

Shattering Glass Boxes: Museums and Dene Resurgence Against the Colonial Politics of Recognition

by

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Abstract

In aiming to dispossess Indigenous peoples from their land and destroy their cultures, settler colonialism increasingly operates by “recognizing” and appropriating Indigenous identities into dominant national narratives. However, Indigenous peoples globally have found numerous ways to unsettle colonial powers, including claiming and reclaiming cultural practices in formerly colonial institutions such as museums. This dissertation examines the role of museums in perpetuating and opposing settler colonialism in Canada. First, I critique museums as forwarding settler colonial narrative and material violence against Indigenous peoples. Second, I examine the ways that Indigenous peoples have been engaging in museum spaces in order to “turn away” from the colonial politics of recognition.

This dissertation engages with literature in political theory, critical museum studies, Indigenous political thought, and the colonial politics of recognition. In the first two chapters I examine three logics of settler colonialism: disappearance, appropriation and obfuscation. I put this theoretical framework in conversation with three case studies. I look at the 1988 exhibition “The Spirit Sings: Artistic Traditions of Canada’s First Peoples” to examine the turn towards the settler colonial politics of recognition. The second case study, a multi-sited exhibition called “De T’a Hoti Ts’eeda: We live securely by the land” (Yellowknife and Ottawa) and “Extremes: Life in Subarctic Canada,” (Edinburgh) is used to think through multiple experiences of collaborative exhibition. The third case study is the “Gwich’in Caribou Skin Clothing Project” (2000-2003), exemplifying the role of knowledge repatriation projects for supporting Indigenous decolonial resurgence. The final two chapters of the dissertation examine how Indigenous peoples’ relationships with museums counter the logics of settler colonialism. I use the collection of Athabaskan Dene objects at the National Museums Scotland (Edinburgh) and the “nation-to-nation” relationship established between the Tłıchǫ Government and the museum as exemplary of relationships exogenous to settler colonial domination. Second, drawing on Hegel’s master/slave dialectic I offer a theory of “labour against recognition,” where the process of making objects is generative of relationships that simultaneously turn away from the colonial politics of recognition and foster a decolonial politics of Indigenous resurgence.

Preface

This dissertation is original, unpublished, independent work by the author, K Wrightson.

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Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Preface	iii
Table of Contents	iv
List of Figures	vii
Acknowledgements	viii
Dedication	x
1 Three Stories: Introduction	1
A First Story: The Cultural is Political	1
Argument: Settler Colonialism, Violence and Memory	3
Terrain of Analysis	6
A Second Story: It Has Always Been About Relationships	12
Webs of Significance	14
Methodology	16
Position and Intention	19
Key Contributions	20
What I Am Not Doing: The Repatriation Debate	22
Organization and Summary	23
A Third Story: It Has Always Been About Work	28
2 “We Don’t Want Indians”: Three Logics of Settler Colonialism	31
Exploitation and Access	32
Disappearance	34
Conclusion	42
Appropriation	42
Conclusion	50
Obfuscation	51
Restorying	52
Accommodation	55

Conclusion-----	58
Conclusions -----	59
3 Smashing the Glass Box: Museums as Political Paradox -----	61
Unpacking the Paradox-----	65
Museum as Domination-----	67
The Museum as Resistance -----	76
Conclusion -----	85
4 “The Spirit Sings”: The Museological Turn to the Colonial Politics of Recognition-----	87
The Colonial Politics of Recognition-----	94
“The Spirit Sings”: Museum Change as the Colonial Politics of Recognition -----	97
The Colonial Politics of Recognition: Fraser and Taylor in the Museum-----	107
Conclusion -----	117
5 “The Scottish Project”: Tłıchǫ Relations with the National Museums Scotland and the Colonial Politics of Recognition -----	122
About the Scottish Project-----	123
The ‘Scottish Project’: Histories and Practices-----	131
Dè T’a Hoti Ts’eeda: We Live Securely by the Land at the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre. -----	138
“Extremes” at the NMS -----	142
The Permanent Display -----	147
Scottish Project Innovations and Challenges-----	150
Audience Responses -----	157
Theory: The Subjective Politics of Recognition -----	158
Methods of Audience Research-----	160
Audience Response -----	162

Conclusion-----	166
Conclusion -----	167
6 “Being Tłıchǫ”: Objects Exceeding the Colonial Politics of Recognition -----	170
Pipes: Agentic Histories and Futures -----	176
The Willow Bark Net: Collective Labour -----	184
Conclusion -----	191
7 Beading the Nation: Labour Against the Colonial Politics of Recognition -----	195
Pathways of Indigenous Resurgence-----	200
Two Knowledge Repatriation Projects-----	204
Labour against Recognition: Hegel’s triad -----	210
Labour against Recognition: Recentering Land as Relations -----	213
Knowledge Repatriation Projects and Resurgence-----	216
Conclusion -----	222
8 Resurgence: New Directions-----	227
Chapter Summaries -----	230
Future Directions: To be Continued -----	234
Bibliography-----	236

List of Figures

Figure 1 Sled with Canvass Covering RMPT.20 © National Museums Scotland	133
Figure 2 Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre, Yellowknife, Fall 2013© Kelsey Wrightson	138
Figure 3 Chantal Knowles and children in Rae. Photo by Tom Andrews © GNWT	141
Figure 4 “Extremes” opening at the National Museums Scotland © National Museums Scotland	143
Figure 5 Hunting Bag, Dogrib, 1860 Collected by Bernard Rogan Ross. A.558.46. Photo © National Museums Scotland	145
Figure 6 John B Zoe at Extremes Opening, May 2008 © National Museums Scotland	146
Figure 7 “Living Lands Gallery” permanent exhibition. Photo © Kelsey Wrightson by kind permission of the National Museums Scotland	148
Figure 8 “Living Lands Gallery” permanent exhibition. Photo © Kelsey Wrightson by kind permission of the National Museums Scotland	149
Figure 9 Pair of moosehide mittens made by Marie Adele Football, collected in 2007. V.2007.90 © National Museums Scotland	151
Figure 10 Stone pipes A.558.14-18AA.481.13 © National Museums Scotland	177
Figure 11 Willowbark net, collected in Fort Rae A.558.29, by Bernard Rogan Ross, Fort Simpson © National Museums Scotland	184
Figure 12 This is a similar style to the birch bark dishes made in Saambe K’e. Birchbark Dish, Dogrib, Fort Rae, 1860 A.558.27. Collected by Bernard Rogan Ross, Fort Simpson © National Museums Scotland	206
Figure 13 Spruce root cooking vessel, Slavey 1862, A.848.45. Collected by Bernard Rogan Ross, Fort Simpson © National Museums Scotland	208
Figure 14 Women's Summer outfit, Dogrib, Fort Rae, 1860, A.558.39. Collected by Bernard Rogan Ross, Fort Simpson © National Museums Scotland	210

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1 Three Stories: Introduction

If knowledge is what you create in using, adapting and enacting certain ideas in your daily life, then it is also what you learn by following long established activities encoded in the process of making these ancient forms. The often collaborative process of gathering and preparing materials and repeating (although never exactly) the patterns of making traditional forms, in and of itself teaches and imparts knowledge. As well, these objects continue to form an important part of our sense of ourselves as collective beings, connecting us to other people, past, present and future, and to other beings in the natural world.

Deborah Doxtator, Mohawk
From “Basket Bead and Quill” (1995, 15)

There is a danger in allowing colonization to be the only story of Indigenous lives. It must be recognized that colonialism is a narrative in which the Settler’s power is the fundamental reference and assumption, inherently limiting Indigenous freedom and imposing a view of the world that is but an outcome or perspective on that power.

Taiaiake Alfred, Mohawk and Jeff Corntassel, Cherokee
From “Being Indigenous” (2005)

A First Story: The Cultural is Political

The exhibition “Sakahán: International Indigenous Art” (2013) has been described as one of the most ambitious modern art exhibitions in the world.¹ 75 Indigenous² artists from across the globe displayed works of art, including sculpture, painting and performance, in multiple exhibition sites across Ottawa, the capital city of Canada. While the exhibition was widely supported, it was also contentious. Sponsored by the RBC Foundation and Canadian National Railway (CN), the majority of pieces were displayed at the National

¹ National Gallery of Canada website <http://www.gallery.ca/sakahan/en/>. Retrieved, January 26, 2015.

² Throughout this dissertation I use the term “Indigenous” to refer to the descendants of the peoples and Nations who originally occupied the territories prior to colonization. When specifically referencing the Canadian context I use the term Indigenous peoples to reference those who originally occupied territory in what is now known as Canada. Canadian nomenclature uses the terms “First Nations” “Metis” and “Inuit” to refer to Indigenous peoples in Canada. Where ever possible I use the names of particular nations. I use settler to refer to peoples who do not have ancestral and ongoing connections to the land.

Gallery of Canada, one of many institutions charged with preserving and sharing the national culture of Canada, a state whose conditions of possibility are predicated on the foundations of ongoing settler colonial dispossession, racism, capitalist exploitation and patriarchy. Canada remains a state that continues to actively perpetuate violence against Indigenous peoples who have found themselves within its borders.

While there were a number of compelling pieces in the exhibition, I quickly became fascinated by a small square of text posted beside Nadia Myre's 2013 site specific installation "For those who cannot speak: the land, the water, the animals, the future generations." The description of the piece included a direct quote from a statement read by a group of Algonquin *kokoms* (grandmothers) on Parliament Hill during the rise of the Idle No More movement on 11 January 2014. The text read, "We join the voices of all our Relatives who are standing up and speaking for the land, water and future generations... We demand that the Crown and all governments on Turtle Island start to behave in accordance with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Royal Proclamation, the Treaties and their own Constitution... we make these demands on behalf of all those who cannot speak... Their very survival depends on our success. This is our responsibility as Grandmothers, *kokomisag, Chi-Migwech*." Beside this text, posted in English and French as is the custom of the National Gallery of Canada, were the words "The views expressed in this work are those of the artist and do not reflect the views of the National Gallery of Canada."

Myre presented her piece beside powerful words for political action, and the gallery responded with a refusal. While the reasons for this disclaimer, and other similar ones posted throughout "Sakahana," would no doubt be an interesting subject for further research, the point that I am making with this example is clear. The words of Algonquin *kokoms*, spoken on Parliament Hill during the height of the Idle No More movement and then placed beside Nadia Myre's installation of a photograph of a Two-Row-Wampum styled belt were so politically potent the National Gallery of Canada needed to explicitly distance itself from the message.

The caveat added by the National Gallery to Nadia Myre's work suggests the effectiveness of the politics of her piece. Whether beading, in cyberspace, or on public billboards, the work of Indigenous artists is powerful and effective. The assimilationist

project of the Canadian settler colonial state has been perpetuated, at least in part, through punishment for continuing cultural practices, including potlatch, sundance, carving and beading. However cultural and artistic resurgence enacts a generative mode of resistance that not only counters settler colonialism, but also creates alternative futures. When Nadia Myre chose the words of Algonquin *kokoms* to give context for her work, she situated “For those who cannot speak: the land, the water, the animals, the future generations” in relation to the Idle No More movement. This piece, and the refusal issued by the National Gallery, emphasized to a perceptive audience what Indigenous artists and activists have known for generations:

The cultural is political.

Argument: Settler Colonialism, Violence and Memory

The argument at the core of this dissertation is twofold. Museums specifically, and cultural production more generally, have been implicated in the production and substantiation of settler colonialism in Canada. However, Indigenous peoples’ practices of cultural resurgence have also informed and underpinned resistance to colonialism for generations. I make these arguments by first critiquing the settler colonial politics of recognition as it manifests in contemporary museological practice, and then moving into an analysis of resistance to settler colonialism. I argue that Indigenous peoples are “turning away” from the colonial politics of recognition and conciliatory forms of settler colonialism by connecting to object³ histories and narratives that exceed the history of colonization. Further, I look to the process of making and object creation as a practice of self-recognition and affirmation that challenges the conciliatory colonial politics of recognition. This dissertation in its most general form is both critiquing settler colonialism as it manifests in Canada, and upholding the ways that Indigenous peoples have been practicing transformative resurgence in various ways for centuries.

Thus, this thesis must begin from an assertion: Canada is a settler colonial state.

³ It is important to note that the term “object” is not apolitical. The 2015 exhibition *c̓əsnaʔəm; the city* before the city at MOA, Museum of Vancouver and Musqueam, intentionally chose the word “belongings” to describe the historic and continuing relationship between Musqueam people and their material culture. I chose the term “object” as that is the language used by those I worked with.

While it seems that the majority of public responses in the public comments section of CBC news stories on Indigenous peoples in Canada are some version of “get over it- it is in the past,” this is not a sufficient response to colonialism in Canada. This is, at least in part, because colonialism is not over. The practices of dispossession that underpin the asymmetric relations of colonial power are informed by acts in the present, and these practices perpetuate colonial violence. Patrick Wolfe is often credited with the description of settler colonialism in the present with his argument that “invasion is a structure, not an event” (1999) but this argument was also made by many others who refuse to accept the “post” of post-colonial studies (Alfred 2005; Johnston & Lawson 2000; Moore, Stanton, & Maley 1997; Pitts 2010; Said 1997; A. Simpson 2011; L. B. Simpson 2008; Smith 2012; Thomas 1999, 2000; Tully 2008a, 2008b; Veracini 2010, 2011; Wolfe 1999, 2006). The implications of seeing colonialism in Canada as a structure rather than an event are numerous, but for the purposes of this dissertation I would like to highlight one key factor. As a structure rather than an event, settler colonialism is oriented towards the ongoing obfuscation of the violence that is at the generative roots of settler colonial relations of power (Tully 2008a). Dene scholar Glen Coulthard argues that this shifting nature of colonial domination means that colonialism in Canada has shifted from “a structure that was once primarily reinforced by policies, techniques, and ideologies explicitly oriented around the genocidal exclusions/assimilation double, to one that is now reproduced through a seemingly more conciliatory set of discourses and institutional practices” (2014, 6). It is the practices that obscure the generative roots of settler colonialism that make it so pervasive.

Throughout this dissertation I have used the term violence to summarize both the conciliatory and explicit forms of domination that Coulthard identifies. The terms “violence” and “violences” reference the dual material and symbolic effects of domination in the context of settler colonialism. Bourdieu uses the term “symbolic violence,” originating in 1960s France, to address inequalities of the French education system, where schools perpetuate the existing unequal social structures which continue to privilege those already benefitting from the capitalist economic and social relations (Bourdieu, 1991). In this framing, the symbolic violence of cultural inequalities is linked to, and reproduces, the structural inequalities of capitalist economic relations. Anti-colonial

scholar Franz Fanon draws on a similar dichotomy between symbolic and structural violence, where symbolic violence is both influenced by, and influences, structural violence (Fanon 1965, 89, 31; Coulthard 2014).

Articulating a distinction between these practices of violence is not to privilege one over the other, nor do I intend to conflate the two. Material and symbolic violence do have different, and disproportionately felt, effects. Further, by differentiating between the two, I do not want to fall into a false teleology. Foucault argues that state power has moved from control over death to control over life, or from discipline and punishment to governmentality (Foucault 1995). However, this evolutionary view of power has the propensity to obscure the ways in which violence is inflicted on Indigenous lands and bodies in ways that are not only gendered and racialized, but also deeply and problematically *both* symbolic and very physically violent.⁴ Through the first chapter of this dissertation, which explicitly links the material violence of colonial dispossession to symbolic forms of violence, I do not want to elide the interrelationship between the two. Symbolic forms of violence are wrought through material means, and both affect different groups and individuals disproportionately.

Thus, while I find the division between symbolic and material forms of violence a useful lens through which to explore the multiple logics of settler colonial violence, there are two caveats. First, this dichotomy is not an either/or choice, nor is there a clear movement from material forms of violence to the symbolic and conciliatory. The intersectional analyses of Indigenous feminists make it clear that while the violence perpetrated by the settler colonial state may vary in intensity, both forms exist simultaneously (Hunt, 2014). Second, material and symbolic forms of violence should not be understood as all encompassing. Critiques of the cyclical and self-perpetuating nature of symbolic/material violence and the ways in which subjectivities are formed by, and then perpetuate both forms of violence, are salient to critiques of settler colonialism. However, I guard against taking up this critical stance such that it over determines the agency of actors to undermine material and symbolic violence.

⁴ The argument regarding the dangers of a dichotomy or temporal shift from material/physical to symbolic forms of violence owes much to Sarah Hunt's October 22, 2014 (Vancouver, BC) intervention on Coulthard's "Red Skin, White Masks".

Terrain of Analysis

This is a work of political theory, informed, underpinned, and challenged by people who are doing political theory on the ground and in their communities. When writing I asked myself, what if I took the work of the 42 seamstresses who worked on the Gwich'in Caribou Skin Clothing Project and countless others who are beading and tanning right now, as seriously as I take the theoretical cannon? To that end, my dissertation makes two key contributions. First, I have put different tracks of thinking in conversation with each other and challenged disciplinary boundaries. I have put political theory in conversation with museum curation, I have put Indigenous artists in conversation with theories of settler colonialism, and I have put Hegel in conversation with women who tan hide and bead. Second, I have also centered histories and contemporary practices resistance and decolonization as the heart of my dissertation. While this is a critique of settler colonialism in Canada, I have focused on the work of Indigenous peoples who have been actively countering settler colonial violence for hundreds of years.

I situate my dissertation in three terrains or fields. The first is the “museum.” Museums have been studied to such an extent that they have gained near mythic status, and many places in this dissertation slip into the usage of “the museum” as a generalizable category of knowledge institutions trusted with the dissemination of authoritative knowledge to the public. Museums have been variously imagined as contact zones, meeting places, morgues, archives and living ceremonial sites. Audiences are similarly diverse. Some enter into these spaces as fieldwork for armchair anthropology, to find information about themselves and others. Others come into museums to connect or reconnect to a past that has been forcibly removed from living memory. Thus, at best, we can imagine museums to be spaces of tension and contentions.

The second geography is the three “case studies:” the 1988 exhibition, “The Spirit Sings” at the Glenbow Museum in Calgary Alberta; the 2002-2008 “Scottish Project” at the National Museums Scotland, Edinburgh, Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre, Yellowknife, and the Carleton University Art Gallery, Ottawa; and the Gwich'in Caribou Skin Clothing Project, a collaboration between the Gwich'in Social and Cultural Institute, the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre, and the Canadian Museum of

Civilization (Ottawa). Methodologically these case studies are neither “most similar” nor “most different,” nor do I use a compare and contrast approach to analysis. Though I did extensive literature reviews on each exhibition, the materials and participant interviews available to me were different in each case. As such, I use these case studies as examples and a means to think through, challenge, and develop the theoretical underpinnings of my dissertation.

The first case study is the 1988 exhibition “The Spirit Sings: Artistic Traditions of Canada’s First Peoples” which has been cited as a turning point in Canadian, and by extension, international, museum practice (Phillips, 2011). “The Spirit Sings” opened at the Glenbow Museum in Calgary in 1988 to coincide with the Winter Olympics. The stated intention was to celebrate the richness of Aboriginal cultures and educate the public. The exhibition attempted to fulfill this mandate by presenting more than 650 objects from 90 national and international collections. “The Spirit Sings” was highly controversial and created rifts between many colleagues in the museum communities. In addition to the critiques of the content, the exhibition was condemned because of the lack of inclusion of Indigenous people in the curation process, including a lack on consultation with the local First Nations. Most prominently, the Lubicon Cree called for a boycott of the exhibition because of the sponsorship by Shell Oil, a company that had been drilling in Lubicon territory and causing environmental destruction for more than three decades. The controversy resulted in the creation of the 1992 Task Force on Museums and First Peoples,⁵ which, Ruth B Phillips (2011) cites as a turning point towards the “postcolonial project” of museum reform. Though the legacy of “The Spirit Sings” remains controversial, it is clear that this exhibition deeply influenced Canadian and international museum practice.

The second case study is the “Scottish Project” in Denendeh, or what is now known as the Northwest Territories, Canada. I have examined the relationship between the Tłı̨chǫ, a Dene nation whose territories are located east and north of Yellowknife, the National Museums of Scotland, and the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre. I use

⁵ The Task Force on Museums and First Peoples met between 1988 and 1992, when they published their final report titled *Turning the Page: Forging New Partnerships Between Museums and First Peoples*. For more detailed analysis please see (Bolton, 2009). This will be shortened to “1992 Task Force” from here forward.

this case study as a means to understand nation building and cultural resurgence in the north, and included analysis of the historic context in which the objects in the National Museums of Scotland collection were purchased (1859-1862) as well as the negotiation of the comprehensive claims agreement at the beginning of the 21st Century. This case study provides insight into the role of international museums in preserving material culture, in this case, objects made for trade. In addition, I analyzed the ends of the relationship between the three institutions, the multi-sited exhibition alternatively called “De T’a Hoti Ts’eeda: We live securely by the land” and “Extremes: Life in Subarctic Canada,” as an example of audience perception of exhibitions in comparison to source community⁶ experiences.

The third case study, or case studies, are two knowledge repatriation projects: “Dene Spruce Root Basketry” (1999) and “Gwich’in Caribou Skin Clothing Project” (2000-2003), though I have emphasized the latter in interview and archival research. The “Dene Spruce Root Basketry” was a collaboration between the Canadian Museum of History, including Judy Thompson, and Dene woman Suzan Marie in 1999. The “Gwich’in Caribou Skin Clothing Project” (2000-2003), was a collaboration between the Canadian Museum of History (then the Canadian Museum of Civilization), the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre, and the Gwich’in Social and Cultural Institute. Like the collection of objects at the NMS, these items were largely “made for trade” and substantively made up of “everyday” objects that would have been kept outside of the museum collections. Karen Wright-Fraser was hired to work on the Gwich’in Caribou Skin Clothing Project as one of forty-two seamstresses who worked together to remake five men’s summer outfits. She had worked with Gwich’in clothing patterns as part of her own project working with Judy Thompson at the CMC in 1999. This separate but related project also involved using the collections to replicate the traditional clothing patterns. In both cases, Judy Thompson was contacted by an individual who was interested in

⁶ This is a term that is common in material culture studies and museum studies. While contentious, I use it simply to mean the community from which an object was originally purchased, traded or stolen. Because the definition of these communities has shifted over time within the museum records and after further research into collection origins this could mean a specific townsite or geographic area, or a First Nation, political group or language group. For example, the objects that were exhibited as part of the “Scottish Project” are classified in the NMS collections as Athapaskan (a language group), Dogrib (the pre-2005 term for the Tłıchǫ Nation) or Tłıchǫ. I have tried to specify where appropriate.

accessing the Canadian Museum of History (CMH) collection with the specific intention of relearning how to make objects in the collection.

The third geography is the theoretical field of engagement. When I initially put together my research plan I was planning to engage with the work of Michel Foucault, Edward Said, James Tully (amongst others) in order to build an argument about the importance of material culture studies for critical and post-colonial political theory. Foucault, and later Said, use analytical frameworks that are helpful for understanding the relationship between the construction of subjectivity and the power/knowledge matrix. Further, they both offer a theoretical framework for understanding agency within subject formation, as well as the means to analyze the actions that transgress this framework. A nuanced analysis of their work offers a critical reading of discourse and the nexus of power and knowledge that not only critiques practices of power *over* but simultaneously leaves spaces for subjective freedom.

When I first started my research, my methodology was to be an archival genealogy, and I had my catchphrase all worked out- I was to study “objects of empire” as opposed to discourses of empire. I was excited. But as things are prone to do during the course of research, the terrain underneath me shifted. In the fall of 2012 four women from Saskatchewan, Jessica Gordon, Sylvia McAdam, Sheelah McLean and Nina Wilson, started a “teach-in” about colonialism in Canada that exploded into the global movement Idle No More. The activism that took place during this movement shifted the terrain of many debates, and reoriented my analysis away from Foucault, Said and Tully to engage more robustly with my case studies and thinkers such as Glen Coulthard, Deborah Doxtator and David Garneau. Further, work by thinkers including Dory Nason, Leanne Simpson, and Audra Simpson, reiterated the importance of situating gender justice at the centre of struggles for decolonization. They argued that the history and present of colonialism was, and remains, gendered violence (Lawrence 2003; Nason 2013; O’Neill 2001; A Smith 2011, 2012). The violent dispossession of Indigenous peoples’ lands are also an attack on Indigenous women, queer and two spirited people (Morgensen 2010; L. B. Simpson 2012). But just as settler colonial violence has been gendered, so too is Indigenous resurgence, and there are a number of important texts that offer critical analyses of the importance of centring gender justice as part of decolonization, including

The Winter We Danced (Kino-nda-niimi Collective) published early in 2014, *Dancing on a Turtles Back* (L. B. Simpson) released in 2011, and *Mohawk Interruptus* (A. Simpson) in 2014. While this dissertation does not explicitly work within a tradition of Indigenous feminism, as the work moves forward this growing body of theory and practice will offer new directions of thinking and research.

My work also seriously engages with the arguments made in *Red Skin, White Masks* by Dene scholar Glen Coulthard (2014). From the beginning of my research, his critique of the liberal politics of recognition has influenced the way I understand settler colonialism, racism, hetero-patriarchy and privilege in Canada. In particular, the critiques of the contemporary politics of recognition as an extension of settler colonial violence through more conciliatory means have informed much of my analysis of contemporary settler colonialism and museums in Canada. Largely rooted in the Hegelian master/slave dialectic, a politics of recognition seeks to acknowledge but normatively reconcile difference. While there are many different models of recognition-based politics, I am most concerned with what I term the *colonial* politics of recognition. Following Coulthard I argue that this politics of recognition seeks to reconcile Indigenous peoples political and cultural difference with the ongoing legal and political presence of the Canadian state. In short, Indigenous peoples' difference is recognized as a means to reconcile with and maintain the Canadian settler colonial aims of Indigenous dispossession.

One of the first critiques of the liberal politics of recognition was by Elizabeth Povinelli. In her 2002 book "The Cunning of Recognition: Indigenous Alterities and the Making of Australian Multiculturalism" Povinelli reads the politics of recognition through the Australian liberal multicultural project as both an ideology and practice of governance. She describes Australian state policy towards Aboriginal people as shifting from "assimilation to self-determination and then to reconciliation" in the last half of the 21st Century. Povinelli argues that colonial states will recognize collective rights and identities of Indigenous peoples, but only when this recognition does not undermine or threaten the political, legal and economic status quo of the colonial structure.

Her analysis takes place within a wider context and framing of critiques of liberal multiculturalism through which she illustrates the politics of recognition as limited by the

tension between a societies willingness to recognize difference and the limits of moral repugnance, or the tension between a persons obligation to their moral sense and to reason (Povinelli, 2002, 5).

Although state courts and public demand evidence of the continuity of traditional beliefs, practice and dispositions as the condition of cultural recognition, and, through this, land title, some features and practices of “customary law” are prohibited by common and statutory law and by a public sense of moral decency (Povinelli, 2002, 3).

She finds that the politics of recognition is one of the means through which this tension can be reconciled in the context of Australian liberal multiculturalism, but only to the extent that it maintains the liberal structure of asymmetric power. Povinelli states that she is interested in the ways that “[minority and subaltern subjects creatively elaborate new social imaginaries](#)” (2002, 6). However, these spaces of creativity remain circumscribed by the limits of her comparatively totalizing account of power.

In short, Povinelli’s emphasis on the liberal multicultural project framed through a dialectic of reason and repugnance presents a totalizing view of power and subjugation that forces Indigenous peoples to strive for an “impossible position of authenticity.” While Povinelli provides as a compelling critique of the operation of liberal politics of recognition, this critique is predicated on an encompassing account of both the “social fact” of late liberalism, and the effect of recognition as threatening the “subject” and “social life” of Aboriginal people. Thus, for Povinelli it seems that the aim of her critique is the aporias and tensions between obligations to recognize moral sense and reason in the context of liberal multiculturalism. However, this framing risks reducing Indigenous peoples struggles to an explanatory foil for the liberal multiculturalism as a politics of domination. Thus, while innovative and condemning in her reading of liberalism, her conception of the field of action and the creation of subjectivities within this field limits of her analysis

In this dissertation I have found that turning to practices of Dene resistance and resurgence offers a means to examine the practices that exceed and fracture the colonial politics of recognition in the Canadian context. While my work is a critique of settler colonialism in Canada, and the colonial politics of recognition specifically, I also aim to trace and emphasize the work done by Indigenous peoples resisting colonialism in their

territories. Methodologically beginning with the practices of the Dene guards against their work being positioned simply as an explanatory foil to make sense of multiculturalism.

One of the central features of this dissertation has been to bridge between critical museums studies and a critique of the colonial politics of recognition, but by engaging with and talking to people who are actually doing this work in their communities. Through this I aim to reveal the ways in which museum spaces are, through naïve complicity at best and wilful ignorance at worse, implicated in the colonial politics of recognition, a conciliatory iteration of settler colonialism that, while affirming difference, still maintains the colonial power relations.

A Second Story: It Has Always Been About Relationships

The first thing that I learned when I arrived in Denendeh in the fall of October 2013 was about the important places around what is now known as Yellowknife. I was shown a spot where the river joins the lake, and the effects that decades of mining have had on the skyline around the city. The second thing I learned about was the mooseskin boat project that took place in August 2013, a culture camp that brought together three generations of Mountain Dene to camp on the Keele River to build a mooseskin boat and take it downriver into Tulita.

In the 1850s the Industrial Museum of Scotland (Edinburgh) was given a mandate to educate the Scottish public about the arts of the world. Scottish men were already well established at the frontline of British colonialism across the globe, and making use of these networks museum Director George Wilson issued a call for Scottish fur traders to purchase examples of objects and send them home to Scotland. Predating “salvage anthropology” when some amateur and professional anthropologists robbed communities of their sacred ceremonial objects, Bernard Rogan Ross, an Irish Chief Trader with the HBC answered this call and purchased hundreds of objects from Dene communities. He sent some to the Smithsonian, but nearly 240 objects were sent to the Industrial Museum of Scotland, which would eventually become the National Museums Scotland in Edinburgh, UK.

These objects were collected during a period of great change in Denendeh. Trade, either with direct contact or utilizing the already existing complex trading networks that

built on hundreds of years of relationships, meant that the Indigenous Nations increasingly had access to Western manufactured objects, including beads or pots and pans “that eased the difficulty of some land based or subsistence activities. However, this also caused dramatic and rapid changes to the nature of traditional material culture” (Renwick & Andrews 2004, 14). Representatives of the HBC were purchasing furs and communities that had long been self-sufficient, relying on subsistence economics, were starting to reorient themselves around the encroaching fur trade. However, fur trade colonialism manifested differently across what is now known as North America. In Denendeh, the Dene traders often frustrated HBC employees. Rather than becoming reliant on trade goods, many Dene were exploiting the new trading networks. Sometimes this would mean refusing to trade if the price of furs was not sufficient, sometimes that meant selling traders their otherwise unusable furs. “It seems clear that the Northern Indians saw no real need for many of the goods offered by the HBC... Native peoples lived what seemed to them a comfortable and satisfactory life among the caribou and woodland resources” (Abel 1993, 61). While fur trade colonialism was at the cutting edge of what would transform into systemic forms of dispossession predicated on the pillars of settler colonialism, capitalism, patriarchy and racism, in the 1850s, it was the Dene who maintained the balance of power.

When I conducted an interview with John B Zoe, Chief Negotiator of the Tłıchǫ Comprehensive Claims Agreement about relationships with the National Museums Scotland (Edinburgh) and the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre (Yellowknife), he began by telling me about the time before man, when the laws of relationships between man and animals were being made. For Zoe, the contemporary relationship between the Tłıchǫ and the museums that hold objects made by them in the 1850s and 1860s are not detached from the wider context of political change in the north, culminating in the ratification of the Tłıchǫ Comprehensive Claims Agreement in 2005 that signalled the shift back from “dependency to independence.”⁷

Through interviews and spending time in the north, it rapidly became clear to me when conducting this research that I could not understand the Scottish Project without understanding the wider context, histories and projects that preceded or existed

⁷ Interview with John B Zoe and Kelsey Wrightson. October 15, 2013 in Yellowknife, NWT.

simultaneously with that work. Moreover, when conducting this research, I could not detach these practices from other projects, people and histories. A single object was thus not *only* representative of a particular time and place, but also implicated in other networks and practices, social relationships, and potentiality in the future.

This led me to a new set of questions that informed my research. I began asking: what does the history of a museum collection purchased in the mid-19th century have to do with a mooseskin boat built in the 21st century? What does a mooseskin boat have to do with Gwich'in caribou skin clothing, have to do with Hegel, have to do with decolonization in Canada?

It has always been about relationships- some good, some dangerous.

Webs of Significance

Museum collections have often been understood as dusty rooms filled with dead objects. At best they have been described as “contact zones” (Clifford 1997) but at worst, critiqued for “killing” the objects by removing them from community and place, where they can be used, danced and lived (Clifford 1997; Krmpotich & Peers 2013; Peers & Brown 2003; M. Simpson 2009; “Task Force Report on Museums and First Peoples” 1992; Townsend-Gault 1998). National Museums and National Galleries especially, and many other public spaces are charged with displaying “Canadian national culture and history” and educating the public. They are therefore located as part of both the material and narrative or subjective forms of settler colonialism in Canada. However, these institutions are complicated, paradoxical and sometimes ambivalent spaces. While museum collections are often founded on a history of dispossession and represent narratives that are implicated in continuing violence, museums can and have been used to forward the decolonizing efforts that are generated in communities. Within these institutions, the work of Indigenous peoples, Nations, individuals, groups, allies and organizations, is used in numerous ways with various effects, to forward the aims of decolonization and resistance to settler colonialism. This can take the form of acts of remembering, stories, practice and places, which have a quality of resistance that exceeds the attempts at domination. Remembering and memory refuses to capitulate to the demands of settler colonial conquest that Indigenous peoples should disappear, or, be

present in ways that are entirely coherent with settler colonial domination (Corntassel, 2009).

My research finds that these objects remain embedded within, and responsive to, “webs of significance” that continue to inform their meaning and relevance for contemporary communities. Late Mohawk curator Deborah Doxtator articulated the complexities of “Basket, Bead and Quill” within contemporary practices of meaning making and community building. Baskets, and the skill sets that have gone into making them, exemplify the important historic connections between generations of makers.

I have been given baskets, and like many other Native women I have relatives who have made these things as part of their economic survival. In many families the knowledge of the processes involved in making baskets, beadwork, quillwork and other “traditional” activities have been passed down from one generation to another. Each object contains memories of the person who made it, the knowledge of how to gather and prepare materials, the prayers and songs, the philosophies and metaphors for making sense of the world (Doxtator 1995, 15).

However, and as stated earlier, tradition is also generative. Making baskets is not solely about connections to historic communities and practices, but also the ways through which these practices continue to evoke and create new communities.

If knowledge is what you create in using, adapting and enacting certain ideas in your daily life, then it is also what you learn by following long established activities encoded in the process of making these ancient forms. The often collaborative process of gathering and preparing material and repeating (although never exactly) the patterns of making traditional forms, in and of itself teaches and imparts knowledge (Doxtator 1995, 15).

Thus, the webs of significance are not just about the meaning that is made by understanding the history of an object, but also, and perhaps more importantly, about the relationships that went into creating these objects. As Doxtator emphasizes, beading and quilling is a collective practice made possible because of relationships to other makers and to the land. Similarly, the exhibitions that I studied were all made possible through a networks of relationships, both historic and immediate. Moreover, these relationships were prioritized in particular ways, such that the museum and institutions were not privileged, but rather, the needs of grandmothers and school children took precedence over static preservation.

Cultural practices are not inert representations of Indigenous difference, but constitutive of Indigenous peoples' futures, individually, collectively and in relation to others. Valaskakis highlights the dual role of Indigenous narratives by stating:

The stories we tell in written and visual narrative have long been recognized as a window on who we are, what we experience, and how we understand and enact ourselves and others. But... stories are more than a window on identity. We actually construct who we are in our identification with the discursive images and cultural narratives that dominate our ways of seeing and representing the world. These narratives are reflexive and reflective. In the stories that move and change in memory and community, we make sense out of history and heritage, producing personal and social meanings and ideological positions (Valaskakis 2005, 45).

Memory as resurgence, and acts of remembrance as resurgence, actively counter attempts to create a dichotomy between past and present that would either relegate Indigenous peoples' cultural practices to an "authentic" but imagined history, or place Indigenous people cultural practices within a teleological understanding of history that would position Indigenous peoples as disappeared by virtue of their exposure to the "modern." According to Valaskakis, ultimately, "native recovery of collective memory is a transformational process" (Valaskakis 2005, 80). As such, remembering is not an appeal to a "pre-contact" past, but a resurgent move towards decolonial futures.

Methodology

Political Science can be methodologically categorized in a number of different ways. Most broadly, some research undertakes an empirical analysis of phenomena with predictive or explanatory aims. Other projects take a normative direction, attempting to intervene into these phenomena and offer new and better analyses and practice. This dissertation is not a political or cultural history or ethnography of "the north" as a geographic and cultural region. Rather, this is a work of political theory, informed and underpinned by interview and archival study. Thus, my dissertation has two methodological goals. First, I have aimed to put disparate tracks of thinking in conversation with each other. For example, I have put political theory in conversation with museum studies and Hegel in conversation with women who bead. Second, I have

tried to centre histories and contemporary practices of resistance and decolonization, rather than centering a critique on settler colonialism itself.

The “Scottish Project” built on years of Dene activism and leadership, including the “Trails of our Ancestors”⁸ and numerous other examples of work done in communities. The “Gwich’in Caribou Skin Clothing Project” is part of the large scope of work undertaken by the Gwich’in Social and Cultural Institute,⁹ and the dedication of women to ensure that their culture, politics and histories continue. Thus, the methods of this dissertation are not solely explanatory or offering “ought to” answers of normative social science. Rather, I hope to hold up the practices of Indigenous resurgence that have been actively countering settler colonial violence for nearly 400 years. The aim thus, is not to find new ways of practicing resurgence, but offer new ways of thinking about what is already there to continue the dismantling of settler colonial structures across Canada. As such, my empirical and case study analysis is primarily oriented towards a “tracing” and “unpacking” of three case studies that exemplify some of the nuanced practices of resurgence currently undertaken by Indigenous nations, individuals and communities.

In order to achieve these goals I have deployed a few different methods. First, I have sought out sources of political theory in unusual places, including museum literature, but also in exhibition guides and accounts of cultural resurgence and knowledge repatriation projects that have taken place in museums. In Chapter 2 I create a conversation between Indigenous artists and theorists of settler colonialism and critical political theory to offer a means to think through three logics of settler colonialism: disappearance, appropriation and obfuscation. In particular I engage with Lorenzo Veracini, Patrick Wolfe, Taiaiake Alfred, Jeff Corntassel to offer critiques of the ongoing structure of settler colonial domination. While I have used critical and post-colonial theory to frame my analysis of museum spaces, I have also attempted to put political theory in direct conversation with visual methods and analysis. I have emphasized Glen Couthard’s (2014) critiques of the colonial politics of recognition, to re-examine and

⁸ Trails of Our Ancestors is a land-based education project in Tłıchǫ territory. For more extensive analysis please see (Zoe 2007).

⁹ The Gwich’in Social and Cultural Institute (GSCI) was established in 1993 after the settlement of the Gwich’in Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement. In 1993 the Institute began operation with the mandate to “document, preserve and promote the practice of Gwich’in culture, language, traditional knowledge and values.”

analyze museum practice. Secondly, I have also used qualitative methods, including interviews with curators, community members and participants in the various projects. I approached these as expert interviews that were largely open ended. I got very different types of information from the interviews, and generally let the interview participants highlight what they found important, whether the multivocality of the exhibition, building the capacity for community collaborations, or the role of the museum in supporting political independence. Third, I did extensive examinations of museum records and displays, and used the museum's own internal documentation of the successes of exhibitions. This included an extensive analysis of the museum visitor response book records as well as a comparative analysis of exhibition text and presentations.

When first proposed, this research was multi-sited and included case studies from Haida Gwaii, Denendeh and Musqueam. However, it swiftly became clear that the concerns of the Haida Nation are not the same as Musqueam, and the Tł̓ch̓q have different relationships to their material histories than both. Narrowing my analysis to look at the Scottish Project offered the chance to explore an understudied area of material culture *and* political history, and it also offered the chance to develop a more detailed, in-depth study. However, when narrowing to focus on “The Scottish Project” it became rapidly clear that the Scottish Project must be understood within the wider political context in the North. The Scottish Project built upon decades of relationships between individuals and institutions and was only made possible through these relationships. While “The Scottish Project” hinted at further practices of resurgence and resistance beyond changing the dominant stories being told about Indigenous peoples, it was the “Gwich’in Caribou Skin Clothing Project” that offered insights into direct ways that Indigenous peoples are engaging in museum spaces to support cultural resurgence.

Thus, the empirical work in this dissertation is organized around three “case studies”, as detailed above (the 1988 Spirit Sings Exhibition, “The Scottish Project”, and the “Gwich’in Caribou Skin Clothing Project”). Rather than reading and thinking through Hegel’s master/slave dialectic as the starting point of my theory of labour against the colonial politics of recognition, I listened to the work being done in communities, especially by women. By putting these two distinct voices in conversation, it became clear that they not only had much to offer one another, but also that the political theory I was

engaging with had much to gain from such a conversation. This dissertation covers a large scope of literature, draws on research from multiple disciplines, and attempts to forward the arguments made in political science and museum studies by putting the two, often disparate disciplines, in conversation with one another. The heart of this dissertation, that the political is cultural, and the cultural is political, may seem to be a facetious statement. However, when treated seriously, the power of cultural acts to transform political practices is evident.

Position and Intention

I am a non-Indigenous woman. My context, my history, my privilege and my experiences inform the way that I see the world and the way that I conduct my research. I have not intentionally shied away from this during my research process, nor have I abdicated responsibility for my privilege by appealing to a model of value free social science. Much more can be said about my own position in this work, but I will note two principles that inform the way I conduct myself and my research as a visitor on unceded Musqueam territories and a guest to Tłı̨chǫ territory and Denendeh. First, this dissertation is just one part, and not the finite fulfillment of my obligations as guest and visitor. I have not framed this as “community-based work” and my research process is not an example of how community-based research should be conducted, though I am personally informed by the principles (L. T. Smith, 1999; Wilson, 2008). Rather, I see this as the first offering of research, which will, with time and effort, hopefully inform longer research collaborations with interested individuals and communities. The future directions of this work are elaborated on in the conclusion. To this end, or rather beginnings, the second principle is that critique and the opportunity to change are generous gifts, and ones that I welcome.

The intent of this research was to examine the current role, and potential, for museums to serve the decolonizing interests of “source communities.” When I began this work, my position necessarily circumscribed the scope of my research. My initial aim in conducting this research was not to inform Indigenous people of their own cultural practices or histories. Rather, I have always intended this to be a work that traces out the ways that Indigenous peoples are actively contesting settler colonialism in sometimes unanticipated ways. In tracing these acts, I hope to highlight the ways that individuals are

already engaged in resistance such that those who are privileged can come to more fully listen to these practices of resistance. Some of the intended audiences are museum professionals, including curators, who are interested in developing and understanding the impacts and the roles that museums may have to forward Indigenous peoples' acts of decolonization.

As a non-Indigenous person living in Canada, I hope to speak to the other non-Indigenous people in Canada who have, and continue to have, a position of privilege as a result of the history and contemporary settler colonialism on these lands. While I believe that it is non-Indigenous peoples that clearly have the most to learn from examining the scope of resistance and transformative resurgence explored throughout this dissertation, I hope that non-Settlers will also recognize their own practices and thoughts within the case studies examined. Specifically, where settler colonialism in Canada has functioned to detach Indigenous peoples' cultural practices from their radical political critiques, I hope that this dissertation serves as one part of the larger project that traces the connection between the two. To be clear, this is not creating some new or imagined connection between the cultural and political acts of Indigenous peoples, but rather to trace the relationships that are already there. Thus, the goal of this dissertation is an attempt to uncover that connection, and potentially bring it to the attention and interest of the people that need to see it most.

Key Contributions

When I began this research, I came with a particular critical orientation. I began with development of a theoretical lens of analysis, which was followed by a year of fieldwork in Scotland. However, the second year of my fieldwork was not what I expected. The theories that informed this dissertation when I began research traced out the ways in which colonial violence manifested through narratives that are amplified and authorized by museums. In the context of settler colonialism in Canada, the dangers of the colonial politics of recognition in particular and logics of settler colonialism more widely, were readily apparent. Analysis of the audience response books to the exhibition "Extremes: Life in Subarctic Canada" (Edinburgh, 2008) clearly demonstrated the logics of settler colonial material and symbolic violence that I had researched previously. I expected that the remainder of my research would continue to demonstrate narrative and material

manifestations of settler colonialism. However, I was swiftly to be proven incorrect in this assumption. Thus, the contributions that I hope to make are not so much a set of definitive recommendations to museum studies or political theory, but an entreaty for those interested to better listen to the agency of Indigenous peoples who are choosing to work within and engage with the museum studies work.

I aim for this work to be relevant to at least three audiences; academics interested in postcolonial studies, academics and practitioners interested in museum and curatorial studies, and communities interested in critical anti-colonial practices located in museums. In political theory I bring together three areas of theory into conversation: politics and aesthetics, colonialism and political theory, and practices of decolonization in the context of settler colonialism. The scope of my research is novel, combining national and domestic museum analysis, and using empirical case studies to think through, and shift, theoretical developments is an innovative approach that grounds political theory in the “real world.” Bringing together post-colonial theory, political aesthetics and the politics of recognition and self-determination in the context of Canadian settler colonialism addresses a noticeable gap in the field of postcolonial theory more broadly. While the field of political theory has taken up questions of “new imperialism,” (Tully 2008a) this mode of inquiry has remained largely focused in the fields of semiotics, history and archival studies, textual analysis and legal studies (Armitage 2004; Arneil 1996; Asch 1999, 2002; Said 1995, 1997; Spivak 1988; Tully 2008a, 2008b). Rather than focusing on discourses of empire, my work looks at the political histories of objects.

In museum studies, while there has been work done looking at the ways in which museums were complicit and instrumental in perpetuating colonial narratives (Mackey 1999; Phillips 2011; M. Simpson, 2009), fewer resources have been spent looking at the ways in and through which museum spaces continue to perpetuate an asymmetrical relationship between source communities and audiences, while *simultaneously* holding potential for transformative and anticolonial subversive practices. This is especially true when the critiques of museums are reliant on a reading of settler colonialism that privileges the structural over the subversive and occludes the potential for “subaltern agency” in acts of resistance. However, I also offer a critical contribution to museum studies from critiques of settler colonialism. While museum studies has been critical of

pre-1990 relationships with “source communities,” it has also been comparatively self-congratulatory in the post-1992 Museums Task Force context. By explicitly placing shifts in Canadian museological practice in the theoretical context of Coulthard’s critique of the settler colonial politics of recognition I offer a new critique of contemporary museological practice in Canada as an extension of the colonial politics of recognition.

What I Am Not Doing: The Repatriation Debate

One of the most significant, and predominant modes of critique of museum practices is the debate around the repatriation of objects from museums back to source communities (Jacknis 2011; Jenkins 2008; Kramer 2010; Krmpotich & Peers 2013; Krmpotich 2011, 2014; M. Simpson 2009). My dissertation does not deal with this debate for a number of reasons. First, physical repatriation of objects was not the goal of either the “Gwich’in Caribou Skin Clothing Project” or “The Scottish Project.”¹⁰ Second, there is other work being done around the question of repatriation that is more focused, and pertains to more relevant museum collections. Third, the question of museums amenability to repatriation claims is very interesting in the Canadian/UK context, and worthy of an entirely different dissertation. In the United States NAGPRA legislation gives juridical weight to repatriation requests, in Canada, the 1992 Task Force has specific normative goals and gives moral weight to repatriation claims (though no legal recourse). However, in the UK, the institutional amenability to repatriation claims seems to be determined, at least in part, by the individual curators and institutions that are involved. Scottish museums have a history of repatriating objects that is quite different than large English institutions such as the British Museum (Burnet, 2007). While English museums are notoriously adverse to repatriation claims (a notable exception is the Pitt Rivers work with the Haida Nation), the requests have been relatively more successful in Scotland, where the Kelvingrove Museum (Glasgow) repatriated *toi moko* to the Maori in Aotearoa (New Zealand) and a ghost dance shirt to the Lakota (1990 and 1998 respectively).¹¹ This different relationship

¹⁰ Personal communication and Interviews with John B Zoe, Chantal Knowles, and Karen Wright-Fraser as well as cited in (Kritsch, 2001; Kritsch and Wright-Fraser, 2002; Thompson and Kritsch, 2005).

¹¹ Glasgow City Council entertained five repatriation requests between 1990 and 2000. The Ghost Dance Shirt was returned after an initial rejection by the Glasgow City Council, and subsequent appeal. The Australian Aboriginal Human Remains were returned upon first request.
<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm199900/cmselect/cmcmums/371/0051808.htm>

to the question of repatriation is clearly exemplified by the NMS curator Chantal Knowles, who entertained the potential Tłıchǫ or Dene repatriation requests positively.¹² However, those requests did not come during the course of “The Scottish Project,” and indeed, the role of the museum in preservation of objects, and the international presentation of Tłıchǫ and Dene culture and nationhood remains an important facet of “The Scottish Project.”

Debates around repatriation often overwrite the complexities of source community relationships to objects. The thrust of the 1992 Task Force recommendations were towards Indigenous control over their own culture and heritage (1992). To over-determine that recommendation to mean *only* or even *primarily* repatriation excludes a range of ways that people can engage with their material culture and heritage. Nothing in this dissertation should be read as arguing for “knowledge repatriation” or cultural exchanges *at the expense of* physical repatriation. I have made a conscious choice not to engage with the debate around repatriation, though this not to the exclusion of that conversation.

Organization and Summary

When I began my research my hypothesis was that my case studies would demonstrate that museums are inadequate and ill equipped for dealing with the pervasive structures of settler colonial domination as they manifest through disappearance, appropriation and obfuscation. However, through the case study research I found a more complicated, and indeed, paradoxical understanding of the museum. These institutions are, at one time and even in the same exhibition, both a space for the reproduction of settler colonial narratives of control and domination, and a space where Indigenous peoples are interjecting into, and contesting these practices of domination. In order to work through these concepts and practices, this dissertation is organized in three parts: 1) theoretical grounding and establishing the topography of the dissertation, 2) critique of museological spaces and practices as reproducing the colonial politics of recognition, 3) practices of Indigenous resurgence in museums.

¹² Interview with Chantal Knowles by Kelsey Wrightson, November 1, 2013 Edinburgh, UK.

The first two content chapters of the dissertation are largely theoretical, and map the general intellectual topography of the dissertation. The first chapter looks at three “logics” of settler colonialism: disappearance, appropriation and obfuscation. These three logics are illustrated by examples drawn from material culture studies, art and museum studies. Tracing these logics offers a nuanced intervention into the settler colonial goals of dispossession, capitalist exploitation and maintenance of the status quo colonial governance, and reveals these logics to be mutually constitutive. The goals of Chapter Two are to give a theoretical language to illustrate both the location of my intervention (museums) and the larger structural condition of settler colonialism while using empirical examples to exemplify and illuminate the theoretical concepts. Chapter Two also serves to illustrate the relationship between material and symbolic forms of violence, revealing the inextricable connection between the two.

Chapter Three moves to the museum as a site of political analysis. Like the first chapter, this analysis is intended to give a general understanding of the theoretical framework for the remainder of the dissertation. The chapter is organized around one central argument; museums are paradoxical spaces. Echoing Taiaiake Alfred and Jeff Corntassel’s warning not to allow the only story of Indigenous peoples to be a story of colonization (2005, 601), rather than a condemnation or exultation of the work done in and with museums, this dissertation attempts to unpack much of the complexity of politics “on the ground.” Using the theoretical insights of Foucault and Said, and drawing largely on the logic of “obfuscation” developed in the first chapter, I argue that museums exemplify the problematic colonial nexus between power and knowledge.

I use Foucault in Chapter 3 to think through the museum as a site of paradoxical power, both domination and resistance. Foucault is particularly useful because his discursive analysis does not fall under the field of semiotics, nor does he take up an explicitly historical, and apolitical analysis. Rather, he uses the analogy of war and conflict in order to understand the field of relations in which he is engaged, placing power at the centre of his analysis.

The goal of Chapter 3 is to reveal the way that museum displays are not just “glass boxes” revealing the “other,” but also mirrors that reflect the ways that power understands itself. Methodologically, rather than describing and understanding

relationships between source communities and objects as finite and comprehensible to Western epistemological priorities, centering the paradox of museum practice and presentation necessitates a focus on the fractures in these settler colonial practices of domination caused by Indigenous peoples' own understandings of their relationships to objects and their interjections into museum spaces.

Thus, given critiques of the limits of Foucauldian accounts of power as totalizing, between Chapters Three and Four, the dissertation moves from a largely theoretical methodology illustrated by empirical examples, to an analysis that more robustly centres on the three case studies. This focus offers a new means of thinking about the practices of resistance that are challenging understandings of the museum as totalizing space of domination. Methodologically, "The Spirit Sings," (1988) "The Scottish Project" (2002-2008) and the "Dene Spruce Root Basket" (1999) and "Gwich'in Caribou Skin Clothing Project" (2000-2003) are illustrative of the theoretical arguments made, and more importantly, offer a means to think through and develop theories around practices of Indigenous resurgence. To tell only one story of either domination or resistance reduces the complexity of both. Thus the following two sections (or four chapters) of the dissertation should be read as a conversation. Chapters Four and Five offer a critique of museological practices as a continuation of settler colonial domination, where Chapters Six and Seven trace the generative modes of Indigenous resistance.

