

### Trans-Indigenous Sci-Fi in French: Language and Temporality in *Wapke*



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An examination of the depths of trans-Indigenous science-fiction would not be complete without paying attention to Indigenous sf produced in French. Published in May 2021, *Wapke* is the first short story collection of Indigenous anticipation stories in French in what is colonially referred to as Quebec. It brings together fourteen authors from different Indigenous communities who imagine *wapke*, or “tomorrow” in Atikamekw. From time travelling Indigenous warriors to rebellious language and knowledge keepers, from Big Trees in a lake to a human sausage factory, from living on the land to living in cyberspace, these stories provide a trans-Indigenous colonial critique. Crossing communities, generations, languages, times, and places, *Wapke* is indeed inherently trans-Indigenous in form. Moreover, when read together, these stories convey trans-Indigenous messages about language, temporality, colonialism, and decolonization. Thus, in this article, we aim to demonstrate how *Wapke* goes beyond the confines of settler colonial ideologies and imagines decolonial futures. Closely reading *Wapke* and drawing on Leanne Betasamosake Simpson’s theory of Indigenous resurgence, Daniel Heath Justice’s take on Indigenous wonderworks, and Chadwick Allen’s notion of trans-Indigenous methodologies, we seek to answer the following questions: As a trans-Indigenous wonderwork, what messages about language and temporality does *Wapke* communicate? How are these enriched by its trans-Indigenous form? We argue that, on the one hand, by offering criticisms of “civilization” and settler colonial structures, these stories dismantle colonialism, and, on the other hand, they build tomorrows rooted in Indigenous resurgence by creating alternative temporalities and reflecting on linguistic diversity.

As settler scholars in what is now called Canada, we are committed to engaging with Indigenous literatures in ethically appropriate and respectful ways. To us this means continually learning about the cultures and communities from which these artistic expressions arise, privileging the work of Indigenous scholars, writers, and community members, and critically engaging with these works and texts – as Sam McKegney points out, “healthy skepticism and critical debate are signs of engagement and respect” (85); all of which we aimed for in our analysis of *Wapke* as a trans-Indigenous wonderwork.

#### **Situating *Wapke* as Trans-Indigenous wonderwork**

*Wapke* is characterized as “le premier recueil de nouvelles d’anticipation autochtone au Québec”, as the book’s back cover indicates.<sup>1</sup> Although associated, anticipation and science fiction are not synonymous: while both imagine other worlds, science-fiction can be set in the past, present, or future while anticipation always portrays a future. Anticipation stories are not

necessarily science fiction either, since they can portray futures without “sci-fi elements”. In reading *Wapke*, we found this Western genre distinction to be counterproductive as it would classify some stories as sci-fi but not others. In our understanding of Indigenous sci-fi, we follow Indigenous writers and scholars like Daniel Heath Justice (Cherokee) and Grace Dillon (Anishinaabe) who argue that Western genre categorizations are limited, and can even be dangerous to Indigenous sci-fi, literatures, and people, since they are “so deeply entangled in settler colonial logics of dead matter, monolithic reality, and rationalist supremacy” (Justice 152). As an alternative to colonial understandings of Indigenous sci-fi, Justice proposes to think about these works as Indigenous wonderworks:

Wondrous things are *other* and *otherwise*; they’re outside the bounds of the everyday and mundane, perhaps unpredictable, but not necessarily alien, not necessarily foreign or dangerous – but not necessarily comforting and safe, either. They remind us that other worlds exist; other realities abide alongside and within our own. Wonderworks, then, are those works of art – literary, filmic, etc. – that centre this possibility within Indigenous values and towards Indigenous, decolonial purposes. (153)

Indigenous wonderworks remind the reader that there are other ways of being in the world than the colonial ways we have been taught to accept. Indeed, as Grace Dillon writes in *Walking the Clouds*, these works “return us to ourselves by encouraging Native writers to write about Native conditions in Native-centered worlds liberated by the imagination” (11). Indigenous wonderworks offer a future, even if it is only an imagined one – for now (Justice 156). *Wapke*’s anticipation stories do exactly that: they offer the reader other futures and worlds—some still colonial, others decolonial.

*Wapke* is not only an Indigenous wonderwork, but also a *trans-Indigenous wonderwork*. To Chadwick Allen, the trans-Indigenous centers Indigenous communities and relations; trans-Indigenous methodologies are “a broad set of emerging practices designed explicitly to privilege reading *across*, *through*, and *beyond* tribally and nationally specific Indigenous texts and contexts” (“Decolonizing Comparison” 378, emphasis in original). Additionally, Allen asserts that trans-Indigenous methodologies are “*purposeful* Indigenous juxtapositions” (*Trans-Indigenous* xviii).<sup>2</sup> As a collection of short stories, *Wapke* intrinsically embodies the notion of trans-Indigenous: short story collections are, in essence, purposeful juxtapositions of stories, and *Wapke* is a purposeful collection of Indigenous anticipation—or wondrous—short stories. Indeed, it brings together authors from different communities,<sup>3</sup> generations,<sup>4</sup> places, and traditions, inherently shaping *Wapke* in a trans-Indigenous form. In that respect, a trans-Indigenous approach on our part is appropriate: we read *Wapke* in a trans-Indigenous way, keeping in mind the local contexts from which the stories emerge, all the while staying cognizant of the whole of this short story collection. The question arises then as to what a trans-Indigenous reading of these stories brings to the fore. We focus our analysis on the themes of language and temporality to explore how these function as sites of resistance to settler colonialism and of Indigenous resurgence and self-determination.

