

**WHAT IS WRONG WITH THIS PICTURE?: INDIGENOUS ARTISTS
CONTEST THE "PLACE" OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLE IN CANADA**

By

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"We see the world, not as it is, but as we are."

~ Stephen R. Covey, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*

Abstract

Indigenous artists challenge cultural stereotypes by creating images that contest preconceived notions of the "place" of Indigenous people held by the Canadian population at large. This thesis research explores the question of identity and stereotypes and how this is transgressed through the work of contemporary Indigenous artists in Canada to adjust the position of Indigenous people in the social hierarchy that controls their "place." Many Indigenous artists incorporate political statements into their artworks that challenge the ongoing stereotypes that assign Indigenous people to their "place"; the political commentary is often the only aspect of their work that identifies it as "Indigenous," with a variety of techniques, media, and styles used in the creation of the art, reflecting the individuality of the artists.

The normativity of whiteness and its impact on ideology and politics is examined, both in historical and contemporary times. Hegemonic images have promoted the Eurocentric concept that the White "race" is the norm and the standard by which others should be judged and put in their "place," contributing to the objectification of Indigenous peoples and the creation of the stereotypical "Indian," such as the "noble savage," and the "ignoble savage." Images created by contemporary Indigenous artists transgress these cultural stereotypes.

The re-labeling and marketing of Indigenous "artifacts" as "art" reflects changing attitudes in the value placed on the work of Indigenous artists, transforming many from anonymous artisans into renowned artists. This recognition as creators of art provides opportunities for Indigenous artists to make public statements, with their work being widely displayed under the classification of contemporary art. The *Sakahàn International Indigenous Art Exhibition* held by the National Gallery of Canada in 2013 embodies the momentum that is building within the Indigenous artistic community; *Sakahàn* is the largest exhibition of any kind mounted by the National Gallery, to date, and is also the largest worldwide exhibition of Indigenous art.

Identity is constantly changing in relation to events and circumstances; as the place of Indigenous people continues to be contested by artists, it will edge further on the continuum towards being "in place" instead of "out of place."

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The Indigenous peoples of Canada have been placed and displaced according to the ideological values of the dominant colonial inhabitants for the past five hundred years. Stereotypes associated with Indigenous people have aided in putting them in their "place." These stereotypes have included the noble savage of the fur trade to the ignoble savage during the massive immigration and settling of the West of the 1800s. The stereotype of the noble savage was revisited at the turn of the twentieth century, a time when Indigenous people were romantically viewed as a dying race. Contemporary views reflect mixed stereotypes that either place Indigenous people as strong warriors, "keepers of the land" possessing special knowledge, unemployable drunks, or "primitive" people who are unable to fit into modern civilization. Indigenous artists challenge these stereotypes by creating images that contest preconceived notions of the "place" of Indigenous people held by the Canadian population at large. I shall explore the question of identity and stereotypes and how this is transgressed through the work of contemporary Indigenous artists in Canada to adjust the position of Indigenous people in the social hierarchy that controls their "place." The *Sakahàn International Indigenous Art Exhibition* held by the National Gallery of Canada in 2013 embodies the momentum that is building within the Indigenous artistic community in Canada to address this topic.

All artists had to self-identify as Indigenous to be eligible to participate in the *Sakahàn Exhibition*. The scope of the artworks included in *Sakahàn* was wide-ranging; many defied cultural classification, while others followed a recognizable traditional style. The structure of the exhibition itself created a platform to challenge stereotypes associated with both Indigeneity and Indigenous art, dispensing with preconceived notions of what is considered to be "Native" art and instead allowing each individual artist to define it as a reflection of who they are themselves. The life experiences of

the artists as Indigenous people provide the thread that binds their artworks together through common themes.

Sakahàn International Indigenous Art Exhibition

The National Gallery of Canada (NGC) mounted the *Sakahàn International Indigenous Art Exhibition* from May to September, 2013. It was a groundbreaking exhibition as it was the largest exhibition that the National Gallery had ever created, of any kind, and it is especially historic given that it was an exhibition of contemporary Indigenous art, featuring 82 artists and over 180 works (Hill 2013). The exhibition featured exclusively Indigenous artists, Indigenous curators (two members of the three-person curatorial team were Indigenous and they consulted with an international team of curatorial advisors, most of whom were Indigenous), there were sixteen additional partner exhibitions, and it incorporated an outreach program into the Ottawa community.



Figure 1.1 *Sakahàn International Indigenous Art Exhibition* at the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. Photo: Paula Loh.

The exhibition transgressed the urban landscape of Ottawa by transforming the appearance of a national institution, the National Gallery building. An "iceberg" could be viewed from motor vehicles, boats, and by pedestrians as they approached the gallery through the streets and waterways. The Great Hall of the gallery had been draped by a canvas 4,600 square metres in size, incorporated

as part of the *Sakahàn Exhibition* (see Figure 1.1, above). Indigenous artist Inuk Silis Høegh of Greenland created his own interpretation of what an iceberg looks like by piecing together photographs taken by his photographer father to create an iceberg from composite images. The work entitled *Iluliaq* made a literally enormous statement and reflected the artist's questioning of how nature would behave and the desire by humans to control it (NGC 2013). The "out of place" iceberg in the city challenges perceptions of what is natural and raises questions as to how this is connected to the work of Indigenous artists, the theme of the exhibition sheltered by the iceberg. Nature is commonly thought of as the binary opposite of culture, yet here we have the nation's premier art gallery not only embracing nature but allowing it to represent the gallery to passersby. By "sculpting" his own version of what is an iceberg, at times challenging the laws of physics, the Indigenous artist can be seen to exert symbolic power over the natural environment, literally making it human-made. Power over nature is conventionally viewed as being wielded by those of the dominant White culture, with Indigenous peoples portrayed as the protectors of nature, therefore, traditional cultural roles have been transgressed with this image. Høegh completed the imagery with a soundscape, having recorded the sounds of glacial ice melting in his bathtub at home (Hill 2013). Glacial ice is active when it melts, grumbling, groaning, and cracking. Høegh's soundscape could be heard by those who walked the perimeter of the building while the iceberg canvas was in place, a sound that changed as the iceberg was slowly dismantled, "melting" as sections of the window project were completed over the course of several months.

Marc Mayer, Director and CEO of the NGC, explains in the exhibition catalogue that *Sakahàn* is about Indigenous identity, with many works addressing this subject, and also provides the opportunity to "share histories, build knowledge and further understanding" (Hill et al. 2013, 9). Indigenous artist, Danie Mellor, gave some insight as to what motivates many of the artists when he said that "art talks of what we have experienced and what we are experiencing" (Sakahàn Artist Q&A 2013). Mellor is from Australia and alludes to the common experiences of Indigenous people around

the world when dealing with the impacts of colonization. "Sakahàn" is an Algonquin word that means "to light a fire." Christine Lalonde, co-curator of the exhibition, refers to the symbolism of starting a fire, describing the growth of the Indigenous art collection at the NGC that began with a few pieces of Inuit art in the 1950s as a "slow burn," leading up to the enormous contemporary exhibition that is *Sakahàn* (2013, 14).

Sakahàn brought emotions to the surface: the emotions of Indigenous people as expressed by the participating artists, curators, and tribal representatives, and the emotions of non-Indigenous people attending and critiquing the exhibition. The opening remarks made by Algonquin Chief Gilbert Whiteduck expressed the hope that

the exhibit will create a better understanding of Indigenous people and [the] Indigenous worldview which is so important, we believe, for all people of the world to understand because it is our belief that with that understanding the world will indeed be a better place. (Whiteduck 2013)

Artworks were selected for *Sakahàn* in order to advance the dialogue of what it means to be Indigenous. Recognizing that indigeneity has multiple meanings, the curators selected work from artists who self-identified as Indigenous, leaving the choice of how to express their identity to the individual artists (Lalonde 2013, 15). Marie Routledge, former curator of Inuit Art at the NGC, observed that the wide range of artworks demonstrated that "the exhibition is affirming that the Indigenous artist can be what they choose. They can be the Indigenous artist or the artist who is strictly contemporary" (2013). Greg Hill, co-curator of the exhibition, asks, "When you see the exhibition, is it what you expected of Indigenous art, or are you surprised?" (Hill 2013). Hill stresses that the exhibition is about self-identification, so each artist decided if she/he wanted to be identified with an exhibition exclusively about Indigenous art (ibid). The opening ceremonies of the *Sakahàn Exhibition* included a symposium with guest speakers followed by an artists' question-and-answer session, with 23 of the exhibiting artists in attendance. Tlingit artist Nicholas Galanin felt that Indigenous artists "have the ability to define Indigenous art," while Robert Houle, a Toronto-based artist, stated that he has "always had a problem with how we are defined, as we are always defined by

others" (Sakahàn Artist Q&A 2013). He questioned the use of the term "Indigenous," musing that it is more appropriate as a description for a plant or an animal, and that he prefers to be addressed as Anishinabe, which means people. Sámi artist, Ingunn Utsi, is wary of the category of "Indigenous" artist, saying that "This can be very dangerous. We are placed in a box — 'there are the Indigenous artists'" (ibid). She and other artists have been discussing whether they want to be classified as Sámi artists, as "it should have been natural that we were equal to other artists ... in Scandinavia they say you have your own grants, your own possibilities to have exhibitions" and wonders if this "can be a hole where we have fallen?" (ibid). Aurogeeta Das, an artist/researcher from London, England reporting on the *Sakahàn Exhibition*, expressed a similar concern. In a conversation following the opening ceremonies, she noted that government funding for artists is often dependent on declaring a cultural affiliation. That is, an artist is eligible to apply for funding if they are classified as a particular type of artist. Artists who do not have alternative sources of income must then rely on this funding, which places them in the box referred to by Utsi.

Comments made by the *Sakahàn* artists regarding the meaning and purpose of the words "Indigenous" and "Indigenous art" were varied. Some of the artists said that they make their art for themselves or their family, while others intentionally incorporate political statements. Houle stated that, "I paint for myself. Creating as a painter is a solitary act and you are the first person to see what you are doing. You become the first viewer" (ibid). Richard Bell, an artist from Australia, said bluntly that, "I make work for my friends and family and I hope that they come to an art gallery to see it ... to feel empowered by it. You are not my audience" (ibid). Mohawk photographer, Jeff Thomas, seeks to define the urban experience of Indigenous people through his work. "You won't find a definition for 'urban Iroquois' in any dictionary or anthropological publication — it is this absence that informs my work" (Jeff Thomas website). Thomas documents his own experiences and also re-presents historical stereotypes and inappropriate caricatures of First Nations people" (ibid).

The artists of *Sakahàn* agreed that they have shared experiences as Indigenous people that influence and inform their work. Mohawk artist Greg Staats referred to his life experiences growing up on the Six Nations of the Grand River and "being influenced more by human behaviour than by cultural behaviour." He continued that, "cultural behaviour was moulded, for better or for worse, by systemic outside influences; the traditional, ceremonial, thanksgiving life. So I grew up that way." Staats said that his work is informed by what he observes through his life experiences: "I observe because I try to incorporate it into not only my personal life, but also my work, my mental health; the holistic approach to it" (ibid). Bell commented that he and fellow *Sakahàn* artist, Vernon Ah Kee, live in the same city (Brisbane) and "there is so much material for us to deal with. We're using art to try to change the world. That's why I make art; I want to change the world" (ibid).



Figure 1.2 Terrance Houle, *Untitled #3*, 2004, from the series *Urban Indian*. Photo © Terrance Houle.

Many contemporary Indigenous artists incorporate political statements in their artworks to challenge the ongoing stereotypes that assign Indigenous people to their "place." The political commentary is at times the only aspect of their work that may identify it as "Indigenous" artwork, since a variety of techniques, media, and styles are used in the creation of the art, reflecting the individuality of the artists. The title of this thesis, "What is wrong with this picture?: Indigenous artists contest the "place" of Indigenous people in Canada," refers to a photograph created by Calgary-based Indigenous artist, Terrance Houle, as part of his *Urban Indian* series of 2004, shown in Figure 1.2. Five of the photographs in the series were mounted on billboards in the Byward Market, with each displayed for a two-week period, as one of the aspects of the outreach program of the *Sakahàn* exhibition. The photographs were also included in the partner exhibition, *Indigenous and Urban*, held at the Canadian Museum of Civilization as part of the 2013 *Sakahàn* exhibition. In the image of Figure 1.2, Houle contests several stereotypes of Indigenous people: the Indigenous person as a hunter/gatherer, the Indigenous person identifiable by the pow wow regalia that he wears, the presence of an Indigenous person off reserve and in an urban environment, and even the physical characteristics of an Indigenous person, since many are now of multiracial backgrounds. This image and others in his *Urban Indian* series place the artist in contemporary urban settings, performing routine tasks common to city-dwellers: kissing his family goodbye when leaving the home, taking public transportation, working in an office, and shopping in a grocery store. The only aspect that identifies him as an Indigenous person is the pow wow regalia that he wears, and that is what defines him as being out of place in the contemporary urban environment of Canada. Entrenched stereotypes of what an Indigenous person looks like and how he/she behaves create expectations on the part of members of the general population. These expectations, often subconscious, are brought to the conscious mind and must then be addressed once they have been transgressed by images such as the ones included in Houle's *Urban Indian* series. Houle's images, like those of many other contemporary Indigenous artists, convey unspoken messages that may jolt the viewer into questioning their taken-

for-granted view of the place of Indigenous people. While an Indigenous person may choose to wear any style of apparel at any time, the goal of Houle's photographs is to question preconceived notions that he believes are held by the general population of Canada. In a 2010 interview published in the *Toronto Star*, Houle states, "That's really what I want to question ... Native people's prerogatives in how we represent ourselves, and how we're represented" (Whyte 2010). Houle elaborates that he believes that a culture must evolve in order to survive. He prefers to question the future rather than to dwell in the colonial past, an outlook he puts into practice in his art. Whyte writes that Houle uses stereotypes to present images of Indigenous culture that is "still groping for its place in a world that set out first to destroy it, then exploit it for so much tourist-industry junk" (Whyte 2010). Houle's website alludes to the political messages in his art and the mass audience he desires to reach when it describes that his "practice includes tools of mass dissemination such as billboards and vinyl bus signage" (Houle 2014).

Tim Cresswell argues that actions "out of place" are those behaviours deemed inappropriate in a particular location. "Transgressive acts prompt reactions that reveal that which was previously considered natural and commonsense"; the previously unconscious power of place that informally dictated appropriate behaviour has been challenged, forcing a formal, conscious opinion to be formed on what is proper (1996, 10). There were many transgressive acts displayed within the artworks of Indigenous artists from Canada exhibited in the *Sakahàn* exhibition, as exemplified through the photographs by artist Terrance Houle.

The Big Picture

Human geography encompasses the human experience of the world based on a person's location in the world, their place. "Place" means more than physical location, however, as values and meanings are assigned to people and the actions that they perform in a given place. Who and where a

person is and what they do will result in their being judged by society in a positive or negative light, a condition that Cresswell refers to as being "in place or out of place" (1996).

Who does "belong" in a given place, and how are they expected to behave? This socially constructed place depends on how a person relates to and is perceived by others: socially, economically, and racially. A normative landscape is constructed, with ideas and expectations of what is right, just, and appropriate being conveyed spatially. Cresswell argues that expectations about behaviour in place, a sense of what is "proper," influence the "construction, maintenance, and evolution of ideological values" in society (1996, 4). Expected behaviours are often unstated and taken for granted, only becoming apparent when they are transgressed¹, either accidentally or intentionally. Once a transgression occurs, people are put back in their "place" by those in power through the use of rules and laws that reinforce that which was previously unstated and understood to be common sense up to that point.

Landscape plays a role in the experience of "place," being both a material setting and a way of reflecting social values. Donald Meinig makes the insightful observation that several people may view the same landscape but its meaning will be different for each of them: "any landscape is composed not only of what lies before our eyes but what lies within our heads" (Meinig 1979, 34). Denis Cosgrove explores the idea of landscape, its origins and development as a cultural concept in the West. The way people see their world provides an insight into their understanding of that world and their relationships with it. "Landscape is not merely the world we see, it is a construction, a composition of that world. Landscape is a way of seeing the world" (Cosgrove 1984, 13). The way landscape is viewed changes according to the accepted thinking of each historical period and that of

¹ "Transgression" is defined in the *Dictionary of Human Geography* (2009) as "The act of crossing accepted limits, of breaking rules or exceeding boundaries. Transgression challenges but also reveals and underlines the values considered to be 'normal' and 'appropriate' in particular geographical and social settings." The dictionary entry draws from Cresswell's 1996 book, *In place/out of place: Geography, ideology and transgression*, to conclude that "transgression can ... go beyond temporary tactical incursions to contribute to social and spatial transformation." There are other writings on the term "transgression," such as those by Bataille, but it is the Cresswell interpretation that I refer to in this thesis.

various social groups. Like an ideology, it conveys meanings that reflect the interests of those in power. Cosgrove elaborates further:

Landscape, I shall argue, is an ideological concept. It represents a way in which certain classes of people have signified themselves and their world through their imagined relationship with nature and through which they have underlined and communicated their own social role and that of others with respect to external nature. (Cosgrove 1984, 15)

The representation of the physical landscape in images such as paintings and photographs depicts the land not only from the viewpoint of the artist, but from that of the observer. It reflects the observer's cultural values and how the world and its peoples are viewed—what is considered "natural"? "By looking at a landscape we become the most important subject —the owner of the view" (Cresswell 2013, 140). Cosgrove believes we exercise personal control over the external landscape as an observer, choosing to extend our gaze or turn away and disengage from the view (1984, 18). "We are constantly engaged in acts of interpretation, resulting in interpretations of the landscape as text," which can have multiple readings ordered within a hierarchy of favoured, normal, and accepted readings having precedence over discouraged, heretical, and abnormal readings (Cresswell 1996, 13). This interpretation leads us to the concept of ideology.

Homi Bhabha observes that various forms of expression are ineffective when divided between theory and activism and that they should exist "side by side – the one as an enabling part of the other—like the recto and verso of a sheet of paper" (Bhabha 1988, 7). I will apply this approach to the work of Indigenous artists, in that art can reflect an ideology and make a political statement that confronts the senses but is simultaneously expressed in a physically non-confrontational and, for the most part, palatable manner for consumption and enjoyment by mainstream audiences.

Cultural production ... gives depth to the language of social criticism and extends the domain of 'politics' in a direction that will not be entirely dominated by the forces of economic or social control. Forms of popular rebellion and mobilization are often most subversive and transgressive when they are created through the identification with oppositional *cultural* practices. (Bhabha 1988, 6)

Transgression questions the normativity of social order, questioning that which was assumed to be "natural," "common sense," and "taken for granted." Transgressive acts disrupt societal myths, causing a sense of unease that something is not quite "right." Confusion and disorientation may result as people begin to question their internalized belief systems—the easy answers to society's problems are not coming as readily now.

Methodology

Images provide windows to the world, with the view changing based on the point of view of the observer. They also present interpretations of the world. Gillian Rose advises that a critical approach to visual culture "takes images seriously, ... thinks about the social conditions and effects of visual objects, ... and considers your own way of looking at images" (Rose 2007, 12).

The objectives during my research were to view the artworks selected for the *Sakahàn International Indigenous Art Exhibition* and note what was included and how they were displayed and described, listen to information on their creation by the artists and justification for their selection by the curators, observe the general reactions of visitors to *Sakahàn*, and be aware of my own interpretation of the images based on my personal background as a non-Indigenous person.

The qualitative method of participant observation was used to conduct primary research for this thesis. My participation with the *Sakahàn International Indigenous Art Exhibition* involved several visits throughout the spring and summer of 2013 to the main exhibition. These visits included attending opening weekend events: opening ceremonies held in an auditorium filled to capacity, the National Gallery Members' Opening Reception, an after-party for the artists, and a symposium with twenty-three of the exhibiting artists. I toured the exhibition on one occasion with exhibiting artist Ingunn Utsi and artist/researcher Aurogeeta Das, and on another occasion with the former curator of Inuit art at the National Gallery, Marie Routledge. I participated in two "Meet the Curator" sessions at the National Gallery, presented by curators Greg Hill and Christine Lalonde, held informal

conversations with exhibiting artists Ingunn Utsi and Venkat Raman Singh Shyam, and exhibition curators Greg Hill and Christine Lalonde, and had extended conversations with former curator, Marie Routledge.

I attended several of the *Sakahàn* partner exhibitions in Ottawa: the SAW Gallery (*Northern Exposures*); the Carleton University Art Gallery (*The Past is Present: Memory and Continuity in the Tyler/Brooks Collection of Inuit Art, Rebecca Belmore—What is Said and What is Done*); the Aboriginal Art Centre, Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (*Aboriginal Expressions: NCC Confederation Boulevard Banners 2013*); and the Canadian Museum of Civilization (*Indigenous and Urban*). These venues ranged from an academic campus to a government administrative building to public and private galleries. In addition to the formal venues, I visited the informal venue of the Byward Market which hosted artworks mounted on the exterior of a building and personal appearances by one of the artists who conducted performance art, and observed the banners flying on Confederation Boulevard in Ottawa.

The *Sakahàn* exhibition contained diverse artworks created by contemporary Indigenous artists from around the world. The scope of a Master's thesis does not permit me to do justice to the wide variety of works included in such a large exhibition, therefore I focused on those by Indigenous artists from Canada, including: Sonny Assu, Keesic Douglas, Robert Houle, Terrance Houle, Alan Michelson, Kent Monkman, Shelley Niro, Annie Pootoogook, Jeff Thomas, and Bear Witness. The banners flown by the National Capital Commission featured work by Indigenous artists from Canada. I have included artworks by Willie Ermine, Walter Harris, and Roger Simon to exemplify the wide-ranging styles of Indigenous artists selected for highly-visible locations.

The multiple visits and varied locales enabled me to observe the wide ranging content of the exhibition and to assess the objectives of the curators and artists as noted in the exhibition catalogue, wall text, and through their spoken words.

Thesis Structure

The second chapter of this thesis serves as a literature review, and I begin by examining the normativity of whiteness and its impact on ideology and politics, as expressed through European attitudes and actions towards the Indigenous inhabitants of colonized nations. Images have actively contributed to the promotion of the Eurocentric idea that the White "race" is the norm and the standard by which others should be judged and put in their "place." The next section of the chapter explores the formation of identity and stereotypes, with emphasis on the creation of the "Indian" through one-dimensional objectification such as that presented in colonial exhibitions, literature, and photographs of Indigenous peoples. Discussion continues on the power of hegemonic words and images and how their underlying meanings become internalized by members at all levels of society, by those both advantaged and disadvantaged by the messages conveyed.

Chapter three highlights stereotypical images of Indigenous peoples through a variety of media and outlets: books, paintings, photographs, colonial exhibitions, museums, Wild West shows, movies, and advertising. The underlying historical theme was to depict Indigenous people as "savages" and contrast them against the "civilized" ways of the European colonizers, creating attitudes that have carried through to contemporary times.

Chapter four begins with an overview of the re-labeling and marketing of Indigenous "artifacts" as "art," then traces the political and social environment influencing the art of Indigenous artists located in Canada from Victorian to contemporary times and how the art was viewed by various aspects of society. The contemporary work of Indigenous artists to challenge stereotypes through a variety of media is then explored.

The fifth chapter features the *Sakahàn International Indigenous Art Exhibition* held in 2013 at the National Gallery of Canada. The chapter focuses on the work of Indigenous artists from Canada and the statements that they make through their work to contest stereotypes of Indigenous identity and

the "place" of Indigenous people. Their political beliefs are often expressed through their work and echoed in their personal lives.

The sixth and final chapter provides concluding remarks on the power of images and their role in creating identity and subsequently transgressing stereotypes associated with Indigenous peoples. The chapter addresses the impact that institutions such as museums and art galleries have within society, either reinforcing hegemonic views of "common sense" or providing alternative viewpoints that contest entrenched ideas as to the "place" of Indigenous artists and Indigenous peoples in Canada.

Chapter 2

Theoretical Base

Tim Cresswell's book, *In Place/Out of Place: Geography, Ideology, and Transgression*, forms the backbone of the theoretical framework for this thesis. Published in 1996, this work is frequently cited by academic authors.² Cresswell has been a human geographer for over twenty years and writes in his blog that his professional work draws on his concern for "landscapes and places and the ways we relate to them" and that it is about "place, belonging, travel, displacement and lack of belonging" (Cresswell 2014). A 1998 book review of *In Place/Out of Place* by Byron Miller in the *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* notes that

Cresswell establishes a very powerful theoretical and interpretive framework through which the place-specific construction of normality can be understood. This framework, employed comparatively and historically to more typical everyday experiences, could shed considerable light on how a variety of forms of oppression are perpetuated. (Miller, 739)

I will cite multiple examples from Cresswell's work in this thesis, as they apply to both historical and contemporary interactions between the Indigenous peoples of Canada and those who represent the dominant Eurocentric ideology.

The Normativity of Whiteness – Ideology & Politics

The fundamental human experience of the world as the world — a set of places — gives geography a fundamental role in ascribing particular sets of values to particular actions. The geographical setting of actions plays a central role in defining our judgment of whether actions are good or bad. (Cresswell 1996, 9)

Cresswell cites Goren Therborn's analysis from *The Ideology of Power and the Power of Ideology* (1980) that states that ideologies work at three levels. "They define (1) what exists and what

² According to statistics displayed by Google Scholar, this book has been cited in over 1200 academic works to date.

does not exist; (2) what is good, just, and appropriate and what is not; and (3) what is possible and impossible" (1996, 14). The three levels work progressively; as the first level is contested, then the next level is actioned, and so on to the third level. The designation of a person's place in society plays a role in the formation of ideology at all three levels—in order to change a "bad" ideology, we must first acknowledge its existence; second, accept that it is negative; and then believe that it is possible to effect change (Cresswell 1996, 14).

