

Coming Home through Grandmother Rosa's Story

Basil Johnston's *Crazy Dave*

Despite having published seventeen books in English and five in Anishinaubae, Basil Johnston has suffered from critical neglect. Indeed, Johnston's greatest recognition comes as a primary source with corresponding citations, references, and acknowledgements numbering into the hundreds. Recently, however, Johnston's eighth book in English, *Indian School Days* (1988), his account of his incarceration at St. Peter Claver's Residential School for Boys during the late 1930s and 1940s, has begun to receive critical attention.¹ Johnston's fourteenth book, *Crazy Dave* (1999), also deals with the residential school experience from an autobiographical perspective, but in this case, Johnston's main concern is not with describing the experience itself or how he and his schoolmates survived it, but rather with the devastating after-effects and how he overcame them and reintegrated into his community, eventually becoming a writer committed to his Anishinaubae heritage. *Crazy Dave* is also a biography of Johnston's uncle David McLeod, who had Down Syndrome, and how the Anishinaubae community coped with David's condition through the 1930s, 40s, and 50s.² *Crazy Dave* has received no critical attention apart from a handful of reviews, though it provides insight into Johnston's own life as well as his family history and the ways in which Anishinaubae culture and its treatment of his uncle helped Johnston to decolonize his mind.

In one sense, *Crazy Dave* is an elaborate mapping of Anishinaubae society, both its past and its place. Johnston begins the novel with an introduction constituting the opening frame of the narrative and providing the context

for the story that follows. In the opening frame, Johnston tells how, when he is ten years old, he is taken away to St. Peter Claver's Indian Residential School in Spanish, Ontario, where he remains for five years until his release in mid-winter of 1944. Johnston is not the only member of his family sent to residential school. As his subsequent narrative reveals, Johnston's sister Marilyn accompanies him to Spanish. Moreover, twenty-five years earlier, his father Rufus and Rufus' brothers Bobby, Walter, and John had all been sent to residential school. When released, the brothers return home to meet varying degrees of success. Rufus never fully recovers from his residential school experience; after his release, he is a restless and ruthless individual, alienated from his family and community. Bobby, too, unable to readjust, leaves the reserve to find work and is ultimately killed. On the other hand, John, while he initially pursues the priesthood, returns home when the experience sours and integrates back into the community. However, it is Walter who, despite his nine years of residential school incarceration, makes the best adjustment. Johnston, most closely following Walter's experience, feels uncomfortable after his return home, but he moves in with Grandmother Rosa and gradually readjusts. Besides their residential school experience and affection for Grandmother Rosa, Walter and Johnston share another bond: "Uncle Walter and I were the only ones in our family to whom Grandmother related the family history" (7).

According to William Bevis, Indian identity "includes a society, a past, and a place" (585). As Johnston makes evident at the outset, Grandmother Rosa's history lesson is one of the key beginnings to the process of his mental decolonization: "Unforgettable . . . is the lesson she passed on to me in my teenage years; that is, to know who I was by getting to know my people's history. When I must have seemed inattentive to her, she reminded me sharply that 'You'd better get to know where you came from. It's the only way you're going to get to know yourself'" (9). The teaching relationship between Grandmother Rosa and Johnston is similar to if not prototypical of the model Leanne Simpson envisions as an integral part of her "Indigenous resurgence" strategy: "I believe one of our most critical and immediate tasks in building an Indigenous resurgence is ensuring that the knowledge of our ancestors is taught to the coming generations" (74). Grandmother Rosa ensures that her Indigenous knowledge is taught to her grandson. The lesson she shares connects Johnston to his past and people because it provides him with Anishinaubae history and genealogy and helps Johnston recover his Anishinaubae identity.

