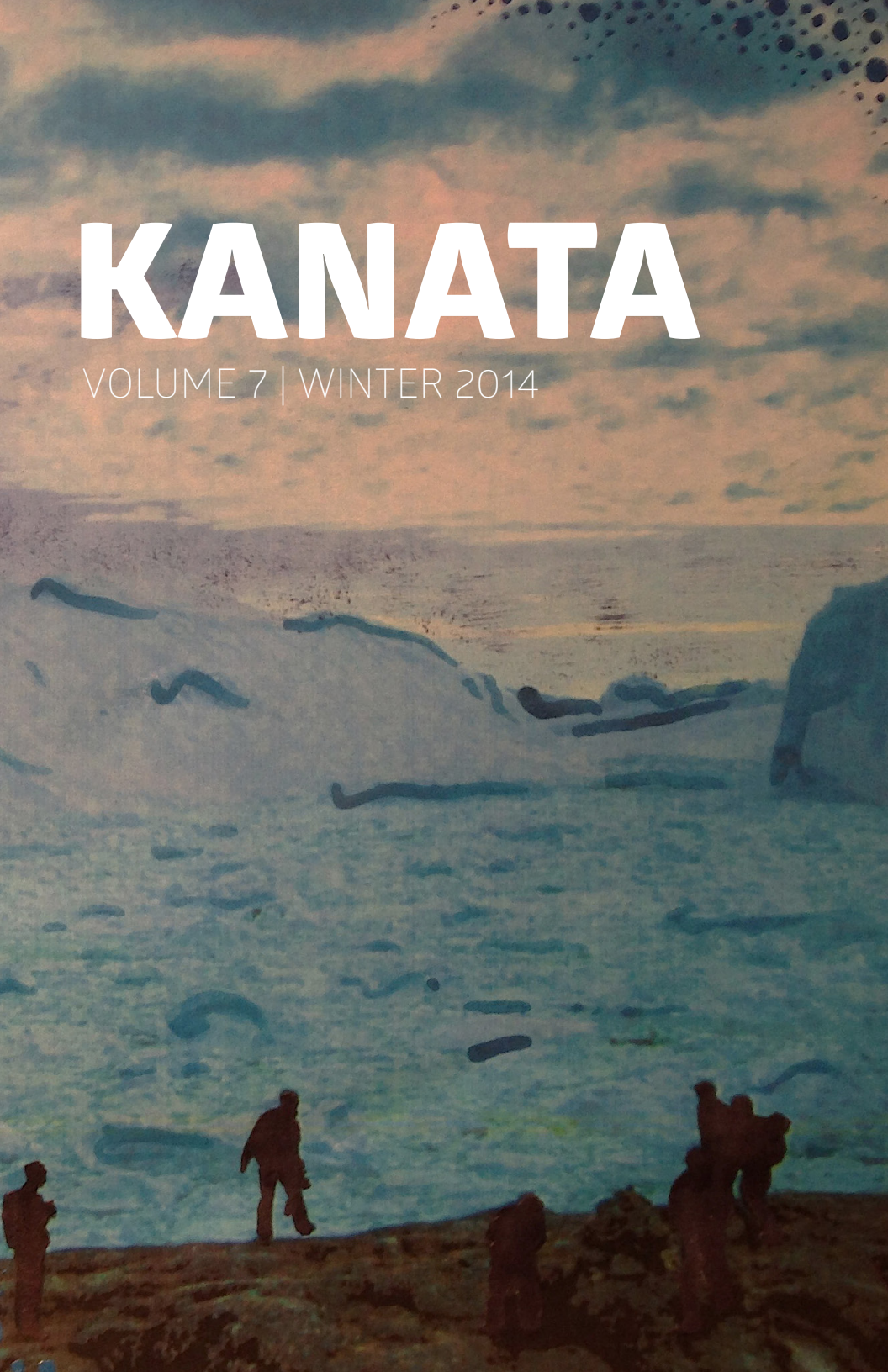


# KANATA

VOLUME 7 | WINTER 2014



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VOLUME 7 | WINTER 2014

The Undergraduate Journal of the  
Indigenous Studies Community of  
McGill University

McGill University  
Montréal, Québec, Canada

KANATA acknowledges that McGill University is situated on traditional Haudenosaunee territory.

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**Winter 2014**

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## A Word from This Year's Coordinators

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As this year's Executive Coordinators of KANATA: McGill Indigenous Studies Community, we are proud to present Volume 7 of KANATA, an interdisciplinary, student-run publication. Since its creation in 2009 by founder and adviser Pamela Fillion, KANATA has flourished as an important addition to dialogues surrounding issues related to Indigenous Peoples in North America and around the world. After many years of advocacy, generations of Executive Coordinators and Chief Editors, and multiple awareness-raising events, KANATA is proud to announce that a new minor program in Indigenous Studies will be offered at McGill University as of September 2014! It must be emphasized that this success is the result of fruitful and long-standing collaborations between many committed actors on campus, including (but not limited to) the First Peoples' House, the Indigenous Students Alliance, the Social Equity and Diversity Education (SEDE) Office, the SSMU, the AUS, the McGill Institute for the Study of Canada (MISC) and the Office of the Dean of Arts. In its early stages of implementation, McGill now joins the several Canadian universities that offer programs in the field of Indigenous issues, most of which will address the history and contemporary experiences of Indigenous Peoples in Canada.

Moreover, for the first time in our university's history, undergraduate students—in fact, KANATA Executives—were invited throughout the year to join the Aboriginal Affairs Working Group, an assembly previously

open exclusively to McGill University Faculty and Administrators. As such, we acknowledge and are grateful to our friend and colleague Kakwiranoron Cook for inviting us to these meetings on behalf of the Dean of Students, Professor Costopoulos but we also believe that this kind of initiative inscribes itself in a current effort to build a stronger sense of community at our university. In short, a project that KANATA has been dedicated to since its creation.

Despite these advancements within our university community, we also recognize that the work, the advocacy, and the discussions are far from over. In light of widespread environmental and social injustices affecting Indigenous Peoples worldwide, we hope that future students and KANATA members will continue to push for increased recognition and dialogue surrounding the situation of Indigenous Peoples today. We believe that there remains much to learn, as well as much to be taught and that through respectful and meaningful exchanges, the McGill and greater Montreal community can improve their relationships with Indigenous Peoples. This recognition must also come in the form of action – the creation of a minor program is but one of many projects proposed this past year to increase the recognition and understanding of the peoples whose lands we live on. Thus, we hope that these recent advancements can be viewed as the first steps of many in our community.

As such, this year's journal encompasses the convergence of the wide-ranging academic backgrounds of students who are committed to learning about

the situation of Indigenous Peoples worldwide, as well as artists and poets whose images and words urge us to acknowledge the importance of visual culture and orality. For these reasons, we are proud of the works of ours peers, and we hope that you enjoy reading the final product of this year's call for submissions and learn from a variety of topics and disciplines. Most importantly, we hope this publication stands out as yet another piece of evidence of McGill students' interest in the interdisciplinary field of Indigenous Studies as well as their ability to work as a team to promote it. After a year of hard work, this publication would not have been possible without the

dedication of remarkable individuals. We would like to extend our sincere and heartfelt thanks to all of those whose support, motivation, volunteer time, and sound opinions made this edition possible: Thank you to QPIRG-McGill, to Cheryl Suzack for her thoughtful introduction to the journal, to the KANATA Editorial board, to our KANATA members and most importantly, to our wonderful Executive Team. Finally, thank you to the Kanien'kehaka peoples upon whose land our communities in Montreal rest.

*Jaya Bordeleau-Cass*

*Nicolas Magnien*

*Executive Coordinators, 2013-2014*

## Editors' Note

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This year, we are proud to present the seventh annual edition of the KANATA Indigenous Studies Journal. September 13, 2007 marked the adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). Codifying a set of international standards venturing to safeguard the rights of Indigenous peoples, the UNDRIP embodied the culmination of a history suffused by the struggles and ambitions of Indigenous peoples across the world. Reflecting the global scope of Indigeneity, this year's edition stretches from the immediate spaces of urban Montreal to the far reaches of Botswana, and from Ecuador's Yasuni National Park to the celestial planets of Star Trek.

As Co-Editor-in-Chiefs of the 2014 edition of KANATA, we have had the pleasure of working with a wonderful team of committed scholars, artists, and

editors. The global scope of this journal would not have been possible without the knowledge and input of from a diverse array of contributors from within the McGill community and from abroad. On behalf of KANATA's Executive and Editorial Boards, we invite you to explore our collection of scholarly and creative work spanning from contemporary Pangniqtuuq to Hollywood during the 1973 Academy Awards.

KANATA continues to work in solidarity with those who are committed to alliance-building between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples at McGill, across Canada, and in the larger global community.

*Maryna Polataiko*

*Susannah White*

*Editors-in-Chief, 2013-2014*



## Guest Editorial

Professor Cheryl Suzack  
McGill University

I dedicate my guest editorial for this issue of KANATA to the participants in my advanced seminar class in Canadian Studies on transitional justice and Indigenous communities.<sup>1</sup> Our class discussions have focused on the field of transitional justice, a paradigm of law-making that arose in the late 1980s to address systemic human rights abuses in countries where successor regimes were confronted by the need “to hold previous regimes to account” for gross violations of human rights and “to foster a transition to democracy” (Arthur 322). Transitional justice is the term coined by Ruti Teitel to designate “the self-conscious construction of a distinctive conception of justice” that followed from periods of “radical political change on the heels of past oppressive rule” (Teitel 1). Since its inception, the paradigm’s focus on seeking recognition for victims and promoting peace, reconciliation, and democracy has garnered attention to both principles and practices of justice-making. These include envisioning how justice may be adapted to societies in the process of transforming themselves following a period of systematic human rights abuses and implementing mechanisms that will further this transitional process.<sup>2</sup>

- 
- 1 They are Alec Angle, Hannah Besseau, Jaya Bordeleau-Cass, Iain Childerhose, Jihane Hajby, Tiffany Harrington, Caleb Holden, Alex Nevitte, Claire Stewart-Kanigan, Molly Swain, Remy Ventura, Alison Wass, and Abra Wenzel. My sincere thanks to the editors for inviting me to provide a guest introduction.
  - 2 Mechanisms include criminal prosecutions, truth commissions, reparation programs, gender justice, security system reform, and memorialization efforts (International Center

Adapting transitional justice measures in Canada to hear the justice calls of survivors of the Indian Residential School experience carries with it the difficult task of conceptualizing how this paradigm applies.<sup>3</sup> Our goal has been to adopt an interdisciplinary, comparative approach that juxtaposes political essays with literary texts that foreground diverse perceptions of the Indian residential school experience. Two questions have predominated: what are the justice demands that these narratives make of us as readers and community members engaged in building a more just society, and what justice opportunities are eclipsed if we refuse to learn about and engage in the truth and reconciliation process? We borrowed from Elaine Scarry’s enormously important work, *The Body in Pain*, the paradox of “doubt” and “certainty” that animates and defines pain as an interior state in order to adopt a listening position that could attune our thinking to experiences fundamentally different from our own. By definition, Scarry argues, pain exists as an interior state

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for Transitional Justice, “What is Transitional Justice?” n.p.).

- 3 For two important contributions to this debate, see Courtney Jung, “Canada and the Legacy of the Indian Residential Schools: Transitional Justice for Indigenous People in a Nontransitional Society,” noting that three barriers to their successful application include limiting the “scope of injustices,” preventing a critique of present-day policies, and resisting Indigenous remedies in the form of “sovereignty and legal authority” (217–218), and Matt James, “Uncomfortable Comparisons: The Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission in International Context,” arguing that “politically marginalized victims” confront societal barriers in the form of “pervasive disbelief or scepticism surrounding their stories,” efforts by perpetrator groups that threaten to “derail” a justice commission’s work, and widespread criticism of both disrespected groups and commissioners for their undue attention to the needs of victims (26).

that radically individualizes the self and resists the self's constitution in language (4). Pain's "resistance to language," Scarry argues, "is not simply one of its incidental or accidental attributes but is essential to what it is" (5). Its inexpressibility is both "world-destroying" (in that it prevents the passage of the self into the "realm of shared discourse" and life-experience [9]) and "world-creating:" because failing to express pain "will always work to allow its appropriation and conflation with debased forms of power," expressing pain "will always work to expose and make impossible that appropriation and conflation" (14). Our task became the following: what social and political obligations follow from our knowing about an unsharable experience and what contributions were we prepared to make in order to take seriously Scarry's insistence that "the act of verbally expressing pain is a necessary prelude to the collective task of diminishing it"? (9)

By way of demonstrating our commitment to this task, I conclude my remarks by incorporating the voices of class members as they have engaged this problem during the past eleven weeks. Asked to consider what "transnational norms" they would insist on should they be empowered to enact "a globalized transnational justice" that would provide "efficacy and legitimacy" to "mechanisms designed to help those who must live together after atrocity" (Nagy 287), they argued for the following ethically-informed positions proving yet again the world-creating potential of education, cultural literacy, and creative forms of expression and listening.

*"No consensus is possible; we must build from the diversity of our lived realities and experiences."*

*"We must respect the integrity of the human*

*body."*

*"We need to protect our basic freedoms—of assembly, speech, and security of the person."*

*"We must engage in acts of anti-oppression, decolonization, and environmental justice."*

*"We must ask who decides our justice provisions."*

*"We must ask what oppression is, and how to go about critiquing another community's values."*

*"We must try to fashion non-hierarchical decision-making."*

*"We must build peace."*

Valuing these voices as also participating in acts of justice-making affirms their world-creating potential and brings into being those aspects of hope, belief, and expressibility that underlie the verbal and material potential of creative activity.

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## Two Ears to Hear With, One Mouth to Speak

Tiffany Harrington

McGill University

I grew up in a multi-generational household with my siblings, my parents and my grandmother. From a young age I remember hearing her stories, about family, of our history, her childhood. I loved snuggling into her embrace and hearing the words trickling off her lips. Experiencing the sounds and painting the pictures in my mind from the images she elicited, I fell in love with the art of storytelling. As I grew older, I began to appreciate the spoken words of my elders and the wisdom that they held. Whether they were personal histories or ones that had been passed down from generation to generation, the act of speaking and animating them in a present context required patience, imagination, remembrance, and effort. Sometimes I think that I was born into the wrong time- sometimes I wish that oral stories were still of paramount value. To me, a story delivered orally, encompasses aspects that the written word can simply not attain. I am worried that everything must be written down these days. "Put it into writing...", they say, "because your word means nothing when it comes to agreements." I am worried, because being of Indigenous descent I recognize that our oral traditions, our oral histories and our oral agreements are not being honoured. I am worried because today, I must communicate with you through the written word to tell you these things. The assimilationist models of our state have engrained so deeply within us the necessity to be literate- to be ashamed of or fearful of losing anything that is not on paper. I hope that from now on we can explore ways of knowing that are rooted in and valorize oral traditions and oral veracity. For me, spoken word is not simply a form of poetry, it is in its essence a preservation of the skills I have learned from my grandmother since birth, and ones that I come to appreciate more and more as I grow older. We must relearn how to listen, how to feel through words and emotions, how to be patient and respectful to the person who is speaking to us- who is telling their story, to comprehend the sentiments that are attached to our words and what implications that has on our relationships to one another. I have provided a link below to some of my living spoken words as I asked to not have them published in written form.

Meegetch

*Listen to Tiffany's Poem on YouTube*  
***Tiffany Harrington on the Appropriation  
of Native Culture***

<http://youtu.be/yZWmZMziieU>



## Today's First Nations Children In Care: Residential Schools Revisited?

Isabelle Lefroy  
McGill University

---

Shawn Atleo, National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, recently stated that the current circumstances of First Nations children in Canada's child welfare system are comparable to those of the children who attended residential schools. This powerful and contentious statement arose at the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal on February 25, 2013, a hearing investigating the disproportionate representation of First Nations children in the child welfare system in Canada. Atleo and other prominent First Nations political leaders attribute this overrepresentation to discrimination through the federal government's chronic underfunding of First Nations child welfare services (Wyld, 2013). These political leaders insist that low levels of funding are perpetuated by acceptance of inferior levels of service for Indigenous peoples, which is a learned tolerance fostered by the policies of the residential school system era.

This paper will analyze the legitimacy of the comparison of the residential school system to current children's welfare circumstances. I will first present evidence of the circumstances in residential schools and experiences of survivors, followed by information on the current situation of First Nations children in the Canadian child welfare system. Next, an analysis of the intergenerational effects of residential schools will demonstrate that there is a closer relationship between the former and contemporary policy than mere

comparison. Rather, the evidence suggests that the current child welfare situation is part of a continuum of a colonial dynamic, which has underpinned the government's First Nations education and social policies for hundreds of years. However, an acknowledgement that the current child welfare system is not an overt attempt to "kill the Indian in the child" is necessary (Harper, 2008), as was the case in residential schools. In fact, the federal government has identified the need for "culturally appropriate" approaches to welfare services, which lays the foundation for First Nations claims to self-governance (Turpel-Lafond, 2013, 5). It is therefore important to recognize efforts to devolve administration of First Nations child welfare to First Nations groups, most significantly in Manitoba and British Columbia. However, Fiona MacDonald (2004) points out the flaws inherent in the solution to First Nations leaders' calls for autonomy in administering child welfare services. What she dubs the "privatization" of child welfare responsibility permits the provincial and federal governments to offload the pressure of an expensive burden and public criticism, while cloaking this move as an abandonment of the colonial policies of the past (2004, 174). Ultimately, an examination of the factors at play in Atleo's statement reveals the persistence of colonial dynamics.

An analysis of the residential schools system is necessary to examine its

likeness to the contemporary child welfare circumstances. To understand the perpetuation of the colonial dynamic between First Nations and the federal government, one must examine the residential schools system's intentions and impacts on survivors. In the context of this paper, the term 'colonial' signifies the Canadian federal government's practice of domination, subjugation and assimilation of Indigenous populations (Kohn, 2012). The federal government's implementation of the residential school system on Canada's First Nations population was a social policy explicitly designed to eradicate the language, traditions, and cultures of multiple generations of First Nations peoples. First Nations children subjected to this colonial imposition of power experienced the disruption of familial and social traditions through neglect, abuse, and disconnection between family members. Through systemized violence, racism and discrimination, Indigenous children were taught to be ashamed of their families, traditions, and cultures in an attempt to "assimilate them into the dominant culture" (Harper, 2008). This goal was informed by the racist belief that Indigenous cultures were "inferior and unequal," and resulted in the attempted erasure of thousands of cultures across Canada. Children were removed from their parents and were forbidden from having relationships with their siblings, thus compromising Indigenous children's access to developing meaningful relationships with family members (Harkey & Kershaw, 2009, 3). As demonstrated by the intent of residential schools, Atleo's likening of them to the current welfare situation implies that the federal government maintains racist and discriminatory policies.

The power of Atleo's comparison is

expanded through a further examination of the inhumane living conditions in residential schools. Children were subjected to harsh daily regimens of physical labor and schooling in dismal conditions. Because of severe underfunding of these institutions, buildings were cheaply made and the children themselves were often repairing the falling structures. There were also high rates of tuberculosis and other communicable diseases in these schools, resulting in thousands of deaths per year. The federal government and the Church jointly ran these schools and First Nations children were forced to adopt religious beliefs unfamiliar to them and reject the beliefs and practices they had been taught at home (Galley, 2010, 16). The prevalence of mental, emotional, physical and sexual abuse in these institutions engendered high rates of anxiety, mental illness, and post-traumatic stress disorder in residential school survivors. The alienation of these children from their families and traditions resulted in generations of First Nations peoples who struggled to manage the stress of raising their own families, a phenomenon which will be discussed in the later analysis of the intergenerational effects of residential schools (Smith, Varcoe, & Edwards, 2005; Harkey & Kershaw, 2009; Stout & Peters, 2011). Considering the severity of the conditions in residential schools, Atleo's comparison would gain traction if the conditions experienced by First Nations youth in the child welfare system are shown to be similar.

Atleo's statement is important to examine considering the federal government failed to properly deal with the harmful effects of the residential schools system. The continuation of harmful after-effects can be explained



by the concept of an “enduring harm or injustice,” the principles of which are outlined in article written by Jeff Spinner-Halev (2007). In his article “From Historical to Enduring Justice,” Spinner-Halev stipulates that an enduring harm occurs when a perpetrator from a dominant culture has not properly addressed an affront to a marginalized group (2007, 575). This term can be applied to the tragedy experienced by the residential school survivors and their descendants. In an attempt to address this enduring harm, there has been a formal acknowledgment and apology by Prime Minister Stephen Harper for the federal government’s endeavor to “remove and isolate children” from their homes and cultures in order to “assimilate them into the dominant culture” (2008). However, many First Nations people feel the persisting legacies of the residential schools have not been addressed, which results in an enduring harm for First Nations populations (Galley, 2010; Harkey & Kershaw, 2009; Spinner-Halev, 2007; Stout & Peters, 2011; Trocme, Knoke & Blackstock, 2004). The Truth and Reconciliation Commission is a federally commissioned team tasked with healing relationships between generations of Indigenous peoples, and between Indigenous peoples and the federal government, though this commission cannot probe the full reach of the residential school system (Harkey & Kershaw, 2009; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2008). The devastating effects of the residential schools system persist, and are most vividly portrayed through examining the dire conditions of First Nations children in the contemporary welfare system.

Countless studies numerating First Nations children’s presence in off-reserve child care, their overrepresentation in the

judicial system, low rates of graduation, and high rates of teen pregnancy and suicide validate Atleo’s claim of the deplorable state of First Nations children’s experiences in Canada’s child welfare system (Blackstock, 2003; Canadian Council of Social Development; Canada Standing Committee on Human Rights, 2007; National Children’s Alliance, 2005; UNICEF, 2009). These results derive from low socioeconomic status, addiction, abuse, poor parenting and neglect, all factors that can be attributed to the legacies of the residential school system. For example, 40 percent of children in care across Canada are Aboriginal, though Aboriginal children only constitute five percent of the overall child population. Saskatchewan and Manitoba’s Aboriginal populations have even higher rates of children in the welfare system, with Aboriginal children constituting 68 percent of the total children in care (Galley, 2010; National Children’s Alliance, 2005; UNICEF, 2009). In British Columbia, a child is six times more likely to be a child-in-care if they are First Nations. Furthermore, only two and a half percent of First Nations children in the care of British Columbia’s agencies are placed in other First Nations homes, despite a statutory requirement stipulating that placing a First Nations child in another culturally appropriate home is a priority (Trocme, Knoke, & Blackstock, 2004; The Aboriginal Advisor’s Report on the Status of Aboriginal Child Welfare in Ontario, 2011). These statistics are particularly alarming in light of the history of the federal government’s policies concerning First Nations’ child removal.

As Atleo and many other First Nations advocates point out, high rates of out-of-home care for First Nations children

produce devastating social implications for the current generation in care, similar to the consequences faced by residential school survivors (Wyld, 2013). Ontario's Aboriginal Advisor claims "the loss of language and culture within Aboriginal communities is a key factor in the breakdown of family values, addictions and anti-social behaviour, to name a few consequences" (2011). For example, there are much higher rates of suicide and substance abuse in First Nations populations. The suicide rate in First Nations teens is two times higher than the overall Canadian rate. Furthermore, one reserve in Manitoba reported 101 cases of fetal alcohol spectrum disorder out of 1000 babies. Moreover, First Nations youth are disproportionately involved in the justice system. For example, 84% of the sentenced, in-custody youth in Manitoba are Aboriginal. In fact, Aboriginal males have a higher likelihood of appearing in the justice system than graduating high school (Representative of Children and Youth 2013, Canada Standing Committee on Human Rights, 2007). These disturbing statistics corroborate Atleo's claim that the federal government discriminates against the funding of social services for Aboriginal youth, which commonly lands them in out-of-home and off-reserve care. The high rates of substance abuse, suicide, teen pregnancy, incarceration, and high school dropout in young First Nations populations echo the prevalence of alcoholism, mental illness, poverty and unemployment in their parents' and grandparents' generations. These deplorable conditions can be attributed to the persistence of the federal government's default solution: the institutionalization of Aboriginal children.

The high rates of children in out-of-

home care is exacerbating the problem of familial and cultural alienation, further revealing a similarity between residential schools and the current child welfare system. The Adoption Council of Canada estimated that 20,000 of the total 22,500 Aboriginal children in care across Canada are in permanent care and will not return to their parents (2012). This phenomenon has been dubbed "the Millennium Scoop," a startling echo of the "Sixties Scoop," in which approximately 20,000 Aboriginal children were taken from their families and fostered or adopted by primarily white families in the 1960s and 70s. In fact, there are twice as many children in out-of-home care now than there were in residential schools during the 1940s and 50s (Hayward, 2011). Accordingly, the Canadian Council of Provincial Youth and Child Advocates claims Canada is experiencing a "crisis in Aboriginal family life" (2010, 8). Atleo claims that instead of the federal government providing services to keep children in their own homes when they are in crisis, thousands of children are being put into "institutionalized care," a phrase that strongly echoes the philosophy behind the residential schools system (Wyld, 2013).

The comparison of the current child welfare system with the residential schools system reveals the perpetuation of discriminatory government practices. The similarities between the results of the two policies are evidenced by the alarming circumstances of First Nations children in care today. As a result of these circumstances, several First Nations political leaders have pursued litigation on the grounds that the federal government discriminates against First Nations child welfare services by underfunding these programs. This case is currently underway, and will pass judgment on whether

the federal government discriminates against First Nations children in-care by underfunding their services (Wyld, 2013). First Nations leaders stipulate that the federal government practices a policy that is “primarily reactive,” not preventative, regarding children who are at risk to be removed from their homes (Hudson & Mackenzie, 2003, 49). Institutionalization and removal of Indigenous children seems to be a default policy. On these grounds, First Nations political leaders have furthermore asked for autonomy over their own child welfare services (Macdonald, 2009, 176; Chandler & Lalonde, 1998, 191; Galley, 2010, 20). The current data on First Nations child welfare reveals that effects of the residential schools system have not been dealt with properly, and materially vindicate Atleo’s comparison of the two policies. His claims open up questions concerning the intergenerational effects of the residential schools system. This pattern of enduring harm and government irresponsibility can be used as a framework to examine the intergenerational legacies of the residential schools system.

While Atleo’s comparison addresses the harm done to the generations of survivors as well as the harm perpetrated against the current generation of children in-care, his statement fails to address the important and often unacknowledged link between these two generations. Inspection of Atleo’s comparison reveals a continuum of government discrimination, represented by the children of the last generation of residential school survivors (Harkey & Kershaw, 2009; Smith, Varcoe, & Edwards, 2005; Stout & Peters, 2011). This phenomenon is called the intergenerational effect, and I contend that the impacts of the intergenerational effects can point to why the current

generation of First Nations children has such high rates of mental illness, behavioural issues and substance abuse. Not only are social services for this demographic underfunded or unavailable, but the trauma experienced by these children’s parents can explain why the current generation faces so much abuse and neglect in their homes.

The transmission of trauma between generations can be attributed to the colonial disruption of family patterns through residential schools system and out-of-home care institutions. The current number of children in care and numerous studies documenting the experiences of survivors of residential schools system demonstrate the incapacitating effects of residential schools on parenting abilities. The authors of one study done on professional women who are daughters of residential school survivors stipulate: “trauma is understood to be among the most significant factors at the root of the present inter-generational social suffering today” (Stout & Peters, 2011, 13). Residential school survivors and their children are now struggling to raise their own children in a safe and healthy way. The legacies of alienation and abuse from survivors’ childhoods are materializing through the high rates of neglect and abuse perpetrated against their own children. Many studies have shown that survivors, and survivors’ children, find it very difficult to connect to their own children without anger or abuse (Menzies, 2007; Smith, Varcoe, & Edwards, 2005; Stout & Peters, 2011). Overcoming familial emotional distance and resisting the urge to scare and harm children are common difficulties these women face. However, they acknowledge the importance of “turning around” this intergenerational effect through healing and confrontation

of the issues (Smith, Varcoe, & Edwards, 2005, 38). Fear, anxiety, and dissociation between second and third generations of residential school survivors are manifested through the high numbers of children in out-of-home care. An analysis of these intergenerational impacts demonstrates the spectrum of the residential schools' enduring harms.

The children of residential school survivors, now parents themselves, are a proxy for the whole continuum of enduring harm, stemming from the residential schools system to today's appalling welfare circumstances. Despite this phenomenon, the government has made limited efforts to provide services through which to face these fundamental issues of emotional duress. These unaddressed issues, or enduring harms, function in a cyclical way in which the reverberations of the first generation's pain are seen in their grandchildren's behavior. Several studies have explored the extent of the intergenerational impacts of residential school system (Harkey & Kershaw, 2009; Menzies, 2007; Smith, Varcoe, & Edwards, 2005; Stout & Peters, 2011). Paul Kershaw and Tammy Harkey (2009) suggest that through examination of contemporary Indigenous parenting and caregiving, the extent of colonial damages can be understood. Their study examines the impacts of the "forcible disruption of familial and community patterns of caregiving," demonstrating the persistence of residential school legacies (3). Similarly, Smith and her colleagues (2005) explored the impacts of intergenerational legacies on Indigenous health through the perceived values of pregnancy and parenting. Their study demonstrates that many descendants of residential school survivors feel disproportionately unprepared for parenthood because of the

lack of parent figures during their own childhoods (Smith, Varcoe & Edwards, 45). Likewise, the previously noted study done on professional First Nations women explores a rarely examined demographic of Indigenous populations and their experiences with their children and mothers. Stout and Peters' (2011) study demonstrates that despite the benefits of education, survivors and their children have deeply broken relationships with their families because of the fracturing of familial structures during the era of residential schools.

These studies illustrate the loss of parenting tools and skills due to the absence of parental roles in survivors' childhoods. As Smith and her colleagues (2005), Stout and Peters (2011), and Harkey and Kershaw's (2009) studies demonstrate, the roles of mother and caregiver figures have largely been neglected but serve an important purpose for the understanding of mother-child relationships, available care resources, and the problems seen today in the huge numbers of First Nations children in out-of-home care. These studies of children of the last generation of residential school survivors reveal that the second generation functions as the transmitter of trauma from the survivor generation to the today's First Nations children. Thus, they complete the continuum of enduring harm.

The strong evidence of "the past, current, multi-generational and multi-dimensional impacts of colonization impacts" on First Nations demonstrates the difficulty of parenting for survivors and their children (Blackstock, Cross, George, Brown & Formsma, 2006, 4). Upon close examination of Atleo's comparison of residential schools and the current child welfare situation, I contend that a deeper

relationship than mere comparison exists between them. There are strong echoes of the institutionalization of First Nations children as a solution to social problems, and a frightening possibility of further eradication of First Nations culture in the high rates of children in out-of-home care. The residential school system cannot simply be compared to the contemporary child welfare system because it is the root of the problems today. These policies are not separate issues, but part of a continuum of colonialism that should, presumably, give political leverage for First Nations political leaders when negotiating for funds and greater autonomy. Instead, this underlying colonial dynamic has permitted the federal government to underfund and provide lower levels of service to First Nations children in Canada for hundreds of years.

It must be acknowledged that the overrepresentation of First Nations children in out-of-home care is not an overt attempt to eradicate cultural and familial connections as was the case in the residential school era. In fact, the federal government has recognized the importance of preserving Aboriginal children's heritage to ensure better social wellbeing. Wary of the social criticism that assimilation and integration policies now garner, and aware of the devastating impacts of the dissociation of survivors from their cultures, the federal government has funded multiple projects that investigate and outline the need for culturally appropriate health care and social services (Hudson & Mackenzie, 2003, 51). These studies suggest that culturally relevant services, perhaps even autonomous services, provide pathways to better health and social outcomes. For example, one study found that nurses and doctors need to be trained in order

to provide culturally sensitive care to Aboriginal individuals (Smith, Varcoe, & Edwards, 2005, 40). However, not all of these political statements have been translated into political actions. The statutory regulation that requires that every effort be made to place a First Nations child in the care of another First Nations home has not resulted in much success, despite a 41 percent increase in funding to implement this policy since 1993 (Hudson and Mackenzie, 2003, 55). As noted before, only two and a half percent of First Nations children in the welfare system have been placed in other First Nations homes. Though the federal government has recognized the importance of preserving cultural ties, actions toward the implementation of cultural preservation in social policy have been limited.

These limited implementations of much needed culturally based approaches give legitimacy to First Nations advocates' calls for self-governance and jurisdiction over child welfare services. Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond, the Representative of Children and Youth of British Columbia, stipulates the need to place children in culturally appropriate environments to preserve heritage connections (2011, 5). In 2011, she conducted an audit of 100 British Columbian children in out-of-home care. She found that sixty of these children were Aboriginal, and of these sixty, only three had a "cultural plan" designed to ensure they "remained connected to their culture and heritage, as required by law" (5). Turpel-Lafond insists that the child welfare system must do better for children to preserve cultural ties and improve the quality of life of these children. Further evidence that an espousal of cultural practices produces better outcomes is found in a study done

by Michael Chandler and Christopher Lalonde (1998). Their study shows drastically lower youth suicide rates in communities in British Columbia that are “engaged in community practices that are employed as markers of a collective effort to rehabilitate and vouchsafe the cultural continuity of these groups” (Chandler & Lalonde, 1998, 191). Thus, culturally appropriate services are proven to create better social and health outcomes. This insight corroborates First Nations leaders’ claims that better outcomes could be reached if jurisdiction over services was devolved to First Nations groups.

As a response to calls like Atleo’s for First Nations autonomy and jurisdiction over child welfare services, the federal government is slowly shifting towards a policy of privatization (Hudson & Mackenzie 2003, 50; Macdonald, 2004, 176). This recent shift is important to analyze in the context of Atleo’s comparison of residential schools with the current child welfare system. Privatization signifies the devolvement of jurisdiction over numerous social services, such as child welfare to First Nations bands. For certain First Nations groups, privatization policies translate to partial jurisdiction over child welfare services, as is the case in Manitoba and British Columbia (Hudson & Mackenzie, 2003; Macdonald, 2004). The Ontario Aboriginal Advisor insists that Aboriginal rights to jurisdiction over services concerning their children lies within and is protected by Section 35 of the Canadian Constitution, which affirms Aboriginal rights. He specifies, “current provincial legislation, the Child and Family Services Act, through its daily implementation, is sometimes viewed by First Nation leaders as infringing upon those rights” (2011). These arguments provide constitutional

groundwork for jurisdiction to be given over to First Nations groups. Following these recommendations for culturally appropriate services for Aboriginals, the federal government is handing part autonomy over to First Nations in these provinces, and beginning the long process of restructuring the current child welfare agencies.

Fiona Macdonald (2004) critically addresses the federal government’s new shift towards privatization of social services in her article “The Manitoba Government’s Shift to Autonomous Child Welfare: Empowerment or Privatization?” This privatization presumably gives power to First Nations groups in terms of the management and staffing of child welfare agencies. However, the long process of restructuring agencies, underfunding, and finding experienced and culturally cognizant employees presents obstacles to the implementation of First Nations-run child welfare agencies. There are also underlying problems with how the government is devolving jurisdiction over child welfare. Provincial governments claim they are reserving their ultimate responsibility over child welfare and refuse to hand over full autonomy to First Nations agencies, which results in underfunding and management issues. Furthermore, the overrepresentation\* of First Nations children in the welfare system puts pressure on newly restructured agencies. Heavily overburdened agencies with limited funds cannot possibly deal with the number of cases they are presented with (Hudson & Mackenzie, 2003). These problems present obstacles for First Nations agencies that will probably accrue much criticism from the public in their start-up years.

Furthermore, Macdonald (2004) contends that this privatization of welfare



ultimately releases the federal government from their obligations and relieves them of the pressure to resolve burdensome issues. Handing partial autonomy to First Nations groups gives the appearance of responding to their calls for self-governance and simultaneously relieving the federal government of the pressures of solving social policy problems. Macdonald argues that the federal government is masking their failure to deal with these issues by devolving the problems to First Nations themselves, who will continue to take the blame for the results of colonialism and discrimination. Rather than devolving power and funds, they are divesting themselves of a onerous social problem, while retaining the constitutional responsibility for children in care. Macdonald's criticism is important in light of Atleo's comparison of the residential schools system and the contemporary child welfare situation. Her analysis of the implementation of partial autonomy for First Nations substantiates the fear that the federal government is maintaining their policy of discrimination, racism and underfunding that reaches back to the roots of colonialism.

Atleo and other First Nations political leaders' calls for autonomy become ironic in the context of Macdonald's (2009) argument. Presumably, the government is devolving jurisdiction to First Nations groups after careful revision of the federal government's past failures to adequately manage child welfare. As Macdonald contends, it is the federal government serving their own interests by granting First Nations autonomy, thereby divesting themselves of political criticisms (2009, 6). Instead of holding the federal government accountable for their past blunders, Atleo and his colleagues' suggestions will result in more criticism

directed at First Nations groups as they take on the huge problem of child welfare with a small budget, inexperienced social workers, and decentralized management teams. For example, Gordon Campbell, the premier of British Columbia, fought vigorously to pass the Kelowna Accord. The Accord promised to reduce the health inequities between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians by investing in current social service infrastructure to minimize financial duress in the future. He appeared to be strongly in favour of First Nations rights regarding the Kelowna Accord but was merely ensuring lessened future expenditures, as he favored "policies and processes designed to assist the marketplace," whereby "First Nations self-determination becomes more attractive than First Nations dependence on the state" (Macdonald, 2009, 6). Macdonald argues that through privatization of child welfare services, Campbell served his own interests by divesting himself of criticism while appearing to be a First Nations advocate (2009, 7). Thus, the federal and provincial governments manage to rid themselves of blame for the alarming statistics of children in the child welfare system. I propose that through this privatization, the federal government not only rids themselves of the responsibility for the contemporary child welfare system, but also the continuing legacies of the residential schools and their intergenerational impact.

In assessing the legitimacy of Atleo's claim, I conclude that it has some merit regarding the numbers of children in out-of-home care and the data reporting the harm done to First Nations children in the residential schools system and present child-in-care policies. Presumably, the numbers alone should give Atleo's claims enormous power in terms of

affecting public perceptions, and thus carry great political weight and leverage in negotiations with the government. However, this comparison, while useful to Atleo's political aims, is simplistic. Upon examination of the unaddressed harms to the generations of residential school survivors and the current First Nations child population, I contend that it is not two separate instances of discrimination. The effects of the residential schools and the current child welfare system today do not merit mere comparison; rather, examination of Atleo's statement reveals a cause and effect relationship. A continuum of enduring injustice has created a public tolerance for underfunding and discrimination. Despite this enduring harm, it is important to acknowledge that the intent of the present system of First Nations children and youth in care is not overt assimilation, as was the case with the Residential Schools. I argue that the restructuring of the present underfunded and neglected welfare system and even the much-feted devolution of childcare to First Nations jurisdiction, presented as a departure from colonialism, may not be the "transformational concessions they appear to be" (Macdonald, 2009, 9). This new policy of privatization is part of a centuries old continuum of the persistent colonial dynamic. Furthermore, First Nations jurisdiction over welfare may narrow political opportunity for social justice by garnering criticism for overburdened First Nations agencies. Though the devolution of childcare to First Nations authorities is consistent with Atleo's demands, it represents the federal government's abdication of responsibility. Ultimately, the perpetuation of underpinning colonial policies is maintained by the lack of a concerted effort to meaningfully engage

with the devastating long-term damage to First Nations families, and the social dynamics that result.

### About the Author

Isabelle Lefroy is a graduating McGill student. She hopes to work in solidarity with Indigenous peoples of British Columbia regarding the settlement of land claims.

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# The Role of Privilege in the Appropriation and Exoticism of Huron-Wendat Souvenirs

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Cultural exchange occurs in all aspects of Canadian daily life. Clothing, art, music and language are just a few areas in which cultures influence and inform one another. Although Canada is a place of great diversity, it is also a site for unequal privilege and racial hierarchies that were imposed during colonization. This unfair power dynamic influences the ways in which cultural exchange occurs. Considering this privilege, we must analyze the interplay between groups and seek to define the fine line that lies between appreciation and exploitation. Additionally, we must examine the issues of essentialization, exoticization and 'Othering' of cultural groups.

