

# Aboriginal™: Constructing the Aboriginal and Imagineering the Canadian National Brand

By

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## Abstract

The marketing of Indigenous peoples, lands, art and culture from within areas that can loosely be drawn together under the rubric of “tourism,” draws Indigenous peoples in a tenuous and complex web of negotiations of imagery, authenticity, nationalism, economics, and identity. Many scholars have explored the economic implications of such interactions. My dissertation, however, is instead focused on attending to the relationship between the contemporary representation of Indigeneity, Canadian national identity, and the intensifying commoditization of ‘all things Indigenous’ (such as Indigenous bodies, identities, languages, spirituality, and material culture) within such spaces. My work asks, what are the consequences of particular forms of commodification of Indigenous culture and identity? In what ways are Indigenous peoples complicit with such forms and in what ways do we negotiate and/or resist them? How do current representations differ from those during the height of “Wild West” shows during Canada’s early nation-building phase, if at all? Mapping a trajectory of representations and visual spectacle in the latter part of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries across a number of sites I explore Indigenous and Canadian tourism marketing, the 1976, 1988 and 2010 Olympics, and Casino Rama. Such Indigenous self-conscious representation has often taken up through a constitutive, discursive lens of “Aboriginality.” Since the Canadian state’s entrenchment of the term “Aboriginal” within the *Constitution Act* (1982), Aboriginality has become its own representational force whereby some Indigenous peoples embrace it as a pathway to community economic revitalization. It is rather more productive, I argue, to recognize the Aboriginal as an allegorical figure of a contemporary market-focused society. While certainly related to what Daniel Francis refers to as the “Imaginary Indian,” the figure of the Aboriginal and of Aboriginality conceals much more sinister state projects that are tied to lingering Canadian state racism and colonializing agendas that seek, through, neoliberal economic terms, to assimilate Indigenous peoples. This assimilationist project is rearticulated through the intensification of the corporatization and marketing of culture and identity. Indigenous peoples participation in the production of Aboriginality is increasingly positioned by the state as evidence of a willingness to assimilate but also as evidence of the reconciled nature of relationship between Indigenous and settler Canadians and the *indigenization* of settler Canadians. I close out by engaging in the fourth chapter a discussion of the artistic expression of Indigenous mixed media artists Rebecca Belmore and Terrance Houle, artists who, I contend, resist the increasingly regimented frame of Aboriginality and challenge the ease with which the state and settlers lay claim to Indigenous imagery, stories, lives, and lands.

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## *Preface*

*Engaging in a discussion about research as an indigenous issue has been about finding a voice, or a way of voicing concerns, fears, desires, aspirations, needs and questions as they related to research. When indigenous peoples become the researchers and not merely the researched, the activity of research is transformed. Questions are framed differently, priorities are ranked differently, problems are defined differently, people participate on different terms.*

~ Linda Tuhiwai Smith

I spent many nights tossing and turning while considering how I might approach my dissertation research. Questions about the ethical practices of certain disciplinary research methods have plagued older disciplines such as anthropology, history, and psychology, disciplines whose research with respect to Indigenous peoples has been rooted in practices of “exploitation, racism, ethnocentricity, and harmfulness” (Ermine et al 12). Research in those disciplines traditionally approached Indigenous peoples as objects and created/were invested in exploiting Indigenous peoples for institutional and state agendas. The result has been the production of “skewed representations” of Indigenous realities, realities that have been “taken for truth and disseminated as the true history and social conditions of Native people” (13).

The question of devising an appropriate research method has plagued me since I first began my Ph.D. in an Indigenous Studies program and subsequently left that program to return to McMaster’s Department of English and Cultural Studies. I often ask myself why would I, as an Indigenous person in the academy, choose to abandon an Indigenous-centered program for a Ph.D. in English, a discipline that carries the historic responsibility for transporting narratives about the ‘savagery’ and inferiority of Indigenous peoples? What is it that I saw within the Department that made me believe

that it could be a disciplinary space willing to be self-aware and critical of its historic and ongoing role in the oppression of Indigenous peoples?

English has long been implicated in the colonial project much in the ways that the aforementioned disciplines have. In recent decades, however, some people working within English-based branches of literary criticism and critical thinking have endeavoured to be more reflexive and critically self-aware. In the 1960s this commitment fostered the emergence of a new field, Cultural Studies, that examines the way messages and meaning are communicated in Eurowestern societies. Through this investment certain people in the discipline have come to attend to concerns raised by peoples marginalized by “traditional” research. Cultural Studies draws on the work of a wide range of disciplines (such as sociology, history, and English) and in many spaces it encourages social justice by employing critical theorizing as the key method through which to address/challenge/contest/engage hegemonic discourses. Working within the field, people engaged in Cultural Studies research are able to draw on many sites of cultural production – literature, film, art, television, advertisements, and policy documents – to make sense of the world around us.

Insofar as I have developed a great affection for Cultural Studies I am reminded of Renato Rosaldo’s important question in the title of the so-named essay, “Whose Cultural Studies?” Rosaldo strongly recommends that “[t]hose with serious commitments to cultural studies...ask over and over: Who is in the room?” (36) He questions the *Chronicle of Higher Education*’s heralding of Charles Taylor’s work on multiculturalism at the “neglect of other prominent voices” such as bell hooks, Gerald Vizenor, Paula

Allen Gunn, and Henry Louis Gates. Rosaldo asks, “Is this an academic version of the return of the great white hope?” (ibid) I have been preoccupied with the question of “who’s in the room” and have noted the problems identified by Rosaldo but I have also come to ask the question, “who’s not in the room?” Further, I have come to ask what knowledges are present within Cultural Studies, what are the investments of Cultural Studies scholars, and why do we only seem subject to a free-floating set of research ethics?

Reading certain Cultural Studies texts and attending Cultural Studies-based conferences I have noticed a number of references to “Aboriginality,” “Indigeneity,” “Indigenous peoples,” and “First Nations, Métis, and Inuit.” A scant few of these mentions are accompanied by either a critical engagement with the work of Indigenous scholars. Even less of such work involves a commitment at the community level with Indigenous peoples – either through research partnerships or interview-based dialogues with Indigenous peoples. Such research methods have not generally been seen as the purview of “traditional” Cultural Studies. As such methods like interview-based research or grounded theory research are not overtly encouraged as a part of our research praxis. So how is it then that I can set myself apart as a Cultural Studies theorist and say that I am not guilty of replicating the very omissions other disciplines have been critiqued for? I can rationalize that my work does not require the direct involvement of Indigenous peoples because I work in and through literature and other forms of meaning-making. Or, I can claim that it is enough to draw on the work of one or two Indigenous thinkers and some research conducted *on* Indigenous peoples by non-Indigenous peoples to craft my

interpretations. My intention is not to invalidate the good work being done in Cultural Studies, or my own work, but to acknowledge and state from the outset that I have spent countless nights belabouring my complicity in a form of knowledge production *about* Indigenous peoples without speaking to other Indigenous peoples.

Does not this approach replicate a form of the exclusionary knowledge production referred to by Rosaldo and to which I am opposed at my very core? Is it enough that I am an “Indigenous scholar”? Does my engagement with Cultural Studies mean that my project cannot be considered as a part of that larger, general canon of “Indigenous research,” or does it exist solely as Cultural Studies work or in another realm perhaps as “critical whiteness studies”? Most importantly, I wonder if my inclination toward critical theorizing breach some sort of research ethics or ethical responsibility to other Indigenous peoples? Since many of the things I discuss in this dissertation, on issues related to racism, colonialism, and representation, impact Indigenous peoples more generally, how can such a delocalized sort of research be done ethically? The challenge in addressing these questions lies in the fact that there is no discrete field of “Indigenous research,” rather it is a broad category made up of many strands of research that concern First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples. Between some of the over five hundred independent nations of peoples represented within these categories there may be some points of similarity, but it is important to acknowledge and appreciate the uniqueness of the peoples labeled by them.

What I can offer is that I firmly believe a commitment to anti-racism and decolonization must be central to the any work done in Cultural Studies and that purports

to address Indigenous peoples. I have been surprised by the way in which students and readings in some courses in Cultural Studies education have managed to evade any concrete discussion of their relationships to Indigenous peoples in a Canadian context. In classrooms focused on globalization I have had discussions with students who are quite well-versed in external perspectives/opinions on the highly-publicized struggle of the Zapatista movement (Indigenous peoples in the Chiapas, Mexico) yet who have never heard of the struggles of the Lubicon Lake Nêhiyawak (Cree peoples). There has been perhaps just a modicum more mention of the Haudenosaunee reclamation taking place along the Haldimand Tract, a strange occurrence considering that the university itself sits uneasily in Haudenosaunee traditional territory. In light of these exclusions I would like to begin this section by affirming that I acknowledge the people of the territories I live and work in – the Neutrals, the Haudenosaunee and the Mississaugas. I respect their sovereignty, their traditional and contemporary knowledge systems (epistemologies) and ways of being (ontologies).

While I acknowledge that my research is not specific to their local communities and may prove to be of no immediate benefit, I am grateful to them and their ancestors, and especially so to those who have welcomed me into their homes and lives. I hope that my contribution here, to examining encounters that affect us more broadly as connected Indigenous peoples, can be seen as an expression of my gratitude. To draw on the work of Asara K. Santiago-Rivera, Gayle Skawennio Morse, Anne Hunt, and Henry Lickers, I hope that my work here will demonstrate *Kariwiiio*, or a good mind, in my effort to “eliminate beliefs about prejudice, privilege or superiority” (167).

## Introducing Myself

Russell Bishop insists that through asserting *whakawhanaugatanga* or the process of establishing extended family relationships (whanau), Kaupapa Maori researchers can ground themselves in a space where their voices are privileged and where they can begin to “assert [their] power” (118). *Whakawhanaugatanga* is a means of identification, of establishing “your bodily linkage, your engagement, your connectedness, and therefore, an unspoken but implicit commitment to other people” (ibid). In a talk given at McMaster University during the Fall of 2009, visiting speaker Willie Ermine echoed Bishop’s words, offering that knowing oneself in relation to ancestors and ancestral lands forms a necessary component of the creation of ethical space in Indigenous research. Ermine also extended his ethical space to explain to non-Indigenous scholars that to establish a basis for an ethical dialogue with Indigenous peoples, they must engage in honest reflection about who they are, who their ancestors are, and how they have come to be.

Setting up such a positioning is important to move us away from self-invested research that can do more than simply elevate our personal and professional status. *Whakawhanaugatanga*, or this process of what Métis scholar Brenda Macdougall refers to as acknowledging *wahkohtowin* (kinship ties), is a central way through which I can situate myself in relation to my research and ground myself within an honest, caring, and ethical space. To do so would establish what Shawn Wilson in *Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods* refers to as “relational accountability.” Wilson writes,

it is imperative to relational accountability that as a researcher I form a respectful relationship with the ideas that I am studying... You need to understand some of

the factors that go into my side of things: how and why I decided to research this topic, where it fits into my life and some of the factors that have influenced my point of view...I am going to be selective and review the events that I think have had the most impact on this particular research topic (22).

This is in keeping with what Nêhiyaw-Saulteaux academic Margaret Kovach recommends, drawing on Maori academic Graham Smith. She writes that it is a healthy, necessary, and ethical practice for Indigenous academics to include a preface or “utility prologue” at the start of our dissertations:

The story we share in the prologue is *relational*, it is here where we say we are qualified to speak because of our relationships with our kin, kith, tribe, and community. It is here where we introduce our bloodlines and cultural influences as best as possible. In community I would share this through talk, I would give just enough information about my lineage and those who raised me for people to ‘ssess me out’ (x).

By enacting my kinship ties and establishing my relational accountability, I reveal my investments in the work that is being done and this serves as a first step in framing Cultural Studies research in a way that is more than “an innocent or distant academic exercise” (Tuhiwai Smith 5). The following establishes a way that I can engage research that impacts Indigenous peoples as an “activity that has something at stake and that occurs in a set of political and social conditions” (Smith 5).

I was born on the West Coast, in the territory of the Sto:lo and briefly raised in S̓k̓w̓x̓w̓ú7mesh territory. I came to be born in Sto:lo and S̓k̓w̓x̓w̓ú7mesh territory after my father moved there from Cree-Métis traditional territory in Edmonton. Although born in Edmonton my father frequented our family farm just south of Lac Ste. Anne in a tiny hamlet called Duffield, located at the edge of the Wabamun Reserves. Following a stint in the Navy which began shortly after he turned eighteen, he began working on the

railroads and traveled throughout B.C. and into the Yukon and Northwest Territories, where he stopped on occasion in Tulit'a to visit our Dene-Métis cousins. My mother, on the other hand, was born in the East and arrived to the coast with her two children after escaping an abusive marriage. They met at a party in the building they both lived in, and the rest, it can be said, is history.

When my father passed away in the weeks following my second birthday, my mother relocated us to be closer to her family, raising me in the traditional territories of the Neutrals and Haudenosaunee in the City of St. Catharines, Ontario. For as long as I can remember my mom told me that I was “part-Cree” by way of my dad and from the time that I was a child it has been ingrained within me to identify myself in that way. Being that my mother was adopted my identity was formed through my long distance relationship to my kokum (my grandmother), through stories told and photographs viewed, and via material objects like my dad's floral beaded wallet and buckskin jacket. As a person dislocated from my family it has taken me years and many visits when I could afford them, to Edmonton, to family, and to the land where our stories are held and my kin are buried, to begin to re-locate my ties. The exact terms of reference have changed as I better come to understand myself and my immediate familial and ancestral kinship and community ties. While I still live apart from my familial and community contexts, I have actively worked to reconnect to my Cree-Métis family and I insist on myself as part of a whole identity, as an *Otipemisiw-âniskwêw* (Cree-Métis woman).

Perhaps the most formative of experiences that connect me to the project I will undertake here is that I grew up in an urban inter-Indigenous community. Some of my

early mentors were Haudenosaunee, Mi'kmaq, and Anishinaabe. The stories that I heard through my many visits to youth and Elder gatherings, and to the local Native center, were related to the people whose territory I was on. Where I lived there was no collective Métis community or identity (although in recent years some people have tried to create one and lay claim to a Métis Nation identity). I spent most of my formative teenage years feeling simultaneously at home and out of place. However I knew that despite my difference each of us were all impacted by the images that the non-Native community had of who and what we were, what we should look like, and how we should act. I have been called a “witch” for participating in our high school’s Native Circle (a support program for urban Native kids), I have been spit on, and I have been called a squaw. I have also been ignored and misrecognized and I have had to listen to anti-Native racism out of the mouths of innumerable people who assumed that there were “no Indians around.” When I have self-identified I have been told that based on my appearance I could not possibly be Native and at other times I have been treasured, tokenized, and trotted out as “so-and-so’s Native friend.”

There was one time in Grade Five when our Social Studies teacher came around to a discussion of the War of 1812 and British and American Indigenous allegiances. The images in our textbook were a far cry from the Indigenous people I knew (my grandma never wore buckskin when she visited), yet I was quite excited to share with the class my Native-ness. My comment was met with disregard by my teacher, my claims to Indigeneity soundly refuted by my classmates. My fellow students (one of whom recently apologized to me for his childhood naivety) had been told unequivocally through

the pages of our Grade Five Social Studies textbook that I should not, could not, would not, be one of “those” people. As students they could not fathom that the teachers or the books would lie. Since I looked nothing like the black, braided-hair, gruff, loin-cloth wearing and feather bedecked “savages” in the images from our text, it made sense to them that I was not Native.

I am cognizant of growing up the world that my European kinship ties have dichotomized – that being the cultural, social, economic and racial space between ‘white’ and ‘non-white.’ As such, I have been confronting questions of Indigeneity, identity and (re)presentations of Indigenous identity for as long as I can remember. As someone who has walked back and forth between a dichotomized “Native” and “white” urban surreality, purported “knowledge” of and assumptions about “Indians” have in many cases spoken for me before I have had the chance to do so for myself and yet I have a whole identity through which I understand myself – I am tied to that wholeness through every ancestral strand in my family tree, like a woven sash I am the wholeness that comes together at the meeting of many strands.

Having established this important foundation, of my positioning and the challenges of being raised in a space where lines were considered clearly drawn between “Native” and “white,” I would like to continue addressing the question of accountability. Why is my topic of research important for Indigenous peoples and communities? What are some of the factors that go into why I have decided to work on this particular research topic? Primarily, I have as an Indigenous person, had to navigate through a sea of unending racist and derogatory representations of ‘Indian-ness.’ This is due the fact that

as Emma Larocque writes, Indigenous peoples “are still being hounded and haunted by White North America’s image machine, which has persistently portrayed them in extremes as either the grotesque ignoble or noble savage” (22). In this way, the research questions I have crafted here and the systems of knowledge about Indigenous peoples that they speak to, address very personal matters however they are also matters which have had and continue to have at times dire effects on Indigenous peoples’ psyches and lives.

In a personal narrative addressed to his sons regarding why he is seeking to develop a research paradigm that is respectful and consistent with Indigenous peoples’ realities, Shawn Wilson writes:

Many people before me have written about the need for such a paradigm. I am not going to go over their arguments here – you can read them for yourself if you are interested. People such as Linda Smith, Lester Rigney and Fyre Jean Graveline have written about how Eurocentric research has helped in the colonization and oppression of our people. By standing on their shoulders for my justification, I want to go further and try to explain just how research can be different-can be Indigenous. It may be that by looking at the different aspects of an Indigenous research paradigm, we can both learn more about the bigger question of what it is to be Indigenous (13).

Wilson therefore establishes the importance of building on the research-writings of other Indigenous scholars and the roles such a practice can serve in working towards decolonization, “We are beginning to articulate our own research paradigms and to demand that research conducted in our communities follows our codes of conduct and honours our systems of knowledge and worldviews. Research by and for Indigenous peoples is a ceremony that brings relationships together” (8). Linda Tuhiwai Smith similarly asserts that it is crucial to furthering the goals of Indigenous self-determination

that Indigenous peoples actively engage with knowledge systems that construct them, to further the agenda of self-determination and to prepare for future challenges (124).

The development and articulation of Indigenous research agendas acknowledges that “research” in an Indigenous context cannot be something that is performed from atop a perch in the proverbial “ivory tower,” whereby any and all attachments to weighted sets of political and social circumstances can be disavowed. Given that colonial domination has been undoubtedly supported by the “Indian research industry” my work comes from a place that takes seriously the role of colonialism in writing about racially configured populations. Colonialism as a carefully manufactured state project, is “a set of projects and practices, social conditions and institutions, states of being and affairs, rules and principles, statements and imperatives...it is about the racist expression of states, state-directed racial exclusions, and so about *racist states*” (Goldberg, *Racist States* 5). This expression of racism has been inherent within research institutions and disciplines that have long sought to define, categorize, control and ultimately write Indigenous peoples out of existence or rather into an existence mediated by colonial desires. The “truths” about Indigenous peoples conceived in the academy have become, in the words of Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, “systemic mediums through which a hierarchical structure of power is perpetuated, and the medium through which conceptions of ‘truth,’ ‘order’ and ‘reality’ become established” (qtd. in Larocque 11-12).

While institutions are opening up to Indigenous physical presence in the academy there are still many struggles with regard to introducing Indigenous epistemologies into academia. What this means is that while Indigenous peoples such as myself, someone

who writes largely through a hybridized Indigenous-Eurocentric frame, are welcomed within academic space, those who attempt to write dissertations from strictly Indigenous paradigms or in Indigenous languages face greater difficulty in feeling “at home” in the university. It is about so much more than the incorporation of works about/by Indigenous peoples. As directly tied to Canada’s colonial history the very structural foundation of the university has been dependant on the exclusion of Indigenous ways. Shaunga Tagore’s poem “A Slam on Feminism in Academia” reflects further on the nature of these concerns. Tagore writes:

why did you let me through the doors in the first place  
if you were just gonna turn around and force me out? (Stanza 1)

why did you let me in this ivory tower  
filled with hippie feel-good activist academics  
debating about feminist organizing in high theory discourse  
while barely-paid migrant workers prepare lunches  
for seminars, conferences, forums  
and get deported the next day (Stanza 2) (37)

let me ask you  
exactly which graduate student’s education are you concerned about  
here? (Stanza 5)

not Indigenous students who are expected  
to read speak and engage with  
languages, theories, and knowledges  
that erase appropriate and colonize  
their lands, cultures, and selves  
with the same ease as the colonizers (Stanza 12) (38)

The concerns expressed by Tagore attend not only to the hypocrisy within the institutions she speaks of but also to the irreconcilability of some aspects of Indigeneity to the university. In spite of these concerns there are many that believe that these are not reasons for Indigenous peoples and peoples marginalized by the institution to abandon it.

Clearly my presence here indicates that I am one of those people. It is imperative that the institution and the sites it speaks of continue to be interrogated.

Perhaps one of the greatest challenges arises from the past few decades and the increased commitment of some schools of academic thinking as to the elimination of racial discrimination and the redress of racial inequality. The (hard-won) rise in attendance of racialized peoples in the university has been used by some to advance the “repression of racial reference” under the auspices that race (and more importantly *racism*), are no longer issues the university needs to attend to (Searls-Giroux 11). Certain academics have doggedly tried to make race “unspeakable” both in public and in the institution by “reducing it to a past problem now resolved and best forgotten” (ibid). The challenge is then to confront this recent “academic allegiance to colorblindness and to theorize the possibilities for a much-needed reconciliation with a social reality that is highly and historically raced, as well as a rehabilitation of critical and creative thought” (6).

### **Research Ethics and the Need for an “indigenized” Cultural Studies Framework**

In light of these considerations I have come to realize that my decision to take up Indigenous Studies within a Department of English and Cultural Studies, and ultimately my inclination to a Cultural Studies research, is anything but a breach of ethical responsibility. Rather, the approach to which I am engaging here marks but one of many branches of responsibility that sees great importance in questioning the representations of Indigenous peoples across a myriad of landscapes (policy, literature, art, music) that have in one way or another contributed to and *continue to* larger discourses about Indigenous

peoples. Given the role of these fields in constructing “the Indian” what might be my responsibilities in responding to such discourse? More to the point, what would constitute an ethics of Indigenous research when it comes to working within the discipline of Cultural Studies?

When one purports to write about Indigenous peoples it is necessary that we consider our place, as Linda Tuhiwai Smith points out in her seminal text on research methods, because “Indigenous researchers are expected, by their communities and by the institutions which employ them, to have some form of historical and critical analysis of the role of research in the indigenous world” (5). Social scientific researchers of European descent have had a history of, for example, coming into Indigenous communities to ‘study’ communities without being a part of the communities or having any tangible connection to the people, viewing Indigenous peoples and communities as “objects of study” (16). As “producers of culture,” policy-makers, filmmakers, authors, and artists have exercised a similar method of disengagement, as in the case of people like Paul Kane, George Catlin, and Karl Friedrich May. May, in particular, having never traveled to meet an Indigenous person authored an entire series of books on Indigenous peoples for European audiences. Engaging in the same sorts of approaches to research and writing, whether in the Social Sciences or Humanities, only serves to support the practices of knowledge construction that have supported the objectification and misrepresentations of Indigenous peoples. To challenge the representations and to restore voice (in essence decolonizing) Indigenous representation, Indigenous researchers must

go to the heart of the Eurowestern knowledge system – the presumptions that it has created about Indigenous peoples.

According to Emma Larocque, “The task then is to humanize the ‘Indian’ by, on one hand, de-normalizing the ‘savage’ view, and, on the other, putting forward Native peoples’ humanity through their writing” (11). In a related turn, Lester Irabinna Rigney as part of a three-pronged Indigenous research framework suggests that Indigenous voices must be privileged within in Indigenist research (116). I think that this idea is especially important for an “indigenized” Cultural Studies research approach, or perhaps even for an “indigenized” Critical Race Theory approach. It is here that I can articulate the second important step in my “indigenized” Cultural Studies research method. After the first, the grounding of the researcher within an ethical research space of relation, the second step is in acknowledging and indeed privileging the voices of Indigenous academics in my work.

An important aspect of decolonizing and anti-colonial research is the inclusion of Indigenous peoples’ voices in research on themselves and their communities. In the absence of a research method that involves direct community-based research one of the routes to ensuring that such involvement occurs can be through the privileging the work of Indigenous theorists. In the following chapters I draw heavily on the work of Indigenous academics from a variety of Indigenous nations, namely Christine O’Bonsawin, Janice Forsyth, Emma Larocque, Jolene Rickard, Michelle Raheja, and Darrell Manitowabi. While my attention to their work is as much because of their unique contributions to Indigenous research there may have been spaces when non-Indigenous scholars could have been used in their place. I take the assertion of Rigney seriously and

therefore elect to place Indigenous theoretical voices at the forefront of most of my analyses. In a discipline such as Cultural Studies that by its nature involves critical reflection on cultural sites, there remains the possibility of, as Rosaldo writes, that the voices of “white” Cultural Studies theorists will come to dominate in discussions of Indigenous peoples and “peoples of colour” (36). By consciously seeking out and utilizing the work of Indigenous theorists, perhaps I can allay some of the concerns raised by Rosaldo on the possibility of traditional Cultural Studies’ “slippage into whiteness.”<sup>1</sup>

My third element for an ethical research approach involves considering the positioning of the researcher, of myself, in relation to the practice of criticism. I defer to the words of Shawn Wilson to elaborate:

I have consciously and explicitly decided not to critique other research paradigms and strategies or to justify my own paradigm through citing dominant paradigms. My only goal is to explain an Indigenous research paradigm and the relationships surrounding it. Critiquing other research paradigms or justifying my own through citing others would constitute a recognition of their jurisdiction over Indigenous research (42).

The notion of academic criticism (not to be confused with rigor), is for some Indigenous peoples problematic in that it implies and “aggressiveness and sometimes ruthlessness inherent within the tradition of Western criticism” that stands in opposition to many traditional Indigenous beliefs (Larocque 13). For Greg Sarris criticism has long served as a way that scholars distance themselves from the texts and subjects they study (6).

Given that criticism is as well at many times antithetical to some Indigenous perspectives on the relationship between research and knowledge it is important to reject a form of research that reproduces white supremacist commitments. It is in light of this that as Larocque writes a form of or variation on critique may be necessary when

addressing certain texts. This critique, she advises, should employ an alternative reading practise and show restraint when critiquing texts by other Native authors:

reading Aboriginal voice and discourse differently demands that I cite generous portions from the Native documents and writing without excessive intrusion. This is not to say that Aboriginal material cannot be criticized or that it is either too transparent or too different, but it requires a new critical approach and way of reading (12).

Larocque's rationale for this approach is that rather than explicitly critiquing writings by Native writers, it is instead "to foreground Native responses to centuries of misrepresentation" (12-13). Further, "It is also to respect what appears to be in the making among Aboriginal intellectuals: an Aboriginal-based criticism within the community, one which seeks to be non-violent and unintrusive" (ibid.).

Wilson reconciles the need to respond to writings through deploying the softened language of *review* over *critique* (43). He argues that while conducting a "literature review" is still a way of communication for "dominant system academics," it is also a way of "putting a study into its context" that does not involve the troubling hostility or aggression implied by negative criticism (44). By engaging in a non-critical review, then, an "indigenized" Cultural Studies research praxis "builds upon the work of others" and can thus also form the context for relational accountability in the working from an Indigenous paradigm (ibid). I would like to extend this analysis further and suggest that while I consider my work as performing a review, I do prefer to consider the voice I use throughout this project as, in light of Sarris' work, a *narrative critique* that is grounded in my experiences, precisely because as Larocque writes, "It is imperative that we treat with respect other people's works upon which we build our dialogics...it is also important to

maintain our right to disagree. Writers owe much to each other...but I must also retain my right to debate and to question” (32).

It is in this way then that critique, as Sarris positions it, is not always detached from Indigenous paradigms. It need not always function at arms length that it can “use a myriad of voices and narrative forms to show how criticism can move closer to that which it studies”:

My mode of expression is performative as well as expository; I tell stories not only to show how they might be used in critical discussions but specifically to place them in the contexts of those critical discussion in order to inform, often by means of their different narrative forms, the content and nature of the discussions...the point is to see these methods and modes not as dichotomous and oppositional, but as interrelated and relational, as different voices capable of communicating with and informing one another (7).

Many of my chapters will incorporate personal narratives, stories as Wilson calls them, to establish the relationship between my voice and the voice of those whose work I draw on.

This approach is consistent with what Sunseri writes, namely that

Indigenous ways of gathering knowledge contain a coexistence of critique and respect. Indigenous epistemology and methodology demand that the relationship between the researcher and the participants be built on sincere and heartfelt dialogue, so that good and right relations can be nurtured. This means that for a fully honest and respectful relationship to happen, different points of view, positions, experiences and interpretations should be shared (100).

This honest and respectful, sincere, and heartfelt dialogue must be supported by an ethics of humility. In line with the Seven Grandfather Teachings of the Anishinaabe that I was introduced to during my teenage years, *dbaadendiziwin* or humility foregrounds how we should live our lives. We should approach dialogue not from a position where we feel impervious to self-reflection but be open-minded. Humility must be “an integral part of our teacher preparation” but it must also be a central part of our research praxis (Freire

*Freedom* 108). We should not begin from a position that “my thinking is the only correct one, accepting no criticism, [and that] I cannot listen to anyone who thinks or elaborates ideas differently from me” (ibid 107). I acknowledge that there may be times when it is necessary to more firmly respond to works that do harm to Indigenous peoples, whether intentional or unintentional. This is not because I believe it “would be giving away the power of an Indigenous research paradigm to say that it needs to be justified by a dominant paradigm” (Sinclair 42). Rather, I would mobilize a narrative critique-based approach to dominant paradigms because the dominant paradigms are themselves contradictory, and more often than not, harmful.

There are times such as when I am dealing with works of a colonialist, racist, and marginalizing nature that it may seem that I am directly critiquing these works in the more problematic ways of certain strands of Western criticism, such as how I have mentioned here – as a form of confrontation or attack. It is important that even as such ideas have been produced I should not advance my work by belittling the work of another, no matter how inflammatory or misguided it may be. This would run counter to my intent here as the goal is ultimately to offer valuable criticism: “criticism must think of itself as life-enhancing and constitutively opposed to every form of tyranny, domination and abuse; its social goals are noncoercive knowledge produced in the interests of human freedom” (Said qtd. in Larocque 32). In this respect actively engaging the practice of humility would allow us to exercise “a capacity to live with and learn from what is different, and an ability to relate to others without letting our ill-humor or our antipathy get in the way of our balanced judgment” (Freire *Freedom* 24).

The narrative element of narrative critique is important in that the understanding of humility, as I understand it, is not an awareness gleaned from “conventional fieldwork” (as Lena Sunseri terms it). It is derived from

informal, ongoing life-learning experiences acquired from my connections to my community – for example, from attending various traditional ceremonies and healing circles, and from listening to stories about our culture, about our history, and about matters of importance to our nation, told to me by my mothers, my aunties, and elders (98).

This tendency toward ‘subjectivity’ is indeed a strength when understood as a part of a research paradigm that positions Indigenous perspectives at its core, for “an Indigenous research methodology sees this subjectivity as a strength in a more holistic and genuine research process, one that shapes a truly collaborative relationship” (102). Drawing both the review and the critique together and closer to me helps me to tell a story of my relationship and investment in the discussion and of my place within both my academic and non-academic communities.

Even in our attempts to “do good” Cultural Studies researchers may inadvertently replicate the harms we are trying to attend to. In disciplines where research involving Indigenous peoples as “human subjects” is common, there is an extensive ethics approval process in place. Perhaps because Cultural Studies is not viewed as one of the traditional disciplines that have contributed to discursive regimes about Indigenous peoples, and in that it often does not involve “human subjects,” a consolidated ethical practice is not viewed as necessary. It is out of recognition of this absence that I have devised a working ethical approach to writing about First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples, or a way of “indigenizing” Cultural Studies. The first step involves grounding oneself within *an*

*ethical research space of relation*. The second step arises from *acknowledging and privileging the voices of Indigenous academics* where possible in work that purports to be about Indigenous peoples. My third and final step involves a *consideration of the researcher's position in relation to the practice of criticism*.

While to some extent it can be argued that Cultural Studies commitment to critical and self-reflexive theorizing reflects the disciplines ethical practice, given the nature of our work Cultural Studies researchers may often engage with representations of Indigenous peoples without speaking to Indigenous peoples or reading works *by* Indigenous peoples. For centuries, texts have been written and theorizing carried out *about* Indigenous peoples in the absence *of* Indigenous peoples. In Cultural Studies there is no disciplinary mechanism in place to ensure that this does not continue to be the case. Further, there is also no space for ensuring that the work we do with regards to Indigenous peoples involves a decolonizing agenda, one that is advanced on Indigenous terms and from Indigenous perspectives. While this discussion is by no means complete, I hope to have presented here some beginning thoughts on ways that Cultural Studies researchers, in our research praxis and writing, can become more deeply invested in an ethical and respectful relationship to First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples.

## *Introduction*

“The Indian spectacle has no historical significance because the Calgary Stampede display is not a historical exhibition. Whites insist upon seeing Indians in this primitive way because it corresponds to their stereotypes.”

~ Howard Adams, *Prison of Grass*

Like all societies throughout their various histories, Indigenous nations have had their own distinct economic systems. Some scholars, like Rauna Kuokkanen, consider these economies as “social economies,” although they are perhaps most widely referred to as “seasonal, integrated economies” or “subsistence economies” that included “hunting, fishing, gathering, trapping, and ‘other activities which provide income in kind’” (219). As traditional economic structures of Indigenous communities, they go “beyond the economic realm – they are more than just livelihoods providing subsistence and sustenance to individuals or communities” and are about “living on the land and with the land” (Kuokkanen 215; Brascoupé qtd. in *ibid*). If it is the case, as Simon Brascoupé suggests, how do we account for contemporary economies that on the surface appear less intimately tied to the land? How do we understand economic shifts that rely less on the ties themselves and more on the commodification of the appearance of such ties? What are the ways that this latter economic form has “downplayed” or “dismissed” the “continued significance of subsistence economies,” while promoting itself as invested in Indigenous culture and spirituality? (*ibid*)

The latter form that I speak of here is perhaps best known as a “global market economy.” It is an economic system born out of the rise of capitalism in the mid-to-late 1800s and which exploded in the mid-to-late 1900s as corporate interests proceeded

relatively unregulated, coming in recent decades to dominant political and social life.

From the establishment of permanent colonial structures on Indigenous lands, Indigenous nations have been pressured to abandon their economic structures prefaced on respect for the land. Kuokannen writes that Indigenous economies are rooted in sustainability and reciprocity and consistently,

reflected land-based worldviews founded on active recognition of kinship relations that extend beyond the human domain. Sustainability is premised on an ethos of reciprocity in which people reciprocate not only with one another but also with the land and the spirit world. Indigenous economies are thus contingent upon a stable and continuous relationship between the human and natural worlds. Knowledge of taking care of that relationship has traditionally been an integral part of social, economic, as well as spiritual structures and practices (219-220).

The push towards European economic models, particularly in the context of the global market economy has meant that Indigenous peoples end up engaging in “profit-driven development projects such as logging, mining, hydro, and oil and gas development in indigenous communities” (217).

While Kuokkanen’s focus is on forms of for-profit development that are tied to the commodification of the natural resources sector, I would like to extend her analysis to include economies dependent on the commodification of Indigenous cultures and identities. The shifting nature of the present global market has not only meant the changes in the nature of work she outlines, but it has also been matched by an altered understanding of what it is exactly can be considered a marketable “product.” John L. and Jean Comaroff suggest that ‘culture’ and ‘ethnicity’ are “becoming more corporate, more commodified, more implicated than ever before in the economics of everyday life” as economic competition between nations intensify (1). Commodification, a process that

involves the transformation of things into economic goods or marketized products to be bought, sold, and traded based on their perceived worth, is a process not limited to material items.

Immanuel Wallerstein has suggested that “the historical development of capitalism has involved the commodification of everything” (qtd. in Castile 743). In recent decades and thanks in large part to the emergence of a unified global market the “commodification of everything” quite literally refers to the commodification of Indigenous peoples and essentially to the transformation of all things embedded in localized cultures into saleable, for-profit products. George Pierre Castile notes that this is not necessarily a new phenomenon with the rise of capitalism and colonialism directly linked. Colonialists “made a ‘market’ for ethnic identities in which they have been traded as a commodity ever since” (743). Perhaps the most significant commodification of “ethnic identity,” Castile writes, was the early “expropriation of Indian imagery for symbolic and hegemonic purposes,” which served a way through which America defined its “new ‘American’ national identity” as “new America” (Euro-Americans) against “old Americans” (Indians) (ibid).

Similarly, as Himani Bannerji argues, Indigenous peoples have been the “absent signifiers within Canadian national politics, the bedrock of its national definitional project” (92).<sup>2</sup> The construction of an early Canadian national identity hinged on the construction of a discourse of Indian-ness turned saleable commodity through which the emerging state defined its national identity in relation to what it was *not*. As Arjun Appadurai writes, no nation “however benign its political system and however eloquent

its public voices may be about the virtues of tolerance, multiculturalism, and inclusion, is free of the idea that its national sovereignty is built on some sort of ethnic genus” (Appadurai 3). Canada’s ideas about its “ethnic genus” are explicitly linked to notions of Britishness (eventually revised to give tacit acknowledgement to French Canadian-ness), a Britishness that has grown tolerant of “immigrant difference,” and yet Canada’s sense of Britishness is also reliant on its ongoing invisibilizing of Indigenous humanity and sovereignty.

Constructions of Indigenous peoples as the Indian of traveler’s journals, captivity narratives, dime store novels and other colonialist, written records talked of wild frontiers, “noble braves” and “savages,” and easy and accommodating (albeit silent) “squaws” that ride on horseback, dress in feathers and in fringe and buckskin. Indigenous men have been constructed as “noble savages” who have an enduring, spiritual connection with nature and who will inevitably die out (nobly of course) because they are frozen in a “pre-contact primitive,” “pre-modern” state. They have also been figured as “ignoble savages” who are violent, emotionally cold, lazy and/or drunk” (Sunseri 95). Similarly, Indigenous women have been constructed as tragic “primitives,” matronly “squaws,” who are destined to “die out” as they try (sometimes in their Disneyfied, Pocahontasesque sexualized way) to bring “harmony among the races.” Indigenous women have also been portrayed as lazy, dirty, drunk, sexually promiscuous, and as Andrea Smith writes “inherently rapable” (10). Indigenous peoples have been positioned as the ultimate ‘Other,’ as the greatest impediment to the Canadian nation-building

process, yet not part of it, against which the Canadian (ethnic genus) and national identity was formed.

Canadian national identity has hinged on the idea that Canada (and its people by extension) is a civil nation, and that its key national characteristic is its civility – a mythic civic/social politeness that enables the nation to take pride in its so-called civil/tolerant approach to colonizing Indigenous peoples. This mythology of benevolence and civility/civilizing claims that Canada is a nation that in contrast to the U.S. “civiliz[ed] the frontier [and the “Indians”]...in a gentler, less violent, manner...because of British systems of justice, and, in particular, the benevolent and tolerant behavior of the Mounties” (Mackey 76-77).<sup>3</sup> The frontier myth of peaceful/civil settlement is a racially-charged one, as are depictions of Indigenous peoples aforementioned; civility is perhaps better understood as a “white civility,” whereby constructions of whiteness (who is deemed “white” and who has been racialized as “non-white”) have been conflated with civility; this conflation has in turn naturalized whiteness “as the norm for English Canadian cultural identity” (5).<sup>4</sup> It is against the normalized white, English Canadian identity, this “master narrative of nation” that functions as a key “technique of power,” that Canada has sought to define itself and its citizens, juxtaposing those who are “British” (Scots, Irish and English), “white” and “civil” against those who are positioned as lacking these three attributes and their attending markers – law-abidingness, humanitarianism, a commitment to equality, and a tolerance of diversity (Thobani 4-5). The Indian was deemed to be lawless, brutal, oppressive, intolerant, and ultimately uncivilized in the face of white English civility, and inferior in the face of white English

superiority. The Indian as both figure and discourse is comprised of “symbols of ‘Indian-ness,’” which according to Deborah Doxtator refers to the ways in which Indigenous peoples are deemed to look, talk, act, think and feel. Symbols of “Indian-ness” are micro-simulacra, are smaller fantastical representations that come together to form non-Indigenous Canadians’ definition “of what an Indian is” (10).

Castile argues that the market value of the Indian as a thing, or as a commodity as both symbol and tangible product, has fluctuated greatly. In the United States “the value of an Indian identity was at an all-time low” in the 1920s, as a result of America’s genocidal nation-building and the forced assimilation of Indigenous peoples (744). The market value of what Castile calls “Indian identity” has rebounded, however, and “stock is up in the ethnic market” with an exorbitant number of people now claiming an “Indian identity” as a pathway to economic success. This process involves the extraction of “Indian image and identity...from Indian reality as a ‘raw material,’ to be smelted and forged into new shapes” (743). The difficulty I have with Castile’s piece is that he draws on American Indian Movement (AIM) leader Russell Means’ role in the Disney film *Pocahontas* as evidence of the market’s ability “repackage” “Indian identity.” In his assessment he argues that “Indian identity has become unavoidably commodified, bound up in the politics, as well as the economics, of political economy” and that as in the case of Means this commodification and repackaging have been controlled by “wholly owned subsidiaries of the dominant society, entirely free of Indian influence or control (747).

I can appreciate that at the time of Castile’s writing in 1996 it certainly was the case that Disney’s use of Means was driven by Euro-American corporate desires, yet I am

concerned by his insistence that Means (and other Indigenous peoples by extension) have no influence or control in such moments. Certainly there is an element of choice in Means' participation with Disney in the making of the animated film – and he was not the only Indigenous person involved in its production – as Irene Bedard (Inupiat Inuit and Métis) was both the physical model and voice for the lead character Pocahontas. Perhaps it is possible to read these engagements as a self-conscious effort to bridge the gaps between the decline in subsistence economic possibilities for some and the rise in the global market economy. The challenges faced by peoples who are unable to engage in subsistence economies by virtue of their location in urban spaces, a lack of resources, or a lack of knowledge due the disruptions of colonial process like residential schools (and a loss in connection to family/community and/or the knowledge necessary for working within a subsistence economy) does mean that people are not seeking ways to hold on to elements of their cultures and identities while finding new ways to enter into the marketplace. It is precisely the global explosion of this transition, of cultural practice as a form of Indigenous self-driven entrepreneurialism, that the Comaroffs begin chronicling in their work, *Ethnicity, Inc.*

By no means unproblematic, however, one of the major tensions arises when Indigenous peoples engaged in the commodification of Indigeneity are drawn into the state's desire to market Aboriginality (which I will argue has become a distinct image and "product" from that of the "Indian") as emblematic of particular ideas about the state and its relationship to Indigenous peoples. Despite the struggles for freedom from an ongoing albeit transformed colonial rule, Indigenous peoples are still "inextricably linked to the

ebb and flow of the dominant society and its markets and are subject to the rules of its regulators” (ibid). The arguments laid out in the following chapters are my contributions to larger discussions on the transformative nature of Indigenous economic engagement and the points of intersection between Indigenous economies, the Euro-Canadian economy, and the global economy.

My primary interest is in exploring some of the ways in which “Aboriginality” or “Aboriginals” are conceived of and codified as allegorical figures of a contemporary market-focused society – as a result of larger process of the intensification, corporatization and marketing of culture that sits at the heart of Canada’s conception of its national identity. I am interested in the representational work made possible by such economic shifts, especially the work being done by “Aboriginal.” “Aboriginal” has emerged in recent years to rearticulate and recast Canada’s national identity and state-Indigenous relations. Prior to 1982 and since colonization began various state formations (be they English or Anglo-Canadian) have used explicitly racist terms such as Indian, Halfbreed, and Eskimo as the preferred terms of reference for Indigenous peoples. In 1982, Section 35(2) of the *Constitution Act* passed by the Canadian Parliament first used “aboriginal,” defining “aboriginal peoples of Canada” as being “the Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada” (“Rights of the Aboriginal Peoples of Canada”). With the passing of the *Constitution Act* the state codified Indians, Inuit and Métis as legal entities under the branch of “aboriginal.” The terminological shift had perhaps the greatest impact on/for Métis, who prior to 1982 were often peoples positioned on tenuous and shifting racial lines in and around the binaries of “Indian” and European, collapsed by the

state into the Anglophone category of “halfbreeds.” 1982 ushered in the semi-recognition of Métis as distinct communities of “aboriginal peoples.”

From 1982 Aboriginal (often capitalized unlike the *Constitution*) became the state’s blanket term of choice for referring to hundreds of distinct Indigenous nations. The *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* (RCAP, 1996), a report issued by a commission convened by the federal government in 1991 to explore the relationship between Indigenous peoples and Canada, declared that “Aboriginal” denotes collectives of people who, rather than united by a racial identity are instead connected by their position as “original peoples of North America”:

the indigenous inhabitants of Canada when we want to refer in a general manner to Inuit and to First Nations and Métis people, without regard to their separate origins and identities. The term *Aboriginal peoples* refers to organic political and cultural entities that stem historically from the original peoples of North America, rather than collections of individuals united by so-called 'racial' characteristics.<sup>5</sup>

For the purposes of RCAP the term “First Nations” supplants “Indian” as in the wake of the *Constitution Act* the term “Indian” had been problematized by some Indigenous peoples.<sup>6</sup> RCAP’s terminology is consistent with the *Constitution Act*, with Inuit and Métis still referred to as such and as separate entities from First Nations, yet all collapsed under the blanket term “aboriginal.”

Overseen by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND), Inuit peoples and Status Indians (those registered under the *Indian Act* and thus recognized by the federal government as Indians) have been dealt with through the departmental arm of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC). Non-status and Métis peoples on the other hand, have (since 1985) been primarily dealt with through the branch

titled the Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians. In a monumental symbolic shift, 2011 saw the Conservative federal government under the hand of Stephen Harper (and without consultation of First Nations, Inuit, or Métis) quietly change the *applied title* of the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) to Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC).<sup>7</sup> This *applied title* change, however, should not be confused with a *legal title* change. With an applied title change the federal government, through its Federal Identity Program (FIP) policy, is able to effectively rebrand what it refers to as its “corporate identity.” The renaming through FIP is essentially “a management technique for communicating an organization's unique characteristics in a memorable manner” from a vantage point that understands that “corporate identity is based on the premise that key publics must perceive an organization clearly and accurately if management objectives are to be achieved” (“Management Guide”). Although the state has changed its applied title, the legal name for the department remains the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada and the legislation charged with “administering” and “managing” First Nations peoples remains the *Indian Act*.

While a number of departments have applied titles that differ from their legal titles, I wonder what this amendment reveals about the changing governmentality of the state, particularly with respect to Indigenous peoples. According to Andrew MacDougall, spokesman for Harper, the applied title change arises from the state’s desire to brand itself with a title that is “more up to date and inclusive, consistent with the government's focus on moving forward in our relationship with Aboriginal peoples” (qtd. in

“Aboriginal Affairs”). FIP is a policy that ensures the state brands itself in the most effective and efficient ways possible while affirming the state as a corporate entity. Taken in context with MacDougall’s words, FIP and the INAC applied title change are emblematic of the government’s neoliberal operational logic.

Neoliberalism has been increasingly embraced by the Canadian state over the past four decades and refers to the way in which the state has worked in collusion with corporations to allow market interests to dominate every aspect of political and social life. In effort to facilitate the free flow of capital and render everything in market terms, the state has gradually dismantled social and welfare programming in favour of the privatization of social services. The interests of corporations are seen by the government as trumping the needs of human beings. The government’s job is then to encourage the flow of capital, a move promoted as improving human well-being through state-sanctioned liberalization of market forces. In doing so the state “ensures military, police and legal infrastructures are in place, thereby allowing the market to operate freely and without state intervention” (Manitowabi “Casino Rama” 261).