The narrative proper begins with what Grandmother Rosa tells him:

"Grandson! Listen! I'll tell you what my grandmother told me," Grandmother said to me one night as I stared gloomily at the rain beating on the windows and pounding on the roof. I wasn't really interested in Grandmother's stories about the past, but I didn't have much choice. . . . Thus began the first lesson in the history of our people, yet I didn't put much stock in it. (17)

The history Grandmother Rosa tells Johnston is about the "exodus of the Pottawatomi from Green Bay, Wisconsin." It is a history illustrating "the dispossession and dislocation" experienced by "North American Indians, not only in Wisconsin, but elsewhere" too (9-10), and it is a history Johnston interprets throughout his narrative. In effect, Johnston "emplots" his own, Grandmother Rosa's, and the community's memories about the past, turning occurrences and events into what Anthony Paul Kerby calls "moments in a narrative composition" (28). Doing so allows Johnston the opportunity to interpret memory through narrative and to understand how the resulting story generates a sense of self.

Grandmother Rosa conveys the history of dislocation when she tells Johnston about "her grandmother, Misqua-bunno-qua (Red Sky Dawn), and her flight from Wisconsin; [and] the troubled times for Indians in those days a hundred years before" (7).³ Grandmother Rosa's grandmother and kin were forced to take flight because the "White People" they initially pitied and assisted became "greedy": "They wanted land. They bought land, and if they couldn't buy it, they stole or killed for it" (17-18). When the European immigrants/colonizers came to the Green Bay area of Wisconsin desiring to buy land, they proposed that the Pottawatomi "relocate in Indian territory to the southwest" in exchange for "payment and the protection of the American government." The Pottawatomi were told that if they "refused to sell their land, settlers and speculators would confiscate it as they had done to other Indians and the American government would be powerless to help." The Pottawatomi "protested that this land was their home; it belonged to their forebears and it belonged to their descendants. . . . It was not an easy matter to uproot one's home and life and transplant it to another place." In response, the Europeans told the Pottawatomi to "[t]ake [the offer of relocation] or leave it." The Pottawatomi "were divided in their thinking": some wanted to stay and defend the land; others wanted to accept the proposal; still others wanted to strike out "for another part of the Anishinaubae nation's vast territory" (19-20).

Grandmother Rosa's grandmother was a member of a "small party of fifty or sixty people, made up of six families" who left the Green Bay area,

because they lacked the “power or the means to refuse” to sell their land and were forced to relocate (19-20). This small group made a long trek through Chicago and lower Michigan until, heading north, they eventually reached “Owen Sound, then known as Great Sturgeon Bay, the principal town of the Saugeen-Nawaush Chippewas,” where they met with the “chiefs and headmen” who “after much debate . . . agreed to admit the refugees on condition of good behaviour.” Twenty years later, the Saugeen-Nawaush Chippewas themselves were “pressured to surrender their homeland in its entirety and migrate to Manitoulin Island, which was envisioned by the colonial government as Canada’s very own Indian territory” (22-23). The Saugeen-Nawaush Chippewas initially resisted but eventually “gave in, surrendering the greater part of their homeland, the Bruce Peninsula,” retaining the Saugeen reserve on the Lake Huron side of the peninsula and the Cape Croker reserve on the Georgian Bay side, as well as hunting grounds, islands, and shorelines (24).⁴

In telling Johnston how “[h]er own grandmother and . . . kin fled Wisconsin sometime in the early 1830s to seek sanctuary, peace, security, and beauty in another part of Anishinaubae-akeeng” (10), Grandmother Rosa reveals a long history of colonial dislocation. She also passes on to Johnston the family genealogy, which helps him to locate himself in time and place. Misqua-bunno-quaе, who initially fled Green Bay and eventually settled in Cape Croker, is Johnston’s great-great-grandmother.⁵ Her daughter, “one of the local princesses,” is Johnston’s great-grandmother.⁶ After the Saugeen-Nawaush Chippewas surrendered their land, Fred Lamourandiere, a trilingual “half-breed,” became a member of the Cape Croker band, thereby satisfying a need for an interpreter. He was subsequently “appointed band council secretary” and, once settled in Cape Croker, permitted to marry “a local princess,” Misqua-bunno-quaе’s daughter. Lamourandiere is Johnston’s great-grandfather. The marriage between the “local princess” and Lamourandiere produced Christine, Louis, and Rosa (25). Rosa is Johnston’s grandmother.