Chapter Four begins with a doubled narrowing in the trajectory of the dissertation. Methodologically, I narrow the scope of empirical analysis to explore the first of three case studies, the 1988 exhibition "The Spirit Sings" held at the Glenbow Museum in Calgary Alberta during the 1988 Winter Olympics. The second narrowing is theoretical in which I turn away from more general critiques of settler colonialism and towards the specificities of critiques of the colonial politics of recognition. In the fourth chapter I argue that the exhibition "The Spirit Sings" was a key event that represents a shift towards the more conciliatory politics of recognition within Canadian museum policy and practice, intending to accommodate Indigenous peoples' cultural claims within narrative inclusion and "recognition" as critiqued by Coulthard (2007, 2014). The colonial politics of recognition draws most explicitly upon the second and third logics of settler colonialism domination that I explore in the first chapter. Namely, disappearance of the Indigenous

“other” is facilitated by the appropriation of Indigenous peoples’ cultural practices and heritage in order to detach the “cultural” from the political claims generated by relations to and on the land. Thus, I argue that the colonial politics of recognition as it plays out in museological practices obfuscates ongoing settler colonial violence by “restorying” and “eventing” which shifts the narratives of the settler colonial state to make the structures of domination difficult to see, critique or further dismantle.

With this turn toward the conciliatory politics of recognition, Chapter Four concludes with an examination of three articles that explicitly take up the politics of recognition within museum studies. Through these I argue that the *colonial* politics of recognition perpetuates settler colonial control and domination by a) transforming political claims into more conciliatory narratives of cultural accommodation b) maintaining the asymmetric structures of authority and c) privileging narrative change without accounting for structural and economic equality.

My arguments in Chapter Four focus primarily on the structural analysis of Coulthard’s critique of the colonial politics of recognition. In Chapter Five I turn to the psycho-effective and intersubjective critique of recognition, and examine the ways in which *colonizer* subjects are formed in and through museological spaces. I also turn to the second, and most extensive, case study. Thus, a significant portion of this chapter is a narrative recounting of “The Scottish Project,” a collaborative exhibition that took place in Yellowknife, Ottawa and Edinburgh. However, following from the previous chapter’s examination of the politics of recognition as taken up in museum studies, I examine the limits of the politics of recognition as it has been advocated for in museological practice. Using audience response books to the exhibition in Edinburgh and focusing especially on Canadian responses, I find that the narrative changes are insufficient to effectively transform the nexus of material and narrative violence that underpins colonialism in Canada. In other words, changing the stories told about and by Indigenous peoples in museum spaces was insufficient for changing the minds of many of the Canadian audience members who continued to iterate the narratives that inform and underpin settler colonial subjectivities.

However, the deficiency to transform the settler colonizer is not the end of my analysis of “The Scottish Project.” Indeed, recalling Chapter Three, which argues that

museums are paradoxical spaces, the last two chapters take on a different line of argument. While still deploying a methodologically narrow approach using a case study analysis, rather than critiquing the colonial politics of recognition, the following two chapters argue that Indigenous peoples' interjections into museum spaces should be read as actively contesting the colonial politics of recognition specifically, and the logics of settler colonial domination more generally. I trace two "modes" of resistance that is exemplified by interjections into museum spaces. Taking up the work of Métis artist David Garneau and his concept of "spaces of Aboriginal irreconcilability," (2012) the first mode of resistance finds that, rather than being implicated in a dialectic of oppression/resistance that falls into the danger of allowing colonialism to be the only story of Indigenous peoples, there are histories that are *exogenous* to the narratives of settler colonialism. Thus, Chapter Six argues that though "The Scottish Project" was insufficient to fully transform the narratives of settler colonialism in Canada as exemplified by audience responses, this deficiency was not the only story. Indeed, using interview, historic and discourse analysis, I argue that some Tłı̨chǫ individuals specifically, and Dene more broadly, understand their relationship to museums, and the work being doing *within* museums, in a manner that exceeds the colonial politics of recognition. Through analysis of the particular object histories of a set of stone pipes and a willow bark net, I argue that the material histories, and the relationship between the Dene and their own material culture histories exemplified in the school outreach program, exceeds settler colonial attempts to narratively and materially disappear, appropriate, and obfuscate Indigenous Nations historic and continued presence.

Chapter Seven then turns to the second mode of resistance, which I have termed "labour against recognition." In contrast to the previous two chapters, which emphasize the narrative forms of the politics of recognition (telling better/more accurate stories about the self and other), this chapter returns to a generative theory of the politics of recognition, the Hegelian master/slave dialectic. I argue that not only did Hegel underestimate the role of labour as an avenue for emancipatory self-recognition, but when put in conversation with the growing body of literature on Indigenous resurgence, labour is generative of social and political relationships formed on, and informed by, relationships to land. These webs of social relations mean that labour, and the process of

labour is not *inherently* linked to the colonial politics of recognition. Instead, and against the logics of settler colonial appropriation and obfuscation, labour in the form of making and remaking objects, cannot be appropriated into the colonial logics of domination and thus presents an alternative mode of engagement. This chapter focuses on my final case study, the “Gwich’in Caribou Skin Clothing Project,” and to a lesser extent the “Dene Spruce Root Basketry” project, which are examples of a growing number of collaborative projects that use museum storerooms for “knowledge repatriation” projects. Rather than exceeding the colonial politics, I argue that the colonial politics of recognition has been actively countered through a process of “labour against recognition.”

This leads to the conclusion, which synthesizes some of the disparate threads of this dissertation together. The research underpinning these conclusions clearly demonstrated that the work of many Indigenous women has been integral resistance to colonialism. The work of Indigenous women within and in conversation with museums and in their communities forms the cutting edge of these generative acts of cultural resurgence that are central to Chapter Six and Chapter Seven. The case studies that I examine ultimately have many “faces” or stories, but it is the intimate acts of resistance in the form of sewing circles, exhibition guides discussed around kitchen tables, and children asking grandparents how to say “snowshoe” in Tłıchǫ that have been acknowledged as both the most powerful and holding the most potential to form the basis for Indigenous political and cultural resurgence against settler colonial domination.

A Third Story: It Has Always Been About Work

I was sitting in front of a sewing machine on April 14th 2014. I remember the date very clearly because it was exactly a year from the day that my Grandmother passed. I am not a particularly good seamstress by any stretch of the imagination. I do not like following rules and I am constantly sewing my pockets inside out, but some of my favourite memories are of sitting in my Grandmother’s dark basement watching her under the light of a single bulb as she put together a new Christmas dress or pair of pajamas. I was sitting in front of a sewing machine that particular day because the sound of the pedal reminded me of her. While I was refusing to follow a pattern and trying to undo my inside-out hem, I realized something that would come to be very important. The product of my work in

the form of a hole-ridden and lopsided attempt at a dress did not matter; it was the process of making something that brought me comfort.

When beginning my research one of the first interviews I conducted was with Judy Thompson who had spent her professional career at the Canadian Museum of Civilization dedicated to the preservation of northern material culture and supporting the continuation of Dene practices of making in the North. In late summer of 2012 Judy Thompson described working with Karen Wright-Fraser and the Gwich'in Social and Cultural Institute on the "Gwich'in Caribou Skin Clothing Project." The sound of the sewing machine pedal reminded me of my grandmother, and of my conversation with Judy Thompson, and then of the second thing that I had learned in Yellowknife about the process of making a mooseskin boat. Thinking about these collaborative and creative projects made me realize that they shared a common theme that explicitly situated the creation of objects as part of *continuing* relationships to land, the past and the future. I recalled Deborah Doxtator's essay at the beginning of the 1995 exhibition "Basket, Bead and Quill" explaining:

each object contains memories of the person who made it, the knowledge of how to gather and prepare materials, the prayers and songs, the philosophies and metaphors for making sense of the world. If knowledge is what you creating in using, adapting and enacting certain ideas in your daily life, then it is also what you learn by following long established activities encoded in the process of making these ancient forms... these objects continue to form an important part of our sense of ourselves as collective being, connecting us to other people, past present and future, and to other beings in the natural world (1995, 15).

Sitting in front of the sewing machine that day I realized that I had been thinking about women and beading for years, but I finally had the experience to tie everything that I had rolling through my head together. Just as violence has been gendered, so has resurgence. Anishinaabe Indigenous feminist Dory Nason writes about the boundless love that Indigenous women have for their families and nations, which, in spite of being ongoing targets of violence, continue to inspire the sort of political actions that create change within Indigenous and non- Indigenous communities (2013). In addition to these public acts of resurgence, Indigenous women have also been at the front line of the intimate acts of resistance that include the labour of creating and supporting families, holding individuals and communities accountable to their own laws and practices, sharing

language and food around a kitchen table, and passing along generations of knowledge through tanning and beading. The arc of this dissertation narrows to address these different modes of resistance, from large-scale critiques of settler colonial violence, through to the public display of Tł̓ch̓q histories, and finally to the intimate acts of resurgence of women beading together. Serendipitously and without planning, my first interview and my last interview were both about the “Gwich’in Caribou Skin Clothing Project.”

Decolonization has always been about the work. And it has always been about women’s work.

This dissertation is guided by three informing theories: the cultural is political, it has always been about relationships, and it has always been about the work. These three themes were both inspired by my research process, and informed the methods that I used when conducting this research. When I started the work, I expected to find that museums were spaces for the active perpetuation of material and symbolic violence. While this was correct, ultimately colonialism is not the only story.

2 “We Don’t Want Indians”: Three Logics of Settler Colonialism

The thing of it is to me, though, is that people don’t want to be Native; they want to remain themselves while pretending to be Native. They don’t want to come live like you or have fights or have drunks around; they don’t want their kids to go to the second-class schools, have third-class health care. They don’t want that. They want to stay themselves but yet they’re you. Then they can disavow any problems they’ve caused, because they’re you. That washes them clean—and I say no.

Hock E Aye Vi Edgar Heap of Birds interview with Lawrence Abbott (1994)

Settler colonialism functions as an oppressive structure operating through discursive and non-discursive practices. This chapter will focus on the particular operations, or logics, of settler colonial domination as they are both exemplified and constituted within the museum. In other words, and in direct contrast to arguments that would see the museum as an “apolitical” space of knowledge dissemination, this chapter traces the explicit ways that settler colonialism is actively perpetuated. While drawing on contextually situated analysis and examples of settler colonialism in museums, this critique of the logics of settler colonialism looks to broad modes of operation. Settler colonialism is not extrahistorical, juridical or totalizing, but abstracting the logics from the practice moves beyond particular temporal and geographic contexts, and, I argue, reveals settler colonial domination to be, at most, *partial*. Acts of violent and non-violent resistance have always existed alongside and against settler colonial structures, practices and discourses, despite the ‘hegemony’ of settler colonialism. Further this logic level analysis emphasizes the many messy and ultimately paradoxical practices of settler colonialism. I argue that settler colonial practices are oriented towards the key goal of exploitation and access to lands and resources. Though mutually constitutive, I have divided the overlapping operations into three basic “modes” of operation: disappearance, appropriation, and obfuscation. Using key settler colonial thinkers, including Patrick Wolfe, Lorenzo Veracini, Gail Guthrie Valaskasis and Ronald Hawker to frame my analysis, I will analyze these three

forms of settler colonialism and how they manifest within museum space and practice. The goal of this chapter is to establish the theoretical language that will be used throughout the remainder of the dissertation. This chapter can therefore be understood as a theoretical intervention that uses Indigenous artists, museum exhibitions and material culture histories to illustrate and illuminate theoretical analysis from settler colonial studies.

Exploitation and Access

“We don’t want Indians,” a 1982 text based work by artist Hock E Aye Vi Edgar Heap of Birds, exemplifies these central paradoxes of settler colonialism. Done in typographic poster style, the painting has the term “Natural” in reverse lettering at the top of the canvas, followed by the text “We don't want Indians Just their names mascots machines cities products buildings living people?” The piece, displayed as part of the 1992 exhibition “Revisions” at the Banff Cultural Centre which was curated as a response to the controversial 1988 exhibition “As the Spirit Sings” at the Glenbow Museum, traces the simultaneous desire to destroy Indians while appropriating their cultural forms and practices into the dominant narrative of settler nation-state building. “We don’t want Indians,” identifies the “tensions between ideological positions that exclude and contain the outsider and those that forcibly remake the Other into an insider” (Valaskakis, 2000, 390).

The driving logic of settler colonialism is distinct from colonialism; rather than exploitation or imperialism, the overarching logic of settler colonialism is *settlement* (Veracini 2011b; Wolfe 2006). The process of settlement is oriented towards two, mutually implicated, ends: opening up space for the exploitation of land, resources, labour and bodies, and the maintenance and spread of this status quo of domination. Unlike more explicitly exploitative logics of colonization in which land, resources and labour are utilized for the benefit of the geographically separate colonizer, settler colonial

violence is rooted in dispossession predicated on the material and ideational erasure of the colonized and possession of the land.¹³

This chapter explores three logics of settler colonialism: disappearance, appropriation and obfuscation. These logics are contradictory at best, and reveal the deeply aporetic operation of settler colonial practices. According to Johnston and Lawson, “the typical settler narrative [has] a double goal. It is concerned to act out the suppression or effacement of the indigene; it is also concerned to perform the concomitant indigenization of the settler” (2000, 369). While the desire to secure land and access to resources is predicated on the “disappearance” of the Indigenous “other,” either through assimilation or genocide, there is a simultaneous need to legitimate and stabilize the operations of power through appropriation. The third logic of obfuscation serves to at least partially reconcile disappearance and appropriation, but the operation of settler colonialism remains contradictory.

These tensions have been readily identified in many examinations of settler colonialism. Some analyses resolve the ideological conflicts through historical “stages or shifts,” where “over a period of actual invasion and dispossession, it proceeded through savagery and terrorism; at other times, indigenous culture could be positively invoked, staged and stimulated” (Thomas, 1999, 48). In addition to Wolfe’s (1994) examination of racial periods, there have been histories of the economic periods exemplifying different stages of domination (Lutz, 2008). Others find that the logics of dispossession through suppression and genocide exist simultaneously with the constitutive aims of “indigenization” of the settler via appropriation of “indigeniety.” For example Hawker’s analysis of material culture on the Pacific Northwest Coast finds that there are two purposes to Canadian state sanctioned acts of material appropriation.

¹³ To this end, exploitation of land and labour works in conjunction with settler colonial disappearance by eliminating the possibility of healthy living on territories slated for resource extraction (such as the case of the Lubicon Cree in Northern Alberta), and/or by incorporating Indigenous peoples into the capitalist labour market, undercutting Indigenous economies and land based ontologies (Coulthard, 2010). Thus, exploitation works in conjunction with, rather than solely prior to, disappearance. Seeking to secure ongoing access to land and material resources, the ends of settler colonialism are determined by the stabilization of hierarchical relations where “the domination of a majority that has become indigenous... According to these characterisations, colonisers cease being colonisers if and when they become the majority of the population. Conversely, and even more perplexingly, indigenous people only need to become a minority in order to cease being colonised” (Veracini, 2010, 16).

The reconfiguration of objects previously associated with the potlatch into objects of antiquity served two purposes: first, it paralleled the overtly repressive strategies of the potlatch ban by suggesting that the objects no longer held a viable role in First Nations societies; second, the objects could be appropriated and presented as part of a mythical Canadian past now useful in symbolizing Canadian identity (Hawker, 2003, 18).

Thus rather than temporal “episodes,” the contemporary topography of settler colonialism in Canada can arguably be understood as paradoxical and overlapping. This is not to say that settler colonialism does not operate in a developmental trajectory, but rather, that the logics are not *inherently* linear and ordered.

Disappearance

The settler colonial logic of disappearance is arguably not the “first” temporally speaking, having been preceded by trade and treaty relations (at least in much of North America). Though varied in form, disappearance has become, arguably, the dominant logic in the historic and contemporary operation of settler colonialism, “settling” lands by imposing and normalizing hierarchical relations through the material and ideational disappearance of the Indigenous occupants. Disappearance transgresses any constructed material/ideational binary, attacking Indigenous ways of being, including land, bodies and minds (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005; Alfred, 2005; A. Smith, 2011; Wolfe, 2006). Located at the nexus of material and discursive disappearance, museums exemplify the logic of disappearance in the exclusionary knowledge produced within their state sanctioned walls,¹⁴ and are also implicated in the material dispossession of land and material culture, especially through the instrumental creation and dissemination of racist tropes and laws that facilitated dispossession and concurrently grew museum collections globally (Brown, 2003; Centre, 1976; Clifford, 1997; Hawker, 2003; P. Hilden & Huhndorf, 1999; Lonetree, 2006; Mackey, 1998, 1999; R. B. Phillips, 2011; Stoler, 2002; Thomas, 1999). Examples of attempts at suppression or disappearance include: material disappearance, *terra nullius*, constructed inferiority, and acculturation. While I discuss

¹⁴ This includes both the prioritization of Western scientific paradigms and the ways that the prioritization of this knowledge serves to exclude other perspectives and positions.

these as distinct practices of settler colonial power, in practice they are mutually constitutive and overlapping.

The material destruction of Indigenous lives and lands is one of the most deeply felt and effective forms of disappearance. While the history of settler colonization is complex and interpretations range from generous readings of cooperative relations between Indigenous peoples, fur traders, and early colonists, to explicit and premeditated histories of murderous destruction, even the most generous (but historically documented) accounts of post-contact “North America” include the destruction of Indigenous lives and lands (Hall, 2010; A Smith, 2012; 2011). These acts of disappearance use material and ideational tactics, and inflict violence on minds and bodies of Indigenous peoples.

Hawker’s (2003) examination of First Nations art in British Columbia between 1922 and 1961 tells a compelling history of the relationship between museum practice and material disappearance by tracing the causal relationship between the potlatch ban between 1885 and 1951, the 1921 Cranmer “potlatch raid” and the growth of many international museum collections. According to Hawker, the potlatch ban of the late nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century was part of a larger project of disappearance that included residential schools where the repression of traditional rites and cultural practices facilitated destruction of Indigenous peoples’ homes, lives, languages and politics.

In Canada, potlatch ceremony was outlawed between 1885 and 1951, but early attempts at prosecution were limited until the expansion of the definition of potlatch in 1914 and 1918. These amendments facilitated the arrest, conviction and imprisonment of participants in the Dan Cranmer potlatch in 1921. “The Cranmer prosecutions signalled the active participation of state officials in the reconfiguration of First Nations objects. While the national museum had been collecting such objects since its inception, nowhere are the political implications of this reconfiguration so clear or so active” (Hawker, 2003, 29). For the Canadian state, the terms were political, but for those persecuted, survival was at stake. After arrest, participants in the Cranmer potlatch were given a nearly impossible choice; extensive jail time during the fishing season which would cause serious hardship, or give up all ceremonial objects and generations of history to the colonial state. Both disappearance of cultural practices or physical presence would facilitate the

imposition of the Canadian political-legal order and the settler colonial state. Hawker’s account of the potlatch raid indicate the role of objects in the political and cultural wellbeing of these communities, and reveals the multiple violences that were perpetuated in and through this raid. In this case, though museums did not drive the destructive policies, they were implicated in the results.

This is not to say that museums were always passive recipients of the spoils of material disappearance. Though in the case of potlatch raid, museums were institutional beneficiaries of the settler colonial laws, national and domestic institutions were implicated both material violence in the form of “stealing” objects, and the creation and dissemination of knowledge that facilitates settler colonial domination. The dubious collecting techniques of historic museums have long been documented, and more recently been a subject of critique to varying degrees. While some historicize the collecting practices (Clifford, 1989) by acknowledging that collectors at the time were simply preserving what they saw as dying cultures, at best many of these “preservation” techniques were mutually agreed upon trade transactions. Many were outright robbery (Ames, 1992, 2005; Doxtator, 1988; Frank, 2000). Though these material tactics of disappearance were undoubtedly violent, the redeployment of objects in new discursive constructions amplified the violence as both material and discursive. Indeed, in museums the world over, the knowledge created and disseminated within the sanctioned walls placed “objects of colonialism” in new discursive formations. Thus objects told stories of the imagined disappearance of Indigenous peoples, and were instrumentally implicated in the creation and dissemination of particular knowledge about the Indigenous “other” to facilitate that disappearance.

One of the prime examples of the role of the museum in the creation and dissemination of knowledge facilitating colonial domination is the legal myth of *terra nullius*. The concept of *terra nullius* or empty land, an ideological (and legal) justification for settler colonial occupation, is premised on narrative or material disappearance, both contemporaneous to contact, and a retrospective “restorying” of the “original conditions”. *Terra nullius* as contemporaneous to the first practices of colonial encounter facilitated and encouraged the process of settlement. The retrospective form bases contemporary justifications of colonization on reading *terra nullius* backwards as an

historical condition (Asch, 2002). In both forms, in a blatant denial of Indigenous peoples historic and ongoing presence, *terra nullius* exemplifies Veracini’s formulation of settler colonial domination as first imagined, and then practiced (Veracini 2010, 59, 76).

Artists, and by extension the narratives constructed through the manufacture of knowledge, were key nodes for the creation and perpetuation of *terra nullius*. For the artists in the early colonial period, landscape paintings of the “new world” were the basis for “aesthetic colonization” (Thomas, 1999, 22-24). Thomas argues that the depiction of “empty land” by 19th and early 20th century artists in New Zealand and Australia both justified colonization and facilitated and encouraged the movement of settlers to Australia. Michael J Shapiro, in *Methods and Nations: Cultural Governance and the Indigenous Subject* makes a similar argument in which the portrayal of empty land was formative for the colonial process of nation building in North America (2004). The rampant portrayal of the “new world” as *terra nullius* served both descriptive and normative purposes; describing the land as empty and also justifying physical settlement of the land based upon the imagined absence.

The construction of the land as *terra nullius* is not restricted to the 15th century “doctrine of discovery” era. The Canadian Group of Seven, painting between 1920 and 1933 created icons of Canadian geographic imaginary in their works of art. Using a style that broke with European traditions of the time, their collective works continue to reflect a distinctly nationalist tradition (Mackey, 1999). The trouble with landscape painting at this time is twofold. Not only are the works devoid of human life and avoid any reference to prior occupation in favour depicting the “wilds” of Canada, but this visual culture was *and remains* a foundational part of Canadian visual literacy. Though likely not the explicit intention of the artists, the Group of Seven created an imagined space empty, and ready for settlement (Mackey, 1999; 2000). The notion that the Canadian wilderness is empty, or misused, or *terra nullius*, erases the founding acts of dispossession that precede settlement or resource development. For example, Townsend-Gault (2011) recalls a 2009 CBC newscast where then Premier of Alberta, Ed Stelmach, looked down at the tarsands development in Northern Alberta and remarked consolingly “There is still a lot of empty space down there,” despite the fact that the land is Treaty 8 territory and was, and remains, occupied by the First Nations signatories.

These assumptions of *terra nullius* are not only in the constructed imaginary of Canada, but also foundational to the legal system. Historic validation of settlement in the texts of early political philosophers, especially John Locke’s justifications of English colonial expansion in North America, centre on the role of *terra nullius* as an imagined and normative condition (Arneil, 1996; Tully 2008b). With lasting implications for contemporary settler colonial governance, Michael Asch examines *terra nullius* as the foundational assumption predicated and constraining treaty negotiations in British Columbia (Asch, 1999, 2002). While *terra nullius* is not the juridical justification of settler occupation in treated parts of Canada (and North America), the historical restorying of the land as improperly used remains an implicit (and sometimes explicit) generative myth of Canadian legal traditions (Borrows, 1999, 2001). Archives are filled with 19th and 20th Century recruiting posters advertising “free land” for settlement across the Canadian interior. The portrayal of land open for settlement and occupation in common landscape painting facilitated Veracini’s imagined colonization, are not apolitical representations, but powerful normative stories to justify and encourage settlement. Through the normative assumption of *terra nullius* and the imagined construction of land as empty, the active disappearance of Indigenous peoples is perpetuated through retrospective myth memories, as well as historic and contemporary reality.

Carol Pateman argues that the settler contract has both a material (land was unoccupied and uncultivated) and normative dimension (inhabitants were not evolved enough to assert a recognizable form of sovereign power) (2007, 36). The latter modes of *terra nullius* exemplify a further operation of disappearance through the normative construction of inferiority. Though Indigenous peoples continue to assert that they were non-negotiably present at the time of contact, and remain so today, disappearance is upheld through the constructed inferiority. Indigenous peoples were (and remain) racialized to facilitate disappearance through irreversible change predicated on the weakness of Indigenous peoples cultures and “race” (Lawrence, 2003; Ramirez, 2007; Stasiulis & Yuval-Davis, 1995; Wolfe, 1994, 2011). In other words, disappearance is perpetuated through myths of miscegenation and inferiority, where Indigenous peoples disappeared simply through proximity to whiteness.

Museums and the control of visual and material culture were a location for the creation of myths of “inferiority,” and “development” as well as the dissemination and legitimation of these myths. In the 19th Century, museum “collections were organized and grouped according to what at the time were thought to be universal themes, such as race or evolutionary stage” (Ames 1986, 4). As institutions of public and scientific knowledge, museums authorized the construction of Indigenous peoples as racially or culturally inferior. For example, the 1933 exhibit in the Field Museum of Natural History (Chicago, Illinois) entitled *Races of Mankind* consisted of 101 life-size bronze sculptures of the human “racial types,” which “reified Western notions of class, culture and race, placing Europeans and white Americans at the peak of racial evolution” (Teslow 1998, 53). The museum space reflected the western notions of racial hierarchy and gave these categories “scientific authority from their location in a science museum and from the anthropologists who sanctioned them as authentic representations” (Teslow 1998, 54). Though the origins of the racial categories may be traced outside of museums, the authority of museums imbued these created categories with greater weight. Disseminated to a public audience, the racialized construction of inferiority was unquestioned and the spatial configurations of difference created deeper temporal and geographic distances between the civilized “self” and the primitive “other.”

These presentations of race were not uncomplicated. Rather than a binary between two static positions of the colonizer and colonized, museums often displayed racial inferiority as variant, differing over temporal and geographic contexts. The settler colonial logic of disappearance is predicated on the “inferiority” of the colonized as the condition of possibility for “progress.” “These are the dying races, whose fragile bloodlines readily dissolve into the settler stock under post-frontier policies of Native assimilation” (Wolfe, 2011, 274). Disappearance via progress towards the “civilized” culture is a key mode of Canadian settler colonialism both in theory and practice. Whereas “colonialism reproduces cycles of opposition between civility and barbarism... settler colonialism mobilizes peoples in the teleological expectation of irreversible transformation” (Veracini, 2011, 207). Widdowson and Howard serve as one of the more explicit contemporary examples of a pervasive mode of thought in which colonial domination is assumed as the natural end to continued exposure to the culture of those

deemed “civilized” (2008). This line of thought has been robustly critiqued by Taiaiake Alfred who highlights what is lost in appeals to “civilizing” progress (2009). Wolfe describes this form of disappearance as “*corpus nullius*” where “part-Aboriginal meant non-Aboriginal” (1994, 13). The miscegenic and deeply paternalistic and misogynist logic means that Indigenous women who marry non-Indigenous men give birth to white babies.¹⁵ This logic was institutionalized in the gender discrimination of the Canadian Indian Act, which explicitly discriminated against Indigenous women up to the partially successful reform in 1985 (Cannon, 1998; Turpel-Lafond, 1997; Anderson, 2000; Lawrence, 2003).

The placement of material culture in these discursive tropes of inferiority within the museum facilitated the myth of “white by proximity.” Historically, many museum collection models also reflected the notion that preservation of objects was necessary given that inevitable progress and proximity to settler cultures would result in disappearance of Indigenous peoples, so called “salvage ethnography” (Clifford, 1989). However, the perpetuation of disappearance by proximity has not entirely ceased. Hawker argues that up until as late as 1993 museums dictated a constructed dichotomy between authentic and modern that further situated Indigenous peoples and cultures in the past. Modern Aboriginal art was conceived of, and described as “revival art,” implying that something was irretrievably lost in the process of colonization. “The mythic tropes of decline and revival confirmed the authority of state institutions and those individuals who formulated the discourse of Northwest Coast objects from within them” (Hawker, 2003, 12). This constructed binary between the “old and authentic” and the “new and inauthentic” not only relegates Indigeneity to the past, but delegitimizes Indigenous cultures in the present due to their “modernity.” This binary presumes the inferiority of Indigenous peoples’ cultures and affirms the relative inherent strength of the colonized.

More than the construction of disappearance as a function of inevitable inferiority Indigenous peoples and their proximity to the dominant civilized cultures as a passive

¹⁵ In contrast, non-Indigenous women who married Indigenous men had children who could claim Indian Status. This is a deeply complex and contested issue that cannot be fully developed within the space of this dissertation but has been well explored by writers such as Andrea Smith (2011) and Bonita Lawrence (2003).

process, museums were also a staging field for the much more active and conscious process of disappearance in the form of acculturation or assimilation. “The imagined communities of Canada and the United States, which have represented Indians as different, inferior and dispensable, have produced not only military operations to eliminate, confine or restrain Indians, but institutional and legal policies to enforce their acculturation” (Valaskakis, 2000, 390). While assimilation does not necessarily physically destroy Indigenous peoples, “as a technique of elimination, assimilation is more effective than either homicide or a spatial device” (Wolfe, 2011b, 34). Assimilation appeals to a teleological notion of cultural evolution that conflated genetic and cultural criteria so that “to become civilised, Indians had to become White” (Wolfe, 2011b, 22). However, rather than the ascription of inferiority, disappearance via assimilation takes an *active* role in the destruction of Indigenous peoples in order to facilitate integration into settler society.

Wolfe reads the considered efforts to eliminate Indigenous peoples’ political and social communities as a key branch of assimilation, where “detribalised, [Indians] would merge into settler society” (Wolfe, 2011, 23-24). The residential school system in Canada, with a history that includes the Gradual Civilization Act of 1857, the closure of the last school in 1996, and continued institutionalization of Indigenous children through social services, is only one of the most explicit manifestations of this philosophy and practice of assimilation (Regan, 2006). Following Hawker, the intent of banning the potlatch in Canada was to remove material culture and facilitate the assimilation of Indigenous peoples into the settler state cultural and political systems. Thus, the assimilationist agenda is not marked so much by the presence in material culture, but rather, and unsurprisingly, by the *absence*.

Examination of the potlatch removals reveals the ways that material culture, and the destruction of material culture, was integral to the active attempts to assimilate Indigenous peoples on the Pacific coast. These explicit acts of destruction indicate that the settler colonial state recognized that cultural practices were integral to Indigenous peoples’ political communities. Thus, outlawing the potlatch and the subsequent removal of material culture actively attempted to destroy in order to facilitate the integration of Indigenous peoples into the settler polity. This is only one example of the destructive acts of assimilation that includes the removal of sacred objects and banning Indigenous

peoples’ languages. Whether the active removal of material culture or the “education” of Indigenous children, the intent to destroy Indigenous peoples’ cultural and political practices facilitated the integration into the settler colonial state and “whether dead, removed or assimilated, Indians would pass into memory” (Wolfe, 2011, 23).

Conclusion

The logic of disappearance in settler colonialism is perpetuated in a number of material and ideational ways. Museums as disseminators and creators of public knowledge were instrumental to this, both as active participants in the removal of material culture from communities, and in the discursive redisplay of these objects in ways that furthered (and continue to perpetuate) the settler colonial project. Though the practices are overlapping and mutually reinforcing, the construction of the Indigenous other as inferior, practices of assimilation and the logic of *terra nullius* are intertwined with the material “disappearance” to facilitate the appropriation of land and exploitation of resources. While these attempts to disappear have been deeply violent, the logic of disappearance has ultimately failed in both forms.

Appropriation

While the first logic of settler colonialism seeks to disappear Indigenous peoples, the second logic of appropriation of Indigeneity as a practice of knowledge, category of identity and/or subjectivity, works in tension with disappearance; first acknowledging the historic or continued presence of Indigenous peoples and then appropriating this presence to serve the ends of settler colonial domination. Paradoxically, while “Indigenous people’s claims to the land are being denied or forgotten, elements of their culture are being prominently displayed and affirmed” (Thomas, 1999, 12). Thus, Indigenous peoples as subalterns are marginalized, not by being ignored or destroyed, but by being appropriated. Linda Tuhiwai Smith sums this logic up, saying, “it appalls us that the West can desire, extract and claim ownership of our ways of knowing, our imagery, and things we create and produce, and then simultaneously reject the people who created and developed those ideas and seek to deny them further opportunities to be creators of their own culture and own nations” (1999, 1). Not only does this “extraction” continue to perpetrate violence against Indigenous peoples, it concomitantly serves to reinforce the

settler presence, folding the violence onto itself to substantiate the continued hierarchical relationship between settlers and Indigenous peoples.

Examples of the appropriation of Indigenous visual art, material culture and ceremony are rampant, and the detrimental results of appropriation well explored, both within academic and non-academic settings. Activist and scholar “Dr. Adrienne K.” runs the website “nativeappropriations.com” dedicated to detailing acts of appropriation in contemporary popular culture. Adrienne K.’s analysis of Native appropriations within largely American popular culture recalls the connection between practices of settler colonial domination and the strategic deployment of Indigenous images to denigrate and/or assimilate. In this section I will specifically examine appropriation as a means to bolster and substantiate settler colonial nation building. Charlotte Townsend-Gault argues that the acknowledgement of Indigenous presence in museums, either through representation and/or self-representation, is a central ambiguity that often necessitates presentations that conform to a settler state narrative, or “singing the nation” (2011). Thus appropriation can reflect, and in some cases bolster, the settler state governance models, both as constitutive of settler nationhood, and justificatory of status quo settler domination.

Both Veracini (2011) and Johnston and Lawson (2000) have highlighted that alongside the logic of disappearance a narrative strategy of appropriation aims to indigenize the settler through appropriating and rearticulating the settler created category of Indigenous (often the form of “Aboriginal”). If “the nation-building projects of North America have always involved eliminating, absorbing or containing Indians” (Valaskakis, 2000, 390), then this logic is not just predicated on the removal or disappearance, but the productive redeployment of “Indigenous” as part of settler nation building. In contrast to appropriative acts of assimilation which attempt to disappear (for example, the 1921 Cranmer potlatch raid), appropriation of knowledge, narrative and/or subjectivity imagines a relationship to the land as a means to constitute and legitimate settler nationhood and occupation using “representations of the settler entity as both an ideal society *and* as truer and uncorrupted version of the original social body” (Veracini, 2010, 81).

In both the normative dimension of what settler identity should be, and a reflective dimension of what shared national identity is, settler colonial nationalism has come to be at least partially constructed through “imagery of or by historically marginalized groups—especially Aboriginal people and ethnic minorities” (Mackey, 1998, 152). For example, the work of Haida artist Bill Reid includes some of the most circulated images in Canadian public memory. His sculptures “The Raven and the First Men” and “Spirit of Haida Gwaii” graced the 2004-2012, twenty-dollar bank note, and the “Spirit of Haida Gwaii-the Jade Canoe” welcomes visitors to Canada in the Vancouver International Airport. Appropriating material culture as a means to represent the Canadian state refigures the meaning. “Native culture becomes a form of *cultural* property that is transformed into the inheritance of the nation... The process of transforming Aboriginal culture into “heritage” enables the culture of the colonized to be appropriated by the colonisers and put to service in building national and international identity” (Mackey, 1998, 160). Rather than representing the varied and distinct First Nations or “source communities,” appropriation and public circulation of these re-imagined emblems refigures objects as representations of the settler state.

For example, Hawker connects the state sponsorship of Haida “revival” art with the appropriation and transformation of the meaning of objects. “Canadian ‘cultural’ agencies... undertook a number of important programs that reconfigured the meaning for Northwest Coast objects” (Hawker, 2003, 6). The redisplay and deployment of material culture and motifs, strategically cultivate material culture to fill the perceived void of settler national identity. Director of the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology (Cambridge), Nicholas Thomas states,

long ago artists and writers in [Canada, Australia, and New Zealand] presumed that the nation lacked an identity, and that it was their task to invent one. In doing so, producers of culture- such as designers in various media as well as painters and poets- frequently turned to what was locally distinctive, either in the natural environment or in indigenous culture. The deep association between indigenous people and the land provided strong and condensed reference points for a colonial culture that sought both to define itself as native and to create national emblems (1999, 12).

The use of the “native” to create a coherent national identity has both an international face, and domesticating or consolidating function. Ruth B Phillips argues that Canada

has a long history of using First Nations to visually represent a coherent national culture for an international audience, including Expo ’67 and ’86, and Musqueam sculptures and weavings greeting visitors at the Vancouver International airport. Her critical examination of the Museum of Anthropology as the forum for the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation meetings finds that the staged production of the “Indian” was not only limited to what would be acceptable for the Canadian government and world leaders, but also that the “limited recognition of indigenous sovereignty and of a group’s unique relationship to a particular territory crosses a larger, long-standing and more powerful history in which a totalizing image of a generic ‘Indian’ population has been appropriated to the national identity” (2000, 180). Charlotte Townsend-Gault (2011) examines the 2010 Olympics, and the “Native-art-as-usual” trope as perpetuating similar settler Canadian identity through appropriation. Though ambiguous in the simultaneity of celebration and repression, she argues that appropriation during the 2010 Olympics perpetuated dominant narrative of nationalism.¹⁶

While Phillips reads the use of Musqueam and other First Nations representations at the APEC summit within the flows of global capitalism and globalization, and Townsend-Gault (2011) explores the appropriation of Indigenous art for an international audience, there is another, domestic, function of these visual representations. Eva Mackey argues that “nationalist narratives often mobilise images of land—be it homeland, motherland or fatherland—to do the work of constructing a sense of “oneness” from diverse populations which may never meet face-to-face” (1998, 151). Appropriating the uniquely recognizable images of Indigenous peoples simultaneously homogenizes and consolidates national identity and enables the settler state to govern both the land and the population. Rather than signaling the deep difference between settlers and Indigenous peoples, the domestic face of appropriation serves to “create a unified (although hybrid) narrative of national progress. Thus, representations of Indigenous people and their cultural heritage are used to bolster settler nationalist mythology” (Mackey, 1998, 152).

Paradoxical in practice, appropriation not only “incorporates” the visual culture of Indigenous nations to fill the nationalist void of settler-state identity, but also situates

¹⁶ Townsend-Gault also points to the ways in which specific communities have come to exploit these ambiguities, turning the trope on its head and using nationalist representations for their own, self-determining means, especially through claiming jurisdiction over distinct spaces.

the Indigenous other as the constitutive “outside.” Mark Rifkin argues that “discourses of racial difference and equality as well as of cultural recognition are deployed by the state in ways that reaffirm its geopolitical self-evidence and its authority” (Rifkin, 2009a, 91).

Critical museum studies has often and vehemently critiqued museum practices that have placed Indigenous cultures outside of the “civilized” museum space. Rather than placing Indigenous art and artefacts within museums or art galleries, there was a long tradition of placing them in Natural History collections (Ames, 1999, 1986; Teslow, 1998). While these presentations spatially situated Indigenous others as the geographic and temporal outsiders or the exception to the civilized internal, they simultaneously served as a means to define the constitutive inside in negative alterity. In other words, the civilized was made coherent, at least in part, by reciprocal negation of the Indigenous or colonized other.

These practices of appropriation are therefore bound up with the consolidation of settler state power. Rifkin’s analysis of colonialism and settler colonialism uses Giorgio Agamben’s “exception” to understand the relationship between Indigenous and settler communities (Rifkin, 2009a). In this framing there is an “acknowledgement of native political identity as a vehicle for consolidating [state] authority” (Rifkin, 2009b, 5). In addition, Morgensen (2011) argues that the settler colonial hegemony also includes an incorporative logic, where bodies and spaces of alterity are redefined and included in settler hierarchy. For Rifkin, defining Native identity as an exception in need of regulation re-enforces the policy apparatus of the settler colonial state. “More than circumscribing or disciplining the autonomy of Native peoples Indian policy recodes their identities, defining and redefining the threshold of political identity and legitimacy and determining how Native peoples will enter that field, including what (kinds of) concepts and categories they will inhabit” (2009, 91). Consequently, unlike disappearance, appropriation seeks to maintain the “Indigenous” as an epistemological and empirical category of exception while deploying the category strategically as a means to construct and consolidate the legitimate statehood and citizen belonging.

In addition to filling an imagined void of Canadian settler-national identity and providing a coherent “self”, the deployment of Indigenous images to bolster the visual literacy of Canadian nationalism served an explicitly “settling” role by creating a legitimating origin story that strengthens an imagined connection between settlers and the

land. In her reading of the sculpture outside of the Canadian Parliament buildings, Mackey argues that by situating the Native as natural, in the past, or as raw material, “Native peoples [provide] a link between the settlers and the land—they help to negotiate the rocky terrain of creating Canada as “Native land” to settlers, when the nation is made up mostly of colonisers and immigrants” (Mackey, 1998, 160). Appropriating distinct Indigenous Nations into “Canada’s Indians,” the unique and prior occupation of Indigenous peoples on the land is reconstructed to justify Canadian state control over land and bodies. Rather than a logic of *terra nullius* which would justify occupation of land based on the “erasure” of Indigenous peoples prior and continued presence, appropriation acknowledges the prior occupation, but incorporates the presence into a settler colonial national identity, “indigenizing” the settler by providing a direct connection to the land.

The legitimating function of appropriation is at the heart of the logical aporias within settler colonialism. “Settler societies have used native cultures, generally with some awkwardness, to express vicariously their own, colonial attachments to place” (Thomas, 1999, 49). However, the appropriation of Indigenous images as a means to legitimate the settler state requires recognizing the *prior* presence of Indigenous peoples. Moreover, rather than a construction of primitivism, these arts and practices are often remade representatives of the “civilized” culture. These logical aporias are not enough to dismantle or fundamentally disturb settler colonial hegemony, but necessitate an incorporative move to justify and naturalize. As Sean Nixon has argued in his examination of popular culture, “the process of establishing cultural authority by dominant groups is not a simple process of domination. It requires that elements of the subordinate cultures are actively incorporated into the representation of a legitimate way of life” (2000, 256). Thus, the selective inclusion via appropriation is a means through which Indigenous claims to difference can be partially recognized and included without disturbing the status quo.

Deborah Root looks at the “white Indian” acts of appropriation that she found common on the west coast in the 1960s. In her reading, “white folk” would dress in native regalia in order to proclaim both dissatisfaction with their experience in “modern” culture, and attempt to articulate and practice an affinity to their understanding of what

native culture was meant. Though she reads these attempts as sincere, “sincerity is not enough and can be damaging in its own right” (Root, 1997, 230) largely because it evades complicities in power relations. “Part of the problem lies in how the display of affiliation enables white people to insist on being the centre of attention (Root, 1997, 231). This is not a new phenomenon but a manifestation of a long tradition of political thought that relied on the “noble savage” constructed in negative alterity to settler civil society. For example, Rousseau upheld the “Indian” superior to the corrupting influences of civil society. Not only does this “noble savage” trope flatten the diversity of Indigenous experiences into a singular identity, it also appropriates the “other” in order to tell a story about the particular self. Though this is in direct opposition to an assimilative project that would construct Indigeneity as backward, in both instances the position of the Indigenous other is solely the negative image of the self. Beyond maintaining the asymmetric relations of power and keeping settlers at the centre of the narrative, this appropriation constructs both a false innocence and an idealized connection to the land that does not acknowledge the fundamental acts of dispossession, but is legitimated in and by the “indigenization” of the settler. More than expressing this affiliation between settler and Indigenous peoples, for Mackey, “a narrative of progress links colonisers to the specific topographical space, at the same time producing national innocence regarding the colonial encounter” (Mackey, 1998, 164).

In addition to creating new national histories, appropriation serves to transform the meaning of Indigenous national culture, enrobing objects in different discursive frameworks as a means to neutralize the confrontation that ongoing presence poses for the settler state. Deborah Doxtator’s 1988 exhibition *Fluffs and Feathers* is a historical and context based analysis of the ways that the Canadian state used Indigenous peoples for strategic identity building purposes, and also how commodification of Indigenous identities changes the meaning of self-representation. Tracing the image of the Indian through text based “histories,” contemporary popular culture, and consumer culture she argues “'Indian' as characters of terror or romance have become types of celebrities, consumer items created for the amusement of a bored public” (Doxtator, 1988, 40). Thus, not only does appropriation produce “Indigeneity” to be reconciled with the presence of the colonizer, appropriation is also entwined with capitalist exploitation, creating

“Aboriginal” products to sell. “Advertising objectifies. It transforms the image of historical figures such as Tecumseh (Tecumseh Ware pots) and Pontiac into trivial objects that can be possessed, used up and thrown away” (Doxtator, 1988, 46). Thus, the appropriation of these images not only removes the power of self-definition from the community, appropriation also commodifies images, marketing an ideal national product or culture as something to be consumed. This is not a matter of simply redeploying Indigenous visual culture, but transforming the meaning of material culture and representations. The settler state has “marketed native cultures to tourists, and constrained and degraded their art forms in various ways” (Thomas, 1999, 49). Removing material culture from the purview and control of those it represents often perpetuates or reinforces negative stereotypes of Indigenous peoples. The phrase “the only good Indian is a dead Indian, has been reformulated into “The only good Indian is a saleable Indian” (Monture, 1994).¹⁷

Finally, appropriation and commodification neutralizes the deeply transgressive and critical aspects the Indigenous peoples presence poses to the state, where the state appropriated and controlled category of “Indigenous” reinforces the continued hegemony of state practices. Métis scholar Adam Gaudry argues that by situating Louis Riel within a narrative telling of Canadian history Jennifer Reid (and others who use the same framing) assimilates “Riel into the Canadian political consciousness *as a Canadian*” (Gaudry, 2013). He identifies two discursive patterns; the first is the “oppositional set of values” approach (Gaudry, 2013, 69). This approach figures Riel as exemplary of all the exceptional non-Canadian traits, and thus constitutes a coherent Canadian “belonging” through the negative alterity. “These discourses, paradoxically, situate Riel at the core of Canadian identity by highlighting his non-Canadianness” (Gaudry, 2013, 69). The second discursive model addressing Riel positions him at the heart of, and prime example of, the Canadian multicultural state, thus articulating Riel as a public figure who was a key Canadian nation-builder, neutralizing the radical critique that Louis Riel actually posed

¹⁷ The appropriation of cultural objects as a means to market and profit, and concomitantly build up the power of the state and those who benefit from settler colonial formulations of power, requires a more careful tracing as the topic of selling Indigenous material culture is complex and requires an examination of not only who benefits from profit, but also the ways in which the imposition of capitalist market values is antithetical or detrimental to Indigenous economic and political practices. (Duffek, 1983; Cole, 1995; Phillips and Steiner, 1998)

to the Canadian state. The rhetorical and historic appropriation also includes the attachment of Tecumseh and Riel to “Canadian” iconography, forcing Indigenous individuals to represent a dominant settler-nationalist narrative rather than articulating a distinct counter-narrative or critique of settler colonial domination.

Conclusion

In conclusion, appropriation serves many functions, including both the constitution and the legitimation of settler peoples and states, but also discursively resituating Indigenous objects and images in ways that neutralize the transgressive contestations that ongoing Indigenous cultural practices pose for historic and contemporary settler-state national identity and histories. Mobilizing selective images, narratives and Indigenous motifs, concomitant with the delegitimation of Indigeneity, appropriation serves to restore the settler nation state such that “representations of the settler entity as both an ideal society *and* as truer and uncorrupted version of the original social body” (Veracini, 2010, 81). In this manner, appropriation is tied to the asymmetric constitution of knowledge about the other, both as a mode to control subjectivities, but also as an attempt to maintain a hegemonic position. “The public has been conditioned to accept anyone as ‘Indian’ so long as they adhere to a few of the ‘markers’ of ‘Indianness’ (Doxtator, 1988, 41). These markers of the “Indian,” sanctioned by the state, not only remove the practice of self-representation and cultural determination from the purview of Indigenous peoples, but also impose a false understanding of who counts as legitimate occupants of the land. Hawker describes the act of settler colonial appropriation as “displacement through display.”

The government, by constructing a narrative of displacement through locating First Nations objects within museum displays, threatened the traditional roles of the totem poles, masks, coppers, and dance gear... Displacement through display affirmed government authority over the distribution and economic development of land and natural resources and was part of a larger strategy of transforming First Nations peoples into colonial subjects (Hawker, 2003, 171).

While on one hand displacement of material objects from their source communities served to reinforce other acts of disappearance from the land, the nearly simultaneous display of objects within museums as institutions of cultural memory and authority

reaffirmed particular narratives of nationalism, reinforcing the place of Indigenous peoples in the past, and settler presence within modern subject positions. As such, “the larger dynamic of colonial history can only suggest resonances between invasions of land and of culture” (Thomas, 1999, 144). The appropriation and subsequent redisplay of material culture objects connects the material with acts of dispossession.

When acknowledging the history of Canadian settler colonialism, but appropriating Indigenous difference into the Canadian multicultural narrative, the ongoing systemic levels of oppression that are a direct result of settler colonial occupation are obscured by a narrative that “makes up” for the past with contemporary “non-oppressive” practices. For example, “Riel and the Metis have become a gateway through which political theorists can identify a post-colonial Canada; a project which is, at its core, disingenuous in its erasure of ongoing colonial occupation of Indigenous lands and governments” (Gaudry, 2013, 66). The “good modern” Canadian state can thus legitimate its presence and obscure the ongoing practices of settler colonial occupation by appropriating Indigeneity and reconstituting the state as a multicultural, peaceful and just nation. Thus, appropriation not only erases the founding violence at the root of settler colonial domination but also naturalizes the hierarchical relations of power that continue to structure settler colonial domination in contemporary practice.

Obfuscation

These acts of disappearance and appropriation work alongside and reinforce the operation of the third logic of settler colonialism, obfuscation, which in turn involves both restorying and accommodation. According to Veracini, “settler colonial phenomena possess a mimetic character, and that a recurrent need to disavow produces a circumstance where the actual operation of settler colonial practices is concealed behind other occurrences” (2010, 25). The variant operations of obfuscation have been traced by many theorists, including (Alfred, 2005; Coulthard, 2007, 2014; Johnston & Lawson, 2000; Veracini, 2010; Wolfe, 1999). According to Veracini, the most effortlessly analyzed examples of settler colonialism are also the weakest because settler colonial hegemony operates to obscure “the conditions of its own production” (2010, 25). James Tully argues that in Canada, the adaptive practices of colonialism have meant that the Canadian state

can make the claim to being “postcolonial” because it does not resemble the earlier forms of colonialism, while maintaining a colonial hierarchy through practices such as recognition and accommodation (Tully 2000). Settler colonialism, or, as Tully describes it, “internal colonization” manifests itself along three different axis: historical processes, stable structures of incorporation including displacement and assertion of jurisdiction (Tully 2000, 38-39) The adaptive qualities and the multiple trajectories of settler colonialism are the condition of possibility for ongoing marginalization of indigenous peoples. Thus, functioning in conjunction with disappearance and appropriation, obfuscation reconciles some of the tensions between the disappearance and appropriation by “restorying” the past and positing settler colonialism as non-violent or a finite historical event and practices of accommodation that selectively includes Indigenous peoples within the settler colonial hegemony.

Restorying

Settler colonial obfuscation attempts to “restory” colonization to either erase the founding violence at the heart of domination, or relegate colonial relations to an event in the past, something that should be “recovered” from or ignored. In both instances, restorying the past reconciles the appropriative inclusion of Indigenous peoples with the desire to erase Indigenous presence. This practice of restorying draws on multiple and interdisciplinary sets of literature. Within material culture studies, there are critical engagements with the erasure of history because “collective displacement entails a partial loss of reality and obstruction of historical memory” (Lutz, 1990, 175). Veracini references psycho-analysis by describing restorying as a “memory shield” that simultaneously guards oneself psychologically from historical reality, and replaces that history with a narrative that can be repurposed for settler colonial redeployment. Using discursive and material means, land is “settled” and legitimated by the creation of myth-memories that are based on denying the founding (and continued) violence of settler colonialism (Veracini, 2010, 16). The rhetorical denial of colonial history, for example, through the “discovery” of the Americas, perpetuating the myth of *terra nullius*, or framing conquest as peaceful and cooperative settlement, obscures the violence at the foundation of colonization.

In some national museums, the practice of restorying is prominent, where history is “sanitized” for consumption. Nation building narratives such as the “peaceful RCMP” and “cooperative Native” have been critiqued as not only historically inaccurate, but prioritizing building a Canadian identity as stable and homogenous at the expense of recognizing some of the more deeply violent historic realities (Mackey, 1999). Mackey finds that “the celebration of Canadian national “heritage”, made possible by appropriating Aboriginal culture, entails no less than the erasure of the history of *conquest*” (1998, 161). At heart, the outright denial of the history and violence of domination serves to reinforce contemporary acts of violence and are foundational to nation building.