### From Indigenous Language Revitalization to Indigenous Resurgence in *Wapke*

Multiple stories in *Wapke* deal with language, although in different ways. While some focus on linguistic diversity between French and Indigenous languages, others portray a universal language created through mixing various languages. Whereas some stories offer the reader a critique of colonial languages, others center language revitalization and linguistic resistance as essential components of Indigenous resurgence.

*Wapke's* first short story is Innu poet Marie-Andrée Gill's "Dix jours sur écorce de bouleau," which is composed of ten diary entries written by the main character, an unnamed boy. He reflects on French, writing "je sais pas quoi écrire. Le français, j'aimais pas ça. Les seules choses que j'aimais quand on était au village, c'était jouer au hockey quand on pouvait encore, jouer à ma console et monter dans le bois" (Gill 16).<sup>5</sup> The boy's assertion that he did not like French reads, on the one hand, as an adolescent's dislike of the school subject French, and, on the other hand, as a critique of this language being forced on Indigenous people through colonialism. Indeed, in the last diary entry, the boy recounts how another small community found theirs:

On voulait tous leur poser des questions mais on était aussi un peu gênés, c'est bizarre de voir du nouveau monde. C'est comme si les mots restaient pris dans la gorge parce que le cœur bat trop fort. Je pense que ça leur faisait ça à eux aussi. Ils devaient être habitués de juste parler leur langue entre eux. Avec Simba, Jack et kukum Denise par contre ils pouvaient parler en atikamekw et ils se comprenaient super bien. Moi je poignais juste des bouttes, comme un radio qui poigne un poste à moitié. (Gill 18)

The community that found them had been speaking solely in Atikamekw<sup>6</sup> until they arrived there. In the boy's community, only three out of twelve people were still fluent in the language, the others – including the boy – spoke mainly French with some Atikamekw words. The metaphor of the radio is quite significant too since earlier in the story the boy recounts how there was less and less communication over their radio until it completely stopped – apart from the signal they picked up hearing people speak with an Atikamekw accent, who turned out to be the people who later found them. In this quote, the radio detecting only half the signal is a reflection of how the boy only catches half of what is said in Atikamekw. His grandfather was the only one who knew about how to work with electronics and had tried to teach the boy, but he was not interested at that time. To the boy, his former disinterest in his grandfather's teachings "n'a plus de sens aujourd'hui" (Gill 11); it would have been useful if he had paid attention to his grandfather's teachings back then.<sup>7</sup> The idea that he missed out on learning from his *nukum* indicates that he is now interested in relearning the language, not necessarily to get rid of his French, but rather to be able to communicate with the Atikamekw communities close to him.

In the story "Kanatabe Ishkueu" by Innu poet Natasha Kanapé Fontaine, Innu-aimun appears beyond rescue at first. Even though Kanatabe, a future version of what is now called Canada, has implemented Indigenous knowledges to survive the new ice age, the language has not fully endured: "cependant, la technologie ne nous a pas permis de sauvegarder notre langue maternelle,

l'innu-aimun" (Kanapé Fontaine 164).<sup>8</sup> In this world, their language has disappeared apart from some names and states that have been named by taking a word from an Indigenous language or by coming back to the roots of the word:

le Keb était autrefois une province, le Québec, aujourd'hui un état libre au sein des États unifiés du Kanatabe. Le Canada et le Québec, comme d'autres États du monde, ont été renommés, soit en reprenant un nom issu d'une des langues autochtones du territoire, soit en revenant à l'origine de leur nom. Kanatabe (*Kanata-Ahbee*) signifie 'terre des nombreux villages', et Keb provient du Kebeq, 'là où le fleuve se rétrécit', pour désigner la capitale, la ville de Québec. (Kanapé Fontaine 164-5)<sup>9</sup>

These names appear to be the only traces of Indigenous languages throughout the first part of the story and can be considered a form of tokenism; the Kanatabe government has only symbolically given Indigenous names to the states and cities all the while maintaining the oppression of Indigenous people, partly through the further erasure of their language. However, the story turns around after the main character's *Traversée* (or Crossing): the person who found her addresses her in Innu with "kuei", and throughout the second part of the story, other Innu words are used (such as *mushum*); in this alternate, separate world *Innu-aimun* is still alive. Quite like Gill's story, Kanapé Fontaine's story ends on a hopeful note. The character explains she was able to make the *Traversée* guided by a book explaining how to get to this other place. This underscores the power of literatures; as Jo-Ann Episkenew (Métis) asserts, Indigenous stories have real-world effects "as [they] move outside the boundaries of a text to affect the material world" (193). Or as the main character in Gill's story writes: "C'est puissant, les mots, quand même" (10).<sup>10</sup> Since she left the book in Kanatabe, "ca veut dire qu'il y en a d'autres qui viendront" (Kanapé Fontaine 177).<sup>11</sup> Not only are Innu-aimun (Innu language) and Innu-aitun (Innu culture) very much alive, but others will also be able to join this community and live within Innu traditions. Gill's and Kanapé Fontaine's stories thus provide a hopeful image of Indigenous language revitalization in their imagined futures, hinting towards Indigenous resurgence as a possibility.