When Grandmother Rosa first instructs Johnston in Anishinaubae history and family genealogy, he is not interested. Johnston would have heard a different version of history at school: the history of colonization from the perspective of the colonizers. *Crazy Dave* does not tell us what Johnston learned at residential school, but we do learn about Walter’s experience. He “heard nothing of Indian history. What knowledge he had was confined to snippets of incidents in British and Roman history carried in the public

school readers for grades six, seven, and eight. . . . There were no comparable stories about Indians in any of the books he'd read" (282-83). We also learn about Johnston's individual experience from *Indian School Days*, another of his first-person narratives.⁷ The academic instruction Johnston received at residential school did not include a history of his own people; whatever history lessons there were focused on the glorious events in Europe (65).

Theorists of colonialism also help us understand the version of history Johnston would have learned at school. As Edward Said indicates in *Culture and Imperialism*, in the dominant version of history, North America's original inhabitants are an inferior race—without an “independent history or culture,” occupying a “vast and . . . empty” land and “in need of *la mission civilisatrice*” (xiv-xix). From this perspective, Johnston's lack of interest in Grandmother Rosa's version of history is understandable; his mind was effectively colonized during the time he was away at residential school. The result is that following his release from residential school, Johnston is “uncomfortable” and doubtful about his “heritage” (*Crazy Dave* 6-8).

In contrast to the often incorrect and self-serving monumental histories and official discourses of colonialism, Grandmother Rosa's lesson in Anishinaubae history tells the history of colonization from the perspective of the colonized and hence discursively challenges colonial history. In voicing previously unacknowledged history, Grandmother Rosa places her ancestors in their proper context and engages in a project of cultural reclamation. Specifically, she reinscribes a past on a presumed empty continent and challenges what Emma LaRocque calls the “civ/sav dichotomy.” As LaRocque continues, “[C]ivilization is consistently associated with settlement, private property, cultivation of land and intellect, industry, monotheism, literacy,” whereas “savagism” delineates “Indians . . . as wild, nomadic, warlike, uncultivating and uncultivated, aimless, superstitious, disorganized, illiterate” (41). In other words, Grandmother Rosa's story about the exodus of the Pottawatomi from Green Bay becomes an act of “opposition and resistance to imperialism” through history as culture (Said 200).

While Grandmother Rosa tells the history of the initial dislocation of her Pottawatomi ancestors, Johnston expands on it. The story he tells is one of transgenerational dislocation extending from his great-great-grandmother's generation up to and including his own. Johnston is dislocated from his family and community because of his removal to residential school. But he does not remain so. Although he leaves Cape Croker in 1947 to finish high school, his narrative reveals, “From 1948 to 1954 I returned home once a

year, at Christmas" (*Crazy Dave* 332). While working in Toronto after 1955, Johnston "came home more frequently" (332). The effect of these repeated visits over the course of so many years is that Johnston eventually adds to the knowledge he initially learns from Grandmother Rosa. This process continues Johnston's mental decolonization and helps him to develop the anticolonial analysis of dislocation he eventually narrates.

Even before Johnston is old enough to attend school, Grandmother Rosa begins another aspect of his education when she instructs him in Anishinaubae spirituality. She tells him "that there are realities in the world other than the physical, that every being and thing has an unseen principle of life" (8). She also tells him about "God, the Manitou, and the Little People" (239-40).

At the time of Grandmother Rosa's telling, Christianity has infiltrated both Anishinaubae culture and spirituality. Johnston's maternal grandmother Philomene is not immune to the infiltration. Although she tells Johnston "about God" and teaches him "to pray," she tells him nothing about Anishinaubae spirituality (240). Even Grandmother Rosa has been indoctrinated by the Christian missionaries living at Cape Croker. Nonetheless, she tries to give her grandson an education in Anishinaubae spirituality, but that education only causes him to ask, "Who is God?" and "What are the Manitou?" Because the colonizers' religion makes no mention of the Manitou and the Little People, Johnston is, to borrow Armand Garnet Ruffo's phrase, "entangled in the torment of . . . conflicting visions of Christianity and Native spirituality" (Ruffo 102); he is "staggered . . . trying to sort . . . out" the conflict between what he hears from his two grandmothers (Johnston, *Crazy Dave* 239-40).

