 1950s.[72] The surveys were completed on a voluntary basis and the archives received over three thousand replies. I reviewed only two surveys, the Pioneer General Experiences Questionnaire and the Folklore Questionnaire, and I prioritized materials that refer to the southcentral and southeastern areas of Saskatchewan/Treaty 4 as this is where many Métis settlements, Indigenous reserves, Ukrainian bloc settlements, and British homesteaders were located.[73] The questionnaires did sometimes ask leading questions. The Folklore Questionnaire asks settlers to share anecdotes about "settlers' adventures; Indians; animal behaviour; hunting adventures," for example, and asks for a summary of any artefacts found near the homestead, including "Indian rings, old trails, ruins of fort or dwelling house." Likewise, the General Experiences Questionnaire asked participants to share a memory about the journey west, how they heard about the west, and whether they had

[72] These eleven surveys covered a range of topics from food, recreation, social life, religion, folklore, politics, holidays, and agriculture. The surveys were sent to different senior based social clubs, nursing homes, and churches throughout the province and were completed and returned on a voluntary basis. Rollings-Magnusson recently did a study using only the Pioneer Farming Experiences Questionnaire. Sandra Rollings-Magnusson, "Frost, Hail, Prairie Fire, and Weeds: Families Harvesting Crops on a Saskatchewan Homestead, 1872-1914," *Canadian Journal of Family and Youth* 13, no. 2 (2021), 97.

[73] This area also covers the southeastern corner of Saskatchewan, which is Treaty 2 Territory. Under normal circumstances, I would have included Questionnaires submitted from Treaty 6 territory as well. Unfortunately, access to the Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan was restricted due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and I was forced to limit my sample size as a result.

intended to stay. Though leading, these questions remain open-ended and there was only a limited amount of space for participants to enter their handwritten replies. Due to limited space, participants would have had to prioritize which stories or memories to share. It can therefore be inferred that the stories respondents shared would have been ones that were particularly memorable and significant to them.

My study contributes to public understanding of southern Saskatchewan's history by challenging the narrative of the courageous pioneering homesteader. These heroic homesteader narratives are grounded in land ownership, possession, and belonging, the legacy of which is a "settler move to innocence."[74] Settler moves to innocence are actions performed by settlers in the name of decolonization, but which have little real-world consequences. In other words, settler moves to innocence are "strategies" that settlers use so they may discuss decolonization and reconciliation without actually "giving up land or power or privilege."[75] Scholars Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang outline six possible move to innocence strategies: settler nativism, settler adoption fantasies, colonial equivocation, freeing/decolonizing your mind and the rest will follow, at risk/asterisk peoples, and re-occupation/urban homesteading.[76] In particular, my work will counteract settler adoption fantasies by challenging settler views of land, self, and interrelationships.[77] A settler adoption fantasy allows a settler to assume Indigenous traits – knowledge systems and/or land connections – while preserving their settler privileges and avoiding any responsibility.[78] This move to innocence is particularly important as it also leans into the problematic narrative that "the Native… hands over his land, his claim to the land, his

[74] Tuck and Yang, 3-4.
[75] Tuck and Yang, 10.
[76] Tuck and Yang, 10-28.
[77] Tuck and Yang, 9-17.
[78] Tuck and Yang, 13-17.

very Indian-ness to the settler for safe-keeping."[79] Settler adoption fantasy is a trope that helps maintain Saskatchewan's settler legacy.

One of many "unsettling innocence" actions Tuck and Yang identify is to use Indigenous place names to disorient or "disrupt" settler understandings.[80] Similarly, "renaming the world using the original Indigenous names" is another suggestion on Linda Tuhiwai Smith's list of Indigenous Projects.[81] I attempt to "unsettle innocence" by, in part, using Indigenous place names wherever possible instead of permitting audiences to remain grounded in places mapped and labeled with settler names and understandings. I follow the lead of Indigenous scholars, like Neal McLeod, who italicize Indigenous words and do not use capitalization.[82] Naming the land is a way to assert control over landscapes.[83] Therefore, applying settler names to places is part of the process of settler colonialism. Using Indigenous place names encourages settler audiences to rethink their own geographical understandings of southern Saskatchewan.

All three chapters of this thesis will cover the homesteading years from the 1880s to 1910s. As well, each chapter weaves together the experiences of British settlers, Ukrainian settlers, *nêhiyawak*, Lakota, Nakota, Dakota, *nahkawininiwak*, and Métis/Michif. The first chapter of my thesis, "Settling the Scene: Understanding the Imagined West," discusses the creation of the Canadian West as a frontier that was marketed by government and media officials as an agricultural landscape – one that called upon images of golden wheatfields, available land,

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[79] Tuck and Yang, 14.

[80] Tuck and Yang, 30.

[81] Smith, 157.

[82] Settler scholars Bill Waiser (*A World We Have Lost*) and Alan Anderson (*Settling Saskatchewan*) also follow the practice of italicizing Indigenous words. *Nêhiyawak* grammar practice is based on *nêhiyawak* belief that all are equal, therefore capitals are never used even when discussing people or places – features the English grammar system would classify as "proper nouns." Jean Okimāsis and Arok Wolvengrey, *How to Spell it in Cree: The Standard Roman Orthography,* (Saskatoon: Hougton Boston, 2008), 5, 56-58.

[83] Smith agrees that the act of naming is about control. As she writes, "by 'naming the world' people name their realities," 157.

and disappearing Indigenous peoples. Incoming settlers may have thought that the Canadian prairies were "open" for homesteading, but settlers recognized that the land they were breaking and settling was not "empty."

The second chapter, "Staging Settler Colonialism: Constructing a Sense of Settler Belonging," investigates how settlers attempted to replace Indigenous home and community with settler home and community to justify remaining on Indigenous land.[84] Settlers attempted to construct landscapes through place names, infrastructure, traditions, and stories in hopes of using constructed landscapes to go beyond simply *living on* the land – occupying it, using it, and even owning it – to create a sense of *belonging to* the land – being of it and from it despite their short tenure.

The final chapter, "Spotlight on Settler Stories: Unsettling the Homesteader Hero Narrative," shows why it is necessary to challenge the legacy of homesteader heroism. If, as Thomas King explains, "the truth about stories is that that's all we are," then the way a story is told and how it is remembered has immense power. This chapter uses family stories from the archives to examine the ways settler stories propel homesteader heroism. Moreso, this chapter shows how everyday Indigenous encounters were commonplace in homesteading families' narratives and yet are passed over in favour of the settler-as-hero narrative. I reposition settler legacy to unravel the heroic homesteader narrative, ultimately reframing these settler stories into the uncomfortable reality of what they were: acts of imperial dispossession. This thesis will

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[84] Replacement – that is settlers' attempts to replace Indigenous cultures, traditions, spaces, and customs with settler cultures, traditions, spaces, and customs – has been widely discussed as a key feature of settler colonialism. For more see Lorenzo Veracini, "Introducing Settler Colonial Studies," *Settler Colonial Studies* 1, no. 1 (2011), 1-5; Natsu Taylor Saito, "Chapter Three: Settler Colonialism," in *Settler Colonialism, Race and the Law: Why Structural Racism Persists* (New York, New York: NYU Press, 2020), 51; Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (December 2006): 388; Cole Harris, "How did Colonialism Dispossess? Comments from an Edge of Empire," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 94, no. 1 (March 2004), 179; And see all of Emma Battel Lowman and Adam J. Barker, *Settler: Identity and Colonialism in 21st Century Canada* (Winnipeg, Manitoba: Fernwood Publishing, 2015).

conclude with a discussion about how the stories we tell influence our approach to the processes of Truth and Reconciliation. In this model, reconciliation is predicated on the telling of the truth, and this might mean that some of the stories we prairie settlers have been telling ourselves – the ones that go to the heart of the construction of our identity – have to be told differently in the future.

Chapter One:
Settling the Scene: Understanding the Imagined West

Last summer, my mom and I drove to the town of Frobisher, located in the southeastern corner of Saskatchewan. Along with my bag of road-trip snacks, I was armed with homestead records, family photographs, scans from a local history book, a fully charged camera, my grandmother's stories, and the naive belief that I was going to discover a sense of connection with the land my ancestors had farmed. My grandmother's family, the Sharpes, had applied for and later were granted entry to a homestead a few kilometres north of Frobisher in April 1899.[1] By 1907, Frobisher had four grain elevators, two liveries, two blacksmiths, two lumber yards, two general stores, a real estate office, a billiard hall, a hotel, a doctor's office, a veterinarian clinic, a school, a newspaper and a jeweller.[2] Today, as is the case with many rural prairie towns, there is not much left of Frobisher. All that remains along the main avenue are a few abandoned and boarded-up buildings. A small home near the railway track has caragana growing through its window and a long tree branch resting across its roof. A narrow building sags in the middle, the block letters spelling out "Rennies' Store" still visible next to a front door that is weathered and peeling delicate strips of white paint.

My mom and I considered the town's old buildings, trying to guess which ones, if any, the Sharpes would have frequented. Afterwards, we drove north to NW-34-3-4-W2. I was surprised by the landscape. The prairie is still open here, but there are tree bluffs visible at the corners of the quarter-sections and along the horizon. Unlike the landscape around Moose Jaw, which is sprinkled with abandoned farmyards, there is little evidence aside from the broken land

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[1] Thomas Sharp's Application for Patent, 6 November 1902, Homestead Records, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, S 42.470797. Once in Canada, Thomas's children all added an "e" to the end of their surname. For simplicity, I will refer to the Sharpes with the "e" even though Thomas's records spell Sharpe without one.

[2] *Frobyshire to Frobisher,* (Frobisher, Saskatchewan: The Frobisher Happy Gang, 1979), 14.

that homesteaders had been there at all. The landscape felt eerie and unfamiliar. It was not the setting I had in mind when I read stories about the Sharpes. I had expected to feel a sense of home. Instead, I felt oddly out of place.

I had anticipated finding some sort of visual reminder of the Sharpes on the land that had been their quarter-section. In 1902, Thomas and Mary Sharpe and their ten children were living on their quarter-section in a 22x24 frame house.[3] They had three horses, one cow, a granary, and a sod stable.[4] The only thing left to see during my recent visit was a ploughed prairie, an oil donkey, and an old dirt laneway. I held up a photograph of the Sharpe's farmhouse and tried to imagine it on this spot again. The wheat rustled in the wind. A grasshopper buzzed across my foot. The landscape which had been claimed by my family nearly 125 years ago bore little evidence of them. I felt the same uneasiness I had when I was standing at the graveyard in Seagrave, England. The Sharpes had settled on this land and claimed it as their own, but ultimately it did not belong to them, nor do I belong to it.

Figure 3: View of the Sharp(e) Family's old homestead, north of Frobisher and southwest of môswacîhk. 2021. Personal Collection.

[3] This was the standard way houses were measured on patent applications – 22x24 would mean 22-foot-by-24-foot and frame means a wooden, usually A-frame, structure. Also, while Thomas Sharp's Application for Patent says the family had been living on the quarter-section continuously since 1899, the Sharpes also had a large house in Frobisher at the corner of Third Street and Riddle Avenue. Therefore, it is likely that the family, or at least some of the family, lived in town as well. *Frobyshire to Frobisher*, 325.

[4] Thomas Sharp's Application for Patent.

Settler colonialism begins with the arrival of newcomers who intend to stay, as scholars Lorenzo Veracini, Patrick Wolfe, Cole Harris, Adam Baker, and Natsu Taylor Saito explain.[5] While not all settlers on the Canadian prairies arrived with the intention of staying permanently, they did arrive within a structure geared towards long-term settlement. For instance, Susan Tucker, who came from Minnesota to homestead with her husband near Craik, said they had no intention of staying: "we were going to get rich quick and return to the store business."[6] Although the Tuckers did ultimately stay in the Craik district, many other families in prairie Canada did not, migrating instead on a temporary basis with the intent of earning money and leaving. However, the difference is the system in which they were participating. Whether it was working on the homestead, in trades, or in cities, settlers arrived in Canada during a time when the intention of government authorities was to create a permanent, ideally British-Canadian, society and system that would sustain settlers for generations to come. Regardless of whether or not every individual settler arrived with their own personal intention of remaining permanently; the goal of Canada's settlement project – and what is at the heart of settler colonialism more broadly – is to establish policies and infrastructure that would lead settlers from preferred ethnic and class backgrounds to stay and "settle" in Canada.[7]

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[5] Lorenzo Veracini, "Introducing Settler Colonial Studies," *Settler Colonial Studies* 1, no. 1 (2011), 6; Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (December 2006): 388; Cole Harris, "How did Colonialism Dispossess? Comments from an Edge of Empire," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 94, no. 1 (March 2004), 167; Adam J. Barker, "Locating Settler Colonialism," *Journal of Colonialism & Colonial History* 13, no. 3 (Winter 2012): 3; Natsu Taylor Saito, "Chapter Three: Settler Colonialism," in *Settler Colonialism, Race and the Law: Why Structural Racism Persists* (New York, New York: NYU Press, 2020), 50. See also Emma Battel Lowman and Adam J. Barker, *Settler: Identity and Colonialism in 21st Century Canada* (Winnipeg, Manitoba: Fernwood Publishing, 2015); Kehaulani Kauanui, "'A structure, not an event': Settler Colonialism and Enduring Indigeneity," *Lateral: Journal of Cultural Studies Association* 5, no. 1 (2016): 1-8; Maya Mikdashi, "What Is Settler Colonialism? (for Leo Delano Ames Jr.)," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 37, no. 2 (2013): 23-34.

[6] Susan T. Tucker, General Pioneer Experiences Questionnaire, page 3 and 6, Pioneer Questionnaires Fond, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, SX 2.877.

[7] For more see Lorenzo Veracini, "Introducing Settler Colonial Studies," 1-12.

My family is part of this history. By settling in Frobisher, breaking the prairie, and building homes, the Sharpes were quite literally putting down roots in the prairies. In doing so, they were performing as settler colonists. When settlers applied for entry onto a quarter-section, they were agreeing "to turn the 'wilderness landscape' into a 'garden'," historian R. Douglas Francis explains.[8] They were required to put the land to cultivation under the terms of the Dominion Lands Act of 1872, and were "promised prosperity and happiness" if they could successfully "develop the region."[9] This promised prairie "abundance" could only be obtained by "giving one's all to taming the land,"[10] all while displacing Indigenous peoples and ignoring their claims to a share of the territory and its resources.

Narratives about the homesteading period have excused incoming farmers from taking any responsibility for the role that they played in settler colonization by claiming that they were not aware that the land they took belonged to Indigenous peoples.[11] If homesteader stories continue to be told within the frame of settler ignorance – that is, that settlers were not aware of Indigenous presence or history prior to arrival – then settlers can avoid being held accountable for their own acts of settler colonialism. Historian Erin Morton explains settler ignorance as

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[8] R. Douglas Francis, "Regionalism, Landscape, and Identity in the Prairie West" in *Challenging Frontiers: The Canadian West*, edited by Lorry W. Felske and Beverly Jean Rasporich (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2004): 35.

[9] Francis, 30; Doug Owram, *Promise of Eden: The Canadian Expansionist Movement and the Idea of the West, 1856-1900,* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980).

[10] Literary historian Dick Harrison proposed the "garden myth" in 1977, explaining that "the prairie landscape is characterized as one of abundance, but an abundance that can only be realized through the exacting and exhausting process of giving one's all to taming the land." As cited in Francis, 35.

[11] This narrative was popular in Saskatchewan education textbooks: for more, see chapter three. As well, this narrative continues to appear in various forms in academic works. For instance, historians Bill Waiser, Francis Swyripa, and Lindy Ledohowski, while critical of settlers' stories and roles in colonialism, state that settlers were likely unaware that they were arriving on land belonging to Indigenous peoples. Bill Waiser, *A World We Have Lost: Saskatchewan Before 1905* (Ontario: Fifth House Publishers, 2016), 623; Frances Swyripa, *Storied Landscapes: Ethnoreligious Identity and the Canadian Prairies* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2010): 45; Lindy Ledohowski, "'White Settler Guilt': Contemporary Ukrainian Canadian Prairie Literature," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 47, no. 4–5 (2015): 69. Scholars Tuck and Yang would also argue that this narrative framing is a move to settler innocence. Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, "Decolonization Is Not A Metaphor," *Decolonization* 1, no. 1 (2012): 13-17.

"colonial unknowing." According to Morton, "white settler family stories of merit-based property ownership – possession through acts of labour – must be dislodged… in order to undo the ways in which colonial unknowing allows white settlers to refuse their ongoing participation in inhabiting and profiting from colonized lands."[12] Though narratives of homestead heroism claim settler innocence by ignoring, overlooking, glossing over, silencing, or denying Indigenous presence, the evidence tells a different story. As I will demonstrate here, homesteaders actually were very aware that the quarter-sections they claimed were seated on Indigenous lands. Not only did they meet Indigenous people and see physical evidence of their occupation of the land, but they also talked about what they saw and recorded their observations. This evidence suggests that prairie settlers were aware that their arrival displaced and disadvantaged Plains Indigenous peoples.

I begin this chapter by looking at how the image of the Canadian west that was heavily promoted in the mid-to-late-nineteenth century relied on the "Garden of Eden" and "vanishing Indian" discourses to portray an "open" and "empty" landscape ripe for settlers' taking. Next, I provide evidence that despite this messaging, incoming settlers recognized Indigenous presence and history on the landscape and were aware – both because of the stories settlers shared and the physical evidence they discovered – that there were prior and competing claims to the land they occupied. Yet, settlers continued to support the tide of agricultural progress in the region as envisioned by prairie promoters. For many agricultural immigrants, returning to their homelands was not a viable option, either because they lacked the means or will to do so, or their homelands had become inhospitable due to limited opportunities or increased risks. Nonetheless, settlers continued to support and subscribe to this specific agricultural vision while ignoring or denying

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[12] Erin Morton, "White Settler Death Drives: Settler Statecraft, White Possession, and Multiple Colonialisms under Treaty 6," *Cultural Studies* 33, no. 3 (2019), 453.

Indigenous concerns. I conclude by suggesting that the homesteader narrative which prevails in Saskatchewan and prairie Canada more broadly should be revised to acknowledge that, upon arrival, settlers understood that the Canadian west was "open" but not "empty."

The Vanishing Indian and the Garden of Eden: Promoting the Canadian Prairies

On September 3, 1882, twelve-year-old Charles Davis of Dorset, England, arrived in Saskatchewan.[13] Charles later recalled that his family left England because his father, who "wanted land," had seen a railroad advertisement for the Canadian prairies.[14] Starting in the early 1880s, the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR), the Canadian government, and privately operated Canadian colonization companies began publishing pamphlets and booklets promoting settlement in prairie Canada. They soon added colourful posters portraying Canada's prairie region as an agricultural utopia. One of the most famous of these posters, produced during the 1920s, depicted a white farmer looking over an image of golden wheat fields and an immaculately maintained farmyard, framed by the words "It's Mine" blazoned in large red print across the top.[15] Indeed, this "It's Mine" sentiment is a red thread running throughout settlement promotion materials published from the 1880s to just after the Second World War. Charles's father had good reason to believe that Canadian prairie land was his for the taking: this message was woven into the promotional literature and into the colonial mindset and legacy of the homestead period.

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[13] Saskatchewan was not a province until 1905. Prior to 1905, the region discussed in this thesis (southern Saskatchewan) was a district called Assiniboia. For simplicity, I use Saskatchewan to refer to any area that is currently understood as being within the province of Saskatchewan.

[14] Charles Davis, General Pioneer Experiences Questionnaire, page 3, Pioneer Questionnaires Fond, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, SX 2.370.

[15] Canadian National Railways, "It's Mine! Canada - The Right Land for the Right Man. Canadian National Railways - The Right Way!" Glenbow Archives Poster Collection, 1920-1935, ref. no. 1338. The Canadian National Railway was established after the First World War and collaborated with the Canadian government and the CPR in promotional settlement campaigns.

Although Canadian colonization companies were only marginally effective at securing actual settlers for the west (less than ten percent of prairie settlers took up company land), they nonetheless contributed to the overall success of the resettlement project by spreading news about the Canadian prairies in the promotional literature they produced.[16] Like the CPR and the Department of Agriculture, colonization companies were intent on promoting a fertile, utopian image of the Canadian west.[17] Early promotional literature targeted settlers from Britain and the United States, as well as Canadians who lived in Ontario, Quebec, and in the Atlantic region. Scholar Andre Lalonde found that one colonization company alone printed and distributed over sixty thousand pieces of promotional literature in Canada, the United States, and the British Isles, along with funding public lectures and agents to help arrange travel for prospective settlers.[18] Promotion of the Canadian west in eastern-European countries, notably Ukraine and Austria, did not begin until the last few years of the nineteenth century, led in part by Dr. Josef Oleskow, who promoted the Canadian prairies with literature written in Ukrainian. Oleskow died in 1900 and is credited for bringing news of the "free land" in western Canadian to Ukrainians, particularly those in Galicia, who would then come to Canada by the thousands in the early years of the twentieth century.[19] The promotional program that colonization companies and individuals, like Oleskow, ran complemented Minister of the Interior Clifford Sifton's immigration policy and campaign. This policy and campaign were ultimately successful as from 1900 to 1910 there were

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[16] Historian Theodore Binnema points out that this promotional literature may not have played a significant role in immediately attracting high numbers of prospective homesteaders to prairie Canada. However, the promotional materials were successful at communicating the idealized image for the prairies and communicating that the Canadian west was "open" for settlement. Theodore Binnema, "'A Feudal Chain of Vassalage': Limited Identities in the Prairie West," in *Immigration and Settlement, 1870-1939,* ed. by Gregory P. Marchildon, (Regina: University of Regina Press, 2009): 159.