The representation of Canada’s Native peoples as child-like, trusting, and friendly to their Canadian government invaders, was important in the construction of myths about Canadian identity... Canadians still like to believe that they are tolerant and benevolent people...yet by reaffirming the notion that Canada has a long history of benevolent forms of justice and tolerance of Aboriginal people, they erase the more complex brutal and difficult history of dispossession, erasure and cultural genocide (Mackey, 1998, 157-158)

The attempt to envision and implement a more just Canada without a history of colonization creates a shared myth-memory of historic justice and founding cooperation, and makes it possible to imagine a “just” present. Thus, obfuscating the history of violence does not just erase the colonial past, but serves as a “myth-making apparatus hiding a pervasive settler-colonial reality within a mythological post-colonial fantasy” (Gaudry, 2013, 67). Rifkin similarly argues that a retrospective restorying of the history of colonization to erase domination and violence in favour of a non-violent or consensual settlement functions to justify contemporary status quo relations. According to Rifkin, some histories of treaty making in the United States provide an “overdetermined account of Oneida agency in order to foreclose any potential questions about the justice of the court’s actions” (2009b, 5). Thus, the restorying of history to create a narrative of peaceful conquest not only obscures that past but also serves to justify contemporary occupation and a mythic post-colonial present.

Doxtator’s *Fluffs and Feathers* (1988), confronts and contests the operation of this strategic restorying in Canadian settler colonial myth. She writes in her accompanying catalogue,

interpretations of history can best be understood as a series of stories or myths. My generation grew up with the story of how North America was "discovered" by Christopher Columbus and of how civilization was "started" by the French. There were lots of statements in the textbooks about "virgin land," "uninhabited territories." Then suddenly into the picture came the Indians. Sometimes they were portrayed as tools, sometimes as threats, sometimes as allies. Indians were incidental because the story was not about them. They were just there- in the way (Doxtator, 1988, 56).

In her reading, histories that included Indigenous peoples were strategic, deployed largely to tell the history of the settler, using the voice of the settler and thus, oriented to practices of dispossession.

In the face of growing critical scholarship from many disciplines, the social imaginary of settler colonial peaceful domination or the outright erasure of any history of colonialism in Canada has become increasingly untenable and the logic has shifted toward a partial acknowledgement of colonial encounter. As part of a larger critique of Canadian colonial history, Stephen Harper’s 2009 G20 statement that “Canada has no history of colonialism” was confronted by artists in the 2011 exhibition “Decolonize Me” at the Ottawa Art Gallery. Mi’kmaw artist Jordan Bennet challenged the layered history of colonial institutions by, quite literally, layering the legislative operations of colonization during a performance piece titled “Sovereignty Performance”. Using stylized images of Prime Ministers layered over top of an image of the National Aboriginal War Veterans Monument, his performance traced the progress of settler state colonization, and highlighted the manner in which the history is retold to strategic ends. Stressing the violence done in this restorying process, across from this performance, Sonny Assu’s text print work *Chief Speaker* (2011), had the words of Stephen Harper, “Canada has no history of colonialism” printed in graphic yellow and turquoise.

However, paradoxically, obfuscation can also situate colonization as a historic reality and relegate it to a single *event* as a means to deny contemporary violence. Patrick Wolfe’s 1994 differentiation between settler colonialism as a structure and colonization as an event highlights the discursive functions of “eventing” settler colonialism, a practice that Doxtator traced into the artistic imaginary. "One of the ways in which Canadian artists and authors have "worked out" the problem of trying to deal with the existence of "indians," the original people of the land, has been to deal with Indians as if they existed

only in the past" (Doxtator, 1988, 28). Doxtator’s essay accompanying the 1992 exhibition “Revisions” eloquently expresses the violence that occurs when Indigenous peoples are confined to the past. She says “it is very difficult for Indian people to gain access to the interpretation of their own cultures in large part because of the public perception that the essence of “Indianness” is a connection to a distant and disappeared past (1992, 25). Both situating Indigenous peoples and/or colonial violence in the past serves a similar function, colonization becomes something to be “recovered from”, absolving those who continue to benefit from contemporary domination.

Again, this eventing of the history of settler colonialism not only displaces history, but justifies contemporary practices. According to Rifkin,

in asserting a de facto right to superintend indigenous territories and populations in perpetuity, though, the decision repeatedly describes the dispossession of the Oneidas as an “ancient” act, displacing and safely sealing it into a long distant past and thereby casting current conflict over the contours of U.S legal geography as instead merely anachronistic Indian longing (Rifkin, 2009b, 4).

Thus, the practices of restorying are dangerous in multiple ways. First, restorying colonization, in outright denial or eventing, reproduces violence against Indigenous peoples, either by denying the connection to history, making history difficult to access, or by outright denying ongoing presence and occupation of land. Second, it serves a contemporaneous purpose as justifying continuing occupation. In this manner, obfuscation through restorying reconciles, at least in part, the tension between the logics of disappearance and appropriation. Placing Indigenous peoples in the past allows for a situated and partial recognition of their realities without calling for substantive rethinking of the legitimacy or justifications of settler occupation.

Accommodation

The last form of obfuscation is the most constrained to a certain time period in the settler colonial project, emerging largely in the later part of the 20th century. Though sharing some of the same techniques as appropriation, accommodation can be seen and traced as a distinct iteration of settler colonial replacement. Where I have examined appropriation as a constitutive act (predicated on the prior dislocation of objects and meaning), accommodation seeks to maintain the status quo of asymmetric settler colonial

power relations not by creating or justifying a new national identity based on disappearance, but as a means to reconcile difference into the status quo. Rather than creating something new, accommodation as obfuscation attempts to reconcile Indigenous peoples with the settler colonial structure of domination.

Glen Coulthard’s book *Red Skin, White Masks* (2014), offers a critique of the politics of recognition in the context of settler colonialism, and provides a theoretical foundation of accommodation as obfuscation. Accommodation functions in a similar way to appropriation in that the Indigenous other is maintained and upheld. Recalling settler colonialism violence as shaping the field in which relations take place, accommodation and practices of recognition are negotiated by and within a language that is profoundly shaped by the settler state power. When recognition is “granted” by the state, it does little to transform the profoundly asymmetric structures of state authority, and can serve to more deeply entrench and embed domination of subjects who are being “recognized.” However, in contrast to appropriation which simultaneously “takes away” the agency from Indigenous peoples and strategically deploys it to constitute state nationalism, (either by removing it materially from Indigenous peoples such as the case of the 1921 Cranmer potlatch raid, or narratively in the case of Louis Riel), accommodation does not have the same explicit aspect of removal. Instead, Indigenous peoples’ agency over objects and cultural representation is maintained (at least as a guise) and then incorporated into the framework of domination.

Coulthard argues that one function of accommodation is the transformation of political and material calls for justice into cultural expressions (2014, 19). Not only does this reinforce a posited distinction between the material and cultural claims, but it allows the state to elide responsibility for material redress, especially for land dispossession, in favour of more easily accommodated cultural practices. In effect, this transforms resistances that question and undermine the operation of the settler state into practices that can be more easily accommodated into the status quo operation of power. For example, in alignment with Alfred’s critique of critical but conciliatory academics, Rifkin argues “while certainly not disregarding the violence of dispossession, this critical fascination with forms of cultural circulation and fusion... tends to draw attention away

from the political-economy of settler occupation” (2009b, 18). This shift to the depoliticized “cultural” presentation of objects is well exemplified in museum studies.

By displaying an artifact as if it were a beautiful but politically neutral art object, museums hope to skirt such thorny issues as land claims, fishing rights, the legacy of colonialism and the powerful impact that museums have had in shaping the public's perceptions of Indian culture. Museums seem to believe that the presentation of artifacts as art objects elevates the value of Indian cultural objects in the mind of the public and indirectly the value of Indian cultures themselves (Doxtator, 1992, 28)

While the 2010 Vancouver Olympics have already been offered as an example of appropriation, the event simultaneously exemplifies accommodation, reconciling the disappearance of the Indigenous peoples as political actors while constituting the Canadian settler state as the legitimate authority and incorporating Indigenous peoples into the international projection of state identity. Many studies have looked both critically and less critically at the inclusion of the First Nations within the Olympic narratives from both institutional and material/discursive stance (Boykoff, 2011; O’Bonsawin, 2010; Silver, Meletis, & Vadi, 2012; Townsend-Gault, 2011). There have been a number of responses to the use of Native art within the context of the Olympics, some taking on an explicitly critical observation of the use of Native art (O’Bonsawin, 2010) and others pointing to the transgressive acts of reclaiming space and naming that existed alongside the hegemonic relations (Townsend-Gault, 2011). In both cases it is clear that the use of Native imagery within the context of the Olympics played a powerful discursive role in representing the Canadian state internationally. Explicitly situating First Nations within the context of settler colonial logics of obfuscation offers a new light on the implications of the use of these narrative forms and the manner in which Indigenous authenticity is defined by the colonial state as a means to accommodate difference.

Townsend-Gault (2011) points to the inherent ambiguity of the relationship between the Vancouver Olympic Committee (VANOC) and the recognition of the “Four Host Nations,” (FHN) who cooperated with VANOC and were institutionally recognized and acknowledged as “hosts” during the Olympic period. Visual metaphors, including seating the Chiefs of the FHN alongside Prime Minister Harper, seemed to set up a narrative of equity, with First Nations co-hosting alongside the Canadian State. While

this projected an image of “nation-to-nation” relationship, it did little, if anything, to meet the demands of Indigenous peoples who are displaced because of the Olympic machine or otherwise protesting the presence of the Olympics on occupied Indigenous territories. While the verdict on whether or not these acts of accommodation were exclusively disempowering must be left to those who were being “accommodated,” it is clear that, from a settler standpoint, little, if anything in the settler colonial apparatus of dispossession was substantively shifted or changed in order to facilitate the recognition of Indigenous peoples presence as “hosts.” Certainly there was never any question of the possibility of material redress for the generations of dispossession that makes the city of Vancouver possible.

Conclusion

As many theorists of settler colonialism have pointed out, the aim of settler colonial replacement necessitates the paradoxical disappearance and appropriation of the Indigenous other. Obfuscation, meaning defining the terms of engagement, restorying history, and accommodating difference functions to, at least in part, resolve some of the tensions within settler colonial domination, such that the ultimate aim of settler colonialism, namely replacement, is structurally upheld. This logic of obfuscation recalls Audre Lorde’s now famous assertion that you cannot dismantle the master’s house using the master’s tools (2003). Indeed, as Alfred (2005), and many other Indigenous theorists have argued, the methods in which one chooses to engage determines who one will become once the fight is over. In the context of settler colonial domination, the logic of obfuscation makes engagement tricky ground. Exemplified by the contemporary art of Sonny Assu and the critical curatorship of Deborah Doxtator, despite the pervasiveness of obfuscation, it is not totalizing. Critical work on the subtle operations of settler colonialism, as exemplified by Coulthard and Alfred, informal imperialism as exemplified by James Tully, and curatorial contestations such as, *Fluffs and Feathers* (1988), *Revival* (1992), and *Decolonize Me* (2011), highlight the obfuscating operations of settler colonialism and bring the operations to critical light.

Conclusions

Settler colonialism is best understood as a hierarchical structural relation, rather than a single event. As such, settler colonialism is not contained to a single finite period, nor is it “over.” Instead, settler colonialism must be understood as longstanding structures and practices perpetuated in material and ideational forms. The mutual implication of the material and non-material violence that has come to define and reinforce settler colonial dispossession makes museums, and by extension, public memory and material culture studies, a particularly potent place in which to analyze and contest settler colonial domination. In both the historic relationship as well as the contemporary configurations, museums are implicated in settler colonial nation building, as well as dispossession. Underpinning the general linear logic of “destroy in order to replace,” or settlement, the three logics are both generative of settler colonialism, and serve to reinforce and perpetuate it. First, is the logic of disappearance, second is the logic of appropriation, and third is the logic of obfuscation.

While the three logics of settler colonialism are overlapping and mutually implicated, they also sometimes work in tension, leading to aporetic spaces within settler colonial domination. Further, these logics are not linear or unidirectional, but are being contested, reformed and transformed as a means to forward practices of self-determination and decolonization. In the face of material and non-material violence that continues to produce settler colonial domination, colonization and settlement is not now, nor has it ever been, totalizing. Despite the many articulations of contemporary Indigenous cultural “revivals,” the loss that a revivalist framing implies has never been completed. Instead, anti-colonial practices are constantly rearticulated in and by Indigenous arts and cultural politics, despite the attempts at the colonial state to over- and re-write the history of colonization. For example, across settler colonial geographies and temporalities, “local signs could be (and have been) reappropriated by natives, to draw attention to their precedence, and to reassert indigenous sovereignty” (Thomas, 1999, 12). Walking through UBC campus totem poles, monuments and works of public art remind visitors that they are on unceded Musqueam territory. While examining the logics and theories of settler colonialism has established multiple lines of critique or lenses of examination, ultimately this story of settler colonialism is also a story about the ongoing

acts of resistance against which settler colonial logics have had to compete. “Indian resistance is sometimes confrontational, but more often it is transformational” (Valaskakis, 2000, 391).

I understand Valaskakis “transformative resistance” as aligned with Coulthard’s “resurgent politics of recognition.” In contrast to the colonial politics of recognition, Coulthard describes a resurgent politics as practices of “decolonial, gender-emancipatory, and economically non-exploitative alternative structures of law and sovereign authority” (2014, 179). He argues that this resurgent politics is premised on “self-actualization, direct action and the resurgence of cultural practices” (Coulthard 2014, 24). In Chapters Six and Seven I will develop three case studies to examine what transformative resurgence looks like in a museological context. Drawing on Simpson’s argument that Indigenous peoples’ cultural process of creation are directly antithetical to the consumer culture. She says “creating was the base of our culture. Creating was regenerative and ensured more diversity, more innovation and more life” (L. Simpson, 2011). In short, these acts of transformative resurgence (as opposed to a revival after a fundamental loss) drive the following research.

3 Smashing the Glass Box: Museums as Political Paradox

“Mmm. That’s my dinner on display,” I say, as we approach the display case labelled “Technology, Food Quest/Coast, Processing” at the beginning of the “pre-contact” section of the exhibit. The case contains fishing items as well as what appear to be dried, split salmon, dried clams and other traditional foods. “But First Nations people *still* fish,” I explain to my group, “and they continue even now to process fish in ways similar to those displayed here.”

Gloria Jean Frank, 2000, 164

The move to collaborative curatorial practice in anthropology museums is rooted in two important intellectual and moral developments which have steadily grown in power during the past half century. First, the reflexivity in the humanities and social sciences associated with postmodernism has raised awareness among museum anthropologists of the ways in which earlier, objectifying traditions of material culture display have supported the colonial and neo-colonial power relations. Second, the evolving discourse of human rights has, in the years since its first broad codification in the 1948 UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, has been vigorously argued to extend to cultural property and the protection of traditional indigenous knowledge.

Ruth B Phillips, 2003, 158

In 2011, in the shadow of the Canadian Parliament buildings and against the backdrop of international celebrations of the colonial state including the 2012 Queen’s Jubilee and the 200-year commemoration of the War of 1812, the Ottawa Art Gallery held an exhibition titled “Decolonize Me.” The work of six artists and two writers contested the settler state nationalist narratives with contemporary interjections of Indigenous self-determination and agency. Against the rampant celebrations of colonial history as normative practice, “Decolonize Me” questioned the narratives of national progress, and the contemporary illusions of a “post-colonial Canada” including the depoliticization of these historical “celebrations.” The work in “Decolonize Me” challenged capitalism, patriarchy, and environmental degradation, while simultaneously confronting and transforming the topography of colonial national celebrations. This

carefully curated response to contemporary settler colonialism is only one of many examples of artists and activists working through, and with, material culture to contest the ongoing processes of colonization. From the Elders, activists and allies who actively call for the repatriation of stolen objects from foreign museums (both international and Canadian), to contemporary curators and artists who interject into the spaces, museums are a new/old frontier for the confrontation of colonial culture.¹⁸ Contemporary artists, including Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun's "modernist" visual storytelling and Brian Jungen's paradoxical presentation of traditional motifs in reclaimed modern materials (including hockey masks and bags), continue to assert the ongoing, lasting and vibrant cultural and physical presence of diverse Indigenous peoples. These artists challenge the progressive modernist versions of history, which would place Indigenous peoples as teleologically primitive or no longer present. Other works actively re-make "settled spaces" within and outside museums by drawing attention to the spatial logics of colonialism, and reclaiming these spaces as Indigenous Nations.

As the "staging" ground, the museum has become an increasingly paradoxical geographic and imagined space. Bolstered by a history of collecting that was instrumentally tied to the active material and ideational practices of colonization, the museum carries a legacy of exclusionary Western knowledge that continues to reproduce a normative story of progress and civilization. Yet, alongside the historic legacy and modern practices, many contemporary interjections into the museum space highlight the subtle permutations and manifestations of contemporary colonialism. The material culture within the museum, including collections of objects, stolen or made for trade, tell stories that have the potential to both perform and reproduce colonialism, *and* to foster and cultivate resistance to it.

In response to growing activist and academic voices, the field of museum studies became (and continues to be) a central location for debates over the role of material and cultural presentations and the perpetuation of domination and hegemony. These debates are often posited as occurring between two crudely distinct camps, an "empirical scientific" view that locates the museum as a repository of scientific knowledge, charged with

¹⁸ New because it offers a burgeoning field of critical study within academia, old because the extraction of Indigenous peoples' material culture is not a new tactic of imperialism, and museums have long been at the forefront of this.

apolitically keeping and displaying history and contemporary culture, versus a critical “postcolonial” view that acknowledges and seeks to disrupt power relations within museums. In their caricatured forms, both camps reify particular understandings of knowledge, power and the role of material culture within museums, either falling back on proclamations of “universal scientific knowledge” or continuous critiques of power, privilege and cultural incommensurability. In their extreme forms both positions miss the nuanced and paradoxical roles that museums, and those working within these institutional structures, must occupy. Further, they risk over-determining the agency of the artists and curators who choose to engage in these spaces in complex ways.

As Ann Stoler (1989) argues, the categories of colonizer and colonized deployed in uncomplicated manner flattens the complexity of differences *within* these categories. Similarly, viewing the museum as either a key perpetrator of colonial violence or the central figure in upholding Enlightenment values of scientific knowledge and historical preservation, does not open the conceptual space for understanding the far more complicated relationship between museums, curators and communities. Indeed, located in the liminal space of the operation of state sanctioned power and resistance to that, the museum is “tricky ground,” shifting and dangerous, but nonetheless changeable. The very nature of the museum as an extension of state-sanctioned forms of domination also means that the museum is a powerful space for the transformation of these structures.

Whether repatriating stolen objects, reclaiming physical gallery space, or creating new works of art, work within the museum engages with a long tradition of critical thought that identifies power as operating in pervasive, non-state centred ways. In part due to Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1977, 1995), the analysis of imperial power outside of state apparatus became a burgeoning field of study (Foucault, 1982, 1995; Shaprio, 2004; Spivak, 1988; Stoler, 1989; Thomas, 1999; Tully, 2008a, 2008b; Wolfe, 2006). The institutional and historical legacy of the museum as well as the contemporary critical engagements situates museums at a critical nexus of disciplinary and governmental power, knowledge and subject creation, and individual and collective memory making. Indeed the museum is a strategic location of colonial domination, both the field upon which the operations of colonial power take place and at the nexus of many tactics of colonial power, including material dispossession, knowledge and narrative creation, and concomitantly

the creation of colonial subjectivities. Looking within the museum enables analysis of the multiple lines or trajectories of power; the story of colonial domination can be read alongside stories of resistance. Thus, reading objects of colonization as simultaneously objects of decolonization opens up analysis of the productive fractures within colonial narratives. Against the implicit assumption that the museum serves to primarily reflect and disseminate knowledge, this chapter focuses on the power of the museum to *create* knowledge.

The previous chapter offered a critical language through which to engage the nexus between theories of settler colonial studies and material culture studies, including the three “logics” of disappearance, appropriation and obfuscation oriented towards the overarching aim of dispossession of Indigenous peoples from their lands and the maintenance of the settler colonial system of domination. The goal of that chapter was to illustrate the nexus between material culture and political theory, provide a broad conceptual framework of settler colonial domination and explore the mutually constituted relationship between material and ideological modes of domination. This chapter takes a similarly theoretical methodology, but rather than focusing on the logics of settler colonialism, I examine the *museum* as a physical and conceptual space for both perpetuation of and resistance to these settler colonial logics of domination. First, this chapter establishes the museum as a paradoxical space, both a location for settler colonial domination and a space for the enunciation of resistance in a wide range of forms. Second, underpinning this analysis of the paradox of the museum is a theoretical understanding of how power functions, and locating the agency of actors to resist power. Building upon the theoretical insights of Foucault, Tully and Said, this chapter seeks to frame the museum as a political paradox- simultaneously a place of agency and domination, hegemony and resistance. Tracing these paradoxes through theory and example, this chapter draws together poststructuralist theory and contemporary decolonial thinkers to trace the operation of power in museums and the ways in which engagements can confront the logics of settler colonialism as they manifest in museum spaces.

Unpacking the Paradox

Contemporary analysis of the history of collection and display no longer depoliticizes the history of museums as institutions of apriori knowledge, but highlights the myriad of ways that museums as institutions, and the individuals working within and for them, took an active role in the process of colonization. When museums collected objects to be held in trust for future generations, the ostensible intent was to preserve “vanishing” cultures from the “inevitable” disappearance that history would impose. But this ignored the violence that this “preservation” was itself perpetuating.¹⁹ Collecting practices were depoliticized. The curatorial displays were read as reflections of the contemporary known world, offering a platform for the projection of racial categories and evolutionary teleology that congratulated the West for its’ self-proclaimed civilization while condemning the rest to inferior barbarism (Ames, 1992; Teslow, 1998). The physical removal of some objects from still living peoples facilitated the intentional destruction of their lives. The redisplay of the objects in Western, often racist and colonial, presentations, reveals museums as more than apolitical reflections of value neutral knowledge, but a stage on which domination was performed.

While the institutional structure of museums, including curatorial legacy and policies, often seeks to maintain the guise of apolitical knowledge dissemination, it is more difficult to find Indigenous artists or members of a “source community” who believe that their art, and more specifically its representation and display, is not deeply political. When the survival of Indigenous peoples and cultures contests the ongoing process of colonization and attempts at eradication, engagements within the museum that *transform* colonial practices have disruptive potential that can challenge and change the status quo operation of settler colonialism.

Given the legacy of museums in the performance and reproduction of colonial violence, the choice to engage within this space may seem a strange one. While museums were and remain a source of violence in the form of dispossession of material culture and the constitution and dissemination of racist, imperialist knowledge perpetuating and

¹⁹ The documentary film “Totem: The Return of the G’psgolox Pole”(Cardinal, 2003) illustrates the tensions between preservation and dispossession.

justifying conquest, museums also often hold knowledge and material culture that has otherwise been systematically destroyed by the colonial impetus.

For peoples whose way of life has changed dramatically but whose identity rests on historical cultural knowledge, artefacts offer the possibility of recovering a broad range of cultural knowledge for use in the present and future. Some of that knowledge may have been deliberately suppressed by policies of assimilation, or lost as a result of dislocation from familiar landscapes (Peers & Brown, 2003, 5).

Museums are not only a space to learn about and reflect upon the legacy of this history, but also a space to actively engage in its transformation. Indeed, museums are deeply paradoxical, a position of power that has long been recognized by Indigenous peoples who have found archives filled with material culture, history and objects that were systematically destroyed outside of these dusty corridors. While the act of preservation in itself may reflect the imposition of Western cultural values, negotiating the tension between historic (and contemporary) epistemological and material violence, epistemological privilege, and shifting obligations to source communities remains central in many debates over the role and responsibilities that museums have towards changing these legacies.

Critical museum studies have not only called for critique of the role played by museums in the construction of marginalized subjectivities, but also the potential of museums to contribute to and create social change (Brown & Peers, 2006; Butler, 2000; Phillips, 1990, 2011; Sandell, 2007). In these ongoing debates, the museum is located at a critical nexus for understanding and critiquing colonial identity formation and transformation. This double role of the museum as both “reflecting” history as well as creating new knowledge highlights the ways in which the museum does not simply reflect colonial or hegemonic knowledge as Said argues, but also has a constitutive role to play in the perpetuation and internalization of colonial subjectivities (1995). Located at this complex intersection of theoretical domination and practical transformation, the museum reflects the many aporetic, messy and shifting logics of settler colonialism. Revealing the agency of individuals and objects not only counters the formulation of power as a totalizing force, but also widens the space between the discourses and practices of domination and the acts of resistance. This is not to say that Indigenous peoples have not been systematically subjugated. Nor does this presume that settler colonialism does not

continue to be a pervasively violent process. Rather, this focus on paradox and aporia ensures that the acts of resistance that have been taking place for over 400 years are at the centre of my own analysis of power relations in the museum.

While discussions of the individual practices highlight particular experiences of museums, I argue that these are collectively political spaces, whether or not curatorial objectives are ostensibly “apolitical.” The forcible collection, confinement and redeployment of objects within particular spatial and temporal frameworks, in certain museums, at particular times, are all implicated in and constitutive of the material and ideational manifestations of colonial power. Simultaneously, interjections into these spaces also have power. The inclusion of Indigenous voices, and the often forcible interjection of Indigenous bodies and perspectives into colonial spaces, not only resonate within the museum, but also outside. Whether reclaiming occupied territories with street art or occupying museums that have a long history of perpetuating colonial practices or narratives, “Indian resistance is sometimes confrontational, but more often it is transformational” (Valaskakis, 2000, 391).

The Museum as Domination

This section will look at the museum as both a field for the operation of colonial power and the specific tactics of power, highlighting both the operation of power/knowledge and the creation of colonial subjectivities. This analysis is prefaced on the politicization of the physical and ideational space of the museum, by placing objects within a Foucauldian discursive analysis. Patricia Hill Collins has argued, “a choice of language transcends mere selection of words – it is inherently a political choice” (Collins, 1998, xxi), but these political choices exceed the linguistic focus of many post-colonial scholars. While many have narratives and discourses of colonialism, I centre analysis in the material and narrative production of colonial power. Recentring objects counters a division between material and figurative or narrative power. Objects redeployed within museum contexts created knowledge about the other, but were also an instance of the physical control. Kept behind glass walls to be observed and known, categorized and tamed, objects not only represented the literal and figurative incarceration of colonized bodies, but also reinforced colonial regimes of power through the material constraint.

Histories of museums often trace their origins to “cabinets of curiosity,” where the private collections of personal “grand tours” were displayed in parlours for family and friends. However, in the late 19th century, museums were increasingly charged to be institutions of public knowledge. Rather than a representation of a private collectors’ individuality, the museum became a space where the public was asked to invest themselves in relation to the collection, learning about the “other” while simultaneously taking on narratives of themselves. In granting public access to museums, the role of the museum collection shifted. “Thus, gradually, the public—or more correctly, the educated classes—came to believe that they had the right to expect that the collections would present and interpret the world in some way consistent with the values they held to be good, with the collective representations they held to be appropriate, and with the view of social reality they held to be true” (Ames 1986, 7). Though tasked with public education, the museum did not seek to challenge the commonly held views. Indeed, Ames argues that the museum not only adopted the predominant colonial ideology of the time but also had the authority to both impose and educate through these categories. Thus, the museum not only reflected social conventions and structures, it also served to educate, disseminate and embed the socially constructed knowledge as authoritative.

Located at this important nexus between the public dissemination, discipline of knowledge and the production of particular forms and categories of analysis, museums should continue to be understood in the productive power/knowledge matrix. By imposing academic classifications, the museum authorizes the hegemonic discourses of science while further disqualifying subjugated knowledges. “Since displays typically do not draw attention to the partiality of the picture they present, they reveal these distorted versions of others as if they were objective truths” (Eaton & Gaskell, 2009, 245). Rather than assuming the public space of the museum is value neutral, knowledge is not only produced *about* objects in collections but *through* the control of objects.

Collecting—customs and clothes; images, memories and idioms; spoons, songs and spirits—removes or redefines the lived significations of identity and power that are enacted and acted upon in Indian experience. Museums display glass-cased artefacts and carved canoes, totem poles and berry baskets, all removed from the discursive exchange of daily life and labeled with meanings that are fixed in the culturally coherent narratives of Others. Indian objects for which

meanings emerge in the power they invoke or the community they involve are redefined as historical representations and ethnographic artifacts (Valaskakis 2005, 72).

Careful observation, preservation and categorization are prioritized over physical engagements with the objects. Performance, ritual and indeed, practical context are largely removed from the object in favour of knowledge that can be retrieved “through the looking glass.” “The space of representation constituted in the relations between the disciplinary knowledges deployed within the exhibitionary complex thus permitted the construction of a temporally organized order of things and peoples” (Bennet, 1995, 81). Thus, the problem in many institutional frames is not the lack of knowledge about an object, but the manner in which the subalternized knowledge has been actively excluded from the formal and public histories. “Through the practices of collection and public exhibition, museums have developed a discipline of looking – a way of retrieving meaning from objects” (Bolton, 2003, 43). Knowledge is “extracted” from objects, filtered through the legitimating complex of value neutrality and empiricist priorities, and presented as universal. Not only does this functionally serve to exclude different knowledges from within the legitimating “science” of the museum, but also the exclusionary silence is filled with institutionalized knowledge. Thus, a doubled violence occurs, both the violence of exclusion and obscuring that the exclusion took place through the imposition of other forms of knowledge.

Placed in glass box museum displays, objects are presumed unable to “speak for themselves.” They are blank narrative slates through which meaning can be made. For example, a drum displayed in a museum is accompanied with text, offering stories of history, creation and display to “interpret” the assumed silence of the object. Counter to this view of the object as silent and agentless, Chippewa scholar Gail Guthrie Valaskakis recounts the complications of her family’s relationship to a water drum associated with Midéwiwin, or Grand Medicine Society (2005, 175). For her, the waterdrum was always already implicated in a network of meaning made in and through relationships to the objects individually and collectively. Deciding the fate of the drum was a complex and difficult process that involved both community and individual interactions with the object. Even when viewed as silent and in need of interpretation, objects “are discursive, and their power is constructed in relation to those who invoke the information they express,

which relationships they enact, and the personal experience they engender” (Valaskakis 2005, 181-182). Thus, Valaskakis does not understand objects as passive, but embedded in webs of meaning, and further, active in the creation of that meaning.

Despite the robust critiques of objects as discursively active themselves, they are still subject to interpretation and interpellation within the museum, where meaning is made in and by the contexts in which the object is presented. “Museums provide one of the major means by which that relationship of cultural perception is defined, and, for the most part, they do so wholly on the terms of the dominant culture” (Eaton & Gaskell, 2009, 243). The placement of objects within these institutional frameworks dislocates them. Objects are both physically removed from the original place, and discursively removed from where meaning was originally made. Decontextualized display of material culture often elides both the history of collection, and the fact that “objects are collected and displayed in specific political and intellectual environments” (Bolton, 2003, 43). In relation to the logics of colonialism, the spatial dispossession and relocation of material culture is a double violence, at once removing objects and the meaning and cultural practices from the land, and redisplaying these objects in a new context. Removal erases the history and present of Indigenous occupation of place, while the redisplay solidifies this violence through the museum sanctioned ethnographic categories, or “glass box” gaze.

When Indigenous peoples’ material culture is presented within a colonial space, the meaning of those objects is dislocated and remade into a narrative that not only reinforces the temporal distance between the civilized centre and the primitive other, but also the geographic distance as well.

Museum exhibition techniques continue to impose academic classifications—our ‘glass boxes’ of interpretation—upon diverse cultures... They always remain anthropological boxes, however, ‘freezing’ others into academic categories and to that mythical anthropological notion of time called the ‘ethnographic present’ (Ames 1992, 140).

The “savage over there” reinforces the colonial present, where distance performs a story of teleological evolution that often enables or reproduces the settlement of space; the museum is a central node in the power/knowledge, spatial and temporal logics of colonial domination. Creating authoritative knowledge about the colonized is thus instrumentally

related to the operation of colonial practices. “The dynamic of naming becomes a primary colonizing process because it appropriates, defines, captures the place in language” (Ashcroft, 2001, 134). What can be named can be known- what can be known- can then be controlled. The category of “culture” ascribed by the anthropological knowledge regime was not merely political in its representational implications, but served as a “governmental and disciplinary possession of bodies *and* territories, and in this were included existent forms of philosophy, history and social life that Empire sought to speak of and speak for” (A. Simpson, 2011, 67). More than perpetuating violence through the already constructed meaning about an object, these knowledge creation practices also perpetuated violence through what was missing, or what was considered irrelevant in the creation of knowledge about objects. When a census of the collections at the NMAI was completed, it was found that much of the catalogue records were missing vital information, where a ring would still be on a human finger bone but the presence of human remains would not be recorded. “These early cataloguing practices indicate that human remains at that time were considered less important than their associated artefacts” (Rosoff, 2003, 73).

Finding museums located at the nexus of power/knowledge reflexively acknowledges that the museum space is not value neutral but upholds implicit and explicit power relations. Rather than trying to neutralize the power of knowledge production, this critical position attempts to reflexively and explicitly acknowledge power in order to address and mitigate these political contexts. Within this framework, exhibitions “do not, in fact, erase Western traditions of discourse and display, but rather intervene in them to a greater or lesser extent” (Phillips, 2003, 165). However, the intentions of collaboration are constrained and potentially also shaped by the institutional framework. In other words, there is tension between the curatorial and even institutional aims and the structures of constraints of that museum. “Museums’ attempt to reinvent themselves as socially engaged places of memory are hindered by an embedded desire to catalogue, conserve and display objects” (Ouzman, 2006, 269).

For example, the narratives and practices of repatriation, variously intentioned, are arguably constrained by the institutional and epistemological framework of the museum itself. Starting from the mid-1980s, for a variety of reasons, hundreds of objects

have been repatriated to First Nations communities in Canada. Jennifer Kramer argues that this wave of physical repatriation aimed to redeem anthropology and museums from their colonial histories, acknowledge that physical repatriation of objects may foster community rejuvenation, and/or that self-representation by these communities will provide proof of sovereign control over territory and population (2010). However, as Deborah Doxtator argued, these acts of repatriation remain under the control of the museum, and by extension the juridical and legal hegemony of the (often still colonial) state (1992). Working under, rather than against, the established power hierarchy of settler colonialism, physical repatriation is truncated by the dominance of the state imperative. While serving positive ends for communities who feel empowered through the repatriation of objects, both by the process as well as the reconnection to material objects and forcibly suppressed skills, repatriation does not always significantly transform the settler colonial hegemony that is cyclically linked to the conditions of dispossession.

Conversations about repatriation are largely situated within a Western empirical analysis. Indigenous peoples who argue for the repatriation of objects must become conversant in the Western discourses in which they are framed. Once objects are wrapped in the languages of commodity, preservation and cultural property, it is difficult to disentangle them and resituate the objects within traditional frames of collective property, sacred ritual, or kinship relations. Jennifer Kramer's analysis of the repatriation of the Echo mask to the Nuxalk nation in Bella Coola exemplifies the complicated "enrobing" of material culture with Western norms (2010). When repatriated to the community, a sacred mask traditionally danced only in winter ceremonies and potlatches and hidden from the eyes of the general public was displayed in the public bank 24 hours a day. Doxtator argues that using Western notions of commodification and preservation to argue for repatriation does more harm than good, reifying the codes of knowledge imposed by the colonizer (Doxtator, 1996), and arguably reproducing the subaltern silence.

The museum as a field and instrumental location for the deployment of a colonial power and knowledge not only perpetuates violence by dislocating, disciplining and changing meaning, but is also implicated in the "tactical" creation and control of colonial subjectivities, both the imagined colonized and colonizers. Anthony Bennet argues in the

19th century museums were one of many institutions that were charged with cultural governance, to “help form and shape the moral, mental and behavioural characteristics of a population” (Bennet, 1995, 21). He identifies these practices as juridico-discursive, stemming from a sovereign source with a clear purpose to exact obedience from a population. Drawing off poststructuralist theory, the museum was (and continues to be) placed alongside the prison and clinic as a central location of disciplinary and governmental power. According to Foucault, “the ‘mind’ as a surface of inscription for power, with semiology as its tool; the submission of bodies through the control of ideas” (Foucault, 1995, 102). The creation of knowledge about objects, and the deployment of this knowledge through museums as spaces of authority thus formalizes subjectivities. The subject is created, enabled and simultaneously constrained in the categorical relations of knowledge creation. If “politics as a technique of internal peace and order, sought to implement the mechanism of the perfect army, of the disciplined mass” (Foucault, 1995, 168), collecting and categorizing knowledge about the savage “other” has a domesticating power, defining and controlling the subjects that are created in and through this power/knowledge nexus.

These articulations of particular societal history congeals a grouping of people together not by territorial bond, but by a shared history and shared imagination of the collective self. “The nation is by no means something that is defined by its territorial unity... The nation has no frontiers, no definite system of power, and no State” (Foucault & Ewald, 2003, 134). Thus, cohesion must be created through something else, a shared collection of knowledge and information through which social cohesion can be constructed. “Public displays of any cultural sort, whether by the government, the cultural elite, or activists and resisters to the establishment, are inescapably based on the constructed ideology intended to promote a shared vision of history, identity and heritage” (Thompson, 2002, 38). Indeed, as knowledge is made by and for power, the creation of knowledge is less a reflection of truth than a reflection of whom the truth serves. To that end, museums are not only a location for housing, holding and preserving knowledge, but also a locus of the authority with “a power to ‘show and tell’ which, in being deployed in a newly constituted open and public space, sought rhetorically to incorporate the people within the processes of the state” (Bennet, 1995, 87). Through the museums’ cabinets of

curiosity, the public was asked to construct knowledge about the self. Thus, instead of a unilateral perception-reception knowledge transmission, museums can better be understood as a node in the complex governmental tactics of population and subject creation.

For Foucault, the question is not only about how knowledge is imposed as a means to subjugate the other, but also “the way a human being turns himself into a subject” (Foucault, 1982, 789). When audiences enter museum spaces, they are asked to not only create knowledge about the other, but also locate themselves both individually and collectively within this relational matrix. Thus, subjects come to not only recognize knowledge about alterity, but also distinguish themselves by what they are not. The glass boxes act as mirrors, where the subject is asked to place themselves in meaningful relation to the contents of the museum. The evident distortions in museum images and imaginary “reveal more about the interests and motivations of observers than they do about whoever is notionally represented” (Thomas, 1994, 22). Thus, when individuals engage within the museum space, they are not only asked to take up this knowledge, but also to use that as a means to generate self-reflexivity, to varying degrees of criticality.

A question remains behind both a reading of objects within a discursive field of knowledge creation, and the creation of collective and individual subjectivities in and through the field of power/knowledge relations; agency, or finding the spaces where the seemingly totalizing control of colonialism are fractured. Judith Butler has taken up a Foucauldian analysis of the internalization of subjectivity where “power not only *acts on* a subject but, in a transitive sense, *enacts* the subject into being. As a condition, power precedes the subject” (1997, 130). This formulation places power and knowledge, prior to subjective experience, or indeed, subject as “being,” reducing subjectivity to the constitutive relations of power on or about the subject. Said argues that “ideas, cultures and histories cannot seriously be understood or studied without their force, or more precisely their configuration of power, also being studied” (Said 1995, 5). In this framework, asymmetric power between the West and Orient is the condition of possibility for Orientalism as a system of relations in which subjectivities are constructed both materially and discursively. In emphasizing the importance of discursive power, Said explores “the degree to which the West’s systems of scholarship, and its canons of

aesthetic representation, have been implicated in the long history of the West's material and political domination of the non-Western world" (Moore-Gilbert, Stanton, and Maley 1997, 22). Said's *Orientalism* shifted analysis of representations as "image" and reflections, to a discourse, deployed as a means to construct the world, where the other is constituted through a "created consistency, and that regular constellation of ideas" (Said 1995, 5). While politicizing presentations, Said later clarified his analysis to leave room for a qualified agency, where subjects being represented were not wholly products of the study. Thus, the Orient is not "*essentially* an idea, or a creation with no corresponding reality" (Said 1995, 5).

While there may be a material and substantive existence beyond hegemonic construction of the Orient, the asymmetry of constitutive power and the proliferation of specified knowledge, makes it difficult to imagine the Orient beyond the West's construction. Though the inclusion of the poststructuralist theory offered a critique of what was being presented in museums, as well as the ways in which these presentations both reflected and reinforced the practices of Western imperial and colonial projects, placing power as prior to both subjects, and objects, flattened the field of relations to hegemony of domination. Though difficult to imagine, the logics of colonial domination are always partial; varied, pervasive, but nonetheless, fractured. According to Stoler and Stassler, students of colonial history want two stories, "a story of hegemonic colonial state, saturating both the cultural frame and the cracks in which the colonized live, *and* a story in which deft evasion leaves the memories of these same actors unscathed by those state intrusions" (2012, 8). However, the story of colonial power as it plays out in the museum is far more complicated than a binary between pervasive constructions of the subaltern as imagined by the powerful, and the "untouched." This location as holding and disseminating knowledge and creator of the disciplinary norm reveals the importance of museums, not only in the creation of colonial knowledge, but also in the resistance to that. Where knowledge about the nation is created, it can also be destroyed, subverted or changed when museums are read as reflecting the colonizer rather than creating knowledge about the colonized. Though Spivak (1985), Tully (2008a, 2008b) and many others rightly argue that the very possibility of articulating alternative histories is obscured by dominant narratives of progress, evolution, and Western liberal teleology, the resistant

power of counter-histories provides alternative perspectives and fracturing a totalized narrative of the present.

As Nicholas Thomas identifies in his analysis of colonial texts, there are gaps between the projection and performance of colonial domination (1994, 16). Indeed, these gaps are the very condition of possibility for the transformation of colonial politics. Gyan Prakesh (1992) argues that subaltern colonized peoples have a “third sight” by virtue of their exclusion from the hegemonic communities of colonizers and colonial elites. The illiterate peasantry of colonial India was not able to understand through the western hegemonic development discourse, but the “third sight” “represented the limits of colonial discourse” (Prakesh, 1992, 173). These limits in the hegemony of the discourse can be widened by those who are subjected to colonial power, and shatter the otherwise often too coherent “mirror” of display that reflects the image of the colonizer back to themselves. This places the onus on those privileged by colonial power to question the otherwise prominent myths about themselves. Despite the historic (and sometimes contemporary) attempts to depoliticize the museum in favour of universal histories and knowledge, it is clear that curators and source communities understand the politics of display, and the importance of contexts. Increasingly, many curators and people who work within museums understand their work to intersect directly with political practices, both within the institution as well as within the communities. Just as Foucault found that “it would not be possible for power relations to exist without points of insubordination which, by definition, are means of escape” (1982, 794), alongside the operation of the museum as a space of power and domination, they were also spaces for practices resistance.

The Museum as Resistance

Whereas many theories of imperial power tend to see the position of the ‘powerless’ colonial subject as one of the most passive victimage, it is clear that individuals are almost always able to operate within the framework of the dominant discourse to their own advantage.

Bill Ashcroft, 2001, 42

Despite the pervasiveness of the structures of invasion and ongoing attempts to destroy and/or displace Indigenous peoples who have been forcibly incorporated into Canada,

these structures and relations of colonial domination are not totalizing. Not only have Indigenous peoples been actively resisting colonialism, some for more than 400 years, the discourses and practices of colonization are fractured along multiple lines, often internally aporetic and with evident paradoxes between narrative and material forms. Both causing and widening these fractures, museums are a platform where the control of the power/knowledge and construction of colonial subjectivities is actively contested.

Tully's examination of engagements between Indigenous peoples and Western thinkers in his chapter "The Struggles of Indigenous Peoples for and of Freedom" finds that while Western and Indigenous political theories are not incommensurate, they "are massively unequal in their effective discursive power in the present. One is the dominant language that presents itself as a universal vocabulary of understanding and reflection; the other a subaltern language" (2008b, 258). Though resistance to colonialism occurs, when the terms of the discourse, or the terrain of engagement, is determined by the hegemonic power, the vocabulary of contestation is prone to naturalizing the asymmetric relations of power. Tully finds that "while subalterns are constrained to act 'tactically' in these ways, because of the unequal and subordinate position, hegemonies act 'strategically.' Hegemonies try to structure the field of possible responses" (2008a, 160). As evidenced by repatriation claims that are primarily communicated in the languages of commodification and value, and/or source community- museum relationships that privilege the importance of preservation, interjections into the museum are often confined to this "strategic" terrain²⁰.

However, the interjections into the dominant discursive constructions of the museum have the potential to break out of these essentially strategic operations by a) interjecting subalternized knowledge to trace dominant but subtle operations of power structuring museum based knowledge, and b) becoming a space for "self" presentation, turning away from strategic processes and indeed hegemonic power more generally. This turning away or refusal calls to the fore the third mode of fracture, c) demanding a response from power that recognizes the challenges of colonial subjectivities, most especially of the colonizers.

²⁰ Jennifer Kramer (2004) discusses the ways in which pieces once removed from communities become "wrapped" in the language of commodification. The repatriation claims that follow from are also in the language most comprehensible to museum practice. For example, the use of NAGPRA legislation to request repatriation of museum held remains uses the US legal system in order to induce change rather than articulating it through the law and languages of those requesting the return.

Continuing (and in some respects challenging) the critical history of subaltern studies, museums have become a space for the presentation of subaltern knowledges, troubling the authorization of Western knowledge once exclusively deployed in the museum and recognizing subaltern knowledges having counter-authority; deconstructing dominant narratives through direct confrontation. “Within museums, source community research with collections and consultation for exhibition developments provides opportunities to articulate perspective and narratives denied by the dominant society” (Peers & Brown, 2003, 1). This interjection of subalternized knowledge actively fractures the otherwise often homogenous representations, revealing agency against a long history of attempted assimilation and domination, and the limits of the presumed universal western knowledge paradigm.

This is not to say that there are not dangers in critical interjections of subaltern knowledge into the museum space. In “On Law Democracy and Imperialism,” Tully argues that “our dominant languages of disclosure and research conceal and overlook the imperialism of the present” (2008a, 127). Thus, even though critics are ostensibly attempting to work against asymmetric relations, when the languages and institutional frameworks of engagement remain dictated by and for the powerful, (for example, when English property law is used to adjudicate land claims) the operations of domination are not supplanted or changed. This subtle but pervasive reliance on the underpinning assumptions of colonialism manifest through the languages of engagement, as well as in the methodological assumptions, ontological presuppositions or implicit (and explicit) moral and ethical drives. In museums, the superficial recognition of the importance of source community engagement does not *necessarily* change or transform particular institutional constraints that curators must negotiate in community partnerships.

Any community relationship must not only recognize the particularity of the needs of that source community, including the complex politics *within* that community, but must also recognize that there are very different epistemological and even ontological considerations and obligations. Negotiating community relations within the “dominant languages” of museum studies can reproduce subtle operations of the still colonial contexts. The subilty of power and privilege are no less damaging, and can inflict another,

perhaps more dangerous, operation colonial dominance in the refusal to acknowledge the embedded conditions of systemic asymmetry. For example:

The [left-wing intellectuals] who refuse to acknowledge their privilege and inheritance of wrongs are practicing another form of selfishness and hypocrisy—they claim the right and privilege of indignation and the power to judge those cruder colonizers among them and attempt to use this rhetorical posture to release themselves of their own responsibility for the colonial enterprise (Alfred, 2005, 105).

Though Alfred locates this refusal of colonial privilege in the individual, the same logic of refusal perpetuates violence at a systemic level, where the attempt to abdicate both individual and collective responsibility for colonial pasts and presents “restories” truths, perpetuating violence. Whether denying the power of knowledge formation or deflecting critiques, “museums typically exhibit the objects in their collections in a way that appears completely neutral on two levels: first, in the sense that the choices (and the assumptions and values guiding them) regarding presentation of the objects are erased; and second, in the sense of appearing apolitical” (Eaton & Gaskell, 2009, 241). In the case of the museum, falling back on the “apolitical” presentation of knowledge not only obscures violence caused by the active denial of other ways of knowing that could interrupt the unilateral hegemony, but overwrites the possibility of those interjections under the guise of apolitical presentations.

These depoliticized discursive presentations can be read alongside, or as part of, the Foucauldian matrix of power and knowledge where interjections of various (subalterned) knowledges disentangles the hardened relationship between power and knowledge, revealing the ways in which knowledge forms are actually contingent, and related to functions of power. By revealing the manner in and through which knowledge is created through power relations, knowledge cannot be assumed as value neutral. Rather, “knowledge is not made for understanding; it is made for cutting” (Foucault, 1994, 360). In direct contestation of a positivist perspective that would see knowledge in general, and empirical “reality” as value neutral, Foucault understands the construction of truth as central to the exercise of power regimes. “Truth isn’t outside power or lacking in power” (1994b, 316), but rather, truth plays an important role in the practice and perpetuation of power relations, especially when truth is produced in conjunction with already structured practices of hegemony. If “history had never been anything more than

the history of power as told by power itself, or the history of power that power had made people tell” (Foucault & Ewald, 2003, 133), then these formulations of counter knowledge are not only contestation through contrast, but also by highlighting the stories that power tells itself as exactly that, a single story amongst others.

To this end, interjections into the museum space are not solely about the critical potential of presenting alternative knowledges that contest the hegemony of a truth regime, but also about disentangling these knowledge projections from the regimes of discipline and power that they bolster. “It’s not a matter of emancipating truth from every system of power (which would be a chimera, for truth is already power) but of detaching the power of truth from the forms of hegemony, social, economic and cultural, within which it operates at the present time” (Foucault, 1994b, 318). Foucault widens the field of analysis to focus on the underpinning conditions of possibility that enable a juridical assumption of knowledge or truth. Debates which seek to locate the “truest” of truths, the image of the other that is most authentic, either produced in and by the knowledge located in the museum or from source communities, not only has the propensity to reproduce a constructed homogeneity between colonizers and colonized, the privileged and subalterned, but also obscures the *function* of the “truth.” The task at hand should not be so much about the tracing the production of truth, but to source the *effects* of those particular truths. These knowledge effects and the productive function of both colonial discourses and the resistance to them, is where political action lies.

Making the most of these aporetic logics, interjections into the museum serve as a mode to contest both the historic and contemporary operation of colonialism. Ashcroft describes these aporetic operations as “ambivalences,” where the desire to reproduce and perpetuate colonial discourses and subjects is the condition of failure. These reproductions are never perfect, nor totalizing, thus leaving room for the colonized to transformatively “imitate,”

to take the image of the colonial mode and use it in the process of resistance, the process of self-empowerment. Ambivalence is not merely the sign of the failure of the colonial discourse to make the colonial subject conform, it is the sign of the agency of the colonized—the two way gaze, the dual orientation, the ability to appropriate colonial technology without being absorbed by it—which disrupts the monologic impetus of the colonizing process (Ashcroft, 2001, 22-23)

The museum offers a space for tracing these colonial ambivalences and analytically situating agency against disciplinary knowledge alongside the concomitant creation of colonial subjectivities. In this colonial ambivalence, Indigenous interjections into the museum can be read as “turning away” from the colonial story to focus on community resilience. This refusal to engage is not ignoring the history and presence of colonial domination, but not constraining that as the single story of Indigenous peoples.

Engagements within the museum are often framed as a practice of “reclamation,” where connections to stolen objects, ceremony, ritual and song are made possible because of the “preservation” within the museums. While at the time this conservationist operation was an instrumental violent arm of the colonial state, the archives often hold dusty material that have otherwise been actively destroyed by colonial operations. “Artefacts prompt the re-learning of forgotten knowledge and skills, provide opportunities to piece together fragmented historical narratives, and are material evidence of cultural identity and historical struggles” (Peers & Brown, 2003, 6). For example, one of the handbags in National Museums Scotland collection of Athapaskan objects is unique to that collection, and the pattern was no longer part of the skillset of the current makers. Part of the community consultation included allowing members to have physical access to the bag, learn the pattern and the skills that went into making it, and reproduce new bags from the original techniques, effectively reclaiming a “lost” set of skills into the present.

The active reclamation of knowledge and skills are distinctly political acts. First, because the division between cultural and political is neither salient, nor relevant, especially when cultural practices have been actively suppressed as part of the attempt to solidify colonial power. When Ann Fienup-Riordan described the visit of the Yup’ik Elders to Berlin, she highlights how Elder Wassilie Berlin held a child’s bowl and recited the *inerquutet* (rules) of what could be placed in the bowl. “Again and again I heard the traditional rules for living I had recorded in *Boundaries and Passages* (1994), but in this context they were organized dramatically around real objects and activities, rather than didactically around ideas of what it meant to be a ‘real person’” (Fienup-Riordan, 2003 32). More than connecting these “culturally” framed objects to Indigenous political practices in the form of laws, ethics and governance, the engagements with these objects are also situated at the centre of political engagements with colonial state and political

structures. Some curators and museum officials have come to see Indigenous peoples' engagements within the specific museum structures as speaking to the wider political topography within settler colonial states. Ruth B Phillips' comparative analysis of the NMAI and the CMC highlights the very different political contexts in Canada and the United States (2006). Further, the 1992 Museums Task Force, both implicitly and explicitly recognized the ways in and through which engagements with museums could be political, either as a form of "empowerment," but also as an institutional engagement which prioritizes the words and wishes of the First Nations (Task Force Report, 1992). In Australia, "museum collections have become one of the loci of Aboriginal reclamation of a traditionally derived identity and, more specifically, of the reclamation of cultural autonomy" (Bolton, 2003, 46). Cultural autonomy as a practice of self-determination directly confronts the apparatus of colonial control where the discursive operation of knowledge about the colonial subject can be inverted. In this manner, the museum becomes a platform that not only highlights the interconnections between objects framed as "cultural" and terrain of the political, but also a space for the active practice of politics.

