
Colleen Cardinal. *Ohpikiihaakan-Ohpihmeh (Raised Somewhere Else): A 60s Scoop Adoptee's Story of Coming Home*. Fernwood Publishing, 2018. 207 pp. ISBN 97817739205.

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Ohpikiihaakan-Ohpihmeh (Raised Somewhere Else): A 60s Scoop Adoptee's Story of Coming Home (2018) calls upon readers to bear witness to the haunting effects of colonial trauma and systemic violence. This memoir retrospectively captures the painful life experiences of Colleen Cardinal and her grief as an Indigenous adoptee and survivor of Canadian child welfare. With truth, grace, and strength, the writing – which cumulates into a story of cultural reclamation and healing – commands your attention as a reader. From the outset, Cardinal articulates her story as motivated by her intention to “honour [her] sisters’ stories and validate the experiences of the hundreds of other indigenous adoptees and foster care survivors of the 60s scoop” (4). The central elements of this novel are the cumulative impacts of colonization and residential schools, with specific attention to the effects of the Canadian child welfare system on Indigenous children and their kin. The writing is compelling, forthright, and at times heart-wrenching in the painful recounting of physical, sexual, and emotional abuse. Writing in the first-person tense effectively provides the reader a window into Cardinal’s thought processes and emotions, thereby creating a strong sense of empathy and understanding in the reader. The novel is largely centered on vivid depictions of navigating and coping with violence, poverty, and misogyny through the representations of Cardinal and her sisters’ experiences. Crucially, however, the narrative is also a reminder of the perseverance and strength of the human spirit. In the concluding chapters, Cardinal embarks on healing, and her rise as a public speaker, advocate, and co-founder of the Indigenous Survivors of Child Welfare Network is inspiring. Cardinal’s remarkable life journey is admirable for her ability to turn hardship, abuse, and trauma into a story of self-discovery and self-actualization.

Dr. Raven Sinclair, a Sixties Scoop Survivor and a Professor at the University of Regina, writes a foreword about the historical context of the novel and offers a working definition of the Sixties Scoop within the first few pages. As articulated by Sinclair, the Sixties Scoop refers to the mass removal of Indigenous children from their families and communities during the late 1950s to the 1970s, who were subsequently placed in predominately white, settler homes, sometimes across the country or even abroad (1). In her first chapter, “Taoeyihtamiwin: Reckoning,” Cardinal regrets that she has only recently become fully aware of the extent of the harm committed by the Sixties Scoop (5). As suggested by Cardinal in the concluding chapter, this over-representation of Indigenous children in the child welfare system is ongoing and pervasive. This somber account in the beginning of the novel importantly situates the significance of Cardinal’s story and how it remains a relevant and pressing concern for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people interested in social justice, human rights, and equality. It’s evident that a reader unfamiliar with the Indigenous child welfare crisis in Canada will come away from this book more informed and enlightened on the Sixties Scoop and Indigenous child welfare displacement. Cardinal’s reconnection with her biological family and rediscovering her culture and becoming involved in a class action suit launched by Sixties Scoop survivors against the Canadian government assisted Cardinal’s awareness of the impacts of the Sixties Scoop (7). As a reader, you are taken on a learning journey and, in the process, acquire insight into why removing

Indigenous children from their communities and placing them into non-Indigenous homes is harmful.

Tracing the trajectory of Cardinal's life from her early experiences as a child born in 1972 to her self-actualization as a Sixties Scoop advocate in adulthood in 2017 provides in-depth insights into Indigenous adoptee perspectives and life outcomes. Themes of violence, trauma, addictions, and racism are recurrent throughout the novel. The story is told in a candid tone that names unspeakable truths and brings to light the complexities of intergenerational trauma, colonialism, and Indigenous-settler relations. In the book, Cardinal reflects on the physical violence she endured at the hands of her adoptive father. She writes, "I cannot tell you how many times I cowered in my closet or in the front hall closet, trying to will myself invisible so that I didn't have to hear my father or be around him when he got angry or when I was in trouble" (20). Moreover, she describes her adoptive father as a "cruel sadistic man who would lose his temper at the drop of a hat, and when he did I would see his face turn bright red, even into his scalp" (21). When Cardinal finally meets her biological family she is confronted with how deeply colonial trauma has affected her family and other Indigenous folks. She finds her family is living in a condemned house with no heating or electricity. Cardinal learns that a lot of the people in their run-down neighbourhood "drank Listerine, Lysol, hairspray, cheap wine and even Chinese cooking wine" (51) to cope with the pain of their own trauma. When her sister is murdered in a park, Cardinal is inconsolable and wretched in grief. She writes, "grief has no timeline; it sat in my throat, left me on the verge of tears, and my words became bitter and angry" (64). While many aspects of the memoir are often unrelentingly brutal, this story is an honest rendering of an Indigenous reality for many marginalized and vulnerable people.

In the memoir, Cardinal describes the circumstances under which she was taken from her Indigenous family and placed in the child welfare system. From research and conversations with her biological father and other family members, Cardinal learns that her parents struggled with addictions, lack of sufficient support, and poverty, making it difficult to care for her. Child welfare documents listed "neglect, unfit conditions and severe alcohol issues" for the removal of her and her sisters (13). As a baby, Cardinal and her sisters had spent three years in different, neglectful foster homes until they were later adopted by Ronald and Mary White in Sault St. Marie, who also had a biological son named Scott (14). Having to contend with an abusive and racist adoptive home forever altered the lives of Cardinal and her two sisters. As a teenager, Cardinal escapes but finds herself an adolescent without financial and emotional support and reeling from traumatic experiences. Taken in by a friend's family, Cardinal struggles to cope and ends up on a Greyhound bus heading to Edmonton to live with her older sister, Gina. Cardinal later becomes pregnant, and the rest of memoir follows her journey as a mother of five children. Though her children are represented as the light and saving grace in her life, Cardinal continues to struggle with her personal demons and ability to cope with crushing poverty, racism, and abusive partners. However, towards the end of the memoir, Cardinal returns to school and, later, takes on an administrative position, but health issues, racism at work, and plaguing symptoms of Complex-PTSD force her to leave her job.

Near the end of the memoir, Cardinal enters therapy and later becomes involved in advocacy work for MMIW and Sixties Scoop survivors. She begins the journey of healing, self-discovery, and self-actualization as she thoughtfully reflects back on her life and finds peace. Cardinal

articulates how she was robbed of opportunities to know her people from Saddle Lake/Goldfish Lake communities as well as her language and culture. As a result of child welfare displacement, Cardinal developed little understanding of her Cree identity and felt disconnected from her extended Indigenous community. Coming back to her home community, Saddle Lake, and connecting with an Auntie, alongside her experience of meeting other activists and community organizers, were depicted as pivotal moments in Cardinal's transformation in the memoir. Cardinal describes finding community, healing, and purpose in fellow Sixties Scoop survivors, community activists, non-Indigenous allies, her children, and grandchildren. As readers, we are left with a call to have "compassion, empathy and understanding" for our Indigenous relations (205). *Ohpikiihaakan-Ohpimeh (Raised Somewhere Else): A 60s Scoop Adoptee's Story of Coming Home* is purposeful in educating, validating, and drawing attention to a looming Indigenous child welfare crisis that urgently requires attention.

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