A culture and society that appears on the surface to be self-evident as to the way humans interact, in reality holds many subtleties to be explored to understand the motivations and behaviours of its inhabitants who often hold conflicting ideologies and positions of power. Through common practice, the beliefs of a dominant ideology become accepted as facts. Howard Becker expands on this concept to state that we can never take facts for granted, that "facts" take on meaning based on ideology and that, indeed, facts are only facts when they are accepted by those to whom they are relevant, a particular audience (2007, 12–3). Representations of "facts" are subject to selection, translation, arrangement, and interpretation (Becker 2007).

"Common sense" rules are implemented in practice both by members of the dominant, powerful sectors of society and by members of disadvantaged sectors. Bourdieu has theorized about the use of "natural" practice and attitudes as a means of domination (Grenfell 2008, 120). He draws a connection between a person's objective position (the social role they play) and their subjective beliefs (that maintain the role). The social world appears to be operating "naturally" according to common sense beliefs, which serve to maintain the objective conditions. Bourdieu uses the term "doxa" to refer to the situation where a person's objective position aligns closely with their subjective beliefs (Grenfell 2008, 121). Until a person's subjective beliefs are transgressed, their objective position in society is unlikely to change; this principle applies to those holding both advantaged and disadvantaged positions.

Imperial explorers of the fifteenth century set out from Europe to extend their holdings and "discover" new sources of wealth. The subjective beliefs of these explorers enabled them to claim and name these "new" lands as their own, thus associating the imperialists with the origin of the land in what McClintock calls the "imperial scene of discovery" (1995, 29). The language of imperial exploration that claimed originary authority over the colonial lands and their occupants was reflected through the subsequent mapping of the world based on surface appearances, both physical and cultural. This assertion of power established history as beginning with the arrival of Europeans and disregarded both the events that had occurred in colonized countries prior to this time and the importance of the Indigenous peoples.

Daniel Francis theorizes that Europeans projected their hopes and fears of the New World onto its existing inhabitants. For those who viewed it as a Garden of Eden, the Indigenous people were noble savages; for those who saw the New World as an unknown place to be feared, then the Indigenous people were seen as frightening and violent (1992, 8). Bhabha refers to John Stuart Mill's work *On Liberty* (1972) to emphasize the importance of "assuming the mental position of the antagonist" (Bhabha 1988, 9); that is, to understand what motivates people to behave the way they do, instead of mounting an opposition that confronts their behaviour. By critical thinking through "the displacing and decentring force of that discursive difficulty" (1988, 9), the truth that has previously been hidden through political rhetoric and action can be revealed. The language of critique is effective because "it overcomes the given grounds of opposition and opens up a space of 'translation': a place of hybridity" (Bhabha 1988, 10–11). This is a place of change and where future change will continue to occur. "Our political referents and priorities—the people, the community, class struggle, anti-racism, gender difference, the assertion of an anti-imperialist, black or third perspective—are not 'there' in some primordial, naturalistic sense" (Bhabha 1988, 11) but part of discourses that are always changing.

Colonial attitudes about nature evolved from plant classification and collection to that of viewing nature as a resource, a source of wealth to be exploited and controlled. This resource could be human, in the form of slaves, or minerals and plants obtained from the land. The White Europeans believed their way of knowing the world was superior to that of Indigenous peoples. Iris Young explains that this sense of superiority influenced their point of view and they were "sometimes too quick to label the assertions of others as irrational, and thereby try to avoid having to engage with them" (2000, 24). Europeans of colonial times categorized cultures that did not share their view of nature as primitive, and took it upon themselves as the "White man's burden" to govern those who could not seemingly look after themselves. Indigenous scholar, Taiaiake Alfred, states,

The colonial attitudes and structures imposed on the world by Europeans ... are merely reflections of white society's understanding of its own power and relationship with nature. The brutal regime of European technological advancement, intent on domination, confronted its opposite in indigenous societies. (2009a, 45)

Colonial attitudes of White European male superiority were expressed with the first world's fair, staged at London's Crystal Palace in 1851. The illustration of Figure 2.1 was published in a comic novel of the time and told the adventures of an English family who travelled to London to visit the Great Exhibition. The Crystal Palace is positioned at the top of the globe and is portrayed as the destination of people travelling from around the world, communicating its global importance. Billed as a peace conference, 14,000 booths displayed manufactured articles from thirty-two nations, featuring the themes of industrial progress, mass spectacle, and consumerism. McClintock refers to the Great Exhibition as a new way of marketing history via the simultaneous viewing and consumption of cultures from around the world (1995, 57). The British White working class were now included in the Imperial narrative of progress and could participate in the expression of their racial "superiority" through attending the Great Exhibition (ibid, 59). The Great Exhibition also showed that the capitalist system had created a new form of exchange of goods and was facilitating a new form of representation for these goods. Goods were not only physically displayed but also represented as commodities through the use of images (ibid, 208). Thomas Richards states that

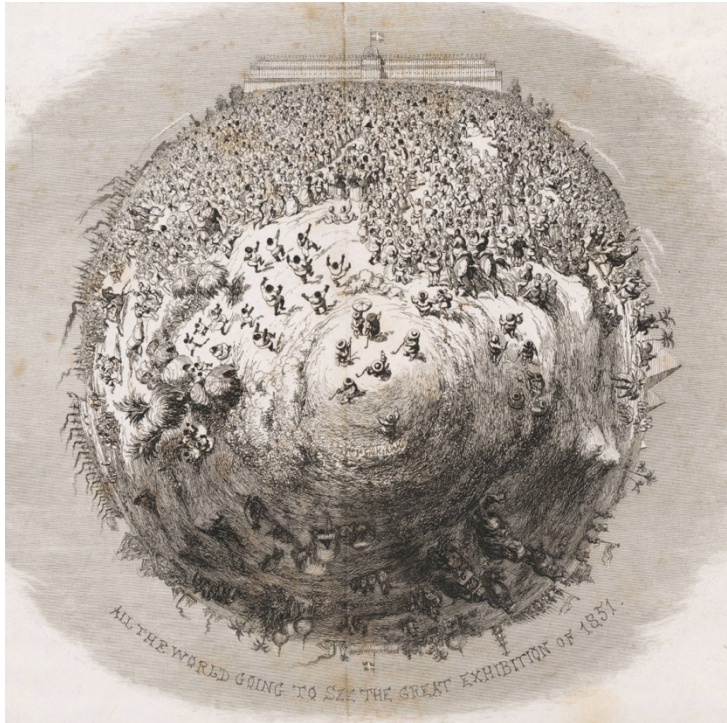


Figure 2.1 Henry Mayhew and George Cruickshank, *All the world going to see the Great Exhibition of 1851*, The British Library, London. ©The British Library Board (12620.d.15)

"a new kind of being, the consumer, and a new strain of ideology, consumerism" was created by the Great Exhibition (1990, 5). The enthusiasm generated at the Crystal Palace by the "commodity spectacle" had advertisers begin to realize that an effective way to sell commodities was to sell people the ideology of their country through images (ibid, 40). The start of consumerism and its use of images in the decades that followed expressed attitudes towards

race that spread across the ocean to the North American countries of Canada and the United States.

By the turn of the twentieth century, many of the Indigenous people of Canada had been legislated to live on reserves and had little contact with White Canadians (Francis 1992, 15); their appropriate place was considered to be separated from White society. They were popularly viewed to be a disappearing race, facing disease, alcohol abuse, and economic challenges. Personal contact was limited to writers, artists, and photographers who created their own images of the "Indian" to present to the general public, the "Imaginary Indian" (ibid). At this time, Indigenous people were viewed romantically as "noble savages," part of the wild, natural landscapes that they had inhabited and were exoticized in the spirit expressed by Edward Said's ideas of *Orientalism* (1978) and the Other. The connection with the landscape and "the identification of place usually involves an us/them distinction in which the other is devalued" (Cresswell 2002, 15). The lifestyle of Indigenous peoples was viewed with nostalgia as they were considered to be a dying race that would not exist for much longer, a goal

that the Canadian government was actively pursuing through the enforcement of the Indian Act of 1876.

Contemporary society contains structural inequalities of power that favour the dominant culture. Formal democratic procedures are likely to reinforce this inequality because "privileged people are able to marginalize the voices and issues of those less privileged" (Young 2000, 35). Additionally, those who have power and privilege "manipulate the properties of place to make ideological and political arguments" (Cresswell 1996, 8). Hegemonic power utilizes common sense practices to normalize the social hierarchy that has resulted in the racialization of Indigenous and other peoples, keeping them in their "place." Racism is socially constructed through these taken-for-granted practices and society's attention is diverted to judging what is appropriate behaviour in a particular place, instead of recognizing the social inequities that underlie *why* the behaviour is judged appropriate or inappropriate (ibid). Young suggests that working within formal democratic institutions and societal norms "is usually the only realistic option for oppressed and disadvantaged people and their allies to improve social relations and institutions" and make political progress (2000, 35). I will demonstrate how societal norms are transgressed by Indigenous artists in Canada through their artwork, using informal and physically non-confrontational approaches that effect societal change at the subconscious level. They challenge what behaviour is "in place" and "out of place" for Indigenous people.

Democracy, a style of governance that is commonly perceived as treating everyone equally, in reality does not give an equal voice to all people. "Democracy is a competitive process in which political parties and candidates offer their platforms and attempt to satisfy the largest number of people's preferences," states Iris Young (2000, 18). Those who are marginalized through socioeconomic means or are racialized have a weaker voice in the democratic discussion than those from the dominant class who can use privilege and social connections to strengthen their voice. Young asks, in a democratic society, "How can a group that suffers a particular harm or oppression

move from a situation of total silencing and exclusion with respect to this suffering to its public expression?" Her answer is through storytelling. "As people tell such stories publicly within and between groups, discursive reflection on them then develops a normative language that names their injustice and can give a general account of why this kind of suffering constitutes an injustice" (2000, 72). Artists have the opportunity to tell a story through their artwork, a story that is communicated to people across cultural and political boundaries. Indigenous culture incorporates oral traditions of storytelling, a practice still valued in contemporary times that can be reinterpreted into artworks created in various media.

Transgression is a form of political resistance to challenge marginality and the construction of difference, the Othering of groups of people in society. Transgression "serves to foreground the mapping of ideology onto space and place, and thus the margins can tell us something about 'normality'" (Cresswell 1996, 9). Indigenous artists are now combining traditional storytelling with imagery to convey transgressive messages that challenge their "place" in society.

Stories matter. Many stories matter. Stories have been used to dispossess and to malign, but stories can also be used to empower and to humanize. Stories can break the dignity of a people, but stories can also repair that broken dignity. (Adichie 2009)

A single story, or message, creates stereotypes that represent an incomplete story. "They make one story become the only story" (Adichie 2009). Show a people as one thing, over and over, and that is what they become in the eyes of others. A single story emphasizes how we are different instead of how we are similar. A person's "sense of place" leads them to exclude *themselves* from opportunities that they would otherwise be excluded from by others (Cresswell 1996, 19), thereby creating a self-fulfilling prophecy and maintaining the social order, free of conflict. It is only when subjective "common sense" beliefs are challenged by an alternative way of thinking that disharmony arises as people begin to question their "place." Bourdieu identifies them as crisis points in doxa; Cresswell names them as transgressions. It is often only when a transgression occurs to disrupt the

norm that people begin to recognize the underlying taken-for-granted beliefs that have enforced their "place" in society.

The Normativity of Whiteness—Imagery

Imagery that reflected the normativity of whiteness extended to the new concept of the commodity that began in the Victorian era.

McClintock writes that in the eighteenth century, the commodity was a mundane object to be bought and used. By the late nineteenth century, it formed the basis of the new industrial economy and represented social values (1995, 208). The middle-class Victorians filled their homes with objects shipped in by traders from around the world. In 1899, the Pears' Soap company advertised in McClure's Magazine, as shown in

Figure 2.2, that the virtue of cleanliness could be used by the British Imperialists to advance

civilization to colonized peoples and lighten "the White man's burden," referring to the title of Rudyard Kipling's poem. McClintock observes that this advertisement represents a shift in Victorian times from the scientific racism of the 1850s onwards, as depicted in scientific journals, travel writing, and ethnographies, to commodity racism, as displayed through advertising, photography, colonial exhibitions, and the museum movement. Commodity racism "converted the narrative of imperial Progress into mass-produced *consumer spectacles*" (McClintock 1995, 33). Soap advertising embodied the imperial civilizing mission, focusing on racial differences and reflecting imperial values

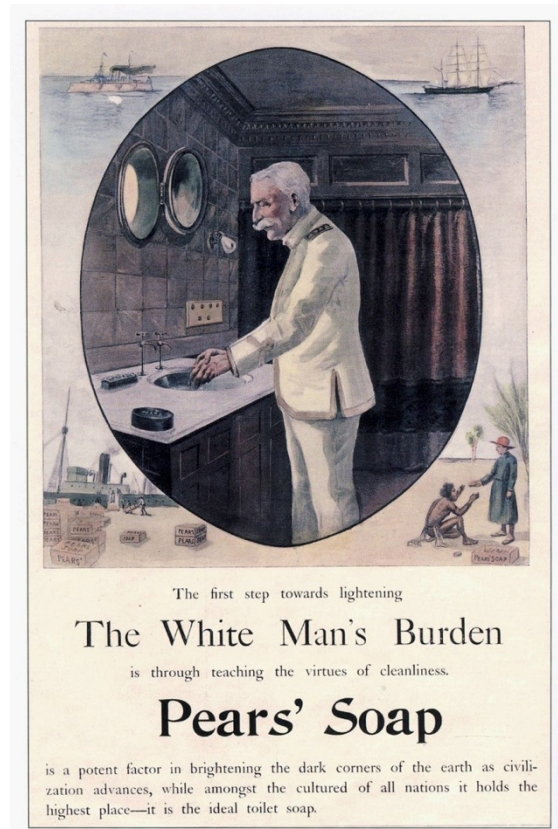


Figure 2.2 *The White Man's Burden*, Pears' Soap advertisement, 1899 ©The British Library Board (P.P.6383.ae)

and attitudes. The use of marketing images extended the formerly limited influence of the scientific written word to now encompass the uneducated illiterate classes in attitudes of racial superiority.

Soap advertisements of the era also told the narrative of "first contact." In Figure 2.3, a Pears' advertisement titled *The Birth of Civilization: A Message from the Sea* shows a scantily clad "savage" wearing a feather headband and standing at the seashore holding a spear in one hand and a bar of soap in the other. The anachronistic hunter-gatherer now has the potential to become a "civilized" consumer. McClintock writes that the Victorians believed that colonized men's preference for decorating their bodies, as represented by the feather headband in the Pears' advertisement, gave them qualities that were effeminate and lower-class (1995, 224). She cites Thomas Carlyle, who writes in *Sartor Resartus*, published in 1896–1899, that "The first spiritual want of a barbarous man is Decoration, as indeed we still see amongst the barbarous classes in civilized nations" (ibid).

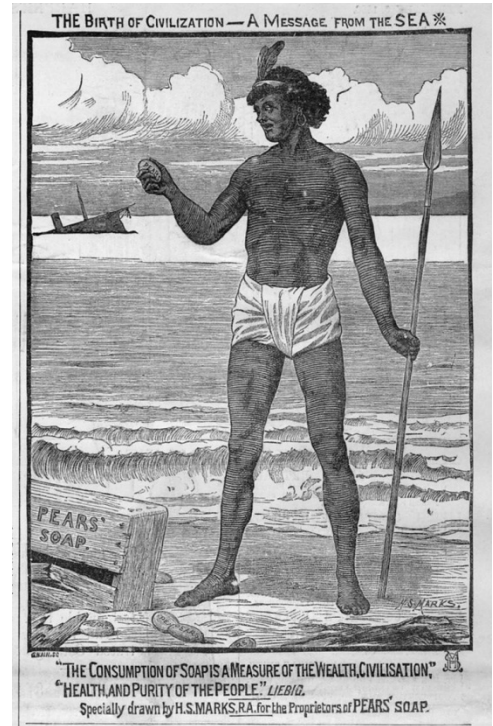


Figure 2.3 Henry S. Marks. *The Birth of Civilization – A Message from the Sea*, 1885, Pears soap advertisement, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University

The front page of *Harper's Young People, An Illustrated Weekly* published in July, 1884 displayed the image of an Indigenous family, fashionably dressed and carrying a bar of Ivory soap. Below the image, shown in Figure 2.4, is the title "Reclaimed," followed by a poem describing stereotypical "savage" activities such as hunting for buffalo and killing White settlers. Their life was described as dark and dirty before they were "civilized" by the wonders of Ivory Soap, transforming them into clean and fair-skinned people.

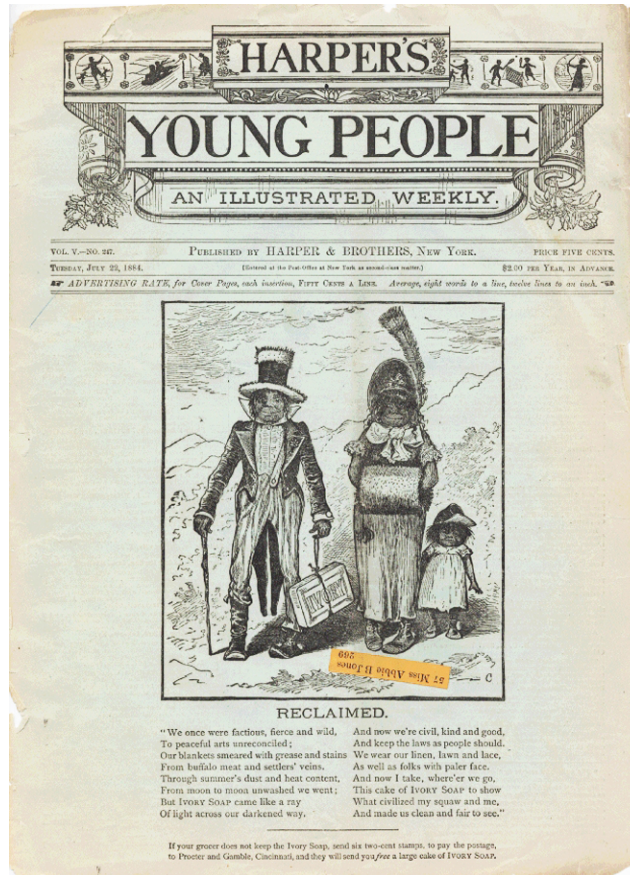


Figure 2.4 *Harper's Young People, An Illustrated Weekly*, 1884. Ivory Soap Collection, Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution

Publications such as the *Canadian Illustrated News*, a weekly magazine published in Montreal from 1869-1883, disseminated representations of Indigenous peoples during the Victorian era. The inaugural edition of the *Canadian Illustrated News* of October 30, 1869 featured a portrait on the cover page of Prince Arthur, taken by Montreal photographer William Notman. A news article on page six told of the activities of the prince, who had arrived in Montreal on October 8, 1869 on a military commission and was performing a variety of official duties, including that of attending the Lacrosse grounds to open the tournament. The magazine reports that,

A feature in the amusements of the day was the 'war dance' of the Indians in full costume. This exhibition, which lasted for about a quarter of an hour, was quite as ludicrous, in view of the surroundings of the scene, as it could be made by tomahawks, paint, feathers, and similar trappings, with the wild yells and whoops, and fantastic tricks of the performers. Mr Inglis succeeded in securing a photograph of a group of Indians witnessing the Lacrosse games. (Library and Archives Canada)

The writer refers to the spectacle of the "war dance," expressing the opinion that it could be recreated by anyone with the appropriate props. He/she calls them "performers," indicating that the display was for entertainment purposes and that it was not in keeping with the setting of an urban lacrosse match.



Figure 2.5 James Inglis. Group of Indians at the Lacrosse Tournament, Oct. 9, 1869. Canadian Illustrated News, vol. 1, no. 1, Library and Archives Canada. 783



Figure 2.6 William Notman. Kahnawake Lacrosse Club, Montreal, QC, 1867. McCord Museum, Montreal, QC. I-29099.5

Figure 2.5 shows the photograph taken by James Inglis, titled *Group of Indians at the Lacrosse Tournament, Oct. 9*, printed on page thirteen of the issue. Inglis was a competitor of Notman and operated a Montreal photographic studio. The photograph appears to be a studio portrait and would not have been taken while the subjects were "witnessing the Lacrosse games," having been taken either before or after the event. The portrait depicts the Indigenous people wearing traditional ceremonial attire, in keeping with the grand colonial occasion of being present at a royal event. It is unlikely that any of them wore this style of dress in their everyday lives, especially when compared to the attire worn in the photograph of Figure 2.6 that depicts the Kahnawake Lacrosse Club in a Notman studio photograph taken two years earlier in 1867. Kahnawake Mohawk Territory, overseen by the Mohawk people since 1762, is located south of Montreal on the St Lawrence River. The Mohawk team members are in contemporary dress of the time, indicating that transculturation had occurred for many Indigenous people living in an urban environment.

The *Canadian Illustrated News* published an image titled *Our Indians* in 1879 (artist unknown). The image bears the caption "Types, Manners, and Sports of our Indians," with illustrated activities labeled as: Harvest Dance, A Burial, A Game of Lacrosse, Bow and Arrow Trial, War Dance, Canoe Race, and The Pursuit. All activities are undertaken in traditional dress within scenes



Figure 2.7 Artist Unknown. *Our Indians*, *Canadian Illustrated News*, 1879. Library and Archives Canada. 72403

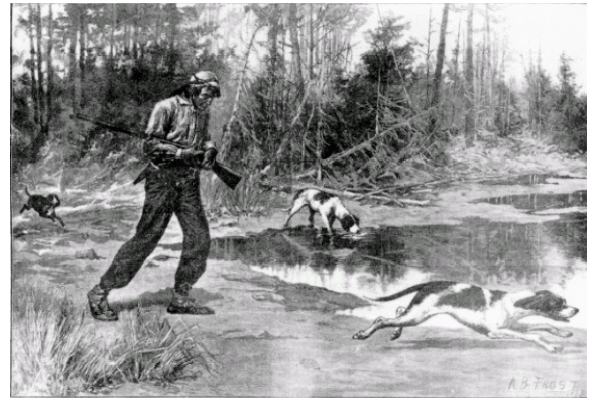


Figure 2.8 Arthur Burdett Frost. *Indians Putting Dogs on a Deer Trail*, *Canadian Illustrated News*, 1883. Library and Archives Canada. 78447



Figure 2.9 William De La Montagne Cary. *Sugar-Making Among the Indians in the North*, *Canadian Illustrated News*, 1883. Library and Archives Canada. 78184

that include teepees, a canoe, and bows and arrows, all symbols of "Indianness." The title of the image conveys a paternalistic attitude towards Indigenous peoples. *Our Indians* contrasts with the image in Figure 2.8 by Arthur Burdett Frost, an American illustrator and graphic artist. *Indians*

Putting Dogs on a Deer Trail was published four years later in 1883 and depicts a man wearing contemporary dress while hunting; what appears to be a feather is tucked into the side of his cap, the only indication that he is Indigenous. He carries a contemporary rifle, and not a bow and arrow. A second 1883 image from the *Canadian Illustrated News* is by William De La Montagne Cary, a western illustrator based in New York City. Figure 2.9, titled *Sugar-Making Among the Indians in the North*, shows a group of Indigenous people wearing a combination of contemporary clothing, such as hats and jackets, and items traditionally associated with them, such as blankets and moccasins.

The five images shown in Figures 2.5 to 2.9 span sixteen years during from the Victorian era, from 1867 to 1883, and have settings that range from urban to remote wilderness. The Notman studio photograph was probably commissioned by the Kahnawake lacrosse team itself and would be an accurate representation of the urban Indigenous lifestyle at that time. The Inglis studio photograph is a re-creation of a past Indigenous lifestyle, with the subjects wearing traditional apparel in keeping with a royal event. The composite image of activities by "Our Indians" portrays a stereotypical view of Indigenous people in natural settings. For example, the lacrosse players all wear feathered headdresses, absent from the image of the Kahnawake lacrosse team taken twelve years earlier. The remaining two images place Indigenous people in natural settings, engaged in activities related to the land such as hunting and making sugar.

A commercial photographer widely recognized due to the extent and aesthetic qualities of his work is Edward Curtis, who travelled extensively throughout the United States and Canada to photograph Indigenous people. Between 1900 and 1930, he created thousands of photographs of "Indians" as he imagined they should look, dressed in apparel that he provided, when necessary, to ensure "authenticity." The results of his work were published in the twenty-volume set titled *The North American Indian*, with the first volume published in 1907. Curtis cropped and retouched his photographs to remove signs of Western civilization, such as clocks, automobiles, and manufacturers' names on "traditional" objects (Gidley 1998). His photographs were also edited to represent the ideal

of what pre-contact "natural" Indigenous culture and landscape was imagined to be, such as the use of airbrushing to transform an irrigation ditch into a natural pond. The inclusion of animals of incongruous European origin, such as sheep in *Navaho Flocks* (1904), served to enhance the image by introducing elements from nature. The romanticized image of Indigenous people is described further by Mick Gidley, professor of American Literature, who has published extensive research on Curtis' work. Curtis created portraits of Indigenous people in outdoor settings "according to the particular posing practices and stress on lighting then current in studio portraiture" (Gidley 1998, 67). Curtis wanted to create spectacular artistic images, with documented plans to create photographs illustrating the myth stories and to "make the most of the nude" (ibid, 68). His work served to further emphasize the "primitive" aspects of Indigenous peoples and, by association, the "superiority" of the White race.

Curtis practised pictorialism, a primary feature of which was manipulation (ibid, 69). The pictorialist genre used to depict Indigenous peoples, when combined with the prevailing ideology of them as a vanishing race, "created images that naturalized the predicament faced by indigenous North American peoples" (ibid, 74). Gidley writes that the general opinion at the beginning of the twentieth century was that since "nothing could save them *as* cultures, representations were considered the best that could be achieved" (ibid, 102).