The effect of power on artistic exchange can be examined through an analysis of the sale of souvenirs by the Huron-Wendat women in the nineteenth century. This group, located in what is today Lorette, Quebec, initially depended on hunting and fishing for survival.<sup>1</sup> However, in the early 1800s, their hunting grounds were taken over by European colonists, and they had to find alternative methods for survival. The Wendat women turned to the production of souvenirs as a vital source of income. These souvenirs applied their traditional embroidery methods to objects that appealed to European tourists or visitors. Before the arrival of Europeans, they used

shell, bone and stone beads to decorate the garments they wore.<sup>2</sup> During the expansion of tourism, the Wendat women gained access to new materials and applied their traditional moose-hair embroidery to European objects. These included "fans, ladies' reticules and handbags, gentlemen's cigar cases, calling card trays, and boxes."<sup>3</sup> Calling card trays were objects that became particularly popular in upper-class European homes during the mid-1800s. The trays would be displayed in the entryway of the house, and collect the cards of visitors.<sup>4</sup> The women of Huron-Wendat, however, were not the only producers of these souvenirs.

Around the same time, the nuns of the St. Ursuline Convent in Trois-Rivières were producing these objects for tourists as well.<sup>5</sup> These nuns had come from France in the early seventeenth century with

2 Linda Sioui, "The Huron-Wendat Craft Industry from the 19th Century to Today" McCord Museum, [http://www.mccord-museum.qc.ca/scripts/printtour.php?tourID=CW\\_HuronWendat\\_EN&Lang=2](http://www.mccord-museum.qc.ca/scripts/printtour.php?tourID=CW_HuronWendat_EN&Lang=2) (date of last access 26 November 2013)

3 Ruth B. Phillips, "Nuns, ladies and the 'Queen of the Hurons': souvenir art and the negotiation of North American identities" Local/Global: Women Artists in the Nineteenth Century, eds. Deborah Cherry and Janice Helland ed. (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, Oxford: 2006), p. 156.

4 Sioui, "The Huron-Wendat Craft Industry" (date of last access 26 November 2013)

5 Priscilla Wakefield, Excursions in North America. Described in Letters From A Gentleman and his Young Companions to their Friends in England (London: Darton and Harvey, 1806), p. 303.

1 Georges E. Sioui, Huron Wendat: The Heritage of the Circle, eds. Jane Brierley (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1999), p. 100.

the intention of spreading Catholicism to the Indigenous population.<sup>6</sup> As Ruth While Phillips, a Canadian art historian and anthropologist, explores in her work, the nuns noticed the new market for these handmade objects, and also started producing them to sell to British buyers.<sup>7</sup> In this newly popularized artistic exchange, we can find several problematic motivations that were a feature of this unfair power dynamic.

The first immoral feature of this exchange was the appropriation committed by the St. Ursuline nuns. Appropriation, as defined by writer and Art History professor Deborah Root, is a type of theft that occurs when the user of another culture's property does not ask for permission from the owner, or does not accord the owner their rightful financial compensation.<sup>8</sup> By this definition, it can be argued that the nuns appropriated the techniques and artistic style of the Huron-Wendat women. They used an artistry that did not belong to them to make a profit and intruded on the souvenir market initially created by the Indigenous groups. Phillips proposes that moose hair embroidery was a technique that was invented by the St. Ursuline nuns.<sup>9</sup> Naturalist-ethnographer, Frank Speck, contests Phillips' proposal and argues that, although the embroidery technique spread to many other surrounding groups and tribes, several specimens of the

artistic method in museums point to the conclusion that moose-hair embroidery originated with the Huron-Wendat peoples.<sup>10</sup> Linda Sioui, an anthropologist based in Wendake, Quebec, also argues that moose hair embroidery was present in Lorette before contact with Europeans.<sup>11</sup> Even if the definite origin of the technique has yet to be determined, it is clear that the Huron-Wendat peoples played a significant role in its development, and an equally large role in the creation of an Indigenous visual culture so desired at the time.<sup>12</sup> If we consider the possibility that the embroidery and souvenirs were created by an interplay between the two groups, as Phillips later suggested,<sup>13</sup> the act of appropriation relies on which group holds more privilege. On a similar note, some may argue that by utilizing Euro-Canadian objects, Indigenous women were equally guilty of cultural appropriation. For instance, when considering the calling card tray, the intended function of the souvenir was brought to Canada via the European colonialists and not previously used by the Indigenous population.<sup>14</sup> As a marginalized group whose livelihood was being impeded upon by the colonists, it is clear that the Huron-Wendat people were not in a place of privilege that gave them the power to appropriate.<sup>15</sup> Instead, their

6 "Arrival of the Ursulines in Canada" *Glimpses of the Monastery*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed, (Quebec: L.J. Demers & Frere, 1897) p. 14

7 Phillips, "Nuns, ladies and the 'Queen of the Hurons'," p. 158.

8 Deborah Root, *Cannibal Culture: Art, Appropriation, & the Commodification of Difference* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1996), p. 72.

9 Phillips, "Nuns, ladies and the 'Queen of the Hurons'," pp. 157-158.

10 F.G. Speck, "Huron Moose Hair Embroidery" *American Anthropologist*, vol. 13, no. 1 (March 1911), p. 2.

11 Sioui, "The Huron-Wendat Craft Industry" (date of last access 26 November 2013)

12 "Cigar Case with Lid" *Royal Ontario Museum*, (date of last access 26 November 2013)

13 Phillips, "Nuns, ladies and the 'Queen of the Hurons,'" p. 157.

14 Sioui, "The Huron-Wendat Craft Industry" (date of last access 26 November 2013)

15 Ibid.

use of Western styles was an appeal to the white visitors' problematic obsession with the 'exotic.'<sup>16</sup> The St. Ursuline nuns were the group with power, which enabled them to replicate the creations of the Indigenous group and profit from the tourists' interest in Indigenous cultures.

This seizure of artistic style by the European settlers in Canada is further demonstrated by the royal visit of the Prince of Wales to Canada. As Phillips describes in "Nuns, ladies and the 'Queen of the Hurons,'" the prince was given several gifts of moose hair embroidery. These gifts were not crafted by Indigenous peoples, but were supposedly created by a white woman named Sarah Rachel Uniacke. This is a clear instance of appropriation; instead of commissioning the Indigenous peoples to produce an art that is a part of their culture, the state requested that Uniacke, a European settler, learn embroidery from the women of the Mi'kmaq tribe.<sup>17</sup> Appropriation and discrimination are clearly shown by the Canadian officials' unwillingness to have their nation represented by its original inhabitants. Additionally, it should be noted that while Sarah Uniacke's name is well recorded, the creator of several calling card trays that are featured in the McCord Museum remain unnamed, further exemplifying the privilege granted to white settlers in Canada. These instances demonstrate the appropriation that occurred with the souvenirs created by the Huron-Wendat group in the late nineteenth century. Appropriation of

Indigenous art by white producers is still pervasive today, particularly in many Canadian souvenir shops.<sup>18</sup>

As mentioned previously, the Huron-Wendat women incorporated Western styles into their souvenirs as a way of appealing to the Westerner's interest in the 'exotic.' While sometimes conceptually overlapping, it is important to distinguish between the act of appropriation and that of exoticism. In her 1996 book, *Cannibal Culture*, Root differentiates between these two terms:

Exoticism evokes a sensibility and uses objects to construct a conceptual line of escape out of Western culture into a titillating, yet manageable other. Appropriation incorporates the objects and sensibilities into the dominant, Western based culture, sometimes by domesticating and sometimes by erasing the origins of these objects.<sup>19</sup>

In the context of souvenir production, the St. Ursuline nuns appropriated the styles of the Huron-Wendat women. Meanwhile, exoticism is present in the purchasing of these souvenirs by European tourists and visitors. Exoticism is the interest in an object or tradition simply for its connection to a culture that is 'Other.'<sup>20</sup> Like appropriation, this action requires a certain amount of power which is articulated through one's ability to pass as unmarked or unnamed. In a contemporary Western setting, the white, cisgendered, straight, able-bodied, man has a privileged place as the 'default' or normative subject, while people of other races, genders, sexualities,

16 Moira T. McCaffrey, "Crossing New Borders to Exhibit Iroquois Tourist Art" *On Aboriginal Representation in the Gallery*, eds. Lynda Jessup and Shannon Bagg (Hull, Quebec: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 2002), p. 80.

17 Phillips, "Nuns, ladies and the 'Queen of the Hurons,'" p. 167.

18 Valda Blundell, "Aboriginal Empowerment and Souvenir Trade in Canada" *Annals of Tourism Research*, vol. 20, no. 1 (1993), p. 65.

19 Root, *Cannibal Culture*, p. 78.

20 Ibid, p.30.



etc. are seen as 'Other' in comparison.<sup>21</sup> This feeds the white visitors' interest in Indigenous culture. The visitors from Britain and France locate differences from their own culture and render them as 'strange' or 'curious.'<sup>22</sup> While the Huron-Wendat population appealed to this interest in the exotic, they incorporated European elements to make the objects legible to the white consumer.<sup>23</sup> When considering a souvenir such as a calling card tray, the Wendat women used Indigenous techniques and applied them to a European object.<sup>24</sup> In this way, they 'domesticated' the object and allowed the European visitors to consume Indigenous culture in a way they could understand.

While we have determined that monetary gains often motivated appropriation, we should now consider the motivations for exoticism. One motivation was the newfound concept of the 'primitive.' As Hill explains, 19th-century academia and the development of anthropology led to the Eurocentric concept that all societies and cultures move along a path from "primitive to civilized."<sup>25</sup> With colonization, the Indigenous peoples of Canada were seen as 'less developed', and fundamentally different from European cultures. This difference fueled an interest in Indigenous

art works and cultural objects.<sup>26</sup> This helped create a market for souvenirs that depicted a clear stylistic Indigenous influence. Another motivation behind this interest in the exotic was the belief that Indigenous peoples were destined to disappear. Many visitors and outsiders thought that European colonization and superiority would lead to the eventual demise of the Indigenous population.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, this coloured the Huron-Wendat souvenirs as rare and consequently more valuable. European visitors purchased these objects with the intention of displaying them to friends and relatives back home.<sup>28</sup> The display of these objects was done with the intention of promoting the owner as generous and charitable.<sup>29</sup> The concept of the exotic allowed the buyer to think of themselves as a saviour of these disappearing and primitive peoples.

As with appropriation, a certain level of power and privilege is also present in the practice of exoticism. American anthropologist Sally Price provides an example of this privilege with the figure of the connoisseur. Price describes the connoisseur as an upper-class white gentleman who carries an opinion that is well respected by many. In the context of the Huron-Wendat souvenirs, the connoisseur would be the buyer, a

21 Charmaine Nelson, "Examining Canonical Canadian Art History (Discourses and Canons)" Introduction to Canadian Art, McGill University, Art History Department, Montreal, Canada, 17 September 2013.

22 Root, Cannibal Culture, p.30.

23 McCaffrey, "Crossing New Borders," p. 79.

24 Sioui, "The Huron-Wendat Craft Industry" (date of last access 26 November 2013)

25 Tom Hill, "A First Nations Perspective: The AGO or the Woodland Cultural Center?" On Aboriginal Representation in the Gallery, eds. Lynda Jessup and Shannon Bagg (Hull, Quebec: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 2002), p. 10.

26 Aaron Glass, "(Cultural) Objects of (Cultural) Value: Commodification and the Development of a Northwest Coast Artworld" On Aboriginal Representation in the Gallery, eds. Lynda Jessup and Shannon Bagg (Hull, Quebec: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 2002), p. 97.

27 Phillips, "Nuns, ladies and the 'Queen of the Hurons,'" p. 163.

28 Sioui, "The Huron-Wendat Craft Industry" (date of last access 26 November 2013)

29 Sally Price, Primitive Art in Civilized Places (London: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 25.

white visitor or colonizer from Europe who expresses an interest in the exotic and enjoys the privilege of being able to discriminate.<sup>30</sup> By this, it is meant that he has the power to decide what *is* and is *not* valuable. The Huron-Wendat culture, like any culture, is far from simple; it is intricate and complex. However, the souvenir market is controlled by the interests of the connoisseur, as he decides what is worth bringing back to Europe. Thus it is clear that the concept of the “exotic” involves a certain level of privilege and inequality. First, one culture is valued above another as being ‘unmarked,’ and then the members of the ‘unmarked’ culture are given the agency to decide what aspects of the ‘exotic’ culture are valuable.

This ability to determine value also greatly affects the shaping of identities. By selecting which items and aspects are valuable, the connoisseur effectively forms an essentialist identity for the ‘exotic’ culture.<sup>31</sup> Arthur Middleton, a traveller from France, describes his encounter with the St. Ursuline nuns and the souvenirs he bought from them. Although modern-day scholars determined these souvenirs to be specifically tailored to European desires, Arthur expresses his desire to send these souvenirs to friends in Europe as “specimens of the art” in Canada.<sup>32</sup> It can be inferred that many visitors saw these souvenirs as adequate and legitimate expressions of Indigenous peoples’ life in Canada. This is further exemplified by the accounts of a German traveller named Georg Kohl who interpreted the

souvenirs as authentic representations of Wendat culture.<sup>33</sup> In this way, the souvenir market, which is controlled by the ‘connoisseur,’ shapes the outsider’s idea and image of Canada. Unfortunately, this identity is more heavily controlled by the privileged Europeans than Indigenous peoples themselves.

This essentialization of Indigenous life can also be seen in the creation of a Canadian identity. In constructing their national identity, Canadians turned to their country’s natural landscape and the art and traditions of the Indigenous peoples inhabiting it.<sup>34</sup> For years, Canadians, mainly Euro-Canadians, have used Indigenous symbols and art to represent their nation. This is an act of essentialism; the history and significance of the symbols are often ignored or misunderstood, and the entire Indigenous population is represented by a selection of very specific objects that do not pertain to every Indigenous group in Canada.<sup>35</sup> Newly-formed ideas concerning Indigenous people as ‘primitive’ also enabled people to make a direct link between the Indigenous peoples of Canada and the ‘wilderness.’<sup>36</sup> As a result, much of the imagery used to represent and distinguish Canada involves some combination of Indigenous traditions and Canadian landscape, furthering the idea that the Indigenous population is less ‘developed’ and thus closer to nature. This promotion of Canada’s crafted identity can be seen clearly in its plenitude of modern-day

30 Price, *Primitive Art in Civilized Places*, pp. 7, 13.

31 Phillips, “Nuns, ladies and the ‘Queen of the Hurons,’” p. 158.

32 Wakefield, *Excursions in North America*, p. 303.

33 Phillips, “Nuns, ladies and the ‘Queen of the Hurons,’” p. 169.

34 Blundell, “Aboriginal Empowerment,” p. 73.

35 Gerald McMaster, “Our (Inter) Related History” *On Aboriginal Representation in the Gallery*, eds. Lynda Jessup and Shannon Bagg (Hull, Quebec: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 2002), p. 5.

36 Hill, “A First Nations Perspective,” p. 10.

souvenir shops.<sup>37</sup> This carefully crafted national identity is another example in which white Canadians used the imposed racial hierarchy to appropriate Indigenous art and decide which symbols are and are not important.

Complementary to the act of exoticism and essentialism, social status plays an important role in the popularization of this process. If we return to analyzing the calling card trays, particularly ones held at the McCord Museum in Montreal, we can see the effect that status had on the exoticism of Indigenous peoples. The calling card tray in particular is intriguing because it was specific to upper-class European homes in the mid-nineteenth century. These trays sat at the entryway of the home and would be seen by everyone who visited the owner's house.<sup>38</sup> Arguably, the tray was desired as a souvenir for its ability to act as a symbol of status. As discussed previously, the tray acted as a sign of the benevolence of the house owners. As Price explains, connoisseurship and exoticism create the idea that cultural exchange is unnatural, and therefore an act of equality is seen as benevolent.<sup>39</sup> It is possible that many calling card trays were purchased with the intention of displaying this benevolence to the owner's guests. Additionally, the interest in the exotic is also motivated by the way it displays wealth and power. Root explains that one fundamental part of exoticism is that an object is appreciated by an outsider because of its value in its originating culture. To the European visitor, the tray loses its value when it is no longer connected to an 'exotic' culture.

For the white visitor, owning the tray is appealing because it demonstrates their ability to possess something that is valued by another group.<sup>40</sup> This idea can also be applied to any Westerner's interest in the traditional or ceremonial objects of another culture. This pinpoints one of the key problems with exoticism. Issues arise when the collector's interest lies in the "exotic" cultural aspects of an object, rather than the object itself. The calling card tray, in its incredibly visible position, acts as a symbol of status and privilege of the owner. Along with benevolence and power, the tray also demonstrates the bravery of the owner. This goes back to the misconceived idea of Indigenous peoples as 'primitive.'<sup>41</sup> At the time, many Europeans saw the Indigenous residents of Canada—and other colonized countries—as irrational and different. This fed their desire to own items created by Indigenous groups as representations of the buyer's bravery and willingness to interact with the 'Other.'<sup>42</sup> The calling card tray is very clearly an object that is meant to be seen by many and not hidden away. For this reason, I speculate that this visibility fuels the buyer's interest in the object and the way it might influence their status.

While at first the sale of souvenirs by the Huron-Wendat women in the nineteenth century seemed like a rather simple cultural exchange, an examination of systems of power reveals the inequalities that existed and continue to exist. Two hierarchies existed in this scenario, the first of the St. Ursuline nuns and their privilege over the Indigenous women. It was this privilege that allowed

37 Blundell, "Aboriginal Empowerment", p. 65.

38 Sioui, "The Huron-Wendat Craft Industry" (date of last access 26 November 2013)

39 Price, *Primitive Art in Civilized Places*, p. 25.

40 Root, *Cannibal Culture*, p.81.

41 Hill, "A First Nations Perspective," p. 10.

42 Glass, "(Cultural) Objects of (Cultural) Value," p. 97.

the nuns to appropriate and utilize the stylistic elements of the Wendat group in their own production of souvenirs. The other hierarchy is that of the European visitor or tourist and their authority over Indigenous peoples. This unequal power allowed Europeans to 'exoticize' the Huron-Wendat souvenirs, essentialize the culture, and utilize it to display their own status of privilege. All of these delicate by-products of power demonstrate the immense difference between cultural appreciation and exploitation.

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## Catching the Early Bird

Joey Shaw, a.k.a. Warrior Minded

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Catching the early bird, I'm late for my nine-to-five  
Used to work the late-night shift, with some baggy eyes  
Now, I'm just trying to adjust  
With a new work ethic, it's a must  
I bring the check in  
Pay my debts and bring the rent in, no extensions  
Not to mention all the food and the hydro  
Is it worth the time, with the dollar in decline?  
Hell if I know, I'm shopping at Costco's  
Collecting coupons to keep the cost low  
Discounting the penny,  
All I have - is a lucky nickel that I found...

Walking downtown in the middle of the night  
With the bright city lights on  
Searching on my Walkman for the right song -  
Seems like music festivities are over, and the leaves  
Are changing colours, while the wind is getting colder  
You can feel the winter season coming closer  
Next morning waking up, keeping warm  
With a hot cup of Foldgers on my way to work  
The public transit, packed...

People clocking in positions - like, minutes to an hour passed  
Crammed up on a sidewalk, or stuck up in a traffic jam  
Riding on the metro, until it shuts down - in the middle of the tracks  
And everything is pitch-black for a second  
Then it's fifteen minutes that you're never getting back  
Everybody's losing patience, in disarray  
Some seeking for a day-job that pays off  
While others, getting laid off

So many odds that are stacked against us  
With our backs against the wall  
Playing a game of cat and mouse  
Getting caught up in the traps they've designed  
To make us fall. Fate lies within a race  
Out of the maze - to the cheddar  
So that you can see better days  
To those, that resonate reality that others never face...  
Remain standing, with your head on straight  
Don't lose your focus, the focal point of the notion

Implanted by mixed emotions  
Evokes these words that are spoken  
The silence is broken  
Truth is open for discussion  
To find the root of the ruckus, something's up  
I've had enough of, empty words of deceit  
Words I wouldn't want to speak  
Like, a pastor not practicing what they preach

Sitting in my room by the window  
Watching it snow, feels good to be home  
Just been walking outside – in the cold, all alone  
With a disconnected phone, in another area code  
That's what you get for a one-way ticket on the road  
So many miles, still what made it worthwhile  
Were the smiles that I shared, with the people I connected with  
Wasn't expecting it – to rain so many days  
Made me easily amazed in the morning by the sun-rays  
Walking down a street, get invited to a feast on a Sunday  
A wise man, wishes me safe travels on my way  
What can I say? I've got a lot to be grateful for  
To all my close friends and family supporting me  
To the small fan-base that I have  
Who just want to hear more from me...

Thanks for the patience, it's all paying off  
With hard work and dedication, the passion awakened  
With a raised fist, as I – close my eyes and visualize, what is to be  
I can see what seems to be, all of my hopes and dreams  
I can hear the voice inside of me, interpret what they mean  
When I receive them, if I believe them enough  
I know I can achieve them, with a rhyme and a reason  
Exceeding what you're perceiving  
Even, if it falls on deaf ears  
The blood, sweat, and tears that it takes to get here  
Will give me some of the best years  
I could reflect on, with my peers  
The future couldn't be more clear  
Wiping the smear off the mirror  
Focused and ready, for transition – to the next era  
Against the reign of terror



# Getting “Back to Nature” and “Playing Indian” The Origins of the North American Summer Camp Movement

Susannah White  
McGill University

Popular culture has it that summer camp is a child's paradise, a heaven on earth, a place where kids are free to be their happiest, most liberated selves. And much of it is true. The institution of the North American summer camp has provided children with fun, educational opportunities for over a century. The thousands of boys and girls who grow up with fond memories of “camp” often send their own children in later years, thus making camp a mainstay in both American and Canadian cultures. As a truly cultural institution, every aspect of a camp, from its mission statement to its cabin arrangements, lends messages about North American society. In important ways, a closer look at the North American summer camp reveals a great deal about societal conceptions of “nature” and the resultant ideas of Indigenous “primitivism” and gender roles. In this paper, I will argue that the rise of these summer camps, extending from the late nineteenth century to the first half of the twentieth, was not only a broad cultural scheme, but a very real environmental movement with far-reaching implications. I will begin by placing the movement within a grander historical context, and then I will examine the role it played in shaping problematic dualisms of nature and culture, the modern and the premodern, and the masculine and the feminine. Finally, I will demonstrate how we can connect the reality of this movement to

other cultural landscapes, such as the American Museum of National History, to emphasize hidden truths behind our complex conceptualizations of the ‘natural.’

The summer camp movement began in North America as a response to the growing scepticism about urbanization during the late nineteenth century (Wall 5). In a time of rapid industrialization, scientific breakthroughs, and unprecedented rates of immigration, many middle-class Americans and Canadians alike felt their traditional values threatened. As a result, a great dichotomy developed between urban and rural environments; nature came to be understood as the place where industry was not (Scott). Fast-paced cities – considered hubs for drinking, prostitution, and excess consumerism – were branded unclean, unkind, and indifferent. Nature, on the other hand, became a tranquil, nurturing, mother-like entity valued for its healing powers. More and more people took John Muir's outlook on the wilderness as “the hope of the world” (Van Slyck 3). The “rest cure in a canoe” became a common antidote for metropolitan anxieties as nature-based leisure activities such as hunting, boating, and tripping to sites like Niagara Falls and the Great Lakes gained enormous popularity (Wall 7). North Americans feared the changes around them and became nostalgic for a simpler, more “authentic” life through communion with nature (Fint 73).

This mounting concern over the impacts of the Industrial Age especially affected middle-class parents and educators who feared for the proper development of their urban youth and, in particular, for their sons. They worried that young men, surrounded and overwhelmed by material culture, might lose sight of life's small gifts and the importance of both physical labour and hard work (Wall 7). The idea of hundreds of unstructured hours during the months of summer vacation fostered a particular uneasiness in parents who believed that the distractions and temptations of the city would turn their sons into unscrupulous and languid young men (Fint 73). The first summer camps emerged as a back-to-nature solution to these perceived problems of modern boyhood.

Through the 1880s, camps began to crop up steadily to the north and south of the Canadian-American border in New England, Ontario, Quebec, and Nova Scotia (Wall 10). The summer camp movement, eventually opening up to larger sectors of society, became somewhat of a phenomenon across the continent. By the 1920s, summer camps were widely accepted as valuable for their educational and character-building benefits (Fint 74). Popular literature began to celebrate camp as "...the call of the woods with its golden sunset, clear blue skies and wilderness dear to the hearts of all" (Weyl 184). Between the World Wars, over sixty-three camps were founded in Ontario alone, and the number of recognized Ontario camps grew from twenty-three in 1939 to one hundred forty-six in 1955 (Wall 11). Through the first half of the twentieth century, approximately 150,000 children in Ontario – and at least one in twenty children throughout all of Canada – experienced the rite of passage that was

"camp," and statistics were similar in the United States (Wynn xi).

While people chose to believe that heading off to camp meant an escape from modernity, there were many ways in which camps were merely "disguised reflections of mainstream culture" helping people to negotiate, and sometimes even to stimulate, the commodification and consumption of the times (Fint 75). The summer camp was an invention born in modernity, and its survival very well depended on urban areas, factories, and the notion of "progress" (Wall 15). Camp founders often expressed commitment to modern principles such as order and productivity in their determination to rationally control "wild" landscapes. Even in their efforts to "leave nature untouched," camp administrators promoted the problematic, modernist, and dualistic views of nature and culture in their propagation of the concept of a "wilderness" (Wall 14). The assumption that lay at the core of the summer camp movement was that, indeed, there was a very real and very good "nature" existing separately from humans. There is a subtle irony in the fact that much of the "wilderness" of summer camps was largely manufactured out of farmland that had been part of the westward frontier movements of prior decades (Van Slyck 4). As the historian John Higham eloquently explained: "The emergent culture of the Strenuous Age had an ambiguous relation to its institutional matrix. In some measure a rebellion against the constraints of a highly organized society, it was also an accommodation to those constraints, a way of coming to terms with them" (Fint 75). Camps were designed as refuges from modernity, but the very process of designing them undermined that purpose.

As Sharon Wall writes in her book,

The Nurture of Nature: Childhood, Antimodernism, and Ontario Summer Camps, “adherence to modern ideals of childhood and child-rearing at camp also reveals an inclination to order not just space but also human experience” (14). Camp operators – albeit with good intentions – manipulated not only landscapes to accommodate their modernist pursuits, but also their respective programs. While camp directors insisted that their programs allowed children liberation and promoted a type of rugged manliness in nature, they ultimately functioned as a means to cultivate traditional modern values in youngsters for when they would go home to their cities come August (Fint 75). Common camp practices such as morning inspection and coup-earning reinforced values of cleanliness and ambition, and daily activities blended a “romanticization of nature, celebration of wilderness, glorification of the simple life, and fascination with the primitive” with traditional undertakings of the “civilized” (Wall 14). As expressed by one camp proponent in 1925, “The theory of teaching the [campers] the value of money was important and it worked out splendidly. The program of the camp included canoe-building, the editing and publishing of the camp paper, fishing, cooking, examinations, races, cruises, correspondence with home, stories, and baseball” (Weyl 180).

These summer camps were cultural landscapes that sent out important messages about the people who created and attended them (Van Slyck 213). An examination of various camp philosophies, programs, and overall designs – right down to the vegetation and topography – can help to reveal the values and aims of the organizations’ leaders (Fint 73). Understanding “camp”

can help us to understand the North American conceptions of “nature” through history, as well as the implications of these conceptualizations for North American society. Central to our notions of humankind and civilization are our notions of nature (Scott). The summer camp movement exemplifies Raymond Williams’ assertion that, “in the idea of nature is the idea of man...the idea of man in society, indeed the ideas of kinds of societies” (71).

The modernist conception of nature prevalent during the rise of the North American summer camp did in fact produce problematic ideas of societies, namely those of Indigenous groups. The North American majority subscribed to the myth of the ‘ecologically noble savage,’ or the false idea that Indigenous peoples lived in a primitive state in perfect harmony with the natural environment, and summer camps began to perpetuate this myth through the appropriation of Indigenous rituals (Paris 199). According to Leslie Paris, “as many camp leaders saw the matter, Indian play was particularly suited to children’s culture because Native Americans represented a less advanced stage of civilization. The conventions of Indian play rendered Indians as simple, and their vocabulary stilted and somewhat ungrammatical, like that of young children” (208). One excerpt from a piece of camp literature illustrates the attitude towards the relationship between “Indianness” and camp popular in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, reading, “Camping is the oldest of all modes of living. In America, the early Indians were the first campers quite as well as the original inhabitants. According to nature, man should live his life in the open. As civilization advanced, economics forced people into

the cities; but progress has not dimmed the allurements of the camp. The power of this ancient heritage is keenly illustrated in the eagerness with which every boy, girl and grownup anticipates a camping trip" (Weyl 180). The leaders and patrons of camp understood the Indian to be the primitive quintessence of a perfect relationship with the natural world, and they sought to create spaces where modern children could emulate that relationship as a means of furthering themselves from the harmful aspects of mainstream society (Wall 231).

Modern, middle-class, white men admired Indigenous men for their supposed independence, canoeing prowess, and survival skills, and they wanted their sons to develop a similar rugged edge in addition to their more refined, urban behaviours (Wall 183). Summer camps catered to this desire through the integration of so-called 'Indian' motifs and customs into their programs. Camps sought to recreate anti-modern representations of Indigenous life by establishing a sense of community, belonging, and a more "primitive" spirituality (Wall 218). Nearly every camp took the name of Indigenous peoples to support claims that summer camp was a "wilderness environment untouched and untamed by white civilization" (Van Slyck 174). They designated cabin areas as "wigwams" or "longhouses," and different age groups took names like "Ojibwa," "Cree," or "Sioux." Tepees, council fire rings, and totem poles marked the landscape and became a fixture of camp culture. Children spent many hours devoted to carving "Indian heads" or building birch bark canoes (Wall 219).

A major issue with this appropriation of Indigenous traditions lies in the mindless manner in which camp directors often

jumbled different traditions together and, in some instances, entirely fabricated them. In her book, Wall provides an example of such a blending at Camp Bolton where, in 1937, a totem pole, a distinctly Northwest Coast tradition, and the tepee, a unique structure of the Plains peoples, stood next to each other. She also notes how the council fire ring at Camp Ahmek involved the Ohama tribal prayer, the American "Zuni Council Call," and the "Thirst Dance" of the Plains Indians. "In such cases," she writes, "camps were not penetrating the intricacies of Native history or culture; rather, like a long line of explorers, settlers, and academics before them, their images of Native peoples were based on a fantastical amalgam of [...] traditions projected onto one mythic Indian Other – another version of the white man's Indian" (221). In so doing, these camp organizations demonstrated blatant disregard for the vibrant diversity of Indigenous traditions across the continent as well as the very tangible influence of modernity on Indigenous cultures. Indigenous peoples – even as the inventors of canoes and snow shoes – were wrongly considered to be living in societies functioning without technology.

It was this kind of thinking that denigrated many groups as something other than truly Indigenous (Wall 231). Through the various associations drawn between Indigenous peoples and a "primitive" past, camp programs played a large role in promoting the growing idea that "authentic" Indigenous peoples had all but evaporated as a result of European supremacy (Van Slyck 212). A popular anthem at Camp Mystic even had children singing, "We have a Camp and its name is Mystic/It's perched way up a hill/The Indians used to find it jolly/ And we find it jolly still" (Paris 189).

Indigenous peoples, however, were very much present in these and other areas, and some even chose to participate in this commodification of their cultures in order to support themselves as they lost more and more of their territory to private and governmental endeavors (Van Slyck 170). Many of the organizations in more remote areas continually hired Indigenous staff members to serve as trip guides, craft instructors, dish washers, maintenance workers, and overall attractions to establish a more “wild” and “primitive” atmosphere (Wall 235). Perhaps some of these workers derived satisfaction from the chance to offer positive – albeit essentialist – examples of Indigenous life, but many likely chose the positions not to “play Indian” but to receive the “easy money” of camp work. When most Indigenous families in Ontario amassed a mere twelve to fifteen dollars a month during the logging, trapping, hunting, and mining seasons, a summer job at a camp offered upwards of five hundred dollars a day. As an added bonus, jobs at camp were a good deal less physically demanding (Wall 239).

These workers – performers even – were well aware of their audiences’ preferences for the traditional garb and gait of the “ahistorical, timeless Indian,” and they played to these tastes despite inevitable psychological battles (Wall 239). Most of the captivated campers in these programs didn’t realize the gravity of the burden on the shoulders of their Indigenous entertainers (Wall 240). Their costumes were largely an illusion, and this illusion had serious repercussions. By drawing on stereotypes of Indigenous peoples, camps moulded the outlooks of generations of children who would one day become adults. More importantly, “playing Indian” contributed to the

continuing justification of colonialism. From one perspective, the idea of the Indigenous person as a “savage” justified colonialism for its supposed humanitarian achievements, and from another, the understanding of the Indigenous person as an ageless, noble figure allowed for the rationale that Indigenous peoples couldn’t live in “civilization” if they tried. In both cases, the colonial scheme had to be accepted (Wall 245). Equally problematic are the less obvious consequences of these camp practices. As Wall poignantly observes, “Nothing was ever said about the fact that, as white campers played at being Indian, contemporary Native children were the target of aggressive campaigns aimed to rid them of their ‘Indianness.’ Did campers have any idea, one wonders, that, as directors donned Native headdresses, federal laws attempted to bar Aboriginal peoples from appearing publicly in traditional dress?” (245). Ignorance of these horrible truths might have provided temporary bliss for campers, but omitting painful, historical realities has harmful consequences.

The essentialist renderings of Indigenous peoples and cultures were not the only ways in which camps sought to determine a “natural” order of things. Nearly all camp founders believed in “the naturalness and significance of gender differences” and designed their programs to suit them (Wall 175). All of the earliest camps were opened exclusively for boys, as males were thought to mirror the natural environment in their efforts to reject containment and lead active, rugged lifestyles (Wall 177). Much of the activities offered involved rough-housing or calisthenics, and hours were spent honing “manly” skills in construction. People considered camps to be a back-to-nature escape for boys whose “feminized

homes” posed a threat to their manhood (Van Slyck xxiv). Many camp directors insisted that camp “satisfied the lure of the wild which is strong in every normal boy,” and others upheld their beliefs that “the country provided the only natural setting for a boy to grow” (Wall 177). The camp tradition of the canoe trip was thought to grant young men the spoils of virility as well as the furthest possible removal from the poisons of civilization (Wall 179). On the canoe trip, Wall remarks, “the typically male prerogative of exploring defined the middle-class man as much with regard to his relationship with nature as with regard to his relationship with the opposite sex. Both ‘adventures’ conveyed a similar sense of manhood – of the excitement of acting in an assertive way on the object of one’s desire (whether woman or landscape) and the importance of being the first one there” (Wall 180). It is clear that, in these ways, camps looked to foster a more “natural” masculinity in their subjects.

Originally, camp was not thought of as a place for girls to go. On the contrary, women, despite their obvious link with natural processes, had long been connected to ideas of civilization. In fact, during the years of frontier settlement, women were brought to “wild” areas to domesticate the grounds in addition to the men who lived on them. Moving into the twentieth-century, people were more frightened by the prospect of nature’s influence on the feminine than the feminine influence on the natural (Wall 189). Yet, with the perceived threats of urbanization seemingly growing with each year, all-girls summer camps developed as a solution to the modernist problem of young women becoming unnaturally “hardened” (Wall 192). Unlike those of the boys’ camps, advertisements for girls’

camps spoke often of the calming serenity of campuses with “the appearance of a fairy land,” “cool, quiet woods” with “life-giving fragrance,” and winds with “purifying influence” (Wall 191). Many camp brochures often boasted of programs which would ready young women for their predominantly domestic futures. In 1942, one such brochure announced, “We believe that it is of real value for a group of girls to plan a series of menus to consider nutritional and enjoyable meals...girls are going to have the job of making meals for their families.” Bed-making, knitting, and tea party planning were common quotidian activities at girls’ camps (Wall 191). Other features of camp programs also catered to the gender stereotypes of the times, including dramatics and musical productions. A 1931 Statten camps’ newsletter claimed, “Every normal girl likes dramatics. It satisfies a natural urge for self-expression.” And while girls performed “folk songs and other light, pretty songs, with a few noisy, funny ones mixed in,” boys lowered their voices to sing “with great gusto, sea shanties and other rousing songs” (Wall 192).

Gender categories also factored into the aforementioned camp theme of “Indianness.” Boys received encouragement to release their inner “savages” in games of capture-the-flag, fondly known as “scalping,” as well as in productions of games like “Pioneers and Indians.” Certainly, the camps’ very incorporations of Indigenous traditions were in large part due to the greater, modern “masculine project” at hand (Wall 233). Nevertheless, “playing Indian” had an important role in the everyday experience of girls’ camp. Young ladies were expected to follow the model of a more domestic Indigenous character instead of participating in the same kind



of activities as their male counterparts. In the creation of their own 'Indian' dresses, many girls improved their artistic talents through sewing, dyeing, and beading (Paris 201).

Several parallels can be drawn between the ways in which "nature" was constructed at summer camp and the ways in which it was first depicted through public displays at the American Museum of Natural History, revealing significant societal conceptions of the natural during the same epoch. In making these connections, I will refer often to Donna Haraway's article, "Teddy Bear Patriarchy: Taxidermy in the Garden, New York City, 1908-1936," a seminal publication in which she illuminates the totemic and political aspects of the painting and taxidermy in the museum's African Hall. The earliest summer camps were cultural landscapes which – under the guise of anti-modern lore – served to bolster societal ideals and principles of modernity, promote false ideas of the "primitive," reinforce gender stereotypes, and ultimately perpetuate dichotomous thinking about nature and culture. In the same way, Carl Akeley's African Hall at the Museum of Natural History provided – and continues to provide to this day – false representations of the "natural" order of the world.

Implicit in Akeley's arrangements of lions, gorillas, and zebras are societal understandings of supposedly "natural" race, sex, and class relations. Haraway writes that most groups at the museum consist "of only a few animals, usually including a large and vigilant male, a female or two and one baby. Perhaps there are some other animals – a male adolescent maybe, never an aged or deformed beast" (24). The animals in the dioramas, "in the morality play on the stage of nature,"

are ordered hierarchically with sexual division of labour (Scott). Just as with the promotion of gender stereotypes and the preference for males during the rise of North American summer camps, Carl Akeley favored male specimens over females as true models of natural beings. According to Haraway, Akeley hunted "many fine cows or lionesses, and he cared for their hides and other details with all his skill. But never was it necessary," she notes, "to take weeks and risk the success of the entire enterprise to find the perfect female. There existed an image of an animal which was somehow the gorilla or the elephant incarnate. That particular tone of perfection could only be heard in the male mode" (37).

"Taxidermy," Haraway insists, "fulfills the fatal desire to represent, to be whole; it is a politics of reproductions" (25). Taxidermists and camp operators alike sought to reproduce and reaffirm their ideas about the human race in their respective roles. Museum founders and exhibitors possessed the same kind of evolutionist thinking about the "natural" origins of mankind as the founders of summer camps. H.F. Osborn, the president of the American Natural History Museum from 1908 to 1933, described the exhibits in the African Hall as tending "to demonstrate the slow upward ascent and struggle of man from the lower to the higher stages, physically, morally, intellectually, and spiritually. Reverently and carefully examined, they put man upwards towards a higher and better future and away from the purely animal stage of life" (Haraway 37). Clearly, this sort of essentialist thinking was rampant at the time and can help to explain camp fascinations with – and manipulations of – Indigenous cultures. Interestingly, Carl Akeley's second wife, Mary Jobe Akeley,



was the founder and director of Camp Mystic for girls, the aforementioned camp with the minstrel show tune about local 'Indians' all but vanishing into thin air (Paris 190).