Viewing the museum as an ambivalent space and foregrounding subjective agency, rather than positioning discursive power as prior and totalizing, shifts the analysis to take note, not only of reclamation as political, but the ways in which engagements are transformational, both of the subjective experiences and the larger systemic operations of colonialism. Ashcroft reads these practices as taking advantage of "cultural capital," where "the concept of cultural capital exposes a process whereby colonized subjects of all races and classes appropriate, or 'consume', the dominant, 'hegemonic', culture, discourses, technologies, for purposes which may be very different from those of the disseminators of that culture" (2001, 44). Understanding objects as only implicated within the discursive and material operations of power exerted by the dominant culture in the process of historic and ongoing colonization problematically elides the ways that objects are multivocal, sharing different stories, and offering these variant stories to different people. Where an object might reveal to one viewer a history of colonial contact, it may also tell a story of cultural resilience in the face of increasingly intense violence. Rejecting the unilateral or scientific narratives that often accompany objects in favour of reading

objects through subjective and political narratives resituates museums as a space of power, not only of the dominant forces, but also of those subalternized through its practices.

In practice, the cultures apparently ‘silenced’ by this process nevertheless continue to exist, and not only develop their own operations and revisions but develop coherent strategies of self-determination with the new discursive tools at their disposal (Ashcroft, 2001, 46).

Thus, the active practices of engagements “play” with the colonial legacy within the museum, consuming the culture of the colonized, and turning it back again. The glass boxes thus, are not just mirrors reflecting the subjectivity of the colonizers, but a two-way gaze. Objects under glass are active, and so too are the engagements within the museum space. The engagements within the museum offer more than what is encapsulated by the experiences of Indigenous peoples reconnecting to cultural heritage and stolen history.

Not only are critical interjections retelling the hegemonic stories of the colonized, the glass boxes are also serving as mirrors, demanding a more critical response from those who are privileged in the museum. Though knowledge “about” the colonized concomitantly attempts to construct and constrain subjectivity, the museum speaks to the subjectivity of the colonizers or those privileged in the discursive construction of subjectivity more than it speaks to, or about, those colonized. Flipped in this way, the “glass boxes” of museums become mirrors. Rather than looking through the glass to seek the constructed authenticity of the object within, it is the display cases themselves, the context and the constructed meanings, that become the subjects of study. “Colonial objects” thus have a doubled life, both implicated in narrative and creation of domination, but also embodying of the ambivalence of colonialism; a representation of the ongoing agency of the colonized subject, and widening the fractures and paradoxes of colonial operations. Focusing on the fractures, and the glass boxes as mirrors, not only offers a means to critically engage with the creation of colonial subjects (both the colonized and the colonizer), but understand how the centring of agency serves as a means to transform the stories colonizers tell to themselves, demanding more than passive subjective affirmation from those privileged by colonization.

Transforming the power of the museum through the figurative inversion of the space, and bringing to light the operations of power does not turn away from the

“silencing effects” of colonial representations, but confronts them. These interjections recognize the inherent power and agency of the subalterned interveners, against the danger of colonial discourse theory of the “insistence on the totality and absolute efficacy of the ‘silencing’ effects of colonialist representation, which... envelops and predetermines even the conscious acts of resistance which seek to oppose and dismantle it” (Ashcroft, 2001, 46). For Valaskakis, museums are not solely seats of colonial power, but liminal zones of transformation.

In the borderzones that reclaim, transform, and create heritage, Native people are asserting their cultural ownership of art and artifacts in expressions of transmutable form, undeclared context, and concealed knowledge. This challenge to the power and privilege of outsiders who claim and name Native art and artifacts is unsettling to the institutions that display or sell representations of non-Native history and Indian heritage (Valaskakis 2005, 84).

Where and how the “unsettling” of institutions occurs, and the implications both for communities who are engaging in these practices and those within museums who take the time and care to listen, is unfolding. Viewing the museum as a shifting zone, tricky, but nonetheless flexible, not only opens the possibility for reading productive paradoxes within colonial logics, but also centres the agency of those who have been actively “subalternized” by the power/knowledge matrix within the museum space. Thus, engagements within the museum take place there not *despite* the legacy of colonial operations of power, but *because* of that legacy.

Where once the museum was understood as an apolitical space of scientific knowledge, where colonizers (and those privileged by the colonial systems of power) entered to be taught about themselves, these spaces are changing. When the glass boxes also become mirrors, other ways of knowing and seeing may enter the museum to fracture the colonial power/knowledge matrix. This is not to say that the museum is not a violent place, but that, if listened to well, and indeed more fully than has taken place, the museum can serve as a means for actively contesting colonial legacy and contemporary practices.

Conclusion

The museum is “dangerous ground,” not only contoured with legacy of colonial regimes of power and authority, but, to varying degrees and in varying ways, continuing to manifest and perpetuate contemporary practices of colonial power, both in the dissemination and creation of knowledge, but also through the creation of colonial subjectivities. There have been shifts within the academic discipline of museum studies to critically examine some of the ways that museum practices can challenge the assumed hegemony of particular kinds of knowledge. Changes in museum curation to reflect the multivocality and multiple meanings of objects, increasing recognition of the complexities of museum object acquisition, storage and conservation and relationships to source communities have also challenged the ways that objects and communities engage with, and move through the institutional structures of the museum.

But these shifts within museum structures and relations are perhaps some of the most dangerous. When read against the background of power/knowledge as normalizing and subject forming, the challenges posed through interjections into museum spaces do not necessarily or inherently challenge the colonial legacies. Given the obfuscating impetus of settler colonialism that seeks to erase and re-enclose any potential contestation, the museum can be read as another location for the perpetuation of violence. Foucault reminds us that despite the guise of the “normal” or “peaceful,” battles over and through power continue. “In this central and centralized humanity, the effect and instrument of complex power relations, bodies and forces subjected by multiple mechanisms of ‘incarceration’, objects for discourses that are in themselves elements for this strategy, we must hear the distant roar of battle” (Foucault, 1995, 308). The battlegrounds of museums are habitually quiet, conflicts often hidden in the back rooms of the archives, the fighters are curators, museum professionals and community members who frequently come up against institutional structures as much as they are in conflict with each other. But the hushed tones of battle do not negate violence.

Museums are complex “tricky” spaces, where reconnections are made to material and immaterial culture that have been “preserved” for the imagination of the colonizer, but still resonate with other stories. The museum speaks in multiple tones; there are stories of historic and continued domination, where the seizure and redisplay of objects of

colonialism are not only implicated in, but also instrumentally related to the perpetuation of colonial processes. There are stories of colonial subjects, the colonized and the colonizers, told through the perspective of the powerful. But against this, in varying degrees and in different forms, are stories of fracture, where the museum space is being redeployed as a means to counter and contest formerly hegemonic knowledge.

Communities turning away from the single story of colonization not only directly confront logics which seek to incorporate and perpetuate settler colonial domination, often in much more dangerous and subtle permutations, but also turn away from the “educative” purpose of the museum to prioritize their own interests and values. This turning away refuses the discursive presentations made by power, throwing into sharp relief that how the glass boxes set up to disseminate knowledge about the “other” tell more about the colonizers than the colonized. If power is seen as telling stories primarily about the powerful, rather than creating knowledge about the other, then the glass boxes become mirrors. Interjections into the space of the museum may reframe, contest and actively confront the creation of colonized subjectivities, but they also offer a moment of rupture where the coherent narratives of and about the colonized speaks to those privileged in these narratives. Engagements between source communities and museums are not solely “cultural” practices, but political.

4 “The Spirit Sings”: The Museological Turn to the Colonial Politics of Recognition

The present museological management of aboriginal collections by non-aboriginal peoples in Canada has been heavily influenced by the changing expressions of Canadian nationalism. In the nineteenth century, when most of the native collections in museums were brought together, the act of building Canada involved asserting a nation literally over top of native cultures. There was no room in Canadian nineteenth century nationalism for separate survivals of aboriginal peoples. Just as Canada asserted sovereignty over aboriginal lands, Canada was to assert sovereignty over native peoples’ separate identities and cultures.

Deborah Doxtator, 1996, 61

Although primitive accumulation no longer appears to require the openly violent dispossession of Indigenous communities and their entire land and resource base, it does demand that both remain open for exploitation and capitalist development.

Glen Coulthard, 2014, 77

Prominent scholar and museum curator Ruth B Phillips argues that museums and public monuments are reflective of political ideologies beyond their walls. “Museums and public monuments, it seems, have come to serve as primary barometers of the manner in which public institutions – and, by association, their governmental sponsors – interpret laws and policies related to cultural diversity” (Phillips, 2011, 4). This continuity with the external political environment is especially relevant in the context of settler colonialism. Despite some critiques of the museum as a national institution²¹, there have been few sustained examinations of the ways in which museums as authoritative spaces not only reflect, but are also active hubs in a matrix of power/knowledge and thus, implicated in the perpetuation of explicitly *settler colonial* regimes of power.²²

²¹ In museum studies literature, the “nation” as a set of shared cultural ideas and beliefs and the state as a set of institutions are often conflated. In this chapter I follow with this and discuss the nation as the state sanctioned narratives of shared history and belonging.

²² Exceptions include Charlotte Townsend-Gault (2006), Paul Chaat Smith (2013, 2009) and Karen Duffek (2013)

Foucault argues, “history has never been anything more than the history of power as told by power itself, or the history of power that power had made people tell” (Foucault, 1994, 133). Through this reading of power, engagement in museums is a double-edged sword, and “public displays of any cultural sort, whether by the government, the cultural elite, or activists and resisters to the establishment, are inescapably based on the constructed ideology intended to promote a shared vision of history, identity and heritage” (Thompson 2002, 38). The authority of museums thus helps to shape a range of identities and national narratives (Bennet, 1995; Mackey, 1999; McKean, 2000; Witcomb, 2003). Despite a strong intellectual legacy critiquing asymmetric power relations and the problems of representing the “other,” explicit critiques of the *settler colonial* politics of recognition, or how the “politics of recognition” work *within* and as part of settler colonialism, have not been readily taken up within museum studies. However, two lines of critical thought within museums studies reveal the absolute necessity of this analysis. The first argument posits that museums can and should be apolitical disseminators of knowledge, and the second suggests that museums are implicated in the state-sanctioned production of national identity and history.

My analysis speaks to both political theory and critical museum studies. To political theory, following on the first chapter, I argue that the museum is an important site for thinking through the very political iterations of state that continue the project of settler colonial domination through both material and symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 1991). To those who work within critical museum studies I make the explicit connection between two lines of argument in that field. The first posits that museums are “apolitical” in the exercise of a multivocal curatorial mandate (Phillips, 2006, 77; Eaton and Gaskell, 2009). The second argues that museums remain implicated in the creation of state-sanctioned national narratives and discourses. The “apolitical” and multivocal claim made by some museums, especially national and state-funded museums, compliments the colonial politics of recognition when the institutions serve as an authoritative extension of the settler state drive to disenfranchise and marginalize. By locating my critique of the colonial politics of recognition at the nexus of these arguments, I find that aspirations to being an “apolitical” space within a broader context of the colonial politics of recognition actively perpetuates the very power relations that “multivocality” is attempting to disrupt.

This claim to being an “apolitical” space has two roots – one modern and one post-modern. The first line of argument appeals to Enlightenment ideals of single truth and relies on the authority of the museum to produce and maintain an unchallenged claim to knowledge about an object. McLoughlin articulates this line of thought as a stabilization of meaning through the removal of disruptive contexts and the appeal to “objective” knowledge and on claims to authority of expertise, rationality, neutrality and singularity of meaning (McLoughlin, 1999; Shelton, 2006, 2001). “In making an object one’s own, through its acquisition into a collection, the object is removed from a potentially threatening environment and provided a safe, and seemingly comprehensible meaning” (McLoughlin, 1999, 5).

The second source of the “apolitical” position of the museum has moved away from the claim of a singular “objective” understanding to the presentation of “multivocality.” This second line of argument presumes that the museum is a “blank slate” where audiences can be presented with multiple viewpoints and find their own conclusions. Therefore the museum presents itself as a public “neutral arbiter” of identity claims and the “democratization” of the museum space through the inclusion of multiple voices into a value-neutral space of (re)presentation (Sandell, 2007). The onus is then on audiences to understand and arbitrate the information offered. Shelly Butler anecdotally explains how “viewers will be viewers” and interpret exhibitions according to their own values and positions rather than reflecting impartially on the display of objects at the museum. She asks, “is there a point to critical curating and pedagogy if this is the case? My response is yes, for I think it useful to acknowledge that curating, like teaching, should never be an authoritative exercise that imposes views on others” (Butler, 2000, 82). Thus, those taking up multivocal curation and apolitical museum space advocate for a non-authoritative practice, where audiences can learn and unlearn according to their own subject positions.

However, the appeal to apolitical multivocality is an underestimation of the legacy of museums as spaces of authoritative knowledge, since the individual subjective power to create, disseminate and transform meaning through inclusion of multiple voices “needs to be held in tension with the symbolic and institutional power of the museum to tell ‘authoritative’ stories of the nation” (McLean & Cooke, 2000, 150). The relationships of

multivocal viewing and learning take place within and through the particular and historically grounded epistemological authority of museums to discursively and tangibly frame and organize meaning. “National museums, funded by national governments and directed by their appointees, have no choice but to navigate official ideologies and politics” (Phillips, 2011, 213). Apologetically acknowledging the institutional constraints of funding and legislative authority nevertheless severs critical museology from a broader political critique. In museums that hold objects made by Indigenous peoples, the relationship between museum mandate and government financial resources adds another dimension of this authority, both constraining the narratives and permissive of certain kinds of voice. Many critical museum studies highlight that, while curators operate with goals of implementing transgressive and multivocal exhibitions, they are constrained within institutional limits, including procedures, taxonomic legacies, and funding demands. “Museum exhibitions begin with abstract conceptual plans, but they are realized by individuals who must negotiate particular institutional histories, who bring to the table their prior experiences of exhibition development, and who are ultimately answerable to external sponsors and government agencies” (Phillips, 2011, 207).

Recognizing the tension between an argument for “apolitical” spaces and the museum as disseminating state-centred (and funded) histories, some maintain the position that museums simply act as impartial display cabinets for objects, but others argue that “the apolitical-political divide is becoming less certain. This confusion is sustained by a longing for objectivity on the one hand and the realisation that topics and their interpretation are contingent and subjective on the other” (Cameron, 2008, 7). Rather than shying away from the power held by museums by appealing to value neutrality, some have come to embrace the power in museums and take a view of the museum as far more *active* in the political interests of source communities. However, this is often expressed in terms of a politics of recognition, where the political role of the museum is to better present narratives or histories such that “source communities” may make other claims, such as those to sovereignty and self-determination (Phillips, 2006; Smith, 2007).

In the last ten years in museum studies, scholars such as Phillips and Laurajane Smith have come to use the politics of recognition as articulated by Charles Taylor and Nancy Fraser to situate the museums within the broader fields of liberal democratic

theory and practice. However, these analyses do not offer a critique of the relationship between the politics of recognition and the settler colonial structures that determine the relationship between Indigenous peoples and the state today. Phillips (2006) argues that the “multivocal” approach to the First Peoples Hall at the recently renamed Canadian Museum of History is intended to reflect the “equivalent authorities” of Indigenous and non-Indigenous ways of knowing (77). Phillips and many others advocate for multivocal museum spaces as exemplary of the politics of recognition. However, they do not go on to elucidate the ways that the “equivalent authorities,” while ostensibly value-neutral and upholding a multivocal rhetorical practices, may serve to reproduce the already asymmetric relations of power. This is especially relevant with settler colonial relations of power between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

This chapter seeks to fill this analytic void by critiquing the *colonial* politics of recognition in relation to museological practice. Building on Dene scholar Glen Coulthard’s analysis of the colonial politics of recognition in Canada, I claim that institutional changes in Canadian museums exemplify the move to affirmative and conciliatory forms of domination, or shifting from “wards of the state” to “subjects of recognition” (Coulthard, 2007). I argue the colonial politics of recognition within Canadian museums is part of ongoing settler colonialism in Canada. As such, current museological practice, particularly as it relates to Indigenous objects within museums, must include a *critique* of the politics of recognition.

In forwarding this argument I draw heavily on Coulthard’s book, *Red Skin, White Masks* (2014). However, I parallel this history of the colonial politics of recognition in Canada with the shifts within museums’ institutional practice and normative orientation. I analyze the shift towards the colonial politics of recognition through the controversial “The Spirit Sings” exhibition in 1988 and the boycott led by the Lubicon Cree that ultimately impelled the creation of the Task Force on Museums and First Peoples. Beginning from a specific reading of the colonial politics of recognition I argue that by examining the normative shifts in museum practice post 1988, key events (or exhibitions as events) in Canadian museum practice are exemplary of institutionalized shifts towards the colonial politics of recognition. I find that while Indigenous peoples’ land-based actions, specifically that of the Lubicon, inspired major changes within museums in

Canada, this dissent was incorporated into the nascent but growing turn to the politics of recognition which Coulthard argues has come to define Indigenous-settler relations since the 1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (2014). Further, if, as I have argued in the previous chapters, museums are not just reflective of the outside political context, but also constitutive of national narratives and identities and therefore instrumentally related to the political ideologies outside the museum, the absence of this critique of the colonial politics of recognition within museum studies means museum practice may be implicated in the reproduction of these “new” colonial relations. Despite Phillips reading of the “indigenization” of the museum, I find that museums are not only illustrative of the settler colonial politics of recognition but also, through naïve complicity at best and active iteration of settler state interests at worst, play an *active* role in the settler colonial politics of recognition.

The previous two chapters were primarily theoretical interventions into settler colonialism, providing the language and narratives necessary for understanding the theoretical topography of the following four chapters. In Chapter Two I examined three logics of settler colonialism, arguing that material and symbolic forms of violence are not only mutually implicated, but that these logics operate both in conjunction and contrast with each other, leading to logical aporias within settler colonial logics and practices. Chapter Three argued that museums should be understood as paradoxical spaces. To understand these spaces as *solely* either reproducing colonial violence or emancipatory reclamation of history and self-recognition is not only unnecessarily reductionist, it also problematically elides the complexity of all practices taking place in and through museum spaces. These first two chapters provide a robust theoretical basis for the remainder of this dissertation, which can be understood as developing case studies that not only exemplify the museum as a paradoxical space, but also work through some of the fractures and aporetic spaces created through the paradoxes in the operation of settler colonialism.

Chapter Four marks a methodological shift away from theoretical engagements with the three logics of settler colonialism and the paradox of museum spaces illustrated by case studies. Instead, I use case study analysis to think through and illuminate the theoretical insights. Chapter Four also marks a theoretical narrowing. Though the

previous two chapters were a general intervention into settler colonialism, this chapter narrows to a particular contemporary instantiation of settler colonialism, namely the colonial politics of recognition. The colonial politics of recognition operates with both material and psycho-effective modes of domination. Indigenous peoples’ cultural practices, bodies and representations are appropriated into the service of the settler colonial state, maintaining the asymmetric relationships through restorying and eventing of both history and contemporary relationships to Indigenous peoples. The theoretical narrowing to the colonial politics of recognition hones down on the connection between material violence of dispossession and exploitation and symbolic violence inflicted through psychologizing effects. Further, the colonial politics of recognition is related to, and indeed generated by, the logics of appropriation, dispossession and obfuscation. In short, I read the colonial politics of recognition as the most contemporary distillation and iteration of the three logics of settler colonialism, attaining primacy after the 1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (Coulthard, 2014). As such, focusing on the colonial politics of recognition as a tactic or practice of settler colonial violence intersects with the “logic level” practices of colonial domination. Though the colonial politics of recognition most explicitly relates to obfuscation and appropriation, the ends of the relationship is still informed by a fundamental drive towards disappearance of Indigenous peoples.

This chapter makes two key arguments. First, I argue through analysis of “The Spirit Sings,” that shifts in museum policy, and the normative changes that followed from the controversy surrounding the exhibition, are exemplary of the turn towards tactics of accommodation that Coulthard argues underpins the colonial politics of recognition in Canada. Second, I argue that museum studies scholars have begun to uncritically take up this politics of recognition explicitly within their museological analysis. Taken together, this chapter thus finds that not only are museums telling examples of the colonial politics of recognition, but that museologists and curators are seizing on the language of recognition as advocated by Charles Taylor and Nancy Fraser to further implicate museum institutional practice within the accommodating and conciliatory practices of a colonial politics of recognition.

The following portion of the chapter is divided into three sections. The first section provides a brief examination of Coulthard’s critique of a politics of recognition in

the context of settler colonialism, highlighting the predominance of the colonial politics of recognition post-1996, and the ways that the colonial politics of recognition both perpetuates settler colonial relations of power and actively undermines resistance. In the second section I examine the 1988 “The Spirit Sings: The Artistic Traditions of Canada’s First Peoples” exhibition and 1992 Task Force on Museums and First Peoples recommendations as exemplary of a nascent colonial politics of recognition. In the third section I look at three articles in critical museum studies that draw explicitly on the politics of recognition as theorized by political theorists, Nancy Fraser and Charles Taylor. This section is a contiguous critique with case study analysis, substantiating three salient arguments; returning to the Lubicon boycott, I argue that the colonial politics of recognition functions in and through museum spaces by transforming political and land-generated resistance into more easily accommodated cultural forms. Through Laurajane Smith (2007, 2010), Kalliopi Fouseki (2011), and Emma Waterton (2010), I argue that the colonial politics of recognition appeals to the status quo institutions of the state to arbitrate these identity claims. Using Ruth B Phillips (2003, 2013), I argue that narrative change will enhance the position of Indigenous peoples in relation to material inequalities.

Overall in this section I argue that the uptake of the politics of recognition within museum studies is insufficient to address the political *and* cultural claims being made by Indigenous peoples in and through their interjections into museum spaces and contestation of museological practices. Thus, the uptake of the politics of recognition within museum studies a) works to transform the political claims into more conciliatory narratives of cultural accommodation b) maintains the structures of colonial authority, despite this ostensible shift away from unilateral or “top down” knowledge dissemination c) privileges narrative change without accounting for structural and economic equality.

The Colonial Politics of Recognition

In order to build my critique of museum practice in Canada as exemplifying the colonial politics of recognition, the first section of this chapter will be an overview of Coulthard’s 2014 critique of the politics of recognition. Following the protests that condemned the disastrous 1969 White Paper in Canada and in direct response to Indigenous peoples’ actions in the decades following, it has become untenable for settler

colonial government policies to be explicitly assimilationist, even if policies maintain the aim of settler colonial domination. Replacing the “White Paper” style attempts at disappearance through cultural and legal assimilation policies, Coulthard argues that since at least 1996, recognition has emerged as the “hegemonic expression of self determination within the Indigenous rights movement in Canada” (Coulthard, 2007, 438). This shift towards accommodation is exemplified most clearly through the legal and political recognition of Aboriginal rights and title, and Treaty rights. Beginning from the landmark *Calder Case* (1973)²³ rather than denying Indigenous peoples rights and title in order to maintain the status quo of settler colonial statehood, limited recognition and accommodation of rights reconciles Indigenous peoples’ presence with the presumed status quo of Canadian state sovereignty.

This shift towards a politics of recognition within government policy and practice has a genesis in the discipline of political theory. According to Coulthard, much of the intellectual labour around the politics of recognition has focused on the relationship between the institutional accommodation of collective difference, and the freedom and autonomy of individuals. Key theorists of the politics of recognition are united by their adherence to the relational or intersubjective understanding of identity formation. Jakeet Singh (2014) describes two approaches to recognition and self-determination, either from “above” or “below,” where the “top down” approach is largely through state-centred means, and the “bottom up” is through counter-hegemonic social movement practice. The strategies for this reconciliation range from narrative or symbolic shifts in understandings of both self and other, changes in economic goods or “redistribution” and/or shifts in institutional practices that recognize and accommodate group differences.

Though theorists of recognition offer different means and strategies for intersubjective recognition, they are dedicated to the diagnosis of social conflict caused by “misrecognition” and the normative aim of recognition as the solution. This teleology has been taken up in the field of political theory as a means to both recognize and articulate subjective and societal difference without giving up on the individual rights and state sovereignty at the root of the liberal democracy. For example, Charles Taylor thinks through the shift in Canadian politics from a “bi-cultural” French and English national

²³ *Calder v British Columbia (AG)* (1973) S.C.R 313, (1973) 4 W.W.R 1

identity to a more robustly multicultural nation. When advocating a multicultural political and social imaginary, it is both *possible* and *necessary* to reconcile group difference with individual claims to freedom. Difference, when upheld as a cultural right, can be *reconciled* with the effective functioning of liberal democracies predicated on the assumption of state sovereignty and the legitimate authority of state institutions. Thus, for Taylor, the politics of recognition is the means to navigate this reconciliation. Coulthard (2014) argues that the politics of recognition maintains the founding and continued violence of settler colonialism through the elimination of Indigenous peoples and exploitation and access to their land and resources. He goes on to illustrate the risks that engaging within the colonial politics of recognition have, including by drawing on Fanon, the threat that the colonized may come to identify with the conditions and structures of their own domination.

The politics of recognition do not perpetuate settler colonial relations of domination because of an incorrect diagnosis of the “problem.” The unilaterally imposed creation of “colonial subjectivities” through narrative misrecognition, asymmetric locations in structures of domination, and material inequalities, does cause social and individual psychological and material damages. However, when reading the politics of recognition in the context of settler colonialism, the variant solutions to misrecognition maintain the founding violence of Canada’s sovereignty and continue the project of land appropriation and “elimination.” Conceptualizing recognition as something to be “granted” by the dominant group (in this case the Canadian state) Coulthard argues, “prefigures its failure to significantly modify, let alone transcend, the breadth of power at play in colonial relationships” (Coulthard, 2014, 31). Thus, recognition is implicated in the settler colonial drive to stabilize the status quo of hierarchical relations of power between settler and Indigenous peoples.

Following Fanon’s critique of Hegelian master/slave dialectic, Coulthard argues that the politics of recognition, through intersubjective relationships of domination, produces and maintains colonial domination. He locates the colonial politics of recognition in a shift from the “unconcealed structure of domination to a mode of colonial *governmentality* that works through limited freedoms afforded by state recognition” (Coulthard, 2014, 16). Settler colonial power relations have shifted away from violence of

domination and force (though this still demonstrably occurs), and manifests more frequently through the affirmative relationship between recognition and freedom which produces “colonized subjects” and “the production of the specific modes of colonial thought, desire and behaviour that implicitly or explicitly commit the colonized to the types of practices and subject positions that are required for their continued domination” (Coulthard, 2014, 16). In other words, there is a significant shift from the explicit forms of violence against Indigenous Nations to the more subtle operations of power in and through the shift from state policies, techniques and ideologies “explicitly oriented around the genocidal exclusion/assimilation double, to one that is reproduced through a seemingly more conciliatory set of discourses and institutional practices and institutional practices that emphasize our *recognition* and *accommodation*” (Coulthard, 2014, 6). The intended ends of the politics of recognition is to establish just relations, but instead, these conciliatory discourses are actually the condition of possibility for settler colonial injustices and violences that extend far beyond Taylor’s diagnosis of poor “self-esteem.”²⁴ The dispossession of land and continued extraction of resources is not predicated on problems of “misrecognition,” but rather, the colonial politics of recognition serves the ends of “elimination.” “Instead of ushering in an era of peaceful coexistence grounded on the ideal of *reciprocity* or *mutual* recognition, the politics of recognition in its contemporary liberal form promises to reproduce the very configurations of colonialist, racist, patriarchal state power that Indigenous peoples’ demands for recognition have historically sought to transcend” (Coulthard, 2014, 3).

“The Spirit Sings”: Museum Change as the Colonial Politics of Recognition

I trace this shift to the “conciliatory” configurations of settler colonial power in the form of the colonial politics of recognition through a genealogy of museum practice. “The

²⁴ Elizabeth Povinelli argues that a similar shift occurred in Australia, moving from “assimilation to self-determination to reconciliation” (2002, 2). She states “the generative power of liberal forms of recognition derives not merely from the performative difficulties of recognition but also from something that sociologists and philosophers have called moral sensibility” (2002, 4). Povinelli goes on to make a cutting critique of liberal multiculturalism and Australian collective nationalism in the way that multicultural domination works by “inspiring subaltern and minority subjects to identify with the impossible object of an authentic self-identity” (2002, 6).

Spirit Sings”(1988) exhibition is a critical moment of reform in the history of Canadian museum practice, marked in the living memory and intellectual history of most who study Canadian museums. According to Phillips, “virtually all writers on museums and Indigenous peoples have positioned *The Spirit Sings: Artistic Traditions of Canada’s First Peoples* as the point of departure for the postcolonial project of museum reform” (2006, 48). Cherokee museologist Karen Coody Cooper states “the exhibition was a watershed for North American Indian/museum relationships. Had it not been for the Lubicon boycott which drew worldwide attention and created a call for action to which Canada responded in an enlightening fashion while the world watched, positive changes in policy and practice regarding First Nations (and, quite likely, indigenous people throughout the world) would have been, I believe, slower to come and not as extensive” (2007, 27).

The exhibition itself has been critiqued extensively from numerous angles, including curatorial content, use of sacred objects, presentation style and lack of consultation with source communities. But it has also been defended as expanding knowledge about previously under-researched museum collections, upholding the academic and intellectual freedom of the museum and reopening the museum institution as a site of research rather than solely of display (Harrison, 1993). Phillips argues that the extensive focus on “The Spirit Sings” has transformed it into an “event” rather than an exhibition, and it is analyzed without the background necessary for understanding the depth and complexity of a museum exhibit (2006). Rather than shying away from the “event” that was “The Spirit Sings,” the following section analyses this exhibition as a key moment that instigated a number of other changes in Canadian museum practices. Through this reading I argue that, rather than signaling the “postcolonial project” of museums, “The Spirit Sings” exhibition and the institutional responses can be read as the nascent colonial politics of recognition in Canada.

“The Spirit Sings” opened at the Glenbow Museum in Calgary in 1988 to coincide with the Winter Olympics. The stated intention was to celebrate the richness of Aboriginal cultures and educate the public. The exhibition attempted to fulfill this mandate by presenting more than 650 objects from ninety national and international collections. Collection materials, the bulk of which are held by museums outside of Canada, included items from First Nations across Canada, including the now “extinct”

Beothuk.²⁵ As such, the aim of “The Spirit Sings” was framed as inviting “travellers” to return home after 300 years away. “As early as 1668, they had left to tell the “Old” World of another, to act as witness to the expanding dominion of these explorers they travelled with” (McLoughlin, 1999, 3). While many welcomed the temporary return of objects from museums around the world and the exhibition funded unprecedented research into international museum collections, the exhibition was deeply critiqued and questioned for narratives presented and the institutional choices that preceded the exhibition display.

The exhibition controversy began in 1986, three years after research had started and two years before its intended opening. While the cultural objects ostensibly declared “the continuity, and the adaptability and resilience of the Indian and Inuit cultures of Canada” (Harrison, 1988a, 7) the exhibition was critiqued for the homogenizing presentation of diverse nations that ultimately placed Indigenous peoples as part of a historic community rather than contemporary presence, and the glaring absence of any mention of colonialism in Canada.

Within their narrative were painful silences, powerful absences. They were not asked to speak of the disruption and extinction, the change or the loss, that was evident on their return. Their invitation specified public homecoming stories of a culture that flourished centuries ago, but demanded silence on their subsequent travels and the circumstances that had led to their leaving (McLoughlin, 1999, 3).

The deep dissent aimed towards the exhibition made these “painful silences” impossible to ignore. Especially effective was the international boycott sponsored by the Lubicon Cree First Nation. The boycott struck a rift within the museum community, with many colleagues falling on opposite sides of the debate. The Canadian Ethnology Society (now the Canadian Anthropological Society), organizations such as the World Council of Churches, and the European Parliament supported the boycott. Twelve of the lending institutions out of 110 rescinded their loan agreements. The key reason behind this boycott was the Glenbow’s decision to have Shell Oil, which has been drilling since the

²⁵ One reviewer in the Edmonton Journal described this painful inclusion by asking “What manner of pride can be taken from this? It is as though the Berlin Olympics had put on a display of Jewish religious objects to celebrate the diversity and pluralism of German culture” (Hume, 1988, p B1 cited in McLoughlin, 1999, 9).

1950s in Lubicon territory as the sole corporate sponsors of the exhibition. Shell Canada Limited contributed \$1.1 million to the \$2.6 million budget, the rest of the funding coming from non-corporate sponsorship, including the Canadian Government.

The Lubicon- sponsored protests capitalized on the international audience focused on Calgary during the Olympics, leading to a wider uptake of the call to action lead by the Lubicon.²⁶ Indeed, the difference in the events in 1988 was not that the exhibition reiterated the tropes of disappearance that had been definitive of museum curatorial practice for many years, but that dissent inspired by these land-based actions actually seemed to instigate some change within the museum communities, both inside and outside of the Glenbow Museum itself. In response to the numerous and pointed critiques, the Glenbow placed the following statement at the entrance to “The Spirit Sings”:

The importance and the reality of continuity in the cultures of Canada’s Native Peoples is integral to the exhibition, *The Spirit Sings*. Consistent with that principle, the participants in the exhibition, listed below, express their hope for an expeditious and just resolution of all Canadian Native land claims, and the related issues of compensation, self-determination and self-government (Quoted in Harrison, 1993, 342)

Though this was a small concession to acknowledge contemporary political contexts, only thirty-five of the lending institutions decided to put their names on the statement.

Outside the Glenbow Museum, Bruce Trigger resigned from his honorary position as curator of ethnology at the McCord Museum (Montreal) when the institution did not join the boycott, reasoning that it was an “obscenity for a company to do this to a living people.” Despite the Glenbow’s director advising the National Museum of Denmark that a refusal to lend would be interpreted as “interference in the internal affairs of Canada” (McLoughlin, 1999, 11), the National Museum of Denmark withdrew support, citing tense political situations and concern for the safety of the loan material (JD Harrison, 1993, 326). The International Council of Museums responded by passing a resolution calling on museums to not exhibit cultural material without the consent of

²⁶ Iroquoian Nations also rallied to have a sacred mask removed from display after they filed an injunction to the Queens Bench against the Glenbow. However, the mask was only removed from display during the two-week injunction. The precedent to display this mask was based on prior negotiations with the Iroquois False Face Society Faith Keepers which indicated the display of the mask would not be breaking any protocol or causing offense (Harrison, 1993, 340).

source communities involved. The resolution stated: “Museums, which are engaged in activities relating to living ethnic groups, should whenever possible, consult with the appropriate members of those groups.”²⁷ Though The International Committee for Museums of Ethnography, and the International Council of Museums denied that the resolution was in reference to the Lubicon boycott, the Lubicon and several institutions used the resolution to justify rescinding or not participating in the loan program. While this was a normative move that was not implemented by all member museums, the acknowledgement of contemporary source community interests in “historic” collections was unprecedented.

There were two lines of defense for the exhibition: the first was to divide between “social responsibility” and “political action” and the second to claim the modern idea of the museum as an apolitical institution of knowledge production and dissemination as discussed earlier. For the former, Harrison stated, “in its organization of *the Spirit Sings* Glenbow undertook to be socially responsible rather than be politically active, to advocate a better and wider understanding of a solution of a situation rather than one particular solution to it” (1988c, 19). Rather than denying the ways in which museums are implicated in the politics outside of their walls, Harrison focused on the social rather than the political to guard against “pressure group” interests in museum curation. “While it may be legitimate to mount political action around any activity of a public institution, it would destroy the credibility of those institutions if they were forced to espouse the political causes of one pressure group after another” (Harrison, 1993, 343). Thus, defenders of the Glenbow acknowledged that the institution had “social responsibility” but stopped short of articulating that responsibility as advocacy or political action. Further to this appeal to the “social” rather than the political was a call to recognize the authority of the museum in apolitical knowledge generation. “It was argued by the Glenbow, and many supporters within the museum community, that the boycott amounted to an attempted suppression of academic freedoms of speech and representation” (McLoughlin, 1999, 10). Michael Ames, in defense of the exhibition, stated that the Lubicon boycott “was an act of political repression disguised as political advocacy and it displaced the responsibility for the Lubicon situation upon those who

²⁷ Resolution 11, International Council of Museums 15th Annual Conference Proceedings, 1986

were not empowered to change it” (1988, 16). Like the dichotomy between socially responsible versus politically active, the defense of “academic freedoms of speech and representation” appealed to the perception of a museum as a value neutral institution in which audiences enter to form their own opinions and identities. While Harrison and those who advocated the modern “neutrality” of the museum to present multiple viewpoints were attempting to distinguish the museum as an institution of objective knowledge from a role of political advocacy, in effect this reinforced a status quo production of hegemonic knowledge. In the structural relationship of settler colonialism, the current operation of power/knowledge is not neutral, but *actively* displaces Indigenous peoples from their lands.

In response to the protests and Lubicon boycott, in 1988 The Canadian Museums Association and the Assembly of First Nations held a colloquium at Carleton University in Ottawa titled “Preserving Our Heritage: A Working Conference Between Museums and First Peoples.” From this the Task Force on Museums and First Peoples was established in 1989, which consisted of more than twenty-five museum professionals as well as members of Indigenous communities across Canada.²⁸ The Task Force Report (1992) contains a set of recommendations that were not “statutory” but provided a moral and ethical guideline for change within the institutions. “In many cases the report summarizes the current best practices of individual museums and their relationships with First Peoples. However, some of the recommendations represent a major challenge to current museological practice” (Herle, 1994, 41). There were three key areas for targeted improvements identified by the Task Force: increased involvement of Aboriginal people in the interpretation of their cultures, repatriation of artefacts and human remains, and improved access to museum collections. The Task Force Report acknowledged historical roots of inequality, urged cooperation to remedy the current situation, and emphasized the skill and necessity for Indigenous peoples to speak for themselves. Unlike NAGPRA,

²⁸ List of Task Force Members are: Tom Hill (co-chair), Trudy Nicks (co-chair), Henri Dorion, Joanna Bedard, Andrea LaForet, Gloria Canmer Webster, Michael Ames, Miriam Clavir, Robert Janes, Carol Geddes, Katharine Pettipas, Donna Augustine, Bob McGhee, Gerald McMaster, Nicholas Deleary, Dorothy Daniels, Bill Byrne, Cathy Martin, Alex Greyeyes, Marie Routledge, Ruth Phillips, Linda Jules, Chuck Arnold, David Miller, Nancy Hall, Lize Thunder, Karen Issacs, John McAvity, Lance Belanger, Lee Ann Martin (1992).

an US Federal Act to provide for the protection of Native American graves,²⁹ the Task Force recommendations were primarily normative rather than legislative or judicial. Adherence to the Task Force recommendations remains fairly widespread but ad hoc and without the support of a legal act, leaving communities in Canada to rely on normative influences to enforce adhesion to the Task Force recommendations. Despite this, the Task Force recommendations have been upheld as a high standard for relations between museums and source communities. “The task force process and its report thus excited widespread interest and proved to have enduring value. It has provided a model both as a process of response and a set of recommended practices that have influenced the work of museums in Australia, Europe and elsewhere in important ways” (Phillips, 2006, 13).

Following the Task Force findings and recommendations, there were clear changes within museum communities and practices. Many museums not only responded to requests from source communities but have also begun actively seeking out “source community” voices to integrate into display texts and exhibition curation, iterating the postmodern shift in museological practice towards multivocality within display and curation. “Most curatorial staff now view the incorporation of alternative viewpoints in the display and management of museum collections as a learning opportunity with significant benefits. In some instances a multi-vocal approach has been used as a practical way of incorporating differing viewpoints” (Herle, 1994, 46). Listening to communities of origin, their requests and understandings of objects, and the active integration of community voice into new curation has certainly been an important part of post-1988 norm changes. Thus, the Task Force can be located as the moment where there was a significant shift towards to a new “normative” benchmark where community consultation and guidance would be at the foundation of source community/museum relationships.

The 1994 Symposium in International Indigenous Curatorship at the University of Victoria responded to the Task Force Recommendations and the resultant shifts away from the exclusion of Indigenous voices and ownership towards the more conciliatory multivocality in museum practice. Emmanuel Arinze and Alissandra Cummins stated,

²⁹ Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), Pub. L. 101-601, 25 U.S.C. 3001 et seq., 104 Stat. 3048, enacted the 16th November 1990. This act requires institutions that receive federal funding to return cultural and heritage materials to lineal descendants, culturally affiliated tribes and Native Hawaiian organizations. See King (2011), Archuleta (2005), Bruning (2006) and Collins (2004).

“the salt of this symposium should be our acceptance of the loud testimony of the worth, intelligence and superiority of our indigenous people in handling their affairs and presenting their heritage in their own perspective (Cummins & Arinze, 1996, 5). Tom Hill, Onkwehon:weh director from the Conadah Seneca Band and Director of the Woodland Indian Cultural Education Centre responded to the panel on the first day by stating “here in Canada, we have made some significant advances in trying to lay the foundations of accommodating indigenous perspectives” (Hill, 1996, 25)

However, the limitations of this notion of “co-ownership” and “accommodation” were critiqued from the outset, with Mohawk curator and scholar Deborah Doxtator underscoring what I argue to be the nascent shift towards a critique of the colonial politics of recognition.

The Task Force calls for a new and equal partnership between museums and native peoples. The recommendations, however, generally re-ascribe most of the responsibility—and position of power—to non-native museums, who must out of moral compunction involve aboriginal people by allowing them access to museum collections. Aboriginal peoples are given a somewhat passive role in these recommendations (Doxtator, 1994, 63).

Lee-Ann Martin, then interim curator at the Canadian Museum of Civilization, remarked on her discomfort in the title of one of the presentations:

“Aboriginal People Need to Be in Control of Their Own Culture” still indicates the deep power imbalances that preclude Indigenous peoples from being at the forefront of their own heritage control and presentation. “To me, it should be, “Our Own Culture.” I feel that non-aboriginal people hear us say something and then they borrow it and use it (1994, 27).

Both Doxtator and Martin highlighted some of the more subtle operations of asymmetric power, which were smuggled into the ostensible reforms inspired by the Task Force recommendations. Doxtator pointed to both the passive role that Aboriginal peoples were given as consultants, and the rather toothless moral compunction that was meant to regulate the interactions between source communities and museums. Martin located this subtlety within the conference itself, asking to be re-centered in a more substantive way in conversations about ownership and control.

While the Task Force recommendations attempted to address and redress the decentering of Indigenous peoples from their own histories, Doxtator’s analysis only two years after the release of the documents already gestures towards the growing colonial politics of recognition in museums. She highlighted the way that limited and non-transformative incorporation of Indigenous voice and presence in museums maintains the status quo of the state monopoly on “symbolic power” (Bourdieu, 1989, 23). For Doxtator,

this idea of partnership has not resolved the basic issues of access to and control over cultural objects, because it is a partnership directed by Canadian museums assuming responsibility... This is borne out by the fact that most major Canadian museums for the past twenty years have publically committed themselves to the idea of involving native peoples as consultants, have made serious attempts to honour the culturally prescribed ways of caring for religious artifacts and have removed skeletal remains and culturally sensitive materials from display, but native people still do not have the objects or information they need (1994, 64).

Thus, I argue that the Task Force recommendations are part of a normative shift to the politics of recognition that moves away from the modern idea of the museum as a space of apolitical knowledge but retains the asymmetric relationship between museums and Indigenous communities. The shift articulated by the Task Force Report in answer to the Lubicon Boycott found that the problem within Canadian museological practice was that misrecognition and misrepresentation was underpinned by the *exclusion* of Indigenous peoples from exhibitions and museums more broadly in terms of internships, board membership and curation. Echoing the framing of the relationship between Indigenous peoples and the Canadian state as articulated by Dale Turner (2007), the response to this exclusion was to more effectively include Indigenous peoples’ voices and perspectives. In short, the Task Force Report focused on increasing Indigenous peoples’ voices and agency *within* the institutions. However, as Coulthard (45, 2014) clearly argues in his response to Turner, the effective inclusion of Indigenous peoples’ voice and presences into institutions that substantively undercut the sovereignty of Indigenous peoples does not transform the colonial relations, but reiterates the structural relations of settler colonial power.

Given the institutional response to the radical critiques of the Lubicon in the form of cultural accommodation, the Task Force can be read as the pivotal moment in the shift from the confrontational suppression to the more conciliatory forms of accommodation and recognition. However, the conciliatory forms of recognition undercut the radical critiques being made in and through museums. The Lubicon boycott was not solely about objects being held in museums without consultation with the Indigenous communities they represented, but against the complicit relationship between the Glenbow museum and Shell Oil, which was actively dispossessing the Lubicon from their traditional territories. The Task Force response, limited though it was in the eyes of Doxtator and Martin, also served to partially recognize the Indigenous peoples’ cultural claims for inclusion and recognition at the *expense* of their political claims. Coulthard argues that the 40 years of political change in the Denendeh have resulted in “a partial decoupling of Indigenous “cultural” claims from radical aspirations for social, political and economic change that once underpinned them” (2014, 19). He argues that this decoupling should be understood as an *effect* of primitive accumulation, not a deficiency in Indigenous cultural politics (2014, 20). I would argue that the same effect occurs with the partial recognition of cultural claims through this museological transformation. When recognizing and accommodating the cultural claims to recognition through the Task Force and shifts in museum policy, the *effect* was to decouple the Lubicon’s political *and* cultural claims. When the Lubicon originally protested against the exhibition it was directed at the connection between this exhibition and the continued exploitation of their lands by settler corporate interests, in particular Shell Oil. The Lubicon were connecting their cultural claims to their dispossession from territory. Though it is possible to argue that the Lubicon were using the 1988 Olympics to strategically bring more attention to their *strictly* legal and political claims against the Canadian state, they did so through the confrontation of museological norms and practice, linking the two together. It was the partial recognition and accommodation in the form of shifts in Canadian museological practice that caused the detachment of the political and cultural claims, not an insufficiency in the Lubicon’s protest.

Thus, to reiterate, though the operating norms of Canadian museums changed in response to the boycott, these shifts were limited, not only in terms of the museological

practice, but also limited in terms of redressing the political claims of the Lubicon. As Doxtator argued in 1994, the shift in the inclusion of Indigenous voices into museum display does not significantly change the power relations within museums where museological standards of preservation and ownership maintain precedent. Moreover, this limited accommodation detached the Lubicon’s cultural claims from their political claims. In other words, the cultural problems of inclusion and access to heritage were redressed while the political claims of sovereignty and access to land remain unacknowledged. When placed within the context of wider cultural politics, such decoupling serves to neutralize more radical political and transformative claims in favour of cultural recognition and accommodation. In other words, settler colonialism, driven by the aims of dispossession and elimination, results in the decoupling of political and cultural politics in order to privilege the cultural in such a way as to neutralize the deeply transformative political claims of Indigenous nationhood. Situating Indigenous peoples’ claims for recognition within the project of liberal multicultural recognition then entrenches the position of the Canadian state as legitimate sovereign entity and the institutional forms as the valid modes of collective identity arbitration and regulation. This prefiguring effectively undercuts meaningful transformative recognition in favour of maintaining the status quo of state and institutional forms and practices. The following section will make the theoretical connection between the uptake of the politics of recognition within museum theory and practice and the practice of settler colonialism more explicit.

The Colonial Politics of Recognition: Fraser and Taylor in the Museum

As examined at the opening of this chapter, museological practices in Canada have shifted away from value neutrality and the apolitical dissemination of knowledge to being viewed as active hubs in the power/knowledge matrix (Bennett, 1990, 1994; Brown & Davis-Brown, 1998). More than just recognizing power and authority to share and disseminate information, some curators are highlighting the ways that museums can play an active role in the explicitly political interests of source communities. Metaphorically, this shift would be akin to changing the Glenbow’s institutional response to the 1986

Lubicon boycott from rebuttal to actively seeking to situate the museum as a platform for Lubicon political actions. For example, Laurajane Smith connects control over culture and heritage to other “equity based” claims. She says “conflicts over the control of heritage objects and places may be understood to occur in an arena where the symbolic *recognition* of the legitimacy of indigenous identity claims diffuses out to inform and *validate* other claims to equity based on claims to cultural identity, cultural knowledge and experiences” (Smith, 2007, 160, emphasis added). This explicitly politicized view remains rooted in a politics of recognition that gives authority to museums to advocate for political transformation of knowledge, and acknowledge and represent diversity in order to meet the ends of source community interests (Sandell, 2002, 2007; Watson, 2007; Witcomb, 2003). Thus, it is through the politicization of the museum that an explicitly articulated “politics of recognition” has been taken up within museum studies in recent years. Though many obliquely reference the potential role of museums in forwarding the interests of source communities, the following section will analyze three explicit examples of the use of the “politics of recognition” within museum studies. Two articles by Laurajane Smith and Emma Waterton, and Smith and Kalliopi Fouseki, “The Recognition and Misrecognition of Community Heritage,” and “The Role of Museums as “Places of Social Justice” respectively, explicitly take up Nancy Fraser’s iteration of the politics of recognition in museum spaces in order to fulfill responsibilities to source communities and resolve “status inequality.” Comparably, Phillips situates much of her recent work in alignment with Charles Taylor. Thus, Phillips, Smith, Waterton and Fouseki position the museum as site and institution which can address the problem of misrecognition, without fully considering if such politics might be substantiating settler colonial structures of power. The following section looks at the implications of this oversight in continuing the colonial politics of recognition in museum spaces.

First are two articles by Waterton and Smith, and Smith and Fouseki who take up the “politics of recognition” via Nancy Fraser as a means to critique the authority of elites to define access to heritage resources (Waterton & Smith, 2010), and illustrate the relationship between symbolic misrecognition and material inequalities (Smith & Fouseki, 2011). However, I argue that in both articles the use of Fraser ultimately limits their critical and normative goals for museological practice because the substantive theories of

recognition that Fraser herself offers are unable to adequately address the structures of settler colonialism (Coulthard, 2014). Smith and Waterton argue that, following Fraser, “the heritage sector is dominated by a particular notion of community, one that overlooks the fact that representations of reality can have powerful effects on any group under construction (Waterton & Smith, 2010, 9). To this end they find that ‘status inequality’ results in communities and individuals being included in control over heritage resources. They go on to argue that “Western Authorized Heritage Discourses” mean that “real life communities are not only misrecognized but misrepresentations of identity become institutionalized in the heritage process” (Waterton & Smith, 2010, 12). They read “parity of participation” as being hindered by economic maldistribution, misrecognition and political misrepresentation, but focus on the “cultural” ways in which “status inequality” hinders access to heritage resources. They argue that “community or group identity becomes the object of regulation through heritage management processes” (Waterton & Smith, 2010, 12). Resultantly, a range of people suffer from status inequality and are unable to intervene in their own heritage narratives or resources.

Waterton and Smith attempt to solve the problem of the asymmetric and unilateral definition of “community” which excludes some groups from participating in the display of their own heritage. In short, they are critiquing British heritage institutions for caring only, or at least primarily, about the heritage of white middle-class British symbols. However, by appealing to Fraser’s status model they are underestimating the strength of their own critique. They argue for the confrontation and redress of the ways that “communities of expertise have been placed in a position that regulates and assesses the relative *worth* of other communities of interest... ‘other’ communities, therefore, have endured a less than equal footing from which to make claims about their past, their heritage and their self-image” (Waterton & Smith, 2010, 13). Though ostensibly critiquing the colonized “other” as one of the communities who have endured a less than equal footing, they have missed the ways that the politics of recognition, as articulated by Fraser, reproduces the practices of settler colonial asymmetry by appealing to an ostensibly neutral arbiter (such as the court system) to determine and remedy status equality. While critically unpacking the definition of “community” as it comes to exclude certain individuals and groups, appealing to Fraser concurrently calls for the same

institutions (namely the state) that are causing “status inequality” to then moderate the outcome. In short, while they use Fraser to critique the inequality of access that some communities have to defining their own culture and heritage, Fraser’s solution of better integration into the institutions that structurally impede this participation is inadequate in the context of settler colonialism. As Coulthard argues, Fraser’s status model relies on the “background assumption that the settler state constitutes an appropriate and legitimate framework within which Indigenous peoples might be more justly included (Coulthard, 2014, 36). This background assumption underpinning Fraser’s status model, and consequently Waterton and Smith’s analysis of museums as perpetuating misrecognition, undercuts their critiques of elitist driven definitions of “community” by displacing the authority from “communities of expertise” to the state. In the context of settler colonialism, this shift continues to perpetuate violences against Indigenous peoples, including excluding them from defining their own heritage and resources.