The early twentieth century representation of Indigenous peoples as being a part of nature gained prominence in the 1970s with the promotion of environmental awareness, which saw Iron Eyes Cody featured as the "crying Indian" for posters against pollution. In contemporary times, environmentalists link their causes to Indigenous peoples when lobbying against natural resource extraction, drawing on the mythology surrounding Indigenous connections to the land.

Images, while aesthetic, also present political views; Curtis' photographs played an ideological role in reinforcing White imperialism, reflecting and reproducing White values of his time. Gidley observes that cultural expression through words and images does not reproduce reality but instead *represents* reality, illusions of reality. These representations, which have been occurring

since the time of Aristotle and the ancient Greeks, help to form a new reality for the cultures that produce and consume them, incorporating and reflecting the assumptions of the dominant culture (Gidley 1992, 1–2). Assumptions and taken-for-granted representations of what is considered appropriate contribute to the formation of "place" and, subsequently, who belongs "in place" and who is "out of place."

People play various roles with regard to an image, including that of subject, artist, publisher, viewer, collector, and archivist. Social and political power is introduced to the image by the position in society held by each player. Instead of asking whether White culture has accurately represented Indigenous cultures, Gidley suggests the counter-question of "What aspect of *itself* has it represented?" (ibid, 3). Many of the images created by photographers such as Curtis are reconstructions, or *constructions*, produced as the result of the prevailing ideology (ibid, 3). His images reflect representations of the theory of anthropology of his time, based on a hierarchical approach that places members of the White "civilized" race at the top of the Tree of Man³ and other races at lower levels, descending to a base comprised of "primitive" societies (Lorimer 1988). These constructions did not necessarily even attempt to represent reality. Indigenous people were depicted according to European taste, with an example given of the blankets of Plains chiefs draped in the style of classical togas (Gidley 1998, 277). The pan Indian was being constructed, essentializing many disparate groups of Indigenous peoples into one generic image that could be described as "*the* Indian." This practice relates back to Edward Said's work on *Orientalism* (1978) which describes the construction of the exotic "Other."

The scientific existence of "race" went unquestioned until recent times, with race and individual races believed to have an essence that enabled them to be mapped and counted (Cresswell 2013, 177). Race is now seen as a social construct, a creation of society and culture. Many images remain, however, from the not-so-distant past that influence the beliefs of contemporary people,

³ There was a gender bias, with women excluded from historical representations of racial progress.

preserved in places such as museums, books, and archives. Images have actively contributed to the dissemination of the Eurocentric idea that the White "race" is the norm, the standard by which others should be judged, with Indigenous peoples put in their "place." This place was "posed before artificial backdrops, often exotic and incongruously out of keeping with the sitter's world, but expressive of fantasies of imperial control over space, landscape and interior" (McClintock 1995, 125).

The National Gallery of Canada (NGC) completed a major fundraising campaign in 2014 to purchase an original eighteenth-century handcrafted frame to replace the twentieth-century reproduction that had surrounded the 1770 painting, *The Death of General Wolfe*. The NGC website had implored, "Donate today and be a part of YOUR history" (NGC 2014). The gallery, in its zeal to enhance its artistic holdings, was endorsing the Eurocentric version of Canadian history that tells the story from the point of view of the conquering European nations, England and France. The English general, Wolfe, died of wounds sustained during the 1759 Battle of Quebec following his victory over the French general, Montcalm. Time has progressed to the twenty-first century and many Canadian citizens do not have the English or French ancestry that was predominant in the eighteenth century nor are they likely to in the future, upon examination of recent demographic trends. Statistics Canada reports that in 2011, 19.1% of Canada's total population identified itself as a member of a visible minority group, the figure having increased from 16.2% in the 2006 census. Over the five year period from 2006 to 2011, Asia and the Middle East was the largest source of immigrants. Specifically, 661,600 immigrants came from Asia and the Middle East during this period, substantially greater than the second-largest source of 159,700 European-born immigrants (Statistics Canada, 2011).

Anne McClintock writes that the politics of memory and authorship are dictated by institutional power, and are manifested through domestic life, the workplace, education, and the arts. She argues that history is an inventive practice and the contest over which memories will survive is what determines the future (McClintock 1995, 328). Institutions promote particular versions of history through the images that they value in their collections. *The Death of General Wolfe* was

painted by Benjamin West, an American who settled in England in 1763, seven years prior to creating the painting. West was a co-founder of the Royal Academy of Arts in London, England, a respected institution that exhibited his painting of General Wolfe to great acclaim in 1771. The audience was British and the canvas told the patriotic story of British valour set in the recent 1759 battlefield. This canvas is now a major holding at Canada's national art gallery, quietly communicating its historical message.

Historically Defining "Indigenous" Identity

All [people] of sane and wholesome thought must dismiss with impatient contempt the plea that these continents should be reserved for the use of scattered savage tribes, whose life was but a few degrees less meaningless, squalid, and ferocious than that of the wild beasts with whom they held joint ownership. It is as idle to apply to savages the rules of international morality which obtain between stable and cultured communities, as it would be to judge the fifth-century English conquest of Britain by the standards of today. (Theodore Roosevelt (1894), cited in Walters et al 2011, 177)

Indigenous peoples are often defined and put in their "place" by the non-Indigenous dominant group that has settled in countries subsequent to the arrival of these original peoples. Several terms have been introduced for Indigenous peoples, such as Aboriginal, Indian, and Native; these terms are either political, racist, or ambiguous. Métis artist and theorist David Garneau states that they are "all colonialisms originally designed to herd the diverse many into a manageable one" (cited in Lalonde 2013, 14). The United Nations (UN) has adopted the term "Indigenous peoples"; however, there is no accompanying formal definition of the term at the global level. The initial working definition outlined in a study chaired by Martinez Cobo in 1986 stated that,

Indigenous communities, peoples and nations are those which, having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing on those territories, or parts of them. (UN 2009, 4)

The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, adopted in 2007, notes the importance of self-identification, enabling Indigenous peoples to define themselves as Indigenous in accordance with their customs and traditions (ibid, 5).

Identity is paradoxically what makes you unique and also what demarcates you as a member of a group with which you share commonalities. It is also always changing. Stuart Hall defines identification as having a common origin or shared characteristics with another person or group or with an ideal, and with the solidarity and allegiance that is created by it. Identity is a social construction, a process that is constantly changing in response to environment and the perceptions of others, often involving acts of power. Hall further notes that history, language and culture all contribute to the identity process of "becoming rather than being: not 'who we are' or 'where we came from'" but what we might become (Hall 1996, 4). When your place in society has been fixed in the historical past by the dominant group, as it has for Indigenous peoples, it is difficult to become anything else. Space and place have been used hegemonically to structure a normative identity for Indigenous peoples. Art, as defined by the Oxford dictionary, produces works to be appreciated mainly for their beauty or emotional power. Art has the ability to communicate at the emotional level; transgressions manifested through art can question normative identity and potentially lead to a new sense of identity and "place."

Indigenous peoples of Canada have been assigned several changes of identity since the arrival of European colonizers. As Canada's first peoples, they are the connection to the nation as it was when first settled by Europeans. Initially, the colonizers thought the two races could co-exist, as reflected by the legend of John Smith and Pocahontas. The arrival of more settlers created a demand for the land occupied by Indigenous peoples, resulting in conflict and distrust. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the assimilation of Indigenous peoples into mainstream, White society was the goal of the government of Canada. Indigenous people were to disassociate themselves from tribal customs and subject themselves to the laws of the country, laws that discriminated against them as Indigenous peoples, such as denying them the right to vote. Various approaches were considered, including assimilation through education, and separation by removal to prevent them, it was argued, from suffering culture shock or the effects of alcohol and disease. It was believed that Indigenous

peoples could only survive in isolation, with the latter approach resulting in the creation of reserves and conveniently freeing up centrally-located land for White settlement. A paradox surrounding government policy was the goal of assimilation into the greater society, yet this was done by isolating Indigenous communities on reserves. Indigenous people received privileges such as hunting and fishing rights, which served to anger non-Indigenous people who saw it as unfair, while their fundamental rights were ignored.

The Canadian government established the *Indian Act* in 1876 and assigned registered status to Indigenous people based on bloodlines. The term "Aboriginal" is a political term that encompasses the First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples in Canada and is popularly used in the place of "Indian," now considered a politically incorrect term. The federal government department known as "Indian Affairs and Northern Development" was renamed "Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada" in 2011,⁴ updating the nomenclature but perpetuating the myth that Indigenous people primarily live in and are perpetually linked to the remote northern regions of Canada and its development. Mohawk scholar, Taiaiake Alfred, interviewed in the film *Kahnawake Revisited: The St. Lawrence Seaway* (2006), explains that a problem arises when Indigenous people start defining themselves as Aboriginal because of a law and associating their identity with their Indian Status card. He believes that the only way to counteract this situation is to maintain the true sense of what it is to be Indigenous, which can only exist "in relationship to the land in a spiritual sense and not just in a territorial sense." Alfred states that to talk exclusively of land in the form of its economic benefit is a sign that Indigenous people have lost touch with their roots and the necessities of survival in all senses of the word. Lands should be used by people to practice not only Mohawk culture but the "natural way of being human." Young reinforces this point, saying that "It is important to remember ... that much of the ground for conflict between culturally differentiated groups is not cultural, but a competition over territory, resources, or jobs" (2000, 91). The construction of the St Lawrence

⁴ The federal department remains legally known as the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, as named in the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development Act.

Seaway was hailed as creating economic opportunities for the nation of Canada, but to do so Mohawk lands were appropriated and flooded. This action encroached on traditional practices such as fishing and permanently changed the geography that defined the "place" of the Mohawks of Kahnawake.

The Canadian government has written laws to control the space and place of Indigenous peoples. The *Indian Act* created a social hierarchy through legal means, naming Indigenous people as wards of the state and denying them the rights of citizenship. Reserves were established to segregate Indigenous people from White society and strong efforts made to "civilize" them and erase elements of Indigenous culture. Indigenous people rank low on socioeconomic indicators and have significantly poorer rates of physical and mental health than the general population (Gionet and Roshanafshar 2013). Walters and Simoni (2002, 521–22) note that this discrepancy is particularly evident with respect to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, anxiety, depression, alcoholism, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and pain reactions. While social determinants of health, such as low socioeconomic status, help to explain their poor health, they do not account for the extremely poor health rates seen among Indigenous people. The federal government currently spends over \$100 million annually for Indigenous mental health programs and services, and notes that "mental health and suicide are pressing issues that touch the lives of people living on reserve" (Government of Canada, Economic Action Plan 2013). The institutional structuring of Indigenous space has led to ambiguity as to their "place" in society, with contemporary Indigenous people assigned both positive and negative stereotypical identities by the general population that include "warrior," "keeper of the land," and "drunk."

Despite history to the contrary, there are those who hold current positions in Canadian government who would like the Canadian public to believe that there is not and never has been an "Indian problem." In a speech at the 2009 G20 Summit in Pittsburgh, Prime Minister Stephen Harper declared that, "We [Canada] also have no history of colonialism. So we have all of the things that many people admire about the great powers but none of the things that threaten or bother them"

(Ljunggren 2009). The Oxford dictionary defines colonialism as "the policy or practice of acquiring full or partial political control over another country, occupying it with settlers, and exploiting it economically." Taiaiake Alfred describes his understanding of colonialism as consisting of "such things as the resource exploitation of indigenous lands, residential school syndrome, racism, expropriation of lands, extinguishment of rights, wardship, and welfare dependency" (2009b, 43). He outlines the ways Indigenous people are impacted when colonial actions are manifested as "becoming causes of harm to them as people and as communities, limitations placed on their freedom, and disturbing mentalities, psychologies, and behaviours" (ibid). There is a disconnect between the words of the prime minister and the well-documented reality of Canada's colonial history, indicating that changes in thinking at the highest level of government will need to occur before Indigenous people can share in the full rights and benefits of citizenship in Canada.

Indigenous identity has been and continues to be defined legally by the government of Canada, setting physical, social, and economic boundaries. The expression of Indigenous identity is personal, however, and is a reflection of the lived experiences of each person. Donna Oxenham comments that "indigenous identities are not necessarily locked into the periodization of past, present and future; rather, all three exist, like photographs, in the here and now" (Edwards 2006, 33). Contemporary culture is a palimpsest of past cultural experiences, layers that build upon each other, obscuring some parts, revealing others. Physical and imaginary boundaries form and re-form, separating people by culture into seemingly unique and static groups. Adam Green concludes that Canada and other geographical territories are, in practice,

a patchwork of cultural, linguistic, and historical patterns, many of which overlap and influence each other, but each of which also contains some independent or extenuating qualities or characteristics. (2007, 146)

Green recognizes the practical role that physical borders can play, but emphasizes that they are legal entities and not necessarily cultural ones. He suggests that it is interesting to explore *why* people in particular regions and locales express particular cultural identities—*where* they do it is not so

important (ibid, 146). The Indigenous peoples of Canada have had boundaries placed around them based on their culture. Cresswell writes that social acts of territorialization create boundaries that order our society; these acts of boundary making simultaneously open up possibilities for transgression to challenge these social boundaries (Cresswell 1996, 149). Stereotypes form invisible boundaries that keep people "in place"—I will demonstrate that through their artwork, contemporary Indigenous artists are contesting these cultural stereotypes.

Defining "Indigenous" Identity through Stereotypes

Indigenous peoples were no longer considered a threat after the establishment of reserves by the Canadian government, especially as their population began to decline because of disease. Their connection to the origin of the nation now began to be used symbolically to build national identity. Public opinion, however, alternately depicted them as noble (strong, independent) or ignoble (poor, dependent) savages. These constructed images were stereotypes based on constructions of race and culture, and were beyond the control of the Indigenous peoples themselves, who were not permitted to define their own identity. The stereotypes served to exclude Indigenous peoples from the nation, as they did not illustrate the ideal of civilized progress. If they were successfully educated and "civilized" then they would no longer be Indigenous people. They were popularly considered to be a dying race; either way, they would not exist and there was no "place" for Indigenous peoples in contemporary society.

Europeans created the "Indian." Indigenous people had classified themselves as distinct tribes and nations numbering close to five hundred prior to the arrival of Europeans in North America. The image of the pan-Indian was created in the 1800s through photographs and Wild West shows by combining symbols that included Plains Indian war bonnets, Navajo blankets, buckskin apparel, headbands, moccasins, teepees, horses, and canoes. This generic representation of Indigenous people was accompanied by a similar generic representation of their art. Middle class Victorians were fixated

with origins, archaeology, and fossils which, when combined with the desire to collect and exhibit, resulted in the rise of the museum as an institution to communicate the Victorian narrative of progress (McClintock 1995, 40). Curators of museums and international colonial exhibitions displayed items from distant lands, identifying them as artifacts created by anonymous artisans deemed to represent an "authentic" cultural way of life. At the turn of the twentieth century, North American photographers, such as Edward Curtis and H.H. Bennett, created romantic images of the past, recreating for posterity Indigenous dress and living environments that had already begun to change. They preferred to not capture representations of "inauthentic" Indigenous people who now wore modern clothing and were of mixed race—hybrid people, the result of transculturation.

Indigenous culture is vibrant and changing, like that of any other, reminds author Thomas King. Contemporary stereotypes of Indigenous people, however, have been carved in stone from the historic past. King writes that "The idea of 'the Indian' was already fixed in time and space" (2003, 37). Putting Indigenous people in their "place" began in earnest in the Victorian era with the "invention of anachronistic space," a phrase referred to by Anne McClintock in *Imperial Leather* (1995, 40). Europeans did not explain the diversity of cultures found in the colonies due to their being socially or geographically different from Europe, but as temporally different, fixing them firmly in the past. Geographical travel across space was equated with travel across time; the journey to the colonies was a trip backward in time, with the return journey following evolutionary progress back to the modernity of Europe (McClintock 1995, 40). Europeans held the belief that divine intervention dictated that certain races prospered while other races disappeared; this belief served to justify their settlement of the colonies.

The Victorian idea of progress needed to have an opposite condition by which progress could be measured and boundaries of civilization established. McClintock notes that "the distance along the path of progress traveled by some portions of humanity could be measured only by the distance others lagged behind" (1995, 46). Mick Gidley interprets Eurocentric views as placing traditional Indigenous

cultures in relation to the dominant White culture. They reflected the "primitive" past of the dominant culture, a past that had since made "progress" into civilization. He cites Indigenous author Michael Dorris: "the Indian is seen not 'on a human being to human being basis, but ... through an ancestor-descendant model'" (cited in Gidley 1998, 103). The place of Indigenous peoples was to serve as a reminder of just how far White society had progressed since the beginning of time.

Representations of a bygone era served to promote North American tourism, drawing tourist dollars away from the traditional travel destination of Europe. Curtis wrote in articles for *Scribner's* in 1906 and 1909 with a conclusion that, "You, who say there is nothing old in our country, turn your eyes for one year from Europe and go to the land of an ancient primitive civilization" (cited in Gidley 1998, 179). Curtis' images of Indigenous peoples were reproduced as postcards and used to promote tourism by the Santa Fe Railroad. The adventure of travelling back in time to view the land and its "primitive" people prior to the arrival of White Europeans was being sold—to view the land with the "imperial eyes" described by Mary Louise Pratt (1992). This idea of progress translated into identifying people with the binary of "civilized" European or "savage" Native, with stereotypes created that solidified these roles in the minds of Europeans. "The White Man's Indian" (Berkhofer 1978), the "Imaginary Indian" (Francis 1992), and "The Inconvenient Indian" (King 2012) all came into existence with these stereotypes.

The turn of the twentieth century represented a time of economic decline and rising criticism of colonialism's lingering negative aspects. At the same time, political efforts focused on building national identity and reinforcing support for empire. International exhibitions began to feature live exhibits of colonized people. The objectivation of Indigenous peoples served to remove them from the category of "human" and thus from human history, allowing the colonizing countries to rationalize their ownership of the formerly "unoccupied" lands of the New World. The ideology of "terra nullius" reflected the imperial view that land supporting subsistence habitats belonged to no one, being deemed unoccupied and, therefore, open to occupation by European nations. Pratt

comments on the tales of travel writers such as naturalists Anders Sparrman and William Paterson. They explored southern Africa in the 1770s, documenting their travel through observations of landscape, flora, and fauna, giving marginal attention to any human presence. "Where, one asks, is everybody? The landscape is written as uninhabited, unpossessed, unhistoricized, unoccupied even by the travelers themselves" (1992, 51). She further elaborates on the travel writing of John Barrow, who was personal secretary to the colonial governor of the Cape Colony (now South Africa) while under British rule in 1795. In this position, Barrow made several journeys into the interior of the country, writing extensively of his experiences while omitting most references to pre-existing human presence in the lands to be colonized. Pratt observes, "So it goes for the better part of 400 pages, a ... narrative that seems to do everything possible to minimize the human presence" (ibid, 59). Pratt utilizes the trope of the "monarch-of-all-I-survey" to explain the attitude expressed by colonial explorers who first viewed colonized countries to be in a wild state, devoid of people, then assumed ownership of all they saw. She describes how guides were hired to take European explorers to locally well-known places, such as Lake Tanganyika, enabling these wilderness sites to be "discovered" and subsequently written about (1992, 201). Jocelyn Thorpe writes on White views of nature and Indigenous people in Temagami, Ontario in the early-twentieth-century, arguing that the area echoes the romantic visions of reimagining nature as "naturally wild, white, and Canadian through the disappearance of Aboriginal people" (2011, 195). Thorpe examines travel writing between 1894 and 1915, mostly by White men, that gave the false impression that Indigenous people had either not existed or had disappeared from the area. For example, the 1915 brochure for Camp Temagami described the area as "primitive forest" with "innumerable lakes and rivers, many of them practically unexplored" (2011, 201). Indigenous people continued to live there and considered the area to be their home and not a "pristine wilderness," with a land claim filed in the court system to reclaim it as their territory. The space of Northern Ontario was being imagined as a white Canadian place of wilderness

where Indigenous people who led a contemporary lifestyle did not belong—their reality did not fit the historical identity of Indigenous people as "nature."

Pratt addresses the colonial ideology of relegating Indigenous peoples to history, therefore, existing in the past and not the present. By reviving "indigenous history and culture as archaeology is to revive them *as dead*" (ibid, 134). This ideology echoes the imperial attitude towards land being "terra nullius"; if the Indigenous peoples no longer exist, then the land is available for colonization. To support this myth, value and meaning must be created and reproduced by those in power to construct a place out of space—a place with unwritten rules that determine who belongs and who does not.

The creation of stereotypes rendered Indigenous peoples as one-dimensional, with predictable behaviour that could not be civilized by the newcomers. This supposed predictability created a paradox, as claims were made that the colonized *could* be civilized under the influence of the Europeans, yet the colonizers' economic and political agenda depended on the stereotypes of racial difference. Bhabha claims that stereotyping is not the establishment of a false image that then becomes the rationalization for discriminatory practices. Instead, he perceives stereotyping as a seemingly ambivalent expression of cultural beliefs that form the basis for racist discourses (Bhabha 1983, 33). He draws on Frantz Fanon's classic treatise, *Black Skin White Masks* (1952), to argue that racial stereotypes play on paradoxical colonial fantasies of desire and fear of the "other" (ibid, 27). The successful stereotype must be repeated continually, ascribing reality to "the same old stories" when told "again and afresh" (ibid, 28). Bhabha cites an article by Fanon, "Racism and Culture" (1969), to state that the power of the colonizer captures the colonized within the stereotype, preventing them from growing and changing, essentially creating "cultural mummification" which "leads to a mummification of individual thinking" (ibid, 32). The stereotype provides a spontaneous and visible way of identifying the colonized as the object of discrimination, with colour being the sign of inferiority. What is visible provides the evidence to validate the racially-based stereotype. Bhabha

further elaborates that the stereotype masks two opposing views of the colonized person: "real" knowledge and the fantasy, and makes it more believable. For example, the Black person is both savage and an obedient and dignified servant (ibid, 32). These stereotypes allow the colonized to be "known" and endorse the use of discriminatory and authoritarian political control. "The colonised population is then deemed to be both the cause and effect of the system" (ibid, 33).

Thomas King is a prominent contemporary author. He refers to himself as a storyteller who writes and speaks about Indigenous issues in a humorous manner that underlines his political commentary on colonization. He writes in his book, *The Inconvenient Indian*, that:

In order to maintain the cult and sanctity of the Dead Indian, North America has decided that Live Indians living today cannot be genuine Indians. This sentiment is a curious reworking of one of the cornerstones of Christianity, the idea of innocence and original sin. Dead Indians are Garden of Eden-variety Indians. Pure, Noble, Innocent. Perfectly authentic. ... Not a feather out of place. Live Indians are fallen Indians, modern, contemporary copies, not authentic Indians at all, Indians by biological association only. (2012, 64–5)

"Live Indians" have lost their traditional languages and cultural practices as a consequence of institutionalized oppression through the banning of cultural artifacts and rituals, the Scoop of the 1960s, and the forced removal of children to residential schools. Cultural traditions are slowly being reclaimed and publicly manifested at pow wows and other community gatherings. Indigenous photographers such as Vicky Laforge of Clearskies Photography take photographs of participants at these public events and will often send copies of the photographs to the subjects. The act of Laforge photographing them validates that their actions and their culture have value, that they are worthy of being preserved in an image. John Berger, an art critic, painter, poet, and author, reinforces this in his statement that, "A photograph is a result of the photographer's decision that it is worth recording that this particular event or this particular object has been seen," establishing the photograph as a message that states "I [the photographer] have decided that seeing this is worth recording" (1972, 1-2). The impact of this validation can bring people to tears (personal conversation with Karen Nicole Smith, friend of Laforge).

Ecofeminist Val Plumwood explores the subservient role created for those who are compared to "nature":

To be defined as 'nature' ... is to be defined as passive, as non-agent and non-subject. ... It means being seen as part of a sharply separate, even alien lower realm, whose domination is simply 'natural', flowing from nature itself and the nature(s) of things (Plumwood 1993, 4).

An enduring societal stereotype depicts Indigenous people as strong, sexual, scantily-clad, warriors who live in harmony with nature. The reality is that Indigenous people cannot be easily identified in a contemporary Canadian street that is filled with people of multicultural backgrounds; they look, dress, and act in a manner similar to others of varying ethnic backgrounds who also live in the urban environment. King refers to the Indian-Irish writer, Louis Owens, who discusses family photographs in his memoir, *I Hear the Train: Reflections, Inventions, Refractions*. Owens, who can see no "Indians" in his mixed-blood family photographs, comments that "few looking at [these] photos of mixed-bloods would be likely to say, 'But they don't look like Irishmen', but everyone seems obligated to offer an opinion regarding the degree of Indianness represented." The modern reality is that more than half of Indigenous people in Canada live off-reserve in an urban setting, with little connection to nature in their daily lives. They live within Western economic and political structures while often maintaining their cultural traditions. They are citizens of Canada in every sense of the word, presenting a positive but invisible image that contradicts the negative stereotypes of Indigenous people who are seen as sitting around waiting for the next government handout.

The negative stereotypes abound, however, disseminated by those with the power to influence and control, such as media and government, promoting narratives that focus a negative light on Indigenous peoples. An example of this is the portrayal of Indigenous life at the Northern Ontario community of Attawapiskat, a First Nations reserve located at the mouth of the Attawapiskat River near the shores of James Bay. It is devastated by repeated spring flooding due to its location at sea level, resulting in the deterioration of living conditions. There is a shortage of housing, leading to overcrowding in the substandard housing that does exist. Chief Theresa Spence drew media attention

to their plight in October, 2011, by declaring a state of emergency as temperatures began to fall and many people lacked adequate housing for the upcoming winter. National media coverage transmitted images of the poor housing conditions, raising awareness and creating indignation in the general population. This heightened awareness by the electorate roused a quick response by the federal government, which arranged for the transportation of several modular homes to the reserve. Media reports since then have called into question the reputation and ability of Indigenous leadership, and include disputes by the federal government over misuse of funds by the Attawapiskat band council. The federal government commissioned an audit to examine how the reserve's management spent the \$104 million that it received over a six-year period (Bourbeau 2014). Another news item reported on the high salary earned by Chief Spence when compared to the mayors of nearby Thunder Bay and North Bay (Hough 2014). During the *Idle No More* protest demonstrations, a movement that raised awareness of issues facing Indigenous people such as poverty, youth suicide, and broken treaties, Chief Spence went on a 6-week hunger strike in December, 2012 on Victoria Island in the Ottawa River. While some media outlets reported on her meetings with political leaders in a neutral manner, other reports questioned the validity of the hunger strike, alluding to her overweight condition and consumption of liquids. A "good news" story reported on the recent opening of a new elementary school for Attawapiskat in September, 2014. The former school was closed down in 2000 due to toxic contamination from a fuel leak that occurred in 1979; deteriorating portable classrooms had been used for fourteen years (CBC News 2014).