Robert McChesney writes that neoliberalism “refers to the policies and processes whereby a relative handful of private interests are permitted to control as much as possible of social life in order to maximize their personal profit” (7). In doing so neoliberalism seeks “its ideology and practice, to intensify the abstractions inherent in capitalism itself: to separate labor power from its human context, to replace society with the market, to build a universe out of aggregated transactions” (Comaroffs “Millennial Capitalism” 14). Maria Bargh surmises that the extension of the market into “areas of the

community previously organised and governed in other ways” involves a three-fold emphasis on “‘free’ trade and the ‘free’ mobility of capital, accompanied by a broad reduction in the ambit and role of the state” (1). Neoliberalism, then, is “essentially a totalizing economic machine that transforms whole communities” and is accompanied by the rationalizing that the liberalization of the market is “necessary to resolve poverty” (Manitowabi “Casino Rama” 198; 261).

The resolving poverty is a trope anchored in neoliberalism’s “long-term goal” of economic growth or an “increase in the aggregate national income” (Bargh 10). The perceived increase in economic growth is then aligned with the belief that stable incomes translates to happier citizens and thus neoliberalism has the potential to realize the “wellbeing of all people” (ibid). As but one of the rationalizations for neoliberalism, neoliberal logic is as well justified through the assertion that neoliberal approaches to everyday life are effective tools for the regulation and management of socialization. Positioned in this way, neoliberalism is lauded as adept at civilizing and encouraging peace (8). It is this appeal towards civilizing and social management that inspires Bargh to identify the points of connection between colonialist discourse and neoliberalism.

Bargh writes that for some Indigenous peoples neoliberalism appears “as a new form of colonisation” in that it has a “past and a history which is filled with particular kinds of attitudes towards indigenous peoples and indigenous cultures” that are consistent with those arising from colonization (2; 13). Both colonization and neoliberalism rely on a language of civilization and both have tended to view Indigenous peoples “and cultures as obstacles to economic development which must be eliminated” (13). The

transformations of neoliberalism which have the effect of reinforcing Indigenous subjugation and domination hardly look different from past eras. The motives driving the English, French, and Canadian states have, for the most part, always been about acquiring Indigenous lands and resources for the benefits of European states and corporate entities. Given that the depths of such capitalist greed have almost always been buried beneath a passive language of civility, and purported “good will,” what makes the contemporary moment different?

What differs between colonization and neoliberalism is the way in which they have sought/seek to “deal” with Indigenous peoples. For the purposes of this analysis I advocate for an understanding of neoliberalism as the most recent incantation of colonialism, as an adaptation of earlier colonialism – neither wholly disconnected yet not entirely the same as earlier expressions of colonialism. Given the monumental shift in the state’s attitude toward favouring neoliberal logic, it is inevitable that neoliberalism will come to play some role in restructuring the state’s approach to Indigenous peoples. Neoliberalism is rather a new expression of colonialism, albeit one that actively attempts to conceal its colonial tenets. As Bargh writes, neoliberalism’s management techniques and its approaches to the civilization process operate “more covertly” than the civilizing projects did in the early colonial nation-building era (Bargh 13).

One of the ways that neoliberalism impacts state-Indigenous relations is through the state’s consistent push toward individualized, corporatized economic development (take, for example, the pushing of communities away from communal land ownership to the privatization of reserve lands). Market solutions are advertised as “naturally superior”

ways for resolving the “problem” of Indigenous poverty. Neoliberalism clandestinely embeds itself within the state’s contemporary rhetoric of equality wherein “all individuals are equal in the eyes of the market” (9). Steeped in notions of individualism, they fly in the face of Indigenous traditional ontologies and epistemologies, rejecting notions of collective land ownership or community economy. According to Bargh in the context of the Maori neoliberal practices such as privatization and corporatization “threaten Maori world-views, which understand the relationship between Maori and resources as diverse and holistic, rather than market based” (15). Crucially, Manitowabi points out that neoliberalism “is particularly damaging to collectivities because it transforms communities into individuals linked to an economic engine” (“Casino Rama” 198).

In recent decades the state’s own legal systems have reluctantly admitted the validity of Indigenous world-views and significantly that of “Aboriginal title,” as a recognized form of collective Indigenous land ownership.<sup>8</sup> This may be representative of what Bargh argues is a repackaging of “older colonial beliefs” about the civilizing mission and the superiority of European ways and the inferiority of Indigenous ways, beliefs which were “once expressed explicitly, [are] now expressed implicitly” (Bargh 13). The state now seeks to conceal its paternalism, stopping short of relinquishing its colonial stranglehold on Indigenous peoples, wanting instead to “be seen to allow people the ‘freedom’ and ‘empowerment’ to govern themselves, but at the same time distrusting the abilities of some peoples, particularly indigenous peoples, to do so” (14).

Through neoliberal practices like privatization and corporatization the state can circumvent its own legal system and its reluctant creation of a system perpetrated on

equality. Economic development (in terms of corporate development and ownership) and privatization propose “market solutions” for “colonial problems” – namely the eradication of Indigenous land ties to lands which the Canadian state wants to claim as its own. At the same time as the state enacts neoliberalism in regards to managing Indigenous lands, it is as well caught up in a global competition for human resources and feels that it must necessarily bury alive (as David Theo Goldberg suggests) its racist past and contemporary racist present. The key way which Canada has sought to bury its legacies of race is through multiculturalism, namely the institution of multiculturalism policy and the promotion of multiculturalism discourse.

Multiculturalism emerged as official governmental policy during the 1970s in response to tensions between this white, Anglo-British national base, French-Canadians, and other European ethnic Canadians as to their places within the nation’s traditional Anglo-British narrative of citizenship and identity. The 1971 multiculturalism policy and the 1988 *Multiculturalism Act* (Bill C-93) endeavour to reconcile tensions between so-labelled diverse populations and in turn proclaims the state’s (and its citizens) innate openness, acceptance, and tolerance towards difference (difference seen as coming to the nation through immigration, not as fundamentally part of the nation).

The burying or replacing of such obviously racist terminology as Indian, Halfbreed, and Eskimo with a term such as Aboriginal is characteristic of a neoliberal, multiculturalist state that believes it has moved beyond race/racism. David Theo Goldberg refers to this as the “post-racial” moment. Goldberg elucidates that the “post” in “post-racial” truly signals neoliberal states “attempt to go beyond – without (fully)

coming to terms with – racial histories and their accompanying inequalities...to transform, via the negating dialectic of denial and ignoring, racially marked social orders into racially erased ones” (qtd. in Searls Giroux 4). The difficulty I have with employing the language of “post-racial” is that while Canada is attempting to bury or move beyond its racism, it has never actually admitted to having been “racial” (to say nothing of the fact that it still is). The racisms of earlier eras are completely ignored, as though in contrast to the United States and the begrudging recognition of slavery as part of the nation’s past, Canada has not been implicated in such racist action – almost as if the pain of a racist past is *too* much for *settlers* to bear. Many Euro-settler Canadians pride themselves on colonization through rationalization and civilization, dismissing the racism embedded within things such as the *Indian Act*, the reserve system, and residential schools.<sup>9</sup> Yet this is exactly why Canada may be considered and why Searls Giroux writes, that post-racial states may be accurately describe as racist states. Post-racial states are states that profess their racelessness, states that in reality “seek more often than not to dissolve all forms of socially contracted responsibility” (3). Racism is derided as the sole propensity of the “‘*far* right,’ loony extremists, individual or collective, such as the various forms of ‘national front’ or neo-Nazi groups” (Goldberg 181). Rendering racism as exceptional, the neoliberal state reinforces the idea that it is “exonerated, guiltless” and not complicit in racism (ibid).

The rise of Aboriginal rhetoric in the arena of national image-making, while originating in legal and political spaces, is at once emblematic of Canada’s raced racelessness, its racial neoliberalism. The impetus towards racelessness is tied to

globalization and neoliberalism. It is through the pressures of this contemporary globalization of economic and social life that Canada has come to engage in territorial branding where emphasis is placed on “creating value in the relationship between territorial entities and individuals” (van Ham 250). Multinational corporations have expanded beyond their original national borders and are caught up in a global competition for economic dominance, a competition that sees the privileging of the interests of the market over those of citizens and communities. As the state is drawn into this competition and becomes increasingly corporatized, its national identity appears as its most valuable commodity. Canada, through an appeal to its post-raciality signaled by the language of Aboriginality, embarks “upon a renewed quest for the hearts and minds of ‘their’ people both at home and around the world” (ibid). Branding as a central tenet of neoliberal, Euro-economic states, involves the imbuing of national identity with its own unique image/personality so that it holds market appeal for investments, tourists, and consumers.<sup>10</sup> Principally, the transition to the language of Aboriginal reflects the state’s preoccupation with (re)branding its national narrative.

It is from the foundation provided by multiculturalism, the self-proclaimed qualities of inclusiveness and tolerance, that Canada has transformed into one of its strongest (if not the strongest) branding strategies. Renisa Mawani suggests that Canada presently draws Indigenous peoples into national narratives to affirm the state’s innate multiculturalism, its reflexivity and tolerance. Canada promotes itself as a nation that “now fully recognizes that First Nations are ‘our Communities’ who, notwithstanding the effects of Canadian colonialism, now enjoy the full benefits of multicultural citizenship”

(51). This move is one way that the nation markets itself as being absolved of “its colonial past, suggesting that we have transcended it” (52).

Brimming beneath the surface of this transcendence is the reality that multiculturalism was devised to cope with English-Canadians “settler anxieties” and fears of national illegitimacy (Moran 101). Seemingly about diversity, tolerance, equality, and multicultural harmony, multiculturalism’s purpose is to conceal the nation’s racism. At the same time it also provides a “discursive rhetorical structure that smoothes over social anxiety regarding the solidity of national boundaries” (Heinz Housel 449). Canada, driven by settler anxieties and a crisis of whiteness, and by the pressures of increased international market competition, tries to re-narrate its history by invoking the rhetoric of multiculturalism, providing a language for the nation to brand itself “on the global stage as urbane, cosmopolitan, and at the cutting edge of promoting racial and ethnic tolerance among western nations” (Thobani 144).

In spite of the platitudes of (neo)liberal multiculturalism as both policy and brand, it remains contentious as Indigenous peoples have both challenged the bicultural and bilingual “founding myths of settler nationhood” and have resisted being subsumed within multiculturalism, a policy that would position us as “diversities” and “ethnic minorities” (Morgan 31). The refusal of Indigenous peoples to subscribe to multiculturalism is based on its language and ideological basis – principally that notion that we are not sovereign nations that Canada must negotiate with us on a nation-to-nation basis. Understanding these concerns, multiculturalism can best be understood as a tool through which the nation seeks to conceal its *intolerance* while maintaining its core ethnic

genus, reinventing itself free of its colonialist past, “obscure[ing] issues of land theft, genocide, sexual conquest, forced assimilation, displacement, the outlawing of religious practices, residential schools, imposed governments and laws, the extreme intrusions on basic human rights” (Morley Johnson 111).

As will be revealed by this project Canada’s attention to rebranding itself can best be understood as an effort to transform the national narrative “in order to present distinctive images in order to attract foreign investment and skilled labour” (Nimijean 68-69). The relationship between the state’s interest in branding itself and to Indigenous peoples is increasingly tethered to the search for resources (Slowey xiii). Specifically, that the Canadian government has come to develop its national brand directly involves Indigenous peoples. Neoliberalism as it is inherently raced and is informed by colonial structures, make easy work of the branding and commodification of Indigenous peoples, bodies, identities, cultures, lands, spirituality, craftwork, etc. Makere Stewart-Harawira writes that,

In the face of increasing globalization, indigenous cultures and identities are being increasingly threatened by the commodification of indigenous culture that is occurring at multiple levels. Beyond the homogenizing influence on material forms of culture is a more fundamental and profoundly significant issue, that of the homogenization of world views and construction of reality and the loss and commodification of indigenous knowledge (18).

The extent to which the state envisions Indigenous peoples as implicated in this project is epitomized by the government’s FIP change of its colonial management office from INAC to AANDC, and its transition from the language of “Indian” to the language of “Aboriginal.” The terminological transition, however, signals more than a simple administrative name change. As Canada has sought to distinguish itself in the global

marketplace it has incorporated a commodified form of Aboriginality (that which is intended to mark Aboriginal material and spiritual cultures and knowledges) into revenue-generating tourist spaces. It has also made desirable the repackaging of the nation's image "for commercial consumption and nostalgic renarration purged of historical responsibility" (Goldberg 221).

Taiiaki Alfred contends that even when the past is repackaged, even when the colonial relationship is "conceived as part of the historical past," the rhetoric of Aboriginal implies that "indigenous cultures cannot be relevant to future generation of First Nations people as viable alternatives to the current reality" (Alfred "Colonialism" 51). The appeal to Aboriginality in legal and political realms is an appeal to what Alfred refers to as Aboriginalism. He likens its uncritical embrace on the part of some Indigenous political leadership and elites as a false consciousness anchored in colonial desire. He writes that there is a "permanent embedding of colonialism's assumptions and attitudes into First Nations culture and society. This colonial consciousness generates a desire in the colonized person for non-contentious, cooperative identities, institutions, and strategies for interacting with the colonizer" (51). Aboriginalism is rooted in assimilationist attitudes, according to Alfred, wherein Indigenous (First Nations specifically) accede to the state's vision to "alleviate the stresses of being in a colonized position" (ibid). This accession or conceit involves the abandonment, compromise or negotiation of Indigenous dependency, which Alfred argues translates to our "integration in every way into the settler society's institutions...Aboriginalism does exactly this as part of its jettisoning of indigenous authenticity to accede to Canadian government

policies and embrace mainstream values and culture” (ibid). In affirmation of Alfred’s words, the Aboriginal is a figure that can be seen to have moved beyond legal and political realms and is coming to embed itself in many other sites in contemporary Indigenous and Canadian social life.

Much in the way that the “Indian” is associated with a complex web of narratives about Indigenous peoples, so too, is the Aboriginal. Aboriginal is a term that is relatively new in its application to Indigenous peoples in a Canadian context, one which can perhaps best be read as a signpost of the concealment of Canada’s anti-Indigenous racism. My dissertation maps the emergence of Aboriginality by analyzing a trajectory of representations of Indigenous peoples in the latter part of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries across a number of sites. I ask: how does the nation imagine itself and its relationship to Indigenous peoples through tourism? How do Indigenous peoples contribute to and are drawn into these imaginings? In what ways are Indigenous peoples complicit with such forms and in what ways do we resist them, either through direct protest or direct engagement? How do current representations arising within tourism differ from those during the height of “Wild West” shows during Canada’s earlier nation-building phase? Finally, what are the consequences of particular forms of commodification of Indigenous culture and identity through the rubric of Aboriginality, on Indigenous sovereignty and decolonization?

I am directly interested in considering the complex interplay of Indigenous participation in the Canadian tourism economy and the role of tourism in shaping Canadian national identity through the marketing of Indigenous peoples, lands, art and

culture. It is important to clarify that this is not a criticism of Indigenous peoples who elect to engage in either Canadian tourism or in what I will show has come to be termed Aboriginal tourism. It is rather a project intended to critically assess the nuanced ways and to what ends the *state* facilitates/fosters/encourages the creation of Aboriginality and the complex ways agency is enacted through collusion and resistance to such a trope. By drawing on the language of Aboriginality I intend to highlight shifting constructions of Indigenous peoples, flagging a neoliberal racist, post-racial, post-1982 Constitutional way of expressing “Indian-ness” that is still deeply tied to Euro-centric ideas about who and what Indigenous peoples are. Therefore when I use Aboriginal or Aboriginality, I am referring to First Nations, Inuit, and Métis as they have been *imagined* by the settler Canadian state.

I identify Aboriginality and the Aboriginal as referring to the most recent incantation of what Daniel Francis terms the Imaginary Indian. The Aboriginal is tied in some ways to racist representations of Indigenous peoples as marked by the term Indian, yet it is markedly different in that it implies both the historic and a more contemporaneous vision of Nativeness. Political and legal movements toward the use of Aboriginal (out of supposed recognition of its inaccuracy as a term to describe a vast range of Indigenous peoples), hinges on the belief that the Aboriginal is a more authentic representation of Nativeness. Chapter One offers a nuanced reflection of the shifting dynamics of the tourism industry’s relationship to notion of authenticity. I start with a brief analysis of the history of relations between Indigenous peoples and the Canadian state’s tourist economy. I then turn to an assessment of online tourism marketing, namely

that of the Canadian Tourism Commission (CTC)'s and the site of the Aboriginal Tourism Association of British Columbia (AtBC).

By examining these sites I argue that the state and certain Indigenous peoples have embraced the language of Aboriginality to different ends. The industrialization of travel into an economic field of “tourism” along with the high degree of Euro-state intervention within tourist relationships preclude any possibility that tourism can function as, to borrow from Taiaiake Alfred, “pathways of resurgence” for Indigenous peoples, as tourism is fundamentally a colonial economy.<sup>11</sup> Howard Adams writes that the Indigenous peoples who participate in these forms that “give in” to Euro-tourist demands as simply “playing Indian,” an example of “white oppressors and Indian and Métis [who] collaborate with each other portraying the archaic culture in public spectacle” (35). These criticisms arise precisely because even as Indigenous peoples engage in a sort of “Indigepreneurialism” (Indigenous entrepreneurialism) the inclusion of such endeavours within a larger rhetoric of “Aboriginality” (in “Aboriginal tourism”) serves a state-driven nationalist pedagogy through which the Canadian nation is *imagineered* through tourism (to borrow from Margaret Werry) as a multicultural, settler-Indigenized state. This imagineered national identity (and to be sure the collusion which Adams critiques) is used to minimize the state’s hand in racism, colonialism, and in perpetrating the physical, cultural, environmental, and spiritual genocide of Indigenous peoples. Alfred writes that Aboriginalism is the “social and cultural reimagining of genocide” and is principally based “on the idea that what is integral to Indigenous peoples is an irrelevant relic, and

that if First Nations are to have a viable future, it will be defined by and express itself only at the discretion of the dominant society” (Alfred “Colonialism” 51).

However, the selection and representation of Aboriginality within cultural and eco-tourism spaces are not cut-and-dry. Aboriginalism in these spaces does serve (somewhat) different ends than Aboriginalism or Aboriginality does in legal and political spaces. In the absence of Indigenous-run tours that correspond with market demand, non-Indigenous companies gladly fill the void and often do more harm than good. In many ways it is thus necessary as a form of protection that Indigenous peoples enter the circulation of tourism and touristic image production. In light of this I consider the challenges to claiming tourism as a site of Indigenous possibility in the face of outfits trading in racist representations coded in language of reality and authenticity. The challenge is as Jessica Francis identifies, that “tourists have come to desire these popular and damaging Aboriginal images over more accurate and authentic portrayals” (8). Representations within these sites, although delivered to more limited audiences than the Olympics (broadcast around the world), still work in such a way as to create a general discourse about Canadian nationalism as an “indigenized nationalism”

In Chapter Two I transition from a focus on the broader tourism industry to a more narrowed comparative focus on the 1976, 1988 and 2010 Canadian-hosted Olympics. Through a study of the 1976 Montréal Summer Olympic Closing Ceremony, the 1988 Calgary Winter Olympic Opening Ceremony, and the 2010 Winter Olympic Opening Ceremony I consider the shifting imaginative renderings of Canadian nationalism and the state’s relationship Indigenous peoples. While the 1976 Montréal

Olympics were purportedly held “in honour” of Indigenous peoples, the 1988 Calgary Olympics traded in the city’s down-home “western hospitality,” a hospitality that organizers was felt was best exemplified by the (racially-imbued) archetypes of “Cowboys” and “Indians.” The Vancouver 2010 Olympics, on the other hand, sought to weave rhetorics of multiculturalism, eco-friendliness, sustainability, and ‘authentic Aboriginality’ into a narrative of city, provincial and national identity that lives in harmony with nature and its (read: Indigenous) peoples. The images presented during the games were steeped in the specificity of local First Nations who were positioned as symbols of Canada’s enduring multicultural ethic. In an era increasingly marked by rhetoric of Canadian-Indigenous “reconciliation” (particularly among the province of B.C. and select First Nations and through the residential schools *Truth and Reconciliation Commission*), the 2010 Olympic multiculturalism implied and yet supplanted reconciliation, in effect concealing the very framework that was supposedly put in place to come to terms with Canada’s colonial past and the lingering effects of the subjugation of Indigenous peoples.

Interestingly, in the years leading up to the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympics the CTC and the Four Host First Nations Society (FHFN) signed a “Statement of Cooperation” declaring “their intention to work collaboratively to bring greater awareness of Canada’s Aboriginal Tourism Experiences” (Statement of Cooperation”). They outlined a partnership that they claimed was aimed at building “a stronger Aboriginal cultural tourism industry within British Columbia that respects the unique qualities and richness of the First Nations and Aboriginal Peoples of this land” (ibid).

I also address the varied resistance movements launched by Indigenous peoples to the environmental, economic, and social effects of the Olympics. Ultimately I argue that a transition in the Olympic planning and branding language from Indian (1976), to Native (1988), to Aboriginal (2010) reveals a calculated rebranding project bolstered by appeals to multiculturalism. Centrally, the state is articulated as furthering its economic agenda through a neoliberal raced racelessness that strives to negate its racist past and ongoing obligations to Indigenous peoples as the first peoples of this land. This has had profound implications for the lived embodiment of Indigenous peoples. While some Indigenous bodies were coveted, valued as central performers in Canada's Opening Ceremonies and as a display of 'indigenized Canadian nationalism,' other bodies, those that could not or would not "play Aboriginal" were rendered problematic, even criminal. In the run-up to the Olympics the oppressive rhetoric of Canadian civility was reinvigorated through both provincial and municipal legislation (*Safe Streets Act, Project Civil City*), and was mobilized as a promise to prospective tourists (and concerned businesspeople) that the city could clean up its "image problem" (meaning the visible homeless, sex-working, and/or drug-addicted population in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside). The narrative produced during the Olympics is one that split Indigenous peoples into either good national subjects who fell in line Canada's new indigenized-settler nationalism, or bad ones that needed to be hidden so as not to counter-narrate Canada's benevolent, tolerant, inclusive, and ultimately, post-racial identity.

Certainly, there are ways in which Indigenous peoples and communities invested in the tourist industry and engaging in consumer culture play up reified forms of what

non-Indigenous peoples consider ‘authentic identity’ which conform to expectations of Aboriginality. In Chapter Three I examine how Indigeneity is given visual form through the placement and incorporation of “traditional” culture presented at the Mashantucket Pequot Foxwoods Casino and Casino Rama (the casino located on the Mnjikaning/Rama reservation). I consider how images of that which are supposed to mark authentic Indianness and Aboriginality come to play within the casinos. Why is there a need to examine the material culture presented within casino spaces?

Most analyses of First Nations gaming tend to take up the economic, social and/or political reactions to gambling. While these are extremely important analyses, to be sure, so too is coming to understand that great symbolic and material consequences of the commodification of Indigeneity. Subsequently, I argue that while for Foxwoods the marketing of culture is important, it appears as a secondary concern in the grander scheme of the casino, whose primary purpose is to generate revenue that later translates into reconstructions of Mashantucket Pequot identity. I contrast this to the situation at Rama, where Casino Rama’s purpose is not to help *rebuild* the community or its culture, but appears as though created to “help alleviate” Rama’s financial troubles and the troubles of First Nations of Ontario broadly, as Rama is only one of the many First Nations receiving payment through Rama. While there are symbols of Indianness such as dreamcatchers and teepees present in Casino Rama, Rama’s design is far more attentive to perpetuating an image of “authentic” Aboriginality.

To place both of these arguments in contact, I first offer an outline of the history of development of Foxwoods. As the largest Indigenous gambling venture in the U.S.,

Foxwoods provided a visual referent point to members of Rama during the initial stages of casino planning. Presumably, it provided a launching point for Rama to consider in what ways it might similarly or dissonantly market itself as an “Indian casino. Next, I turn to the development of Casino Rama and the construction of a hyper-Aboriginality that as it supposes its own “authenticity,” alienates some community members from their own Anishinaabe-ness. Ultimately, I advocate for a reading of the situation at Casino Rama as a form of market-based casino colonialism, whereby the government has used particular forms of cultural labour and corporate involvement to dominate the casino relationship, using Casino Rama as a vehicle for its own economic ends.

First Nations casinos operate within broader economies of tourism and leisure that serve to facilitate, at least in part, non-Indigenous relationships to and perceptions of, Indigenous communities.<sup>12</sup> In the context of Rama, the presence of a casino is undoubtedly more complex for First Nations who although involved in the earlier voting and planning stages have been gradually pushed out of the casino by government and corporate interests. Growing anti-Native casino rhetoric in Canada accomplishes many things in a time marked by casino colonialism, mainly the reinvigorating of paternalistic narratives that the Canadian government “do something” to “protect” Indigenous peoples from a corrupted Native leadership which would pray haplessly on innocent and misguided “good” Indigenous peoples. It is in the final section of this chapter that I explore the backlash toward Indigenous peoples, when those involved in casino gambling are positioned as stepping “out of line” with neoliberal racist ideas about what constitutes acceptable fiscal behaviour. There exist very particular notions held among settlers about

what constitutes “appropriate” wealth, in the American context reflected as “Rich Indian” racism. In a Canadian context what is deemed to be “appropriate” fiscal behaviour can be understood as “anti-Aboriginal” racism. This latter form of racism, anti-Aboriginal racism, reveals the depths of Canadian commitments to raced racelessness, conspicuously cloaked in rhetoric of older forms of Canadian racism. Anti-Aboriginal racism is centered on measures of “civility” which have come to be rearticulated through a language and measuring of “responsibility” and “accountability.”

My thesis culminates in a discussion of the work of Indigenous mixed media artists Terrance Houle and Rebecca Belmore who use their artistic prowess to challenge the state’s attempts at concealment. Their works, when read in conjunction with one another, put forth a challenge to the images encouraged within Canadian tourism culture that, I argue, continues to rely on predefined notions of Aboriginality that although have shifted are rooted in (and do not circumvent) older conceptions of Indigenous peoples as “Indians.” They reveal that it is possible to use non-Indigenous peoples’ desire for Indigenous cultures to contest the reductionist tendencies of the market as to what constitutes sellable and marketable “Aboriginality.” Houle and Belmore reclaim Indigenous images and problematize Aboriginality, engaging in a practice of what Michelle Raheja and Jolene Rickard separately refer to as “visual sovereignty.” Through visual sovereignty artists “deploy individual and community assertions of what sovereignty and self-representation mean and, through new media technologies, frame more imaginative renderings of Native American intellectual and cultural paradigms, such as the presentation of the spiritual and dream world” (Raheja 1165-1166).

Houle, for example, a Blackfoot and Anishinaabe artist focuses on his body and uses it as a site to resist dominant discourses about Indianness, Aboriginality, and about the Indian and Aboriginal male body. In a nation focused on translating cultures into commodities, the questions which Houle raises about presumptions of Nativeness make the translation much more difficult. I argue that Indigenous arts industries offer a path to counterbalance the stifling effects of Aboriginality as a project of Canadian nationalism, and in fact they challenge the entire house of cards supporting the nation and its non-Indigenous citizens' understandings of their own existence. Indigenous re-narrations of identity through the arts, despite their challenges, remind non-Indigenous Canadians "albeit temporarily, that they are that they are strangers in their own land" (and more pointedly that they are strangers on *Indigenous* lands) (Jacobs 152).

The focus of my dissertation is to offer some reflections on the way that Aboriginality becomes tied to the nation's search for resources as it endeavours to define its "national brand." Consequently, I respond to neoliberalism's expansion of the definition of resources from base materials to the inclusion of all things human and specifically all things Indigenous. This project mining of human resources for the sake of national branding is grounded in what Renato Rosaldo refers to as imperialist nostalgia. For Rosaldo imperialist nostalgia marks the colonist's attempts to transform themselves into "an innocent bystander" out of a twisted sense of mourning over the "passing of what they themselves have transformed" (108). Tied to reconciliatory rhetoric the Aboriginal in tourism is a symbol of the states imperialist nostalgia that allows for settler Canadians to put forth a "pose of 'innocent yearning'" while at the same time trying to "capture

people's imaginations and to conceal its complicity with often brutal domination" (ibid). Further, in a time when Canada has actively sought to bury its legacy of colonialism and genocide the Aboriginal is an allegorical figure whose "primary function is [still] to sustain the foundation myth" (Hodge and Mistry 26). The visual sovereignty exercised by Houle and Belmore is a necessary antithesis to these myths, to Aboriginality, to the Canadian tourist industry, to advancing Canada's tourism brand, and to the crafting of the post-racial, national narrative.<sup>13</sup>

## *Chapter One*

### **“Going Aboriginal”: Constructing the Aboriginal, Aboriginal Tourism, and the Canadian Tourism Industry**

As I sat down to begin writing this chapter on January 7, 2012, my partner alerted me to a breaking news report about tourists to the Andaman Islands who bribed local police in order to ‘view’ Indigenous Jarawa peoples.<sup>14</sup> Video footage leaked to the media shows tourists and tour leaders throwing bananas and biscuits to the people while demanding that they dance and eat the strewn food. As partially nude women and children sing and dance, one particularly insistent guide demands that a woman refusing to move should dance for the food that has just been thrown at her feet with the promise of more to come as a reward for her dancing.<sup>15</sup> Tears streamed down my face as I watched the video and as I recalled Daniel Francis’s note in *The Imaginary Indian* about English traveler Edward Roper, who on journey through the plains in the late nineteenth century was disappointed by the lack of “authentic Indians” he saw. Upon realizing that all he would see were dirty and hungry-looking “Indians,” Roper decided to entertain himself by throwing coins and oranges from the back of the train “to watch young Native[s] scramble in the dust for them” (181).

As the tears gave way to what might best be captured by the title of one of bell hooks’ books as “killing rage,” I thought of the hard-fought strides Indigenous peoples of this land have made by challenging their coerced and forced inclusion in such “exhibitions” meant to stimulate and placate the Euro-colonial gaze. Although a century apart, what the juxtaposition of these two incidents reveals is the continuity of tourist

desires for “primitives.” While the case of the Jarawa and Roper’s experience reflect the dark side of tourism in both a contemporary and historical context, in recent decades some Indigenous peoples have embraced (with varying degrees of enthusiasm) a reworked form of tourism as a means of economic survival. Some have posited tourism as a pathway for their peoples’ reclaimed self-determination and resurgence, and as such there are many instances now in which Indigenous peoples design, construct, manage and are active agents in the “phenomenon [of] selling a cultural image” (Ballengee-Morris 232).

Howard Adams, as discussed in brief in the previous chapter, has suggested that Indigenous peoples who collude in such public spectacles are simply “playing Indian.” Adams critique, although important, is somewhat dated and his statement has inspired me to think of how “playing Indian” might have changed. Are Indigenous peoples still “playing Indian” in moments when they take up participation in public spectacles such as tourism? What are the parameters of contemporary characterizations and performances of Indigeneity? How and why has the model of representation and the tourism relationship changed? Why have they changed and is the change significant enough for us to safely say we have moved out of the oppressive tourist dynamic Adams identifies? As in so many other sites since the passage of the *Constitution Act* (1982), Aboriginal has become institutionalized within Canadian tourism discourse. While “Indian-ness” and the “Imaginary Indian” (to borrow from Daniel Francis) have been defining discourses of nineteenth and the majority of twentieth-century tourism, in the latter decades of the

twentieth century the representational landscape has shifted and is now dominated by the rhetoric of the “Imaginary Aboriginal” and “Aboriginality.”

In line with this emergence, Aboriginal tourism has become one of the fastest growing branches of the broader tourism industry in Canada. According to the Aboriginal Tourism Association of British Columbia (AtBC), revenue generated by the “Aboriginal Cultural Tourism Industry” has grown substantially –from twenty million dollars in 2006, to roughly forty-two million dollars in 2011 (“Next Phase”) (8). This chapter engages the following questions: What is the relationship between the industrialization of imagined Aboriginality (referring to a broader field of image, culture, spirituality framed as Aboriginal) and discourses of Canadian-ness? How does the nation imagine and market itself through tourism in the present moment? What insights may be gleaned from these intersections about the ways Indigenous peoples envision this relationship (as more or less problematic)? Are those Indigenous peoples engaged in tourism over the past three decades simply “playing Aboriginal” (a related, but somewhat different performance from its “Indian” predecessor)?

To answer these questions I begin with a brief overview of the historical relationship between Indigenous peoples and Canadian tourism. Next, I turn to an examination of the marketing of Aboriginality across two sites: the Canadian Tourism Commission (CTC)’s website and the site of the Aboriginal Tourism Association of British Columbia (AtBC). My study contemplates the changing face of tourism and Indigenous peoples relationships to it, both as object (in spaces controlled by Euro-Canadians) and as agent. While these latter sites are for the most part controlled by

Indigenous peoples directly, the impetus to a cultural-based tourism has arisen as a response to the transformative effects of colonialism on traditional Indigenous economics.

The appeal to Aboriginality in tourism, I argue, is also linked to the state's emphasis on and interest in the web-based marketing of Canada's identity as an "aboriginalized nation" that in effect seeks "through Aboriginality, to create for itself a more secure and legitimate national identity that can be shared by all the diverse groups that make up the [...] nation" (Moran 689). Despite projecting the illusion that Indigenous spiritual and cultural practices matter, when cloaked in the language of Aboriginalism tourism performances of culture are appropriated and manipulated into being "a touchstone for the formation of new ethnic adaptations of a dispossessed and decultured 'Aboriginal Canadian' identity" (Alfred "Colonialism" 44).

### **Colonialism, Early Canadian Nation-Building, and Tourism**

Humans have long engaged in temporary travel outside of their own locations of habitation, with access to wealth mediating the terms, distance, and content of such travel.<sup>16</sup> With the rise of what many European theorists refer to as "modernization" in Western Europe and European-colonized territories in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, tourism organized around notions of "leisure" became a key revenue source for older and emerging nations. From the late 1700s Europeans influenced by "Romanticism," by literature and paintings growing out of colonial contact that figured Turtle Island as a *terra nullius*, a land empty of inhabitants, a barren landscape, and a vast wilderness, saw the "New World" as an escape from their "complicated" urban lives (Jasen, *Wild Things* 15). As Mimi Sheller writes in the context of the Caribbean,

romantic tourism meant Europeans could “move through Caribbean landscapes” and “experience[e] bodily what was already known imaginatively through literature and art” (38):

Middle-class Europeans, Americans, and Canadians were increasingly alarmed over the enervating effects of urban life and the pressures of modern business. As they gradually came to admit their own need for an occasional release from work (well before they recognised the same need among the working classes), they became convinced of the restorative value of a wilderness holiday, embracing the idea that ‘brain workers,’ in particular, required ‘the tonic of wildness,’ in measured doses, to combat physical and nervous disorders (Jasen, “Native People” 1).

The desire to visit “wild places” as figured through European literature and art was propped up by the feeling that wildness of naturalized landscape offered a remedy to societal ills and a refuge from the rigors of English (white) civility (*Wild Things* 17).

As Patricia Jasen argues in *Wild Things: Nature, Culture, and Tourism in Ontario 1790-1914*, the tourism industry in the emerging nation “preceded – or accompanied – immigration and resource exploitation, and the tourist industry made its own contribution to a distorted representation of Native cultures and the transformation of their economies” (4). Tours of New England and Upper and Lower Canada became increasingly popular, eventually coming to bring thousands (and in the present millions) to the Niagara region and in and through Indigenous communities like the Tuscarora village near Lewiston, New York (Jasen, “Native People” np). With disillusionment growing with a pressure-filled urban life, Euro-tourists “flocked from the enervating city to the exhilarating wilderness, hoping to cast themselves under the care of Mother Nature and to rediscover the power of the primitive within themselves” (ibid). Euro-tourists who moved through Indigenous communities viewed them as “a sort of laboratory where visitors might

observe the people's way of life and speculate upon their capacity for survival or improvement” (ibid). Viewing European conquest as both inevitable and as necessary, Europeans engaged in a tourist-organized pastime of “lamenting the destruction of the primeval forest and savouring the tragedy of [Indigenous] peoples’ expected demise” (ibid).

While tourists could “visit” eastern parts of the emerging Canadian nation, mass travel to the Northwest was nearly impossible due to the rocky terrain and fear of large and powerful Indigenous nations that had yet to be dominated by Canada’s colonial hand. For the better part of the 1800s, while much of the Northwest had long been claimed by the Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC), the company that held a tenuous grasp over the region’s Indigenous and Métis-dominated nations, numerous Indigenous resistances and an effectively strong and vocal Métis Nation in the Red River area prevented HBC from exercising the authority it insisted it had obtained by way of the English monarchy. The Métis Nation resisted Canada’s claiming of the Red River and the trampling of their nationhood in the wake of a land transfer from the HBC to the Dominion of Canada on December 1, 1869, and again resisted Canada’s push westward in 1884 and 1885.

Without suppressing both First Nations and Métis on the prairies, Canada could not push westward and head off potential annexation of the west by America’s booming imperialism. As part of the dream of westward expansion, Canada’s first Prime Minister John A. Macdonald promised constituents that he would realize his government’s goal of building a railway that would link the newly-formed province of British Columbia (1871) to the eastern provinces, and prevent American incursion into the areas Macdonald’s

government sought for itself. By the time of *e-mayikamikahk* (where it went wrong) in 1885, Canada had extended the CPR to the Northwest Territories and was able to oppress the Métis Nation by bringing a vast number of its military into the region via the CPR. While attending to Métis resistance the Canadian government negotiated and compelled First Nations leadership to sign a series of numbered treaties that would relegate First Nations to a series of isolated reserves.<sup>17</sup> With Indigenous oppositions neutralized, Canada expanded its railroad through to the Pacific coast.

Daniel Francis marks this extension of the railway as a key turning point in early Canadian tourism. The government came to see the extension of tours through the plains and into the mountains, capitalizing on the beauty and “wildness” of the landscape, as a viable option for funding the railway and keeping it afloat (179). Michael Dawson suggests that the elite of many small towns and cities in B.C. used the expansion of the railway and the growing invasion of tourists into the province to “boost” their municipal profiles (16). These “boosters” sought to market the lands they claimed in such a way as to attract *settlers* and *investors* rather than temporary tourists. The practice of boosterism as a form of strategic marketing worked in tandem with Romanticist ideologies to fuel the growth of the tourist industry.

Efforts by the state and by tourism promoters to draw tourists to the land, for temporary and, especially, for permanent settlement, relied on the existence of racist discourse about Indigenous peoples and Indigenous land ownership and tenure. The idea that the lands were “vacant” meant that in the eyes of Europeans Indigenous peoples had no real legitimate claims to their own territories. While treaties were negotiated for

certain parcels of land, the general consensus of the Canadian government and of visiting Americans and Europeans was that Indigenous peoples were not human beings – those interested in travel generally operated under racist assumptions that did not recognize Indigenous peoples' humanity; the assumptions were driven by Romanticism's rhetoric and led to colonial rationalizations that lands could only be classed as "occupied" if the people residing on them met rigid (and yet often shifting) requirements of English land ownership. If Indigenous peoples were not white, Anglophone, Christian, agricultural, and Euro-centrally commercial (which no Indigenous populations *could* be in racialized, colonialist terms), the land was deemed empty and "free for the taking."

The tourist interest in Indigenous peoples reflected in the Ontario tourist industry had less to do with a respect for Indigenous connections to their lands and more to do with the notion that Indigenous peoples would inevitably "die out" as "noble savages" were destined to do.<sup>18</sup> Whereas these beliefs about Indigenous peoples carried weight in the tourism industry in the east, Indian-ness was not an early marketing ploy for tourism promoters in B.C. Indigenous peoples were not initially engaged in the tourism industry (except in the role of guides for individual "explorers") due to the persistence of scientific racism which posited that Indigenous peoples were "unproductive and backward" (Dawson 72). By the end of the nineteenth century and into the early twentieth century, however, tourist desires for "seeing Indians" became of greater interest to those travelling westward. Observing that tourist fantasies of Indians still held power, the government and the CPR "realized that the Indians were a surefire tourist attraction" and from the late 1800s and early 1900s the CPR sold and orchestrated train tours through the prairies for

non-Indigenous tourists to view “wild Indians in their natural setting from the safety and convenience of a railcar. It was every bit as exotic as visiting the depths of Africa or some distant island in the Pacific” (179-181). “Seeing Indians” became such a popular tourist draw that in 1894, when floods wiped out the CPR track the company invited Indigenous peoples from the Stoney reserve at Morley to entertain travelers marooned in Banff. The Indigenous peoples who elected to participate performed modified traditional dances, dressed in buckskin in accordance with tourist fantasies of Indians, and competed in rodeo events “for prizes put up by the railway company” (ibid).

Like the tourists in Ontario, tourists in the prairies wanted mementoes of their adventures. The developing ties between Indigenous peoples and the tourist industry had inspired new forms of Indigenous economic engagement as Indigenous peoples came to work in tourism in multiple capacities as “picturesque figures, as wilderness guides, and as makers of keepsakes” (Jasen “Native People” np).<sup>19</sup> Indigenous peoples engaged in the industry in part due to coercion but also as a proactive measure wherein “cash income earned in this manner became an important element of the Native economy” (*Wild Things* 2). Tourism promoters in Ontario, as an extension of colonial authority, actively sought Indigenous engagement and thought that an “authentic Aboriginal culture” could be captured in representations and marketed to potential tourists (Raibmon 158).

In response to market demand in the latter part of the 1800s, photographers began selling images “of Indians going about their daily lives” to tourists wanting souvenirs of their journeys. The government and tourism promoters also started selling packages for travel on the newly-built Canadian National Railway (CNR) on the Pacific coast and

marketed “the scenic wilderness of western Canada through images of ‘wild Indians’ and ‘totem poles’” (Mawani 40-41). Indians, as imagined by such tourism promoters became, to borrow from Jasen, one of tourism’s most powerful “saleable commodities.” Train tours to see “wild” landscapes and “Indians in their natural habitat” were so successful that by 1913, fifteen and a half million passengers rode the “Indian express” train in B.C. (41). Renewed fears of American imperialism spurred by “World” War I appear to have sustained the tourist industry with train tours reached their peak through the 1920s, but as various droughts and the Great Depression took hold in the years preceding “World” War II, overall tourism numbers declined.<sup>20</sup> By the 1920s Canada had as well solidified its colonial nation-building project through the negotiation (some forced) of treaties and the extension of the reserve system. Canada extended from the east through to the British Columbia coast.

In the absence of truly “natural” and “wild” Indians, the tourism industry witnessed a decline in tourist interest in viewing Indigenous peoples. Tourists were less interested in seeing Indigenous peoples who had adapted to “modernity” and who were not (contrary to popular colonial mythology) “dying out.” Losing some appeal as advertising devices due to their purported ‘modernizing’, Indigenous peoples and symbols of Indian-ness began falling out of favour as marketing ploys for CPR. Some peoples, such as Cree from Mistissini, continued to find ways to work within the tourist industry through the 1950s and 1960s by continuing a centuries old practice of working as tour guides for Euro-tourists (McGinely 15). Overwhelmingly, though, the

“modernization of Indians” meant that tourists were less interested in tours through Indigenous communities.

However muted, there did remain “a fascination among travelers with Indians and their exotic cultures” (Francis, *Imaginary Indian* 183). Perhaps the most exoticized, aggressively promoted and thus most noticeable symbol of Indian-ness is the totem pole.<sup>21</sup> With the first pole erected in 1903, the totem poles in Stanley Park in Vancouver quickly became associated with Canadian-ness. In spite of tourism’s Depression-era decline, visits to see the totem poles provided a boost to Canada’s economy. Whereas tourist’s had become disillusioned with modernized Indians, the totem poles served as sufficient “visible markers of Otherness [that] were a necessary reminder to tourists and travelers that while Canada no longer had an ‘Indian problem’ it did indeed have an ‘ancient past’” one that provided sufficient exotic and romantic spectacle for the leisure/pleasure-seeking tourist (Mawani 44). At the same time the totem poles served as homage to Canada’s imperial might. In the absence of Indians, markers of Indian-ness underscored Canada’s own insistent indigenized existence. While Indigenous peoples became less popular, symbols of Indian-ness retained a powerful hold over tourist imaginations as represented by tourism marketing.

Tourism as a central feature of the “modern” period is inseparably linked to Canadian nation-building and to the colonization of Indigenous lands and peoples, and perhaps most importantly provided a financial base for the realization of nation-building. It also served as a form of nationalist pedagogy aimed at educating the nation’s occupants and its visitors, furthering the notion that westward expansion (or “westward march of

European civilization”) and the disappearance of the “original inhabitants” of the land was inevitable (Jasen “Native People” np). Colonial discourse is therefore inextricably linked with tourism as both have “strategically functioned to produce geopolitical myths about destinations” (D’Hauteserre 237). Tourism provided both a stage through which the colonial national story, a story long foretold in European writings, could become embodied. Tourism cloaked the visual spectacle of colonization in romantic narratives, allowing Anglo-European peoples to visit places they had only read and dreamed about. Tourists and tourism promoters as extensions of colonial processes “reconstructed images of the Indian to suit their own immediate needs and purposes, including their need to affirm their own culture's notion of progress, racial superiority, and rights to this ‘new’ land” (Jasen “Native People” np).

### **Experiential Tourism**

In the post-war era, tourism rebounded on a tide of economic growth and tourist agencies more readily sprang up. Small companies and growing corporations soon dominated the field and a bona fide “tourist industry” emerged alongside other industrialized economic modes. The 1950s and 1960s saw the development of standardized, packaged tours and vacations with “low levels of personal involvement” (Canada’s Minister’s Roundtable on Parks Canada qtd. in Smith “Experiential Tourism” 5), or the rise of “mass tourism”.<sup>22</sup> Through the 1950s and 1960s the tourist industry grew so much so that in 1963 the United Nations (UN) agreed it should hold its first conference on tourism and international travel; at the 1963 conference the UN agreed with the International Union of Official Travel Organizations (IUOTO) that it was time to consider

defining a field of tourism and terms for travelers such as “visitor,” “tourist, and “excursionist.”<sup>23</sup> Following IUOTO’s meeting tourism continued to grow through the 1970s and in the 1980s tourism reached its peak. By the 1980s tourism was no longer the sole purview of the economic elite and an identifiable form of “mass tourism” emerged that hinged on the packaging of affordable, resort-based pleasure vacations available in a range of prices; mass tourism grew as governments, hotels, tour companies and travel agents made travel more accessible for middle-income earners with resort vacations becoming the preferred tourist mode *du jour*.

Tours, such as what CPR had marketed to Euro-tourists, were elaborated as comprehensive travel packages (including such things as travel, accommodation, meals, entertainment). The packages were framed in particular ways to attract tourists to certain sights – enticing tourists to travel to see the places and the people the tourists wanted to see. The conceptual frames were a further visualization of romanticized imagined geographies perpetuated by “the West’s” ideas about “the Rest,” or “Others,” who were territorially but also socially, culturally, and racially outside and different from the West.<sup>24</sup> In Canada’s case this exoticization and marketing of difference continued to center around Indigenous peoples distinctiveness from an Anglo-European normative Canadian-ness. Unilaterally, however, tourism packages carried on the earlier ideological project of portraying the legitimacy of colonial regimes through the depiction of tourism as a noninvasive “modernizing force” that while promoting standards of progress and “civility” did not “threaten the primitiveness of indigenous peoples” (Silver 306).