Virginia Pésémapéo Bordeleau's story "Les enfants lumière" paints a different picture in which languages are morphed together into a universal language. In the story, the world has completely changed due to capitalism's continued extractivism, and attacks on the earth. Among the Survivors of "L'Événement" (the Event) are the original people from the Abitibi region: in line with their traditional values of "l'accueil chaleureux" and "une large conscience sociale" (59), they welcomed the refugees, among them Chinese students, people from African countries and Haiti, and a descendant of the Aborigines of Australia. This resonates with Leanne Betasamosake Simpson's (Anishinaabe) idea of solidarity between Indigenous peoples and people of color as an essential part of radical resurgence: "If we recognize settler colonialism to be dispossession, capitalism, white supremacy, and heteropatriarchy, that recognition points us to our allies: not liberal white Canadians (...) but Black and brown individuals and communities on Turtle Island and beyond that are struggling in their own localities against these same forces, building movements that contain alternatives" (*As We Have Always Done* 228-9). This story shows that co-resistance and

solidarity are essential to building an alternative reality rooted in renewed, traditional values such as hospitality and relationality. After the Event, most people renounced having children, as their mentalities had radically changed. However, Sam, a member of the Anishinaabeg, and his wife Bella still had hope, and did have a child, Nibi. The third and last part of the story indeed focuses on Nibi and “les enfants lumière” (the light children). They bring joy and hope to the new people; after couples were formed among the other community members, they gave birth to a new generation that will carry forward the knowledge of the People:

Le savoir serait transmis. [...] Au fil des années, des enfants de toutes les nuances possibles du genre humain animèrent les maisonnées et le grand village cosmopolite. Ils parlaient plusieurs langues à la fois en mêlant les mots, inventant ainsi un langage unifié tout comme ils créeraient avec le temps une humanité sans races. (Pésémapéo Bordeleau 67)<sup>12</sup>

This universalization of the language is born out of solidarity between Indigenous peoples and other people of color. Here, traditions are reactualized rather than staying put in the past: the story shows tradition as a living entity that adapts to and through time and space. Tradition can and should be recalled and used in ways that reflect and suit present life. The decolonial world imagined here by Pésémapéo Bordeleau is then built on the “very best practices of our traditional cultures, knowledge systems and lifeways in the dynamic, fluid, compassionate, respectful context in which they were originally generated” (*Dancing on our Turtle’s Back* 18).

While the authors mentioned above have taken up language as a theme, others use Indigenous languages in their stories. The title of the collection underscores the importance of using Indigenous languages: “Le titre, *Wapke*, un mot atikamekw qui veut dire demain ou avenir, n’est d’ailleurs pas anodin dans les circonstances et représente un message fort” (Yvon).<sup>13</sup> These circumstances include the continued extractivist practices targeting Indigenous land, the environmental crisis, missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, Québec’s refusal to acknowledge systemic racism in the province, not to mention the current and ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.<sup>14</sup> Although the writers had not gotten any specific assignment, all stories reflect on and connect through such social, political, and environmental themes; through sharing such elements, these stories portray trans-Indigenous content. Cyndy Wylde (Anicinape and Atikamekw) said that “c’est un peu décourageant qu’on se projette tous comme ça,” but also emphasizes that she wanted a positive end to her story: “je voulais qu’on soit les gagnants dans l’histoire” (qtd. in Yvon), which is a goal that *Wapke*’s contributors seem to share.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, as the title reminds us, these short stories offer a tomorrow from an Indigenous perspective.

Some authors have used words, phrases, and expressions in an Indigenous language in their stories. Natasha Kanapé Fontaine, for example, uses *mushum* in her story to refer to the main character’s grandfather and *kuei*, an Innu greeting, to signal the continuance of the Innu language in the other world (as we have discussed above). Joséphine Bacon, in turn, uses Innu words like Uatan (the village in which her story takes place), *Nutshimit* (the inland), *Tshishikushkueu* (“la femme de l’espace qui veille sur la Terre” (203)) and *teueikan* (drum). In using Innu words, these

authors underline the continued existence of Indigenous languages, cultures, and peoples into the future, especially since the words used here are mostly related to family and to inherently Innu places, traditions, and knowledge. In a similar vein, Atikamekw language teacher, actress and writer Janis Ottawa's story includes many Atikamekw words, especially those that refer to traditional knowledges of the land ("wikwasatikw, le bouleau blanc" (180), "minihikw, une épinette blanche" (181), "awesisak, le gibier" (181), etc); traditional ways of living ("nous allons apprendre le *kotosowan*, la façon dont nos ancêtres le faisaient, pour appeler l'original juste à temps pour la chasse" (182)); people in the community ("awacak, les jeunes" (181), "*kokom*, grand-mère" (181), "*moshom*, grand-père" (181), etc), and the others ("*ka wapisitcik*, des Blancs" (182)). Miko, the story's main character, indeed uses Atikamekw language and his life in the community is rooted in traditional practices. Nevertheless, Miko has a strong desire to leave the island and go to the city to find his lost love. Towards the end of the story, he even says to himself that he does not want to be Anicinape anymore: "Je ne veux plus être un Anicinape", se dit-il. Puis il regrette; c'est insensé de vouloir changer d'identité, aussi bien de mourir (186-7).<sup>16</sup> Miko realizes that he should not try to change his identity as Anicinape. He becomes aware of the interconnection between the island where he and his community live, the way they live there (including their language use), and his identity as Anicinape. In that sense, the story exemplifies Jeannette Armstrong's concept of interdependence and the centrality of land and language to Indigenous existence: "language was given to us by the land we live within" (146).