Whether the subject matter is presented in a neutral manner or not, there is a bias as to what the Canadian media chooses to include in its reports. The images of the Indigenous people of Attawapiskat portray them living in a rundown, remote community, far from civilization. The impression is given that large sums of money are spent on supporting an infrastructure that is ultimately inadequate. The communities are in an isolated environment where it is difficult to provide high-quality employment opportunities, health, education, and social services. The stereotype of the

Indian that is dependent upon White society and incapable of improving his/her situation is maintained.

The documentary film "Third World Canada" (2010) by independent Ottawa filmmaker, Andrée Cazabon, featured Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug First Nations. Commonly known as KI, it is a fly-in reserve located 600 km north of Thunder Bay with substandard living conditions and high suicide rates. Cazabon continues to work in conjunction with community leaders of KI to raise awareness amongst the general population of life in their remote reserve. They invited "everyday Canadians" to visit KI for a week in the summers of 2013 and 2014 and stay with families in the community to experience life there, both the good and the bad aspects. Cazabon's documentary and ongoing efforts with community members present the reality of self-destructive behaviours that continue in KI, but also present the hope that the active intervention by Indigenous leaders can and will lead to positive change. These actions help to counteract the negative stereotype of dependency.

The Power of Words & Images to Create & Contest Stereotypes

Representation is the manifestation of the meaning of mental concepts. Words and images are powerful tools for communicating socio-cultural expectations, providing signs that add spatial meaning to create a place for people based on gender, class, or race. They convey the underlying "common sense" attitudes that reinforce the hegemonic social structure. They can also be used as tools to transgress these taken-for-granted societal beliefs, challenging the normative geographies established by those in power, and potentially creating a new place. "Place is a powerful force in ongoing hegemonic and counterhegemonic struggles" (Cresswell 1996, 13).

Nigerian writer Chimamanda Adichie spoke of "The Danger of a Single Story" (2009) and elaborated that, "How [stories] are told, who tells them, when they're told, how many stories are told—are really dependent on power. ... Show a people as one thing—as only one thing—over and over again, and that is what they become" (2009). Her plain-English commentary stresses the power

of the stereotype as created and reinforced through words and images. Stories put into practice the beliefs reflecting what is normal behaviour for a place and whether a person is "in place" or "out of place."

Hegemonic images and their underlying meanings become internalized by members at all levels of society, by those both advantaged and disadvantaged by the messages conveyed. We interpret images through socially constructed "maps of meaning" that are culturally shared (Hall 1997, 29). Stuart Hall argues that "seeing" is a cultural practice, influenced by the viewer's social position which affects their interpretation of the image being viewed. He states that visual culture is a meaning-system, a "language" with signs and codes used to interpret meaning. An image is part of that visual language, a sign that is culturally interpreted based on the viewer's social practices. Seemingly objective images become subjective—"used and 'lived' subjectively"—as their meaning is created by each viewer (Hall 1999, 310). There are visual discourses that interpret and "make sense" of an image, to read its "text" and produce meaning. Hall elaborates that this meaning is not fixed; it changes with time and culture. Each viewer "sees" differently and the subject being viewed is also never complete and is produced through social and interpretive processes that are time and place dependent (Hall 1999, 310-11).

Jacques Derrida (1968) coined the word *différance* to refer to the production of textual meaning. He believed that words and signs can never fully express what they mean, and can only be defined through the use of additional words, from which they differ. Thus, meaning is forever deferred through an endless chain of words and signs. Culture and identity can only be defined by how they differ from something or someone else. There is no essence of identity, no absolute identity. Bhabha elaborates that the interpretation of words is not a simple act of communication between the I and the You designated in the statement. "The production of meaning requires that these two places be mobilized [in the act of communication] through a 'Third Space', which represents both the general conditions of language and the specific implication of the utterance in a performative and institutional

strategy of which it cannot in itself be conscious" (Bhabha 1988, 20). What this statement refers to is the act of subjective interpretation. The existence of the interpretive "Third Space" brings into question the view of culture as a homogenizing, unifying force that was created in the historical past and is kept alive by ongoing traditions. The discursive conditions of the "Third Space" create signs that can be appropriated, translated, re-historicized, and read anew; the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or stability. Cultural identity is hybrid. People who initiate revolutionary cultural change already have a hybrid identity as they are "caught in the discontinuous time of translation and negotiation" and represent the "dialectical reorganization" of their culture (Bhabha 1988, 21). Societal change occurs when a critical mass of people transgress and challenge their "place" in society.

The impact of a particular image is affected by the viewer's position within the hierarchy of society. Knowledge may be constructed or applied to the subject viewed, based on the particular meaning conveyed/received. Hall writes that "knowledge is always implicated in power" and power controls "what can be seen and shown, thought and said" (Hall 1999, 311). Discourse constructs what is considered to be normative and is a way of controlling conduct, viewing the world with taken-for-granted rules. "The power of the image" relies on its immediate and powerful impact, often beyond a rational level of awareness, connecting with our subconscious in ways that we may not be aware of (Hall 1999, 311). Members of the dominant sector of society are reassured in their beliefs by the constant stream of images generated by media that represent Indigenous peoples playing stereotypical roles. Conversely, Indigenous peoples consume images that reinforce stereotypes that keep them "in their place."

Bhabha discusses the concept of "fixity" and the use of stereotypes as a mode of representation, part of the discourse of colonialism that serves to create a one-dimensional, fixed image of colonized peoples. He argues that the stereotype is a form of knowledge and identification that "vacillates between what is always 'in place', already known, and something that must be

anxiously repeated" (Bhabha 1983, 18). He refers to this paradoxical process as the seemingly ambivalent expression of cultural beliefs, enabling the stereotype to be maintained throughout various historical settings, proving that which cannot be proved, and perpetuating the image of the "other". He explains further that colonial discourse essentializes colonized peoples as a fixed reality, simultaneously being "entirely knowable and visible" (Bhabha 1983, 22) while paradoxically being an unknowable, exotic "other." Bhabha further defines the role of colonial discourse as depicting the colonized peoples as degenerate due to their race, thus justifying their conquest and establishing Eurocentric administrative and education systems (Bhabha 1983, 22).

Stereotyped words and images of Indigenous peoples exist in many forms within art, literature, and the media. Images influence politics and society, shaping the material world through their visual nature. The images can reveal as much about the creator as about the subject portrayed, reflecting personal and institutional views and cultural assumptions. On the subject of photography, Louis Owens observed that instead of *taking* a photograph, we *bring* the photograph with us, "an internal negative always ready to be superimposed over the object of desire" (2003, 189). Stereotypes of Indigenous identity are perpetuated by those who bring their own cultural experiences and expectations to the images that they create and the images that they view. The photograph, for example, is a powerful tool. Flusser writes that the objective nature of technical images leads viewers to see them not as images but as windows; as ways of looking at the world (2000, 15). What is viewed can become cultural reality for the viewer, either creating opinions or reinforcing existing ones expressed by powerbrokers such as the media and government.

Images are powerful. The common phrase, "a picture is worth a thousand words," conveys the impact that a single image can have. Images can be used to create, alter, reinforce, and destroy identities. Photography has contributed to these practices since its invention in the mid-nineteenth century. There has been an ongoing debate over whether photography is an art or a science, as the picture that is formed is the result of scientific invention. In 1857, Lady Eastlake says that it remains

to be decided, "how far the sun may be considered an artist" (1857a, 2). In her era of the mid-nineteenth century, photography was seen as the work of "an unreasoning machine," its role to give "evidence of facts" (Eastlake 1857b, 97). This view resulted in the photograph often being credited as expressing "truth," believing that the scientific camera would not lie (Barthes 1981, 85). We know now that this is a myth; while the camera as a machine on its own would not lie, it is operated by a human, and the resulting photograph and its interpretations have many stories to tell. Photographic theory has explored this myth (Benjamin 1936; Berger 1972; Sontag 1977; Barthes 1981; Sontag 2003), with discussion covering aspects such as who took the photograph, who commissioned it, why was it taken, what was portrayed, what was left out of the photograph, where was it displayed, and who chose what images would be displayed and preserved. There is often text associated with images, whether it is notes on the back of a photograph, wall text linked with displays in an exhibition, a short caption to name the image, or a lengthier description included in a book of images. Again, subjectivity is introduced as to the motives behind the writer. What was the story that the writer wished to tell and to whom? The message is not accidental, and both image and text affect the identity of ethnic and minority groups depicted in images, including Indigenous people. "Society has levels of power and influence related to class, gender, race, sexuality, age and a host of other variables" (Cresswell 1996, 3). Images reinforce the normative geography that assigns a place for each group of people within societal hierarchy based on the cultural power that they hold.

Social anthropologist Alfred Gell wrote in his 1998 book, *Art and Agency*, of his theory of art based on abductive reasoning, or "inference to the best explanation." What we view contributes to our perception of reality, and photographs are extensions of interpersonal relationships. Elizabeth Edwards is a historical and visual anthropologist who has worked extensively in the field of cross-cultural photography. In her 2005 article *Photographs and the Sound of History*, she writes about the nature of photographs as relational objects in the making and articulating of histories, arguing that they occupy the spaces both between people and people, and between people and things. She

discusses ways in which visual devices, such as photographs, can be used to explore how history is expressed in the present, using the Aboriginal people of Australia to illustrate her arguments. Who takes the photographs, who is depicted in them, and who controls who sees them are all questions that are significant to the modern identity of a group. Edwards refers to Gell's argument that the representation made of a person captures a trace of them, which she interprets as "the impression of social being" (2005, 31). Photographs distribute personhood "beyond the body-boundary," according to Gell (1998, 104). Images are forms of agency that are extensions of ourselves and our relationships, "because as social persons, we are present, not just in our singular bodies, but in everything in our surroundings which bears witness to our existence, our attributes, and our agency" (Gell 1998, 103). Richter asks, "Does photography depict what is already present in the object world, or does it create its own reality?" (2010, 33). We have seen that both words and images have been integral in the formation of Indigenous citizenship, used in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to construct stereotypes that remain strong in contemporary times. The commercial value of images as material objects fluctuates according to where they are sold and to whom. Vilem Flusser states that the true value of images

lies in the information that they carry loose and open for reproduction on their surface. ... The distribution channels, the 'media', encode their latest significance (Flusser 2000, 56).

The physicality of images gives them a place in the material world, a world that reflects our social values and our place in society. However, "Value and meaning are not inherent in any space or place—indeed they must be created, reproduced, and defended from heresy" (Cresswell 1996, 9), indicating an ongoing dialectical process. This process involves images as reflections of societal expectations and the "place" that Indigenous people are assigned.

Joan Schwartz traces the multi-faceted story behind one of the many photographs in the collection of Library and Archives Canada, to show how value and meaning are assigned to a photograph by the people who come in contact with it in their various roles. Her goal is to show "that

our use of historical photographs must begin with an awareness of the questions we ask and what the viewer ... brings to the looking" (2011a, 77). There is a plurality of meanings in a photograph, created by the viewers who have different biases and backgrounds that they bring to their interpretation of the photograph.

Examining materiality, Elizabeth Edwards highlights that printed photographs are tactile and appeal to multiple senses. They exist in time and space, and are part of physical culture. Western culture privileges the visual sense, and "the primacy of the visual in thinking about photographs has elided the sensory and emotional impact of photographs as things that *matter*" (2005, 28), in both senses of the word. Derrida writes about one of the roles that the photograph played in history; for a few years, it was common practice to give a signed photograph, usually a portrait, of oneself as a gift. "Great men," such as Freud and Heidegger, did so. Their signature transformed the photograph into a self-portrait, personalizing it and making it unique. It created a seal of authenticity through a double-exposure, a "writing upon writing." Although initially created by a machine whose images can be replicated, the signed photograph became a valuable and unique gift (2010, 22–23). Images have value, both as commercial works of art and for the messages that they convey about a person's identity and "place" in society.

The classification of images expresses ideology and societal norms. Lee-Ann Martin, former curator of Contemporary Canadian Aboriginal Art at the Canadian Museum of Civilization, writes that it is only in recent years that curators and art historians have begun to recognize and classify images created by Indigenous artists as art instead of the nineteenth-century "artifact" classification entrenched by museums (2002, 239). In 1991, Martin completed a study for the Canada Council that found that "few art galleries in Canada showed any commitment to the sustained collection of Aboriginal work" (ibid). By 2002, she had observed an increase in the profile of Indigenous art at these public institutions, supported mainly by the Canada Council through its Acquisitions Assistance and Curatorial Residency Programs (ibid).

The historical view of Indigenous objects as primitive cultural crafts has restricted them from being elevated to the status of "art" and being offered for viewing and sale in public and commercial art galleries. Argentinian artist Sebastian López comments on the double standard in the art community that allows White artists more creative freedom than those of other cultures:

While the European artist is allowed to investigate other cultures and enrich their own work and perspective, it is expected that the artist from another culture only works in the background and with the artistic traditions connected to his or her place of origin ... If the foreign artist does not conform to this separation, he is considered inauthentic, westernized, and an imitator copyist of "what we do". The universal is "ours, the local is yours." (cited by Canclini 1994, 506)

Indigenous artists, like Indigenous people in general, were deemed to be untouched by the modern world that surrounded them and placed in an ethnological time warp that would prevent them from becoming inauthentic to their traditions. The *Photographic Times* of April 1912 contained an article on photographer Edward Curtis titled "Writing History with the Camera." The writer, influenced by the thinking of the time of the vanishing race, commented that in the future artists would have to model the "Indian" by painting a White man in bronze and dressing him in costumes borrowed from a museum, adding as an afterthought that "a museum is a strange dwelling place for human souls and memories" (cited in Gidley 1998, 31).

The majority of photographs of Indigenous people exhibited were created by White photographers who brought their own experiences and expectations to the images. There was some power, however, that Indigenous people could exert over the image. Steven Hoelscher argues that,

photography has long served as a technology of domination to subdue indigenous peoples the world over, but it has also worked to provide those very peoples a medium for their own culture's survival, endurance, and renewal—for their survivance. (2002, 10)

Survivance is explained as the combination of survival and endurance. "Transculturation," frequently referred to by Mary Louise Pratt in her book, *Imperial Eyes* (1992), is the mutual transfer of cultural knowledge between different societies at the point where they interact. Transculturation occurs through the use of photography, a Western invention, when used by Indigenous peoples to re-present

their culture. Some previously unknown Indigenous photographers from the early twentieth century are now receiving attention due to the inclusion of their work in the galleries. They include George Johnston, a Tlingit man from the Yukon who captured on film the everyday life of his family and community in their remote settlement, and Richard Throssel, a Cree man of mixed-race adopted into the Crow tribe of Montana. Since the 1970s there has been a growing number of Indigenous artists in Canada who are using photographs as political tools to create provocative modern images that challenge colonial images of Indigenous identity. These include Carl Beam, Rebecca Belmore, Arthur Renwick, Sonny Assu, Jeff Thomas, Dana Claxton, Adrian Stimson, Rosalie Favell, and Shelley Niro, to name but a few.

Bhabha supports cultural difference (the process of practicing culture) and discounts the concept of cultural diversity (an object of empirical knowledge), stating that

Cultural diversity is the recognition of pre-given cultural 'contents' and customs, held in a time-frame of relativism; it gives rise to anodyne liberal notions of multiculturalism, cultural exchange, or the culture of humanity. (Bhabha 1988, 18)

He elaborates that cultural diversity divides and separates cultures as if they are unchanged by history and location, "safe in the Utopianism of a mythic memory of a unique collective identity" (Bhabha, 18). Bhabha envisions an international culture, based not on the polarity of the exotic Other nor based on the multiculturalism of diverse cultures, but based on the hybridity of culture. He stresses that it is the "in-between," the "Third Space," that carries the meaning of culture. It is in this space, he says, that we will find the words and images to allow us to emerge as the others of our selves (Bhabha 1988, 22).

Historically, the representation of Indigenous people has focused on essentializing their culture through the use of stereotypes, marking them as different from White society. These stereotypes must first be acknowledged and then transgressed to effect societal change.

Chapter 3

Stereotypical Images of Indigenous Peoples

The colonizing of the Indigenous peoples of Canada was a direct result of the settlement by immigrants from Great Britain and the subsequent establishment of institutional control dictated by colonial attitudes from the homeland. These colonial attitudes were reflected throughout Canada consciously and subconsciously through images that have now become entrenched as part of contemporary society.

The image of Indigenous peoples has been and continues to be represented primarily by non-Indigenous people, members of the dominant Eurocentric culture, through various media and outlets including books, paintings, photographs, medicine shows, colonial exhibitions, agricultural exhibitions, museums, theatrical performances, Wild West shows, movies, and advertising. The reasons vary, including those of: nation-building, tourism, commerce, and environmental rights activism. Representation through a variety of media and outlets has created and reinforced stereotypes of the noble and stoic "savage" who is one with nature, and Indigenous people as children and wards of the state. The "place" of an Indigenous person, the "Indian," is represented as being in a historical time warp. As a result, it is difficult for contemporary Indigenous people to be viewed as individuals and not as members of an essentialized cultural group. This position limits their opportunities for upward mobility and negatively affects their socioeconomic status.

Historical and contemporary images may be viewed as simply representing a moment in time. When examined in conjunction with political and social documents of the time, however, a different picture emerges as to their purpose and intent. Placing images in context reinforces the importance of always being critical of images: who created them and why? What is included and what is excluded? The quotation that follows may be applied to the layers that exist in history—a palimpsest of experiences—their representation through images, and their ongoing effects:

I began then to think of time as having a shape, something you could see, like a series of liquid transparencies, one laid on top of one another. You don't look back along time but down through it, like water. Sometimes this comes to the surface, sometimes that, sometimes nothing. Nothing goes away. (Margaret Atwood, *Cat's Eye* 1988, 3)

The following five sections serve to provide a sampling of some of the many ways in which Indigenous people have been stereotypically portrayed to the general population during the past 200 years.

Cultural Objects

The gaze is a representation of power: those who are allowed to look hold the power. Those who preserve and present that which is to be gazed upon also have power. Institutions such as galleries, museums, and archives preserve and display objects associated with Indigenous culture and historical images depicting Indigenous people. These images reflect beliefs at the time and should be viewed in that context. Associating an historical image that was created through the lens of Western ideology of the time serves to perpetuate myths and stereotypes in the present.

The 1770 painting, *The Death of General Wolfe*, by Benjamin West is proudly displayed by the National Gallery of Canada and described by the gallery as "an unofficial national treasure" (NGC 2014). In Figure 3.1, the painting portrays the death of General Wolfe in 1759 after the battle of the Plains of Abraham and includes an Iroquois warrior seated on the ground contemplating the death scene. Francis describes the painting as predominantly a work of fiction: Wolfe died away from the battlefield—only one of the people surrounding him in the painting was actually present at his death—and there were no "Indians," whom he despised, fighting alongside him (1992, 13). The painter, however, included the muscular image of the "noble savage" in his painting who, Francis speculates, represents the natural virtues of the New World that Wolfe had lost his life defending. Vivien Green Fryd, Art History professor, observes that the warrior and General Wolfe are the most conspicuous figures in *The Death of General Wolfe*. Fryd believes that West constructed them as representatives of the two cultures of the Old World and the New World, the savage and the civilized,

in opposition to each other (1995, 74). The figure of Sir William Johnson stands behind the warrior, a link between the two worlds. Visually, Johnson's apparel is a mixture of European and Indigenous



Figure 3.1 Benjamin West, *The Death of General Wolfe*, 1770. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. Photo © NGC

styles, wearing a green jacket, beaded leggings, moccasins, and a beaded pouch. Fryd writes that West intentionally inserted the figure of Sir William Johnson into the narrative due to his influential role in colonial politics, a role that was now being forgotten through the new mythology surrounding General Wolfe's victory (ibid, 75). Johnson had gained the trust of the Six Nations, enriching his personal wealth by receiving 130,000 acres of land from them, and had persuaded them to align with the British for several battles in the Seven Years' War. He served as superintendent of Indian Affairs from 1756 to 1774. To represent Johnson's significant influence and landholdings, Fryd observes that West included on Johnson's powder horn the words "Mohawk River" and "Ontario" and a map of the

Mohawk Valley (ibid, 75). History professor Julian Gwyn, however, expresses his low regard for William Johnson:

He was distinguished only by the great advantages he possessed through his office and through his long intimacy with the Indians. He was indeed one of their principal exploiters ... He was a typical imperial servant, in an area where he had few competitors able to match his intelligence and interest." (1979)

Fryd explores the role of the Indigenous person in West's painting, stating that the warrior is passive and vulnerable, clothed by a blanket and sitting on the ground, but displays a strong, muscular body, "underscoring both his strength and his subservience to British power" (1995, 84). She suggests that West painted the warrior's contemplative expression to be associated with a prophesy of the Vanishing Race, rather than with sympathy for Wolfe's demise (ibid, 82).

The Death of General Wolfe was popularly reproduced on items for home use and included in school books as an accurate representation of history and British Empire (Francis 1992, 13). This historical image from 1770 has travelled through time to extend its influence on contemporary society and express the territoriality that is "an intrinsic part of the organization of power and the control of resources and people" (Cresswell 1996, 12).

Cultural objects associated with Indigenous peoples were also displayed by ethnological museums for scrutiny by "civilized" members of society, defining an image that established the "place" of both the viewer and the viewed. The modern public museum began in the mid-1800s, having originated from the "cabinets of curiosities" collected by early explorers and traders. Indigenous artifacts were avidly collected from North American settlements for use in colonial exhibitions and subsequently formed the basis of museum collections. The Smithsonian Institution (Washington), the American Museum of Natural History (New York), and the Field Museum (Chicago)⁵ were founded between 1846 and 1893. In Canada, the federal government created the

⁵ The Field Museum held an exhibition from October 25, 2013 - September 7, 2014 entitled *Opening the Vaults: Wonders of the 1893 World's Fair* displaying artifacts and specimens from around the world that served to establish the museum 120 years ago.

Division of Anthropology in 1910 within the Geological Survey and expanded its museum into the Victoria Memorial Museum, which eventually became the Museum of Civilization in Ottawa. The Canadian government, that had sought to erase all aspects of Indigenous culture through the *Indian Act*, was now actively preserving it for posterity. Francis draws an analogy between the Wild West shows of the same era and the museums, as they both served to preserve and represent elements of Indigenous culture. One was marketed for mass entertainment, whereas the other was for the sophisticated supporter of culture in a scientific setting (1992, 104–105).

Mass Entertainment

The Wild West shows of the late 1800s and early 1900s provided the biggest source of images of Indigenous people for mass consumption prior to the introduction of Hollywood movies. Performances included live animals and "real Indians" such as Sitting Bull and Black Elk. The Wild West shows established the image of the Plains Indian as "the" Indian who wears a feathered headdress, rides a horse, and lives in a teepee. Indigenous peoples from diverse cultures were merged into one universal cultural image, the Plains chief. This stereotype so effectively established the image of the pan-Indian that real "Indians" were not acknowledged as such. In 1886, a group of nine Kwakiutl people from British Columbia on tour in Germany wearing their traditional dress, disappointed their audiences when they were mistaken for Oriental people — they did not have the facial features nor the feathered headdresses of the Imaginary Indian (Francis 1992, 94).

The Wild West shows also reinforced the idea that Indigenous peoples were a conquered race, representing the triumph of civilization over the wilderness. The cowboys always won. There were many Wild West shows, but the most famous was Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show which began in 1883 and lasted until the advent of World War I in 1913. Operated by Colonel William Cody, also known as Buffalo Bill, he capitalized on his storied activities on the western prairies as a Pony Express rider, a military scout, guide, and buffalo hunter. The show toured across Canada in the

summer of 1885, stopping at Ottawa, Kingston, Hamilton, Toronto, and Montreal. The *Toronto Globe* newspaper reported at the time that the enormous show required eighteen train cars to haul the 150 actors and assorted animals which included: Sitting Bull and fifty-two braves, Annie Oakley, and a large herd of buffalo (ibid, 87–88). The show was dramatically previewed by the famous Deadwood stage coach, pierced by bullets and arrows, parading through the streets of the city, pursued by shrieking Indians on horseback. Newspaper articles of the time reported on the "authenticity" of the spectacles and conveyed the belief that the audience was experiencing American history being re-enacted in living colour (Bara 1996, 153). Displays of cowboys defeating Indians provided comfort to a White audience that had been receiving reports of the North-West Rebellion of 1885 in Saskatchewan, led by Métis leader Louis Riel.