Smith and Fouseki use Fraser for a different, but parallel analysis. Their examination of the politics of recognition within museums relies on Fraser’s analysis of the relationship between symbolic recognition and material redistribution, specifically revising historic narratives in order to reframe conversations on and about remediation and redistribution. In her 2011 interviews with museum curators and participants in museum/community consultations, Smith found that disjunctions in the needs and goals of the participants led to frustrations in the curation process. They note that source communities are less “object oriented” and more “people oriented,” and thus concerned with stories, narratives and language rather than the objects themselves. They find “the criticism that staff were object-centric is not due to a misunderstanding by communities about the role of objects in museum exhibitions, but rather derives from a failure by museum staff to engage with the *politics of recognition*, as staff were ‘not thinking so much about the people’ whose history and experiences were being represented” (Smith and Fouseki, 2011, 109). In Smith and Fouseki, the appeal to the politics of recognition takes the form of access to narratives and the importance of community consultation. They use the politics of recognition as a lens to understand “how and why community consultation is ultimately about the negotiation of power” (Smith and Fouseki, 2011, 100). This politicized analysis is then used to argue that it is important to be aware of the

representational authority of museums, and that the community consultation process can become part of the larger struggles for equality. Thus, the authority of museums to arbitrate legitimacy and narrative authority is “pitted against the need for recognition by some community groups, [which] can lend a certain intensity or emotional and political urgency to community participation” (Smith and Fouseki, 2011, 101).

While politicizing the museum space and the practices of representation including images and narratives about “self” and “other”, in attempting to unpack the unilaterally defined notion of community neither Smith and Fouseki nor Waterton and Smith acknowledge that Fraser’s appeal to a “status equality” model is insufficient to resolve material and symbolic misdistribution. The achievement of “full partners in social interaction,” necessitates the “objective condition” of participatory parity, or the redistribution of resources, and the “intersubjective condition” of the equal opportunity for achieving social esteem (Fraser, 2001, 29). Yet, Fraser’s project has a limit because claims for recognition that contest sovereignty or the structures of colonial power cannot assume the legitimacy of institutions of arbitration as Fraser does (Coulthard, 2014, 36). While they are writing in a British museological context, Smith and Fouseki and Waterton and Smith exemplify a widely demonstrated problem. Miranda Brady’s analysis of Foucauldian governmentality in museums articulates this limit well. Using the example of the Canadian Museum of Civilization she says, “these national, big-budget museums are increasingly integrating high-technology communications devices by which museum-goers make sense of their visits, and these ostensibly ‘give voice’ to largely remote aboriginal constituents (Brady, 2008, 769). By “giving voice” or arbitrating narratives, museums maintain their own structural authority, despite the appeal to multivocality. Waterton and Smith are drawing on Fraser as a means to critique the authority of elites to define and moderate who can access heritage resources. Smith and Fouseki are drawing on Fraser’s theories to politicize the representative process and argue for the connection between remedial recognition and justice issues including redistribution. However, in both cases the remedy to the problems offered by Fraser are inadequate in the context of settler colonialism where the sources of these inequalities, namely the settler state, cannot *also* be the arbitrator of appeals to justice. Critiquing the museum and

upholding the role of the state is insufficient because the sources of narrative and material inequalities remains the settler colonial state itself.

Returning to the previous example of normative shifts post-1988, the inclusions that Smith, Fouseki and Waterton argue remedy the absence of subaltern communities in museum practices would centre largely on exhibition planning, funding programs, inclusion of Aboriginal people on museum boards, and employment of Aboriginal people within all levels of museum operations. The intention of this inclusion would supposedly be more effective incorporation of Indigenous voices and perspectives in the sharing of their own culture and heritage. However, while the policies advocate adherence to cooperation, partnership and recognizing the mutual responsibilities and interests that museums and Indigenous communities have in the objects, the structural causes of these inequalities remain unaddressed. For example, a board of trustees makes the major decisions in museums, and exhibitions are constrained by funding sources and appealing to the “public.” Doxtator expressed concern early that the selective inclusion mandated by the Task Force did not significantly disrupt the structures that caused the exclusion in the first place. Resolving the asymmetric discursive and subjective positioning of settler and Indigenous peoples within museums “is a situation that is more complex than simply following respectful practices, filling administrative positions in Canadian institutions with aboriginal people or agreeing to conditional loans and sometimes selected return to native museums that meet the Canadian museological standards” (Doxtator, 1994, 64). Though the last twenty years has seen an increased number of Indigenous peoples actively pursuing careers in museum curatorship and research, this inadequate inclusion continues to come up against the limits of the settler colonial states.

Where in 1988 the nascent politics of recognition undercut the Lubicon’s claims to territory by conciliatory recognition in a multivocal museum space, in 2011, the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) in Washington D.C. functions in a similar manner. When Jolene Rickard reflected on her experience curating at the NMAI, narratives and practices of Indigenous sovereignty within the NMAI, she found that though Haudenosaunee strategic cultural resistance includes tactics of presenting important narratives and events within different cultural settings, she “struggled to make a curatorial intervention regarding the United States’ colonial-settler metanarrative about

Indigenous presence” (Rickard, 2011, 466). She proposed a curatorial practice that was not interested in authenticating Haudenosaunee existence, but “rather in taking seriously a civilization that has been thousands of years in existence” (Rickard, 2011, 466). This framing was ultimately unacceptable to the NMAI management who asserted the Haudenosaunee are “quasi-sovereign.” Rickard’s curation thus came up against the limit condition of settler colonial politics of recognition within the National Museum of the American Indian, exemplifying a larger problem of the institutional limits of museums. By remaining within or appealing to the institutional forms dictated by settler colonial structures, or alternatively creating narratives that remain coherent with the underpinning conditions of settler colonial state access to land, subalterned knowledge can be deemed acceptable as long as it does not confront the underpinning conditions of settler colonialism that the politics of recognition reinforces.

While Smith, Waterton and Fouseki’s use of Nancy Fraser is inadequate to address the structural and institutional sources of inequality in the context of settler colonialism, Phillips’ appeal to the politics of recognition draws on Charles Taylor in an explicitly settler colonial context. Phillips draws on the politics of recognition through Charles Taylor as both a means to diagnose the problem (museums cause narrative/symbolic misrecognition) and locate the role of the museum in the solution (the inclusion of Indigenous/ “source community” voices and perspectives changes the narratives). Through Taylor, Phillips does not connect the politics of recognition to material redistribution as explicitly as Smith, Waterton and Fouseki, but does politicize the representation of “otherness” as a source of misrecognition. Phillips is also explicit in tracing the shift of the political topography of institutional practice from “colonial” to “post-colonial” stating,

in settler societies such as Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, which have been both colonies and colonizers, museums and art galleries were, for much of the twentieth century, absorbed in projects of nationalist identity-construction. Yet today, as they come to lead the world in demographic diversity, their museums are also having to reinvent themselves as post-colonial, multicultural, and pluralist institutions (2006, 148).

Phillips does not use Taylor’s theory of the politics of recognition to argue for particular practices and understandings of museum curation, but cites Taylor to situate her readings

of museum exhibitions within the wider political shift towards the multicultural politics of recognition in Canada. She argues that debates and conversations around authenticity, sacrality and ownership have stimulated the changes within the museum such that “Canada’s self-image has shifted from the Eurocentric and, in relative terms, culturally homogenous construct of “two founding nations” to the more pluralist notion of multiculturalism” (Phillips, 2006, 92). She goes on to position her analysis of Indigenous peoples as part of this multicultural national identity.

Phillips’ deployment of multiculturalism echoes a more pervasive set of problems inherent in relying on the multiculturalism as a normative and ethical framework of decolonization. First, reading Indigenous peoples as cultural minorities “equivalent” to all other minority groups ignores the specificity of Indigenous peoples’ historic and ongoing relationships to land, and their particular experiences of settler colonial dispossession and violence (Coulthard, 2014; Povinelli, 2002). Second, and more broadly, a multicultural politics of recognition retains the asymmetry of power between the assumed “us” who recognizes “them.” As recognition becomes an act of benevolence it maintains the privilege of those who “recognize.” Finally, the colonial politics of recognition maintains the settler state as the arbiter of injustice. Not only does this maintain the status quo structures of domination in the form of the state political, legislative and juridical orders, but the further effect is that this normative order maintains the hegemony of the nation state (Young, 2011; Singh, 2014; Dhamoon, 2006; Markell, 2009).

Though Phillips acknowledges the complicated relationships between museums and Indigenous source communities in Canada, the trajectory of her analysis reiterates the shifts Coulthard identifies as the colonial politics of recognition. Namely, the response to Indigenous peoples’ protests is the institutionalization of recognition within the state-sanctioned structures and practices. To this end, Phillips argues “the process of change we have witnessed in Canada since Expo 67 can be understood as one of indigenization” (Phillips, 2011, 10) including the recommendations of this Task Force as an example of this “indigenization.” She goes on to say the “indigenization” of museums has two aims: the incorporation of Aboriginal concepts, protocol and processes into the mainstream museum world, and the “pluralist negotiation that arises from a unique history of interaction among Indigenous peoples, French and English colonizers and settlers, and

diasporic communities” (Phillips, 2011, 10). But when read against the settler colonial politics of recognition as articulated by Coulthard, Phillips’ claim to “indigenization” can be dangerous when it elides the continued asymmetries that structure the relationship between museums and Indigenous communities and when it leaves unquestioned the existence of settler state and colonialism as an assumed background condition.

In short, Phillips, drawing on Taylor’s advocacy for a politics of recognition, overstates the potential transformative power of narrative reform and in doing so, truncates the possibility of a transformational politics of recognition. Taylor’s understanding of identity, and indeed human life, as primarily *dialogical* (1994, 32-33) is very compelling within a museological practice that has shifted towards multivocality and self-representation. However, Taylor’s emphasis on narrative forms of misrecognition cannot adequately address the structural and economic features of colonial oppression (Coulthard, 2014, 34). Thus, while Phillips upholds the multivocality of museum practice as a means to further the “pluralist negotiation” of a multicultural Canadian society, like Taylor, she fails to address the “generative structures” of colonial-capitalist exploitation, though it may alter the intensity of the effects (Coulthard, 2014, 35). Likewise, Phillips’ reading of the role of the museum, especially the Canadian Museum of Civilization, is limited to addressing the narrative manifestations of Indigenous peoples’ inequality, rather than the structural conditions of those narratives. Doxtator’s response to the 1992 Task Force anticipates this failing by demanding that the inclusion of Indigenous peoples within museum practice should not simply be a matter of shifting narratives, but substantively transforming the conditions of ownership (1992).

Further, using Taylor’s politics of recognition to inform her work reveals the second problem with the politics of recognition in the context of settler colonialism: the incorporation or accommodation of Indigenous peoples within the status quo narrative of the Canadian state. When Phillips describes museums and monuments as barometers of public perception of government and policy, she claims that these institutions may *reflect* different perspectives of positions. However, if museums are imagined as a space for multivocal “transformative” advocacy, *and* implicated in state sanctioned narratives of nationalism, then museums are also located in the settler colonialism where the selective and constrained inclusion of Indigenous voices reproduces a politics of recognition. In the

last 30 years Canadian museums have moved towards “non-authoritative representation and inclusive participation” (Ashley, 2005, 8). However, a national museum cannot be fully extricated from the political context in which it is embedded. Even when upheld as a space for apolitical dialogue, Susan Ashley argues “not only does authority and domination exist in the use of the museum as a voice of the state, but this power of exclusion can creep into its alternative use as a public site of contestation and dialogue” (2005, 7). Acknowledging that narratives within museums are implicated in the political context outside of the museum, the museum is paradoxically articulated as holding transformative power against these messages while still constrained to act in accordance with political ideologies outside the museum. Thus, in addition to asking if museums *should* become politicized in their messages, there are also questions of whether these museums *can* wield any transformative power against the pervasive and dominant narratives outside the institutional walls. Hilden extends this critique even further to ask if museums are also implicated in the perpetuation of colonial power relations. About the NMAI she says, “skeptics—among them many American Indians involved with museums—argue that regardless of the ethnic origins of curators or boards of directors, most ethnographic museums remain memorials to wealth and privilege, educating a public to accept the relations of power extant in given societies” (Hilden, 2006, 77).

Given the operation of the settler colonial politics of recognition to transform Indigenous peoples’ political claims into more easily accommodated cultural claims through selective inclusion, contemporary museum practice cannot be *both* a value neutral space for the multivocal interpretation of multiple perspectives *and simultaneously* charged with creating and disseminating the history of the Canadian state in the manner currently imagined. The goal of neutrality is itself problematic if, as Waterton and Smith and Fouseki fail to acknowledge, the institutions Fraser relies on to remedy status inequality actively perpetuate the material inequalities of indigenous people. Or, as Doxtator diagnosed early in the Canadian state shift to the colonial politics of recognition, if the museum authority and institutional norms are the structural limit, then recognition is ultimately truncated and limited to the field of actions constrained and determined by the institutional status quo. Thus, what is “neutral” remains implicated in the ongoing symbolic and material violence that underpins settler colonialism.

In conclusion, Phillips claims that the shifts in museological practice are both an “indigenization” of the museum and a move to the post colonial and “multicultural” narratives replacing the “bi-cultural” vision of Canada. However, the conflation of “indigenization” with “multiculturalism” in Phillips’ analysis illustrates the cultural accommodation that Coulthard critiques in his reading of the colonial politics of recognition. Coulthard argues “we have witnessed within the scope of four decades the emergence of an unprecedented degree of recognition for Aboriginal “cultural rights” within the legal and political framework of the Canadian state” (2014, 2). By including Indigenous peoples within the multicultural landscape of Canadian identity politics, the serious political claims that challenge the racist foundation of the Canadian state through the assumption of settler state sovereignty and the presumed legitimate authority of institutional forms are “neutralized” through accommodation. Indeed, as Smith, Fouseki and Waterton via Fraser and Phillips via Taylor exemplify, the uncritical uptake of the politics of recognition in museological practice can resituate museums as an instrument in the colonial politics of recognition.

Conclusion

In this chapter I offered a history of the 1988 Spirit Sings controversy and the 1992 Museums Task Force response as exemplary of the shift away from the modern politics of apolitical knowledge to the colonial politics of recognition as multi-vocal spaces that take seriously the perspectives of indigenous groups. I argued first that the nexus between reading the museum as an extension of state sanctioned national narratives and an apolitical space of multivocal presentation necessitates a critical reading of the colonial politics of recognition. In the last section, I used three articles as examples of the inclusion of a politics of recognition into museum theory and practice. I argued that museums are thus implicated in the *colonial* politics of recognition by a) transforming political claims into more conciliatory narratives of cultural accommodation b) maintaining the structures of authority implicitly despite the ostensible shift, and c) privileging narrative change without accounting for structural and economic equality. I found that the more robust inclusion of a politics of recognition is not only resonant with the shift that Coulthard traces from explicit assimilation to more conciliatory discourses of inclusion, but can also

be read as contiguous with the 1988 “Spirit Sings” controversy and the subsequent shifts in Canadian museological practice.

In 1994 Doxtator stated, “during the past decade, aboriginal groups have become recognized as nations, but only under the umbrella of the overarching coordination of the Canadian Crown. This can easily be seen in the cultural policies of Canada with regard to control over archaeological resources” (1994, 62). The criticisms of the 1992 Museums Task Force by Doxtator and Martin highlighted the continued subalterned position of Indigenous peoples’ knowledges and presences though recently accommodated within the museum, and echoed critiques of the dangers in the reduction of Indigenous peoples’ experience to the colonial, even critical anti-colonial history, where “Native reality is grounded in the experience of being inscribed as subaltern in the history of Others and as subjects in one’s own heritage” (Valaskakis, 2005, 71). By running her critique of the selective inclusion of Indigenous peoples within the Task Force mandate alongside her critiques of the maintained control of museums institutions and state legislative bodies over Indigenous peoples’ material culture, Doxtator throws the operation of the colonial politics of recognition into relief, though she does not identify it as such. Namely, Task Force-inspired selective inclusions of Indigenous peoples’ voices may have *disrupted*, but did not substantively *transform*, the asymmetric relationship between museums and source communities called for by the “grounded normativity” (Coulthard, 2014) of the Lubicon and supporters.³⁰ If the colonial politics of recognition accommodates Indigenous peoples’ claims to nationhood and sovereignty as “cultural” claims for recognition, the “multivocal” “Indigenized” museum tasked with creating coherent multicultural narratives is an ideal location for this act.

The conclusions of this chapter could be read as indicating a very dire situation with respect to museums, where not only are the attempts to “solve” the problem of misrecognition insufficient to address the complexities of interconnected forms of domination in settler colonialism, but also the “solution” of recognition serves to further entrench settler colonialism. Critical museum studies have offered serious condemnations of the legacies of racist, colonial and patriarchal knowledge within museum structures,

³⁰ Coulthard uses “grounded normativity” to refer to land-connected practices and experiences that “inform and structure out ethical engagements” (2014, 13).

and examined the institutional structures and power relations that define and disseminate knowledge about the “other.” While these analyses have critiqued the practices of representation, and offered democratization and multivocality as potential solutions to the asymmetric practices of representation, these ostensibly critical formulations are implicated within the continuing ethos of the politics of recognition and settler colonialism. Though it is clear that “good work” is being done within museums, and many individuals and groups have warmly reflected on their engagements within museums themselves, the ways in which these discursive spaces and legacies continue to frame and constrain ostensibly emancipatory practices must be interrogated.

Curators and museum professionals are not unaware of some of the controversies of display. Indeed, attempts at remedying the explicit exclusions and appropriation of Indigenous peoples’ voices and presence indicates that curators, museum professionals, and the museum community more broadly are attuned to the complex relationships between the museum as sites of knowledge production and the ongoing experiences of violence inflicted on Indigenous peoples as a result of their forcible inclusion into the settler state. The impact of “The Spirit Sings” controversy and the fallout afterwards certainly generated and informed many shifts within museological practice. The museum community was fiercely divided around the subject and the debates ushered in a new era of museum ethic and protocol in relation to Indigenous source communities. However, reading these shifts alongside the critiques of the settler colonial politics of recognition reveals that these changes are not incongruous with the continued functioning of the settler state hierarchy and control of Indigenous objects, and as Doxtator argues, Indigenous histories and subjectivities.

As such, while the explicit reference to Enlightenment epistemologies founded in a teleological developmental progression may have been discarded, the subtle, yet still dangerous, operation of settler colonial power relations continues. While the structural inequalities may have been (arguably, and perhaps partially) addressed through the implementation of Task Force recommendations and the continuing shifts that have followed, the relationship still seems to be one of symbolic violence, “a gentle, invisible violence.” In short, multivocal curation can be, but is *not inherently*, congruent with the practices of asymmetric recognition that reinforce settler colonial structures of power.

Bringing together critiques of the settler colonial politics of recognition and the institutional shifts in museum practice, I argued that museums are implicated in the current iterations of settler colonial structures as a politics of recognition rather than providing the transformative public space and tools to counter the ongoing material and discursive manifestations of domination.

Further, the museum space and discursive forms are not detached from the wider colonial and de-colonial politics. Doxtator, as quoted at the beginning of this chapter, makes the explicit connection between the Canadian state claiming “sovereignty” over Indigenous peoples’ subjectivities, identities and histories, and the state claim to sovereignty over Indigenous peoples’ lands and practices. Indeed, as Mohawk scholar Audra Simpson describes, the category of “culture,” a discursive construction ascribed by the anthropological knowledge regime, was not solely rhetorical. The essentialized category of Indigenous culture did not simply represent a category of knowledge, but served as a “governmental and disciplinary possession of bodies *and* territories, and in this were included existent forms of philosophy, history and social life that Empire sought to speak of and speak for” (A. Simpson, 2007, 67). While the settler state drive to exert control over the mind as a means to gain access to bodies and territories, the resistances to these forms of control are also generated in and by relationships to land. The boycott of “The Spirit Sings” by the Lubicon was grounded in their land-based actions, inspired by the threats that they were facing from Glenbow sponsor Shell Oil as well as the symbolic violence perpetuated through the display of objects in disjunction with their own history. The Lubicon’s long history (and present) of land based actions found another voice in and through the boycott, and a retrospective analysis twenty five years later can locate this particular instantiation of land based action as part of a larger trajectory which would inspire significant and sweeping policy and normative change within museums. Though I argued that the Task Force response to the boycott transformed the Lubicon’s land based political claims into more easily accommodated cultural claims, this limited recognition did not end the Lubicon protest. Thus, the boycott and the ongoing struggle of the Lubicon against settler-capital invasion, is exemplary of what Coulthard argues to be the heart of Indigenous anticolonialism- “a struggle primarily inspired by and oriented around *the question of land*-- a struggle not only *for* land in the material sense, but also

deeply *informed* by what the land *as a system of reciprocal relations and obligations* can teach us about living our lives in relation to one another and the natural world in nondominating and nonexploitative terms” (Coulthard, 2014, 13 emphasis his).

Coulthard argues that continuing to engage with institutions implicated in the politics of recognition risks the interpolation of subjects into those oppressive spaces of power. Indigenous struggles for decolonization should “collectively redirect our struggles *away* from a politics that seeks to attain a conciliatory form of settler-state recognition for Indigenous nations toward a *resurgent politics of recognition* premised on self-actualization, direct action, and the resurgence of cultural practices that are attentive to the subjective and structural composition of settler-colonial power” (Coulthard, 2014, 24). While the boycott exemplifies a “turning away” from the institutional structures, an action which forced institutional shifts but, as I argued, not transformation, others are interjecting into museum spaces, not seeking to be recognized, but transforming the terms of the process of recognition. “For whereas many theories of imperial power tend to see the position of the ‘powerless’ colonial subject as one of the most passive victimage, it is clear that individuals are almost always able to operate within the framework of the dominant discourse to their own advantage” (Ashcroft, 2001, 42). The following three chapters explore the manner in and through which Indigenous peoples engaging in museum spaces as a means not only to transcend a theoretical relationship of recognition, but also to transform museum spaces.

5 “The Scottish Project”: Tłcho Relations with the National Museums Scotland and the Colonial Politics of Recognition

In her 2013 paper titled “The Politics of Reconnection: Museum Collection as Sites of Indigenous Cultural Recovery” Ruth B Phillips relies on Taylor’s 1994 essay “The Politics of Recognition’, to provide a substantive theoretical basis for her understanding of shifts in museum practice after the 1988 “Spirit Sings” controversy. She states that Taylor “makes a philosophical argument that provides an important foundation for the postcolonial reinvention of the Western museum” (Phillips 2013, 176). As in her 2011 essay, discussed in the previous chapter, she positions the museum as an ideal location through which one can achieve the “fundamental human right” of having one’s cultural identity publically recognized. She argues that collaborative models of museum process “have enabled Indigenous people to speak directly and in their own voices to broader publics” (2013, 176). However, as I argued in Chapter Four, the uncritical uptake of the politics of recognition in the context of settler colonial domination does not lead to the emancipatory ends that Phillips anticipates through Taylor. Rather, museums become implicated in the *settler colonial* politics of recognition as critiqued by Glen Coulthard (2014).

There are three key aspects of this chapter. First, while Chapter Four examined the continuity of settler colonial power relations as they manifest in the post-1988 turn towards the politics of recognition in museological practice, I focused primarily on the structural dimensions of colonial power. In contrast, this chapter takes up the subjective dimensions of the colonial politics of recognition. Coulthard’s critique of the colonial politics of recognition, rooted in Frantz Fanon’s analysis of the psychological dimensions of colonialism argues the psycho-affective manifestations of contemporary colonial power are as important as the structural dimensions (2014, 41). I analyze the subjective or psycho-affective dimensions of museological practise through the examination of a

specific exhibition, or rather set of exhibitions. Second, I move to a more detailed case study analysis (affectionately called “The Scottish Project” by the participants in Yellowknife and Edinburgh). Third, through this case study it is possible to begin developing what might be an alternative to the liberal politics of recognition through a more resurgent or transformative indigenous politics of resistance to settler colonialism within the context of museological practises. Using a detailed case study analysis, this chapter argues the Scottish Project represents a marked break from the pre-1988 museological practice in Canada, moving towards more fully realized and less asymmetric relationships between museums and source communities. While the Scottish Project does suggest changes that resulted in institutional shifts and changes at the NMS and challenged many narratives that underpin settler colonial domination, it was still insufficient to challenge the *subjective* position of the colonizer. In short, in this chapter I begin the turn towards the practices of Indigenous peoples to find what may be the theoretical or practical alternative to settler colonial politics of recognition, which will be developed further in Chapter Six.

About the Scottish Project

The Scottish Project was organized with support from the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre (Yellowknife), the National Museums Scotland (Edinburgh), and the Tłıchǫ Government.³¹ This collaborative exhibition was organized between 2002 and 2008, and included the temporary return of 40 Dene objects collected between 1859 and 1862 to Yellowknife, as well as changing the permanent display in Scotland. The key participants representing their respective institutions were Tom Andrews, the Territorial Archaeologist of the NWT working at the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre

³¹ There is a long and complex political history pertaining to the terms “Dene” “Tłıchǫ” and “Dogrib.” Athapaskan and Athabaskan, have been used interchangeably in museum collections and anthropology and describes the language group. Dene means “the people” and refers to five language sub-groups and political organizations. The Dene Nation as a political organization continues to represents five political regions that generally map onto the political, historic, and language distribution. These are Gwich’in, Sahtu, Dehcho, Tłıchǫ, Akaıtcho. Over the course of the exhibition the Canadian state changed the official recognition from Dogrib to Tłıchǫ as a result of the ratification of the Land Claims Agreement. This dissertation uses Tłıchǫ throughout except when citing other sources.

(PWNHC), Chantal Knowles, curator at the NMS, and John B Zoe, Chief Negotiator of the Tłıchǫ Land Claims Agreement and Gavin Renwick, then a PhD student at the University of Dundee who was carrying out his PhD research in the NWT in collaboration with the Tłıchǫ. The 40 Dene objects chosen for the exhibition were displayed at the PWNHC and Carleton University Art Gallery³² under the title “Dè T’a Hoti Ts’eeda: We Live Securely by the Land.” The final exhibition was in Edinburgh at the National Museums Scotland (NMS). This exhibit was retitled “Extremes: Life in Subarctic Canada” and included only Tłıchǫ objects, including items that were collected while Knowles was in the NWT to conduct research trips.

This relationship began in 2002, when seven members of the Tłıchǫ (then known as Dogrib) Nation visited the NMS. Two groups of Dene visitors came to Edinburgh, including Elders, teachers, cultural workers, and translators from both Tłıchǫ and Gwich’in communities. The participants were: Georgina Chocolate, Madeline Chocolate, Joe Mackenzie, Rosa Mantla, Dora Nitsiza, Charlie Tailbone, and Lianne Mantla. Allice Legatt (Project Director, Traditional Knowledge Project), Tom Andrews (PWNHC) were also part of the group traveling with the Tłıchǫ members. At that point, the Gwich’in Social and Cultural Institute (GSCI) was already underway with the Gwich’in Clothing Project, and Ingrid Kritsch (Gwich’in Social and Cultural Institute) and Karen Wright-Fraser (Whispering Willow) brought one of the completed outfits to Edinburgh, displaying for the first time the results of the collaboration. They also used the trip as an opportunity to see and document the Gwich’in material at the NMS collection, adding further documentation to both the NMS records and the Gwich’in knowledge about international museum collections. This initial visit corresponded with the 9th International Conference on Hunting and Gathering Societies in Edinburgh, September 9th-13th 2002, and was a significant moment for both the NMS and the Tłıchǫ community. Over several days, 37 objects were examined at the NMS. In addition, though Karen Wright-Fraser had to return home directly after the conference, Ingrid Kritsch examined some of the Gwich’in collection at the NMS. This was the first time that Tłıchǫ community members

³² Because of space constraints and the fact that the exhibition at CUAG was the same content as at the PWNHC I have cut this section of analysis to focus on a more robust comparison between PWNHC and the NMS.

had interacted with the objects since they had left Tłıchǫ territory, though the objects had been displayed at the Canadian Museum of Civilization (CMC) then known as the Canadian Museum of Man, in Ottawa in the 1970s as part of the exhibition “The Athapaskans: Strangers of the North.”

This initial visit was an important introduction for Knowles, who, in her role as curator, was tasked with providing the Tłıchǫ parties access to the objects. Knowles recounted that the experience was very informative for her, both in how the Dene visitors regarded these objects, but also how they engaged with them. “Everything was laid out on the table, all the clothing hung on the walls. The biggest thing I learnt was that it was about being with the objects.”³³ Some described manufacturing techniques or told stories, others phoned home to share with their relatives what they were looking at. Knowles recalled that this museum interaction “was about being with something that your ancestors lived, worked on, made, traded and it always felt a bit about connections.”³⁴ While Knowles and the Dene visitors only had a limited time with the objects, it was clear that the collection warranted building a relationship exceeding the single visit. Knowles recalled that, “I think I quite naïvely expected people to start telling me about objects and knowing about objects when in fact these objects were 150 plus years old and so they were as unfamiliar as I was. I was familiar with the museum documentation, and they were familiar with the stories, but connecting all that information was not just going to happen in an afternoon.”³⁵

In addition to the delegation interacting with the objects in private, a group asked to be able to present themselves to museum visitors. Over the course of two days, Tłıchǫ people set up a table in the museum and took part in story telling, craft demonstrations, discussions and a small display. Knowles recalled that this was a success, with some museum visitors returning for a second day just to continue conversations with the Dene guests. However, this outreach was not undertaken without trepidation, at least on the part of the NMS.

³³ Chantal Knowles, Interview with Kelsey Wrightson, November 6th 2013, Edinburgh UK

³⁴ Chantal Knowles, Interview with Kelsey Wrightson, November 6th 2013, Edinburgh UK

³⁵ Chantal Knowles, Interview with Kelsey Wrightson, November 6th 2013, Edinburgh UK

I was really nervous about that because I come from a background in education where I had done loads of researching on world fairs and the person as objects in a museum. So I was really uncomfortable with it. But that was what they wanted to do. They wanted to present themselves within the museums space to other people... What I was concerned being a “live exhibit” became an interaction that was really positive and people really wanted to meet them and people really wanted to talk about their lives and their concerns.³⁶

For Knowles, “this initial action of opening Tłıchǫ museum stores to the visitors, giving them full access and then providing a platform for their own ‘outreach’ programme in the Edinburgh community provided the foundations on which the partnership was ultimately brokered” (Knowles, 2008, 42).

I chose the Scottish Project for detailed case study analysis for three reasons. First, the materials involved in the exhibition were “made for trade,” meaning that they were neither sacred nor ceremonial objects, nor were they stolen either through legislative or extra-judicial means. Instead, many of these objects exemplify Dene ingenuity and resilience during a period of great change in the North. Second, the multi-sited international parallels the historic networks of trade and colonialism and reveals the unique benefits and difficulties of presenting Dene and Tłıchǫ nationhood to an international audience. Third, the exhibition took place during the negotiation and conclusion of the Tłıchǫ Comprehensive Claims Agreement (2005). The negotiation of this land claim and self-government agreement resonated with the Scottish goals of devolution and thus became an important narrative feature of the exhibition in both Canada and Scotland.

The NWT has thirty-three communities and a population of approximately 43,000 people in a land base of over a million square kilometers. Indigenous peoples of the NWT include the Dene, Metis, and Inuvialuit peoples. The Dene can be further divided into distinct nations according to linguistic markers, including: Chipewyan, Tłıchǫ, Slavey, Sahtu and Gwich’in. There are eleven official languages of the NWT: Chipewyan, Cree, English, French, Gwich’n, Inuinnaqtun, Inuktitut, Inuvialuktun, North Slavey, South Slavey, and Tłıchǫ. The population density is low, almost all communities

³⁶ Chantal Knowles, Interview with Kelsey Wrightson, November 6th 2013, Edinburgh UK

are accessible by regional air services, but only about half are linked by all-season road. Winter roads are available 3-4 months out of the year linking most of the remaining communities. All have access to telephone and electricity, though for many communities this only became available in the 1990s. The opening of the winter roads, weather and the shifting of seasons continue to define life and movement in the North.

The Tłıchǫ traditional use territory as defined by the 2005 Claims Agreement ranges east of Yellowknife, west into Nunavut, north to Great Bear Lake, and includes 39,000 square kilometers where the Tłıchǫ have both surface and subsurface fee simple ownership. Previous to the finalization of the Tłıchǫ Land Claims and Self-Government Agreement they were known as the Dogrib, and the political body was the Dogrib Treaty 11 Council. There are four Tłıchǫ communities. The largest, Behchokò, is one hour by road outside of Yellowknife and has two distinct townsites, Rae and Edzo. The community has approximately 1950 people and includes the central offices for the Tłıchǫ Government and the Tłıchǫ Community Services Agency. The three other communities, Gameti, Wekweeti and Whati are more remote, accessible by iceroad January through March and by regular flights for the remainder of the year. Many of the communities still maintain traditional hunting and fishing practices, and seasonal caribou hunts are an important part of life. According to the Tłıchǫ government website, in Whati more than 92% of the community fluently speaks Tłıchǫ, however the generational language gap between Elders and the youth remains a problem with this community along with many of others. Significant changes to the political economic situation, especially following the 1970s Dene Declaration, including the shift to capitalist oriented resource exploitation, urbanization of youth, language loss and the ongoing effects of residential schooling, have changed the ways that Indigenous peoples across Canada, including the north, are able to exist on and with the land.

The following three chapters are animated by a central guiding question growing out of the preceding analysis from previous chapters: are the colonial politics of recognition specifically, and the structures of settler colonialism generally, so pervasive that it becomes impossible to surpass their control? Is all resistance condemned to be either ineffective or caught in a Manichean binary that reproduces the conditions of

ongoing settler colonial domination? In locating the museum as a political space of narrative control, it is important to guard against the reduction of the complexity of museum spaces, and museological practices, to a hegemonic and insurmountable binary of either repression or empowerment (Brady 2008, 764). On one hand, one must be wary of this over-determined pair and the propensity to reduce the agency of actors and/or reinforce the notion that settler colonialism is an incontestable or inevitable structural condition. Yet on the other hand, the extent to which these new collaborative models of museological practice, including multi-vocality, continue to be framed within, or reinforce, the Western epistemological privilege that underpins the colonial politics of recognition must be examined. Following the previous chapter, focusing on “self-fashioning” within a museum space is simply not powerful enough to counter the settler colonial politics of recognition. Indeed, as exemplified by the changes in Canadian museological practice post-1988 and the inclusion of the politics of recognition within theory and practice, changing the representations of the other, including the turn to multivocality, makes the politics of recognition in the museum amenable to ongoing settler colonial ideologies and institutions. Difference is recognized, and then accommodated in such a way that it not only remains non-transformative but also additionally risks undercutting political challenges that inform the critiques and interjections by Nations, such as the Lubicon.

For example, Miranda Brady argues that the National Museum of the American Indian has an actively dialogic model based on self-representation, however, “the nation-building occurring through the museum’s presence suggests the United States has now established a more progressive relationship with American Indian people” (2008, 765). The guise of more “progressive” relationships displayed at the NMAI has the propensity to undercut substantively transformative modes of resistance. Given that changing the narratives told about the “other” is congruous with the politics of recognition as imagined by Taylor, the question that drives this chapter is as follows: Is the interjection of subalterned knowledges and alternative epistemologies challenging the colonial politics of recognition and the settler colonial logic of obfuscation?

In Chapter Two, I argued that settler colonialism operates through the logic of obfuscation, where “restorying” and “eventing” history, at least in part through the subalternization of Indigenous knowledges, obscures the asymmetric relations of power and status quo structures of power that underpin settler colonial structures, for example, through the “discovery” of the Americas, perpetuating the myth of *terra nullius*, or framing conquest as peaceful and cooperative settlement. In some national museums, the practice of “restorying” is prominent, and history is “sanitized” for consumption.³⁷ Nation building narratives such as the “peaceful RCMP” and “cooperative Native” have been critiqued as not only historically inaccurate, but building a Canadian identity as stable and homogenous at the expense of recognizing some of the more deeply violent historic realities (Mackey, 1999). Eva Mackey finds that “the celebration of Canadian national ‘heritage’, made possible by appropriating Aboriginal culture, entails no less than the erasure of the history of *conquest*” (1998, 161). At heart, the outright denial of the history and violence of domination serves to reinforce contemporary acts of violence and are foundational to nation building.

The representation of Canada’s Native peoples as child-like, trusting, and friendly to their Canadian government invaders, was important in the construction of myths about Canadian identity... Canadians still like to believe that they are tolerant and benevolent people...yet by reaffirming the notion that Canada has a long history of benevolent forms of justice and tolerance of Aboriginal people, they erase the more complex brutal and difficult history of dispossession, erasure and cultural genocide (Mackey, 1998, 157-158).

By controlling the official national narratives, the relationships between Indigenous peoples and settlers can be obscured such that the active practices of violence are overwritten in favour of stories of “peaceful” conquest or a colonial past rather than settler colonial present.

Chapter Four concluded with the argument that the turn towards the conciliatory and accommodating politics of recognition in museum studies and museological practice has resulted in the separation of the Lubicon’s political claims from their calls for cultural

³⁷ There have been numerous sustained analyses on this question that focus especially on the Canadian Museum of History and the National Museum of the American Indian (Brady, 2008, 2009; Mackey, 1999; P. C. Smith, 2009)

recognition. Further, the uptake of the politics of recognition as articulated by Taylor and Nancy Fraser results in maintaining the hegemonic positions of authority that substantiate the settler colonial domination by simply displacing the authority from the “heritage institutions” to the state, or vice versa. This is a problematic shift in the context of settler colonialism, where domination is structurally maintained through the continued asymmetric relationship between the colonized and colonizers.

This chapter continues this line of analysis tracing the turn towards the politics of recognition in post-1988 museological practice. I use case study analysis to make two critical arguments regarding the relationship between settler colonialism and museum practice. First, in contrast to the previous chapter, I move the grounds of analysis to the psycho-affective aspects of the politics of recognition in the form of intersubjective identification. To do this, I read the audience response books to the NMS exhibition “Extremes: Life in Subarctic Canada” in light of Coulthard’s critique of the subjectifying power of the colonial politics of recognition. Through analysis of the NMS response books I examine the disjuncture between the narratives in *The Scottish Project*, which challenge settler colonial logics of disappearance, appropriation and obfuscation, and the creation of colonizer subjectivities.

Second, through the analysis of the subjective aspect of the politics of recognition I argue that not only are museums limited in the structural redress of the colonial politics of recognition, but that they are limited in the potential for intersubjective change. In short, despite Phillips situating the museum as a space for achieving the affirmative public recognition, the politics of recognition fails on its own grounds. Recognition through Indigenous self-representation challenges the narratives that underpin settler colonial domination, but remains insufficient to challenge the *subjective* position of the colonizer. However, following on Chapter Three’s argument that museums are paradoxical spaces, I conclude, leading into Chapter Six, that failure of the psycho-affective politics of recognition is neither the only nor even the most appropriate way to understand the *Scottish Project*.

The chapter is organized in three sections. First, is a narrative analysis of the “Scottish Project” that looks at how the exhibition was initiated, the key goals in

organizing it, and the results in the form of three displays. In the second section I offer a comparative analysis of the exhibition in Yellowknife and Edinburgh focusing on how the different spaces were partially or fully successful in countering dominant narratives of settler colonialism. The third examines the limits of these narrative shifts to challenge settler colonialism. I find that interjecting Indigenous presences through the inclusion of orthography and representations of Indigenous voices in video and photographic display, challenged the settler colonial narratives that would locate the Tłıchǫ and Dene specifically, and Indigenous peoples more generally, as figments of a colonial historical imagination.

The ‘Scottish Project’: Histories and Practices

So those objects that the museum found in its collection is, to me, a treasure because they don’t exist too many places.

John B Zoe, Interview with Kelsey Wrightson

Between 2002 and 2008, the Tłıchǫ Government, Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre (PWNHC), and the National Museums Scotland (NMS) collaborated on a multi-sited exhibition that temporarily returned a selection of objects from the NMS Athapaskan collection to Yellowknife and Tłıchǫ territory. As stated earlier, the key participants were Tom Andrews, the Territorial Archaeologist of the NWT working at the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre (PWNHC), Chantal Knowles, curator at the NMS and John B Zoe, Chief Negotiator of the Tłıchǫ Land Claims Agreement and Gavin Renwick, a PhD student at the University of Dundee who was completing PhD research in the NWT.³⁸ Dr. Tom Andrews did much of the work representing the PWNHC. He has worked in the North for more than twenty five years decades, working as the Territorial Archaeologist in the Government of the Northwest Territories Cultural Places Program. Gavin Renwick was a PhD Student at the University of Dundee who completed a practice-led PhD titled ‘Spatial Determination in the Canadian North,’ and

³⁸ The University of Dundee was an early collaborator on the project because of Gavin Renwick’s involvement in research in the NWT and with the Tłıchǫ specifically. He was moving between Yellowknife and Dundee throughout the project and thus was able to support from both locations.

currently works at the University of Alberta as the Canada Research Chair for Design Studies. Chantal Knowles was the Principal Curator of Oceania, Americas and Africa at the National Museums of Scotland. John B Zoe (Tłıchǫ) was the representative of the Tłıchǫ Government who collaborated on the project. At the time of the development and display of the exhibition he was the Chief Negotiator of the Tłıchǫ Land Claim and Self Government Agreement. He also worked on the annual canoe trip across Tłıchǫ territory called “Trails of our Ancestors,” and currently serves as the Tłıchǫ Executive Officer for the Tłıchǫ Government.

All participants acknowledged that the “backbone” of the Scottish Project was the strong relationships established between all the participants as individuals and the institutions that they were representing. This relationship began in 2002, when seven members of the Tłıchǫ (then known as Dogrib) Nation visited the NMS. Over several days, objects from the Tłıchǫ community were examined at the NMS. It was the first time that Tłıchǫ community members had interacted with the objects since they had left Tłıchǫ territory, though the objects had been displayed at the CMC in Ottawa in the 1970s as part of the exhibition “The Athapaskans: Strangers of the North.” For Knowles, “this initial action of opening Tłıchǫ museum stores to the visitors, giving them full access and then providing a platform for their own ‘outreach’ programme in the Edinburgh community provided the foundations on which the partnership was ultimately brokered” (Knowles, 2008, 42). It was on the basis of these interactions, and the visits of Chantal Knowles and NMS museum staff to Yellowknife and Tłıchǫ communities, that established the basis for the project that would last for more than six years.

The first of three exhibitions was at the PWNHC, a small heritage centre in Yellowknife, NWT from October 2006 to August 2007. The second at Carleton University Art Gallery (CUAG), a university art gallery in Ottawa, Canada beginning in fall 2007, and the third at the National Museums Scotland (NMS) from May to September 2008, a large national museum in Edinburgh Scotland. The three exhibitions occurred in very different contexts for understanding the objects, but the NMS exhibition was distinct both in presentation and the title. The previous two exhibitions in Canada were known as “Dè T’a Hoti Ts’eeda, We Live Securely by the Land,” while the

exhibition in Edinburgh was re-titled “Extremes: Life in Subarctic Canada” and affectionately called “The Scottish Project” by participants. Each exhibition centred on the display of the “everyday” objects that were part of Tłıchǵ, and more widely Dene, history. The Canadian exhibitions included items from across Denendeh, while the NMS exhibition was focused solely on Tłıchǵ materials and included items from the 19th and 21st centuries. While individual objects may have been periodically placed in temporary collections in the earlier 19th century exhibitions at the NMS, the first recorded display of Athapaskan objects in Scotland was in the exhibit *Scotland and the World* in 1998. Prior to this display, the 1974 travelling exhibition *The Athapaskan's: Strangers of the North* was organized between the NMS and the Canadian Museum of Civilization in Ottawa. It was out of this collaboration that the only comprehensive publication, a black and white catalogue, was published.



Figure 1 Sled with Canvass Covering RMPT.20 © National Museums Scotland

While none of these spaces has public entrance fees, that is where the similarities end. The contrasts between the spaces, the geographic contexts and the resulting differences in audiences created very different receptions for each of the exhibitions. As the objects moved further and further away from Tłıchǵ territory, the basic audience knowledge about the Tłıchǵ diminished, and the exhibition content was necessarily adjusted accordingly. Audiences entering the PWNHC viewed the exhibition as part of

their own history, the pictures on the walls were often of relatives and the objects directly connected to individual and community histories. In Scotland, audiences were presented with a story of both Scotland and the Tłıchǵ, highlighting the historic relationship between the colonization of Scotland and contemporary parallel struggles for recognition. These shifting contexts highlighted the inherent multivocality of objects in the Scottish collection, a fact long recognized within source communities but often denied in the museological documentation that focuses on material composition or accession records.

The exhibition displayed a selection of objects of the NMS’s collection of over 240 Tłıchǵ and Dene items that were collected in response to the call from the NMS to Scottish nationals to purchase items of interest while they were working for the HBC. Thus, much of the NMS collection reflects these historic trading networks. In addition to these 19th century artifacts, NMS curator trips to Tłıchǵ communities between 2002 and 2006 resulted in additional acquisitions, including beaded wallets, a ski-do and sled, and a copy of the 2005 Tłıchǵ Land Claims Agreement. There are nearly 240 documented artifacts in the Athapaskan collection at the NMS. The forty objects from the Tłıchǵ Nation were collected primarily between 1859 and 1862. These are “every day” objects, many of which were made explicitly for trade with the Hudsons’ Bay traders or in response to calls from museum collectors. As everyday objects, they were items that, at the time, would have been used and discarded.

These objects, even though they were amazingly beautiful things, they were never ever made to be kept. They were made to be used and then discarded when they were no longer needed. So that was a really interesting experience, engaging with elders who were marveling over the skill of their ancestors but also the fact that somebody had seen value in these things and had preserved them and now we were able to look at them again.³⁹ This is a unique collection, not only because there are very few museums which hold as many Dene-made items (the only comparable institution is the Smithsonian and to a lesser extent the CMH), but also because the modern relationship established between the Tłıchǵ and the NMS led to more objects being added to the collection.

³⁹ Tom Andrews, Interview with Kelsey Wrightson, October 14th 2013, Yellowknife, Canada

These objects are some of the earliest material recorded as being traded by the Tłıchǫ people and made on their land. Collected largely by Bernard Rogan Ross (1827-1874), the Chief Trader at Fort Simpson and an Irish employee of the HBC aspiring to fame as an ethnographer, these objects were largely commissioned or deliberately made for sale. In commissioning the items, Ross was fulfilling the call for ethnographic materials made by George Wilson, the Director of the new Industrial Museum of Scotland (opened in 1855), who used existing Scottish diaspora networks to collect objects for the new museum. Wilson’s aim was to document the “industrial arts of the world” and thus, “the collecting guidelines encouraged not only the collection of everyday but also artefacts in the process of being made providing the process of production, its tools and techniques” (Knowles, 2011, 237). Rather than placing the objects within the teleology of history, the Athapaskan Dene objects were collected to reflect “what you can learn from other processes.”⁴⁰ The trading forts in the north dealt predominantly in fur pelts, largely in exchange for metal tools, cooking pot and clothing items, so the artifact trade would have been a different line of economic development. Given the items in the collection of the NMS, this opportunity was seized by a number of Indigenous makers and HBC traders alike (Knowles 2011, 235). In contrast to stories of colonization that emphasize the lack of agency and the victimization of Indigenous peoples to the extent of undermining both historic and contemporary agency, these objects and their history of collection reveal a more nuanced understanding of active Tłıchǫ and other Dene participation in the trade, where individuals were innovating to benefit from the new economy. Reading the collection in this way offers insight into a subalterned history of the HBC fur trade, and a history that reveals the everyday acts of resistance and innovation taking place during a time of great change in Tłıchǫ territory.

This resulted in a collection of objects exemplifying many of the everyday skills for Tłıchǫ, and Dene, life. Collectors purchased items that were in various stages of completion, including raw materials, pipes, items of clothing, and fishing tools.

These were specific commissions, not just taken from a wish list of representative items as compiled by Ross or an opportune acquisition

⁴⁰ Chantal Knowles, Interview with Kelsey Wrightson, November 6th 2013, Edinburgh UK

based on something already on offer, but instead a specific request to a selected individual that resulted in a special relationship between maker and collector. This collection is founded on long-term relationships where artefacts were made specifically for sale, or commissioned with specific instructions such as dimensions for the models, or items in stages of manufacture to demonstrate technical process (Knowles, 2011, 237).

In contrast to examples such as the Cranmer potlatch collection, that were “collected” under conditions of coercion, exploitation and destruction, the NMS Athapaskan collection, while implicated in the shifting economic, cultural and physical landscape during the mid- 19th century growing fur trade, was not amassed as a direct result of genocidal legislation. The trading origins of collection continues to influence the way that contemporary Dene and museum curators understand the objects at the NMS, such that the collection represents and embodies Dene adaptability, innovation and independence during the encroaching fur trade colonization of the 1850s and 1860s.

As anthropologist Kerry Abel highlights, the Dene clearly demonstrated that “they were not the naïve traders that observers have sometimes believed them to be” (1993, 61). There are many accounts of Dene people being savvy traders but

the traders were frustrated by what they perceived as laziness among the Dene. They constantly urged the Natives to exert themselves and attempted to convince the Dene that they were “naked” and poor, conditions that could be rectified through the acquisition of trade goods. The Dene certainly did not see themselves in the same way. They valued family life and leisure time rather than constant exertion to enable an accumulation of material goods (Abel, 1993, 107).

Indeed, if the prices were deemed to be unfair, many Dene would simply stop trading with the Hudson’s Bay Company, much to their frustration. Thus, the NMS collection arguably exemplifies the historic and continuing agency of the Tłıchǫ people, choosing to engage (and disengage) in trade, offering objects to traders on their own terms. Knowles recounts that “in reviewing the collection and the objects it comprises, we can glimpse the negotiation and personal agency of some of those involved. For example, Tłıchǫ seamstresses clearly believe [use of poor quality hides] was a clever way of trading, making money, but keeping back the best hides for family use” (2011, 237).

Rather than economic dependency, these objects are now read as being produced and traded because of the good relationships established between traders and trappers, and remain a material (as opposed to narrative) example of the complex relationships that were being established when objects were originally collected. “Canadian fur trading posts were the locales where social relations were formed and maintained through the exchange of objects” (Knowles, 2011, 236). For the Dene, these trading relationships were more than the material exchange of goods, but also “a political and social arrangement involving reciprocal responsibilities” (Abel, 1993, 109). The trading origin of this collection represents the political relationship at the time of contact and also *invokes* a similar set of obligations and relationships in the contemporary exchange and movement of objects. This complex history of the NMS collections and object acquisition at a time of change within the Tłıchǫ community colours both the historic relationship between the traders and the ancestors who made the objects, as well as the way that the Tłıchǫ community views and understands the contemporary relationship between the Tłıchǫ and the NMS. “In the case of the traded Tłıchǫ artefacts it seems that at the moment of transaction, both maker and collector were satisfied with the outcome. Consequently, modern Tłıchǫ feel the objects were ‘fairly traded’” (Knowles, 2011, 236). Knowles states that John B Zoe understood the objects to also be “ambassadors”, connecting to international audiences and representing Tłıchǫ people in a different state. The trade and removal of an object to Scotland is not the end of a finite relationship, but continues to be part of contemporary Tłıchǫ life ways and connections between the Tłıchǫ and Scotland.

**Dè T’a Hoti Ts’eeda: We Live Securely by the Land at the Prince of
Wales Northern Heritage Centre.**



Figure 2 Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre, Yellowknife, Fall 2013© Kelsey Wrightson

The first exhibition within this six-year Scottish Project took place at the PWNHC in Yellowknife in 2006. The exhibition was titled “Dè T’a Hoti Ts’eeda: We Live Securely by the Land” and lasted one year. This was the first formal collaboration between Dogrib Treaty 11 Council, National Museums of Scotland, University of Dundee,⁴¹ and the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre. Approximately 30,000 visitors attended the exhibition, including tourists and return visitors. For an area with a permanent population of about 20,000 people this was considered very successful. The exhibition was designed for the “South Gallery” at the PWNHC, measuring 680 square feet. It included forty-five objects from the NMS Athapaskan collection, and support

⁴¹ Involved in support of PhD student Gavin Renwick.

materials including photographs, video, audio, maps and archival documents. Each display case contained a personal quote or story from a member of the Dene community, and there was a descriptive label written in English, French and one of the Dene languages. In addition to these individual label descriptions two large descriptive text panels on the walls of the exhibition space detailed the relationship between the NMS and the Dene. “Back in their source community these objects were framed as being of the land and having come ‘home’, yet the inclusion of a panel about Scotland hinted at the collection’s other ‘identity’” (Knowles, 2011, 240).

The overarching exhibition theme was based on the idea of “contact zones”, or “places where living societies may interact with objects from their past.” The sub-themes were: Preserving Culture, Exploring Contact, and Reflecting Wisdom. Curators described the exhibition as bringing together “selected aspects of a historic museum ethnographic collection together with contemporary making to help describe the inextricable link between land and home within Dene cultures” (Renwick & Andrews, 2004, 1). Aligned with these themes, the material was selected to show Dene history as well as to place the historic objects in relation to the modern ways of living and resilient Dene nationhood.

The exhibition hall itself was quite dark, with the NMS preservation staff having specified the light levels and spotlighted the objects within cases. Visitors were welcomed into the exhibition with a large birchwood panel suspended from the ceiling like a fishing net, introducing the exhibition and providing a large frame for the focal object, an intricate spruce root basket. Objects were sparsely displayed, with only a few items in each case, allowing for visitor focus on each. However, no matter the angle from which one looked there were moving photographs on the wall so the exhibition space had a quality of being “underwater,” and the objects themselves seemed to move. Tom Andrews noted that this gave life to the objects to emphasize the living quality of the collection.