All in all, the study of the rise of the North American summer camp as an environmental movement, like Haraway's examination of the American Natural History Museum, serves to demonstrate the critical lessons about our ideas of nature that lie deep inside the structures of these taken-for-granted cultural institutions. After all, our ideas of nature determine how we think about ourselves as humans, in turn influencing our considerations of Indigenous communities, men, women, and our relationships to one another and to the environments that we do and do not inhabit. The summer camp may have had its heyday in the early twentieth century, but it is still very much a feature of Canadian and American childhood. It is true that fewer camps take the names of Indigenous peoples these days, more are co-ed, and there is certainly less touting of a rugged model of masculinity, yet, in despite of this, innumerable problems and paradoxes still exist. Many questions are still relevant and must be raised: What do we want generations of our children to take away from their camp experiences? How can the notions of 'wilderness' or 'progress' help or harm the places and people of the world? What do other institutions like the summer camp say about the societies in which we live – our ideals, our beliefs, and our goals? These answers may prove difficult to come by or ugly to discover, but they are imperative to understanding ourselves and our roles on the planet.

## About the Author

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# How do you say Itinérant in Inuktitut? A Look at Homelessness among Inuit Women in Montreal

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As a direct consequence of ongoing, systemic imperialism, substandard living conditions in Canada's Arctic often prompt their Indigenous residents to move south. The challenges faced by Inuit women in Northern communities are even more numerous than those of their male counterparts. Accordingly, Inuit women migrate from the Arctic in especially high numbers.<sup>1</sup> This retreat of Inuit peoples from the Canadian North to the country's southern city centers has grown exponentially within the past thirty-five years.<sup>2</sup> Montreal, for example, is quickly becoming one of the many major urban hubs regularly frequented by Inuit in search of opportunity. Indeed, 90% of Montreal's current Inuit population hails from outside the city.<sup>3</sup> While many Inuit relocate to Montreal to benefit from the city's wealth of social resources, more often than not the city fails to deliver. Language barriers, low levels of education, substance abuse, racism, discrimination and cultural disparities are all elements that hinder socioeconomic success among Montreal's Inuit population.<sup>4</sup> As such, Inuit – many of them women – often

find themselves in Montreal's urban setting without permanent housing. The purpose of this paper is to contextualize the reality that Inuit women who migrate from their Northern communities to the south in search of better opportunities often have limited socioeconomic success in Montreal. This paper will highlight several reasons Inuit women leave their home communities. It will also outline the challenges these women face within Montreal and how these factors contribute to the rising rates of homelessness among Inuit women in the city. While this paper is not meant to provide an exhaustive list of the factors contributing to homelessness among Inuit women within their Northern communities nor in Montreal, the juxtaposition of their circumstances in these two geographic locations illuminates the particular marginalization of this group.

Life in the Arctic can be harsh. This is certainly true for the once semi-nomadic Inuit who have been relegated to federally imposed settlements as a result of policies motivated by colonization. In the 1950s, the Canadian government supplied Northern communities with "prefabricated frame housing units."<sup>5</sup> A report developed by the Royal Commission of Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) in 1996 lists that 33% of Inuit deem these structures as ill-equipped to

1 Judie Bopp et al., "Pan-Territorial Report: A Study of Women's Homelessness North of 60," in *Finding Home Policy Options for Addressing Homelessness in Canada*, ed. John David Hulchanski (Toronto: Cities Centre Press, 2009).

2 Nobuhiro Kishigami, "Homeless Inuit in Montreal," *Etudes/Inuit/Studies* 1(2008): 73-90

3 "Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study: Montreal Report," *Environics Institute* 1 (2011): 72

4 Kishigami, "Homeless Inuit," 77-80.

5 Pamela R. Stern, *Daily Life of the Inuit* (Santa Barbara: Greenwood, 2010), 74.

weather the Arctic climate.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, given the remote location of these communities, construction costs and maintenance of houses are especially high and thus unaffordable for the majority of the Inuit population.<sup>7</sup> In the same way, federal housing assistance is most often offered to rural areas in the form of subsidies geared toward home ownership.<sup>8</sup> RCAP also states that despite Inuit peoples comprising 30% of the Canadian population in need of housing, only one in every one hundred subsidies has been allocated to a family of Inuit origin.<sup>9</sup> This program is unsupportive to the large number of unemployed Inuit peoples and, consequently, most Inuit do not own housing. Similarly, current Northern rent costs hover at approximately 25% of the average Inuit income.<sup>10</sup> This lack of affordable and available housing contributes to the elevated number of Inuit who do not have stable or permanent housing, as well as to overcrowding within existing homes.

The most pressing contemporary issue in Canada's territories is the housing shortage. The Northern Quebec region of Nunavik is said to currently hold the title for the region with the worst housing crisis in Canada,<sup>11</sup> where it is estimated that more than one thousand houses are

needed.<sup>12</sup> At the forefront of this problem is severe overcrowding within homes. Nunavik's rate of overcrowding is currently at 68%,<sup>13</sup> where many houses shelter two or three Inuit families. "Often there are 12 to 15 people of three and even four generations in the same house,"<sup>14</sup> despite many of the units being single room dwellings. According to a 2001 census conducted by the YWCA, 20% of Inuit households were overcrowded, compared to 10% among First Nations and trailed by 2% among the non-Indigenous Canadian population.<sup>15</sup> The full extent of this drastic phenomenon is generally difficult to track given that overcrowding is often underreported, and as such the situation is referred to as 'hidden homelessness.'<sup>16</sup> This is especially true in the winter, when temperatures can drop below 60 degrees Celsius. During these months the women tend to "frequent coffee shops, hoping to make a cup of coffee span the day, or gathering at a friend or family member's already overcrowded home."<sup>17</sup> These living arrangements, while sometimes temporary, account for one hundred to three hundred homeless Inuit women in Iqaluit, Nunavut's capital.<sup>18</sup>

Unfortunately, this crisis in Northern communities stems from and is perpetuated by the extensive lack of funding from the Canadian government. As James Anaya, the United Nations Special Rapporteur

6 Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, Government of Canada, Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (1996): Chapter 4, section 1.2.

7 UN-HABITAT, "Indigenous Peoples' Right to Adequate Housing: A Global Overview," (Nairobi, 2005): 92.

8 UN-HABITAT, "Right to Housing," 94.

9 RCAP, *Government of Canada*, 4.1.2

10 UN-HABITAT, "Right to Housing," 94.

11 Makivik Corporation, "Report on Inuit Homelessness in Montreal, Canada," in *the Popular Commission on Housing Right*, as presented to the Front d'action populaire en réaménagement urbain, (2012): 3

12 NETWORK, "Learning From Cabot Square: Developing the Strategy for Community Safety and Wellbeing," report in Montreal Urban Aboriginal Community Strategy, (2013): 35.

13 Donat Savoie, "Report on Inuit Homelessness in Montreal, Canada," Makivik Corporation 1(2012): 32

14 Makivik, "Report on Inuit," 4.

15 Bopp, "Pan-Territorial Report," 4.

16 Makivik, "Report on Inuit," 5.

17 Bopp, "Pan-Territorial Report," 10.

18 Makivik, "Report on Inuit," 5.

on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples states, "funding for Aboriginal housing in Canada is woefully inadequate."<sup>19</sup> Federal monies are often allocated according to population numbers, rather than a needs-based system. Thus, due to their limited population size, Inuit receive minimal financial resources for housing.<sup>20</sup> As high numbers of Northern Inuit leave in search of appropriate accommodations in the south, the population of these communities continues to dwindle. This growing exodus only further diminishes the already scarce government resources designated for this pressing issue.

Overcrowding in Northern dwellings has an undeniable impact on Inuit peoples. Poverty often sees an increase in malnutrition coupled with an inevitable decrease in personal hygiene. The close proximity to a large number of people who suffer from poor nutrition and who lack access to facilities to remain clean veritably increases the potential spread of illness.<sup>21</sup> As one participant in a 2009 study entitled "Immigrants and Homelessness – At Risk in Canada's Outer Suburbs" explains, "I have even seen 16 peoples sharing a basement. It is so crowded that they set a house rule on bathroom use on certain time. You can't use a bathroom if your time is up. This is not a joke."<sup>22</sup> Thus, communicable diseases,<sup>23</sup> infections and chronic lung disease<sup>24</sup> are exacerbated by overcrowding in the unsuitable dwellings of the north.

Furthermore, studies have confirmed a causal relationship between overcrowded housing in Northern communities and the high rates of sexual and physical abuse against Inuit women and children.<sup>25</sup> Intergenerational trauma suffered by Inuit as a result of the abuses they endured at the hands of the colonizers, most often having occurred in residential schools or in adoptive families, contributes to the prevalence of sexual and violent assaults among these populations.<sup>26</sup> That being said, living in such close quarters also creates a situation where women and children in particular become increasingly vulnerable to sexual and domestic violence. Though incidences of assault certainly occur outside of shared dwelling arrangements, limited personal space in addition to a lack of privacy in overcrowded houses increases the exposure of women and children and in turn raises their level of vulnerability to attacks. Many Inuit women, especially those with children, move to the south in order to escape said abuse and often have no intention of returning to their home communities.<sup>27</sup>

Housing issues are not the only challenges faced by Inuit women in the North. Due to the limited resources in Arctic communities, many Inuit women reluctantly remain in relationships that they would otherwise leave if they had sufficient access to resources.<sup>28</sup> Often women experience feelings of worthlessness as a result of mistreatment within their domestic partnerships. "They are trapped in abusive relationships in which financial, psychological, physical and mental control are used to keep

19 Savoie, "Homelessness Canada," 18.

20 Bopp, "Pan-Territorial Report," 4.

21 Bopp, "Pan-Territorial Report," 17.

22 Preston et al., "Immigrants and Homelessness – at Risk in Canada's Outer Suburbs," in *Finding Home Policy Options for Addressing Homelessness in Canada*, ed. John David Hulchanski (Toronto: Cities Centre Press, 2009), 10.

23 Bopp, "Pan-Territorial Report," 17.

24 Makivik, "Report on Inuit," 3.

25 Makivik, "Report on Inuit," 4.

26 Stern, *Daily Life*, 28-29.

27 NETWORK, "Cabot Square," 12.

28 Bopp, "Pan-Territorial Report," 60-73

women feeling powerless.”<sup>29</sup> Emotionally damaging, these forms of abuse greatly impact the lives of Inuit women and are translated into feelings of anxiety, fear and despair. Some women express that their problems were dismissed by Northern community leaders who instead stigmatize them as “bad” homeless women.<sup>30</sup> More often than not, Inuit women who feel caught in a cycle of conjugal violence contemplate suicide, engage in substance abuse, or undertake prostitution.<sup>31</sup> Still others try to locate the resources that will enable them to move south in an attempt to escape negative relationships.<sup>32</sup>

Lack of employment opportunities, medical services and social programs are also among the significant factors that contribute to homelessness in the North.<sup>33</sup> However, many Inuit are drawn to Montreal specifically due to the Inuit-specific organizations and institutions that the city offers.<sup>34</sup> Additionally, some Inuit come to Montreal to pursue an education or to access hospital care; the latter situation is applicable to approximately two hundred Inuit in Montreal at any given moment.<sup>35</sup> Many leave to escape the exorbitant cost of living as they are no longer able to make ends meet, and others leave for Montreal because they can no longer contend with food insecurity in the North.<sup>36</sup> Whatever the reason, close to one thousand Inuit from the Nunavik region alone, many of them women, have established themselves in Montreal in recent years.<sup>37</sup>

Once in Montreal, Inuit migrants are often faced with numerous, unanticipated challenges. The executive director of the Montreal Native Women’s shelter explains, “[w]hen people leave their villages to come to Montreal, they expect something wonderful.”<sup>38</sup> Unfortunately, in many regards the city fails to deliver to its new Inuit members. As a city where French is the primary language, followed closely by English,<sup>39</sup> many Northern Inuit who are unilingual Inuktitut speakers face severe language barriers in Montreal. A lack of French reading, writing and oral skills, and limited capacity in English, severely limits Inuit peoples’ employability in Montreal. Even more, these language barriers hinder overall Inuit adaptation to a new urban lifestyle.<sup>40</sup> In the same vein, many Inuit from the North lack formal education and thus often do not fulfill the minimum requirements of job postings.<sup>41</sup> Without employment, newly arrived Inuit struggle to pay for food, clothing, and housing. Unemployment due to weaknesses in these areas tends to be a common theme among migrant Inuit in Montreal, as they are often linguistically and academically ill-equipped to take advantage of available job opportunities.<sup>42</sup>

Inuit are often subject to discrimination by non-Indigenous people in Montreal. While stemming from ordinary citizens, racism is also rampant within mainstream services.<sup>43</sup> Inuit reports of discrimination

29 Bopp, “Pan-Territorial Report,” 12.

30 Bopp, “Pan-Territorial Report,” 11.

31 Bopp, “Pan-Territorial Report,” 4.

32 Stern, *Daily Life*, 66.

33 Stern, *Daily Life*, 60.

34 Makivik, “Report on Inuit,” 5.

35 Makivik, “Report on Inuit,” 5.

36 Makivik, “Report on Inuit,” 5.

37 Makivik, “Report on Inuit,” 5.

38 Peggy Curran, “Eking out a Life on the Margins,” *The Gazette* [Montreal], March 01, 2009: A3

39 Kishigami, “Homeless Inuit,” 74.

40 NETWORK, “Cabot Square,” 35.

41 Kishigami, “Homeless Inuit in Montreal,” 78.

42 Curran, “Life on Margins,” A3.

43 Graeme Hamilton, “Inuit Residence in Montreal Scrapped and Racist Charges; ‘It’s as if they were coming to Las Vegas’”, *Montreal Gazette* [Montreal], September 11, 2010: A4.

from public sector workers,<sup>44</sup> who offer much needed services, are prevalent in Montreal. An evaluation of the city's health services indicates that 87.1% of the sample of Indigenous peoples asked responded that they had received poor treatment given their First Nation, Métis or Inuit background.<sup>45</sup> This discrimination is a deterrent among Inuit peoples as they often try to avoid these negative encounters by limiting their use of these services.<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, many Inuit in Montreal have difficulty accessing much needed programs and services due to the language barrier<sup>47</sup> as this often prevents them from locating the correct facilities or exchanging information with the appropriate staff member. The frustration and embarrassment that regularly follows failed attempts or negative interactions is often enough for Inuit to steer clear of similar situations in the future.

Because of the abovementioned difficulties, Inuit migrants often turn to Montreal homeless shelters for support. However, culturally non-specific homeless shelters in Montreal are not exempt from engaging in the discrimination of Inuit peoples. Often, non-Inuit workers and other homeless patrons mistreat many of the Inuit who attempt to access the offered services. In Nohubiro Kishigami's 2008 Montreal study among homeless Inuit, many interviewees express that they have encountered discrimination in the form of disparaging remarks about Inuit, saying that they "smell," "are noisy," and "have fleas and lice."<sup>48</sup> In this way,

Inuit often feel uncomfortable using non-Indigenous shelters<sup>49</sup> despite limited options.

The scarcity of available resources specific to Inuit women in Montreal particularly contributes to the rising homeless statistics among this population. The Montreal Native Women's Shelter<sup>50</sup> and Chez Doris<sup>51</sup> are two shelter options specifically available to Indigenous women in the city. While plans are in place for the latter to hire an Inuit case worker fluent in Inuktitut,<sup>52</sup> currently "[t]here are no Inuit counsellors to translate and demystify basic social services for Inuit city-dwellers."<sup>53</sup> Even more, both of these shelters require that women subscribe to a zero tolerance policy regarding drugs, alcohol and violence.<sup>54</sup> This criterion, in addition to requiring that each woman present a piece of identification to gain entry,<sup>55</sup> excludes many Inuit women in Montreal from availing themselves of the resources offered by Montreal shelters. The use of alcohol or illegal substances is common among many homeless Inuit women who seek escape from the duress of everyday life.<sup>56</sup> Additionally, capacity is limited within the available shelters, and priority is given to mothers or women who have recently suffered from domestic abuse.<sup>57</sup> Thus, single Inuit women who suffer from substance dependencies

44 Montreal Urban Aboriginal Health Committee – MUAHC, "Montreal Urban Aboriginal Health Needs Assessment," (2012): 15.

45 MUAHC, "Heath Needs Assessment," 14.

46 MUAHC, "Heath Needs Assessment," 15.

47 MUAHC, "Heath Needs Assessment," 15.

48 Kishigami, "Homeless Inuit," 7.

49 NETWORK, "Cabot Square," 12.

50 Curran, "Life on Margins," A3

51 Peter Kuitenbrouwer, "Streets are Cold Home to Inuit Women; Some resort to prostitution to get cigarettes, drugs," *The Gazette* [Montreal], February 09, 1991: A3.

52 Makivik, "Report on Inuit," 8.

53 Sidhartha Banerjee, "Finding Shelter in the Cold," *The Gazette* [Montreal], January 06, 2008: A8

54 Banerjee, "Finding Shelter in the Cold," A8.

55 Banerjee, "Finding Shelter in the Cold," A8

56 Bopp, "Pan-Territorial Report," 100.

57 Banerjee, "Finding Shelter in the Cold," A8



and are not in abusive relationships have difficulty finding room in shelters. In 1987, the residence director of the YWCA admitted, "95 per cent of the time, we can't find a place for homeless women to stay."<sup>58</sup> The challenge of finding space for Inuit women looking for shelter in Montreal continues to increase and speaks directly to the overrepresentation of homelessness within this demographic.

Inuit mothers in Montreal who have migrated from their Northern communities are often in an even more precarious living situation and commonly struggle to provide food, clothing and shelter for their families.<sup>59</sup> Oftentimes, these Inuit women are weary of approaching agencies for support as they are concerned that their children will be taken away from them by the authorities.<sup>60</sup> This threat to child custody is not an idle one: "Those who know Montreal's Inuit community say virtually every Inuit parent in the city has either had a child taken away by youth protection, has been threatened with placement in an institution, or knows an Inuit family that has suffered the same fate."<sup>61</sup> This harrowing reality has Inuit mothers struggling to provide for their children in an urban environment that is not conducive to their success.

In consideration of the aforementioned challenges, many homeless Inuit women engage in sex work as a means of survival in Montreal.<sup>62</sup> While sometimes participating in drug and prostitution

rings,<sup>63</sup> although usually working for themselves, Inuit women who have been unable to gain socioeconomic success in Montreal through other strategies often resort to the exchange of sex for drugs, money, or a place to stay.<sup>64</sup> More and more, Inuit women who have been pushed to the fringes of Montreal society prostitute themselves as a primary source of income. In 1987 a legal advisor for homeless Native women weighed in on the situation: "[F]our years ago, prostitution was nearly unheard of. Nowadays, an Inuit girl ends up in jail every weekend."<sup>65</sup> This phenomenon has only increased in more recent years, where offers of sex continue to be a bartering tool for Inuit women living on the streets.<sup>66</sup> While prostitution represents unofficial employment for some, many Inuit women are simply looking for a warm place to sleep.<sup>67</sup>

As of the 1980s,<sup>68</sup> a steady increase of Inuit have been leaving their Northern communities to move to Canada's south. A multitude of reasons contribute to this migration; at its crux are the poor housing conditions available in the Arctic, which contribute to a myriad of other significant and pressing issues. Inuit women and their children are particularly vulnerable to the issues stemming from the culture of poverty that exists in the North. Often faced with sexual or physical abuse and the responsibility for their children, Inuit women make up a significant proportion of the Inuit who migrate to the provinces' urban centers. While the image of the homeless Inuit may have become a familiar one in the streets,

58 Douglas Janoff, "Poverty and Culture Shock are Driving Native Women to Prostitution Here," *The Gazette* [Montreal], January 09, 1987: A1.

59 Un-HABITAT, "Right to Housing," 151.

60 Emanuel Lowi, "Urban Inuit Face a Life of Pain," *The Gazette* [Montreal], October 29, 2005: A13.

61 Lowi, "Urban Inuit," A13.

62 Kuitenbrouwer, "Streets are Cold," A3.

63 Kuitenbrouwer, "Streets are Cold," A3

64 Kuitenbrouwer, "Streets are Cold," A3

65 Janoff, "Poverty and Culture," A1.

66 Stern, *Daily Life*, 12.

67 Janoff, "Poverty and Culture," A1.

68 Kishigami, "Homeless Inuit" 2.



alleyways, and park benches of downtown Montreal, this unfortunate phenomenon says a lot more about the city itself than it does about the population in question. Despite the increasing number of Inuit leaving their Northern communities to establish themselves and seek out opportunities in Montreal, language barriers, cultural disparity and lack of education often make it difficult for Inuit to find employment in the city. Montreal's purposeful inattentiveness to the needs of a growing urban Inuit population, coupled with an overall sense of reproach held by non-Indigenous Montrealers toward this group, not only reinforces the marginalization of the Inuit population in Montreal but further perpetuates the high degree of homelessness among them. This is particularly true of Inuit women who are new to Montreal, who not only frequently find themselves living on the streets, but often also resort to sex work to make ends meet. Thus, given the limited resources available to them as well as the additional challenges that often mirrors those they encounter in their home communities, Inuit women continue to struggle to cope with Montreal's urban environment.

### About the Author

Lydia Nicole Fanelli is a Concordia student who is completing an Honours degree in Sociology with a minor in First Peoples Studies. Born and raised in Montreal, she is a non-Indigenous ally who has experienced homelessness. She hopes to further her research on Inuit homelessness in Canadian urban centres at the graduate level next fall.

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# The Berger Inquiry

## A Turning Point for Canadian Resource Management and Indigenous Empowerment

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### Introduction

From 1974-1977, the simmering discussion over Northern Canada's resource development boiled over in a heated three-year debate on the future of our territorial North. From Ottawa to Tuktoyaktuk, via Calgary, Yellowknife and communities throughout the Northwest Territories and Yukon, discourse centered around an enormous proposition to construct a pipeline along the Mackenzie River Valley, transporting oil and natural gas south from extraction in Prudhoe Bay and the Mackenzie Delta. Hydrocarbon development has demonstrated tremendous power to impact societies distant from their national and population cores, and this project was expected to bring economic growth, infrastructure, and social change to the entire region (Sabin 1995). To assess potential impacts of this project, the federal government appointed arguably the most famous Royal Commission in Canadian history, under Judge Thomas Berger, to hear testimony from scientific, industry, government, and community representatives and report back with recommendations.

In this essay I will argue that the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry, or Berger Inquiry and Berger Report, as it came to be called, was a landmark case for resource management and Aboriginal community empowerment in Canada and the world. I will begin

with a brief background of the social and environmental conditions of the Mackenzie Valley at the beginning of the Inquiry. I will then describe the status of oil development and pipeline proposals and the preliminary federal review that had taken place before the Inquiry began.

The recommendations of the Berger Inquiry were surprising to many Canadians, including the government that commissioned them. I will review Berger's four key recommendations from the final report, 'Northern Frontier, Northern Homeland,' including the reasons why he recommended a ten-year moratorium of pipeline construction in the Mackenzie Valley. This analysis will take the form of a review of Volume One of the report, outlining the justification behind each of his decisions.

The innovative methodology by which recommendations were reached was even more significant than the findings of the report itself. I will present two elements of the Berger Inquiry as ground-breaking. First, Berger interpreted his Inquiry's scope liberally, including not only the effects of pipeline construction, but also the development of an entire energy corridor through the Mackenzie Valley. Second, the Inquiry adopted informal community hearings to increase accessibility to residents of rural Indigenous communities. Evidence given in these hearings was considered equally valuable to that given by technical

specialists in formal hearings, erasing the divide between local and expert knowledge.

My essay will also review the implications of Berger's methodology and findings. I will first discuss the implications of the report's findings for the Mackenzie Valley – most notably, that no pipeline has yet been constructed. I will argue that the Inquiry increased the importance of Indigenous consultation in impact assessments, especially in isolated communities. Thus, it contributed to the rise of Indigenous control over and benefit from resource management on traditional territory. I will also discuss the inherent irony of the Berger Inquiry: that it is more often cited than followed. While the report stands as an international example of meaningful community consultation, its comprehensive scope and accessible hearings have not been adopted in most Canadian impact assessments.

Finally, the Berger Report used the pipeline discussion as occasion to expose and juxtapose two visions of the Canadian North. Ultimately, it asks us the question: should the North be primarily a frontier for industry or a homeland for its peoples (Berger 1977)? According to Berger, our choice of visions would determine our decision-making and development projects, and thus, the fate of the North (Berger 1977). 'Northern Frontier, Northern Homeland' brought the voices of Northerners to a large audience and is credited with changing the way southern Canadians thought about the North, shaping development conversations in the future (Bocking 2007, 1).

My analysis will take the form of a brief literature review, the primary text being Thomas Berger's 'Northern Frontier, Northern Homeland.' Secondary texts

include summaries and analyses of the Berger Inquiry, news stories released at the time of the inquiry, and academic articles addressing issues of Northern resource management and Aboriginal sovereignty. As in any research, I have prioritized some perspectives and marginalized others – for example, I read, but discarded an article calling the Berger Inquiry "Colonialism's Last Gasp" (Matthews 2007). I also recognize that my perspective on northern Indigenous communities as a non-Indigenous Canadian is limited.

### **Background to the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Proposal**

#### *The Mackenzie Valley: 1974*

When Thomas Berger entered the Mackenzie Valley, he encountered a society in flux. Although still predominantly Indigenous, the population of the Mackenzie Valley was rapidly transitioning from diffused and nomadic to sedentary, community-based society. Until thirty years earlier, the majority of Indigenous peoples had lived away from trading posts during most of the year, hunting and trapping with their families. By the 1970s, it was mainly men who went hunting, while families often remained in communities year-round, supplementing country food with store-bought food products (Sabin 1995, 25) (Keeling and Sandlos 2009). Subsistence food was still an essential source of food, but it was no longer the sole support.

With this demographic shift came an economic collapse, characteristic of resource peripheries that export primary resources to distant markets (Innis 1999). The price of furs declined dramatically following World War II, forcing many Indigenous people into wage labour to replace missing trapping income. By 1964, the contribution of trapping

to average Indigenous income in the Northwest Territories was down to an estimated 23 percent, while government assistance had shot upwards to 28 percent (Sabin 1995, 26).

Beginning in the 1950s and 60s, Dene and Gwich'in children were also being uprooted from their communities for education in Residential Schools. This generation, only just returning to their communities in the years prior to the Inquiry, spoke more English and operated from a more Westernized outlook. Being better able to navigate dealings with Western authorities, they quickly moved into local positions of power. It was these new representatives of a changing Indigenous society that met oil executives and governmental bureaucrats, flown North to negotiate the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline proposal.

#### *The Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Proposal*

Sizeable oil and gas deposits were discovered in Prudhoe Bay, Alaska in 1968, and two years later in the Mackenzie Delta, NWT. At the time, although oil and gas extraction was feasible in these regions, no mechanism existed to transport hydrocarbons to Southern markets on a large scale. Several companies stepped forward with propositions to construct a pipeline to bring oil and gas out of the Arctic (Gamble 1978, 946).

In March 1974, Arctic Gas filed an application to the National Energy Board and the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development to build a pipeline along the Mackenzie River Valley. This application was backed by Arctic Gas' own multimillion dollar study and documentation (Gamble 1978, 946). In financial cost, the proposed Mackenzie Valley pipeline project was scheduled to become the largest private enterprise ever

undertaken. In scale it compared to the construction of the trans-Canada railway (Malley 1976). Because the project compared to none other ever attempted, it faced unprecedented challenges, including the technical complications of building a pipeline over unstable permafrost in an undeveloped region with minimal human infrastructure, combined with the socioeconomic problems of rapid industrialization for isolated and culturally autonomous communities.

However, prior to Berger's report, the eventual recommendation against pipeline construction was neither pre-determined nor predicted. Before it began, the inquiry's value was challenged as "merely a fair trial before a hanging" because "a decision favorable to a pipeline is inevitable" (Malley 1976). North America had just emerged from the first OPEC oil crisis, and political and public opinion south of 60° was deeply concerned with continental oil security. Yet, as I will explore in this essay, while many contemporary public consultation processes may be criticized as tokenistic, the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry cannot.

#### **Findings of the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry**

The Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry was a three year process, producing over 4,000 pages of text. Of those findings, Thomas Berger condensed and synthesized two volumes, together making up 'Northern Frontier, Northern Homeland.' This book included final recommendations to the federal government. Like the Inquiry, it seeks to assess not only the impact of a proposed gas pipeline, but also that of future development of an energy corridor including increased oil and gas

exploration (Gray and Gray 1977, 511). The wealth of Berger's data allows him to take an authoritatively holistic view of non-renewable resource development in the North (Dosman 1978, 136).

In this section I will summarize the contents of the four recommendations of the first and more significant volume (Dosman 1978, 136) (Berger 1977). First, and most controversially, the Inquiry recommended a ten-year moratorium on pipeline construction in the Mackenzie Valley. Interestingly, this recommendation was not because of perceived environmental risk. Rather, the ten-year moratorium on pipeline construction was to buy time for Berger's second recommendation: a carefully planned economic transition for northern Indigenous communities to transition into modern economies, balancing traditional and modern economies, while preserving traditional ways of life. Berger wanted to avoid a boom-and-bust cycle of economic progress through only pipeline construction. Third, and also related, the Inquiry recommended that all efforts be made to settle Indigenous land claims in the Mackenzie Valley. Berger saw modern land claim agreements, including resource benefit sharing agreements, as a necessary component for the transition of Indigenous communities towards modern economies. He also recognized that the Indigenous peoples' call for land claims was linked to a deeper desire for self-determinism, which might be included in final agreements. Finally, Berger made one recommendation based on purely environmental motivation: that three ecologically sensitive areas be permanently protected from pipeline construction or other development. In this section, I will explore in greater depth the reasoning behind the four recommendations made

in the Berger Report.

### *Developmental and Environmental Concerns*

Chapter one of the Berger Report, ambitiously presents a brief introduction to the North: its environment, society, history, and how various discourses depict different realities of 'the North.' In Chapters two & three address the concept of a gas and oil energy corridor and related facilities, and the specific challenges of industrial development in the far North.

Chapter four of the report addresses potential environmental impacts and lays emphasis differently in each region. For the coastal Yukon, it recommends the establishment of a national park, protecting migratory bird and Porcupine caribou habitat from adverse effects of a pipeline and corridor. Further inland, the report expresses concern of the environmental impact of a pipeline on muskrat populations, and the environmental, economic, and social impacts on the village of Old Crow. The report characterizes the Mackenzie Delta and Beaufort Sea as environmentally sensitive but only recommends two areas to be pipeline free: the Mackenzie Delta itself, due to the inherent environmental risks of river crossings, and Shallow Bay, adjacent to Beluga breeding ground, for creation of a whale sanctuary free from development. Many of Berger's environmental concerns focussed on the danger of proceeding with full-scale hydrocarbon production in the Mackenzie Delta and Beaufort Sea before the development of satisfactory technology to clean up oil spills, especially given the severity and irreversibility of the impact of an oil spill on Arctic wildlife (Gamble 1978, 951). Many of Berger's environmental recommendations were

directly targeted at conserving Indigenous subsistence hunting resources.

Interestingly, the report cites no significant potential environmental impacts in the Mackenzie Valley itself, thus concluding “there is no compelling environmental reason why a corridor to bring oil and gas from the Mackenzie Delta and Beaufort Sea could not be established along the Valley” (Berger 1977, 77). However, in the next section, Berger proposed socioeconomic reasons why such a pipeline may not be advisable.

#### *Aboriginal Community Concerns*

The second and more significant section of volume one of the Berger Report describes Indigenous cultural, social, and economic concerns with pipeline construction through the Mackenzie Valley. The pipeline was of great significance to some Indigenous groups, many of whom believed that their interests were not being represented in resource development decision-making. Some Indigenous participants in the review process were truly desperate to bring attention to their plight. One 23-year-old shot himself in the head fatally after testifying at the inquiry in Calgary, having declared that First Nations groups would “take up anything to defend ourselves, our children, our wives, our culture, our spirit” (Malley 1976).

The following three chapters represent the largest subject of the report – cultural, economic, and social impacts of development in the Mackenzie Valley. It begins with a historical summary of the well-recognized negative impacts that southern Euro-Canadian education has wrought on northern Indigenous culture and society. The report continues with an examination of the impacts of European

and Southern Canadian discourses on Northern Indigenous cultures. The Report interprets traditional Indigenous cultural views of land as a renewable resource bank providing the security and sustenance to maintain their ways of life. It stresses the continued importance of subsistence hunting which, the report believes, should form part of a diverse Northern economy, wage labour being only another part of it (Gray and Gray 1977, 512).

To evaluate the economic benefit Northern communities are likely to enjoy from the pipeline, the report synthesizes the experiences of other communities. Most rapid resource development projects in the Canada’s North provided few jobs to Northerners, most in seasonal, unskilled construction labour (Gray and Gray 1977, 512). Furthermore, Alaska’s experience of rapid development brought inflated costs of goods and rent to the North, disproportionately affecting Indigenous communities. The boom-and-bust cycle of construction in Alaska notoriously strained community infrastructure, then left excess capacity after construction was complete. While development in the North would increase Indigenous business opportunities and broaden the local tax base, the report predicts that much of the business would profit southern firms, while heightened health and social service costs would outpace increased tax revenue (Berger 1977). For these reasons, Berger justifies his belief that rapid development would negatively affect the Mackenzie Valley. Instead, he recommends the delay of pipeline construction for at least ten years, while a careful economic diversification and modernization plan is implemented in Northern communities with the financial support of the federal government (Sabin 1995, 40).



The final chapters of the report concern Indigenous desire for land claim settlement and self-determinism, the overwhelming sentiment conveyed in community hearings in the North (Bocking 2007). It documents the broad range of issues linked to Aboriginal land settlements, from control of renewable resources to self-government and control over education. Although it saw no significant environmental risk of pipeline construction in the Mackenzie Valley, the report recommends that all Aboriginal land claims be settled before the pipeline is built, suggesting that it would be very difficult to achieve land settlements after construction.

Indigenous testimony documented in the Berger Report reveals that the majority of Northerners wanted something similar: local control over the full life cycle of economic developments, including revenue-sharing, involvement in planning, local employment, and assurances of minimal environmental impact. Few Northerners were anti-development on principal (Sabin 1995, 18). Dene community respondents, for example, went beyond their spiritual bonds to the land, predominantly emphasizing economic and social concerns. They worried that a pipeline would harm the subsistence base of the Northern economy, as well as risk the trapping industry and change traditional economic organizations in the North (Sabin 1995, 29).

However, the report presents no unified voice from the North. Instead, we are provided with a diversity of perspectives each seeking resolution on their own terms to the cultural, economic, and environmental dilemmas of life in the far North (Sabin 1995, 39). These vast testimonies from Indigenous and non-

Indigenous respondents constitute a significant contribution to Canadian cultural heritage in their own right (Gamble 1978).

### **Methodology of the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry**

As significant as Berger's conclusions were, it was how he arrived at them that set the precedent for subsequent impact assessments (Bocking 2007). In this section I will describe the two ways in which the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline methodology was extraordinary. First, Berger adopted a very liberal interpretation of his Inquiry's purview, addressing not only the pipeline's construction, but also the associated triggering of a series of developments leading to a Mackenzie Valley energy corridor. In this way, Berger placed the pipeline proposal in the proper context of its overall impact – in essence, he conducted a cumulative impact assessment.

The second extraordinary methodology which the Inquiry employed was the use of two forms of hearings. Berger conducted both the traditional formal hearings, in which participants delivered pre-arranged testimony in turn, and community hearings, where Northerners had the opportunity to voice their concerns freely and informally. In this section, I will describe how the unprecedented implementation of community hearings greatly increased the accessibility of the Inquiry for Northerners, and thus had impact on the report's findings.

#### *Liberal Interpretation of Purview*

Berger's inquiry was extraordinary in its scope. It concerned not only the construction of the pipeline itself, but also the development of a Mackenzie Valley energy corridor (Gamble 1978, 948). The latter is a much more complex

subject for impact assessment, with far-reaching environmental, social, and economic repercussions for the entire North, deep into its future. This approach put the pipeline into the context of the triggering effect it would have on a host of other ventures, such as a railroad and highway through the Mackenzie Valley, an influx of southern workers, and rapidly increasing industrial development, each a component of a larger change across the North. In this way, Berger's report overcame the tyranny of small decisions, each well intended, which accumulate to unanticipated and unsustainable conclusions (Oden 1982).

Judge Berger described the process as more than an inquiry into a pipeline, as "it relates to the whole future of the north," a study "whose magnitude is without precedent in the history of our country" (Malley 1976). This approach differs from the National Energy Board, which chose to evaluate the impact of an initial gas pipeline only (Gray and Gray 1977, 514).

### *Two Forms of Hearings*

The Berger Report's extraordinary conclusions can also be accredited to the innovative public accessibility of its hearings. The Berger Inquiry was ground-breaking in its active community engagement through both formal and community hearings in the North (Gray and Gray 1977, 510).

Formal hearings were conducted in Northern and Southern Canadian urban centers, as was the tradition in royal commissions. In them, expert witnesses for each participant gave prepared testimony and could be cross-examined by all other participants. Witnesses were asked to explain not only their position, but also the background material and

studies from which it was derived (Gamble 1978, 949). But these hearings inherently put Northerners, Indigenous peoples, and remote community members at a disadvantage.

Community hearings were more inclusive and flexible, to allow participation from all stakeholders and not only those with the financial and organizational capacity to engage at a formal level. However, the evidence presented in community hearings was accorded the same respect and consideration as that presented at the formal hearings. They were also more flexible with their location, often being staged in smaller and more remote areas than formal hearings. Community hearings were recommended on the basis that, rather than having Northerners travel south to present their concerns, the Inquiry should go to them. Hearings took place in 35 Northern communities, where nearly 1,000 people gave testimony in eight languages (Gamble 1978, 949). Community hearings were an unprecedented inclusion in the impact assessment process, and probably the most publicized aspect of the Berger Inquiry.

Ultimately, community hearings provided a mouthpiece for evidence that could not have emerged through the traditional, formalized system. In community hearings, local Indigenous and non-Indigenous residents gave vivid and comprehensive descriptions of how the development might impact their daily lives, information without which it would be impossible to make a rational impact assessment.

Evaluating local community knowledge as equal to technological 'expert' knowledge significantly re-conceptualized the role of community members in the

environmental management framework. By prioritizing the non-technological, but none-the-less technical knowledge of communities, Berger erased the divide between specialized expertise and local knowledge, confirming that the people who live on the land can know more than scientists (Bocking 2007, 2).

Berger wrestled with government funders to ensure that public interest groups received adequate funding - \$1.74 million Canadian in 1977- to participate as vigorously as lawyers representing natural gas companies (Sabin 1995, 22). The impact of the Berger Inquiry's methodology on its conclusions reveals the extent to which information is key to an assessment process. By extension, the group that controls flow of information controls the outcomes of the assessment – and that control should not rest exclusively with the experts or the industry (Gamble 1978, 951).

As an innovative and unconventional process, the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry received considerable criticism, especially for its size, length, and unusual methodology. Some corporate partners criticized the Inquiry for “flying by the seat of its pants” with a “lack of regulatory process,” with a “proliferation of official governing bodies, land claimants, non-government interest groups, lawyers and... consultants all contributing to the problem” (Harrison 2006, 239). In response to criticism of the pace of the inquiry, alternately described as “grandiose” and “glacial,” Berger snapped “if Canada can't take time to make an informed decision about what is going to happen in our northland, then what has Canada got time for?” (Malley 1976)

## Implications of the Inquiry

### *Implications for the Mackenzie Valley*

Because its recommendations were accepted by the federal government, the Berger Inquiry had huge implications for the history of the Mackenzie Valley. No pipeline was, or has yet been, built in the Valley. Indigenous communities in the Mackenzie Valley have not been exposed to rapid industrial development, and have remained isolated, albeit less so with developments such as the Dempster Highway. However, many Indigenous communities have continued to adopt Euro-Canadian traditions, and continue to suffer socioeconomic challenges such as substance abuse, chronic poverty, disease, and government dependency. We can never accurately know if and how their experiences might have differed had the pipeline been constructed. Fortunately, however, one of Justice Berger's recommendations has been fulfilled for Indigenous communities; many have signed comprehensive land claim agreements and achieved greater control and benefits over resource use within their traditional territories (Sosa and Keenan 2001) (Keeling and Sandlos 2009).