Many theorists such as John Urry (*The Tourist Gaze*) and Dean MacCannell (*The Tourist*) document the consolidation and industrialization of tourism and its growth through the twentieth century into mass tourism, noting that on the wings of an expanding world order and the availability of lower-priced, standardized tourist options, tourism came to outpace other economic sectors. Tourism became one of the world's leading economic forces (Milne and Ateljevic 370-371). While tourism continued to grow, by the 1990s the popularity of standardized tourism had been somewhat displaced in favour of *experiential tourism*. Richard Prentice claims that “[r]esort-based mass tourism progressively eroded the immediate cultural experiences” of earlier tourism (7). Tourists bored by the functionality of mass tourism began to seek more “authentic” and personified experiences in the 1990s, a trade reflected in the wider (non-tourism) market. These changes in the desires and attitudes of tourists would have monumental impact on the global tourism economy and on the nature of the Imaginary Indian as a saleable commodity.

In 2005, Canada's Minister's Roundtable on Parks Canada defined experiential tourism as “an outgrowth of a global movement toward experiential learning, whereby people create meaning through direct experience” (qtd. in Smith “Experiential Tourism” 4). Experiential tourism sits in contrast to mass tourism in that it “shows rather than describes” and “encourages visitors to actively participate in the experience” (qtd. in *ibid* 5). For the tourist, the experience includes, among other aspects, “the people one meets, the places they visit, the accommodations where they stay, activities participated in and the memories created” (qtd. in *ibid* 5). Experience-based tourism is tied to the “evolution

of mass customization and the experience economy,” the Roundtable argues, and “[i]n this sense it is very personal and individual. Essentially, experiential tourists seek memorable experiences (qtd. in *ibid* 4-5).

The language used to frame these experiences is what Prentice refers to as the “New Romanticism of Evoked Authenticity” in an article of the same name. The “new Romanticism,” for Prentice, is tied to a sense among tourists that “self-realisation is not completely attainable by Western populations without travel away from home” (or in the Canadian context travel away to a nostalgic past) (7). Experiential tourism is intimately tied to notions of personal growth and reflection and to feelings of personal accomplishment. Tourists seek to “connect with unique and cultural heritage” through experience that are customized to their interests, arising from a desire to feel as though they have somehow developed elements of their personality and/or character (Roundtable qtd. in Smith “Experiential Tourism” 4-5). Companies and the industry at large have responded to this change in demand by shifting their focus toward offering and promoting experience-based travel activities that draw people “into cultures, communities and the outdoors” (*ibid*).

With the passage into the mid-late 1990s, tourism marketing shifted towards personalizing the tourist experience, inviting prospective consumers to “‘explore’ and to ‘discover’ for themselves: personally to find surprises or ‘hidden’ worlds, to seek adventure, to admire grandeur, to share secrets, to sample flavours and to uncover mysteries or solve enigmas” (Smith 2; Prentice 10). For theorists like Prentice, William L. Smith and Valda Blundell, the movement toward experiential tourism is linked to a

preoccupation with “culture” (specifically “authentic culture”) in the sense that tourists began to seek to “experience the cultural attractions and the cultural distinctiveness of the area they visit” (Blundell “Riding the Polar”). Cultural tourism is epitomized, for Robert Kelly, by the “consumption of cultural experiences (and objects) by individuals who are away from their normal place of habitation” (qtd. in *ibid*). This transition has led to tourism marketing that stresses that a traveler’s worth is tied up in “the consumption of cultural experiences,” with tourism materials emphasizing “a country’s or a region’s art, craft and heritage forms; its museums, art galleries, and historic sites; its culturally different populations; and the different ‘sense of place’ that tourists can experience” (Blundell “Riding the Polar”).

The changing nature of tourism, towards a preoccupation with authenticity and experience, fuels the international competitiveness between market-driven nations. The recent state of tourism has meant that it must continue to attract “affluent international travelers” seeking out authentic, meaningful tourism experiences; the state meanwhile is compelled by its desire for economic dominance to compete with other nations for “its share of ‘world tourism receipts’” (*ibid*). The investments are large and the “world tourism receipts” are indeed vast, as in 1992 tourism had grown into the leading economic sector the world over (Dicks 44). Invigorated by the turn towards experience-focused tourism, tourism provided ten percent of the world’s gross domestic product (GDP) in 2001. Bringing in US\$10.8 billion annually that same year Canada ranked in eighth place among the world’s top earners in tourism and was ranked the ninth most popular tourist destination (Dawson 2).

### **“Start the Adventure, Discover Aboriginal Canada”: The Canadian Tourism Commission and Marketing the Aboriginal**

In the competition for tourism receipts, states find ways to objectify their national identities (i.e. *Scottishness*, *Indianness*, *Japaneseness*, *South Africanness*), a global phenomenon John and Jean Comaroff theorize “appears here to have produced a new sensibility, an explicitly new awareness of its essence, its affective material, and expressive potential” (2). The Canadian Tourism Commission (CTC) as the federal branch of the Canadian government’s tourism profile has responded to the turn towards experiential tourism by defining Canada’s “brand identity” as an “experience-based brand” that is steeped in appeals to tourist affect. CTC markets Canada’s tourism brand as offering tourists a chance to engage in “Canada’s extraordinary experiences; ones that engage all the senses and let travellers create personal stories” (“Canada’s Tourism”). Canada’s tourism brand is marketed as “the imagination and emotion a country inspires in visitors. [It is] [a] set of beliefs and associations they hold about a place. A tourism brand is a promise of what to expect when you visit” (“Canada’s Tourism”).

The move toward experiential tourism in Canada came on the heels of studies of international tourists that found that people felt Canada was a country big on landscape and filled with friendly people, but that it lacks the draw of Europe (historical sites) or the Caribbean (lots of sunshine and beaches). As a by-product of economic global competitiveness CTC feared “that other countries are better known as destinations with impressive cultural attractions” such as “the spectacular historic sites of Europe” and the “peasant peoples of Third World countries” (Blundell, “Riding the Polar”). CTC reflects self-awareness with regard to this fear on its website:

In 2004, we set out to change this outdated idea of Canada. Going back to this country's roots, we put our stake in the ground. We aren't a specialty destination for sun-worshippers who wanted to lie on the beach for a week. We're a country built by—and for—explorers. We attract travellers who want the freedom to express themselves through travel. If Canada is an adventure story, our hero is the curious traveller who thrives on surprising, unexpected and out-of-the-ordinary experiences (“Canada’s Tourism”).

The reaction to the nation’s sense of its own, what I call “destination deficiency” and its desire to go back to its “roots,” results in CTC framing Canadian tourism in the language of frontier mythology, drawing on words like “adventure,” “discovery,” and “exploration.” CTC’s official tourism brand tagline in particular, “Canada. Keep exploring,” constructs an image of Canada as a playground for the experiential tourist, calling to them with promises of unbridled adventure.

To paint this vision for tourists and communicate Canada as a site for adventure, discovery, and exploration, CTC devised five unique “selling propositions” for its tourism industry: “[v]ibrant cities on the edge of nature...[p]ersonal journeys by land, water and air...[a]ctive adventure among awe-inspiring wonders...[a]ward-winning Canadian local cuisine...[and] [c]onnecting with Canadians” (ibid). The first of these speaks to the idea that Canada’s landscape, its “nature,” is more than a backdrop to cities; it is “a symbol of freedom – the freedom to explore and be yourself” (ibid). The second selling proposition is about “discovery, surprise, landscapes and waterways of unimaginable beauty, about a journey that brings you back to yourself. After all, Canada is a land built for explorers” (ibid). On the land “built of explorers” you can “drive Newfoundland’s wind-raked Viking Trail to reach the earliest-known European settlement in the New World” (ibid). With the fourth set of experiences tourists are told they can be the “hero of your own

adventure story,” a framing directly tied to tropes about the land as historically wild and foreboding, but in the present day made accessible (presumably by settlement and modernity): “Once upon a time, Canada was considered a vast, remote, even forbidding wilderness. To get out and be active in our wondrous nature, you had to suffer the elements or sacrifice comfort. But that was around the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Today, you’re the hero of your own adventure story in Canada. And the story couldn’t be more inspiring” (ibid).

As an example of the kind of experiences available to those seeking to be active among awe-inspiring wonders, CTC offers that tourists can “[s]it mesmerized by the aurora borealis (Northern Lights) from the comfort of a hot tub” (ibid). The fourth proposition simply refers to the sampling the “flavor of a place” through the consumption of “unique, locally sourced ingredients, a taste of ethnic fusion, a return to national freshness and sharing the bounty of low-intensity farming” (ibid). With the final proposition CTC alludes to an Indigenous-related experience by suggesting that tourists interested in connecting with Canadians who are “[w]itty, fun, approachable, authentic” take in the Yukon International Storytelling Festival and “[s]hare stories” or alternatively head to Alberta to “[l]earn the traditional life of the Great Plains people at Alberta’s famous buffalo jump” (ibid).

Continuing to play up Canada’s suitability as an experiential tourist destination CTC coaxes tourists by appealing to their need to feel special and spiritually fulfilled by their travel with statements like:

What matters is that you’re unique and that you value the power of an experience. A product is what people buy. An experience is what they remember... Visitors

who fully engage their senses, make a strong emotional connection to their travel experience and feel as if they've enjoyed a personal exploration are more likely to be satisfied and inspired. This is precisely how extraordinary memories are made (ibid).

To ensure that tourists feel they have a hand in making travel memories and that their travel experiences are sufficiently personalized, CTC makes available an online quiz/online marketing tool called the "Explorer Quotient" which helps prospective tourists figure out which sort of adventure they are best suited for. The quiz then places people into one of nine categories of "Explorer Types" as Authentic Experiencer, Cultural Explorer, Cultural History Buff, Personal History Explorer, Free Spirit, Gentle Explorer, No Hassle Traveller, Rejuvenator, and Virtual Traveller, offering each customized list of travel suggestions based on their "personality" ("Traveller Types").

Each of the personality types and list of experiences perpetuate CTC's overall tourism brand and are replete with references to travel that allow tourists to engage in "discovery" and "exploration," and experience the "country's roots" that make the nation what it is. The notion of the country's roots relies on fabricated narratives about the Canadian nation and what it feels it can offer to tourists. These discursive frames, however, are deeply problematic as they are each intimately tied to the displacement and colonization of Indigenous peoples. "Discovery" as an important frame for experiential tourism is nevertheless tied to the longstanding misrecognition of the colonial relationship as one of "discovery" and of Europeans "finding" Indigenous peoples and the "New World." CTC derides the colonization of Indigenous peoples and our lands and the subsequent intergenerational impacts of such a horrific project by romanticizing "discovery" and reinscribing it through tourism's brand as the core of Canadian national

identity. The desire of settler-colonists for “speedy indigenization” is thus reflected across CTC’s branding strategy. As a branch of the Canadian government, CTC works to reconcile the state’s *anxiety of belatedness* through positivist tourism narratives that are perhaps more accurately described as a contemporary reimagining of frontier mythology.

The concern over destination deficiency I identified earlier is reflected here as a settler anxiety and a psychopathological condition of belatedness, referring to the tension arising from Euro-Canadians position as “the bearer of the civilizing mission” while at the same time suffering from a “paranoia [over] colonial civility’s legitimacy” (Coleman, *White Civility* 15-16). Drawing on Homi Bhabha, Daniel Coleman writes that the anxiety of belatedness is tied to the settler-colonist’s internalization of “imperialism’s temporal gap” wherein the settler-colonist feels “caught in the time-space delay between the metropolitan place where civility is made and legislated and the colonial place where it is enacted and enforced” (16). The anxiety which Euro-Canadians feel is directly tied to a sense that the nation lacks a sort of “national legitimacy” which it feels other nations innately possess. Centrally, Indigenous peoples’ survival of colonialism and our insistence on reclaiming land and identity challenge Canada’s attempts to fix its identity. The effect of these anxieties are that the settler-colonist “must construct, by a double process of speedy indigenization and accelerated self-civilization, his priority and superiority to latecomers; that is, by representing himself as already indigenous the settler claims priority over newer immigrants and, by representing himself as already civilized, he claims superiority to Aboriginals and other non-Whites” (ibid).

Insofar as the settler desires their own indigenization they experience an anxiety that feeds and yet is also fed by what Renato Rosaldo refers to as “imperialist nostalgia.”

Imperialist or colonialist nostalgia appears in two stages:

The first is a nostalgia for colonialism itself, a desire to re-create and recover the world of late Victorian and Edwardian colonialism as a culture of extraordinary confidence and conspicuous opulence... The second moment is more oblique. It involves the recovery not only of *fin-de-siècle* claims to power but also its claims to knowledge” (cited in Jacobs 18-19).

Canada romanticizes a history of conquest and colonization through the perpetuation of Aboriginal to assure itself that all is “alright” with the nation, reconcile its anxieties, and to further speedily indigenize itself. Moran theorizes that this is why Indigenous peoples are not made absent from public life:

There is another reason why Aborigines cannot be completely effaced from the record. They still have a crucial role to play in the process of the foundation myth: to confer legitimacy on those who raped, pillaged, poisoned and dispossessed them. So they cannot be silenced: or more precisely, a voice that is labeled as theirs must have a place, legitimated as theirs yet not disrupting the fine balance of contradictions in the foundation myth (Moran 27).

Whereas early Canadian tourism sought to market “authentic Indians,” contemporary tourism trades in representations of a multitude of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis under the moniker “Aboriginal tourism” as “authentic Aboriginals” because it so desperately seeks ways to legitimate its identity.

Canada’s tourism industry imports and then exports the image of the “Aboriginal” in an effort to portray the nation as a multicultural utopia founded on an innate diversity (a diverse “Aboriginal population”), civility, compassion, generosity, and humanitarian superiority, proclaiming to “highlight[t] the nation’s distinctive cultural forms” (Blundell, “Riding the Polar ”) and pacify its own growing sense of unease. Peter Van Ham writes

that Canada transforms its national narrative “in order to present distinctive images in order to attract foreign investment and skilled labour” (qtd. in *ibid* 68-69). CTC’s efforts to “brand Canada,” then actualizes the selling of diversity to transform the national narrative (Nimijean 70). Specifically, CTC endeavours to “capitalize on its strength in this market” in terms of its “rich native and multicultural heritage” (Blundell). The interest in capitalizing on and marketing “native and multicultural heritage” as a core feature of “Canadian diversity” corresponds with the push among economically dominant nations in the 1980s toward “selling diversity” (Abu-Laban and Gabriel, 110). Under the rubric of selling diversity, the increasingly corporatized state views Indigenous peoples and multicultural “Others” as “saleable commodities” for the purposes of marketing a Canadian identity. Drawing on Abu-Laban and Gabriel, Nimijean writes that “Canadian diversity has become a key element of the transformed Canadian narrative” and ultimately as a “selling point” for the restructuring of society along neoliberal lines (69). Indigenous people are drawn into the transformation of Canada’s national narrative as Aboriginal and are positioned as signifiers of Canada’s “originary diversity,” a diversity which the nation professes it has possessed since its inception. It also positions Indigenous histories as part of a *Canadian* “prehistory.” In most instances the return to the country’s roots involves an active claiming of Indigenous peoples, cultures, and identities as a part of Canada’s “pre-Canada” Canadian-ness.

The connection of Indigenous cultures to Canadian national history and identity is an attempt not only to define the nation’s brand but to cater to tourist desires for uniqueness, individuality, meaningful experiences, and authenticity. In a 1996 survey of

tourists from the U.K., Germany, and France a sizeable number of tourists identified Indigenous peoples as a site/source of tourist attraction when visiting Canada.<sup>25</sup> While the research conducted does show that interest in “Aboriginal culture” is not what generally motivates tourists to come to Canada in the first place, once here tourists view “Aboriginal themes...as a value-added component” (“Canadian Tourism Commission”). While images of Indigenous peoples as symbols of Canadian culture and Indigenous-made material culture have been visually consumed and sold as souvenirs to tourists interested in “seeing Indians” since the early days of Canadian tourism, the market changes in the broader tourism industry have generated demands for Indigenous-related cultural experiences and the accumulation of Indigenous traditional, environmental, and spiritual knowledges. In the contemporary moment tourists have expressed an interest in directly *experiencing* Indigenous peoples’ cultures (with a special emphasis on ecological knowledge and spirituality), meaning that they would prefer to participate in the expression of culture and the making of arts and crafts (instead of passively viewing Indigenous performances).

Of all of the “Traveller Types” designated by CTC those who meet the profile of the “Cultural Explorer” are provided with the most recommendations for Aboriginal-related experiences. The Cultural Explorer is said to enjoy “ancient history and modern culture” and “experience the culture as genuinely as possible” (among other things), statements which allude to the existence of “ancient” and “authentic” Aboriginal cultures. The image used to entice the Cultural Explorer is that of an Indigenous man with long braids next to a campfire. He appears to be telling some sort of story to a European man,

woman and two young children, while a teepee, picnic table, and the rolling hills of the plains are laid out in the background. Tourists are told that they, too, can participate in these sorts of “ancient” practices. They can

Paddle a dugout canoe, mush sled dogs, stomp to a beat at a Pow Wow, nibble caribou jerky, sleep in a tipi. Dance a jig to a Métis fiddle tune. Savour wild salmon grilled on a fragrant cedar plank. Paddle a canoe down a river wilderness. Toss aside your shyness and launch into throat-singing. Hike through ancient towering rainforest and touch damp moss. Smell sweet grass smolder in a purifying ritual. Cheer on a walrus using his tusks to haul himself onto an ice floe. Weave a basket. Aboriginal folks are proud to share their culture, so join them at a traditional feast or walk through the woods as native healers do. They can teach you how to carve a totem pole or feel the freedom of riding horses across the prairie. Visit cultural centres shaped like longhouses. Party at Pow Wows where elaborate dresses, masks and feathers whirl in a blur of colour. Or watch an Inuit carver calmly unleashing a polar bear from a chunk of soapstone. Dine gourmet on the wild, the original organic. Grilled elk, caribou stew, muskox sausages, caramelized sky apples. Drop a fishing line into a remote lake or sink into a sauna bathed in the glow of the midnight sun. Then, turn in to your tipi or your stylish Aboriginal lodge to awaken in the morning to the aroma of freshly baked bannock bread (“Canada, Aboriginal-style”).

These are but some of the many things tourists are told they can expect to become involved in should they plan a journey to see “Canada, Aboriginal-style.”

Other options are advertised to tourists on the CTC website through formal profiles and reports such as visiting “the Riel Rebellion’s heartland,” the chance to “Go Inuit for a weekend,” and the opportunity to “Dance at Ahbee Festival.” Going “Inuit for a weekend” refers to “signing up for a home stay with a local family and getting an insider’s look at the workings of a typical Nunavut hamlet” and “learning to navigate the Inuit’s quirky sense of humour” (Pfeiff). The recommendation to “Dance at Ahbee Festival” encourages tourists to visit the Manitoba powwow at Whiteshell Provincial Park “where First Nations people traditionally gathered to share teachings and wisdom”

(“Dance at Ahbee”). Tourists are invited to “Stroll through the Indigenous Marketplace and Trade Show, [to] decid[e] whether to buy a carving, sweet-grass braids or a hand drum” at the Ahbee powwow. When the intertribal dance “is called out” they are encouraged to find themselves “on the dance floor, too, twirling and stepping to the driving drum beat and the intoxicating rhythm of the songs” (ibid). Ahbee is marketed by CTC as a pan-Aboriginal festival that bridges the old and the new through the music of the “soulful chants of the elders” and “everything from hip hop to country” (ibid), and as a playground for the non-Indigenous tourist. Contrasting the Inuit and First Nations experiences, which are organized around “culture,” the Métis profile encourages tourists to see the “battlefields that shaped Canada and began the long struggle for Aboriginal rights,” encouraging tourists to “Meet the people of Batoche. Hear and learn their stories, as well as the story of the Métis people and the struggle for Aboriginal rights in Canada” (“Batoche”). Claimed as a National Historic Site of Canada by Heritage Canada, Batoche is marketed by CTC as a pan-Aboriginal site of “the Northwest Rebellion, Canada’s greatest insurrection” (ibid).

The marketing of these experiences are notable because they reflect the state’s investment in marketing a largely legal category by representing and reducing a diversity of Indigenous peoples/cultures as the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit as an essentialized category of “Aboriginal.” While there are other experiences depicted as Aboriginal on the CTC’s website, these examples are notable for the breadth of CTC’s marketing of the Aboriginal across First Nations, Inuit, and Métis lines. This marketing of Indigenous peoples through an inherently reductive and essentialist frame of “aboriginalism” as

Onkwehonwe scholar Taiaiake Alfred calls it is a “perversity.” He argues that via the deployment (and I would suggest the adaptation) of colonial myths, aboriginalism manipulates Indigenous peoples “into a submissive position” (*Wasase* 23). The coded language of aboriginalism misleads people by concealing the embedded colonialism inherent within marketed “Aboriginal” experiences.

The CTC’s branding of Inuit through the lens of “going native” is one such manipulation; although its exact origins are unknown, the phrase is an expression that has been in use since the early stages of colonialism and refers to colonizer’s fears of assimilating into “uncivilized” Indigenous societies. “Going native” reflects a “widespread ambivalence about modernity as well as anxieties about the terrible violence marking the nation’s origins” (Huhndorf 2). Shari Huhndorf argues that the twentieth century deployment of “going native” has served as a means for “constructing white identities, naturalizing the conquest, and reinscribing various power relations within American culture” (6). In addition to the problematic reference to “going native”, CTC’s branding of the Inuit “Aboriginal experience” relies on racist representations of Inuit peoples as happy and smiling simpletons. Christopher Trott cites an image caption in the *Anglican Churchman* from March 1960 that refers to Inuit people as “The Eskimos” claiming that they are “a happy people and they love to sing and dance...Eskimo babies join the dance. They bounce around on the mothers’ backs and enjoy the fun” (qtd. 172). Inuit are depicted as even happier in the face of “terrible ecological adversity” (ibid). Mid-twentieth century writings about Inuit people reflected similar views and “portrayed

them as rather happy and simple, a view reinforced by the staged photographs of smiling Inuit made available by missionaries” (Huhndorf 15).

As with the Inuit experience tourists are encouraged to “go native” at Ahbee through the buying of traditional medicines (sweetgrass, the purchase of which violates protocol regarding traditional medicines); tourist are also encouraged to see themselves as intertribal through taking the opportunity to dance during the intertribal dance. The encouragement to “take part” in powwow dancing and to vision the tourist self as intertribal is another aspect of the “going native” trope where because “real Indians were destined to disappear, European Americans are the proper heirs of ‘Indianness’ as well as of the land and resources [and cultures] of the conquered Natives” (5). Further, the description of Ahbee paints a problematic picture of Whiteshell Provincial Park being a place open to Indigenous peoples who can gather freely (as has *traditionally* been done) to share “teachings and wisdom.” On the contrary, in Manitoba Indigenous “free” use of the park is mediated by the Manitoba provincial government, who in 2010 rebuked the Brokenhead First Nation’s efforts to obtain sections of the park as legitimate compensation under the Treaty Land Entitlement Process. The Brokenhead in return threatened to block public access to the park in hopes of compelling the government to resolve “the issue of co-management of sacred aboriginal land in the Whiteshell.”<sup>26</sup>

In a move aimed at the heart of Métis pride CTC portrays the Métis resistance against the Canadian state as one of “insurrection” and abject failure in the face of a “superior force.” CTC’s “Aboriginal” rhetoric explicitly ignores the stories the people themselves would tell, namely that the resistance movement at both Red River and

Batoche were never struggles for *Aboriginal* rights. They were never anything other than a resistance to colonialism launched by a distinct Métis Nation in the face of a brutal and particularly racist Canadian nationalism. As Métis peoples continue to struggle as landless peoples who in the present are denied recognition of rights and their inherent nationhood, the state endeavours to sell romanticized and mythologized Canadian frontier rebelliousness with reference to Métis leader Louis Riel.

Aboriginal, when used in this way, displaces “authentic indigenous identities, beliefs, and behaviours with one designed by Indian Department bureaucrats, government lawyers, and judges to complete the imperial objective of exterminating Onkwehonwe presences from the social and political landscape” (*Wasase* 126). It also firmly locates Indigenous peoples in the past with constant historicizing of Indigenous cultural practices and experiences. This is what Alfred refers to as the “genocidal function of aboriginalism,” the “prettied-up face of neo-colonialism that is...the attempt to destroy authentic existences and replace them with ways of life and self-definitions that best serve Euroamerican wants, needs, and beliefs” (127). The discourse of Aboriginal in CTC’s promotion of Canadian tourism puts in place Eurocentric views of Indigenous peoples, histories, and futures that “are nothing more than the self-justifying myths and fantasies of the Settler” (*ibid.*).

The state’s marketing of the everyday lives (Inuit), spiritual/cultural practices and materials (First Nations), and histories (Métis) of Indigenous peoples under the umbrella of “Canada, Aboriginal-style” reflects the totalizing reach of Canada’s attempts to *imagineer* itself. As mentioned earlier, as Margaret Werry suggests, nations are “not so

much imagined as *imagineered*” meaning that the state engages in the production or participatory drama of its national identity, drawing on the work of “culture agents across business, civil society, policy, and entertainment” (x). In the case of the CTC the culture agents are working from within the field of tourism to engineer a nationalism (the national brand) that insists on its own ability to cut across, to borrow Werry’s phrasing, “deep (racial or ethnic) disparities in power or entitlement” (xiv). The Aboriginal or Aboriginalism in tourism is deployed to aid in the performance of state identity, to imagineer it, and to give the nation the “appearance of solidarity” (xv). However, it is perhaps best understood as a device of the ongoing colonial project that in fact serves as “essential means of defining and regenerating racial whiteness and a racially inflected vision of [Canadian]ness” (Huhndorf 5).

### **Our Story, Your Experience: Niche-Marketing Aboriginal Tourism and the Case of AtBC**

When Aboriginality is constructed, as it has been by CTC, it “reflects the prevailing colonial mentality in its redefinition of Onkwehonwe away from our original languages, because it fashions ‘the people’ as a symbol and concept constructed on, and totally amenable to, colonialism” (Alfred *Wasase* 126). It is assimilationist in its efforts to reimagine Indigenous peoples as integrated into and also enabling a supposedly *superior* Euro-Canadian way. Indigenous participation within Canadian tourism has increased, though, spurring the emergence of an Indigenously-driven and definable “Aboriginal tourism” niche market as a part of the broader tourism industry.

Acknowledging Alfred’s concerns, one can ask what might “Canada, Aboriginal-style” look like when Indigenous peoples are actively engaged in the process of

imagineering the relationship between Indigenous peoples and the state? CTC's depictions position Indigenous peoples as Aboriginal objects of the tourist industry but there are other spaces wherein Indigenous peoples are active agents in facilitating an Aboriginal tourism industry. Is it the case that Indigenous involvement in such productions of Aboriginality/Aboriginalism is always, necessarily, a sign of being "amenable to colonialism"? Alfred argues that once people fully comprehend the implications of such an enactment that it is "repugnant to anyone who desires to preserve onkwehonwe ways of life" (ibid), yet people have not abandoned "playing Aboriginal" in spite of these realizations. What might some of the rewards be of "playing Aboriginal" that would see us disregard its more troubling aspects? Are there any positive aspects to enacting the dominating discourse of Aboriginal?

Alfred contends that it is complacency which lies at the heart of people's willingness to play Aboriginal, but also a desire for people to achieve some sort of recognition within settler society:

The severe destructive and disintegrating effects of colonization in indigenous communities and the momentum towards assimilation, combined with the active construction of aboriginalist structures to support the elimination of authentic indigenous existences, make such self-examination unlikely. Instead, accommodations with colonialism are sought. Indigenous people who embrace aboriginalism become cultural mirrors of the mainstream society, and because they aspire to elevate their status inside settler society, they are afforded opportunities to usurp the voice and privileges of legitimate representatives of First Nations. Governments promote, and the general society accepts, the aboriginalist voice in politics and the arts, scholarship, media, and other public forums because it is the voice of accommodation and acceptance of the situation and allows settler society the hubris of its mistaken notion that indigenous dysfunction is responsible for First Nations dependency and suffering ("Colonialism" 52).

He insists on the accountability of the emergent middle class, a self-identifying class of “Aboriginals” that have emerged and “conspir[e] with the state to maintain the status quo and legitimize the colonial system” for their own individual benefit (*Wasase* 121). Aboriginalists, as Alfred calls them, play Aboriginal because they are “dependent financially and for their personal status on that [colonial] order” (121-122). For this he takes them to task, those “aboriginalists” (politicians, economic elites, and moderate intellectuals) who employ a passive language of compromise and negotiation in dealing with colonial authorities in order to “prevent the activation of a political or cultural resurgence against the colonial order” (121).

Like Alfred, Howard Adams identifies this sort of collusion as “playing Indian.” Haunani-Kay Trask, on the other hand, complicates the changing phenomenon by drawing out the extenuating circumstances Alfred hints at, questioning whether such Indigenous peoples are “complicitous” in the “co-optation of indigenous ways” (105). Trask insists that the state pulls Indigenous peoples into “cultural prostitution” by compelling them to take up roles “waiting on tourists, cleaning their rooms, selling them artifacts, and smiling for a living” (105-106). Trask writes,

Some of our people are bought, some are crushed between impossible demands, others are squeezed until they become but images of their formers selves. Those who resist often find the price too high...Native resistance no longer results in death or imprisonment, as it once did, but now brings chronic unemployment or threats of lawsuits or constant hounding and public ridicule that threatens our sanity. For the sake of our loved ones, our families, our elders, and our relatives, we participate in the wage system because we feel that there is no other way (ibid).

While the conditions Trask identifies are surely the case for a great number of Indigenous peoples in both her home territory and on Turtle Island, there is a significant population of Indigenous peoples seeking involvement in the tourist industry.

Aside from CTC's representations, the consolidation and materialization of "Aboriginal tourism" or "Aboriginal cultural tourism" as its own entity is a significant effect of the mid-1980s shift toward experiential cultural tourism. The marketing of the "authentic" and "non-staged" sites and spaces which allow this sort of unprecedented tourist experience has, over the past thirty years, come to be framed as a distinct field of "Aboriginal tourism" or "Aboriginal cultural tourism" with the springing up of many Indigenous-run (Aboriginally-labeled) tourism organizations.<sup>27</sup> Aboriginal tourism is now the single largest cultural tourism draw for Canadian tourism alongside other forms such as "[n]ature tourism, resource-based tourism, adventure tourism, eco-tourism, transformational travel, heritage tourism and other niche areas" (Roundtable qtd. in Smith "Experiential Tourism" 5). In 1996 a collective of Indigenous and non-Indigenous business and government representatives formed an organization called Aboriginal Tourism Team Canada (ATTC). ATTC proceeded to define Aboriginal tourism as "any tourism business that is owned or managed by Indians, Inuit or Métis people. It comprises the full spectrum of tourism products and services, be it traditional or contemporary. This includes: accommodation, food and beverages, transportation, attractions, travel trade, events and conferences, adventure tourism, recreation, and arts and crafts" (2).<sup>28</sup> In that same year, the Aboriginal Tourism Association of British Columbia (AtBC) was formed by a volunteer group of Indigenous peoples working in the tourism sector. AtBC aimed

at exploring the possibilities of increasing Indigenous tourism entrepreneurship in B.C. AtBC defines “Aboriginal cultural tourism” as comprising a mix of “traditional” and “non-traditional” experiences such as “canoe journeys and interpretive jet boat tours to Aboriginal-owned museums, heritage villages, cultural centres, golf resorts and wineries” (“Backgrounder”). AtBC also takes a stab at defining the parameters of “experience” in experiential tourism, claiming that “[p]ut simply, more and more visitors are looking for experiences that immerse them in a foreign culture and allow them to experience customs and traditions firsthand” (ibid).

In 2005, Michael E. Kelly, in “Atiik Askii: Land of the Caribou,” a case study in community-based tourism development for Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC), Canadian Heritage, Manitoba Culture, Heritage and Tourism, and Manitoba Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, defined Aboriginal tourism by first deferring to a nine-year-old (presumably) Indigenous girl from Brochet in Northwestern Manitoba. The young girl, Sherilynn Thomas, reportedly drew a picture that shared what she feels Aboriginal tourism means: “caribou hunting, camping and fishing” (ii). Kelly elaborates Thomas’ drawn definition adding that while Aboriginal tourism may mean “something different for Aboriginal communities across Canada” it generally refers to “arts and crafts, pow wows, story-telling, and foods such as venison, bannock and wild rice. It also means outdoor activities such as canoeing, dog-sledding or staying in a tee pee or lodge” (ibid). These definitions echo that of ATTC and CTC’s joint publication, “Aboriginal Cultural Tourism: Checklist for Success,” that identifies all First Nations, Inuit, and Métis owned *or* operated businesses which “incorporate[e] an Aboriginal cultural experience in a

manner that is appropriate, respectful, and true to the Aboriginal culture being represented” and is generally thematically-based on authenticity and environmental, cultural, and economic sustainability (2).

Encompassing all of these definitions Aboriginal tourism has come to mean “big business” for Indigenous peoples and the nation-state. 1998 industry estimates pegged the revenue generated by “Aboriginal cultural attractions, eco-tourism and wilderness tours” at \$270 million annually with a projected possible growth reaching \$1 billion (“Aboriginal Entrepreneurs”). By 2008 revenue attributed to Aboriginal tourism-related businesses alone was determined as contributing approximately thirty-five million dollars to B.C.’s economy.<sup>29</sup> AtBC’s recently released five-year plan projects that between 2012 and 2017 tourists will spend roughly \$320 million (“Next Phase”). While some studies, such as the 2003 National Study on Aboriginal Tourism in Canada, have suggested that the demand for Aboriginal tourism overrides the availability of Aboriginal tourism “products,” and that the market is challenged by a lack of consumer confidence in the “capacity” of Aboriginal cultural tourism suppliers (AtBC “Aboriginal Cultural” 5), the industry nevertheless continues to grow.

AtBC has thus far been the most successful consolidated effort of Indigenous peoples working in the tourism industry, spurred in part by the boost to the BC Aboriginal tourism economy brought by Vancouver’s hosting of the 2010 Winter Olympics. As a provincial organization driven by Indigenous peoples and representing a wide range of Indigenous tourism companies, AtBC has come to serve as a mentor/role model for local Indigenous community interest in economic development. It is an organization funded in

partnership with non-Indigenous entities such as the Canadian government (through Aboriginal Affairs and through Western Economic Diversification Canada) and by Tourism British Columbia. It also receives financial support from such large corporations as Coast Hotels & Resorts.

AtBC's internet profile is divided into a corporate site and a travel site. The travel site offers prospective tourists insight into the types of experiences available to them in BC. What leaps out at me on the tourist site ([www.aboriginalbc.com](http://www.aboriginalbc.com)) is that it is set up in a way that echoes CTC's marketing of Aboriginal experiences. While there are some notable similarities there are vast differences in the language used to describe the tourist profiles and the recommended forms of travel. Such options splashed across the main page are Art & Culture Connoisseur, Aboriginal Experience Seeker, and Nature & Beauty with a twist. The first of these, Art & Culture, offers a picture of a man carving what could reasonably be assumed to be an upright totem pole. The Art & Culture Connoisseur is someone who is described as having "[a] keen interest to learn about the First peoples of this land. You have a great appreciation for Aboriginal Cultural expression and Cultural treasures."<sup>30</sup> AtBC makes sure that the tourist knows that culture is a living and breathing thing, that the cultural experiences being made available are rooted in "[o]ur living culture [that] has been passed down through the millennia from our ancestors" and in a direct challenge perhaps to pseudo-scientific or Darwinian theories of Indigenous evolution and migration state that tourists can "discover artifacts that pre-date the pyramids; and learn about sacred transformer stones."<sup>31</sup> AtBC neither conceals nor expressly advertises the colonialism which has foregrounded Indigenous-state relations,

but they do suggest that tourists can “view repatriated potlatch treasures,” a nod to the violent expropriation of coastal Indigenous cultural materials.

The second profile shows a plains-style First Nations person replete with feathers and the markers of powwow dress. The Aboriginal Experience Speaker is recognized as someone uninterested in sightseeing bus tours, that they are instead someone who wants “the real thing; to feel the pull of the paddle, hear the rushing water, view the timeless mists and ancient rainforests and smell of the campfire. You want a full experience and perceive your world from a new angle.”<sup>32</sup> To take tourists on an exploration of their world AtBC members offer

Aboriginal guides [who] will show you a different way of discovering our land, waters and embark on adventures as you have never experienced before. View killer whales spy hopping in the ocean, and be awed by the site of grizzly bears feasting on the spawning salmon. Paddle a traditional dugout canoe, take a jet boat tour on one of our great rivers, hike along mountain trails and hike our amazing rainforests. Whichever adventure you choose, we will teach you our way of seeing and experiencing our land.<sup>33</sup>

The focus shifts here toward igniting tourist desires for romantic wilderness that is sold to them as a part of *their* world but is also *our* (Aboriginal) land.

The third image, Nature & Beauty, figures a young, light-skinned Indigenous woman. She offers a broad smile as she sits in a canoe, paddling. Accompanying her image are recommendations tourists who are told: “[r]evitalize and connect with yourself and the wonders of nature. Be exhilarated and inspired with tranquility and lush landscapes, new friendships and memories of a lifetime. Live your dream and experience the pure enjoyment of life.”<sup>34</sup> In contrast to first impressions given based on the title of the profile, those with an interest in Nature & Beauty are offered “a vacation of discovery

with a cultural twist.”<sup>35</sup> The cultural twist is that tourists can engage with “local Aboriginal people” (as symbols of the past) from the conveniences of Aboriginal owned resorts and lodges, golf courses, through spa treatments and at casinos. Tourists are told that they can “sample traditional foods and award winning wines, [while] view[ing] traditional and contemporary art work” (as symbols of the contemporary).<sup>36</sup>

AtBC tries to maintain the integrity of the tourism initiatives it supports through its recently developed Aboriginal Cultural Tourism Authenticity Program. That is, AtBC will provide its own “seal of approval” for those tourism companies it deems *legitimately, authentically* Aboriginal. The seal is a modified version of AtBC’s logo, “a version of AtBC’s hands motif fused with a feather and drum symbolizing the strength and celebration of Aboriginal cultures,” along with the words “Authentic Aboriginal” (“Cultural Authenticity”). For consideration under the program AtBC requires the completion of a lengthy application that can verify that a minimum fifty-one percent of the business is owned by Aboriginal people or by “majority owned Aboriginal companies, OR if the business is owned by a society...at least 51% of the members [must be] Aboriginal” (ibid).

AtBC claims that its program “goes beyond evaluating the cultural component of a tourism business and assesses other criteria, including Aboriginal ownership/control, adherence to Aboriginal protocols, market and export readiness and operating and safety standards” (ibid). All Euro-economic marketing language (“market and export readiness”) aside, the success of an application hinges on the Board of Directors determining that a company’s application meets a floating standard of “Aboriginal

protocols” and the determination that the services/experiences the applicant company provides are sufficiently “cultural.” The cultural activities (or cultural content) being shared with visitors are “approved by the *Keepers of the Culture*.” For applicants whose nations do not have “a system in place to grant cultural approval” applicants can have “the original Nation complete a declaration...granting that approval” (“Guide” 3). The program requires that companies present a minimum number of “cultural elements” in order to “be defined as a cultural experience” and that these cultural elements, regardless of their approval by *Keepers of the Culture*, must “engage the senses and heighte[n] the visitor’s experience and enjoyment” (ibid)<sup>37</sup>.

AtBC implies an interpretation of authenticity, a pre-existing understanding of what constitutes an authentic Aboriginal culture and experience yet in terms of an actual definition AtBC provides a glossary to its applicants where authentic reads as something directly out of the Oxford English Dictionary; it is defined as “not a reproduction, copied or complying to fact, being worthy of trust, reliance, or belief; having a claimed and verifiable origin or authorship, not counterfeit or copied” (10). The difficulty with such a formulaic definition is that it is impossible for an Aboriginal experience to *not* be copied – the tourist industry (despite the shift toward personalized and experiential tourism) requires the replication of experiences. Given that AtBC’s actual definition of authenticity is of little use (beyond establishing that it must have a connection to some sort of community-approved cultural content), it would be worthwhile to consider another perspective on the definition of tourism authenticity.

It would be reasonable to assume that the definition of authenticity is to an extent

mediated by tourist interests. The Department of Tourism and Culture for the Yukon Territory posts on their site a report prepared by Michèle Laliberté of the Tourism Intelligence Network of the ESG-UQAM Chair in Tourism at the University of Quebec at Montréal, titled “Authenticity – What do they (tourists) really want?” Laliberté connects authenticity with the growing interest in sustainable tourism. She writes that “[I]ike ecotourism, learning tourism and the concept of experience, the notion of authenticity is open to many interpretations” (np). Laliberté does offer some framework for understanding authenticity in the context of ecotourism, writing that “urban tourists from industrial countries...[are] seeking something outside their daily lives, something innovative and different, as escape” are in the quest of “new things and enjoy the sensation of being where things are real and original” (ibid). Tourists, she suggests, desire to be at the site of the authentic. Although people can purchase Paris-made clothing in Tokyo, people want to travel to Paris to where the clothing is located – the site of the *original* and the *authentic*; tourists want to be able to say “I was there.” Laliberté defines authenticity as referring to “an original experience that is true to reality. Its meaning becomes clearer when one thinks of its opposites: falseness and imitation” (np).

She goes on to write that authenticity under tourism refers to (among other things) “[w]anting to experience a different way of life,” wanting “a window onto its culture, heritage, history and identity [that differs from one’s own],” and wanting the “opposite of globalization and its resulting standardization.” Perhaps most importantly tourists of today want the “discovery of places in a country that remain untouched by modernism and still maintain traditional methods and ways of life” (ibid). This latter tourist desire is

quite revealing for interrogations into the workings of authenticity. In the early colonial period authenticity referred to the notion that Indigenous peoples were fixed in a “primitive past” and destined to vanish from the earth forever. Those who adapted any elements aligned with “modern,” European culture were said to have assimilated and were no longer considered “authentic” (Raibmon 7). “By this logic,” Raibmon writes, “modern Indians were not Indians at all, they were assimilated. Others were all too Indian; they belonged to a noble and tragic past but had no role in the future. Only the vanishing had legitimate claims to land and sovereignty; surviving modernity disqualified one from these claims” (9).

In contrast to what is suggested by AtBC’s Cultural Authenticity Program, and by Laliberté’s analysis of tourist desires, there is no such thing as authenticity, and that the word authenticity could best be understood as “as shorthand for...historically specific notions of authenticity [...] authenticity is not a stable yardstick against which to measure ‘the real thing.’ It is a powerful and shifting set of ideas that worked in a variety of ways toward a variety of ends” (Raibmon 3). Authenticity has meant very different things at different times with regard to Indigenous peoples. The ideas by Laliberté as outlined above, and AtBC’s development of the Cultural Authenticity Program, reflect the powerful and shifting set of ideas that inform understandings of authenticity in relation to tourism. In order to fully realize the authenticity of the Indigenous peoples they desire, tourists demand practical engagement with Indigenous cultures by “knowledgeable” (authentic) Aboriginal peoples; as such, Indigenous peoples have at times been “collaborators – albeit unequally – in authenticity...utilize[ing] those same definitions to

access the social, political, and economic means necessary for survival under colonialism” (ibid). As was the case in the time and place under study in Raibmon’s book, the same regions which AtBC’s membership covers, authenticity has long served as a key element of “a colonial cosmology” (ibid).

### **Conclusion**

Is this a case, as Raibmon suggests, where “[f]ar from being smothered by a blanket of false consciousness, Aboriginal people twis[t] and transfor[m] colonial concepts like authenticity in the service of their own diverse and (for colonizers) unexpected ends” (12)? Although there is “no such thing” as an authentic Aboriginal or an authentically Aboriginal tourism company, for the low-low price of whatever cost there is to becoming a stakeholder in AtBC, the organization is willing to sell companies a logo that says they are authentically Aboriginal. Might this be part of why Alfred challenges the discourse of Aboriginalism and those who take it up? While CTC’s marketing of Aboriginality hinges on racist and colonial notions of Indigenous peoples and lands, AtBC’s picturing of Aboriginality is rooted in references to diversified land-based and localized experiences, yet is underpinned by standards for a dubious deployment of authenticity.

It would seem that by making reference to golf, wineries, spas, and casinos AtBC employs a broader vision of what constitutes authentic Aboriginality. Despite marketing wineries and golf as “authentic” it does reflect the extent to which some Indigenous peoples have incorporated select aspects of Euro-Canadian economies into their own. This vision of a “contemporaneous Aboriginality” sits in contrast to the rhetoric of

Indianess employed by colonialists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Nevertheless it is important that we do not ignore that AtBC's Aboriginality is still marketed through allusions to "timeless mists" and "ancient rainforests," buzzwords of the colonizer's vision of Indigenous peoples, cultures, and their ties to nature. As Alfred has highlighted the Aboriginal, Aboriginalism, and Aboriginality are falsehoods. The Aboriginal is a construction of the state that bears little connection beyond the state to *actual* Indigenous peoples, however tightly AtBC may spin the narrative about Aboriginal tourism and the authenticity of the businesses it represents. While the state is concerned with drawing on Aboriginality to market itself, so, too, are Indigenous peoples implicated in the promotion and "sale" of the image of the Aboriginal through the marketing of Aboriginality and authenticity.

Nevertheless, the language of AtBC's tourist profiles vary from CTC's in that they focus on localized histories, stories, and cultures in contexts separated from discourses of Canadian nationalism. Whereas CTC based their understanding of "Canada, Aboriginal-style" through the lens of racist and colonial logic that props up the state's fantasies of its relationship with Indigenous peoples, AtBC, on the other hand has tried to reclaim an Indigenous-centered Aboriginal tourism that, on the surface, appears to move the focus away from the state's interests. While AtBC also consistently draws on language that can be read as relegating Indigenous peoples to a nostalgic past existence, like CTC does, AtBC still manages to assert the contemporary presence of Indigenous peoples by drawing tourist attention to the adaptation of Indigenous economic modes – through resorts, wine, spas, art, and casinos.

There are no easy conclusions to be drawn about Aboriginal tourism as a discrete field. On the one hand it provides many rewarding economic opportunities for local communities and, as AtBC claims, it also serves to revitalize local First Nations cultures. AtBC credits cultural tourism “in large part” for a “revival of culture.”<sup>38</sup> These attestations reflect Raibmon’s assessment that by “[p]articipating in the manufacture of authenticity” Indigenous peoples could “bring economic, cultural, and political gains” and in many cases “playing Aboriginal” continues to “provid[e] much-needed income” (11). As we have seen, “[i]mages that confor[m] to dominant society’s expectations [are] images that s[ell]” (11). What sort of work is done by the term Aboriginal?<sup>39</sup> I think it is important that we recognize that contemporary tourism, even in its most aboriginalized of forms, did, as Sheller writes, emerge out of romantic imperialism (38). In light of this, Aboriginal tourism is rife with the “remnants of the earlier representational practices” of romanticist tourism (ibid). It requires that those sites, spaces and *people* perpetuate an entirely fabricated image of uninterrupted, continuous, and pristine Aboriginality that affirms, even as it attempts to negate, a neoliberalized form of colonial power.

## *Chapter Two*

### *Colluding with the Enemy? Nationalism and Depictions of “Aboriginality” in Canadian Olympic Moments*

*After the Indians had their moment in the spotlight, they danced back into history, making way for miners, cowboys and settlers of all races to do-se-do together (as if that ever happened in that place and time). Only the Indians were missing from the hoedown in Salt Lake. But these are just symbols, you say? Well, yeah. Mega-bucks worth of symbols. Symbology that reaches millions of people around the world and leaves a lasting impression in the place of reality - Susan Shown Harjo*

I became interested in researching Indigenous involvement in the Olympics after one of my cousins forwarded to me in September 2009 the application to attend the Indigenous Youth Gathering (IYG), to be held from January 30 to February 14, 2010. The Vancouver 2010 Olympics were slated to start on February 12 and run until February 28. Although it was not explicitly stated in the application for the IYG, since the IYG was to end just a couple of days after the opening of the Games, it was clear that Indigenous youth were being sourced to participate in the Olympics (in a symbolic and not an athletic fashion). Given the involvement of Indigenous peoples in previous Olympic Opening and Closing ceremonies (in 1976 and 1988), it was not a stretch to assume we would play a role in Vancouver’s Opening Ceremony.