Ottawa's, Bacon's, and Kanapé Fontaine's stories also have in common an Indigenous place setting: Bacon's story takes place in the village of Uatan in Nutshimit; Ottawa's story on the island, and Kanapé Fontaine's story partly in Kanatabe, which is still colonial, and partly in the Innu world. In these places, Indigenous people lead a life practically separate from a colonial world, and it comes as no surprise, if we keep in mind Armstrong's idea about the land speaking, that their languages are spoken in these places. These stories thus exemplify Indigenous resurgence and its relation to language. For Simpson, Indigenous resurgence is strongly rooted in Indigenous languages: she argues that Indigenous resurgence and decolonization involve learning from Indigenous languages as they carry Indigenous epistemologies, philosophies, and meanings in their structures. Indigenous resurgence centers self-determination and Indigenous resistance. The imagined futures by these three authors are indeed centered around self-determination of the community in their own spaces, speaking their own languages, and living on the land. They move away from a politics of recognition focused on reconciling with the settler state to root their lives in their own values, traditions, epistemologies, and lands (Coulthard).<sup>17</sup>

The idea of Indigenous resurgence and self-determination becomes even more clear in Cyndy Wyldé's story. "*Pakan* (Autrement)" begins in 2022 and takes us to 2063 following a line of Anishinaabeg women beginning with Kanena and followed by Nibi and her daughter Maïka. These three women are confronted by the decisions of a hegemonic government, but they find ways to actively resist, notably by using their language:

Tout était donc susceptible d'être entendu, mais une barrière demeurait pour les fonctionnaires du régime actuel: les langues autochtones. Nibi s'était fait un devoir de transmettre sa langue à Maïka. Tous les Autochtones de sa génération devenus parents avaient fait de même. La revitalisation de l'identité était un moteur, mais elle roulait dans l'ombre pour ne pas susciter les foudres de l'État. Nibi elle-même avait dû user de plusieurs ruses pour conserver sa langue maternelle. Née de parents chez qui les pensionnats avaient ciblé la destruction de l'identité autochtone en interdisant d'utiliser leur langue, Nibi s'était promis d'honorer ses ancêtres et de confidentialité qu'il permettait l'aiderait à préserver quelque chose de tout aussi vital. (...) Les deux femmes marchent au bord de l'eau, reconnaissantes d'avoir peu de risques d'être écoutées ou, du moins, comprises. En parlant anicinape, Nibi ajoute une obstruction qui la rassure. (Wylde 101-2)<sup>18</sup>

Nibi then continues to explain to her daughter how the government has oppressed Indigenous peoples in the past, and how they continue to do so. Nibi had relearned the Anicinape language to honor her ancestors and to continue the Anicinape language, knowledges, and traditions. In that sense, this act of Indigenous language revitalization forms an act of Indigenous resurgence, as does the fact that she transmits it to her daughter. At the same time, speaking the language also serves as a layer of protection as well as an act of active resistance. Since the authoritarian government listens to everything that is being said, they could not have this honest conversation in French. Speaking in Anicinape allows them to criticize the government without retribution and, thus, to actively resist oppression.

Although in different ways, Gill, Kanapé Fontaine, Pésémapéo Bordeleau, Bacon, Ottawa, and Wylde deal with language—as a theme and/or as a practice—to embody Indigenous resurgence. Language is a path to resisting settler colonialism and building a future rooted in Indigenous languages and epistemologies. Another way these authors resist settler colonialism is by putting forward different conceptions of time and temporality, which are another form of resistance and resurgence.

### **Dismantling Time: Stories of Temporalities as Indigenous Resurgence**

Time and temporality are not synonymous, as “[t]emporality is subjective progression through moments, while time attempts to objectively measure and mark that progression. Time is necessarily temporal, but temporality can exist plainly without time—a slow clock still measures temporality, even if it doesn’t do so in a timely fashion” (Joelle). Time is associated with “objectivity,” measurable and detached from context, while temporality is deeply embedded in subjectivity, place, and relationships. Time works in a linear way, pulling apart temporality to analyze it without the set of relations that makes it whole. Although our settler backgrounds necessarily influence our understanding of time and temporality here, we attempt to follow, as much as possible, Indigenous conceptions throughout our analysis. *Wapke’s* Indigenous anticipation stories makes it possible to link story and history together, creating new narratives for relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. As the authors play with

temporality to make visible the horrors brought on by colonization, past, present, and future collide in the stories to make space for an allyship between the readers and the authors. While offering insightful criticism about the ongoing story that is colonialism, these stories demonstrate that “other realities abide alongside and within our own” (Justice 153). As the authors (re)build their houses, they give the readers the necessary space to feel and think about the issues brought forward.