### *Changing Southern Paradigms of the Canadian North*

The title of Berger's report, ‘Northern Frontier, Northern Homeland,’ speaks to the major philosophical point underpinning the report's conclusions. By including the voices of Northerners in his report and his recommendations, and by considering the impact of pipeline construction on the whole North, Berger argues that the North is not merely a frontier for economic development, but a homeland lived in for generations. Unusually for Royal Commissions, the report was reader-friendly, complete

with engaging language and “profusely illustrated with photographs, diagrams, and maps on every page, with visual impact” (Gray and Gray 1977, 510). The report garnered abnormally wide public readership and discussion – it has been called the best-selling book ever published by the Canadian government (Harbell 2010). Because of its engaging, accessible nature and its wide audience, ‘Northern Frontier, Northern Homeland’ has been recognized as a major force in changing the average Canadian’s perception of the territorial North.

*The Inquiry’s contribution to Canadian Resource Management*

The report’s legacy stretched beyond the Mackenzie Valley. According to scholars of the late 1970s, when the report was released it established a precedent, influencing the style, approach, questions, analysis, and indirectly the conclusions of other reports (Gray and Gray 1977, 510) (Dosman 1978, 138). The Inquiry is also significant within Canadian history as one of the few cases when a project was denied permission to proceed by an impact assessment (Carrier Sekani Tribal Council 2007). The Inquiry is still upheld internationally as an example of comprehensive impact assessment, balancing technical expertise with a human focus (Sabin 1995).

In this section, I will discuss the most important way in which the Berger Inquiry influenced Canadian resource management impact assessments: by increasing the importance of public consultation, and especially Indigenous involvement and control. Through the community hearings, Berger assigned nominally equal significance to local and expert knowledge; through his recommendations, he proved that the

two forms of evidence were equally important in evaluating impact to the North. He demonstrated that participatory assessments worked. Since the Berger Inquiry, the credibility of an impact assessment has depended not only on the expertise included, but also its transparency, accountability, and accessibility (Bocking 2007, 2).

Berger’s Inquiry marked the beginning of the rise of Indigenous involvement and control in impact assessments. In the words of Chief Frank T’Seleie of Fort Good Hope, the Inquiry’s community hearings were “the first time in the history of my people that an important person from your nation has come to listen and learn from us” (Sabin 1995, 22). CBC news described the final report as “Canada’s Native Charter of Rights” (CBC News 1977). It was the first highly publicized case in which Northern Canadian Indigenous concerns were given such agency and consideration within a modern federal governmental assessment of resource management.

Since the 1970s, Indigenous groups have been relatively successful in asserting their vision and control over northern development (Sabin 1995, 18) (Shadian 2013). Through impact and benefit assessments of major development projects in the late 1970s, and continuing through land settlements, impact assessments, and devolution, Indigenous peoples have won increasing economic benefits from local resource development, and achieved increasing influence over the process (Sosa and Keenan 2001). Greater scientific research has been assigned to the impacts of resource development on northern and Indigenous communities, lending credibility to Indigenous claims for compensation for past and future projects (Keeling and Sandlos 2009). This period

has also seen the policy incorporation of traditional Indigenous epistemology such as Inuit Quajimajatuqangit (Inuit knowledge) in resource management. Inuit Quajimajatuqangit challenges underlying western assumptions such as human-environment duality, redistributing decision-making ideologies to the advantage of Indigenous communities (Tester and Irniq 2008). It is impossible to determine whether the subsequent successes of Indigenous land and title rights was triggered by their inclusion in the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline inquiry, or if the Inquiry simply found itself at the tip of a breaking wave. Either way, Keeling and Sandlos (2009) go as far as citing the Berger Inquiry as the beginning of the modern struggle for Indigenous political recognition and control in the North.

Today, First Nations groups wield unprecedented legal and political power in resource management decisions, and no government would dare to exclude them from a list of key stakeholders. Enbridge's proposed Northern Gateway Pipeline, for example, has already been declared "dead" by British Columbian First Nations leaders, since they do not feel they were adequately consulted about its development and have the legal power to indefinitely postpone its construction over unceded territory (Penner and O'Neil 2013). However tempting, a normative discussion about whether Aboriginal communities have acquired enough, or more than enough, control over resource management goes far beyond the purview of this paper.

Despite these positive developments, reviewing the impact of Berger's Inquiry unearths a sad irony: Berger's example has been more often cited than followed (Bocking 2007, 2). Thomas Berger's inquiry stands as an international

standard of how to conduct an impact assessment right (he was once welcomed off a plane in Australia by a group of Indigenous people waving copies of the report). However, his cumulative impact assessment model is still not used in Canada. The vast majority of development projects are still considered in isolation, not in the context of other developments in the same region or the associated future projects that may be triggered.

Similarly, Berger's model of meaningful public involvement through community consultation has had limited application. Although impact assessments panels today typically do travel to small communities to hear testimony, the informal community hearing model has not been widely accepted, making these hearings inaccessible to many members of the public (Bocking 2007). Perhaps worst of all, public consultations today are often seen more as obstacles to overcome or fears to diffuse, rather than opportunities for meaningful dialogue and impact mitigation.

While Berger's recommendations have helped achieve significant victories for Indigenous land management and benefit agreements, the methodology by which he reached the conclusions, which had the possibility to revolutionize the impact assessment process, have not. Today the Berger Report serves as an inspiration and a landmark, but not a well-used guideline.

## Conclusions

In this essay I have summarized the background, findings, methodology, and implications that combined to make the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry a landmark case in the history of resource management and, in particular, of Indigenous engagement. I began with a historical review of the social conditions

of the Mackenzie Valley at the beginning of the Inquiry, describing it as a society in flux, as Indigenous communities transitioned towards permanent community lifestyles. To this, I added Arctic Oil's proposal to build a pipeline through the Mackenzie Valley and some of the challenges facing that proposal.

The Inquiry's four ultimate recommendations focussed on the need for a slow and careful transition from traditional to modern economies. For these reasons, Berger recommended a ten-year moratorium on pipeline construction, during which a careful economic modernization process might be implemented in Northern communities, and Aboriginal land claims might be settled. I remarked on how most of the Inquiry's outcomes focussed on community, rather than ecological, protection. The only environmentally-themed major recommendation was for the creation of three pipeline-free areas, two of them as permanent wildlife reserves.

I have shown the importance of the Inquiry's methodology in its outcomes and enduring impact. The Inquiry's large scope, including infrastructure and economic developments that would be triggered by the pipeline, allowed Berger to make a cumulative impact assessment, placing the project in the proper context of its regional ramifications. Berger's adoption of informal community hearings in Northern communities made his Inquiry more accessible to Northerners. Community hearings supplemented expert evidence from formal hearings, and both forms of information were afforded equal importance. This "reconsideration of conventional wisdom," in Berger's words, erased the divide between expert and local knowledge (Berger 1977).

By linking together many aspects of the pipeline, Berger's inquiry made it increasingly obvious that the whole issue of impact assessment was much greater than the sum of its constituent parts.

Finally, I reviewed the implications of the Berger Inquiry and Report, both for the Mackenzie Valley in halting pipeline development and for influencing the history of impact assessments. The Inquiry endures as an international example of a cumulative impact assessment, in which the full impacts of development were considered, public consultation was solicited and meaningfully incorporated, and Indigenous groups were given special representation. The Report contributed to the rise of Aboriginal control and benefit from resource management, increased the importance of community consultation in impact assessments, and emphasized the North as a homeland, rather than an empty frontier for resource exploitation. However, I argue that the Berger Inquiry is more often cited than copied – its methodology has not been adopted by most Canadian impact assessments.

### **About the Author**

Graham May is an undergraduate at Mount Allison University. He is fascinated with the Canadian story of governance relations between resource-based communities, corporations, and governments. Graham is an ally of Indigenous peoples and works as the Executive Director of the Youth Arctic Coalition.

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# Challenges of Research Methodologies and Indigenous Communities: Policy and Community-Based Responses

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## Part I: Theoretical Foundations

Before addressing contemporary and Canadian-specific issues regarding research and Indigenous communities, it is important to frame the discourse in its theoretical context. One of the most important works on research methodologies in Indigenous communities is *Decolonizing Methodologies* by Linda Tuhiwai Smith. Smith's text is highly critical of Western research paradigms. She suggests that what researchers often regard as 'truth' must be understood within its social, historical, and political context. Smith explores both the relationship among knowledge, research, and imperialism, as well as the 'Indigenous problem' paradigm that has informed much of Indigenous research policy.

### *Knowledge, Research, and Imperialism*

The physical exploitation of the Americas throughout the colonial era is well known, but the lesser-known process of knowledge collection is equally significant as an element of the colonial project. Smith claims that knowledge production, categorization, and a hierarchy among types of knowledge "became as much commodities of colonial exploitation as other natural resources."<sup>1</sup> Smith illuminates early colonizers'

practice of including Indigenous peoples in their project of knowledge collection. She suggests that Indigenous peoples were considered akin to natural phenomena, claiming that they "were classified alongside the flora and fauna."<sup>2</sup>

More than objectification, Smith contends that the colonial project also absorbed and labeled Indigenous systems of knowledge and technologies as new discoveries. Smith suggests that these practices were legitimized through the belief that the colonizers were 'rescuing' artifacts and ideas from Indigenous peoples, who the colonizers perceived as unable to sufficiently safeguard such findings. Central to this justification is the assumed "positional superiority of western knowledge,"<sup>3</sup> an assumption that, Smith suggests, has permeated research practices.

### *The 'Indigenous Problem'*

Extending from the positional superiority of Western knowledge is a colonial discourse that frames Indigenous peoples as the 'Indigenous problem.' Smith traces the evolution of the 'Indigenous problem' framework, suggesting that it was originally perceived as a military and policing issue. However, once reservation systems were established it became more policy-focused, specifically in the realm of health and education. By the 1960s,

1 Smith, Linda Tuhiwai, "Decolonizing Methodologies," (University of Otago Press., Dunedin, New Zealand: 1999), 59.

2 Ibid.

3 Smith, "Decolonizing Methodologies," 59.

the 'Indigenous problem' became part of the discourse of a cultural deficit to help explain persistent marginalization. This has major implications for the nature of research methodology. Smith claims, "Many researchers, even those with the best intentions, frame their research in ways that assume that the locus of a particular research problem lies with the Indigenous individual or community rather than with other social or structural issues."<sup>4</sup>

From early days of colonization, Indigenous communities were categorized as the subjects of research, imposing a binary that precludes Indigenous peoples as researchers in their own right. The framework of the 'Indigenous problem' is the continuation of earlier colonial mentalities and has serious implications for contemporary research in Indigenous communities. Smith claims, "for indigenous communities the issue is not just that they are blamed for their own failures, but that it is also communicated to them, explicitly or implicitly, that they themselves have no solutions to their problems."<sup>5</sup>

## **Part II: Contemporary Challenges: 'Colonizing Methodologies' in Practice**

The tangible aspects of Smith's theoretical framework are apparent in the grievances Indigenous communities, academics, and researchers have expressed in regards to the methodology of research in Indigenous communities. Vine Deloria Jr.'s "Research, Redskins, and Reality" identifies three key contemporary ethical and practical problems with research completed in Indigenous communities. First, he claims there is a lack of distinction between genuine research and

popular writing, pointing to such authors as Ruth Beebe Hill and Peter Matthiessen. Deloria suggests that Hill's text *Hanto Yo*, despite its popularity, lacks any serious research foundation and "reduced the Sioux religion to a bizarre mysticism that few people of any existing culture would recognize."<sup>6</sup> Moreover, Deloria suggests that Matthiessen undertook research for his books only to fulfill his own suspicions and "seemed completely incapable of knowing when he was being given facts and when he was hearing gossip."<sup>7</sup> Deloria underscores the detrimental impact such books may have, especially since they may be perceived as genuine sources of information to the undiscerning reader, serving to propagate old stereotypes and reinforce fundamentally unsound research principles.

Second, Deloria identifies the propensity for new research projects to overlap with previous projects. He suggests that a careful analysis of what has previously been studied, and a method of identifying the current research needs, must be undertaken. Deloria claims that "the need for any profound or prolonged study of an indigenous community by people from the outside seems artificial and fruitless,"<sup>8</sup> suggesting that traditional 'anthropological' studies are no longer relevant and should be replaced by research on contemporary conditions of Indigenous peoples.

Finally, Deloria identifies the necessity of restructuring the system of funding for research. Increasingly, it is not the scholars who determine the scope and nature

6 Vine Deloria, "Research, Redskins, and Reality," *American Indian Quarterly*, (15:4 1991, 457-468), 458.

7 Ibid.

8 Vine Deloria, "Research, Redskins, and Reality," 461.

4 Smith, "Decolonizing Methodologies," 92.

5 Smith, "Decolonizing Methodologies," 92.

of the project, but rather the funding agencies to which they are responsible. Deloria claims, “until both scholars and Indians have clearly in mind the role and the influence of the funding source, determining a code of ethics for scholarly research is a little extraneous.”<sup>9</sup> In this framework of research funding, Deloria identifies an important distinction in the relationship between Indigenous and funding agencies: the constituents, or those responsible for creating the research project, and clients, or those who are “recipients of largesse depending upon their eligibility for the program.”<sup>10</sup> The relationship of constituent-client mirrors the ‘Indigenous problem’ framework described by Tuhiwai Smith, where Indigenous peoples are portrayed as the source of the problem, and situates the solution in the hands of federal funding agencies rather than in the strengths and resources within the community. Deloria calls for a “new sense of ethical behaviour by funding sources”<sup>11</sup> to rectify these challenges and to create a truly collaborative research environment that benefits researchers and Indigenous communities.

### Part III: Policy Responses

Given both the theoretical and practical concerns regarding research and Indigenous communities, it is clear that a re-evaluation of its principles is long overdue. There are two broad categories of responses to the issues raised above: the top-down approach of policy development and the bottom-up approach of community-based solutions.

The policy-level responses in Canada have been varied and numerous, but three particular policy responses warrant a brief analysis in order to address government, Indigenous, and funding-agency based perspectives: the 1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, the 2004 National Aboriginal Health Organization’s report “Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession,” and the 2010 Tri-Council Policy Statement For Research Involving Humans.

#### *1996: Royal Commission on Aboriginal peoples*

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) was launched in 1991 to examine the relationship among Indigenous peoples of Canada, the Canadian government, and Canadian citizens more broadly. The mandate of the commission was to “propose specific solutions, rooted in domestic and international experience, to the problems which have plagued those relationships, and which confront Aboriginal peoples today.”<sup>12</sup> The commission involved extensive research and consultation, and engaged over 80 Indigenous researchers, academics, community leaders, and elders to develop a framework for RCAP research initiatives. Marlene Costellano, the chairperson of an initial meeting for RCAP, shared an anecdote of her experience at the consultations. She claimed that the overwhelming sentiment expressed by Indigenous participants was that “we’ve been researched to death.” The response of an elder also present at

9 Vine Deloria, “Research, Redskins, and Reality,” 464.

10 Vine Deloria, “Research, Redskins, and Reality,” 465.

11 Vine Deloria, “Research, Redskins, and Reality,” 467.

12 “Looking Forward, Looking Back,” in Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. Last updated 02-08-2006, Retrieved from [http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/webarchives/20071211051527/http://www.aincinac.gc.ca/ch/rcap/sg/sg2\\_e.html](http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/webarchives/20071211051527/http://www.aincinac.gc.ca/ch/rcap/sg/sg2_e.html)

the consultation, according to Costellano, was “if we’ve been researched to death, maybe it’s time we started researching ourselves back to life.”<sup>13</sup> According to Costellano, this anecdote shed light on the changing attitudes regarding research and Indigenous peoples in Canada. Castellano and Reading, in their text “Policy Writing as Dialogue,” suggest that research endeavours undertaken for RCAP “gave substance to the expectation that knowledge creation could be owned once again by Aboriginal people.”<sup>14</sup>

#### *2004 National Aboriginal Health Organization*

Efforts to clarify the boundaries of appropriate research have been undertaken outside of Canadian government initiatives. Another important policy-based response comes from The National Aboriginal Health Organization (NAHO). The 2004 NAHO publication “Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession,” introduced the report as “a political response to tenacious colonial approaches to research and information management.”<sup>15</sup> NAHO suggests that while awareness of these concerns is not new, the report clarifies themes that have been addressed previously. The report lists over thirty grievances Indigenous communities have expressed, including financial and recognition-based concerns,

and a lack of respect for community contexts and personal liberty. Other grievances, echoing concerns raised in the RCAP consultation, include the sheer volume of research. The NAHO claims that “First Nations have been subject to too much research,” and that “researchers have treated First Nations as merely a source of data.”<sup>16</sup>

NAHO notes that the principles of ethical research proposed in the report are encompassed within the concept of First Nations self-determination. Beyond the broad requirement of self-determination, the report outlines some key principles that First Nations communities have identified as appropriate research policy. These principles are that research should provide benefit to the communities involved, develop capacity within the communities, increase First Nations control over information, support First Nations sovereignty and self-determination, and should respect cultural preservation and development.

#### *2010 Tri-Council Statement*

An example of a policy response from the funding-agency perspective comes from Canada’s three federal research agencies<sup>17</sup> that published “The Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans,” the first major revision of the policy since 1998. The agencies that comprise the Tri-Council are all publicly funded, and demand adherence to the principles outlined in the statement in order to provide grant money. One of the

13 Marlene Brant Costellano, “Ethics of Aboriginal Research,” *Journal of Aboriginal Health*, (2004), 98.

14 Marlene Brant Castellano, and Jeff Reading, “Policy Writing as Dialogue: Drafting an Aboriginal Chapter for Canada’s Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans,” *The International Indigenous Policy Journal*, (2:1, 2010), 4.

15 “Ownership, Control, Access and Possession or Self-Determination Applied to Research,” *National Aboriginal Health Organization*, (2005), 1.

16 “Ownership, Control, Access and Possession,” 3-5.

17 Canadian institutes of health research (CIHR), Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC), and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC).

most important revisions made by the Tri-Council Statement was the inclusion of a new chapter dedicated specifically to concerns regarding research in Indigenous communities. Importantly, in the preamble to the chapter nine “Research Involving the First Nations, Inuit, and Métis People of Canada,” the Tri-Council acknowledges that “research involving Aboriginal peoples in Canada has been defined and carried out primarily by non-Aboriginal researchers. The approaches used have not generally reflected Aboriginal world views, and the research has not necessarily benefited Aboriginal peoples or communities.”<sup>18</sup>

In examining policy responses from the RCAP, NAHO, and the Tri-Council, it is clear that the government, Indigenous communities, and funding agencies endeavoured to address the major challenges to research in Indigenous communities, acknowledging both historical wrongs and contemporary challenges. While these policy responses are important to establishing broad ethical principles, questions remain about how these principles may be implemented, and whether a top-down policy response is sufficient.

#### Part IV: Community-Based Solutions

In addition to ‘top-down’ policy solutions, there have also been community-based efforts to establish appropriate boundaries for research in Indigenous communities. One salient example of a community-based response is the Kahnawake Schools Diabetes Prevention Project (KSDPP). The project was initiated in 1994 in response to the increasing prevalence of Type II

diabetes in the community and was highly successful in reducing the rate of incidence of diabetes in the community. The community also established ethical research guidelines throughout the project. The project was successful in terms of both its impact on lifestyle choices within the community and its example of community-based collaborative research. Given the project’s success, a subsequent study was undertaken to examine the nature of collaboration between researchers, funding agencies, and the community throughout the project. Cargo, Delormier, *et al* in “Evolution of Perceived Ownership within a University-Aboriginal Community Partnership,” used a longitudinal empirical analysis to clarify the “decision-making dynamics between academic and Aboriginal community partners.”<sup>19</sup> The findings of the study suggested that across all three stages of the KSDPP, measured at the years 1996, 1999, and 2004, the community felt that one or more of the community partners maintained ownership of the project. Moreover, the study finds that “ownership was not developmentally fostered by the academic partner [...] nor was ownership shared between community and university partners, as outlined in exemplary applications of community-based participatory research with marginalized populations. Academics were not perceived as primary owner at any time point.”<sup>20</sup>

These findings provide tangible evidence of an alternative to the

18 “Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans,” (2010), 105.

19 Cargo, Delormier *et al*, “Community Capacity as an “Inside Job”: Evolution of Perceived Ownership Within a University-Aboriginal Community Partnership,” *American Journal of Health Promotion*, (26:2, 2011), 97.

20 Cargo, Delormier *et al*, “Community Capacity as an “Inside Job,”” 99.

'Indigenous problem' framework described by Tuhiwai Smith. Rather than an external researcher identifying problems within the community, the KSDPP project was initiated within the community and remained a community-driven project. As such, the study suggests "rethinking the role of an external change agent in relation to consciousness raising and capacity building in Aboriginal communities."<sup>21</sup>

Furthermore, the project reflects the principles established in the policy solutions, providing practical guidelines for implementation and a framework for other communities to implement similar strategies. It must be acknowledged that where top-down policy based responses face challenges of practicality and effective implementation, bottom-up community based responses face the opposite challenge of applicability to other communities. While it is clear that the program was effective in Kahnawake to both create appropriate research guidelines and effectively implement them, it is unclear how well these methods would transfer to other communities.

## Conclusions

It is evident that historical, social, and political contexts are fundamental to understanding research methodologies, especially in the context of Indigenous communities. Tuhiwai Smith develops a theoretical foundation in an Indigenous context, discussing both the interaction among knowledge, research and imperialism, as well as examining the 'Indigenous problem' framework that has dominated Western research norms. Beyond theoretical considerations, Vine Deloria identifies some of the contemporary ethical concerns of research

in Indigenous communities. Within a Canadian context, both policy-based and community-based responses have emerged to address these issues. While policy-based solutions may be developed collaboratively, they can lack practical implications and may not be suitable for all Indigenous communities. In contrast, community-based approaches, such as the example of the Kahnawake Schools Diabetes Prevention Project, have the benefit of locally-developed solutions that meet the needs of the given communities, but may be difficult to apply to other communities. Despite the challenges of both approaches, they are a positive step toward more candid discussions of the subjective nature of research methodologies and illustrate a necessity for more research in both Canadian and international contexts.

## About the Author

Alex Nevitte is a McGill student in Joint Honours Political Science & Canadian Studies. She is a non-Indigenous ally.

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21 Ibid.

- from: [http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/webarchives/20071211051527/http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ch/rcap/sg/sg2\\_e.html](http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/webarchives/20071211051527/http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ch/rcap/sg/sg2_e.html)
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The image is a painting of a seascape. In the foreground, several dark, silhouetted figures stand on a rocky, uneven cliff edge. The middle ground is dominated by a vast, turbulent sea with swirling, textured waves in shades of blue and green. The background shows a distant, hazy horizon under a sky filled with soft, billowing clouds in pale yellow, pink, and blue tones. The overall style is impressionistic, with visible brushstrokes and a focus on light and color over fine detail.

Artwork



Jobena Petonoquot

## My Grandfather trapped the Rabbit (2012)

Serigraph print on Rag Paper

### Artist's Statement

As a Native artist I am interested in nature and how our actions determine our survival as First Nations peoples. Although I am utilizing a contemporary medium in much of my work, I still consider myself a traditional artist in the sense that I am communicating and documenting happenings that are relevant to me. Our philosophy in art making has always been for that purpose, to tell a story of who we are and who we have become.

For example I can recall my mother telling me a story of my grandfather growing up in the Victorian era and, although our ancestors were inescapable victims of colonization, he had even as a boy maintained cultural tradition by hunting and trapping for most of his life.

This story of my mother's childhood caused me

to think about my place here on the earth, and how my grandfather's actions determined our family's existence. This art piece My Grandfather trapped the rabbit is a tribute to my grandfather because I admire his resilience and refusal to let go of our cultural values.

### About the Artist: Jobena Petonoquot

Jobena Petonoquot was born in Kitigan Zibi, which is an Algonquin reservation in Maniwaki, Quebec. She graduated from Concordia University and has studied Art History with a minor in Photography. She currently works part-time as an art instructor in Kawawachikamach, Quebec where she teaches and hosts a sewing and beading circle called the Native Arts and Craft Initiative for maintenance and education of First Nations culture.





Chris Gismondi

## Pangniqtuuq en plein air (2013)

Watercolour on paper

### Artist's Statement

This work, as an "en plein air" landscape means it was completed entirely outside in the environment in which it depicts. It was done while on an environmental and cultural expedition in the summer of 2013 that travelled to Greenland and Nunavut. Landscape was chosen as a means to depict the natural environment in its current relatively pristine state. This is a contentious issue in evoking connotations of an "ecological" trope and around the future of the arctic region with particular interest to development and resource extraction. It was emphasized on expedition that development takes place if Inuit, Greenlandic and local governments are in favour, not external forces. The vantage point chosen overlooks the small hamlet of Pang, here

referred to by its Inuktitut, as it is distorted to smears of colour and the mountains and the waters of the Pangnirtung fjord are depicted as the notable subject matter.

### About the Artist: Chris Gismondi (CJG)

CJG's, (Chris Gismondi) art deals largely with themes of self-identity, repetition and emotional healing. His multi-media conceptual works have taken the form of performance, soft sculpture, acrylic painting, mixed media and print. As a second year Art History and History student at McGill University, he is also a Students on Ice alumnus participating on Arctic expedition to Greenland and Nunavut this past summer. He has an interest in critical new art history incorporating queer theory, post-colonialism, feminisms and identity politics into scholarship.



Chris Gismondi

## Arctic Conquistador (2014)

Multimedia

### Artist's Statement

These works are an attempt to reconcile how the white, queer male artist can represent the experience of Arctic expedition in a respectful way after engaging in critical social post-colonial scholarship while simultaneously carrying those markers of identification. While the Arctic environmental expedition was an incredible experience, the work is about reconciling desires to represent these inherently colonial sites, which in the modern day are still loaded with expectations and connotations of what they should be. These proto-type works attempt to use contemporary media as a guise to prevent a colonial or problematic historical representation of these sites. The works are digital photographs, digitally altered, printed, painted and collaged to try to prevent a colonial representation. Silhouettes were inspired by Kara Walker's racially charged historic images. Black silhouettes are an attempt to assert sites of modernity-student explorers or imposed technologies- as in excess of these sites are they are additive to the piece. The white silhouettes are meant to evoke sites of traditional imagery and are subtractive, being cut into the work. Both

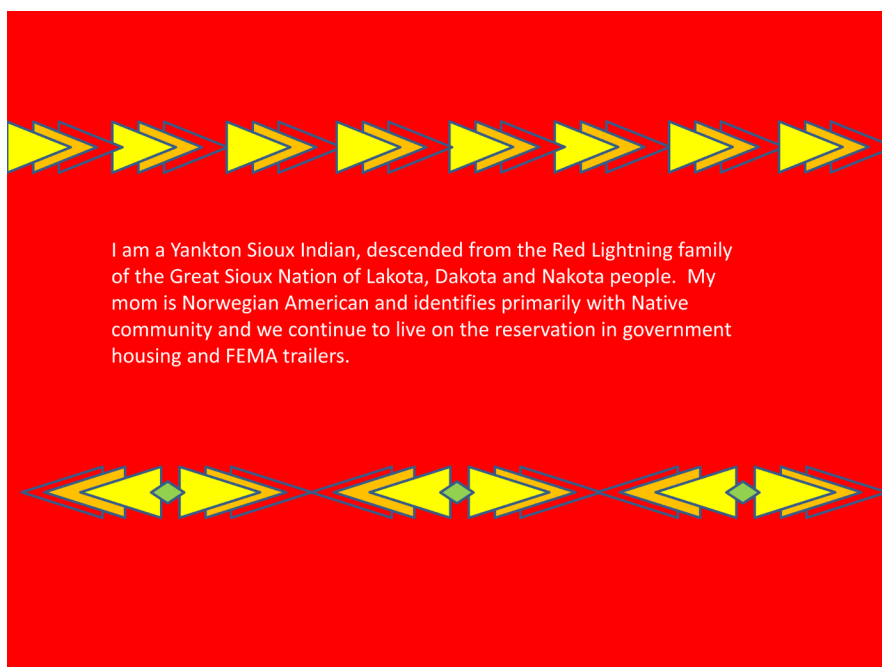
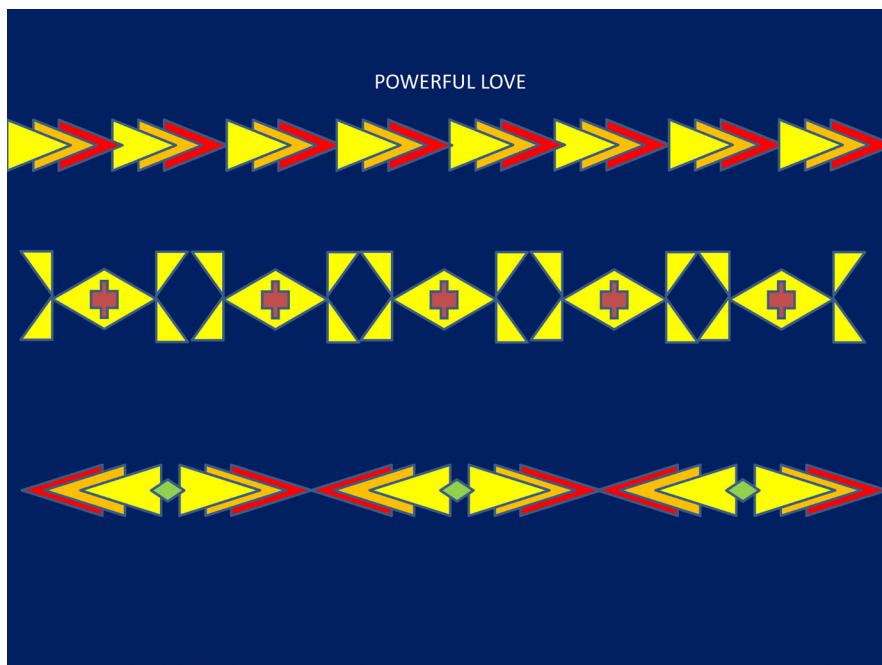
elements are meant to call into question what the expectations of arctic life "should be". The use of polka dots is thematically important to allude to a passing of time and to reiterate that these modern sites cannot be viewed without a consideration of their historic past. Overall I was hoping the over-processed images would speak to my anxiety as attempting to be both the representational artist and the critical social justice activist.



The cover image of this volume of KANATA is original artwork by CJG.

Ben Geboe

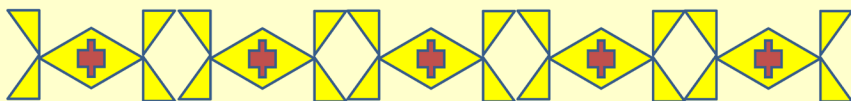
## Blanket (2014)



Bead this design and win a million moose dollars



I am also Gay and have been very active in people of color LGBT community organizing. I inherited a smattering of treaty land in South Dakota and Nebraska as a result of Native intermarriage, which has caused this land to be dispersed through the bureau of Indian Affairs since our first treaties. Now I am approached to make deals for fracking and off shore banking by far off groups of people who gravitate to our extra national diplomatic legal status. We often encounter the dubious.

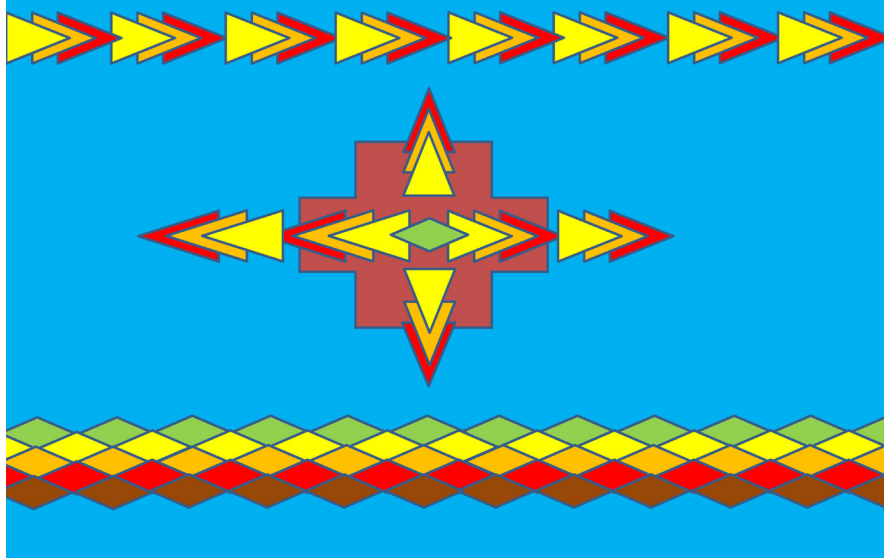


My dad's father, a raging alcoholic, was a Miami Indian and part Arapahoe. The Miami traded in Montreal and signed the La Grand Paix Treaty and one of their daughters married a Gabriel Gibeau grandson, a French colonist from LaPrairie, Quebec in 1799. Since then the Gibeau/Geboe name in the USA is only used by Native Americans and relations. In Canada the Gibeau are all white and French.

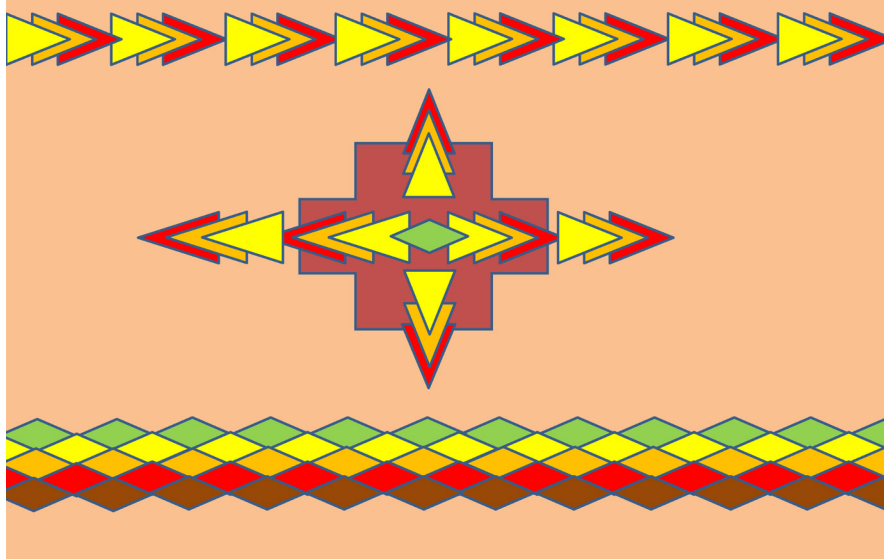




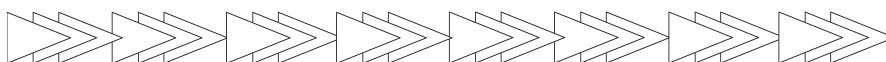
In spite of this blending of people I remain a separate citizen of the United States and Canada, crossing the border with a treaty card and using mainstream opportunity to enrich myself and my loved ones.



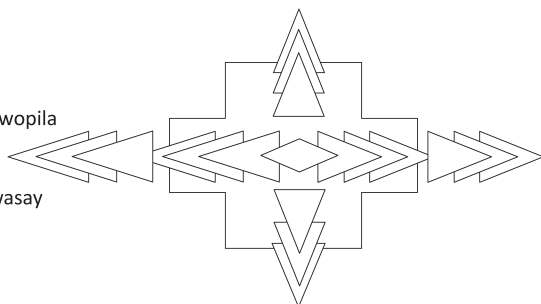
The purpose of this recounting is to show that we all have varied and often wild historical and familial experiences, yet we are united in our experience and connected to all of humanity in spite of treaty status and legal frameworks.



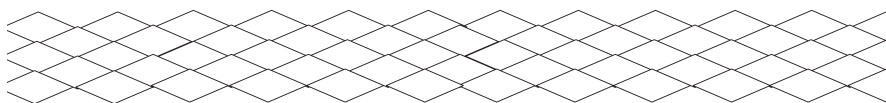




Tokasila  
Unsilapo wopila  
Tokasila  
Unmakia  
Medakuwasay

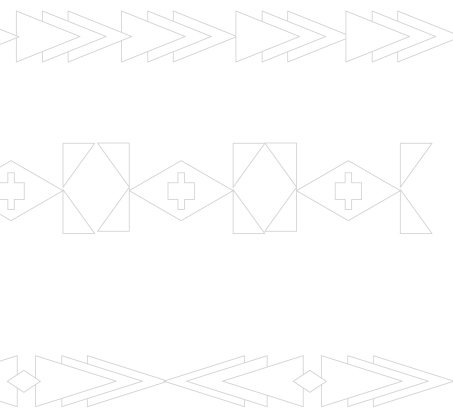


Grandfather  
Have compassion  
Grandfather  
Help us  
To all things related  
we are



### About the Artist

Ben Geboe was born and raised on the Rosebud Sioux Reservation in South Dakota. He's an enrolled member of the Yankton Sioux Tribe and very active in the Native community in Montreal, NYC and on his Reservation. He has a MSW from Columbia University ('96). He's the chairman of the Board of Directors of the American Indian Community House, Inc. in NYC and an active member of the First People's House at McGill. He's a founding member of the North East 2 Spirit Society in NYC, which seeks to advance visibility of Native/Aboriginal LGBT identity in a traditional and culturally relevant manner through training and community organizing. He also pow wow dances and sings on a traditional drum. He is thrilled to join the PhD Social Work program at McGill and loves Montreal (The French Apple?). He's currently working with the School of Social Work on defining Native/Aboriginal healthcare leadership.





Xavier Giroux-Bougard

## Tent Frame at Dry Lake in Old Crow Flats

Photography

### Artist Statement

The Vuntut Gwitchin traditionally spent their entire spring season in the Old Crow Flats trapping furbearers for food and pelts. At the breakup of the Old Crow River, they would canoe their families, supplies and dog teams back to the community of Old Crow to fish over the summer as well as trade their pelts. As younger generations increasingly shift their food supply towards caribou because it is more compatible with the time requirements of modern wage jobs, only the elders of the community occasionally spend their spring "out on the land" to uphold the traditions of trapping and its uncertain future.

### About the Photographer:

Xavier Giroux-Bougard is a conservation biologist currently finishing his M.Sc. at McGill University in Natural Resource Sciences as part of wider project on environmental change, wildlife and traditional food security in the North. Working with local trappers and hunters in the Old Crow Flats (Yukon), he has been conducting population surveys and genetic analysis on muskrat, a species of traditional importance to the Vuntut Gwitchin.



The Second Coming (Oil sharpie, pen on watercolor paper)

Cedar-Eve Peters

## The Second Coming

Oil sharpie, pen on watercolor paper

### Artist's Statement

Recently my drawings have been inspired by what some would call the grotesque and bizarre. I feel drawing and painting is an opportunity to create the weird worlds that inhabit my imagination, and the imagination should know no limits. My drawings are intuitive; they help clear my head of the daily grind, and ultimately keep me sane. Although many of my images contain distorted figures and creatures in shocking scenarios they are my offering to the spirit world. The creatures I create are highly expressive; they are often in states of suffering or

bliss, they help bring comfort and are a way for me to remember to be thankful for everything I have been given in this life thus far. They help me communicate to my ancestors the lives I have been living and the states of well-being or struggles along the journey. They are bright in color as color helps heal the soul. Sexuality is apparent in my most recent works. Creatures intertwine with one another in a symbiotic relationship involving souls and spiritual energy. This relationship is natural and should be seen in a positive light as opposed to being seen as shameful or vulgar. There is a sense of wholeness as though everything is in its right place.