[17] A. N. Lalonde, "Colonization Companies in the 1880's," *Saskatchewan History* 24, no. 3 (1971), 106.

[18] Lalonde, 106.

[19] Orest T. Martynowych, *Ukrainians in Canada: The Formative Period, 1891- 1924* (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 1991): 61-64.

more homestead entries into the North-West then the total number of entries made in the nineteenth century, and three of every five were filed in Saskatchewan.[20]

Responses to the Pioneer General Questionnaire conducted in the 1950s show how successful the promotional pamphlets and booklets had been in spreading news – and in tandem, the ideal agricultural image – of western Canada's land settlement opportunities. As explained above, Charles Davis's family came to Whitewood, Saskatchewan, from Dorset, England, after reading a railway advertisement. Similarly, Augustus Long was born in England and came to the Kelliher district because of a railway advertisement. In 1903, at nineteen years of age, James Cooper of Seabridge, England also arrived in the Kelliher area after seeing an exhibition and reading literature published by the Canadian Department of the Interior.[21] Susan and George Tucker came to Craik from Minnesota after reading about the Canadian west in promotional pamphlets.[22] Alice Geddes's father brought his family to the Grenville area in 1882 after also reading about the region in promotional literature.[23] These examples suggest that promotional literature was indeed influential – perhaps more than some historians have acknowledged – and that the messaging prospective settlers saw quite literally moved them, and continued to resonate in their memories long after they had settled in prairie Canada.

That promotional literature celebrated the Canadian prairies in glowing and often exaggerated terms has been well established in scholarship on this topic, and a few examples

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[20] Saskatchewan's high settlement rate of three-to-five was continuous from 1906 to 1911, during Frank Oliver's term in office as Minister of the Interior. Waiser, *A New History,* 59. Lewis Thomas also notes that the first decade of the twentieth century saw a population growth in the North-West from 419,000 to 1,328,000. Lewis H Thomas, "A History of Agriculture on the Prairies to 1914," in *Agricultural History,* ed. by Gregory P. Marchildon, (Regina: University of Regina Press, 2011): 15.

[21] Augustus B. Long, General Pioneer Experiences Questionnaire, page 3, Pioneer Questionnaires Fond, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, SX 2.539; James Cooper, General Pioneer Experiences Questionnaire, page 3, Pioneer Questionnaires Fond, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, SX 2.683.

[22] Tucker, General Pioneer Experiences Questionnaire, page 3.

[23] Alice Geddes, General Pioneer Experiences Questionnaire, page 3, Pioneer Questionnaires Fond, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, SX 2.367.

from the primary sources demonstrate the extent of this hyperbole. The Provident and Commercial Land Company wrote in 1883, for example, that an "immense area of fertile land… a country teeming with richness" surrounded Regina.[24] In 1892, the CPR claimed to tell "the Truth" that "nowhere else in the world to-day is there such a quantity of rich arable land open for settlement, so blessed by nature with all the capabilities of marvellous richness and wonderful production, as is found here in western Canada."[25] In 1910, the CPR booklet, *Highway to the Empire,* claimed, "there seems to be no limit to the expectations that may reasonably be formed… [The land is] found to be capable of producing full crops, and of providing richer opportunities than can be found elsewhere."[26] This messaging remained consistent throughout the thirty-year homesteading period: Canada was offering prospective farmers an exceptional opportunity to plant themselves on fertile soil.

The emphasis on the Canadian prairies' fertile economic and social potential produced an expectation for the landscape which charged incoming settlers with the impossible task of creating a "Garden of Eden" on the Canadian prairies. As historians Doug Owram, Chris Kitzan and R. Douglas Francis explain, the Canadian prairies became an imagined "Garden of Eden" and Promised Land which promoted the lore that hardworking settlers could achieve entry into an agricultural paradise.[27] As historian David Jones explains, promotional literature presented the

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[24] Provident and Commercial Land Company, *The Regina District and the Lands of the Provident and Commercial Land Co., Limited: A Glance at the Greatest Wheat Producing Lands within the Fertile Belt of the North-West,* 1883, Archives of Ontario digitized by Canadiana, Monographs Collection, no. 88954, page 19.

[25] Canadian Pacific Railway, *Western Canada: Free Homes for all in the Great Provinces of Manitoba, Assiniboia, Saskatchewan and Alberta*, 1892, Adam Shortt Library of Canadiana, University of Saskatchewan digitized by Sask. History Online, no. FC3204.1, page 7.

[26] Canadian Pacific Railway, *Western Canada: The Highway of the Empire*, 1910, Adam Shortt Library of Canadiana, University of Saskatchewan digitized by Sask. History Online, FC3234.1, page 10.

[27] For more on how the Canadian prairies were promoted as an agriculture paradise, or "Garden of Eden," see: *The Prairie West as Promised Land,* ed. by R. D. Francis and Chris Kitzan, (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2007), esp., Bill Waiser, "'Land I Can Own: Settling in the Promised Land," 155- 176 and Doug Owram, "The Promise of the West as Settlement Frontier," 3-28; Doug Owram, *Promise of Eden: The Canadian Expansionist Movement and the Idea of the West, 1856-1900,* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980); *Challenging Frontiers: The Canadian West,* ed. by Lorry W. Felske and Beverly Jean Rasporich, (Calgary:

west as an Eden as a "given state of affairs" whereas popular agricultural news presses at the time marketed the Eden as "more [of] an object to be sought, an ideal state that was merely possible."[28] This imagining of the Canadian west as a Garden of Eden and Promised Land was steeped in Christian symbolism which promised settlers – particularly British settlers – economic, emotional, and spiritual prosperity for "men of good muscle who are willing to hustle."[29] The narrative of the homesteading period became entrenched in a promise that the Garden of Eden awaited those who worked hard enough to transform the landscape from prairie grasses to crop lines, from cart trails to grid roads.

The Garden of Eden mythology was built on a foundation that presumed that Indigenous peoples had disappeared. Promotional literature produced images of the landscape transitioning from bison hunting grounds to wheat fields, from teepees to settler houses. A Canadian government booklet from 1899 included a photograph of a harvested field with lush wheat stacks stretching into the endless horizon with the caption: "where once the buffalo roamed."[30] The same booklet stated that "not long ago" the prairie was "home of the Cree and Blackfoot Indians" as well as "countless buffaloes."[31] This vague and passing reference to the history of

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University of Calgary Press, 2004), esp. R. Douglas Francis, "Regionalism, Landscape, and Identity in the Prairie West," 29-49; *The Heavy Hand of History: Interpreting Saskatchewan's Past,* ed. by Gregory P. Marchildon (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, University of Regina, 2005); Bill Waiser, "Our Shared Destiny? Saskatchewan in 1905 and 2005," *Acadiensis* XXXV, no. 2 (Spring 2006); David C. Jones, "'There Is Some Power About the Land' — The Western Agrarian Press and Country Life Ideology," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 17, no. 3 (August 1982): 96–108.

[28] David C. Jones, "'There Is Some Power About the Land' — The Western Agrarian Press and Country Life Ideology," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 17, no. 3 (August 1982): 103.

[29] Clifford Sifton quotes in D. J. Hall, "Clifford Sifton: Immigration and Settlement Policy, 1896-1905," in *The Settlement of the West,* ed. Howard Palmer, (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1977:), 75; and in Bill Waiser, "'Land I Can Own: Settling in the Promised Land," 159. For more on Sifton see also: David Hall, "Clifford Sifton's Vision of the Prairie West," in *The Prairie West as Promised Land,* ed. by R. D. Francis and Chris Kitzan, (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2007), 77-100. For more on Christian symbolism see the sources listed in previous note and R. D. Francis and Chris Kitzan, "Introduction" in *The Prairie West as Promised Land,* ix-xiv.

[30] Government of Canada under Minister of Interior Clifford Sifton, *Western Canada: Manitoba and the Northwest Territories, Assiniboia, Alberta, Saskatchewan,* 1899, Adam Shortt Library of Canadiana, University of Saskatchewan digitized by Sask. History Online, no. FC3204.2, page 7.

[31] Government of Canada under direction of Clifford Sifton, *Western Canada,* 16.

Indigenous use and ownership of this territory did not provide prospective settlers with much information on the subject. Indigenous peoples and bison were likewise perceived as "vanishing" from this landscape, so their legacy was of minimal importance.

The "vanishing Indian" discourse is based on the idea that with the tide of settlement, Indigenous peoples were going to disappear.[32] *The Canadian Indian* magazine published twelve volumes from 1890 to 1891 and was a strong advocate of the "vanishing Indian" narrative. At its peak, the journal had around three hundred subscribers and sent copies to non-Indigenous readers across North America.[33] *The Canadian Indian* summarized the "vanishing Indian" sentiment in 1890 by predicting that "like the buffalo and prairie fowl, the natives of the soil will give way to civilization and settlement."[34] The journal had a clear agenda which supported Indigenous assimilation while also conveying a sense of urgency to record the 'dying race.' The first volume stated: "Standing on the soil which [Indigenous peoples] inherited from their fathers, and which they no longer call their own, they are mute witnesses today of the overpowering strength of the white race."[35] During the homesteading period, the Pass System limited Indigenous movements, the Peasant Farming Policy limited Indigenous economies, Residential Schools worked towards Indigenous assimilation, disease and starvation harmed Indigenous health, and forced removal to

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[32] Sarah Carter notes that the government propelled this narrative by actively investing in ways to make Indigenous peoples disappear, mainly through "missionaries, schools, and agriculture." Carter, *Lost Harvests,* 23. Settler colonialism scholar Lorenzo Veracini also notes that settlers who subscribe to the "inevitable 'vanishing'" take part in a process of settler colonialism that uses specific narrative to justify settler land claims. Lorenzo Veracini, "Population – Transfer and Settler Colonialism" in *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview,* (New York, New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), 41-42.

[33] There were 272 members recorded in the June 1891. *The Canadian Indian,* ed. by Reverend E. F. Wilson and H. B. Small, June 1891 Issue, page vi, Published Items (Private) Fond, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, file R-E1549.

[34] *The Canadian Indian,* ed. by Reverend E. F. Wilson and H. B. Small, November 1890 Issue, page 35, Published Items (Private) Fond, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, file R-E1549.

[35] *The Canadian Indian,* ed. by Reverend E. F. Wilson and H. B. Small, October 1890 Issue, page 3, Published Items (Private) Fond, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, file R-E1549.

reserves furthered Indigenous displacement.[36] All of these were acts of colonialism purposely created and supported by the Canadian government to eliminate or contain Indigenous peoples, and to make occupied space appear vacant and ripe for the taking.

Charles Mann explains that the lands which Christopher Columbus and other early colonizers "discovered" only appeared "empty" as a result of Indigenous depopulation due to colonial diseases.[37] Mann, along with a growing number of archeologists and historians of North America, correctly argues that Turtle Island land "discovered" by European colonizers was not, in fact, empty. Nonetheless, European newcomers justified their claim to the territory from the fifteenth century onwards by insisting that the Indigenous population was insignificant, both numerically and culturally.[38] Canada adopted a similar strategy when it colonized the territory now identified as Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba. The federal government was well aware that diverse Indigenous nations continued to live in the region and claimed to have done so since time began. Minimizing the significance of their population, both numerically and culturally, allowed Canada to rationalize its colonization of the land and its peoples, and made it possible to envision a new future for the territory: one cultivated by farmers of European descent. Settlers were encouraged to see themselves as occupying Canada's empty land, rather than Indigenous peoples' homelands.

By imagining the agricultural potential of the prairies rather than addressing environmental realities and Indigenous occupation, Canada "discovered" the Promised Land: a mythical virgin landscape portrayed as a vast agricultural utopia in the promotional literature

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[36] For more on these topics see: Carter, *Lost Harvest*; Carter, "Two Acres and a Cow"; Barron, "The Indian Pass System in the Canadian West"; Waiser, *A World We Have Lost*; Waiser, *A New History*; James W. Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains: Disease, Politics of Starvation, and the Loss of Aboriginal Life* (Regina: University of Regina Press, 2013).

[37] Charles Mann, "1491," *The Atlantic Monthly* (March 2002), 43-48.

[38] Mann, 45-46.

published and distributed by the Canadian government, colonization companies, and CPR. When settlers entered the prairie landscape, they were expecting to discover the open agricultural Eden that had been promised to them. They soon realized that "open" and "empty" are not synonymous. Instead, setters who arrived on freshly surveyed parcels of land discovered evidence of both the past and ongoing existence of Indigenous peoples on the territory they claimed as their home.

"It Makes You Wonder": Landscape Awareness and Indigenous Presence

Historian Bill Waiser tells the story of two settlers, Perce and Lillian Turner, who arrived in Saskatchewan in 1906. In a discussion on how one *nêhiyawak* and three Assiniboine (Nakota) bands were relocated to reserves to open the land the Turners would claim near *mikisiw waciy* (Eagle Hills), Waiser writes, "Perce and Lillian were probably not aware of this history. Nor should they have been expected to know it. They had come West to start a new life, and for them and thousands of other settlers, the past was irrelevant."[39] Likewise, historian Frances Swyripa notes that most settlers did not "appreciate that their freshly ploughed field once held a Native summer camp."[40] If we accept these statements at face value – believing that settlers were not aware that their farms supplanted Indigenous peoples – then we cannot hold prairie settlers accountable for their participation in settler colonization. Portraying settlers as "unaware" or unable to "appreciate" that the land they were breaking had been navigated, used, inhabited, and protected by Indigenous communities prior to the 1870s lets settlers off the hook or even forgives them for playing an unwitting role in settler colonialism. This type of selective narrative is, as outlined by scholars Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, a way for settlers to claim innocence.

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[39] Waiser, *A World We Have Lost*, 623.

[40] Swyripa, 45. Historian Lindy Ledohowski also notes that incoming settlers did not realize that the "open Canadian prairie… was not, in fact, uninhabited." Ledohowski, 69.

By telling stories of their prairie settlement in selective ways – emphasizing their role as "pioneers" or focusing on the role they played in "breaking virgin soil," for example – settlers downplay or erase evidence of past or present Indigenous claims. Claiming ignorance is a way to claim innocence. This makes it possible for settlers and their descendants to escape "feelings of guilt or responsibility" while avoiding "giving up land or power or privilege" as a penalty or penance for their complicity.[41] Framing settlers as ignorant, and therefore innocent, means that turn-of-the-century homesteaders – be they fictitious characters in popular culture, pioneers celebrated in museums, or my own settler ancestors – cannot be held responsible as active colonial agents since they did not understand that their ability to homestead in prairie Canada was predicated on Indigenous displacement and oppression.

As attractive as it may have been for settlers and their descendants to claim ignorant innocence, a compelling body of evidence reveals that prairie settlers were aware that the land they occupied had been taken from Indigenous peoples who had hunted, gathered, cultivated, managed, travelled, and lived on it for a very long time. In fact, settlers' memories recorded in local history books, family history books and in the General Experiences and Folklore Questionnaires reveal an acute awareness of to whom the landscape belong(ed/s) prior to settlers' applications for land patents. Clearly, these homesteaders knew these stories, and it is disingenuous to pretend that they did not. They knew that their ability to claim homestead land was predicated on dispossession, relocating, restricting, or outright eliminating the Indigenous peoples who had a prior claim to the region. Some settlers celebrated the displacement of Indigenous peoples as a triumph; others demonstrated some sympathy but deemed displacement a consequence of progress; others still may have willfully ignored this part of the story. In any

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[41] Tuck and Yang, 10.

case, turn-of-the-century settlers did not focus on the role that they played in displacing Indigenous peoples: instead, they had a new part to play. Settlers were commissioned to render the prairie west into a Garden of Eden and to establish respectable society, modeled on Canadian (more particularly, British-Canadian) ideals. They would gain nothing from focusing on stories of the dispossession and oppression of Indigenous peoples; they had everything to gain from focusing on the stories the Canadian government and fellow settlers were weaving, from the legal fiction of land ownership to the heroism of farm families who triumphed over the land. Settlers clearly recognized signs of Indigenous presence and history on the landscape but persisted in creating their agricultural vision – striving to make western Canada a bountiful and productive farmland – as an act of colonizing the west and its peoples.

One way incoming settlers recognized Indigenous history on the land was through the identification and understanding of bison. Homesteaders arrived with the background knowledge to recognize evidence of bison and connect this evidence to Indigenous life and history, yet this evidence is discounted in favour of settlers' own agricultural agenda. For instance, a promotional booklet published by the Provident and Commercial Land Company in 1883 encouraged incoming settlers to search the landscape for existing bison trails. The booklet noted that bison trails could be a helpful sign on the frequently drought-stricken prairie for they led "from watering place to watering place."[42] The presence of bison trails, prominent enough in the landscape of the late-nineteenth century, is an often-overlooked part of the homesteader story. Not enough time passed from the disappearance of the bison in the 1870s to the arrival of settlers

[42] Provident and Commercial Land Company, 21. In this source, amongst others, it is likely that bison trails refer to both the trampled path a herd of bison would leave in its wake and, perhaps even more so, to the singular trail made by Métis hunting parties which followed the bison across the prairies.

in the 1880s for the natural prairie grasses to regrow and reclaim bison trails.[43] Homesteaders entered the region following these trails, reclaiming them as their own or ploughing over them.

From 11 April 1887 to 1 January 1888, fourteen-year-old Maryanne Caswell wrote her grandmother fifteen letters. As the eldest of six, Maryanne's letters recounted her family's journey west by train, then north by ox-and-wagon, family hardships, activities with her siblings, and the first few months on the homestead near Clark's Crossing, Saskatchewan. Maryanne's letters convey a sense of wonder, excitement, and astute understanding and observation of her surroundings. In her second letter, Maryanne wrote that on the train from Portage la Prairie to *môsocâpiskan* (Moose Jaw) she looked out the window expecting to catch a glimpse of bison, "but not a buffalo did we see."[44] When Maryanne entered the prairie region, one of her first expectations was for there to be bison on the landscape. Likewise, in her fifth letter to her grandmother, Maryanne noted that as the Caswell family's ox-and-wagon convoy neared *misâskwatômin* (Saskatoon) she saw something moving in the distance. "Buffalo?" Maryanne asked her father. "No," he replied. "Indians?" she asked. Again, her father answered no. As they approached, it became clear that this was her father's brother, Maryanne's Uncle Joe, coming to greet them.[45] Yet Maryanne's questions show that she was expecting bison and Indigenous peoples to be visible – not vanished – on the prairie landscape.

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[43] The decline of bison in the region currently identified as the Canadian prairies differed from bison decline in the southern Great Plains in the United States. For more detailed explanations for the bison decline see: Jeffrey Ostler, "'They Regard Their Passing as Wakan': Interpreting Western Sioux Explanations for the Bison's Decline," *Western Historical Quarterly* 30 no. 4 (Winter 1999): 475-497; George Colpitts, *Pemmican Empire: Food, Trade, and the Last Bison Hunts in the North American Plains, 1780-1882*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015); William A. Dobak, "Killing the Canadian Buffalo, 1821-1881," *Western Historical Quarterly* 27, no. 1 (Spring 1996): 33-52.

[44] Maryanne Caswell, Pioneer Girl, letters originally written in 1887-1888, transcribed for publication by Grace Lang in 1964, Published Items (Private) Fond, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, item R-E936, second letter. Maryanne uses Moose Jaw and Saskatoon to define her understanding of landscape, but I am favouring for Indigenous spellings to follow my methodological approach of using Indigenous place names where possible.

[45] Caswell, fifth letter.

Once the Caswells left *môsocâpiskan* to travel north towards their homestead, Maryanne told her grandmother about different features of the landscape, including how they came across a poplar bluff which "was broken only in places by buffalo trails and wallows. In these, the buffalo delighted to roll and dust themselves, or take a mud bath if it were wet."[46] In the same letter, Maryanne described a finch and expressed how she did not know the name of the unfamiliar bird, yet she knew enough to not only recognize a bison wallow but understand how it was used. In the following letter, Maryanne addressed how her family had moved onto a "much travelled trail" that ran from the elbow in the South Saskatchewan River to Batoche. While describing the trail, Maryanne explained that it was more worn than the one near *môsocâpiskan* and was made from the "many ruts of traders, buffalo hunters and generations of Indians."[47] Maryanne expressed not only a keen awareness of features in the landscape, but also an understanding of how they were created and that the trails themselves had a "generations" long history belonging to Indigenous peoples. This demonstrates that even children were aware that the landscape they had entered with their families was not empty.

Maryanne's letters provide insight into settler awareness from the end of the nineteenth century; however, settler memories shared in the 1950s Pioneer Questionnaires responses and in local and family history books also provide examples of this recognition. In her response to the Folklore Questionnaire, British settler Mary Archer acknowledged that on her family's land near Broadview "there is an old Buffalo Trail."[48] In a local history book, Mrs. E. E. Ismond shared memories of traveling to her family's homestead when she was a young girl. In Mrs. Ismond's words, "you can image our pleasure and amazement when we beheld the wonderful Qu'Appelle

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[46] Caswell, fourth letter.

[47] Caswell, fourth letter.

[48] Mary Archer, Pioneer Folklore Questionnaire, page 2, Pioneer Questionnaires Fond, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, SX 2.2540.

Valley with our beloved Qu'Appelle River winding along mile after mile with many paths made by herds of buffalo coming down to the river for a drink."[49] Mrs. Ismond claimed ownership over the landscape – "our beloved Qu'Appelle River" – and recognized that the trails she used to enter the landscape were the same ones created by bison.