Wendat writer Jean Sioui’s short story, “Les couleurs de la peau”, takes place in 1534 with the “discovery of Canada” by Jacques Cartier, and challenges the notion of *Terra Nullius*:<sup>19</sup> “Ils sont restés sur le territoire qu’ils *prétendaient* avoir découvert” (88, emphasis added).<sup>20</sup> The story then moves on to the year 2234, when a new mutation of the smallpox virus—the same one that decimated the Hurons-Wendat in the early 1700s—strikes the newborns of Kanata, making their skin blue—but not affecting Indigenous peoples. From there, it does not take much “pour que les horreurs d’un temps à oublier ressuscitent” (88):<sup>21</sup> the children from the story being taken away from their communities to medical laboratories remind the reader of the forced placement of Indigenous children in residential schools,<sup>22</sup> including the medical testing some of these children suffered.<sup>23</sup> This imagined future is rooted in the past and stems from preconceived ideas:

Au début des années 2000, les gouvernements parlaient de pardon et de réconciliation avec les peuples autochtones. À l’aube de 2270, trente-six ans après le début de l’épidémie, les Autochtones sont toujours sous l’emprise de préjugés et de racisme systémique. Presque quarante ans à vivre avec le nouveau virus. Les politiciens, les complotistes et les médias accusent effrontément la nation wendat de sorcellerie. Ils prétendent que des chamans ont jeté un sort aux Canadiens pour se venger de leur inaction après plusieurs études, des rapports gouvernementaux nombreux et des promesses qui sont restées lettre morte. Des promesses qui devaient pourtant corriger les injustices commises envers les Premières Nations. (89)<sup>24</sup>

Demonstrating the failure of recognition and reconciliation policies, Sioui emphasizes how colonization is not a fixed moment in history, but a process that persists by constantly reinventing itself.<sup>25</sup> This reminds us of Glen Coulthard’s deconstruction of the policies of recognition and reconciliation—empty words of action which are not about change but about appeasing Indigenous claims, allowing governments to retain all power. Moreover, the narrative of recognition and reconciliation also serves to naturalize colonization as an historical event; but settler colonialism is not “an anomaly of time and space—it’s an ongoing process of violent self-justification through the erasure of Indigenous peoples as anything but an empty symbol” (Justice 10).

While Sioui’s short story warns us about the emptiness of the recognition and reconciliation discourses, Janis Ottawa’s short story emphasizes the dangers of giving into that same narrative. In “*Minishtikok* (l’île)”, reconciliation is subtly discussed through Miko, the main character. Growing up, Miko dreams of reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. But it quickly

becomes clear that reconciliation is not an option: water and animals are getting harder to find; they are searching shelter from non-Indigenous people; they are in continuous danger of being found; and the men chosen to leave the island to bring back food and materials (like Miko's father) do not come back. Towards the end of the story, it becomes clear that reconciliation is a trap set to capture Indigenous people in erasure. When Miko asks his mom what happened to their people, she tells her son about the dangers of hospitals, the construction of pipelines on stolen land, the communities poisoned by the government's alimentary help provided to families with low income, how these deaths were covered-up by the medias as collective suicides, and how his father always believed in reconciliation only to leave the island and never come back.

In reminding us of the colonial history that led to the death of tens of thousands of Indigenous people, Sioui and Ottawa demonstrate clearly that it could happen again, that it is *still* happening in more pernicious ways. Indeed, colonialism is perpetuated through government policies of recognition and reconciliation. For Vanessa Watts (Mohawk from Bear Clan, Six Nations & Anishinaabe), this act of remembering "is not a question of accessing something, which has already come and gone, but simply to listen. To act" (32). In this sense, the authors invite the readers to become allies by listening to their stories and by speaking up. Here, remembering "is not a question of "going backwards", for this implies there is a static place to return to" (Watts 32), but rather is embedded in a juxtaposition of temporalities.

In Cyndy Wyldé's short story, the juxtaposition of temporalities is embodied in form and content. Indeed, "*Pakan* (autrement)" starts with an ending, the drowning of Maïka. The story then jumps to the year 2022, when Kanena, an Anicinape woman living in Kepek (Quebec), is deeply concerned about the impacts of the recent pandemic on Indigenous people, as discrimination and racism continue to exist in public services and educational institutions. In 2042, Kanena's daughter, Nibi, is stunned by the news of her pregnancy given that she never had intercourse. She cannot get a second opinion since hospitals specific for Indigenous people were created after the pandemic—although they are staffed by Quebecers only. She cannot talk about this with her mother either, because Kanena disappeared one day: "La disparition d'une femme autochtone avait laissé la plupart des gens dans l'indifférence la plus totale" (98).<sup>26</sup> A year later, Nibi opens a letter from the government in which her daughter's Indian status is denied because the father is unknown. But when, in 2063, Maïka announces to her mother that she is pregnant (again, without being sexually active), Nibi's suspicions are confirmed: "L'histoire se répète, ce n'est pas une coïncidence, c'est clair" (100).<sup>27</sup> She explains to her daughter—in Anicinape—that in 2022, a secret government policy was instituted, in which the doctors were ordered (under penalty of disbarment) to insert into every Indigenous baby a programmed chip that assured a pregnancy within eighteen to twenty-five years of their installation. The babies born from this process also get a chip. Without a known father, the children could not be recognized by the law, releasing the government from any obligation towards them, especially economically. Here, we can draw a clear parallel to the Indian Act's regulation of status—and how it has disproportionately impacted Indigenous women<sup>28</sup>—as well as to the coerced and forced sterilization of Indigenous women that