Figure 3.2 Wm. Notman & Son. *Sitting Bull and Buffalo Bill, Montreal, QC, 1885.* McCord Museum, Montreal, QC. II-83124



Figure 3.3 Wm. Notman & Son. *Buffalo Bill and his troupe, Montreal, QC, 1885.* McCord Museum, Montreal, QC. II-94132

Sitting Bull signed a four-month contract to tour with the Wild West Show, with his contract including the exclusive right to sell souvenir photographs of himself and to charge a sitting fee to pose for photographs with members of the general public (ibid, 153). During the visit to Montreal,

Buffalo Bill, Sitting Bull, and other members of the troupe commissioned a series of souvenir photographs at the studio of William Notman, examples of which are shown in Figures 3.2 and 3.3. The photographs of Sitting Bull with Buffalo Bill convey a message of cooperation, as both men are standing in a relaxed pose, gazing in the same direction, and holding Cody's rifle. Each man is dressed in the symbols for his dramatic role: Cody with a Stetson hat, riding gear, and a knife on his belt; Sitting Bull with a full-length Plains feathered headdress, a woven sash, and beaded pouch. The Notman Studio provided a woodland setting for the "outdoor" photographs, more representative of central Canada than of the western prairies.

The show crossed the Atlantic to Europe in 1887 where it was performed for more than 30,000 customers per day. Queen Victoria herself attended two of the popular shows, with celebrities of the time often participating in them in cameo roles. It was indeed a spectacle. "Our interpretations of the world are revealed in the way we act" (Cresswell 1996, 157); the enthusiastic attendance at the Wild West Shows in North America and Europe exhibited the desire to be "amused" by the cultures of others who were considered to be inferior.

Interest in the Wild West shows slowly decreased after the turn of the twentieth century, as Indigenous people had been subdued and were not perceived as a threat. The shows "no longer seemed to reflect history in the making" (Francis 1992, 96). Movies replaced the Wild West shows as the vehicle for mass representation of Indigenous peoples. Westerns (a name in itself that reflects the underlying ideology) were based on popular fiction of the nineteenth century, such as books written by Ned Buntline featuring a series of adventure stories based on the deeds of Buffalo Bill (ibid, 89). The movies rose to prominence during the silent era of films from 1894-1929 and featured the classic stereotypes of "cowboys and Indians." They contained violent scenes of Indians attacking and killing settlers, serving to entrench visual stereotypes of Indigenous people in popular culture. Stereotypes can define a group of people, especially when they provide the only "facts" for those who have no direct contact with the people portrayed.

The Hollywood film industry sells entertainment. Dramatic action set in the Wild West with "cowboys and Indians" provided that entertainment — being historically accurate got in the way of a good story. The documentary, *Reel Injun* (2009), addresses the images of Indigenous peoples as presented by Hollywood. It highlights the formation of the pan-Indian image of the Plains chief and the presentation of all North American Indigenous people as belonging to one tribe, the "Indian" tribe. Canadian director Neil Diamond notes that the film was inspired, in part, by his own experiences as a child in Waskaganish, Quebec, where he and other Indigenous children would play "cowboys and Indians" after local screenings of Westerns in their remote community. Diamond remembers that although the children were in fact "Indians," they all wanted to be the cowboys (*Reel Injun* 2009). After Diamond moved south to Ottawa as a student, he was questioned by non-Indigenous people about whether his people lived in teepees, rode horses, and spoke "Indian," causing him to speculate that their preconceptions about Indigenous people were derived from movies. In an interview with a reporter from CBC News, Diamond comments on the prevalence of stereotypes associated with Indigenous people:

I don't think we've seen a film since the late '70s that doesn't have the noble, spiritual native guy. As soon as he started speaking, a flute played or an eagle cried, and I would just cringe every time I heard that, you know: 'Oh my God, here comes the flute; here comes the eagle. I bet this guy is going to say something really important.' So, those stereotypes still exist. It's just so hilarious. (Skenderis 2010)

Diamond notes that his approach to making the documentary was factual and not intended to be angry in tone, as you can keep people watching and learning when the mood is positive. Diamond states that: "It's better to make them laugh or cry than make them angry" (Skenderis 2010).

Government

As part of the government plan for the assimilation of Indigenous people into the dominant European population, children were removed from their families and forced to attend residential schools. In Canada, attendance was compulsory from 1884 to 1948 and the last residential school

closed in 1996. These schools were intended to teach Indigenous children European language, education, and "civilization." Minister of Indian Affairs Frank Oliver stated in 1908 that they would "elevate the Indian from his condition of savagery" and "make him a self-supporting member of the state, and eventually a citizen in good standing" (Henry and Tator 2010, 103). To document the changes that they underwent, photographs were taken of the children both upon arrival and after they were transformed with western-style haircuts and dress. Well-known images include the photographs in Figure 3.4 of Thomas Moore at the Regina Indian Industrial School, Saskatchewan, credited to the Department of Indian Affairs Annual Report of 1897. The "before" photograph presented the "out of place" Indigenous person wearing traditional dress, moccasins, long hair, and holding a gun. The background is unclear, but appears to be a natural setting, whether real or in a studio. The "after" photograph presented the "in place" person, wearing Western clothing, shoes, short hair, and having a clean-cut overall appearance. The background presents a European-style building.



Figure 3.4 *Thomas Moore before and after admission to Regina Indian Industrial School, circa 1897. Saskatchewan Archives Board. R-A8223(1)-(2)*

In more recent times, the Canadian government has used images to continue the stereotype of Indigenous people being as pure as the northern land that they inhabit. Special issues of stamps by

Canada Post, a crown corporation, illustrate this vision. In 1995, a series of five stamps commemorated the fiftieth anniversary of the Arctic Institute of North America. They depicted arctic scenes of happy people in a clean environment, with images inside the postal cover for the stamps depicting smiling, healthy Inuit children holding sled dog puppies. Reality was different. News headlines were filled that year with the tragedy of gas sniffing by the indigenous children of the Northern Quebec community of Davis Inlet:

To say there is also a serious solvent abuse problem amongst young people in the community is an understatement. Young people start gas sniffing at a very early age. This behaviour eventually leads to alcohol addiction and, for many, to fighting, stealing, vandalism, sexual abuse, and much more. (Press 1995, 196)

The Indigenous peoples of Canada continue to be visually connected through government images with nature and the remote North, depicted as living simple carefree lives far removed from the modern urban life of the big city and the majority of Canada's inhabitants.

Indigenous leaders inadvertently contribute to perpetuating stereotypes. At the Crown–First Nations Gathering in January, 2012, Indigenous leaders were encouraged by government officials to wear their regalia. Many obliged by wearing colourful, feathered headdresses, ribbon shirts and beaded buckskins to the events that were covered extensively by the media, with video and photographs subsequently published nationally. Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper and his cabinet did not wear their traditional cultural dress, choosing instead the internationally-accepted business apparel of a suit and tie. The selection of cultural objects as a mode of dress visually sets discussions in the historical past and potentially devalues the opinions of contemporary Indigenous people. Cresswell notes that ideological values are transmitted through the process of differentiation, placing an emphasis on the differences between "us" and "them" to maintain power structures (1996, 153). Canadians viewing the discussions between government leaders and Indigenous leaders were presented with images that accentuated cultural difference between the two groups.

National Identity & Tourism

Beginning in the late 1800s, photographers documented the natural beauty of the Canadian West to encourage settlement and promote tourism, creating romanticized images that appealed to adventurers. Canada's national railway, established in 1881, used the image of the "Indian" to promote tourism and sell seats on its railway cars. It published posters and pamphlets featuring the natural wonders of Canada's West, providing free rail passage to photographers and artists to entice them to create the images for marketing this national identity of rugged nature. In addition to capturing the landscape, photographers also portrayed Indigenous villages near the railway line, offering these photographs for sale as souvenirs. In 1894, with passengers delayed in Banff for several hours, the railway invited local Indigenous people to perform traditional dances and compete in rodeo events for the amusement of the stranded passengers. Begun by accident, the popular show became an annual event, *Banff Indian Days*, which continued until 1978, when it was deemed politically incorrect. Figure 3.5 displays an image by German photographer, Felix Man, of



Figure 3.5 Felix H. Man. *Stoney Indian chiefs. Banff Indian Days, Banff, AB. 1933.* Library and Archives Canada, PA-145954

the event from 1933, showing members of the Stoney band dressed in full-length feathered headdresses, mounted on decorated horses, with the majestic backdrop of the Rocky Mountains.

Banff Indian Days was revived as a cultural gathering in 2004 by members of the Stoney Nakoda First Nation as a four-day event commemorating the Sundance of the Stoney people. Local Stoney artist, Roland Rollinmud, revived the event to provide an opportunity for young Indigenous people to learn about their cultural heritage. At the annual event in 2011, Rollinmud stated that "we have one foot in the past and one in the future" (Gale 2011). Rollinmud was commissioned by Parks

Canada to create a large mural that was placed at the entrance to the renovated Cave and Basin Historical Site in Banff, Alberta in 2013. The mural, in Figure 3.6, depicts three members of the Stoney Nation climbing down into the cave of the hot spring. The figures are muscular and scantily dressed, wearing only a loin cloth and some feathers in their hair, portraying the stereotypical image of the



Figure 3.6 Roland Rollinmud. Mural at Cave and Basin Historical Site, Banff, Alberta, 2013. Source: thecragandcanyon.ca

"Indian," this time created by a contemporary Indigenous artist.

Since 2004, the Stoney Nation has invested heavily in tourism, opening a casino as the first phase of the Stoney Nakoda Resort & Casino in 2008, with the resort opening the following year. The complex is located 75 kilometers from Calgary and 60 kilometers from Banff. The three bands that comprise the Stoney Nation were anticipating the creation of over 200 jobs, 40% of which would be assigned to Indigenous people, and generating up to \$25 million a year from the project (CBC News 2008). The website for the resort shows a Teepee Village⁶ that was erected near the resort's entrance, with the explanation that it is intended to give the Stoney Nakoda people "a place to honor their past, to allow for the community's cultural ceremonies and educational opportunities for their children" and also "allows visitors the opportunity to experience and learn more about the Stoney Nation people, culture and traditions" (Stoney Nakoda 2015).

The activities of the Stoney Nation reflect Rolinmud's comment about looking to the past and the future: it has reinvented the historical *Banff Indian Days* event, while developing its land to generate income from tourism. The imagery that was originally encouraged by White promoters to

⁶ The Teepee Village may be viewed at <http://www.stoneynakodaresort.com/hotel/teepee-village>

boost attendance at the former tourist event is now being used by Indigenous people as a source of income.

Felix Man, photographer of the image in Figure 3.6, was a German photojournalist who spent seven months in Canada in 1933 taking photographs with the intention of commercial resale in Germany. His emphasis was on portraying his image of the remote wilderness of Canada and not the urbanized areas that in reality was home to the majority of the population. He held romanticized notions of Canada from his childhood readings of the Wild West-themed books written by German author, Karl May. "Imagined geographies are products of representational practices that transform 'space' on the ground into 'place' in the mind" (Schwartz 2011b, 4). The photographs created by Felix Man were of real landscapes, but the emotions that they evoked were manipulated through his selection of images portrayed. He purposely depicted Canada as a wild and vast landscape, one that was remote, snowy, and populated with "Indians" in a natural setting. The Indigenous peoples of Canada were being re-imagined by Felix Man through the power of images to reinforce their "place" as being part of the landscape of wilderness and nature.

The imagined geographies created through the images by Felix Man in the 1930s are reflected in contemporary times through the selection of artworks for sale by the art galleries that specialize in generic "Native" art, such as the Bay of Spirits Gallery at 156 Front Street West in Toronto. This gallery is located near the downtown railway station, the CN Tower, the theatre district, and other major tourist attractions. As such, the gallery's selection of art tends to cater to tourists and offers stereotypical representations of art, promoting pieces that are easily labelled as "Native" and are used to market aspects associated with Canada:

Our focus is Canadian Indian Art which encompasses northwest art from the Haida, wood art including talking sticks, masks, and west coast prints. Native Indian art from the Iroquois which include some Native Americans. Our native art from aboriginal artists include the first nation groups of Ojibway art, Iroquois art, Inuit art, Haida art, other Canadian art as well. ... Whether you are coming to purchase a painting from the native group of seven, exploring Canadian Aboriginal culture, or looking for a gift such as a dream catcher you will enjoy your time spent in the gallery. (Bay of Spirits Gallery)

Items bearing motifs associated with historical "Native art" continue to be marketed to visitors to Canada and promote the stereotype of the "Indian" as being representational of the country of Canada.

The stereotype of the "savage" living in a natural environment is also present in contemporary tourism advertising, as noted by Daniel Francis when referring to a Canadian tourism ad placed in an American magazine in 1992⁷. It features a misty scene with three people wearing Indigenous West Coast apparel and masks. The text begins with "our native peoples have been entertaining visitors for centuries" and continues with colourful language connecting Indigenous people with spiritual and supernatural aspects of the land. The Indigenous person is being used to present Canada as a natural place of mystery (Francis 1992, 187-8), reaffirming that his/her place is a part of nature and is fixed in the historical past.

Sports & Marketing

The early decades of the twentieth century saw many products associated with Indigenous people: motor vehicles, perfume, beer, and food brands. Images began appearing in venues such as magazines, billboards, and supermarkets, making the "Indian" an icon of consumer culture (Francis 1992, 175). The images often represented perceived attributes of the Indigenous person, such as strength, courage, or a connection with nature. Sports teams were named and continue to be named after Indigenous groups to reflect "the courage, ferocity, strength and agility of the Indian" (Francis 1992, 174). The far-reaching and often subliminal power of advertising serves to reinforce the stereotype of the Imaginary Indian. Indigenous stereotypes continue throughout popular culture, as seen by the continued associations between the names and mascots of sports teams and aspects of traditional Indigenous culture. Awareness has been raised of this inappropriate practice, with many

⁷ "The Sophisticated Traveller", *The New York Times Magazine*, part 2 (May 17, 1992), p.2-3.

teams undergoing a rebranding process that began in earnest in the 1980s. Indigenous people, including artists, are now taking an active role to challenge team names that seem "traditional" and "normal" to the mainstream population due to their longevity.

Psychologist Michael Friedman identifies the continued use of dictionary-defined racist slurs in team names, for example "redskins," as a public health issue due to their connection with low self-esteem, in addition to being a question of morality. He emphasizes that the Indigenous population is vulnerable, as indicated by unfavourable physical and mental health statistics. The word "redskins" is government-defined harassment (for example, when used by adults in a work environment), bullying (when used by children), or a hate crime (when used in the process of a crime against an Indigenous person). Friedman stresses that the use of the word is not a victimless crime, nor is discussion of its use simply one of political correctness (Friedman n.d.; Friedman 2013).

Misguided thinking continues in the contemporary naming of sports teams, with two recent examples coming from Ottawa. A new basketball team was added to the NBL Canada league for the 2013-2014 season, with the announcement of the team name, the "Ottawa Tomahawks," in February, 2013. The swift outcry that the name was culturally insensitive to Indigenous peoples resulted in the announcement in April, 2013 that the team would be renamed the "Ottawa Skyhawks." Another example, again from Ottawa, involves the amateur football club named the Nepean Redskins. The club announced in September, 2013 that it would select a new team name, logo, and colours at the end of the 2013 season in November as the result of a human rights complaint that had been filed several weeks earlier by Indigenous musician Ian Campeau. He alleged that the Redskins name was racist, bringing discussion about the team's name onto the public stage. "If it was the Blackskins or Yellowskins this wouldn't even be a conversation," said Campeau, "but for the Redskins I have to file a human rights complaint. It's ludicrous" (Cobb 2013). The stereotype of the aggressive, well-muscled "savage" is still associated with favourable attributes in sports.

A normative geography that disadvantages Indigenous people is being reinforced through the power of images. Most people follow taken-for-granted rules of place and what is "proper." By their repetition, we reinforce established norms of behaviour (Cresswell 1996, 165). It is only through their repeated transgression by many people acting "out of place" that new rules of normality are written. Transgressions of stereotypes as to how an Indigenous person is expected to look and behave are found within many of the artworks created by contemporary Indigenous artists.

Chapter 4

The Place of Indigenous Art and Artists

Defining "Indigenous" Art

In the twentieth century, consumer markets were cultivated by the Canadian government for objects associated with Indigenous culture. The objects were re-labelled as "art" instead of the museum classification of "artifacts," increasing their market value and providing an income for newly-established artists within Indigenous communities.

Academics, such as Bhabha, support cultural difference (the process of practicing culture) but discount the concept of cultural diversity (an object of empirical knowledge) (Bhabha 1988, 18). Cultural difference recognizes that groups of people choose to follow a variety of cultural practices as part of the way they lead their lives; these practices serve to differentiate them from other groups. Cultural diversity is defined externally by others who assign traits and scopes to cultural groups. In the 1950s, the Canadian government marketed cultural diversity through the production and sale of objects deemed to be culturally "authentic," facilitated by the establishment of Inuit arts and crafts distribution centres in the North and an accompanying manual that outlined suggestions for themes and techniques for artists to follow to maximize the sale of their goods to the White consumer market in the South. By the end of the 1950s, the Inuit arts co-operative movement was well-established with a national and international marketing program in place to promote the works as art and not as "souvenirs of a dying culture." Quality control was maintained by a supervising government employee who destroyed items prior to distribution that did not meet the required level of "primitiveness" promoted in the market (Hill 1984, 19). The art was initially anonymously produced by communities but over the years the co-operatives began to recognize and promote individual artists, producing many well-known Northern artists of today. These include Annie Pootoogook and Shuvinai Ashoona—both of these artists had their artwork included in the *Sakahàn International*

Indigenous Art Exhibition held at the NGC in 2013. The work of Ashoona is described by curator Sandra Dyck at the Carleton University Art Gallery (CUAG) as being able to seamlessly move "between the past and present, actual and imagined, and interior and external worlds" and that her drawings "are born of a singular and poignant vision that was forged in, but transcends, a specific place—Cape Dorset" (CUAG 2009). These artists created their own style to depict their life in Indigenous communities of the Northern Territories, often using materials not associated with "native" art, such as pencil crayons, to create images that range from whimsical to intense, including depictions of family violence. These artists are challenging their "place" in the art world as individuals who reflect personal elements of their cultural environment in their work, and not as representatives of a culture that has been externally defined by others.

The civil rights movements of the 1960s influenced Indigenous people in Canada to redouble efforts to reclaim control of their lives from the colonial government. This attitude of self-determination flowed more slowly into the life of Indigenous artists who "appeared to be satisfied with minority status as Indians and as artists" (Hill 1984, 20) with no reflection in their art of social or political commentary. The Canadian art establishment did begin to recognize the talents of individual Indigenous artists, such as Bill Reid and Norval Morrisseau, who gained national prominence through their artworks. Commercially successful, their styles incorporated elements of historical Indigenous culture, with their pieces following a recognizable theme and being readily labelled and marketed as "Native art." The 1960s were a time in Canada's history when the population at large was seeking a national identity, one that became more closely aligned with the perceived values of the "authentic" Indigenous lifestyle. The art-buying public enthusiastically purchased work that reflected a Canadian motif. As Margaret Atwood asks in *Survival* (1972), "The problem is what do you do for a past if you are white, relatively new to a continent, and rootless?" Communing with nature became popular and dress incorporated elements of historical "Indian" and Western garb, such as fringed deer hide jackets, sashes, head bands, long straight hair, and bare feet. Indigenous people were now in fashion,

"in place," in the Canadian consciousness and hippy culture of the 1960s. But it was the stereotype of the "Indian" that was being embraced.

The Royal Tour by the Prince of Wales of Canada in 1860, colonial exhibitions, and major tourism sites such as those in Banff and Niagara Falls, had all featured Indigenous people as spectacle. With the new civil rights consciousness of the 1960s, this was something to be avoided when creating the Indian Pavilion of Expo 67, celebrating one hundred years since the confederation of Canada. Rutherford and Miller argue that past government displays of Indigeneity had meant demonstrating the success of assimilation programs. The Indian Pavilion, however, came to symbolize a transitional phase in Indigenous representation, telling the realistic story of the impact of colonization (2006, 153-54). Establishing the Indian Pavilion in a space separate from the government pavilion was a start to recognizing the uniqueness of Indigenous people. The location, however, was distant from the Canadian Government pavilion and beside the United Nations and Christian pavilions. Symbolically, Indigenous people were of, but not in, the country of Canada of the 1960s (158). Tom Hill, however, remembers the initial meeting of the Expo 67 Indigenous artists (which included George Clutesi, Noel Wuttunee, Gerald Tailfeathers, Ross Woods, Alex Janvier, Tom Hill, Norval Morrisseau, Francis Kagige, and Jean-Marie Gros-Louis) as "the first time that First Nations artists from across Canada came together and shared their concerns" (cited in Rutherford and Miller 2006, 159). This was a positive step towards Indigenous artists taking control of their place in Canadian society.

The political environment of the 1970s was fuelled by the Canadian government's controversial 1969 White Paper and saw the formation of "The Group of Seven." This group lasted for approximately five years in the early 1970s and was comprised of Indigenous artists who made a political statement through the group's name—which paralleled the iconic White "Group of Seven" artists of the 1920s and 30s—while organizing exhibitions and developing a strategy to promote the individual artists to the Canadian public. In 1978, the first Native Artist Conference was held on

Manitoulin Island. Discussion groups involving Indigenous artists and representatives from cultural institutions and government agencies raised dissension, as practices by the institutions were challenged. "It became apparent that Indian art had still not attained the status of genuine art among the Canadian art establishment" (Hill 1984, 27). It was recognized that Indigenous artists were beginning to present an "Indian consciousness" in their work, reflecting the realities of their human condition. Hill asks the key question as to whether this practice "inhibits Indian art's credibility for an art gallery, relegating the work to an anthropological museum?" (ibid, 27). Fortunately, the passage of time has provided a favourable answer to his question. The National Gallery of Canada hosted the 1992 exhibition, *Land Spirit Power*, featuring eighteen Indigenous artists from Canada and the United States to mark the Christopher Columbus quincentennial. 1992 also saw *INDIGENA* mounted at the Canadian Museum of Civilization, a multimedia exhibition of Indigenous artists that marked the 500th anniversary of Columbus' "discovery" of the Americas. The marketing campaign used phrases such as, "Perhaps if they'd stolen your land, your culture, and your spirit, you'd paint a different picture of history, too," and "You cannot discover an inhabited land. Otherwise I would cross the Atlantic and 'discover' England" (McNulty 2014). These exhibitions featuring Indigenous artists challenged the "place" of Indigenous peoples as no longer "savages" waiting to be discovered and civilized, but as individuals who play a role in all levels of contemporary society.

Challenging Stereotypes Through Images

The Indigenous people of Canada are reclaiming their voice by creating visual representations of their culture that was formerly reserved for anthropologists and non-Indigenous documentary filmmakers. The Inuit have told their story through the production of a mockumentary, *Qallunaat: Why White People Are Funny* (2006), whereby Inuit "scientists" wearing white lab coats explore the White Man's culture, using similar techniques used by White people when investigating the Inuit culture. Although their findings are presented humorously, adopting the approach advocated

by Thomas King and Neil Diamond that humour is a better mode of communication than anger, the underlying message is a comment on the impact of European colonialism on Inuit culture. They have used the reflexive strategy of documentary representation that "upsets norms, alters conventions, and draws the viewer's attention" (Nichols 1991, 69). Their "traditional" cultural landscape is reconfigured through film and re-presented to White audiences. Meaning is attached to space through the practice of people who act according to common sense beliefs of what is appropriate for that space, giving their actions meaning (Cresswell 1996, 17). This process can and does change over time through the use of transgressions such as the Inuit "scientists."

The Grand Council of the Crees has asserted the Cree voice through images. Formed in 1974 by the James Bay Cree in response to their legal battle with Hydro Quebec and the Quebec government over the massive James Bay hydroelectric project, this council united nine small, remote communities in a common cause and created a form of government based on Indigenous values. The 1996 film, *Power: One River, Two Nations*, directed by Magnus Isacson, documented their successful struggle against James Bay II, the second phase of the James Bay Project. As of 2010, the Cree are telling their own story through a series of four ninety-minute documentaries to be released on their website. The first film is entitled *Together We Stand Firm* and features extensive interviews with the ten leaders from the 1970s, connecting the Cree oral cultural tradition with digital technology to tell their story to the world. Iris Young states that democratic societies often do not live up to their promise, with political inequality resulting in social and economic inequality (2000, 15). By asserting political control over Cree territory, Indigenous people have been able to regain social and economic control. The power of images has contributed to their ability to reclaim a strong, positive identity and to improve their "place" in the social hierarchy.

The CBC four-part production, *8th Fire*, focuses on the life of urban Indigenous people from different walks of life. In the first episode, "Indigenous in the City," many Canadians say they have never met an Indigenous person. They probably have, but they just don't recognize them as

Indigenous. The news is filled with images of Indigenous people in substandard conditions, such as those living on many of the remote reserves, and residents of cities with high Indigenous populations, such as Winnipeg, see Indigenous people on the street who have ongoing issues with addictions. Socially and economically successful Indigenous people are invisible. Physically, their appearance is similar to people of Asian heritage, their dress is contemporary, and they lead unremarkable lives in common with most middle-class Canadians, unlikely to attract the attention of news headlines. Thomas King questions the insidiousness of the stereotype of the Indian: "How can something that has never existed—the Indian—have form and power while something that is alive and kicking—Indians—are invisible?" (2003, 53). In 1995, Thomas King decided to photograph Indigenous artists, setting off on a road trip across North America. Confronted with the life-size statue of Will Rogers in a parking lot in Oklahoma, he mused that the famous man that he knew to be Cherokee did not *look* "Indian," and wondered how people would know that his photographs of Indigenous artists were indeed of "Indians" (ibid, 41-42). King elaborates on the stereotypes of Indigenous people as viewed by the dominant society:

Dead Indians are dignified, noble, silent, suitably garbed. And dead. Live Indians are invisible, unruly, disappointing. And breathing. One is a romantic reminder of a heroic but fictional past. The other is simply an unpleasant, contemporary surprise. (King 2012, 66)

8th Fire features many Indigenous artists who make political statements against colonization and stereotypes. Steve Keewatin Sanderson is a comic book artist who enjoys debunking the notion that as an Indigenous artist he would only draw buffaloes—instead he incorporates Indigenous superheroes into his work. His father and grandfather both attended residential schools and this has influenced his work. The first comic book he wrote and illustrated, *Darkness Calls*, is about teen suicide in the Indigenous community. It has been converted into an animatic film in the Gitksan language from Northwest Canada and he plans to also create one in the Cree language and other tribal languages as an intervention for suicide awareness in Indigenous communities (Farris 2009). Angela Sterritt is an Indigenous CBC reporter based in Yellowknife and is also an artist and a writer who

worked as a producer on two of the *8th Fire* episodes. Her art incorporates traditional Indigenous formline aspects into a contemporary style that she uses to express the strength of Indigenous people and women in particular.