Johnston's education in Anishinaubae spirituality is halted when he is removed to residential school, where what he is taught works within the colonial binary of civilized/savage. He reveals that during his years at residential school, he was "given to understand that the Roman Catholic Church's teachings on spiritual matters represented the only way of looking at life, the afterlife, and any other kind of life." The "teachings" emphasized that there "was but one God" attended by "angels and saints in heaven." At the same time, Johnston was instructed that to "believe in Weendigo, Little People, Nana'b'oozoo, Manitou, and Thunderbirds, and to offer tobacco to trout, beavers, bears, partridges, corn, and blueberries, bordered on idolatry, pantheism, and paganism, deserving of eternal damnation" (8).

While *Crazy Dave* provides some detail about Johnston's religious indoctrination at residential school, *Indian School Days* provides greater

insight into how residential schools worked in terms of relentless regimentation, what Jo-Ann Episkenew refers to as “mind-numbing routine” (91), with the aim of deracination. Johnston attended mass every day (*Indian School Days* 47). Thursday night was reserved for confession “regardless of guilt or innocence.” On Sunday, he attended “two masses in the morning, one at 7:30, the other at 10:30, plus Benediction in the evening.” High Mass at 10:30 included prayer and Gregorian chants (54-58). Johnston’s religious education at residential school destroyed what he knew of Anishinaubae spirituality.

However, as *Crazy Dave* indicates, after finishing school, Johnston resumes his education in Anishinaubae spirituality when he comes to understand Grandmother Rosa’s spiritual anxiety. Since Johnston does not know what has gone on in his community while he has been at school, his visits home allow him the opportunity to hear the “stories” and “anecdotes” about life at Cape Croker while he was away (12-13). Among other things, Johnston learns about Father Cadot’s unsettling visits. The priest assumes the superiority of European culture and religion, and as such seeks to delegitimize Anishinaubae culture and spirituality.⁸ Grandmother Rosa is anxious about the priest’s visits because she is afraid he will find her wanting. She does not want to give the priest the “chance to criticize her house or her housecleaning,” and she does not want to “be condemned for performing what was looked on by most of her people as an act of respect for God’s creation” (36).

Grandmother Rosa has internalized the colonial gaze and, as Michel Foucault might say, has come to surveil herself. This is evident whenever she questions her own Anishinaubae spiritual customs. Thus, Grandmother Rosa worries about “her practice of offering tobacco in thanksgiving whenever she picked plants or roots or cedar boughs” (36). Ultimately, Grandmother Rosa does not abandon her observances. Rather, in an act of mediation, she follows when possible what the priest tells her about prayer and attending church (36-38) by incorporating them into her spiritual routine. Gail Guthrie Valaskakis would fully appreciate Grandmother Rosa’s liminality. When reflecting on her Lac du Flambeau family, Valaskakis writes, “[W]e were suspended between Christian ritual and Chippewa custom” (27), “caught in a clash of cultures” (15).

Johnston begins to deal with the religious confusion brought about by his indoctrination when he starts making regular visits to his community. Joseph Couture’s examination of the “increasing numbers of Natives engaged in a return to their roots” helps explain why Johnston’s repeated visits to his community are so important. Like the individuals Couture examines,

Johnston too needs “insigh[t] and guidance” (42) in order to alleviate his confusion. The visits home allow Johnston the opportunity to learn about the painful obstacles Grandmother Rosa faces and overcomes as she tries to maintain her Anishinaubae faith.⁹ Grandmother Rosa maintains her faith despite considerable pressure to abandon it, and in doing so demonstrates to Johnston that it is possible to recover and enhance his understanding of Anishinaubae spirituality, even though his religious indoctrination at residential school works against such recovery.