Glory Guts (Oil sharpie, pen on watercolor paper)

## Glory Guts

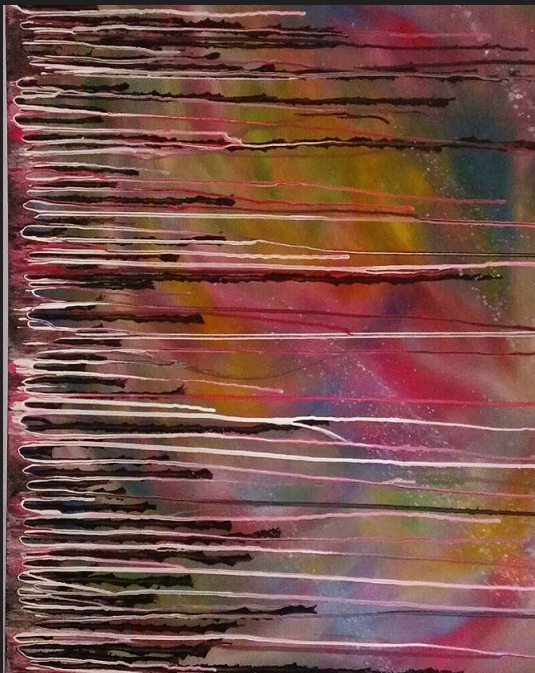
Oil sharpie, pen on watercolor paper

### About the Artist

My name is Cedar-Eve Peters. I received my Bachelor of Fines Arts degree at Concordia University in 2012. This coming year, I plan to apply for artist residencies specific to Aboriginal artists in both North and South America. I hope to gain inspiration and knowledge from travelling and surrounding myself with like-minded people. The opportunity to create and share my art with the world is the only thing in my line of vision and I hope that my art can relate not only to Indigenous people but to non-Indigenous as well. The language of art allows for people to

communicate with one another through a non-verbal means and is integral to keeping First Nations culture alive. My parents constantly tell me 'Creativity is our tradition,' and I couldn't be more thankful.





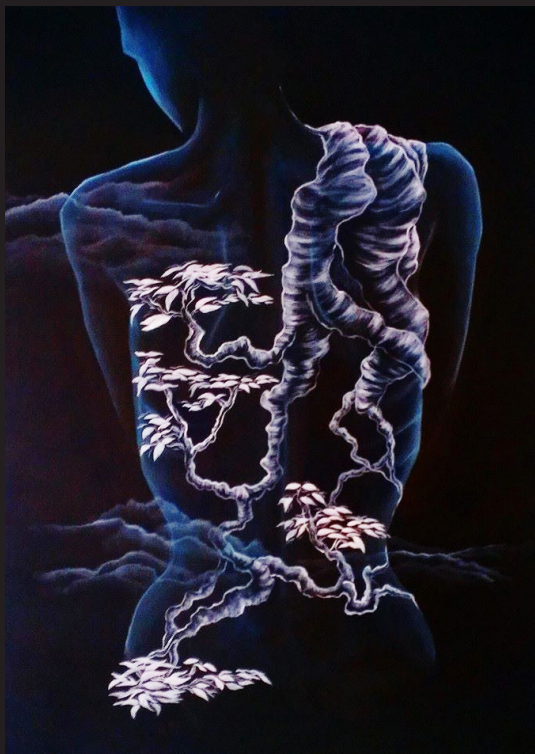
Drops (Acrylic)



Musik (Acrylic)



Mistik Tree  
(Acrylic)



Valorous Soul  
(Acrylic)



Galaxy (Acrylic)

## Ashten Sawitsky

### Various Artwork

#### Acrylic

#### Artist's Statement

I am a 4<sup>th</sup> year undergraduate at McGill University from Bjorkdale, Saskatchewan, not far from my home reserve, Witchehan Lake. I am studying Earth and Planetary sciences with a minor in Geography. After graduation I plan on pursuing a career in geology and attending graduate studies in a related field. On the side, I also train in Brazilian Jiu Jitsu and complete artistic projects.

My artwork is of spontaneity and creativity. Often times I find myself in a place where the only thing that can be accomplished is a piece of artwork, whether it be a sketch, painting or making something out of nothing. These situations usually occur when I have reached an information overload with school or some other emotional situation. The only way to cope is to close out the world and stare at a canvas, envision a picture, mold it in my mind and try to replicate my imagination with a paintbrush. This is much harder to do than said, as most know. I do not know what will become of my paintings when I first start them. As the night passes by, emotions are written in elaborate

colours and pictures are portrayed in conceptually layered graphics, sometimes not forming anything but raw meaning.

Paintings such as Valorous Soul and Mistik Hand (Mistik=Tree in Cree) have significant meaning portrayed in every aspect of the painting, including the layout, positioning and symbolism. Other paintings such as Galaxy, Musik, and Drops are portrayals of emotions and will induce different sensations depending on the individual's state of mind.

*"To those who see, will see only me, if they look closely"* – A. Sawitsky



# Rights and Reciprocity: Alternatives to Development and the Case of *Buen Vivir*

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*Abstract:* Since the 1990s, Ecuador has allowed the extraction of oil from its natural bioreserve, Yasuní National Park. Yasuní has contributed considerably to its national GDP, and comprises the majority of its exports. International oil companies have had almost free rein in extracting Ecuador's oil, largely due to the Ecuadorian government's inability to stabilize neither the country, nor its policies. With the election of current president Rafael Correa, a new era has arisen in Ecuador—not only with regard to its attitude on oil, but also in terms of relations with marginalized groups such as Indigenous peoples. Correa's progressive policies have instilled not only a promising potential for increased representation and rights for Indigenous groups and the promotion of Indigenous cosmologies on a national scale, but also a possibility of a decreasing dependence on oil revenues through the Yasuní-ITT initiative—a project that attempted to conserve an oil-rich bioreserve from extractive industries. In this paper, I will examine the failure of Yasuní-ITT project, as well as the continued marginalization of Indigenous peoples, whose interests continue to be neglected in favour of large development schemes and oil companies. I thus call for a change in development discourse as a whole, and urge for the implementation of development alternatives sensitive to Indigenous needs, which can aid in the achievement of that goal. This will be done through an examination of the concept of *buen vivir*, or, “the good life,” which attempts to reorganize our way of viewing growth and life as a whole, and promotes the ideas of reciprocity and the inseparability of humans and nature.

## Introduction

Ecuador has been an avid participant in the global phases of development. From market capitalism to the neoliberal phase of capitalist development to post-neoliberalism, Ecuador has attempted to implement the most recent and popular development models of the time. However, with the failure of neoliberalism and the election of Rafael Correa and his Alianza Pais, a new development agenda has arisen: that of a postneoliberal, progressive leader, seeking to increase the role of the state as a key actor in society.<sup>1</sup> During Ecuador's 2008 constitutional

reform process, Correa enshrined a variety of articles stipulating progressive reform initiatives. The focus of this paper will center on what is arguably Correa's most progressive and unique contribution: the Rights of Nature Articles, which stipulate that just like Ecuador's citizens are rights bearers, so is Nature.

As a result, Nature is transformed into a legal actor with the capacity to press charges against other legal entities. Following suit, Correa implemented the Yasuní-ITT initiative in order to create an “alliance between environmental and indigenous organizations and the Ecuadorian state” for the protection of valuable Indigenous land from oil extraction.<sup>2</sup> This proposal was to

1 Arsel, M and Angel, NA. “‘Stating’ Ecuador's Role in Ecuadorian Development: Civil Society and the Yasuní-ITT Initiative”. *Journal of Developing Societies*. 2012:28(2); 203-27.

2 Arsel & Angel, 2006.

safeguard an extremely biodiverse nature reserve in the Amazon, leaving the oil found there under the ground only if the international community can compensate Ecuador for the lost revenue. While encouraging dialogue and empowering all sectors of society, the policy also promotes Indigenous cosmologies nationally, and integrates a universal commitment to food sovereignty and poverty reduction.<sup>3</sup> In this paper, I will first offer a historical overview of Ecuador's transition to its current, postneoliberal state. I will then examine the case of Yasuní-ITT and its social, economic, and geographical impacts on affected Indigenous communities. I will conclude with offering an alternative to current development regimes through the idea of *buen vivir* – the Indigenous Ecuadorian idea of “the good life.”

### **From Colonialism to Postneoliberalism: A Brief History Of Development In Ecuador**

With the Incan empire overthrown in the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century by the Spanish conquistadors, Ecuador entered a period of Spanish colonial rule for 300 years. Following its independence from Spain in 1822, the history of Ecuador has been riddled by a streak of government changeover, constitutional reform, and economic change.<sup>4</sup> With twenty constitutions under its belt, Ecuador has not been the most stable of countries, suffering economic crises, ineffectual leadership, and political and social unrest. In attempts to stabilize

the country, Ecuador has undergone a variety of economic reforms, including structural adjustment programs, import substitution, and several other neoliberal policies. While some proved to be effective in the short term, benefiting certain sectors of society, the overall outcome placed a heavy burden on the poor and on the environment.<sup>5</sup>

The discovery of oil in Ecuador in 1967 by the oil giant Texaco has transformed the political, economic, and social development of Ecuador, providing a foolproof means to directly engage with the international community.<sup>6</sup> Revenues from oil inspired an upsurge in nationalist sentiments, as well as a national development plan that was spearheaded by former president Guillermo Rodríguez Lara's revolutionary zeal. Lara's declaration that oil belonged to the state—and was thus beneficial to all Ecuadorians—profoundly multiplied nationalist attitudes, which were further fueled by petroleum policymakers.<sup>7</sup> This nationalist view also promoted the integration of Indigenous groups into the dominant national culture, a move that was reminiscent of colonial policies and inspired resistance among the Indigenous peoples.<sup>8</sup> With Lara's removal in 1976, Ecuador began a transition from protective policies – i.e. a large state sector, high tariffs, and subsidized consumer prices – to a more neoliberal economy, with reduced state spending, privatization, foreign investment, and market-determined prices, as part of the regional

3 Radcliffe, SA. “Development for a postneoliberal era? Sumak kawsay, living well and the limits to decolonisation in Ecuador”. Geoforum. 2012;43(2): 240-9. p. 245.

4 Gerlach A. “The Land and the People”. Indians, Oil, and Politics: A recent history of Ecuador. Scholarly Resources, Inc.; Wilmington, Delaware. 2003. 1.

5 Ibid., 204.

6 Kimerling, J. “Indigenous peoples and the oil frontier in Amazonia: the case of Ecuador, ChevronTexaco, and Aguinda v. Texaco”. International Law and Politics. 2006;38(413): 413-664.

7 Ibid., 415.

8 Ibid., 426.

"Left Turn" backlash to neoliberalism.<sup>9</sup> The country continued to be an oil producer, and, at two fifths of government revenue and representing 58% of its exports, oil has become a central aspect of the Ecuadorian economy.<sup>10</sup> However, adverse effects on the environment and on marginalized Indigenous populations have led to the creation of groups such as the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE) in 1986, which has banded together multiple Indigenous communities in order to have a political voice on a national level.<sup>11</sup> Even so, fighting nationalist and neoliberal policies was a difficult task for this group, and the continuation of oil extraction was no help. With the failure of neoliberal policies, however, there arose a potential for change in Indigenous rights and representation, allowing them to stand up to a government that promised empowerment: the government of Rafael Correa.

The 2006 election of Rafael Correa—the "Obama of Latin America"—brought a glimmer of hope to the people of Ecuador.<sup>12</sup> Here was a man with a vision: a man who would enact change, empower marginalized people, fight for Ecuador on an international scale, and be a fair and modern leader, willing to make drastic changes for the betterment of Ecuador as a

whole. Frequently presented in the media as the champion of a new Ecuador, Correa has won three elections in a row, and has indeed brought about much change to the country including, most famously, the new constitution with its unique Rights of Nature Articles. In tandem with this idea, Correa has centralized the planning ministry SENPLADES into his political agenda in order to bring development into line with the Indigenous concept of *buen vivir*: the "good life."<sup>13</sup>

### Yasuni-Itt and Indigenous Communities

Covering only about 1.7% of the Earth's surface, Ecuador is extraordinarily biodiverse, representing in one square mile of its Amazonian jungle more species of trees and shrubs than in all of North America.<sup>14</sup> The Yasuní National Park, located in the east of the country, is teeming with life—a small representation of the richness and sheer numbers of species in the Amazonian rainforest. Yet, in the Ecuadorian government's eyes, Yasuní holds something even more valuable than all of its species combined: oil. Some 900 million barrels of crude oil are estimated to reside just under the surface of this land in the ITT (Ishpingo-Tambococha-Tiputini) block of Yasuní, representing a large potential income for the country.<sup>15</sup> Driven by oil greed, Ecuador's oil addiction has only grown over the past few decades, leaving the government and international oil companies finding the potential for revenue generation difficult

9 Arsel & Angel, 204; Hey, JAK and Klak, T. "From Protectionism to Neoliberalism: Ecuador Across Four Administrations (1981-1996)". *Studies in Comparative International Development*. 1999;34(3): 66-97.

10 "Ecuador GDP growth rate". *Trading Economics*. 10 November 2013; accessed 10 November 2013. <<http://www.tradingeconomics.com/ecuador/gdp-growth>>.

11 Arsel & Angel, 212.

12 Collins, L. "Another Obama?" *The New Yorker*. 20 July, 2009; accessed 15 November 2013. <[http://www.newyorker.com/talk/2009/07/20/090720ta\\_talk\\_collins](http://www.newyorker.com/talk/2009/07/20/090720ta_talk_collins)>.

13 Arsel & Angel, 205.

14 *Ibid.*, 213.; Gerlach, 1.

15 Newman, L. "Ecuador wants money not to drill". *AlJazeera* video, 3:16. 27 October 2009; accessed 29 November 2013. <<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/americas/2009/10/2009102741040704428.html>>.

to resist.

In June 2007 at the UN General Assembly, Correa offered a proposal that made environmentalists and Indigenous groups alike leap for joy: the Yasuní-ITT proposal. A novel and radical idea, this proposal promised the permanent cessation of oil exploration and extraction in the Yasuní-ITT block. In exchange, the international community would replace lost oil revenues. In return for not drilling, Ecuador would receive \$350 million a year for 13 years and would save the equivalent of what Brazil or France produces annually in CO<sub>2</sub> gasses: some 410 million metric tons.<sup>16</sup> This income would be an estimated half of the expected revenue that would be gained from drilling, but Ecuador was willing to forego the other half, if the international community could step up to the challenge.

The proposal thrilled both the environmentalist and other international communities, not to mention Indigenous communities, as it was “unprecedented in the history of an oil-dependent country.”<sup>17</sup> Yasuní-ITT also suggested the creation of a UN-supervised trust fund for Ecuador, from which the country could use the interest to install alternative energy, environmental, and community development projects.<sup>18</sup> The proposal thus “places the Ecuadorian state at the center of revenue generation by potentially eliminating not only (foreign) oil corporations but extraction itself completely within a small area of significant importance for its oil reserves and biodiversity.”<sup>19</sup> This idea – a potential model for post-extractive sustainable

development in an oil-exporting country – seemed too good to be true, but Ecuador was sure it could work.

Not only was the Yasuní-ITT proposal to be a huge component in the global fight against climate change, but it was also to provide security to the Indigenous peoples living in the national park. These groups, the Tagaeri and Taromenane people, live in voluntary isolation, and are considered “uncontacted peoples” – living a traditional way of life without input from the government or outside world.<sup>20</sup> When drafting the Yasuní-ITT proposal, Correa sectioned off a portion of the park that was declared Indigenous territory—the *Zona Intangible Tagaeri Taromenane* (ZITT)—in order to safeguard Indigenous peoples from the oil industry.<sup>21</sup> Mapped out through GIS and other remote sensing data, the zone defined an area within the reserve that was to be left alone by environmentally destructive mining companies. Deforestation and mining by large companies in the Yasuní region threaten Indigenous livelihoods, mainly through the destruction of a habitat from which the communities collect food and resources. In addition, living in voluntary isolation is a decision that these communities make in order to continue their lifestyles without the imposition of development schemes or other “modern” ideas filtering in from the cities. Yet, voluntary isolation does not necessarily protect these groups, nor does ZITT. As I will discuss below, the zoning appears to have been designed to fail, bringing into question the overall legitimacy of the

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 213.

<sup>21</sup> Pappalardo, SE et al. “Uncontacted Waorani in the Yasuní Biosphere Reserve: Geographical Validation of the Zona Intangible Tagaeri Taromenane (ZITT)”. *PLoS ONE*. 2013;8(6): 1-15.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Arsel & Angel, 214.

<sup>18</sup> Newman, npag.

<sup>19</sup> Arsel & Angel, 212.

ZITT and—by extension—the Yasuní proposal.

As it turns out, in August 2013, the Yasuní-ITT initiative did prove too good to be true: Rafael Correa withdrew the proposal to prevent oil drilling in the Yasuní-ITT block after the international community failed to provide the amount of money Ecuador had demanded. Raking in only \$16 million after four years, the plan has failed and Correa has subsequently allowed for the continuation of oil exploration and extraction.<sup>22</sup> Deceptively environmentally friendly, Correa has in fact recently expanded the mining sector, signing two contracts with Chinese and Canadian corporations, intensifying extraction across Ecuador.<sup>23</sup> In Ecuador, Correa is almost seen in an authoritarian light – his undemocratic tendencies playing an increasing role in multiple aspects of his incumbency. In addition, a study done on the ZITT boundary found that, through GIS analysis, the boundary was “cartographically nonsense” due to the impossibility of mapping out the boundary.<sup>24</sup> The boundary did not take into consideration the nomadic nature of the Tagaeri and Taromenane, and thus begs the question if it was meant to be effective in the first place, as it goes against the rights of the Indigenous peoples that Correa had seemingly been so adamant about promoting in his new constitution.

The future of the Tagaeri and Taromenane is now in question. Yasuní-ITT and the ZITT protected their livelihoods from the threat of the oil industry’s exploration and extraction in the area. However, the withdrawal of Yasuní-ITT and the ambiguity of ZITT have

done away with that supposed protection; the greed for oil gnawing at the belly of the country’s economy has won the tug-of-war between environmental values and economic realities. Thus the way forward is proving to be more of the same: development schemes based on economic growth and a “neo-extractivist” agenda continue to pave the way for unrelenting Westernization, with little regard for their detrimental effects on Indigenous peoples.<sup>25</sup> Socially and politically, the Tagaeri and Taromenane continue to be marginalized; their voice is but a whisper among the clamour of others vying for Correa’s attention. Geographically, their movement is restricted. As nomadic groups, the land through which they travel is extensive. Yet, with the Yasuní proposal being defunded, their livelihoods are back to being threatened. With a history of Indigenous marginalization, and Correa’s early track record of being a leader for his people, it seems as though there should be a compromise – or at least a new way forward – for Ecuador and its

25 Gago, V and Sztulwark, D. “El golpe también fue contra la izquierda, a la que veo confundida y fragmentada”. *Pagina 12*. 10 January 2011; accessed 30 November 2013. <<http://www.pagina12.com.ar/diario/dialogos/21-160169-2011-01-10.html>>.

A neo-extractivist agenda is one that is not only encouraging of a continued exploration and exploitation of natural resources such as crude oil, but also heightens the involvement of the state in oil-mining and collection and distribution of the revenues, in addition to supposedly having greater control over the transnational mining companies. However, this does not mean a huge shift in the structure of society as a whole – it will still be paternalistic and clientelistic, just promoting a change in distribution in order to decrease poverty levels, which tend to be extremely high in Ecuador. In terms of decreasing the poverty gap, neo-extractivists claim that greater state control will lift many out of poverty, but statistics from 2008 to 2009 prove otherwise.

22 Arsel & Angel, 205.

23 *Ibid.*, 209.

24 Pappalardo et al., 1.

Indigenous communities to develop in a way that is consistent with the Rights of Nature and Indigenous rights. But among Indigenous communities, there already is an alternative development scheme: the *buen vivir*.

### An Alternative: The *Buen Vivir*

Despite having been subjected to a multitude of deleterious Western-style development schemes, Ecuadorian Indigenous groups have continued to fight against government initiatives that take a toll on their ways of life and autonomy. Arturo Escobar underscores the need for models and ideas that embody an entirely different way of progressing as a society.<sup>26</sup> Here, the Ecuadorian idea of *buen vivir* is noteworthy. Meaning “the good life,” it denotes an notion encompassing a complex set of rights and a holistic and communal way of life in which everyone is valued for their specific place in society and how they contribute in that role. In contrast to Western paradigms, there is little focus on the individual’s market value in a capitalist culture of consumerism and competition.

This section will look at *buen vivir* as a possible alternative to current development models in Ecuador through its cosmology and restructuring of economy, and how it could be implemented in a post-extractivist society. Succinctly put, “[b]uen [v]ivir, as it is easy to understand urges us to rethink the current way of organizing life in rural areas and in the city, in production plants, and in social living spaces, in schools

and health centers.”<sup>27</sup> In other words, it proposes a change to civilization as we know it.

First and foremost, *buen vivir* dismisses the dichotomy of human vs. nature, regarding the two as part of one single identity. Wellbeing, in *buen vivir*, is intrinsically linked to the fertile land, as well as the acknowledgement of the important place of food, environment, water, and land protection in human happiness and existence.<sup>28</sup> Progress has thus far been the norm and promotes the “productivist logic of always having more and more [...] a vision that place[s] the human being figuratively outside of nature” where nature is “defined without humanity as an integral part of it.”<sup>29</sup> However, *buen vivir* places humanity as an integral part of nature, neither dominating it nor submitting to it. This idea was brought to national recognition in the 2008 constitution with the Rights of Nature, promoting the cosmology on a nation-wide scale, thus elevating Indigenous communities’ status and formally identifying their diverse lifestyles. Nature thus becomes a subject, not an object.<sup>30</sup> Allowing for the expression of traditional knowledge in

26 “Alternatives to development’: an interview with Arturo Escobar”. Transition Culture. 28 September 2012; accessed 10 November 2013. <<http://transitionculture.org/2012/09/28/alternatives-to-development-an-interview-with-arturo-escobar/>>.

27 Acosta, A. “The Buen Vivir: An Opportunity to Imagine Another World”. Inside a champion: An Analysis of the Brazilian Development Model. Berlin, Germany. 2012. p. 192-210. p. 196.

28 Radcliffe, 242.

29 Acosta., 194.

30 Ibid., 197. It must be said, that while the Rights of Nature transitions nature from an object to a subject, it does not mean that nature must be protected in its pristine form, thus excluding fishing, hunting, and other benefits accrued from living off the land. Instead, it is a demercantilization of nature, a de commodification, which is stressed. Maintenance of life systems is central to the Rights of Nature.



national discourse promotes the idea that alternatives to current development trends not only exist, but are also accessible to anyone. Thus, on a national level, humans are regarded not as part of their own individualities – as Western liberal discourses would suggest – but rather as intrinsically linked to the environment around them, creating an alternative to the dominating anthropocentric worldview.

While promoted on a national scale as eco-friendly and environmentally inclusive, *buen vivir* is much more than just a notion to appease environmentalists: it encompasses, as mentioned above, a complete reorganization of society as a whole. Restructuring dominant capitalist thinking requires a reworking of economic objectives, regarding economic growth as “a means and not an end.”<sup>31</sup> The idea of economy in *buen vivir* is based on solidarity. This means that competition – which encourages “economic cannibalism” – is eschewed, favouring instead notions of sufficiency, quality, and reciprocity.<sup>32</sup> This entails placing human relations at the center of economy, promoting a search for what humans *need* rather than what they desire or compete for. This idea throws elite lifestyle especially into relief: as role models for society, the elite must be the first to rework their methods of living. The idea of working the system for personal gain would be nonexistent, as the economy would manifest itself through a “pluralist society with markets” rather than a “market society that is commercialized”.<sup>33</sup> Its economic ideas are not to be confused with socialist ideas, as it is a “platform to explore and build alternatives beyond European modernity,” and thus cannot be subjected to Western

classification systems.<sup>34</sup> Put succinctly, *buen vivir*’s economic discourse would oust accumulation as a core category in economics and replace it with the “reproduction of life’ [...] and the comprehensiveness and interrelatedness of production and reproduction cycles”.<sup>35</sup>

Clearly, *buen vivir* is a radical idea, as its implementation would rework society to be community-based with mutually reinforcing political, environmental, economic, social, and other sectors. This undertaking would be massive: to restructure the entire domain of current thought and lifestyle is no simple task. Thus there are evident criticisms of *buen vivir* as an alternative to development. First, critics condemn it as a return to primitive past. *Buen vivir*, however, is not a static concept. Part of the nature of the concept is that it is fluid and inclusive. While it rejects the consumerist greed associated with competitive capitalist and extractivist mentalities, it incorporates many different aspects found in modern society such as tax reform, sustainability, poverty reduction, freedom, empowerment, and societal integration.<sup>36</sup> In this integration, asserts Radcliffe, is a potential for the formation of a “biopolis”: a fusion of modern bio- and nano-technologies and ecotourism with the idea of communal living to create a state in which biodiversity and its potential for wealth-generation are placed at the forefront of society.<sup>37</sup> Thus, implementing *buen vivir* would not be a so-called return to the past, but rather a

34 Gudynas, E. “Buen Vivir: Today’s tomorrow”. *Development*. 2011:54(4); 441-447. p. 446.

35 Villalba, U. “Buen Vivir vs Development: a paradigm shift in the Andes?” *Third World Quarterly*. 2013:34(8); 1427-42. p. 1430.

36 Gudynas, 446.

37 Radcliffe, 241.

31 Acosta., 197.

32 Ibid., 199.

33 Ibid., 200.



way forward.

Second, critics argue that *buen vivir* cannot be seen in a development context at all, since it is fundamentally not developmental, but rather regarded as degrowth. The response is that, as an alternative to development, *buen vivir* is not inherently developmental as it is seen in its current, linear, Western mode. As it is a re-stitching of the very fabric of societal functioning, it can thus be seen as development only if the word “development” is redefined in non-Western discourse as a term that encompasses a non-linear agenda that encompasses historical and ancestral legacies and the value of environment as intrinsic to not only living well, but also pure existence. Thus a long, complicated answer – one that cannot be fully explored in this paper – awaits those who question the framework’s ability to fit into development discourse.

*Buen vivir* is evidently more than a simple phrase. It is a cosmology, a way of life, a term of empowerment, a way forward? As previously examined, the concept has multiple intricacies through which a new development agenda could be forged for the state of Ecuador. It has the capacity to incorporate many of the current understandings of society and mold them to suit a new framework in which people work in tandem with nature and live communally, rejecting the capitalist notion of competition. Ecuador has taken a step in this direction with idea of Yasuní-ITT and the implementation of *buen vivir* in its constitution. Transition takes time. If the Correa administration is able to follow through on its progressive ideas, *buen vivir* could rise to prominence.

## Conclusion: A Way Forward?

The *buen vivir* is thus a complex concept that takes all aspects of our current understandings of how society works and flips them upside down. Yet, its complexity only manifests itself when examined in relation to current development schemes. Standing alone it is simple: live communally, in reciprocity, with emphasis on quality of life and the inseparable nature of humans and environment. Examining this alternative framework raises the question as to its feasibility in a country where the political and economic environment is so dominated by neo-extractivist, post-neoliberal, and supposedly progressive policies that seem to hinder rather than aid marginalized groups. In Ecuador, *buen vivir* is found peeking out of the pages of the 2008 constitution, calling for the beginnings of reform in the minds of Ecuadorians. Its implementation, however, has been largely theoretical. Increasingly authoritarian, Correa has been shutting down environmental NGOs and continuing to search for oil despite the concerns of Indigenous peoples.<sup>38</sup> Without reciprocity between all Ecuadorians, the *buen vivir* may never be implemented to its full potential. In their own words, “Hands that give also

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38 As of December 4th 2013, Correa has shut down an extremely influential environmental NGO, *Fundación Pachamama de Ecuador*, accusing it of an attack against the Chilean ambassador. This action by Correa serves to further the despair that indigenous groups are feeling towards the implementation of *buen vivir* and the potential for the triangular cooperation of government, indigenous, and environmental groups. In addition, other NGOs including the influential *Acción Ecológica*, now fear their shutdown as Correa continues to consolidate power in himself. The future of the environmental and indigenous movements may now be bleak.

receive".<sup>39</sup>

## About the author

Stephanie Clement is a non-Indigenous ally and a U3 arts student. She studies International Development Studies and Middle Eastern Studies and has a current home base in Vermont, USA.

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## My People, My Pride

Shane Kelsey and Cory Golder ("Northern Collection")

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Writing is the name of the game  
Become a great poet and never be ashamed  
Of lyrics you have written  
Or the verses you've been spittin'  
Look at our leaders tell 'em to take a listen  
Cause the creator has given each of us a voice  
And with that always comes choice  
Idle No More we're here to make some noise  
From the biggest cities to smallest reserves  
Letting Harper know what the people deserve  
This country is no company he can control  
Nor are we employees he's not a CEO  
So don't do as you're told  
It's time for the people to take back control  
'Cause this is democracy and not a dictatorship  
When I see what you're doing it makes me sick  
I look at you and all I see is grey  
You're like an ominous haze  
No one believes anything that you say  
This is for my people yes my people my pride  
We praise the Creator Mother Earth and the sky  
A warriors nation always down for the ride  
A day will soon come for all nations to rise  
All throughout history there ain't no native presidents  
So I'm a run for election I'm a set precedence  
First order of business: paint the white house red  
Maybe then they'll see how much the red man bled  
I'm like Geronimo impervious to lead  
Cross bred with Jesus turning mud to bread  
As we march through the streets no room for elbows  
Standing up to Harper as he swings with low blows  
We all gotta take part, join this Idle No More  
My head held high eyes don't see the floor  
Do it cause you wanna this ain't no household chore  
Can't sit by idle as this affects my core  
So I use my voice to tell 'em all how it is  
They f-ing us over as they add to their sins  
So I'm a step up and swing with all I got  
Ill either rise as a hero or martyred as I'm shot  
This is for my people yes my people my pride  
We praise the Creator Mother Earth and the sky

A warriors nation always down for the ride  
 A day will soon come for all nations to rise  
 So it's do or die but I'm here to live  
 Lets start sharing and learn how to give  
 Without expecting anything in return  
 'Cause the creator is always watching waiting for lessons to be learned  
 Only then can true blessings be earned  
 Maybe that'll be the day that I'll be concerned  
 I'm always down for the just fight yeah, a righteous cause  
 When we've all finished the world will stand and applaud  
 'Cause they seen all the battles leaving our nations in scars  
 Life is one difficult path and no one said it would be fair  
 Only thing we can do is try to be prepared  
 For the worst situation that could suddenly arise  
 Then conquer it and claim victory as your prize  
 No one could strip you of your dignity or pride  
 'Cause this is for my people my people my pride  
 Said this is for my people my people my pride  
 This is for my people yes my people my pride  
 We praise the Creator Mother Earth and the sky  
 A warriors nation always down for the ride  
 A day will soon come for all nations to rise

#### About the Artist

Northern Collection is an up-and-coming hip hop group located in Montreal, Quebec. They prefer to rap about problems in today's society, along with other topics, and are influenced by many different musical artists ranging from Public Enemy, Wu Tang Clan, and Jedi Mind Tricks, classic rockers like Elvis, The Doors and The Beatles, and anything else in between. From their perspective, a true musician listens to and enjoys almost all music so that he or she can truly understand music and everything that surrounds it. Hip hop for Northern Collection is a form of self-expression through music. The artists speaking their minds in their lyrics, speaking out about many of the injustices they see happening to both the Native and Non-Native populations. They also use their lyrics to show a lighter side to hip hop and as a way to inspire youth to go out into the world and achieve their goals and dreams.

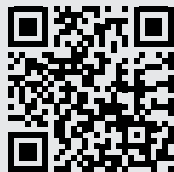
Projek Toombz, a.k.a. Shane Kelsey, was born in Toronto Ontario, moving early in his life to Montreal. Growing up in urban communities, he was influenced at a young age by hip hop and rap music, freestyling with friends on a regular basis while learning the art of rapping. Later in life he decided to start writing lyrics. When reconnecting with an old friend, "Curse," they decided to form the group Northern Collection, officially becoming a group in June 2012.

The Curse, a.k.a. Cory Golder was born in Restigouche, New Brunswick. Moving early in his life to Montreal, he as well was influenced by hip hop and rap music, writing lyrics and rapping from early on in his youth. As he grew, his skill with the pen and pad did as well. Projek Toombz convinced him to start writing lyrics with him, and the next thing he knew, a year later they have their first mixtape coming out and are now performing at several events, realizing his dream. Now he tries to teach youth through his music that their dreams can also come true.

*Listen to the song by Northern Connection on YouTube*

**Northern Collection - My People My Pride (Idle No More)**

<http://youtu.be/Z7xwYH09nu8>



# Pale Face in Space: Star Trek's Treatment of Native "Culture" in "The Paradise Syndrome"

Molly Swain  
McGill University

Star Trek: The Original Series (1966-1969) has been considered a groundbreaking project in several ways, whether through its uncanny foreshadowing of future technologies – such as the cellphone-esque communicators, and even the transparent aluminum Scottie invents in Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home – or in its treatment of social issues that were considered taboo at the time and often remain taboo today. Supposedly the only television program which Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. would allow his children to stay up to watch, the multiracial cast of The Original Series (TOS) was at the time a radical divergence from the vast majority of television. The half-alien, half-human Spock, the Japanese-American helmsman Sulu, and the African-American woman communications officer Uhura were all cast in non-stereotypical roles that pushed the boundaries of acceptable programming at the time. For example, TOS has the distinction of being the first program to air an interracial kiss. Through the genre of science fiction, creator Gene Roddenberry was able to address contemporary issues that would have otherwise been blocked by network censors by setting them in a "mythical" future (Bernardi, 37-38).

TOS is not without its flaws however, and one of the most glaring examples of "well-intentioned" racism in the series is "The Paradise Syndrome," which was originally and tellingly entitled,

"Pale Face." I will first analyze TOS's construction of Native society through the use of Patricia Hill Collins' theory of controlling images from her "Get Your Freak On: Sex, Violence, and Images of Black Masculinity" (2004) and bell hooks' "Eating the Other: Desire and Resistance" (2000)<sup>1</sup>. I will then narrow my analysis to the characters of Salish and Miramane in order to explore the ways in which the controlling images are very specifically gendered as well as racialized. Ultimately, I will show the narrative and visual treatment of Natives in "The Paradise Syndrome" operates to further entrench incredibly harmful settler conceptions of Indigenous peoples as savage, stupid, sexualized, interchangeable, and in need of the white man's benevolence.

Described by Daniel Bernardi as a "contradictory racial project" (44), "The Paradise Syndrome" revolves around Captain Kirk's sudden amnesia and acceptance into a Native society on a distant planet threatened by an asteroid, a culture that is "a mixture of Navajo, Mohican, and Delaware," according to Spock, who can tell just by a glance at the

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1 It is important to note that both Hill Collins and hooks are writing specifically about blackness and its constructions in an American setting. For this reason, not all of their theories will be relevant, or relevant in the same way, to the racialization and gendering of Native peoples, however there are some aspects of these theories that are absolutely imperative to understanding the impact that settler conceptions of Indigeneity have on "The Paradise Syndrome."

scattering of wigwams and tipis that make up this “society.” This narrative is a familiar one, explicitly drawing upon Melville-esque themes of the “Tahiti syndrome,” wherein a white male hero finds a simple and untroubled life in a natural setting but is unable to maintain it. The theme is eerily reminiscent of hooks’ statement that “[w]hen race and ethnicity become commodified as resources for pleasure, the culture of specific groups, as well as the bodies of individuals, can be seen as constituting an alternative playground where members of dominating races, genders, sexual practices affirm their power-over in intimate relations with the Other” (hooks 425). To be clear, “The Paradise Syndrome” is not about showcasing the complexity and diversity of Native cultures, nor highlighting the challenges and struggles faced by Indigenous peoples in a “post-colonial” era: it is about the personal evolution and loss experienced by the civilized white man in his encounters with the ‘savage’ and ‘uncivilized,’ and his ultimate (reluctant) rejection of them (Bernardi 46). Natives are just the “playground”.

But are there Natives in “The Paradise Syndrome?” The two main Indigenous characters, Miramane and Salish, are clearly non-Native actors with body paint and stereotypically “Indian” clothing. This is one controlling image of Native peoples that aligns interestingly with Hill Collins’ assertion that “[b]ecause racial desegregation in the post-civil rights era needed new images of racial difference for a color-blind [sic] ideology, class-differentiated images ... have become more prominent” (122). While Hill Collins is referring to various ways in which black women are stereotyped according to their positions within the class system, in “The Paradise Syndrome”

it could be more accurate to describe the operations of the controlling images as rendering Natives the “invisible class.” While they are portrayed in a technical sense, there are literally no real Natives anywhere in the episode.

Using actors in red-face has the dual effect of perpetuating the stereotype that Native people no longer exist, and it prevents any sort of on-site Indigenous resistance to racist and generalizing portrayals of their cultures and themselves. Unlike black female rappers who were and are able to embrace and subvert white supremacist conceptions of their sexuality and bodies (Hill Collins 127-128), there is no opportunity in “The Paradise Syndrome” for Indigenous peoples to do the same, because they are simply not there. This places the power of portrayal entirely in the hands of the non-Native writer and predominantly white, male production team of TOS, which allows them to uncritically ignore everything from historical accuracy to the basic humanity of their characters in order to provide Captain Kirk with a culturally recognizable, and obviously colonial and patriarchal conception of American Indigeneity to explore and consume.

Furthermore, the use of red-face through the material markers of racial difference present in the episode suggests that anyone can be Native provided they are dressed appropriately: it is the buckskin clothing, feather cloaks – an appropriation of Pacific Island Indigenous clothing – and beaded belts and headbands that make the “Indian.” This commodification is demonstrated explicitly when Kirk is made the Medicine Chief. When given the headband that marks his place within the tribe, Kirk “goes Native.” His newfound ‘Indigeneity’ allows him to access the

peace and tranquility of the 'simple,' and 'uncivilized' peoples (hooks 427).

And simple they are. The only-slightly-more-complex-than-Tonto Indian pidgin English spoken by the Native characters acts as a linguistic marker of Native inferiority – barring the question why supposedly pre-contact cultures on a planet light years away would speak any English at all, especially because the viewer never witnesses these Natives speaking any sort of Indigenous language. The mastery of standard American English is generally viewed as an evolution into humanity, with both class and racial connotations (Hill Collins 139), and these Natives have clearly not evolved, “despite centuries of unencumbered development on a far-off planet” (Bernardi 45).

Even more telling are the ways in which they react to Kirok's various demonstrations of cultural and technological superiority; he is almost unanimously elevated to godhood, with all the benefits befitting such a station, including access to the beautiful Miramane, all of her services, the respect of the tribal council, etc. The Natives are portrayed as innocent and naïve for assuming divine intervention, but also as ultimately correct; it is only natural that these peaceful, simple “Indians” would center their deep spirituality on the civilized white man.

Kirok's (or at this point, Kirok's) only detractor is Salish, who is shown to be the worst example of a Native man: obstinate, unreasonable, stupid, vindictive, sexually and physically aggressive, but ultimately no match for the superiority of his white rival. If the “lure” of the Other is, as hooks suggests, “both the pleasure and the danger” (428), then Salish operates as an embodiment of the latter, becoming a metaphor for savagery in and of himself,

and representing the “dark side” of the white man: what Kirok would be without his innate civilized superiority. This is underscored during the climax of the episode: when the tribe begins stoning Kirok, Salish throws the pregnant Miramane, now Kirok's wife, into his arms, brutally ensuring her death.