An arts-related outreach program has been initiated by three Indigenous business partners: actor Adam Beach, film producer Jeremy Torrie, and reporter, Jim Compton. Their company, Bandwidth Digital Releasing, is modeled to generate profits by setting up pop-up screenings of first-run films on reserves to support the non-profit Adam Beach Film Institute. The company website describes Bandwidth as:

a movie distribution and exhibition venture to promote and release Hollywood studio movies, Aboriginal and Indigenous feature films in Canada and the United States. It takes a tried and true model used by musicians and traveling roadshow events such as fairs, circuses, and in more cultural terms—pow wows—and applies it to the cinematic experience. (Bandwidth 2014)

The institute is in the preliminary stages of raising funds to support its goal of providing training on set for Indigenous students in the film industry, with the grand vision of eventually establishing studios that produce movies and television shows that provide employment and creative outlets for its Indigenous students and graduates (Sinclair 2014). The first screening was launched on April 11, 2014 at the Brokenhead Ojibway Nation, a reserve located 82 kilometers north of Winnipeg. This project presents blockbuster movies, but also showcases the work of Indigenous artists in the film industry to other Indigenous people, establishing and reinforcing positive role models that transgress "natural" practice and attitudes internalized by those who hold a disadvantaged place in society, as theorized by Bourdieu.

Transgressive acts are now being performed by contemporary Indigenous artists, as expressed through their artwork, to reclaim power. In the words of Indigenous scholar Taiaiake Alfred, "The time for blaming the white man, the far away and long ago, is over" (2009a, 61).

Chapter 5

Sakahàn International Indigenous Art Exhibition

My people will sleep for one hundred years, and when they awake it will be the artists who give them back their spirit. (Louis Riel, July 4, 1885)

There is a growing number of art exhibitions across Canada featuring the work of contemporary Indigenous artists. These exhibitions feature artists who express their individual identity as artists through their work, and not necessarily as members of a cultural group. Major exhibitions such as the 2013 *Sakahàn International Indigenous Art Exhibition* at the National Gallery of Canada provide the message to attendees that Indigenous art is wide ranging in style and is not readily representative of an externally-defined culture. The artists are individuals who reflect their personal background and cultural environment. Additionally, many contemporary Indigenous artists incorporate political statements in their artworks to challenge the ongoing stereotypes that assign Indigenous people to their "place" in society.

During a "Meet the Curator" session at the NGC during *Sakahàn*, curator Greg Hill gave an overview of the immense effort involved to mount the exhibition: an international curatorial advisory committee guided the efforts of the team of three curators, and most of the 150 staff members at the National Gallery were involved at some point during the three year process. It is the largest exhibition that the NGC has ever done and to devote the immense amount of space and resources to contemporary art is one thing, but to do it for contemporary Indigenous art is a substantial commitment, alluding to the history of the representation of Indigenous art in Canada as a history to be overcome. The international community of Indigenous artists enthusiastically supported the exhibition, with over 30 of them in attendance for the opening ceremonies. Exhibiting artist Ingunn Utsi travelled from Norway and stayed for several weeks in Ottawa before and after the opening of the exhibition. In a personal interview with Utsi, she explained that she had been the committee

leader representing Sámi Land (home to the Indigenous people of northern Scandinavia) for the *Arts from the Arctic* international exhibition of 1993. She described that exhibition as comprised of five travelling exhibitions, each with 20 to 25 art pieces by Indigenous artists from each of the five participating regions (Alaska, Greenland, Russia, Sámi Land, and Canada).⁸ The planning and execution for the *Arts from the Arctic* had taken ten years and Utsi fully appreciated the efforts that were taken to mount *Sakahàn*, saying that seeing the 2013 exhibition come together had brought her to tears.

Hill primed the gallery attendees at the beginning of his "Meet the Curator" tour, preparing them for a selection of Indigenous artworks that was perhaps different than what they had been anticipating. He prompted: "There are different ways of looking at things. When you see [an artwork] as an example of contemporary Indigenous art, what do you think? What comes to your mind? When you walk into this space, do you see what you expected or are you surprised?" (Hill 2013). The only criterion for an artwork to be classified as "Indigenous" by the curators was that the artist self-identified as being Indigenous, otherwise there was nothing intrinsic to the artwork itself to link it to any cultural style. The opening ceremonies of the *Sakahàn Exhibition* included an artists' question-and-answer session, with 23 of the exhibiting artists in attendance. Robert Houle, a *Sakahàn* artist based in Toronto, commented on the term "Indigenous," saying that it bothers him that they [Indigenous people] are always defined by others, particularly by members of the dominant society. For Greg Hill, the term "Indigenous" has a pragmatic use, as a general term. Hill drew an analogy of the term "Indigenous" to being like a container garden. The container serves to group plants together, yet each plant is unique; they grow and bloom individually and have a beauty and presence unique to that plant. The term "Indigenous" is a container, but the roots of the plants extend down, ultimately breaking beyond the confines of the box (*Sakahàn Artist Q&A*, 2013).

⁸ Irene Snarby notes in the *Sakahàn* catalogue that there were a total of 530 artworks by approximately 200 Indigenous artists included in the *Arts from the Arctic* travelling exhibition.

The curators selected works by artists who came from varied backgrounds: some were acclaimed and commercially successful, while others were relatively unknown in the art world; some had formal art education, while others were self-taught. The artists came from countries beyond those of the Western world: India, Japan, Taiwan, Samoa, Kenya, Mexico, Guatemala, Brazil, Columbia, Finland, Norway, and Greenland. Lalonde writes that in Canada international Indigenous art exchanges have primarily occurred with the United States, Australia, and New Zealand (2013, 16). This situation reflects our ongoing Eurocentric view of the world, as the dominant cultures of these countries were all established by immigration from Great Britain. They share the world language of English, a common language used for the publication and dissemination of ideas, which serves as a vehicle to reinforce the Eurocentric view of the world. Artists from all of the listed sixteen countries were represented at *Sakahàn*, expanding beyond the four countries traditionally used as sources of Indigenous artworks.

Artworks were grouped by themes that surfaced when viewing images of the artworks during the curatorial selection sessions, including: self-representation; histories and encounters; the value of the handmade; and the impact of physical violence and societal trauma (Lalonde 2013, 18). The artists expressed their indigeneity uniquely through their art, with certain aspects playing more prominent roles for some than for others—a reflection of their lived experiences. Greg Hill notes in the afterword of the *Sakahàn* catalogue that "Indigenous art can be a celebration of culture and identity as well as a tool for education and renewal. It is always political" (2013, 137). The colonial attitudes that shaped the dominant society in Canada continue to exist and impact the lives of Indigenous artists, with political tones introduced into many of their artworks.

The work of Kent Monkman was featured in the *Sakahàn Exhibition*. He is a multimedia artist based in Toronto who challenges the colonial relationship and cross-dresses as the character "Miss Chief Eagle Testickle," questioning colonized sexuality. In the past, Indigenous culture was more open to diverse sexuality than it is now, although it still includes the concept of two-spirited

people—those who express aspects of both male and female spirituality. A full-size teepee was erected a few steps inside the entrance to the exhibition, part of Monkman's installation entitled *Boudoir de Berdashe* (2007), shown below in Figure 5.1. The teepee represented a blending of the historical Indigenous lifestyle with that of European immigrants; its fabric shell, made of brocade edged with a fringe, housed items belonging to Monkman's alter ego Miss Chief. Originating from



Figure 5.1 Kent Monkman. *Boudoir de Berdashe*, 2007. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. Photo © NGC.

nineteenth century European culture, the items included a crystal chandelier, a chaise longue, birch bark Louis Vuitton suitcases, and a Hudson's Bay blanket. Miss Chief's "beaded moccasins" were also in the teepee—hot pink, high-heeled, platform shoes decorated with traditional beadwork. A silent film featuring Miss Chief, "Shooting Geronimo," was screened within the teepee. The artist's messages are many and varied, with Monkman commenting on sexual and social aspects brought to the fore by the collision of Indigenous and European cultures.

Working in another medium, acrylic on canvas, Monkman uses nineteenth-century oil paintings as a backdrop to reinterpret their romanticized scenes of Indigenous peoples and the North American landscape. The original paintings that Monkman bases his work on were created by renowned artists such as Paul Kane, George Catlin and Albert Bierstadt and are displayed prominently in galleries around the world, continuing to tell the Eurocentric version of history. The painters followed the European style of painting that was popular at the time; the recognizable style ensured commercial success for the artists but also served to entrench romantic images of nature and the noble savage. Monkman, an Indigenous artist who is now painting his own story of the frontier, challenges the nineteenth-century messages and reverses the colonial gaze, with the Indigenous artist now examining European ways. Monkman's painting, *The Triumph of Mischief* (2007), was included in the 2013 *Sakahàn International Indigenous Art Exhibition* at the NGC. This painting, and several others that Monkman has constructed along this theme, include the flamboyant, cross-dressing character of Miss Chief. *The Triumph of Mischief* depicts a pandemonic scene of nude and semi-nude Indigenous and Black men, clothed White men, cherubs, satyrs and other mythical creatures in a meadow set against a reproduced Bierstadt background of soaring granite mountains and misty forests. The nineteenth-century Albert Bierstadt painting that it was modeled on, *Looking Up the Yosemite Valley* (c.1863-75), is displayed below in Figure 5.2, followed by Kent Monkman's contemporary painting, *The Triumph of Mischief* (2007) in Figures 5.3 and 5.4.

The Bierstadt painting is undated, but estimations are that *Looking Up the Yosemite Valley* was painted between 1863 and 1875, following the completion of trails that opened up the area for visitors. Yosemite was classified as a national park in 1890, with efforts to protect its natural beauty beginning in 1864. Paintings created by artists such as Bierstadt represented the West as an idyllic place, a paradise created by God, further reinforcing the imperial concept of Manifest Destiny and the domination of Indigenous peoples by newly-arrived settlers. Paintings of this genre represented Indigenous people as a part of nature and helped to entrench the stereotype of the "noble savage."



Figure 5.2 Albert Bierstadt. *Looking Up the Yosemite Valley*, c.1863-75, The Haggin Museum, Stockton, California.



Figure 5.3 Kent Monkman. *The Triumph of Mischief*, 2007, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. Photo © NGC.

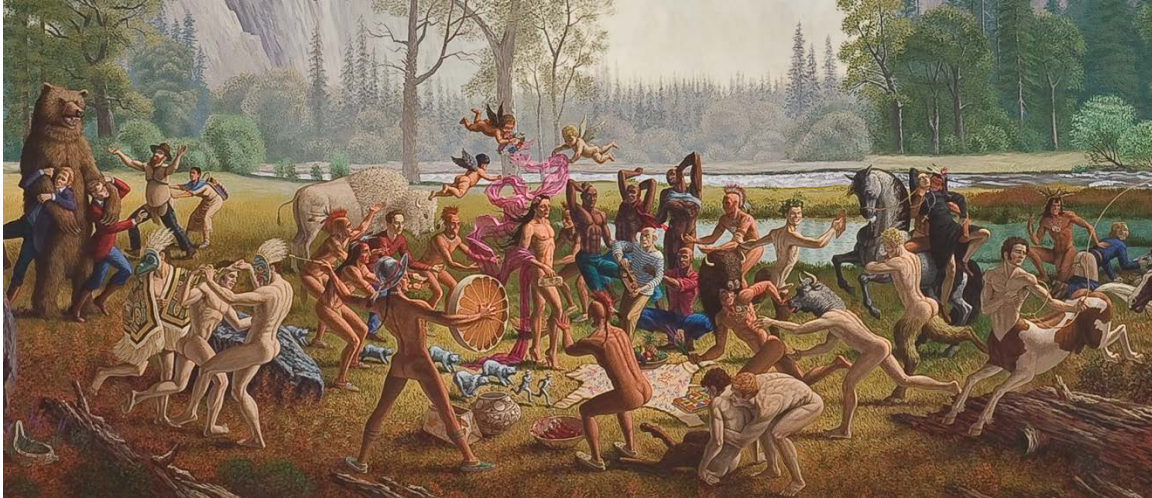


Figure 5.4 Kent Monkman. *The Triumph of Mischief* (detail), 2007, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. Photo © NGC.

Monkman introduces his own stories into the image to deconstruct enduring myths relating to male, Indigenous, and Canadian national identity, describing his painting as "a pagan celebration of homosexuality in honour of my berdache⁹ alter ego, Miss Chief Eagle Testickle" (NGC Magazine 2013). The character of Miss Chief is the centre of attention, with cherubs hovering overhead and the movement of most of the other figures flowing towards this figure. The scant apparel that Miss Chief is wearing is flamboyant: a long piece of pink fabric is draped over his arm and carried upwards by the cherubs, accessorized by high-heeled pink shoes, a clutch purse, and a pink flower in his hair. This dramatic depiction of an Indigenous person contravenes all the historical stereotypes while introducing the concept of the Two-Spirit Person—someone who holds both masculine and feminine spirits. Monkman explored Indigenous cultural history and found that prior to the introduction of Christianity, homosexuality and two-spirited people were generally accepted and sometimes revered for having special powers, but this aspect of Indigenous culture had not been portrayed by the prominent eighteenth-century romantic painters (Mason 2012). Monkman colourfully addresses this historical omission in his contemporary work through the character of Miss Chief.

⁹ The word *berdashe* is thought to come from the Arab word *bardaj*, or slave. The romantic languages adopted the word to mean catamite, or "a boy used for unnatural purposes," in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Other Indigenous figures in the scene incorporate symbols of Indianness: wearing a buffalo head and beads, hair that is braided and/or worn in a mohawk, feathers in hair, and loin cloths. A missionary wearing black robes and a cross is being held in a sexual position by an Indian warrior on a horse, reversing cultural roles and introducing memories of the sexual abuse sustained by Indigenous people resulting from efforts to convert them to Christianity and teach them the ways of "civilization." Adjacent to these figures is an Indian man holding several pieces of long-stemmed vegetation, some of which he has already placed inside the bare rear end of a White man kneeling on the grass. An analogy may be playfully drawn to the "intrusions" made by European naturalists in the eighteenth century, as they travelled around the world to seek out and classify specimens. Pratt refers to contact zones being made "a site of intellectual as well as manual labor" by Europeans pursuing natural history (1992, 27), establishing the difference between the two types of labour and who would perform each one. Further connections to nature are made through a vignette that shows an Indian woman holding back a White man who is attempting to rescue two other White men from the firm grip of an oversized bear. A pack of bears is seen chasing two White men through another section of the scene. These two narratives reverse the gaze from the colonial settler to the Indigenous person and nature, whereby "nature" may be seen to be fighting back against the intruders.

Christine Lalonde notes that cultural, social, and sexual transgressions occur in the painting (2013, 24) and the link between place and behaviour is fundamentally changed from an "*assumed, natural, common-sense and unquestioned* relationship to a *demande, normal, and established* relationship that has been questioned" (Cresswell 1996, 49). The viewer of the painting is forced to think about that which was formerly assumed as the correct "place" for Indigenous people. "The appropriate is defined by the inappropriate" (ibid). *The Triumph of Mischief* includes many examples of the inappropriate, focusing attention on and raising questions as to which aspects of the two paintings, the nineteenth-century Bierstadt and the twenty-first-century Monkman, depict reality. Monkman's heritage is multiracial, being of Swampy Cree and English/Irish descent. He creates

representations of the two cultures that embody him, but he first defines himself as an artist and then defines the interaction of the two cultures (Mason 2012). Monkman's outlook aligns with the thesis of this paper, being a person who is an artist first, who then challenges stereotypes by creating images that question preconceived notions of the "place" of Indigenous people held by the Canadian population at large. Monkman's artwork does not follow a prescribed format that defines it as "Indigenous," yet its political content hints at the artist's Indigenous heritage.

"A Tribe Called Red" is an Indigenous techno music group based in Ottawa. The group's music is described as contemporary pow wow music for the urban Indigenous person, but attracts a mainstream crowd with its blend of hip hop, dance hall, drumming, and chanting. The popular music is an electronic fusion of Indigenous cultural elements with contemporary music forms. The group's name serves to contest stereotypes of the Indigenous person, first as the "Red Man," and second as the generalized pan-Indian that groups all Indigenous people as belonging to one tribe instead of many different ones. One of the three members of "A Tribe Called Red" is Ian Campeau, the Indigenous activist referred to in Chapter 3 who is involved in the campaign to change the name of the Ottawa amateur football club, the Nepean Redskins. Another member of this group, Bear Witness, displayed a video installation as part of the Canadian Museum of Civilization's partner exhibition, *Indigenous and Urban*, for the 2013 *Sakahàn International Indigenous Art Exhibition*. Both the name of the music group and the name of the artist make a cultural and political statement that is reflected in the five-minute video installation titled *Indigenous Power* (2012). The video features scenes of primitive, aggressive behaviour from commercial footage portraying Indigenous characters portraying them as brawny "savages": *A Clockwork Orange*, *Rambo*, *Avatar*, and WWF wrestling. The wall text for the exhibit notes that, "He remixes images and sounds from North American media and popular culture to create videos that explore stereotypical representations of Aboriginal people." This view is reinforced by Neil Diamond, director of the documentary *Reel Injun* (2009) that examines the portrayal of Hollywood "Indians," as he believes that the recent success of the film *Avatar* in 2009 shows how

strong an influence the myths of the primitive "savage" have over storytellers. Diamond playfully renames *Avatar* as "Dances with Pocahontas in Space" (Skenderis 2010), referring to the stereotypical portrayals of Indigenous peoples in *Dances with Wolves*, Disney's *Pocahontas*, and *Avatar*.

The members of "A Tribe Called Red" are politically engaged, as shown by the group's choice of name, the music that they create, the community activism of Ian Campeau, the stage name of Bear Witness and the theme of his video art. The title of the band's second album, *Nation II Nation*, refers to relations between Indigenous people and the European settlers, drawing on phrasing used in treaty-making between them. The inner jacket of the album displays the government-issued Indian Status cards of each band member, accompanied by the words: "After what happened in the last hundred years, the simple fact we are here today is a political statement. As First Nations people everything we do is political." Bear Witness explains that the words refer to the lack of control that Indigenous people historically had over their own image, but they are now able to take control of that image and show the general population who they are (Birnie 2013). The band has performed overseas, where they are not necessarily defined as being Indigenous. Campeau comments that "a lot of people dig the music. It's always our first goal, to get people to dance" (Birnie 2013), unconcerned as an artist that the foreign audience is not aware of the political message, as long as they enjoy the music. Indigenous stereotypes do creep in through enthusiastic fans who attend concerts wearing headdresses and war paint, unaware that they are appropriating elements of Indigenous culture. A tweet from the band in June, 2013 stated: "Non Natives that come to our shows, we need to talk. Please stop wearing headdresses and war paint. It's insulting."¹⁰ The band members exemplify how their Indigenous identity affects every part of their life, from private to public and using multiple forms of media, as they negotiate a new "place" in the social fabric of modern Canada.

¹⁰ The tweet from the band's Twitter feed may be viewed at <https://twitter.com/atribecalledred/status/341205589025779712>. The unwelcome adoption of primitive stereotypes by their fans illustrates the potential pitfalls that can occur when Indigenous people unintentionally perpetuate negative stereotypes through their attempts to overthrow them.

Bear Thomas is the off-stage name of Bear Witness, video artist and one of the members of "A Tribe Called Red." Bear's father, Ottawa photographer Jeff Thomas, is also an Indigenous artist whose work was included in *Sakahàn*. He identifies himself as an urban-Iroquois, as his parents and grandparents were born on the Six Nations reserve in Ontario and left to find work in Buffalo, New York, where he was born. In the 1997 documentary, *Shooting Indians: A Journey with Jeffrey Thomas*, he expresses his reasons for using photography as a medium of expression: "You live in your own country and you don't speak your own language and you don't have your community there; that's very frustrating." Through photography, he could build a bridge to talk about issues of alienation. Thomas seeks to create images of his urban-Iroquois experience, images that he does not see in the photographic archives and that he refers to as the "invisible urban-Iroquois presence," as cited on his website. He also seeks to present historical images of Indigenous people in a new way for a contemporary audience. "Ultimately, I want to dismantle long entrenched stereotypes and inappropriate caricatures of First Nations people" (Jeff Thomas website). Thomas retains a pride in his Iroquois heritage while embracing the realities of modern society, a hybrid identity.

Thomas attempts to overcome entrenched ideas of Indigenous peoples through visual messages expressed in his art. His work, *A Conversation with Edward S. Curtis*, splices photographs by Edward Curtis alongside his own modern photographs featuring urban "Indians" or symbols of "Indianness." He reinterprets Curtis' work to include dialogue with possible descendants of Curtis' subjects, including himself, expanding the original text that accompanied the Curtis photographs. "Technology has allowed me to 'rebind' Curtis' images and bridge the void between myth and reality" (Jeff Thomas website). Thomas also names the Indigenous subjects, giving them a personal identity that was often overlooked by the earlier White photographers. His artwork is dominated by his political objectives to contest the "place" of Indigenous people established historically through colonial ideology. Despite the contentious nature of his work, Thomas' artworks have been collected by art museums in Canada and around the world, a sign that these institutions of colonial origin are

welcoming ideas that contest *their* place in society. He has been exhibiting since the early 1980s and has had over 60 exhibitions, twenty of which were solo projects (McMaster Museum of Art 2012). Jeff Thomas' artwork has met with commercial success and is regularly exhibited in private art galleries. A 2012-2013 exhibit at the Stephen Bulger Gallery in Toronto entitled *Resistance is NOT Futile* offered photographic works for sale at prices ranging from \$1,350 to \$4,600.



Figure 5.5 Jeff Thomas, *Seize the Space* series, 2000 to present. Byward Market, Ottawa. Photo: Paula Loh.

The work of Jeff Thomas was featured in the *Sakahàn International Indigenous Art Exhibition*, with oversized photographs from his *Seize the Space* series mounted prominently at eye-level on the side of a building in Ottawa's Byward Market (Figure 5.5, above). The large, outdoor photographs were displayed in an unexpected place, a busy downtown location in Ottawa's tourist area, contesting the "place" of Indigenous people in contemporary society. Thomas' work as an Indigenous artist became part of the urban environment, challenging attitudes that the "place" for

Indigenous people is on remote reserves, often considered unable to adapt to contemporary society. An underlying theme in Thomas' photographs is to establish the place of the urban "Indian," integrating Indigenous people into all aspects of society. "In all the works in my exhibition I am, in effect, putting 'Indians' back 'on the map'" (Jeff Thomas cited in McMaster Museum of Art 2012). In addition to the photographs mounted in the Byward Market, photographs from Thomas' other series were included in *Indigenous and Urban*, the partner exhibition held at the Canadian Museum of Civilization. *Peace Chief at Place d'Armes, Old Montreal* (2002) from his *Indians on Tour* series featured a small plastic figure of an Indian posed in front of the large monument that commemorates Paul Chomeday de Maisonneuve, founder of Montreal. Thomas posed the plastic figurines at locations across the country with the goal of introducing an Indigenous presence into the urban landscape. From his *Scouting for Indians* series, *Indian on Bank Street* (2001) showed a full-size wooden Indian figure, photographed where it stood on the sidewalk in front of an Ottawa shop called "Beaded Dreams." This series documents the urban presence of Indigenous people through stereotypes across North America and elsewhere, and includes statues of Indians mounted on legislative and bank buildings, as well as "cigar store" carved wooden Indians.

The *Seize the Space* series features the vacant plinth at the base of the Samuel de Champlain statue erected at Nepean Point in Ottawa, located directly behind the National Gallery of Canada. The series stems from photographs first taken by Thomas in the 1990s when a kneeling Indian brave was part of the Champlain monument. His son, Bear Thomas (a.k.a. Bear Witness) is seen posing beside the Indian scout in the 1996 image titled *Bear at Champlain Monument, Ottawa, Ontario* in Figure 5.6, below. Typically, commemorative displays of the past have featured Indigenous people in a subservient position, supporting the hegemonic values of civilization and progress. The 1915 monument of European explorer, Samuel de Champlain, exemplifies this attitude. The figure of Champlain stands tall, overlooking the Ottawa River and the Houses of Parliament, while at his feet was a kneeling Indian scout, scantily attired and well-muscled, playing a supporting role in the

national narrative of conquest. Curator Greg Hill told the story behind the now-vacant plinth at the Artist Question-and-Answer session that was part of the opening ceremonies of the *Sakahàn Exhibition*. In the late 1990s, the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) held a media event at the



Figure 5.6 Jeff Thomas. *Bear at Champlain Monument, Ottawa, Ontario, 1996*, Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography, Ottawa.

monument to draw attention to broader issues by using the scout to illustrate what is wrong with the relationship between Indigenous people in Canada and the government of Canada, such as the lack of recognition of treaties and agreements. The AFN pointed out that the scout was barely clothed and was subservient to Champlain, then covered the scout with a blanket. The Indian figure was eventually removed and relocated across the road to Major's Hill Park in 1999. Hill said that the relocation "sparked a debate in Ottawa about the idea of history and the erasure of history—our cultural amnesia," referring to the attitude that if an

issue is raised that it can simply be removed and it will disappear (Sakahàn Artist Q&A, 2013). The vacant plinth formerly occupied by the Indian scout became the subject of Thomas' *Seize the Space* series, mounted in the Byward Market as part of the 2013 *Sakahàn Exhibition*. Hill commented that the National Capital Commission removed the scout to make the controversy go away but that Jeff Thomas' work is all about reigniting the debate; you can't just take an object away and have the problem subsequently go away—"there is an important message and dialogue that needs to continue" (Sakahàn Artist Q&A, 2013).