The visits home also allow Johnston the opportunity to understand the cultural values upheld by Anishinaubae society. As he comes to realize, Anishinaubae society operates according to the principle of inclusion. However, as Grandmother Rosa’s history lesson indicates, colonial society operates in terms of its opposite. Johnston sees his Uncle David as the paradigm case of that exclusion. Born in 1921, David is Grandmother Rosa’s youngest child. He is diagnosed with “Mongolism,” currently called Down Syndrome. Throughout his life, the colonial authorities—the doctor who diagnoses him, the priest, and the Indian agent—all attempt to have him institutionalized. Because of the colonizers’ desire to exclude Uncle David, he reminds Johnston “of the place and situation of the North American Indian in Canadian society”:

It was assumed that Uncle David didn’t know much about anything, or what he knew didn’t count; what North American Indians knew didn’t amount to a jar of jelly beans, and did not have any larger relevance. As long as Uncle David stayed where he belonged and didn’t bother anyone or interfere with anyone’s business, neighbors could put up with him; and as long as the North American Indians kept the peace and didn’t rock the boat, society could tolerate them. Uncle David didn’t belong in the community. He wasn’t one of the normal human beings; he was dumb and couldn’t talk; didn’t and couldn’t understand. He didn’t belong in the society of sensible people. He belonged in some institution where he could learn to perform simple tasks and operations. (11)

Uncle David’s relationship with colonial society is based on exclusion, just as Anishinaubae society’s relationship with colonial society is based on exclusion. Colonial society wants to exclude Uncle David from his community in the same way colonial society excluded the Anishinaubae from their territory. These parallels help explain why Uncle David is the key figure in terms of the central theme of inclusion versus exclusion, and why the narrative itself is named after him. Jennifer Andrews has a related appreciation of Uncle David: “Dave is a model of stubbornness that the Ojibway need to heed, if they are to retain their unique culture and language

in an era of white pressure to assimilate" (151). Uncle David's batting is a humorous example of his stubbornness. When the school kids tire of David's many failed attempts at hitting the ball, they demand that he return the bat. David refuses. After all, hadn't they "asked him to play" (*Crazy Dave* 253-54)?

From the moment the Indian agent first sees Uncle David, whom he refers to as a "half-wit" (169), an "idiot," and a "crazy man on the loose," he wants him "locked up" (200-03). After Rufus abandons his wife and five children, they move in with Grandmother Rosa and Uncle David. Uncle David's presence so "disturb[s]" the Indian agent that he concocts a scheme to have him removed. According to the Indian agent, Uncle David is a danger to his family because he might "touc[h] or moles[t] one of those girls" (267). In collaboration with the priest, the Indian agent decides "to defuse the situation" by removing two of the older children from Grandmother Rosa's house. When Grandmother Rosa objects, she is told that Uncle David will be removed instead. The Indian agent's scheme to remove Uncle David ultimately fails: Johnston and his sister Marilyn are removed in his place (267-70). The irony is that while the Indian agent professes his concern for the safety of the young girls, he undermines his credibility when he moves only one sister, leaving the other girls in Grandmother Rosa's home. The removal of Johnston and his sister subtly exposes the hypocrisy of colonialism; the children are removed from Grandmother Rosa's home over fears of sexual abuse, but they end up at a residential school where such abuse is rampant.¹⁰ While Uncle David is not removed from his home, colonial society continues to exclude him. Even the missionary schoolteacher excludes Uncle David by removing him from the schoolyard (254).

In contrast to the treatment Uncle David receives from the colonial authorities, family members respect and include him in their lives. Uncle David's family lets him have the same possibilities in life everybody else enjoys: "freedom, equality, independence . . . pride . . . and the chance to show and say, 'This I can do'" (14). His brother Walter, for example, expands Uncle David's "world and vocabulary" by taking him on "field trips" and instructing him in language, mime, and mimicry (102-04). But it is Uncle David's relationship with his brother John that is the model of Anishinaubae inclusion. John teaches Uncle David patience and ways to pass the time by instructing him in soccer (129) and horseshoes (123). He also teaches Uncle David practical skills, such as sawing wood and cutting down trees (144-46). The relationship between Uncle David and his family is based on the principle of reciprocity; Uncle David benefits from the family's inclusion and the family

benefits by including him. For example, the skills John teaches Uncle David keep Grandmother Rosa from having to cut wood herself or to hire someone to cut it for her (145). At the same time, they allow Uncle David the opportunity to make a living and become a productive member of his community.