Ukrainian settler Clara Hoffer recalled there being a bison wallow on her property in which her husband found a bison skeleton complete with arrowheads.[50] Clara, who arrived in the Lipton area in 1905 from Bukovina, also acknowledged that her land was a place where Indigenous peoples would gather and hunt together. Isabelle Rathwell (née Getty) was born in 1897 on a homestead northwest of *môsocâpiskan*. In her reply to the General Experiences Questionnaire, she remembered clearing the land of bison bones. In Isabelle's words: "many Buffalo bones were scattered on the prairies, when these early settlers came in. They would leave home with their waggon early in the morning, gather buffalo bones and on reaching town trade them in and buy groceries."[51] British settler James Craig could not recall if he found bison bones when his family arrived from England in 1910, but in his family history book he writes, "I can only presume so. There were photographs showing buffalo skulls, complete with horns, at the 'corners' of our farmhouse."[52] Likewise, Kay Martin who arrived in Craik from Scarborough, England in 1908, can remember a game of "house" she and the other children would play.[53] The children had constructed their "house" using leftover sod from a recently ploughed fire guard and

[49] AJ Garret and the Friends of the Motherwell Homestead, *Waiting for the Train,* Published Items (Private) Fond, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, item R-E3009, page 12.

[50] Clara Hoffer, Pioneer Folklore Questionnaire, page 2, Pioneer Questionnaires Fond, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, SX 2.2610.

[51] Isabelle Rathwell, General Questionnaire, page 8, Pioneer Questionnaires Fond, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, SX 2.575.

[52] *Craiglands, Saskatchewan 32-27-26-W3: The C.E. Craig family and their prairie homestead dream 1910-1921*, Published Items (Private) Fond, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, item PI-41, page 29.

[53] *Prairie Reflections: Pioneer Life, 1900-1930*, edited by Joan Olson from oral history interviews conducted by the Pioneer Oral History Association in 1980, Published Items (Private) Fond, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, item R-E2360, page 160.

used bison bones to decorate. "There were a lot of buffalo heads, skulls of them," remembered Kay in an oral history interview, later published in a local history book, *Prairie Reflections*. "So we gathered those up and we would have them for imaginary furniture really. We would have maybe three or four of those around our [house], you see."[54] While the discovery of bones would be easier to identify than trails or wallows, settlers still had to know enough about bison, an animal that most of them had never seen alive, to recognize the remains.

In the same publication as Kay's response, Russell McKenzie reflected on his homesteading memories. Russell was nine when he arrived in the Oxbow region with his parents in 1906.[55] Russell recalled how he knew many Indigenous peoples and how, as he got older, he became "conscious" of how poorly those living on the nearby reserve in Moose Mountain were treated. Russell remembered that when he was a child "there was all sorts of old buffalo heads, all over the place, that had been the food of Indians."[56] Russell may have benefited from hindsight as he recorded his homesteading memories seventy-four years later, but his acknowledgement that the bones he found as a child were the same ones that directly led to Indigenous starvation shows a keen awareness in the history of the region he had entered. While bison had been a source of Indigenous livelihood and connection to land for centuries, bison bones were now a form of settler decoration on their newly created prairie homesteads.

Bison bones, tails and wallows were not all that incoming settlers recognized. On the last stretch of trail before Clark's Crossing, Maryanne and her siblings "found several places enclosed with a ring of stones." Following further investigation, Maryanne wrote to her grandmother that they "wondered where the children were who had played house with these

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[54] *Prairie Reflections*, 7.
[55] *Prairie Reflections*, 132, 197.
[56] *Prairie Reflections*, 203.

rings. We had not heard a voice or seen anything from Buffalo Lake to Saskatoon."[57] Even if Maryanne was not aware how displacement took place, she was aware that Indigenous peoples had been removed from the landscape.[58] Maryanne's observation of how deserted and quiet the prairies were from Buffalo Lake to *misâskwatômin* (Saskatoon) shows the success of Indigenous displacement from the landscape and the failure of the mass settlement project in the late 1880s.

Once the Caswell family arrived at their homestead, Maryanne and her siblings began looking for "Indian relics." They found "Indian graves" six miles away, near the river, which had been "heaped with stone."[59] Close by they found several stone circles of various sizes, which Maryanne identified as an old camp and surmised that it must have been used "for some time" given that the fire pits were so deep that she could almost sit and hide within them. At this spot, she also found a knife which reminded her of her grandfather's dirk.[60] "Who has been here and lost this knife?" Maryanne asked her grandmother. Maryanne noted that the knife was still in very good shape and was lost recently enough that it was not yet rusting.[61] Again, Maryanne's comments suggest an understanding that Indigenous displacement was recent. At the same spot, the Caswell children found various stones with "grooves," which Maryanne guessed must have been "no doubt war clubs and hammers to sling from a strap."[62] The recollection of their findings in the Indigenous camp came at the very end of her tenth letter, which Maryanne finished by writing: "It makes you wonder about lots of things."[63] Perhaps Maryanne was wondering about the knife, or the stone rings which were no longer home to children; maybe she was thinking

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[57] Caswell, sixth letter.

[58] As discussed in chapter three, Maryanne demonstrates an acute awareness of the Indigenous peoples living around her family's homestead. Not only did she recognize signs of displacement on the landscape, but she also witnessed Indigenous displacement first-hand.

[59] Caswell, tenth letter.

[60] Maryanne uses the word "dirk," which is a type of knife or dagger.

[61] Caswell, tenth letter.

[62] Caswell, tenth letter.

[63] Caswell, tenth letter.

about the graves or the stone hammers. Perhaps Maryanne was wondering about her place within this prairie landscape.

There is a chance Maryanne knew to recognize these signs of Indigenous presence and history because of her family. Her two uncles had already been living in the prairies for a few years prior to the Caswell family's arrival. It also appears that Maryanne's grandmother lived near Clark's Crossing for a period around 1885, as Maryanne mentioned that she and her siblings went to search her grandmother's old "sod shanty" to make "sure you did not leave any of the pictures you had hidden from the rebels two years ago."[64] Perhaps her uncles or her grandmother had already told Maryanne about bison wallows and trails and about Indigenous graves, stone circles, and hammers. If this is the case, it still means that the adults in Maryanne's life would have had to have known enough to recognize what all these signs were in order to teach Maryanne. Either way, the Caswells were aware that they were not entering an "empty" landscape.

Just as Maryanne Caswell and her siblings went looking for "Indian relics," so too did others. In the Folklore Questionnaire, Ella Otterson, who settled near Shaunavon, shared that "there are many teepee rings, almost any high point of land is covered with them, at one time there were many signs of Indians graves such as beads, clothing, and other articles, but are all gone now."[65] Ella goes on to describe other attributes near her family's homestead, including R.C.M.P stone markers and various "Indian trails" that led between forts, reserves, and across the French Man River, all of which were now just "another man-made landmark the settlers destroyed."[66] Similarly, in his family history book, James Craig recalled his family's homestead:

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[64] Caswell, sixth letter.

[65] Ella Otterson, Pioneer Folklore Questionnaire, page 2, Pioneer Questionnaires Fond, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, SX 2.2562.

[66] Otterson, Pioneer Folklore Questionnaire, 2.

> Our only evidence of Indians was in the pasture... Here was several teepee rings of stones… the stones had already retreated into the soil and were scarcely visible, suggesting that they were put there by a migrating family about 25 or 35 years before we arrived; that is, before 1885, and perhaps before 1875, which was when the buffalo apparently vanished from the plains.[67]

James's memory shows how the Craig family had knowledge what teepee rings were and how Plains Indigenous peoples followed bison prior to entering the landscape. The Craigs understood enough to recognize evidence of Indigenous life and displacement on their homestead.

Other settler memories reveal a more complex recognition. William Prescott, who answered the Folklore Questionnaire, was nineteen in 1906 when he arrived in the Willow Bunch area from England. When asked if he recalled any man-made features on the land, William wrote that "when we came the country had many Indian rings… but those have all disappeared."[68] Yet, when answering if he knew any stories about anyone who had "once lived where you do," William replied, "nobody lived here before we did."[69] William seems to have subscribed to the "vanishing Indian" trope as he was aware of Indigenous presence on the landscape, but he only recognized Indigenous presence as something belonging to the past.

While it is possible that settlers saw evidence of Indigenous camps and thought they were comparable to ruins, it is just as likely, if not more so due to how recent and ongoing Indigenous displacement was during the homesteading period, that settlers understood this as evidence of displacement.[70] As discussed in length in chapter three, settlers were familiar with their Indigenous neighbours. For example, Charles Davis, whose father read about the Canadian west

[67] *Craigsland*, 29.

[68] George Prescott, Pioneer Folklore Questionnaire, page 2, Pioneer Questionnaires Fond, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, (S)X 2.2566.

[69] Prescott, Pioneer Folklore Questionnaire, 4.

[70] More on this in chapter three.

in a promotional pamphlet, noted that they "met lots of Indians as soon as we arrived."[71] Likewise, upon arriving in *môsocâpiskan* in 1887, Maryanne Caswell wrote to her grandmother that "on the rise above the creek we saw our first Indian camp of teepees. We had permission to go to them. I was disgusted with the dirt but we seemed to amuse them for they smiled and laughed."[72] Settlers arrived in an Indigenous landscape where Indigenous people were present and visible.[73]

The Task of Taming: the "Inevitable" Change of Prairie Landscape

Aligning with the dominant colonial thought of the day, settlers likely believed bison extinction and Indigenous displacement were necessary precursors to agricultural development. While the evidence demonstrates settlers may not have thought critically about Indigenous displacement as they adopted homestead land, they were certainly conscious of it. Nonetheless, they persisted in their efforts to tame and transform the prairie to emulate the pictures painted by literature promoting the prairies to prospective settlers. The west as the Promised Land was an imagined ideal that could be achieved only by breaking and manipulating the physical prairie landscape into an agricultural vision. Therefore, while settlers recognized Indigenous displacement, presence, and history on the landscape, settlers still turned their attention to cultivating an agricultural vision of the prairie west as a promised land.

The narratives of Indigenous displacement have been removed from private and public homesteading stories. Indigenous displacement and settler arrival become standalone stories instead of deeply interconnected histories. Narratives of rightful settler placement on "open" and "empty" lands are, following Thomas King's framing, "loose in the world."[74] The assumption

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[71] Davis, General Experiences Questionnaire, 4.
[72] Caswell, second letter.
[73] More on this in chapter three.
[74] Thomas King, *The Truth About Stories,* (Toronto: Dead Dog Café, 2003), 10.

that incoming settlers were unaware of the prairies' recent colonization history makes it possible to argue that individual homesteaders were ignorant of their role and cannot possibly be found responsible for acts of settler colonialism. However, settlers did show some level of awareness and proceeded to tame the land and subject it to their will and vision regardless. Instead of supporting a claim of settler innocence, these stories can be repositioned and recognized as stories about acts of settler colonialism, so that settlers are not automatically let off the hook and forgiven for their role in colonizing the west. As *nêhiyawak* scholar Margaret Kovach writes, "story is experience held in memory and story is the spark for a transformative possibility in the moment of its telling."[75] The way the story is told – how it is framed, what is included and what is not – has the power to change the way people think with history. The act of storytelling and story sharing is, according to Kovach, the way towards decolonization.[76] Just as early settlers were charged with the task of transforming the prairie, so must we now be charged with the task of transforming how homesteader stories are told.

The Sharpe family home my mom and I were hoping to discover no longer exists in the way we imaged it. But the legacy of their arrival is still visible in the crop lines, it is nailed to the soil with the metal anchors of oil donkeys, it is whispering through the brush of a once treeless landscape. Before my mom and I drove north of Frobisher, before we stood on the overgrown dirt road, and before we realized that road was the only remaining feature of the Sharpe's vanishing homestead, we had stopped at the church yard on the edge of town. The church is gone; only the front steps remain. An unruly caragana sprout had broken through the concrete

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[75] Margaret Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 49.

[76] Kovach, 52.

and the old church bell was perched on the top of the stairs.[77] These ruins are only partially visible through the overgrown lilac bush. I crawled through the fading purple petals to look at the bell. It seemed lonely and out of place on the landing of a staircase that no longer led to the Promised Land. For a moment, I thought about what the bell would have sounded like when it was in the steeple. I thought about the legacy of crop rows and the homestead house I had hoped to find. Like Maryanne Caswell did when contemplating evidence of Indigenous homes, I wondered. The story of colonization in the prairie west is not really about populating an empty land and building a new society on top of it: it is about settlers who discovered bison bones and Indigenous homes, recognized them as such, and ploughed them under.

[77] For more on caragana's role in transforming the prairie landscape and furthering the Homesteader Hero Myth, see chapter two.

Chapter Two:
Staging Settler Colonialism: Constructing a Sense of Settler Belonging

Buffalo child that was brought up by buffalo, raised by buffalo, as a child that was lost on the Prairies a long time ago as a group of people travelled. He thought he was a buffalo. He didn't realize until he got bigger, and he seen a reflection of himself as they were drinking water, that he looked a lot different than the buffalo. Using buffalo talk, he asked his father how come he looked so different. His father told him that he was actually a human being they had raised from the young, from being a young child, they raised him as a buffalo, they had found him and raised him as a buffalo. With that discontent he had, his father told him you're free to go if you want to look for your human being relatives, go ahead. That's what he did. He left and he journeyed out and he found people. He couldn't talk Plains Cree, though, so he had a hard time adapting to learning the language, but everybody spoke it so it didn't take him too long to learn Plains Cree. He wasn't very happy a lot of times, seeing all the buffalo hides and the buffalo meat. He'd never eat the buffalo, his brothers and sisters, his relatives. After a while, he did have a family with the people, he had children and offspring, but he decided to leave and join the buffalo again. That's when, later on, he turned into a buffalo, an actual buffalo. And he turned after that into a stone of the sitting buffalo, and that's the stone that was there. That's a sacred story of the Cree. It goes a long time into the past.[1]

nêhiyaw Elder Barry Ahenakew

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In the 1970s, my grandparents purchased an abandoned barn south of *môsocâpiskan* (Moose Jaw) and moved the loft over two hundred kilometres north to the shores of the recently created Lake Diefenbaker. Over the next few years, they renovated the barn loft into a family cottage and their place of retirement. For over forty years, the cottage was the Saas family home. While my grandparents renovated, dug a well, and planted elms, a community grew around them. Roads were graveled. Cottages popped up, and poplar, caragana, and pine tree windbreaks were established. In 1980, the Resort Village of Mistusinne was formed just south of Elbow. It is

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[1] Quote taken from Barry Ahenakew sharing with reporter Hannah Spray of the *StarPhoenix*, reprinted digitally in *The National Post*. Told in more detail here: "The Story of Buffalo Child Stone," interviewed by Saskatchewan Archeology Society in 2012, transcribed by Saskatchewan Archeology Society in July 2021, https://thesas.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/buffalo-child-stone.pdf. There are many versions of *paskwâw-mostos awâsis* (Buffalo Child) and the story of *mistasiniy*. *Nêhiyaw* scholar Neal McLeod referenced the story of *paskwâw-mostos awâsis* as told by Stan Cutherland of Little Pine Reserve, Alexander Wolfe of Sakimay Reserve, Gabriel Crow Buffalo of Daystar Reserve, and Henry Cardinal of Saddle Lake Reserve, Alberta, all of which differ in the details from Ahenakew's telling. However, all the stories, as noted by McLeod, reflect "the most treasured values of Cree culture." Neal McLeod, *Cree Narrative Memory: From Treaties to Contemporary Times* (Saskatoon, Saskatchewan: Purch Publishing Ltd., 2007), 21-23.

here, in the backyard shadow of an early twentieth-century loft, that my memory of family stories is strongest. In the midafternoon summer heat, we would encircle the unlit firepit and pass around bug spray. When the temperature finally dropped after dusk, we would build a fire and crawl under blankets. My grandparents have always been storytellers. And anyone who found themselves in an old beach chair around the Saas family fire on a summer night would settle in for a long listen. We were home.

At the elbow of the South Saskatchewan River, roughly twenty kilometres south of what settlers identify as the village of Elbow, was a 400-ton rock known in *nêhiyawêwin* (Cree) as *mistasiniy*.[2] *Mistasiniy* is the resting spirit of *paskwâw-mostos awâsis (*Buffalo Child). *Mistasiniy* is a *mistasiniyak*, a place associated with "big stone" or grandfather stories.[3] *Nêhiyaw* scholar Neal McLeod explains *mistasiniyak* or "grandfather stones" as "key markers in the landscape and important places for Indigenous people to have ceremonies and pray."[4] In an oral history conversation with the Saskatchewan Archeology Society, *nêhiyaw* Elder Barry Ahenakew shares the story of *paskwâw-mostos awâsis* and explains how *mistasiniy* is more than an Indigenous place of traditional and cultural significance. It is also a sacred space for story sharing.[5] When Barry was a young boy, his grandparents brought him to The Elbow.[6] "They made me sit there and listen," recalls Barry, "and they're talking with… the old men and the old ladies… they're talking about what they heard in the past, the history, that oral history that's been passed on."[7]

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[2] *Mistasiniy* also commonly referred to as mistaseni or, when anglicized, Mistusinne Rock.
[3] McLeod, 19.
[4] McLeod, 19.
[5] For more on *paskwâw-mostos awâsis*, please see complete transcription of Ahenakew's oral history interview with Saskatchewan Archeology Society.
[6] The transcript uses capitals on The Elbow – referring to the elbow in the south Saskatchewan River – indicating the emphasis Barry must have placed on The Elbow as being a place (as a proper noun) rather than just a geological feature in the landscape.
[7] Ahenakew, 3.

Mistasiniy is now infamous in settler narratives about prairie transformation for another reason: The 1967 South Saskatchewan River Dam project.[8] This long-awaited large-scale hydro project was designed to provide hydroelectricity and irrigation to farmland. A portion of the *kâ-têpwêwi-sîpîy* (Qu'Appelle River Valley) was dammed and flooded to create Lake Diefenbaker, which would sustain the hydro-plant at the Gardiner Dam. *Mistasiniy* was in the way. Despite widespread protest from Indigenous peoples, the Saskatchewan and Canadian governments insisted that *mistasiniy* be removed to make way for the lake. The intention was to break *mistasiniy* into smaller pieces to be reassembled as a monument elsewhere. On 1 December 1966, dynamite was strapped to the rock. The fuse was lit and when the dust settled, *mistasiniy* was destroyed.[9] A piece of *mistasiniy* now sits at the edge of the marina in Elbow, while other shards were used in a memorial for *pîhtokahanapiwiyin* (Chief Poundmaker) on the Poundmaker Cree Nation reserve. The rest of *mistasiniy* and the spirit of *paskwâw-mostos awâsis* resides at the bottom of the lake. While we roasted marshmallows in the backyard of an old barn, my grandparents' stories and laughter mixing with cricket chirps, their Indigenous neighbours were fighting a losing battle against settler encroachment exemplified by the destruction of *mistasiniy*.

Settler colonialism, like an invasive weed, chokes out anything native that gets in its way, disturbing, displacing, destroying, and then establishing its own roots and claiming ownership of the territory, its resources, its culture, and its legacy. Settler colonial studies scholar Natsu Taylor Saito explains that "replacement… requires the elimination of that which already exists – indigenous peoples, along with their towns, farms, and hunting grounds; their names and sacred sites, their languages and cultures."[10] A grandfather stone of significant value to Indigenous

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[8] Bill Waiser, *Saskatchewan: A New History* (Calgary: Fifth House, 2005), 398-399.
[9] Waiser, *A New History,* 401.
[10] Natsu Taylor Saito, "Chapter Three: Settler Colonialism," in *Settler Colonialism, Race and the Law: Why Structural Racism Persists* (New York, New York: NYU Press, 2020), 51. Scholars Patrick Wolfe, Cole Harris,

peoples cannot stop a dam: settler society will detonate the grandfather and drown him in their man-made lake.

This chapter considers how settlers worked to (re)construct the prairie landscape. After acquiring land and being charged with the task of transforming the land into an agricultural vision, as explained in chapter one, settlers had to create narratives of home to compensate for a history that spanned decades instead of millennia. They did so in ways that undermined or detached Indigenous peoples from physical and symbolic markers of home that had been built over thousands of years. Settlers exercised their power – derived from the laws and institutions of settler society – to ascribe place names, build infrastructure, and establish cultural expectations that followed the patterns that were familiar to them. In so doing, Canadian settlers rendered unfamiliar landscapes "our home and native land." Once the physical construction of landscape was underway, settlers had to construct "origin" stories that countered or replaced Indigenous creation stories.[11] These settler origin stories would allow them to stake a permanent claim to the land, based in part on settlers' "history" on the land. In this manner, settlers endeavoured to go beyond "owning" the land now and in the future. The constructed narratives positioned them as *belonging to* the land to justify remaining on it as settlers. By claiming to have a "history" on the land, and by celebrating and reinforcing that claim by teaching it in Saskatchewan's schools and proclaiming it on special occasions, settler society attempts to eclipse the far longer and deeper historical legacy of the Indigenous peoples who have lived in this region since time immemorial.

Emma Lowman, and Adam Barker also argue that settler colonialism works to replace. Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (December 2006): 388; Cole Harris, "How did Colonialism Dispossess? Comments from an Edge of Empire," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 94, no. 1 (March 2004), 179; See all of Emma Battel Lowman and Adam J. Barker, *Settler: Identity and Colonialism in 21st Century Canada* (Winnipeg, Manitoba: Frenwood Publishing, 2015).

[11] Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, "Decolonization Is Not A Metaphor," *Decolonization* 1, no. 1 (2012): 6.

"Nothing But Blank Prairie": Constructed Landscapes

Upon arrival, homesteading settlers faced two truths: first, the physical landscape was drastically different than expected, and second, they were a long way from a recognizable home. Settlers needed to create emotional as well as physical ties to the land of their adoption to rationalize their decision to root into the land. The constructed landscape is settlers' attempts to reify their claim symbolically and physically to the land by naming places, and by forming a sense of home through the recreation of familiar society structures by building churches and schools, re-enacting cultural practices, and sharing stories, as historian Frances Swyripa illustrates.[12] While acknowledging that there are logistical and practical reasons for ascribing names to places and for building communities and businesses, this thesis focuses on analysing the cultural significance of doing so, and considers the ways in which constructing this infrastructure supported settler claims to the land and identification with the land. Settlers strove to mold the physical landscape into the desired, yet unattainable, mythical landscape of an agricultural utopia. In so doing, settlers constructed the landscape into a familiar home, displacing Indigenous peoples and their claims to the physical and ideological space in the process.