This was made clearer by the fact that the application form requests that we include two full-length colour photographs of ourselves wearing traditional clothing, clothing which we would be expected to bring with us to the Gathering. The application encourages youth to “where applicable” incorporate accessories such as roaches/masks, hair ornaments, face or body paint, earrings/pendants, arm or leg bracelets or bands, skins/furs/bark, footwear and instruments or drums and rattles). The application asks,

however, that applicants “not wear non-traditional clothing” (aka “contemporary” clothing) in the photos (VANOC Application Form 2). This was the first gathering application, out of the many that I had seen, that required a picture to be included in the application. Having my moccasins, my Métis sash, and my dad’s moosehide jacket, I wasn’t sure that even with all of this and my “Homeland Security: Fighting Terrorism Since 1492” t-shirt, I would be “Aboriginal enough” to be selected and I was not sure that I wanted to find out – or that I wanted anyone affiliated with the Olympic organizing committee to decide whether or not I was.

While I respect those who elected to participate, the alienation I felt from the process provoked me to question more deeply the nature of Indigenous involvement in the 2010 Vancouver Olympic Opening Ceremony. Indigenous peoples have been involved in each of the Canadian-hosted Olympics (to varying degrees) and given my encounter with the 2010 IYG application form I have come to question the nature of organizational committees’ motives with regard to Indigenous participation in the ceremonies. The 1976 Montréal Summer Olympic Closing Ceremony, the 1988 Calgary Winter Olympic Opening Ceremony, and the 2010 Winter Olympic Opening Ceremony in Vancouver each placed Indigenous peoples at the heart of their expressions of regional, provincial and Canadian national identity in one form or another. Why do Olympic organizing committees view Indigenous peoples as central to Olympic ceremonies, when Indigenous peoples are only minimally present as athletes in the Games?<sup>40</sup> Why are Indigenous peoples so central to the narratives of national identity produced during the Olympics? What is Canada trying to say about itself by insisting on Indigenous presence

within the Olympic ceremonies when in so many other spaces in Canadian society we are purposefully invisibilized?

I feel I must clarify, before I proceed further into this chapter, that I respect those who opted to participate in the IYG and the 2010 Opening Ceremony. Also, I do not see Indigenous involvement in the Opening Ceremony, in any of the aforementioned ceremonies which I will examine here, as a form of outright *victimization*. Many participants, particularly in the 1976 and 1988 Games, elected to “play Indian” in accordance with the highly racialized narratives which were constructed for them. In many ways, this “playing Indian,” has served as a form of survivance in the way Gerald Vizenor defines it, as asserting a *presence over absence* (an idea I will return to in the next chapter). As the “*indian* is a simulation” it has displaced and come to stand in for Indigenous peoples. Playing Indian, then, can be interpreted as an act of countering the simulation and absence of Indigenous peoples in imagery of Indians. Playing Indian can be read as an “active repudiation of dominance, tragedy, and victimry” (Vizenor 15). Understood in this way “playing Indian” (in 1976 and 1988) and “playing Aboriginal” (in 2010) in the Olympics is a form of what Michelle Raheja refers to, in the context of the film industry, as “redfacing,” a trickster-esque self-aware form of playing and speaking back to legacies of colonization and genocide.

Nevertheless, my concern at this stage is to question the totality of Indigenous-related imagery in particular ceremonies. I think it is important to critically explore the ways that Canada has sought to capitalize on and indeed engineer Indigenous representation and symbolic participation to gain an understanding of how, in these

particular moments, the nation has imagineered itself. In some ways such exploration is also to question the effects of growing racial neoliberalism, or raced racelessness, on transforming grand narrative productions. Organizers for the 1976 Montréal Closing Ceremony felt little issue with employing non-Indigenous peoples to “play Indian,” and the organizers of the 1988 Calgary Opening Ceremony were unconcerned with drawing on steadfastly racist tropes. The organizers for the 2010 Vancouver Opening Ceremony, on the other hand, sought to obliterate racism by insisting that it simply did not exist. To be sure, the Vancouver Opening Ceremony re-imagined Canadian-ness by figuring Indigenous peoples as “Aboriginals,” as symbols of Canada’s supposed innate diversity, tolerance, and inclusiveness.

The amplified international attention brought by the Olympics has meant that organizing committees are charged with finding new ways to conceal Canada’s racism towards Indigenous peoples, while casting a relationship founded on colonialism and genocide in a positive light. Although it has become less acceptable in recent decades to be so brazen and patronizing about the colonial relationship to Indigenous peoples, it does not mean that the racist ideologies which gave rise to earlier imaginings of Canadian national identity have been completely eradicated. Rather, racist expressions have become, to return to David Theo Goldberg’s phrase, buried alive, in multiculturalism rhetoric. To effectively sell multiculturalism Olympic organizers craft “Olympic Aboriginality” by finding ways to incorporate Indigenous peoples into the cultural rhetoric and national fabric of the nation.

As the site most widely broadcast (estimates for the 2010 Vancouver Olympics pegged global spectatorship at over three billion people) Olympic ceremonies provide cities and their respective nations with the opportunity to express their identities, essentially putting on display and narrating a story (“narrating the nation” as Homi Bhabha suggests) of that which they believe defines them. Heading into the last quarter of the twentieth century Olympic organizers have found themselves increasingly concerned with the “symbolic impact of the pageantry, ceremony and message-making of the Games’ televised opening and closing moments” (Tomlinson 586).

Canada’s hosting of its first Olympics came on the heels of the introduction of multiculturalism as official Canadian policy. Since the first Games, with all three of its Olympics occurring in the past forty years, Canada has been able to consistently incorporate its vision of multiculturalism into the Games as a defining feature of its national identity. Even though Indigenous peoples have resisted assimilation into the state and have resisted inclusion within multiculturalism policy and discourse, the state has continually sought to frame the state-Indigenous relationship around the social mores of multiculturalism because it provides a powerful ideological basis through which the nation can imagineer itself. For the 2010 Olympic Opening Ceremony that tried to distract prying international eyes away from Canada’s abysmal human rights record with regards to Indigenous peoples, multiculturalism enabled Canada “to [try to] evade the responsibility to address the deeper questions of colonial power” (Morgan 35).<sup>41</sup>

The perceived need for such evasion arises from Canada’s desire to access its share of the global economy. The impetus to incorporate a managed form of Indigeneity

into Olympic narratives is two-fold: first, the Canadian state seeks to reconcile the colonial relationship (superficially and symbolically, but not necessarily materially), and second, Indigenous peoples are desired as a symbol of the nation's uniqueness, diversity, and tolerance, are tied to the fact that the nation feels it must diversify its identity to hold international appeal. As such Canada has actively sought to repackage the nation's image out of a desire to "captur[e] global markets and enhance[e] Canada's competitiveness" (Abu-Laban 12). When understood in this way, Canada as a brand state clearly engages in territorial branding in one of the most influential sites in the contemporary moment: the Olympic ceremonies. Nations exercise their influence in the Olympics through a variety of means, from offering support for the actual Olympic bids, to providing funding for venue-building and advertising, to providing security support through the deployment of federally affiliated policing services. The ceremonies of Olympic Games provide a space for the state's "return on investment" in the Games, acting as a space for territories to brand themselves through the pageantry and spectacle of the ceremonies.

For the purposes of this analysis and in light of these concerns, I advocate for a reading of multiculturalism that understands it as a strategy for managing Indigenous peoples and for pacifying Indigenous anti-Olympic dissent. Olympic articulations of national identity which draw on Euro-centric multicultural rhetoric attempts to conceal the lingering colonial stranglehold Canada exercises over Indigenous nations. For example, at the time of the last Olympics in 2010, the Canadian Government had yet to sign the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), opting to instead *perform* multicultural harmony and unity without actively *engaging* or

even considering measures that might make a modicum of difference in redressing the power imbalance between the state and Indigenous peoples.

A closer examination of the inner workings of the Indigenous symbology at the previously listed 1976, 1988, and 2010 Olympic Ceremonies, reveals that the attention to Indigeneity in Olympic ceremonies increasingly appears more as an effort to re-imagine whiteness as a “culturally tolerant cosmopolitan” whiteness, that in effect “facilitat[es] a more fashionable and politically acceptable form of white supremacy, which has had greater currency within a neo-colonial, neoliberal global order” (Thobani 148). The need or desire for this refashioning arises in part due to the white settler anxieties Anthony Moran writes about, which I elaborated in the preceding chapters. These anxieties are the hallmark of the supposedly post-racial moment, fears over losing power, privilege and control over lands, resources, and bodies. Each of the ceremonies addressed in this chapter exemplify the shifting dimensions of imperialist nostalgia, white settler anxiety and resentment. The chapter also reflects on Canada’s attempts to rebrand and globally market what is, in essence, its imperialist nostalgia. Canada has consistently produced Olympic narratives rife with nostalgia, of pasts filled with harmonious relationships to Indigenous peoples and of a present based on mutual partnership and respect. These are pasts and a present that the nation has never and does not currently have.

### **Montreal 1976: Indians**

The thrust to brand the nation is not exclusive to Canada. According to Janice Forsyth and Kevin Wamsley, all hosting nations ultimately use the Games’ ceremonies as an opportunity to “represent versions of their national history, as well as their current

social, political, and economic trajectories to the rest of the World” (Forsyth and Wamsley 228). In the summer of 1976, Montréal, Québec, a city that is home to Canada’s largest Francophone population launched Canada into the international Olympic arena by hosting Canada’s first-ever Olympic games. According to Forsyth and Wamsley the Closing Ceremony was promoted as a tribute to the “Aboriginals”: “The official intent [...] was to convey the idea of multiculturalism with its emphasis on the ‘emancipation and integration’ of the Aboriginal peoples of Canada” (Schantz qtd. in *ibid* 234). The Closing Ceremony provided a space for the federal government to convey ideas regarding the central defining feature of Canadian identity at the time: its purported commitment to multiculturalism. The Montréal Olympics provided the first opportunity for the Canadian government to establish itself in the eyes of the world (with one hundred and twenty-four nations/territories broadcasting the Olympics), and to showcase multiculturalism and the nation’s perception of its own moral superiority (generally vis-à-vis its American neighbour) (“Olympic Marketing” 23).

To coordinate the Closing Ceremony, the Olympic organizing committee hired non-Indigenous choreographers Michael Cartier and Hugo de Pot; Cartier and de Pot arranged for two hundred and fifty amateur and professional dancers from Montréal to teach Indigenous peoples selected to participate in the Closing “how to move through their own ceremony” (Forsyth 72-73). The French Canadian dancers dressed and painted in accordance with European stereotypes about “real Indians,” wearing buckskin costumes replete with fringe and feathers, led the similarly dressed Indigenous participants into the arena [Fig.2].

In the background, the Olympic orchestra played a processional that was inspired by André Mathieu's *Danse sauvage*, a piece that sounds like an orchestral companion to *Durante degli Alighieri* (Dante)'s *Inferno*, comprising of a series of single notes followed by long trumpet notes and shorter, staccato, trumpeted quarter-notes:

[T]he Olympic orchestra play[ed] the *March of the Athletes*, a symphonic suite performed on traditional instruments augmented by Amerindian folk instruments such as tom-toms, rattles, and small bells. To the strains of this march, whose rhythms evoke the chants of the American Indians, a group of seventy five Amerindians in full dress enter the stadium by the marathon gate, under the glare of spotlights sweeping across the field (COJO 76 306).<sup>42</sup>

Just past the one minute mark in the ceremony, a chorus of male voices “whose rhythms evoke the chants of the American Indians” bellowed “ahhhhh-hey-heeey-ey-hey ahhhhhh-hey-hey ah-ha-hey-hey.” The “Indians” marched through the stadium in “arrowhead formation” where they came to enter five rings formed in the shape and colours of the Olympic logo. Standing in the centre of the rings in the heart of the arena, the participants erected five large teepees colour coordinated with the rings.

Four local chiefs, Andrew T. Delisle, Mike McKenzie, Aurélien Gill, and Max Gros-Louis, wearing “full tribal dress” escorted Lord Killanin, then-president of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), to his seat within the royal box (the seating place for heads of state and royal families, seats not reserved for the Chiefs as recognized and sovereign heads of state). As the Ceremony began to wind down the “Indians” broke from their circular formation and handed out feathered headbands and beaded necklaces to athletes, officials, and spectators. Once Killanin finished his speech the final dance of the Closing began and the “athletes, dancers, Indians, and COJO hostesses formed a friendship chain and left the stadium in oddly shaped, curving lines” (312). The Official

Report erroneously identifies the final dance as “a simple Indian dance” which was, in actuality, a dance based on a French Canadian farandole. Newspaper accounts published the morning following the Ceremony declared the Ceremony a resounding success. The *Ottawa Citizen* described the show as a “dazzling celebration of unity” and “innocent exuberance” that was unmatched in Olympic history (Forsyth 73). The Official Report claims that the parade created “remarkable, iridescent effects, with its Amerindian costumes, its plumes and feathered flags, and its drums and colored wigwams, all surrounding the athletes” (COJO 76 306).

For a Ceremony said to hold Indigenous peoples in such high regard, Indigenous peoples were not thanked in the Closing Ceremony acknowledgments. Rather, the images presented were replete with racist representations of Imaginary Indians. Yugoslavian-born Artur Takac, acting in a technical director capacity for the 1976 Games reflects in his memoirs *Sixty Olympic Years* that he initiated having “North American Indians” in the Closing Ceremonies. The initial plan had been to have young Euro-Canadian women form five circles in the Olympic colours in the center of the arena, and the athletes would be given coloured cards to collect in their assigned circle. Takac notes that other organizers raised concerns regarding the “dignity of the young women” and felt that having women placed in such exposing circles might indeed invite “horseplay, which would go beyond the line of fun and offend [sic]” (Takac np). To this end, he decided to nominate Indigenous peoples to “protect” the women by having the Indigenous participants form circles around them (ibid).

Killanin expressed concern with this idea, fearing that Indigenous peoples would use the international attention on the Games to highlight what he calls “their dissatisfaction with historical and more recent treatment” by the government. Takac countered that if the organizing committee were to invite “two Indian Chiefs” who could stand in the royal box as “ceremonial guards to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II,” their presence would side-step any issues. Although it is unclear what exact influence he felt the leaders could have on the participants, who were down on the stadium floor, he writes, “I knew that if the chiefs were in that position they would ensure the best possible behaviour and dignity of the young men of their tribes” (ibid). The Chiefs *escorted* Killanin to the royal box rather than *accompanied* him; they were simultaneously positioned as overseers of potentially “rowdy” (and hypersexualized) Indigenous participants and as figureheads of Olympic royalty and European dominance.

Indigenous involvement in the planning and executing of the Ceremony was permitted to extend little beyond this role of “playing Indian.” Indeed, the way that Canada’s 1976 Montréal Olympic Organizing Committee envisioned Canada-Indigenous unity, multiculturalism and acting on their appreciation for Indigenous peoples was by *not* consulting “with the populations who they professed to respect in the construction of the program. From start to finish, the celebration was designed by Olympic organizers for Aboriginal peoples” (Forsyth 72). In order to promote “Canadian-ness” the organizing committee manipulated the terms of the state-Indigenous relationship and ultimately sought “to release evidence of...the uniqueness of the host nation’s indigenous peoples”

as a marketing ploy, essentially crafting and executing an Indian theme that played up and traded in Eurocentric ideas of the “noble savage” (Godwell 246).

### **Calgary 1988: Natives**

Whereas the Closing Ceremony of the 1976 Olympics was a misguided tribute to Indigenous peoples, the interest in creating an Indigenous component within the Opening Ceremony of the 1988 Games was part of a grander branding strategy first conceived in time for the bidding stage of the 1988 Games. The bid committee sought to capture “Calgary's unique western heritage” and pass on the “warm, western hospitality of the [proposed] host city to people from around the world” (OCO’88 11). In order to effectively display this “unique western heritage” and “warm, western hospitality” the bid committee and later Olympic organizers drew on three familiar figures that international audiences would recognize as embodying Canada’s western history: the Mountie, the Cowboy, and the Indian (although figured in planning literature as the “Native”).

These three figures have been the backbone of the city’s identity, replicated annually in the form of the Calgary Stampede.<sup>43</sup> The Stampede and the reputation it built for the city provided a foundation for both the Olympic bid and for the Opening Ceremony of the Games. The bid committee felt the three figures were so central to Calgary’s identity and to the branding of the Games that during the committee’s trip to Baden-Baden, Germany, for the IOC’s announcement of the site of the 1988 Games, they brought with them flapjack breakfasts traditionally served at the Calgary Stampede, “mounted police, Native dancers, and cowboy hats” (Wamsley and Heine 173). On the IOC reception to Calgary’s display, Frank King, chairperson of the Calgary organizing

committee (OCO'88) writes that “when Chief Fox and his wife danced to the beat of Native tomtoms, people crowded into our area, leaving the other bid displays virtually empty. We learned that our unique western heritage is interesting to people from other parts of the world” (King 85-86).

Realizing the value of the images of the Mountie, Cowboy, and Indian in defining Calgary's identity (and international market appeal) the head of the Calgary Stampede Board as a member of OCO'88's board, initially suggested “that an ‘Indian attack and wagon-burning’ be a part of the opening ceremony” an idea that was (thankfully) rejected (O'Bonsawin “No Olympics” 147).<sup>44</sup> Wagon-burning and “Indian attacks” were not presented but the Ceremony did open with a familiar set of images. Representatives from local First Nations (the Siksika, Tsuu T'ina, Stoney, Piikani, and Kaini who were party to “Treaty 7,” an 1877 peace agreement signed east of present-day Calgary, between these members of the Blackfoot Confederacy and the Canadian and British governments) were instructed to rush into the stadium arena on horseback, while wearing feathered headdresses, buckskin clothing and face paint, outfits approved by Sampson, the non-Native Executive Director of the Opening [Fig.3]<sup>45</sup>. The “Natives” were positioned against Cowboys who entered on chuckwagons, showing their lasso skills from atop their horses. Not long after the Cowboys had their moment, a group of people wearing various “ethnic” outfits and carrying banners displaying country names such as “Russia,” “Austria,” and “Japan,” enter the arena signaling the wave of multiethnic settlement that followed the Cowboys onto the prairies. Soon after, the Mounties, in the form of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP's) Musical Ride, paved the way for Governor

General Jeanne Sauvé, Canada's Head of State to enter to the tunes "God Save the Queen" and "O Canada."<sup>46</sup> The Musical Ride performed a number of cavalry drills and formations before making way for the athlete procession.

Indigenous performers also provided a musical backdrop as attendees waited for the Olympic torch to be brought into the stadium, entertaining the crowd by singing and playing big drums. They continued singing and drumming through the Olympic cauldron torch-lighting and as a series of blue and Hudson's Bay coloured steel beams rose up around the cauldron to symbolize the poles of a teepee. In terms of the singing of the national anthem, Native-ness was as well incorporated as Daniel Tlen, from Burwash Landing, Yukon, sang a translated version of O Canada in his Southern Tutchone language – before the English/French version began.

In part buoyed by Canada's incorporation of "Aboriginal peoples" within the 1982 *Constitution* (as previously mentioned), and in part in response to the disillusionment of tourists with the lack of "real Indians" in the 1976 Closing Ceremony, OCO'88 continued a multiculturalism narrative that would become much more heavily emphasized in the 2010 Opening Ceremony. Like 1976, however, Indigenous decision-making was limited with regard to the planning of the Ceremony with the balance of power for defining the images in the hands of the predominantly Euro-Canadian OCO'88 (Skyles Powderface being the exception). The images constructed for the 1988 Opening Ceremony reveal that "the form of Aboriginal participation within the Olympic Games was set by the organizers" (Sidsworth 36). Organizers erroneously thought that they could use local people as symbols in the Ceremony and more generally as tourist attractions.<sup>47</sup> Yet the

Calgary Opening was understated, for while Treaty 7 members were featured the main purpose of the Ceremony was to highlight the Indian, the Cowboy, and the Mountie. These figures are important as Canada has historically claimed a less violent relationship in its colonization of Indigenous peoples through enactments of Mountie imagery. Within the myth of frontier “settlement,” as previously mentioned, the figure of the “unassuming, patient, impartial, self-disciplined, sober, and completely incorruptible” Mountie plays a central role (Francis, *National Dreams* 33). As the main figure that embodies Canada’s/Canadians’ sense of itself/themselves as “a civilized, orderly society, a ‘peaceable kingdom’” their job in the nation-building was to ensure that “a new [European] society replaced the old [Indigenous peoples] with as little upset as possible” (ibid). This “white civility,” the deployment of Canadian mores of “peace” and “civil order” on the prairies and the “narrative of the Mountie subduing the fiery spirit of the Indian and making the West safe for settlement is one of our basic cultural myths” (30).

The Cowboy and Indian, on the other hand, “represent the overt and hidden hatred and fear that many [...] harbor toward Indigenous, dark-skinned peoples. They are symbolic of the white colonizer's claim of superiority and Indigenous Peoples' inferiority” (Yellowbird 43). Writing in the American context, Michael Yellowbird argues that cowboys are “an evocative representation” of the values of “love of freedom, fairness, individualism, toughness, enterprise, forward looking, attitude, and whiteness” while “Indians, on the other hand, have remained the savage, primitive, losing, dark-skinned, evil, antagonistic enemy” (ibid). The incorporation of the “benevolent Mountie myth,” as

Mackey calls it, softens the dichotomy of Cowboy-Indian that in the U.S. serves as “the consummate example of American colonialism” (ibid).

The Mountie figured as the more gentle hand of civilization allows for the exaltation, glorification and romanticization of Canada’s approach to westward colonial expansion. Similarly, the continual iconization and promotion of the Hudson’s Bay Company colours also ignores a brutal history of Indigenous economic colonialism and displacement. In a moment that effectively sums up the image OCO was hoping to convey, Peter Jennings, in ABC’s coverage of the Opening opines, “Canada particularly proud of having dealt with its Indians. No Indian wars in Western Canada in the 1800s of any significance... There are actually more Indians now in North America now than there were at the time of Christopher Columbus [sic]”.<sup>48</sup> Statements like these, which reflect boisterous attitudes about the genocide of Indigenous peoples in both Canada and the U.S., are precisely why Yellowbird argues that the tropes of the Cowboy and the Indian are indeed the “nation’s most passionate, embedded form of hate talk” (Yellowbird 42). Ceremonial displays such as Calgary’s, really only “serv[e] as grim reminders of the weak attempts by Canadians to conceal historical oppressive relations between cultures, a rather hideous past, and a tension-filled present” (Wamsley and Heine 85).<sup>49</sup>

### **Vancouver 2010: Aboriginals**

From the outset, the bid committee for the Vancouver 2010 Olympics recognized and tried to attend to the two major faults of past Games – the lack of authenticity in the 1976 Closing Ceremony, and the failure to account for resistance that could derail the narrative produced in the Opening Ceremony, as with 1988. The bid committee engaged

in “inclusive planning” by consulting with the Squamish and Lil’Wat First Nations on whose traditional territories the bid committee recognized as “overlap[ing]” the area to be used for the Games. The bid committee sought the Squamish and Lil’Wat First Nation’s support and endorsement throughout the bidding process (and into the Olympic planning, if successful) (VANOC Bid Book 63). The bid committee and the two First Nations collaborated on a financial agreement in 2002 with respect to the Callaghan Valley.

As an example of some of the financial incentives provided, the provincial government committed to providing a grant of three hundred acres of “Crown land,” “the value of which is provided for within the Province’s \$600 million Games funding commitment...for the Squamish and Lil’wat First Nations to pursue economic development opportunities within their shared territories” (VANOC Bid Book 19). In terms of the Olympic Housing Legacy, “The Bid Corporation agreed to allocate a portion of the planned Whistler Athletes’ Village, valued at \$6.5 million, as a post-Games housing legacy for the Squamish and Lil’wat First Nations...Funding for this is provided within the \$600 million provincial 2010 commitment” (ibid). Later, in the 2003/2004 fiscal year, “the Province provided its \$3 million contribution to the Aboriginal Sports Legacy Fund, which is managed by the 2010 Legacies Now Society and the Squamish and Lil’wat Nations” (ibid 9), while in the 2006/2007 fiscal year the Province transferred 300 acres of land to the Squamish and Lil’wat Nations valued at \$13 million...[and] agreed to support the Squamish and Lil’wat First Nations in studying the economic opportunities possible on these lands. Potential uses for the land as suggested by VANOC were for mainly tourism-oriented initiatives, including a public championship

golf course, a Nordic lodge, recreational campground or housing. The Lil'Wat and Squamish First Nations were as well given places on the Board of the Whistler Legacies Society (WLS) as participants in the long-term ownership, operations, and management of the Whistler Nordic Centre, Whistler Sliding Centre, and the Whistler Athlete's Centre, after the Games ended (ibid).

The bid committee used this developing fiscal relationship to legitimate trading heavily in "Aboriginality," drawing on visual markers of west coast Indigenous art in bid materials. VANOC also positioned the relationship with the Squamish and Lil'Wat as emblematic of the city's "natural multiculturalism" and the nation's "historical predisposition" toward social and cultural equality and harmony. The Vancouver bid book proudly proclaims that Vancouver's "embrace of multiculturalism uniquely position Vancouver to host the world. Canada brings together the cultures of the world, as well as an ancient and rich First Nations culture, in one harmonious society" [sic] (ibid 3). The bid book goes on to suggest that Canada "is a living mosaic of peoples and cultures from around the world. Virtually every nation has joined Canada's First Nations, making us a truly multicultural society" (VANOC Bid Book 17).

In 2004 the Squamish and Lil'Wat incorporated a non-profit organization called the Four Host First Nations Society (FHFN) with two other First Nations, Musqueam and Tsleil-Waututh to continue their partnership with the emerging Vancouver organizing committee (VANOC). VANOC and FHFN established "shared [financial] legacies" (through a Protocol Agreement) in exchange for FHFN promoting "harmony, sharing, education, fairness and partnership" for the Games (VANOC "Environmental").

Additionally, one member representing the FHFN was allotted a place on the VANOC board. Through its partnership with FHFN, VANOC ensured that in exchange for economic compromises nearly every cultural site of the 2010 Games could involve a representation of “Aboriginal peoples” that they could claim had been explicitly “approved” (and implicitly authenticated) by local First Nations.<sup>50</sup> While many positive initiatives grew out of the FHFN and VANOC partnership it is necessary to consider critically “the employment of politically persuasive visual imagery that has been outside, and at times in opposition to, the FHFN Protocol Agreement” for the precise reasons laid out above” (O’Bonsawin “Ilaanaq” 387). Instead of having the effect of generating recognition for the sovereignty and independence of First Nations (and Indigenous peoples more broadly), the VANOC-FHFN partnership was used in many ways to lend symbolic legitimacy to re-imagine and assuredly imagineer a national identity in line with the nation’s supposed multicultural leanings.

With the force of the FHFN behind them, VANOC promoted Aboriginality as one of the defining narratives of the Games. The Opening Ceremony told a story about a nation living in harmony with nature *and* with Indigenous peoples. According to VANOC CEO John Furlong, in his Olympic memoir *Patriot Hearts*, David Atkins, Opening Coordinator, came up with the idea of grounding the images of nature and of Indigenous peoples by having representatives from Canada’s First Nations welcome the athletes of the world to *their* country” (195). This would help show the ‘truth’ of Canada’s relationship to ‘its’ Indigenous population and VANOC could “use the moment to give the world a real insight into Canada’s view of the Aboriginal community”; the

committee decided it would dress Indigenous youth in what Furlong refers to as “*modernized* versions of their tribal regalia to create the colour and pageantry for which we were striving” (emphasis added *ibid*).

At the outset of the Opening Ceremony, as the chiefs of the FHFN took their seats as temporary Olympic Heads of State, members of the FHFN nations dressed in “traditional” dress stepped into the Olympic arena. Pillars resembling icy welcome totem poles rose from the floor coming to face the four directions, while the FHFN logo illuminated the ground as each of the First Nations offered traditional language and English greetings, raising their arms in a sign of welcome, as Furlong and Atkins planned. The participants then moved to the centre of the floor and began to play a big drum which rose from the ground in front of them. The announcers proceed to welcome “the Aboriginal peoples of Canada” and group-by-group Indigenous peoples “From the North,” “The Métis Nation,” “The Inuit,” “The First Nations of the Prairies,” and “The First Nations of the East,” danced their way into the arena [Fig.4]. Wanting to keep their plans for the opening under wraps, Furlong writes that the dancers were Indigenous youth which VANOC invited to Vancouver under the auspices of participating in an “Indigenous Youth Gathering” in the two weeks leading up to the Opening of the Games; on the day after the Opening, the youth would be sent home. Once the participants had arrived, organizers would launch a guerilla-style surprise on the youth regarding their participation in the “big show” of the opening ceremony: “we had to get between 300 and 400 young people to Vancouver and keep them quiet about what they were here for once they arrived. We decided to invite them to Vancouver for a Native youth forum and

added the confidential piece about the ceremonies *when we had them locked in a hall in Squamish, a week or so before the Games*” (Furlong 195, emphasis added).<sup>51</sup>

As the Indigenous youth finished entering the arena the Olympic announcer wrapped up the main “Aboriginal” segment, announcing that “On behalf of all Canadians, the Aboriginal peoples of Canada welcome the athletes of the 21<sup>st</sup> winter games.”<sup>52</sup> The athletes entered the stadium while Indigenous youth hung back and gradually the images became less obviously Indigenous – Bryan Adams and Nelly Furtado sang from atop the giant drum; athletes and Indigenous peoples made their way from the staging area; the drum and the totems sank back into the floor (soon followed by Adams and Furtado). While images meant to signal Aboriginality were given precedence and where much more obvious at the outset of the Ceremony, they were quickly displaced by visual constructions of landscapes.

As the scene transitioned to the main cultural section, a pan-Canadian landscape emerged within the segment “Landscape of a Dream.” Totem poles were replaced by simulated frozen tundra with a whitish floor and glittering ‘snowflakes,’ while Donald Sutherland began to share a narrative about immigration and diverse peoples coming together on shared land. A figure cloaked in fur and carrying a large stick led other shrouded, cold-looking people (who donned all-white pseudo-hide winterwear, braids and headdresses) onto the simulated tundra as Sutherland spoke. Once the lead figure began banging his staff into the ground digitized waves appeared to flow outward across the tundra and the people stood in awe as a glittery lighted wolf, eagle, buffalo and bear in turn materialized above them. The ground shifted and a spirit bear (also known as a

“kermode bear” to local Indigenous communities) rose from the base of the stage. The tundra began to “melt” and the people drifted away from one another on faux floes as flashing whales ushered out the spirit bear. The display transitioned toward the “Sacred Grove” segment, where projections of totem poles (in a nod to Euro-Canadian painter Emily Carr) rose from the ground and transitioned into a grouping of Douglas fir trees. The people who shed their nomadic winter wear re-emerged on scene wearing “contemporary clothes,” breaking into a ballet-inspired dance.

The Ceremony continues with images connected to various regions of Canada and expressions of Canadiana – minus the Aboriginals. The visual narrative implies an integration of Indigenous peoples with settlers through the changing and “modernizing” of clothing and dance styles. Indigenous peoples are all but absent as the Ceremony moves through the regions of Canada (although Métis fiddler Sierra Noble makes a brief appearance). Although VANOC declared that the Landscape segment was intended to signify the diverse regions of Canada, the “Landscape” segment might be more accurately described as the “Bering Strait Theory on Olympic (fake) Ice” with allusions to Indigenous peoples at the beginning of the narrative, having entirely disappeared by the end of the segment and with “modern” Canadians emerging and living side-by-side in harmony. The narrative having effectively assimilated Indigenous peoples into the pan-Canadian landscape, Indigenous distinctiveness were rendered safely forgotten.

I recall feeling hesitant about the Opening narrative. I wanted so much to like the display and to allow myself to sink with ease into an Aboriginalized settler nationalist bliss, and in spite of some of the positive experiences shared by friends who had

participated in the Opening, witnessing the display left me ambivalent. This ambivalence is perhaps best expressed by Cherokee scholar-blogger Adrienne Keene from *Native Appropriations*. Keene writes, “I have very mixed feelings about the opening ceremonies--on one hand, it was fantastic to see the extensive Native presence (when has the US ever done anything like this?) and a lot of it was culturally sensitive and true portrayals” (“Vancouver Opening”). On the other hand, she notes, there were “cringe worthy moments” like the icy tundra scene that “just felt a little stereotyped--mystical Native guy tied to nature brings magic to the ‘normal’ community – oh look, his magic created the constellations in the night sky!” (ibid). Lisa Charleyboy of the *Urban Native Girl* blog also expressed a sense of disillusionment writing that while she felt “proud that Native peoples were being included and celebrated” and recognized as partners by the IOC she “can't help feeling like it's a little token” (“2010 Olympics”). She identifies the many reasons Canada wouldn't want to offer a national narrative that was a little more honest writing “it's long legacy of genocide toward the Native people of this country... We have so many health, poverty, education, social issues which have many people living in third world conditions right here in Canada, in our backyards” (ibid).

Ryan McMahon (better known in his comedic form Clarence Two Toes) writes on his website “Who doesn't like [among other things]: CG'd Whales; Modern Dance; canned music performances; [and] Ashlee Macisaac holding it down on the fiddle” (“Canada's Aboriginal Peoples”). He also acknowledges, however, that as soon as discussions began about the Games, so too did discussions about “how the host city would hide it's ‘problems’... Vancouver's lower East side is known to be as rough as it

gets, and while some money was spent on ‘programs and services’ for these folks, displacing them seems to be the answer VANOC, the city of Vancouver, and moreover – Canada, seemed to go with” (ibid). McMahan’s assessment is spot on. In the years leading up to the bid and to the Games, the City of Vancouver, the Province of British Columbia, and Canada faced a “public relations nightmare” with regard to reports in American newsmedia which chastised Vancouver for its “questionable” street population, citing the danger the people of the Downtown Eastside (DTES) posed to tourists.

For example, in July 2006, *The Economist* offered up an unflattering review of Vancouver as Olympic host city. *The Economist* opines that

the once-pleasant downtown...causes [the] most alarm. Homeless panhandlers yell at theatre-goers, while young addicts deal drugs on street corners. They spill out from the Downtown East Side, an area of decrepit boarding houses, sleazy bars and boarded-up shops infamous for the country’s highest rates of poverty and drug addiction (qtd. in Ranasinghe 228).

A couple of months later, *The Vancouver Sun* indicated that *The Economist* had fallen out of love with Vancouver and was “holding its editorial nose at the human detritus stinking up our downtown core” (ibid). While *The Economist* does not make specific reference to Indigenous peoples, as those who make up a disproportionately high number of DTES residents (estimates range from 40% to 70%), as John O’Neil of Simon Fraser University suggests, “In some people's minds, it's [DTES] the largest reserve in Canada” (qtd. in Brethour). The prevalence of sex work, panhandling and the presence of homelessness and visible poverty in the DTES are endemic, issues which are attributable to the continuing effects of colonial policy such as the *Indian Act*, residential schooling and the reserve system, as are the disappearances of Indigenous women – a large number at the

hands of serial killer Robert Pickton (arrested in 2002). The homeless, poor, sex workers and drug-addicted were figured as problems to the city's image and subjected to excessive legislation, anti-panhandling, anti-prostitution, and anti-homelessness laws in the form of the provincial *Safe Streets Act* (2004) and Vancouver's *Project Civil City* (2006) initiative in the run up to the Games.

*Project Civil City* came in the wake of the province of Vancouver's attempts at introducing by-laws to regulate panhandling (1999) and British Columbia's reluctant commitment to "Ontario style improvement" through the introduction of its own *Safe Streets Act* (2004). The concern in Vancouver was that panhandling had become more *aggressive* since the city's recession in the 1990s, a trend Prashan Ranasinghe maps through an analysis of local print-media portrayals of panhandling encounters (214). In response to an increasingly vocal collective of business owners and local politicians disillusioned by the *Safe Streets Act*, the City of Vancouver launched *Project Civil City* in November 2006 to reclaim and ensure "civility on our streets" (Ranasinghe 239). *Project Civil City* was hailed as "restor[ing] the public's sense of personal safety, promote civic pride and encourage personal responsibility through incremental change" (qtd. in *ibid* 235). The *Safe Streets Act* was not repealed, however, and worked in tandem with *Project Civil City*, the latter of which centered around four sweeping promises to eliminate homelessness, the open drug market, aggressive panhandling, and increase public satisfaction with "the City's handling of public nuisance and annoyance complaints," all by half, by 2010 (4).

While not directly attributed to the impending Olympics within initiative documents or by Ranasinghe, 2010 was set as the benchmark date for improvements through *Project Civil City* (236). Karla Fetrow links *Project Civil City* to Vancouver's efforts to "present itself as affluent and thriving" in the "tradition of most cities that have sponsored the Olympics." The result of such efforts has been that they have "criminalized the poor": "As part of Project Civil City, new laws have passed to make begging for money and sleeping outdoors criminal acts, new garbage cans make it difficult to dig through, and new outside benches make it impossible to lie down" (Fetrow "Black Flags"). While *Project Civil City* is cloaked in the language of civility, it is still emblematic of a "hard war" launched against the urban poor, having the effect of "curbing of civil liberties, [and]...increasing [the] criminalization of social problems" (Giroux *Suspect Society* 165).

Why is a discussion of Vancouver's street cleaning initiatives relevant in a discussion of Indigenous participation in the 2010 Olympics? Despite the fact that, as previously mentioned, Indigenous peoples are disproportionately represented in the DTES, nowhere in the particulars of *Project Civil City* or in Ranasinghe's analysis is there mention of the overrepresentation. Most importantly, there is no mention of the serious systemic issues at work in the social construction of the DTES, namely the intergenerational effects of Canada's colonial projects and the enduring systemic *racism* within the nation. Unfairly targeted by both the *Safe Streets Act* and *Project Civil City*, there materializes a stark contrast in the treatment of Indigenous peoples, of Indigenous bodies who were coveted, desired even, as central performers in the Ceremonies as a

display of regionalism and nationalism. Thus the narrative produced during the Olympics is one that split Indigenous peoples into either “good” Aboriginals who fell in line with Canada’s new “Aboriginalized-settler nationalism,” or “bad” Aboriginals that needed to be hidden so as not to counter-narrate Canada’s Olympic identity. Importantly, the legislative assault on “bad” Aboriginals reproduced a paternalistic victim narrative that Aboriginals were in need of saving through legislated civility.

By reflecting on the *city’s* unwillingness to account for the effects of colonialism and racism in creating vulnerable populations of Indigenous peoples I am illuminate at least some of the ways in which racial neoliberalism operates within the *nation*. The mistreatment, marginalization, and criminalization of Indigenous peoples living on the streets in Vancouver, in juxtaposition to those selected for “official” Olympic participation, reveals the way Olympic representations of national identity are deeply tied to racist representations. Indigenous peoples who could not (and perhaps would not) conform to the representations desired by Olympic organizers, by virtue of their socioeconomic status or problems with drug addiction (those who failed to meet the vision that VANOC had for its “Aboriginal” component of the Games), were systematically removed from the sightlines of Vancouver’s streets.

From this position then, the FHFN agreement can be interpreted as enabling the government to counteract and/or distract from these darker sides of the proverbial coin. Fetrow writes that VANOC’s relationship with the FHFN was enacted to portray relations between Indigenous peoples and the Canadian government as peaceable and harmonious. She argues that while the agreements made with the FHFN may have positively impacted

the economic status of “between five and six thousand members” of the respective FHFN, most of the Indigenous populations of Vancouver consisting of “approximately 60,000 people” in total, were negatively impacted by the Olympics (Fetrow “Black Flag”). This is perhaps in part why a larger resistance movement sprung up under the banner “No Olympics on Stolen Native Land” and editor of No2010.com Gord Hill argued that the Olympics were having “huge social and environmental impacts, including ecological destruction along the Sea-to-Sky Highway, [through] the venues constructed in Whistler, [and from] the massive amounts of concrete used in all related construction work” (qtd. in Rezaee).

“No Olympics on Stolen Native land” also addressed the issues of unresolved land claims in BC First Nations territories, and inadequate housing for Indigenous peoples on the streets of Vancouver. O’Bonsawin believes the resistance movements arose because people were aware Indigenous involvement was little more than symbolic posturing intended to head off demonstrations and protest regarding land usage and unresolved land claims:

VANOC has made considerable efforts to ensure indigenous visibility and economic support in the organizing and hosting of the Games. Large sums of Olympic dollars are being directed at indigenous programming and economic projects within communities; however, a troubling reality looms overhead: the Vancouver 2010 Olympic Winter Games are being hosted on unceded and nonsurrendered indigenous lands (“No Olympics” 148).

Naomi Klein similarly posits that internal documents from the Vancouver bid committee drafted prior to the Squamish and Lil’Wat partnership indicate that they foresaw Indigenous resistance and articulated the need for drumming up some proactive (yet symbolic) First Nations support: “If the First Nations perceive that their rights are not

being acknowledged and accommodated by British Columbia, they may go to the media, take direct action or initiate litigation. This would have a negative impact on the bid” (“Olympics Land Grab”). FHFN countered that negative response and protestors were “playing into the politics of appropriation that put us into this situation in the first place” (“Protocols”). Tewanee Joseph, CEO of FHFN painted anti-Olympics protestors as “non-Aboriginal naysayers ... [that] want us to remain forever the Dime Store Indian... We fought to participate in the Games. As full partners... That is why few Aboriginal people are likely to be swayed by salvos of warmed-over, anti-corporate rhetoric. That is yesterday’s news for the Aboriginal people of this country” (ibid). FHFN aggressively defended themselves in media releases claiming that protestors of the Games were “a tiny group of self-described ‘anti-racism’ demonstrators who claim to be acting on behalf of Indigenous People in British Columbia” who were attempting to “steal the voice” of the FHFN (ibid).

Yet the involvement of the respective host nations *was* a largely symbolic gesture, irrespective of the financial benefits wrought from any such partnership. Perhaps the most problematic part of the symbolic power held by the VANOC-FHFN partnership is that it conceals the fact that the relationship was predicated on a corporate partnership, a non-profit-to-non-profit partnership, whereby as the FHFN writes on their website, they are “*incorporated [as] a non-profit society*” (FHFN). That FHFN elected to incorporate themselves is not at issue, but under current federal regulation any group that wishes to receive funding support in any form requires a business number and to be registered *in accordance with regulations governing Canadian businesses*, as a corporation. What this

reveals is that FHFN is subject, like any other organization, to the Dominion of Canada; the FHFN (all illusions aside) do not enter into the partnership on equal terms and with equal footing. This is one of the central problems with the way the 2010 Olympics were presented – they offered an illusion of Indigenous equality, partnership, and freedom, while reinforcing the ongoing power Canada tries so desperately to wield over Indigenous peoples.

How does this negation of both economic and genuine visual sovereignty, this example of neoliberal colonialism, undermine the reconciled narrative of the 2010 Opening? *Reconciliation*, the image of a *reconciliatory national identity* as Kanien'keha professor Taiaiake Alfred writes, is a *pacifying discourse* that conceals the racism and colonialism inherent in Indigenous-state relationships (“Restitution” 182). In spite of this, the Olympics can be seen as representing a site of possibility for Indigenous peoples, a chance to be seen and heard, and a chance to raise awareness about the ongoing beauty and vitality of our communities, and to counter images of victimization and dependency that are so frequently circulated in the global flow of media. On the other hand, some of these engagements have been intended to make (however limited) political and economic gain in efforts to restore agency to communities, and in healing from colonization. On the surface it would seem that the narratives produced within each of these ceremonies attempt noble gestures. The narratives speak of openness, acceptance, collegiality and reconciliation. Still, there is something deeply troubling about the narratives crafted within each of the ceremonies evidenced by the growing anti-Olympic Indigenous

response; as Indigenous involvement and visibility in the Ceremonies increases, so too do Indigenous protests and resistance movements.

Through each of the Olympic Games Indigenous communities sought to counter the misguided and multiculturalist narratives presented in ways that ranged from community cultural organizing to outright protest. While in 2010 Indigenous resistance was organized around the particular issues previously outlined, in 1976, “resistance” took a slightly different form. While Olympic organizers viewed the nearby reserves of Kahnawahke and Kanasatake as fertile ground for finding “Indians” for the Closing Ceremony and managed to find people willing to participate for a variety of reasons, many Kanien’keha:ka from the communities felt it imperative that they take charge of the images represented as best they could. Many people worked within images that were constructed for them and that were “culturally demeaning and fraught with serious ideological implications” (Forsyth 72). In communities close to Montreal the media attention garnered by the Olympics provided an opportunity for self-representation, to disseminate fair and accurate representations of Kanien’keha:ka cultures and communities: “[A]t the same time the Mohawks were attempting to work within the limits of Canadian understandings of Indians and Indianess, they sought to overcome them by utilizing the audience and mass media at the Games to forward their own images and ideas about who they were as contemporary Aboriginal peoples through their Indian Days celebration” (73).

The “Indian Days” celebration was proposed to be a seventeen-day cultural display and event coordinated to run alongside the Olympics, and hosted by the

community of Kahnawahke. Initially, the Indians of Quebec Association (IQA) submitted a request to host the event as a formal part of the Olympic Arts and Culture Program for the Games. The proposal was rejected at the outset because Montréal organizers feared “‘a feather show,’ referring to the possibility of Indian demonstrations” (ibid). Olympic organizers were also concerned that should they back the event the Kanien’keha:ka would use it as a “public forum to make explicit statements about their social, political, and economic situations” (ibid).

Frustrated but undeterred Kahnawahke persisted and committed to hosting the events in their community southwest of Montréal and invited Olympic athletes, support staff, and spectators to see and experience how Mohawks 'really lived' and “to sell locally made arts and crafts to tourists” (Forsyth 72). “Indian Days” was planned to counterbalance the consumption of “Indian” imagery at the Olympics and to provide people with the opportunity to interact with local Indigenous peoples on (somewhat) of their own terms.<sup>53</sup> It was also an initiative to help counter a multitude of stereotypical, negative and harmful imagery at the foreground of the Olympic Closing Ceremony – images which Indigenous peoples attempted to reclaim by participating in within the limited scope of action available to them. Whether Indigenous peoples participated or not, Olympic organizers appeared to have no problem in using large numbers of non-Indigenous peoples dressed as “Indians” to pay “tribute” to “Canada’s Aboriginals” because, as Adams writes in the context of the Calgary Stampede, the public will not pay to see Native people in any other way (35).

In contrast to the 1976 games, “the opening ceremonies were not the most significant, nor controversial, attempt at incorporating Aboriginal culture into the 1988 Games” (Sidsworth 31). Forsyth and Wamsley write that while “the organisers were counting on Aboriginal imagery to attract visitors and Olympics enthusiasts to Calgary, they ignored issues of concern to the Aboriginal peoples around them” (236). OCO’88 faced strong criticism in the run-up to the Games for its “beads and feathers” approach. Organizers erroneously thought that they could use local people as symbols and as tourist attractions without issue. Leo Pretty Young Man, then leader of the Blackfoot questioned the lack of meaningful Indigenous involvement in the Games. Powderface refers to Pretty Young Man in a handwritten memo in late May, 1987, as “irritated” and asking for a report on all projects and activities involving their people (Comm. Series XV Box 8). Seemingly frustrated himself, Powderface adds that OCO should have brought the chiefs together prior to the establishment of the Native program.