Miramane's death has several functions. As a character she represents one of the more overt means by which Kirok engages with the Other (hooks 426). Her character also draws upon and combines two of the most pervasive stereotypes of Native women: the Indian Princess and the Squaw. The Indian Princess, on one hand, is positioned as the willing helper of Europeans, and the sexually appealing and exotic Indigenous woman. On the other hand, the Squaw is figured variously as representing the supposedly animalistic nature of Indigenous womanhood, its inferior intelligence, dehumanization and oppression at the hands of Indigenous men, its shallow character, and, ultimately, its voracious and degenerate sexual appetite (Brownlie, 164). Various scenes with Miramane trying to understand how to undress Kirok (“There are no laces, how is this thing removed?”), or unassertively resisting Salish's advances underscore her servility and sexualized nature. It is through Miramane that Kirok embraces the paradise of his Indigeneity, demonstrated most typically when he and Miramane frolic joyously through the woods (“I'm happy, I'm so happy!”), and she announces her pregnancy.

It is this pregnancy that ultimately kills her: network executives, responding to post-civil rights era anxieties regarding red/white miscegenation, demanded a rewrite of the script without the pregnancy. Roddenberry's compromise was to kill her



off to prevent the birth and abandonment of the Half-Breed baby (Bernardi 47). Miramanee's death allows Kirok to resume his life as Kirk, "left unencumbered in his trek toward a white future" (Bernardi 49). The planet is saved by the superior intelligence and technology of the white men, who heroically intervene at the last minute, despite the violence and degradation of the Natives, who have ungratefully stoned Kirk nearly to death. The final scene is a clip of the Enterprise leaving the planet: the white man has been restored to civilization, and the Natives are 'where they belong,' unchanging and isolated.

"The Paradise Syndrome" is one media representation in a long and continuing trend that portrays Indigenous cultures as consumable, ahistorical, mythical and savage. While Star Trek's multiracial cast and treatment of racial issues was in many ways far ahead of its time, "The Paradise Syndrome" is an incredible failure that treats racialized and gendered stereotypes of Native peoples and cultures as a backdrop for the personal development of the white man at the expense of real Indigenous peoples and struggles.

### About the Author

Molly Swain is a Métis *iskotêw*, currently completing an Honours Women's Studies degree. Her work focuses on Indigenous Feminisms, anti-capitalism, and state interventions into Indigenous families. She is the co-founder of the Montréal Indigenous Women and Two-Spirit Harm Reduction Coalition

### Note from the Author

When watching "The Paradise Syndrome", feel free to skip the subplot involving the Enterprise attempting to divert the asteroid. The content of this paper focuses entirely on the scenes that take place on the planet.

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# “The Body that Didn’t Disappear”

## Melancholic Memories and Site-Specificity in Rebecca Belmore’s *Vigil*

Kathryn Yuen  
McGill University

Anishinabe activist and artist Rebecca Belmore performs *Vigil* (2002, fig. 1), a fifty minute performance that works to remember the hundreds of missing and murdered Indigenous women across Canada, as part of the Full Circle Talking Stick Indigenous Arts Festival. Belmore’s performance commences when she enters an alley at Gore Street and Cordova Street in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside with a bucket full of rags and rubber gloves, a bouquet of roses, a red dress, a lighter, and some candles.<sup>1</sup> She sets up by washing the pavement on her hands and knees, and then by lighting a series of candles, transforming the street into a makeshift memorial space. However *Vigil* does not follow any traditional memorial or funeral procedures. Instead, Belmore chooses to inscribe the names of the missing and murdered women onto her bare skin, and then calls out to them, even though they will never respond. She rips roses through her mouth, thorns and all. Afterwards, Belmore dons a long red dress that she nails onto a nearby pole, and then struggles to viciously rip the dress away from the pole, pulling it apart in the process.<sup>2</sup> This violent bodily

spectacle concludes when Belmore walks over to a truck that is playing James Brown’s *It’s a Man’s Man’s Man’s World* and bows.

This paper will argue that Rebecca Belmore’s performance of *Vigil* uses Vancouver’s Downtown East Side and her own female body as sites, which become activated in specific ways in order to confront the dominant modes of remembering Indigenous women in Canada as marginalized and colonized. In opposition to the Canadian government, mainstream news media, and historical accounts that continue to marginalize Indigenous women, *Vigil* works to open up a space within the collective memory of its viewers in order to remember the missing and murdered women. As such, *Vigil* is saturated in memory since it occupies a liminal position between the dead and the living, but also between forgetting and remembering.<sup>3</sup> This paper will demonstrate that *Vigil* becomes strongly charged with memory, due to its strategic use of site-specificity. In *Vigil*, Belmore physically occupies the very streets from where many of the women went missing, but she resists

1 Claudette Lauzon, “What the Body Remembers: Rebecca Belmore’s Memorial to Missing Women,” in *Precarious Visualities: New Perspectives on Identification in Contemporary Art and Visual Culture*, edited by Oliver Assellin, Johannes Lamoureux, and Christine Ross (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queens Press, 2008), 156.

2 Rebecca Belmore, “Vigil,” Department of

Canadian Heritage through Canadian Culture Online, accessed November 30, 2013, Online video, <http://www.rebeccabelmore.com/video/Vigil.html>.

3 Joan Gibbons, “Introduction” to *Contemporary Art and Memory: Images of Recollection and Remembrance* (London: I B Tauris & Co, 2007), 143.

disappearing herself, and instead insists upon her presence.<sup>4</sup> By activating her own body as a visible site of violence, Belmore symbolizes the trauma that was once inflicted upon the bodies of the Indigenous women who are now absent.<sup>5</sup> Through her actions, Belmore inscribes a revisionist history onto site-specific locations<sup>6</sup> thereby challenging the myth of the “vanishing Indian”<sup>7</sup> and the threat of the colonial gaze.<sup>8</sup> However, despite *Vigil*’s strengths as a powerful, provoking, and deeply affective performance, there still remains an underlying sense of futility.<sup>9</sup> *Vigil* cannot bring back the missing women, nor can it resolve this persisting problem that remains largely neglected by Canadian authorities. It is this inability to make any immediate and significant change, despite many repetitive attempts to do so, that makes Belmore’s moment of remembrance ultimately a moment of extreme melancholia.

Memory, in the most basic sense, can be defined as the powerful act of bringing the past into the present through contemplation.<sup>10</sup> As a result, it occupies a

crucial temporal and liminal position not only between the past and the present, but also between other borders: public and private, forgetting and remembering, presence and absence, dead and living.<sup>11</sup> However memory is also highly selective, in that memory relies on the selective omission of certain things, and the privilege of remembering others.<sup>12</sup> This empowers memory by granting it the capability to alter one’s perception of the world.<sup>13</sup> Belmore’s *Vigil* exemplifies this selective power dynamic within memory, because it is designed to make audiences aware of the dangers of forgetting, by highlighting the missing and murdered women who remain unacknowledged by the Canadian government as the prime example. Since the early 1980s families of the missing and murdered women, along with allied citizens, have called for formal investigations. These investigations were not initiated until 2002,<sup>14</sup> and despite looking into this issue, many Indigenous women are still disappearing to this day. Belmore’s challenge then, lies in her conscious choice to remember and make visible a problem that the Canadian government refuses to address.

According to Yasmin Jiwani and Mary Lynn Young, two Canadian Women’s Studies scholars, there is a pattern of marginalization in the media’s representation of Indigenous women. From their analysis of the media’s portrayal of the missing and murdered women, Jiwani and Young argue that

4 Lauzon, “What the Body Remembers,” 166.

5 Ibid., 158.

6 Ibid., 159, and Julie Nagam, “(Re)Mapping the Colonized Body: The Creative Interventions of Rebecca Belmore in the Cityscape,” *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 35.4 (2011): 148.

7 The ‘Vanishing Indian’ is a term that encapsulates the common tendency to regulate Indigenous individuals to the past in order to deny their contemporary existence. It essentially sees Indigenous culture as a dying race that will soon become extinct.

8 The ‘Colonial Gaze’ is a way of looking at Indigenous individuals, in a way that can be sexualized or de-sexualized depending on the context, and essentially relies on a system of power where the colonizer is always dominant over the colonized.

9 Lauzon, “What the Body Remembers,” 155-6.

10 Gibbons, “Introduction,” 3.

11 Ibid., 6.

12 Ibid., 8.

13 Ibid., 1.

14 Marcia Crosby, “Humble Materials and Powerful Signs: Remembering the Suffering of Others,” in Rebecca Belmore: *Rising to the Occasion*, Edited by Daina Augaitis and Kathleen Ritter (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery, 2008), 80.

Indigenous women are “visible in some respects, and invisible in others, but always in the margins.”<sup>15</sup> This means that Indigenous women are often marginalized by media coverage, or left absent altogether. This marginalization is intersectional, occurring across cultural, gendered, and class-based dynamics as many of the missing and murdered women have inhabited the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver, a known locale for sex trade.<sup>16</sup> As such, these women are dismissed as deviant and degenerate bodies that are not worth privileging by the Canadian media.<sup>17</sup> The Canadian authorities also place culpability with the Indigenous women themselves, through their choice of occupation.<sup>18</sup> The media’s focus lies instead with the horror and sensationalism<sup>19</sup> surrounding white-male perpetrator Robert Pickton.<sup>20</sup> The result of this marginalization is the erasure of these women as distinct individuals, with the media assisting in the creation of a nameless mass of victims. The Canadian media, then, is guilty of perpetuating long-standing, harmful representations

that marginalize Indigenous women. The media does nothing to amend this history by revivifying these women in a more visible manner, or by re-contextualizing them in a more respectable way. Within this context, Belmore’s *Vigil* can then be understood as an intervention into the Canadian media paradigm. Through the act of naming the missing and murdered women, Belmore attends to the gaping wound that has been neglected for so long, and performs the necessary acts of remembrance that Canadian media refuses to do.

*Vigil* represents this revisionist memory and “prompts viewers to examine their relationships to history” through modes of site-specificity.<sup>21</sup> Although memory functions are primarily mental processes, there is a significant relationship between memory and its visible manifestation in objects, spaces, and places. In fact, French historian Pierre Nora has coined the term “lieux de memoire,” or memory places.<sup>22</sup> This means that memory can become harnessed in locations that have a physical, or indexical, link to the original event or experience that inspired the memory. If something indexical is defined as having a real physical relationship with that which it signifies, *Vigil* has an indexical link to the missing and murdered Indigenous women,<sup>23</sup> because Belmore’s performance occurs within the very spaces of their disappearances, and the very sites of their

15 Yasmin Jiwani and Mary Lynn Young, “Missing and Murdered Women: Reproducing Marginality in News Discourse,” *Canadian Journal of Communication* 31 (2006): 912.

16 Jiwani and Young, “Missing and Murdered Women: Reproducing Marginality in News Discourse,” 899.

17 Ibid., 899.

18 Ibid., 901.

19 Ibid., 909.

20 In 2002, Robert Pickton was identified as the main perpetrator behind many of the missing women’s murder cases. DNA from 38 Indigenous women were found on his pig farm, which then triggered a spiral of sensationalist media coverage, broadcasting that the women’s remains were being fed to the pigs that were later slaughtered for pork consumption. Pickton was ultimately charged with 27 out of 38 of these murders, and he has received the maximum court sentence.

21 Kathleen S. Bartels, “Director’s Forward,” in Rebecca Belmore: *Rising to the Occasion*, edited by Daina Augaitis and Kathleen Ritter (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery, 2008), 7.

22 Gibbons, *Contemporary Art and Memory: Images of Recollection and Remembrance*, 142.

23 Charles Sanders Peirce, *The Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce, Volume II: Elements of Logic*, edited by Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1932), 299.

deaths.

There is weight to the location Belmore selected for *Vigil*, and she has explicitly stated that, "I am conscious [of] where I am located – where I find myself standing. I think about the history of each place."<sup>24</sup> Throughout history, the Downtown Eastside has developed a reputation as a marginalized and abject space that tends to mark those who occupy it as degenerate people. By commanding the space with her actions and her voice, Belmore aggressively attacks this site-specific space, along with all the negative ideas and histories that it stands for, with a vengeance.<sup>25</sup> However, in addition to this attack, Belmore's performance can also be understood as an attempt to cleanse the space. By literally washing the street, she washes away all the blood and horror that the space may contain. She confronts the occupants of the Downtown Eastside and tries to revise their perception of that place. Rather than disappearing, Belmore asserts her presence. Instead of yelling out in terror, Belmore yells with a purpose that provokes and demands engaged reactions from the other women in the neighbourhood.<sup>26</sup> Belmore's performance becomes a call to action,<sup>27</sup> where she is not only addressing Canadian authorities, but she is also specifically addressing fellow Indigenous women within the downtown Eastside to powerfully assert their authority, and to resist their stigmatized media representations.

As such, *Vigil* has a potent site-specificity. It is site-specific because there is an indivisible relationship between the performed artwork itself and the downtown Eastside as a site, and, because it significantly involves the physical experiences and bodily presences of other people within that site.<sup>28</sup> However, *Vigil* also activates contemporary notions of site-specificity, where an artwork's site can evolve beyond its physical, geographical location in order to include social and cultural frameworks – and even bodies. In fact, there is the possibility "to conceive the site as something more than a place – as repressed ethnic history, a political cause, a disenfranchised social group," that works to rediscover and provide a greater visibility of repressed issues and peoples, like the missing and murdered Indigenous women.<sup>29</sup> Along similar lines, contemporary conceptions of site-specificity can also derive a sense of place from the "uniqueness of locational identity," such as through the inclusion of the body.<sup>30</sup>

In *Vigil*, Belmore activates her own body and identity as an Anishinabe woman as a site. She explains that her body "speaks for itself. It's the politicized body, it's the historical body. It's the body that didn't disappear. So it means a lot in terms of the *presence* of the Indigenous body in the work. And the female body, particularly."<sup>31</sup> By making herself visibly present, Belmore resists the myth of the "vanishing Indian"<sup>32</sup> that is

24 Rebecca Belmore quoted in Nagam, "(Re) Mapping the Colonized Body," 153. (Interview with Nagam on July 6, 2010).

25 Lauzon, "What the Body Remembers," 165.

26 Kathleen Ritter, "The Reclining Figure and Other Provocations," in Rebecca Belmore: Rising to the Occasion, Edited by Daina Augaitis and Kathleen Ritter (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery, 2008), 53.

27 Ibid., 53.

28 Miwon Kwon, "One Place After Another: Notes of Site Specificity," October 80 (Spring 1997): 86.

29 Kwon, "One Place After Another: Notes of Site Specificity," 96.

30 Ibid., 106.

31 Rebecca Belmore quoted in Ritter, "The Reclining Figure and Other Provocations," 55.

32 The 'Vanishing Indian' is a term that

further perpetuated by the missing and murdered Indigenous women. Instead, she defies expectations by occupying a space where women's bodies are expected to vanish without a trace, but refuses to disappear.<sup>33</sup> As a result, Belmore's body occupies the liminal position of memory between absence and presence, and the dead and the living. By inscribing the names of the missing and murdered women onto her skin, her Anishinabe body becomes a site that calls forth the ghostly absence-presence of the Indigenous women.<sup>34</sup> Then, by nailing her dress to a pole and ripping it away, she uses her bodily presence in a violent way, which represents and repeats the trauma imposed on the missing and murdered women. Through this process, Belmore's body is transformed into a "surrogate [site] for others suffering."<sup>35</sup> But instead of suffering alone or invisibly, Belmore makes her suffering extremely visible to viewers on the street. She explains, "creating the presence of the absent makes me a witness,"<sup>36</sup> however, her performance also allows other members of the public to become witnesses to the violence that is so often inflicted upon the bodies of Indigenous women.<sup>37</sup>

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encapsulates the common tendency to regulate Indigenous individuals to the past in order to deny their contemporary existence. It essentially sees Indigenous culture as a dying race that will soon become extinct.

33 Lauzon, "What the Body Remembers," 166.

34 *Ibid.*, 167.

35 Charlotte Townsend-Gault, "Have We Ever Been Good?," in Rebecca Belmore: The Named and the Unnamed, an exhibition catalogue with essays by Charlotte Townsend-Gault and James Luna. (Vancouver: Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, 2003), 28.

36 Rebecca Belmore quoted in Lauzon, "What the Body Remembers," 155.

37 Nagam, "(Re)Mapping the Colonized Body," 162.

With *Vigil*, Belmore is able to point out how sexual violence and racial violence tend to interlock in particularly nasty ways.<sup>38</sup> Yasmin Jiwani and Mary Lynn Young perceptively point out that violence against Indigenous women not only "constitutes a gendered war," but it also operates within "colonialism and today's ongoing racism and genocide."<sup>39</sup> In Canada's ongoing legacy of colonialism, Indigenous women's bodies and land remain the two primary targets of control and domination.<sup>40</sup> *Vigil* particularly addresses the colonial gaze upon Indigenous women's bodies, where the gaze becomes an expression of a white patriarchal settler mentality to sexually and violently dominate over the Other. Yet Belmore confronts violence with violence in *Vigil*. She resists the colonial gaze by asserting her own body, by repeatedly presenting herself in a violent, visceral, and abject way that is almost too difficult to watch. Belmore draws on the viewer's discomfort by allowing her mouth to bleed as she rips roses through it over and over again. This means that Belmore is able to protect or shield her own body against intrusive and objectifying gazes. Her performance has the power to shift the colonial gaze by challenging viewers to recognize the violence inflicted upon the Indigenous body, rather than simply accept women's bodies as objectified.<sup>41</sup> Yet in drawing attention to this violence, she also imprints these violent acts upon our memories, by refusing to let us forget them. This means that *Vigil* can also be interpreted as a performance where the

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38 Jiwani and Young, "Missing and Murdered Women: Reproducing Marginality in News Discourse," 896.

39 *Ibid.*, 896.

40 Nagam, "(Re)Mapping the Colonized Body," 148.

41 *Ibid.*, 148 and 151.



“scars of history are remembered,” where markers of violence, pain and sadness refuse to fade by continuing to reach us in the present moment.<sup>42</sup>

The persistence of sadness in remembering the missing and murdered Indigenous women causes *Vigil* to also become a moment of extreme melancholia. According to Freud, when a loved person is lost, it is normal to enter into a period of depression and mourn their disappearance; but this eventually heals.<sup>43</sup> One’s sadness is transformed because one’s emotional energy becomes transferred into the formation of new positive, affective bonds.<sup>44</sup> However, mourning is temporary, while melancholia is much more permanent.<sup>45</sup> In melancholia it is impossible to move on, to transform or transfer that emotional energy. By not letting go of what is lost, the sadness becomes internalized and cannibalized.<sup>46</sup> The emotional energy is projected inwards, building up and creating internalized rage that eventually explodes as an outward expression of profound melancholic loss.<sup>47</sup>

Belmore’s performance illustrates these markers of melancholia through the lack of healing and the persistence of sadness, by not letting the problem of the missing and murdered women go. Her violent, raging actions reveal the deep

internalization of the problem, an element which fellow Canadian artist Robert Houle describes as “using her body as a paint brush to create the corporeal from an inner drive, form from memory.”<sup>48</sup> However, even though Belmore expresses her continual remembrance for the missing and murdered women, there remains an underlying sense of futility in her performance. She remembers, and allows others to remember with her, yet the act of remembering can never reverse the situation of the missing and murdered women; it cannot bring them back from the dead. Looking back on Belmore’s performance, we now know that *Vigil* could not even trigger enough immediate change to solve the problem.<sup>49</sup> Even though *Vigil* was performed in 2002, Indigenous women continue to disappear today in 2013.

Furthermore, *Vigil* does not provide any chance to peacefully move on from the loss by transferring one’s sadness into more positive energies. It refuses to provide the emotional release that one might expect from a funeral or a candlelight vigil, a necessary step in dissolving melancholia into mourning.<sup>50</sup> The candles themselves become representative of the futility in her performance, in that Belmore constantly struggles to keep them lit, repetitively re-lighting them after the wind blows them out.<sup>51</sup> Their flickering serves as a reminder of the lives that are lost, instead of creating any kind of funeral ambiance. The roses are not laid down in remembrance. Instead, they are violently torn through

42 Dot Tuer, “Performing Memory: The Art of Storytelling in the Work of Rebecca Belmore,” in *Mining the Media Archive* (Toronto: YYZ Books, 2005), 167.

43 Sigmund Freud, “Mourning and Melancholia” (1917), in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, translated by James Strachey, volume XVI (London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1991), 243.

44 Freud, “Mourning and Melancholia,” 243.

45 *Ibid.*, 244.

46 *Ibid.*, 245-6.

47 *Ibid.*, 251-2.

48 Robert Houle, “Interiority as Allegory,” in *Rebecca Belmore: Rising to the Occasion*, Edited by Daina Augaitis and Kathleen Ritter (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery, 2008), 19.

49 Crosby, “Humble Materials and Powerful Signs: Remembering the Suffering of Others,” 81.

50 Lauzon, “What the Body Remembers,” 155-6.

51 *Ibid.*, 155-6.

her teeth.<sup>52</sup> The names of the missing and murdered women are not simply called out. Instead they are yelled. But there is a sense of failure in this action, because even yelling out their names will not produce any response from the women who are missing or were murdered.<sup>53</sup> The red dress becomes a site of physical trauma that symbolically represents blood, and in its shredded form, it can also represent the dismembered bodily remains of those women who were murdered by Pickton.<sup>54</sup> The final gesture of her performance is a bow, which is unusual in both contemporary artistic performances and funeral memorial services.<sup>55</sup> As such, Belmore's performance of *Vigil* continually builds violence upon grief, and then suddenly stops without any sort of denouement or resolution, leaving viewers with traumatic destabilizing memories. With *Vigil*, there is no sense of closure or peace that is made with the still missing and murdered Indigenous women.<sup>56</sup> Instead, the persistence of sadness, loss, and violence are markers of melancholia that continue to deeply press upon the realm of memory.

In conclusion, it is the strategic use of site-specificity that is at the heart of Rebecca Belmore's *Vigil*, and that makes her performance so charged with melancholic memory. By activating the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver as a specific site, she creates an indexical connection to the memories of the missing and murdered women by occupying the very space of their disappearance, and,

she confronts the issue of marginalized Indigenous women in the news media by refusing to become marginalized herself. By activating her own Anishinabe body as a specific site, her very presence denies the myth of the "vanishing Indian," and her violent performance confronts the masculine colonial gaze. Belmore's body, however, also becomes a site that displays the extreme melancholia in continually remembering the missing and murdered women. Her body houses the persistence of sadness and grief that will not be resolved in the foreseeable future. Although there is an underlying sense of futility in the inability to make any immediate change to the situation regarding the missing and murdered women, there is also an underlying sense of hope, in that Belmore's performance of *Vigil* has managed to de-marginalize the problem and make people, like me, intensely aware of this injustice within Canada.

### About the Author

Kathryn Yuen identifies as an ally to the Indigenous individuals of North America. Her sympathy for the missing and murdered women, combined with her background in Art History, has inspired her to explore the ways in which contemporary art can be used as a tool for activism and public awareness. Kathryn will be graduating from McGill this spring with a double major in Art History and English (Cultural Studies) and a minor in Communication Studies.

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52 Crosby, "Humble Materials and Powerful Signs: Remembering the Suffering of Others," 80.

53 Ibid., 80.

54 Lauzon, "What the Body Remembers," 166.

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# Landscapes of Absence

## The Erasure of the Colonial Past through Homonationalist Gay Imagining in Montréal

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Increasingly incorporated into the neoliberal agenda of global city building, international LGBT<sup>1</sup> festivals and events have become an important part of advancing ideas of 'sexual modernity' - a kind of modernity measured by the legal recognition of homosexuality. Indigenous scholar-activists Andrea Smith (2010) and Qwo-Li Driskill (2010) have asserted the need to attend to the colonial histories that have been erased in the creation of such modernizing narratives. Therefore in this essay, I will explore how the construction of Montréal as a LGBT-friendly city is grounded in the logics of white settler colonialism. The complete absence of Canadian and Québec colonial history during internationally-attended LGBT events in Montréal, such as the annual Pride event (Fierté), Divers/Cité, the 2006 World Outgames, the 2006 International Conference on LGBT Human Rights and the 2013 InterPride conference, demonstrates the incompleteness of dominantly-understood Canadian and Québec history. By failing to acknowledge the full extent of colonial place-making practices within the Canadian and the Québec context, these events further contribute to the naturalization and normalization of non-Native belonging for both LGBTQ<sup>2</sup> settlers and recent immigrants. Through the analysis of mainstream LGBT events,

I argue that Montréal's manifestations of sexual modernity misalign from the realities of ongoing subjugation of Indigenous peoples, and through neoliberal strategies, contribute to the (homo)nationalist<sup>3</sup> imagining of sexual progressiveness. Centering on Two-Spirit critiques, this essay will hopefully contribute to the challenging of queer theory and practices, and the unravelling of disguised landscapes.

Decolonization in Canada, the "ongoing, radical resistance against colonialism that includes struggles for land redress, self-determination, healing historical trauma, cultural continuance, and reconciliation" cannot be neglected in the struggles against sexual regulation (Driskill, 2010: 69). The creation of Two-Spirit identifications among non-heterosexual Indigenous peoples in settler colonial nations was a means to acknowledge the histories of gendered and sexualized violences and to reject assimilation to Western categorization of gender and sexuality (2010: 69). Andrea Smith argues that the failure of queer theory in taking up a decolonial framework exemplifies how the conditions for non-Native belonging remain unquestioned in the normalization of the colonial project

3 Jasbir Puar (2007), in *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*, defines homonationalism as the contemporary confluence of homosexuality with national governance.

1 Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender

2 Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer

(2010: 42). The making of place, and the fostering of a sense of comfort and inclusion among non-Natives, including non-Native people of colour, often depend on a "logic of genocide" (2010: 53).

Canada's aim towards LGBT equality within a rights-seeking framework helps maintain Canada's image as a benevolent nation-state (Howlett, 2013: 162). What is forgotten in this framework is the initial imposition of heteronormative laws and governance onto Indigenous peoples in the construction and growth of the imagined Canadian settler nation (2013: 162). The foundation of sexual regulation then, in Canada, is precisely defined by dogmatic ideas of racial hierarchy and superiority (2013: 164). In this way, the historical continuity of the relationship between sexual regulation, racialization, and colonization needs to be recognized; the struggle against sexual regulation cannot be removed from the struggle against colonization. By attending to the actual conditions within which homophobia is constructed, it becomes evident that the fight for LGBT equality within liberal, rights-based structures does not actually address the historical particularities of sexual regulation in Canada and completely washes over the diverse sexualities of Indigenous peoples. The whiteness of today's LGBT movements is demonstrative of persistent colonial legacies; the acceptance of sexual diversity is now associated with social progression and advancement - an association that ultimately becomes another strategy of sexual colonization.

Before the rest of Canada, Québec recognized the rights of gays and lesbians in its anti-discrimination clause of the Québec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms in 1977 (Meyercook and

Labelle, 2003: 42). Québec also granted gay and lesbian couples the same social and administrative rights as common law couples before the rest of Canada in 1999 (2003: 42). This inclusion of sexual orientation rights laws in Québec represented an "expression of a new nationalist founding myth based on inclusion, openness, and a modernist discourse of progress" (Stychin, 1997: 6). Based on its position on sexual orientation, Québec would prove to be "a generation ahead of most of North America" (1997: 6). In this way, the nationalist configuration of Québec encourages the legal obligation towards the inclusion of gays and lesbians (1997: 15). But even though the history of Québec is often constructed apart from that of Canada, the founding imaginary of building a settler colonial nation runs as a geographical and temporal continuum across Canada since its founding. Dominant narratives of colonization in Québec tend to be one-sided in that they centre the narrative of the colonization of French-Québeckers by English-Canadians. In the 1960s, French-Québeckers often identified with colonized Africans and African Americans, not acknowledging their own role in the colonizing of black and Indigenous populations within Québec (Austin, 2010: 23). Thus, the attention given to the colonization of French-Canadians overwhelmingly masks the consequences of British and French settlement on Indigenous populations in Québec (2010: 24). The portrayal of the two founding nations of Canada as France and Britain contributes to the ongoing exclusion of non-white peoples, both within and outside Canada's borders (2010: 27).

With the progress made by the Québec government with regard to LGBT rights,

Two-Spirit people and Indigenous sexual minorities have always faced the quandaries of leaving home, where inhabitation off reserves can equate to more sexual rights but can also equate to cultural assimilation (Meyercook and Labelle, 2003: 41). The laws of governance on reserves do not always correspond with those of the Québec government. At the same time, rights-granting LGBT laws or policies in Québec are complicit with processes of settler modernity, since the notion of seeking legal rights does not attend to the historical roots of structural injustices, and therefore, occlude the possibility of Two-Spirit existence. In this way, Two-Spirit people and Indigenous sexual minorities are confronted with the dilemma of identifying with either being Aboriginal or being LGBT (2003: 41).

The consolidation and myriad of LGBT rights-based events within the urban setting of Montréal is especially revealing of the tensions that Two-Spirit people and Indigenous sexual minorities must face in resisting mechanisms of assimilation. The development of Montréal through its abundance of cultural spaces and festivities has particular economic and political motives. These international and public platforms help shape the perception of Canada, sustain its image of benevolence and generosity, and contribute to its global and capitalist connectivity (Paul, 2004: 574). With such political and ideological underpinnings, the representation of Montréal as a city of celebration and cosmopolitanism, through these platforms, demonstrates that the imaging of territory becomes central to the making of place (2004: 588). But these platforms, guised as landscapes of festivity, simultaneously mask memories of trauma, neglect, and assimilation.

In July 2006, Montréal hosted the first World Outgames, which took place in conjunction with Montréal's annual gay arts and culture festival, *Divers/Cité*. The Outgames were funded by all three levels of government, and Tourism Montréal took the opportunity to use the event in promoting Montréal as a world-class LGBT destination (Davidson, 2013: 69). As such, the funding was used to frame the city in a particular way and develop it for global investment (2013: 69). The Outgames steered away from having a political stance and instead had a strong emphasis on competition (Washington and McKay, 2010: 473). Such an emphasis on competition can be read as a means of biopower, wherein the biopolitical control of bodies has always had strong associations with processes of racialization (Davidson, 2012: 5). The foundations of international gay sport competitions such as the Gay Games and Outgames are defined by normalized white homosexuality, meaning that the standards of athletic normalization are maintained to favour the bodies of white gays and lesbians (2012: 5). The presumed universal subject in the Gay Games and Outgames is always white and Western; in this way, the logics of settler homonationalism and gay imperialism still impart differentiated sexual regulation (2013: 67). Integral to homonationalist times, the normalization of 'acceptable' queer bodies through sports renders invisible the concomitant processes of neo-colonialism and gentrification (2013: 62). The lack of attention over Montréal's contextual histories and the ignorance of the effects of rapid urban construction are ways in which the Outgames violently displaced and erased certain communities.

The violences of whiteness were realized during the Opening Ceremonies of the



Outgames, when a group of racialized athletes primarily from Arab Islamic and African countries was singled out as "Athletes from Countries with Penalties for Homosexualities" through the announcements (2013: 73). The focused attention on these athletes reinforced the binary between the supposedly sexually liberated nations and sexually repressed nations. And this act, taking place in Montréal, manifested the homonationalist strategies of Western nations; the demonstration of public support for nations without the same LGBT rights as Western nations contributed to the demeaning discourses that project certain populations as naturally homophobic in order to affirm racial hierarchy (2013: 73). LGBT equality, in this sense, is defined by Western rights-based citizenship, which of course, enacts the institutionalized legacy of colonialism.

Also a part of the Outgames was the first international LGBT human rights conference where over 1500 people attended and where the Declaration of Montréal, demands of the international LGBT human rights movement, was drafted (Davidson 2013: 71). Included in the Declaration were rights pertaining to fundamental freedoms and the ending of discrimination in healthcare, education, employment and immigration that were supposed to be universally recognized. The creation of such a declaration had significant effects on Montréal's image; having the international community as the target of such declaration brought attention to Montréal as a forward-looking place with regard to LGBT equality. At such an event, the investment in international LGBT equality complements the project of global citizenship (Burn 2012: 331).

Like other Pride events that take place

in Canadian cities, Montréal's annual Pride (Fierté) has become co-opted by neoliberal structures, impeding any potential for resistive struggles. While Prides in Vancouver, Toronto, Ottawa, Winnipeg have begun recognizing Two-Spirit people in the acronym LGBTTTQ,<sup>4</sup> Montréal Pride still only acknowledges identifications in the LBGT acronym. But this is not to say that a recognition of Two-Spirit people is in any way sufficient in addressing the multiplicity of structural injustices that Two-Spirit people and Indigenous sexual minorities face. The efforts to include Two-Spirit people in internationally recognized LBGT events can often amount to acts of exoticization and tokenization, which was what resulted at Toronto Pride. Toronto Pride's engagement with Two-Spiritness reified racist and colonial understandings of difference (Greensmith and Giwa, 2013: 142). There lacked acknowledgement of the historical and geographical context of Two-Spiritness, and such disregard of the colonial past that gave rise to these identifications merely sustains a system of eliminating Indigeneity (2013: 143). It becomes evident that for Two-Spirit people to be "intelligible as queers," they "must assimilate themselves into contemporary Queer politics" (2013: 140). Toronto Pride then represents an "imagined homogeneity of White settler sexuality" and "derides Indigenous peoples' cultures and understandings of gender and sexuality" (2013: 130).

The banning of Queers Against Israeli Apartheid (QuAIA), a group of queers that mobilize against Israeli Apartheid and pinkwashing from Toronto Pride, is exemplary of Canada's imagined

<sup>4</sup> Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Two-Spirited, Queer

superiority in matters relating to gender and sexual equality.<sup>5</sup> QuAIA's expression of transnational solidarity was unacceptable, since it exposed the colonial realities that exist in both Israel and Canada and thus debased Canada's sexual politics. Canada's role in showcasing its constructed progressive values on an international level helps reaffirm a homonationalist imagining devoid of the racial and colonial realities. This positioning allows all non-Native subjects to "[align] with the progressive future of settler modernity" and thus, "[secure] their emplacement on occupied indigenous lands" (Morgensen, 2012: 172).

Montréal also had a QuAIA contingent at their Pride Parades, but as Morgensen has asserted, critiquing settler homonationalism in Israel is insufficient without critiquing settler homonationalism here in Canada first (2012: 187). The entirety of Pride is built upon ideologies of whiteness, wherein visibility and spectacle-making are central to the materialization of so-called LGBT equality. Thus, it becomes evident that even if Montréal Pride were to follow some of the other Canadian city Prides in recognizing the existence of Two-Spirit people and having Two-Spirit representation, it would be a superficial gesture, since such all Pride events are still working within a neoliberal and neo-colonial framework of LGBTQ place-making.

In the section "Messages from the Dignitaries" in the Montréal Pride 2013 program, Ministers from the Québec government, Bertrand St-Arnaud, Jean-François Lisée, and Pascal Bérubé, stated "[t]he recognition and acceptance of diversity reflect the values of openness and

equality that define Montréal and Québec society" (Montréal Pride, 2013: 7). In addition, Montréal mayor at the time, Laurent Blanchard, declared, "Montréal Pride truly reflects our city's values of acceptance, inclusion and equality and our commitment to ensuring the best quality of life possible for all our citizens" (2013: 7). In the same way, the president of Tourism Montréal, Charles Lapointe, affirmed "[Montréal Pride] provides the opportunity to celebrate equality for all, and to uphold Montréal's reputation as a festive, vibrant, and truly open place to be" (2013: 9). All of the dignitaries' emphases on equality and Montréal's values and reputation demonstrate the usage of these LGBT events as platforms for bolstering particular discourses. Becoming more and more an essential strategy of constructing the neoliberal city, the flourishing presence of LGBT events in Montréal embody a form modernity that erases colonial pasts and creates diversity-oriented futures.

Montréal also hosted the InterPride in 2013, an annual conference that gathers Pride organizers from all over the world. According to the InterPride 2013 website, "Montréal is absolutely the gayest place to be gay on the planet" (InterPride Montreal, 2013b). It also states that Montréal is "one [of] the most cosmopolitan" cities "in the New World" (2013b). These statements substantiate the queer modernity discourse being generated on an international level with regard to Montréal, "one of the world's most vibrant and popular LGBT destinations" (2013b). But once again, the dominant narrative of Montréal as an LGBT inclusive city hides the violent realities that certain LGBTQ individuals and groups still face. In its programming, the conference neglected to address to the particularities of the

<sup>5</sup> See <http://queersagainstapartheid.org>.

LGBTQT community; the workshops that were offered focused heavily on tourism, marketing, and internationalism, without any attendance to racial and ethnic diversity within the LGBTQT community. InterPride is supposed to be “a voice for the LGBTI community around the world” but who even has access to this particular LGBT community (InterPride, 2013a)? Attending these conferences means having both economic and social capital, in addition to the time for international networking and travel. There is a presumption of a universal queer subject, who attends city Prides and only experiences their sexuality as a social barrier. The erasure of particularities contributes to the erasure of Two-Spirit communities in all of North America. Experiences of sexual discrimination by Two-Spirits and Indigenous sexual minorities are neglected by these international structures and spaces, which are supposed to address, but end up merely homogenizing different struggles.

The other large-scale LGBT summer festival in Montréal, Divers/Cité, has transformed drastically since its initiation and is similarly appropriated by global capital. The festival has completely abandoned its queer political roots and is now another tourist attraction that can be seen as similarly exclusionary and/or assimilatory as Pride, InterPride and the Outgames.<sup>6</sup> No longer does the festival even take place in the Gay Village but now takes place in the Old Port, which is federal land and thus cannot stage rainbow flags. The festival also began charging a \$15 daily admission rate in 2013, even though historically all the events were free. This shift away from

its initial dedication to queer liberation sheds light on the current political climate of Montréal, where gentrification and cosmopolitanism are becoming increasingly more prominent. It seems then that Divers/Cité has become just another tool for maintaining Montréal as a global city that is omitted of its histories of social struggles.

The inclusion of Pride Houses in the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympics represented a significant moment of solidification of the relationship established between the construction of international LGBT equality and the erasure of local colonial violences in Canada. It produced “the place, the moment in Olympic history for lesbian and gay visibility, inclusion and human rights,” washing over the protests and resistances organized by indigenous activists (Sykes and Lloyd, 2012: 7). What Sykes and Lloyd have pointed out is the disconnection of the Pride Houses, these constructed spaces of queer modernity, from the resistances and struggles among both indigenous and non-indigenous peoples in resisting the advent of the Olympics on unceded indigenous territories (2012: 8). A narrative of queer modernity is dependent on fixing Indigeneity as backwards and as part of the past (Morgensen, 2010: 106). It becomes clear that Canada’s nationalist gay imaginary relied on the non-inclusion of Two-Spirit and Native sexual minorities in the planning and presentation of the Pride Houses for building these deceptive landscapes (Sykes and Lloyd, 2012: 21).

In this manner, these LGBT events become rituals that (dis)enable citizenship, meaning that certain groups of people are marked as those who belong and other groups as those who do not (Thobani, 2007: 79). The

6 See <http://dailyxtra.com/canada/news/critics-charge-montreals-divers/cite-festival-abandoning-queer-roots>.

repeated performance of “un-seeing” of Indigenous peoples “perpetuates a master narrative in which Native people are erased from an understanding of racial formations, Native histories are ignored, Native people are thought of as historical rather than contemporary, and our homelands aren’t seen as occupied by colonial powers” (Driskill, 2010: 78). These events are complicit with settler homonationalism in that they assume a national and homonormative structure and thus naturalize the belonging of non-Native peoples (Morgensen, 2010: 106). The naturalization of carving out queer space on already settled land fosters the out-of-placeness of Two-Spirit people and Indigenous sexual minorities in LGBTQ spaces (2010: 119). Such erasures through these events are central in narrations of settlement (2010: 120).