Place Names and Maps

When Mrs. Troyer arrived in the unfamiliar landscape of southeastern Saskatchewan in the 1880s, she named the nearby growing prairie town Alameda after her home in California.[13]

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[12] Frances Swyripa, *Storied Landscapes: Ethnoreligious Identity and the Canadian Prairies* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2010), 43-74.

[13] Fredrick Allen Hayter, General Pioneer Experiences Questionnaire, page 7, Pioneer Questionnaires Fond, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, SX 2.400; Mrs. James Bean, General Pioneer Experiences Questionnaire, page 7, Pioneer Questionnaires Fond, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, SX 2.523. Fredrick refers to Mrs. Troyer as "McTroyer," however both he and Mrs. Bean are likely referring to Hanah Troyer – originally from England - who appears in the 1901 Census along with her husband Christian who patented his first quarter-section in 1892. Census of Canada 1891, Provincial District N.W.T, no. 203, Assiniboia East, Oxbow Division No. 2, p. 13; Christian Troyer's Land Record, 25 August 1892, Land Grants of Western Canada, 1870-1930, Library and

Yet, renaming is neither passive nor benign. During the homesteading period, settlers like Mrs. Troyer sought to orientate themselves in an unfamiliar landscape by ascribing their own place names to physical locations to enhance their connection to and proclaim their familiarity with the land, thus enhancing their sense of belonging. Carrieval and Archydal are named after the area's first settlers, Carri Birch and Archie Dalrymple respectively.[14] Frobisher (or Frobyshire) was likely named after the famous British sea captain.[15] Ukrainian settlers in the Mamornitz district near Buchanan named their schools Czernovetz, Dobronovets, and Vaslovetz "after geographical place names in their homeland."[16] Naming locations after first homesteaders gave individual settlers, and those who knew them, a personal connection to the land. By naming sites after familiar locations, such as Mrs. Troyer's hometown or Ukrainian geographies, settlers were defining the landscape using words that were recognizable, giving a sense of comfort to an otherwise unknown landscape.

Yet, place names in the prairies have a long history and a complicated connection to Indigenous understandings. In the General Pioneer Experiences Questionnaire, homesteaders Walter Pennington and Charlotte Brice noted that Moosomin is "an [Indigenous] word meaning 'crossing of the ways'"[17] and Kutawa means "the end of the bluff."[18] While Lake Diefenbaker's

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Archives Canada, item 51301. There is also an interesting layering of colonialism happening when Mrs. Troyer named the town Alameda. The Alameda of her home in California was first named by Spanish colonizers before being brought into the United States. When Mrs. Troyer named the nearby up-and-coming town "Alameda" she was, unintentionally, participating in a triple layering of settler colonialism as Alameda went from defining space in a Spanish context to an American context to a Canadian context.

[14] Ernest Bishop, General Pioneer Experiences Questionnaire, page 8, Pioneer Questionnaires Fond, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, SX 2.426; Isabelle Rathwell, General Pioneer Experiences Questionnaire, page 7, Pioneer Questionnaires Fond, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, SX 2.575.

[15] *Frobyshire to Frobisher,* (Frobisher, Saskatchewan: The Frobisher Happy Gang, 1979), 3.

[16] Jennie Zayachkowski, *Mamornitz: A History of a Ukrainian Pioneer Community in Saskatchewan, 1900-1995,* published 1995, Published Items (Private) Fond, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, item R-E4015, page 10.

[17] Walter Pennington, General Pioneer Experiences Questionnaire, page 6, Pioneer Questionnaires Fond, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, SX 2.495.

[18] Charlotte Brice, General Pioneer Experiences Questionnaire, page 5, Pioneer Questionnaires Fond, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, SX 2.555.

namesake is Prime Minister John Diefenbaker, the Village of Mistusinne on the lake's shores is named after *mistasiniy*.[19] However, as Francis Swyripa explains, place names with roots in Indigenous histories have lost their "cultural context" and become appropriated by settlers.[20] While Walter and Charlotte recognize that Moosomin and Kutawa stem from Indigenous words, neither of them reflects on nor shows interest in how Indigenous knowledge shapes place names and land understandings. Walter and Charlotte nodded, as other settlers did and do, to the Indigenous history of the word, but adopted the word to use and fit within their own specific colonial understandings of space. The continued use of Indigenous names reflects settlers' first introduction and their subsequent adoption of the name in question rather than a deep appreciation for the cultural significance or meaning of the word.

Despite homesteaders' efforts to claim the land with their own words, they could not completely rename and replace the map, Indigenous peoples have a deeper and longer connection to the land, defined and understood through stories, memories, and kinship networks. When discussing Lebret, for example, Jimmy LaRocque, a Métis man from the area, described the space according to where other Métis families lived. Jimmy notes that geographical features were named after the families living in the area, such as the Morins Coulee or the LaRocque Coulee.[21] As Jimmy states, "as far I'm concerned, that's the community of Lebret."[22]

For *nêhiyawak*, stories have places and places have stories. Elder Isadore Pelletier explains that *mistasiniyak* "are listeners, they are grandfathers, they are older than… just as old

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[19] Waiser, *A New History,* 401.

[20] Swyripa, 45.

[21] The LaRocque Coulee was later renamed the CNR Coulee by Canadian National Railway agents. Jimmy LaRocque and Guy Blondeau interviewed by Sherry Farrell Racette, 10-11 January 2004, videotape two, Gabriel Dumont Institute, transcribed by David Morin.

[22] Jimmy LaRocque, 10-11 January 2004. For more on Métis understanding of land and kinship see: Cheryl Troupe, "Mapping Métis Stories: Land Use, Gender, and Kinship in the Qu'Appelle Valley, 1850-1950," Doctoral thesis, University of Saskatchewan, 2019.

as Mother Earth."[23] *Mistasiniyak* are places of stories whereas *mistasiniy* is a story of a place. *Nêhiyaw* scholar Neal McLeod continues, "the stone [*mistasiniy*] was a physical reminder of the relationship between people and the rest of creation, particularly the buffalo."[24] Plains Indigenous knowledge is fundamentally connected to the land. In this cultural context, milestones have stories. *Mistasiniyak* are "spaced equally all around," becoming physical identifiers of location on the prairies. Settlers can look at the landscape, see a creek with willow trees and a field of chokecherry bushes and name their schools Willowbrook and Cherryfield, but settlers cannot, and do not, have the stories or kinship networks to ground their place names.[25] Settlers' stories on this land are short; Indigenous stories on this land are long, stretching in some cases to when the world itself began.[26]

Informal and formal settler maps were redefined to reflect settler understandings, using constructed landscape features to define space. Settler map making, according to historical geographer Cole Harris, "introduced a geographical imaginary that ignored indigenous ways of knowing and recording space, ways that settlers could not imagine and did not need as soon as their maps reoriented them after their own fashion."[27] Settlers' maps helped to "locate themselves in [the] space" they were claiming.[28] For instance, a hastily drawn map of southeastern Saskatchewan from between 1900 and 1905 places Cannington Manor – a failed attempt to recreate a British aristocratic community – at the centre.[29] Cannington Manor's

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[23] McLeod, 20.

[24] McLeod, 23.

[25] Andrew Salamon, General Pioneer Experiences Questionnaire, page 6, Pioneer Questionnaires Fond, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, SX 2.963

[26] For an example of a map of Saskatchewan using Indigenous place names see McLeod, 108.

[27] Harris, "How did Colonialism Dispossess," 175.

[28] Harris, "How did Colonialism Dispossess," 175.

[29] There is no date on the map, but it is does include the 1900 CPR Line and the map is labeled "East Assiniboia, N.W. Territories," meaning it was likely created prior to the province of Saskatchewan's creation in 1905. I therefore put the dates of creation between 1900 and 1905. The map included in this file is a scan of the

location is anchored in the map by its rough relation to other settler created features: two parallel, horizontal lines labeled the "CPR Mainline 1882" and the "CPR Pipestone Branch line 1900" and two corner lines indicating where the Saskatchewan border meets Manitoba to the east and the United States to the south. One early settler at Cannington Manor recalled that on the White Bear reserve in Moose Mountain there was a prominent hill called "shputinah" and "dehert-nah" (Heart Hill) by local Indigenous groups.[30] Elder Josh Kakawaway from White Bear First Nations explains that "Heart Hill is a very sacred area… If you put your head against the hill you'd swear there was a heartbeat there."[31] While an important landscape feature to the *nêhiyawak*, *nahkawininiwak*, Nakota and Dakota, Heart Hill is not visible on the settler's map. The map relies completely on settler place names and settler constructed features of the landscape to define location.

Maps and place names are also aspirational, sometimes created to depict the type of society that should be constructed before such a creation was possible. From early spring 1887 to New Year's Day 1888, fourteen-year-old Maryanne Caswell wrote a series of letters to her grandmother in Ontario describing her family journey west and their first few months on their homestead at Clark's Crossing in southcentral Saskatchewan. After nearly two weeks of traveling through a "country [that] was vast and bare except for grass, with never a break," the Caswell family reached *misâskwatômin* (Saskatoon).[32] Maryanne told her grandmother how

original. "East Assiniboia, N.W. Territories," hand drawn map, Thomas Beck Fond, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, R-390, file 6.

[30] "Moose Mountain: 1892-1908," handwritten memory by Cecil LeMesuier, Thomas Beck Fond, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, R-390, file 6, page 2.

[31] White Bear First Nation, *Historic and Traditional Land Use Study,* Written Evidence in reply to Enbridge Pipelines Inc.'s Line 3 Replacement Program, 2015, Canada Energy Regulator, case C46-02, page 59-60, 103. Michael Lonechild echoes Elder Josh Kakawaway, 75. Interestingly, Cecil LeMesuier recounts this same story about the heartbeat in his handwritten accounts showing that Cecil would have had enough of a relationship with his Indigenous neighbours to learn the significance of Heart Hill. "Moose Mountain: 1892-1908," 2-3.

[32] Maryanne Caswell, Pioneer Girl, letters originally written in 1883, edited for publication by Grace Lang in 1964, Published Items (Private) Fond, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, item R-E936, fourth letter.

excited she and her sisters had been at the idea of returning to a city. When they finally reached *misâskwatômin*, the Caswell children were surprised to find only fourteen houses. When Maryanne and her sisters asked the adults in their traveling party where the city was, the answer was "on a map in the surveyor's office."[33] Maryanne wrote her grandmother, "what disillusioned, dejected girls we were."[34] Similarly, place names were also aspirational. *Oskana kâ-asastêki* means "pile of bones" and was used by the *nêhiyawak* to mark "the retreat of the buffalo from the land."[35] While early settlers and colonial powers adopted this label at first, they renamed the townsite "Regina" in 1883 after it became the territorial capital.[36] Colonial agents wanted to entice settlers to the region, preferably English-speaking British settlers, and *oskana kâ-asastêki* (Pile of Bones) was not an enticing name for the urban hub that agents of colonization envisioned for the North-West. They believed a city named after the Queen would be more appealing to the sort of immigrants they were hoping to attract.[37] Using regal place names such as Regina or Prince Albert, in place of *kistapinânihk,* was designed to show incoming settlers that Canada, and by extension the British commonwealth, had ownership and control over the space.

Houses, Churches, Cemeteries, and Cultural Traditions

In August 1980, Korchinski family descendants gathered at the original homestead of John Korchinski, who had arrived with his brothers to farm in the Ituna area more than seventy-five years prior. In an act of commemoration, the Korchinski family erected a plaque at the edge of John's old quarter-section. The inscription reads: "This memorial is dedicated to the

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[33] Caswell, fifth letter.
[34] Caswell, fifth letter.
[35] McLeod, 6.
[36] Bill Waiser, *A World We Have Lost: Saskatchewan Before 1905* (Ontario: Fifth House Publishers, 2016), 494.
[37] Waiser, *A World We Have Lost,* 494-495; McLeod, 6.

Korchinskis and also to all pioneers who settled in the Ituna-Hubbard area, built homes, schools, churches and towns, who plowed the virgin soil, made the land prosperous and who by their sacrifices and hard work helped build Canada."[38] This commemorative plaque serves as a marker to confirm connection to the land for settler families like the Korchinskis, and as a marker sharing how settler families constructed landscapes by building home. The Korchinskis, as many settler families do, were honouring the homesteaders who created a way of being on the prairie.

By constructing home onto the prairie landscape, settlers were attempting to create a permanent place, or way of being, on the prairie space. Transforming the prairies into a landscape familiar to settlers required making places out of spaces. Historical geographer Charles Withers argues that place is not "a fractional unit of space"; rather, place is "an idea, a concept, a way of 'being in the world.'"[39] Settlers arrived in the prairie space of western Canada and worked to create a home to secure their connection to the prairies. While the Canadian government set the stage for settler colonialism to unfold in the prairie region, and while British-Canadians ideals were presumed to prevail, settlers of other backgrounds also exercised what they saw as their right to restyle prairie space as "home" in ways that reflected their own culture and experience. As historian Orest Martynowych explains, peasants from Galicia and Bukovina drew their sense of culture, beliefs, and practices from their densely forested environment at the base of the Carpathian Mountains. By settling in the wooded park belt of the prairies, Ukrainian settlers were able to "create the illusion of 'at homeness.'"[40] Ukrainian settlers built "small houses with thatched roofs and packed earth floors" which resembled those found in Galicia,

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[38] Korchinski, Family Histories Collection, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, item R-E2700, page 1.

[39] Charles W. J. Withers, "Place and the 'Spatial Turn' in Geography and in History," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 70, no. 4 (October 2009), 640.

[40] Orest T. Martynowych, *Ukrainians in Canada: The Formative Period, 1891- 1924* (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 1991), 73; Swyripa also notes Ukrainians knew how to farm in wooded areas and chose to enter a landscape they were familiar with. Swyripa, 43.

furthering a sense of "homeness."[41] Likewise, British settlers were quick to replace log cabins or sod houses with "stone, brick and frame houses" that replicated the Victorian style of homes found in England and eastern Canada. Prairie historian Bill Waiser explains that the "elaborate Victorian" buildings helped give the prairie a sense of familiarity or a foundation of Britishness.[42] For example, when Archie Dalrymple arrived at 2-18-28 W2 in 1882, he lived in a tent, then constructed a V-joined shack before building a 12x16 house in 1886 and by 1903 he had rebuilt with brick.[43] By building and rebuilding home, replacing tents with wood and wood with brick, settler families created longevity on the landscape both literally with the use of more durable materials and figuratively with the construction of familiarly styled houses.

Building a house was not enough to create a connection to the land. Homesteaders also had to construct a familiar community. Ukrainian settler Mike Harbuz, who arrived in the Alvena area from Galicia, reported that his family and neighbours continued to speak Ukrainian long after settlement. They built community through church picnics, social events such as plays and concerts, and by establishing a Ukrainian library.[44] Similarly, a local history book for the Ukrainian settlement of Mamornitz near Buchanan in southeastern Saskatchewan states:

> Set in an environment with neither a culture nor a history, these settlers expressed their feelings and longings for their homeland by recreating a domestic landscape patterned after their native villages in Ukraine… their dazzling white-washed houses and thatched-roof log stables, their church architecture complete with a separate bell tower and an adjacent cemetery, their design of the white memorial crosses… together constituted a visible domestic element of the prairie landscape in which they felt at home. What we have here was a little replica of an old homeland in their new adopted land of Canada.[45]

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[41] George W. Simpson, "The Blending of Traditions in Western Canada, *The Canadian Historical Association* 23, no. 1: 48.

[42] Waiser, *A World We Have Lost*, 602.

[43] *From Buffalo Trails to Blacktop: A History of the R.M. of Caron #162*, (Caron, Saskatchewan: The Caron History Book Committee, 1982)*,* 176-177

[44] Mike Harbuz, *Ukrainian Pioneer Days*, Published Items (Private) Fond, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, item R-E974, page 1 and 17.

[45] Zayachkowski, *Mamornitz,*10.

Problematically, this book disregards Indigenous culture and history when addressing the background to the settlement of Mamornitz. Yet, this disregard also serves a settler purpose – it positions Ukrainian settlers as the first arrivals, fulfilling the heroic making-something-from-nothing narrative. This passage also indicates the type of belonging that was being constructed on the landscape as one that was visually familiar to Ukrainian settlers. Jennie Zayachkowski, who edited *Mamornitz: A History of a Ukrainian Pioneer Community,* concludes the book by praising the home, the church, and the school for being the heart of the community. According to Jennie, it is the "spirit" formed through these community establishments which were grounded in "hard work, prayer and tradition" that now ties people to landscape.[46]

Cultural traditions, as ways of being, offered incoming homesteaders a familiar practice which allowed individuals to feel connected to each other and place even when in a physically unfamiliar landscape. Ukrainian settler Katherine Semenuik arrived in southeastern Saskatchewan from Zastawna Village, Austria in 1911 at age eighteen. In her oral history interview, she remembered how Ukrainian traditions "did not change much when I came to this land."[47] Katherine described how at Christmas, her family would make the same twelve traditional dishes and all the Ukrainian families would visit each other following the same customs as they did "in the old country."[48] Katherine also talked about bringing a sheaf of wheat into the house which, according to traditional Ukrainian practices, was burned on New Year's Eve to release the souls of their Ukrainian ancestors contained within the wheat.[49] Whether the wheat was grown in the rusty soil of Galicia or in the black soil of Saskatchewan, it continued to

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[46] Zayachkowski, *Mamornitz,* 121.

[47] Katherine Semenuik interviewed by Z.K. Semenuik in Ukrainian, July 17, July 18, July 19, August 2 and August 23 of 1937, transcription provided in English, Oral History Collection, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, R-A337(A), R-A348 to R-A352, page 14.

[48] Semenuik, 14; Swyripa, 29.

[49] For more see, Swyripa, 70.

hold cultural significance. In choosing a particular physical landscape and continuing cultural traditions, such as burning wheat, Ukrainian settlers were able to recreate familiar customs and connections in a different environment.

Religious ceremony and tradition influenced settlers' community construction. For incoming settlers, churches created a point of familiarity and faith in an unfamiliar space. Community members from the Canora area researched and published a booklet on Uspenska, a local Ukrainian church. The cover of the booklet includes a statement emphasizing the importance of Uspenska: "Rural pioneer churches scattered across the prairies have been called 'historical landmarks of the plains.' Certainly, there is no more familiar sight in the countryside of Saskatchewan than the rural pioneer church. The church is as much a part of the prairie landscape as were the grain elevators and agriculture."[50] Churches, as places of culture, religion, and community, served an important logistic and symbolic purpose for settlers. As places of worship and community engagement, rural churches were constructed so settlers could feel a sense of spiritual and religious belonging to a place.

By offering funeral services, churches also functioned as places where settlers could be eulogized, buried, and mourned. As Swyripa writes, "burying their dead on the Canadian prairies" made it possible for settlers to "forg[e] deep emotional ties with the soil," which served to validate settler families' connections "to a specific place."[51] Settlers' churches and their cemeteries continue to serve as "historical landmarks." Settlers "assert their right to the land and its history" by celebrating and remembering early homesteaders buried in these community gravesites.[52] Cemeteries become sites of pilgrimages for settler descendants who could visit their

[50] Uspenska: A Historical Landmark of Saskatchewan, Published Items (Private) Fond, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, item R-E4743, cover page.

[51] Swyripa, 66.

[52] Swyripa, 201.

ancestors' final resting place and claim connection to the land. The cities of Regina, Saskatoon, and Moose Jaw all offer cemetery walking tours, the Riverlands Heritage Preservation region surrounding Blaine Lake and Marcelin includes six cemeteries on their driving tour, and smaller town or rural cemeteries are preserved, maintained, and honoured by local residences and by provincially funded organizations, such as Saskatchewan Genealogical Society (SGS). As the SGS points out, cemeteries become a "matter of community pride" and are physical documentations on the land celebrating and recording what is "sometimes the only tangible evidence" of early homesteading families.[53] In this way, cemeteries are not only locations to grieve and lay to rest loved ones, but also physical settings that settlers can use as proof of their belonging to the land.

If cemeteries act as record keepers, then cemeteries also show which records, which histories, settlers preferred to preserve. The commemoration of settlers buried in manicured cemeteries offers a sharp contrast to the unmarked graves that settler society (represented by both church and state) used for at least 751 Indigenous children buried on the grounds of Marieval Indian Residential School in southeast Saskatchewan.[54] In 1911, Métis student Louise Moine (née Trottier) arrived at the Lebret (Qu'Appelle) Industrial School. In her memoirs, Louise recalled how there was one year where every month a child from the girl's side and the boy's side of the school died of tuberculosis. Louise and the other students were told that the children had gone to heaven as if "this would somehow lessen the grief and sadness we felt for the loss of

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[53] Saskatchewan Genealogical Society, "Saskatchewan Genealogical Society Cemetery Program," webpage, https://www.saskgenealogy.com/index.php/cemetery/saskatchewan-genealogical-society-cemetery-program.