Uncle David's relationship with his community is also based on reciprocity. He cuts his neighbours' wood and receives payment (154). He plays baseball with the local kids (253) and attends community functions (162). Furthermore, all members of the community stand up for Uncle David when the Indian agent first raises the idea of sending him away. Stephen Elliot, "Cape Croker's finest orator," accurately captures the community's sentiment: "What you intend to do, Mr. Agent, is what cowards do. You pick on David McLeod because he can't defend himself, he can't even talk for himself. He does not belong in an institution. He belongs here, not in an asylum or reform school where he'll be abused. He belongs with his mother" (qtd. in *Crazy Dave* 210).

The relationship Uncle David shares with Grandmother Rosa is particularly important. Grandmother Rosa never once entertains the idea of institutionalizing her son. Instead, she "looked after him, worried about him, subordinated her life to his so that he could lead his life and existence as well as he could" (13). She is willing to sacrifice her life for Uncle David when, at great risk to her own "strength and health" (323), she comforts and nurses him following a vicious, racially motivated beating (317-18).¹¹ She treats David like a normal human being. When she finds out that he stole money from her, "Rosa snapped at David and chewed him out as she had never done before. . . . She didn't raise him or look after him so that he'd be a common thief" (196). When Uncle David, in a fit of pique, purposely cuts a neighbour's firewood incorrectly, Grandmother Rosa immediately tells him to "get back down to Resime's and saw that wood properly" (157). Uncle David is Grandmother Rosa's responsibility, and she competently raises him in a way that challenges the colonial assumption that she is incapable of raising her children, an assumption that precipitated the removal to residential school of her older children many years before (118).

According to Bevis, the protagonist in all the Native American texts he examines "seeks an identity that he can find *only* in his society, past, and place" (591). *Crazy Dave* conforms to this model. In Bevis' analysis, this narrative pattern is a reflection of an inherent aspect of Native American subjectivity, what he calls "tribal identity" (585). In *Crazy Dave* more specifically, the "homing in" plot—that is, the way in which Johnston returns home and finds his identity—is associated with colonization. Johnston's

identity is incomplete because of the colonial dislocation he has experienced. If he is to (re)construct his identity, he must reintegrate into his family and community. In other words, he must come home.

Johnston's repeated visits to his community are absolutely crucial to the process of reintegration. Not all former residential school inmates return to their communities after serving their time. Those individuals who manage to return do not always successfully reintegrate into their communities. Johnston's father Rufus is one such individual. Following his release from residential school in 1917, Rufus returns to Cape Croker and leaves two months later (55). He returns again after an absence of almost twenty years (229), but this return is also unsuccessful. Johnston's narrative offers no explicit explanation as to why his father's literal return does not prompt a metaphorical one. Instead, Johnston poses a series of questions: "Did Father lose whatever capacity to love he may have had during his confinement at Spanish? Did he ever have much to begin with? Was he really as indifferent to law, church, and family as he seemed to be?" (258). Johnston's narrative does, however, make two suggestions. First, whereas Johnston's initial visits restart the process of his mental decolonization, Rufus' visits do not because the damage he suffers at residential school is so utterly complete. The place to which Rufus returns does not become home the way it does for Johnston: a "place of understanding and culture" (McLeod 33). Rather, it remains a site of injury, the place where his dislocation began. Second, Rufus does not benefit from inclusive relationships with his family or community the way his son does. By returning frequently to his community, Johnston has a chance to re-experience inclusive relationships and understand why he is confused, while Rufus, who seldom visits, does not have that opportunity. As Couture indicates, the process of decolonization requires time because "There are no shortcuts to attitudinal and spiritual change, no possible end-runs around phases of inner change" (51).

Johnston ends *Crazy Dave* with an epilogue constituting the closing frame of the narrative. In it, he tells about his eventual return to Cape Croker and how Cape Croker as place and community influences his identity. In researching Grandmother Rosa's story, Johnston learns how closely place is implicated in the construction of identity. Grandmother Rosa knows and appreciates Cape Croker as home. One of Johnston's earliest memories of his grandmother is of her sitting "down, as she did every evening, in her rocking chair in front of the window that faced the south and the limits of our world, the ramparts of the bluffs of the Niagara Escarpment, six to seven miles away" (7). Seated

there, Grandmother Rosa maps her reserve. From her “rocking chair in front of the window,” Grandmother Rosa occupies what Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin call “a position of panoramic observation, [which is] itself a representation of knowledge and power over colonial space” (227). It is a position Grandmother Rosa accepts with pride not least because of the considerable obstacles she overcomes in order to get there.

