

Advance Praise for
GENOCIDAL LOVE

“Intimate and unflinching, *Genocidal Love* lays bare how residential school violence lingers in the body, eating away at lives and communities. Yet, in her vividly resilient portrayal of Myrtle, Bevann Fox tears beauty from the jaws of genocide, daring to claim love beyond settler imaginings—love that nurtures decolonial futures and makes possible a more just world. This book is an act of defiant generosity.”

—Sam McKegney, author of
Magic Weapons and Masculindians

“This is a gem of a book....Indian women need to read this, and so do settlers/newcomers. Bevann Fox offers a unique contribution to the body of Indian residential school literature. I cannot think of another recent text that ruminates on the effects of residential schools on romantic partnerships from a woman’s perspective.”

—Michelle Coupal, Canada Research Chair in Truth,
Reconciliation, and Indigenous Literatures

“*Genocidal Love* by Bevann Fox is a riveting, often difficult, brave, important book about an outspoken little girl living in a boisterous, loving family on reserve, who is sent to residential school where she is abused, humiliated, and left unable to articulate the damage done to her. As an adult she examines

the long-lasting genocidal effects that linger and resonate in her life, even as she searches for a way to unlearn the lessons of self-hatred taught to her. This book reveals the trauma in calling the State and Church to account and the pain a generation of residential school survivors experienced when bringing the truth of abuse to light. It also celebrates the possibilities of healing.”

—Deanna Reder, Chair, Department of
Indigenous Studies, Simon Fraser University

“A riveting and courageous reflection of the author’s abusive experience at residential school, *Genocidal Love* is unique in its detailed account of the often re-traumatizing effects of the legal and bureaucratic barriers of compensation programs predating the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.”

—Jesse Rae Archibald-Barber, editor of *kisiskâciwan*
and co-editor of *Performing Turtle Island*

GENOCIDAL LOVE

A Life After Residential School

BEVANN
FOX



University of Regina Press

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SASKATCHEWAN

*In memory of my late grandfather, Gaston Anaskan,
Nimosōmipan, for his inspiration. He said,
“One day you will write a book.” Also to my beautiful
grandmother, Myrtle Anaskan, Nohkōmipan.*

Content Warning

This book may bring awareness and rekindle memories. Although some parts may hurt, other parts may help move you through energies unsettled within you or that may have been asleep until now. My intent is not to hurt anyone but to bring back something lost. As I read the book over and over, I cried, laughed, or felt very happy. It has helped me understand more of who I am and helped me release emotions still stored in my body.

So if you find yourself feeling angry, sad, or happy, then embrace that energy, for you are a success. Honour yourself, find some quiet time, make a cup of hot tea, and enjoy reading this book. It is a story about Myrtle, and she wants to share everything with you.

—Bevann Fox

*This story is based on real events.
Names and identifying details have been
changed to protect the privacy of individuals.*

Abstract Life Me

*If you can't read the book then wear my abstract shirt
Feel my energy and feel the beauty
A red child living in genocidal love
Please love my freckles
This is an abstract way of life
There is no normal or consistent
There is but constant abstract
As colonialist hands touch everywhere
A seed planted in the mind already
A pattern of abstract love
Of a different life*

*The red child...
Genocidal love
Love my freckles please...
I have freckles... Just like you.*

—Paquahsimou Piyesiw Iskwew
(Raindance Lodge ThunderBird Woman)

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FOREWORD

by MICHELLE COUPAL

I am deeply humbled and honoured by the invitation from Bevann Fox and University of Regina Press to write this foreword to *Genocidal Love*. They asked me to frame and contextualize the incredible story that Bevann has written within the broader body of work that is now known as Indian Residential School literature. I think they approached me because of my scholarly expertise in Indigenous literatures. What they did not know is that my personal story shares some important similarities with the story Bevann tells about her protagonist, Myrtle.

I did not attend residential school, so the setting is different. But like Myrtle, I was held captive between grades one and three by my Uncle, a Catholic Brother, who “took care of me” in the basement of my family home. His three-year reign of terror was made possible by the neglect of my mother and

the absence of my father. My Uncle told me that if I ever told anyone what he was doing to me, he would take me to a place where no one would find me. He had a gun, he said, that he would use to kill me if I uttered a word. So, like Myrtle, I lost my voice. I rarely spoke for three years. I was ultimately sent to a speech pathologist, who found nothing wrong with my ability to speak, except that when forced to mouth words I spoke so quietly that it was difficult to hear me. I deliberately muffled my words to make them hard to discern. To this day, I have to concentrate to articulate my words clearly. When I am having difficulty, it sounds like I have slight lisp—the disarticulated cry of a child.