Thomas' photographs feature an ever-expanding number of people from a wide range of backgrounds posing in the place of the Indian scout, challenging the colonial authority of the

monument and "transforming it into a space of resistance," says Claudette Lauzon, Associate Dean of OCAD University (2011, 90). She believes that Thomas seeks to maintain the dialogue created by the controversy of the Indian scout's removal from the monument to "disrupt the monological narrative imposed by the commemorative space" and to utilize the commemorative space to rethink the "representation and lived experience of Aboriginality in urban settings" (ibid, 79). When ideologies are challenged and transgressed, this leads to "revisions, adaptations, and denunciations" (Cresswell 1996, 162). Thomas continues to transgress the ideology that puts Indigenous people in their "place" as he photographs people posing on the vacated plinth. As another outreach aspect of the *Sakahàn Exhibition*, in addition to the fixed exhibit in the Byward Market, Thomas held portrait sessions at the Champlain monument for attendees of the exhibition on scheduled days, keeping the dialogue alive by interacting with people who may not have been familiar with the history of the monument. His goal was to continue the *Seize the Space* series and make 400 portraits during *Sakahàn*; the number "400" corresponded with planned celebrations in 2013 to commemorate the 400th anniversary of Champlain's arrival in Canada.

During the Artist Q&A session, curator Greg Hill asked artist Alan Michelson, a Mohawk member of the Six Nations of the Grand River, Ontario, about his work included in the exhibition. The artwork, *TwoRow II* (2005), is a large (9 feet x 48 feet) four-channel video installation portraying two sides of a river bank, laid out in two rows of images to mimic the format (two parallel lines) and colours (purple and white) of the two row wampum belt. The wampum belt historically had a political use, as it was exchanged as part of a treaty to visually depict a harmonious relationship between European people and Indigenous people. The design of the wampum belt represented two boats which, while different, were travelling on a parallel course along the same river. Figure 5.7, below, shows the video installation of *TwoRow II*, that was filmed on the Grand River as it ran along the Six Nations Reserve.

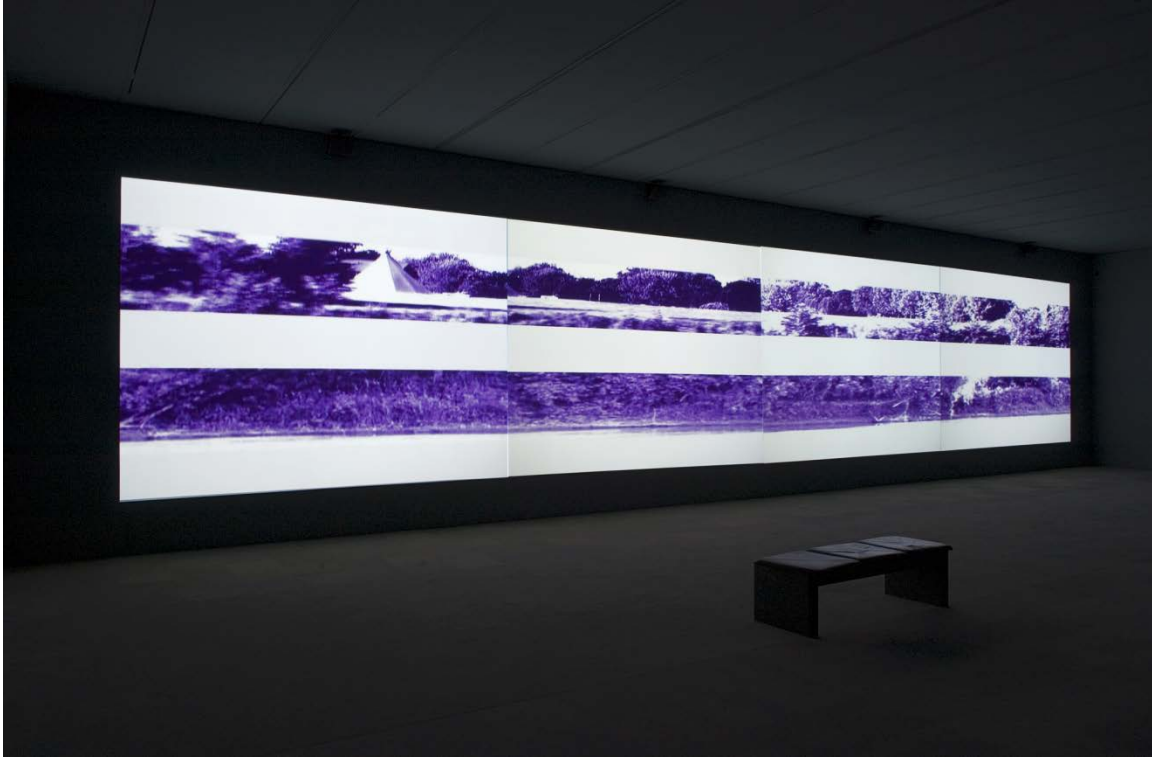


Figure 5.7 Alan Michelson. *TwoRow II*, 2005, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. Photo © NGC.

The 13-minute video includes the voices of two people speaking simultaneously, representing the view that each of them sees. One voice is that of the captain of a tour boat. While looking at the south bank where the Six Nations Reserve is located, he explains in a matter-of-fact voice that Six Nations Indian Reserve (an outdated term, as "Indian" is not used in Canada to describe reserves) is the largest reserve in Canada and stretches along the Grand River for 25 miles. The captain describes that the Grand River has many rapids but no waterfalls, and is the most heavily canoed river in Canada because of these features. The video's second voice track begins with a woman telling her family's history in this area and her childhood memories of time spent beside the river having picnics in the summer and skating on its surface in the winter. Her voice is followed by that of a man telling the history of settlement in the area, followed by an older man who speaks in an Indigenous language.

Michelson realized that there was something political happening within the physical structure of his reserve. The Grand River, the basis of the reserve's land grant, "had become a fence, a border

between our community and the non-native community on the other side" (Sakahàn Artist Q&A, 2013). He noted that filming from a boat provided him with an alternate, secret view that was yet right in front of him, since you usually do not see cities from boats. Looking at both banks of the river provided two different perspectives for him to apply to his work; people holding different perspectives is a situation that Michelson believes complicates our societal relationships.

The identity of Indigenous artists Alan Michelson and Jeff Thomas has been shaped by their life experiences, experiences that have been influenced by politics and geographical location. The words of Michelson and Thomas express the artists' interest in political geography, with references to maps, borders, and place that are also reflected in their artwork. The two artists were both born in Buffalo, New York and have a shared history in the Six Nations Reserve, located in Ontario near the border of New York State.

The *Sakahàn Exhibition* of the NGC also featured the work of Sonny Assu, an Indigenous interdisciplinary artist originally from British Columbia and now based in Montreal who self-identifies as an urban "Indian"—"with light skin and green eyes, he calls himself a 'white Indian'" (Thom 2009, 13). He draws on his mixed heritage to "merge Indigenous iconography with the aesthetics of popular culture to challenge the social and historical values placed upon both" (Assu 2012). He places an emphasis on humour, believing that a political message can be communicated more effectively and with less resistance when laughter is involved. His work has met with some negative feedback from other Indigenous people since it is not traditional in its use of Indigenous iconography, although he does incorporate the formline style of traditional Northwest Coast art in many of his vibrant painted works. He examines consumerism and branding, commenting on modern society in general, in addition to challenging Indigenous stereotypes. An example of this is the popular *Coke-Salish* (2006) image from his *Urban Totem* series. Replicating the look of a classic Coke advertisement, which represents "one of the most popular brands in the world, Assu subverted the message—instead of 'Enjoy Coca-Cola', it reads 'Enjoy Coast-Salish Territory'" (Thom 2009, 14).

Ironically, this piece was purchased by the Museum of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia which stands on unceded Coast Salish land. Assu's work included in *Sakahàn* comments on consumer culture while making a political statement. *1884–1951* (2009) is comprised of 67 copper coffee cups with lids spread out on a blanket. The blanket is a symbol of Indigenous-settler relations, representing the trading activity that occurred during the early years of European settlement. As noted on Assu's website, the coffee cups are a commentary on the disposable wealth of consumerism, while their copper material represents the wealth that was valued and shared among Indigenous people during the potlatches conducted by the peoples of the Northwest of British Columbia. The title of the installation and the number of cups represents the timespan and the total number of years that the potlatch was banned through government legislation by an amendment to the *Indian Act* in 1884. The ban was lifted in a subsequent amendment to the *Act* in 1951, following the experiences of World War II and the associated raising of awareness of human rights.

Assu has created work that directly questions the value of Indigenous artwork—is it art or artifact?—and who holds the authority to make this decision. His *Artifacts of Authenticity* (2011), created in collaboration with artist Eric Deis, is a series of three photographs representing those who have authority over the definition of Indigenous art: the museum anthropologist, art curator, and tourist gift shop operator. A log-home developer's cedar off-cuts became masks for Assu's *Longing* series as they "looked remarkably like pre-fabricated Northwest Coast masks" (Assu 2012). One of these pseudo "masks" was inserted into the three photographs alongside conventional Indigenous art objects in a "Where's Waldo" parody to raise questions as to what is Indigenous art and are these "masks" valuable art or artifacts, or waste products of a consumer society. The venue where a piece of art is viewed and the associated context has an effect on "the perceived value and authenticity of the piece" (Milne 2012). In the gallery, the authority of the photograph as art has the power to raise the value of the waste objects, by their mere association with objects that have already been assigned a societal value. Additionally, the power of who selects which objects to include in each setting is

another layer of interpretation. The museum setting has traditionally selected "Dead Indian" (King 2012) artifacts for display, further reinforcing the romanticized stereotype. The commercial art gallery assigns a commercial value to Indigenous art, sanctioning what style is to be considered valuable and what is not, with the power to elevate simple objects to that of fine art. The tourist gift shop effectively does the reverse, commoditizing objects to their lowest level of production value for sale to the masses. These objects are often reflective of stereotypes associated with Indigenous culture, such as dream catchers, moccasins, and necklaces on leather cords with images of wild animals.

Toronto-based artist Robert Houle challenges the "place" of Indigenous peoples through his interpretation of historical events. His artwork exhibited in *Sakahàn* titled *Paris/Ojibwa* (2009-10) was a multimedia installation consisting of four oil paintings, a video projection, and sound component. He reconstructed a Paris salon to tell the story of a group of eleven Ojibwa entertainers who travelled to France in 1845. Only five of them survived the visit to Paris, as a smallpox epidemic killed the remaining members of the group. At the *Sakahàn* Artists' Question-and-Answer session, Houle described the material he works with as history; history generates emotions and pain. He described history as transforming, depending on how you remember it, "whether it is through trauma, prejudice, or racism" (2013). Houle continued to explain his experience as an Indigenous artist: "While you're handling the pain, as the pain moves back and forth, it does transcend something and it does heal". While he was undergoing the creative process of figuring out his subject matter for *Paris/Ojibwa*, Houle learned through thinking about the people who died:

This is part of the healing for me. It may be different for other artists. I began to decolonize myself because I was struggling to try to place them somewhere. In conversation with my own family, they became messengers, people who live in the mythological world and [they] also begin to live and communicate. (Sakahàn Artist Q&A 2013)

When he tried to understand and place the Ojibwa people who had died in context, he started talking to himself in his Indigenous language. Prior to this, he had not realized how much he had been

thinking in English and how Westernized he was, having attended Western schools for painting and drawing. Houle draws attention to the need to acknowledge history as part of the healing process for the wrongs that have been committed against Indigenous people. There can be no closure if past wrongs are erased from the historical memory without first being acknowledged. An example of this is the residential school apology made by Prime Minister Stephen Harper in June, 2008, which included the acknowledgement that, "objectives were based on the assumption Aboriginal cultures and spiritual beliefs were inferior and unequal," and that, "The legacy of Indian Residential Schools has contributed to social problems that continue to exist in many communities today" (AANDC 2008). By re-enacting history in his artwork, Houle opens the conversation about the "place" of Indigenous people to raise awareness that the present plight of many of them is not due to an essential nature based on primitivism but instead is a direct result of colonization.

Houle is also a curator, having held the position of curator of Contemporary Indian Art at the Canadian Museum of Civilization from 1977 to 1980. In this position, he opposed the classification of contemporary Indigenous art as anthropological or ethnographic artifacts. To reinforce his argument, Houle began introducing Indigenous ceremonial objects into his own contemporary artwork following this experience (NGC Collections 2014).

The National Gallery's collection includes Houle's painting titled *Kanata* (1992). The title of the work refers to the origins of the word Canada, which go back to French explorer Jacques Cartier in 1535 who adopted the Huron-Iroquois word for village, Kanata. Houle questions the historical identity of Indigenous people by inserting a replica of Benjamin West's iconic painting, *The Death of General Wolfe* (1770), as displayed in Figure 3.1, into his own canvas, shown in Figures 5.8 and 5.9. The West canvas depicts an Iroquois warrior in the stereotype of the noble savage, his strong, muscular body scantily clothed, seated on the ground contemplating the death scene. Houle removed most of the colour from West's painting, leaving only the clothing and accessories of the lone



Figure 5.8 Robert Houle. *Kanata*, 1992, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. Photo © NGC



Figure 5.9 Robert Houle. *Kanata* (detail), 1992, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. Photo © NGC

Iroquois warrior illuminated. He accentuated the blue and red colours in these objects, then sandwiched the modified West painting with a band of solid blue to the left and a band of solid red to the right. The image of *Kanata* when viewed from a distance is reminiscent of the tricolour French flag, comprised of bands of blue, white, and red. The three colours also comprise the Union Jack of Great Britain. The artist explains that:

the Indian is in parentheses, the Indian is surrounded by this gigantic red and this gigantic blue and is sandwiched in that environment ... And that is reality because the English and the French are still the major players in the making of this history. (NGC Collections 2014)

Houle sees the "place" of Indigenous people as controlled by those of European origin; the history of colonization of Indigenous peoples in Canada began with the French and continued with the English. While the population of Canada is becoming increasingly ethnically diverse, the seats of government are still predominantly occupied by those of White ancestry. For example, in Canada's 41st Parliament, elected in 2011, 9.4% of members of parliament (MPs) were identified as members of a visible minority (Public Policy Forum 2011, 8). This number is less than the figure of 19.1% for the general population of Canada in 2011,¹¹ but has been slowly increasing over the years, having increased from 7.8% for the previous parliament. The 2011 parliamentary statistic is potentially skewed, though, as it reflects the large swing in elected officials representing the NDP party that year and the decreased representation by the Liberal party, which hold higher and lower percentages of members of a visible minority, respectively (ibid, 9). The Liberal party has been slowly regaining political strength in recent years and future elections may begin to reflect a reduction in the number of MPs identified as members of a visible minority.

Through his artwork, Houle presents Canada's history as it impacted Indigenous people, a version that is not commonly taught in the school system. Textbooks contain words and images that serve to influence the thinking of young Canadians during their formative years; education is not

¹¹ As referenced in Chapter 2, Statistics Canada reports that in 2011, 19.1% of Canada's total population identified itself as a member of a visible minority group.

simply the transference of facts and figures, but also of cultural knowledge and practices. Textbooks published after 1840 depicted the previous three hundred years of Canadian history as a struggle for existence, depicting hardships and battles that included Indians as allies. The topics of confederation and governance took precedence following the War of 1812 and Indigenous people were no longer given roles to play in textbooks. "History was something that happened only to White people" (Francis 1992, 167). Research shows that the current Ontario secondary school curriculum fails to realistically represent Indigenous peoples (Godlewska et al. 2010), with further research underway by Godlewska for other Canadian provinces.

Annie Pootoogook is one of several Inuit artists whose work was included in the *Sakahàn Exhibition*. In 2006, Pootoogook had her debut exhibition at Toronto's Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery and won the Sobey Art Award that same year, that carried with it a \$50,000 prize. She was born in Cape Dorset, Nunavut, in 1969 and represents a generation that still remembers the old ways but is living in the modern world. Her mother, Napachie Pootoogook, and grandmother, Pitseolak Ashoona, are acclaimed artists.¹² The three artists have chronicled the cultural transition that the Inuit have undergone, revealing the profound changes that have taken place in Canada's far north during the past century. Her grandmother recorded in her prolific drawings the transitional period in the mid-twentieth century when the Inuit lifestyle changed from camps to permanent settlements (Balzer 2006).

Pootoogook, along with her cousin, Shuvinai Ashoona (also a *Sakahàn* artist), is recognized as introducing a new style of art to the North, using "an approach that has offered an alternative to traditional treatment of the Inuit experience" (Bingham 2013). She diverges from the stone carving and print making skills that were taught by the West Baffin Eskimo Co-op of 1959 (known locally as the Kinnigait Co-op), and the subject matter related to the land and Indigenous myths which were

¹² The work of Napachie Pootoogook and Pitseolak Ashoona was included in the *Sakahàn* partner exhibition, *The Past Is Present: Memory and Continuity in the Tyler/Brooks Collection of Inuit Art*, held at the Carleton University Art Gallery (CUAG), June 18 to August 11, 2013.

focused at the time on appealing to southern clients. Instead, Pootoogook's drawings express a range of life experiences in the Arctic, from the mundane (the line-up for the ATM machine at the Co-op store, watching television with her family) to the personal and intimate (her experience with spousal abuse, the death of her mother). Unlike Inuit art made for the tastes of the general public and mass sales, Pootoogook's work, usually in pencil crayon, comprises depictions of Inuit life as she sees it, both the good and the bad. The 2006 documentary *Annie Pootoogook* was filmed primarily in the community of Cape Dorset. Pootoogook states in the documentary that she has never seen an igloo: "I see only ski-doo, Honda, house, things inside the house ... What I see, I do [draw]." She draws to help her forget the bad experiences; once it is on the paper, she can put the bad experience out of her mind. Pootoogook elaborates that "I cannot draw anything that I myself did not experience." She comments on the impressions of the attendees of her 2006 exhibition at the Power Plant Art Gallery, saying that, "They feel in their heart and their mind when they see my artwork. They didn't know up North were like that today." Pootoogook recognizes the impact of her artwork on the Southern audience and the opportunity it provides to inform others of contemporary Inuit culture. At the same time, she is pragmatic and says that she has to eat every day and that is why she draws.

Her drawings were exhibited at the Agnes Etherington Art Gallery at Queen's University in 2011 in the exhibition *Annie Pootoogook: Kinngait Compositions*. Curator Jan Allen writes in the exhibition's catalogue that Pootoogook's style reveals her Inuit artistic heritage, as derived from the art co-op's influence. This heritage is shown primarily through her use of closed-contour drawing, but also through her use of white space to define planes, a lack of perspective in her outdoor scenes, and the use of graphic elements to help tell her story (2011, 11). Allen describes her style as hybrid, combining the artistic elements "associated with Inuit art as it was cultivated through the latter half of the twentieth century" with the depiction of contemporary life in the North (ibid). A book on display to accompany the exhibit dispelled any romantic notions of contemporary Inuit people living off the land, describing in a matter-of-fact way that today's youth in her community learn about hunting by

watching documentaries on television. The exhibition included Pootoogook's work titled *Watching Hunting Shows* (2003-2004) that depicts a young child sitting on the floor in a contemporary living room, his gaze fixed on a hunting show on television, while a younger child has been put to sleep on the nearby couch. An oversized watch hanging on the wall introduces the element of time; calendars and timepieces are commonly found in Pootoogook's work.

Pootoogook's work titled *Cape Dorset Freezer* (2005) in Figures 5.10 and 5.11 was included in the *Sakahàn Exhibition*. The large artwork (almost four feet by eight feet in size) is rendered in pencil crayon, ballpoint pen, and pencil on paper, all commonly-available materials. The image shows people shopping at the local Co-op store, a large, modern building located in the centre of town that serves as a meeting place as well as a source of supplies. The freezer section displayed in Pootoogook's image contains packages labeled TV Dinners, Pizza Pocket, Pogos, and Hungry Man dinners, in addition to generically named items including Pizza, Chicken Wings, Burgers, Vegetable, and Fries. The contents of the freezer reflect those of a grocery store located in any other Canadian centre, dispensing with the romantic myth that the Inuit survive by depending upon their hunting



Figure 5.10 Annie Pootoogook. *Cape Dorset Freezer*, 2005, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. Photo © NGC

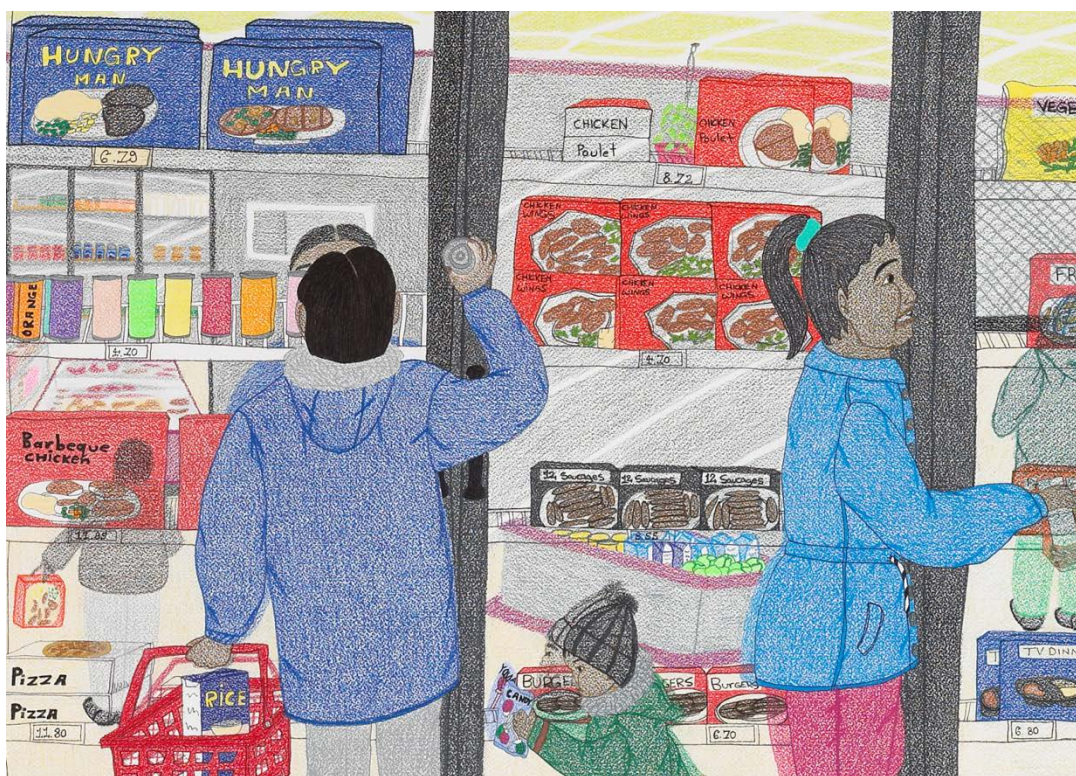


Figure 5.11 Annie Pootoogook. *Cape Dorset Freezer* (detail), 2005, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. Photo © NGC

skills to live off the land. Most of the shoppers are dressed in contemporary apparel, again a similar scene to that of other Canadian centres, visually showing that members of the Inuit community rely on mass-produced consumer goods and do not fabricate traditional culturally-specific clothing for everyday use. The exception is two members of the family on the right hand side of the image; the woman wears a traditional Inuit parka, the amauti, which has a built-in pouch to carry the baby. Her older child wears an anorak in a style associated with the North, having a fur-trimmed hood and striped accents. This family is not exclusively dressed in traditional form, though, as the man wears only contemporary clothing and the woman wears a contemporary outfit underneath the amauti. The blending of traditional and contemporary dress styles reflects the transculturation that the Inuit community has experienced, and continues to experience, through its ongoing contact with western culture. The depiction of everyday events through Pootoogook's artwork serves to communicate the reality of contemporary Inuit culture to Canadians who have not visited the North.

Pootoogook conveys life stories in her work, featuring happy scenes such as family dinners (*Memory of Eating with Family*), everyday scenes such as a child playing video games (*Playing Nintendo*), and traumatic scenes that depict financial crisis (*Man Trying to Think*) and family violence (*Mother Falling with Child*). Bingham notes that, while Pootoogook is talented at drawing, she prefers to create her figures in a simple, childlike manner by drawing them facing straight on or in a sideways profile. He elaborates that "it's the *situation* and its implications that are important in her works" and not the individual (2013). Pootoogook's own personal situation has overcome her in recent years, as a 2014 article in the *Ottawa Citizen* reported that she is suffering from drug and alcohol abuse, living with a man who supplements his disability pension by panhandling, and in 2012 had sold some drawings on the streets of Ottawa for \$25–30 to earn cigarette money (Adami 2014). She has a troubled background that includes alcoholic parents and an abusive spouse.

The drawings of Annie Pootoogook are in prominent collections, including the National Gallery, and will continue to tell her story of contemporary Indigenous life in Canada's North. Her artistic style demonstrates her choice as an artist to present life events in a unique manner, not following the marketing script established by the West Baffin Eskimo Co-op in 1959. She portrays the lifestyle of the Inuit from the point of view of someone who has lived that life, challenging stereotypes that their "place" is as a primitive society that lives off the land and replacing them with views of people who lead contemporary lives.