is still happening to this day in Canada.<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, the fact that the doctors in Wyldé's story are "ordered" (with a negative incentive) rather than forced shows the degree to which they are complicit: as much as they (should) want to help, they do not when they risk losing their privilege. This example of complicity asks readers to think about their own complicity in settler colonial structures. Completely overwhelmed by this revelation, Maïka starts running and ends up falling in the water near her—bringing back the readers to the beginning of the short story. But this is not *the end*, as the narrative continues towards the (re)creation of the earth: "L'île de la Tortue renaîtra, et Maïka deviendra la grand-mère de tous les êtres humains sur cette nouvelle terre" (107).<sup>30</sup> Then, the Creator explains to Maïka that the first Mother Earth is falling apart and that they are responsible for the next one: "Vous êtes les protecteurs de la tortue, vous appartenez à la terre et non le contraire. Dorénavant, il ne faut plus laisser le mal prendre autant de place sur son dos. Protégez la Terre mère" (108).<sup>31</sup> Here, the last words of Wyldé's short story remind us that acting, and listening is everybody's responsibility, the settlers as well as Indigenous people.

As the story starts with an ending and ends with a beginning, the temporalities are juxtaposed in ways that demonstrate the continuity of colonialism while moving towards change—the recreation of Mother Earth. To us, this represents resurgence, as the author builds on ancestral knowledge about time and temporality to create a "new" narrative deeply embedded in a traditional Creation story. Indeed, Wyldé's story embodies a conception of time that is not linear. This reminds us of what Grace Dillon, quoting Gerry William (Spallumcheen Indian Band, Enderby, British Columbia), writes about:

the Okanagan sense of time in space-time traditions of aurality. He explains that his writing follows "the Okanagan beliefs that linear time is something from western paradigms. Time in our stories is not circular, but perhaps more in keeping with the Irish tribal traditions of the cone, where time spirals along a path which never repeats, but is also always there in the past, present and future." The space-time shifts [...] follows a spiraling trajectory through memories conveyed in the narrative (Dillon 77-8).

This is also reflected in Louis-Karl Picard-Siouï's (Wendat from Wendake) short story, as the characters travel through time and space. In "La hache et le glaive", Yahndawara' is charged with protecting the Strendu, a technology that allows both traveling through and altering time, against the *Glaive*, an all-powerful sect (39) that is trying to gain power over the machine to rule time. Created in 2124, the Strendu was an experiment that went horribly wrong: "la machine avait été aspirée par la brèche qu'elle avait elle-même générée. La surface du temps avait été fissurée" (39).<sup>32</sup> Yahndawara' has been running for a long time across spatiotemporal currants trying to prevent this catastrophe, to stop this system that could cause "assez de paradoxes et d'anomalies pour déchirer la toile de la réalité elle-même et briser de façon définitive le cercle sacré de l'existence" (37).<sup>33</sup> Here, the idea of movements across spatiotemporal currants is echoed by Diane Glancy's (Cherokee) explanation of time, which is like:

a rubber band, stretchable, or as little loops. Millions of years can be 'kinked up and crawled over. There are wormholes you can fall down and get lost in and then come back up and move on and travel. So time is certainly not really circular, and it's certainly not linear. There are lapses and times within times, and coils, and other geometrical patterns that time can follow. It can undulate, and be wavelike, going back and forth... History is a multiplicity... [akin to] the unrolling of many scrolls... going back and retrieving what was there but has not had a voice.' (Dillon 26-7)

Yahndawara' is coming from far away, in space and in time, as she was born in the 16th century when her city was among the first to be invaded by the colonizers. As an Indigenous woman, she is a guardian of this sacred circle of life. As she comes close to succeeding in her mission, meeting general Providence, the leader of the Glaive, becomes inevitable. Their encounter illustrates the clash between two conceptions of time, as for the general, time is something controllable and the Strendu is a given right: "Bientôt, il pourrait récupérer ce qui était sien. Il pourrait corriger le passé" (45).<sup>34</sup> But for Yahndawara', the Strendu is an aberration that does not belong to anybody. Indeed, when Yahndawara' and the general meet, it becomes clear that you cannot solve an issue with what caused it in the first place, as the Sorcerer also affirms in the story: "On ne peut régler un problème avec l'outil qui l'a causé" (40).<sup>35</sup> This not only refers to the Strendu being unable to resolve the breach of time, but also of the impossibility of settler colonial logics to solve settler colonialism: there can be no decolonization without dismantling settler colonial thinking, policies, and structures, nor without Indigenous resurgence, which provides a sustainable alternative.