[54] The Marieval Indian Residential School operated from 1899 to 1997 in Cowessess, 140 kilometres east of Regina. In June 2021, 751 unmarked graves were found. Bryan Eneas, "Sask. First Nation announces discovery of 751 unmarked graves near former residential school," CBC, 24 June 2021, https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatchewan/cowessess-marieval-indian-residential-school-news-1.6078375; Alexander Quon, "A year of pain and healing since 751 unmarked graves announced at Cowessess First Nation," CBC, 24 June 2022, https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatchewan/cowessess-graves-first-anniversary-1.6495126.

one of our little schoolmates."[55] She remembered how the nuns would dress the girls who had died in light blue and how all the children would attend mass together before escorting the "simple handmade coffin" to the graveyard.[56] The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada found that there were 566 recorded deaths of Indigenous children at Residential and Industrial schools in Saskatchewan throughout the schools' 140 years of operation.[57] From June 2020 to March 2022 there have been an additional 878 unmarked graves found at the sites of former Residential Schools in Saskatchewan. Most of the graves belong to children.[58] Creating schoolyard cemeteries and leaving graves unmarked can be read as attempts to remove Indigenous presence and history from the landscape and shift the focus to settler spaces. In this way, homesteading cemeteries as sites of mourning, burial, and connection strive to replace Indigenous connections to the land by attempting to make not only Indigenous peoples' lives invisible, but to make their deaths invisible too.

Shelterbelts and the Park Belt

Homesteaders who arrived on the prairie not only sought to construct home on the landscape by creating familiar maps, building houses and churches, continuing cultural practices,

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[55] Louise Moine, *Remembering Will Have To Do: The Life and Times of Louise (Trottier) Moine,* Saskatoon: Gabriel Dumont Institute, Published Items (Private) Fond, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, item PI-130, page 48-49.

[56] Moine, 48-49.

[57] Truth and Recolonization Commission of Canada, *Canada's Residential Schools: Missing Children and Unmarked Graves,* The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Volume 4, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015, 20. For more details see entire report.

[58] The 878 total is as of June 2022 and are as follows: Marieval Indian Residential School (751), Fort Pelly/St. Phillip's Indian Residential School (54), Musowequan Indian Residential School (35), and Regina Industrial School (38). For more, see the interactive map from *Global News*: Rachel Gilmore, "Mapping the missing: Former residential school sites in Canada and the search for unmarked graves," *Global News,* 15 September 2021, https://globalnews.ca/news/8074453/indigenous-residential-schools-canada-graves-map/; Patrick White, "Fifty-Four potential graves found at two former Saskatchewan residential schools," Global News, 22 February 2022, https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-fifty-four-potential-graves-found-at-two-former-saskatchewan/#:~:text=A%20Saskatchewan%20First%20Nation%20has,Canada's%20treatment%20of%20Indigenous%20peoples. As well, see the work being done by "Settlers Take Action,' an initiative run by the On Canada Project: https://oncanadaproject.ca/settlerstakeaction.

and burying their dead: they also sought to construct a sense of permanence by physically manipulating the landscape. One of the ways in which they did so was by planting and removing trees. The National Film Board of Canada released a film called *Windbreaks on the Prairies* in 1943 that promoted the prosperous farmer narrative and provided information to farmers about how to obtain, plant, and care for trees in a shelterbelt.[59] The film praised early pioneers who "had seen the value of trees in home building on the prairies" because "they saw in trees something which would give permanence to the Canadian west."[60] While settlers on the grasslands strove to protect their homesteads with windbreaks and shelterbelts, settlers in the parkland belt fought instead to uproot trees to build their homes. In both cases, the physical landscape and environment of the prairies were radically transformed, and this transformation was seen by government authorities as an attempt to secure settler permanence on the land.

Along with replacing natural grasslands with agricultural crops, one of the most significant alterations to the physical landscape was the introduction of shelterbelts. By the early 1900s, the federal government was encouraging farmers to use shelterbelts as windbreaks to protect livestock and homesteads, for catching and retaining snow, and to define property lines.[61] In 1888, the Indian Head Experimental Farm, the first of its kind in Saskatchewan, was created to test the success of different trees and shrubs in the western environment. The CPR chartered trains to take farmers and their families from *môsocâpiskan* (Moose Jaw) to the Indian Head

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[59] Likely, this film was a response to the drought of the 1930s. *Windbreaks on the Prairies,* directed by Evenly Cherry, (1943, National Film Board of Canada).

[60] *Windbreaks on the Prairies,* 7:28-7:47.

[61] J. A. G. Howe, "One Hundred Years of Prairie Forestry," *Prairie Forum* 11, no. 2 (Fall 1986): 243; "Caragana" Gardening at USask article, College of Agriculture and Bioresources, University of Saskatchewan, 29 April 2021, https://gardening.usask.ca/articles-and-lists/articles-plant-descriptions/trees/caragana.php; Janell Christine Rempel, "Chapter Two: Shelterbelts in Agricultural Systems on the Prairies," in *Cost, Benefits, and Barriers to the Adoption and Retentions of Shelterbelts in Prairie Agriculture as Identified by Saskatchewan Producers,* Master's thesis, University of Saskatchewan, 2014; Joseph M. Piwowar, Beyhan Y. Amichev and Ken C.J. Van Rees, "The Saskatchewan Shelterbelt Inventory," *Canadian Journal of Soil Science* 97, no. 3 (September 2017), 433.

Experimental Farm for day trips in the 1890s.[62] While at the Experimental Farm, homesteaders learned about the best varieties of wheat to grow on the prairies and which trees to plant for protection.[63] In this way, Experimental Farms became places that promoted the idealized version of the prairies so settlers could learn how to transform the prairies. In 1906, under the direction of the Department of the Interior, the Indian Head Experimental Farm became the only tree nursery on the prairies permitted to distribute seedlings to the public.[64] That year the Indian Head nursery issued two million trees to settlers.[65] This means, assuming all the issued trees were indeed planted, that there were 4,000 kilometres of shelterbelt trees planted on the prairies in 1906 alone – presumably mostly in Saskatchewan, as that is where the nursery was located.[66] From 1892 to the mid-1980s there was an estimated 450 million trees distributed across the prairies, totalling 900,000 kilometres of planted shelterbelts.[67] This suggests a phenomenal

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[62] *From Buffalo Trails to Blacktop*, 218-219. In the General Experiences Pioneer Questionnaire, John Rathwell of Moose Jaw district wrote that one of his clearest memories was "going to see the Experimental Farm at Indian Head" as a young boy. John Rathwell, General Pioneer Experiences Questionnaire, Pioneer Questionnaires Fond, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, SX 2.474.

[63] *From Buffalo Trails to Blacktop,* Page 218 – 219.

[64] Howe, 245. In 1912 a second tree nursery was formed at Sutherland, Saskatchewan (present day Saskatoon) to help support the demand. Howe, 246.

[65] From 1925 to 2009, the six dominant species planted in shelterbelts were green ash, Manitoba maple, Scots pine, white spruce, popular, and caragana. For more, see: Beyhan Y. Amichev, Murray J. Bentham, Darrel Cerkowniak, John Kort, Suren Kulshreshtha, Colin P. Laroque, Joseph M. Piwowar, and Ken C. J. Van Rees, "Mapping and quantification of planted tree and shrub shelterbelts in Saskatchewan, Canada," *Agroforest Syst* 84, (2014): 49.

[66] According to Amichev et al, an average single-row 100-meter-long shelterbelt has 50 trees. This means that there would 4,000,000 metres for 2,000,000 trees. Since there are 1,000 metres in 1 kilometre, there would be 4,000 kilometres worth of single-row shelterbelt trees planted. This is assuming that all trees distributed by experimental farms and nurseries were going to use as shelterbelts, but there is no way to track this. Amichev et. al, 52.

[67] Howe, 247. For reference, an individual would have to drive to Calgary from Regina roundtrip 593 times to cover the total distance of planted shelterbelts.

According to Amichev et. al, an average single-row 100-meter-long shelterbelt has 50 trees. This means that there would 900,000,000 metres for 450,000,000 trees. Since there are 1,000 metres in 1 kilometre, there would be 900,000 kilometres worth of single-row shelterbelt trees planted. Again, this is assuming the trees were going to use as shelterbelts. Amichev et. al, 52; Regina to Calgary along Highway #1 is 758 kilometres. 900,000 divided by 758 is 1187 one-way trips, or 593 round trips.

amount of ecological and environmental change taking place in less than a hundred years on the once arid, treeless plains of southern Saskatchewan.

If shelterbelts gave "permanence to the Canadian west," then shelterbelts also were visual signs on the landscape of settler presence. At present, shelterbelts remain on the landscape as markers of deserted homestead, ecological change, and physical alterations to the prairie environment.[68] The most influential and identifiable plant that settlers used to create prairie permanence through shelterbelts is the caragana. Of the total trees planted in the prairies from the late-1800s to the early-1980s, over half were caragana.[69] Native to northern China, Russia and Siberia, caragana are now considered quintessential to the Canadian prairie landscape.[70] Caragana redirect wind patterns and control snow drifts, protect buildings and livestock, and ultimately provide a visible legacy of a settler-driven process to "shift away from grass in favor of trees and shrubs."[71] In 2021, an enthusiastic post about caragana from the University of Saskatchewan's College of Agriculture and Biosecurity begins, "we owe the caragana an enormous debt of gratitude. Most of us would not be here without these shrubs!" Caragana were introduced to the Canadian prairie with the arrival of settlers and transformed the structure of the prairie landscape while also fulfilling their role as windbreaks and shelterbelts to protect the homestead. Planting caragana, and shelterbelts in general, constructed a sense of settler place and permanence on their homesteads and, to a greater extent, on the landscape.

Settlers who arrived in the wooded prairie parkland belt as opposed to the grasslands were faced with the opposite task – clearing trees to construct permanence. On 19 March 1907, Andrew Salamon of Orstentmiklos, Hungary, applied for his homestead in the Ukrainian bloc

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[68] Waiser, *A New History,* 109.
[69] Howe, 247-248; Waiser, *A New History,* 109.
[70] "Caragana" Gardening at USask article, College of Agriculture and Bioresources.
[71] Courtwright, 161.

settlement between Melville and Yorkton. At the age of thirty-one, Andrew arrived with his wife and children.[72] In his response to the General Pioneer Experiences Questionnaire, Andrew wrote that when they arrived, the trees were "50 and 60 feet tall with not enough opening anywhere even to build a home. So I got to cut logs to clear a place where I could build, and in time the home from logs, sod roof, small windows, was built to house my family."[73] When asked what the most important change to the community had been, Andrew replied that the most significant change was seeing how the dense forested areas were replaced with farmlands.[74] Whether planting shelter belts or uprooting park belts, settlers worked to construct a physical and environmental landscape that created functional agricultural spaces, allowed them to root into the land as settlers, and served the homesteading project more broadly.

Settler Stories

The constructed landscape settlers strove to create through familiar social and cultural practices and familiar infrastructure and place names was not enough to justify remaining on Indigenous lands. Settlers had to create stories to accompany and rationalize the constructed landscape. Family and local history books serve to establish settler belonging through story. The local history book *From Buffalo Trails to Blacktop* for the RM of Caron opens with a dedication to the "courageous" homesteaders who "kept a belief in the land," to the "cheerful" women who "left comfortable homes to live in a tent or sod house," and to the couples who "[built] a church and school so they could nurture faith, honesty, and… education."[75] Beneath the dedication is a sketch of a highway stretching between two fields. The field to the left is a fenced pasture with bison walking over the hill and into the distance. The other field is unfenced with recently

[72] Salamon, General Pioneer Experiences Questionnaire, 2.
[73] Salamon, General Pioneer Experiences Questionnaire, 4.
[74] Salamon, General Pioneer Experiences Questionnaire, 7.
[75] *From Buffalo Trails to Blacktop,* 1.

harvested rows of wheat winding along in neat, endless lines. The land where bison once roamed freely is enclosed and replaced with unrestricted fields of wheat. The purpose of a local history book is to not only recount settlers' history and honour local families, but to create individual and community connections to the past. Emma Lowman and Adam Barker explain that arriving settlers were determined to "find a homeland" in Canada and to do so settlers had to "build a sense of belonging through social and political structure" and through "stories of personal and familial struggle and success."[76] Telling and re-telling family stories that focus on family members who first arrived on the homestead or the Canadian 'frontier' is a way for settlers to create belonging through an origin story in order to justify remaining on Indigenous land indefinitely.[77]

The settler "origin" story is very similar to the Homesteader Hero Myth.[78] It is, as scholar Sheelah McLean argues, a narrative that says "'we [settlers] built a life from nothing.'"[79] When reviewing the responses to the Farming Practice Pioneer Questionnaire, historian Sandra Rollings-Magnusson found that one participant wrote: "heartaches, backaches, hardships, loneliness all helped to make a district and home which we would never want to leave."[80] This "origin" narrative uses accounts of settlers' hardships to reinforce settler claims to the land: through their blood, sweat, and tears, they had conquered the prairie and therefore earned the

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[76] Lowman and Barker, 53.

[77] Lowman and Barker discuss how settlers create stories of belonging as a means of justification. Lowman and Barker, 58-61.

[78] As outlined in the introduction, the Homesteader Hero Myth relies on a narrative structure that is formed by mythical, physical, and constructed landscapes.

[79] Sheelah McLean. "'We Built a Life from Nothing': White Settler Colonialism and the Myth of Meritocracy," *Our Schools/Our Selves: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives*, (Fall/Winter 2018): 32; Sheelah McLean quoted in Erin Morton, "White Settler Death Drives: Settler Statecraft, White Possession, and Multiple Colonialisms under Treaty 6," *Cultural Studies* 33, no. 3 (2019), 440.

[80] Simeon Hiltz quoted in Sandra Rollings-Magnusson, "Frost, Hail, Prairie Fire, and Weeds: Families Harvesting Crops on a Saskatchewan Homestead, 1872-1914," *Canadian Journal of Family and Youth* 13, no. 2 (2021), 114.

right to own and belong to the land.[81] Thomas King explains that creation stories, or origin stories, have the power to define "how cultures understand the world in which they exist."[82] Settlers' "origin" stories about heroism and hardship provide a framework for settlers to (mis)understand their own place in history.

These settler origin stories position homesteading families on "the frontier" of western Canadian society.[83] The frontier setting functions not just as the outer edge of a space, but also as a time period during which the physical and ideological space transitioned from being Indigenous homeland to becoming Canada's prairie west, populated with the infrastructure and practices familiar to settlers.[84] As Hugh Ulmstead Rosison explained in his response to the General Pioneer Experiences Questionnaire:

> I do feel that I was very fortunate to have been raised on the 'Frontier,' a wilderness but for a few hamlets along a thousand miles of a single line of railway, to see the prairie west transformed into a rich agricultural and industrial empire, to see great cities and innumerable smaller, prosperous communities, where there had been nothing but blank prairie.[85]

Hugh feels part of Saskatchewan's origin story by having lived in the frontier – a period which Hugh emphasizes as a time when the landscape changed from "nothing" to a "rich agricultural

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[81] This narrative leaves out the settlers who left – who failed to break the land, establish a home and canceled land grant. However, I would argue, the lack of presence of these homesteader failure narratives is part of the Homesteader Hero Myth as well. Homesteaders who canceled land entries and left their homesteads are either mentioned in passing or mentioned in reference to the Great Depression, where economic and environmental issues are the cause of their failure on the land, not their own will power or ability. For more on the Great Depression's impact on settlers see: Curtis McManus, *Happyland: A History of the "Dirty Thirties" in Saskatchewan, 1914-1937* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2011) and Bill Waiser, "A Prairie Parable: The 1933 Bates Tragedy," *Great Plains Quarterly* 29, no. 3 (July 2009): 203-218.

[82] Thomas King, *The Truth About Stories,* (Toronto: Dead Dog Café, 2003),10.

[83] Settler origin stories as "creation stories" is challenged and discussed further in chapter three. For more on the Canadian frontier see Elizabeth Furniss, *The Burden of History: Colonialism and the Frontier Myth in a Rural Canadian Community,* (Vancouver, British Columbia: University of British Columbia Press, 1999).

[84] As historian George Stanley notes, eventually the frontier – as a physical space and a mental construct – "ceases to be such" as settlers reconstruct home causing the frontier to "[arrive] at a state of culture not far short of that of its mother country." Stanley, 107.

[85] Hugh Ulmstead Rosison, General Pioneer Experiences Questionnaire, page 0003, Pioneer Questionnaires Fond, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, SX.437.

and industrial empire."[86] This sentiment was well-summarized in 1884 by the manager of the Edgeley Farms, W. T. Jackson, in Fort Qu'Appelle who wrote, "two years ago you could travel for hundreds of miles without evidence of civilisation, and now the land is dotted everywhere with substantial buildings, [and] the houses of settlers."[87] Constructed landscapes not only change the physical landscape by breaking land and building houses, schools, and churches, but constructed landscapes also work to justify land claims by allowing settlers the chance to construct origin stories. These stories let settlers rationalize the breaking and building of the physical landscape, while also allowing settlers to feel as if they belong to the land.[88]

My Mountain, My River: Staging Settler Belonging

Nêhiyaw scholar Margaret Kovach wrote "we return to our stories because they tell us who we are."[89] I have spent countless afternoons with my grandfather driving from the Village of Mistusinne to the Gardiner Dam tourist centre for onion rings and a pop. Sometimes while we drove, my grandfather would tell me the story of the government officials who thought they could blow up and reassemble *mistasiniy*. But I had never given *mistasiniy* critical thought until the summer of 2019 when I was in England with my Indigenous London class. It was a humid, rainy day and my class had just arrived at the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich.[90] The curators of the Maritime Museum work closely with the Māori community in London. Before we

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[86] Although discussing the American Plains, Courtwright's research supports Hugh Rosison's claims about the "agricultural and industrial empire." As Courtwright notes, "towns and cities quickly multiplied in number and expanse, livestock took the place of bison as the dominant grass-munching animal, roads and train rails crisscrossed the ground, and, perhaps most notably, large-scale agriculture, involving some irrigation and extensive plowing, became the desired norm." Courtwright, 162.

[87] Richard Sykes, *Guide to the Qu'Appelle Valley, Assiniboia*, 1885, Monographs, Library of Congress digitized by Canadiana, no. 30718, page 25, https://www.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.30718

[88] Tuck and Yang explain that settlers "[adopt] the love of land" as a feeling to justify them "[belonging] to the land." Tuck and Yang, 15.

[89] Margaret Kovach, "A Story in the Telling." *LEARNing Landscapes* 11, no. 2 (Spring 2018), 49.

[90] Indigenous London was an undergraduate 300-level course offered through the First Nations and Indigenous Studies Department at the University of British Columbia. It was organized and led by Dr. Coll Thrush. We had two weeks of classes on-campus in Vancouver, two weeks of classes in London, England, and the last two weeks back in Vancouver. We were tracing Indigenous influences and resistances in the heart of the British Empire.

began our tour, we gathered for a mihimihi: a traditional Māori welcome that asks us to introduce ourselves by introducing our people, our mountain, and our river.[91] I stood, introducing my grandparents, and stumbling through my land claims: "my mountain is the Qu'Appelle Valley, my river is the South Saskatchewan." I sat with a sense of unease. At the end of the day, we were led to the large world map printed on the floor at the centre of the gallery. We were asked to stand on the place that we thought of as home. Curious onlookers from the nearby museum café watched as we scrambled, a group of twenty-something-year-olds trying to locate themselves. My classmates clustered mostly around the west coast, a couple of us finding home on other floor-printed landscapes. I stood with my toe on the oddly rectangular body of water in southcentral Saskatchewan. We were given triangular pieces of paper and wrote down the name of our sacred place, of our home. I wrote the name of the spot where I was standing, the place constructed from the *kâ-têpwêwi-sîpîy* and the *wâwâskêsiw-sîpiy*.[92] It is this storied landscape – the destruction of *mistasiniy*, the flooded valley, the irrigation project to sustain agriculture, and the physical alteration and manipulation of land – that I belong to.

Figure 4: View of Lake Diefenbaker from the Village of Mistusinne's beach. Constructed from the kâ-têpwêwi-sîpîy and the wâwâskêsiw-sîpiy. 2022. Personal Collection.

When I was in England, I visited the place of my family stories and identified home based on the memories of my childhood. I return now to a different, albeit connected, story on

[91] Also sometimes called a mihi, for more information see the University of Otago, Te Ao Māori, Mihi – Introductions, https://www.otago.ac.nz/maori/world/te-reo-maori/mihi-introductions/.

[92] *kâ-têpwêwi*-sîpîy is the Qu'Appelle River Valley and *wâwâskêsiw-sîpiy* is South Saskatchewan River.

the shores of Lake Diefenbaker. This time it is the summer of 2014. While I sat encircling the backyard fire with my family, a group of divers descended into the depths of the lake looking for the remains of *mistasiniy*. After nearly fifty years, *mistasiniy* was found. Joining the dive team was Tyrone Tootoosis of Poundmaker Cree Nation, the son of Wilfred Tootoosis, one of the determined advocates who tried to protect *mistasiniy* in the 1960s. After finding *mistasiniy*, Tyrone told Saskatoon's *StarPhoenix*: "I think the telling of the story is important, the sharing of what the rock means to our people – not meant, but means."[93] When elder Berry Ahenakew was asked about the dive, he said "even though… parts of it are underwater, the spirit of it is still there, the spirit of the buffalo child."[94] The landscape may change but Indigenous stories remain. The significance of *paskwâw-mostos awâsis* (Buffalo Child) retains a permanence that settler origin stories cannot touch.