As demonstrated through Two-Spirit organizing in Montréal, Two-Spirit people must resist on numerous fronts, for example in struggles for housing, employment and land rights, and against police brutality and racism (Meyercook and Labelle, 2003: 36). Such struggles cannot be relieved, even temporarily, by participating in or hosting internationally-recognized celebratory events. Instead, an important strategy of Two-Spirit organizing in Montréal is simply having get-togethers (2003: 45). Oftentimes, Two-Spirit people are diffused within the larger LGBTQ community and thus, oftentimes are separated from one another and do not know one another (2003: 46). These gatherings are a way for Two-Spirit people to regroup, share experiences and build a sense of solidarity (2003: 50). Reversing dominant colonial history by unlearning colonial conceptions of sexual diversity, relearning pre-colonial traditions of sexual diversity, reclaiming

Indigenous cultures and spiritualities, and resisting Western gender and sexual norms all become central in the efforts to reverse processes of marginalization - processes which affect Two-Spirit people in both Indigenous and non-Indigenous spaces (2003: 50). From the first Two-Spirit gathering organized in 1996, the first Two-Spirited organization in Montréal was created, through which much mobilization has ensued (2003: 45). Thus, unlike LGBT Pride organizing, Two-Spirit organizing in Montréal is not so much about external visibility but about internal relationship-building.

With the recent economic and political conditions of Montréal fostering the creation of particular spaces of social diversity and cosmopolitanism, international LGBT events have been used as strategies for building upon imperialist and capitalist ideologies. What is forgotten in these spaces is the historical continuity of colonization; the erasure of any markers of Indigeneity, including Indigenous peoples and their histories, is indicative of how settler colonialism operates. The desire for LGBT inclusion becomes embodied by the state, making the imagining of a sexually liberated space impossible for materialization. Because sexual regulation was used as means to create and maintain a white settler nation, it cannot be removed from the present political and social context, where Canada continues practices of colonization on Indigenous populations. In this way, the dominant narrative of sexual modernity as constructed through the LGBT events, landscapes of absence, helps sustain colonial practices of assimilation and elimination.

## About the Author

Carolyn Huang is a settler and a child of settler-immigrant parents.

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# Localized Forms of the Global: Implications of World Heritage on the San in Botswana

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*"Tourism is not just an aggregate of merely commercial activities; it is also an ideological framing of history, nature and tradition; a framing that has the power to reshape culture and nature to its own needs," (Dean MacCannel, 1992, p. 1).*

The Okavango River Delta is one of the most striking geographical features of Botswana. With a scenic landscape of exceptional beauty, the Delta sustains a remarkable ecosystem of habitat and species diversity. Surrounding the Okavango Delta live, inter alia, the Indigenous San. The San are the first inhabitants of Botswana and have lived in the area for at least 2,000 years. The San are among the most marginalized groups in Botswana; many of the San lack land rights, are under-represented in government, and face widespread societal discrimination. San communities experience a situation resulting from centuries of interaction with their neighbors, a relationship that has generally been highly exploitative (SASI, 2009). In September 2012, the Republic of Botswana nominated the Okavango Delta as a World Heritage Site. According to the World Heritage Convention, what makes World Heritage exceptional is its universal application; once designated, the Okavango Delta becomes global heritage and global property. Once a site obtains World Heritage status, tourism becomes a major element of a site's transformation. UNESCO World

Heritage acts as a brand that 'developing' countries seek out for international recognition and economic development, and this can have enormous impacts, both positive and negative, on Indigenous populations in the area (Giraud, 2011). Through the case study of the Okavango Delta in Botswana, this paper will examine the relationship between heritage conservation, tourism development and Indigenous identity. I will evaluate the commodifying tendencies of heritage tourism that occur at World Heritage sites, and I will discuss the theoretical and practical implications of this for the San living in the Okavango Delta. Cultural tourism is an alternative avenue through which the San in Botswana can articulate their Indigenous identity for economic and political visibility. Cultural tourism processes, however, remain top-down and tend to restrict the San's cultural traditions to a static representation that is held in the past, so that they are unable to adapt to social changes (Giraud, 2011). There are four San Indigenous groups living in the Okavango Delta region—||Anikhwe, Buga-Khwe (or Khwai), Ju|'hoansi and !Kung—but for the purposes of this paper I will refer to them as the San (Crawhall, 2013).

UNESCO adopted the World Heritage Convention on November 21, 1972 with the aim to conserve and protect cultural and natural heritage through international cooperation. At the heart of the World Heritage Convention



is the value of heritage, which is defined as “cultural and/or natural significance, which is so exceptional as to transcend national boundaries and to be of common importance for present and future generations of all humanity,” (UNESCO, 2013, p. 49). From this definition, UNESCO classifies heritage in two ways: natural or cultural world heritage. In some cases, a site can be designated as both cultural and natural World Heritage site. Although the convention states that there is a universality of the significance of heritage, what signifies “heritage” is debatable, and the specified dichotomy between natural and cultural heritage is problematic for Indigenous peoples who have strong cultural ties to their natural environment. While the universalism of World Heritage at its core stems from “the commons,” the notion of a universal value of heritage is itself a hegemonic tool. Natural and cultural World Heritage sites around the world have become major attractions for cultural tourism. Although the World Heritage Convention does not explicitly mention tourism, it is now accepted as part of a site’s development..

The Okavango Delta is nominated as a natural World Heritage site. It is a mega inland delta system in Northern Botswana, the only one south of the equator. Among some of the inhabitants around the Okavango Delta are the San Indigenous peoples, popularly referred to as the “Bushmen.” The San’s traditional livelihood activities are hunting and gathering, but today few San in the Okavango Delta, or in the southern African region, rely solely on this traditional livelihood strategy. With their increasing interaction with modernizing sources and involvement in community-based programs, many of the San have adopted new livelihood

strategies including producing crafts, crop and livestock farming, and wage labour for farms, state institutions or tourist attractions (Mbaiwa, 2011).

In Botswana, the San hold a unique position and relationship with the state compared to San peoples in neighbouring countries like Namibia and South Africa. Unlike many other southern African countries, the government of Botswana does not highlight racial or ethnic difference in their policies in an attempt to avoid any racial or ethnic conflicts that were and still are prevalent in the region. Upon gaining independence in 1966, the new government adopted policies that prohibited racial and ethnic partiality. Gradually, the promotion of undifferentiated citizenship concealed ongoing ethnic inequalities (Giraud, 2011). These policies also allowed the government to select one cultural perspective to dominate national development, which further deepened the inequalities among other ethnic groups who have different understandings of the world. The San were not the only people marginalized in this way (Mbaiwa, 2005a). This dominant perspective was adopted from the traditionally pastoral Tswana ethnic group. Now, Tswana customary law, language (Setswana) and education systems have been formalized with the state model and dominate the socio-political landscape of Botswana. The government of Botswana informally and homogeneously refers to the San as Basarwa, which derives from a Setswana expression that means “those who do not herd cattle.” Today this label defines the San’s lack of political spaces and the power relations within those spaces. The San reject this name because it is a reminder of their subjugation by the government (Taylor, 2003).

The San's marginalization marks the foundation of relationships between the San and other stakeholders involved in tourism development in Botswana. The uneven power dynamic between social groups offers insight into the examination of how the San, as an Indigenous cultural group, are commodities at World Heritage and tourist sites, and the positive and negative implications of their commodification.

The San represent a unique aspect of the tourism imaginary of Africa's history. Human rights groups and academics define the San peoples as 'Indigenous' but foreigners commonly refer to them as "Bushmen." The term Bushmen was originally a pejorative name given to the San by white settlers. The term is also the name that the global media uses in reference to the San, and thus "Bushmen" is how much of the wider public knows them, especially foreign tourists visiting southern Africa (Giraud, 2011). Bushmen are represented through anthropological literature and popular media as the quintessential primitive "Other." This name evokes images of traditional African peoples: the San as the first inhabitants of the world, living in harmony with nature and unaffected by modernization. These romanticized representations are surely no longer accurate, but they contribute to the San's popularity as tourist attractions. When tourists visit Botswana, they want to see the "Bushmen" in their traditional skin loincloths, hunting with a bow and arrow. Across the African continent, these romanticized representations of Indigenous identity have been strategically commodified for political and economic gain. For example, in Etosha National Park in Namibia, tourists can visit the San's 'traditional villages' where they can

learn to track animals, learn about native plants, and practice traditional games and healing dances with the local San groups (Dieckmann, 2003). Furthermore, in his film *Milking the Rhino*, David E. Simpson illustrates how important the 'real experience' is for tourists: at the Il Ngwesi tourist lodge in northern Kenya, the Indigenous Maasai quickly cover any tracks in the sand made by the safari vehicles after each tour so that every tour group can experience the same feeling of authenticity. Simpson's film speaks of the 'promise' of these tourist projects for Indigenous communities; he argues that this commodification of culture is a new way that Indigenous peoples can interact with modernity. According to Simpson, tourism allows Indigenous peoples to use their identity in strategic ways to integrate themselves into the market economy and to increase their political and legal recognition at the national and international level (Simpson, 2008).

Simpson's argument parallels Tania Murray Li's concept of the 'tribal slot,' wherein Indigenous identity is "an intentional positioning, which draws upon historically embedded practices, landscapes and repertoires of meaning, and emerges through particular patterns of struggle" (Li, 2000, p. 151). If the San are to fit the predefined 'tribal slot' at the Okavango Delta, "they must be ready and able to articulate their identity in terms of a set of characteristics recognized by their allies and by the media that presents their case to the public" (Li, 2000, p. 157). Here the San are able to self-consciously commodify their ethnicity and partake in tourism endeavors, in order to earn money and express their political agency. They adopt what Anna Tsing calls "tribal fantasies" to maintain the field of attraction with outsiders (Tsing, 1999 p. 162). The

tourism industry enables this sense of local agency in the commodification of ethnic difference, and these differences then become distinctive cultural brands that serve to further illuminate a group's distinctive qualities. In *Ethnicity Inc.*, Jean & John Comaroff explain how cultural commodification is an example of new 'ethno-businesses,' where groups around the world organize to create businesses based on the promotion of their identity (Comaroffs, 2009).

There is an apparent ideological clash between tourists' desire for cultural pluralism, which is also the policy of UNESCO, and the government of Botswana's mono-cultural stance (Giraud 2011). Bearing this clash in mind, the commodification of heritage at the Okavango Delta may be a positive consequence, as this commodification provides the San with an alternative avenue through which they can be recognized as a distinct Indigenous group. With international tourism that arises from World Heritage status, cultural tourism is an innovative way that Indigenous peoples can interact with the market economy and forge global alliances (Tsing, 1999). Given the political oppression of the San, the articulation of Bushman identity for political gain can be understood as what J.C. Scott calls an 'everyday form of resistance' (Scott, 1986).

This adoption of romanticized notions of place and time are nothing new to the Okavango Delta in Botswana, which is already a tourist hotspot. For example, Gametrackers is a subsidiary of the international leisure group Orient Express Hotels, which owns the Khwai River Lodge in Northern Botswana. The Gametrackers brochure reads, "you find yourself harmonizing with a different, timeless place, remote from cities, beyond

ordinary history [...] and the realization dawns that you are fortunate and privileged to be in one of the last corners of the planet under the total governance of nature (emphasis added)," (Taylor, 2003 p. 261). The practice of using exotic images to appeal to the tourist imaginary resonates with Mudimbe's theory of Africanism. Mudimbe argues that Western social scientific thinking is not objective, unbiased or universal; rather, it is a product of a specific history and draws on a set of preconceived notions about Africa. Specifically, Africanism is "a subconscious body of knowledge or repertory of images and ideas, enacted in Western art, literature, and scholarship that informs and constrains the ways in which Africa and Africans are represented," (Mudimbe 1988, ix). The last part of this quote, suggesting that cultural representation constrains how Africans are represented, has important implications for the San. Heritage tourism encourages representations of San culture as closed and static repositories of custom and tradition that are held in the past and unable to change or adapt over time (Tsing, 1999). Culture and identity are not static but dynamic, and cultural commodification preserves something that should be adapting and changing (Giraud, 2011).

Another critique of heritage tourism in Botswana stems from the nature of tourist development history in the country. These developments were, and primarily continue to be, top-down processes with the economic benefits going to dominant ethnic groups (the Tswana) and foreign tourism companies. In Botswana, tourism developments have tended to be enclaves in nature, meaning they are concentrated in remote areas and fail to take into consideration the needs and

aspirations of surrounding communities. Mbaiwa argues that this “is a kind of internal colonialism” (Mbaiwa 2005b p. 159). Early tourism projects emphasized the economic impacts of tourism such as foreign exchange earnings, employment creation, and infrastructure development without recognizing its negative socio-cultural and environmental impacts on tourist sites, such as unequal power relations and benefit sharing. Tourism is an industry dominated by developed countries that perpetuates the dependency of developing countries. In the Okavango Delta, foreign companies and investors control the ownership of tourism facilities. As such, tourism reinforces the socio-economic regional disparities in Botswana, rather than reducing them (Mbaiwa, 2005).

Fortunately, in the second millennium, there has been a shift in tourism and conservation projects more inclusive of local understandings and approaches. This focus on local concerns initiated an era of community development fused with natural resource management, implemented through Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM). CBNRM assumes that once rural communities participate in natural resource utilization and derive economic benefits from it, they will cultivate a spirit of ownership that will lead to natural resource use that is consistent with long-term sustainability (Mbaiwa, 2005a). Mbaiwa argues that there were two main factors leading to the participation of the San in CBNRM programs at the Okavango Delta in Botswana: the loss of land and its natural resource, and the need for poverty alleviation and natural resource conservation. Some examples of CBNRM projects in Botswana include campsites and restaurants,

cultural villages, safari lodges, guided game viewing, bird watching, crafts, and tanneries, all of which are based on a tourism model (Lepper & Goebel, 2011). As with any development paradigm, there are costs and benefits for the actors involved. Benefits of CBNRM for the San include more regular employment and income; greater livelihood diversification (and reduced risks); opportunities for locally controlled businesses; and cultural recognition. Costs can be summarized similarly: they include associated losses of income; employment and resource availability; loss of control over local businesses and resources to outsiders; disruption of the social fabric of the community; overutilization of natural resources; and a loss of traditional livelihoods (Lepper and Goebel, 2011).

Furthermore, there are challenges that threaten the sustainability and benefits of CBNRM programs around the Okavango Delta. First, the lack of entrepreneurship and managerial skills among the San has resulted in these communities forming joint partnerships with foreign companies, such as safari companies. These partnerships are expected to transfer entrepreneurship and management skills to the local people, but this ‘trickling down’ effect is yet to be seen (Mbaiwa, 2005a). There is little collaboration and learning between companies and communities, meaning the San have little to do with the management, monitoring or practicalities of running a tourism business. CBNRM programs have thus created a system of passive participation, raising expectations but providing disincentives to work. Second, there is a lack of understanding of the CBNRM concepts. This unawareness is illustrated by the failure of communities to create tourist projects that match their skills and knowledge. For

example, some communities propose or engage in projects that are too elaborate and complicated for their managerial or financial capabilities such as stores and guesthouses that require a high level of experience and training. Third, CBNRM programs rely heavily on outside support and assistance, which is rarely available. For example, due to its lack of resources and institutional capacity, the Department of Wildlife and National Parks is unable to provide necessary follow up on projects or financial services in the Okavango Delta (Mbaiwa 2005a).

In addition to these practical challenges, economic development through CBNRM programs can also affect traditional gender roles among the San. There are a number of disruptive forces that change the traditional gender roles of the San in Botswana, but heritage tourism is significant because it affects both labour division and cultural representations of gender. The San are traditionally an egalitarian society, with a division of labour between genders for food procurement: the men hunt, the women gather. The community development approach to village representation in Botswana came with the formation of community trusts. Men now dominate the community trusts, and women are actively discouraged to seek larger leadership positions. Furthermore, the Hambukushu (descendants of the Tswana tribes) dominate the community trusts and most community development programs in the Okavango Delta. For example, tour guiding is almost completely executed by Hambukushu men because they are more educated and speak better English. The Hambukushu, as the dominant ethnic group in the Okavango region, continue to subjugate the San, and this will undoubtedly be

exacerbated if the Okavango Delta becomes a World Heritage site (Giraud, 2011).

Examination of the challenges, costs and benefits of tourism endeavors through CBNRM at the Okavango Delta begs the question: who is really benefiting? Mbaiwa contends that 53.7% of the tourism facilities in the Okavango Delta are foreign-owned, citizens own 17.9%, and 23.3% are jointly owned between citizens and non-citizens. This suggests that foreign companies and investors have an influence of about 79% of the tourism facilities in the Okavango Delta (Mbaiwa, 2005b). According to the Operational Guidelines of the World Heritage Convention, inscription on the World Heritage list neither imposes nor recommends any changes to the sites' legislative, regulatory and contractual measures for protection. Rather, it affirms that the site will continue to function through the management and protection systems that are already in place in the nominated area. At the Okavango Delta, the primary management plan is the Okavango Delta Management Plan (ODMP), which asserts that CBNRM has been formalized as a part of the national master tourism plan (ODMP, 2013). For the Indigenous San communities at the Okavango Delta, this means that community-based tourism projects will likely increase, thus intensifying the numerous consequences and challenges for the San peoples.

Studying localized forms of the global, such as World Heritage and tourism, and examining top-down community management processes in the production of culture elucidates the far-reaching effects and the site-specific dynamics at the Okavango Delta, Botswana. There are obvious contradictions within

World Heritage status; it is not always perceived as a conservation strategy, but is also a mechanism for economic development. An economic emphasis on consumption is a very powerful hegemonic discourse, one that has deeply shaped tourism development in Botswana (Erb, 2005). Cultural tourism projects at World Heritage sites may be the vessel with which the message of the San's Indigeneity is more fully accepted by the Botswana government, as the San, through their own agency, negotiate their Indigenous identity for economic and political visibility (Giraud, 2011). The commodifying tendencies of cultural tourism, however, restrict the San's cultural traditions to a static representation, disempowering them and limiting their ability to adapt their traditional cultures over time. Moreover, tourism management strategies remain top-down, wherein the Indigenous San see little benefit from their participation in tourist projects. There is no right or wrong approach to tourist development in Botswana, or southern Africa, but it is important to understand that tourism, its origins and its impacts, is framed by a complex amalgamation of history, politics, nature and tradition.

### About the Author

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# Mohawk/Princess: Pauline Johnson, Performance Art, and the Perpetuation of Colonial Discourse

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In her 1991 lecture, "Linoleum Caves," Margaret Atwood provided Oxford's academics with a parcel of information which, despite its potential to become instrumental in the field of Canadian Art history—was left unexamined by both her and the faculty. While speaking of Canada's "Indians", Atwood briefly mentioned Pauline Johnson, a 19th century Indigenous-Canadian elocutionist whose magnitude has shrunk to near nonexistence since the 1950s.<sup>1</sup> Atwood described Johnson as "what would now be known as a performance artist."<sup>2</sup> It is a challenge to envision Johnson's persona as encompassing something other than her talent as poetess, one made especially difficult by the small body of work dedicated to her time on the stage and her absence from Canada's sole feminist performance art anthology.<sup>3</sup> Caught in the Act: an Anthology of Performance Art by Canadian Women makes no mention of the "Mohawk Princess" and claims that performance art in Canada officially took root in 1953 Vancouver, leaving no opportunity for the anthology's editors, Tanya Mars and Johanna Householder, to consider

Johnson's career worth investigating.<sup>4</sup> Knowing of Atwood's contention and assuming that Mars and Householder are frank when stating that their work is meant to redress the lack of historical recording accorded to Canadian women's performance art, a puzzle begins to form.<sup>5</sup> Who is Pauline Johnson? Was she a precursor to Canadian performance art? Should she have been included in Mars and Householder's anthology? What can be taken (if anything) of her absence in regards to the dialectic of Canadian art? In answering these questions, this essay will show that Johnson's absence from the anthology was the result of

1. the racism and patriarchy that permeated 19th century Canadian culture, which forced Johnson to produce performances that conformed to the demands of her white audience, and
2. her subsequent biographies, which systematically undermined her work and ultimately rendered her unfit for the Canadian art historical discourse.

Emily Pauline Johnson was born in 1861 near Brantford, the daughter of an upper class English-Canadian mother (Emily Howells) and a Mohawk father

1 Margaret Atwood, "Linoleum Caves" Strange Things: The Malevolent North in English Literature (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), p. 91.

2 Atwood, "Linoleum Caves", p. 91.

3 Tanya Mars, "Preface" Caught in the Act: An Anthology of Performance Art by Canadian Women, eds. Tanya Mars and Johanna Householder (Toronto: YYZ Books, 2004), pp.10-11.

4 Johanna Householder, "Ap-o-lo-gia" Caught in the Act: An Anthology of Performance Art by Canadian Women, eds. Tanya Mars and Johanna Householder (Toronto: YYZ Books, 2004), p. 16.

5 Tanya Mars, "Preface," p. 11.

(George H. M. Johnson).<sup>6,7</sup> Though George was raised on a reserve, his father, Chief John Smoke Johnson (born Tekahionwake), an employee for the British Indian Department of Affairs, gave him access to European culture.<sup>8</sup> George soon found himself enthralled by the mythology of European conquerors and colonialists, Napoleon in particular.<sup>9</sup> This enthusiasm directed George toward the Church of England, where his stature and popular reputation afforded him the position of interpreter for the Church's missions, during which he oversaw the Christianizing of Indigenous pagans.<sup>10</sup> Once married to Emily (1853), George's high rank allowed him to endow her and their four children with "everything they would have had [had he been] a white man."<sup>11</sup> Indeed, the nights spent entertaining celebrities at Chiefswood, "the Johnson family home", were a far cry from those of Canada's Indigenous communities, who were pushed onto reserves throughout the 19th century and forced to spend their nights

accommodating European squatters.<sup>12,13</sup>

Pauline entered young adulthood a gifted amateur poet and actress well versed in the etiquette of Victorian femininity.<sup>14</sup> Upon her father's death in 1884, she was able to utilize these talents to earn a living.<sup>15</sup> Her call to fame occurred on January 16th, 1892 when Frank Yeigh, an old school friend, invited her to recite the poetry she had penned at a literary benefit held in honor of the Young Men's Liberal Club of Toronto.<sup>16</sup> Following her poem "A Cry from an Indian Wife", the audience of four hundred leapt to its feet, demanding an encore and consequently denoting her skills as a performer.<sup>17</sup> Recognizing the marketability of her triumph and of her race, Yeigh organized Johnson's first reciting tour, billing her as the "Mohawk Princess."<sup>18</sup> Thus began seventeen years of touring across Canada, the United States, and Britain.<sup>19</sup>

To assess whether Johnson's presentations over the course of those seventeen years constituted 'performance art' requires a definition of the genre. For this purpose, this essay will rely on the explanatory articles that preface Mars and Householder's anthology. According to these articles, women's performance

6 Betty Keller, Pauline: A Biography of Pauline Johnson (Vancouver: Douglas and MacIntyre, 1981), pp. 10, 13.

7 Sheila M.F. Johnston, *Buckskin and Broadcloth: A Celebration of E. Pauline Johnson-Tekahionwake, 1861-1913* (Ontario: Natural Heritage Books, 1997), p. 38.

8 Johnston, *Buckskin and Broadcloth*, pp. 21-22 and Keller, Pauline, p. 47.

9 Marilyn J. Rose, "Johnson, Emily Pauline" Dictionary of Canadian Biography, <http://www.biographi.ca/>

en/bio/johnson\_emily\_pauline\_14E.html(date of last access 26 November 2013) and Keller, Pauline, p. 19.

10 Christine Lowella Marshall, *The Re-Represented Indian: Pauline Johnson's Strong Race Opinion and Other Forgotten Discourses* PhD Dissertation, English Literature (Arizona: The University of Arizona, 1997), p. 11.

11 Keller, Pauline, p. 17.

12 Johnston, *Buckskin and Broadcloth*, pp.38, 54.

13 Eva Mackey, *The House of Difference: Cultural Politics and National Identity in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), p. 28.

14 Rose, "Johnson, Emily Pauline," (date of last access 26 November 2013).

15 Walter McRaye, *Pauline Johnson and Her Friends* (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1947), pp. 35-36 and Keller, Pauline, p. 43.

16 Johnston, *Buckskin and Broadcloth*, pp. 76, 98.

17 Keller, Pauline, pp. 57-58 and McRaye, Pauline Johnson and Her Friends, pp. 36-37.

18 McRaye, *Pauline Johnson and Her Friends*, p. 37.

19 Rose, "Johnson, Emily Pauline," (date of last access 26 November 2013).

art ought to: be political, emit a general feeling (anything from grim to comedic representations of the artist's cause), utilize some type of costume, prop, or art object and make use of the artist's body, often through reclamation of sexuality.<sup>20,21</sup>

Pauline Johnson was no stranger to politics. Early in her teens, she "elected to make her way as a New Woman in North America."<sup>22</sup> The movement of the "New Woman" aimed to advance the female sex through the expansion of "acceptable" behavior for women.<sup>23</sup> Though many who took part in the movement's first incarnations were ridiculed, Johnson found great success in deviating from the politically correct.<sup>24,25</sup> The 19th century's middle class widely considered

live performance to be improper.<sup>26</sup> The few genteel women who did perform were expected to maintain a certain level of decorum and command respect through social propriety.<sup>27</sup> The "Mohawk Princess" did not do such thing. Many of her performances were very political in nature, often entailing some kind of reprimand for its spectators.<sup>28</sup> Despite her performances' acknowledgement of socio-political issues like the treatment of the Indigenous peoples of Canada, she was showered with "the loving appreciation of [her] audience."<sup>29</sup> For example, after a performance in 1892 England, wherein she recited her seminal "A Cry from an Indian Wife," one journalist from the *Globe* stated that Johnson's performance moved the "complaisant whites" in the audience by "[awaking] their thoughts [and bringing] penitence [at the sight of] the other side of the story."<sup>30</sup> The socio-political awakening of her audience was without doubt a difficult feat to accomplish. Not only was Johnson an Indigenous woman (a double minority) delivering a political message, but she was also doing so in front of large English-Canadian audiences. These audiences often perceived themselves as just towards Indigenous peoples, bringing them closer to civilization and further from the 'barbaric' customs they believed would impede on their ascendance toward the "true faith": Christianity.<sup>31</sup>

20 Householder, "Ap-o-lo-gia", Tanya Mars, "Not Just For Laughs", Elizabeth Chitty, "Asserting Our Bodies", Jayne Wark, "Dressed to Thrill" *Caught in the Act: An Anthology of Performance Art by Canadian Women*, eds. Tanya Mars and Johanna Householder (Toronto: YYZ Books, 2004), p. 13, pp. 20-24, pp. 68-69, 81-84, pp. 86-87.

21 It should be noted that the anthology also lists the use of multi-media like video and sound as prominent features of performance art, however, in the context of Johnson's time period, such features will not be considered.

22 Veronica Strong –Boag and Carole Gerson, *Paddling Her Own Canoe: the Times and Texts of E. Pauline Johnson Tekahionwake* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2000), p. 59.

23 Strong –Boag and Gerson, *Paddling Her Own Canoe*, p. 59.

24 Strong –Boag and Gerson, *Paddling Her Own Canoe*, p. 60.

25 Prominent McGill University professors, Stephen Leacock and Andrew Macphail stated that women who took part in the movement were akin to "blacks" since they were perceived as attempting to displace young men for the sake of their "unnatural desires" (Strong –Boag and Gerson, *Paddling Her Own Canoe*, p.60-61). Being a "New Woman" was understood by Canada's white male elite as cupid, selfish, and unbecoming (Strong –Boag and Gerson, *Paddling Her Own Canoe*, p.60-61).

26 Strong –Boag and Gerson, *Paddling Her Own Canoe*, p. 104.

27 Strong –Boag and Gerson, *Paddling Her Own Canoe*, p. 104.

28 Strong –Boag and Gerson, *Paddling Her Own Canoe*, p. 114.

29 Strong –Boag and Gerson, *Paddling Her Own Canoe*, p. 114 and Keller, Pauline, p. 60.

30 Strong –Boag and Gerson, *Paddling Her Own Canoe*, p. 107.

31 Mackey, *The House of Difference*, pp. 35-36.

The above example makes it apparent that Johnson fulfilled performance artistry's political and sentimental requirements. However, one would be wrong to assume that her performances were solely grim presentations of Indigenous life in Canada, as her act encompassed a "mixed program of comical skits and stories" as well.<sup>32</sup> She made a point to present her most sober material during the show's first half so she could send her audience home calmly with the comedic input of the second act.<sup>33</sup> In one skit, she would address and poke fun at the nature of Canada's Mounted Police: "that excellent corps, the Mounted Police, scour the prairies and seize any whiskey they find [...] they drink it themselves I am told."<sup>34</sup> One reporter from Kingston found the jokes made at the expense of Mounties so witty that he thought it appropriate to publish them verbatim.<sup>35</sup> Though the Canadian Mounted Police was often understood to characterize Canada's (mythologized) identity as a benevolent and omnipotent Northern presence, Johnson was unafraid to address the shortcomings of its officers.<sup>36,37</sup> For

this, she rarely received any criticism, emphasizing once again her ability to artfully question Canadian culture and politics.<sup>38</sup>

Billed as the "Mohawk Princess," Johnson knew that a large segment of her audience solely attended her presentations to be "brought into personal contact with [...] Indians."<sup>39</sup> As a result, Johnson devoted a large portion of her recitals towards her dual nationality.<sup>40</sup> In 1893, she began dividing her performances into two sections.<sup>41</sup> During the first act, Johnson would enter the stage donned in her best gowns, appearing as a lady—a Princess.<sup>42</sup> In the second, so as to complete the foretelling of the "Mohawk Princess," she would change into what one reporter described as a "strikingly picturesque Indian dress."<sup>43</sup> However, achieving the look of an "Indian" was a difficult task for Johnson.<sup>44</sup> Having had a genteel upbringing, she owned very few Mohawk artifacts and garments.<sup>45</sup> In her desperate search for a costume capable of encapsulating the "look" of the Mohawk, she began correspondence with Montreal history and literature aficionado, W.D. Lighthall:

For my Indian poems I am trying to get an Indian dress to recite in, and it is the most difficult thing in the world. Now I know you know what is feminine,

32 Strong—Boag and Gerson, *Paddling Her Own Canoe*, p. 105.

33 Strong—Boag and Gerson, *Paddling Her Own Canoe*, p. 107.

34 Strong—Boag and Gerson, *Paddling Her Own Canoe*, p. 108.

35 Strong—Boag and Gerson, *Paddling Her Own Canoe*, p. 109.

36 Mackey, *The House of Difference*, pp. 34–36

37 In *The House of Difference*, Eva Mackey utilizes a large portion of her text to criticize the myth of the Benevolent Mountie, claiming "the formation of the North-West Mounted Police in 1873, to act as a quasi military agent of the government in Western Canada, is one of the most romanticized events in Canadian popular history" (Mackey, *The House of Difference*, p. 34). Johnson's statements makes it evident she would have wholly agreed with Mackey (Mackey, *The House of Difference*, p. 34).

38 Strong—Boag and Gerson, *Paddling Her Own Canoe*, p. 109.

39 Johnston, *Buckskin and Broadcloth*, p. 100.

40 Johnston, *Buckskin and Broadcloth*, pp. 99–100.

41 Johnston, *Buckskin and Broadcloth*, p. 99.

42 Johnston, *Buckskin and Broadcloth*, p. 99.

43 Strong—Boag and Gerson, *Paddling Her Own Canoe*, p. 113.

44 Strong—Boag and Gerson, *Paddling Her Own Canoe*, p. 110.

45 Strong—Boag and Gerson, *Paddling Her Own Canoe*, p. 110.

so you can tell me if the Indian stores in Montreal are real Indian stores [...] if you see anything in Montreal that would assist me in getting up a costume [...] I will be more than obliged to know of it [...] but I want one that is made up of feminine work.<sup>46,47</sup>

Her desire to acquire Indigenous clothing is not the most telling aspect of Johnson's correspondence with Lighthall. Rather, her requisite of the femininity of any garments found in Montreal provides insight into the ways in which she utilized her female physicality to advertise and enhance her performances.

Although Johnson was very much aware of the sexual etiquette expected of Victorian women like herself, she did not hesitate to emphasize her beauty and sexuality when performing as a Mohawk.<sup>48</sup> The "Indian" costume, making visible her left arm and ankles (uncommon sights for wealthy white men and the women they courted) as well as her long curly hair, actively enticed the men in her audience.<sup>49</sup> The sexual charm she exuded while dressed as a Mohawk can be best appreciated when her double identity (Mohawk/Princess) is understood in comparison to the "aesthetic[s] that [have come to structure] the female body in Western art."<sup>50</sup> Through the use of publicity photographs, Johnson

promoted her performances with an iconography similar to that of painted nudes.<sup>51</sup> Her flowing hair, her modestly averted gaze, her arms placed at the back of her head (making it appear as though she is laying on her back) were spectacles, invitations for male voyeurism, which men undoubtedly accepted seeing as they perceived her as a colored woman unworthy of their high esteem (Figure 1).<sup>52</sup> In a manner similar to the promotional representations of Saartjie Bartman (d.1815), as the "Hottentot Venus," it is probable that the men who received Johnson's publicity photographs assumed that the "Mohawk Princess" was an oxymoronic term used to advertise an upcoming show aiming to ridicule Indigenous women through the emphasis of their presumed promiscuity.<sup>53,54</sup> Thus, the on-stage appearance of Pauline Johnson as a demurely dressed member of Canada's literary community in her performance's first act must have shocked those hoping to see a "savage."<sup>55</sup> In promoting herself as an object worthy of male lust, and then in subsequently refuting this lust during half her set as someone who presumably resembled her male audience's female relatives, it is likely that Johnson was attempting to reclaim

46 Johnson to Lighthall, 18 September 1892, Lighthall Papers, #17, CN 3, MS 216, McGill Rare Books and Special Collection (MURBSC), McGill University, Montreal, Canada.

47 Strong-Boag and Gerson, *Paddling Her Own Canoe*, p. 110.

48 Johnston, *Buckskin and Broadcloth*, p. 112 and Keller, Pauline, p.33.

49 Strong-Boag and Gerson, *Paddling Her Own Canoe*, p. 113 and Johnston, *Buckskin and Broadcloth*, p. 113.

50 Lynda Nead, "Theorizing the Female Nude" *The Female Nude: Art, Obscenity and Sexuality* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 5.

51 Strong-Boag and Gerson, *Paddling Her Own Canoe*, p. 113.

52 Lisa Farrington, "Re-Inventing Herself: The Black Female Nude" *Woman's Art Journal* vol. 24, no. 2 (Autumn 2003-Winter 2004), p. 15.

53 Lisa Farrington, "Re-Inventing Herself", pp. 16-17 and Mackey, *The House of Difference*, p. 28

54 Mackey notes that that following the Canadian Confederation of 1867 (twenty-five years prior to Johnson's rise to fame) cultural and racial boundaries caused negative stereotypes concerning Indigenous-Canadians to emerge (Mackey, *The House of Difference*, p. 28). Among these was the belief that they presented hypersexual tendencies (Mackey, *The House of Difference*, p. 28).

55 Keller, Pauline, p. 64.



the sexual respectability that she and her paternal relatives had lost at the hands of European colonialism.<sup>56</sup>

Were she to set foot on a stage today, Pauline Johnson would undoubtedly be recognized as a performance artist. Her act was political in nature, relied on both comedic and dramatic storytelling, and utilized costumes to present the Indigenous body as both an object of sexual attraction and one worthy of the respect given to European-Canadian women.<sup>57</sup> It is problematic that Johnson was not included in Mars and Householder's anthology. How could two adamantly feminist Canadian scholars and ex-performance artists overlook one of their genre's major female precursory performers?<sup>58</sup>

When researching Johnson, colonial discourse plagues references to her performances.<sup>59</sup> Of course, this is especially true of her two earliest biographies, *The Mohawk Princess* (1931) and *Pauline Johnson and her Friends* (1947). Both were written at a time when their respective authors could only discuss her work in the context of gender and race, as opposed to poetic talent and showmanship, as these were anomalies and the theoretical perspectives of Bhabha, Nochlin, and Pollock did not yet exist.<sup>60</sup> What is surprising, however, is that a similar sense of dominance still permeates throughout modern works dedicated

to Johnson.<sup>61</sup> Both Pauline (1981) and *Paddling Her Own Canoe* (2000) represent her in terms of her race and gender, only this time, the claims are that she used her Mohawk lineage and beauty to manipulate her audience. For example: "Johnson developed several performance strategies to exploit power structures on her own behalf," and "[Johnson] willingly capitalized on her [...] identity to keep bringing in the customers."<sup>62</sup> The sense gathered from these works is that Johnson was a phony "Indian," a sell-out who utilized the trope of the "Noble Savage" to her advantage and thus perpetuated Eurocentric considerations of race and gender.<sup>63</sup> Modern claims concerning her manipulative inclinations serve to undermine her contributions to Canadian art history as a performance art pioneer.<sup>64</sup>

The fact of the matter is that Johnson, because of the colonial context in which she lived, had no choice but to indulge her audience with tropes, no matter how sexist or racist these might have been.<sup>65</sup> In accordance with Canadian law, her father's Indigenous origins classified her as a "half-breed," effectively rendering her unfit for marriage with men among her social class.<sup>66</sup> It is unlikely that the prospect of marrying an Indigenous man appealed to Johnson, seeing as such an occurrence would result in the loss of her social magnitude and her confinement to an "Indian" reserve.<sup>67</sup>

56 Mackey, *The House of Difference*, p. 28

57 Strong –Boag and Gerson, *Paddling Her Own Canoe*, pp. 60, 105-109, 113, Johnston, *Buckskin and Broadcloth*, p. 99, Lisa Farrington, "Re-Inventing Herself: The Black Female Nude", p. 15.

58 Tanya Mars, "Preface", pp. 10-11.

59 Marshall, *The Re-Represented Indian*, pp. 49-84.

60 Marshall, *The Re-Represented Indian*, pp. 55-56.

61 Marshall, *The Re-Represented Indian*, p. 74.

62 Strong –Boag and Gerson, *Paddling Her Own Canoe*, p. 113 and Keller, Pauline, p.64.

63 Marshall, *The Re-Represented Indian*, p. 74 and Strong –Boag and Gerson, *Paddling Her Own Canoe*, p. 115.

64 Marshall, *The Re-Represented Indian*, p. 71.

65 Marshall, *The Re-Represented Indian*, pp. 49-84.

66 Keller, Pauline, pp. 16, 54.

67 Johnston, *Buckskin and Broadcloth*, p.99.

After all, in the same year Johnson rose to great acclaim, the federal government of Canada released a statement asserting the need to “persuade Indians to give up their wondering habits.”<sup>68,69</sup> It becomes understandable, then, that a woman brought up in luxury and wealth would deliberately adopt colonial stereotypes to remain economically afloat and relevant within the community in which she was raised.<sup>70</sup> Nevertheless, the fact that contemporary biographers emphasize her adoption of Eurocentric ideals, as opposed to her ability to inform the consciousness of Euro-Canadians in regards to the treatment of the Indigenous community, in itself acts as a continuation of a colonial discourse. It precludes Johnson from her own self-determination (“she had always considered herself Indian”) and consequently undercuts her importance as a performing activist.<sup>71</sup>

The long-term effect of this new type of colonial discourse is the erasure of Pauline Johnson from the Canadian Art canon, which can explain her absence from *Caught in the Act*.<sup>72</sup> Why should a “phony Indian” (assuming Mars and Householder were actually aware of her existence) be considered in a work aiming to outline pioneers in Canadian performance art?<sup>73</sup> Though Johnson fits well in Atwood’s “performance artist” categorization and, as consequence, should have been included in the anthology, her gender, race, and Victorian

upbringing (first perceived as threats and later as scapegoats by biographers) have actively stunted her ascendance to national recognition as a precursor to Canadian performance art.<sup>74</sup> In terms of the dialectic of Canadian art history, Johnson’s stratification underscores the fact that the contemporary Canadian art historical discourse remains inundated with gendered and ethnic subjectivities, despite the presence of feminist and post-colonial theories of re-interpretation. That many more like Johnson have been overlooked because of their gender, ethnicity and social class is more than a possibility, it is a certainty.

### About the Author

Marie-Claude Gill-Lacroix self-identifies as a non-Indigenous ally. She is currently studying Political Science and Communication at McGill University. During the summer of 2014, Marie-Claude will work in conjunction with the Native Friendship Centre of Montreal to conduct research on public institutions capable of hindering the political participation of Indigenous populations.