## Conclusion

At the beginning of this article, we asked ourselves what *Wapke* teaches us through its trans-Indigenous nature as a short story collection. The ways that the authors deal with language and temporality demonstrate resistance to settler colonial structures and center Indigenous resurgence as an effective way forward. Indeed, on the one hand, *Wapke* offers a sharp critique of the devastating effects of colonialism. Despite the open instructions the authors had received, they tended to take up and criticize similar issues: colonial hegemony, government control, institutional and personal violence, land exploitation, language loss, etcetera. These critiques effectively dismantle the master's house, to borrow from Audre Lorde, in order to affect change. On the other hand, the authors move beyond a colonial framework, which is often damage-centered and recognition-based, to imaginative futures where Indigenous resurgence and resistance are central to the continuity and life of Indigenous people. The tomorrows envisioned in *Wapke* are rooted in Indigenous resurgence through the creation of alternative temporalities and realities and through the reflection on linguistic diversity often centered around Indigenous languages. In this way, bringing together fourteen authors with different backgrounds, experiences, and histories, *Wapke* offers a trans-Indigenous perspective of what the future could be.

As a trans-Indigenous wonderwork, *Wapke* teaches the reader about how Indigenous resurgence is not only rooted in language and conceptions of time and temporality, but also in place, space, (renewal of) traditions, presence, ethics, and more. Further exploration of this topic would benefit from a land-based approach reflecting on how language and temporality as parts of Indigenous resurgence inherently come from the land.

In our analysis of *Wapke*, we came to understand that Indigenous resurgence is strengthened by the trans-Indigenous as it centers Indigenous-to-Indigenous relations; the short story collection embodies Simpson's idea of a constellation of active co-resistance: "Individual stars shine in their own right and exist, grounded in their everyday renewal of Indigenous practices and in constellated relationships, meaning relationships that operate from within the grounded normativity of particular Indigenous nations, not only with other stars but also the physical world and the spiritual world. Constellations in relationship with other constellations form flight paths out of settler colonial realities into Indigeneity" (Simpson, *As We Have Always Done* 217-8). Each story shines in its own right, but read together they recreate the future "*pakan*, autrement" (Wylde 108).

## Notes

1. "The first Indigenous collection of anticipation short stories in Quebec" (our translation).
2. Juxtaposition is understood broadly here as placing texts close together.
3. Marie-Andrée Gill, J.D. Kurtness and Michel Jean are Innu de Mashteuiatsh. Katia Bacon, Natasha Kanapé Fontaine, and Joséphine Bacon are Innu from Pessamit. Alyssa Jérôme is Innu from Uashat Mak Mani-Utenam. Louis-Karl Picard-Sioui, Isabelle Picard, and Jean Sioui are Wendat from Wendake. Virginia Pésémapéo Bordeleau is Métis-Cree from Rapide-des-Cèdres. Cyndy Wylde is Anicinape and Atikamekw from Pikogan. Elisapie Isaac is Inuit from Salluit. Janis Ottawa is Atikamekw from Manawan.
4. *Wapke* comprises stories of writers of different generations. The younger generation includes emerging authors such as Katia Bacon and Alyssa Jérôme as well as more established authors such as Natasha Kanapé Fontaine and Marie-Andrée Gill. *Wapke* also includes stories by those who are Elders in their communities such as Joséphine Bacon.
5. "I don't know what to write. French, I didn't like that. The only things I liked when we were in the village were playing hockey when we still could, playing on the console and going up to the woods" (our translation).
6. "We all wanted to ask them questions but we were also a little embarrassed, it's weird to see new people. It's like the words are stuck in your throat because your heart is beating too fast. I think they felt that too. They must have been used to just speaking their language to each other. With Simba, Jack and kukum Denise however they could speak in Atikamekw

and they understood each other very well. I could only pick up some parts of what they were saying, like a radio that is not quite tuned.” (our translation)

7. “today that doesn’t make sense anymore” (our translation).
8. “However, technology has not allowed us to save our mother tongue, Innu-aimun” (our translation).
9. “Keb used to be a province, Quebec, nowadays it’s a free state within the United States of Kanatabe. Canada and Quebec, like other states in the world, had been renamed, either by retaking a name from one of the territory’s Indigenous languages, or by going back to the origin of their name. Kanatabe (Kanata-Ahbee) means ‘land of numerous villages’, and Keb comes from Kebeq, ‘there where the river retreats’ to refer to the capital, the city of Quebec” (our translation).
10. “Words are powerful though” (our translation).
11. “That means that there are others who will come” (our translation).
12. “The knowledge would be transmitted. [...] Over the years, children of all possible shades of the human race animated the houses and the big cosmopolitan village. They spoke several languages at once, mixing words, thus inventing a unified language, just as they would in time create a humanity without races” (our translation).
13. “The title, *Wapke*, an Atikamekw word meaning tomorrow or future, is not insignificant under the circumstances and represents a strong message” (our translation).
14. “La pandémie était aussi un terreau fertile pour imaginer le pire comme le meilleur” [The pandemic provided also fertile ground to imagine the worst as well as the best] (Yvon, our translation).
15. “it’s a little discouraging that we all project ourselves like that” (our translation); “I wanted us to be the winners in history” (our translation, emphasis added).
16. “‘I don’t want to be an Anicinape anymore,’ he says to himself. Then he regrets; it is insane to want to change identity, might as well die.” (our translation)
17. In *Red Skin, White Masks*, Dene scholar Glen Coulthard argues that a politics of recognition does not challenge the Canadian state; it only upholds current power relations. A politics of recognition refers to the range of recognition strategies and models that try to ‘reconcile’ Indigenous assertions for nationhood and self-determination with(in) settler state sovereignty. Coulthard argues that instead of creating mutual recognition and reciprocity, a politics of recognition only serves to uphold and reproduce colonialist, racist, patriarchal state power that Indigenous peoples sought to transcend.
18. Everything could be heard, but one barrier remained for the officials of the current regime: the Indigenous languages. Nibi had made a point of passing on her language to Maïka. All the Indigenous people of her generation who had become parents had done the same. The revitalization of identity was a driving force, but it was carried out in the shadows so as