There are many other similarities in our stories—traumatic dissociation, PTSD, and difficulty finding healthy adult relationships with men, to name a few. We share, too, the incredible strength and fortitude that comes with survival, a learned, quiet resilience in the face of new traumas (even if the cracks reopen deeper and wider), and successful careers later in life. We both love to laugh. But, of course, there are many differences. Our stories are our own to tell and in our own time. For survivors of Indian residential school, these are some of the most difficult stories to write and to share. These stories are also difficult to read. Yet they are much more than stories of horrific childhood experiences of sanctioned genocide by the government. These are stories of reconnection, healing, joy, laughter, resistance, strength, and courage.

Genocidal Love contributes to a significant body of work—memoir, fiction, poetry, picture books, graphic novels—written

by survivors or family members of survivors about their experiences of Indian residential schools and their ongoing legacies. Indian residential school literature has flourished, especially during and following the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC). There is enough of it now to call it, as Renate Eigenbrod did as early as 2012, a sub-genre of Indigenous literatures in Canada. The first published memoir of residential schooling in Canada was Jane Willis's, *Geniesh* (1973). That was also the year that Maria Campbell published *Halfbreed*, a pathbreaking autobiography that many scholars cite as marking the beginning of contemporary Indigenous literatures in Canada. Campbell spent one year at a residential school, which she describes briefly but powerfully in *Halfbreed*. The 1970s also saw the publication of Alice French's *My Name is Masak* (1976) and George Kenney's *Indians Don't Cry* (1977).

However, the most famous early memoir published about residential schooling was Basil H. Johnston's *Indian Schools Days* (1986). Johnston wrote the memoir predominantly for his friends who also attended the Spanish Indian Residential School in Ontario. Like the memoirs of the 1970s, Johnston's memoir carefully stories the day-to-day experience of attending the school. He leaves little doubt about the poor quality of education, food, "instruments of suppression" such as bells, gongs, whistles, and clappers (43), and the prison-like environs:

Our sole aspiration was to be rescued or released (it didn't much matter which) from Spanish, and to be restored to

our families and homes. That was the sum total of our ambitions. Our vision did not extend beyond the horizon; our world was confined to the playground and the west wing of the building enclosed by fences and walls. The outer world and events taking place therein were as distant and as alien as Mars. The future was tomorrow; beyond that we could not see. (53)

The accounts of residential schooling in these earlier works tend to be less graphic than present-day narratives in chronicling the abuses suffered by the children. Indeed, Basil Johnston waited until he wrote the Foreword to Sam McKegney's *Magic Weapons* (2007) to publicly reveal the sexual abuse he suffered at Spanish. Child sexual abuse remains one of the most difficult and emotionally risky traumas to speak aloud. I was in my late thirties when I started speaking to my family members and friends about my childhood sexual abuse. The decision to do so was complicated. I was motivated by the desire to stop what I perceived to be a false family rhetoric of harmony that placed my mother on a pedestal, with me as the scapegoat who allowed her to stay there. Some of my family members judged me and questioned the veracity of my story. Others didn't blink, as if the fact of it had always been apparent. My judges asked, "How could your mother expose you to a man she knew to be violent and sexually deviant?" And, "How could she *not* tell anyone when she discovered her brother in the act of committing a crime?" These questions came with little thought to my mother's

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Bevann Fox is a member of Pasqua First Nation, originally from Piapot First Nation. In 2012 she received her Bachelor of Arts in Arts and Culture and in 2018 her Master in Business Administration, Leadership from University of Regina. In 2014 she was honoured with the YWCA Women of Distinction Award—Arts, Culture and Heritage. She is the founder, producer, and co-host of Access TV's *The Four* and also works as Manager for Community-Based Prevention at Yellow Thunderbird Lodge/YTCCFS (Yorkton Tribal Council Child Family Services). She is also a certified yoga teacher and an artist in sculpture and/or acrylics.