The use of photographs was unbelievably successful in Yellowknife, so much so that people came for the photographs and the objects... The PWNHC got their collections, their archive and that was an amazing achievement because actually it was quite a large space with these

solitary cases became a very inclusive space with people. It was peopled all the time by these images. And suddenly you saw, pictures from the 70s where there were objects that were similar to things in cases.”⁴²

In addition to the exhibition at the PWNHC, the objects were also a part of an educational outreach program to communities in Tłıchǵ territory. During the initial visit in 2003, Knowles noted that there were community members who expressed interest in looking at and exploring the objects, but would not be able to travel to Yellowknife or Edinburgh to view the objects. “It is clear that [some Elders] would be extremely interested in having access to the objects but due to age would have limited ability to travel to Yellowknife to see the exhibition and this would be true of many of the elders in all of the communities” (Knowles, 2005). The outreach program was established to bring objects out to communities and facilitate conversations between youth and Elders. The outreach program was themed “Winter Travel.” The objects were chosen because they were the most portable and robust items for travel and they were appropriate for the time of the year (winter) that the outreach program would take place. Chantal Knowles travelled with a suitcase of items to three of the four Tłıchǵ communities. More than 300 different students participated in the program that brought Elders, translators and students together to discuss and handle the objects.

As part of the programming, Elders were invited into the classrooms, providing the opportunity for objects to form a “bridge” between multiple generations. Where language barriers existed between generations, the objects were a tangible starting point for a conversation.

⁴² Chantal Knowles, Interview with Kelsey Wrightson, November 6th 2013, Edinburgh UK



Figure 3 Chantal Knowles and children in Rae. Photo by Tom Andrews © GNWT

It gave the chance for community people, especially the Elders, it gave them I think an avenue, it gave them a forum to talk to the youth which is very rare... if you give them an object from a couple of hundred years ago, they recognize what it is, and they can relate through that to the audience, about its origin, how it was processed and put together.⁴³

In many respects the outreach program was considered one of the most successful aspects of the collaborative exhibition and represented a number of innovations.

It was really quite remarkable that a national museum from another country sent not only the objects but their staff over and allowed us to take some of these objects back to the communities of origin and have them taken out of their cases and have Elders with their white cotton gloves on, hold them and be able to sit in front of a classroom of their youth and be able to explain things.⁴⁴

⁴³ John B Zoe, Interview with Kelsey Wrightson, October 15th 2013, Yellowknife, Canada

⁴⁴ Tom Andrews, Interview with Kelsey Wrightson, October 14th 2013, Yellowknife, Canada

Knowles acknowledged that the outreach program included a greater degree of handling than these objects would normally be subjected to, something that was quite controversial for many museums.

We had this whole thing when everyone put on gloves and it was about understanding a museum and understanding how old objects were...I have a very philosophical approach [to object handling]. The majority of those objects have now gone back into store. The handling and the objects returning to Yellowknife will likely never happen again and so if something had a little bit of extra wear, I think that the positive effects of that far outweigh the fact that maybe the object sustained a little bit of damage. Because I think the ripple effect... another generation will come across the catalogue and then they'll ask someone what was this about and someone will remember someone coming to school and getting a bit engaged with it.⁴⁵

For curators and the NMS institutionally, this outreach program offered an opportunity to witness the importance of material culture as a connection to history and building resilient contemporary communities. In interviews, both Chantal Knowles and John B Zoe emphasized the hope that the outreach programming in particular would have a lasting resonance within the communities.

“Extremes” at the NMS

The final display of the NMS collections took place in Scotland, and was distinct from the first two exhibitions in both the content and aims. The “Extremes” exhibition was opened in May 2008 at the NMS and was on display until September 2008, with August having the highest number of visitors during the annual Edinburgh Festival. It was the most widely attended exhibition to date in the small gallery, and remains an important exhibit within the institutional history, promoted as an example of good relations between the NMS and source communities more broadly.

When the title of the formal exhibition changed from “We Live Securely” to “Extremes,” it signaled a curatorial shift. Rather than an exhibition centring on “we,” audiences were asked to learn about the “other.” “Extremes” was the first time that non-

⁴⁵ Chantal Knowles, Interview with Kelsey Wrightson, November 6th 2013, Edinburgh UK

Scottish material was displayed in the “Scottish Gallery,” and there was a curatorial push to ensure the connection between the Tłıchǫ and Scotland was explicit. This was done by tying in a number of historic narratives, as well as offering further links between the Tłıchǫ experiences with self-determination and the Scottish struggle for devolution.

The Museum of Scotland presents Scotland’s story to its international audience, and for the temporary exhibition the endeavours of the Scottish diaspora was a key narrative thread in order to relate the material to the rest of the Museum’s displays. However, by focusing on the Tłıchǫ story in this space we had to be explicit about the relevance of the collection to this nation’s history (Knowles 2011, 234).



Figure 4 “Extremes” opening at the National Museums Scotland © National Museums Scotland

Recognizing the differences between Canadian and British audiences, and the need to cater to, and offer contrasting perspectives for each, the content also significantly changed, to focus only on Tłıchǫ objects (as opposed to more broadly Dene). “We honed it right down to Tłıchǫ because we wanted to talk also about our partnership and talk about how we, how it came about, but also about the land claim and self-government.”⁴⁶ Knowing that the Scottish public had less background knowledge on Indigenous peoples in

⁴⁶ Chantal Knowles, Interview with Kelsey Wrightson, November 6th 2013, Edinburgh UK

Canada, the narrowing of the materials to the Tłıchǵ objects was intended to provide the opportunity to develop the history and context of the Tłıchǵ nation in greater detail. This narrow focus also enabled further development of the trade connections between Scotland and the Dene that founded the collection.

The new exhibition title “Extremes: Life in Subarctic Canada,”⁴⁷ was not chosen by Knowles, but by NMS public relations staff. Andrews highlighted the renaming as not exactly fitting the message that the PWNHC and Tłıchǵ had hoped to convey, a tension that Knowles articulated as balancing between appealing to Scottish audiences through these “romantic” ideas of the north in order to draw them into the exhibition and the lived reality of Tłıchǵ experiences. The image sections were divided according to “Winter,” “Summer,” “Who we are,” “Crafted from the land,” “Reunited.” The oldest image was taken in 1976, the most recent from 2003 and the bulk from 1995. Many of the images highlighted the juxtaposition between the “barren” landscape and the Tłıchǵ inhabitants who clearly were making a life from the land.

Unlike the exhibitions in Canada, the NMS display included items acquired between 1859-1862, as well as objects that were collected during the outreach and relationship building stages of the exhibition. The juxtaposition of the newly acquired and the historic objects was intended to show the continuity and the resilience of the Tłıchǵ community. For example, in display case 8, a traditional and a modern bag were displayed side by side (A.558.46 and V.2007.83).

The bags were made of babiche and hide,⁴⁸ using an alternating tight and loose woven net pattern and could be decorated with quills, beaded bands, decorated and pigmented thongs. The visual display of modern Tłıchǵ objects alongside the historic items countered assumptions of the Tłıchǵ nation as “historic” or limited to the past, a theme that was further challenged with the text panels which emphasized the continued community resilience.

⁴⁷ The word “Extremes” seems to have been chosen largely in reference to the weather in Denendeh. All the exhibition information and advertisements reference the fact that it was -50 in the winter and +30 in the summer. A more detailed analysis of the tensions around this word choice is found in the following section of this chapter.

⁴⁸ Babiche is cord or lacing made of sinew or leather.

Contemporary objects of Tł̓chq manufacture, including clothing and bags as well as documents and flags that related directly to the land claim and emergence of a nation, were dispersed throughout the exhibition... The juxtaposition of modern artefacts... alongside historical ones demonstrated continuity of materials and techniques (Knowles, 2011, 244).



Figure 5 Hunting Bag, Dogrib, 1860 Collected by Bernard Rogan Ross. A.558.46. Photo © National Museums Scotland

Rather than having audiences view the collection in an exhibition space that places the Tł̓chq as “outsiders” situating “Extremes” within the Scottish collections emphasized the relationship between the Tł̓chq and Scotland. The exhibition included text panels that explicitly articulated the relationship between the Tł̓chq and the NMS at the entrance.

In addition to the change of name and content of the exhibition, the presentation of the material changed significantly in Scotland. With only English text, the panels were no longer tri-lingual, but still included both ethnographic or museum content as well as quotes from Elders and Tłıchǫ community members about the historic and contemporary uses of the objects. “We used Tłıchǫ orthography in the gallery, which was really important for me. I wanted people to see what it was, because I think language, where language persists that’s so important to recognize that, because its really amazing that the language persists and not only that, but that is now a written language.”⁴⁹ The text panels for the exhibition were not created in direct consultation with the Tłıchǫ community, but John B Zoe and Tom Andrews reviewed them. For text quotes and interpretation of the objects from a Tłıchǫ perspective, Knowles relied on the work done by Zoe and Andrews in researching the Canadian exhibition in order to ensure Tłıchǫ voice was included throughout.



Figure 6. John B Zoe at Extremes Opening, May 2008 © National Museums Scotland

While the PWNHC has a long history of working with Dene groups and individuals in collective and collaborative models, the NMS does not have the same

⁴⁹ Chantal Knowles, Interview with Kelsey Wrightson, November 6th 2013, Edinburgh UK

history or institutional expertise to draw upon when building collaborative community exhibitions. As an institution that has existed in various incarnations for over 100 years, innovation and change within the established mandates is often hard to achieve, but the “Scottish Project” successfully challenged many of the institutional norms. Exemplifying the paradox and particularities of museum practice, the NMS relationship with the Tłıchǵ represents a clear break from British museological practice, however, whether or not this will prove to be the exception rather than the rule has yet to be determined.

That opening was a bit of a landmark institutionally because they let John and Tom speak. And I worried over whether that would actually be allowed because until then it was only ever our director and the head of trustees who had spoken at openings...for us as an institution there were a lot of barriers and hurdles that we had to cross in terms of our understanding of how partnership might work with partners from different and non-museum backgrounds.⁵⁰

Knowles noted that the Scottish project continues to resonate positively as a good example of establishing collaborative relations between institutions and source communities. She said that at the time of the project, the exhibition was highlighted in a number of director meetings and the current director still uses it as an example when speaking publically about outreach work. The exhibition also featured prominently in internal NMS publications, advertising material from 2008, as well as the July 2007 British Museum magazine.

The Permanent Display

The permanent display in the NMS “World Cultures” gallery is the final physical iteration of the relationship between the Tłıchǵ and the NMS. The Tłıchǵ objects are currently displayed beside Inuit objects in the “Living Lands” gallery. Located on the first floor in the Victorian building, this permanent display takes up the entire West side of that gallery space. The Tłıchǵ collection shares the space with a Nisga’a Pole, Pacific Northwest items, as well as collections from Tibet, the Ainu in Japan and Aborigines in Australia. Upon entering the “Living Lands” gallery from the main atrium it takes a moment to adjust to the darker gallery space. Dene and Inuit displays are placed side by

⁵⁰ Chantal Knowles, Interview with Kelsey Wrightson, November 6th 2013, Edinburgh UK

side. When entering from the right, a visitor first encounters a life-sized plastic replica of a seal and is invited to touch a sample of caribou fur, beaver fur, and seal gut. Moving along, the display cases are filled with both historic and contemporary objects, including a seal gut rain cape, various examples of snow goggles, intricate pieces of jewellery, and small sculptures. A modern sled and a skidoo take up the last third of the west side of the gallery space. In front of the display cases is a model of an Inuksuk, and beside this, visitors are invited to watch a small television screen where Zoe and Andrews speak about the importance of objects, museums and the continuing culture of Tłıchǫ people. Thus, the display explicitly emphasizes both the historic collections, and the contemporary lives of the Tłıchǫ people, including Tłıchǫ voices into the exhibition itself, making the “living” aspect of Tłıchǫ identity and nationalism difficult to ignore.



Figure 7 “Living Lands Gallery” permanent exhibition. Photo © Kelsey Wrightson by kind permission of the National Museums Scotland

The 2008 renovation of “The Living Lands” gallery provided a chance to integrate the Tłıchǫ material into the permanent display. Though this opportunity might not have presented itself had the NMS not been undergoing planned renovations, the chance to integrate the new information into the permanent displays was an important

legacy for the "Scottish Project." Knowles reflected that she felt the inclusion of these materials was important for both the NMS and for the Tłıchǫ.

One of the most interesting things that John said was that the Tłıchǫ needed a presence beyond Canada. And that was a real reason for having them on the permanent gallery as well. I felt that was a commitment we kind of made. Now of course it meant that they were objects that we had a great depth of knowledge on and made connections about so it made it is easy to include them as well. We weren't just putting up dialogue without any connections to communities. But I felt there was also, in me, a responsibility to see a permanent presence for the Tłıchǫ material, because that's what they want. They want an international presence for themselves. So they don't always want to be Tłıchǫ in Canada.⁵¹



Figure 8 "Living Lands Gallery" permanent exhibition. Photo © Kelsey Wrightson by kind permission of the National Museums Scotland

⁵¹ Chantal Knowles, Interview with Kelsey Wrightson, November 6th 2013, Edinburgh UK

The evidence of the collaborative exhibition project is clear in the permanent display. Though the “Scottish Project” is not mentioned explicitly, the collections clearly indicate that there were recent acquisitions. Additionally, the ongoing presence of Tłıchǫ people is not only articulated, it is performed through the inclusion of John B Zoe's voice and image in the exhibition itself. The presence of “modern” alongside “historic” objects cannot be ignored, and the resilient presence of the Tłıchǫ is clearly integrated into the space.

Scottish Project Innovations and Challenges

Canadian museums are often held up as a high standard for community relations, and the Scottish Project provided an opportunity to bring those norms into an international exhibition setting.⁵² When compared against the pre-1988 Canadian museological practice, the Scottish Project exemplifies many of the key innovations and changes that have occurred in Canada since the 1992 task force. Allowing Zoe and Andrews to speak at the opening of the exhibition in Edinburgh, the inclusion of Tłıchǫ orthography, and the display of non-Scottish materials in the Scottish gallery were unprecedented for the NMS as an institution, and established new norms for future collaborations. While the PWNHC has a long history of working with Dene groups and individuals in collective and collaborative models, the NMS does not have the same history or institutional expertise to draw upon when organizing collaborative community exhibitions, and the Scottish Project established a clear institutional precedent for further relations. “The [Scottish] project, which is ongoing, has enabled NMS to rethink its collection strategy with particular regard to communities and cultures already represented in the collections” (Knowles, 2008, 38). Zoe reflected, “we have come to the point where we know that if something came through once we can always go visit it again. Unlike the past where we had to depend on looking for sources and putting funds together, we have people to do that now.”⁵³

⁵² For a parallel critique of Indigenous peoples’ influencing norm change in international relations see Lightfoot, 2010.

⁵³ John B Zoe, Interview with Kelsey Wrightson, October 15th 2013, Yellowknife, Canada

While the aims of collaborative exhibitions are defined *in situ* and cater to the specificities of source communities, collaborative exhibitions often have the dual goals of deepening knowledge, both of source communities and museums, and fostering connections and reconnections between source communities and museum collections. For the Scottish Project, Renwick and Andrews write about their experiences with collaborative museum work as relationship *and* knowledge-building, with the aim of both being that the knowledge of Elders and community members would be at the heart of the project. “These projects, and the objects that stimulate them, provide opportunities for “listening” to elders’ stores about the objects under study” (Renwick & Andrews, 2004, 19). This chance to “listen” rather than speak about or reflect upon the objects is a critical means to build new information about the objects, but also understand the lasting relationship between Indigenous peoples and international museum exhibitions. Thus, the goal of the Scottish Project was not just providing access to Dene objects, but ensuring that this was a *meaningful* renewed relationship. Knowles reflected that early on in the process it was decided that “an exhibition would provide the originating community with physical access to artefacts by placing them in an accessible space where elders and youth would be able to meet and discuss them” (Knowles, 2011, 232).



Figure 9 Pair of moosehide mittens made by Marie Adele Football, collected in 2007. V.2007.90 © National Museums Scotland

The content of the exhibition also challenged many previous narratives and practices at the NMS. During Knowles’ travels to Yellowknife and Tłıchǫ territory she acquired a number of objects as examples of contemporary material culture. At the NMS especially, placing modern Tłıchǫ objects alongside objects collected in the 19th century emphasized the modern presence of Indigenous peoples and confronted the ongoing and deeply troubling stereotype that Indigenous peoples are figments of the past. Zoe reflected that this was an important message to share. “It goes to show that we can portray to the world putting things out there, things put together. That portrays to the world what these ancient artifacts are about. So the marriage between the two, [the modern and ancient] to me is fascinating.”⁵⁴ Challenging the dichotomy between past and present reflects the Tłıchǫ educational philosophy of “strong like two people,” which encourages young people to embrace traditional culture, heritage practices, and teachings, as well as the contemporary world.⁵⁵ In both the PWNHC and the NMS, the display of 19th century items represented the resilience of Dene people in the past, but were directly connected to practices in the present through the inclusion of contemporary material, videos and photographs in the exhibits. Viewing the objects from a number of perspectives was not incommensurate with each other, but added to the depth of meaning.

In terms of museum and display we wanted people to be able to appreciate the objects in a different way. We wanted them to be able to have a view into a case that would enable them to look into museum collections and ethnographic collections, a view into a case that provided kind of museums collections and ethnographic perspective. From that view you could see the labels and read what the object was and when it was collected and who collected it and if we knew the makers name that would be incorporated. There would be a list of all constituent parts and what they were made from and then a comment from one of the elders on what role and how important this object was in everyday life and Tłıchǫ culture in days yonder. And then you would go to another view of the case and just observe this thing as an object of beauty and incredible design or engineering so you could view it aesthetically rather than viewing it from a documentary perspective. So

⁵⁴ John B Zoe, Interview with Kelsey Wrightson, October 15th 2013, Yellowknife, Canada

⁵⁵ This quote has been attributed to Tłıchǫ Chief Jimmy Bruneau and is the title of a 2005 documentary. “Strong Like Two People” was also an important guiding concept through the Scottish Project and featured in the display text at the NMS.

we tried to bring these competing views into the exhibit as well. Played with that theme throughout the whole exhibit.⁵⁶

Centering the philosophy of “strong like two people” and challenging the dichotomy between historic and contemporary practices were important narrative counters to the settler colonial logic of disappearance which would posit that Indigenous peoples have either disappeared entirely, or are under threat of disappearing through modernity. Moreover, the emphasis on the distinct politics, philosophies and cultural practices distinguishes the Tłıchǵ specifically and Dene more broadly from assimilation into the Canadian state-centred narrative of multiculturalism.

The narratives and practices of political independence and nationhood were another important theme and practice that underpinned all iterations of the Scottish Project and countered the settler colonial drive to subsume Tłıchǵ and Dene political organization into the multicultural Canadian state. However, this was not without complexity. The exhibition was the only institutional relationship that took place over the course of the ratification of the 2005 Land Claims Agreement between the Dogrib Treaty 11 Council and the Canadian Government that resulted in the formation of the Tłıchǵ Government. Though imperfect analogies, the similarities between Tłıchǵ and Scottish struggles for independence resonated with audiences in both Yellowknife and Edinburgh.

The successful realization of the Tłıchǵ’s land and self-government claim in 2005 and the relatively recent devolution of the Scottish government in 1999 and the election of the first Scottish nationalist government in 2007 meant that the themes of national identity, self-determination and history were in the minds of those curating and developing the exhibition and many of the visitors (Knowles, 2011, 232).

At the NMS, the inclusion of the text of the land claims agreement and interpretation panels highlighted the changing political relationship between Canada and the Tłıchǵ Nation. Scottish audiences were interested in the way that the Tłıchǵ achieved this “independence” and practiced self-determination.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Tom Andrews, Interview with Kelsey Wrightson, October 14th 2013, Yellowknife, Canada

⁵⁷ This was a reoccurring theme in exhibition books, Knowles’ reflection on the exhibition as well as the internal NMS audience surveys.

Tom Andrews highlighted that “capacity building” for the newly formed Tłıchǵ Government was important for representatives from the PWNHC from the outset, with the eventual goal being for the Tłıchǵ Government to have the experience and expertise to facilitate relationships to domestic and international museums in a more equitable fashion. Early on it was stated that “the exhibition aims towards helping qualify parallel understandings and facilitate a more equitable dialogue” (Renwick & Andrews, 2004, 2). Underpinning Zoe’s understanding of Tłıchǵ governance moving from “dependent to independent,” Zoe noted that the 2005 claims agreement was a pivotal time for the Tłıchǵ nation. Where before exhibitions took place “for and to” the Tłıchǵ nation, afterwards, he hoped that the relationships would be “with” the Tłıchǵ Nation.

The fact that John B Zoe was able to present at the opening here Chantal with a Tłıchǵ flag and receive in exchange the Saltire representing the flag of Scotland, he was very proud of that. And there is that photograph of him holding that. And that was an important thing. It was kind of a recognition, and it wasn’t from Canada. It was from Scotland that the Tłıchǵ Nation, the Tłıchǵ government was a real thing.⁵⁸

Knowles noted that the Scottish audience displayed an affinity with the Tłıchǵ experience, in part because Scottish national identity is wrapped up with stories of colonization by England. Because of the placement of “Extremes” in the Scottish portion of the museum, curators felt a responsibility to make the connection between Scottish and Tłıchǵ history, and Knowles noted that Scottish audience members were particularly interested in the Tłıchǵ political struggles against the Canadian state. Knowles reflected that these shared histories of national survival against the forces of colonialism resonated with Scottish audiences in ways that were likely missed by Canadian audiences who continued to perceive the Tłıchǵ as part of a multicultural Canadian history rather than a distinct nation akin to the Scottish parliament.

There was a real notion of cultural survival of a strong culture, a culture that was active, knowledgeable, had language, had song, had tradition. Which Scotland conceives entirely. It’s exactly how Scotland perceives itself. So people going round, my reading is that they were really, there is this sympathy for the underdog. So they also were saying “ok well

⁵⁸ Tom Andrews, Interview with Kelsey Wrightson, October 14th 2013, Yellowknife, Canada

here is a community that have said ‘we are here’” and they’ve made their place known, and bounded and they have the sense of moving forward under their own control. And so that resonated.⁵⁹

However, Knowles registered this affinity or resonance with some discomfort, recognizing that while Scotland does have a history of being colonized, they were also at the forefront of colonization.

I’d always been slightly uncomfortable about this being two nations who are fighting for their independence. Scotland is not a downtrodden nation. Yes it may want its independence but we are not colonized in the way of other countries. In fact we were the people who were there in the army, there in the offices, there in the government making it happen. Facilitating the colonial process. And it’s a really interesting thing for me about how Scotland manages to play this game of the underdog when historically its been absolutely implicated in the whole colonial process.⁶⁰

Scottish nationals were overrepresented in British Empire colonial strategies, especially in Canada (Connell 2004; Davidson, 2000). While there were parallels between the Tłıchǵ and Scottish struggle for “independence,” especially given the rise of an independence movement in Scotland after 1998, these struggles are not analogous. The ability for Scottish audiences to locate their own stories within the representations of the “other” thus risked overwriting the unique histories of the Tłıchǵ. However, it also provided a way into a conversation about life in the Arctic that could have been largely distinct from the Scottish experiences.

The title “Extremes” was another way into the exhibition, but played on many stereotypes about “subarctic Canada” in order to attract a wider audience. Both Knowles and Andrews expressed concern that the title “Extremes: Life in Subarctic Canada” reproduced stereotypes about the north, rather than emphasizing the themes of adaptability and resilience. The choice of the title was not one made by curators, and highlights many of the institutionalized constraints faced by curators of any exhibition. Once the content had been decided, choices surrounding the “public face” of the exhibition were under the purview of NMS marketing department, who emphasized many of the stereotypical perceptions of the Canadian north in order to increase audience

⁵⁹ Chantal Knowles, Interview with Kelsey Wrightson, November 6th 2013, Edinburgh UK

⁶⁰ Chantal Knowles, Interview with Kelsey Wrightson, November 6th 2013, Edinburgh UK

numbers. Though the large numbers of attendees was evidence of the effectiveness of the title, these institutional constraints caused a disjuncture between the intentions and the outcomes of the exhibition.

The title “Extremes Life in Subarctic Canada” is such a title for the public and not a title for the exhibition. So that was about marketing, and it was, I don’t think any of us were ever comfortable with that as a title... you don’t want to essentialize people into the characters that the general public find fun or curious.⁶¹

In addition to the stereotypes reproduced by the title choice “Extremes,” three huskies were at the exhibition opening, and the image of a young Scottish boy being licked by the dogs was on the front of many newspaper publication materials. Though Knowles felt that this was a publicity stunt that potentially overshadowed the Tłchq content of the exhibition, Zoe recalled the interaction between the boy and dog with humour, noting that the boy probably had never seen a husky before.

In comparison to the 1988 Spirit Sings, the Scottish Project furthered a number of key innovations at both the PWNHC and the NMS. At the PWNHC, this was the first time that Dene objects returned to Denendeh, establishing a clear precedent for future collaborations with the NMS. At the NMS, it was the first time that a collaboration that included the return of objects to source communities had taken place, and resulted in important institutional changes, including changing their policy to include Zoe and Andrews at the opening, the inclusion of Tłchq orthography and allowing Elders and children to handle objects in the collections. When read against the backdrop of the 1988 Spirit Sings exhibition and the resulting shifts away from “top down” curatorial practices within Canadian museum practices, the Scottish Project is exemplary of the general move towards more collaborative practices within exhibition creation. The form of the exhibition, as a collaborative project with goals of “capacity building” for the Tłchq to negotiate with international museums themselves, also exemplified the post-1988 shift towards community driven exhibitions. Centring on themes of Dene resilience, the continuity between the past and present, and philosophies of “strong like two people,” the Scottish Project in all iterations actively countered some of the predominant narratives of

⁶¹ Chantal Knowles, Interview with Kelsey Wrightson, November 6th 2013, Edinburgh UK

settler colonial disappearance and obfuscation. “The idea was to show people today how amazing the Dene are, have been and always will be.”⁶² The school outreach program shattered the “glass box” model of museum practice, and allowed children and Elders to connect over the shared experiences of touching objects.

However, the Scottish Project was not without conflicts in display, especially in “Extremes” at the NMS. The strategic, but perhaps not critically reflexive, choice of publicity materials deployed settler colonial stereotypes of northern peoples in order to attract audiences. While the choice of Tłıchǫ political self-government as a central theme was important, the exhibition elided the role of Scotland in the spread of global colonial and settler colonial projects. Though the Scottish Project is exemplary of the significant changes that have occurred in museological practice in the 25 years following the Spirit Sings exhibition, as I argued in Chapter Four, these shifts mirror the larger shift in settler colonialism from overt violence towards the conciliatory modes of governance in the form of the colonial politics of recognition (Coulthard, 2014). The following section critically examines the Scottish Project against the background of the colonial politics of recognition.

Audience Responses

Charles Taylor argues that the crucial feature of the human condition is the *dialogical* character of life (1994, 33). Focusing on this, he argues that the politics of recognition has the capacity to remedy the problems of non or misrecognition. Phillips takes up Taylor’s dialogical understanding of intersubjective relations and the remedial power of the politics of recognition in museum studies (2011; 2013) and locates the museum as one site to resolve the problems of mis and non-recognition through more effective recognition and self-representation. As I argued in Chapter Four, museum practices in Canada post-1988 are exemplary of this turn towards the politics of recognition. However, focusing on the *critique* of the politics of recognition as articulated by Coulthard demonstrates how the uncritical uptake of recognition-based justice models within museums does not resolve the

⁶² Tom Andrews, Interview with Kelsey Wrightson, October 14th 2013, Yellowknife, Canada

dual structural and psycho-affective problems of settler colonialism, but can further entrench these asymmetric, though more conciliatory, forms of oppression (2014).

While this critique of museological practice is the backdrop to my analysis of the Scottish Project, my argument takes a slightly different turn. Where the previous chapter critiqued the possibility that the politics of recognition can transform settler colonialism, this chapter critiques museum exhibitions as instruments for the politics of recognition. In other words, I critique the politics of recognition on its own grounds. Thus, I find the politics of recognition doubly deficient, unable to create sustained and substantive transformation of settler colonial domination, but also unable to create the intersubjective changes necessary to resolve mis and non-recognition. While advocates of an emancipatory politics of recognition would posit the museum as a site to achieve public recognition and thus change intersubjective relationships, careful examination of the Scottish Project reveals that, despite the narratives which actively countered and challenged subject constitution (or knowledge about the self and other), these narrative shifts are insufficient to challenge settler colonial logics, and the colonizer subjects they create. This is not a failure of the Scottish Project, but a failure of politics of recognition to transform the underpinning logics of settler colonial domination including intersubjective misrecognition.

Theory: The Subjective Politics of Recognition

Coulthard’s 2014 critique of the colonial politics of recognition argues that there are structural *and* psycho-affective manifestations of contemporary colonial power. Chapter Four dealt primarily with the structural critique of the colonial politics of recognition using the uptake of politics of recognition in Canadian museum practice and institutional reform. In the following section, examining audience response books opens up the space to think through the *subjectifying* aspects of the politics of recognition. Through Fanon, Coulthard argues the psycho-affective power brought to bear against colonized subjects results in a range of issues including depression, alcoholism and violence directed both towards the self and others. However, in this intersubjective analysis, subjects are not just effected by, but also constituted *within* these profoundly asymmetric relations of power. Coulthard reads Taiaiake Alfred as saying that demands

for recognition within state structured and controlled discursive fields “govern how Indigenous subjects come to think and act not only in relation to the recognition claim at hand, but also in relation to themselves, to others, and the land.” (Coulthard, 2014, 42) Thus, through the dual structural and subjectifying power of the colonizer, the colonized comes to identify with the conditions of their own domination. Coulthard takes up this critique and applies it to settler colonialism to argue that active participation in the *colonial* politics of recognition risks having the colonized become embedded in, and indeed identify with, the structures and identities that perpetuate their own subjectification. As explored in Chapter Two’s logic of obfuscation, not only do the colonial politics of recognition obscure the status quo relations of power by normalizing the identities of the colonized and colonizer, but this also makes the status quo difficult to escape or critique.

My work is not interested in critiquing the ways that the colonized come to identify with their own conditions of domination. Not only is it inappropriate for me to take up this analysis, this argument has already been thoroughly made by numerous scholars including Taiaiake Alfred, Glen Coulthard and Leanne Simpson. However, while Fanon spends the bulk of *Black Skin, White Masks*, analyzing the subjectification of the colonized, he opens the book stating “the white man is locked in his whiteness. The black man in his blackness” (xiii- xvi). One of the conditions through which the colonized are subjectified, denigrated and become victims of asymmetric violence, is through the concomitant glorification of the colonizers. In the context of settler colonial domination, there is clearly asymmetric distribution of both material and symbolic forms of power. Thus, the interrogation of the subject formation of the *colonizer* has the potential to unpack the way in which this position comes to inform, and underpin, the ongoing colonial politics of recognition.

The pervasiveness of the subjective form of the colonial politics of recognition is clearly demonstrated in the audience notebooks from the Scottish Project. Rather than reading these notebooks as a failure of the exhibition, I read them as a success in the colonial politics of recognition to constitute colonizer subjectivities. These notebooks are thus illustrative of the larger problem of obfuscation normalizing the conditions of domination. The Scottish Project had clearly articulated goals and narratives. The fault in

the exhibition was not the deficiency in the cultural politics and the narrative form of the exhibition, but a failure in its presumption that more effective politics of recognition challenges the structural and psycho-effective forms of settler colonial domination. Phillips using Taylor argues that museums are a location for the public recognition of one's cultural identity, leading to more just relations in increasingly pluralist societies. However, bringing together the audience notebooks as exemplary of colonizer subjectivities with Coulthard's critique of the colonial politics of recognition, I argue that the underpinning logics of settler colonial domination, including disappearance and obfuscation, remain clearly demonstrated in the responses to “Extremes.” Thus, the problem is not in the exhibition which narratively challenged these settler colonial logics, but rather that the politics of recognition fails on its own terms in that colonizer subjects remain unchanged and unchallenged by public recognition.

Methods of Audience Research

The study of audience perspective and perceptions of museum exhibitions have an intellectual history including work done by Eileen Hooper-Greenhill (1994 and 1999), Marilyn Hood (1991), Belinda Seagram, Leslie Patten and Christine Lockett (1993). However, in the following section, I bring together the work done within museum studies pertaining to audience perceptions, and the critical scholarship on settler colonialism. The bulk of my analysis draws on a set of five audience notebooks from “Extremes” in Edinburgh that include over 500 individual entries reflecting on and describing the exhibition. In addition, I learned that the NMS had conducted exit interviews and focus groups with audience members and I have used these reports to corroborate my readings of the audience notebooks. Because the exhibition was temporary, I do not have direct access to audience members. Thus, pragmatically I had to rely on document research.

For the first data collection technique, because I was using documents, I could not ask direct questions to research subjects. However, I chose to treat the notebooks as if they were unstructured interviews, thus, I was able to conduct a “discourse analysis.” Renata Tesch reduces qualitative data collection to three basic orientations: language-oriented, descriptive/interpretive, or theory building. This data collection was ‘language oriented,’ and looked at the prevalence or use of particular words and how audience

members communicated meaning (Tesch, 2013). I used discourse or conversation analysis, which involved reading each of the comments carefully to draw out themes or meaning. This allowed me to collect the data ethnographically, attuned to the connection between the social and the textual.

The second data collection tool developed from the findings is discursive analysis. From my discursive analysis, I inductively created a research instrument in the form of theoretical coding such that my categories of analysis emerged directly from the discourse analysis. I created a spreadsheet that “coded” each of the entries into the book according to the 1) Content 2) Nationality 3) Relationship between the author and the exhibition. This allowed me to note the prevalence of different themes, and compare the experiences of people from different places. Had the exhibit been currently on display, survey research, focus groups, and/or participant observation would have been appropriate tools.

With over 500 entries, the data could be reduced along several lines. First, I was interested primarily in the comments that had something specifically to say about the exhibition rather than general “positive” comments such as “Interesting,” “Good,” or “Great Exhibition.” Approximately 30% of the comments in the books were of this nature. Second, I further eliminated comments that were in a foreign language, those these would be very interesting to explore if I had the resources for translation. This was 2% of the comments. Third, I also eliminated comments that were about the museum more generally, such as “great museum,” or “I am so glad that we have a museum such as this in Scotland.” These comments were again less than 5% of the responses. Though some of the writing was “childlike” there was no reliable way to eliminate or typify the responses according to age as determined from the writing style. So, while it might have been good to narrow my focus to specific age groups, this could not have been reliably done given that I was working with documents that had limited or no personal information. I could have narrowed the commentary through other categories. For example, nearly all of the comments had the country/town/region of commentator’s origin. It would have been possible to look at only Canadian, or Scottish responses. There were at least 73 entries from people who identified as being from Canada, and the NMS’s internal review also dealt significantly with Canadian guests. I chose to use the different

nationalities as variant categories of analysis. Thus, I was able to compare the content of responses to the different nationalities of origin.

Audience Response

Through the analysis of these audience notebooks it became clear that despite considered efforts by museum curators and other participants, there was a disjunction between the intended understandings of the exhibition, and the responses in the notebooks. Audiences are notoriously difficult to influence in their interpretations of museum exhibitions and objects, especially when combatting deeply held stereotypes and contrasting with information previously considered authoritative. Though the stated intentions of the exhibition were to counter some of the predominant stereotypes of settler-colonial and imperial imaginaries of Indigenous peoples, the audience notebooks of the Scottish exhibition displayed a range of responses. Some exemplified critiques of common settler colonial discourses, but other responses mirrored and echoed the prevailing logics of settler colonial domination. When focusing on the responses made by Canadian guests these logics became even more clear.

A very small number of entries were explicitly racist. For example, one respondent offered a blatant condemnation of presumably all First Nations land use, stating “I do hope they use the land to their advantage. They normally don’t.”⁶³ On this particular entry another museum guest had written “racist” underneath. Additionally there were nearly fifty entries that exhibited the common settler colonial myths perpetuating literal and figurative disappearance and assumptions of assimilation.

One of the Canadian respondents understood the distinction that the Tłıchǫ have from the Canadian state, however, the vast majority of Canadian respondents situated the Tłıchǫ as part of the Canadian multicultural state, using phrases such as “our people” or a contrived familiarity with the Tłıchǫ in order to establish these connections. One respondent requested, “We would like more about modern Canada. Let’s give a punch to stereotypes about indigeneity.”⁶⁴ While ostensibly critical of “stereotypes about indigeneity,” this response not only misses the agency of the Tłıchǫ participants in

⁶³ Book 5, Entry 220

⁶⁴ Book 5, Entry 210

deciding the content of the exhibition, but also misses that the exhibition was explicitly aiming to portray “modern” Tłıchǫ.

There was a relatively common slippage between Tłıchǫ and Inuit, repeated throughout the audience responses, likely indicating a misreading of the exhibition and the strength of stereotypes of the North as populated only by “Eskimo” or “Inuit.” The most common misconception, or perhaps more accurately the strongest settler colonial myth unchanged by the exhibition, was around situating the Tłıchǫ specifically, but Indigenous peoples more broadly, in the past and reiterating the settler colonial impetus to “disappear.” Though some audience members located the Tłıchǫ and exhibition as part of the contemporary world, there were nearly twice as many (twenty) responses that located the Tłıchǫ as historic, primitive or ancestral. A respondent from Pakistan placed the Tłıchǫ firmly as part of a historic teleological evolution stating: “it really reminds us of our past, when, and how our forefathers lived.”⁶⁵

Many of the respondents were very complimentary to their perception of Tłıchǫ ways of life. A German respondent complimented the “simple ways of these brave soldiers.”⁶⁶ However, praising the “way of life” or praising the survival of the Tłıchǫ was often paired with expressed concern over the “dying culture,” missing one of the most important narratives in the exhibition, the demonstration of resilience and survival. Not only were there examples of audience members situating Tłıchǫ in the past, but many presumed that the future would lead to inevitable destruction of their cultural and life ways.

This exposition shows pretty well how the Inuits lived some years ago but now, there are lots of problems in that civilisation, they pass from the snow shoes to internet in 20 years this is a lost people.”⁶⁷

While critical of settler colonialism, some audience members maintained the dichotomy between “traditional” and “modern” that the exhibition themes and goals explicitly tried to contest. For example, the following quote is critical of cultural genocide, but maintains the teleological narrative of modern v traditional.

⁶⁵ Book 2, Entry 67

⁶⁶ Book 2, Entry 214

⁶⁷ Book 3, Entry 102

The exhibition presents artifacts of the Tłıchǫ’s “traditional” way of life vs their “modern” way of living. And the 2005 land treaty. However, why is there no mention of the cultural genocide of Native people of Canada by the White settlers and the difficulties faced today by indigenous people of Canada.”⁶⁸

This quote also exemplifies one of the more subtle instantiations of settler colonial narratives of disappearance, namely the imposition and request for more information about the “difficulties” and “ills” of Indigenous peoples. One respondent from Toronto said, “I enjoyed seeing a piece of my country I have very little access to (transportationally, culturally etc.) But, I am curious how the Tłıchǫ community is dealing with the tragic ills of depression and alcoholism. Cheers.”⁶⁹ A respondent from Fredericton stated they “would love to read more about the issues affecting Canadian aboriginal reserves today and the problem they face (poverty, unemployment).”⁷⁰ Though ostensibly sympathetic to the history of colonialism in Tłıchǫ territory and the impact of colonial genocide on Dene culture, raising these concerns missed the point of the exhibition’s focus on the resistance and adaptability of the Tłıchǫ. While the Tłıchǫ clearly recognize the threats to culture and language and land, the exhibition was centred and focused on the resilience. This is a direct counter to the predominant displays, exhibitions and performances of suffering that are so common in Canadian settler colonial narratives and understandings of Indigenous peoples, and which perpetuate the myth of disappearance because of “dying out”. In the face of these dominant discourses of suffering and disappearance, celebrations of cultural resilience are a substantive and progressive act of refusal, or as Gerald Vizenor would term it, a discourse of “survivance” (2008). A refusal to take on the identity of injury and suffering and, instead, to engage with the resilience and prosperity of knowledge repatriation and cultural ingenuity was a key theme of the museum exhibit and directly contests the dominant narratives of settler colonialism as disappearance.

Another iteration of the settler colonial logic of obfuscation read in the audience response books centred on concerns over the inclusion of “bingo daubers” in the

⁶⁸ Book 5, Entry 114 (Respondent from Edinburgh/Quebec)

⁶⁹ Book 1, Entry 52

⁷⁰ Book 1, Entry 142

exhibition. One display case included bingo daubers and beaded bingo bags, and mentioned that bingo was an important pastime in the north. In early conversations with Knowles she noted that the emphatic audience responses were particularly surprising for curators who had not expected to have such a large Canadian demographic attending and did not anticipate that the bingo daubers would be such a lightning rod for misinterpretation. Despite the fact that the exhibition was clearly created in collaboration with the Tłıchǫ Government, and the inclusion of bingo daubers was a specific request of Tłıchǫ community members, these items were considered by some Canadian respondents to be a problematic inclusion. “Bingo daubers- insensitive? Strange choice from Canadian perspective. (gambling a huge issue on reserves).”⁷¹ The expressions of concern over the inclusion of bingo daubers and representations of gambling and game playing are particularly interesting because they are indicative of a broader paternalistic understanding of the relationship between settler Canada and Indigenous peoples. These responses reveal an underlying assumption that, not only are the Tłıchǫ unable to accurately represent themselves or offer a dissenting opinion in the creation of the exhibition, but that Canadians have the ability and authority to speak for *all* Indigenous peoples.

Being from Canada and *having many aboriginal friends* I believe *I can speak on their behalf* when I say that the inclusion of bingo daubers and the claim that it is a popular pastime among the tribes it not only unfounded but also extremely racist.⁷²

While the above quote is framed as both authoritative (speaking on behalf, authorized because of aboriginal friends) and benevolent, the concern expressed is the antithesis of the content of the exhibition, which was determined by Tłıchǫ in collaboration with the NMS. Given the perceptions of Indigenous peoples within Canadian popular media, this paternalism is not entirely surprising. These audience interpretations thus reveal less about the particular context and framing of the museum exhibits, and more about the ways in and through which audience take on and reinforce their own position within the settler colonial politics of recognition.

⁷¹ Book 1, Entry 142

⁷² Book 3, Entry 205 (from Victoria BC) emphasis mine.

Conclusion

The audience notebooks demonstrate a clear disjuncture between the reception of audiences and the aims of curators and collaborators in the exhibition. This disjunction may be reduced to the “viewers will be viewers” and the loaded contexts that audiences bring into museums themselves, but can be expanded outwards to a critique of the logics that underpin the settler colonialism, especially that of disappearance and obfuscation. In short, the audience notebooks exemplified Canadian audience members as individuals representing the grand narratives of paternalism, racial subordination and Indigenous disappearance that underpin ongoing settler colonialism.

Fanon’s critique of colonialism is both structural and subjective, and while he focuses on the ways that the colonized come to identify with the conditions of their own domination, the flip side of this is that the colonizers also identify with their own position of power. Focusing on the ways in which these narratives create the colonizer subjects who remain unable or unwilling to critique the conditions of their own subject formation also brings to the fore the discursive structures that Indigenous peoples have to variously contend with in order to “self-present” against the asymmetric and hegemonic stories told “about” and “for” rather than with them. The Scottish Project, both in presentation and in its collaborative practice, challenged the dichotomy between modern/premodern and struggles for Tłıchǫ national independence. Scottish audiences grasped the Tłıchǫ struggles for independence and self-determination against the Canadian state, however, this contrasted greatly with the Canadian audience members iteration of tropes of settler colonial disappearance and obfuscation. The presentation of alternative narratives at the NMS was insufficient to fully transform the stories that underpin the colonial politics of recognition. However, the central argument in this chapter has been not that this was a failure of the cultural politics or narrative of the exhibition, but a failure of the audience’s subjectivities to be substantively transformed or changed by the interjection of these narratives. In short, this was a failure of the politics of recognition on its own terms.

Conclusion

While audiences in Scotland clearly demonstrated a critical interest in the narratives and practices of Tłıchǵ nationhood, especially in the struggle for independence and political self-determination, simply interjecting these alternative narratives into the discursive web of understanding did not substantively transform the understandings of all audience members. Perhaps the discourse of settler colonial disappearance and restorying is just too pervasive to be actively countered in an international museum space? Or perhaps audience members have a vested interest in understanding their own relationship to colonialism in Canada as “value neutral” and non-problematic? Either way, the audience notebooks clearly exemplified the turn of phrase “viewers will be viewers.” Yet to end analysis of the Scottish project with audience perception is not only devaluing the experiences of others who participated in the programming, including the school outreach program, and Dene community members who saw their objects in the PWNHC, it also *overvalues* the experiences of primarily non-Indigenous audiences in relation to work of Dene peoples.

As observed in Chapter Four, and highlighted by the prescient engagement of Deborah Doxtator and many others, interjecting subalterned knowledges into museum spaces is, on its own, insufficient to transform the pervasive structures and discourses of settler colonialism. However, two important caveats must be made. First, this insufficiency of transformative power as demonstrated through the audience responses is *not* an insufficiency in the cultural politics of Dene peoples. Second, and more importantly, while some non-Dene audience members were not transformed by this narrative interjection, this is not to say that the Scottish Project, and other projects like it, remains useless. In the Scottish Project, to assume that non-Indigenous audience responses were the only or even primary target for the exhibition underestimates the organization of exhibitions, *as well as* underestimating the narrative and material power of the objects themselves.

The Tłıchǵ Government, representatives, museum curators and staff clearly recognized the threats to culture, language, and land, and the exhibition centred and focused on the resilience of Dene people, both in the past and currently. As a result, the

themes chosen in the exhibition were a direct counter to the predominant narratives of settler colonialism and nation building that over-determine the Canadian settler colonial understandings of Indigenous peoples. Focusing on resistance, presence and continuity as well as representing themselves as a distinct nation in the international community as opposed to a minority within the state of Canada, actively resists the imposition of colonialism in Tłıchǵ territories. In the face of these dominant discourses of suffering and disappearance, celebrations of cultural resilience are a substantive and progressive act of refusal, or as Gerald Vizenor would term it, a practice of “survivance” (Vizenor, 2013). A refusal to take on the identity of the injured and suffering and, instead, enact resilience and cultural ingenuity was a key theme throughout “The Scottish Project” and serves as a direct contestation of the dominant narratives of settler colonialism as disappearance, “eventing” and restorying the past. This is not to say that the colonial history and present in Canada was not acknowledged in the exhibition, but that colonialism was not the *only* narrative. In tracing presences and “survivance,” the Scottish Project demonstrates that another story is taking place, and telling that story through reconnection to material culture is, in itself, an important political act.

When I began this case study research after my literature review, I expected that the “Scottish Project” would clearly demonstrate the logics of disappearance, appropriation, and obfuscation through “eventing” and “restorying” that continue to bolster settler colonialism in Canada. However, this was not the case. I have demonstrated that the interjection of Tłıchǵ presence into the NMS challenged the existing settler colonial narratives and politics of recognition by articulating the Tłıchǵ as part of the present rather than the past, as resilient, rather than victims of colonization, and as a nation which is part of the international community rather than a ‘cultural minority’ within the settler state of Canada. Despite articulating these narratives in contradistinction to the settler colonial state narrative, I also showed how these were insufficient in changing audience narratives and subjectivities exemplifying Canadian settler colonialism.

But in the following chapter I explore the ways that *this is not the only story*. While influencing and educating an audience is a key goal within the institutional framework of

the museum, the ethical relationships to source communities was at the centre of the exhibition creation and display as a long-term relationship. What is the importance of audience perception when the “source communities” have achieved their collective goals in engaging within the exhibitions? Rather, and perhaps instead, the opportunity to present Tł̓ch̓ materials in the NMS was an important “self-realization” regardless of the misperceptions of audiences. Thus, the question then becomes in the next chapter, if the settler colonial politics of recognition continues to define the subjectivity of the colonizer, what can be learned from these objects, even when audiences seem unable or unwilling to learn from the exhibitions? I argue that rather than challenging the *settler colonial* narratives, the Scottish Project can also be read as *exogenous* to settler colonialism in Denendeh. When thinking about the objects as representative of different histories, the narratives evoked were not of colonization, but of the historic and contemporary agency that the control over material cultures and histories represents. This is not to say that the political history of the objects does not include settler colonialism, but that the exhibition narratively, and in practice, exceeded the structural and narrative bounds of the settler colonial state project.

6 “Being Tłıchǵ”: Objects Exceeding the Colonial Politics of Recognition

To answer the question of “Why is there another story of “The Scottish Project”? I begin with another question: Where do I start to tell the story of “The Scottish Project?” When I first proposed this research, the answer was a simple one. Start the Scottish Project in 2002 with the beginning of the relationship between the Tłıchǵ Nation (then the Dogrib Treaty 11 Council), the National Museums Scotland, and the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre. However, when engaging in the research, the story became far more complicated. At the beginning of each interview I asked “How did you get involved with the Scottish Project?” For Tom Andrews, the Scottish Project began when he discovered objects in the NMS collections that were not represented within the archaeological records in the NWT. For Chantal Knowles, the project started with the visit of Tłıchǵ Elders to the ethnographic collections. For John B Zoe, the Scottish Project started in 1859 with the initial acquisition of objects, but built upon a far longer history of trade and relationships. The question of where to begin then became a narrative problem. How to convey the story of the Scottish Project when the history of the Project clearly surpassed the relationships between museums and the Tłıchǵ Nation? This swiftly morphed into a methodological and ethical question. How can I explain the Scottish Project in relation to the colonial politics of recognition, and the logics of settler colonialism in Canada more generally? Surely settler colonialism is, was, and remains an important source of violence and the founding legitimating violence of the Canadian state. Yet, as Alfred and Corntassel, amongst many others, clearly state, this is not the only story (2005).

In Chapter Five I offered a narrative analysis of the Scottish Project and an analysis of the interjection of subjugated knowledge into museum spaces as a way of fracturing the hegemonic power/knowledge. I argued that this countered both the settler colonial logic of obfuscation through ‘restorying’ history and the transformation of political narratives of Indigenous nationhood into more easily accommodated cultural claims of difference in the politics of recognition. This chapter is the second part of the

examination of “The Scottish Project” in relation to the colonial politics of recognition in museums, and settler colonialism more generally. The previous chapter ended with the conclusion that a narrative shift is insufficient to substantively transform the settler colonial logics of “restorying” and “eventing” that underpin on-going structures of settler colonialism in Canada. However, I found that the insufficiency of these narrative shifts to change settler colonialism was not only not the *only* way to engage with “The Scottish Project.”

When I began analyzing the Scottish Project using interviews, analysis of the display, and analysis of the material around the exhibition, I expected to see evidence of the logics of settler colonialism, or tropes of the colonial politics of recognition. Evidence for this would have included themes of disappearance and subsuming the Tł̥chq̓ and Dene Nations within the political and cultural “umbrella” of the Canadian state. As demonstrated by the previous chapter, these narratives were a common way that the audiences in Scotland (especially those from Canada) understood the exhibition. However, the dominant narratives in the Scottish Project were of survival, resilience and ingenuity. While the history of colonialism in the North was not an explicit part of the themes of display in the Scottish Project, this was not an absence that favoured the Canadian state. Put simply, the history of colonialism was not ignored as a means to ensure that the Canadian state looked “good.” Rather the exhibition centred on the survival and “survivance” of the Dene and Tł̥chq̓ people. Rather than tropes of disappearance, appropriation and obfuscation, or the colonial politics of recognition, the Scottish Project highlighted the ways that objects served as “ambassadors” and were simply “being Tł̥chq̓” in the National Museums Scotland, rather than representing the Canadian state. I did not find the narratives of settler colonialism that I had anticipated would be part of the exhibition. This is not to say that “the Scottish Project” was a perfect exhibition, but that it was much more complex than I had originally thought.

Chapter Five argued that while the interjection of subaltern knowledge into museums fractures the epistemological privilege of museums, it is insufficient to significantly counter the politics of recognition as it manifests itself in Canadian museological practice. Yet, I concluded that the Scottish Project is *not inherently nor exclusively* an example of the settler colonial politics of recognition. Through my interview

research it became clear that settler colonialism and the colonial politics of recognition were not the only lenses through which the exhibition was understood. Rather, when thinking about the responses to the question “where did the Scottish Project begin?” I found that the Scottish Project had a life and impact that was *exogenous* to the colonial politics of recognition, particularly as seen from the perspective of the Tłıchǫ people. In other words, a specific detailed case analysis revealed not the ways that subaltern knowledge was confronting the colonial politics of recognition as it manifests in a particular museum display or exhibition, but the ways in which museums may be used to tell, reconnect, and share knowledge that is outside of the single story of colonialism (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005) and the narrative of the settler state. Thus, I argue that the Scottish Project in both intent and result, had impacts that surpassed the expression of the colonial politics of recognition as exemplified in audience responses. In other words, the Tłıchǫ articulated and practiced a relationship to their material culture histories that was not responding to a dialectic of colonialism, but traced an entirely different history and set of relationships. This chapter examines this *other* narrative and draws on Métis artist David Garneau’s theory of spaces of “irreconcilable Aboriginality” to underpin the need to acknowledge the potential for histories and narratives exogenous to both the story and practices of settler colonialism and the purview of non-Indigenous peoples (2012).