not to incur the wrath of the state. Nibi herself had to use many tricks to keep her mother tongue. Born to parents for whom residential schools had targeted the destruction of Indigenous identity by forbidding them the use of their language, Nibi had vowed to honour her ancestors and perpetuate her own. She had managed to keep Anicinape alive with her daughter, and now the confidentiality it allowed would help her preserve something equally vital. (...) The two women walk along the water's edge, grateful that they have little chance of being heard or, at least, understood. Speaking Anicinape, Nibi adds an obstruction that reassures her. Suddenly, she stops and looks Maïka right in the eyes. (our translation).

19. Indeed, the settlers rationalized their asserted right to the land, its resources, and its history through the myth of “terra nullius—the racist legal fiction that declared Indigenous peoples too “primitive” to bear rights to land and sovereignty when they first encountered European powers on the continent, thus rendering their territories legally “empty” and therefore open for colonial settlement and development” (Coulthard 175).
20. “They stayed on the territory they pretended to have discovered” (our translation).
21. “For the horrors of a time to be forgotten to resurrect” (our translation).
22. For more information about the forced removal of Indigenous children, see *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future. Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*. 2015.
23. For more information on this matter, see Mosby, Ian. “Administering Colonial Science: Nutrition Research and Human Biomedical Experimentation in Aboriginal Communities and Residential Schools, 1942–1952”. *Histoire sociale / Social History*, vol. 46, no. 1, 2013, pp. 145-172.
24. “In the early 2000s, governments were talking about forgiveness and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. At the dawn of 2270, thirty-six years after the epidemic began, Indigenous people are still in the grip of prejudice and systemic racism. Almost forty years of living with the new virus. Politicians, conspiracy theorists and the media brazenly accuse the Wendat Nation of witchcraft. They claim that shamans have cast a spell on Canadians to avenge their inaction after several studies, numerous government reports and promises that have gone unheeded. Promises that were supposed to correct the injustices committed against First Nations” (our translation).
25. In “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native”, Patrick Wolfe indeed asserts that settler colonialism is a structure not an event.
26. “The disappearance of an Indigenous woman had left most people in total indifference” (our translation). This points to the missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in Canada. See, for example, National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. *Reclaiming Power and Place: Executive Summary of the Final Report*, 2019, available at <https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/final-report/>.
27. “History repeats itself, it’s no coincidence, that’s for sure” (our translation).

28. For a detailed analysis of how Indigenous women were disproportionately affected by the Indian Act, see, for example, Barker, Joanne. "Gender, Sovereignty, Rights: Native Women's Activism against State Inequality and Violence in Canada." *American Quarterly* vol. 60, no. 2, 2008, pp. 259-266.
29. See Delphine Jung. "'Je ne me sentais plus femme', raconte une Autochtone stérilisée malgré elle." Radio Canada: Espaces Autochtones, March 24, 2021, <https://ici.radio-canada.ca/espaces-autochtones/1779442/ligature-trompes-femmes-premieres-nations-sterilisation> (accessed August 15, 2021); Boyer, Yvonne and. Judith Bartlett. "External Review: Tubal Ligation in the Saskatoon Health Region: The Lived Experience of Aboriginal Women." July 22, 2017, [https://www.saskatoonhealthregion.ca/DocumentsInternal/TubalLigation\\_intheSaskatoonHealthRegion\\_theLivedExperienceofAboriginalWomen\\_BoyerandBartlett\\_July\\_22\\_2017.pdf](https://www.saskatoonhealthregion.ca/DocumentsInternal/TubalLigation_intheSaskatoonHealthRegion_theLivedExperienceofAboriginalWomen_BoyerandBartlett_July_22_2017.pdf).
30. "Turtle's Island will be reborn, and Maïka will become the grandmother of all human beings on this new land" (our translation).
31. "You are the protectors of the turtle, you belong to the earth and not the other way around. From now on, you must not let evil take up so much space on your back. Protect Mother Earth" (our translation).
32. "the machine had been sucked in by the breach it had itself generated. The surface of time had been breached" (our translation).
33. "enough paradoxes and anomalies to tear the fabric of reality itself and definitively break the sacred circle of existence" (our translation).
34. "Soon, he could reclaim what was his. He could rectify the past" (our translation).
35. "You can't fix a problem with the tool that caused it" (our translation).

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