

Cadi Martin (cmart163@students.kennesaw.edu)

Prof. Miriam Brown Spiers ([mspiers1@kennesaw.edu](mailto:mspiers1@kennesaw.edu))

Oral Presentation

Field of Study: English

### Abstract

Exploring Cedar Songmaker's Native Identity in Louise Erdrich's

*Future Home of the Living God*

*Future Home of the Living God* by Louise Erdrich is a science fiction novel that presents a world in which evolution is collapsing in on itself. Cedar Songmaker, an Ojibwe woman adopted by white parents, documents these changes and her pregnancy, but Erdrich also explores the importance of Native identity. This paper analyzes Cedar's specific experiences and psychological studies to explain her identity, which is a complex combination of white, Ojibwe, and Catholic. Her experiences are similar to those of many adopted Native children who are kept from knowing about their Native identities. The Indian Adoption Program, popular in the 1950s through the 1970s, forcibly removed Native children from their tribes and placed them in white households which erased their Native identities. Living into her mid-twenties without knowing anything about her birth mother or her Native heritage causes Cedar to feel alienated from those around her. Cedar struggles with her Native identity throughout the novel, especially combining it with the identity she already has. Cedar's adult life is formed around her religion, which is an important source of solace. She takes the teachings of the Catholic Church, particularly its

teachings about Mary and other female religious figures, and utilizes them to lift herself up and validate her own identity. Rather than feeling oppressed by the Church, Cedar uses it as a connection with her birth mother. Cedar's time with her tribal nation also allows her to explore her Ojibwe heritage and identity. Cedar feels more self-determination when she knows all aspects of her identity and is able to combine them the way she wishes, not the way others tell her to.