This chapter uses two objects included in the Yellowknife exhibition as a means to think through the ways in which museums can be used to support substantive histories and contemporary political relationships that are exogenous to the relationship to the settler colonial state.⁷³ Through tracing the political history of these two objects, a stone pipe and willow bark net, I argue the history of the Tłıchǫ Nation, and their relationship to the objects in the NMS collections exceeds the purview and control of the settler colonial state and the substantiating narratives. I find that objects are not only representative of narratives that are exogenous to the historic practices of settler colonialism, but also exceed the contemporary settler colonial narrative practices of

⁷³ Being exogenous to the settler colonial state is not directly analogous to being behind the purview of non-Indigenous peoples. Garneau clarifies that “irreconcilable Aboriginality” supports good relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples and acknowledging different histories does not truncate the possibility of shared futures. However, to support contemporary political relationships outside of the relationship to the settler colonial state is outside and against the logics of settler colonial dispossession, appropriation and obfuscation, which support and inform settler colonial dispassion, racism, and patriarchy.

“disappearance” and “obfuscation.” Further, rather than appealing to the Canadian state or settler colonial institutions for more effective recognition or representation, or demanding to be recognized by the colonial “other” through Canadian museological practice, the histories of these two specific objects reveal that relationships generated by the Scottish Project did not respond solely to a relationship to the Canadian state. In contrast to the interjection of “subaltern knowledges,” the museum served as a lens to reflect upon practices and histories that were always there, but perhaps overwritten through the imposition of colonialism, rather than uncovering or recovering. I make the following arguments in this chapter. First, exploiting the paradox of museums, Indigenous communities can interject into museums spaces to reconnect to their own culture and knowledge in ways that exceed the limits of the logics of settler colonialism more generally, and the colonial politics of recognition. Second, the Scottish Project exemplifies the ways that the Tłchq have specifically reconnected to their material culture as part of the irreconcilable spaces of Indigeneity.

Theoretically, my argument finds its most analogous form in the work of David Garneau, a Metis artist who has argued “the colonial attitude, including its academic branch, is characterized by a drive to see, to traverse, to know, to translate (to make equivalent), to own, and to exploit” (2012, 29). His response to this colonial desire is the theory and practice of “irreconcilable spaces of Aboriginality” which are “gatherings, ceremony, Cree-only discussions, kitchen-table conversations, email exchanges, etc. in which Blackfootness, Métisness, Indianness, Aboriginal, and/or Indigeneity is performed apart from a Settler audience” (Garneau, 2012, 33). While under the guise of respect for “cultural difference,” the desire to know demands translation into Western epistemological forms and norms. Garneau uses objects and spaces that are “beyond trade” to argue that the colonial attitude to know and “assume control over the space, bodies and trade of other” is predicated on either the historical colonial refusal of “the sacred character of the object or site,” or materialist scholarship’s recognition of “sociological and instrumental value for the ‘believers’ but not for themselves” (Garneau, 2012, 32). This desire to know recalls many of the critiques leveled at 19th and 20th century museums as disregarding the needs and practices of source communities in order to create museums that served the “West”.

In 1994 Deborah Doxtator provides a telling illustration envisaging Garneau’s argument as she recalled being confronted by a couple who said “don’t take these things away, we need them... I would not respect your culture if I had not known this” (Doxtator, 1994, 57). To predicate inter-cultural respect on access to knowledge that necessitates that *everything* be accessible to a settler audience creates Western epistemological privilege over cultural incommensurability. To this end, Garneau argues that primary sites of resistance to colonialism are not in “open battles” but “the perpetual, active refusal of complete engagement” (Garneau, 2012, 29) as a form of resistance to settler colonialism. For Garneau the refusal of complete engagement is not analogous to complete disengagement. He says, “sharing in a discourse about histories, responsibility, and transformation among artworks with other human beings is a corrective to the colonial desire for settlement” (Garneau, 2012, 38). However building and maintaining the irreconcilable spaces is an important initial point from which to build good relationships with “others.” Townsend-Gault similarly argues that

...in the end, cultural difference is expressed not by attempting to find common ground, common words, common symbols across cultures. It is finally dignified by protecting all sides from zealous oversimplification, by acknowledging a final untranslatability of certain concepts and subtleties from one culture to another. (Townsend-Gault, 2006, 540)

This “final untranslatability,” and spaces of irreconcilability is the substantive basis for my argument that the Scottish Project exceeds the colonial politics of recognition as they are iterated within museums. It may seem paradoxical to argue that an exhibition that actively engaged in public dissemination, cited museums as “contact zones,” and worked within institutions that I have just critiqued as a locus for the colonial politics of recognition is an example of the active refusal of complete engagement. However, I am not focusing on Garneau’s “irreconcilable spaces” as an active refusal in *response* to the colonial desire to know and settle. Instead, underpinning the ethos of “irreconcilable spaces of aboriginality” is that there were, and remain, narratives, spaces, practices and objects that exist outside of the purview of the settler colonial gaze and epistemological privilege. These are not generated through antagonism or dialectics of resistance, but are distinct spaces and practices onto themselves. Garneau signals these irreconcilable spaces in his work with notable absences, where an audience is signalled that there is something

absent, or information about a piece that cannot be known. For my research on the Scottish Project, the notion of irreconcilable spaces of Aboriginality is useful, not only because of the active refusal, but because Garneau offers a way of explicitly thinking of narratives, practices and materiality that is outside of Western epistemological purview. It is this view of objects and histories “outside” that ultimately informs the following analysis.

The objects in the Scottish Project are neither sacred, nor ceremonial. Indeed, many were made *explicitly* for trade and remain wrapped in narratives of the economic agency of the Tł̓chq̓ and Dene makers who sold items to collectors between 1859-1862. The notion of irreconcilable spaces is useful, not because it refers to a particular set of sacred relationships that are the limit of what can or should be known by non-Dene or Tł̓chq̓ people, but because what is “known” through and by the objects is not the singular story of colonialism. In the last chapter I argued that the narratives of the exhibition can become interpolated back into the prominent narratives of settler colonialism by some of the audience members. Linda Tuhiwai Smith argues “this collective memory of imperialism has been perpetuated through the ways in which knowledge about indigenous peoples was collected, classified and then represented in various ways back to the West” (1999, 1). Exceeding the colonial politics of recognition is not the denial of presence and impact of colonialism and settler colonialism, or denying the settler public and audience, but about the refusal to see colonialism as the only story (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005). In other words, the history and the relationships with and through the objects is *exogenous* or outside of historic conditions of settler colonialism and the contemporary dialogic relationship between Indigenous and settler.

The following section returns to the narrative analysis. I use Garneau’s principle of aboriginal spaces of irreconcilability as exceeding the colonial politics of recognition to theoretically inform the analysis of object histories and contemporary relationships in Tł̓chq̓ and Dene communities. Using two objects that were highlighted by Andrews, Knowles and Zoe as particularly important to the exhibition, and the responses that people have to the objects, I argue that while the interjection of subaltern knowledge into museum spaces, specifically the PWNHC and NMS, was a significant contribution and challenge to settler colonial practices of “restorying,” the Scottish Project can also be read as resonating outside or beyond the bounds of settler colonialism.

Pipes: Agentic Histories and Futures

It’s not as some people keep referring to us as looking back. We are not looking back. We do not want to remain static. We do not want to stop the clock of time. Our old people, when they talk about how the Dene ways should be kept by young people, they are not looking back, they are looking forward. They are looking as far ahead into the future as they possibly can. So are we all.

Georges Erasmus, quoted in Fumoleau Dene Nation 1984, 65

The Athapaskan Dene collection at the NMS includes a set of stone pipe fragments in various stages of manufacture. The Tłıchǵ did not have a pipe and tobacco smoking tradition prior to contact, and there are no examples of Tłıchǵ made pipes within the Athapaskan collection at the PWNHC.⁷⁴ The manufacture of these pipes reveals the genius of Tłıchǵ traders during the 1860s, who, recognizing the growing market for ethnographic objects to be traded alongside the traditional fur trade industry of the HBC, began manufacturing these pipes for sale. Knowles wrote about her conversation with John B Zoe in her chapter “Objects as Ambassadors.” Zoe stated:

the most important object to me is the stone pipe . . . it represents the landscape and the skill of the people in recognising the type of stones they used, the artwork that went into developing it, the time and patience that it must have taken and the knowledge that had been passed on to the artist in putting it together. . . .It is made out of some soft stone material that is a piece of the landscape and it has a stem that is made from a plant that grew out from the landscape as well as the babiche that comes from the animal from the landscape so it has all the elements of the landscape, the vegetation and the animals . . . all put into one. . . (Knowles 2011, 244).

⁷⁴ There are pipes in the PWNHC collection, but they were likely brought by HBC employees, not made by Tłıchǵ people for trade.

While the pipes tell an important story about the history of Tłıchǵ relationships and trade innovations, they also offer insight into the importance of land and land-based practices. “In the context of the here and now of Tłıchǵ history, the stone pipe can be seen as the summation of what it is to be Tłıchǵ, who they are and their enduring relationship with the land” (Knowles 2011, 245).



Figure 10 Stone pipes A.558.14-18AA.481.13 © National Museums Scotland

Thus the pipes represent webs of relationships, including the Tłıchǵ enduring relationship to land, and the agency of Tłıchǵ traders. The record of the pipes in the NMS collection catalogue compiled by Dale Idiens, and the absence of Tłıchǵ made pipes from the archaeological record in the NWT was a curiosity that helped inspire Tom Andrews’s interest in the Scottish collections. When asked about how he came to be involved in the “Scottish project” he said:

For me it began many years earlier working with the Tłıchǵ on cultural resource inventories of the birch bark canoe trails in between here and Great Bear Lake and also to the barren lands. One of the interviews

that we conducted with an Elder in Rae (now Behchokǵ), Pierre Rabesca, he talked about a place where the Tłıchǵ would go to collect this particular kind of rock to make stone pipes. He said “we don’t have any now because we don’t make them, but our grandparents made them and when they went into Fort Simpson or Fort Rae to trade their fur they would be asked if they would sell these things as well.”

It was an astounding thing for me because although there is a well-known tradition for the Inuit to have pipes there had been no documented tradition of the Tłıchǵ making these pipes. So that set me on two quests. One to go out and find the archaeological evidence but then to see if we could find them in collections. In those days in the 90s the best published exhibit guide was “The Althapaskans: Strangers of the North” which was combination of objects from the Royal Museum of Scotland as it was called then and the National Museum of Man as it was called, then the Canadian Museum of Civilization soon to be the Canadian Museum of History. Sure enough in there I found a beautiful photograph of a beautiful Dogrib or Tłıchǵ pipe so I wrote Dale Idiens and that began my association with the National Museum.⁷⁵

When conducting my research in Yellowknife, I met with John B. Zoe for an interview. I conducted a formal interview with him in the Tłıchǵ band office in Yellowknife, and much of that conversation is included in this chapter. The next day I was invited to Behchokǵ where Zoe met me at the band office in order to pass along some reading material that he thought was important for my understanding of the exhibition. While I had anticipated a quick meeting, over the course of the next hour and a half, Zoe shared a complex history of the Tłıchǵ nation, and the evolution of Tłıchǵ government in its current form. The history he offered was in the form of different stages of nation-to-nation relationships, beginning with the time of Yamozha, which is associated with the landscape being formed, relationships between land and animals negotiated and laws being created. He described the next time period as the time of conflict and trade. The third was the first Treaty period where Chief Monfwi negotiated a nation-to-nation relationship and signed Treaty 11. The next period was a time of “dependency” on the Canadian state and the invasion of residential schools, and the last period was the move to “independence.” Zoe recounted a similar history to Jim Martin and Nancy Gibson. The following is an excerpt from that article.

⁷⁵ Tom Andrews, Interview with Kelsey Wrightson, October 14th 2013, Yellowknife, Canada

When we began our early journeys, elders told the Yamozha stories of long ago, which are about the co-existence of the people and animals in the early landscape. The next stage, which I call the Edzo era, was related to respect, not just towards ourselves, but to other people as well. Then we get into the trade period, re-emphasizing collectivity where strength in numbers and having one voice became very important. When Monfwi spoke the words at the initial treaty of 1921 that led to the Tłıchǵ signing the modern treaty, he was a visionary for us. It's not only other people recognizing your government, but our own people recognizing themselves as having the ability to make their own decisions. That's probably the toughest part, trying to get away from dependencies. It has always seemed better for somebody else to make the decisions. Then we don't have to have that responsibility, but that's the story that we have become to believe. On the journey some old people would say about the many challenging issues, “Well, I don't know where to put my head. Where do you put your head? To lay down here? Lay down there?”

What happened back in 1492 didn't really affect us as a people until after 1670 when the Hudson's Bay Company traders showed up in the North. Then it started to have an impact, and later on it created conflict. That's where the refuge stage began in our story. In 1763 the Royal Proclamation recognized what was here before, giving us some recognition, and deciding that there had to be treaties of some sort in exchange for those lands. Then in the 1870s the Indian Act determined how people were going to be governed. Treaty 11 as signed in 1921 and after that most of the residential schools started to affect our people. Before that they couldn't really take our children because they weren't wards yet, but once we became wards, then the federal government could assimilate us in that way. That's why people don't know where to put their heads, over here, over there. They are never comfortable either way. This is the story before recent negotiations for self-government. That's what our Tłıchǵ governance is about: to have an influence on how that story is being told. We would have law-making authority, but other governments would still have their authority too. Our authorities meet in mid-stream without each giving away their identity (John B Zoe quoted in Martin & Gibson, 2012, 148)

The records and the trading history of the pipes offer insight into the oral histories that have often been forcibly overlooked in favour of a written account. For John B Zoe, the trade records are an important means to verify the oral histories, especially of the clashes between the Tłıchǵ and Chipewyan that led to a group of Tłıchǵ staying at “The Refuge,” known in Tłıchǵ as Ezǵdzitì. The trade records reflect this shift in Tłıchǵ trading practices, with the archives revealing both the number of people who were likely residing

in the area near Fort Simpson, as well as their names. These records reinforced the oral history known by the Tłı̨chǫ about that time period. The late Dene Elder and author George Blondin, in his book *Trail of the Spirit* recounts the fight between Tłı̨chǫ leader Edzo and Chipewyan leader Akaitcho. The threat of war with the Chipewyan leaders was a constant worry for the Tłı̨chǫ as winter was approaching, but using powerful medicine, Edzo was able to convince Akaitcho to agree to peace between the Dogrib and the Chipewyan.

The Chipewyan Nation was a powerful force. They had three times the population of the Dogrib Nation and were known for their strength in medicine power. Their leader, Akaitcho, was a formidable medicine man. The Dogrib people faced a great dilemma. If they hunted for the precious caribou in the Barren lands, they may be attacked and killed by the Chipewyan. If they didn't hunt for the caribou they would surely starve (Blondin 2006, 146).

Blondin explains that Edzo was able to use his medicine powers in order to convince Akaitcho to make peace. “The whole camp stood in line and shook hands with each of the Dogrib men and with each other. Then preparations for the feast were made and a tea dance followed. They had such a good time that the celebration lasted for two days and nights. This is how peace was established between the two nations” (Blondin 2006, 146). In the 2005 Tłı̨chǫ Agreement, this area of refuge, known as Mesa Lake and Gots'òkàtì, has special protections as an area of deep cultural significance. For Zoe, the history of Edzo and Akaitcho, and the peacemaking that took place at Gots'òkàtì, is wrapped up together with the history and record of trading.

At the time of the trade from Fort Simpson mostly, told us a lot. This was important to the story of Edzo and Akaitcho and the peace treaty and understanding that people were trading in that area because it is much more safer on this side. And because of the trade, certain individuals' names show up on the trade register and that tells us even more, or it could tell us a lot more if we concentrate on those names and rebuild it so that it not only tells about the trade that was going on with the Scottish people or the trade with the Hudsons Bay or the Scottish museum, but the names of the traders that came in would tell us a lot about the number of people that would probably refuge at the time and the names would tell us a lot about them, the relationship to the people today...

All the museum has done for me has sparked more interest in what's more that could be shown that's not shown. It's the objects that shed

some more light into things that are not objects, that are more about oral history- that the oral history can be supported by the Hudsons Bay trade books. Nailed down even the talk giving a lot of support to the oral history.⁷⁶

More than reinforcing the history of trade relationships that were established between the HBC and the Tłıchǫ, these traded objects and their histories offer insight into the political histories of those trading networks, and the political relationships that preceded contact. Zoe recounted the ways that trade relationships with the HBC were built on the histories of the ceremonial trade relations that had occurred prior to fur trade occupation.

That the new dependency on trade when it first came in, the point that trade became more ceremonial to some degree. That if they approached the trading post they would shoot the guns up in the air and they would do the shaking of the hands and the feasting and tobacco exchange or even up to announcing that the chief is coming to trade. So these built on exchanges that were happening before the trade, became more ceremonial. It is like a treaty to some degree. And your alliances that you made with the Hudsons’ Bay or with the church when they were trading and also with the free traders. So a lot of things that happened during that time was more about the relationship.⁷⁷

Zoe’s history of trade and exchange iterated a number of moments that recognized or emphasized the trading and exchange relationships. Thus these objects provide insight into the importance of these trading relationships as both ceremonial and political. These objects are thus not only representative of trading relations, but can be understood as iterative of the “nation-to-nation” relationship that took place between the Tłıchǫ and various traders that have come into their territory. The peace made between Edzo and Akaitcho, the signing of Treaty 11 and the land claims agreement in 2005 are wrapped into the same sort of cycles of history.

When conducting research on the themes and outcomes of the Scottish project it was clear that these trading relationships, which generated the need for the pipes in the mid 19th century, continued through to contemporary relationships between the Tłıchǫ and the NMS. When the objects generally, but the pipes specifically, are put within a longer history of “ceremonial” trade and exchange, the relationships they embody are not contained within the practices of settler colonial state creation. This is not to say that

⁷⁶ John B Zoe, Interview with Kelsey Wrightson, October 15th 2013, Yellowknife, Canada

⁷⁷ John B Zoe, Interview with Kelsey Wrightson, October 15th 2013, Yellowknife, Canada

histories of trade as the generative relationships of settler colonialism are not part of the practice of obfuscating the settler colonial structures of resource extraction. Rather, the histories uphold the agency of Indigenous peoples at the time of trade and the nation to nation nature of the relationship which continued when the objects were returned to Denendeh. Tom Andrews reflected on how the moment of flag exchange was something that exceeded a politics of recognition on the part of the settler state to become instead a nation to nation moment between Scotland and the Tłıchǵ nation:

For [John B Zoe], that was very important for him, that really was a moment of nation to nation exchange. The fact that he was able to represent at the opening here, Chantal [Knowles] with a Tłıchǵ flag and receive in exchange the Saltire representing the flag of Scotland, and one of those (drumming stick) and anyway, he was very proud of that. And there is that photograph of him holding that. And that was an important thing. It was kind of a recognition, and it wasn't from Canada. It was from Scotland that the Tłıchǵ nation, the Tłıchǵ government the nation was a real thing.⁷⁸

While Andrews used the language of “recognition,” this recognition was not from the Canadian state, but rather from Scotland. When combined with the long view of history, the histories of exchange that the pipes represent exceed the histories of Canadian settler colonialism. According to Andrews and Zoe, building a substantive relationship with the National Museum of Scotland, and the Scottish nation more broadly, was political and outside of the relationship between the Tłıchǵ and the Canadian state. The objects that remain on permanent display in the gallery at the NMS serve as “ambassadors,” continuing the present and represent the distinct Tłıchǵ nationhood outside both Tłıchǵ and Canadian physical place and cultural imaginary.

One of the most interesting things that John said was that the Tłıchǵ needed a presence beyond Canada, and that was a real reason for having them on the permanent gallery as well. I felt that was a commitment we kind of made. Now of course it meant that they were objects that we had a great depth of knowledge on and made connections about so it made it is easy to include them as well. We weren't just putting up dialogue without any connections to communities. But I felt there was also, in me, a responsibility to see a permanent presence for the Tłıchǵ material, because that's what they

⁷⁸ Tom Andrews, Interview with Kelsey Wrightson, October 14th 2013, Yellowknife, Canada

want. They want an international presence for themselves. So they don’t always want to be Tłıchǵ in Canada.⁷⁹

The relationship with the NMS and PWNHC echoed the relationship that was being practiced with the Canadian state, and was part of a larger project of intergovernmental relations that existed institutionally in the space between the Tłıchǵ Government and the Canadian government. As such, the museum was both a buffer between the Tłıchǵ politics and culture and the potentially challenging relationship with the settler state, while also a bridge between the Tłıchǵ people and the Canadian state, enabling moderated conversations and representations to take place.

While in the previous two chapters I argued that museums can serve to reiterate and reproduce the colonial politics of recognition, analysis of the long history of these objects and the relationships of exchange as a nation-to-nation international agreement that the contemporary museum exhibition engendered did not fall into that category of conciliatory colonial politics of recognition. Rather, I found that when placed within the larger practice and longer history of Tłıchǵ relationships of trade and exchange, the history of the pipes signal Garneau’s “refusal of complete engagement.” This is not to say that settler colonialism is unacknowledged in the history of trade, or unacknowledged by the curators and participants in the Scottish Project. Rather, it says that the history of trade and the exchange is not *inherently* or *solely* iterative of the colonial politics of recognition in particular, or settler colonialism more generally. Knowles found that the language of substate national independence and a shared colonial history was problematically deployed in the “Extremes” exhibition in Scotland, exemplifying the drive for “common ground” that Townsend-Gault warns against for founding understandings of cultural difference. However, the affinities were important for generating shared meaning, and the more substantive narrative for John B Zoe, Tom Andrews and Chantal Knowles, was the role of objects as “ambassadors,” demanding recognition from Scotland as the Tłıchǵ Nation, distinct from the Canadian state. While the previous chapter argued that the interjection of subaltern knowledge into museum spaces is insufficient for transforming the colonial politics of recognition, looking at

⁷⁹ Chantal Knowles, Interview with Kelsey Wrightson, November 6th 2013, Edinburgh UK

objects in relation to oral histories and placing them in the context of this long history of exchange, is *exogenous* to the settler colonial narrative drive to disappear and “restory” history.

The Willow Bark Net: Collective Labour



Figure 11 Willowbark net, collected in Fort Rae A.558.29, by Bernard Rogan Ross, Fort Simpson © National Museums Scotland

In addition to the histories of objects as exemplified by stone pipes as critical to nation-to-nation and trading relationships, there were also material relationships that remained outside of the exhibition. By this I mean the Scottish project included a chance to engage with the objects physically, connecting individuals to the history of trade relationships, but also, and perhaps more importantly, to the embodied process of making and the knowledge which inheres in those processes. Knowles gestured towards the importance of the materiality of objects when referencing the pipe as the embodiment of Tł̓chq̓ history, and “the summation of what it is to be Tł̓chq̓, who they are and their enduring relationship with the land” (Knowles 2011, 245). However, there was another

object in the collection that exemplifies this embodied importance, a willow bark, or willow baste, net.

While curators and attendees had different perspectives on the “stand out” objects of the collection, the willow bark net was a clear favourite of the exhibition, especially at PWNHC. While not the most aesthetically pleasing piece, the net represented ingenuity, creativity, living on the land, collective ownership, kinship, and complex family relationships.⁸⁰ A willow bark net was an important fishing tool for generations of Dene people. Made, owned and used collectively, the nets were important for summer diet but could also be used in the winter if the ice opened for fishing. The first mention of the use of these nets in imperial archives was by Samuel Hearne, an HBC employee observed Dene use of willow bark netting in 1772. His journal tells the story of a lone Dogrib [Tł̥chq̓] woman who had survived an entire winter by herself by making and using a willow bark net.⁸¹ The nets are made by harvesting the inner bark of willow bushes and twisting it into very fine individual strands about 1mm thick and knotted in intervals to create a mesh net. This process of manufacture was noted throughout a number of early 18th and 19th Century HBC accounts of travel through the region, including Hearne and Rae and Robert Campbell (R. Smith, 2003). According to Tom Andrews this object had a singular importance to the Tł̥chq̓ visitors to the exhibit:

The single most important object was this lump of willow baste, this net. It looked completely like chaos on a plate. It was completely unattractive but to them it was the most amazing thing in the gallery because it represented this incredible skill being able to take the inner bark of a living willow and turning it into a massively long complex important fishing tool, an aspect of their subsistence. So they marvelled

80 The interest in the willow bark net recalls Alfred Gell’s 1996 sustained engagement with the questions of artifact and aesthetic in the article “Vogel’s Net: Traps as Artworks and Artworks as Traps.” In this article, Gell engages with the questions arising from the inclusion of a Zande hunting net in the 1988 exhibition ‘ART/ARTIFACT.’ He uses the net as a jumping off point to examine the difference between the designation of art and artifact. Though not examined in the scope of this dissertation, the “Scottish Project” explicitly troubled this binary when the Carleton University Art Gallery was chosen as the second venue. Gell concludes that the most appropriate designation of art is somewhere between an “institutional” and “interpretive” theories (36), where an artifact can be art so long as it is “deemed interesting as art to an art public” (37). Connecting back to the willow bark net, the object was deemed interesting, not because it was presented as an art object, but because it was both an art object, and an artifact representing a range of uses and practices.

81 In Knowles’ travels to the NWT three different families, inspired by the image and presence of the willow bark net, told her a similar story. In my research, John B Zoe told me a similar story as he recounted import events in Tł̥chq̓ history.

not so much at the object but they marvelled at the skill and the work and the workmanship that went into preparing it. They liked all the other stuff too, but they were like bees to honey.⁸²

Knowles noted that the organizers were all keen on different pieces in the exhibition, because each piece told unique stories. For her, the net was an object that echoed with community and collective use, ingenuity and skills.

I think that was the most revealing thing about that first meeting was this willow bark net and how it kept becoming the catalyst that got people to talking about it. Of all the objects, as a curator, the willowbark net, every time you touch it, bits fall off. It's really friable and being in the museum it's dry, it was always kept wet. And that was the object everyone focused on. And so a curator looking at that set of objects, I can't imagine a curator looking at a set of objects and alighting on that particular one, yet that was the one the community alighted on...

It is not the beauty. And I think that's why it challenged me. It is a fantastic object because it's a family object. It's owned collectively, it's used collectively it's made collectively. People have to care for it in a particular way and it's absolutely about the survival of the family. And that can be a wider family group, you know extended family group. So it is the antithesis of objects that are normally personal and individual, especially with regalia. There is so much that is personal and it is a community object. It is a family object. And it's a working object so it's about the environment, the family, and it provoked stories and emotion.⁸³

Like the pipes, the willow bark net was a mnemonic device, inspiring many to recount the story of a Dene woman being left in the woods to survive over the winter, much like the story told in Samuel Hearne's notebooks.

The potential for these objects to inspire the telling and sharing of histories was well recognized from the outset of the organization. In the initial stages of the exhibition, and throughout the funding proposal materials, there was much discussion on how the Scottish Project would provide an opportunity for the NMS to deepen their understanding of the museum collections based on the community outreach and engagement. From the very beginning and planning stages of the Scottish Project, the outreach and the “tangibility” of engagements with the objects was to be a key part of the planning process. Importantly, objects like the willow bark net provided an opportunity

⁸² Tom Andrews, Interview with Kelsey Wrightson, October 14th 2013, Yellowknife, Canada

⁸³ Chantal Knowles, Interview with Kelsey Wrightson, November 6th 2013, Edinburgh UK

for the Tłıchǰ to reconnect with the knowledge/skills/ways of life with their ancestors, to make the young understand the ways of their elders, as George Erasmus suggests. “It’s not as some people keep referring to us as looking back. We are not looking back. We do not want to remain static” (Fumoleau & Dene Nation, 1984, 65).

Thus, in one of her preliminary visits to Tłıchǰ communities, Knowles recounted that Chief Joseph was keen for the objects to serve as inter-generational teaching tools, while his daughter was interested in learning the skills that would have gone into object making.

Chief Joseph noted that the community might be better served through guided workshops with handling sessions. This would allow objects to stimulate discussion and the transfer of knowledge from one generation to another. This could include oral histories or learning craft techniques through inspection of the objects. His daughter (aged about 27) was very interested in the objects and has a strong interest in learning the skills to prepare hides and make artefacts.⁸⁴

This became the “school outreach program” portion of the Scottish Project. The outreach program was established to bring objects out to communities and facilitate conversations between youth and Elders. Chantal Knowles travelled with a suitcase of items to three of the four Tłıchǰ communities. More than 300 different students participated in the program that brought Elders, translators and students together to discuss and handle the objects. The outreach program was themed “Winter Travel.” The objects were chosen because they were the most portable and robust items for travel and they were appropriate for the time of the year that the outreach program would take place. In addition to providing hands-on access to objects, there was an “Edukit” provided at each of the school, which included some hands on items, as well as CD’s, DVD’s, archive records and a Teachers Guide. As part of the programming, Elders were invited into the classrooms, providing the opportunity for objects to form a “bridge” between multiple generations. Where language barriers existed between generations, the objects were a tangible starting point for a conversation.

Well it gave the chance for community people, especially the Elders, it gave them I think an avenue, it gave them a forum to talk to the youth which is very rare. It’s usual to invite an Elder to come in to talk to kids

⁸⁴ Field Report Written by Chantal Knowles.

and what do you talk to kids about you know? Especially when you have a language barrier. But if you give them an object from a couple of hundred years ago, they recognize what it is, and they can relate through that to the audience, about its origin, how it was processed and put together, how many peoples have taken and how much time.⁸⁵

For curators and the NMS institutionally, this outreach program offered an opportunity to witness the importance of material culture as a connection to history and building resilient contemporary communities. However, it was also a collecting opportunity. “The outreach programme also provided a valuable opportunity of adding to the NMS collection.... I would purchase whatever was offered to me in order to ‘capture’ the community response to the collection and the momentous change in their recent history” (Knowles, 2008, 53). As a result of Knowles’ collecting, the NMS now holds a number of 21st century Tłıchǵ and Dene items, including the flag and ball caps and a copy of the Tłıchǵ Final Agreement. In interviews, both Chantal Knowles and John B Zoe emphasized the hope that the outreach programming in particular would have a lasting resonance within the communities. While Knowles noted that she learned a lot from the handling of the objects and the outreach program, and the institution of the NMS underwent significant changes in response to some of the innovations of the exhibition, the most important “knowledge exchanges” were inspired by the objects but took place within the Tłıchǵ community. “The objects embedded themselves in certain stories but it was about actually knowledge exchange within the Tłıchǵ community... The knowledge exchange may not be the knowledge exchange between the museum and the community. In fact I think it was between generations.”⁸⁶

As described in the previous chapter, this knowledge exchange took place between Elders and youth, museum curators and staff, and community members. Though *facilitated* by the NMS and the PWNHC, these relationships were not regulated or implicated within a dialogic relationship to the state. The important conversations and relationships were between generations living in Dene communities. With a knowledge exchange that focused on the relationship between generations and individuals, once again the Scottish Project exceeded the institutional limits of the museum. The goal of intergenerational knowledge exchange was made explicit from the proposal stage of the

⁸⁵ John B Zoe, Interview with Kelsey Wrightson, October 15th 2013, Yellowknife, Canada

⁸⁶ Chantal Knowles, Interview with Kelsey Wrightson, November 6th 2013, Edinburgh UK

exhibition, especially in the form of an “outreach” project that was explicitly aimed at community connections and intergenerational learning. For Andrews, the outreach program “was a way for them to have a tactile sense of history by being able to hold these things and engage with them in reality rather than in just oral tradition.”⁸⁷

The handling of museum objects by children was not without risks, but Knowles stated she had a very philosophical approach to the collection, noting that the majority of objects are returning to museum storage. If an object had been damaged or subjected to a bit more wear and tear, it would be worth it because of the “ripple effect.” The museum catalogue “might be lying under sofas but it doesn’t matter because another generation will come across it and then they’ll ask someone what was this about and someone will remember someone coming to school and getting a bit engaged with it.”⁸⁸ Andrews and Knowles both recognized the importance of the tactile handling of the objects to facilitate meaningful memory making and intergenerational knowledge exchange.

Andrews recounted that it was an amazing experience, “just to see those kids excited and gather tightly around an object so they could see it and smell it and with careful gloved hands hold it and appreciate it in different ways. I think that was quite a remarkable success too.”⁸⁹ For Knowles, the future legacy of the exhibition was important, and she felt that the greatest chances for such meaningful legacy was through the experiences of the youth. She recalled one young person asking how to pronounce “snowshoes” in Tł̓ch̓q, and she suggested that they ask their grandmother.

I hope that the kid did go back and ask their Gramma how to pronounce snowshoes because they asked me to pronounce it and I say “yeah right and you need to go ask your grandma” ... so when I said this to the boy, he kinda looked at me and then thought “oh yeah,” that it hadn’t occurred to him that it is his Gramma that prefers and only speaks Tł̓ch̓q might actually be the person he should show the book to and read the words with.⁹⁰

For Zoe the connections between generations, especially connection between generations that take place on and with the land, are important for the continuation of the political and cultural vitality of the Tł̓ch̓q. The museum exhibition may be a singular catalyst but

⁸⁷ Tom Andrews, Interview with Kelsey Wrightson, October 14th 2013, Yellowknife, Canada

⁸⁸ Chantal Knowles, Interview with Kelsey Wrightson, November 6th 2013, Edinburgh UK

⁸⁹ Tom Andrews, Interview with Kelsey Wrightson, October 14th 2013, Yellowknife, Canada

⁹⁰ Chantal Knowles, Interview with Kelsey Wrightson, November 6th 2013, Edinburgh UK

ultimately it must be read within the broader context of land based learning and interconnections with community. “So it’s very important for us to get youth and Elders back on the land, to give meaning to the agreement. That’s what its about. Revisiting the, you know, where they’ve been and come from. If you need to expand there you are doing it from strength rather than theory. It is easy to float away.”⁹¹

The willow bark net seemed to be the centre of the exhibition for many Dene visitors. Thus, while it was a conservator’s nightmare and aesthetically chaos on a plate, it was also of central important to the exhibition in Yellowknife. The willow bark net countered the narratives of settler colonialism that would enrobe Indigenous peoples in primitiveness or “disappearance” while also engendering a discussion that largely transcended the conversation around colonial encounter. As a communally owned and made item, the willowbark net revealed a history of adaptability and innovation of Dene people and was a mnemonic device, inspiring the telling and retelling of important Dene histories. It was not surprising to the participants in the exhibition that these objects would be at the centre of the intergenerational knowledge exchange. The Scottish Project, including the specific outreach to schools, was then a chance to revisit histories, but also actively engage with objects. The inclusion of school outreach programs was a chance for children and Elders to experience shared material histories together. My argument is not that this intergenerational learning was an innovation for Tłıchǫ communities, but rather that the use of museum objects to generate and support the knowledge exchange was an important use of the museum collections, and the first time that any such project had been undertaken with the Athapaskan Dene objects at the NMS. While the exhibition funding and proposal materials centred the object exchange as the chance for the NMS to deepen the institutional knowledge about their own collections, through the development of the project, the exhibition instead centred the knowledge exchange between generations of Tłıchǫ people. Returning again to Garneau’s irreconcilable spaces of Aboriginality, the outreach program was not an “Aboriginal only” space, but an “Aboriginal priority” space. While not an outright refusal, this privileged the desires and intentions of the Dene communities over the priorities of museological authority. Indeed, Andrews reflected that the heart of the exhibition from the perspective of the PWNHC

⁹¹ John B Zoe, Interview with Kelsey Wrightson, October 15th 2013, Yellowknife, Canada.

was capacity-building, to ensure projects such as the Scottish project, could continue. Like the stone pipes, which represent and embody a history exogenous to the history of settler colonialism in Denendeh, the willow bark net and the conversations and outreach project, represents relationships between generations that, despite the considered efforts of the Canadian state, continue, and continue to be strengthened by practices such as the outreach program.

Conclusion

The Scottish Project was iterative of larger narratives and practices of exchange, relationships of trade and treaty, and cultural and political revival that includes projects such as “Trails of our Ancestors.” While reading the Scottish Project within the long history and large geography is important, so was the narrow reading of singular objects. Zoe’s recounting of Tłıchǵ political history emphasizes the “phases” of history and the complex ways in which the Tłıchǵ imagine and practice their nationhood with, and often against, the Canadian state. When recounting this history to me, Zoe ended by saying “and that is why museums are important,” because they are a source for a better understanding of the historic relationships, and also because they are an embodied understanding of the contemporary self-determination and independence. Zoe explains this independence as “it’s really all about recognizing where we are, the recognition that your story is just your own story” (Martin & Gibson 2012, 149). Through the exhibition with the NMS, both in the temporary exhibition in Yellowknife and Scotland, and the permanent presence of Dene made objects in Scotland, the Tłıchǵ have actively reclaimed ownership over the objects and the histories that they present. Knowles recounts, “I was really interested in the agency of the objects within this space, to be Tłıchǵ. They weren’t representing, they were being Tłıchǵ.”⁹² For Zoe, participating in the land claims negotiation process simultaneously with the “Scottish Project,” wrapped the two together. Stories told on the land, objects made in relation to the land, the trading ties that resonated with the ceremony of the past, and the treaty relationships that embodied Tłıchǵ sovereignty over land and nation, were read and practiced through this

⁹² Chantal Knowles, Interview with Kelsey Wrightson, November 6th 2013, Edinburgh UK

museum exhibition. This follows the notion that “the struggle over land is not only experienced, it is told and retold in the stories of dominance and survival that reconstruct, imagine and, most of all, assert Indian spirituality and empowerment in the memoried past and the politicized future” (Valaskakis, 2005, 103).

In interviews with Zoe it became clear that the specific short term relationship with the NMS was not detached from the longer history of collection and trade on Tłıchǫ territory, nor could the symbolic representation of a nation-to-nation relationship be detached from the process of sovereign negotiations that were taking place with the Canadian state over the course of the exhibition.

All our stories are collective stories that will remain to be told and hopefully our language will persevere. And the more we go back to what we were at least in our memory, we will find out that even the names of our younger generation are anchored to our story, if they are able to swim backwards holding onto the umbilical cord.⁹³

The “long view” of the Scottish project towards language and practice revitalization and hands on learning seems to be directly in line with Tłıchǫ cultural and political practices. In the words of Alice Abel:

In the past, and still today, the native languages and traditional aboriginal spiritual values that the women have taught to their young children are to respect their elders, to love, to be honest, sharing, and caring for and respecting the land which provided the means of survival of people. These values are very important and it is our women who can keep them alive because they are the first educators of our children (Alice Abel quoted in Fumoleau & Dene Nation 1984, 12).

It is no accident, and likely not a surprise, that many of the projects of “making” and revival are inspired, and led by women.⁹⁴ Zoe understood the women to be the main audience of the museum exhibition because it is the women that continue to do a lot of work centering on language and community revitalization in the community.

⁹³ John B Zoe, Interview with Kelsey Wrightson, October 15th 2013, Yellowknife, Canada

⁹⁴ The gendering of labour should be carefully, and critically examined, not only for the potential imposition of asymmetric amounts labour, but also the ways in which gender identities can be imposed in restrictive manners. However, this important critical eye should not come at the cost of holding up the inspiring work that women are doing within the Tłıchǫ community in order to ensure the long term survival of culture, language and politics. The importance of women, and the work that women do, will be further emphasized in the next chapter.

To me I think the main audience was actually the women. I think they were kind of inspired to look into how the stuff was put together because every object was there had to do with leather or caribou hide and all those things were processed by the women at the time. The rope and strings. All the other things that went with it except for maybe the bone and the bone objects and other material. But the underlying thing was the women. And they always talked about going back to take a closer look at it, but more towards reproduction and trying to infuse that back into the educational system to accompany some of the activities that are going on today. I think if anybody is inspired they would be the ones that are more inspired. And I think that inspiration happens mostly from the school. Because most of our strong women are in that school anyways and it adds to their work and they get inspired by that. And it shows with the school.”⁹⁵

Recalling Garneau’s theory of irreconcilable spaces of aboriginality, though not an open battle to refuse complete engagement, tracing the histories of the willow bark net and the collection of pipes reveals a much more nuanced story than has been projected by predominant settler colonial narratives of disappearance. While the colonial politics of recognition functions in museums to incorporate these narratives into the continued structural condition of settler colonialism, these histories indicate that there is something “outside” of the single story of colonialism. I argue that the Scottish Project, at its micro, “community based” level, exemplifies the way that museums can be, and have been, accessed by “source communities” in a variety of ways. The Scottish exhibition exemplified the use of the NMS to reiterate a “nation to nation” relationship that was previously practiced through the “ceremonial” trade of pipes. The objects, and the relationship of exchange was a “recognition” by Scotland that did not demand or capitulate to the authority of the Canadian state.

The willow bark net not only countered narratives of disappearance and “primitiveness,” but offered a way into the important conversation about the notion of community knowledge and object making. This was reiterated through the outreach program, which emphasized the role of the objects as an opportunity for intergenerational learning between the Tłıchǫ Elders and children, rather than for the NMS. The public nature of the exhibition, especially with the explicit intent of engaging a non-Indigenous audience does not directly align with Garneau’s polarizing theory of

⁹⁵ John B Zoe, Interview with Kelsey Wrightson, October 15th 2013, Yellowknife, Canada

irreconcilable spaces of Aboriginality. However, Garneau’s theory does illuminate some of the complexity of the Scottish Project. While the previous chapter found the interjection of subaltern knowledge into the museum was insufficient to confront the settler colonial narratives that substantiate the colonial politics of recognition in the museum space, nevertheless, the willow bark net and the pipes indicate that there is, was, and remains something exogenous to the museum and exhibition that was of value to the participants. While audiences did not always come away transformed by the exhibition, to read the outcome of the exhibition as solely reproducing settler colonial narratives and practices does not account for the full range of outcomes. The further directions, including the need for more Tłıchǫ and Dene led collaborations, was also raised by John B Zoe when asked about the future of the project. “I think [the relationship between the museums and the Tłıchǫ government is] eventually coming around so the outcome might be more towards looking at the objects and how to revive [cultural practices]. [The revival can] give greater meaning to our work that we are doing today in terms of looking at being more independent.”⁹⁶ I read these calls for revival as not incongruent, but following from, the intergenerational knowledge and long history of these projects. It is this practice of revival through labour against the colonial politics of recognition, that is the focus of the next chapter.

⁹⁶ John B Zoe, Interview with Kelsey Wrightson, October 15th 2013, Yellowknife, Canada

7 Beading the Nation: Labour Against the Colonial Politics of Recognition

I think [the relationship between the museums and the Tłı̨chǫ government is] eventually coming around so the outcome might be more towards looking at the objects and how to revive [cultural practices]. [The revival can] give greater meaning to our work that we are doing today in terms of looking at being more independent.

John B Zoe, Interview, Yellowknife.

When social and economic survival are pressing issues within many urban and rural native communities, it is little wonder that institutions as culturally remote as museums have not often been approached. Aboriginal control over aboriginal cultural resources is nevertheless essential to meeting the particular goals and needs of aboriginal communities. It is part of the process of negotiation going on with regard to establishing aboriginal autonomy and ownership in the areas of land, resources and the administration of programs.

Deborah Doxtator, 1994, 66.

The quotes opening this chapter establish the relationship between the revitalization of cultural practices and policies with goals of decolonization, such as “being more independent” and “Aboriginal control over aboriginal cultural resources.” The connection between cultural revitalization and decolonization is developed in this chapter by drawing together literature on Indigenous resurgence, two “knowledge repatriation” case studies, and Hegel’s dialectic of recognition. Using these three theoretical and empirical threads of study, I will argue that revitalization of cultural practices is a means to challenge the colonial politics of recognition as one instantiation of settler colonialism in Canada.

In this chapter I turn to the second mode of resistance, which I have termed “labour against recognition.” In contrast to the previous two chapters, which emphasize the narrative forms of the politics of recognition (telling better/more accurate stories about the self and other), this chapter returns to the generative theory of the politics of

recognition, the Hegelian master/slave dialectic. I argue that not only did Hegel underestimate the role of labour as an avenue for emancipatory self-recognition, but, when put in conversation with the growing body of literature on Indigenous resurgence, labour is generative of social and political relationships formed on, and informed by, relationships to land. These webs of social relations mean that labour, and the process of labour is not inherently linked to the colonial politics of recognition. Instead, and against the logics of settler colonial appropriation and obfuscation, labour in the form of making and remaking objects, cannot be appropriated into the colonial logics of domination and thus presents an alternative mode of engagement. This chapter focuses on my final case study, the Gwich'in Caribou Skin Clothing Project, which is an example of a growing number of collaborative projects that use museum storerooms for "knowledge repatriation" projects. There are numerous resurgence projects that have been undertaken in the north, including the Tłı̨chǫ Birch Bark Canoe project (1996), the Dogrib Caribou Skin Lodge Project (1997), Gwich'in Science and language immersion camps (1995-2001), and more recently the work of Dene Nahjo, a grassroots collective organizing projects centering around land, language and culture in Denendeh. They have organized workshops on traditional toolmaking and moose and caribou hide tanning (2014). Following from John B Zoe's assertion that the women were the key audience of the Scottish Project given the work that they are already doing in Tłı̨chǫ communities, the two projects that I focus on in this chapter are led by women in the community of Saambe K'e and the Gwich'in communities.

The previous chapter examined the Scottish Project as an imagined and practiced "nation-to-nation" relationship that actively countered many of the discursive tropes that perpetuate settler colonialism. While analysis of "The Scottish Project" began with discursive and narrative forms as a mode of resistance to settler colonialism in general and the colonial politics of recognition specifically, this chapter begins with the materiality and centres objects, and the labour that creates objects, as the political act. This chapter focuses on the relationship between assumed-to-be-discrete cultural practices and the political impetus of decolonization. Inspired by the two knowledge repatriation projects, as well as interviews with John B Zoe, Karen Wright-Fraser and the writing of Deborah

Doxtator, this chapter resists the tendency to isolate these acts as cultural as opposed to *both* cultural and political.

Following those who argue that the revitalization of cultural practices is a central component in decolonization I ask: How are practices of Indigenous resurgence contributing to practices of decolonization in Canada today? Drawing from the work of Deborah Doxtator, Leanne Simpson, Taiaiake Alfred, Jeff Corntassel and many others (Martineau & Ritskes, 2014; Navarro, 2014; L. B. Simpson, 2011a; Zepeda, 2014) in the growing literature on Indigenous resurgence, I offer the conceptual theory and empirical analysis of “labour against recognition” as one particular tactic of resistance to the colonial politics of recognition specifically, and the settler colonial drive to dispossession, assimilation and disappearance more generally.

In Chapter Four I offered a description of the colonial politics of recognition by focusing on the evolution of museum policy in Canada. I argued that the genealogy of museum practice from 1988 onwards could be read as a site of the colonial politics of recognition, which, according to Coulthard, has become the predominant approach through which settler colonialism continues in Canada today. Coulthard argues that the colonial politics of recognition functions primarily by “recognizing” Indigenous peoples’ difference, but this recognition strengthens settler colonial control by maintaining the “top down” approach and the structural/institutional framework through which Indigenous peoples are expected to seek and gain recognition. However, *Red Skin, White Masks* concludes by focusing on the ways that Indigenous peoples continue to resist and confront colonial power.

What our present condition does demand, however, is that we begin to approach our engagements with the settler-state legal apparatus with a degree of critical self-reflection, skepticism, and causation that has to date been largely absent in our efforts. It also demands that we begin to shift our attention away from the largely rights-based/recognition orientation that has emerged as hegemonic over the last four decades, to a resurgent politics of recognition that seeks to practice decolonial, gender-emancipatory, and economically nonexploitative alternative structures of law and sovereign authority grounded on a critical refashioning of the best of Indigenous legal and political traditions (Coulthard, 2014, 179).

I draw on the work of thinkers such as Simpson, Alfred, and Coulthard which states that strong Indigenous communities and decolonization are deeply informed by, and indeed generated in and through, relationships and obligations to land and land-based practices. Concerned with the intersubjective violence caused by the colonial politics of recognition, including the ways in which colonized subjectivities are “deformed” to the extent that they come to identify with the conditions of their own subjugation, his response to the colonial politics of recognition is a “turning away” from the apparatus and industry of political recognition in the form of “rights based” judicial pursuits, or struggles for land as a resource. In critiquing Turner’s assertion of the importance of working with and within institutions of the Canadian settler state, Coulthard, drawing on Alfred, argues for the importance of refusing these institutions of colonial subjugation (Coulthard, 2014, 45). Tully has theorized a similar form of resistance as a practice *for* freedom, not constrained to act within the techniques of government, but against the structures of domination, and iterative of freedom in practice (Tully, 2008b, 276).

In a similar approach to the previous chapter, which traced the relationship between the Tłıchǫ and material culture objects collected between 1859-1862 as exogenous to the settler colonial narratives in the North, this chapter examines labour against recognition as another mode of resurgence. I differentiate my analysis from the conclusion that Coulthard offers in *Red Skin, White Masks* in my location of sites for decolonial praxis. Where Coulthard theorizes a “turning away” from the institutions of settler colonial politics of recognition, this chapter traces the practices of decolonial refusal and resurgence that are occurring *within* these institutions of recognition, specifically museums. However, rather than appealing to the “emancipatory” practices of a politics of recognition as imagined by Charles Taylor or Nancy Fraser, I posit that the activity of labour against recognition is a means in and through which Indigenous peoples are effectively confronting and working outside of a colonial politics of recognition. At its crux, this “turning away” is generative and can include direct confrontation *within* sites

that stage a colonial politics of recognition while simultaneously refusing them as a mode of governance.⁹⁷

Zoe's quote opening this chapter highlights how the relationship between museums and the Tłıchǫ government can center around revival of cultural practices with the aim of becoming more "independent."⁹⁸ I argue that this "revival" of cultural practices can be framed within the literature on Indigenous resurgence, and generates the sort of transformative confrontation and refusal that has been called for by thinkers such as Coulthard, Leanne Simpson and Audra Simpson. To make this argument I draw on Hegel and to a lesser extent Marxist understandings of labour in relation to primitive accumulation and enclosure, as well as the extensive research in material culture studies. Through analysis of two "knowledge repatriation projects" that centre on the creation of objects, I find that labour, or the physical act of creation, may be conceptualized as a *transformative praxis*. By praxis I mean the process through which a theory or supposition comes to be iterated, enunciated or embodied. These can be "every day" practices of active life, or the Freirean action upon the world in order to transform it (Freire, 2000, 33, 36). I draw substantively on "Indigenous resurgence," a growing body of thought that has coalesced in recent years to offer a number of critical attitudes or orientations when thinking about and through practices of decolonization in settler colonial contexts. Resurgence has a long and multi-stranded genealogy of thought and practice. Leanne Simpson states "our responsibilities for resurgence pre-existed before we were present on the earth... Resurgence is our original intention" (2011, 66). Continuing this long history of resurgence, Alfred was one of the first theorists to robustly think through the concept of

⁹⁷ Turning away from the hegemonic state controlled colonial politics of recognition, the primary audience is *not* the settler audience. However, this does not preclude the possibility that settlers may be challenged by these discursive interjections, but rather that these conversations are of a secondary concern.

⁹⁸ While John B Zoe's understanding of independent comes out of a much more robust, "nation-to-nation" understanding of land claims and relations, the connection between cultural practices and self-government can also be found in other liberal democratic thinkers. "Claims to reinvigorate traditional practices are often simultaneously about building the capacity for self-government and re-establishing the meaning of traditional practices" (Eisenberg, 2011, 142). Eisenberg argues that there are risks to turning to the institutional (legal or political) solutions for recognition, especially in the separation of "traditional" practices from the self-determination of communities. However, her framing of identity politics that finds "reinvigoration" traditional practices may also be self-government gestures towards some openness to understanding praxis based readings of culture and politics. If "traditional practices" are part of the (re)building governance practices, then this particular iteration of the liberal politics of recognition may be opening space for understanding self-determination as a cultural and political process, rather than institutional accommodation.

Indigenous resurgence, including cultural regeneration and political restitution (2005). However others have added to this body of literature and practice by thinking through particular cultural practices and developing theoretical orientations towards de- and anti-colonialism in Canada (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005; Corntassel, 2012).

I argue that if one looks to the practices of Indigenous peoples' interjections into the museum, western political theorists such as Hegel have underestimated the potential of objects to transform asymmetric power relations. Yet he remains a central figure in thinking through the politics of recognition. There is little doubt that Marxist understandings of labour and exploitation remain a pillar of settler colonial violence (Wolfe, 2006; Coulthard, 2014). However, labour, while implicated in the capitalist exploitation, is not an *inherently* exploitative social relation, and therefore should not always be conflated into a capitalist system of labour and resource extraction. The process of labour, making and creation, can be read as extra-discursive or haptic, outside of the dialogical mode of recognition. Thus, beginning from a place-based epistemology, in which labour works as part of a larger set of social relations, is the condition of possibility for an understanding of labour against recognition as a transformative anti-colonial praxis.

Pathways of Indigenous Resurgence

The first step to developing the concept of labour against recognition is a brief overview of the theory, concepts and practices of "Indigenous resurgence" which I read through literature on material culture studies and Indigenous arts. In the conclusion of *Red Skin, White Masks*, Coulthard describes Indigenous resistance as the "affirmative enactment" of alternative modes of being.

Forms of Indigenous resistance, such as blockading and other explicitly disruptive oppositional practices, are indeed, *reactive* in ways that some have critiqued, but they are also very important. Through these actions we physically say "no" to the degradation of our communities and to the exploitation of the lands upon which we depend. But they have also ingrained within them a resounding "yes": they are the affirmative *enactment* of another modality of being, a different way of relating to and with the world (Coulthard, 2014, 169).