Settler colonialism requires the reproduction of heroic homesteader narratives that erase, deny, or ignore the connection between settler constructed landscapes and Indigenous displacement. As Lowman and Barker explain, "we [settlers] create potent stories about the land – as sites of conquest, as hard-won property, or even emotional and historical attachments to these places that become our home. But these investments still treat places as territories or objects, not as alive."[95] The construction of Lake Diefenbaker, predicated on the destruction of

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[93] Reprinted from the StarPhoenix in: Hannah Pray (the StarPhoenix), "Remnants of sacred rock located in Lake Diefenbaker," *The Leader Post,* 27 August 2014, https://www.pressreader.com/canada/regina-leader-post/20140827/281496454460744; "In 1966, a sacred aboriginal rock was blown up to make way for a lake. Now divers search for the remains," *The National Post,* 27 August 2014 and (reprinted online) 24 January 2015, https://nationalpost.com/news/canada/in-1966-a-sacred-aboriginal-rock-was-blown-up-to-make-way-for-a-man-made-lake-now-divers-search-for-reminants. See also: ICT Staff, "Remnants of Sacred Rock Destroyed in the 60s Discovered Underwater," *Indian Country Today: Digital Indigenous News,* 27 August 2014 and (updated) 13 September 2018, https://indiancountrytoday.com/archive/remnants-of-sacred-rock-destroyed-in-the-60s-discovered-underwater.

[94] "In 1966, a sacred aboriginal rock… search for the remains," *The National Post,* 27 August 2014; summarized also in *The Leader Post* and *Indian Country Today: Digital Indigenous News.*

[95] Lowman and Barker, 53.

paskwâw-mostos awâsis, gives evidence of this.[96] Rather than recognizing and respecting the living legacy of this particular grandfather stone, settler society blew it up to make way for a lake, which they then named after a prominent representative of settler hegemony in Saskatchewan: a Canadian prime minister of German and Scottish descent.

[96] Lowman and Barker also use mistasiniy as an example of physical and narrative replacement and "erasing." Lowman and Barker, 30.

Chapter Three:
Spotlight on Settler Stories: Reframing the Homesteader Hero Narrative

When I was eleven, I found a manila envelope of Sass (Saas)[1] and Sharpe family documents tucked between my grandparent's photo albums. I spent the next few years returning to the envelope, poring over the names, births, deaths, biographies, and censuses. More than a decade later, these details led me to the Seagrave Church, to the Beaver Hills and Jedburgh Cemeteries, to a quarter-section north of Frobisher. In my mind, stories grew from the snippets I found in the records, shaped by family lore, embellished by my own imagination, and reinforced by heroic homesteader mythology that still prevails in Saskatchewan's public memory. Now I realize I had filled silences in my family's records with stories that reflected and reinforced the Homesteader Hero Myth. From my position now as a Canadian prairie researcher, I find it astonishing, perhaps even unsettling, to think I willfully placed my family as homesteading heroes without thinking critically about their roles in settler colonialism, about my own place within this history, or about how it is that I have come to call Indigenous land my home. It would be easy to chalk this up to childhood naiveties; however, doing so would only further the idea of settler innocence – that I am exempt because I was a child who did not know better than to idealize homesteaders. The stories I was told shaped my identity as a descendant of homesteading heroes. I now recognize

Figure 5: View from the edge of the Jedburgh Cemetery near the Sass Family's farm(s). Northeast of kaskitê-maskwa-maskosis, acâhkosa k-ôtakohpit, okinîs and pîhpîhkisîs. 2020. Personal Collection.

[1] My grandfather changed the spelling of his surname to Saas; however, most of the family goes by Sass. I will use that spelling (Sass) when referring to the family in general.

that key parts of the story were left out. My privilege as a settler descendant living in southern Saskatchewan rests on the dispossession and displacement of Indigenous peoples whose roots in this place run far deeper than mine or my ancestors'.

Settlers have suggested that since they were not aware of Indigenous displacement or oppression, they cannot and should not be held accountable for the effects of settler colonization on Indigenous peoples in the prairie region. Since the Truth and Reconciliation Commission exposed the extent to which settler authorities (the federal government and Christian churches, for example) effected assimilation and genocide amongst Indigenous peoples, more Canadians have been willing to (or forced to) acknowledge that First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples have experienced harm. Nonetheless, far fewer Canadians or Saskatchewanians more particularly have been willing to accept responsibility for *effecting* harm as agents of settler colonization who displaced Indigenous peoples by building homes in the prairie region.[2] Settlers claim that homesteaders did not know about acts of genocide, assimilation, and displacement, and were therefore innocent beneficiaries. However, family history books and the Pioneer Questionnaires housed at the Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan show that Indigenous peoples were present, visible, and active in settlers' stories of the homesteading period. In these memoires, few settlers directly linked their arrival, efforts to establish homes and communities, and continued occupation of the land as acts of settler colonialism.[3] Yet the stories that settlers do share demonstrate that they were aware of their Indigenous neighbours and that they were aware, to an extent, of Indigenous displacement practices.

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[2] Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, "Decolonization Is Not A Metaphor," *Decolonization* 1, no. 1 (2012): 3-4, 10.

[3] This is possibly because the term "settler colonialism" only came into use in the academic fields the 1980s/1990s and is only more recently being used in public conversations. In this way, settlers failing to identify with the "settler colonial" label is to be expected; however, the *acts of* settler colonialism – such as dispossession, assimilation, displacement – are activities that homesteading settlers understood, recognized, participated in, and contributed to, whether actively or passively.

Evidence of everyday settler-Indigenous encounters during the early homestead period from 1880 to 1910 challenges present-day settlers' attempts to claim innocence and ignorance. Everyday encounters prove that settlers recognized ongoing Indigenous presence despite discourses of the "vanishing Indian." Though these encounters are noted in family and community narratives, they are often excluded from the overarching narrative that describes the Homesteading Hero's settlement of Saskatchewan.[4] For settler colonization to work, it must subsume Indigenous peoples and practices, replacing them with settler models. When this could not be affected on the ground, it was effected in the construction of aspirational settler origin stories. As scholars Emma Lowman and Adam Barker explain, "indigenous histories and creation stories cannot be allowed to compete with heroic origin stories of brave pioneers and frontier individualism" if settler colonization is to be completely effective.[5] Therefore, everyday settler-Indigenous encounters prove that settlers knew their Indigenous neighbours and were aware that Indigenous peoples had not "disappeared." However, if settlers were to recognize these relationships as part of their "heroic origin stories," then they would have to confront the fact that their homesteading ancestors are not innocent bystanders, but active participants in settler colonialism.

This chapter analyzes the history of mythmaking on the Canadian prairies and investigates settlers' stories of everyday encounters with Indigenous neighbours. This chapter begins by defining and giving evidence of the Homesteader Hero Myth in Saskatchewan and ends with a discussion of why it is necessary to challenge this narrative. Ultimately, this chapter

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[4] Indigenous studies scholar Neal McLeod describes collective memory as "the echo of old stories that links grandparents with their grandchildren." Neal McLeod, *Cree Narrative Memory: From Treaties to Contemporary Times* (Saskatoon, Saskatchewan: Purch Publishing Ltd., 2007), 11. Collective memory, as previously defined, is different from "Cree collective memory" – for more see all of McLeod.

[5] Emma Battel Lowman and Adam J. Barker, *Settler: Identity and Colonialism in 21st Century Canada* (Winnipeg, Manitoba: Frenwood Publishing, 2015), 30.

demonstrates that Indigenous displacement and settler placement are neither sequential nor even parallel histories, but rather intertwined events and narratives. This interconnectedness is foundational to settlers' personal recollections of the homesteading period yet is silenced in homesteader hero mythology. Settlers who want to claim connection to the Homesteader Hero Myth must disregard the homesteader's role in colonialism.

The Promise of Paradise, the Heroic Homesteader: Mythmaking on the Canadian Prairies

In 1886, Mrs. D. G. Dick wrote of the Canadian prairies, "do not come expecting to find a Paradise. Eve was the only woman that found one, and she was not contented in it."[6] Mrs. Dick was answering a series of survey questions about homesteading experiences for an upcoming Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) promotional booklet, *What Women Say.* The year prior, the CPR had sent out a survey to women across the Canadian prairies and reprinted their responses to shed light on the "true conditions" of the North-West and to help wives and mothers answer two questions: "should we emigrate?" and "where shall we make our new home?" The reprinted letters praised the good quality of soil, the fair climate, and the success of their family's homesteads, and gave advice to incoming women about what to pack, what to buy, how to garden and how to maintain morale. Mrs. Dick suggests that the Canadian prairies were not the mythical "Garden of Eden" it was promised to be. Yet, it is this narrative of homesteaders who expected to find Promised Land, arrived to find various hardships instead, yet remained with the intention of transforming the land and carving out home on the land that is the basis for prairie mythology.

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[6] Canadian Pacific Railway, *What Women Say of the Canadian North-West: A Simple Statement of the Experiences of Women Settled in all parts of Manitoba and the North-west Territories,* 1886, Monograph Collection, University of Alberta digitized by Canadiana, no. 16869, page 11.

Several scholars have pointed to versions of the homesteader hero mythology on the Canadian prairies.[7] Historian Erin Morton explains that the settlement period "created one of Canada's founding national mythologies" which emphasized the white prairie farmer leading Canada into a new agricultural economy.[8] Prairie historian Bill Waiser refers to the Anglo-Saxon wheat farmer vision as Saskatchewan's Big Idea.[9] Historian Sonia Mycak identifies a similar phenomenon – what she calls the "Prairie Pioneer Myth" – where the selfless prairie farmer who works hard gains "a certain nobility of character."[10] Western Canada developed a Country Life Ideology which was, as historian David Jones explains, the optimistic belief that economic and spiritual success was dependent on owning and working the land.[11] In these narratives, hard work leads to success. Dale Eisler further argues that the identity of the hardworking Saskatchewan resident fuels the Saskatchewan Myth, "a belief deeply embedded in our history and our attachment to the land."[12] All of these mythologies rely on the prairie as being a landscape of prosperity which was, as historian R. Douglas Francis explains, only obtainable if one could work hard enough to transform the land into agricultural paradise.[13] Waiser's Big Idea, Jones' Country Life Ideology, Mycak's Prairie Pioneer Myth, and Eisler's Saskatchewan Myth are all

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[7] These scholars include Bill Waiser, Francis Swyripa, Doug Owram, David Jones, Erin Morton, Elizabeth Furniss, Sonia Mycak, R. Douglas Francis, Chris Kitzan, Lorry W. Felske, Beverly Jean Rasporich, and Randy Widdis.

[8] Erin Morton, "White Settler Death Drives: Settler Stagecraft, White Possession, and Multiple Colonialisms under Treaty 6," *Cultural Studies* 33, no. 3 (May 2019): 440.

[9] Bill Waiser, "Our Shared Destiny?" in *The Heavy Hand of History: Interpreting Saskatchewan's Past,* ed. by Gregory P. Marchildon (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, University of Regina, 2005), 9; Bill Waiser, "Our Shared Destiny? Saskatchewan in 1905 and 2005," *Acadiensis* XXXV, no. 2 (Spring 2006), 158.

[10] Sonia Mycak. "'A Different Story' by Helen Potrebenko: The Prairie Pioneer Myth Re-Visited." *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 28, no. 1 (1996): 68.

[11] David C. Jones, "'There Is Some Power About the Land' — The Western Agrarian Press and Country Life Ideology," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 17, no. 3 (August 1982): 96–108.

[12] Eisler continues that "Saskatchewan was a promised land of abundance and opportunity for all." Dale Eisler, "The Saskatchewan Myth," in *The Heavy Hand of History: Interpreting Saskatchewan's Past, e*d. by Gregory P. Marchildon (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, University of Regina, 2005): 71-72.

[13] R. Douglas Francis, "Regionalism, Landscape, and Identity in the Prairie West" in *Challenging Frontiers: The Canadian West*, edited by Lorry W. Felske and Beverly Jean Rasporich (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2004): 30.

names for the same experience. Western pioneer mythology has captured so much attention because of how embedded it is in Saskatchewanians' present-day idea of self and because it provides "a tidy and satisfying picture of the past."[14]

The Homesteader Hero Myth is an origin story for settlers to tell in the present allowing them to claim a "tidy" understanding of the past. As scholar of settler colonization Natsu Taylor Saito elaborates, "narratives of origin, identity, and purpose tell us who we are, where we have come from and where we are going, what we should hear, what we should want and how we should try to attain it."[15] The myth is further reproduced in settler family history books and narratives. For instance, on 24 December 1953, the *Kipling Citizen* began publishing Marion Dash's homesteading recollections as a series of weekly articles. At the start of the first article the editors of the newspaper wrote how pleased they were to share a "real story of real pioneers." The editors concluded that "we believe too, that the stories of our pioneers are too soon forgotten and that the lessons they have to teach, especially in the way of courage, are something that we can all use."[16] Not only are the editors setting up Marion's story as a heroic origin story, but they are emphasizing how others, by returning to and listening to the pioneer origin story, can find meaning and identity. Myths work to connect people to place by creating a collective identity narrative. Language such as "courage" or "fortitude" in place of words such as "cowardly" or "failure" ascribes characteristics to those in the past and to their descendants who claim connection to the myth in the present. As author Myrna Kostash states, "the 'official' histories demand that we see their lives as heroic or nothing at all."[17]

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[14] Mycak quoting Francis Swyripa. Mycak, 69.

[15] Natsu Taylor Saito, "Chapter Two: Unsettling Narratives," in *Settler Colonialism, Race and the Law: Why Structural Racism Persists* (New York, New York: NYU Press, 2020), 25.

[16] Marion Dash, "Weaving the West", clippings from *Kipling Citizen* published 1953-1954, Private Items (Published) Fond, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, item R-E2852, 24 December 1953.

[17] Sonia Mycak quoting Myrna Kostash's *All of Baba's Children* (1977). Mycak, 82.

Indigenous peoples have been silenced in settler mythology by being cast as passive characters belonging to the past and/or as supportive characters only present when convenient to the pioneer. History and social science textbooks approved for Saskatchewan's elementary and secondary curriculum from 1920 to 1980 further these narratives. Throughout this sixty-year period, Indigenous peoples in Canada's prairie history books appeared as vanished (peoples who lived prior to settlement),[18] as helpmates (teaching survival skills),[19] or as assimilated (through state education, Christianization, or reserve farming initiatives, for example).[20] In some texts, Indigenous peoples made no appearance whatsoever: they were erased from Saskatchewan's history altogether.[21]

The narratives presented in elementary and secondary school texts favoured the farming homesteader figure in western Canada while downplaying Indigenous peoples' involvement or reframing their involvement in Saskatchewan's history to favour settlers. For instance, the

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[18] These sections were extremely common and often read like an ethnic study of an extinct society with passages describing traditional clothing, food, hunting, war activities, and nomadic structures often in comparison between how west coast Indigenous peoples, Plains Indigenous peoples, and the Haudenosaunee (referred to as the Iroquois) differ in appearance. For examples see: C. A. Scarrow and Jean Gibson, *Indians of Canada and Prairie Pioneers* (Regina: School Aids and Textbook Publishing Company, 1943), University of Saskatchewan digitized by Sask. History Online; John Archer and A. M. Derby, *The Story of a Province: A Junior History of Saskatchewan* (McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1955); Fred Wilkes, *They Rose from the Dust* (Saskatoon: Modern Press, 1958).

[19] In these texts, Indigenous peoples are presented as a nameless, faceless collective group who helped early homesteaders live in unfamiliar environments by teaching them survival skills such as to wear moccasins, which berries to pick, and which plants had medicinal uses. As one example, in *Canada: Land of the Beaver* (1951), the history section on settlement makes no mention of Indigenous peoples at all aside from the fact that pioneers wore moccasins in the winter just as Indigenous peoples did. Ernest H. Reid, *Canada: Land of the Beaver* (Regina: School Aids and Textbook Publishing Company, 1951), University of Saskatchewan digitized by Sask. History Online, page 127-128.

[20] For instance, an elementary textbook has Uncle Jack – no doubt based on Union Jack – teach his niece and nephew about children from non-British cultures, including Indigenous children of "long ago" who are currently, Uncle Jack explains, being assimilated into colonial society. Dorothy Gathercole and F. J. Gathercole, *Children of the Long Ago: A Work Book in Social Studies – Grades III and IV,* (Saskatoon: Provincial Normal School, 1948), University of Saskatchewan digitized by Sask. History Online, 23-31. See also: Mary Weekes, *The Indians of the Plains* (Regina: School Aids and Textbook Publishing Company, 1950), University of Saskatchewan digitized by Sask. History Online; Zachary Macaulay Hamilton and Marie Albina Hamilton, *These Are The Prairies* (Regina: School Aids and Text Book Publishing Co., 1948)

[21] *Growing Up With the West: An Enterprise*, (Saskatoon: School Publications & Specialities Limited, 1940-1949), University of Saskatchewan digitized by Sask. History Online; Reid, *Canada: The Land of the Beaver.*

authors of *This is Canada* (1942) designed a "dramatization" skit of Treaty 6 negotiations that presented Poundmaker as subservient, Big Bear as aggressive, and Commissioner Alexander Morris as the peacekeeper and caretaker.[22] *Growing Up in the West* (1940s) does not mention Indigenous peoples at all and credits the RCMP for bringing justice to the west by stopping American whiskey traders with no reference to the 1885 Northwest Resistance.[23] *This is Canada* also opts to call the Red River Resistance "The Misunderstandings of 1869 and 1870," placing the Canadian government in the role of peacekeeper and mediator rather than as aggressor.[24] *Indians of Canada and Prairie Pioneers* (1943) explained that early homesteaders entered a landscape where "people were few" while *The Indians of the Plains* (1950) argued that Indigenous peoples lived on reserves "allotted to them by white men" who hoped to teach them how to properly farm and make homes.[25] The textbook goes on to explain that reserves were a means to quell land disputes and bring Indigenous peoples "easily under government control."[26] Often, Indigenous peoples were referred to in the past tense or as wards of the state. In these examples, Indigenous peoples' acts of agency, resistance, and resilience are silenced in a portrayal of history favouring the actions of homesteaders and colonial agents.

In education textbooks, Indigenous history was consistently presented as separate from pioneer history. This division, along with the narratives of Indigenous peoples assimilating, disappearing, and being a "white man's helper," prevailed throughout the 1920s and into the 1980s. In 1987, education studies scholar G. Patrick O'Neil reviewed ten recent comprehensive

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[22] M. P. Toombs, *This is Canada: History, Geography, and Citizenship Correlated: Based on the Elementary School Curriculum for Saskatchewan Grades V and VI "A" and "B" Courses* (Regina: School Aids and Textbook Publishing Company, 1942), 268-269.

[23] *Growing Up With the West,* 34. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) were called the North-West Mounted Police (NWMP) in 1885.

[24] Toombs, 266.

[25] Scarrow and Gibson, 143; Weekes, 10.

[26] Weekes, 10.

studies of history textbooks published during the 1970s and early 1980s for elementary and secondary students. O'Neill found that the portrayal of Indigenous peoples was grossly inaccurate across North America.[27] Two of the ten studies O'Neill reviewed took place in Alberta and Saskatchewan. Of the 246 recommended and required textbooks in 1970s Alberta, 63% were considered "seriously problematic or completely unacceptable" while Saskatchewan's textbooks were deemed biased, trivial, distorted, and presented severe errors in facts.[28] Generations of students growing up in Saskatchewan encountered a biased and problematic account of the province's history which focused on separating Indigenous and settler history while instilling a belief in the homesteader hero.

Despite Saskatchewan's textbooks failing to recognize the interconnectedness of Indigenous and settler life during the homesteading period, evidence of these everyday encounters *is* nonetheless present, but is ignored, overlooked, or minimized for the preservation of the homesteader-as-hero narrative. Historian Elizabeth Furniss explains that settlers who prefer to frame homesteaders as heroes run the risk that their local communities will develop a "selective historical tradition." A selective historical tradition provides an "official story" of history and, in Canada, this official story works "to legitimize" colonialism and Indigenous displacement.[29] Furniss further explains that selective historical traditions are "adopted by local pioneers, settlers and 'ordinary people' to organize their experiences, frame their life stories, and account for their collective past."[30] As a form of selective storytelling, settlers are able to favour one narrative – that of heroism – over another – that of colonizer – in order to ease a sense of

[27] G. Patrick O'Neill, "The North American Indian in Contemporary History and Social Studies Textbooks," *Journal of American Indian Education* 26, no.3 (May 1987): 22, 26.
[28] O'Neill, 24-25.
[29] Elizabeth Furniss, "Pioneers, Progress, and the Myth of the Frontier: The Landscape of Public History in Rural British Columbia," *BC Studies* no. 115/116 (Autumn/Winter 1997/1998): 7-8.
[30] Furniss, "Pioneers, Progress, and the Myth of the Frontier," 39.

guilt and/or justify a sense of belonging. Actively letting the Homesteader Hero Myth inform settlers' understanding of their own homesteader families simultaneously subscribes for them a narrative – one of hero over colonizer – while silencing Indigenous peoples' roles and places in everyday homesteader narratives.

"They Were Often in Our Kitchen": Indigenous Presence in Settler Family Memories

It is important to consider the stories families tell about their own history of settlement. The way that settler families present and interpret their own histories around the kitchen table or the campfire shapes the way settlers understand their local, provincial, and federal histories and how settlers understand their positionality in these histories. Everyday encounters make settler colonialism personal and sharing settler stories of everyday Indigenous encounters "render[s] settler colonisation visible."[31] For the purposes of this chapter, the selection of evidence from settler stories has been narrowed to stories of relationships and stories of movement to show the frequency of everyday encounters. These stories are often mundane, in direct contrast to the representation of the Indigenous/settler or cowboy/Indian contact presented in wild west narratives.[32] Relations were cordial enough that Indigenous peoples felt no qualms about entering a homestead kitchen to initiate a trade, and the women of the house felt no qualms about satisfying it. The regularity of settlers referring to everyday Indigenous encounters in family history books and Pioneer Questionnaire responses prove that it would have been nearly impossible for incoming settlers to arrive on the prairies and not recognize that the land was in the process of being manipulated for an Indigenous displacement and homesteader placement

[31] Barker, "Locating Settler Colonialism," 3.