As noted by curator Lee-Ann Martin, it is only in recent years that curators and art historians have begun to recognize and classify images created by Indigenous artists as art as opposed to artifacts, overcoming the entrenched idea that their artworks belong in a museum or a gift shop. The NGC and its curators took this concept further by incorporating a community outreach component to the *Sakahàn Exhibition*, installing several artworks for viewing by the general public outside of the gallery. The outreach aspects of *Sakahàn* took the art to people who may not normally visit an art gallery or choose to view an exhibition of Indigenous art, creating the opportunity to contest

stereotypes that they may hold with regard to Indigenous art. It has already been noted that the NGC breached the walls of the institution with the mounting of oversized photographs by Jeff Thomas on the side of a downtown building and the taking of photographs by Thomas at the Champlain monument. The urban landscape was further transgressed by the appearance of the National Gallery building itself, as it was draped by a canvas 4,600 square metres in size and transformed into an iceberg. The canvas, while an artwork, additionally had a practical purpose to conceal the building while work was done to replace the windows of the gallery's Great Hall. Another aspect of the



Figure 5.12 Confederation Boulevard Banners, Ottawa, 2013. Photo: Paula Loh

outreach program involved artist Terrance Houle, whose photographs from the series, *Urban Indian*, were mounted on billboards in the Byward Market of Ottawa during the *Sakahàn* exhibition.¹³

The City of Ottawa participated in the promotion of *Sakahàn* by way of the Confederation Boulevard banners, as shown in Figure 5.12, that fly along the capital's ceremonial route in downtown Ottawa–Gatineau. The 500 banners highlight Canada's provinces and territories and commemorate special events, celebrating the country and its people through public art. From May to September, 2013, 100 of

these banners featured the work of Indigenous artists, reflecting a change in the attitude of government towards the "place" of Indigenous people in Canadian society. No longer were they nameless artisans in remote areas mass producing crafts deemed marketable to predominantly White

¹³ One of the images from his series is included in Chapter 1 as Figure 1.2.

consumers—they were individually-recognized artists selected, by a panel of Indigenous people involved in the arts, for the representation that each of their artworks conveyed. The panel was comprised of artist Sonny Assu (an exhibiting artist in *Sakahàn*), Viviane Gray (a Mi'gmaq artist and writer, and former Director/Curator of the Indian and Inuit Art Centre, AANDC) and Lee-Ann Martin (former Curator of Contemporary Canadian Aboriginal Art at the Canadian Museum of Civilization, now renamed the Canadian Museum of History). The photograph in Figure 5.12 shows two of the contemporary commemoration banners bearing Indigenous art by Walter Harris and Teresa Marshall in the foreground, and the 1915 monument of Samuel de Champlain in the background, typical of statuary commemorating European explorers and leaders of its time.

The Aboriginal Art Centre in Gatineau, part of the department of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC), holds an extensive collection of Indigenous artwork¹⁴ and served as one of the fourteen exhibition partners for *Sakahàn*. Their exhibition entitled *Aboriginal Expressions: National Capital Commission Confederation Boulevard Banners 2013* showcased eleven works selected from their collection by Indigenous people associated with the arts (artist Sonny Assu, director/curator Viviane Gray, and curator Lee-Ann Martin). The artworks were displayed in the lobby of the AANDC building and reproduced on 100 of the 500 banners flown on Confederation Boulevard in 2013, reflecting styles ranging from the traditional bold strokes of West Coast formline art by Walter Harris in Figures 5.13 and 5.14 to the abstract art of Willie Ermine in Figure 5.15 that contains geometric shapes with no identifiable Indigenous symbolism.

The backgrounds of the two artists are also diverse. Walter Harris (1931-2009) was a hereditary chief of the Gitksan First Nation in northwestern British Columbia, where he attended the Gitanmaax School of Northwest Coast Indian Art to study Northwest Coast art styles. Willie Ermine

¹⁴ In 1985-1992, the Aboriginal Art Centre divested itself of the 5,000 pieces of Inuit art in its original collection, many of which went to the National Gallery of Canada, significantly expanding the existing small Inuit art collection at the Gallery (Routledge 2013).



Figure 5.13 Walter Harris. *Frog*, 1978, Collection of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada. Photo: Lawrence Cook



Figure 5.14 Walter Harris. *Owl*, 1978, Collection of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada. Photo: Lawrence Cook



Figure 5.15 Willie Ermine. *The Day the Shadows Played*, 1984, Collection of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada. Photo: Lawrence Cook

is from the Sturgeon Lake First Nation in Saskatchewan and is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Indigenous Studies, First Nations University of Canada where he promotes ethical practices in research involving Indigenous peoples. Ermine expresses his Indigenous identity through political activism as part of his work life, whereas his abstract art betrays no such cultural identity and is purely a personal expression of his state of mind.

Other artworks display political and cultural messages that question the identity of Indigenous people in contemporary society, such as *The Canadian* (1995) by Mi'kmaq artist Roger Simon (1954–2000), shown in Figure 5.16. This painting depicts an Indigenous man looking off to



Figure 5.16 Roger Simon. *The Canadian*, 1995, Collection of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada. Photo: Lawrence Cook

the distance, deep in contemplation, wearing traditional regalia that includes a feathered headdress and beads, while his shoulders are partially draped with a Canadian flag. The combination of traditional elements of Indigenous culture with the Canadian flag reflects the mixed identity of contemporary Indigenous people. Each person is influenced by their cultural environment which, as shown by Simon, is a blend of Indigenous and Canadian elements.

Roger Simon stated that his art expresses his own spirituality, and the myths, legends, and social conditions of Indigenous people, whereas formline artist Walter Harris stated that he wants his work to "live and carry on the rich traditions of our people" (AANDC 2013). Abstract artist Willie Ermine states that his painting reflects the "release or expression of 'mind' and something of my inner self ... my raw self, its nooks and crannies" (AANDC 2013). These three artists all express different motivations for their art, with different results portrayed. The selection of these particular artworks and artists for an Indigenous art exhibit reinforces the theme of Indigenous artists as individuals who reflect their personal background and cultural environment and not as representatives of an externally-defined culture. Through their artwork, they are transgressing societal expectations of Indigenous artists and Indigenous peoples. The banner exhibition is a form of transgression, not in that it places Indigenous artwork in an unfamiliar place—the public domain of commemoration and national identity is an all too familiar place for images of Indigenous peoples—but in the portrayal of individual expression in the artworks and the diversity of Indigenous artists selected, unhindered by cultural stereotyping. "Place contributes to the creation and reproduction of action-oriented (ideological) beliefs" (Cresswell 1996, 161). This same place can be a site of transgression to challenge ideological beliefs.

The Canadian Museum of Civilization (CMC) in Gatineau, Quebec, hosted the exhibition titled *Indigenous and Urban*. As a *Sakahàn* partner, the CMC facilitated the exposure of the work of contemporary Indigenous artists, work that showcased their individual identity as well as their talents, while focusing on their urban experience. Wall text at the entrance to the exhibit described that it "reveals the diversity of the urban Indigenous population and the expressive richness of being Indigenous in the city. Through humorous and thought-provoking works, it also addresses issues of identity and stereotyping." The exhibition title, *Indigenous and Urban*, makes the statement that Indigenous people can be both Indigenous and live in Canadian cities, challenging the stereotype that Indigenous people lead different lifestyles than the majority of Canada's urban-based population.

Photographer Shelley Niro, a Mohawk from the Six Nations Reserve in Brantford, Ontario, questions the impact of stereotypical images in her *Mohawks in Beehives* (1991) series. Her photographs portray herself and her two sisters, contemporarily-dressed Indigenous women having fun together, first sitting on a park bench and then posing in front of a memorial featuring Indigenous men in historical attire. The memorial was erected in 1886 in honour of Joseph Brant, for whom the city of Brantford is named. It contains two groups of muscular Indigenous warriors who are scantily dressed and wearing feathers in their hair, holding items representative of Indigenous culture in the nineteenth century: scalping knife, spear, pipe of peace, bow and arrow, war club, and flintlock gun. Above the warriors is an oversized statue of Brant himself, wearing a combination of native and western dress of his time. Niro's juxtaposition of two time periods raises questions for the viewer as to what is the genuine depiction of Indigenous people: a memorial that includes stereotypical images from the historical past, or the photograph of what Thomas King refers to as "live Indians"?

Several Inuit artists were featured in the CMC exhibit. The print entitled *Flight North* (1989) by Pudlo Pudlat from Cape Dorset depicts an airplane flying over contemporary row houses. He includes methods of transportation of the modern world in his prints, physically and culturally connecting the geographically remote North to the urban environment. Transculturation, as discussed by Mary Louise Pratt as the transfer of cultural knowledge between different societies, is also seen in the work of another Cape Dorset artist, Ningeokuluk Teevee. *Yesterday* (2008) is a print that focuses on a turntable playing a record with the Beatles' song, "Yesterday," a memory from her childhood. The image reminds the viewer that popular culture has an impact on Indigenous people—their lifestyles are not static—and that diverse cultures can have shared memories, whether in remote locations or in urban environments.

Toronto-based Ojibway photographer Keesic Douglas' 2007 series, *Lifestyles*, was included in the exhibition. Douglas staged photographs of an Indigenous couple in their urban apartment, dressed in an eclectic mix of contemporary clothing and stereotypical "Indian" attire, surrounded by

objects stereotypically associated with Indigenous people, such as drums, dream catchers, buffalo robes, a feather headdress, "Native" paintings, and carved figures of "Indians." Figure 5.17 displays



Figure 5.17 Keesic Douglas. *Lifestyles* series, 2007, Collection of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada. Photo: Lawrence Cook

two of the four photographs in the series. The kitchen scene shows the barefoot woman clothed in a Pocahontas-inspired fringed dress, her long, dark hair in braids. The man wears a talisman necklace and a buckskin jacket over his jeans. The contemporary kitchen contains furniture, appliances, and dishes typical of many urban households. Douglas has included symbols of "Indian" culture throughout the scene: a dream catcher and maize hang on the wall, while Indian dolls stand on the kitchen table. The living room scene shows the woman wearing jeans and a top that displays the Canadian maple leaf along with the figure of an Indian, holding a crafted bag. The man talks on the phone, wearing a fringed vest, leather cuffs, and jeans. The room is stuffed with "Indian" souvenirs and gift shop objects, including dream catchers, drums, baskets, pots, a beaded pouch, an image of a wolf printed on a hide, a Thunderbird blanket, paintings, a buffalo robe, and a carved cigar-store Indian. The furniture, again, is typical of urban households in Canada. An additional object is the "Canada with Indian" flag hanging above the radiator, introducing a political element to the scene.

Douglas explains that he wants his artwork to "engage conversations about things we don't always talk about; the environment, stereotypes, racism, oppression, representation, identity," using humour as a way to initiate dialogue (Mestrich, 2014). The setting for his *Lifestyles* series starts with a typical contemporary apartment which is then filled with items typically sold in tourist gift shops and stereotypically associated with Indigenous culture. His over-the-top approach raises questions for the viewer as to whether urban Indigenous people live in this manner, countering the inaccurate images of Indigenous people that pervade Canadian society.

Another component of *Sakahàn* was an inbound program funded by an anonymous donation to the gallery to be used to specifically target local Indigenous youth. The Sakahàn Youth Education Program enabled the gallery to physically bring Indigenous children to the gallery to tour the exhibition, children who may not otherwise have the opportunity to be inspired to become artists and curators themselves (Hill 2013). This wide exposure lays the foundation for the momentum by Indigenous exhibitions such as *Sakahàn* to be continued into the future, propagating its influence beyond the dates of the exhibition as another generation of Indigenous people potentially become artists, influencing social groups that "are capable of creating their own sense of place and contesting the constructs of others" (Cresswell 1996, 47).

The 2013 *Sakahàn International Indigenous Art Exhibition* served to continue the discussion of Indigenous identity in Canada and to contest the "place" of Indigenous people. The curators included the work of Indigenous artists from several countries beyond those typically considered to have Indigenous peoples, selecting contemporary artworks that reflected individual lived experiences and not a representation of a historically-based culture. The inclusion of a large number of exhibiting artists created a supportive artistic community, especially among those who were physically present during the set up and opening ceremonies of the exhibition. The artworks were created using a variety of media, ranging from drawing, painting, and photography, to the inclusion of found objects, consumer products, and electronic audiovisual collages. The size and location of the artworks also

varied greatly, from images that would typically be mounted on walls in a home to the building-size canvas of an iceberg, appearing both within and outside the walls of the National Gallery. Several issues were contested, including those of national identity and commemoration, questioning whose history is being represented when presenting the history of Canada. Many of the artworks contained political messages. The outreach aspects of *Sakahàn* brought the messages to members of the general public who may not normally attend an art gallery exhibition, and particularly one that is billed as featuring Indigenous art. The involvement of partner exhibitions in *Sakahàn* amplified the message that Indigenous art is created by individuals and not representative of a static culture. Preconceptions regarding the identity of Indigenous people are perpetuated through societal stereotypes, which carry through to the perception of what is Indigenous art;—these views are often vastly different from the reality of contemporary art as created by Indigenous artists in Canada. Societal change often occurs gradually and can be unnoticeable until it reaches a tipping point. Exhibitions like *Sakahàn* at the NGC provide a high profile venue for Indigenous artists to contest the "place" of Indigenous people and contribute to breaking down societal stereotypes.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

The dominant group within society relies on "common sense" as a subtle way to entrench ideological beliefs that have created socioeconomic disadvantages for the Indigenous peoples of Canada (as noted in Chapter 2). Institutions are established that reflect and reinforce these beliefs, making them appear "normal" and commonplace. Citizens participating in these institutions become conditioned to such behaviour and further reinforce it through their compliance. A dialectical relationship is then created between individuals and institutions, as the beliefs of one are reflected back to the other in a continuous cycle. This implementation of hegemony has resulted in the continuing subordinate position of many Indigenous people, both externally and internally imposed. The cycle continues until actively transgressed by those who are disadvantaged by it, when they question "common sense" practices and thus create the opportunity for change. Indigenous artists challenge the ongoing stereotypes that assign Indigenous people to their "place" in society, incorporating political statements in many of their artworks. This philosophy often extends into their personal lives and is expressed through community activism.

Images are powerful, conveying emotions, morals, and aspirations, sometimes subliminally, and they are often used as propaganda to sway public opinion. Images influence politics and society, shaping the material world through their visual nature, with stereotyped images of Indigenous peoples existing in many forms within art, literature, and the media. Words and images are tools that are now wielded by contemporary Indigenous artists to deconstruct stereotypes that impede claims for full Indigenous citizenship;—their artwork transgresses normalized societal expectations. During the past fifty years, Indigenous artists have been challenging stereotypes that reflect values held by a Canadian society controlled by people of predominantly European ancestry. Images in their artwork introduce questions that ask whether they are "in place" or "out of place," with the goal of raising awareness of

past wrongs done to Indigenous people and promoting contemporary societal equality and respect. There is an indication that momentum is building, as art exhibitions featuring Indigenous artists become more commonplace and their work increases in commercial value, represented by art galleries and collected by the population at large. Indigenous people are slowly gaining power as they assume positions as curators and art directors, positions that can influence the themes and content of art exhibitions and provide opportunities to display the politically-charged messages included in the work of contemporary Indigenous artists from Canada such as Kent Monkman, Bear Thomas, Jeff Thomas, Alan Michelson, Sonny Assu, Robert Houle, Annie Pootoogook, and many others.

The artists of *Sakahàn* draw on their life experiences when creating their artworks. They use a variety of techniques, media, and styles, with many incorporating political statements. The scope of the artworks included in *Sakahàn* was wide-ranging; many defied an externally-imposed cultural classification, while others followed a recognizable traditional style. The backgrounds of the artists are diverse and the resulting artwork is unique to each artist. Some artists incorporate Indigenous cultural elements that are readily identifiable, while others do not. What they share in common is their self-identification as an Indigenous person. Past experiences shape who we are, both as individuals and as members of a cultural group. Indigenous cultural affiliation informs the work of the artists of *Sakahàn*: Kent Monkman draws on his identity as an Indigenous gay man to challenge the "place" of both Indigenous and gay people in contemporary Canadian society. The members of the music group "A Tribe Called Red" make political statements in both their private and their public lives, ranging from Ian Campeau confronting stereotypes of the Indian in the name of his hometown's football team, to Bear Thomas' video installation at *Sakahàn* addressing the theme of the "native savage," to reclaiming stereotypes through the name of the band. Photographer Jeff Thomas' work is driven by political objectives to contest the "place" of Indigenous people in contemporary Canadian society. His commercial success has enabled the circulation of his message through the display of his artworks in prominent galleries across the country. Alan Michelson's video installation presents the viewpoint of

both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, examining their perceptions of a given geographical place—the Six Nations Reserve on the Grand River of Ontario. The message is political and uses Indigenous cultural symbolism of the wampum belt to convey the story. Sonny Assu comments on consumer culture while injecting elements of Indigenous culture into his work, creating political messages on the effects of colonialism. Robert Houle describes his material as history. He creates artwork that challenges the "place" of Indigenous peoples through his interpretation of historical events and presents them from the Indigenous point of view. Annie Pootoogook draws what she sees and what she herself has experienced in life. Her artwork tells the story of Northern Inuit life to Canadians in the South and beyond, challenging stereotypes that their "place" is as a primitive society that lives off the land and replacing them with views of people who lead contemporary lives.

The *Indigenous and Urban* partner exhibition held at the Canadian Museum of Civilization featured images by artists Shelley Niro, Pudlo Pudlat, and Ningeokuluk Teevee that are all part of the CMC's permanent collection. Their ownership by the institution indicates the existence of a curatorial philosophy that values the individual artistic styles of Indigenous artists and reinforces the malleability of Indigenous culture, yet there are contradictions between the forward-looking *Indigenous and Urban* partner exhibition of *Sakahàn* and the permanent exhibitions within the museum. The CMC was established in 1856 as the Geological Survey of Canada display hall. It underwent several changes in name from the National Museum of Canada to the National Museum of Man. In 1989, the institution relocated to its current site in Gatineau, Quebec as the Canadian Museum of Civilization where it contains three permanent exhibition halls: Grand Hall, Canada Hall, and First Peoples Hall. The exhibits of the panoramic Grand Hall convey "stability and timelessness" (Phillips 2011, 210) featuring totem poles and a line of house fronts associated with the traditional culture of Northwest Coast Indigenous peoples. Ruth Phillips draws a contrast between the Grand Hall and the display in the museum's Canada Hall which followed a geographical and chronological path across the country, evoking "travel, modernity, and progress" (ibid). The Gatineau institution is

located across the river from the NGC and has since been renamed and rebranded by the federal government as the Canadian Museum of History. In December, 2013, royal assent was given by parliament, enabling the implementation of the government's goal to commemorate the 150th anniversary of Canada's Confederation at the institution. Canada Hall is now closed due to renovations underway to establish it as the new Canadian History Hall, slated to open on Canada Day, July 1, 2017. There is evidence that this re-imagined institution will maintain and add more aspects that essentialize Indigenous culture, as shown by its plans to keep the First Peoples Hall, "a permanent exhibit of aboriginal artifacts¹⁵ from across Canada" (CBC News 2013). The use of the term "artifact" is repeated on the website of the Canadian Museum of History, appearing in the sidebar on the home page as part of a feature labeled "Artifact of the Week." The current image displayed is of a sculpted gold box entitled *Haida Myth of the Bear Mother* by renowned Haida artist Bill Reid (1920-1998). Reid's work, however, is collected and valued as art, not as cultural artifacts. In May, 2008, the University of British Columbia Museum of Anthropology (MOA) issued a press release offering a \$50,000 reward for information leading to the recovery of twelve Bill Reid artworks that had recently been stolen. The MOA assigned a value of \$2 million to the missing pieces, describing them as "art objects" (NationTalk 2008) and not artifacts. The different attitudes towards Indigenous art expressed by the Canadian Museum of History and the UBC Museum of Anthropology may be attributable to the latter being both affiliated with a university and being located in British Columbia. Describing itself as Canada's largest "teaching museum" (MOA 2014), the MOA is at arm's length from federal government ideology with regard to its physical location on the west coast of Canada and with regard to its academic influences and funding for acquisitions, as many items in its collection were either donated or purchased with donated funds.

¹⁵ The term "artifact" is used elsewhere by the media. The Globe & Mail article by James Adams, "National Gallery's summer blockbuster to showcase contemporary native artists from around the world," dated February 13, 2013, initially described the Sakahàn exhibition as containing "more than 150 artifacts." Two months later, the term "artifacts" was replaced by "art works" in the online version of the article.

The inclusion of Indigenous people in key decision-making roles contributes to the possibility for greater change in society in general and the art world in particular. The government department of AANDC had a panel of three Indigenous people select the works for inclusion in their partner exhibition, *Aboriginal Expressions: National Capital Commission Confederation Boulevard Banners 2013*. The three-person curatorial team for Sakahàn, of which two members were Indigenous, consulted with an international team of curatorial advisors. Most of the members of this eight-person committee were Indigenous.

Acquisition policies to select artworks for the permanent collections of institutions are influenced by the attitudes of those in power. Artist Alan Michelson commented at the *Sakahàn* artists' question-and-answer session that he is glad that the NGC purchased his work, *TwoRow II*, as it helped him in many ways—prior to the NGC purchase in 2006, he hadn't sold an artwork in twenty years (Sakahàn Artist Q&A, 2013). Shortly after that, another of his works, *Mespat* (2001), was purchased by the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) in 2006. In 2009, Michelson was featured in a five-page spread in *American Indian Magazine*, published by the Smithsonian's NMAI, and in 2010 he won the Citation in Art award from the Government Services Administration for his glass installation, *Third Bank of the River*, at the U.S. Port of Entry in Massena, New York (NMAI 2011). This series of events illustrates the positive impact that acquisition policies at institutions have on the career of an Indigenous artist when they recognize his/her work as having artistic, and monetary, value.

The speech at the G20 summit given by the Canadian prime minister in 2009 denying a colonial past indicates that there remains much work to be done politically before Indigenous people can claim their place in contemporary society and leave the historical stereotypes in the past; until a problem is acknowledged, it cannot be addressed. The varying attitudes expressed by directors and curators at institutions reflect the dichotomy that remains within Canadian institutions and ultimately greater society. The process of challenging entrenched ideology and its associated norms and

stereotypes is ongoing, as can be seen by the recently rebranded Canadian Museum of History and its essentializing of Indigenous culture and categorization of Indigenous art as "artifact." Recent events at the National Gallery of Canada depict how societal change can begin when those in power have the commitment to effect change. The 2013 *Sakahàn International Indigenous Art Exhibition* held at the NGC is the largest worldwide exhibition to date of Indigenous artwork. During the initial planning discussions with curator Greg Hill, NGC director Marc Mayer established his strong support with the statement that, "It's got to be big" (Sakahàn Opening Remarks 2013). The curatorial team worked together for three years to select contemporary works whose only commonality was that the artists self-identified as being Indigenous. Partner exhibitions and inbound and outreach programming further broadened the scope of the main exhibition held at the NGC, increasing the number of people exposed to the exhibition.

The National Gallery has plans to repeat the concept of the *Sakahàn Exhibition* every five years. This action will continue to provide a high-profile platform for Indigenous artists from Canada to contest preconceived notions of the "place" of Indigenous people in society. Identity is constantly changing in relation to events and circumstances; as the place of Indigenous people continues to be contested by artists, it will edge further on the continuum towards being "in place" instead of "out of place." The ideal situation occurs when there is no unfair judgment as to the place in society of any group of people based on their culture.

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Appendix A: General Research Ethics Board (GREB) Approval



August 13, 2013

Ms. Paula Loh
Master's Student
Department of Geography
Queen's University
Kingston, ON K7L 3N6

GREB Ref #: GGEO-154-13; Romeo # 6010530

Title: "GGEO-154-13 Is it Indigenous Art, or Art by Indigenous Artists?"

Dear Ms. Loh:

The General Research Ethics Board (GREB), by means of a delegated board review, has cleared your proposal entitled "**GGEO-154-13 Is it Indigenous Art, or Art by Indigenous Artists?**" for ethical compliance with the Tri-Council Guidelines (TCPS) and Queen's ethics policies. In accordance with the Tri-Council Guidelines (article D.1.6) and Senate Terms of Reference (article G), your project has been cleared for one year. At the end of each year, the GREB will ask if your project has been completed and if not, what changes have occurred or will occur in the next year.

You are reminded of your obligation to advise the GREB, with a copy to your unit REB, of any adverse event(s) that occur during this one year period (access this form at https://eservices.queensu.ca/romeo_researcher/ and click Events - GREB Adverse Event Report). An adverse event includes, but is not limited to, a complaint, a change or unexpected event that alters the level of risk for the researcher or participants or situation that requires a substantial change in approach to a participant(s). You are also advised that all adverse events must be reported to the GREB within 48 hours.

You are also reminded that all changes that might affect human participants must be cleared by the GREB. For example you must report changes to the level of risk, applicant characteristics, and implementation of new procedures. To make an amendment, access the application at https://eservices.queensu.ca/romeo_researcher/ and click Events - GREB Amendment to Approved Study Form. These changes will automatically be sent to the Ethics Coordinator, Gail Irving, at the Office of Research Services or irvingg@queensu.ca for further review and clearance by the GREB or GREB Chair.

On behalf of the General Research Ethics Board, I wish you continued success in your research.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joan Stevenson".

Joan Stevenson, Ph.D.
Chair
General Research Ethics Board

c: Dr. Audrey Kobayashi, Faculty Supervisor
Dr. Mark Rosenberg / Dr. Anne Godlewska, Co-Chairs, Unit REB
Joan Knox, Dept. Admin.

Appendix B: National Gallery of Canada (NGC) Letter of Permission



National Gallery of Canada Musée des beaux-arts du Canada

7 August, 2013

Paula Loh
Graduate Student
Department of Geography
Mackintosh-Corry Hall, D-303
Queen's University
Kingston, ON
K7L 3N6

Re: Thesis research, Sakahàn International Indigenous Exhibition

Dear Paula,

The National Gallery of Canada supports your research topic with regard to its summer 2013 exhibition Sakahàn that examines the question, "Is it Indigenous art or art created by Indigenous artists?"

On behalf of the Gallery, I give permission for you to conduct interviews with Gallery staff and Sakahàn artists that further this research. These interviews may be conducted on Gallery property, if desired.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul Lang".

Paul Lang
Deputy Director and Chief Curator

T 613.990.1985 F 613.993.4385

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