OCO also faced strong criticism in the run-up to the Games from people such as Lubicon Lake Cree leader Bernard Ominayak, for what he considered were symbolic gestures within the Ceremony and the broader Games. In Calgary tensions arose with regards to the contradictions inherent in the sponsorship of certain games events by big corporate oil companies. Companies such as Shell and Petro Canada, while sponsoring Indigenous involvement in the games, are directly implicated in ecological genocide. Both companies play significant roles in damaging the traditional and contemporary territories of Indigenous peoples through the extraction of oil, specifically in the

traditional territory of the Lubicon Nêhiyawak peoples, residing approximately four hundred kilometers from Calgary.

In 1986 the Lubicon initiated a boycott of a museum exhibit put on to coincide with the Olympics, titled “The Spirit Sings: Artistic Traditions of Canada’s First Peoples” (and originally titled “Forget Not My World” – a titled changed in response to protest by local Indigenous communities). The Spirit Sings was the flagship of the visual arts component of the Olympic Arts Festival and was the “most ambitious and complex museum project ever undertaken in Canada” (Official Report 277), opening its doors on January 14, 1988 and running until May 1, 1988. The exhibit was installed the following Canada Day, July 1, in Ottawa for a five-month display. The popular exhibition cost over two and a half million dollars and involved “627 rare Indian and Inuit art objects on loan from 82 lenders in 16 countries” and more than “two-thirds of the objects had never been seen in Canada before” (ibid). Yet while OCO’88 and various media outlets considered the exhibit to be a resounding success “one major controversy” plagued the exhibition.

The Lubicon encouraged museums from around the world that had been solicited to contribute not to transfer any artifacts to the exhibition. The Lubicon were greatly opposed to the museum exhibit for its display of “Aboriginal artifacts” that had been collected from museums around the world. According to Julia Harrison, the Glenbow coordinating curator for the exhibit, the exhibit was intended to act as “an important vehicle to educate the Canadian people about the native heritage of their country and to bring the wealth of Canadian native materials held in foreign museums to light” (qtd. in Sidsworth 33). Moira McLoughlin in “Of Boundaries and Borders: First Nations' History

in Museums” writes that one of the Lubicon’s concerns with the exhibit was its “focus on the period of contact.” The exhibit lacked “contemporary Native voice and presence” and as such the Lubicon contended that “the museum needed to promote, rather than deny, the relationship between the historical pieces and the realities of contemporary Native life” (McLoughlin).

Part of the reality of contemporary life for the Lubicon was that they were subject to the federal government’s ongoing denial of a land claim settlement/treaty agreement and were being victimized by oil sands expansion. Shell Canada had since the 1950s been drilling in the lands that the Lubicon identified as their traditional territory. The Lubicon are a community like “unlike most of the other Aboriginal groups in Alberta, was not a party to any treaty, and therefore was without the settlement rights and reserve land provided under these agreements” (Sidsworth 32). The oil drilling posed significant threat to the ecosystem of the Lubicon’s traditional territory under claim and by extension posed significant threat to the survival of the people who engaged in theirs and the Canadian economy through hunting and trapping (ibid). Shell Canada, as a part of what OCO’88 affectionately referred to as “Team Petroleum’88” (King 253), co-sponsored The Spirit Sings alongside the federal government. While OCO’88 felt it had to allow equal participation to major oil corporations who served as both Olympic sponsors and as the backbone of Calgary’s economy (and by extension its identity as a city), the Lubicon felt it highly problematic that Shell should sponsor The Spirit Sings while directly “engaged in destroying the traditional economy and way of life of the Lubicon Lake Cree” (Trigger qtd. in McLoughlin).

Wamsley and Heine write, “The exhibition itself gradually became the focus of the boycott since its very existence was assured only as the result of a substantial grant from Shell Oil Canada Ltd” (107-108). As a major funding partner for The Spirit Sings the Lubicon felt it greatly hypocritical that Shell Canada should be permitted to financially support the vitality of Indigenous peoples while being directly responsible for the continued destruction of Indigenous lands and thus genocide of a community of Indigenous peoples: “In the words of Bernard Ominayak, Chief of the Lubicon: ‘The irony of using a display of North American Indian artefacts to attract people to the Winter Olympics being organized by interests who are still actively seeking to destroy Indian people, seems obvious’ (cited in Harrison (1988, p.60)” (Wamsley and Heine 107-108).

Representatives from Glenbow met with the Lubicon who reportedly (according to curator Harrison) had “no objection to the content of the exhibition but only to its sponsorship and association with the Calgary Olympics” (qtd. in *ibid*). Harrison responded to the objections by “playing the old ‘objectivity’ card” (Wamsley and Heine 108), countering that, “Museums, like Universities, are expected by the constitutions, to remain non-partisan” (qtd. in *ibid*). The Lubicon’s retort was that, indeed, by accepting Shell’s sponsorship the Museum was anything but non-partisan – it had already taken a political stand. Curator Harrison’s reply on behalf of the Museum was that there was no “evidence that the public confuses corporate support for corporate policy” (qtd. 108).

At the heart of the matter laid the fact that the Lubicon felt that the “presence of these oil corporations on contested indigenous territories, as well as the federal and provincial governments’ unwillingness to engage in honourable treaty negotiations with

the Lubicon Cree” reflected an ongoing commitment by the Canadian government to eliminate the Lubicon peoples (O’Bonsawin 147). For an exhibit which claimed to be about respecting and honouring Indigenous peoples to accept sponsorship monies from a corporation directly contributing to the environmental genocide of Indigenous peoples, was for the Lubicon, a decidedly politicized (and personal) act - regardless of public perceptions of that act. Forsyth and Wamsley write that even the “outward partnership displayed between corporate organisers and Aboriginal peoples” overall at the games really only served as a “grim reminder of the weak attempts by Canadians to conceal historically oppressive relations that involved a difficult past and a tension-filled present” (236).

### **Conclusion**

Each of the Olympics Games and the attending resistances can be understood as highlighting that which Forsyth and Wamsley speak of, namely Canadians’ attempts to conceal the extent of the colonial relationship and its resonances in the present. In 1976 French-Canadian dancers led Indigenous peoples through a multicultural tribute that was a contrived performance of plains-style Indian-ness, a performance that left many spectators frustrated by the use of so many French-Canadians in place of more “real” Indians. In 1988 there were no Euro-Canadians “playing Indian” as Indigenous peoples were presented as one of three core figures (Native-Cowboy-Mountie) at the heart of Calgary’s regional identity, propping up narratives of equal partnership that would more accurately be understood as glorifying Canada’s westward expansion and colonial nation-building project. The 2010 Ceremonies were the first games to bring together First

Nations, Métis, and Inuit, those broader classifications of Indigenous peoples recognized by Canada's 1982 *Constitution Act* as populations of "Aboriginal peoples," and yet the bid committee drew on language that posited First Nations as a singular entity and as a willful partner in the establishment of the nation. The narrative derided histories of colonial oppression and genocidal nation-building in VANOC's attempts to present an inclusive, "Aboriginalized" Canadian national identity.

At a superficial level, the narratives produced within each of the ceremonies attempt noble gestures; they speak of openness, acceptance, collegiality and equality and to be sure, Indigenous peoples have "played Indian" (1976), "played Native" (1988), and "played Aboriginal" (2010) in accordance with these changing narratives. The reasons for collusion are complex; some people see the ceremonies as a break from their everyday lives, as a chance to be on television, as a chance to meet athletes, and others become involved as a continuation of a long tradition of acting as "'show Indians' in the entertainment industry" (Forsyth 72). Some, such as the FHFN, appear to be motivated by significant financial concessions and incentives that offer promise to revitalize their communities. Many more become involved to prevent Euro-Canadians from continuing to "playing Indian" while some become involved because they realize that, as Howard Adams writes in the context of the Calgary Stampede, the public will not pay to see Native people in any other way (Adams 35). Others view the Olympics, even in their problematic state, as a site of possibility for awareness-raising, truth-telling, and resisting racist state oppression.

While some peoples have posited that the representations have improved, become less racist, and reflect the improvements in the relationship between Indigenous peoples and settler Canadians in the respective hosted regions, and that the 2010 Olympic narrative arose out of a sense of reconciliatory camaraderie, I argue that the perception of reconciliation gleaned from juxtaposing the 2010 Ceremony against the earlier two Ceremonies offers ways for the nation to continue marketing its multiculturalist national identity. This in turn allows for the nation to continue denying the ongoing and very real impacts of older forms and neoliberal forms of colonialism on Indigenous peoples lives.<sup>54</sup> As it is the *province* of B.C. which in recent years has framed its relationship to Indigenous peoples in the language of reconciliation, the *nation*, is able to point to the multiculturalist narrative to *deny* any further need for reconciliation (and for affording Indigenous peoples recognition as free and sovereign nations) while negating the centrality of a more fulfilling “truth-telling” to reconciliation processes.<sup>55</sup> Multiculturalism continues to work to “discredit[t] Aboriginal claims to special status as the original inhabitants of the land; Aboriginal is instead devalued as only one among several cultures that needs to be harnessed for the cultural enrichment of nationals” (Thobani 174).

As it has continuously been adapted from 1976, to 1988 and to 2010 multicultural discourse in the Olympics conceals the basis of state-Olympic-Indigenous relationships that are still “built on racism and colonial exploitation” and effectively “fomen[ts] a wider confusion about indigenous peoples as an ethnic minority within Canada’s multicultural milieu” (Alfred “Restitution 184; O’Bonsawin “No Olympics” 148). The figure of the

Aboriginal as epitomizing the 2010 Olympic multiculturalist vision of a reconciled relationship to Indigenous peoples is a pacifying discourse that as it obliterates histories of difference, insists that all peoples now, regardless of “culture” difference, are “equally Canadian.” By rendering Indigenous peoples as a part of the multicultural milieu, the most recent of Olympic narratives minimized the significant histories of colonization and racist marginalization while at the same time assuaging “white” settler guilt and anxiety. In doing so VANOC’s deployment of Aboriginality encouraged a public act of forgetting, encouraging a form of historical amnesia that made easy work of repackaging, rebranding, and selling the national narrative.

## *Chapter Three*

### **Casino Colonialism and Aboriginal (Re)Presentation in Casino Spaces**

*“Foxwoods is a glitzy, casino-cum-shopping mall-cum-theme park trading in familiar tropes of Indianness, owned by and operated for the benefit of Native Americans. If the Pequots are playing to (or are themselves constructing) consumers’ expectations (that they are on Indian Land; that Indian art looks like this; or that Indian music sounds like this), they are also players in a long history of Native American participation – coerced as well as voluntary – in transnational circuits of production and exchange in which indigenous cultural heritage, cut loose from traditional senses of place, has become, in effect, portable – a global commodity” (Anthes 208).*

Having grown up in the shadow of a casino city (Niagara Falls) and having worked in the tourist industry there during the summer before moving to Thunder Bay in the fall of 1999, I had seen innumerable tourists pick-up kitsch in casino gift shops and local tourist traps that they felt would commemorate their visit to Canada – kitsch of the most essentializing kind for Indigenous peoples, such as “Made in China” moccasins, red-faced “Indian dolls,” mini-totem poles, and dreamcatchers. Products that were made by Indigenous peoples were not sold on the primary tourist strip of Clifton Hill, but rather in the outlying areas such as Niagara-on-the-Lake, an area which caters to more affluent travelers. Watching this complex interplay of tourism and commoditization, I felt disconcerted by the way tourists embraced as though natural the bizarre congruence of the strength and beauty of Niagara Falls and the Niagara Gorge, with casinos, tourist shops and symbols of Indianness as markers of Canadianness.

My first experience with an Indigenous-run casino came a few months later and was equally jarring. During my first few months at Lakehead University, Orientation Week organizers for my dorm orchestrated buses to take undergraduate students across

the American/Canadian border from Thunder Bay to *Gichi-onigamiing* (Grand Portage) and Northeastern Minnesota. I was intrigued by the opportunity to visit a reservation casino because I naively assumed that by virtue of being located in reserve territory, that the casino was designed and controlled by the local Indigenous community, that the “culture” I would find in the casino space might move away from catering to non-Indigenous fantasies of Indianness. I think I may have just been simply excited to see Indigenous peoples represent themselves, essentially imagining my own version of Indianness that might serve to educate people on the inaccuracies of the Imaginary Indian.

Instead, I was overwhelmed by the Las Vegas-style glitz that I observed throughout the casino and “lodge” areas. While there was some incorporation of simulated woods, trees, and painted floral patterns (which the casino itself refers to as reflecting the “area’s vibrant history of aboriginal culture and the fur trade”), the casino traded very little in Indian imagery. Nevertheless the tourist shop I entered, like the ones in Niagara Falls, sold red-faced Indian girl dolls. While the ones sold in Niagara Falls were almost always stamped “Made in China,” the souvenirs at Grand Portage were marketed as authentically Indian (meaning, in this case, made by an Indian person). Looking back on this experience now, I am both amused and bemused by my own youthful, naïve belief that I would or *could* find reality in a casino space.

Walking into Casino Rama, an Anishinaabe First Nation casino at the Rama reserve near Orillia, I felt prepared for what I would encounter thanks to the lessons learned at Grand Portage. I had also come to better understand that the problems inherent within Indigenous-casino relationships, and that logic behind gambling is a marked

departure from traditional Indigenous ontologies (issues of which I will return to later in this chapter). Driving onto Rama First Nation, having heard little about it beyond that it existed, I was aware that I should not expect to see Native-ness at the forefront of Casino Rama. I was rendered nearly speechless when Casino Rama first came into view, with its massive concrete walls, shrouded with murals that look as though they are painted in the style of woodlands Indigenous art (murals that I would later learn were created and painted by local Anishinaabe artists). I was simultaneously aware that at the center of the entrance, set in a circle and protruding into the sky, sit a number of wooden poles (or what look like wooden poles). I arrived at Casino Rama expecting very little allusion to Indianness. Rather, Rama is replete with the juxtaposition of stereotypical presentations of Indianness against what, on the surface, appears to be a more respectful incorporation of Anishinaabe culture.

Years later, when conducting research for this project I learned that members of Rama First Nation visited the Mashantucket Pequot Foxwoods Casino in 1994, in advance of the approval of and building of Casino Rama. I was excited on my first visit to Foxwoods to see what inspiration Rama may have drawn from them, as one of the largest (if not *the* largest) Indian casinos. Once again I was forced to reconcile my ill-informed assumptions about what the institution of Indianness in casino and tourist shop spaces might look like, and to reconsider how and why material culture purporting to present Indigenous peoples is brought into casino spaces to begin with. For all of its grandeur, the introduction of Native design aesthetics at Foxwoods sits in stark contrast to

that of Rama. While the former intersperses references to generalized Indianness, the latter strives for what it asserts is cultural accuracy and specificity.

Certainly there are ways in which Indigenous peoples and communities invested in the casino industry and the broader field of tourism play up reified forms of what non-Indigenous peoples consider Indianness and consider more “authentic” forms, both of which conform to dominant expectations of Indigenous peoples. In light of this, in this chapter I examine how Indianness and Aboriginality are given visual form through the material and visual culture at Foxwoods Casino and Casino Rama. I consider how the construction of that which is supposed to mark Indianness at Foxwoods and Aboriginality at Rama, analyzing in what forms and to what ends they are constructed.

Why is there a need for such a study, the examination the material culture as presented within casino spaces? First, while casino spaces overwhelmingly cater to tourist expectations as Bill Anthes argues with regard to the Mashantucket Pequot, through the involvement of the communities in the construction of the images presented they also function as “unlikely national symbol[s]” for their respective communities (212). First Nations casinos as well operate within broader economies of tourism and leisure that serve to facilitate, at least in part, non-Indigenous relationships to and perceptions of, Indigenous communities.<sup>56</sup> Second, there is a paucity of literature related specifically to First Nations gambling. Although Yale Belanger has offered up two admirable publications on First Nations casinos, *First Nations Gaming in Canada* (2011) and *Gambling with the Future: The Evolution of Aboriginal Gaming in Canada* (2006), within what is available on casinos most analyses tend to take up the economic, social

and/or political reactions to gambling. The presentation of Indigenous culture in casino space is somewhat taken as a given – as either expressing or reflecting local Indigenous beliefs, or as playing to (non-Indigenous) patrons' expectations of Indigenous culture (namely through the deployment of dreamcatchers and teepees).

Third, I think it is important to discuss the role of what comes to be marketed as culture in casino spaces because as has been discussed in previous chapters, we are presently living in an era of heightened interest in commodifying cultural difference. Via a study of two contrasting sites, my primary interest, then, is in asking what a proximal reading of Foxwoods and Rama and their designs reveal about the different ways that Indigeneity is imagined and commodified. Given the limited literature available on the topic of cultural representation in the context of First Nations, referring to Foxwoods will also allow me to engage in a more expansive reading.

I will begin by articulating the construction of Indianness within the Mashantucket Pequot's Foxwoods Casino Resort, followed by an exploration of the visioning of Anishinaabe-ness and Aboriginality at Casino Rama. A consideration of their similarities and their differences will aid me in articulating the representational landscape of Casino Rama as one uniquely positioned in a broader field of Aboriginal articulations. It is here that I will as well offer close reading of the work of Darrell Manitowabi, as one of only two authors (the other being Karen Campbell) to have specifically addressed the negotiations of Anishinaabe culture in the casino. Next I will theorize the significance of colonialism and neoliberalism as united projects in the shaping of the Casino Rama's narratives. Finally, I will present and contest the distinctive forms of racism which

emerge in relation to Indigenous peoples engagements with casino economic development. Ultimately, this chapter should be considered as a contribution to what I hope will come to circulate in broader discussions about visual culture in First Nations casinos.

### **Foxwoods and the Mashantucket Pequot**

In the U.S. the Mashantucket Pequot happen to be “the most self-sufficient and the most financially independent tribe in the United States” (Harvey 150). Yet this affluence was not always the case. The Pequot have struggled against successive waves of intensive colonial projects alternatively aimed at eliminating and assimilating them. They have also faced intertribal wars, epidemic disease, and “the forced breakup of the tribe” by the New England colonists (Harvey 152). According to Sioux Harvey the population of Mashantucket Pequot came into existence following the Pequot Massacre of 1637, where a colonial army aided by the neighbouring tribes the Mohegan and the Narragansett, killed seven hundred Pequot people. The remaining Pequot were divided up between the Mohegan and Narragansett in the 1638 Treaty of Hartford the following year. The treaty “forbade the survivors from returning to the land or ever again being called ‘Pequot’” (151). The Pequot living amongst the Mohegan split into the Eastern Pequot and the Mashantucket Pequot and settled on to reserved plots of land. Gradually, the number of Mashantucket Pequot declined and by the early 1800s remained only thirty or forty Mashantucket living on their reservation (152).

In the 1950s the Mashantucket’s numbers on on-reserve residents dwindled to roughly five people and in 1970 there remained only two women on the reservation (152).

In 1974, however, a grandson of one of the women, Richard “Skip” Hayward took charge of the reservation and “began the tribe’s resurgence” (ibid). The tribe’s membership enrolment grew to thirteen in 1980 and spurred in part by the opening of a high-stakes bingo hall in 1986, the numbers of on-reservation Mashantucket Pequot steadily increased. Through steady economic growth financed by a Malaysian corporation, the bingo hall was transitioned into Foxwoods Casino Resort in 1992. By 1995 revenue from Foxwoods inspired a return of people to the reservation with the population growing to three hundred and seventeen residents (ibid). The success of Foxwoods revealed casinos as an economic powerhouse of sorts for Indigenous peoples and for many communities they quickly became a “fundamental economic development initiative for Indian nations in the United States” (Bodinger de Uriarte “Imagining the Nation” 561).

Yet the process of initiating economic development through Indigenous casinos involves far more than simply building the physical structure of a generic gambling space. In order to convince people that they should venture to reservations, to draw people out in numbers to generate much-needed revenue, American Indian casinos must have carefully crafted marketing strategies. For Foxwoods, the crux of their marketing strategy involved devising a plan for instituting “Indian culture” in the casino that could serve to attract prospective gamblers. The “generalized, pan-tribal” Indianness is entrenched in the structural and interior design elements at Foxwoods. They involve

‘basket-weave’ patterns and use of ‘tribal colors’ in the floor tiling; scattered display cases in the atriums and hallways of the casino filled with collections of traditional southwestern-style Indian pottery – complete with small, explanatory placards – and contemporary Indian bronzes; large bronze statues of Indian figures throughout the building (Bodinger de Uriarte 555).

While the immediate gambling space is not laden with symbols of Indianness, in the outlying shopping, rest, and resort areas there are mixes of real and fake flora and fauna hanging from fixtures painted aquamarine and mauve, colours which Leda Cooks writes, is intended to signify “the Pequot tribe” (227). Many of the bronze statues of warriors, women, and children scattered throughout Foxwoods are crafted as plains-style, highly “Hollywoodized” Indians that bear little, if any, of the facial features, hair, skin or clothing associated with the Mashantucket Pequot in either an historical or contemporary context (Cooks 228).

Some of the most perplexing design elements within Foxwoods I noticed while walking through the Rainmaker casino floor and into the mall hallway filled with fast food chains, cafes, and tourist shops. The various shops sell everything from sundresses, blouses, M&M candies, to tribal flute music, “Indian made” feathered earrings, hair extensions, and dreamcatchers, and “Indian made” red-faced Indian dolls. Each of the stores we passed by were faced with storefronts in the style of New England colonial architecture. They were mixed with “false fronts of colonial houses,” some of which provided passageway for staff into the recesses of Foxwoods (ibid). One of the false fronts looks like “an old fire station, another a lithograph shop, and yet another – in an interesting re-creation of local colonial history – the ‘Mashantucket Town Hall’” (ibid).<sup>57</sup> If we were to ignore the visible food court-style chairs and tables to the left of us and paid sole attention to the shop and house exteriors, it would have seemed as though we were walking through a small colonial town.

In terms of embodiment, in the early years of Foxwoods Euro-American women employed as cocktail waitresses were dressed in “Pocahottie” Indian-garb – tight, buckskin mini-dresses topped with “single, dyed-feather headbands” (Bodinger de Uriarte “Casino and the Museum” 146).<sup>58</sup> Rayna Green terms this phenomenon the “Pocahontas perplex” wherein Indigenous women such as Pocahontas, as the antithesis to the undesirable “squaw,” are the objects of “lust for white men” (703). The hyperfeminine, sexualized Indianness channeled through the bodies of “white” women indicate the Mashantucket’s attentiveness as to the desire of (both Indigenous and non-Indigenous) men for exotic and sexually objectifiable Indigenous women. At the same time the fact that such fantasies are played out on the bodies of “white” women, that “white” women are “playing Indian,” arises from a deeply ambivalent desire for/detesting of Indigenous women. “White” women dressed as “sexy Indians” perform a “safe” sort of exoticism and still there is a sad irony in that the playing out of fantasies of “Indian princesses” and “Pocahotties” takes place across the bodies of ‘white’ women at Foxwoods. In response to criticism by other Indian leaders that the “skimpy pink and turquoise Pocahontas costumes worn by cocktail waitresses [at Foxwoods] were offensive to Indians” the leaders of the Pequot replied by rationalizing that the “fringed, chamois-like tunics, slit to the hip, were chosen because they are comfortable and conform to the casino’s Indian motif” (Waldan qtd. in Lacroix 138-139).

“Although they are not statues...[they] are perhaps [as] equally objectified” as the most notable design feature of Foxwoods, a forty-five hundred pound display named “Rainmaker” (Cooks 228). Rainmaker is located outside of the Rainmaker casino, one of

the four casinos within the grander Foxwoods resort, in the Rainmaker Square. The Rainmaker was designed by Mashantucket Pequot member John Holder. Ironically, rather than rooting the Rainmaker in localized Mashantucket Pequot symbology, Holder based the Rainmaker's design on the work of Chiricahua Apache sculptor Alan Houser (1914-1994), specifically Houser's bronze statue "The Sacred Rain Arrow." He did so at the insistence of tribal chairman Skip Hayward who had seen the Sacred Rain Arrow and was impressed by it. Houser's sculpture, based on a story given to him through the tradition of oral storytelling, depicts an Chiricahua Apache man bent on one knee, holding a bow and arrow drawn and aimed upwards at the sky.

Holder and then-CEO of Foxwoods, a non-Indigenous man named Al Luciani, proceeded to alter Houser's design for the Foxwoods exhibit, "making it 12 feet tall, translucent, and changing Houser's original Apache figure to one featuring Eastern Woodlands clothing and artifacts" (Bodinger de Uriarte "Casino and the Museum" 125). I have been unable to determine whether anyone from Foxwoods had been in direct contact with Houser and whether he approved of the appropriation and modifications of his design. In addition to utilizing different materials and to altering the dress of the Sacred Rain Arrow, Holder also exaggerated the musculature of the figure in his version of the sculpture. Holder undoubtedly constructed a figure that epitomizes the hyper-masculine, romanitized, and essentialized Indian. Arising from such construction, the Rainmaker is detached from any locally specific Mashantucket Pequot cultural context. Despite being a resident of the reservation since the late 1970s/early 1980s membership revival of the Mashantucket reservation, Holder's design incorporates very little

Mashantucket cultural reference. Instead, he appropriates and distorts an image arising from the traditions of the Chiricahua Apache, fusing it with racialized visions of Indigenous masculinity. Holder and the team at Foxwoods in doing so misappropriate the sacred story represented by Sacred Rain Arrow, novelizing it in order to commodify it. By lifting it from its original context they remove the cultural locatedness of the story and turn it into a fabricated visual narrative whose only meaning arises in the context of its role as visual commodity.

Detaching the Sacred Rain Arrow, even in its adapted form as the Rainmaker, transforms it into a sellable, visual product. Bodinger de Uriarte argues that this disjuncture is the objective of what he calls the “Indian gaming industry” (“Casino and the Museum” 147). The industry is principally about how to transform, capitalize on and “utilize the popular representations of an essentialized or naturalized Indian, emphasized in dominant historical narratives, in conjunction with self representations and contemporary views of native peoples very much at home with modern projects like...the resort and gambling industry” (ibid). To be sure, Holder was “charged with the task of creating a spectacular sculpture that would parallel the fantastic thematic constructions of Las Vegas casinos” (Bodinger de Uriarte “Casino and the Museum” 124). Holder himself explains:

you go to Vegas and you got the Mirage and they got a big volcano that goes off, and you go to Circus Circus and they got circus acts, and alot of them have their themes. You’ve got the Luxor. That’s a pyramid and it’s all theme done Egypt [sic]. Ours being a Native American casino, I wanted to have a Native American theme through, an awing experience. I said, ‘It would be nice to be known as a casino that had a thunderstorm going on inside it,’ and it draws a crowd every time still (Holder qtd. in ibid 125).

What distinguishes Rainmaker from some of the larger bronze statues throughout Foxwoods is its fusion of essentialized trope and “modern” influence.

As Holder reveals, Rainmaker is part of a high-tech, extended, simulated, thunderstorm display. Rainmaker rests atop “on a rocky outcropping rising from shallow pool amid grove of artificial trees – [at the] center of Foxwoods – like famous talking sculptures that tell the story of Atlantis in Caesars Palace in Vegas” (Anthes 207). The Rainmaker’s bow and arrow are aimed towards the ceiling directly above where the ceiling “comes to a four-sided, peaked glass skylight, the light from outside playing on [the] milky, urethane figure” (Bodinger de Uriarte “Casino and the Museum” 121). At five minutes before each hour, the skylight above the Rainmaker’s bow and arrow is covered over by blackout curtains. As fog “billows out from beneath the central platform, and hidden lights play across the twelve-foot high figure” the blackout curtains come to function as a projector for “a small assortment of figures with a generic ‘Native’ pictographic quality to them: a spiral, a crooked arrow, a buffalo, an eagle” (ibid). Following the screech of an eagle, a recorded narration plays which “relates the saga of the Pequots on whose land the Rainmaker kneels” (Anthes 205).

The narration is provided by Holder, who also wrote the recorded story which accompanies the display. The narrative recounts the arrival of various forms of animal life to the Mashantucket territory in the wake of the post-Ice Age melt. As game animals enter into the territory they are followed by “giant game hunters” with “nomads” being the last of the “animals” to arrive on the land:

Long ago before the Ancient Ones, the land still stood under a heavy blanket of snow several miles thick. As the climate gradually warmed, the giant freeze began

to melt; for a thousand years great rivers flowed, eroding, forming and re-arranging the earth's landscape. Gradually, a summer began to take place. Trees from warmer climates began to edge northward. The first were spruce, fir, birch and the great oak. Game such as caribou, bison, mastodon, elk, giant beaver and the woolly mammoth were the first explorers of this land. They were soon followed by the giant game hunters. Later, nomads in search of food first came to this area as seasonal hunters, retreating southward as the harsh winters came (Bodinger de Uriarte "Casino and the Museum 121).

Most troubling, Holder's narration describes the changes to the landscape before the arrival of the so-called "Ancient Ones" by drawing on Euro-anthro-scientific explanations of Indigenous and ultimately Pequot "migration."

The narration draws to a close and is punctuated by a laser beam shooting out of the tip of the arrow, "causing momentary downpour that cascades through the branches of surrounding trees and into the fountain below, full of coins and tokens" (Anthes 207).

Throughout the narration and visual display, prerecorded "powwow-style" songs (by tribal member Michael Thomas) are played in the background, orchestrated to accompany the four stages of the thunderstorm.<sup>59</sup> The Rainmaker display is as John J. Bodinger de Uriarte writes, an "epiphanal moment" that "problematizes a clear or untroubled understanding of the configuration of Indian identity" through the deployment of what he refers to as "advanced, modern technologies" which "evoke the primordial: the 'Indian,' ...emphasiz[ing] the natural" playing to Foxwoods theme of "Gaming in Its Natural State" ("Casino and the Museum" 127; Lawlor 163). The Rainmaker has become synonymous with Foxwoods and with Mashantucket Pequot "culture" in the popular, American imaginary. Taken together, the exaggerated masculine warrior and the sexualized feminine Indian princess appear as "moving mannequins, adornments to the farce of representation. These symbols play to the stories, colonial and colonized, of

warriors frozen in time – warriors with feathers in their hair, who wear loincloths and live in tepees – of women who remain colonized by historical stories in which they are not actors but objects of men’s actions” (Lawlor 163).

The deployment of the hyper-masculine Rainmaker and the feminine, sexualized Indian Princess waitresses at Foxwoods, when read against the quest for reclaiming identity, reveal the tenuous negotiations of Indigenous communities engaged in gambling in a consumer society dominated by non-Indigenous peoples that is still consumed with a desire for the ‘exotic’ and ‘Other’ ‘Indian.’ As Celeste Lacroix writes, “When seen as a part of the system of signification of the ‘entertainment’ casino in the era of late capitalism, Foxwoods conforms to certain codes of casino design and space and violates others, producing a contrast or difference that is a source of meaning for experiencing Foxwoods as an ‘Indian casino.’” (Lacroix 130-131). Spokespeople working on behalf of the tribe have offered that Foxwoods is the “means to an end and as an entity [...] was never conceived as an expression of tribal culture” (Lawlor 168). For the Pequot, the cocktail waitress costumes were not *intended* “to be historical representations of Indian garb” (Walden qtd. in Lacroix 138-139). Interestingly, in the years that it has become the benchmark for Indian casinos, its executive has become less preoccupied with selling the casino space “in pan-Indian terms” as an “Indian casino”: “The exotic or exoticized narrative of ‘the Indian’ has shifted as the genre of ‘Indian casinos’ changed from anomaly to an established and powerful industry” (Lawlor 140). At the same time, Hayward and other community leaders argue that their engagement in global corporate

capitalism (Foxwoods) has allowed them to fund a more accurate reestablishment of Mashantucket “as a cultural entity.”

Due to the economic success of Foxwoods in 1997 the Mashantucket used their gambling profits to expand their operations to include the Mashantucket Pequot Museum and Research Center. Mary Lawlor describes the location and construction of the Museum:

Not far from Foxwoods, however, around a few bends in the road and further into the reservation proper, another impressive structure comes into view, the Mashantucket Pequot Museum and Research Center[.] Enveloped in the trees, the museum represents a different category of Pequot interests. It aims to narrate and image the tribal past in a contemplative setting. Somber and graceful in its carefully conceived design, the museum does not so much extend an invitation to visitors as it permits them to approach. Unlike Foxwoods, with its Himalayan profile, the building angles and spirals downward, from the height of a solitary watchtower to galleries and research laboratories deep underground (164).

Bolstered by work undertaken during the early years of the Mashantucket Pequot Ethnohistory Project (a project originating in 1983 and spanning twenty years) the building of the Museum and Research Center signals an attempt by the Mashantucket to “revive Mashantucket political and cultural history” (ibid). With its opening in August 1998, the museum worked to project “an alternative image to the tribe’s public profile as a gaming corporation” (ibid). The construction of the Museum, Lawlor suggests, operates as a counter-representation to the contrived images of the casino space. We see, then, that in the context of Foxwoods and in the vision employed by its primary leader, Skip Hayward, that there has been a splitting of the Mashantucket, between Indian culture (that which is in the casino) and tribal culture (that which is presented in the Museum). While the latter is positioned as the more “authentic” vision of Mashantucket identity, the

former is recognized as a generalized trope yet still useable in corporate enterprise to make possible the elaboration of “real” Mashantucket culture.

It is not my intent to negate the valuable work that has been achieved in reinvigorating and reclaiming Mashantucket Pequot identity, or to minimize the historical and contemporary traumas which the community has faced that may have resulted in such loss, but at least some of the community at Mashantucket have played a central role in design of the casino’s “more gaudy Indian stereotypes” (Cooks 231).<sup>60</sup> It is “neither an accident nor the design of some architect unfamiliar with Pequot culture” that these designs have come to pass noting that the design work arose was at least discussed at successive and lengthy tribal council meetings which “produced a sense that the tribe was involved collectively in the building of the casino” (ibid). Whatever the degree of participation of other members of the community beyond tribal executives like Skip Hayward, Al Luciani, and John Holder, the end result remains that “[t]he conceptualization and design of the casino reflect both the big business of gambling addiction and the big business of exoticizing culture” (232).

Nonetheless, nearly all of the design elements I have described here remain at Foxwoods, its caretakers appear unconcerned with its problematic, essentializing décor.<sup>61</sup> One of the reasons may be that as a population of mixed ancestry and often racialized as “white” or “black” but generally “non-Indian,” many Mashantucket do not see themselves represented by the stereotypical images of “pure” Indians throughout the casino. Perhaps, then, they have been more willing to play up the Indianness in Foxwoods. This has been a fruitful enterprise as the pan-Indianness of Foxwoods has provided the economic means

necessary for the re-establishment of a more specific vision of Mashantucket Pequot's self. Walking through the Museum and Research Center I did come to see glimmers of the cultural reclamation launched by the Mashantucket. The museum featured some explanation of pre-colonial life, a section devoted to the decimation of the Pequot, and tellingly, a gallery of photographs featuring "real" contemporary Mashantucket Pequot members who scarcely resemble the physiological appearance of the Indians on display in Foxwoods.

For all of its supposed distance from Foxwoods pan-Indianness, the Museum replicates many of the pan-Indian narratives produced within the casino. It problematically elaborates on the same being Bering Strait theory espoused during the Rainmaker display while offering a visual mapping of such theories of Indigenous migration. While in the Museum there is reference to *other* tribal nations' creation stories, like that of the Algonquin and the Haudenosaunee story of Sky Woman, there is an absence of a Mashantucket Pequot creation story. It is possible that a distinct creation story did not survive the onslaught of colonialism, which I outlined in the beginning of this section and which has made necessary the recreation of Mashantucket Pequot cultural narratives through some of the only tools available to them – specifically a contestable Bering Strait migration theory that Vine Deloria points out throughout the entirety of *Red Earth, White Lies: Native Americans and the Myth of Scientific Fact* (2007), is often drawn on to counter Indigenous claims to land.

Or perhaps the development of the casino pan-Indian *is* a Mashantucket Pequot creation story. The fact that both Foxwoods and the Museum are founded in little specific

cultural context while insisting on a dichotomy between a faux “Indian culture” and a supposedly real “tribal culture” reflects the near total elimination of the Mashantucket Pequot. Such a splitting perhaps reflects the significant damage done to the Mashantucket Pequot traditional culture and people. This dichotomy alludes to the concept of stereotypical dualism (as identified by Stuart Hall and drawing on the work of Peter Hulme) with regard to colonial discourse. Stereotypical dualism refers to the splitting of stereotypes into “two opposing elements” (308). In the first instance, *stereotyping*, “several characteristics are collapsed into one simplified figure which stands for or represents the *essence* of the people” (ibid). In the second instance “the stereotype is split into two halves – its ‘good’ and ‘bad’ ideas” (ibid). Perhaps this splitting marks a new creation story, of displacement and rebirth through capitalism. The reinvigoration of the Mashantucket Pequot would seem to indicate so, especially as Foxwoods has become the “defining standard for Indian casinos in the US” (Lawlor 140). Foxwoods new “creation story” is that it has emerged as the ‘gold standard’ of Indian casino gambling.

### **Casino Rama and Rama First Nation**

The circumstances faced by the Mashantucket Pequot are decidedly different from that of the people of Rama First Nation, colonized first by the English and then by Canada, many of whom occupy or retain direct connections to Anishinaabe communities and what I will come to explain as “bimaadziwin.” Despite the fact that Rama First Nation members visited Foxwoods, it would seem from a comparison of imagery in both spaces that Rama took little inspiration from Foxwoods in terms of constructing culture in what would become Casino Rama. While for the Mashantucket Pequot the construction

of the casino has been intimately linked to questions of the community's physical, geospatial and cultural continuity, these issues are not of quite such an immediate concern for a community such as Rama. How do these tensions play out when the tribe/First Nation involved is not necessarily seeking profits from casino gambling in order to reestablish themselves as a "cultural entity"? If the end goal of casino gambling among First Nations is more about economics and less preoccupied with declaring a community's "legitimacy," or "authenticity," or its aiming for cultural revitalization, what images come to be presented and in which way?

The interest in First Nations casino-building arises in part due to recognition of the economic benefits which casino operations can bring – a source of much needed revenue for building basic infrastructure (housing, schools) in the absence of restitution from the Canadian government. Karen Campbell, Rama member and researcher, writes that justifications for Casino Rama are anchored in the idea that if the community could be "less reliant on the Canadian government, then the community would become more fully self-governing," there an explicit link was made between economic sustainability and self-governance (3). Gambling was promoted as a quick economic fix for poverty-stricken Indigenous communities, as a "symbolic replacement for the buffalo as the primary mechanism used by American Indian peoples for survival" even though there was and continues to be considerable debate around the epistemological rationality for a Euro-centered form of gambling (ibid 15).<sup>62</sup>

Rama initially entered into a discussion regarding the development of on-reserve gambling at the insistence of an off-reserve band member interested in the introduction of

bingo to the community.<sup>63</sup> In 1984 the Opaskwayak Cree Nation had initiated a surge in interest in First Nations gambling, through the establishment of a community-based lottery in response to the Manitoba and Canadian government's "historic inability to foster economic development on reserves" (Kayseas et al 12). By the late 1980s, the Chiefs of Ontario (COO) had as well begun taking a serious look at the development and expansion of forms gambling on Ontario reserves, and in April of 1993 COO entered into talks with the provincial NDP government about the possibility of establishing on-reserve casinos (Manitowabi "Casino Rama" 259). An agreement was reached a short while later to establish a profit-sharing casino on one Ontario reserve (with the profits being divided among the remaining First Nations communities).

At Rama, the community band council and its economic development team had begun secret negotiations with American conglomerate Bally's to pitch Rama (and by extension the Rama-Bally's partnership) as the ideal site for the casino. If Rama would to put its name forth and to be selected as the new casino site, they would be in an iron-clad contract with Bally's. According to Campbell, few community members knew of this "secret deal" with Bally's. While many community members recognized the benefits of hosting the proposed casino on Rama, many more were "concerned that the casino would result in higher crime rates and increased traffic, or that the casino would become the centre of the community, outstripped the best interests of the people in lieu of maintaining profit levels" (Campbell 91). The community was divided into 'pro' and 'con' camps regarding the casino, and a referendum was held in order to determine community support

for putting forth Rama's name, following the visit of community members (at Bally's expense) to Foxwoods.

As mentioned earlier, Rama First Nation members traveled to Foxwoods on September 14-16, 1994. One hundred and twenty people traveled to Foxwoods to explore the casino and attend information sessions run by Mashantucket's chief and council, the casino economic development team, and Bally's representatives (ibid 92). Upon returning from their visit to the Mashantucket reservation and witnessing first hand the economic success of the Foxwoods casino, a number of community members turned their votes around to favour pitching Rama as a possible site for Ontario's first on-reserve casino. With a favourable vote of seventy-one percent, Rama proceeded with offering up its name. On December 5, 1994, Ontario's NDP government announced that Rama First Nation was selected to be the site for the first on-reserve casino in Ontario, and that the casino "would be run by an established corporation during its first 10 years of operations" (ibid).<sup>64</sup>

Although Rama would be the formal 'owner' of the casino, the gambling license would be granted to and held by a selected corporation who would ultimately be the 'operator' (ibid 23). Despite the earlier, independent agreement Rama had made with Bally's to be the corporation taking up the gambling license, the province instructed Rama to terminate the agreement with Bally's. A call for proposals that was sent out for an operator that would agree to the condition that "the casino must fit into the fabric of the community, and not compete with or overwhelm it" given the acknowledgement by the band council that casino values generally do not reconcile with those of Indigenous

communities (ibid 40). Through the course of an ‘open’ competition, the Miami-based company Carnival was selected (by a committee comprised of First Nations leaders and government officials) to back the casino.<sup>65</sup> The structure of the agreement meant that as the licensee, Carnival would be “accountable to the province first, before the community” giving Rama “limited...ability to direct corporate policy” (ibid).<sup>66</sup>

Roughly six months later, in June 1995, the casino project was stalled as the NDP party was ousted from political leadership and replaced with the Mike Harris-led Conservative party. In the initial agreement negotiated with the NDP government the provincial government would not claim any funds, as the casino revenue-sharing agreement among First Nations was intended to provide some economic relief to their communities, and reduce governmental contributions to First Nations. Harris’ government, however, began dismantling the initial province-Rama gambling agreement, imposing a twenty per cent ‘Win Tax’ on gross revenue generated by Casino Rama. During the preceding election Harris promised he would not attempt to alter the agreement but once elected his government insisted that the Win Tax was “standard operating procedure” and that “his government simply wanted the same 20 per cent it currently received from the Windsor casino and would obtain from the proposed Niagara Falls casino” (ibid 92).

Rama and other First Nations leaders initially refused to renegotiate the terms of the agreement and the Harris government responded by shutting down construction of the casino and interrupting financing for the project. Under the first agreement the province was not to benefit at all, but under the proposed revised agreement the province would

stand to gain roughly six hundred and fifty million dollars over a ten year period. Eventually First Nations community leaders gave in and “agreed to set aside the 20 per cent in future revenues in a trust account in order to continue” (ibid).<sup>67</sup> With a revised ‘agreement’ established, construction proceeded and Casino Rama officially opened for business on July 31, 1996. The positive economic effects of the new casino were felt immediately on and around Rama, marked by the growth of new businesses, new schools and planned community initiatives (97). Rama also planned to develop at a later date a museum and cultural space emphasizing the history of the local fish weirs, highlighting the local community and other First Nations in the area. The fish weirs are an important Anishinaabe historical site that would provide a solid eco-local base for the production of museum narratives, as well as a point for sharing information about and teachings of the Anishinaabe with visitors to the community (ibid 60-61).

While the positive economic effects were felt in some parts of the community, economic and social problems have emerged over the longer term at Rama. However, I am less concerned here with providing an overt examination of the economic and social dimensions of on-reserve gambling and more concerned with considering how “culture” in Casino Rama came to be incorporated. Most assuredly the economic and social concerns with gambling are connected to the cultural, representational analysis to which I will now turn thanks largely due to the tenuous and shifting economic relationship-dictatorship between the provincial government and Casino Rama. It is the colonialism inherent within the structure of this economic relationship that reveals precisely why the marketing of Indigenous cultures in casino spaces is so infinitely problematic.

The emptiness of the kinds of cultural performance in casino spaces is punctuated by the fact that most of the First Nations peoples working at the casino  
3are employed in part-time, graveyard shift, and entry-level jobs (Manitowabi “Casino Rama” 264). Meanwhile landlords in neighbouring Orillia are reluctant to rent places out to casino employees because of the unpredictability of the length of their tenuous employment contracts. Instead of serving as the economic harbinger of community salvation, as of 2002 nearly seventy-nine percent of Rama employees were non-First Nations. By 2004 only five First Nations people remained employed with Rama (ibid). Manitowabi reflects on the reality of these changes: “I observed that with the exception of the few who do have sufficient work experience and education, the harsh reality is that most First Nations casino employees arrive with a sense of optimism but are forced to return to their communities” (ibid).

The “cultural commoditization” at work in casinos through the enactment of images meant to signify “Aboriginality,” although heavily influenced by certain community council members, reveals “a peculiarly insidious aspect of capitalist development” (Jarvenpa 27). It is one that sees “culture” at work in the casinos in the absence of Indigenous peoples at work because under the logic of capitalist development, an “Indian casino” needs no “real Indians” (ibid). As Robert Jarvenpa notes, “Unlike the marketing of concrete products or services, the commoditization of cultural meanings can proceed without the consent of local participants” (ibid). This is precisely what has gone relatively unexamined in discussions of Rama and in discussion of First Nations casinos

in general – the institution of that which is often portrayed as and perceived as an example of an “authentic Aboriginal culture.”

### **Constructing Casino Culture and Displacement of *Bmaadiziwin***

“For the newcomer to the casino, the depictions of Native ‘culture’ become apparent” as the exterior is punctuated by a large tipi-like structure rising from the roof of one of the main entryways. The exterior of the casino is also covered with large murals, an “art wall” inspired by “local history and a book by the Wisconsin Anishinaabe, Eddie Benton-Banai” (Manitowabi “Fish Weirs” 79). These elements of culture most immediately visible at Rama, the art walls, retain much closer ties to Anishinaabe stories than the contrived culture presented in most of Foxwoods. During the design phase of Casino Rama, Japanese-Canadian casino architect Raymond Moriyama felt that it was important to incorporate “the special culture of the Ojibway people into the building’s design” (Moriyama). He also felt that while the casino’s purpose was to generate revenue for a number of First Nations communities, that the design and building process provided an opportunity to “raise self-esteem and feelings of pride within the native community” (ibid). Moriyama was unaware of existing artists from Rama First Nation, and so he enlisted the Chief and Band Council. He suggested that “a coalition of native artists, now known as the Mnjikaning Art Studio, be formed to create an art wall” (ibid).

Mark Douglas who oversaw the art wall project confirmed the importance of having the project showcase local artists. Ten artists were charged with creating images for the exterior, images would be incorporated into the interior designs. Telling a slightly different version of the design planning than Moriyama, Manitowabi implies that the

artist collective may have been preexisting, that they were “a consortium of Mnjikaning artists who called themselves the ‘Mnjikaning Art Studio’ and operated on a clan model with each having equal participation and input with respect to the artwork” (Manitowabi “Fish Weirs” 80). Some band members were enthused about the involvement of Rama artists. One in particular, a member of the band’s administration and part of the planning committee for the casino stated in an interview that

other than [being] just a big box sitting there, it has the community’s stamp on it, so, that’s good. And the other, the other story out of that was the artists trying to decide what images to go on, and could something go on, or not, because it was a gambling place, and they had a visioning session and the elder said to them, if your ancestors went out and painted on the rock, the faces of the rocks, and they communed with the creator when they did this, the creator has given you this – these walls as your rocks today, and this is the face to which you are to commune with. And so it set the tone, for good, really good pieces, from their hearts. And it was, is, beautiful (qtd. in Campbell 29).