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- 68 Johnston, *Buckskin and Broadcloth*, p.99.
- 69 In this same statement, Canada’s Indigenous population is described as “ignorant and lazy” (Johnston, *Buckskin and Broadcloth*, p.99).
- 70 Marshall, *The Re-Represented Indian*, p. 74.
- 71 Marshall, *The Re-Represented Indian*, p. 50 and Keller, Pauline, p. 35.
- 72 Marshall, *The Re-Represented Indian*, p. 71.
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# An Actor's Outrage, or a Generation's Wake-up Call? Native American Activists' Declaration at the 45<sup>th</sup> Academy Awards Ceremony

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On March 27th, 1973, dressed in traditional Native American regalia, young American Indian Movement (AIM) activist Sacheen Littlefeather addressed the 45th Academy Awards audience in an announcement arranged by American actor Marlon Brando, who boycotted the ceremony. In her speech, Littlefeather explained that Brando declined his award for Best Actor in the movie *The Godfather* in order to denounce the Hollywood film industry's mistreatment of Native Americans in films and on television. It was almost as if 'the Indian' came out of the movie to face the audience. Although this incident was undoubtedly meant to attract the attention of the American—and, potentially, foreign—audience of the time, its message might have long been interpreted through the lens of Brando's celebrity and social involvement.<sup>1</sup> While this public declaration may have been seen more as a 'stunt' by Brando than an event orchestrated by Native American activists themselves, these protesters were

certainly more than just a mouthpiece for the American celebrity. Perhaps a restructuring of our understanding of agency becomes necessary here: rather than being a favour by Brando for the Native American activists, Littlefeather's announcement was a successful action on the part of these militants; rather than being an actor's whim to show off his support for one of many causes, Littlefeather's televised appearance reflected a generational effort to bring issues of social inequality and relations of US mass culture to the forefront of Americans' societal discussions. Likewise, beyond the scope of the film industry, the mixed reactions to Littlefeather's speech might reveal something about the American audience at the time. Thus, in this paper, I argue that in order to analyze this historical event rightfully, it is important to recognize the degree to which it actually was an initiative of Native American civil rights activists, who, like other groups in the 1970s, used mass media to criticize American institutions such as the Hollywood film industry or the federal government as well as their claimed status as global authorities.

## The 'Actors'

By the early 1970s, Marlon Brando had indeed already built himself a name as a prominent advocate for marginalized groups. On the day following the ceremony, one could read in the *New*

1 Given the extensive attention this event got through the years—not only was it broadcasted on live TV, but then discussed, criticized, and debated on in the written press and TV programs, as well as, more recently, films and domestic politics—it becomes nearly impossible (and perhaps futile for the sake of this research) to affirm with conviction whether one particular coverage of this occurrence had more impact than others. However, the relevance and uniqueness of this incident in American and mass media history, is what I choose to dwell on here.

York Times that his declining of an Academy Award “comes after a long career of activity on behalf of racial minorities and other unpopular causes.”<sup>2</sup> In the 1960s, he had marched against segregation in the Deep South.<sup>3</sup> Without wanting to insult the entire movie industry, he wanted to bring attention to the plight of Native Americans. In the speech he shared with the press, Brando denounced the incurable effects that their depictions in movies might have on Native American children’s psyche.<sup>4</sup> For this reason, as Littlefeather explained shortly after her speech, he was considered to be “a long-time friend of the American Indian, long before it was fashionable to pile on the turquoise and the feathers.”<sup>5</sup> To Brando himself, his speech was even more historically rooted. “For 200 years we have said to the Indian people who are fighting for their land, their life, their families and their right to be free: ‘Lay down your arms, my friends, and then we will remain together,’” he remarked in his complementary textual address.<sup>6</sup> “When they laid down their arms, we murdered them. We lied to them. We cheated them out of their lands,” he continued.<sup>7</sup>

As for activist Sacheen Littlefeather, there seems to have been confusion (at best) about her identity and the purpose of her presence. Introducing herself as the President of the Native American Affirmative Image Committee in her televised speech, she explained in a very

calm voice that Brando’s rebuff of the industry was due to “the treatment of American Indians today by the film industry [...] and on television in movie reruns, and also with recent happenings at Wounded Knee.”<sup>8</sup> Shortly after the ceremony, rumors circulated that she was not Native American, that she was a Mexican actress, and that she had posed for Playboy. As she confessed years later, “It was really an experience for me. Being lied about in the media, people saying that I wasn’t Indian, people saying that I rented my dress... It was a very tough time. There were death threats at that time.”<sup>9</sup> Born Marie Cruz, her mother was white and her father was a white Apache and Yaqui expert saddle maker, both of whom had met in Phoenix. From an early age, Littlefeather experienced segregation, but it was not until her teenage years that she decided to explore her ethnicity a little more. In the San Francisco area, where she went to school, she met other urban Native Americans and Elders, and that was how she got her name Sacheen, meaning “little bear.”<sup>10</sup> In the

8 Sacheen Littlefeather. “Marlon Brando’s Oscar\* win for ‘The Godfather’” (27 March 1973) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2QUacU0I4yU>.

9 Reel Injun. (Dir. Neil Diamond. Montreal: National Film Board of Canada), 2010. Until very recently, Sacheen’s identity has been the subject of public mockery in the media, such as on August 27th, 2012, when commentator Dennis Miller compared Senator Elizabeth Warren—who stated that she was partly of Native American ancestry—to “that stripper chick Brando sent to pick up his Oscar for The Godfather” (see Josh Rottenberg, “Catching up with Sacheen Littlefeather, 40 years after her controversial brush with Oscar history” [in Entertainment Weekly. 19 January 2013.] Accessed 23 December 2013. <http://insidemovies.ew.com/2013/01/19/sacheen-littlefeather/>).

10 Lisa Snell. “What would Sacheen Littlefeather say?” (in Native American Times. 26

2 Special to The New York Times. “Brando Has Long Backed Rights of Racial Minorities [Sic].” New York Times, 28 March 1973, 40.

3 Ibid.

4 Marlon Brando. “That Unfinished Oscar Speech.” New York Times, 30 March 1973, 39.

5 Special to The New York Times. Op. cit.

6 Marlon Brando. “That Unfinished Oscar Speech.” Op. cit.

7 Ibid.

post-ceremony coverage of the Academy Awards, Littlefeather was depicted as a troublemaker who had caused something irrevocable and triggered a surge of negative comments. Reflecting on her life experience in 2010, Sacheen Cruz Littlefeather even introduced herself as “half Indian, and half savage.”<sup>11</sup>

Quickly, the written press and American television also widely speculated on the relationship between Brando and Littlefeather. Marlon Brando, who somewhat expected how the whole situation was going to be perceived, said in the opening of his textual address to the press, “Perhaps at this moment you are saying to yourself, what the hell has all this got to do with the Academy Awards? Why is this woman standing up here, ruining our evening, invading our lives with things that don’t concern us, and that we don’t care about? Wasting our time and money and intruding in our homes.”—and he was right.<sup>12</sup> Actor John Wayne, notoriously known for his roles in Western movies, criticized the move, suggesting that Brando “should have appeared that night and stated his views instead of taking some little unknown girl and dressing her up in an Indian outfit.”<sup>13</sup> To many it was as though the great Marlon Brando had ‘used’ the young and innocent Littlefeather, at worst, or had

done a favour to poor ‘Indians,’ at best. However, the idea that Littlefeather herself could take responsibility for her action, or that, more generally, Native American activists could claim some agency in the event, seemed almost inconceivable in the coverage of the event.

Yet, while the reasons that pushed the AIM to recommend that the 26-year-old woman be the one to go to the ceremony remain unclear, Brando and Littlefeather certainly shared a concern for fairer ethnic depictions in the film industry. In fact, they had already met months or years (records do not say) before the Oscars in Washington DC, where the young woman was presenting to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) on race and minorities.<sup>14</sup> Created in 1934 under the Communication Act, the FCC replaced the former Federal Radio Commission and took several of the same responsibilities. Back at its inception, it was agreed that the seven-member body would regulate radio as well as interstate and international telegraph, cable, and telephone services.<sup>15</sup> While scholars disagree on how much of a product of Roosevelt’s New Deal the creation of the FCC truly was,<sup>16</sup> it is clear that by the 1970s, the FCC’s role had come to include limiting the power of TV networks and, more importantly, dictating what content might be controversial or offensive to conventional values and tastes.<sup>17</sup> Surely enough, it was with full knowledge of these facts that

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October 2010.) Accessed 23 December 2013. [http://www.nativetimes.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=4479%3Awhat-would-sacheen-littlefeather-say&catid=49&Itemid=25](http://www.nativetimes.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=4479%3Awhat-would-sacheen-littlefeather-say&catid=49&Itemid=25)

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- 17 Paul Starr, Op. cit., 381; 368.



Littlefeather had already approached the telecommunication industry. Along with other activists, she felt concerned by the common demeaning depictions of Native Americans in Hollywood films and TV shows. Similarly, Brando believed that “the motion picture community has been as responsible as any for degrading the Indian and making a mockery of his character, describing him as savage, hostile and evil.”<sup>18</sup> The year of 1973 thus marked two important events in the lives of both activists: first, since they had mutual friends in the AIM, Marlon Brando was able to get back in touch with Sacheen Littlefeather a few days before the ceremony; and secondly, after her address of March 27th, 1973, the young woman abandoned her ambition to become a professional Hollywood actress.<sup>19</sup>

### Challenging an Imagined Community

Benedict Anderson’s definition of the “imagined community” may offer a good introduction to understand the effects of Littlefeather’s speech and its origins. As the British scholar reminds us, nationality and nationalism are “cultural artefacts” which require that we look at their history and their change over time in order to understand them.<sup>20</sup> After World War II, the Truman and Eisenhower administrations wanted to unite the American population, an ambition that also meant dismantling the reservation system in order to integrate Native Americans into the American mainstream. This policy came to be known

as ‘termination,’ as it sought to end the “recognition of the remaining elements of Indian sovereignty.”<sup>21</sup> Of course, the attempt to develop a sense of patriotism across Native American territory after a war was no new phenomenon in American history: for example, back in the 1870s, railroad companies and the federal government had worked hand in hand to eliminate the treaty system, which was seen as impeding a national unity born from the Civil War.<sup>22</sup> There had also been more contemporary causes leading to the growth of a Native American activist movement by the 1970s, as will be discussed later. However, these post-war governmental policies embodied one of the most recent and overt attempts to assimilate Native Americans into an ‘imagined’ American culture that defined a particularly circumscribed position for them within it.

Arguably, even if they were not necessarily an extension of the government of the time, the motion picture and television industries contributed equally to the construction of a certain idea of what it meant to be ‘American’. On this, Anderson says that the “imagined” nature of a nation lies in the fact that political or cultural bonds are created between people who will most likely never meet. For this reason, “Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined.”<sup>23</sup> Interestingly, although not pertaining to Native American cultures, the movie *The Godfather* might actually embody one such ‘style’ in its portrayal of a fictional New York-based Italian crime family’s ‘integration’ into the U.S. When accepting the Academy Award

18 Marlon Brando. “That Unfinished Oscar Speech.” Op. cit.

19 Special to the New York Times. Op. cit., 40; Lisa Snell, Op. cit.

20 Benedict Anderson. “Imagined Communities” (in *Imagined Communities: reflections on The Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. New York: Verso, 1991), 48.

21 Eric Foner, Op. cit., 1069.

22 Ibid. 654

23 Benedict Anderson, Op. cit., 48.

for Best Picture on the same evening as Brando, producer of the film *Albert S. Ruddy* possibly gave the audience an indication of that:

America needs the motion picture business, and the motion picture business needs the United States. Good audiences need good films as good films need good audiences. The American dream and what we all want, for me at least, is represented by this [he shakes his Oscar]. It's there for everybody if we want to work, dream, and try to get it. Thank you very much.<sup>24</sup>

How much of that speech was prepared in advance, or whether Brando thought *The Godfather* to be a particularly relevant movie (and, in the context of the ceremony, an appropriate setting) to make his announcement, remains unknown. However, Ruddy's speech offers a unique insight into Hollywood filmmakers' intentions behind the representation of cultural minorities in the movies they crafted at the time. More significantly, it gives an interesting sequence to Littlefeather's declaration earlier that evening—and so did the immediate reactions to her speech.

Before her identity even came to be questioned, the retorts during Sacheen Littlefeather's live declaration were very mixed. Boos were mixed with cheers, causing the young woman to take a pause during her speech. It almost seemed like she had touched a nerve of the spectators, that she had raised a question that they were everything but indifferent to. Was it disappointment towards Brando's 'tactless' move, or truly against Littlefeather and/or Native American activists? Perhaps a bit of everything. In any case, the actor

later commented, "I was distressed that people should have booed and whistled and stomped even though perhaps it was directed at myself."<sup>25</sup> After Littlefeather walked off stage, the audience was left a bit dumb by the surprise. Whether out of complete intolerance for this intervention, or as some clumsy attempt to cool down the atmosphere, a few presenters made comments that gave the impression to ridicule Littlefeather's announcement afterwards. Actor Clint Eastwood wondered out loud whether he should present the Award for Best Picture "on behalf of all the cowboys shot in all the John Ford westerns over the years."<sup>26</sup> Nervously opening the envelope for Best Actress, Raquel Welch mocked, "Hope they haven't got a cause..."<sup>27</sup>

If conceiving an imagined community meant creating and promoting an image that appeared to connect many different people, it also implied determining and rejecting the 'unfit.' On the basis of this argument, the AIM and Brando did not believe that the United States was a haven for democracy as it claimed to the world. The term "community," as Anderson explained, gives the illusion that the nation always embodies "a deep, horizontal comradeship," regardless of the exploitation that might prevail and

24 "The Godfather' winning Best Picture" (by Oscars. 27 March 1973). Accessed on 23 December 2013. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y1qWRdil--A>

25 Marlon Brando. "Marlon Brando interview after 1973's oscar" (by Salamazman). Accessed on 23 December 2013. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-0OPtfm5sOc>

26 "The Godfather' winning Best Picture," Op. cit. Interestingly enough, Clint Eastwood participated, with other celebrities, in a documentary made by Cree director Neil Diamond some 40 years later, *Reel Injun*, which analyzes the portrayal of Native Americans in Hollywood movies over the past century.

27 Welch, Raquel. "Liza Minnelli winning an Oscar" for 'Cabaret'" (by Oscars. 27 March 1973.) Accessed on 23 December 2013. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DFstplKW7A4>

of the fact that other forms of identity might exist therein.<sup>28</sup> In other words, the American identity was forged, like many others, as a subterfuge to keep a mass more or less cohesive, while fiercely rejecting alternative views. This kind of belief, as will be discussed soon, was precisely what linked the AIM to other social movements in the 1970s. With his experience joining marginal groups, Brando declared, “I don’t think that people, generally, realize what the motion picture has done to the American Indian. As a matter of fact, all ethnic groups. All minorities, all non-Whites.”<sup>29</sup> It would be tempting to think that in denouncing his nation’s “moral schizophrenia” and naive belief that it still protected “the inalienable rights of all people to remain free and independent,” Brando made his own signature.<sup>30</sup> Clearly, he played an important role in exposing a wide audience to issues of social justice that went far beyond the motion pictures—denying this would be unfair—but the popular reading (both literal and metaphorical) of his refusal might have been skewed by his popularity. By 1973, the AIM’s advocacy of Native Americans’ civil rights had actually gained national recognition, so that Sacheen Littlefeather’s speech was seen as yet another grand victory on behalf of many Native American activists. The late Russell Means, a prominent member of the AIM and famous Native American actor, admitted that “Marlon Brando and Sacheen Littlefeather totally uplifted our lives” at Wounded Knee.<sup>31</sup>

### **‘Indians of All Tribes,’ or the Casting of a New Community**

Founded in 1968, the American Indian Movement was an initiative of Native American individuals in the United States to rally against their oppressors, most of which were governmental agencies. Conscious of the irreversible damages made to their people, they saw their mission as raising awareness about “questions that have gone to sleep in the minds of Indians and non-Indian alike,” which is surely echoed in Brando’s statements.<sup>32</sup> As a consequence, they demanded greater tribal autonomy and the restoration of some of the promises made in treaties.<sup>33</sup> In the words of Oglala Lakota Birgil Kills Straight, posted on the homepage of the AIM website, the “AIM was born out of the dark violence of police brutality and voiceless despair of Indian people in the courts of Minneapolis, Minnesota...”<sup>34</sup> As Littlefeather mentioned in her address, this violence and revolt against oppression was best exemplified “with recent happenings at Wounded Knee.”<sup>35</sup> In the spring of 1973, disagreements over the legitimacy of the BIA (Bureau of Indian Affairs) and Tribal Council in Indian lands led the AIM to confront U.S. armed forces on the Pine Ridge Indian reservation.<sup>36</sup> For 71 days, these Native Americans were armed and exchanged gunshots with agents from the Federal Bureau of Investigation, who surrounded the town. Both the site of the conflict and the pan-Nativism that

28 Benedict Anderson, *Op. cit.*, 50.

29 Brando, Marlon. “Marlon Brando interview after 1973’s oscar”, *Op. cit.*

30 Brando, Marlon. “That Unfinished Oscar Speech,” *Op. cit.*

31 Reel Injun. Dir. Neil Diamond, (Montreal: National Film Board of Canada), 2010.

32 American Indian Movement. “AIM-GGC Profile.” Accessed 23 December 2013. Unknown. <http://www.aimovement.org/ggc/index.html>

33 Eric Foner, *Op. cit.*, 1069.

34 American Indian Movement, *Op. cit.*

35 Sacheen Littlefeather. “Marlon Brando’s Oscar” win for ‘The Godfather’,” *Op. cit.*

36 American Indian Movement, *Op. cit.*

the AIM called for drew upon significant themes in the history of that struggle. Back on December 29th, 1890, federal troops had been deployed in the area to prevent a feared general uprising emanating from Ghost dancing, a legacy of yet earlier pan-Native movements. Soldiers opened fire on many dancers and killed many women and children, an event that both directly and indirectly led to an unprecedented decrease in the Native American population of the country.<sup>37</sup>

Following the creation of the AIM and right before the crisis at Wounded Knee, in 1969, a group called 'Indians of All Tribes' (IAT, also called 'Indians of All Nations') had become famous for its occupation of Alcatraz Island in San Francisco. Among its members was Sacheen Littlefeather, who regularly showed up on the island throughout the 19 month-long occupation while still attending school. Their claim was that according to a legal provision, Native Americans were entitled to take over any public property that had been given up by the federal government, an argument that the AIM defended in many subsequent occupations of federal facilities throughout the 1970s.<sup>38</sup> Of course, the point made by this group was broader—it meant to evoke unresolved or unpaid-for past dispossession, which launched the Red Power Movement.<sup>39</sup> This upsurge in Native militancy truly was—along with

women's and gay and lesbian liberation movements, as well as Latino and African-American activism—a product of the 1970s. The emergence of a socio-political consciousness in the U.S., stemming from the disillusionments of the post-WWII and -Vietnam War era, had gone a long way in the minds of the youth, who then demanded more democratic policies and institutions in the American society.<sup>40</sup>

In fact, Littlefeather drew much inspiration from her interactions with other movements' advocates, and so did other Indian activists. In spite of the tumults that followed her address, she explained in an interview 40 years later that, "I knew that I was on the right track when I got a note from Coretta King, Martin Luther King's wife. She told me she was proud of me."<sup>41</sup> One could argue that in some sense, the AIM and the IAT also imagined their own 'community'—one that united all Native Americans in the adversity resulting from white (or non-Native American) coercion, and that should be the 'new face' of Indians in Hollywood films. On the AIM's website, one can actually read that "The American Indian Movement is then, the Warriors Class of this century, who are bound to the bond of the Drum, who vote with their bodies instead of their mouths... THEIR BUSINESS IS HOPE. [Capitals included]"<sup>42</sup> Like other imagined communities though, not all Native Americans agreed to their demands or the way they expressed them. After all, others also worked for these same bodies that were attacked by both civil rights' groups.<sup>43</sup> This being said—or, perhaps,

37 Eric Foner, *Op. cit.*, 655. Looking back on the violent struggles of Native Americans in Wounded Knee, native artist and activist John Trudell bluntly but carefully reminds that, "The American government fought a war against us..." (see *Reel Injun*. Dir. Neil Diamond [Montreal: National Film Board of Canada], 2010).

38 PBS. "Alcatraz Is Not an Island." Accessed 24 January 2014. ITVS, 2002. <http://www.pbs.org/itvs/alcatrazisnotaniland/activism.html>

39 *Ibid.*, 1069.

40 Eric Foner, *Op. cit.*, 1066.

41 Lisa Snell, *Op. cit.*

42 American Indian Movement, *Op. cit.*

43 *Ibid.*; Marlon Brando. "Marlon Brando interview after 1973's oscar," *Op. cit.*

for this reason—the enthusiasm that Native American activists shared with one another as well as other groups ultimately pushed them to seek new avenues to make their point.

These groups' general concerns and expectations for more democratic governance only joined an expanding number of protesters who already used mass media to express alternative ideas and gather new members, both domestically and overseas. The written press, radio, and television had been used widely to promote ideas or policies that suited the U.S. government. With the increasing climate of disillusion that emerged in the country in the 1960s and 1970s, these ways of disseminating information became prime opportunities to foster individual and informed participation in society and counteract years of propaganda. As an example, after much cover up and censure of the Vietnam War, attempts were made to bring more attention on the gloomy realities of the war overseas: American documentaries were directed and broadcasted on the subject, although they benefited from only so much publicity.<sup>44</sup> Similarly, the IAT started to broadcast radio shows live from Alcatraz Island (called "Radio Free Alcatraz") on a daily basis during their "re-occupation"—from their point of view, as historian Eric Foner would say—of the island to educate the public about their claims and the evolution of their siege.<sup>45</sup>

Initiatives to condemn American entertainment institutions' hidden attempts to promote governmental

policies also happened from outside of the United States. Before the event at the Academy Awards, other individuals had protested against the U.S.'s cultural imperialism, which worked hard at demarcating a line between white Anglo-Saxon Protestant America and the rest of the world.<sup>46</sup> For instance, *How to Read Donald Duck* was a political science work produced by foreign-born Chilean authors Ariel Dorfman and Armand Mattelart and published in Chile in 1972 that criticized the strong political biases carried in Disney productions, which were then sold overseas. From real-life attempts to crush local adaptations of Disney cartoons to detailed guides on how to 'recognize' Native people abroad to bring them back home, the gigantic corporation acted as a medium to express a specific idea of what it meant to be American. Such cases also found much resonance in the actions of Native American activists back in the United States, as they often compared themselves with 'underdeveloped' countries overseas. More than mere monetary compensations, they demanded self-determination, just "like the emerging nations of the Third World."<sup>47</sup> To some extent, Disney's propaganda abroad, like American television and movie production domestically, sold a pseudo-homogeneous American identity that cut short the growing desires of cultural minorities to have their rights recognized.

If mass media offered advocacy groups much power to communicate with a larger audience, confronting important cultural institutions could also turn against these activists—and Littlefeather learned how

44 Greg Mitchell. "The Great Hiroshima Cover-Up," in *The Nation* (3 August 2011). Accessed 23 December 2013. <http://www.thenation.com/blog/162543/great-hiroshima-cover#>

45 Eric Foner, *Op. cit.*, 1069; American Indian Movement, *Op. cit.*

46 Ariel Dorfman and Armand Mattelart. *How to Read Donald Duck* [transl.] (New York: International General), 1975.

47 Eric Foner, *Op. cit.*, 1069.

much of a tremendous opponent the Hollywood film industry could be. Right before Sacheen Littlefeather got in the hall to make her announcement, producer of the Academy Awards' show Howard W. Koch told her, "I'll give you 60 seconds or less, and if you go over that 60 seconds, I'll have you arrested. I'll have you put in handcuffs."<sup>48</sup> Clearly, there was something that was deemed inappropriate, even criminal or threatening in coming to the ceremony to make a political statement rather than enjoying it and playing one's 'usual' part in the show. That same 'unfitness' in the imagined community of the motion picture industry was emphasized in the exacerbated critiques made of Littlefeather and her address. According to Seminole film historian Melinda Micco, all silly debates over her identity, her dress, and her relationship to Brando were made "to personally discredit her, but at the same time to discredit the message that she was trying to deliver—about the depiction of Native people in film, but she was also talking about the atrocities against Native people that were continuing."<sup>49</sup> Littlefeather was perhaps only one ambassador of Native American militancy, and one voice among other minorities in the American society, but she was also threatening a stability that was enjoyed by the majority through their TVs and personal entertainment. In a way, her opponents chose in their turn to use mass media as a channel to obligate her to fit in the American mainstream.

### Conclusion

Whether a consequence of the emergence of Red Power or not, the Native American population in the U.S. grew significantly from 1970 onwards, partly as

a result of a "rising sense of self-respect".<sup>50</sup> Looking back, it is worth wondering how different the outcome would have been or would still be if Brando and Littlefeather had not gotten in touch in 1973, or if Littlefeather had otherwise not been able to make her announcement at the Academy Awards. After all, until she actually came onstage, nobody knew whether Marlon Brando's name was going to be called out. It is nearly impossible to assert with conviction how much of a key moment this particular event of 1973 was in Native American people's destiny in the U.S.

Thus, in the face of so much ignorance, it is equally important to give the potential role Native American activists played in the development of their cause just as much consideration as Brando's decision to boycott the awards or to be replaced. With all the credit that can be given to the actor, perhaps he should not be thought of as the one determining factor that had the grace to dedicate his attention to the 'Indian cause.' Perhaps Brando's address was a message in his own words about a cause that the AIM or Littlefeather had brought to his ears. Although the speech and venue were his, the message or action was still very much an initiative of Native American protesters. The relevance of this question is that it offers us a different historical perspective on that event, one that gives more agency to the main interested parties.

The Academy Awards represented one of America's proudest expressions of an imagined American culture. The problem was that this industry, just like other institutions in U.S. history, had been imposed on a long-existing cultural diversity, embodied here by

<sup>48</sup> Reel Injun, Op. cit.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Eric Foner, Op. cit., 1069.



Native American descendants. As it was shown in this paper, Anderson's notion of "imagined communities" is relevant to our analysis, even if primarily looking at the extent to which the written press both used and promoted a number of cultural constructions. The intention behind Littlefeather's speech and the extent to which it appealed to new communities in the making is what matters. Moreover, it is arguable that television and films had an even more instrumental role in this project since, contrary to the written press, they did not rely as much on the literacy of an audience.

Although Native American activists clearly only spoke for a fraction of the entire Native American population at the time, their promotion of a pan-Native consciousness through mass media was unprecedented and really characteristic of their time. It is certainly possible that putting conventional ideals and worldviews—as depicted in Hollywood movies—back in question, particularly through the industry that had heavily contributed to their dissemination, was tantamount to attacking an actual and cherished American identity. There was, perhaps, the sensitive nerve that Littlefeather and other Native American activists touched in that speech of March 1973 that would indeed trigger change over the upcoming 40 years.

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Nicolas Magnien is a final-year undergraduate student at McGill University completing two concurrent degrees: one B.A. in Geography and Hispanic Languages, and another one in History (Hons.). His personal interests and professional experience have introduced him to Indigenous issues globally, but his academic research has

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## As With the Sage

Andrew De Luna

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I stand outside for a while to take in the midnight scene. Damp stone is under my boots. Not too long ago, there would have been marbled ice or firm snow pack, but February is ending and everything is melting. A muffled drizzle, almost invisible to my eyes but noticeable in the puddles, continues to eat away at the snow banks. Packs of loud students stumble around campus. Shouting nonsense, they mindlessly ignore the ancient peace of these elms. But who am I to judge? I join them too, some nights. Somewhere between blissfully ignorant and painfully reverent, I stand on the edge of this social border.

Walking under a lamp now, I see how much rain there really is and begin to worry about the eagle feather in my hand. Though I doubt water could damage its precise weaving, I quicken my pace. Under the mist, I chant some Lakota words that I heard long ago. I do not know the meaning of these words. And I do not know why I am walking through New Haven, in the first hours of a Sunday. Trusting the wisdom of my feet and the felt meaning of the song, I walk towards the Native American Cultural Center.

When I arrive, I run upstairs to grab a hand drum, and then make a quick circle around the building to find shelter. It is late. The parking lot behind the building is empty. An

old sodium street light hums into the darkness. Standing under the mist, under the yellow light, my shadow keeps me company.

A small staircase under a wooden overhang proves dry enough. I pull a velvet pouch out of the chest pocket of my leather jacket. I slide an abalone shell from it. I set it down on the floorboards, religiously. I remove some sage from my other pocket and some matches I got from the cigar shop around the corner. From this same pocket, I take a cigarillo. I spill out some tobacco into my palm, gather a pinch, and bless the four directions. Moving in a circle, starting from the East, I pray.

I strike the match against the sandpaper box. Running the flame along the bundle of sage, meditatively, I marvel at the sweetness of the sacred smoke. I pick up the abalone chalice and place the burning herbs in the center. With the eagle feather, I waft the smoke around me. In thin, spiraling fingers, the smoke takes hold of me. After blessing myself, I set the shell down with even more reverence.

I strike the drum I brought with me. This one beat echoes across the empty parking lot. I close my eyes. I resume the heartbeat of my drum, the exact same beat that my ancestors felt in their chests and heard at their powwows. I begin to chant those mysterious words. The drum in my chest and the drum in my hands get louder and faster. The music holds me.

I strike the rawhide a final time. I hear the rhythmical drip of water off the rooftop. I open my eyes to a

vision. An empty New Haven parking lot becomes the mountains of Lakeville. I remember the Berkshires. The damp stone cools my bare feet. I smell the wet grass of the golf course below. Beyond I see the canopy of hemlock, white pine, and sugar maple against the midnight blue sky. I hear the breeze playing in the sweet grass meadows in the distance. I feel the smooth surface of my red cedar flute in my hands. I am grateful that I have it with me. I play a song for this summer night.

I begin with the tree line. I trace its shadow precisely. This natural sheet music rises and falls, creating a smooth and rhythmical song. As the edges of the forest trail off, my final note hangs in the air. I hear my flute echo across the distant lake, that I love to swim in, and am drawn into the wilderness.

I walk down the steps onto the fairway that lies between Watson Hall and the forest. The dewy grass tickles my feet. This is a wonderful sensation. I smile. Flute in hand, I walk to the edge of the forest. I squint through the heavy undergrowth and try to peer through the dark forest night. It is too dark. Then I remember my friends who enjoy my music. I put the cedar mouth piece to my lips. Even it smells like the woods. My fingers move to cover the six holes, instinctively. But I withdraw the last three, intentionally, and begin my song.

I play a few long, patient notes to let them know I am here. I look up expectantly for early comers. There is only darkness. A little spooked, I take a few steps back onto the safety

of the tame grass. I play my flute louder in a burst of chirping notes. I spin a rapid melody to match their thousand partner dance. From the depths of the forest, they emerge in bursts. Diving and rising, appearing and disappearing, they fill the air around me with light. Enthralled, I spin around and try to play their rapid fireworks show. Now I am dancing under the light of a thousand fireflies! This is my favorite Saturday night dance. This field on the edge of the forest is what holds me. Spinning and playing in nature, I cannot resist laughing out loud.

Someone shouts—another blissful group wandering around the streets. My fingers have tightened in the cold air. I am holding a drumstick. I can still hear the last note that echoes off the rawhide. A wisp of smoke rises from the ashes of the sage. The earthy, saccharine scent still lingers, though. I begin to wonder how long I was dreaming and what it means.

Yesterday, my friend saw a seagull above Chapel Street. He was shocked. “What is that doing so far from the ocean?” His words did not register in my mind. I was thinking of my homework. We moved on. But now I remember. I remember that New Haven sits on the edge of an ancient glacial lake. I think I’ll go to East Rock next weekend. I want to find the forgotten water.

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LA MAISON DES PEUPLES AUTOCHTONES

### First Peoples' House (FPH)

Mission: 'A Home Away from Home'

First Peoples' House is an innovative and unique partnership between McGill University and the Aboriginal communities. Playing many roles, including those of residence, gathering place and resource centre, it is first and foremost a community. Our aim is to provide Aboriginal students attending McGill with a "home away from home," where they can find support and encouragement to succeed in their studies and remain connected to their culture.

- To meet the concerns of Aboriginal communities which include educational programming and policies that are culturally relevant to Aboriginal peoples
- To promote collaborative research and learning between McGill University and Aboriginal communities
- To raise awareness within the McGill University community regarding the past, present, and future aspirations of Aboriginal peoples through the promotion of activities that encourage personal, social, intellectual, and cultural interactions between Aboriginals and McGill students and staff.
- Collaborate and engage with McGill, local and national Aboriginal communities to support Native student issues.

#### *Contact Information*

First Peoples' House at McGill

3505, rue Peel

Montreal, Quebec H3A 1W7

t 514-398-3217

e [firstpeopleshouse@mcgill.ca](mailto:firstpeopleshouse@mcgill.ca)

w [www.mcgill.ca/fph](http://www.mcgill.ca/fph)





## McGill Aboriginal Outreach

An innovative program designed to encourage First Nations, Inuit and Métis youth to pursue studies at McGill that is now in full swing. Also a partnership with First Nations communities that has been essential for the realization of this initiative, which works on:

- Outreach and Engagement with the Aboriginal Community
- Access, Recruitment and Admissions
- Student Support and Recognition

### Contact Information

e [aboriginalcommunity@mcgill.ca](mailto:aboriginalcommunity@mcgill.ca)

McGill Institute for the Study of Canada  
L'Institut d'études canadiennes de McGill



w [www.mcgill.ca/deanofstudents/aboriginaloutreach](http://www.mcgill.ca/deanofstudents/aboriginaloutreach)

## McGill Institute for the Study of Canada (MISC)

The McGill Institute for the Study of Canada was established in 1994. Its mission is to:

- Promote a better understanding of Canada through the study of our heritage
- Develop a clearer understanding of Canada's social, political, and economic future
- Identify and explore the benefits that a pluralistic society offers
- Support the study of Canada across the country and internationally
- In order to achieve these goals, the Institute:
- Encourages a multidisciplinary approach to the study of Canada
- Promotes public as well as university-based education about Canada
- Fosters the development of networks in the areas of Canadian Studies
- Enhances informed discussion of public policy

### Contact Information

McGill Institute for the Study of Canada (MISC)

3463 Peel Street

Montreal, Quebec H3A 1W7

t 514-398-8346

w [www.mcgill.ca/misc](http://www.mcgill.ca/misc)



## Indigenous Students Alliance (ISA)

The ISA is a student-led group, which strives to seek out the wants

and needs that exist within the Indigenous populations on campus, and to provide integrative support to and connect Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples throughout McGill University and Montreal. Our vision is to respectfully represent Indigenous Peoples on campus and foster creativity, growth, innovation, development, and education in all of our endeavors, and to offer a platform for Indigenous voices.

Contact Information

e [indigenoumcmgill@gmail.com](mailto:indigenoumcmgill@gmail.com)



### **Aboriginal Sustainability Project**

This project is supported by First Peoples' House, the Social Equity and Diversity Education Office (SEDE), the Office of the Dean of Students (represented by the Aboriginal Outreach Coordinator) and the Office of Sustainability at McGill. The aim is to enhance the visibility and presence of Aboriginal peoples in the McGill and Montreal community through educational and cultural activities. The project seeks to develop a broad-based educational campaign aiming to provide Aboriginal-specific programming and opportunities for bridge-building among diverse members of the McGill community.

*Contact Information*

t 514-398-3711

w [www.mcgill.ca/equity\\_diversity/what-we-offer/aboriginal](http://www.mcgill.ca/equity_diversity/what-we-offer/aboriginal)

### **Aboriginal Law Students' Association (ALSA) / L'association étudiante pour les droit des peuples autochtones**

L'association étudiante pour les droits des peuples autochtones est un groupe d'étudiants en droit à l'université McGill qui s'engage à sensibiliser le public sur les enjeux juridiques touchant les peuples autochtones au Canada.

Aboriginal Law Students Association members also seek to expose students in the faculty to the legal traditions of Aboriginal peoples in Canada. ALSA is a non-hierarchical club open to everyone.

*Contact Information*

e [ala.law@mcgill.ca](mailto:ala.law@mcgill.ca)

Aboriginal Health



### **Aboriginal Health Interest Group of McGill**

We are a group based in the Faculty of Medicine at McGill, but we welcome everyone interested in promoting and improving the health of Aboriginal people, families and communities in Canada.

Our VISION: Healthy and vibrant Indigenous nations, communities, families, and individuals supported by an abundance of well-informed Indigenous and non-Indigenous health care

practitioners working together. Because...HIV, TB, diabetes and suicide rates in Canada's First Peoples are unacceptably high; there are incredible young Aboriginal leaders that would make terrific doctors and nurses if given the opportunity; there is a lack of sustainable health care workers for northern communities; there is a lack of interest among medical students in pursuing a northern career; there is a need to inform health care workers of traditional healing and cultural practices; of the environmental health impacts of climate change, Hydro development, persistent organic pollutants; Justice for all.

Our areas of action:

#### ADVOCACY -

Locally: Lobbying to improve conditions in Montreal

Broadly: Lobbying to increase enrollment of Aboriginal students in the health professions

#### AWARENESS –

Locally: Hosting events, engaging media, reaching out to raise awareness

#### URBAN HEALTH –

Locally: Connecting volunteers with local organizations including the Native Friendship Centre and the Native Women's Centre

#### RURAL HEALTH –

Locally: Training medical students in cultural sensitivity and preparedness

Beyond: Funding options, SARROS, etc.

Contact Information

w [groups.google.com/group/aboriginalhealth](https://groups.google.com/group/aboriginalhealth)



### **Indigenous Access McGill**

What they do: Provide support to students from First Nations and Inuit communities studying in the Health and Social Services disciplines at McGill (Social Work, Nursing, Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy, Dietetics, and Speech and Language Pathology)

What they offer:

- A dedicated support team of advisors who will offer mentoring and tutoring in all aspects of your studies
- A direct link to all the resources available to students at McGill from counseling to study skills, from writing skills to library research and much more
- The use of a resource centre in the School of Social Work where you can consult documentation, do online research, discuss with other students, talk to the tutors
- An opportunity to get together with other First Nations and

Inuit students and to support each other

- A summer support program for First Nations and Inuit students who have been accepted into the social work program or one of the health disciplines mentioned above. The orientation includes mini-courses, field placement visits, and an introduction to McGill support services

#### *Contact Information*

Indigenous Access McGill Office  
 McGill University School of Social Work  
 3506 University, Room 319  
 Montreal, Quebec H3A2A  
 t 514-398-2129  
 e iam.socialwork@mcgill.ca



#### **Social Equity and Diversity Education (SEDE):**

Through innovative practices, strategic partnerships and capacity building, we promote the development of inclusive, sustainable, and equitable environments within our communities. By connecting with local and regional organizations, SEDE also provides McGill's students and staff with community-based learning experiences that foster leadership, encourage civic engagement, and promote a deeper understanding of diversity. At the same time, via outreach initiatives, SEDE seeks to further McGill's stated objective of increasing and improving access for underrepresented groups.

#### *Contact Information*

Social Equity and Diversity Education Office (SEDE)  
 3610 McTavish Street, Suite 12  
 Montreal, Quebec H3T1Y2  
 t 514-398-5645  
 w [www.mcgill.ca/equity\\_diversity](http://www.mcgill.ca/equity_diversity)  
 e [quity.diversity@mcgill.ca](mailto:quity.diversity@mcgill.ca)



#### **McGill Social Work Student Society (SWSA):**

SWSA works to represent social work students' interests politically and facilitate meaningful learning opportunities outside of school.

#### *Contact Information*

SWSA  
 3506 University Street, Room 314  
 Montreal, Quebec, H3A 2A7  
 e [communication.swsa@gmail.com](mailto:communication.swsa@gmail.com)  
 w [mcgillswsa.blogspot.com](http://mcgillswsa.blogspot.com)

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