The epilogue begins:

From my vantage point a thousand feet or so above sea level I saw the entire “Cape,” as the locals knew and called Cape Croker. My eyes followed the shoreline from behind King’s Point Bluff to the southeast, swerved toward and around King’s Point, then swept into Little Port Elgin Bay before snaking out toward Lighthouse Point. (331)

Like Grandmother Rosa before him, Johnston maps the reserve. As previously mentioned, *Crazy Dave* is an elaborate mapping of Anishinaubae society and it is through this mapping that Johnston reconstructs his Anishinaubae identity. Johnston’s narrative mapping suggests that it is possible to stop the dislocation that characterizes so much of his family’s history. To do so, the Anishinaubae must tell their history and map their place from an Anishinaubae perspective. Grandmother Rosa does this when she tells Johnston what her grandmother told her (17) and when she surveys the world from her rocking chair. Johnston too does this when he surveys his world from his vantage point and when he writes his narrative. Right at the end of *Crazy Dave*, Johnston explicitly claims discursive control over Cape Croker by naming it “Naeyaushee-winnigum-eeng” (331) as his ancestors once did.¹²

Valerie Alia’s study of the coerced renaming of Canada’s Inuit populations, known as Project Surname, helps us understand how Johnston’s onomastic act furthers identity reconstruction and Anishinaubae cultural continuity: “Current efforts to retrieve and reinstate personal and place names reflect Inuit determination to reclaim both land and people” (92); “[n]ames do not just continue individual lives; they continue the life of a community” (18). As Alia also indicates, Inuit do not differentiate between personal and place names; they see “no power discrepancy between the two kinds of names” (99). Johnston too shares this appreciation, especially when his naming act is considered along with his explorations of Anishinaubae naming where he writes, “a name [i]s not merely an appellation, or a term of address; it [i]s an identity” (*Ojibway Ceremonies* 15). Johnston demonstrates his pride of place and identity and the growth he experiences as a result of learning about his place and reconstructing his identity by coming home and writing Grandmother Rosa’s story.

NOTES

- 1 Johnston's *Indian School Days* has begun to receive critical attention in such collections as Sam McKegney's *Magic Weapons: Aboriginal Writers Remaking Community after Residential School* (2007), Deena Rymhs' *From the Iron House: Imprisonment in First Nations Writing* (2008), and Jo-Ann Episkenew's *Taking Back Our Spirits: Indigenous Literature, Public Policy, and Healing* (2009).
- 2 Thanks to early anonymous reviewers for suggesting this sentence.
- 3 In "The Algonquian Farmers of Southern Ontario, 1830-1945" (1994), Edward S. Rogers provides an account of these "troubled times":