Through a series of community consultations and involving the artists, it was decided that the seven traditional clans of the Anishinaabe (the deer, bird, marten, crane, loon, fish, and bear) would provide the major thematic base for the interior casino aesthetic and the exterior art wall.

The deer is the dominant figure depicted “representing the care givers and artists of the community” and can be seen throughout the casino, such as in the centre of the ‘o’ in the Casino Rama logo (Manitowabi “Fish Weirs” 81). The bird clan represents spiritual leaders within the community; the third clan, the marten, represents warriors and protectors while the crane indicates leadership and external relationships. As a nod to leadership, Chief Yellowhead, a revered leader of the community, is portrayed within the crane mural. The fifth mural is the loon which is known for its oratory ability and

communication skills, as well as “knowledge of local environment and internal dynamics of community” and portrays past chief Big Wind (ibid 82). The sixth clan, the fish clan, is connected to philosophy, stargazers, community visionaries, mediators and leadership, and the mural “depicts cross section of Lake Couchiching with fish and fish weirs” (ibid). The final and seventh clan is the bear, representing the healing and protection of the community through an understanding of the land, nature and the use of medicines in healing. On the art wall, the bear clan is depicted as responsible for policing in the community, with portraits of the founders of the Rama police at the heart of the mural (ibid).

Localized cultural references are not limited to Rama’s exterior, as they are also present inside Casino Rama. Existing on the complete opposite spectrum from Foxwoods Rainmaker is Rama’s signature feature. Joining the hotel to the main gambling area sits Rama’s largest Anishinaabe-inspired installation. Rama’s central display is a seventeen thousand square foot rotunda located at the juncture between the casino and a long hallway leading off toward the hotel (added in 2002). The rotunda is constructed around the four primary colours of the medicine wheel: yellow, red, black and white. At the heart of the rotunda, timber stakes come together in a circle forming a fish fence meant as a symbolic gesture to the centrality of fish weirs to the history and culture of the Rama people.<sup>68</sup> The weir is complemented by “eight tree columns representing the Anishinaabe clans: deer, bear, crane, loon, bird, martin, fish and a final column representing Mother Earth” (ibid 84). The rotunda is intended to symbolize the earth with the ceiling representing the sky and the ground representing the earth and water.

Hanging above the circular fish weir is a large video screen framed by a faux sweetgrass braid in the shape of a medicine wheel, surrounded by seven vertical video screens. The screens work in conjunction with artistic lighting and surround sound to play a video narrative of Rama's cultural history, a technical feat recalling Foxwoods' Rainmaker. The broader narrative of Rama's cultural history is centered around three smaller narratives: 1) the relationship between the people of Rama and the land in older and more recent historical terms; 2) the Creation story of the Anishinaabeg; and 3) prophetic moments about how the Anishinaabeg have struggled to tell their story. The presentation shares that the fish weirs pre-date the Egyptian pyramids as "the Creator called the fish to hold a council at the Narrows between Lakes Simcoe and Couchiching, informing the people how to build the fence that would make the weirs" (85). The faux fish weirs serve as reminders to "give thanks to fish who sacrificed themselves for food" (ibid).

Whereas Foxwoods' Rainmaker narrative was unable to provide a culturally-specific creation story, Rama's "Spirit Lodge" display integrates an abbreviated Anishinaabe creation story, asserting the primacy of traditional knowledge about the land at Rama and the peoples' uninterrupted relationship to it. The narrative explains "that the earth was once covered by water and the Creator called upon the turtle to form the land" (ibid). The muskrat, listeners are told, successfully "brought earth from the bottom of the water to form earth on the turtle's back" and "animals in the rotunda are shown driving, searching for earth that eventually formed on the back of the turtle" (ibid). It is the final of these, that the Anishinabeg have struggled to tell their story, that provides a segue to

clan introductions. This moment is figured around the assertion that when the Anishinaabeg first told their story they were not understood. During this second opportunity (“the time is now” as the elders in the narrative state), embodied by the repetitious moment of storytelling in the middle of the casino rotunda, that the “four colours of humanity would be drawn to the community ready to listen” (ibid).

As fiber optic footprints from each of the clans appear on the rotunda floor, initially appear to be “normal wood carving[s] on a tree” are transformed into “holographic Spirit Trees” (Lester Creative). Holographic faces appear in the Spirit Trees and after sharing in sequence about the respective clan they represent, the faces disappear.<sup>69</sup> There are much less grand incorporations of local culture in Casino Rama, specifically through the introduction of fish weir imagery into the interior design. The series of interconnected buildings are made up of the casino/gambling space, a large entertainment theatre, a series of shops and boutiques, and nine restaurants. In addition to being aptly named Weirs Restaurant, Weirs Restaurant is framed by a large weir. There are numerous abstract renderings of fish local to Lake Couchiching cover the ceiling and walls, while the interior walls aim to reflect the natural surroundings of the fish (ibid 86). Additionally, locally-rooted culture is presented through allusions to the allied peoples of the Three Fires Confederacy of the Anishinaabeg, the Chippewa, Odawa and Potawatomi.<sup>70</sup> In the Firestarter Lounge a large, three-sided fireplace is intended to represent the people of the Three Fires Confederacy, while hung on the walls of the lounge are community-made beadworkings. At the back of the bar sits a series of black and white photos of community members (ibid).

On September 18, 2002, a luxury hotel constructed to mimic an historic Anishinaabe lodge was added to Rama. The hotel extends much of the cultural references in present in the casino with a direct emphasis placed on “replicating a naturalistic feel” (ibid). The hotel lobby area resembles a wooden lodge, except that the ceiling of the lobby is covered with large windows. Near the hotel entrance to the casino sits a mechanized waterfall. The floor is made up of faux stones and is embedded with “animal and First Nations’ motifs” (ibid). The carpeting in the hallway that traces the connection from the hotel and to the casino is decorated with the Seven Teachings of the Anishinaabe. Near the elevator of the hotel there is a large mural depicting drumming. In a review of the designs at Casino Rama, the *Orillia Packet and Times* reported that the signification of the drum mural is that: “[t]wo drummers in the centre sing to call the clans together. And on the outskirts, the clan animals are seen to be moving toward the centre as they are moved by the rhythm of the Heart Beat of Mother Earth” (qtd. in ibid 87).

While Foxwoods’ Rainmaker employs a strictly masculinized view of Indianness, the drum painting and the Spirit Lodge pay tribute to the earth as “Mother Earth.” Mother Earth even receives her own fish weir pole in the Spirit Lodge display. The narration as well speaks of the importance of the Anishinaabkwe’s (Anishinaabe women’s) traditional role in selecting the future, male leaders of the community. While simultaneously perpetrating the idea that women should not/do not take up leadership roles in the present moment, women are more than mere Pocahotties in the culture on display at Casino Rama. Although women and femininity are symbolized to a lesser

degree than that of men and masculinity, we may exert a collective sigh of relief that Casino Rama did not adopt from their experiences at Foxwoods, an agenda of explicit, racialized, sexual objectification of women.

A comparative reading of the different gendered constructions of culture in Casino Rama and Foxwoods draws out one of the significant differences between the marketing of culture within the two sites. While Foxwoods' vision of Indianness is greatly divided along ideas of Indigenous masculinity and femininity, an important part of Casino Rama's success is its broader appeal and its ability to trade in images of a holistic, pan-Aboriginality. For all of their difference, a comparison of Foxwoods and Casino Rama reveals that the Eurocentrism of pan-Aboriginality is buried much more deeply than in Foxwoods' pan-Indianness. As I put forth earlier, in Foxwoods narrative construction culture is split between Indian culture (casino) and tribal culture (museum), with both being quite reliant on "Euro-American" doxa. At Casino Rama Eurocentrism is very much present in the overall framing of "Aboriginal culture," as primitive and unchanging, something which sits in contrast to the dynamic, current, living culture of the community that Manitowabi refers to as "bimaadiziwin" (which I will return to shortly).

Manitowabi draws important insight into the insidious way racial logic is woven through the constructions at Casino Rama:

With the exception of the photographic collection in the Three Fires Lounge, the symbolism is comprised of feathers, words, motifs, replica waterfalls, wood, dreamcatchers, talking trees, clans, turtle shells and many other symbols that represent Anishinaabe culture. In this way culture is created and controlled to reveal a certain timelessness and association with nature. Hence a maintenance of Euro-Canadian doxa exists where the Anishinaabeg are associated as unchanging or 'primitive' ("Casino Rama" 195).

At Rama the split appears with the realization that the images which are being marketed are those which, as Manitowabi so astutely points out, are overwhelmingly preoccupied with the *past* of the Rama First Nations people. A reflection on the naming of the hotel spa “Mnabmaadziwin,” further reveals the more subtle ways a focus on the past is represented, but also the way that Aboriginal casino culture relies on much more than just material cultural. Anishinaabe material culture is not the only thing transformed into a commodity in the casino. The very language of the people, Anishinaabemowin, is introduced to the Casino Rama through the name of the hotel’s spa, which is officially translated by the hotel to mean “life in balance.” When broken down and analyzed in English *mnabmaadziwin* more accurately translates to “mna/mno meaning ‘good’ and bmaadziwin means ‘the good holistic way of living’” (footnote 5 in Manitowabi “Fish Weirs” 83).

One is a passive phrase while the other is active – whereas “life in balance” applies to tourist desires for personalized experiences, experiences that focus on them, it also implies that it is life itself that must do the balancing or must balance itself. On the other hand, the English translation of “the good holistic way of living” is an active phrase which invokes the responsibility of the person living to live their lives in a good way. The translation of language here is important as it serves as a symbol for what happens in the larger process of the “casinofication of culture.” For *mnabmaadziwin* to be considered marketable, for it to have satisfactory meaning in the realm of capital and for it to contribute to the Aboriginal culture of the casino, for it to fit the presentation of Anishinaabe culture as fixed, the language must be emptied of the essence of its

Anishinaabemowin. *Mnabmaadziwin* involves an ethics for living in a good way, a way that is contemporaneously relevant and more than traditional kitsch. It also implies an ethics of responsibility as an individual and as a community member, of being in a good way that in the casino dynamic *must* be emptied of its meaning because its meaning sits in absolute contrast to notions of neoliberal capitalism that privilege individual gain over community survival.

The emptying of meaning from Anishinaabe culture and language for its placement within the casino is very necessary since Rama is marketed as an “Aboriginal casino.” Despite the fact that on its website Casino Rama markets itself as a “First Nations casino,” any enterprise as grand as Casino Rama will be drawn into the discursive language of Aboriginality and Aboriginalism that is pan-Indigenous at its core. This is reflected in Casino Rama’s creation of the “Casino Rama Aboriginal Tourism Award” for graduates of the Travel and Tourism program of Georgian College and its development of a scholarship fund for graduate students called “Casino Rama Awards for Excellence for Aboriginal Students.” The engagement with the language of Aboriginality means that visits to Casino Rama do arrive “expect[ing] to see symbolism validating this claim [of Aboriginality]” (ibid). But what exactly is casino Aboriginality?

This project has so far examined the way Aboriginality circulates in the wider tourism industry but also how it has transformed through narratives of Canadian nationalism presented at the most recent of Canadian Olympics. As previously mentioned Manitowabi devises a definition of “casino culture” that he distinguishes from “bimaadziwin,” the latter which he positions as less commercialized, spiritually vacant

expression of culture. Bimaadziwin is the cultural practices driven into the recesses of the community in part due to a desire to protect its sacredness from the rapacious greed of casino culture and the tourists it brings. Casino culture, alternatively, is that version of culture which is “controlled and defined by Euro-Canadians employed by the casino which is controlled by the Province and managed by Euro-Americans” (Manitowabi “Casino Rama” 196). Some Rama First Nations members participate in the perpetuation of casino culture directly in the community. Gatherings such as sweatlodges and powwows that are not innately Anishinaabeg in their current forms of public expression enact a pan-Aboriginal approach. As much as they create new configurations of culture, they intentionally work to try to attract casino patrons away from the community. They serve as attempts to head off tourists from invading the private lives of Rama First Nations members as tourists seek out further contact with “real” and “authentic” Aboriginal cultures.<sup>71</sup>

In many ways the Aboriginality at Casino Rama is a hyper-Aboriginality, the likes of which resonate within the Aboriginal tourism industry. Hyper-Aboriginality involves an aggressive push toward presenting whichever culture it is marketing as authentic, as a “true” version of culture (seen in the AtBC’s authenticity program). Manitowabi writes that from his series of interviews at Rama he came to realize that

[m]ost members of Mnjikaning do not identify with the culture presented at the casino. For instance, very few are aware of ancestral clans. The language is spoken only by a few over the age of 50. As well, very few participate in ceremonies. Most would not even be able to describe the meaning of the symbols at the casino (“Casino Rama” 196).

People appear alienated by the hyper-Aboriginality of the casino in part because its brand of culture dominates other bimaadziwin and other expressions of Anishinaabe culture. One interviewee of Karen Campbell, who works on-reserve with Social Services, reflects on the assimilationist pull of the casino's version of culture, opining that "your identity right now is the casino. ... The casino is the number one thing and the culture I think could be very easily lost if they let it" (41).

Hyper-Aboriginality is expansive, involving a push to essentialize its form of tradition, ignoring the fact that for many of the people at Rama they continue to experience the intergenerational effects of colonialism. There has been massive rupture in the transmission of culture between generations due to things like the *Indian Act's* banning of traditional practices and the internment of Indigenous children at residential schools. The hyper-Aboriginality of Casino Rama looms over people as reminders of years of colonial policies motivated by an ultimate end goal of eradicating them and assimilating them into Euro-Canadian society. Perhaps this is why one of Campbell's interviewees responded that people in the community are not overly traditional because "a lot of people find that it holds us back if we stick to tradition too much" (42). This language of holding back is interesting – what is it that tradition holds people back from? I believe the assumption underlying this interviewee's words is that some people have come to view bimaadziwin as irreconcilable with, and as an impediment to, economic development. Whereas casino culture or hyper-Aboriginality encourages development, bimaadziwin is understood as outdated and as an ineffective tool for sustaining Indigenous communities. This epitomizes what I will subsequently argue "casino

colonialism” is all about – hyper-Aboriginality is the mask that serves to conceal the indivisible intertwinement of colonial and neoliberal logics.

### **Two Peas in a Pod: Colonialism and Neoliberalism in Casino Rama**

Neoliberal logic, in the context of Casino Rama, means that essentially everything, including the mobilization of culture in the construction of the casino space and the surrounding community, should benefit individualism and capitalism. These interests are privileged over those of the collective community. The presence of the casino as corporation in community life can be read on many levels as an extension of the colonial project, marking a form of colonialism as “casino colonialism” in which the corporation (as extension of government and yet independent of government) has come to be the primary source of enforcement of economic and cultural control over Indigenous peoples’ lives. The casino corporation’s involvement in the community is attributable less to the fact that casino is an intrinsic part of the community (and an economic /enterprise controlled by Indigenous peoples, which it is distinctly not) and is more attributable to attempts by casino executives to “fi[t] into the community from the sense of participating in events, and trying to give ‘something back’ to community members” from a position as outsider (Campbell 41). The casino creates the illusion of working to “end poverty,” while being directly implicated in the state’s ongoing denial of sovereignty for the people at Rama; as Manitowabi has alluded, the casino has in many ways displaced the state as the main force ruling over the lives of First Nations peoples at Rama.

Colonialism's ability to operate in and through Casino Rama is due precisely to the fact that "modern European colonialism... [is not] some transhistorical impulse to conquer but...[is] an integral part of capitalist development" (ibid 20). Manitowabi confirms my suspicion that this transition represents more a form of "casino colonialism" by identifying that while the "former power broker for the Rama First Nation was Indian and Northern Affairs Canada [,] [n]ow, under neoliberalism, the casino represents an additional broker that has entered the power-relations dynamic on the nation" ("Casino Rama" 267). Ultimately, "The component of the casino defined as First Nations is limited to the land the casino is built upon, and the revenue-sharing agreement, of which all Ontario First Nations are beneficiaries" (Manitowabi "Casino Rama" 268). The reality of this power dynamic is perhaps best expressed by one online poster to the *Orillia Packet & Times*, a self-proclaimed resident of Rama, who writes "I live here in Rama and we have no say in happenings at casino...I'm just one person, and I believe that, at the end of the day, we got sold out to the province (thro casino deal) [sic] and now they are calling the shots at casino. And they will do whatever they want" ("Shark Fin Soup").

Casino colonialism is a way of 'occupying' Indigenous lands through capitalism – although in this instance the corporation is enabled by the government as colonialism's primary agent:

The essential point is that although European colonialisms involved a variety of techniques and patterns of domination... all of them produced the economic imbalance that was necessary for the growth of European capitalism and industry. Thus we could say that colonialism was the midwife that assisted at the birth of European capitalism, or that without colonial expansion the transition to capitalism could not have taken place (Loomba 9-10).

The analogy Ania Loomba provides indicates that older forms of capitalism have depended on colonialisms (in various contact zones) for its emergence in colonized spaces. Roger Maaka and Chris Andersen write that “The new colonialism became manifest primarily in the pressures to assimilate Indigenous peoples into the economies, legal systems, and corporate structures that grew out of the old colonialism” (263). The statements by Loomba, Maaka and Andersen support my reading that the presence of direct colonial rule is not *necessary* to understand the situation at Rama as exhibiting signs of replicating colonial relationships, yet for all illusions to the contrary, the reserve lands are unreservedly held “in trust” by the Canadian government (the lands remain the property and possession of the Canadian government).

In this sense then capitalism is the life support attempting to extend oxygen to the aging and tenuous governmental control of Indigenous peoples. The imperialism embodied by the Casino Rama relationship continues to work in and through the economic (and social) relations of dependency and colonial control created by the *Indian Act* and continuing into the present. Nothing within the way the casino relationship currently operates indicates that the First Nations casino economic relationship to the province is one rooted in the sovereignty of Indigenous peoples. In fact, as Manitowabi notes “First Nations autonomy has been restricted and manipulated” through the province’s embrace of “an active role in the casino development process and fail[ure] to respect First Nations autonomy” (“Casino Rama” 273). This is punctuated by public proclamations by the provincial government that “Casino Rama is an extension of the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corporation,” the rules of the casino’s operation are defined

by the OLG, and that presently, Penn National Gaming of Pennsylvania (having taken over from Carnival previously), manages the casino (ibid 273; 264).

Sentiments expressed by various interviewees in Campbell's thesis attest to a disillusionment with these conditions, as she notes that one-quarter of the people she interviewed felt that the casino's hosting of feasts, attendance at cultural events and attempts to provide food and services when there is a death in the community, "removed the opportunity for the community to do something on their own" (41). This removal of opportunity extends beyond what appear, at least on the surface, to be the casino's attempts at being neighbourly and extend into more insidious forms of control over community engagement. No other gaming is permitted on the Rama reserve and this has meant that hockey teams attempts to raise funds to travel for tournaments, and elders setting up raffles to raise funds for a new Fire Department, come under the threat of legal action for violating the casino's monopoly on gambling (and any loosely related forms of economic exchange). With raffles supposedly being in conflict with the government's agreement with the casino corporation, the province tries to justify its intervention by citing the casino's "generous compensation to the community" (ibid).

At the same time that Casino Rama has been repeatedly sold by the government as the harbinger of First Nations economic dependency, its existence directly undermines Anishinaabe peoples' attempts to create a legacy of economic autonomy. The exclusion of people from direct participation in the growth of their community through "casino stipulations banning community-based capital fundraising events" has led to a decline in volunteerism at Rama (Manitowabi "Casino Rama" 267). The freedom to fundraise has

been displaced by a “provincially-imposed agreement assigning narrowly delineated authority to a small group of political leaders” (ibid 265). The regulation of the people at Rama and the assignment of authority to a small group has effectively meant the depoliticization of the larger community at Rama. In order to facilitate the flow of capital potential dissenting voices need to be rendered ineffective (the challenge to which we saw with regard to the Lubicon resistance to oil imperialism during the 1988 Olympics).

This focus on reducing peoples’ ability to challenge market dominance is consistent with both neoliberalism *and* colonialism and their efforts to undermine First Nations peoples. It is through appeals to a supposedly universal “common sense” and interest in free enterprise that the government has consistently sought to curtail the people at Rama’s ability to engage in free economic relationships (and to express dissent against the casino’s role in the community’s life). The casino, by its very existence in and through the terms designated by the government, negates Rama’s land sovereignty and marks an encroachment into ‘Indian space’ that reflects the ongoing paternalism of the Canadian state:

In the process of negotiating the creation of Casino Rama with the province, the Ontario First Nations compromised effective economic self-determination, since ultimately the province exercises control over the casino...this is the hidden element of the casino. It appears Casino Rama represents a case of First Nations economic salvation marked by modern symbols of development in the form of infrastructure and low unemployment (Manitowabi “Casino Rama” 268-269).

The presence of an American corporation on ‘Indian land’ (which is, in actuality, land “held in trust” by the Canadian government *for* ‘Indian peoples,’ aka ‘Canadian land’) is made permissible not by the sovereign and independent decision of the local community (which is why the community’s agreement with Bally’s was vetoed by the provincial

government). Instead, Carnival's initial presence came at the insistence of the province that the community throw out its original agreement for one that it deemed acceptable, reflecting the province's insistence on its own sovereignty and its power over Indigenous peoples at Rama.

What is made apparent, particularly in the Canadian context, is that casinos operate as an extension of colonialist practice and colonial discourse, producing a new (neoliberal) casino colonialism that the people of Rama feel they have little control over. In an interview with Manitowabi, one First Nations casino employee reflects, "It's weird living in the white world, even though I'm working on the rez" (qtd. in "Casino Rama" 264). Rather than functioning as a form of economic empowerment or as a site of First Nations sovereignty and self-representation, the state exercises its power through Casino Rama, albeit through a market-centered casino colonialism which uses Indigenous peoples as cultural commodities.

The presence of Casino Rama essentially produces an all-encompassing dependency where *bimaadiziwin* is passed over for casino culture that is rendered in generalized and marketable terms, and where the Anishinaabe at Rama are economically dependent on the ongoing support of the casino. This system of displacement at the heart of casino colonialism is directly linked to older forms of colonialism. The utilization of Indigenous material culture purporting to feed hyper-Aboriginality in sites where there is an explicit denial of sovereignty and autonomy to Indigenous peoples, results in a process Aimé Césaire refers to as "colonization = thingification" (21). Indigenous involvement in formulating what is to be passed off as hyper-Aboriginality in Casino Rama does a

dangerous dance with lingering colonial fantasies of Indigenous peoples that simultaneously reveal the ongoing attempts by the Canadian government to suppress Indigenous sovereignty.

One band member recalls and cautions: “When the Grand Opening occurred we had a powwow...and there was a lot of anger about the co-optation of culture for economic means. And so there’s a danger there that the casino could dress us up in our own buckskins and feathers and try to make a profit off of that. So we need to be careful” (Band Administration and Planning Committee Member qtd. in Campbell 39). Ania Loomba, referring to Césaire, articulates this threat through reference to a core aspect of colonialism whereby “colonialism not only exploits but dehumanises and objectifies the colonised subject” (24). Increasingly, money and commodities begin “to stand in for human relations and for human beings, objectifying them and robbing them of their human essence” and “they become fetishised (fetishes being objects which we invest with human qualities)” (Loomba, drawing on Marx, 24; 28).

### **Anti-Indian/Anti-Casino America and Canadian Anti-Aboriginality**

There is a backlash to the successful fetishization of Indigenous peoples and cultures, to the effective commoditization of culture. Indigenous peoples are, on the one hand, valued for their culture and cultural expression when mediated by casino spaces and as a part of larger colonial national tourist strategies in Canada and the U.S. (as expounded on in the first chapter). On the other side of the splitting which Hall identifies and I addressed earlier, sits the construction of the Indian who is *too* successful in terms

of casino gambling (Mashantucket), and/or who fails to meet colonial expectations about what constitutes Indigenous economic success (Rama).

The current anti-Indian racism experienced by the Mashantucket Pequot emerges in part as a result of what Kate Spilde refers to as “Rich Indian Racism” whereby affluent American Indians, such as the Maschantucket, are called out as assimilated Indians on the basis of their economic success.<sup>72</sup> Rich Indian Racism does not eclipse the racist conceptualizations of Indians as “poor, lazy, and primitive” but rather adds to it “the modern characteristics of impoverished and welfare-dependent” (Cramer 315). Those who cannot be contained by such representations, namely those who have effectively navigated the economy of a neoliberal market-state, and are prosperous and successful in the way the market defines success, are derided as “fake” Indians. Rich Indian Racism parallels assertions of assimilated Indian-ness and is a no-win situation where Indian peoples who fail to live down to negative colonial expectations or circumvent them by way of garnering economic success, face racist backlash.

The more successful the Mashantucket have become the louder the challenges to their identity as Indigenous peoples of “Afro-Indian” heritage. As Cramer notes, members of the Mashantucket Pequot tribe are most often accused of being too successful and therefore “too White” to be Indian. This is especially ironic, as the membership of the Mashantucket Pequot tribe has recently become more visibly diverse, as so-called Afro-Indians return to the reservation from places like Providence, Rhode Island and New York City (330). Thus there is an equation of capitalist success with whiteness, of market engagement with whiteness, and of poverty with Indian-ness.

Joey Carter, a member of the Mashantucket Pequot, articulates the links between anti-Indian racism and economic success: “We’re not supposed to have enterprises like Foxwoods. Indians are supposed to be poor people, they’re supposed to live on a reservation, grow their corn, pick their berries, and be exploited. That’s what they’re [the Pequot’s critics] scared of. They realize money is power—that’s what it’s all about” (qtd. in Cramer 333). For the Mashantucket Pequot, even when their success is portrayed in the media in positive lights it is invariably linked to debates about the decline in their authenticity as Indians, reinforcing the equation of “indigeneity with primitivism and poverty” (Cramer 332).

For many Euro-Americans, particularly those located near “unrecognized tribal entities” the success of the formerly ignored and economically marginalized Mashantucket Pequot, who defy colonial expectations, have exacerbated settler anxieties. According to Celeste Lacroix, depictions of the Pequot as too powerful as a result of their economic success arise because

[a]s a direct result of sovereignty, then, the ‘Indians’ have turned the tables after four hundred years of dominance and shifted the balance of power in the communities of southeastern Connecticut. The colonial, dominant position so long enjoyed by non-Indians operated as a ‘taken-for-granted’; the relations of power were so naturalized that it was only through this obvious shift in power that the dominant position was seen as threatened (100).

S. Elizabeth Bird argues that as cultural images “of who *we* are” changes, so too does the “image of the Indian...now becoming everything we fear” (3). As the Mashantucket Pequot have become more economically successful and leveled the proverbial economic “playing field,” settlers, particularly white settlers, feel anxiety over the displacement of the positional superiority of their whiteness.

Perceptions that the Mashantucket Pequot have transitioned to capitalism in the ways demanded of all Indigenous peoples, thereby effectively assimilating into neoliberal, Eurocentric economic values, exacerbates pre-existing anxieties that have existed from the very beginning of colonialism. Herein lies the greatest of contradictions inherent within contemporary anti-Indian and/or anti-Indigenous racism. Indigenous peoples have long been seen through imperial eyes as embodying an “escape” from the pressures of colonial life. That Indigenous peoples have not been seen as accumulating great volumes of wealth, as not having successfully adapted to individualistic, capitalist culture, has meant that we are a nostalgic reference point for settlers of “a model of social relations no longer available or accessible to a majority of people” (Eva Darian-Smith qtd. in Cramer 319). This is why anti-Indigenous racism tries to so steadfastly fix Indigenous peoples in place through the re-entrenchment of racial discourse, because as Eva Darian-Smith suggests, to settlers the belief that ““authentic Indians still exist [...] in turn bolsters a hope, though false, that a golden past could possibly be returned to one day” (ibid).

If this is even but a segment of the landscape of contemporary anti-Indian racism faced by the Mashantucket Pequot and in response to Foxwoods prosperity, do the people of Rama First Nation experience a similar backlash due the more muted (but still perceptible) success of Casino Rama? The *Orillia Packet and Times* reported that the drum mural which I referred to earlier in this chapter speaks to Rama First Nation’s response to “the call of the drum.” The article positions the building of the Casino as a sign that the people of Rama First Nation are “beginning to reclaim their destiny” (qtd. in

Manitowabi “Fish Weirs” 87). The nearest city newspaper views the sanitized hyper-Aboriginality of the casino as signaling a reclaimed destiny, or perhaps even a return to culture, that had once been lost. The bizarre figuration of casino development wedded to the marketing of culture as a sign of “reclamation” and as a “return” to something presumed lost by the people of Rama is troubling. I think this problematic language is a tiny beacon calling out from the darker side of hyper-Aboriginality, Aboriginality, Aboriginalism, casino colonialism, and indeed anti-Aboriginal racism.

The passage from the *Packet and Times* reads almost as though the author finds relief thanks to the existence of Casino Rama – relief at the possibility of being financially unburdened by Rama First Nation. As will be discussed, this feeling of relief rarely lasts long given the structure of the economic relationship and the mobilizations of anti-Aboriginal racism. Perhaps the feeling of relief stems from lingering (white) settler guilt. Such an assessment does fall in line with arguments I made in earlier chapters that the narrative of Aboriginality is intimately tied to project of reconciliation that in turn promises settlers a state of euphoria wherein everything is now “okay.” In the context of this passage, then, regardless of what the *actual* truth is behind the façade of the Aboriginality at the casino, the author feels relieved – settler guilt can be assuaged and is once again effaced by the (visual) “return” of Aboriginal culture.

Yet settler guilt is assuaged by more than a feeling of return of culture, as it is also relief over the belief that Aboriginals (unlike Indians or Natives) are learning “how to function,” are “rebuilding their economies,” and are moving away from being an economic “burden” on the state. If we were to interpret the article’s author as relieved

then we must also attend to what else this relief would signal, which I believe, is the deep, abiding racism embedded within settler Canadian relationships to Indigenous peoples. It is a racism that, as I have mentioned in earlier chapters, is “buried alive” and is difficult to see. It is a unique expression of post-racial racism, marked by the appearance of its own racelessness

Due to the extensive governmental management/interference in Casino Rama the backlash to any perceived success at Rama takes on a slightly different form than the anti-Indian racism expressed toward the Mashantucket Pequot. However, in the absence of a consolidated study on non-Indigenous response to Rama that I could draw on, and in the absence of any studies on the backlash to First Nations engagement with casinos more generally, I will draw on the work of Crystal Maslin. Maslin speaks to social constructions of Indigenous peoples and First Nations gambling in two mainstream Saskatchewan newspapers during the so-called “scandal” of the 2000 “Dutch Lerat Affair.” From Maslin’s work I delve into some of the complexities of contemporary anti-Indigenous racism, coming to argue that what initially emerges as “anti-First Nations” racism is blurred into a broader anti-Aboriginal racism. The inherent contradictions of the racism within casino Aboriginality (that operates in conjunction with the racism of commodified cultural narratives) are drawn out by Maslin’s analysis but also by reference to online public forums.

The expression “Dutch Lerat Affair” refers to the news reports which surfaced in the Canadian media on June 7, 2000 regarding the CEO of the Saskatchewan Indian Gaming Authority (SIGA) Dutch Lerat. The Saskatchewan provincial auditor of SIGA,

in its annual audit of the organization, found Lerat to have “spent more than \$800,000 without proper authority” (Belanger “Securing Public Trust” 249).<sup>73</sup> When read alongside recent online responses to the Lerat’s recent return to the public eye, along with coverage of SIGA’s financial challenges, we can gain insight into the racial rhetoric regarding First Nations peoples and the enterprise of casino gambling.<sup>74</sup>

In addition to the unauthorized spending, Lerat was also accused of having received three hundred and sixty thousand dollars in unauthorized debit and credit card advances. One news report summarizes the aftermath of the story:

RCMP investigated, but Lerat was not charged. They said his actions did not meet the criminal definition of theft or fraud. Lerat has said repeatedly the rest of the board knew of and approved his actions. ‘Did we spend lots of money? Yes. Were some expenses unaccounted for? Yes. Did we lack financial controls? Yes. Was I a high roller? Yes,’ Lerat wrote in a letter to The StarPhoenix in December 2000. ‘I don’t dispute any of those charges. But I do have some unanswered questions. The main one is: Was I out of control or was I doing my job?’ He faded from the public spotlight, eventually winning election as a band councillor on his home First Nation of Cowessess. Lerat filed a wrongful lawsuit in 2006 against the FSIN and SIGA, claiming \$240,000 in compensation plus money for vehicle and other allowances (“Lerat still on SIGA file”).

Responses by the media to the findings were aggressive with the media “depict[ing] Dutch Lerat as a spendthrift” (Belanger “Securing Public Trust” 232). The tone of the print media changed soon after the breaking of the story, with both Lerat and SIGA derided as “corrupt and incapable of properly managing a multi-million-dollar corporation” (ibid).

Since 2000, and the Lerat Affair, SIGA’s corporate image and reputation have taken a serious blow, one that initially “signaled to the provincial gaming industry that SIGA was on the cusp of a crippling monetary setback, which would have grave

ramifications for the provincial gaming industry” (ibid). As Belanger identifies SIGA is dependent on its ability to create “a favourable corporate image” in order to “advance positive attitudes (political and societal) about the organization” (ibid). The blow to SIGA’s reputation is complicated by the fact that SIGA’s success is primarily reliant on non-Indigenous patrons. It is also troubled by the fact that “public opinion indicates that only 1 percent of Canadians believe First Nations should operate gaming establishments” (ibid 233).

Maslin, through a comprehensive analysis of media coverage in two Saskatchewan newspapers, *Leader-Post* and the *StarPhoenix*, chronicles the impact of this blow. She details the emergence of what she calls “new” racialized characterizations of Indigenous peoples in the wake of the Lerat Affair. The most prominent image which emerged is that of “The Crook.” She writes that The Crook is portrayed in very general terms as “Aboriginal Peoples as having corrupt business practices. Often this character was referred to as accountable to no one, and was accused of committing white-collar crime or not complying with government mandates” (42). In an article published in June 2000, an unnamed journalist warned that the “‘SIGA Scandal’ had irrevocably damaged the confidence of the white community in Aboriginal leadership”: “The FSIN's handling of Lerat's situation has been a complete disservice to its band members and one that shatters the confidence of the *white community* on all matters related to native self-government. It's all too typical of the games that are too often played at the highest level of Indian politics” (emphasis added, qtd. in ibid25).

Portrayals of The Crook by the papers tended to extend the rhetoric of alleged corruption beyond the immediate focus of accusation to attack “many levels of Aboriginal governance” (89). The rhetoric targeted the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians (FSIN) as a figurehead of SIGA, insisting that Lerat’s corruption was an extension of an innate sense of corporate greed and a general failure of First Nations to “get” how economies should work (ibid). A review of online comments in select articles published about Lerat, SIGA, and FSIN reflects the pathologizing Maslin identifies. In September 2011, the *Leader-Post* and the *StarPhoenix* were ablaze with coverage of a new “SIGA controversy” regarding revelations about the ongoing ties of Lerat with SIGA through his relationship with FSIN. The papers also reported a more recent conflict over a SIGA non-confidence vote that put Kirk Goodtrack as SIGA Board chair (and formerly employed by both Penn National Gaming and Mnjikaning/ Casino Rama) out of power:

Kirk Goodtrack had stated his intentions to slash hundreds of thousands of dollars in SIGA board costs and undertake other sweeping reforms to the corporation when he was appointed in February. The SIGA board dismissed Goodtrack, a Regina lawyer, citing alleged conflicts of interest. A judge ordered him reinstated soon after, disagreeing with the board's arguments, but he was fired soon after by the chiefs of the FSIN, SIGA’s parent organization (“Vote for Sask. Story of the year”).

While the news coverage was direct in its attack on the perceived corruption of SIGA and FSIN, the most vitriolic of responses appeared in online comment sections by the *StarPhoenix* and *Leader-Post*.

Many of the comments make sweeping generalizations about First Nations governance, making specific reference to the Lerat and Goodtrack stories to insist, as in one comment, that “[an invisible hand should] Disband FSIN, SIGA, and all other First

Nation bureaucracies that are completely corrupt” (anon14865809, “Lerat still on SIGA file”). The same commenter goes on to declare that “[t]hey are simply black holes in which the Federal and Provincial governments drop more money with no accountability as to where this money has been spent” (ibid). The obvious solution, the commenter poses, is for an independent corporation to oversee all “First Nations monies,” specifically that “a private, non-government and *non-aboriginal* organization has to be in charge of all First Nations monies!” (emphasis added ibid). While such a comment can be derided as arising from a combination of ignorance and misinformation, such backlash becomes much harder to disregard when it is delivered from the Premier of Saskatchewan. Premier Brad Wall is quoted numerous times as saying that the revelations about SIGA “just isn't giving anyone any confidence,” to which he ponders the possibility of dismantling the SIGA collective, assembling provincial control and transmitting the funds “directly to individual First Nations” (“SIGA board expenses up”).

Wall’s public expressions elicited a number of responses. The actions of Lerat were condemned most egregiously within expressions online of public opinion, and again the accusations against him were projected back onto *all* leaders of SIGA and FSIN.

Poster *anon148658090* asks in response to Wall’s words,

When will Brad Wall end the corruption? When will criminal charges be laid? Were this any organization but a First Nations one, the government would have already stepped in and the public outcry would be enormous. *We* must stop funding First Nations organizations. *ALL are corrupt as are their activities at the band level.* I am tired of excusing criminality and incompetence to assuage European guilt! (emphasis added ibid).

*Commenter DP2*’s statements precede *anon148658090*’s but offer similar sentiments, extending the “generalizing of corruption”: “First Nations leaders simply are not leaders.

To steal from your own people is ruinous. But to defend your actions is simply lying to the public, and it reflects poorly on First Nations people in general, even though it shouldn't (ibid). *stooner01* proposes a solution that an unnamed source should,

Do away with the FSIN completely, and have a *neutral firm appointed to account for all monies distributed to these FN communities*. Dutch Lerat along with those other vice chiefs should all be charged and sent to jail for disregarding a court ruling, and mishandling of federal funds to feed their own interests. I hope *Brad Wall and Harper* do something quick. Shut the taps off completely until there is abolishment of the FSIN. *I am FN and tired of having my hard earned tax dollars given to these imbeciles to misspend. DO SOMETHING SOON BRAD WALL, OR DON'T EXPECT YOUR GOV'T TO BE REELECTED BECAUSE WE ARE ALL TIRED OF READING THESE NEW FINDINGS EVERY WEEK !!* And hats off to the SP for publishing this and making everyone aware (emphasis added ibid).

*rtp000* also proposes a “solution”:

Here's an idea... negotiate a new 5 year gaming agreement that requires SIGA / FSIN to be self sustained and take care of *their own people* without any more tax dollars being directed towards the corrupt few. Maybe then, the first nations people will actually rise up against their own corrupt leaders that are stealing from them and they will impose new leadership that is accountable. *If they don't agree, take away their rights to have casinos until they do agree*. In the next couple of years, the population of the province will come to a point where *every tax payer will carry the burden of 2 people*. If self sustaining options are not mandated soon, we're heading for a heap of trouble as a province in the next 10 years! (emphasis added ibid).

*Bluehills* weighs in and upholds the growing anti-First Nations rhetoric writing that it is the “Same old song and dance. This is what happens when the fox is left in charge of the hen house...it's a complete joke, but not funny in the least. It's time for change, time for some honest accountability, time to stop allowing *those who have repeatedly shown themselves incapable of honestly managing funds*, to hold the purse strings” (emphasis added ibid).

The rhetoric that First Nations people are unaccountable and thus dysfunctional is persistent, as reflected in multiple responses to *The StarPhoenix's* coverage of the Lerat and Goodtrack matters:

For years non-native people were muzzled about speaking up about the injustices we saw in the transfer of funds to reserves and native agencies. They were told they were racists if they spoke up about the amount of money that there was no accountability for. There are many people who know they are not racist and are now speaking up not against someone being First Nations but about the apparent misuse of public funding that taxpayers certainly have a right to ask the questions they are providing the funding. It wouldn't matter what ethnicity people were if this was happening with any other group taxpayers would be speaking up now. Governments better start listening because they are party to this misuse of funds by not demanding accountability.

Do they really think taxpayers who provide the public funding for all these things are so blind that they aren't aware of the governments bias attitudes and actions. They better start being fair and demanding the same for all use of public funding, in their own offices, in anything connected with First Nations funding, and of course continue with the scrutiny that they have always had with non-native agencies. The taxpayers have had enough and Wall better recognize this soon because anyone who steps up and says they are going to start holding reserves, and Native run agencies accountable will get many peoples votes (gem3, emphasis added "SIGA finances cause concern").

When is Brad Wall going to get the Provincial Auditor to investigate ALL First Nations organizations, not just FSIN, or SIGA, or FNUC? And, cut their funding! And while you are at it Mr. Wall, check into all the fraud at the band level. These same Chiefs are doing the same fraudulent behavior on the reserves. Why are these Chiefs and bureaucrats not being criminally charged? *Non-Aboriginal and non-government individuals must be put in place to control the flow of money and to ensure accountability (anon148658090, emphasis added ibid).*

ENOUGH!!! At what point do we call a spade a spade and put an end to this dismal, pathetic excuse for a 1st nations "government". How much money has to be wasted? How much fraud committed? How many millions squandered before someone says "*youve wasted enough money, proved yourselves to be incapable, the gravy train ends*" Disgusting (sktrainspotter, emphasis added ibid).

The FSIN and SIGA should be criminally investigated to the max. Stop funding these clowns that lack any *managment accumen or moral compass and start laying serious charges*. If they want such a body as FSIN let the indian bands pay

for it, the average band gets a million dollars a month and with 70 in the province they can easily fund their own lobby groups (*anon318440888*, emphasis added *ibid*).

Even a story placing a positive spin on the existence of FSIN, “FSIN marks 65 years fighting for rights,” elicits backlash to the perceived corruption of FSIN and SIGA. The majority of the responses are underlined by their authors’ beliefs that race and racial division are to blame for the perception they have that FSIN (and SIGA, and First Nations peoples more generally), are failures.

When the comments move away from admonishing First Nations leadership, transitioning to blanket statements about First Nations peoples generally, First Nations peoples are derided as “respecting nothing.” *FRBRGR* writes:

the FSIN is a joke you rob your own people, make excuses, whine that conditions on reserves are terrible, fight for treaty rights the government should cut the chord and flip you all the bird, *why should tax payers continue to support a group of people that after 200plus years cant support it self.* and don't respect what it is given. on how many reserves has the government built schools, housing etc and within 6 months the windows are boarded up because they are smashed *you people respect nothing.* there will always a divison of people in this provence [sic] as long as the FSIN exists (emphasis added in *ibid*).

In response to the same article, *anon285584129* directly ties critiques of FSIN to both the greediness and definitive racialization of Indigenous peoples (extended the “problem of race” to *all* ‘non-white’ peoples). Slowly, the language of anti-First Nations becomes solidly located in explicit references to race, as well equating political correctness with an American and not Canadian national ethos:

African-Americans, Asian-Canadians....Caucasian Canadians.....oops I stepped in it that time. FSIN would be a credible organiation if their leaders didn't make such boneheaded greedy decisions. Go ahead and call be [sic] a white racist I just call 'em like I see 'em. Let's not get tangled up like our American neighbors with all this politically correct mumbo jumbo. WE ARE CANADIANS! (*ibid*).

So then in addition to claims of corruption and a lack of accountability, public opinion to online newsmedia coverage of SIGA and FSIN situate *race* (in a semi-socially-constructed fashion in the sense Maslin identifies) as the central problematic which has contributed to the “justifiable” hostility of Euro-Canadians toward the Crook(ed) Indians.

Statements such as these are the personification of racially-driven neoliberalism that makes Canadian neoliberal racism distinct. At the same time as it positions itself as “uniquely Canadian,” it embeds the language of white normativity it articulates it within a language of racelessness and indeed in appeals to multiculturalism (which, as mentioned in previous chapters, is steeped in racist conceptualizations). Those who espouse these desires for (and sometimes commitments to) “colour-blindness” actively deny the presence of deep-seated racism (Goldberg “Threat of Race” 201). Equally evident of this sort of neoliberal racist mentality are commentators attempt to evade legitimate questions about the extent of their racism by the inversion of victimization – by appeals to “reverse racism,” whining excessively about their marginalization as “white.” *JJ2* writes,

Didn't you know, only white people are racist, everyone else is just proud of their heritage. Well guess what everybody, I'm proud to be white and I'm proud of my ancestors who worked hard to get my family where it is today. Aboriginal leaders have no credibility and shouldn't even have the respect of the people that they claim to lead. They're far more dishonest than the federal and provincial governments (ibid).

In a strange twist of logic First Nations peoples become responsible for the racism (that is depicted as not *really* being racism) launched towards them and somehow due to their laziness and ineptitude also wind up responsible for the victimization of “white” peoples that have “worked hard” to establish their families.

This last comment, I think, articulates clearly for us the shape of settler anxieties and fears which I have touched on throughout each chapter and which motivate the “new” anti-Aboriginal racism. It is ultimately fueled by a perception of what David Theo Goldberg refers to as “racial threat.” Misguided though it may be, (white) settler perceptions of the destabilization of their position of superiority “fuels fear of loss – of power, of resources, of competitiveness, of life itself – and their attendant antagonisms and aggressivites. This sense of threat, almost invariably tinged with anxiety or exacerbated by paranoia upon racial mediation, tends to articulate self- with social protection, no matter the cost” (Goldberg “Threat of Race” 29). This paranoia in turn facilitates further resentments and drives anti-Aboriginal rhetoric (alternatively figured as anti-Indian, anti-First Nations, and anti-Native) about Indigenous peoples “‘wanting too much’ and as having ‘too many rights’” (Mawani 52).

When news broke that Casino Rama was working to “tighten its belt,” to be *more* financially resolute First Nations peoples were again put in the crosshairs of public ill will. Despite the fact that the financial management of Casino Rama lies largely in the hands of non-First Nations peoples, Online poster “Jim Tolnai” writes in response to an article for the *Orillia Packet & Times*,

So after hundreds of years the beads and coloured glass still works and the vast majority end up paying the real price for the trinkets for the few. Truth is there is only one way of achieving self government. It is for the band members to actually start giving a crap about the next generation and their future instead of buying bobbles that may shine but does nothing of value. If any native band in Canada had a great opportunity to finally have prosperity it was Rama. But once again the opportunity was squandered. Stand and join those so called disidents [sic] like my friend Arnold and work to change the leadership with those who have vision and integrity. Otherwise be prepared to live in the 21st century as you have in the last one (“Rama First Nation”).

While the Aboriginality within casinos can be reading as an effort to preserve some semblance of the Indian nostalgia settlers long for (at least for the purposes of successful marketing), perceptions of corruption elicits many responses which uphold the racialization of Indigenous peoples as lawless, irresponsible, desperate, needy and greedy. As one commenter who simultaneously romanticizes and slams the people of Rama First Nation writes, “Indians are a law unto themselves. They answer to no one. But somehow, the incredible sinkhole that is First Nations funding never seems to be enough. Where does that money go?” (*Garry Burke*, “Reconsider shark fin”).

