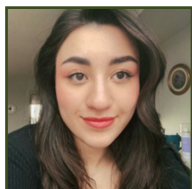


## An Exploration of the Cultural Teachings Seen in Post-colonial Indigenous Literatures: Learning Across the Divide



**Zahra Mirabolfathi**

School of English and Theatre Studies, University of Guelph, Guelph, Ontario, Canada

Canada's ongoing colonial relationship with its Indigenous peoples reflects its overall views on multiculturalism and racial diversity. In her "Land as Pedagogy," Indigenous scholar Leanne Simpson describes how Indigenous cultures use their traditional lands as a heuristic device to continue the education of their cultural customs and histories throughout generations. Conversely, in *Intimacies of Four Continents*, Lisa Lowe argues for the sharing of colonial experiences as a way of building intimate connections despite the barriers between 'continents' upheld by colonial frameworks.

In this talk, I will argue that through close engagement with Indigenous literature and scholarship, Indigenous and racialized Canadians can learn how to share their experiences of living as minorities with one another. Indigenous teachings foster intimate connections across these racial differences and distinctions, acting as a "means to observe the historical division of world processes into those that develop modern liberal subjects and modern spheres of social life" (Lowe 17). Focusing specifically on Simpson's narration of her experience sharing her Indigenous customs with her co-author, Robyn Maynard in *Rehearsals for Living*, this talk will present traditional Indigenous lands as a heuristic device for racialized Canadians, arguing that this land provides the space needed to form intimate connections to heal from the traumas of colonialism. Therefore, Indigenous customs teach racialized Canadians the importance of continuing the fight against colonial frameworks within Canada; to lose the battle is to lose the formative aspects of their racialized identities. The overall argument of this talk is that reaching across continents and converging based on our experiences living within colonial frameworks — of which the generational implications continue to live on in our bodies — helps colonized individuals to understand each other by partaking in intimate decolonial acts of education.

### Biography:

Zahra Mirabolfathi is a master's student at the University of Guelph, Canada, where she is completing her MA in English Literature. Her MA thesis focuses on expressions of humour in Iranian-American and African-American women's memoirs and how that consolidates their racial traumas. Alongside her thesis, Zahra is interested in, and has done much academic work in the field of Indigenous literatures and scholarships. Specifically, she is curious about what engaging in Indigenous teachings reveals about life in multicultural Canada as a racialized other. She was originally born in Iran but moved to Canada at the age of ten. Zahra hopes to understand her diasporic condition through her academic career and is working towards obtaining a PhD in English Literature in the near future.