[32] For more on the wild west and on challenging the wild west imagery see: Emma LaRocque, "When the 'Wild West' is Me: Re-Visiting Cowboys and Indians," in *Challenging Frontiers: The Canadian West*, ed. by Lorry W. Felske and Beverly Jean Rasporich (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2004): 136-153.

project. The fact that these stories about Indigenous encounters were both memorable and mundane shows that Indigenous peoples remained visible in settlers' everyday lives.

Stories of Movement and Relationships

In 1903 and 1904, four brothers – Nick, John, Julian, and Stanley Korchinski – left Galicia and arrived in Saskatchewan to homestead adjoining quarter-sections at 18-24-10 W2 near Ituna, northwest of Melville.[33] Their homestead land was five kilometres from the northern section of Little Black Bear Reserve and ten kilometres from the File Hill Reserves.[34] One of the stories recorded in their family history book describes one summer afternoon in 1907, when John had taken his team of oxen to go rake the hay. In the heat of the day, the untrained oxen began to balk in attempts to pull away from the irritating bites of black flies. At the sudden pull, John was tossed "in the hay rake and was badly cut up." An Indigenous group, likely *nêhiyawak* and/or Assiniboine/Nakota from Little Black Bear, passed through the area and, upon finding John, "took him to their tents and cared for him for two or three days."[35] In the book, John's daughters Julia and Dorothea wrote that "John was well cared for; he was unable to speak with the Indians, however he felt they were real brothers."[36] Julia and Dorothea recalled that when their eldest sister, Mary, later married settler Adolph Breden, "many of the neighbouring Indians and Métis attended the wedding and fit in well and enjoyed the merriment."[37] Despite not speaking a common language, the Korchinski homesteading family and their Indigenous neighbours soon developed a close enough relationship that they attended family gatherings. The Korchinski story

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[33] Korchinski, Family Histories Collection, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, item R-E2700, page 9.

[34] There are four reserves within the File Hill Reserves: Little Black Bear (*nêhiyawak* and Assiniboine/Nakota), Starblanket (*nêhiyawak*), Okanese (*nêhiyawak* and *nahkawininiwak*), Peepeeksis (*nêhiyawak*).

[35] Korchinski, page 27.

[36] Korchinski, page 27.

[37] Korchinski, page 28.

highlights two continuous themes in settler homesteading memories: witnessing Indigenous movement and personally knowing Indigenous neighbours.

Settler stories of the homesteading period show that the Korchinskis' experience was not uncommon. For instance, many settlers recounted stories of learning local Indigenous languages to better communicate with their Indigenous neighbours, which suggests that these cross-cultural encounters were a regular occurrence. Growing up in the Wolseley area, Mrs. Joseph Keys shared that from age eight to eighteen her family was "continually with the Indians, who were always good friends. We became quite proficient in the Indian language."[38] While Mrs. Keys also noted that her parents spoke Gaelic and the two "languages did not mix" well at home, she was still learning an Indigenous language and bringing it home to the farm. Cecil LeMesurier recalled that he and his brother settled at Cannington Manor and became fluent in *nêhiyawêwin*, often acting as translators for the local magistrate.[39] Hallie McKay grew up playing with the Lakota children from a nearby camp and learned to speak *lakhótiya* as fluently as she did English.[40] A few years before the McKay family arrived on their homestead in 1882, a group of Lakota from Sitting Bull's band traveled north after the Battle of Little Big Horn.[41] Although Sitting Bull eventually returned to the United States, a group of Lakota stayed and lived at the bend in the Moose Jaw River. As a child, Hallie's best friend was the daughter of the Lakota chief and Hallie would often act as an interpreter between the Lakota and other settlers.[42] While

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[38] Likely Assiniboine/Nakota as Carry The Kettle Nakota Reserve is just north of Wolseley. Mrs. Joseph Keys, Pioneer General Experiences Questionnaire, page 6, Pioneer Questionnaires Fond, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, SX 2.461.

[39] "Moose Mountain: 1892-1908," handwritten memory by Cecil LeMesuier, Thomas Beck Fond, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, R-390, file 6.

[40] John C. McKay, *Ann Calder's Children,* (self-pub., Burlington, Ontario, 1983), Internet Archive Database, 141, 145. The Lakota Nation's language is also called Lakota (autonym is *lakhótiya*) and is part of the Siouan language family.

[41] McKay 71; Bill Waiser, *A World We Have Lost: Saskatchewan Before 1905* (Ontario: Fifth House Publishers, 2016): 498-499.

[42] McKay, 44, 141.

these memories do not share specifics, such as names or languages, these memories do suggest that it was common for settlers to develop personal and friendly relationships with the very peoples they were displacing and saw value in learning Indigenous languages to facilitate these relationships. These relationships also speak to a longer history of generosity and hospitality that Indigenous peoples often extended to colonizers.

Even within settler family narratives of prejudice and racism, there are narratives of Indigenous movement and relationships. Hallie McKay's mother, Mary, is remembered by her family for believing "firmly in the White-Anglo-Saxon superiority" and for believing that "those of other races [were] an inferior breed," a sentiment that Hallie's elder brothers and father also shared.[43] When Hallie was old enough, her father planned to send Hallie to Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, for further education. A Lakota chief, likely Chief Black Bull, visited Hallie's father and asked if he could send his daughter with Hallie so that the two could receive an education together.[44] Hallie's father refused, "believing such a thing [educating an Indigenous person] to be quite impossible."[45] On another occasion, Chem McKay, one of Hallie's older brothers, shot Lakota horses which had wandered into his mother's garden. According to Chem, his actions were justified because Mary had previously asked the Lakota to keep their animals out of her garden.[46] John and Mary McKay were not alone in their thinking. In an oral history interview, Elizabeth Thurm of Disley recalled that as a young woman she was secretly courting

[43] McKay, 44.

[44] In the McKay family book, the Lakota chief is unnamed, but this is likely Chief Black Bull. Black Bull led the Lakota to what would become the Moose Jaw area around 1883 and he remained chief until his death in 1897 – the exact period that the McKay family lived in the region.

[45] McKay, 145.

[46] McKay, 71. For a while, locals thought Chem's actions might set the Lakota "on the war-path" but nothing else came of the encounter. According to the McKay family, the Lakota did not retaliate because they believed Mary's actions were fair given that she had previously asked them to corral their horses. While this is one possibility, it is also likely that the Lakota, who were wary of their rural and urban settler neighbours, did not respond for fear of how the citizens of Moose Jaw, and perhaps more broadly the NWMP, might retaliate.

and corresponding with a Métis boy. When her father found out, Elizabeth had to "give him up" to marry a German boy.[47] While these settler family stories describe prejudicial and racist attitudes and incidents, they also offer examples of regular personal interaction between settlers and their Indigenous neighbours. These settlers had relationships with Indigenous peoples, some of which were cordial or even intimate.

Settler families' memories of the homesteading period show that Indigenous movement was a common occurrence. Maryanne Caswell wrote to her grandmother in 1887 that "Indians from White Caps reserve called" on her family while on their way to visit "friends" across the North Saskatchewan River at *kistapinânihk* (Prince Albert).[48] The group of Indigenous travelers, likely Dakota if they were from Whitecap Reserve, although possibly Métis, stayed long enough to watch Maryanne's mother spin wool and for Maryanne to thoroughly inspect their traveling cart which she learned was called a "*travois*."[49] In the same letter, Maryanne shared that one Sunday "a tall Indian walked [into the house] without knocking with a string of prairie chickens." Maryanne said he spoke "only Cree" but they soon discovered he was hoping to trade the chickens for flour.[50] Maryanne's memories show the frequency of Indigenous movement and how Indigenous peoples and settlers had direct encounters during the homesteading period. Similarly, Arthur Fewing of the Moosomin area recalled an Indigenous family passing by and camping on the Fewing homestead for "several days."[51] The Korchinski family remembered

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[47] *Prairie Reflections: Pioneer Life, 1900-1930*, edited by Joan Olson from oral history interviews conducted by the Pioneer Oral History Association in 1980, Private Items (Published) Fond, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, item R-E2360, page 117-119.

[48] Maryanne Caswell, Pioneer Girl, letters originally written in 1887-1888, transcribed for publication by Grace Lang in 1964, Published Items (Private) Fond, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, item R-E936, letter fourteen.

[49] Caswell, letter fourteen.

[50] Caswell, letter fourteen.

[51] Arthur Fredrick Fewing, *Our Early Years in Canada*, Family Histories Collection, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, item (S)Q 63, page 6.

"two Indian families, living in small, mud plastered shacks" a "little distance away" from the homestead. Mike Harbuz of Alvena recalled that every spring and fall, a group of forty to fifty Indigenous people would camp, trap, and hunt near a lake 500 yards north of the Harbuz homestead.[52] Settlers were not vaguely aware that Indigenous communities lived in the region; rather, they had personal, active contact with Indigenous peoples who moved through their homes and homesteads.

Settler stories of Indigenous movement also show that settlers were aware of various Indigenous nations and Indigenous protocols. When asked in the General Experiences Questionnaire to share notable memories, Charlotte Brice of the Touchwood Hills district wrote:

> I was home one day, and my father and mother were away. It was a summer day, and the door was open. I was playing a piano that my parents had brought out from England (and which I still have). I heard a very low voice, and looked around to see two Indians standing at the door listening. They could only make signs. The one Indian was Piapot, the Indian Chief from Piapot's Reserve, and there were two other Indians. They were on their way back to Piapot Reserve, had been up to the Reserves North. As my father and mother always gave the Indians tobacco, and tea, etc. I took some tobacco of my fathers, and gave them some. And they sat on the grass outside, and smoked their homemade pipes.[53]

Charlotte's memory demonstrates that Indigenous movement was not a passive feature of the landscape – Charlotte did not watch *payipwât* (*nêhiyaw* Chief Piapot) walk by in the distance but interacted with him in her home. By offering tea and tobacco, Charlotte and her parents not only demonstrated that they were ready and willing to show hospitality to Indigenous visitors, but also that were prepared to do so in a manner consistent with Indigenous cultural expectations.[54]

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[52] Mike Harbuz, *Ukrainian Pioneer Days*, Private Items (Published) Fond, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, item R-E974, page 8-9.

[53] Charlotte Brice, General Pioneer Experiences Questionnaire, page 9-10, Pioneer Questionnaires Fond, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, SX 2.555.

[54] The Muskowekwan Reserve is in the Touchwood Hills district; therefore, it is likely that Charlotte and her family established a relationship with *nahkawininiwak* (Saulteaux) from Muskowekwan.

Charlotte's testimony provides evidence that she was aware of *payipwât's* prominence and the distances he and his companions had travelled to reach Touchwood Hills from Piapot Reserve.[55] Although she was a teenager at the time, Charlotte still shows a keen understanding of who she was speaking to, where *payipwât* was coming from, where he was going, and an understanding of the customs used when meeting Indigenous visitors. While a critical reflection of why *payipwât* was traveling between reserves and why *payipwât* was important is missing from this account, Charlotte does present an acute understanding of the events happening around her.

As Charlotte's story suggests, homesteading families visited with Indigenous travellers in their homes and understood why Indigenous peoples moved across their quarter-sections. When Isabel Muirhead returned the General Experiences Pioneer Questionnaire to the Saskatchewan Provincial Archives, she had opted to ignore the questions and instead write a "story of my life" on the back of the survey pages. Isabel recounted how in 1885, the year of the Northwest Resistance, there was a great deal of Indigenous movement across the plains. "We have had whole tribes of Indians make through our home," wrote Isabel, "and I remember one time we were at dinner when a tribe came in, and one very old Indian reached across the table, shook hands with the old Gentleman we had at dinner that day and how he did laugh. I must say we were not harmed in the least; in fact, we found them very friendly and thankful for any favours and without fail returned any kindness in some way."[56] Likewise, Mary Anne Bishop also recalled Indigenous movement in 1885. In her account, Mary Anne noted how in the summer of 1885 the Indigenous peoples near her father's homestead in southeastern Saskatchewan were

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[55] The Touchwood Hills is over 100 kilometres north of Piapot Reserve which shows that Indigenous movement during the homestead period was not only to nearby reserves. *Payipwât* and his people where one of the last to settle on reserves as they had tried to maintain their connection to their homelands in Cypress Hills only to be forcibly relocated, multiple times, by the government to reserves in the eastern part of the province. Despite forced relocation, *payipwât* and his people continued to maintain connections to other reserves.

[56] Isabel Muirhead, General Pioneer Experiences Questionnaire, page 3-4, Pioneer Questionnaires Fond, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, SX 2.415.

removed from Moose Mountain to a reserve north of Broadview. “Some times there would be about 100 camped just outside [our] yard,” wrote Mary Anne, “there tens [sic] looked like a small village.”[57] Interestingly, Mary Anne shows an awareness that the Indigenous peoples moving through her family’s homestead were not doing so by choice but were being forcibly relocated following the Northwest Resistance a few months prior. Indigenous movement was not happening in the background of settler stories.

Isabel and Mary Anne’s memories of 1885 reflect many settler stories about Indigenous encounters as ones of movement and personal interaction. Marion Dash (née Merryfield)’s written recollections provide a more complex reflection on Indigenous-settler relationship during the homesteading period. The Merryfield family left England for Saskatchewan in 1883 after reading an advertisement in a CPR promotional booklet.[58] In 1884, Marion’s father moved onto his quarter-section at NW-14-15-6 W2, leaving Marion and her mother alone in Broadview.[59] The Kahkewistahaw Reserve neighboured the northern town limits of Broadview and Marion recalled her family’s house was “close to their tepees.” Marion remembered becoming “well acquainted with the tribe, and I soon learned some of their language.”[60] In particular, she recalled watching a “young Indian maid one day on the farm in the spring of 1897” tanning the hides of animals who had died from starvation over winter. Marion’s memories highlight a close tie that she felt with her Indigenous neighbours from the Kahkewistahaw Reserve: as Marion stated, “they were often in our kitchen.”[61]

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[57] Mary Elizabeth Bishop, Pioneer General Experiences Questionnaire, page 4, Pioneer Questionnaires Fond, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, SX 2.443.

[58] Dash, “Weaving the West,” 24 December 1953.

[59] Dash, “Weaving the West,” 14 January 1954.

[60] Dash, “Weaving the West,” 11 February 1954. Likely Marion learned *nêhiyawêwin* or *nehkawiwin* as Kahkewistahaw reserve is home to *nêhiyawak* and *nahkawininiwak* nations.

[61] Dash, “Weaving the West,” 11 February 1954.

While Marion and her mother had a direct relationship with *nêhiyawak* and *nahkawininiwak* from the Kahkewistahaw Reserve, the family also had a direct role in the displacement and suppression of the Métis Nation. In passing, Marion mentioned that in the spring of 1885, her father, Walter Merryfield, took the oxen and wagon and "went to work for the Government, during Louis Riel's rebellion." [62] Walter, she casually mentions, was one of the six men who served as a jurist for Riel's trial.[63] Near the end of her written account, Marion said "with money earned on Riel's trial, father bought our second cow, and she gave us a bull calf in December 1886."[64] She pays no attention to the events of the Northwest Resistance, nor to her father's role in finding Riel guilty and in Riel's subsequent execution. Instead, Marion focused her attention on the cow. Marion was careful to note that the *nêhiyawak* and *nahkawininiwak* who lived near Broadview "did no harm" during the Resistance: she supported her Indigenous neighbours, but her negative views of the Métis suggest that she did not support all Indigenous people.[65] These relationships are important as they show the complex layering and shifting relations of Indigenous-settler everyday encounters during the homestead period.

In some cases, homesteaders interacted with Indigenous neighbours regularly, weekly, or even daily. Arthur Fewing recalled the Indigenous family who camped nearby would "[come] to us for water."[66] When the Indigenous families, likely *nêhiyawak* and/or Assiniboine/Nakota from

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[62] Dash, "Weaving the West," 14 January 1954.

[63] Louis Riel was a prominent political figure who led the Métis Nation during the Red River Resistance in 1869 and, along with Gabriel Dumont and others, led the Northwest Resistance which came to a head at the Battle of Batoche in 1885. After Batoche, the Northwest Resistance ended with the capture and hanging of Louis Riel on charges of treason. For more on Louis Riel and the Northwest Resistance see: Jean Teillet, *The Northwest is Our Mother: The Story of Louis Riel's people. The Metis Nation*, (Toronto: Patrick Crean Editions, 2019); Chester Brown, *Louis Riel: A Comic-Strip Biography*, (Montreal, Quebec: Drawn & Quarterly, 2006); Tricia Logan, "Settler Colonialism in Canada and the Metis," *Journal of Genocide Research* 17, no. 4 (2015): 433-452; McLeod, 44-53; Waiser, *A World We Have Lost,* 531-569.

[64] Dash, "Weaving the West," 28 January 1954.

[65] Dash, "Weaving the West," 11 February 1954.

[66] Fewing, page 6.

the Little Black Bear Reserve near the Korchinski family caught game, they would bring the meat over to share with the Ukrainian settlers.[67] Marion Dash remembered that "one day mother took me with her [to Kahkewistahaw Reserve], when she went with some beef tea to visit a girl dying of consumption in a tepee."[68] Mike Harbuz recalled that the group of Indigenous peoples living near the lake "sometimes came to our house for bread and water…. Once two Indian women came. Mother gave them mild for the babies, bread, and eggs. They left a sealskin jacket and a shawl for her."[69] As well, in honour of Saskatchewan's jubilee, Mike made a miniature replica of the Harbuz homestead which included the neighbouring Indigenous camp.[70] Despite Indigenous-settler everyday encounters being left out of homesteader mythology, particularly in the mythology building narratives presented in history textbooks, Mike could not recreate his family's homestead without including Indigenous presence on the landscape, just as Arthur and Marion could not talk about their past without discussing Indigenous peoples. However, there is also privilege in these settler stories. Arthur does not wonder why Indigenous neighbours are coming for water, Marion does not express concern about the prevalence of tuberculosis on reserves, and Mike does not acknowledge the trade routes and relationships required to pass a sealskin coat from the hands of an Indigenous woman to a Ukrainian woman in southern Saskatchewan. While settlers recognize Indigenous movement and everyday relationships, they did not always think critically about the context of these relationships: the policy and practices in place to dismantle Indigenous movement and kinship networks through reserves, Residential Schools, starvation, and disease, all of which worked to displace Indigenous peoples for prairie settlement.

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[67] Korchinski, page 23.
[68] Dash, "Weaving the West," 11 February 1954.
[69] "Mild" is likely a typo, Mike probably meant to say "milk." Harbuz, page 8-9.
[70] Harbuz, page 28.

Jane Toppings's memories acknowledge Indigenous displacement tactics without offering a critical reflection of how she, as a homesteader, was benefiting from displacement. In 1889, at the age of twenty-three, Jane Toppings arrived to keep house for her brother in the Broadview district. When asked in the Pioneer Questionnaires if there are any incidents she recalls, Jane Toppings recounted the memory of the "first Indian I saw." It was the summer Jane arrived, and she had been left alone on the homestead. A group of Indigenous people were passing through on their way from Broadview to Moose Mountain and stopped to ask for food. Jane noted that the group was "required to carry permits for travelling from one reservation to another."[71] Jane is referring to the Pass System, which came into effect following the 1885 Northwest Resistance and dictated that Indigenous peoples were not allowed to leave their reserves unless they had written permission from the local Indian Agent. Despite never being passed into law by Canadian courts, the Pass System was designed and promoted by Assistant Indian Commissioner Hayter Reed and enforced, to various degrees of success, by the NWMP/RCMP from 1885 into the 1930s.[72] Jane acknowledged that there was a system in place to restrict Indigenous movement, yet she does not think critically about why movement was restricted, what restriction meant, or why food was sought. The lack of critical reflection could be due to ignorance. Perhaps settlers did not know the context of assimilation, starvation, and displacement policies. It is also possible that settlers did know and simply did not care.

Both Mike Harbuz in his family history book and Russell McKenzie in his oral history interview acknowledge, to different degrees, the context of Indigenous starvation and

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[71] Jane Toppings, General Pioneer Experiences Questionnaire, page 4, Pioneer Questionnaires Fond, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, SX 2.449.

[72] Laurie F Barron, "The Indian Pass System in the Canadian West, 1882-1935," in *Immigration & Settlement, 1870-1939*, edited by Gregory P. Marchildon (Regina: University of Regina Press, 2009), 213-234. Barron also argues that the Pass System, while effective in restricting Indigenous movement, was also not as successful as intended. Indigenous peoples continued to move between reserves and continued to maintain kinship networks.

displacement practices. While Mike did not reflect on the expansive and well-established kindship and trading networks needed to pass a sealskin coat from an Indigenous woman to his mother, Mike did offer a reflection on Indigenous movement. Mike noted that when “I was about 5 or 6 [in 1904 or 1905], they no longer came because so many people clearing land had driven away the animals.”[73] Mike recognized that the movement of Indigenous peoples followed traditional patterns, including animal migration, and, although he did not take direct ownership of this history, Mike did acknowledge that this movement was deterred by settlers clearing the land.

Likewise, Russell McKenzie, who was born in 1897, told his story of life on the prairies near Oxbow in the southeast corner of Saskatchewan.[74] In 1980, Russell stated:

> Of course, there was also the sweep of the native population… there was the Reserve way north up in the Moose Mountain area, but there were bands of Indians used to come along and they lived desperately. The Church also began to be interested in these Indian people, the natives, and they had lived on buffaloes, which we had destroyed… up to 1914, when I was still in High School, they were telling us that the Indians were a doomed race. They could not accept civilization and that they would eventually die out completely, but now, of course, we know that we were just starving them. Our economic system and our selfish ways of life were simply setting them aside.[75]

Russell mentioned Indigenous movement and visitors to the family homestead, and he noted the role of the Church in assimilation practices. As well, Russell critiqued the narrative he was taught in school that Indigenous peoples were “doomed” and directly acknowledged starvation policies. By using language such as “we,” Russell was referring to the settler colonial government and to himself as part of this settler colonial process. Russell was recognizing that settler placement is dependent on Indigenous displacement.