What my reference in brief to these latter two commentators reveals is that the raced raceless racism launched toward First Nations peoples involved in casinos does extend beyond the confines of SIGA and Saskatchewan. Further, no Indigenous person who is grouped as Indian, Native, or Aboriginal escapes unscathed when articles about casino corruption emerge. Taken together with the aforementioned comments, along with the information Maslin provides with regard to journalistic depictions of First Nations, a racialized, neoliberal discourse emerges about casino Aboriginality. The Crook does not appear to be a trope published in the *Leader-Post* and the *StarPhoenix* prior to when the accusations made against Lerat came to light, but increasingly it is on the rise as “Aboriginal peoples become more successful with land claims and other litigation, [and as] a stereotypically poor and unemployed population is gaining access to wealth and white-collar employment” (42).

Each of these comments provides insight into the ways that purportedly “common sense” comes to be mobilized to justify racist assumptions and calls for greater

oppression of Indigenous peoples. Opinions such as those expressed above about the innate irresponsibility of Indigenous become laughable when considered against corporate CEO such as Conrad Black, who (to a much larger extent) “ripped taxpayers” off. The public response to Black never made links between his corruption and lack of accountability to a racialized identity. He has never been called to account as a figure for all those thrown into the same racial category as he is. He has been thrown in with other corrupt businessmen whose racial identity is given no name in public opinion; racialized as white he is invisible to the power structure that he was born into and that has sustained him throughout his life. When a person such as Lerat is in the crosshairs of public opinion the reference to corruption is always wedded to the idea that Indigenous peoples as a monolithic *general and cohesive population* are incapable of accountability. In the absence of an innate ability of First Nations to be accountable, the paternalistic state is called on to, and often criticized for, failing to monitor its “children’s” behavior.

The comments expressed in the forums reflect the ambivalence of Aboriginality. Even as Indigenous peoples perform in accordance with the norms of neoliberalism set out for us we walk a tightrope that is mediated by an economic racism that positions Indigenous peoples either as excessively greedy or unendingly inept at financial management, with no middle ground except for continued poverty and subjugation. We are either viewed as “failing to adapt” to the current economic climate or, in the case of Lerat, “wanting too much” and being incompatible with what are already predetermined to be (for Indigenous peoples) “inappropriate” forms of economic engagement. Neither of these forms of racist imagining are new, rather they are derived from older forms of

racism transformed through emerging languages of neoliberalism. As is consistent with the ethos of a neoliberal racism, Indigenous peoples are held to a higher standard of accountability than white, Euro-Canadians. Indigenous peoples perceived failings are reflected back (by the ‘white mirror’) and projected onto Indigenous communities, communities seen as endingly incapable of “proper” market relationships.

### **Concluding Thoughts**

Contrary to the anti-Indian racism launched toward the Mashantucket Pequot success of Foxwoods, First Nations peoples become targets of anti-Aboriginal racism not through jealousy over the effectiveness of their “economic assimilation” success, but in response to a perception of the failure of their leadership to effectively assimilate into tenuous structures of neoliberal economies. Such racial rhetoric according calls on external mediation by either a benevolent Euro-Canadian government, or an independent and supposedly “impartial” private corporation. Benevolent intervention is figured as necessary to save the *community* who in the media coverage and online responses analyzed in the preceding section are depicted as victims of their corrupt leaders.

Adapting Gayatri Spivak’s statement in “Can the Subaltern Speak?” that “White men are saving the brown women from brown men,” I would argue that media constructions and online responses by those who self-identify as Euro-Canadian based on the *invisibility* of their identifications assert that white men must intervene to save brown *people* from brown men which “has long been a major plank in the colonial ship since it serves to mark the colonizer as modern and civilized and provides at the same time an important reason to keep Brown men in line through practices of [in this case economic]

violence” (Razack 17). As responses to SIGA demonstrates Indigenous peoples are still subject to a colonialist gaze that insists on their “perfection” – any slippage that can be construed as morally deviant by some Euro-Canadians are taken to indicate the failure of Indigenous peoples to behave in properly civilized (economic) manners. This is very much due to colonialist nostalgia, to the resonances of older colonial discourse that romanticizes and idealizes Indigenous peoples as living “quite literally in another world, untouched and unblemished by capitalist morals, deeply connected to land and nature, and upholding family and community relationships as central to their communal lifestyle” (Eva Darian-Smith qtd. in Cramer 319). It also reveals that whiteness, neoliberalism, colonialism, and capitalism are inseparable, further problematizing Indigenous engagements in Euro-centered market relationships.

In spite of these issues, I cannot deny the way gambling and gambling agreements in their creation of revenue, can for *some* Indigenous peoples, serve to revitalize their communities and draw people back into a sense of community and economic independence, as is the case with Foxwoods. Interestingly, Grand Portage, the casino I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, is undergoing a remodel to appear *more* “Aboriginal” as suggested by the transition in their website’s language from Indian to Aboriginal. On the other hand, for Rama, there has been a marked increase in the number of community members moving off-reserve to get away from their figurative and literal stifling at the hands of the oppressive Aboriginality of the casino (Campbell 31).

The question, then, is *why* do self-aware Indigenous peoples market presentations of Indigenous cultures in casino spaces and participate in the fabrication of Aboriginal

culture? I would argue that in many cases the presentation of culture in casinos and in tourism spaces broadly, is made necessary only minimally by tourist demands and desires to consume Aboriginality. I think such an active engagement in the production of Aboriginality arises largely due to the anticipation of attacks claiming that economic sites devoid of an Aboriginality recognizable to settler Canadians means that Indigenous peoples are assimilated. This in turn would translate to rhetoric that Indigenous peoples no longer being distinct, all things being equal, that there is no *rational* cause for the Canadian government to continue to “pay out” magnanimously to Indigenous peoples. In some ways, perpetuating a mythic Aboriginality can serve as a strategy to guarantee that in one way or another, the state upholds its fiscal obligations to Indigenous peoples.

As possible testament to this, SIGA’s restructuring in the wake of the Lerat affair (with its 2003-2004 *Annual Report*) attempted to reconcile the anti-Aboriginal backlash launched against them. They appealed to “tradition” to “secure public trust.” The *Annual Report* identified five governing principles drawn from *Néhiyaw* (Cree) approaches to Treaty 6 negotiations with the British Crown in 1876, approaches that would be adapted and put to work in the operation of SIGA. To assure “the public that it had indeed turned over a new leaf” SIGA drew from tradition to guide contemporary development (Belanger “Securing Public Trust” 239). I think this could be read in two ways. In one instance SIGA may have come to realize that corruption is innate to neoliberalism and they are seeking a way, through traditional thinking, to redirect the path of its leadership. In the other (and a far more likely possibility given the ongoing struggles of SIGA), SIGA’s remedy for anti-Aboriginal racism is more Aboriginality. The notion that appeals

to tradition should be used to “secure public trust” further reinforces the tangibility of anxieties among non-Indigenous peoples as to the so-called “corrupt” and “greedy” Aboriginal. Still prone to lawlessness, immorality and selfishness, appeals to naturalized “tradition” are called for to assuage the anxiety of non-Indigenous peoples and settle the settler’s anxieties.

## ***Chapter Four***

### ***Rejecting the Aboriginal: Visual Sovereignty in the Work of Terrance Houle and Rebecca Belmore***

*I have arrived at writing this chapter with great excitement, a feeling tempered only by my fear that the words I put on the page will not do justice to the affection I feel for Indigenous peoples' artistic practices. I am motivated to have such a discussion not only because I see certain conceptual links between artists and tourism performers, but also due to the fact that although I am not acquainted with visual art as either critic or creator, I did spend my formative teenage years moving between Indigenous, European, Euro-American and Euro-Canadian music and theatre traditions. During high school music classes at my arts-focused high school and through extracurricular training and performance, I was fortunate to encounter some instructors who encouraged us to listen to, learn, and sing music from outside European classical tradition. My instructors' understandings of what was appropriate in an educational context was, however, tempered by what they had learned in university and teacher's college as constituting the core of music theory. The pedagogical approach to music in mainstream Canadian educational music spaces, from understandings of and namings of notes to the classification of instruments are rooted in European interpretations of sound and music.*

*Unlike the oral approach to singing I was learning via weekly meetings with my Indigenous women's drum group about the words, notes, and pitch of the songs we sang, the music I learned in Eurocentric educational spaces were, somewhat understandably, Eurocentric. The music I learned operated in accordance with a written system and*

*through a set of literal music cues (with an emphasis on knowing how to “sight sing” and “read music”). While “ear training” (an aural skill and a way of learning by listening) is also an element of Eurocentric music practice, such training requires a comprehension of a standardized and written musical system.<sup>75</sup> I had learned much from my time studying music through a Eurocentric lens, but I realized there was a complete separation from the Indigenous women’s singing group I spent my weekends with. In spite of my reservations about my “formal” training, I was on track to commit my life to the study and performance of music and to the arts and had applied to a music program at a university located just a few hours from where I had been raised.*

*Not long before I was to set to move through the audition process for the university music program, a friend, a woman I consider one of my early mentors and a key part of our women’s drum group, passed away. Anne Pineault was a warm and loving Mi’kmaw woman with a vibrant spirit. She was also a talented artist. At a memorial event held at a local art gallery featuring Anne’s work I stood among my drum group members and Anne’s many friends. We sang various traditional and contemporary Indigenous songs to honour our friend as she journeyed to the spirit world. While we sang together previously for a number of different events and to a number of audiences it was not until Anne’s memorial gathering that I first truly appreciated the power of Indigenous contemporary cultural, musical, and artistic practices. I was struck by the artworks created by Anne and hung on the walls of a steel and concrete artspace, art which involved a fusing of elements of the traditional and the contemporary, art punctuated by the presence of our singing group.<sup>76</sup>*

*It was following this experience that I began to think more critically about the path ahead if I were to choose to develop my artistic voice within the academy. I thought long and hard about how, outside of my women's group, I often found myself singing songs (at best) written by European men for European audiences and (at worst) singing songs written by European men (some of whom were staunch racists like Richard Wagner) that exoticized and racialized people (Arthur Sullivan's *The Mikado*, Giuseppe Verdi's *Aida*, and Giacomo Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*). Along with literature and the visual arts, music has been a key cultural site through which Europeans have refined racist and fantastical representations of Indigenous peoples. While my primary instructor tried his best to encourage us to listen to and appreciate "non-white" and non-European forms of music and arranged a music exchange with an all-African American drum group from Georgia, he was oftentimes limited in what he could teach us by what was available to him on sheet music. For every song like *O Siem* (a song by Inuk singer Susan Aglukark) that we were able to sing there were hundreds more that perpetuated racism towards Indigenous peoples. I sang many songs from the periods of Canadian and American colonization, rooted in European religious choral music, and I realized that whenever "non-white" musics were made present they were framed in accordance with ethnographic understandings of music – as primitive in contrast to the maturity and beauty of European music.<sup>77</sup>*

*I frequently stood alongside a hundred or so other students, the majority of European descent, singing American and Canadian folk songs, songs about African lions, and songs like *Oh Shenandoah* (a song about Euro-American traders in love with and*

*longing for “Indian maidens”). I remember smiling politely when fellow musicians made jokes about Indigenous music and pounded out “dun dah dah dun dun dun dun” on the piano (a refrain from Hollywood films meant to signal the presence or impending presence of Indians onscreen). It did not strike me as odd then, as it does now, that I shrugged these moments off or that I willingly colluded in the singing of songs like Oh Shenandoah and Colors of the Wind from the Disney cartoon Pocahontas. It is with my own experiences in mind and out of an appreciation for the power of those who have refused to sing along in the face of racism within Canada society that I turn to a reflection on the work of those Indigenous peoples who, rather than abandon the arts as I did, find ways to use their art as a site of resistance.*

### **Setting the Stage: A (Very) Brief Contemporary History of the Art Industry and Indigenous Art**

As long as Indigenous peoples have existed we have engaged in visual cultural practices. From early interactions with Europeans who would come to colonize us, our artistic productions were classified by them as of inferior (“primitive”) quality in comparison to their artistic expression (hence the later development of a field of “Primitivism” as a category of art). With 1884 amendments to the *Indian Act* of 1876, Indigenous cultural expression was outlawed, including but not limited to ceremonies, dances, songs, regalia, masks, and musical instruments (Trépanier 8). Indigenous visual art was often stolen by European anthropologists and placed on display in anthropological museums and among the stores of private collectors as novelties, oddities, spoils of colonial conquest, and relics of a “dying race.” As France Trépanier notes, so desperate were Europeans to catalogue and commemorate “vanishing” Indigenous cultures that

graves were robbed by explorers, archeologists, and missionaries, and “human remains were sold to natural history museums around the world” (ibid). In the rush to declare Indigenous peoples as vanishing, anything that might be construed as Indigenous art was excluded from Canada’s national art institutions and was relegated to the sites of anthropology and ethnography as “evidence” of Indigenous “primitiveness.” Indigenous artists, in turn, were not considered by Euro-Canadians or the European art world to be “professional” artists (ibid). The material production of Indigenous peoples were considered as relics and confined to museums, rather than being appreciated as valid and viable art and included in the Euro-Canadian canon of national art.

Attitudes towards Indigenous material production began to change in the 1940s when the federal government realized the growing market interest in Inuit sculpture (“Fact Sheet” 2). Interested in the market potential of Inuit sculpture, the government encouraged Inuit production and amended the *Indian Act* in 1951 to permit and extend limited cultural expression to First Nations peoples as well (ibid 9). In the 1960s, the Canadian art world embraced the works of First Nations involved with the Woodland School of Art, namely Norval Morrisseau, Jackson Beardy, Eddy Cobiness, Alex Janvier, Daphne Odjig, and Carl Ray, along with Bill Reid and Allen Sapp (“Fact Sheet” 2). In 1965 Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) created the Indian and Inuit Art Centre, housing over four thousand First Nations, Inuit, and Métis artworks. Entrenched with the state’s bureaucratic management office of First Nations peoples and endorsed by the government as cultural artifacts and representatives of state diversity, the work of some First Nations and Inuit artists become unlikely “national symbols and treasured

components of [the] country's national heritage" (Blundell "Take Home" 252). As symbols of national heritage at the Montréal Expo in 1967, Indigenous artists were provided with a teepee-shaped "Indians of Canada Pavillion" where Indigenous peoples "from different cultures created murals blending Western technique with Aboriginal ideas and concepts" (ibid).

Despite the interest in marketing Indigenous peoples arts and crafts as a point of national pride, the Canadian state has generally provided minimal funding to support its development in relation to the shoring up of Canadian national identity, instead pouring money into "properly Canadian" arts. As Indigenous artists have always done, they continued to persevere and to reclaim and revitalize their artistic practices through the latter half of the twentieth century. It was not until 1994 and the establishment of the "Aboriginal" Arts secretariat within the *Canada Council for the Arts* that the state began to demonstrate some level of commitment to fostering Indigenous contemporary arts ("Fact Sheet" 9). It is also here where we first see the consolidation of a somewhat identifiable industry around the term "Aboriginal arts." As pointed out earlier in this text "Aboriginal" is a uniquely post-1982 *Constitution Act* way of speaking about Indigenous peoples. The use of the term in the arts field, as in the context of tourism, is meant to signal particular things about Indigenous peoples' relationship to the Canadian state. With respect to the arts it does portray the notion, as with tourism, that the relationship is one where Indigenous peoples continue to make traditional art, engage in traditional practices, and that this signifies state support and/or the state's tolerance of Indigeneity (I

will return to this latter idea shortly, as I begin a discussion of artists who work outside of popularist Aboriginal art boundaries).

In the fiscal year 2006-2007, *Canada Council for the Arts* transferred nearly six million dollars in funding to over one hundred Aboriginal arts organizations, including but not limited to visual art centers (5). In 2002 the then-federal government committed to nearly two hundred million in funding spread over an eleven year period to encourage the retention, revitalization, and promotion of Indigenous cultures and languages (*Canada Council for the Arts*). Indigenous peoples have since come to make up a sizeable portion of artists the state now considers as “Canadian artists,” at a rate of roughly two and a half percent of the overall artist population (2001) and these artists play a significant role in bolstering Canada’s tourism industry (Trépanier 6).<sup>78</sup> The state’s recognition of the economic potential of Indigenous art has meant that support for Indigenous arts culminated in a concerted effort by the Olympic organizing committee to feature Indigenous artists as a part of broader Indigenous participation within the Games entertainment profile. INAC funneled close to one million dollars to VANOC’s Aboriginal Arts Program and Art Market, leading to the installation of ninety works of Indigenous art at various Vancouver and Whistler Olympic venues (“One Year Later”).<sup>79</sup>

The increase in material and symbolic capital as return for the state’s investment has also meant the widespread growth of Indigenous arts across a number of fields. Indigenous art is now “internationally acclaimed in a wide variety of disciplines including Red Sky Performance (dance/theatre), Urban Shaman Gallery (visual arts), imagineNATIVE Film + Media Arts Festival (media arts) and Kegedonce Press (writing

and publishing)” (“Fact Sheet” 9). Finding ways to revitalize and represent traditional art forms, many artists and performers intersect traditional art practices such as beadwork, painting, basketweaving, with contemporary forms like digital art and theatre performance. Still, the most valued Indigenous artistic materials in the Euro-dominated art market are those that were produced during the early years of “contact,” while the most profitable of tourism art forms are souvenirs that tourists buy to commemorate their journeys within and to Canada and their encounters with “authentic” Aboriginal experiences. In most cases souvenirs are adapted from traditional forms to allow for mass production and sale. An example of this would be the development of kachina dolls made for the tourist market and modeled after spiritual traditions and practices of the Hopi nation. Since the 1960s local Indigenous artisans have mass-produced kachina dolls to sell to tourists. Beverly Singer notes that prior to the tourism boom of the 1960s, the kachina dolls were “carved from wood, painted, and used to teach children about the many different kachinas,” whereas in the present today the dolls are standardized and made to appear exactly alike (7).

While the souvenir trade is not the main focus of this chapter, it is necessary to recognize the impact that tourist desires have on the modification of Indigenous arts. There is a splitting of Indigenous art production into a) souvenirs/commercial art and b) the “finer” Indigenous arts (not mass-produced and often more costly), although these two streams are not mutually exclusive. Although the “finer” Indigenous arts have often been “one-offs,” meaning that they are made or created as single/standalone pieces, due to the rise in digital technology some of these one-offs have come to be replicated and

reproduced as or on everyday objects. For example, Norval Morrisseau's paintings are now widely printed onto coffee and travel mugs, umbrellas, coasters, ties, ornaments, and bags.<sup>80</sup> The kitsch objects sell for below fifty dollars a piece and are sold at many Aboriginal tourism gift shops. They are made available in response to tourist demand for Aboriginal art but also in the context of a nation that encourages the sale of Aboriginal art as a mark of a "uniquely Canadian" travel experience. The reproductions are valued at far less than the original paintings (which are likely to be found in private collections, local and national galleries, and in museums) with lesser known originals selling for up to twenty thousand dollars and well known works selling for well above three hundred thousand dollars.

Even though there may be points of overlap between souvenir/tourist art and "fine" art, it is the latter that by its very nature, allows for greater interpretive freedom. So while the art market is to some degree mediated by the interests of a Eurocentric industry, and artists are represented within a Eurocentric economic framework (signed with specific galleries), artists can and often do divert from the images expected by buyers within the tourism market. Additionally, a certain freedom is afforded to visual and multimedia artists in that their art is generally made through individual practice and is not targeted as the mass market. It is therefore somewhat removed from the economic implications of community-based representation, such as casino designs or in the way that community-based businesses represented by the Aboriginal Tourism Association of BC (AtBC) are.

There are artists who choose to take greater license with their work, diverting from styles perceived by the market as “traditional” or in keeping with stereotypical assumptions about Indigenous art. Valda Blundell and Ruth Phillips contend that some artists find greater compatibility with “modernist artistic statements” such as expressionism, surrealism, and pop-art. These aesthetic forms, they argue, while “more readable by the non-Indian public” and allowing Indigenous peoples to “challenge more directly Euro Canadian misconceptions about Indians” pose a great challenge. Such forms, Blundell and Phillips write, “may not be as commercially viable as those executed in the more ‘primitive-looking’ Woodland School style” (129). Many artists who take up so-called “modernist” styles face difficulties with having their work accepted by art institutions who have narrowly-defined beliefs about what constitutes “Aboriginal art” (beliefs that rely on fixed notions of what appears “traditional” and thus properly Aboriginal) (ibid). Regardless of these challenges many Indigenous artists elect to deploy mixed media forms and move away from such limited perspectives on Indigenous art. In fact, it is this rejection by some institutions I argue, that reinforces Indigenous artistic commitments to continue in a practice of what I refer to as “resistance art,” or art as the “practice of freedom” (to borrow wording from Paolo Freire).

### **Visualizing Sovereignty and Embodying Visual Sovereignty**

My previous chapters have looked at the complex interplay between Indigenous participation and tourism culture and the enactment of narratives of Canadian identity that draw on particular ideas about “Aboriginality.” In this chapter I move away from a focus on sites directly related to tourism and consider selected works by artists who have at

times used their art in ways that counter the nationalist image as one of happy multiplicities. Their works deftly challenge the image of benevolent settler Canadian-ness as it has tried to export an image of itself as having reconciled its relationship to Indigenous peoples. Although they are not producers of explicitly tourist art, Terrance Houle's *Urban Indian Series*, *Landscape Series*, and *End of Trails/Trails End*, and Rebecca Belmore's *Artifact #671B* (1988) and *Indians Only* (2010), respond to and contest contemporary narratives of nationalism and the enduring racialization of Indigenous bodies. As relative outsiders to the fantasy world of tourism, they provide an necessary challenge as the works created by the artists juxtapose markers of Indian-ness or Aboriginality easily recognized by Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples against backdrops or themes noted for their invisibilizing of Indigenous peoples. Further, the artists draw on embodied narratives to challenge Euro-normative s Indigenous peoples place within current Canadian life, making difficult the ease with which the state can commodify them as "Aboriginals." Through their respective works they also draw attention to the way in which racist imaginings of Indigenous peoples continue to be used by the state for renewed purpose within a globalizing, consumer capitalist world order.

It is through the lens of their work that I argue that Belmore and Houle embody what Jolene Rickard and Michelle Raheja have independently referred to as "Indigenous visual sovereignty." Sovereignty, as a conceptual tool for discussing the freedom that contemporary Indigenous peoples strive for, is a popular yet contested term. Some theorists like Taiaiake Alfred question the semantic possibilities of sovereignty, as an English language term, for advancing Indigenous resurgence and the land claim process.

He questions how sovereignty, as a non-Indigenous political concept, has become *the* form of expression for Indigenous land claims and nationhood and concerned with how its embeddedness in legal and political discourse ignores the fact that Indigenous nations “had their own systems of government since the time before the term ‘sovereignty’ was invented in Europe” (“Sovereignty” 465). Proponents of sovereignty, who call on the state to recognize Indigenous sovereignty, ignore the reality that sovereignty is a far cry from traditional indigenous nationhood. Problematizing the enactment of sovereignty and contending that it sits in direction opposition to traditional indigenous nationhood, Alfred instead advocates for resistance rooted in Indigenous language and knowledge systems because unlike sovereignty, traditional Indigenous nationhood(s) involves “no absolute authority, no coercive enforcement of decisions, no hierarchy, and no separate ruling entity” (*Peace* 56).

In spite of the concerns raised by people like Alfred, sovereignty continues to be used by Indigenous peoples in the field of law and politics, but also outside of these fields and into the realm of writing and visual art. Rickard, in her development of a theory of Indigenous visual sovereignty does not write off Alfred’s concerns, yet she contests what she views as Alfred and others’ narrow view of sovereignty. Rickard stresses that while some legal-political Indigenous scholars are “caught in a system of Western validation,” the work of two Haudenosaunee, Deskaheh and Sotsisowah, provides examples of Indigenous conceptualizations of sovereignty in their advancement of their community-specific Haudenosaunee sovereignty (469-471). As a form of expression that has been adapted by people like Deskaheh and Sotsisowah in the quest for the reclamation of

nationhood, sovereignty's "subtext" can be understood as not being the exclusive purview of European and Eurocentric nations, and is instead very much about "both Western and Haudenosaunee ideas about law" ("Visualizing Sovereignty" 470).

Further, Rickard challenges the idea that understandings of sovereignty should be confined to the legal-political realm. She draws attention to the deployment of sovereignty as a framework for the discussions of a number of Indigenous scholars and writers, such as Vine Deloria Jr., Jack Forbes, Joanne Barker, and Robert Allen Warrior in their respective writings on Indigenous intellectual sovereignty, and Beverly Singer's exploration of Indigenous cultural sovereignty. The expansion of discussions of sovereignty into other realms is intended to highlight the ways Indigenous peoples seek to decolonize various fields/disciplines. Intellectual sovereignty, for example, involves decolonizing "the theoretical and methodological perspectives used within analyses of indigenous histories, cultures, and identities from the legacies of intellectual colonialism" (qtd. in Rickard "Visualizing Sovereignty" 471). Similarly, visual artists re-imagine the "singular idea of sovereignty as a legal construct" and transform it in and through "multiple [visual] interpretations" (ibid).

As discussed in previous chapters Eurowestern artists like Kane contributed to singular visual interpretations of Indigenous peoples that are more accurately reflective of what Daniel Francis has termed the "Imaginary Indian" and what Robert Berkhofer calls the "White Man's Indian." Working through the arts many Indigenous artists respond directly to the colonial gaze produced by Eurowestern artists while negotiating the "deconstruction of the colonizing image or text, and Indigeneity" (ibid). One of the

tactics used by Indigenous artists to refute and deconstruct the colonial gaze is by engaging in what Michelle Raheja refers to as “redfacing.” Redfacing, Raheja writes, is a “unique form of American mimicry” and is a way that Indigenous peoples use their ability to “laugh at the camera” to fight back against colonialist representation (1160). For Allan J. Ryan this comedic twist is the result of what he terms the “trickster shift.” Trickster discourse tries to account for the comedic spirit in Indigenous art, writing, and performance, originating in the “service of a predominantly white and colonial culture that characterized this figure as exotic” (Reder and Morra xii). Coined by nineteenth-century anthropologist Daniel Brinton, the word trickster has since been applied to Indigenous writing and art by many Euro-Canadian and Euro-American literary theorists, and by Indigenous writers like Thomas King. Drawing on the work of Gerald Vizenor and Carl Beam, Ryan explains that humour in Indigenous art and writing, the trickster shift, is “best understood as serious play, the ultimate goal of which is a radical shift in viewer perspective and even political positioning by imagining alternative viewpoints” (5).

In recent years, however, Indigenous literary scholars have encouraged a movement away from the language of the trickster by framing it as “emblematic of a postmodern consciousness rather than as part of specific Indigenous cultures, histories, storytelling” (Morra and Reder xii). They problematize the application of the trickster to Indigenous cultural production as an Anglophone way of understanding a comedic figure known to some Indigenous communities as Nanabush (Anishinaabe) or Wesakecak (Nêhiyaw). In spite of these concerns there is something to the language of trickster that

helps those of us who are working across Indigenous nationalities and localities to speak of interrelated comedic turns. I much prefer, however, to frame the enactment of embodied humour and comedy in resistance art in the way that Raheja does with regard to cinema, as redfacing. Both Raheja and Ryan (as but one of a handful of writers employing trickster) note that Indigenous artistic expression involves a comedic response to or inversion of Eurocentric depictions of Indians, however it is Raheja's analysis that accounts for humour as a tactical response.

The Indigenous artists I will address here can be understood as “redfacing” through the ways they “confront[s] the spectator with the often absurd assumptions that circulate around visual representations of Native Americans, while also flagging their involvement and, to some degree, complicity in these often disempowering structures of cinematic dominance and stereotype” (1160). Raheja's conceptualization is drawn from cinema and pertains specifically to Indigenous peoples' collusion in “playing Indian.” I find, however, that it is possible to witness redfacing in the visual art produced by Houle and Belmore. These artists draw on an often wry and biting humour to propose alternative visions of Indigeneity. Their alternative visions poke fun at wider desires for Aboriginality, exposing their investments in new Romantic narratives of Indigenous peoples. The work of these artists serves as an antidote to the highly managed constructions of Aboriginality that emerge from within tourism. Artists like Houle and Belmore use humour in their respective visual mediums to question the colonial gaze and to renarrate the racist and statist conceptual imaginings of Indians and Aboriginals.

They confront colonialism's claims on their nations' lands and their peoples' bodies by addressing a canon of embodied *and* land-based Imaginary Indian-ness and Aboriginality in their works. The artists declare their sovereign right over the images that purport to represent them in such a way as to agitate the state's erasure of Indigenous land ownership and to rebuke claims to reconciled settler nationalism. At the same time they reflect the continuous Indigenous presence on Indigenous lands, and intervene in the often fraught legal-political debates over Indigenous land claims and nationhood. The artists "simultaneously recognize[e] Indigenous survivance while underscoring our colonial subjugation" (Rickard 465) by inverting colonial depictions of Indigenous bodies, communicating Indigenous sovereignty through the artistic conceptualization of their and other's, Indigenous bodies. Conversely, although "the state removes and alienates an Indigenous peoples from their land and disrupts their connection" (McLeod 37), Houle and Belmore use their artistic visions to reassert their bonds to it.

When redfacing is mobilized as a way of asserting visual and material sovereignty in such a way as Houle and Belmore do, it becomes possible, as Gixtsan artist Wii Muk'willixw (Art Wilson) writes, to effectively educate people. Thus Houle and Belmore's work can be understood as art as the practice of freedom, or as counter-pedagogical interventions wherein their various artistic methods allow them to reclaim and retell Indigenous histories and "stories of injustice and resistance" while creating provocative "constant reminder[s] of the atrocities that have taken place" (14). In this way the work of the aforementioned Indigenous artist forces a reappraisal of Canadian settler nationalism and its imagineering of Canadian national identity as one of successful

multicultural integration reconciled with Indigenous peoples. They also muddy representations of Indigenous peoples as Imaginary Indians and Imaginary Aborigines.

### **Indians in Unexpected Places: Terrance Houle – Contesting the Imaginary Indian**

The idea to incorporate a discussion of Indigenous artists into a project focused on tourism came to me after I was put into contact with Blackfoot-Saulteaux artist Terrance Houle. It was a casual online encounter that sprung up when one friend encouraged me to “friend” Houle on the social networking site Facebook. Raised on the prairies, the lands of many of his ancestors, and currently residing in Calgary, Houle is an artist, filmmaker, and performer whose work centers around the Indigenous body – most often his own – and around issues connected to Indigeneity, urbanity, identity and “modernity.” One day Houle posted for sale a series of photographs, copies of images from his 2004 *Urban Indian Series*. The *Urban Indian Series* reminded me of an image I came across in Philip Deloria’s book *Indians in Unexpected Places* (also the inspiration for the title of this section) entitled “Red Cloud Woman in Beauty Shop, Denver 1941.” In the image Red Cloud Woman sits beneath a hair dryer in a salon, wearing full powwow regalia, and is on the recipient of a salon manicure. Deloria argues that such an image is an off-putting one for non-Native people as Euro-American society has perpetuated the idea that Indians (signaled by Red Cloud Woman’s body, her clothing and her braided hairstyle) are irreconcilable with modernity (symbolized by the beauty shop, hair dryer, and manicure) (4). The “vanishing Indian myth” dictated that Indigenous peoples would not survive the onslaught of modern nation-building, and that in the wake of surviving we still remained

ted to a pre-modern state. The image of Red Cloud Woman defies these racist, colonial logics.

In a time when Euro-American society has accepted that Indigenous peoples will no longer physically vanish from land (to say nothing of the belief Indigenous peoples will still vanish culturally through assimilation), the postmodern romantic myth of today renders the image jarring for its suggestion that Indians can, like Euro-Americans, become consumers. For as much as Euro-American and Euro-Canadian societies desire the assimilation of *Indigenous peoples* (often figured through the media and by governments as “problems” and socially dysfunctional burdens), there is something disconcerting with the image of an *Indian* (as the static rendering of a purest colonial fantasy) assimilating into consumer culture. The image of Red Cloud woman suggests the assimilation of a “traditional” Indian into consumer culture, a suggestion that directly challenges the belief that Indigenous peoples, as Indians, are immune to the pull of consumerism. Deloria writes that this is because “Even in the wake of decades of stereotype busting, a beaded buckskin dress and a pair of braids continue to evoke a broad set of cultural expectations about Indian people” (ibid). An Indigenous woman dressed in regalia engaging in an act most often associated with consumer culture and with modernity appears “out of place.”

It is precisely this “out of place-ness” which Houle draws on to interrogate dominant notions of the Indigenous body as the product of colonization and its ongoing ideological effect on non-Indigenous peoples. In his many works, such as his *Landscape Series* (2007), *Trails End/End Trails* (2007), and the *Urban Indian Series* (2004), he plays

on colonial misrecognitions of Indigenous identity, relationships to urban space, and to markers of modernity that lingering racist attitudes view as antithetical to the essentiality of Indigenous peoples. It is the latter of these works that is especially striking and that perhaps best highlights the often convoluted assumptions settler Canadians have inherited with respect to Indigenous peoples. Houle defines the scope of the *Urban Indian Series* in his Artist's Statement, sharing that,

The *Urban Indian Series* is a comment on personal identity and cultural commodity in today's contemporary culture. Specifically, what is my culture as it compares to the mainstream understanding of Native Peoples? My regalia is both a catalyst in the image, breaking up the sea of mundane western garb, and a representation that is part of my everyday, much like my culture, thus challenging the suggestion that I am out of place in a world that only identifies with conformity. The work serves to question ideas of tradition, identity and culture that are often negated or replaced by Western cultural standards. Also, in capturing the image of the "Indian" in portraiture and regalia, the *Urban Indian Series* seeks to comment on the historical relationship between photography and aboriginal identity (Houle "Artist Statement").

In the *Urban Indian Series* Houle offers a series of eight photographs of himself (five of which I will elaborate on) dressed in full grass dance regalia, carrying about a "day in the life" of everyday activities which accompany life in urban space – activities such as kissing a woman on the porch of a home (#2), riding public transit (#3), talking on the telephone in an office (#4), buying groceries (#7), and taking a bath (#8).

In photograph #2 of the series he is standing opposite a young woman holding a baby. The trio are standing on the front porch of a house, in the open front doorway, and the two adults are kissing as Houle is about to leave the house for the day. Retreating backwards down the stairs, Houle pauses for the couple to have a fleeting "goodbye" kiss. The next image in the series, #3, pictures Houle partially concealed by commuters while

standing in a crowded bus and gazing out the bus' window [Fig.7]. He stands out in his brightly tailored regalia, highly visible amid a sea of drab, tri-tonal grey, black, and denim clothed passengers. The fourth image shows Houle having arrived at an office [Fig.8]. As he sits behind a desk, still in his regalia, he is pictured with a telephone to his ear and reaching for a file as a pair of pale hands passes it to him and points at a particular line. Surrounded by scattered paper and stacks of office supplies, in the background of the photograph we can see what looks like a miniature trophy atop Houle's desk along with a picture stuck to the wall behind him of a half-naked man. The man appears to be a very tan, muscular entertainment wrestler. Jumping ahead to the seventh image in the series we see Houle presumably having finished work and shopping for groceries in what appears to be a small shop. He leans slightly forward with a green grocery basket slung over his right arm, extending his left arm out and his open palm lifting what appears to be a small herb leaf, as if bending to smell the fresh herb [Fig.9]. Behind him further down the aisle a person wearing a light denim shirt and light denim jeans stands reading the label on a product box.

The eighth and final image of the series shows Houle at the end of his day. Amid a sea of bubbles and next to a yellow and blue rubber ducky shower curtain, Houle relaxes while reading a magazine [Fig.10]. Having shed his regalia, it sits piled on the floor of the bathroom next to the bathtub and so ends a day in the life of an *Urban Indian*. In the *Urban Indian Series*, Houle plays on expectations of Indianness by dressing in traditional clothing while going about the task of everyday urban living. Many of the photographs present an *identifiable* (i.e. known, recognizable, Hollywood-ized) Indian

disrupting racially-charged stereotypes of Indigenous peoples as lazy, as welfare recipients and ultimately as unemployed. It should not seem humorous or disconcerting to see an Indigenous person kissing someone goodbye, nor should it seem odd to encounter an Indigenous person riding on the subway, and yet it is – it purposefully is. In a conversation with Murray Whyte for the magazine *Canadian Art* in which Whyte refers to humour as Houle’s “weapon of choice,” Houle credits his family and community with raising him to recognize the importance of humour. He opines, “We were *the* Native family...Our identity was constantly being pointed out to us. But my folks always used humour to cushion the blow. We were taught at an early age not to put the barrier up, but to try to teach people who we are. I think that’s why, at an early age, I started getting into art” (qtd. in “Terrance Houle”).

Carrying this humour through his work in the *Landscape Series* Houle evokes some of the tensions present within *Urban Indian*. This time dressed in decidedly less clothing (shirtless but wearing a red breechcloth and with some feathered pieces attached), Houle is pictured in numerous urban locations. In the midst of a manicured park, a baseball diamond, and downtown streets, in the *Landscape Series* Houle lies face-down, stiffening his body as straight as a wooden plank. Once again he pokes fun at the exclusions of Indigenous peoples in everyday, urban spaces by having his partner for the series, Jarusha Brown, take snapshots of him in “unexpected places.” The rationale for the series came from an exchange with a friend, inspiring Houle to ask some critical questions about what sorts of things his daughter would learn about her history as an

Indigenous person in the city of Calgary. In an interview with Ida Galesh for the blog

*Contemporary North American Indigenous Artists*, Houle explains,

The work came out of this idea: a friend said to me “Canada was made off the backs of Native People”. This made me think about this idea of history and representation by the colonized. I live in Calgary, Alberta, which is a city located in what is now treaty 7. The area has been home to Blackfoot people for a long time. I became a father in 2003 and thought so much about what my daughter would think of when she grows up. How would her history be explained to her? I grew up in public school and would always think to myself “why is Native People’s history not being told?” How come there is such a lack of truth and reality to the things I am learning?” I spent my youth going to ceremony and powwow dancing and traveling all over Canada and the States. How can the general public be so ignorant of who Native people are in this land? I wanted to present this idea of the land holding knowledge or at least a sleeping knowledge, that there were people here in this land of North America prior to colonization, or “settlers.” I also wanted to address that sometimes our own people have forgotten these ideas. I wanted to have myself in these landscape photos being subverted, sleeping almost, and face down hiding in the landscape (Houle qtd. in “Terrance Houle – Blackfoot”).

What I am intrigued by in the *Landscape Series* and in Houle’s reflection is that as much as his images are about the Indigenous body they cannot be decoupled from racialized conceptions about the place of the Indigenous body in space.

For those who have been indoctrinated into believing that Indigenous peoples look a certain way there is a sense that what is right with the image is the body (“the Indian”), while what is wrong or uncomfortable is the body in space (“the Indian” on the bus, “the Indian” at a baseball diamond, “the Indian” at the grocery store, “the Indian” on the street). Not only do the *Urban Indian Series* and *Landscape Series* take to task racialized misrepresentations of Indigenous bodies, the pieces provide a necessary challenge to the erasure of Indigenous peoples in urban space. The works trouble urban narratives, using the discomfort created to open up space and provide avenues for

Indigenous peoples to re-narrate our relationships with urban space. Through a juxtaposition of a racialized body against a whitened space Houle's embodied works reveal both the tragedy and resilience of Indigenous peoples who have managed to survive, what Diana Taylor calls "the crash of colonization" (96).

One of the most poignant images of resistance that Houle launches through embodied art practice comes in the form of his piece *End of the Trail, Trails End* [Fig. 6], a seditious homage to American painter and sculptor James Earle Fraser's 1894 sculpture *The End of the Trail*. According to the City of Waupun, Wisconsin, where the large scale 1914 bronze version of the sculpture now sits, Fraser crafted *The End of the Trail* when he was seventeen years old as a small scale figurine "representing the plight of Native Americans who were displaced all over the country during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries" ("City of Sculpture"). The now iconic version *The End of the Trail* pictures a chiseled Indian sitting on a horse as the wind whips them both. The Indian holds in his arm a long spear as both he and the horse slump forward in a seemingly downtrodden state. In the original version the Indian held a buffalo shield while in the 1914 version Fraser replaced the shield with a medicine bag and curtailed the earlier buffalo robe in order to highlight the musculature of his Indian (a representation of supposed strength). The National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum insists that Fraser struggled with the 1914 adaption of his 1894 piece. He apparently felt torn between depicting "the Native American" as "a vanishing race of savage warriors or the transformation of proud, spiritual people into the next century" ("The End of the Trail"). The Museum notes that Fraser elected to go with the latter option. Nevertheless, the primary idea "cemented" by

the sculpture is that “Native Americans were at the end of their cultural journey” (Rogers 235).

The Museum proclaims the carving as “one of the most recognizable images in the United States” (“The End of the Trail”). Playing on the image’s iconic status *End of the Trail, Trails End* features a less muscular Indian, namely Houle, wearing glasses, dressed in red loincloth, and topped of with a feathered headpiece. Sitting dejected, atop a plastic playground pony Houle holds on to a wooden stick. Barefoot amid a snowy landscape Houle looks inconsolably sad. Whitney Light writes in *Canadian Art* that the image is “simultaneously sad and funny...his face droops in a tired expression. Everything seems like a chore; society’s expectations of Nativeness weigh him down like a ball and chain. There’s a gag here, to be sure, but the poignancy of the sentiment lingers” (162). I appreciate Light’s assessment but I would suggest, rather, that in the context of Houle’s other works it is more than society’s expectations of Nativeness, of the physical appearance of Nativeness, that weighs Houle down, rather I believe it is *urban* society’s expectations of *Indianness* which weigh Houle’s subject down here. He seems almost sad to find himself seated on an inanimate pony, thus managing to politicize a seemingly innocuous children’s playground object. The hollowness of the pony echoes the hollowness of the Indian, and Houle effectively exploits the ruptures between false representations and presumptions of Indigenous reality and the *reality* of Indigeneity in urbanized space.

As previously discussed, the racialized characterization of Indianess is intimately tied to discourses about land. This understanding pushes Houle’s subversion beyond

simple questions about physical appearance and identity. There is a somewhat humouristic disconnection between the Indian and the land here - between the Indian and the urban park, a disconnect Houle plays up especially well in the *Landscape Series*. This is precisely because understandings of space and of who belongs in certain spaces are steeped in racist discourses, as identified by David Theo Goldberg. He writes, “Racisms become institutionally normalized in and through spatial configuration, just as social space is made to seem natural, a given, by being conceived and defined in racial terms” (185). To unmap/denaturalize colonized and racialized spaces we must “begin by exploring space as a social product, uncovering how bodies are produced in space and how spaces produce bodies” (17). Houle’s illustrations do this – they effectively force us to “denaturalize geography” through denaturalizing Indians, undermining the “worldviews that rest upon” the construction of social space (Richard Philips, cited in Razack 5).

### **No Reconciliation Here: Rebecca Belmore, Rejecting the Imaginary Aboriginal**

On January 12, 1988, Anishinaabe mixed media artist Rebecca Belmore debuted *Artifact 671B*. Held just days prior to the start of the Glenbow Museum’s *The Spirit Sings* 1988 Calgary Winter Olympic exhibition, *Artifact 671B* was an embodied installation Belmore created and placed outside of the Thunder Bay Art Gallery. Discussed in greater depth in the second chapter, the display was put on to coincide with the 1988 Calgary Winter Olympics. Originally titled *Forget Not My World*, Belmore’s resistant artistic performance provided a counter-narrative to that produced by Glenbow that romanticized Indians while ignoring the very real effects that Shell and other oil

companies' rapacious greed had/have on the Lubicon and other Indigenous peoples.

Belmore explains that she envisioned her performative piece in response to the Lubicon Cree's call to boycott the Olympics and the torch relays, "respond[ing] to the hypocrisy of this supposedly celebratory exhibition and its relationship to the Olympics" (qtd. in Martin 80). Throwing her full support behind the Lubicon, she decided that the location at the Thunder Bay Art Gallery was a logical choice for the politicized performance given its sizeable collection of Indigenous artwork.

In the installation Belmore is featured "immobile, as an artifact, in -22°C weather for two hours on the frozen ground outside the Thunder Bay Art Gallery" (Martin 80).

Daniel Baird in a piece for Canadian magazine *The Walrus* succinctly sums up Belmore's performance:

She set herself up in a display case outside the Thunder Bay Art Gallery, a Shell Oil logo pinned to her chest and a Canadian flag upside down on her back. The piece was performed in support of the Lubicon Crees' land dispute with the government, which had given Shell approval to drill on tribal lands, and in protest of *The Spirit Sings*, an exhibition of First Nations treasures at Calgary's Glenbow Museum, sponsored by Shell in conjunction with the Winter Olympics. Artifact 671B was timed to coincide with the passing of the Olympic torch through Thunder Bay ("Trauma").

Whilst hundreds of Thunder Bay area residents attended the Olympic flame's appearance at Thunder Bay's City Hall, local Indigenous students answered the call of the Lubicon and Belmore by joining in the display. The students stood behind her "holding a banner that read 'Share the Shame'" (Belmore qtd. in Martin 80). Charlotte Townsend-Gault notes that while putting herself on display Belmore elects not to label herself with a name, but rather uses a number to symbolize either "one of those inscrutable museum codes, or

perhaps the Ontario Liquor Control Board's code for a cheap red wine" ("Have We Never" np).

*Artifact 671B* took issue with the government's policy of non-negotiation with the Lubicon and the unwillingness of the state to address its complicity (and facilitation of) ecological genocide and environmental racism. In her thoughtful reflection on Belmore's work, Jolene Rickard underscores *Artifact 671B*'s effectiveness at revealing the contradictions inherent within contemporary capitalism. She writes that Belmore "revealed the duplicity of a company that provided corporate sponsorship of the Olympic exhibition, *The Spirit Sings*, which featured Canada's First Nations people, while securing drilling rights in the territories of outstanding Lubicon Cree land claims" ("Performing" 2). In a pointed statement about these contradictions Belmore herself explains that the decision to engage was an easy one, writing that she "could not ignore the reality that objects made by our ancestors were vastly more desirable to the world than dealing with our present-day existence" (qtd. in Martin 80).

While not expressly comedic, *Artifact 671B* does play on the fact that the "Native Indian is a marketable commodity" (Ryan 45). In fact she frequently acknowledges the complexities of the commodification of her body and being as an Indigenous artist. In order to draw attention to such things she actively works to exploit her own commodification (ibid). By tagging herself as an artifact Belmore wryly intercepts the commodification of Nativeness as epitomized by the Olympic machine. As with Houle, Belmore engages in a satirical mimetic exercise that reveals the inherent racist dimensions of the commodification of Indigenous cultures. In 1988 Belmore refused to

“play Native,” as I discussed in the second chapter. Rather than “play Native” she proposed an alternative vision of sovereign Indigeneity that refused to be relegated to the nation’s (and the museum’s) historical memory.

Using humour, albeit often in a satirical way, allows Belmore to “slip into places she wouldn’t be invited to otherwise” (ibid). This is especially true in the context of her installation for the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympics. Whereas in 1988 she was a “fringe” artist on the outside of the Olympic framework, in 2010 the opportunity presented itself to take her art “inward” and operate under the official banner of the Olympics. This inclusion, however, did not stop Belmore from engaging in resistance art practices. As a part of the official Olympics Cultural Olympiad Belmore presented an Opening Night performance to anxious patrons, a single night event that coincided with the Games’ Opening Ceremony. Held at the Playwright’s Theatre on Granville Island, *Indians Only* has been described as a “more gritty and audacious Aboriginal spectacle” than the Olympic Opening Ceremony (Kingston np). Intersected with Northern Ireland-based English artist Theo Sims’ *Candahar Bar*, a recreated Belfast bar aimed at casting out the Disneyfied misrepresentations of Irish pub life, *Indians Only* drew on the hype surrounding *Candahar Bar*. When patrons arrived in droves for the evening opening of *Candahar Bar* most were turned away. The “bar” was packed with Indigenous peoples (including Belmore) and the bouncer blocking the entrance announced to the crowd that Indigenous peoples were the only ones being permitted early entry. Non-Indigenous peoples were told they would not be admitted until a full hour and a half later than the

Indigenous attendees – until they were admitted they could not have an alcoholic drink and were instead offered pop or water while they waited.