During the 1830s and 1840s, several thousand Algonquian-speaking Indians living in the United States immigrated to Upper Canada. The United States government passed the Indian Removal Act in 1830, permitting it to relocate Eastern American Indians. Accordingly, the government pressed Amerindian groups to sign treaties with provisions stating that their communities must migrate to the prairie country located west of the Mississippi River. This clause generated great dissatisfaction. Many of the Amerindians south of the Great Lakes refused to leave and remained in what became the states of Indiana, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Illinois. But pressures for their removal mounted. In 1837 the US government informed the Indians that no further annuities would be given until they complied with the terms of the treaties. By moving north they could remain in the Great Lakes area. (122)
- 4 Rosamond M. Vanderburgh's *I Am Nokomis, Too: The Biography of Verna Patronella Johnston* furnishes specific chronological information detailing the Pottawatomi removal and the Saugeen Territory and Bruce Peninsula land cessions:
 - 1833 Treaty of Chicago: Potowatomi lands in Illinois territory ceded to the United States of America: subsequent dispersal of the Potowatomi westward, and north to Ontario.
 - 1836 The Saugeen territory is ceded to the Crown: the Bruce Peninsula is reserved for the Indians.
 - 1854 Laurence Oliphant Treaty: The Bruce Peninsula is ceded to the Crown, with lands reserved to the Indians at Saugeen, Chief's Point, Big Bay (Owen Sound), Cape Croker and Oxenden (Colpoys Bay). (16)
- 5 Incidentally, Verna Johnston and Basil Johnston share the same great-great-grandmother: Misquo-bunno-quaе, "the woman from Wisconsin." Verna Johnston's great-grandfather Francis Nadjiwon and Basil Johnston's great-grandmother Mary Nadjiwon Lamourandiere were brother and sister (Vanderburgh 10).
- 6 Johnston's references to "local princess(es)" could benefit from some cultural context. As Raymond William Stedman explains in *Shadows of the Indian: Stereotypes in American Culture* (1982), except for maybe in one instance, "Indians in what is now the United States had no perpetual aristocracy in the European sense." He continues, "Yet in power and domain grand caciques or territorial masters . . . were every bit as much kings as were hundreds of ancient monarchs of Europe. And authority often did remain within principal families." Stedman also adds, "[M]any of the famous Indian princesses of fact and fiction were indeed the daughters of chieftains" and that "[o]ften, however, the designation was one of convention" (24-25). From Vanderburgh's biography of Verna Johnston, we learn that Philomene Nadjiwon married William B. MacGregor, "a grandson of Chief Wahbadick." Philomene is the sister of Francis Nadjiwon and Mary Nadjiwon Lamourandiere. We also learn that William B. MacGregor and Fred Lamourandiere enjoyed a very successful relationship, with both political and economic rewards. Although Mary Nadjiwon Lamourandiere, the "local princess," might not have been the daughter

of a chief, she was, through her sister's marriage, related to one of the region's "most influential families" (Vanderburgh 24-25).

7 *Indian School Days* was published in 1988, but it had been on Johnston's mind since at least 1976. In a June 2, 1976 letter to Mr. Al Potter, Johnston's editor at McClelland and Stewart, Johnston lists "some projects that [he had] in mind." Johnston describes one such project in the following way:

5. An Indian Residential School at Spanish Ontario. I know that Indian Residential Schools have been the subject of books and studies. All have been non-complementary [sic] or academic. Having been confined eight years to one, I think I can offer another viewpoint, the humorous side (presuming I can handle humor). The idea, of course, is not to absolve such schools of their mortal sins. It may tarnish priestly images. (*Letter from Basil Johnston* n. pag.)

The remaining ideas that Johnston had in mind all eventually became published books, but there is no indication that he envisioned a book on Uncle David at this time.

8 Verna Johnston's biography references Father Cadot's "perceptions of the Indians" in Cadot's own, unambiguous language: "The Indian often not only does not pay any heed to the morrow; he even lets the afternoon look after itself. A great number of them are, through all their life, children; an Indian greybeard of sixty is but an infant" (qtd. in Vanderburgh 242). Cadot's paper "Bruce County and Work Among the Indians," which was published in *Ontario Historical Society Papers and Records* 18 (1920), has been reprinted in *I Am Nokomis, Too* in its entirety.

9 Johnston uses the term "faith" after Grandmother Rosa prays to "Kizhae Manitous" on learning that David is "a Mongoloid" (88-89).

10 Johnston details the horrific abuse he suffered at residential school in his Foreword to Sam McKegney's *Magic Weapons* (xi).

11 Johnston writes that in 1980, he "dall[ies] with the idea of writing a series of stories about some of the misadventures of Uncle David" (10). In fact, Johnston more than dallies; one story about Uncle David is committed to paper. Johnston's collection of humorous stories, *Moose Meat and Wild Rice* (1978), contains "Good Thing We Know Them People," which is an earlier version of the *Crazy Dave* episode where Uncle David is mistaken for a Japanese soldier. Uncle David is not identified by name in the *Moose Meat* version of the story.

12 In *Honour Earth Mother* (2003), Johnston glosses Naeyaushee-winnigum-eeng as:
Naeyaushee-winnigum-eeng (Cape Croker, ON)—Portage Point
Naeyaush: a point
Winnigum: to portage
Eeng: at the place of (167)

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