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[73] Harbuz, page 8-9.
[74] *Prairie Reflections*, page 197.
[75] *Prairie Reflections*, page 88.

The stories settlers share of Indigenous encounters refer to a larger and longer ongoing trend of settler-Indigenous daily relations. Indigenous peoples' presence in the everyday stories shared by settler families show that they witnessed Indigenous displacement (relocation to reserves), Indigenous movement (traveling between reserves/following seasonal hunting patterns), and Indigenous restrictions (Pass System).[76] They also show that settlers personally knew their Indigenous neighbours well enough to learn Indigenous languages, share food and water, and attend social gatherings. Indigenous-settler everyday relations were commonplace in the homesteading period. Yet Indigenous peoples' active presence in the day-to-day stories shared by settler families is disregarded by settlers for the preservation of the Homesteader Hero Myth. This preservation is the legacy of the homesteader hero.

The Legacy of the Homesteader Hero

Thomas King asks, "do the stories we tell reflect the world as it truly is, or did we simply start off with the wrong story?"[77] Settler "origin" stories must be recast not as "creation stories" but as "colonization stories."[78] It is convenient for settler and mainstream society to preserve the Canadian prairie "origin" story as a narrative of a homesteader heroically overcoming hardship, as this telling does not require settlers to address their past and present connections to settler colonialism. If instead settlers want to engage meaningfully with decolonization, then settler narratives must be reframed to demonstrate that homesteaders did indeed have relationships with

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[76] On average, just over half of all sources studied for this project gave examples of everyday encounters, and within these sources, a significant number of incidents are described. For instance, 15/22 family and local history books read for this study mentioned everyday encounters; however, all of these books refer to more than one encounter with more than one individual. As an example, Oxbow's *Furrow to the Future* local history book only counts as one source in the total and yet 13 different families shared stories of everyday encounters. Likewise, of the 73 Pioneer Questionnaires reviewed for this project only 48 answered more than a couple questions on the survey and of that 48 only 31 answered more than half the survey and/or answered with more than a few words. This means that of the surveys with substantial replies 23/31 referenced everyday Indigenous encounters.

[77] Thomas King, *The Truth About Stories,* (Toronto: Dead Dog Café, 2003), 26.

[78] Tuck and Yang, 6.

their Indigenous neighbours, witnessed their displacement, and benefited from the process. Settlers must start with a different story.

The Homesteader Hero Myth relies on a narrative which insists that settlers did not know, understand, or recognize the prairie landscape as belonging to anyone but them. Despite the passive role Indigenous peoples have in prairie settler mythology, enforced by twentieth-century textbooks, Indigenous peoples were part of settlers' weekly, even daily, lives during the homesteading period. Rather than stories told by settlers reflecting popular tropes of us-versus-them violence or aggression, the types of encounters were, for the most part, welcoming, friendly, and demonstrate settlers' thoughtfulness about Indigenous protocols. These stories are told in mundane or neutral tones as if the story were both noteworthy – for it is being shared over other potential family stories – but also a somewhat common part of everyday life on the Canadian prairies. The fact that settlers experienced and reported on an "everydayness"[79] which specifically interconnected them with Indigenous movement and presence is significant. It is also significant that these stories have not been included in the canon of homesteader hero stories that have circulated publicly in Saskatchewan. This erasure constitutes an act of settler colonization.

To challenge the legacy of homesteader heroism and to reframe the Homesteader Hero Myth in settler family stories is to engage with truth. Adam Barker discusses scholar Paulette Regan's "truth telling" model as a process by which "people who perpetrate settler colonization can confirm their own colonialism and engage in true restitution and reconciliation." The purpose of "truth telling" is to "rebuild" or retell settlers' histories to emphasize settlers' role as

[79] Historian Laura Ishiguro's research focuses on the place of boredom or "nothingness" in British Columbia settler family letters. As Ishiguro explains, the "power to claim boredom was also the power to look away from the possibility of racialized violence, settler anxiety, or colonial vulnerability." This same argument is applicable to my study on southern-Saskatchewan. Laura Ishiguro, *Nothing to Write Home about: British Family Correspondence and the Settler Colonial Everyday in British Columbia*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2019): 96.

participants in acts of settler colonialism.[80] If the past actions of the homesteader hero are not understood within the framework of settler colonialism, then settlers will "be forever defined" by the narratives of settler ignorance or settler origin stories which problematically removes Indigenous peoples from the narrative and responsibility from the settler.[81]

The homesteader hero persists, similarly to all prairie mythology, not because it is real or true but because, as explained by Dale Eisler, "people believe it to be so"[82] and find that this belief serves an important purpose. I did not pick up that manila envelope of family records without knowledge of Indigenous histories. My grandparents, one a retired Director of Education and the other a retired grade-four teacher, were fierce advocates for Indigenous studies education from the 1970s to 1990s. The stories they shared around campfires were also stories of two well-educated white settlers who were aware of and eager to learn about Indigenous histories. Yet, the three of us were still profoundly impacted by the prevailing heroic homesteader narrative. For example, my grandmother identifies herself as a fourth-generation settler; however, she also claims to belong to Saskatchewan by virtue of her grandparents' homesteading efforts.[83] When I found the manila envelope, I knew my families had arrived on Indigenous land and yet I, as a child and teenager, gravitated towards the Homesteader Hero Myth because I too believed it to be so. I have come to recontextualize the snippets of family stories, treat them as historical artifacts, and return now to the family records with the understanding that when the Sass and Sharpe families homesteaded, they did so as witnesses to and participants in Indigenous dispossession and oppression.

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[80] Barker, "Locating Settler Colonialism," 8.
[81] Barker, "Locating Settler Colonialism," 8.
[82] Eisler, 70.
[83] Lynne and Albert Saas in conversation with Jessy Lee Saas, recorded 15 July 2021, Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, 14:31-15:00.

Saskatchewan's 1905 inauguration ceremony was a settler celebration with festivities focused on British imperialism, the development of an agrarian society, and the promise of progress and prosperity for settlers. The ceremony and contemporary news coverage of it emphasized there was no place in Saskatchewan's future for "the remnants of a departing race."[84] As historian Bill Waiser points out, Saskatchewan's settler society expected that Indigenous peoples would "ride off into oblivion."[85] At the celebration of Saskatchewan's birth as a province, the emphasis was on the homesteader hero. Nonetheless, despite efforts to frame Indigenous peoples as gone, Indigenous peoples could not be extracted from Saskatchewan's story. Dozens of Indigenous peoples traveled from nearby reserves to watch the inaugural proceedings.[86] *Payipwât* even led the parade.[87] Despite the Homesteader Hero Myth's effort to promote a landscape belonging only to settlers, Indigenous peoples have been consistently present and visible in day-to-day life. Just as I grew to start thinking critically about my own stories and my place in them, so has Saskatchewan reached the point of maturity in its own coming-of-age story. Saskatchewan's own manila envelope of settler stories favouring homesteader heroism needs to be emptied and re-examined with a critical eye. Homesteaders who landed on the prairies knew that their presence was contingent on the displacement of Indigenous peoples.

[84] Waiser quoting an article from the *Moose Jaw Times*. Bill Waiser, *Saskatchewan: A New History* (Calgary: Fifth House, 2005), 21.
[85] Waiser, *A New History*, 22.
[86] Waiser, *A New History*, 15.
[87] Waiser, *A New History*, 13-14.

Conclusion

Once again, I am standing in a cemetery, but this time I am only two hundred kilometres and a few dozen wheatfields away from where I grew up. My mom and I are at the Beaver Dale Ukrainian Catholic Cemetery north of Melville – the landscape of my grandfather's youth. It is a hot, dry, and windy day. Behind me, in the shadow of a separate bell tower, my mom takes a photo of a church with three onion-dome towers across the field. I stand in the furthest row at the foot of my great-great grandmother's grave, Katarzyna Sass.[1] Katarzyna was raised in Galicia, Austria. In 1903, after a nine-hundred-kilometre railway trip across eastern Europe with only her suitcase to sit on, a transatlantic voyage spent below water level, another week cramped into a soiled train car, and at least four medical and means examinations, 41-year-old Kataryzna arrived in Saskatchewan, pregnant and traveling with her husband and five children, four of whom were toddlers.[2] When she arrived, she could neither read nor write in Ukrainian, much less read, write, or speak in English. In 1935, Katarzyna died, according to family lore, in a farming accident.[3] My mom crosses the cemetery and joins me, listening to me marvel at what we knew about Katarzyna's life.

Figure 6: Beaver Dale Ukrainian Catholic Cemetery. Northeast of kaskitê-maskwa-maskosis, acâhkosa k-ôtakohpit, okinîs and pîhpîhkisîs. 2020. Personal Collection.

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[1] Depending on the record, Katarzyna is also called Kate Sas, Katrina/Katie Sass, Катеєина Сасс.

[2] Family records state that the Sass family was on the *Bulgaria Shipping Clerk* a steam ship part of the Hamburg-Amerika Line leaving Hamburg. Historian Orest Martynowych's research on Ukrainians in Canada fills in some of the gaps about what the Sass family likely experienced. Orest T. Martynowych, *Ukrainians in Canada: The Formative Period, 1891-1924* (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 1991), 66-70.

[3] Family records belonging to Brian Sass shared with Jessy Lee Saas. These family records also say that Katarzyna's husband, Jan Sass, died in the same farming accident although Jan's tombstone says he died in 1938 so it is possible that the farming accident is family lore.

Now, as I reflect, I cannot help but wonder about the location of the Beaver Dale Ukrainian Catholic Cemetery being northeast of *kaskitê-maskwa-maskosis* (Little Black Bear), *acâhkosa k-ôtakohpit* (Star Blanket), *okinîs* (Okanese) and *pîhpîhkisîs* (Peepeekisis).[4] *Nêhiyaw* scholar Neal McLeod explains that in *nêhiyawêwin* the words for "reservation" are *ashîhkân* and *iskonikan* which mean "fake land" and "left-overs."[5] Here lies the legacy of my homesteading family, in a rural cemetery near the land they helped break, near the *ashîhkân* and *iskonikan* at File Hills, and within a 130-kilometre radius of ten Residential School sites.[6] The Sass family's homesteading experiences are grounded in this specific landscape of displacement, oppression, and assimilation.

The purpose of my thesis is not to minimize the economic, social, and environmental hardships that homesteaders endured. Rather, the goal is to re-examine these stories and interpret them in the context of settler colonialism. Focusing only on overcoming their own hardships has made it difficult for settlers and their descendants to acknowledge Indigenous peoples as historical actors rather than as part of the scenery. Historian Sandra Rollings-Magnusson, who has done extensive research with the Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan's Pioneer Questionnaires, notes that the questionnaire responses are used as links between homesteaders and present-day settlers to create and maintain a "cultural heritage" and a "sense of belonging."[7]

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[4] Collectively known as the File Hill Reserves.

[5] Neal McLeod, Cree Narrative Memory: From Treaties to Contemporary Times (Saskatoon, Saskatchewan: Purch Publishing Ltd., 2007), 57.

[6] File Hills Residential School (1889-1949), Round Lake Residential School (1887-1950), Marieval/Cowessess Residential School (1898-1997), Lebret Industrial/Qu'Appelle Residential School (1884-1998), Gordon's Residential School (1888-1996), Musowequan Residential School (1888-1997), St. Phillips Residential School (1928-1969), Fort Pelly Residential School (1905-1913), Cote Improved Federal Day School (1928-1940), Crowstand Residential School (1889-1915). For context on how long these schools around the Sass family homesteads were in operation, the earliest one opened nineteen years before Kataryzna arrived and the latest one closed a year after Jessy Lee was born. This timespan covers five generations.

[7] Sandra Rollings-Magnusson, *The Homesteaders,* Regina, Saskatchewan: University of Regina Press, 2018), 3.

However, she also finds that settlers "had little to say" about Indigenous peoples in their questionnaire responses. Rollings-Magnusson accounts for this silence as reflecting the time, stemming from the federal government's promotion of the "vanishing Indian" and a prosperous agricultural settler-driven future.[8] In contrast, I find that these questionnaires have more to say about Indigenous peoples than we might expect. For the most part, they do not offer a detailed account of Indigenous peoples or critical reflection, yet stories about Indigenous peoples are still present. Reading against the grain of these narratives alludes to a much larger and more in-depth history of Indigenous and settler connections. The Pioneer Questionnaires and stories shared in family history books prove that incoming settlers recognized signs of Indigenous displacement, witnessed displacement firsthand, and continued to build home regardless. It is this *narrative* of homesteaders' understanding of colonialism that has been silenced, left out of scholars' studies, and erased in the general public's mythmaking. There is sufficient evidence to fill these silences and gaps. During the homesteading period from 1880 to 1910, Saskatchewan settlers were indeed familiar with Indigenous neighbours, and could see evidence of their long occupation on the land, and personally witnessed some of the struggles they faced as a direct result of settler colonization in their homeland.

Historian Lindy Ledohowski argues that while all settlers subscribe to a "first" or "origin" story, Ukrainian settlers favour the "founding father" narrative as a means to entrench their contribution to the development of western Canada alongside English- and French-Canadians.[9] As Ledohowski explains, telling homesteader and frontier stories as "founding father" narratives places settlers "as the 'first' inhabitants of the prairie space [and] removes the

[8] Rollings-Magnusson, 1-2.

[9] Lindy Ledohowski, "'White Settler Guilt': Contemporary Ukrainian Canadian Prairie Literature," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 47, no. 4–5 (2015): 68.

pre-existing Aboriginal presence from the landscape."[10] The introduction to the Korchinski family history book states, for example, that "our forefathers are the real pioneers who were invited to come here, and should be considered as members of one of the founding races and true builders of Canada."[11] Likewise, the image of the Ukrainian pioneer women, *baba*, came to represent Ukrainian homesteader's "prairie roots" and their "sense of place as partners" in Canada's nation-building story.[12] Historian Erin Morton argues that settlers, regardless of ethnicity, often see "[themselves] to be the rightful inheritors of land and labour from [their] settler kin."[13] The stories recorded in local history books show how entrenched these narratives of building-something-from-nothing are in prairie settlers' understandings of their 'rightful' connection to land. Canadian immigration officials and the Canadian public more broadly may have viewed Ukrainian settlers as "less desirable" than the British settlers who were "preferred," but both Ukrainian and British settlers participated in the prairie settlement process in similar ways by contributing to the agricultural development of the region and striving to carve out home in land that had clearly belonged to Indigenous peoples for millennia. Settlers – whether from "preferred" or "less desirable" backgrounds – return to the Homesteader Hero Myth as an "origin" story to explain their legacy and reinforce their claim to Indigenous homelands.

By continuing to reproduce the heroic homesteader or founding father narratives, settlers fail to take a meaningful part in Truth and Reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. Decolonization and reconciliation, as modules of truth telling, demand a shift in settler narratives. A subsection of the forty-sixth Call to Action outlined by the Truth and

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[10] Ledohowski, 69.

[11] Korchinski, Family Histories Collection, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, item R-E2700, page 9.

[12] Frances Swyripa, *Storied Landscapes: Ethnoreligious Identity and the Canadian Prairies* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2010): 173-175.

[13] Erin Morton, "White Settler Death Drives: Settler Stagecraft, White Possession, and Multiple Colonialisms under Treaty 6," *Cultural Studies* 33, no. 3 (May 2019): 438.

Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) calls on the government and individuals to "[repudiate] concepts used to justify sovereignty over Indigenous lands and peoples."[14] The TRC provides the Doctrine of Discovery and *terra nullius* as examples of sovereignty justifications which are both forms of narratives embedded in the homesteader hero legacy. Challenging the homesteader hero narrative answers this Call to Action. Reframing and retelling settler family narratives to consider homesteaders' role in colonization, to include Indigenous voices and presence and to move away from mythology language is an act of decolonization. As *nêhiyaw* scholar Margaret Kovach writes, "story is how we decolonize teaching and research. Story is how we will decolonize the academy."[15] Many settlers and their descendants have been telling stories that are incomplete. As a result, their understanding of their history on this land has been distorted. This has blinded them to the harm that settler colonization has posed to Indigenous peoples while at the same time made it possible to deny responsibility for any part they might have played in it on a personal level.

From the 1880s to the 1910s in Saskatchewan, settlers did indeed view the land to be theirs for the taking. They did not, however, see the land as empty. After recognizing that the land was not empty, incoming settlers had to build systems and infrastructure that reinforced their claim to the land vis-à-vis Indigenous residents. Without a millennia-long legacy to draw on, without ancestors to teach them about the supplies, stories, and spirits that made this land home, settlers had to build a sense of home for themselves by constructing the landscape to reflect that which was familiar or ideal to them. These constructed landscapes were designed to

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[14] Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action, (Manitoba: Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015), 5.

[15] Margaret Kovach, "A Story in the Telling." *LEARNing Landscapes* 11, no. 2 (Spring 2018), 52.

displace Indigenous ways of knowing, living, and being and replace them with settler infrastructure, culture, and religion.

Settlers' physical alteration of the landscape (breaking the soil, planting cash crops, establishing windbreaks, constructing houses and barns, building transportation networks, founding townships, extracting resources, and creating new lakes, for example) was not enough to solidify their claim to Indigenous lands. Indigenous peoples still had an unshakable cultural and spiritual connection to the land: stories that connected them inextricably to each of its features and taught that they had been on this land since the world itself began. To compete, settlers also had to replace Indigenous stories with their own stories – stories that would reinforce their claim to the land and its resources, and that would convince them that they were indeed rooted in this home.

To achieve these goals, settlers' narratives have emphasized their own heroism, frontierism, and "origin," and glossed over evidence that their efforts to make homes here came at an enormous physical, material, cultural, and spiritual cost to Indigenous peoples. Despite witnessing Indigenous displacement and knowing their Indigenous neighbours personally, settlers have supported the Homesteader Hero Myth which casts them in a positive light, views Indigenous peoples as dead or disappearing. As long as the stories of homesteader participation in acts of settler colonialism are silenced in favour of the founding father and homesteader hero character, these frontier stories of courageous pioneers will be tools for settlers to continue acts of settler colonialism in the present. To decolonize the Homesteader Hero Myth is for settlers to not only accept that the homesteader hero is flawed, but to accept their own positions as

benefactors within the continuation and preservation of this myth. Saskatchewan settlers do not have origin stories, they have colonization stories.[16]

In his series of Massey Lectures entitled *The Truth About Stories,* Thomas King concludes: "don't say in the years to come that you would have lived your life differently if only you had heard this story. You have heard it now."[17] We have heard the story of Marion Dash and *nêhiyawak* in her kitchen. We have heard the stories of the Korchinskis who celebrated and shared meals with the *nêhiyawak*, Nakota, and Métis from Little Black Bear Nation, and of the Caswells who recognized Indigenous home, movement, displacement, and wondered what it meant. We have heard Russell McKenzie acknowledge starvation and assimilation policy on reserves, Jane Toppings recognize the Pass System, and the Hoffer family identify bison bones. We have heard the story of Charlotte Brice who sat inside at the piano her parents had brought to the Canadian prairies from England, a physical object which they used to try and create a sense of familiarity in an unfamiliar space, while outside *payipwât* and two others, after being forcibly displaced and relocated from their home landscape in Cypress Hills, sat on the prairie, a hundred kilometres from their reserve, smoking tobacco. Now that we have heard these stories, we cannot go on pretending that we have not.

Tucked in the marshy parkland belt, the Beaver Dale Ukrainian Catholic Church sits in a mowed, well-maintained clearing. My mom and I circled the church. I climbed the steps as I did in Frobisher. The doors were locked. I did not linger like I had in Seagrave: instead, we left. As we travelled west across Treaty 4 – the parkland belt thinning to acres of wheat, canola, and flax, mapped with windbreak markers of homesteads – I thought about *ashîhkân* and *iskonikan*. I

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[16] As scholars Tuck and Yang explain: "Indigenous peoples are those who have creation stories, not colonization stories, about how we/they came to be in a particular place – indeed how we/they came to be a place." Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, "Decolonization Is Not A Metaphor," Decolonization 1, no. 1 (2012): 6.

[17] Thomas King, *The Truth About Stories,* (Toronto: Dead Dog Café, 2003), 29, 60, 89,119, 151, 167.

thought about how the breeze rolled in from the lake and across the barn loft backyard, collecting the whisper of trembling aspen, the crackle of a log, the constant comforting chirps of crickets as it passed by. Now, I wonder how the wind would have sounded in the *kâ-têpwêwi-sîpîy* when *paskwâw-mostos awâsis* was still sitting at *mistasiniy.* I remember how I once read that immediately before the Treaty 6 commissioner warned the *nêhiyawak* about the impending influx of homesteaders, he told them that one square mile of reserve land would be allocated for every family of five. In response, *pîhtokahanapiwiyin* (Poundmaker) replied: "This is our land! It isn't a piece of pemmican to be cut off and given in little pieces back to us."[18] My family's placement, and all settler families' placement, was only possible because of Indigenous displacement and assimilation. Homesteading families knew they were arriving on Indigenous land, recognized evidence that the land they occupied was Indigenous homeland, and stayed, attempting to recreate heroic narratives to undo their roles as colonizers. To "unsettle" the legacy of homesteader heroism in settler family narratives is to recognize them for what they are: stories about acts of imperial dispossession, suppression, and the oppression of Indigenous peoples through the process of settler colonialism.

[18] Quoted in Bill Waiser, *A World We Have Lost: Saskatchewan Before 1905* (Ontario: Fifth House Publishers, 2016), 473.

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