Sims and two Euro-Canadians serving as bartenders were the only non-Indigenous revelers in the *Candahar Bar*. Anne Kingston, writing for *Macleans*, states that Belmore delivered *Indians Only* to “confront stereotypes about Indians drinking and to challenge presumed notions of privilege and prejudice” (np). The reaction by the non-Indigenous crowd was largely one of frustration with some people leaving in protest and “others in disgust” while one person “tried to sneak in the pub’s back door” (ibid). For his part Sims noted the tension created by Belmore’s performance piece and was happy that it so starkly contrasted the Opening Ceremony, while Belmore acknowledges that people were quite upset by *Indians Only*. She realized that her point had been made as she recalled one woman who “told her she’d felt upset by the experience but not unhappy about it” (ibid).<sup>81</sup> Belmore’s delight at the tension produced by *Indians Only* can be considered, to borrow from Megan McCullough, as exemplary of “creative mischief” (np). Despite working *within* the Olympics Belmore engages in a creative mischief that inverts the mainstream Olympic representations of “Aboriginals” as colluding with the spectacle in culturally-prevalent yet depoliticized ways.

By exposing the inanity of anti-Indigenous racism, and perhaps prodding it to the surface, Belmore also resists the reconciliatory shift in the narrative of Canadian nationalism suggesting that everything is *not* alright at “home” in the nation. She restores humanity to Indigenous peoples through the visual by undermining racist presumptions about Indigenous peoples. Like Houle’s *Urban Indians Series* and *Landscape Series*,

Belmore's *Indians Only* and *Artifact 671B* are calls to other Indigenous peoples to consider alternative pathways of self-representation that effectively challenge, rather than collude with, state desires for Indians and Aboriginals. Neither of the artists rest easily in the categories the state and settler Canadians attempt to put them, nor do they try to work within the labels that have been placed upon them. Belmore, in particular, used the access she was given through the Cultural Olympiad to expose how disjointed the Opening Ceremony's display was from the realities of life as an Indigenous person contending with the embedded racism of settler Canadians. Both artists claim the visioning of themselves back from a Euro-dominant state that seeks, in the present moment, to profit off of the manipulation of Indigenous images.

On a related, though slightly different note, one of the most disconcerting things brought to light by Belmore's *Indians Only* is the extent to which the Olympic organizers went to in order to head-off symbolically powerful dissent. By drawing such a visually prolific artist into the programming of the Games (someone who only twenty-two years earlier launched a highly visible protest against the Olympics) VANOC managed to strategically commodify dissent. VANOC's desire to claim Belmore's voice reflects the state's broader interest in sanitizing and indeed depoliticizing resistance during the Olympics, a direct result of the Olympics as a capitalist industry's ability to consume, repackage, and market dissident voices (Sandlin and Milam 259). It is this reality that makes the work of people like Houle and Belmore all the more important. Reflecting on another of her works, *True Grit (A Souvenir)*, Belmore writes "I was pissed off about being a token Native artist, so this piece to me is a comment about myself – questioning

myself as a maker of objects, as a maker of commodity, as a maker of products. As an artist you make things. Is it for sale? And what's the price on it? And also, [I was] using myself, as a Native artist, as a commodity" (Ryan 44). As exercises of visual sovereignty their work extends beyond addressing the Imaginary Indian and the Imaginary Aboriginal. In a self-aware commodification of their bodies the artists became powerful forces in questioning the nature of contemporary capitalism.

### **Conclusion**

As much as I have mapped here the differing ways which Houle and Belmore have redfaced (and in the case of *Indians Only* drawn *other* Indigenous peoples into the redfacing movement), I still feel that there is something amiss even within my own analysis. In many ways the images, even as Houle has insisted that his are meant to be funny, or as I wrote with regard to Belmore's *Artifact 671B*, satirically mimetic, they could be viewed as entirely *unfunny*. To find them funny one would have to see disconnects between an "Indian" and an "Indian" in urban space and in contact with "modernity." The spectator would have to accept the ridiculousness of racist presumptions of Indigenous peoples as drunkards. As an urban, non-drinking Indigenous person, at a superficial level I do not see anything "out of the ordinary" or absurd with the images that would provoke me to laugh. I am quite aware that we are not the Indians or Aboriginals of anyone's imagination and that we exist in ways that run counter to many settler Canadians understandings about our presence.

Having grown up familiar with grass dancers, I would likely assume someone dressed as Houle is in the *Urban Indian Series* was on his way to or from a gathering, a

powwow, or some other community event. Yet although I do not immediately recognize the images as funny the images *are* humorous in that as *images* they defy imagined Indianness and Aboriginality. Houle's images poke fun at the idea that traditionally dressed and visually recognizable "Indians" are somehow out of step with the markers of "modernity" and urban living. They tease the naïveté of those who still see Indigenous peoples as Indians bedecked in loincloths and with feathered headdresses. Belmore on the other hand, through her visual enactments, satirizes presumptions of Aboriginality in Olympic moments, drawing on the mass spectacle of the Games to communicate messages about the contradictions inherent within the Canadian racial state *and* within capitalism.

Terrance Houle and Rebecca Belmore are not the only artists who perform visual sovereignty in their works to comment on and fight back against the misrepresentation of themselves and their peoples. They are also not the only ones who draw on their Indigenous bodies as sites of resistance. Nadya Kwandibens, a photographer/photo-artist, finds ways through her series *Concrete Indians: Portraits of the Urban Indian Experience* to insist on Indigenous presence with less direct humour than has been mobilized in Houle's work. Kwandibens' work does not deploy humour in such an overt way. Instead, she lampoons non-Indigenous perceptions of Indigenous bodies in urban spaces. Like the other artists she draws on embodied performance to assert visual sovereignty and to attend to broader issues around the colonial discourse of identity and land. She does so, however, through reflecting Indigenous urban realities from a variety of Indigenous perspectives, to attend to an exploration of "Indigenous collective identity" ("Concrete

Indians”). The tagline for her exhibit of work is ““A photo-series exploring what it means to be native in the city...from your perspective” (ibid).

Her *Concrete Indians* project began in May 2008. Kwandibens desired to “promote a more positive image of all the diverse nations and all the different cultures that are us” (qtd. in Charleyboy np). Her *Concrete Indians* are Indigenous peoples (predominantly First Nations and most of them well-known within their respective circles) who are willing to show themselves in ways that confront assumptions about Indigenous peoples in urban space. Well-known actress Jennifer Podemski, for example, wanted to reflect the reality of her daily life. According to Kwandibens the image of Podemski sitting on a curb outside of a Starbucks, BlackBerry in hand, was anchored by her wearing her mukluks – for Podemski, “Mukluks for her symbolize her Native identity” (ibid).

The rest of the photographs depict Indigenous peoples who intersperse signs of their urban-ness and existence in “today’s world” with cultural reflections of their Indigeneity – on busy city streets, wearing suit jackets and roaches (Jacob Pratt), dressed in powwow gear while the city landscape looms in the background (Terri Lynn Swain), in a jingle dress and with a suitcase in the Spadina subway station (Tee Lyn Copenace), and singing and playing a hand drum on a downtown street corner (Michaela Washburn). Along with the works of Houle and Belmore I see these performances, if they can so be called, as central to renarrations of Indigeneity in line with the sort of embodiment which Diana Taylor discusses in her work *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*. She writes, “Embodied performance have always played a

central role in conserving memory and consolidating identities...Not everyone comes to ‘culture’ or modernity through writing” (xviii-xix). When viewed as a part of a larger web of sovereigntist expression along with, legal-political, intellectual, and cultural sovereignty, the embodied visual sovereignties presented by each of these Indigenous peoples serves as “strategic sovereigntist resistance in the twenty-first century to ongoing coloniality and the flattening process of globalization” (Rickard “Visualizing Sovereignty” 475). Artists such as Belmore and Terrance Houle and artist-photographers like Nadya Kwandibens reveal that while it is a volatile field through which to work it is possible to use non-Indigenous peoples’ desire for Indigenous cultures to restore humanity to Indigenous peoples and nations. Colonized by a nation and within a global sphere focused on translating cultures into commodities, the questions which these artists raise and the tensions they provoke make that transaction much more difficult.

## *Conclusion*

I feel that Canadian consumer culture has constructed its own version of Aboriginality, essentially its own vision of what and who the Aboriginal is, that circulates outside of the use of “Aboriginal” in the legal and political realms. To see the more complex and widespread workings of Aboriginality, the future direction of this work may very well involve a series of interviews, sourcing participants own words on their visions and performances of Aboriginality. This is one possible future direction for this work. Nevertheless, there is value in that which is presented here in terms of initial thinking about the power of Aboriginal presentation. It may seem that I am keeping focused on the representations of Indigenous peoples more than on the actions and responses of Indigenous peoples to such representations. This is surely true, although this is not to elide the agency of Indigenous peoples in participating in narrative constructions of Aboriginality. As an Indigenous person I am well aware that our various peoples are capable of a wide-range of responses to the conditions of living and that our community members can and do respond in vastly different ways to the conditions they find themselves in. Some may elect to participate in the narratives in hopes of reclaiming them or aiding in the construction of more accurate representations, while others may launch outright resistances to the state’s imageering of them. Some, like myself, find space in the narrative construction by taking up writing as an act of resistance to assert that there is value in identifying and explicitly calling out racialized representations of Indigenous peoples (even those that people I greatly respect participate in perpetuating).

What I have offered here are some thoughts about the ways Eurowestern Canadians have sought to pin down, contain, and assimilate Indigenous peoples through racial neoliberalism. These are also my ruminations on the changing shape of state anti-Indigenous racism, a neoliberal racism that at times can so effectively invisibilize its deep investments in the oppression of Indigenous peoples that it appears as exactly the opposite. In this way, the Aboriginal is imagineered by the state as a signpost of a reconciled relationship between the state and Indigenous peoples. The difference between Aboriginal and the (Hollywood) Indian is that the latter conjures visceral visual imaginings of scantily-clad, hyperheteromasculine men on horseback and hyperheterofeminine “Indian maidens.”

There is no specific image of the Aboriginal that I have identified here and which can be conjured in the imaginative sense of the Indian –I cannot simply call out “Look at the woman on buckskin and on horseback, that’s an Aboriginal!” and in our minds conjure a firm and fixed vision of an “Aboriginal” person. There seems to be a disjuncture between the older and more entrenched racial presentations and what is instigated by the new language of Aboriginality. Perhaps this is due to the articulation of Aboriginal as including a wider range of people, to its consumption of Inuit and Métis within it. Possibly, then, an imaginative rendering of the Aboriginal would see the more stereotypical representations of Indianness alongside that which is deemed to be more culturally-specific and “authentic.” Such a tie is reflected in the stereotypes of Indianness that are placed alongside culturally- and nation-specific imagery (such as with the juxtaposition of dreamcatchers and Anishinaabe teachings at Casino Rama).

Assuredly, the picturing of the Aboriginal reflects a biding commitment to assimilation that the very term implies. For many settler Canadians even though they are aware that “wild Indians” no longer roam the plains on horseback, their visions of Aboriginality are still rooted in particular beliefs about Indian peoples. This “new racism” has not displaced earlier racist representation of Indigenous peoples, as indicated throughout these chapters. Even without the prefix of “anti,” the Aboriginal (like the Indian) can be seen as carrying the cumulative weight of both negative and positive characterizations of Indigenous peoples. The darker side of (anti)Aboriginal racism reveals that settlers desperately want to “move past” their own racism (and bury the evidence of its existence), insisting in accordance with the multiculturalism rhetoric that the state has encouraged, that Indigenous peoples are like “everybody else.” The Aboriginal is permitted enough Aboriginality to be different (and to be marketable), but not enough difference to pose a threat to the state’s agendas, agendas which often involve the continued violation of Indigenous human rights, treaty rights, and Indigenous lands.

When figured within the national narrative and as a core part of Canada’s self-branding exercises, the Aboriginal is a symbol of forgiveness, reconciliation, the state’s “post-racial” status, and the assimilative success of multicultural policy. The Aboriginal conceals a more insidious agenda, namely the state’s commitment to a distinctly neoliberal form of assimilation – assimilation through rhetoric and by economic rather than explicitly legal or political means. The crux of this argument is that the state no longer needs assimilative legislation as it has in the past. The state’s earlier political maneuvering tried to keep Indigenous peoples in a constant state of deprivation. As many

Indigenous peoples (particularly on-reserve and rural peoples) find themselves in a desperate need for employment arising from the intergenerational effects of deprivations, many look toward corporate opportunities and the language of economic development as an antidote to poverty. The guise of corporate control and the language of “economic development” (particularly as put forth by the oil and mining industries), has made it easier to entice Indigenous peoples away from traditional economic practices and values. With the state’s relationship to Indigenous peoples mediated through market logic, through neoliberal colonialism, the state as corporation has begun to wield its paternalistic control over Indigenous peoples in entirely new ways than it has done in the past.

Chapter One assesses the usage of the history and contemporary reality of the branding of Indigeneity in tourism. I suggest that the branding of Aboriginality is a recent phenomenon arising out of a complex interplay between state desires and Indigenous entrepreneurialism. While Aboriginal tourism as an identifiable industry may bring economic revitalization to some communities, the branding of Aboriginality in tourism allows for the state to imagineer a national identity that deflects attention from the devastating effects of the changing capitalist social structure. Chapter Two reflects on the shifting narratives of national identity produced by the Canadian-hosted Olympics ceremonies in 1976, 1988, and 2010. I examine each of the Games’ ceremonies that enticed Indigenous participation in order to draw out the changing frames through which the state portrays the relationship between it and Indigenous peoples broadly. I argue that the state alters the narrative of Indigeneity from “Indian” (1976) to “Native” (1988), and

eventually to “Aboriginal” (2010), as a response to growing Indigenous resistance during Olympic Games. In order to stem the tide of resistance, of international embarrassment, and to alleviate intensified settler-colonial anxieties over the perceptions of settler-colonial illegitimacy, the state as working through Olympic organizers has come to frame the relations in terms like Aboriginal. As a figure of reconciliation and multicultural harmony, the Aboriginal can be read as a form of symbolic inclusion that is less reflective of the state’s ability to move past its deeply ensconced racism and more reflective of the extent it will go to elide the realities of its ongoing neoliberal colonial agenda and anti-Indigenous racism.

Chapter Three analyzes the rise of the casino as a site of economic development for Indigenous peoples, contrasting the American Indian casino Foxwoods with the First Nations casino Casino Rama. Through a comparison of the cultural design of both spaces and the attending racist backlash, I argue that First Nations peoples are subjected to uniquely Canadian neoliberalism racism. This racism idealizes Aboriginals as those who assimilate by embracing casino economic development while deriding those Indigenous peoples who decline to effectively assimilate into (and yet ironically *do* effectively assimilate into the corruption of) capitalist culture. Finally, Chapter Four examines the work of Terrance Houle and Rebecca Belmore who, I argue, pose a challenge to the state’s vision of the Aboriginal. They exercise a distinct form of visual sovereignty that reclaims Indigenous self-representation.

Since Canada’s national identity drew heavily on Aboriginality for the 2010 Olympics. I would like to close out this project by drawing attention to a series of coins

issued by the Royal Canadian Mint (RCM) for the 2010 Vancouver Olympic Winter Games. The RCM is acknowledged in Vancouver's Bid Book for its "extensive experience marketing nationally and internationally, including the very successful coin programs of the 1976 Olympic Games in Montreal and the 1988 Olympic Winter Games in Calgary" (97). Two of the most recognizable coins minted were the 2008 Four Host First Nations coin designed by Sk̓wxwú7mesh artist Jody Broomfield and a 2008 Inukshuk coin by Catherine Deer. None of the coins issued, however, are more intriguing or more telling of the way in which Indigenous peoples figure into the national imaginary at the present moment than the series of Canadiana coins, titled "Early Canada," "Towards Confederation," and "Modern Canada."

When analyzed in concert with one another, the series of coins chart a revealing narrative of Canadian national identity and reflect the state's belief about assimilation. The first coin is titled "Early Canada." Released in 2007 and made of one kilogram weight silver, the coin was designed by RMC senior engraver Stanley Witten. Central to the coin's design is a depiction of Canada in its "pre-modern" state, reflected by its "diverse and abundant wildlife...a grizzly bear with a salmon in its mouth to represent the west coast, a plains bison for the prairies, a moose and a beaver for the central and eastern regions and a wolf and caribou for the north" (Historic Beginnings). To complement the abundant wildlife Witten's coin also displays "Canada's rugged geography," replete with West Coast mountains, rugged bicoastal oceans, Prairies and inland waters, and "the barren lands of the North" (ibid).

The trio of images contained on the coin is rounded out by a depiction of “Canada’s First Peoples.” According to the design description, Indigenous peoples are represented “both as individuals and through their distinctive building forms which were influenced by the geography, climate and the available building materials” (ibid). On the left side of the coin is a totem pole, said to be representative of the West Coast, while a “tipi is placed centrally in the design to represent the prairies, the wigwam is placed to the right side of the coin to represent Eastern Canada, and the inukshuk of the North is placed near the top of the design” (ibid). Another notable depiction is that of a person paddling in a canoe – perhaps one of the most (if not the most) recognizable modes of transportation in “Canadian” history.

The second coin of the series, named “Towards Confederation” and released in 2008, was designed by Susan Taylor, another senior engraver at RCM. Taylor’s coin visually narrates Canada’s history through a clockwise progression, starting on the east coast in 1534 and making its way westward through land and time, mapping the growth of Canada across land and time. On the east coast, Taylor illustrates Jacques Cartier “and a cross, claiming the land for France. Just below the portrait is an astrolabe representing explorer Samuel de Champlain” (Inspiration Coin). As well there is:

A rendition of the tall ship represents the British influence and the continuing French-English presence. This leads the eye to the centre of the design, which features Lower Fort Garry and the Red River Cart – a means of transportation over land and water. We see the Métis flag featuring the infinity symbol representing the coming together of the two distinct cultures: European and Native. To the lower left of the design are the Voyageurs travelling by canoe over the rapids, representing the development of the fur trade in Canada. Another major Canadian industry is represented by the salmon swimming upstream. Above the Voyageurs are images of David Thompson and Alexander MacKenzie representing the exploration and mapping of Canada to the Pacific coast. Beside

MacKenzie is an image of Fort Langley, representing the west coast and trading posts, while above him is an image of the logging industry which used the river system for transportation (ibid).

The design's narrative ends on the northern part of the coin, coming "full circle with the image of Province House in Prince Edward Island where the Fathers of Confederation met in 1867" (ibid).

In 2009, the final coin of the series was released. The "Modern Canada" coin as designed by VANOC's design team was to represent the Games' host region and to "celebrate a contemporary Canada" (New Theme). At the forefront of the coin, located to the left of the set of images are train tracks intended to reflect the central role that the railway played in the westward expansion (and "modernization") of Canada. The description offered by the RCM claims that,

Transformation and fusion are at the soul of Vancouver, a place where nature and culture are in a constant state of change and growth. Water, in all its forms, is everywhere. It nourishes, cleanses and gives beauty to the province's ever-changing Sea-to-Sky region—and to all of Canada. Across the country, towns and cities reflect the same energy as their natural environments and cultures from around the world come together in a fusion of fresh ideas and possibilities (ibid).

A city skyline is set against a range of mountains on the coin, while a small aircraft (that appears to have dragonfly wings) flies out of the city skyline. The design is sleek consisting of electricity lines, a lighthouse, a streetlight, the Lion's Gate bridge connecting Vancouver to West and North Vancouver, and what appears to be ski chalets (presumably playing to Whistler as a world-renowned ski tourism area).

While other coins designed by Indigenous artists were made available through the commemorative coins program (such as the FHFN commemorative coin and the coin titled "Surviving the Flood," designed by Kwakiutl- Skwxwú7mesh artist Xwa Lack tun),

juxtaposition of the engravings of “Early Canada,” “Towards Confederation” and “Modern Canada” maps a troubling linear narrative of Canadian history and contemporary reality. First of all, the Canada represented by Witten’s coin is not Canada at all – the coin paints an image of a land void of European presence, the land he imagines, exists as a barren wilderness with the exception of some Indigenous peoples. The narrative Witten creates of rugged wilderness and of a northern land that is “terra nullius,” is a decidedly Eurocentric view of the land that has come to be called by some as Canada.

Yet the land that has come to be called Canada was not (as the coin in circulation implies), belonging to Canada from early on – it could not be early Canada, because Canada did not exist at the time the coin purports to depict. Rather, the lands depicted by Witten were cared for and protected by a vast number of independent and free Indigenous communities, whose lives were brutalized by a calculating, race-based policy of European colonial genocide. The Indians (rearticulated as Aboriginals) that he engraves on his coin are aligned with the “wild” and “rugged” landscape, racially-charged representations that provide a foundation for Canada’s attempts at legitimating the colonial project at the forefront of the second coin, “Towards Confederation.” By the third coin images of Indigenous peoples or cultures, or associations of Indigenous peoples with the land, have disappeared. The peoples that were so central through “Early Canada” and “Towards Confederation” are erased. The coin series is clearly consistent with racially-contrived narratives of “pre-modernity,” “primitiveness,” “backwardness,” and “progress.” Indigenous peoples are derogatorily positioned as impediments to modernity and as relics

of a past, “primitive” life. Trapped between “primitiveness” and “modernity,” the coin series speaks to the need for Indigenous peoples, as VANOC points out in their Olympic Museum Educational Kit, to be “anchored” in the “modern world” (34).

There is something deeply insidious with regard to representations of Indigenous peoples within the coin engravings. In the first coin, Indigenous peoples are depicted as I previously mentioned, in a pre-colonial state. In the second instance, First Nations and Inuit peoples are conspicuously absent. Métis (who contrary to our own creation stories and narratives of self are often depicted as “half-European” and “half-Native”) are the only Indigenous peoples figured prominently on the coin, alluding to the “marriage” of European and Indigenous. By the third coin, Indigenous peoples are eliminated entirely, as if the series of coins charts a narrative of “progress” that deliberately and systematically erases Indigenous peoples’ presence on the land, much like the colonial project of the time commemorated by the coins intended to do. Métis then, through this reading, are positioned as a midway point in a linear move towards “Modern Canada,” towards an “Indian-free” Canada.

The fact that Indigenous peoples are not the only beings absent from the coins does little to assuage my concerns. Rather, the fact that there are no people present in the engraving, having been supplanted by images of technology and capitalist progress, only underlines the points I have made here. The coins chart a visual narrative of assimilation through transformative capitalism that when taken in context with the entirety of the Olympic Opening Ceremony, perpetrates the notion that Indigenous peoples have been successfully assimilated into the emergent corporatized state. These troubling portrayals

serve to highlight the colonial truth of Canada's relationship as one of paternalism and embedded racism. It is disconcerting, to say the least, that if the purpose of the coins is to commemorate Canada's history it elects to do so in such a manner as to eradicate Indigenous presence from Indigenous lands.

While in years prior the Indian was constructed through paintings, film, and literature, the Aboriginal is a much more subtle entity that peeks through from the representations in the tourism industry, from the Olympics, and from casinos. I have tried to attend to some of the ways that Aboriginality has furthered Canada's colonialist and assimilationist agenda. In a time when Aboriginal is the nomenclature to describe state-mediated Indigenous relations, the Aboriginal has come to signify particular things about Indigenous peoples. As such I have also reflected on a few of the many ways that Indigenous peoples have navigated and at times negated the tightening noose of Aboriginality.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Rosaldo echoes the concerns of theorists in fields such as Ethnic Studies, some of whom fear that “their work on diversity will be appropriated by conferences with all-white panels of experts organized by the all-white chief executive officers of cultural studies programs” (36).

<sup>2</sup> For further discussion regarding the problems with multiculturalism for Indigenous peoples, see Mary Ellen Turpel, “Aboriginal Peoples and the Canadian Charter: Interpretive Monopolies, Cultural Differences,” *Canadian Human Rights Yearbook, 1989-90* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1990).

<sup>3</sup> The “Mounties” are Canada’s federal police force, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP).

<sup>4</sup> Coleman argues that civility is linked to the collapsing of Scots, Irish, and English under an English-dominated “Britishness” wherein three formerly warring nations overcame their differences and united to some extent when undertaking global colonizing missions. The notion that these nations “overcame” their differences and were thus exemplary models of peace and civility was trotted out by the British Crown, and formed the basis of the civilizing/colonizing mission. See Coleman’s comprehensive analysis throughout *White Civility: The Literary Project of English Canada*, especially 3-45.

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/webarchives/20071124125216/http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ch/rcap/sg/sg1\\_e.html#0](http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/webarchives/20071124125216/http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ch/rcap/sg/sg1_e.html#0)

<sup>6</sup> Many on-reserve bands began to refer to themselves as “First Nations.” The National Aboriginal Health Organization (NAHO) suggests that the term, originating in the early 1980s, applies to “Status and Non-Status Indians. <http://www.naho.ca/publications/topics/terminology/>

<sup>7</sup> The change was contested by Assembly of First Nations leader Shawn Atleo and a number of other Indigenous leadership. The federal government rationalized that the move was to acknowledge the relationship of the office to other Indigenous populations, however the concerns expressed by Atleo and others hold that the change was done without consultation with Indigenous peoples – see <http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1314808945787>.

<sup>8</sup> For more on “Aboriginal title,” see the University of British Columbia’s Indigenous Foundations backgrounder - <http://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/home/land-rights/aboriginal-title.html>.

<sup>9</sup> It is interesting to note that in the entire length of the June 11, 2008 “Apology to Former Students of Indian Residential Schools” that race and racism are not mentioned. As the official representative head of state, Stephen Harper managed to avoid framing the atrocities of residential school as the result of racist thinking and racism. Jack Layton, of the NDP, was the only person speaking on that day to use the word “racist,” and used it to refer specifically to “legislation that established the residential schools” (as opposed to racism embedded within the state that led to the establishment of the residential schools). For a full-text version of the apology, see <http://www.parl.gc.ca/HousePublications/Publication.aspx?DocId=3568890&Language=E&Mode=1&Parl=39&Ses=2>.

<sup>10</sup> I use the term “Euro-economic” here to acknowledge and distinguish those economic rationales and systems steeped in Eurocentric thought from Indigenous economic frameworks that do not necessarily proceed under the same set of assumptions as Euro-economic understandings (such as the Métis Buffalo Hunt).

<sup>11</sup> For a discussion of “colonial economy” framed in the language of “settler economy,” see Michelle Daigle’s “Auwawainithukik: Living an Authentic Omushkegowuk Cree Way of Life A Discussion on the Regeneration and Transmission of Nistam Eniniwak Existences.” MA Thesis. Victoria: University of Victoria, 2005. 40-45.

<sup>12</sup> There is some debate around the notion of casino as tourist space – see G.J. Smith and T.D. Hinch “Canadian Casinos as Tourist Attractions: Chasing the Pot of Gold.” *Journal of Travel Research* 34:37 (1996), 37-45. For the purposes of this discussion I align myself with the belief that First Nations casinos, insofar as they are also “attractions” (with the attractions – as “a named site with a specific human or natural feature which is the focus of visitor and management attention” (Pearce qtd. in Smith and Hinch 37).

<sup>13</sup> See <http://www.tandfonline.com.libaccess.lib.mcmaster.ca/doi/pdf/10.1080/14724040802695991>.

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<sup>14</sup> <http://www.news.com.au/world/outrage-over-indian-islands-human-zoo-video/story-e6frfkyi-1226242317881>

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/video/2012/jan/07/andaman-islanders-human-safari-video>

<sup>16</sup> See Christine Ballengee-Morris, “Cultures for Sale: Perspectives on Colonialism and Self-Determination and the Relationship to Authenticity and Tourism.” *Studies in Art Education*. Vol. 43, No. 3 (Spring, 2002), 233-235.

<sup>17</sup> See Neal McLeod, “Thinking Treaty Six in the Spirit of Mistahi Maskwa (Big Bear).” *The Canadian Journal of Native studies* XIX, 1(1999):69-89.

<sup>18</sup> For more on interactions between tourists and Indigenous peoples, see Jasen’s *Wild Things*.

<sup>19</sup> In “Native People and the Tourist Industry in Nineteenth-Century Ontario” Jasen flags some of the problems inherent in her analysis, noting that due to the absence of oral histories from the 19<sup>th</sup> century specially around Indigenous perspectives on tourism limits a comprehensive treatment of the relationship between Indigenous peoples and tourist economies. She advocates (albeit briefly) for the importance of oral history research in ensuring understandings of the early phenomenon of Canadian tourism.

<sup>20</sup> I place “World” in quotation marks to flag the problematic nature of the term in that it labels a largely European event as a “world” event, and contributes to the notion that the “world” is centered on transformations in European societies.

<sup>21</sup> Mawani discusses the rise of totem pole popularity in Vancouver through the 1930s and the city’s claiming of historic poles as , noting the complex interplay between Indigenous desires to “increase their visibility in their territories” (45) and colonial assumptions about “‘uncivilized savages’ who, among other things, could not protect their cultural property. Colonial authorities needed to ‘save’ and ‘preserve’ totem poles and other artifacts as evidence of a ‘lost civilization’” (44).

<sup>22</sup> For more on the rise of mass tourism, see Christopher M. Kopper’s “The breakthrough of the package tour in Germany after 1945,” *Journal of Tourism History* 1.1 (2009): 67-92.

<sup>23</sup> “International Recommendations for Tourism Statistics 2008.” Madrid and New York: World Tourism Organization, 2008. <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/tradeserv/IRTS%202008%20edited%20whitecover.pdf>

<sup>24</sup> See Said’s chapter in *Orientalism* titled “Imaginative Geography and Its Representations: *Orientalizing the Oriental*.”

<sup>25</sup> See the 1996 Aboriginal Business Survey conducted by Industry Canada; “Aboriginal Tourism Opportunities for Canada: U.K., Germany, France,” *Canadian Tourism Commission (CTC)*, [http://en-corporate.canada.travel/sites/default/files/pdf/Research/Product-knowledge/Aboriginal-tourism/Aboriginal\\_Tourism\\_Opportunities\\_eng.pdf](http://en-corporate.canada.travel/sites/default/files/pdf/Research/Product-knowledge/Aboriginal-tourism/Aboriginal_Tourism_Opportunities_eng.pdf); see also, “Aboriginal Arts and Crafts and Tourism: A Sector Analysis,” *Aboriginal Tourism Team Canada (ATTC)*, August 2002.

<sup>26</sup> “Whiteshell blockade threat averted...for now.” *Winnipeg News*. 25 August 2010. Web.

<http://www.cknw.com/Channels/News/Winnipeg/Story.aspx?ID=1269142>

<sup>27</sup> To name a few, there has been the Canadian National Aboriginal Tourism Association (CNATA), the Aboriginal Working Group (AWG), Alberta Aboriginal Tourism (ATA), the Northern Ontario Native Tourism Association (NONTA), and Eastside Aboriginal Sustainable Tourism, Inc.

<sup>28</sup> ATTC’s mission was that it would “influence and develop policies and programs to benefit Aboriginal people in Canada” through key activity areas such as industry development, community awareness and capacity development, marketing and partnership building, human resources development, and communications and advocacy with stakeholders (Hussein 2). The organization operated in accordance with the regulations of *Corporations Canada* as a non-profit organization and was structured as required by government regulations for non-profit organizations. ATTC hosted a number of national gatherings on Aboriginal tourism and conducted industry research, although over half of Aboriginal tourism business respondents to the final review of ATTC reported never having heard of ATTC (vi).

<sup>29</sup> “Aboriginal Tourism Takes Flight in British Columbia,” *Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development*, 2008. <http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100021348>.

<sup>30</sup> <http://www.aboriginalbc.com/experience-types/art-culture-connoisseur>

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> <http://www.aboriginalbc.com/experience-types/authentic-experience-seeker>

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> <http://www.aboriginalbc.com/experience-types/nature-beauty-with-a-twist>

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. Although it is not the direct focus on this section, it is important to note that the first two images are of men while the third image, of Native & Beauty features a woman; the juxtaposition of these images particularly that of the woman, does double-duty in marketing the Aboriginal culture experiences along gendered lines. As Trask writes in reference to the prostitution of culture in Hawaii, women are effectively “pimped out” as hula dancers.

<sup>37</sup> The program is also contingent upon businesses becoming “stakeholders” an exchange that results in “The Marketing Program (which is largely supported by AtBC) provides thousands of dollars of national and international exposure at a small fraction of the cost to you” (“AtBC Authenticity” 1).

<sup>38</sup> <http://www.aboriginalbc.com/media/story-ideas/revitalization>

<sup>39</sup> The question here, “what kind of work” does the term do, is inspired by a talk given by David Theo Goldberg at McMaster University on March 15, 2012, as he questioned the effects of labeling American and global society as “postracial.” Rather than taking an interest in what the term means, he suggested we focus on considering what it is that “postracial” does – what sorts of histories and present realities does it conceal/supplant/reimagine? This is the spirit in which I discuss “Aboriginal.”

<sup>40</sup> For the Vancouver 2010 Olympics there were two Indigenous women participating in snowboard/slalom events. According to an article from *The Canadian Press* titled “Aboriginal athletes rare participants at Olympics,” Indigenous peoples are woefully underrepresented in the Olympics as athletes. *Canadian Press* notes that there were two Indigenous athletes (which they refer to as “aboriginal”) at the Beijing Summer Olympics. For more information see:

[http://www.ctv.ca/servlet/an/local/CTVNews/20091225/091225\\_aboriginals\\_olympics?hub=CP24Bin](http://www.ctv.ca/servlet/an/local/CTVNews/20091225/091225_aboriginals_olympics?hub=CP24Bin).

<sup>41</sup> See also Heinz Housel, “Australian Nationalism,” 450.

<sup>42</sup> It is important to note here that the number of Indigenous participants is inconsistently reported in official Olympic materials/coverage. Some estimates say 75, some refer to 250, while other estimates put the number closer to 500. The wild discrepancies between the count further indicates to me the lack of concern organizers have/had with regard to Indigenous involvement.

<sup>43</sup> The contemporary Stampede evolved out of an agricultural fair begun in 1886. By 1923 it had become formalized as the Stampede and was turned into an annual event. Max Foran suggests in his work on the Stampede that “Some see it as a “ten-day party,” a Disneyesque sham, and a commercial rip-off. Others hail it as “the greatest outdoor show on earth,” a destination event, and a world-class festival rivaling Mardi Gras, Carnivale, or Oktoberfest” (xiv) – see “Introduction,” *Icon, Myth, Brand: The Calgary Stampede*, Ed. Max Foran, (Edmonton: AU Press), 2008.

<sup>44</sup> “Native Indians” became an essential service category in the administration of the Games, alongside “Food Services.” In 1986 OCO’88 appointed Sykes Powderface of the local Stoney Nakoda as the “full time Native Liaison coordinator” and financial manager of a broader Native Participation program (NPP). Out of this relationship grew a separate Treaty 7 chiefs committee with financial assistance redirected from Indian Affairs to offer loans and grants to support Native-initiated Olympic initiatives, as part of the NPP – proposals approved included a cultural exhibition, Olympic powwow, fashion show, and national youth conference. According to OCO’88 the purpose of instituting NPP was to “highlight the lifestyle transition of Canada’s Aboriginal peoples by focusing on their past, present and future” (Official Report 271).

<sup>45</sup> For more information on Treaty 7, see <http://www.treaty7.org/TreatyNo7.aspx>.

<sup>47</sup> Leo Pretty Young Man, then leader of the Blackfoot questioned the lack of meaningful Indigenous consultation with the Games during their planning. Powderface refers to Pretty Young Man in a handwritten memo in late May, 1987, as “irritated” and asking for a report on all projects and activities involving their people; similarly frustrated himself, Powderface adds that OCO should have brought the chiefs together prior to the establishment of the Native program (Comm. Series XV Box 8).

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<sup>48</sup> “1988 Winter Olympics OC Part 7–Introduction by ABC,” Youtube, accessed November 12, 2010, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u61dC8RW4AA>

<sup>50</sup> In June, 2008, the federal government “paid 17 million dollars each to the Musqueam and the Tsleil-Waututh, making the Musqueam one of the wealthiest tribes in Canada” (Karla Fetrow), while the provincial government made an out of court cash settlement with the Musqueam “for over twenty million dollars, ending three court cases over land at the UBC golf course and Rock River Casino” (Fetrow) – see “Black Flags over the Olympics,” *Subversify*, February 26, 2010.

<sup>51</sup> In personal communications with various friends, I have been told that instead of attending a “gathering,” the young people chosen to participate were expected to partake in lengthy workout regimens in the weeks leading up to the Games. Some were expected to spend significant time learning how to dance the “traditional” dances of their peoples.

<sup>52</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MxZpUueDAvc>

<sup>53</sup> I use the word “somewhat” to signal some of the tensions around having to inhabit the space of “Indian” as in “Indian Days” in order to attract Euro-Canadians and other tourists who seek, specifically, to see “Indians.”

<sup>54</sup> For more on the links between 2010 and reconciliation, see Sidsworth’s expanded piece.

<sup>55</sup> See [http://www.gov.bc.ca/arr/reports/down/annual\\_report\\_2010\\_2011.pdf](http://www.gov.bc.ca/arr/reports/down/annual_report_2010_2011.pdf) and

[http://www.newrelationship.gov.bc.ca/agreements\\_and\\_leg/reconciliation.html](http://www.newrelationship.gov.bc.ca/agreements_and_leg/reconciliation.html).

[http://www.reconciliationmovement.org/docs/Touchstones\\_of\\_Hope.pdf](http://www.reconciliationmovement.org/docs/Touchstones_of_Hope.pdf). For more on the issues around reconciliation, see Taiaiake Alfred, “Restitution is the Real Pathway to Justice for Indigenous Peoples.”

<sup>56</sup> There is some debate around the notion of casino as tourist space – see G.J. Smith and T.D. Hinch “Canadian Casinos as Tourist Attractions: Chasing the Pot of Gold.” *Journal of Travel Research* 34:37 (1996), 37-45. For the purposes of this discussion I align myself with the belief that First Nations casinos, insofar as they are also “attractions” (with the attractions – as “a named site with a specific human or natural feature which is the focus of visitor and management attention” (Pearce qtd. in Smith and Hinch 37).

<sup>57</sup> Placed atop the boutiques are “Disney-like displays of colonial U.S. history. These animated and mechanized figures act out scenes from 17th-century coastal New England: In one a wife chastises her husband for staying out all night; in another a captain asks passersby to sign up on his whaling ship; in another a young woman talks with her father... All the figures are White, are all dressed in colonial garb, and none tell us anything about the oppression suffered by the tribe on whose land we stand” (228).

<sup>58</sup> The pejorative term “Pocahottie” is found, most prominently, as the name of Hallowe’en costumes marketed to non-Indigenous and purportedly representing a sexualized “Pocahontas”/ “Indian.” A cursory scan of Google links provided for a search of “Pocahottie,” reveal sites like

<http://www.spirithalloween.com/product/pocahottie-pow-wow-costume>, where the Pocahottie costume is marketed with the pitch “Girl, you won't be sitting around the campfire stringing beads in this Pocahottie Pow Wow costume! The work is done and it's time to play cowboys and Indians, only this time the Indian picks off the cowboys that she wants. Put the wow in pow wow and practice some native American rituals in this sexy Pocahottie costume. Is that an ear of corn in your pocket or are you just glad to see me?”

<sup>59</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g4mMB8baGII&feature=related>

<sup>60</sup> In Cooks’ work she refers to an interview with one community member who refers to the construction of the casino as Skip Hayward’s vision: “Designers and architects involved in the building of the casino went to Las Vegas and to Epcot Center for inspiration, and one source who worked closely with the tribe observed that the casino reflected Hayward (the tribe’s leader): ‘One side of his family is Mashantucket Pequot and the other D.A.R. (Daughters of the American Revolution). This was Skip’s vision” (232).

<sup>61</sup> One of the most blatantly offensive exercises in marketing ethnicity at Foxwoods, I think, is a large mural located on the exterior wall of The Scorpion Bar (and tequila cantina). It features the image of a pouty-lipped, dark-haired, light-skinned woman, seductively posed with her back facing those who would gaze upon her. Her head is tilted back and she slyly looks over her shoulder. In the background, along with scorpions, craggy desert rocks, and tumbleweed, is a painting of a large Spanish colonial building. The

obvious shelling of an image of the exotic and “sexy Latina” seems at once at home within Foxwoods and its attention to marketing ethnic and other identity stereotypes.

<sup>62</sup> Campbell distinguishes between games of chance (gaming) as a form of traditional practice meant to teach skills to people and strengthen the community, and gambling which outside of a “cosmic or cultural context (i.e. for personal gain) was perceived to be dangerous for the well-being of the gambler, as well as the community and the cosmos... Whereas traditional gaming activities were group experiences, focusing upon skills necessary to sustain the collective interests of a community, casino gambling activities are entirely focused upon individuals gaining private property, at the expense of other individuals” (14).

<sup>63</sup> This marked a turning point which would later see the Rama band council initiate discussions with American corporation Bally’s about the possibility of building a community casino (Campbell 90-91).

<sup>64</sup> By February 1994, fourteen communities had submitted proposals to host the casino. Around the same time, Ontario First Nations had made clear their interest in having the provincial government recognize their jurisdiction over on-reserve gaming. In spite of this interest, the Ontario government (with non-intervention by the federal government) announced that a First Nations ‘fund’ would be established to administer gaming profits to the provincial First Nations, a clear indication of the province’s disinterest in First Nations gaming sovereignty.

<sup>65</sup> The call that was sent out stipulated that “the operator’s costs prior to construction would include the construction of a recreational facility, a senior’s home, and the establishment of a trust fund to develop a gambling addictions program” (Campbell 92). Campbell argues that the benefit here is significant, in that the building of both the community centre and housing for seniors helped to “keep them on the reserve instead of forcing them off in order to find suitable facilities” (27).

<sup>66</sup> The awarded contract compelled Carnival to hire “a minimum 20% of Native people” even though the company did not want to do that initially. The Band Administration and Planning Committee fought for this requirement which ultimately led to Indigenous peoples making up roughly 60%-70% of the work force (ibid). This is important because it indicates the agency, however limited, which people at Rama were able to exercise in the development of the casino at Rama.

<sup>67</sup> According to Campbell, “The Harris government compelled First Nations to sign an acknowledgement that Casino Rama would remit the required 20 per cent Win Tax to the Consolidated Revenue Fund” (93). The COO sought to recoup the losses through legal action, where the government ultimately denied that it ‘coerced’ First Nations leaders into signing the agreement. For further elaboration, see Campbell 97-98.

<sup>68</sup> For more information on the historic connection between fish weirs and the Rama community, see Manitowabi’s “Fish Weirs.”

<sup>69</sup> The faces appear much in the way that the face of ‘Grandmother Willow’ does, materializing in Disney’s *Pocahontas* in the bark of a willow tree. She sings a song to advise *Pocahontas* to listen to her heart (because Pocahontas cannot properly understand the English language of John Smith), before fading back into an inanimate willow tree. The similar construction at Rama is significant as it not only cements an equation of the Anishinaabeg with nature but it also veers dangerously close to reproducing one of the more problematic representations of Indigenous peoples in recent decades. For more on the projection created by *Lester Creative*, see [http://www.lestercreative.com/casino\\_rama.htm](http://www.lestercreative.com/casino_rama.htm).

<sup>70</sup> For more information on the Three Fires Confederacy, see <http://www.ogemawahj.on.ca>.

<sup>71</sup> The desire that the casino design has encouraged has led to the springing up of tourists in Rama residents’ front yards – they “drive down the side roads [of Rama] to see what’s going on and how Native people live” (Social Services worker and interviewee qtd. in Campbell 31). For more discussion of the violation of community members private lives, see Campbell, pages 31-32.

<sup>72</sup> See Anne-Marie D’Hautesserre’s “Explaining Antagonism to the Owners of Foxwoods Casino Resort” in *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 34.3 (2010): 107-127, Renee Ann Cramer’s “The Common Sense of Anti-Indian Racism: Reactions to Mashantucket Pequot Success in Gaming and Acknowledgment” in *Law & Social Inquiry* 31.2 (2006): 313-341, Kevin Brunyeel’s “The Colonizer Demands its ‘Fair Share,’ and More: Contemporary American Anti-Tribalism from Arnold Schwarzenegger to the Extreme Right” in *New Political Science* 28.3 (2006): 297-321, and Iver Peterson’s “Resistance to Indian Casinos Grows Across U.S.” in *The New York Times*, February 1, 2004.

<sup>73</sup> For more detailed information on the matter, refer to Belanger’s article in full.

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<sup>74</sup> While the identity of individuals posting online commentary are impossible to verify, it is important to note that a number of people frustrated with the corruption of Lerat identified themselves in their comments as First Nations, Indigenous, or Native. None of the commentators whose postings I reviewed identified themselves as “non-Native” through the course of their claims. While it is of course possible that the comments purporting to be by First Nations peoples were in actuality posted by First Nations peoples, it is also possible that this reference to a Native identity was used by non-Indigenous posters to lend legitimacy to the overwhelming anti-SIGA sentiment.

<sup>75</sup> This does not mean that there are not “rules” that apply to and help shape Indigenous music forms, but rather I mean to make elaborate some of the key differences between Indigenous and European musical expression.

<sup>76</sup> I refer to them as “contemporary” here so that I can make clear that I understood the significance of older forms of spiritual and cultural knowledge prior to this moment. While I refer to this instance as an example of a contemporary Indigenous engagement with arts practices it is also important for me to make clear that do not view “contemporary” and its corollary binary of “traditional” in such terms. Indigenous cultural, spiritual, and artistic practices change, shift, adapt, mutate and are not stagnant as has long been argued by the colonial canon. Thus, although I employ the term contemporary to distinguish between earlier forms I also acknowledge the problematic nature of such wording.

<sup>77</sup> For a discussion on the role of primitivism in art, see Susan Hiller Hiller, *The Myth of Primitivism: Perspectives on Art* (1991).

<sup>78</sup> As Trépanier notes there are likely many more Indigenous peoples involved in the arts but who do not self-identify in state-administered studies because they “do not identify with the Western definition of art and artists” (5). Also, it is important to note that the success of the art market is not limited to First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples, as the trade in Indigenous art is a growing market sector the world over. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, in a 1994 study of the Indigenous art and craft market, found that Indigenous arts and crafts generated roughly \$200 million annually for Australia’s economy with the majority of purchases of Indigenous art made by international visitors (Smith 632).

<sup>79</sup> Notwithstanding the increased flow of funding to Aboriginal art organizations Indigenous arts are paid on average thirty percent less than Euro-Canadian artists (“Fact Sheet” 5).

<sup>80</sup> Whether Morrisseau himself consented to the replication of his art on these objects is unclear as there has been great debate over his estate, his legacy, and the plethora of fraudulent copies of his works. He actively fought to stem the growing tide of forged copies of his work. For more details, see Waubgeshig Rice, “When Art Transcends Controversy: The Norval Morrisseau Legacy.” *Media Indigena*. Web. <http://www.mediaindigena.com/waubgeshig-rice/arts-and-culture/when-art-transcends-controversy-the-norval-morrisseau-legacy>.

<sup>81</sup> Kingston observes that the frustration over clamp-downs on anti-Olympic expression seems unfounded here. She glosses over the massive cuts to arts budgets in favour of proclaiming the openness of the Cultural Olympiad in allowing even that “that aren’t just another corporate branding platform” (no). In her discussion with Sims he articulates the irony of the Olympics hosting such counter-spectacles.

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