From this "reactive" but not reactionary position, calls for Indigenous resurgence centre on transformative shifts in thinking and acting.

In 2005, Alfred and Corntassel offered five “mantras of a resurgent Indigenous movement” (613). They focused on land, language and culture where the individual “self” was the initial locus for change. In 2012, Corntassel’s “re-visioning resurgence” emphasized the everyday acts of decolonization, the importance of familial activities and intergenerational learning, as well as the centering of Indigenous knowledge. This theory emphasizes both collective and individual sites for decolonial resurgence, and should not be read as antithetical positions, but rather in conversation with each other. Further conversations in Indigenous resurgence literature around “queering resurgence” (L.B Simpson, 2012) and centering the “boundless love Indigenous women have for their families” (Nason, 2013) have made the interrogation of heteropatriarchy a core of the decolonization project, and moved away from thinking about resurgence as a return to a pure form of “traditional.” This has been especially important when the “traditional” has taken the form imagined, and then imposed, by the colonizers.⁹⁹ For example, Alfred (2010) speaks of a “radical imagination” as a means for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people to re-envision existence on the land. By turning towards “imagination” and a critical awareness (L.B Simpson, 2012) rather than static “tradition,” resurgence can most robustly be understood as a productive refusal, simultaneously a critique and generative of alternatives. Audra Simpson (2008) speaks of an “ethnographic refusal” that turned away from hegemonic epistemologies and methodologies and *creates* alternative ways of thinking and being. Thus, conceptually, refusal is at one time critical of settler colonial relations and structures, and generative of alternative ways of knowing and being in the world.

In tracing the multiple strands of Indigenous resurgence literature, I have located one shift away from appeals to “tradition” and towards generative refusal and radical imagination in the ongoing “North West Coast Renaissance” debate that began nearly three decades ago in the discipline of Art History. This debate started when, in the 1980s, the claim that Bill Reid’s art had begun a “Haida Renaissance” was widely circulated. While initial critiques of this framing focused on attributing too much responsibility to Bill Reid as an individual, a criticism that Reid himself seemed responsive to, the debate

⁹⁹ Leanne Simpson discusses this in “Queering Resurgence” 2012, in relation to being wary about taking on the heteropatriarchy that has been imposed by the colonizers as a mode of governance within communities.

eventually evolved to broader, and more polemical questions of Western epistemological hegemony. The phrase “renaissance” was critiqued as an inappropriate and damaging term, generated by Western language and history (Summers 2004, 133). More pertinent to the conversation on Indigenous resurgence were the critiques that “renaissance” as a metanarrative obscured the continuity and resilience of West Coast First Nations cultural practices and “omits references to the continued life of twentieth-century Northwest Coast Art” (Jonaitis 2004, 172). In other words, the claim to “renaissance” and “revival” erased the continuity of Haida cultural practices despite the attempts of the Canadian state to suppress and extinguish them. Further, the “romanticization” of a “purer” or more “traditional” past resulted in “the unfortunate dismissal of Northwest Coast artists whose artistic expressions diverge too far from, or became too independent of, that canon” (173). This is a doubled blindness to both the continuity through the period of “dark” that preceded the so-called renaissance, and the creativity and adaptive resilience of new artists and makers. The terms “revival” and “revitalization” can thus be critiqued as obscuring the continuity and innovation of Indigenous peoples’ cultural practices despite considered attempts at erasure by the colonial states in which they find themselves, as well as romanticizing a “lost past” and, thus, in transcribing the imagined “traditional” into the future, disqualifying the flexibility and diversity of Indigenous peoples’ political and cultural practices (Webster, 2013).

In 1995, Mohawk curator Deborah Doxtator wrote an essay responding to an exhibition titled “Basket, Bead, Quill” at the Thunder Bay Art Gallery. She discussed the objects in the exhibition at length, focusing on what “traditional” materials “evoke,” stating: “these objects continue to form an important part of our sense of ourselves as collective beings, connecting us to other people, past, present and future, and to other beings in the natural world... they evoke rather than narrate, dictate, or define knowledge” (Doxtator, 1995, 15). In spotlighting the evocative rather than “replication,” she distinguishes the artists’ and makers’ practices as something other than a static notion of tradition.

If ‘tradition’ is merely the surface appearance of form, then those who lament the passing of Native traditions are justified in doing so. But if ‘tradition’ is really collective community and individualized processes which are evoked by continuing, culturally powerful metaphors such as

‘basket, bead and quill’, among others, then ‘tradition’ is very much alive... The power of “basket, bead and quill” comes not from a past defined by non-Native societies but from their continued relevancy and potency as conceptual metaphors that still play an important role in the processes of making cultural “tradition” (Doxtator, 1995, 19-20)

With this quote, Doxtator not only removes “Basket, Bead and Quill” from the hegemony of Western epistemological categories, but also brings “tradition” directly into the present as a means of thinking about, and creating, a decolonial future. In line with this “making cultural ‘tradition’,” and in contrast to a “revivalist” mode of thought, resurgence does not attempt to revive what has been “lost” and concomitantly romanticize a particular conception of history or the “traditional” past. This is not to say that the “peoplehood” model, or the emphasis on tradition found in the work of Alfred and Cornthassel (2005) is incorrect, but that the range of resurgence models also includes other modes of decolonial praxis.

As demonstrated by material culture and art history, the conversation on Indigenous resurgence has evolved through many different streams of thought and genealogies of critique, originating in a range of disciplines. Thus, the ends of “resurgence” may manifest in a number of different ways including objects, art, creative practices, storytelling, film, curation and other forms of creation. Relegating Indigenous practices to a reactive binary against colonialism reduces the complexity and transformative potential of these practices. In *Dancing on our Turtle’s Back*, Leanne Simpson discusses her desire to think of decolonization as more than “resistance.”

While theoretically, we have debated whether Audre Lourde’s “the master’s tools can dismantle the master’s house,” I am interested in a different question. I am not so concerned with how we dismantle the master’s house, that is, which sets of theories we use to critique colonialism; but I am very concerned with how we (re)build our own house, or our own houses. I have spent enough time taking down the master’s house, and now I want most of my energy to go into visioning and building our new house (2011, 32).

It is this aim of “visioning and building” that animates my understanding of “labour against recognition,” where acts of labour and making are both embodied and discursive iterations of resurgent decolonial acts centering on the production of alternative practices and realities. In their 2014 special issue in *Decolonization: Indigeniety, Education and Society* on “Indigenous Art, Aesthetics and Decolonial Struggle” citing Coulthard, Martineau and

Riskes state “Indigenous art evokes a fugitive aesthetic that, in its decolonial ruptural form, refuses the struggle for better or more inclusion and recognition and, instead, chooses refusal and flight as modes of freedom” (iv, 2014). From this moment of refusal, resistance then is both generative and imaginative, visioning and building rather than solely dismantling.

Two Knowledge Repatriation Projects

So we went out last year [to get] bark... you know the feeling of taking the bark off a good tree, like the tree's just sort of talking to you, sort of giving you this bark... and you get home and you actually start making a basket, it took me a couple of weeks... how can that be reflected in [glass] cases? (Robert Matthew, quoted in Doxtator, 64-65)

The Dene Spruce Root Basketry and Gwich'in Caribou Skin Clothing Project are two examples of a growing number of museum and “source community” collaborations that have come under the framing of “knowledge repatriation” (Kritsch & Wright-Fraser, 2001; Parlee, Andre, & Kritsch, 2014; Thompson, Kritsch, & Marie, 2007; Thompson & Kritsch, 2005). These two collaborations took place between the CMC, PWNHC, the Gwich'in Social and Cultural Institute, and a large number of Dene individuals in numerous communities. Like the collection of objects at the NMS, these items were largely “made for trade” and substantively made up of “everyday” objects that would have been kept outside of the museum collections.¹⁰⁰ In both cases, Judy Thompson, then curator of Western Subarctic Ethnology at the CMC, was involved as the representative of the museum, and opened the museum collections with the explicitly intention of relearning how to produce objects in the collection. The Spruce Root Baskets Project was a collaboration between Suzan Marie and the CMC in 1999. The Gwich'in Caribou Skin Clothing was a collaboration between the CMC, the PWNHC and led by the Gwich'in Social and Cultural Institute from 2000-2003. The GSCI hired 42 women, included a Gwich'in seamstress, Karen Wright-Fraser, who had begun her own project in

¹⁰⁰ Focusing on “crafts” as a generative political activity pushes against the long propensity to disqualify women’s work and craft from the realm of formal art. However, there has been some work in the last few decades that has turned towards a more robust inclusion of womens’ work as examples of fine art, including exhibitions such as “We wear our traditions” and the work of Judy Thompson.

collaboration with the CMC in 1999, to work with seamstresses to create five outfits. Four of the outfits are now in Gwich'in communities and one is on display at the PWNHC.

As a general category of collaborative projects situated in museums, “knowledge repatriation” projects are, with increasing regularity, and with more resources dedicated to their success, being used to revive “lost” traditions and make new connections between and within communities. While not taking the form of some of the more public and extensively studied repatriation projects, (for example the important work being done at the Pitt Rivers Museums, Oxford (Krmopotich & Peers, 2013; Krmopotich, 2014)), these two knowledge repatriation projects are a continuing source of pride for many who participated. As a general category, knowledge repatriation projects do not require a permanent relocation of objects to source communities, but instead can mean engagement with museums and in many cases taking up a “hands on” approach to relearning skills exemplified by the collections. Though this calls for a degree of access to materials that is often outside of the financial means available to First Nations and continues to push the limits of museum policies restricting handling for the preservation of objects, knowledge repatriation projects tend to be more in line with the current restrictions of domestic and international museum policy (M. Simpson, 2009; Thompson & Kritsch, 2005). In contrast with Phillips claim to “indigenization of museums,” these knowledge repatriation projects do not attempt to transform the institutional structures, but rather, focus energies on the aims of communities, and producing effects outside of the museum. This “amenability” to current institutional formations, or working “within,” does not negate the importance of these practices. In other words, simply because knowledge repatriation projects are congruent with current structures and operating norms of museums, does not negate their transformative potential, especially when read alongside theories and practices of Indigenous resurgence against colonialism.

Some knowledge repatriation projects centre on sharing “intangible” knowledge with source communities, opening archives and storerooms to community members to get a better understanding of their histories.¹⁰¹ However, in both the Spruce Root and Caribou Skin projects the focus was the *practice* of making. The collaborative projects

¹⁰¹ Some examples of this include the work being done with Haida carvers at the Pitt Rivers museum in 2014.

centered on the skills that create objects rather than the objects themselves. Thus, these museum collections were valued as representative of the technologies for the creation of objects. Because these knowledge repatriation projects emphasize the process, praxis and knowledge linked to creation of an object, this work can be read in conversation with thinking about Indigenous resurgence as a process. Thus, I argue that these two projects exemplify the transformative potential of labour against recognition.



Figure 12 This is a similar style to the birch bark dishes made in Saambe K'e. Birchbark Dish, Dogrib, Fort Rae, 1860 A.558.27. Collected by Bernard Rogan Ross, Fort Simpson © National Museums Scotland

Dene artist, author and educator, Suzan Marie and Judy Thompson collaborated on the Dene Spruce Root Basketry project, beginning in 1999, where the CMC's collection of spruce root baskets were used to "revive" the tradition of spruce root basket making that had been previously "lost." "[Suzan Marie's] interest was sparked (by a photograph), and she determined to restore the knowledge and techniques of making coiled spruce root basketry to Dene communities. She foresaw that such a project would have cultural and educational benefits and that it would stimulate interest and pride in a unique cultural heritage, both within Dene communities and among the general public" (Marie & Thompson, 2002, 4). The project took place in the late 1990s and consisted of a number of community outreach workshops where participants would gather to learn the "lost" skill of basket weaving. According to the project book, the spruce root basket

project is “the story of this modern revival of a traditional skill, and of the museum collections that were essential to the process” (Marie & Thompson, 2002, iii).

The community of Saamba K’e in the NWT was chosen for the workshops because many women living there are still collecting spruce roots, and the skills needed to prepare the roots were still widely practiced because the roots were still used as “thread” to make birch bark baskets. Because no local Elder could be found who knew how to weave the elaborate baskets, Suzan Marie invited Mandy Brown, a Nlaka’pamux basket maker from Lytton, BC to visit Saamba K’e and lead the workshops.

For Suzan Marie and the workshop participants, the creation of the spruce root baskets was never solely about producing an end product, but about the constitutive skills and practices. Relearning skills and participation in these workshops was a chance to reimagine their connection to their ancestors, build connections within communities and families.

The workshops succeeded as Suzan Marie had hoped they would. Soon, a number of women were working independently on coiled basketry, experimenting with form, size and materials and producing well-made, original works. Mothers were passing on newly learned skills to their daughters and, in a few cases, younger women who had participated in the workshop went home and taught their mothers the craft (Marie & Thompson, 2002, 23-24).

It was noted that the workshops helped develop traditional knowledge and techniques, and communicated them to a wider audience. Further, Dene language skills were practiced and stories shared. Though weaving a spruce root basket was the work of an individual artist it was also a collective process, building on old community networks, while creating new intergenerational connections.

The CMC participated in a second “knowledge repatriation” project from 2000 to 2003. Like the Spruce Root basket project, The Caribou Skin Clothing project was collaborative and centring on the work of women within their communities. Karen Wright-Fraser began her own project in collaboration with the CMC in 1999, and was hired by the GSCI to work with seamstresses to create five summer outfits. Representing the Gwich’in Social and Cultural Institute, Ingrid Kritsch and Alestine Andre were the

led organizers.¹⁰² Judy Thompson, curator at the CMC, opened the collections of Dene clothing, and Karen Wright-Fraser was one of the forty-two seamstresses hired for the project. They worked together to bring skilled seamstresses from the north to Ottawa in order to examine a set of caribou skin suits held in the CMC collections. These skills were then “repatriated” to communities where the women worked in groups to create a set of caribou hide clothing. This resulted in an exhibition in Yellowknife and the creation of permanent displays of the newly created Caribou Skin Clothing in each of the four Gwich’in communities as well as a set of clothing for the PWNHC. “With the Gwich’in Traditional Clothing Project, the Gwich’in hoped not only to accurately reproduce old-style outfits which would be permanently housed in Gwich’in communities, but also to revive and preserve for the future a broad range of cultural and linguistic information associated with the manufacture of hide clothing” (Thompson & Kritsch, 2005, 3). As with the spruce root basket making, the collective workshops opened up the space and opportunity for sharing language, techniques and collective decision making.



Figure 13 Spruce root cooking vessel, Slavey 1862, A.848.45. Collected by Bernard Rogan Ross, Fort Simpson © National Museums Scotland

¹⁰² The project came out of the work conducted as part of the repatriation clause in the Gwich’in Comprehensive Claims Agreement (1992) to survey the Northern Athapaskan and Métis collections in museums and archives in the NWT, and the desire to repatriate skills and knowledge back to Gwich’in communities, to document, preserve and promote Gwich’in Traditional Knowledge.

The initial letter written by Karen Wright-Fraser to Judy Thompson at the beginning of her 1999 project reveals the deep complexities that these knowledge repatriation projects can hold. Simultaneously museum storerooms are embodied spaces of loss due to colonialism, yet also a source of pride that museums valued and preserved these “every day objects.” Karen Wright-Fraser explained:

I first discovered these outfits, I believe it was 1999, my brother gave me this book to look at - it was 200 years of Dene Clothing, by Judy Thompson. I'm flipping through the book and I seen this beautiful outfit, and I was thinking “is that ever beautiful” and I read the caption beside it saying it was a Traditional Gwich'in Tunic, and I thought, “man they made a mistake because we don't have anything like that.” So I kept reading and it said it was purchased in 18 something in Fort McPherson and I got a little lump in my throat because it is only a little ways from Inuvik. I still always get a little choked up when I think about it.

I was like wow- where did this come from? And it was almost like it was hidden. But it was beautiful because it was almost like opening a present.¹⁰³

For Wright-Fraser, seeing the skills of her ancestors were a source of good feelings, but she recognized that the absence of these caribou skin suits from her experiences growing up as a child in the NWT was a personal and collective loss. “While growing up in Inuvik I did not have the opportunity to experience much tradition or heritage of my people” (Wright-Fraser). She explained that when thinking about travelling to the museum and relearning these sewing skills that, “I went through all this range of emotions... I was feeling like something was lost. Plus there was good and bad feelings all mixed in one, a big jumble of emotions.”¹⁰⁴ Both knowledge repatriation projects are a critique of the museums that remain implicated in the continued absence of objects from the communities where they might be most needed, but these projects are also paradoxical. While on one hand, the removal of objects from communities is an example of the violent accumulation that takes place as part of the larger settler colonial project, on the other, Wright-Fraser expressed gratitude that the preservation of these objects now provides the opportunities for individuals and communities to learn from and with the museums. Through the process of making and remaking the caribou skin clothing, participants in

¹⁰³ Karen Wright-Fraser, Interview with Kelsey Wrightson, October 18th, 2014

¹⁰⁴ Karen Wright-Fraser, Interview with Kelsey Wrightson, October 18th, 2014

the project could “reclaim” the skills of their ancestors as their own. Though objects within museum storerooms remain static, they are also alive with the potential of making and remaking.



Figure 14 Women's Summer outfit, Dogrib, Fort Rae, 1860, A.558.39. Collected by Bernard Rogan Ross, Fort Simpson © National Museums Scotland

Labour against Recognition: Hegel's triad

To situate the praxis of these knowledge repatriation projects as “labour against recognition,” I return to one of the theoretical origins of the politics of recognition, Hegel's master/slave dialectic. Through this I argue that Hegel underestimated the emancipatory potential of objects and labour to break from the asymmetric politics of recognition. More importantly, I argue that if one seeks to substantively critique the colonial politics of recognition, then centering on the creation of objects is one means to think “outside the dialectic.” In Hegel's master/slave dialectic, one of the processes

through which the master comes to assert his power over the slave is by forcing the slave to work on or create an object.

This forced labour reinforces the asymmetric dialectic between the master and slave and reaffirms both identity positions. However, when Hegel's master/slave thought experiment leads to the production of something permanent, the "object," the dialectic transforms into a triad, where, rather than seeking affirmative recognition from master, the slave can evoke herself, or "self-recognize" through creation (Hegel, 1977, 117).

While the master desires the object, this desire is a mediated and impermanent relationship. Without engaging in labour himself, the master has no permanent presence in the world, and no permanent relationship with the object. Not only is the master reliant on the slave for inter-subjective recognition but also he is now doubly tied to the labour of the slave in creation of the desired object and as a relationship to the "real" world. In contrast, through physical work in the world the object exceeds the hierarchical relationship between the master and slave by offering a means for the slave to act (and actualize oneself in permanent relation to the world) outside of the dialectic relationship to the master. If the master/slave/object triad is read as a normative theory of freedom, then through the self-actualization or self-inscription, or by "laboring oneself" into the world, an object as the inscription of the self is a means through which this freedom may be sought. This self-affirmation is not available to the master who dictates the constitution of objects rather than creating his own. "Thus, in the end, the truth of independent consciousness and one's status as a self-determining actor is realized more through the praxis of the slave—through his or her transformative work in and on the world" (Coulthard, 2007, 440-441). By making oneself in the world, objects as both representative and evocative of the "self" and labour as a praxis, are not inherently wrapped into the domination with the master. Labour is the ontological reality and the condition of possibility for a liberatory rupture of the asymmetric dialectic of recognition.

Hegel has been deeply, and correctly, critiqued for his theorization of the master/slave relationship without any reference to the reality of the conditions of slavery, which he was most certainly aware of. Susan Buck-Morss, in "Hegel and Haiti" critiques him for the "glaring discrepancy between thought and practice" (Buck-Morss, 2000, 821), and this detachment of theory from lived context colours how the master/slave

relationship should be read. My analysis of labour against recognition must not be read as redeeming forced or slave labour as a condition or practice of freedom. Rather, I find that Hegel, in his blindness to the acts of resistance (in the form of the Haitian revolution) that were occurring simultaneously with his writing of the master/slave relationship, underestimates the potential of labour as generative of social relations. In other words, Hegel underestimated the normative potential of “transformative work” in labouring oneself into the world outside of the reactive, asymmetric dialectic.

This is where the literature on Indigenous resurgence becomes crucial in developing “labour against recognition” as a mode of resistance. The literature on Indigenous resurgence, calls for “everyday actions” (Corntassel, 2012) grounded in (re)connecting to land and “a refutation” of resource extraction economy towards “sustainable relationships” (Corntassel, 2012). Aligned with this framing, labour as a productive process can be dislocated from inherently asymmetric social relations. If the forced characteristic of labour is the end of analysis, then enslaved labour is both the ends and means of domination. My alternative reading calls for a critical distinction to be made between labour *against recognition* and theories of labour that understand land as a resource, or as the literal grounds of the founding capitalist violences of enclosure and primitive accumulation. It is not difficult to find substantive theoretical and embodied grounds in which to base this rethinking of labour as a social relation. In *Trails of our Ancestors* Zoe explains the importance of living and working on the land. “Through these stories and the daily work we encountered, sometimes paddling through strong winds, or portaging through muskeg and bog, it was the Elders words from their stories that helped to keep us going... this was where connections can be made to our personal lives in our communities “(2007, 47). When not undertaken through coercion or force as part of capitalist extractive and exploitative social relations, labour has a different quality, and the process of labour can be read as a transformative decolonial act. The recentering of land as generative of non-capitalist social relations is the focus of the following section.

Labour against Recognition: Recentering Land as Relations

To all Dene people, whatever your grandparents or your aunts or your uncles taught you about your arts and crafts, please hang on to it and don't let it get lost.

Margaret Jumbo, quoted in Marie and Thompson, 2002, vi

In *Dancing on our Turtle's Back* Leanne Simpson discusses Scott Lyon's research on a word for "culture" in Nishnaabemowin. She says, "of course we don't have a word for culture because our "culture" was and is a series of interrelated processes that engage our full beings and require our full presence" (Simpson, 2011a, 141). She goes on to say that "the goal is to promote life and to live it rather than just talk about it" (Simpson, 2011a, 142). In offering a praxis of "labour against recognition" I hope to centre the ways in which people are promoting and living life through "labour," rather than just talking about it. In doing so I argue against a view that labour is an inherently violent process, either in the way that resources are extracted and used, or in the exploitative relationships necessary for the creation of surplus and expansion. While capitalist labour is predicated on the violences of exploitation of time and expropriation of land to create surplus, labour predicated on a different understanding of land and relations to land and with/between people opens the possibilities to imagine labour as productive of different social relations. This labour may be incorporated into a capitalist system of value (for example, the purchase of Indigenous-made art for sale)¹⁰⁵ and indeed might even be intended to produce an income for a community within a capitalist system of social and economic relations. Despite this, the *process* and *effects* of labour against recognition constitutes a different set of social and political relations. This is not to say that the current capitalist system of labour is not a relationship of domination, nor that forced labour is non-

¹⁰⁵ Martineau and Ritskes argue that Indigenous art "occupies a unique space within settler colonialism: both as a site for articulating Indigenous resistance and resurgence, and also as a creative praxis that often reinscribes indigeneity within aesthetic and commodity forms that circulate in the capitalist market" (i, 2014). They argue that incorporation into the capitalist commodification system is a means to neutralize and enrobe and deeply contesting operation of colonial politics into the capitalist system of resource extraction. Thus, the argument can be made that these interjections may be an example of attempts at *interpellation* risks *interpolation*.

exploitive. Rather, I assert that labour is not *inherently* exploitive, nor do capitalist social relations define the totality of labour relations.¹⁰⁶

This rethinking of the process of labour necessitates a radical recentering of land as generative of a different set of social relations. While Western thought, including Marxist theories of capital, prioritizes time-centered epistemology, much Indigenous thought emphasizes a connection to place. Marx bases his theory of exploitation on the initial act of primitive accumulation that founds capitalism as both social relations and material practice (Marx, 1990). Marx's theory of labour is based on practice of labour creating social relations. When labour becomes alienated from the labourer these relations are transformed into relations of domination and exploitation. However, the initial exploitation of time through the transformation of surplus labour into surplus capital is founded by the violence of primitive accumulation and enclosure.¹⁰⁷ Theft of land is the condition of possibility for exploitation of time. However, if theft of land in the form of alienation and dispossession is not the predicated condition of labour as exploitation, then land, and relationships to land, changes the quality of labour. Andrea Smith argues, "if we understand Native identity as spatially rather than temporally based, claims to the land are based not solely on prior occupancy but on a radical relationality to land" (2012, 83). Placing land, and continuing respectful relations to land, as the literal and metaphorical grounds of labour then necessitates that the *praxis* of labour exist within a different set of social relations. "It is a profound misunderstanding to think of land or place as simply some material object of profound importance to Indigenous cultures (although it is this too); instead it ought to be understood as a field of 'relationships of things to each other'" (Coulthard, 2007, 79).

While the removal of material goods from the land may seem like an act of violence, within many Indigenous traditions, actions with and on the land are constitutive of important social, political and ontological relations. For example, Vine Deloria Jr

¹⁰⁶ Though these examples and Hegel's theory of master/slave/object more generally, uses atomistic understandings of labour (i.e- labour is for oneself) not all labour is of this individualist nature. In the following sections it will be made more clear that, against both the notion of labour as inherently exploitative and labour as individualist, labour against recognition as a concept grounded in theories and practices of Indigenous resurgence also include collective labouring; for example, labour to create for another or collective projects of labour, reproductive labour and care.

¹⁰⁷ Dispossession took the form of conquest, enslavement, robbery and murder, and through the privatization of collectively held territories and resources, created a working class (Coulthard, 2014, 7).

argues that the difference between Western and Indigenous metaphysics is centered on the importance of land to Indigenous modes of being and behaving (2003). For Dene people, relationships with the land are not exploitative, but navigated with deeply complex practices that evoke considered relations of respect. Coulthard explains:

In the Weledeh dialect of Dogrib... for example, “land” (or *de*) is translated in relational terms as that which encompasses not only the land (understood here as material), but also people and animals, rocks and trees, lakes and rivers and so on. (Coulthard, 2014, 61)

Andrews explains the centrality of other-than-human-persons:

In Dene ontology, all animals, along with a great number of other-than-human entities, both corporeal and incorporeal, are considered persons. These other-than-human-persons are regarded as having the same characteristics as human-persons in that they are sentient, self-aware, have wisdom, the ability to communicate among and between species, and have life forces that can be reincarnated. The Dene regard components of the landscape and natural phenomena as being sentient, challenging yet another Cartesian dualism of animate/inanimate (Andrews, 2011, 67).

More than questioning the dualism between human and non-human or animate/inanimate, this understanding of relations between human and non-human life is an entirely different starting point from which social relations of labour can be founded. Navajo artist Tom GreyEyes explains these complex relations in conversation with his artistic practices, saying “the land claims me, speaks my language, carries all the traditional teachings, and provides me a lens for looking at the world” (Martineau, 2014, 226). Thus, and following L. B. Simpson, labour in the form of being on the land, stories, and practices of making, is a process of “visioning and building” that ultimately serves to counter the substantive practices of settler colonialism aiming at dispossession.

In tracing the shifts in politics in Denendeh, Coulthard (2014) distinguishes a change in the meaning of self-determination in the north as a reorientation of struggle *for* land in distinction from struggles that are *informed by* land (78). But this formulation is dialogic, where land and good relations to and on the land, inform decolonization. Starting from land as central to relationships creates a network of reciprocal obligations. Situated as a practice of “grounded normativity” (Coulthard, 2014) rather than social relations of exploitation, labour creates non-exploitative relationships. Following from this radical re-centring of land, if labour is not *inherently* exploitative, labour can then be

understood as generative, not solely in the “ends” or product, but also, and perhaps most importantly, generative of relations.¹⁰⁸ Given this theoretical understanding of the ways that labour is not inherently a relationship of violence or exploitation, the following section will explore examples of labour as an emancipatory and creative rather than exploitative practice.

Knowledge Repatriation Projects and Resurgence

As stated earlier, my analysis of labour against recognition draws significantly on Coulthard’s critiques of the colonial politics of recognition, but locates the acts of transformative resurgence “within” museums and their collections of Indigenous objects. Reading knowledge repatriation projects as exemplary of the labour that breaks out of the Hegelian master/slave dialectic of recognition leads to two key conclusions. First, the creation of an object transforms Hegel’s dialectic into a triad and offers the “slave” a means to turn away from the dialectic of recognition such that the transformative work “in and on the world” becomes a normative story of potentially emancipatory praxis. While the object itself is an important embodied and discursive manifestation of this normative story, it is the process of labour itself that carries the quality of transformative social relations. In a radical recentering of land, and resurgent decolonization informed by relationships to and on the land, labour against recognition in the form of remaking and recreating objects can be read as one of many modes of Indigenous resurgence. This section will read the two knowledge repatriation projects in direct conversation with some of the key modes of “Indigenous Resurgence” as theorized by L. B. Simpson (2009), Alfred and Corntassel (2012) and many others.

While Alfred (2005) located the individual as an important site for his theory of resurgent decolonization, later iterations of resurgent decolonization have centered the relationships between generations, communities, and families (Corntassel 2012). Thus, I argue that these knowledge repatriation projects are best understood within a larger context, or web, of relationships both historic and contemporary. When read in this way

¹⁰⁸ This is not a novel argument as Shona Jackson has critiqued the ways in which slave labour in Haiti was generative of social relations that enabled black citizenship and simultaneously erased Indigenous peoples’ presence (2014). Labour was generative of social and political relationships of belonging and citizenship.

the skills and stories of single objects can only, and best, be understood within the larger set of social relations that they inhabit. Objects in museum collections that were made for trade are not necessarily representative of entire cultures, but representative of a moment where the labour of an artist or maker exemplifies agency, often in contestation of colonial invasion. These representations of historic agency are then echoed in the contemporary practices of making, either in the repatriation of knowledge or through contemporary artistic practices, building on and tracing the connections between generations. Wright-Fraser, spoke eloquently about her personal reflections on coming to find the works of her family members in museums as both a sense of pride, and exemplary of the skills commonly practiced. Seeing the intricate and detailed work of her Elders was a source of pride.

Then I was thinking, because I grew up in Inuvik, in an alcoholic home, and it was really tough. And the community, it was not a healthy community and I see a lot of negativity. And I was thinking, when I was young I needed to see this to feel good about where I come from. It would have helped me so much in so many ways. Even today there are so many children out there who grew up like that. They need to see this.¹⁰⁹

(Re)making the caribou skin outfits was then a chance to reconnect to her own history and actively counter the stories of colonialism she had been told. Further, the Caribou Skin Clothing project was only completed through the work of forty-two women in five communities who cooperated and collaborated to create the suits, but the process involved many more individuals, including those who hunted the caribou, prepared the hides, the production of sinew and the collecting and processing of silverberries. There were still others involved in fundraising, reporting, organizing workshops and filmmaking. Thus, the process of labour was generative of a different and complex set of social relations mutually constituted and created a deep sense of pride both individually and collectively, using diverse skills to achieve the collective results. Wright-Fraser attributed both the project, and potential future work as a source of empowerment for women in particular. This work was important “for the women to feel empowered even...

¹⁰⁹ Karen Wright-Fraser, Interview with Kelsey Wrightson, October 18th, 2014 speaking about her individual project with the CMC.

everything. To feel stronger (culturally) the self sufficiency would follow. It would just work.”¹¹⁰

The process of making that was at the core of both knowledge repatriation projects was also generative of a different set of social relations to the land. Aligned with Corntassel’s call for “restoration of indigenous presences on the land” (2012, 97), the supplies needed for both projects could only be gathered through “land based practices.” Thus, the labour necessitated by these knowledge repatriation projects reinforced Dene land-based ontologies which find land, and placed-based learning at the centre of “being Dene.” “Harry Simpson had frequently used the simile that the ‘land is like a book’ to explain that while each place was a repository of stories, it required experience of travel to ‘turn the pages’” (Andrews, 2011, 181). Andrews and Zoe go on to say these “stories provide all the knowledge necessary for living within the Tł̨ch̨ [and more widely Dene] landscape” (2007, 29). For both the spruce root baskets and the caribou skin clothing, the process of making not only brought a group of Elders and young people together around a shared object, but also offered the opportunity to go back on the land. When recalling the story of making the caribou hide replicas, Wright-Fraser did not just recount the ways in which sewing was about the process, but about how the entire project was made possible through relationships with others. She sourced caribou skins from those who continue the labour-intensive process of tanning and the gathering of silver willow seeds and red ochre¹¹¹ for the finishing of the garment necessitated going to the land.

All I had seen was pictures of ochre in a book. I had never seen it or handled it, but I had seen it on the back of the fur, I had seen it dyed red. I didn’t understand it. But so now, we were going to collect ochre for this project and coming to realize that red, I think they used to sometimes colour it with whatever red, but from further back it was from ochre. So we brought this Elder and we went out to Rock River, and Jane Charlie, she came with us, and we were driving. We brought guides and camera people and whatever, and we went out on this trip. Jane was telling us stories about years ago when she was young and people used to travel and get ochre for whatever purpose they needed throughout the year. And if the weather was bad, they weren’t supposed to gather this, it was a bad omen. So the people would say for some reason the men in the community would say “nope- it looks like rain or

¹¹⁰ Karen Wright-Fraser, Interview with Kelsey Wrightson, October 18th, 2014

¹¹¹ Red ochre was not used for the GSCI Caribou Skin Clothing Project, but was used by Karen Wright-Fraser in her 1999 collaboration with the CMC.

the storm is coming so don't go get the ochre" if they used it on clothing or whatever I think they believe- I'm just assuming now- that if it was bad weather, I think that might put something bad spirit a bad omen onto the clothing.

When you would go to get this ochre you had to bring something that means something special to you. Like cigarettes or tea or ammunition or whatever, and if they would take ochre from the land they would leave something there as a gift, like an offering back to the land, to say thank you. And to appreciate getting this gift from the land.

They would use it to paint the clothing as well as their faces way back when.

We went with Jane Charlie and we repelled down the mountain. It was beautiful. I just looked around and this Rock River, and you come down and you look behind you, it is a spectacular beautiful, view. Absolutely beautiful. Its kind of high up so you could see this river and all the trees and everything and I remember standing there, I was just thinking to myself, "wow- here I am standing here getting ochre, what my ancestors used" and it was just surreal and my brother says, "Look"- so I look down, and there was grizzly bear tracks, way down, on the sand bar. It was just a really powerful moment. We just looked. It was very special.¹¹²

Going out to their land, gathering materials and connecting to other members of the communities are all part of the wider set of social relations that have not disappeared, despite the substantial attempts of Canadian colonialism. Building and practicing these social relationships remains a powerful enactment of a resurgent decolonial politics. These knowledge repatriation projects, and the process of labour that goes into them, are therefore generative of important relations to, on and with the land, as well as relations between individuals and communities.

Indigenous resurgence has also focused on buildings and sharing the cultural skills and practices. Alfred and Corntassel advocate this as a means to offer an alternative to colonized ways of thinking and doing, and thus fracturing the hegemony of Western cultural knowledge and practices. The labour of making Gwich'in clothing was an active countering of some of the representative violence of settler colonialism, most especially the patently false and dangerous assertion that Indigenous peoples and their robust traditions have been irretrievably lost. Though the complex basket making techniques

¹¹² Karen Wright-Fraser, Interview with Kelsey Wrightson, October 18th, 2014 describing her knowledge repatriation project in 1999.

exemplified in museum collections were no longer being practiced within the Dene communities, the skills required to “revitalize” were present and remembered, and moreover, this project exemplified a very active desire for Suzan Marie, Karen Wright-Fraser and other Dene women to continue to practice these skills. The intergenerational learning inspired by this workshop not only revealed that these traditional skills remain important and vital to communities, but that these practices remain central to countering the assimilative tactics of settler colonialism which would assume that modernity must necessarily eclipse Indigeneity. Karen Wright-Fraser spoke of her hope that the skills repatriated through the Caribou Skin Clothing Project would lead to further inclusion of the traditional techniques into modern practices.

From here- what I was hoping was that the techniques that we learned from this project, hopefully that the women would incorporate it into their sewing today. And I have seen some people incorporating it in.¹¹³

The inclusion of traditional techniques into modern practices was an important means to continue the practice of making, but modern technologies were also incorporated as an important tool to help foster and spread the traditional skills and work. Wright-Fraser spoke about young people taking on the sewing practices and how it has been growing through the use of social media.

So she [a Dene teenager from the Sahtu] made a pair of mitts and she showed it on social media to all of her friends and she said “I feel so good, I finished my mitts”... so now you should see all the young people sewing up a storm in Deline- it’s just going strong. The Elder passing on her knowledge and the young ladies used social media to show off their skills. Then the traditions mixed with the technology, coming together to revitalize the sewing. I see more women getting into it. My heart is so happy. My heart is so happy.¹¹⁴

The resurgence of cultural practices is more than dialectically resistant to colonialism, but generative and regenerative of the skills and adaptability honed after many years of working and being on the land. Rather than revitalizing what was “lost,” the resurgence of spruce root basketry and caribou skin clothing was an example of the “ruptural potentiality” Martineau and Ritskes attribute to Indigenous artistic practices (2014). Building relationships between generations and with other communities, Marie and

¹¹³ Karen Wright-Fraser, Interview with Kelsey Wrightson, October 18th, 2014

¹¹⁴ Karen Wright-Fraser, Interview with Kelsey Wrightson, October 18th, 2014

Wright-Fraser and the GSCI used the CMC collections as a starting off point from which alternative practices could be imagined. These knowledge repatriation projects were not simply replicating skills of the past, but were also about generating new relations.

Congruent with the concept of “ruptural potentiality”, Nigit’stil Norbert, a Yellowknife based Gwich’in artist, produced a piece called *Enframe* (2011) for the exhibition Decolonize Me! This set of hand-beaded photographs “demonstrates the power of objects to help us recover suppressed skills and knowledges. The artist explains that while she was never taught beadwork from her relatives... she recovered this past in the present by recalling and examining objects her grandmother and others had made... This piece is an eloquent statement on the inability of oppressors to eradicate Indigenous knowledge despite the challenging conditions produced by generations of overwhelmingly imbalanced power relations that sought to suppress and destroy Aboriginal cultures” (Igloliorte et al., 2012, 21). Through contemporary acts of making, whether creating new objects through “knowledge repatriation” projects or using skills to create “modern” art pieces, Indigenous peoples are clearly reclaiming practices from the past as an active engagement with the present and future. According to Corntassel, “acts of remembrance are resurgence” (Corntassel, 2012, 91). The GSCI, Marie, Wright-Fraser and Norbert’s work exemplifies the ways that labour is not just the end product, but the practice of making itself that holds the resurgent potential. These practices of making connect to the wider network of land-based pedagogy that directly connect Indigenous decolonial resurgence and the land.

“Knowledge repatriation” projects exemplify the multiple creative acts of agency always and already practiced, but also reveal how these practices counter the colonial politics of recognition as they take place within a context of settler colonialism. Returning to Hegel’s understanding of the relationship between the master, slave and object, the praxis of making oneself in the world transcends the asymmetric dialectical relation in order to uphold a more deeply transformative mode of engagement. Crucially, these examples of knowledge repatriation projects, which I read as labour against recognition, are generated by relations to the land. “Theory removed from the land, removed from practice, and detached from the contexts that give it form and content propose a decolonizing strategy that risks metaphorizing its constitutive ground. Land and place

must remain at the center of decolonial thought and practice” (Martineau & Ritskes, 2014, ii). There are dimensions of land based learning, language learning through practice, but also, as Karen Wright-Fraser stated, seeing the objects made by ancestors as a source of deep pride for individuals and communities. Thus, when placed in the larger Dene epistemological position of land as constitutive of relations, labour is not an inherently violent practice, but a means of constituting and practicing good relationships. Making an object, therefore, is not about transferring labour into a system of capitalist material value, but generative of alternative modes of relationship to, on and with, the land and other beings on the land.

Conclusion

Art making is a form of decolonization because we need to dream. Without that, how can we envision anything? That’s exactly what artists do. We find inspiration and then we begin to bring it out into the physical reality. When we do that, it carries an energy, and with that it promotes dialogue.

Tom GreyEyes (Martineau, 2014, 229)

The connections between the creative and generative practices of making, and dreaming and imagination necessary for a resurgent and decolonized future should not be underestimated. Though not part of the formal Caribou Skin Clothing Project, and not located in, or generated by accessing museum collections, Karen Wright-Fraser told a story of the importance of sewing, making, and creating with these materials. Wright-Fraser was approached by a man in her community who asked her if she could find someone to repair a set of sealskin kamiks (winter boots). She knew of an Elder who grew up in Nunavut and approached her to discuss the possibility of repairing them.

So I went to this house where this Elder comes to the door. The granddaughter comes, she doesn’t speak a word of English so her granddaughter is translating.

So I explained “someone lived in Nunavut and they have this kamik and he can’t wear them because they need to be repaired so I thought of you.”

“Oh” she said, and she starts speaking in her language, holding her heart, speaking and just listening and speaking, and shaking her head. And then her granddaughter says,

“My grandmothers says she is so thankful that you thought of her and she is really really happy that she is going to work with her sealskin again. She is going to take them and she is going to dream about it tonight and tomorrow when she wakes up she is going to work on it.”

And I thought- whoa. It was like she’s going to put it into her whole being, like spiritual. Cause she was so happy that she could work with her materials. It just blew me away.¹¹⁵

For the grandmother from Nunavut, Karen Wright-Fraser understood that working with sealskin was an embodied and spiritual practice. The process of making, as part of “knowledge repatriation” projects, is an embodied means of thinking and acting against the asymmetric practices of recognition, but also creating something new. This notion that Indigenous peoples’ praxis is generative rather than representative is not a novel concept. In her 1995 essay on the exhibition “Basket, Bead and Quill” Doxtator directly links the everyday practices, the labour of making objects to the generation of knowledge. “If knowledge is what you create in using, adapting and enacting certain ideas in your daily life, then it is also what you learn by following long established activities encoded in the process of making these ancient forms” (Doxtator, 1995, 15). More than “revitalizing” knowledge and challenging a static notion of tradition, in this chapter I argue that the productive process of labour against recognition is entirely congruous with the broader cultural and political processes of decolonization, especially in the forms imagined and enacted through Indigenous resurgence.

There are clearly conditions in which labour can continue to be the active iteration of settler colonial violence. The point of this chapter has been to counter this singular understanding of labour and show how it can be used for different means and towards different ends. Labour is necessary to life and most importantly need not be *inherently* exploitative. The intent then of this chapter has been to open up the space for thinking about practices within museums as an active countering of the colonial politics of recognition specifically, but also to think about the possibility that labour can be generative of other social and political relationships more generally. By situating labour against recognition within the web of social and political relationships, often informed by a land-based “grounded normativity,” it is then no accident that my theory of labour

¹¹⁵ Karen Wright-Fraser, Interview with Kelsey Wrightson, October 18th, 2014

against recognition was inspired by, and centres on, the work done by Indigenous women. I see this theory of labour against recognition as tracing and highlighting the important work being led by women for their communities and children. This includes work done around the kitchen table, with community justice programs, language nests, beading, creating public artworks, blogging and other examples of “the boundless love that Indigenous women have for their families, their lands, and themselves and Indigenous people” (Nason, 2013).

While this chapter has dealt primarily with the notion of “labour” as productive of physically tangible objects, “labour against recognition” can be extended beyond the tangible and material to making performances, dances, films, movies and stories as they serve a similar purpose in both reconnecting people to practices, knowledge and community. Leanne Simpson explains that “storytelling then becomes a lens through which we can envision our way out of cognitive imperialism, where we can create models and mirrors where none existed, and where we can experience the spaces of freedom and justice” (Simpson, 2011a, 33). Tom Hill, Onkwewehon:weh director from the Conadah Seneca Band and Director of the Woodland Indian Cultural Education Centre stated “we need more than objects, although objects indeed embody those conceptual frameworks from which our cultural heritage is suspended. We need our own historians, ethno-historians, anthropologists, artists, faithkeepers, traditional speakers, museum directors, archaeologists, art historians and interpreters to stabilize those conceptual frameworks so our culture too can evolve and be dynamic” (1996, 26). Whether grounded in resisting and countering the representative practices of a colonial politics of recognition, or a more materially based process of repatriating knowledge, skills and returning to the land, emphasizing the processes of labour as “grounded normativity” offers a different understanding of labour as a situated decolonial praxis. Thus, while the examples that have inspired the development of this theory of labour against recognition are two examples of crafting, this theory of labour against recognition could be expanded to include many other forms of labour, including the reproductive and the labour of care. While I focus on creative practice of making clothing and spruce root baskets, with further work I believe that the concept of labour against recognition could be expanded and in fact ought to be extended to include other forms of labour and different places.

I offer two conclusions of this re-reading of knowledge repatriation projects through and against the Hegelian master/slave dialectic. First, the creation of an object transforms Hegel's dialectic into a triad and offers the "slave" a means to turn away from the dialectic of recognition such that the transformative work "in and on the world" becomes a normative story of emancipatory praxis. Second, while the object itself is an important embodied and discursive manifestation of this normative story, it is the process of labour itself that carries the quality of transformative social relations. Through a radical recentering of land, and informed by relationships on and with the land, labour against recognition in the form of remaking and recreating objects can be read as one of many modes of Indigenous resurgence. Further, if labour is a form of social relations that is neither inherently exploitative nor capitalist in nature, then the process can be imbued with transformative power that contests the imposed dialectic of recognition. Indeed, as the stories told by those who engage in processes of making are taken seriously, the labour is implicated in a larger set of social, political and legal systems. As Karen Wright-Fraser discussed, the Gwich'in caribou skin clothing was not just materially valuable, but most valuable in what the pieces exemplified, namely skills and pride. Materiality is instrumental; a means to reconnect to the set of skills that were lost or forcibly removed through repeated attempts at settler colonial conquest.

In offering labour against recognition as a mode of resurgence, I have traced the generative practices of resistance that turn away from the asymmetric colonial politics of recognition. As I argued earlier in this chapter, when Hegel's master/slave thought experiment leads to the production of something permanent, the "object," the dialectic transforms into a triad, where, rather than seeking affirmative recognition from master, the Slave can evoke herself, or "self-recognize" through creation. When rooted in the "grounded normativity" of ethical relationships generated on, and with, the land, I find that labour against recognition as an act of "self-recognition" is sufficient to counter the colonial politics of recognition critiqued throughout this dissertation.

As such, labour against recognition is not intended to recover or redeem the colonial politics of recognition but transgress the Hegelian dialectic, where "Indigenous art evokes a fugitive aesthetic that, in its decolonial ruptural forms, refuses the struggle for better or more inclusion and recognition" (Martineau & Ritskes, 2014, iv). Thus, the

process of making an object is the “transformative labour” in and on the world, rupturing the Hegelian dialectic into a triad, and offering a new normative orientation. Centred in the literature on Indigenous resurgence and a “grounded normativity” in the form of non-exploitative relationships to land, labour against recognition counters the conflation of labour into social relations of exploitation. Understanding labour against recognition as generated by respectful relations to and on the land, while also reinforcing or supporting these respectful engagements, necessarily creates a different set of social and political relationships, rather than redeeming the “politics of recognition” as currently imagined.

In the Hegelian dialectic of recognition, constant struggle is iterative and moving towards a normative end. In contrast, by centring relations to land, the process of labour itself has the quality of resistance. Martineau and Ritskes argue that Indigenous artistic practices “challenge the temporal nature of colonialism and reassert a fugitive aesthetic that refuses to abandon contemporary decolonial struggle, by connecting present and future to uninterrupted trajectories that retrace a rooted history of aesthetic practice and literary/visual sovereignty (Martineau & Ritskes, 2014, viii). I argue that these knowledge repatriation projects can be understood in the same decolonial frame, at one time connecting the past and present of aesthetic practice while also generative and exemplary of the practice and presence of decolonial acts. This is not just replicating the past in the present, but identifying an interconnected *praxis* that evokes the complex relationships between land, governance, language, politics, identity and community. To this end (which is not really an end but rather a perpetual state of beginning), labour and making are not passive perception and (re)production, but a wide set of practices in and through which culture, community and resilience is produced, embodied and *em-placed*. Thus labour against recognition, rather than generating a finite ideal form of subjectivity, centres the *process* of becoming as the field of ethical and moral actions. Grounded in either theoretical analysis or listening to the voices of those who participate in such projects it is clear that a simple dialectic of exploitation does not describe the process of labouring as a cultural practice grounded in and generated by relations to, with, and on the land and other relations.

8 Resurgence: New Directions

How to stop a story that is always being told? Or, how to change a story that is always being told? ... This is political life that, in its insistence on certain things-- such as nationhood and sovereignty—fundamentally interrupts and casts into question the story that settler states tell about themselves.

Audra Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus*, 2014, 177

When I was sixteen, my mom gave me my late grandmother's beads, so I learned to bead. My mom taught me to sew, and once I started sewing with moose hide, I wanted to learn how to tan it. The beauty of traditionally tanned moose hide amazed me. I loved the smoky colour and smell, the texture, and was fascinated by the tanning process. I was so proud of the first moccasins I made, and I wanted to make more – this time out of moose hide that I had tanned myself....

During a circle discussion at Dechinta this year, I asked the students to reflect on what community governance means to them, and to share with the group an exemplary example of community governance. When it came to my turn, I said that a community is a collective with common interests that works together in pursuit of shared goals and aspirations; and that community governance is action informed by respect, reciprocity, relationality, and love by community for community. I drew from our moose hide tanning camp at Sombah K'e as an example: a group of women with different backgrounds. learning from elders and each other to tan moose hides in the traditional way of the Deh Cho Dene.

Mandee McDonald, 2014, 180

In October 2014 the Aboriginal Curatorial Collective held a Colloquium in Montreal. New York based Anishinaabe performance artist, Maria Hupfield, was invited to “offer an Indigenous lens” on the new permanent exhibition “Wearing our Identity: The First Peoples Collection” at the McCord Museums in Montreal. Hupfield stated, “so many institutions where these collections are held are not about the people, they’re about preserving the work. So how do you make what’s behind the glass part of something you can identify with?... when I see objects behind glass, I’m like are they filling their function,

or purpose? Are they living their life?” (Hupfield quoted in DaCosta, 2014).¹¹⁶ Hupfield did not centre her intervention on a dichotomy between preservation and decay, but focused on the possibilities of engaging through the display glass to ensure that collections are not about objects, but about people. When the National Museums Scotland sent objects back to Tłıchǫ communities, they practiced a similar ethic. In allowing Elders and schoolchildren to cross generational and language barriers in order to share the experience of holding an object made 150 years ago, the NMS also centered people over preservation.

While the core of this dissertation is that the museum institution can and has been used in profoundly violent ways, I have also centred on the ways that community members, curators and other individuals are accessing the museum archives in order to support the intergenerational political and cultural resurgence. When I began conducting research for my dissertation, it went in a direction that I did not anticipate. I thought I would have a dissertation that condemned museums and museological practices as further instantiations of settler colonial violence. Many scholars within critical museum studies had made the connection between the role of museums representing the “other” and ongoing practices of settler colonial violence and domination. I proposed to explicitly link materiality and politics through research on the narratives of settler colonial disappearance, appropriation and obfuscation, especially in the form iterating the colonial politics of recognition and the control and display of objects. I expected to find a story of settler colonialism narratively reinforced in museums, and materially reinforced through the dispossession of objects from Indigenous communities. However, when actually conducting this research, the story I found was far more complicated. While I found my hypothesis was correct, museums are a space for the practice and representation of settler colonialism, this was not the only story. While people were and are being dispossessed and are subjected to symbolic and material forms of violence, these are not the only experiences. Thus, while I had a theoretical framework that explained the settler colonial narratives in museums, my theories of settler colonial domination could not account for the actions being undertaken in communities, in some cases for

¹¹⁶ <http://www.muskratmagazine.com/home/node/343#>, retrieved July 9, 2015

decades or more. I needed to develop another way to understand what I was hearing and reading of Tłıchǫ and Dene experiences.

This dissertation found that while museum space is often imagined as an archive of history, it can be fractured to tell a new story, not of a disappeared past, but of a renewed future and the continuity in between. 19th century Métis leader Louis Riel has been quoted as saying “My people will sleep for one hundred years, but when they awake, it will be the artists that give them their souls back” (Farrell Racette, 59). While not in disagreement with this sentiment, Indigenous women, artists and community members who sit together, bead together, speak and work together, are not just “giving back souls” to communities, they are strengthening what is already a connection between the past and the future. In many respects the conclusions of my work were not only different than what I expected, but far exceeded what I thought I would write about. I had hoped for a dissertation that would critique settler colonialism, but the research provided insight into much more: stories of resilience, histories that exceed colonialism in Canada, and contemporary acts of resistance and resurgence.

Leanne Simpson describes colonial society as a society of “absence” premised on practices of capitalist consumption. In contrast she says “creating was the base of our culture. Creating was regenerative and ensured more diversity, more innovation and more life” (Simpson, 2011, 92). Between 2000 and 2002 Nadia Myre beaded the Indian Act. Or to be more specific, through weekly “beading bees,” workshops, class presentations, more than 230 individuals participated in beading 56 pages of the annotated Indian act. In a 2002 interview with James Martin, Myre stated “Beading is political... I really do see beading as an act of silent resistance.”¹¹⁷ Myre’s work, and the work of many other artists and creators demonstrates the continuity of creation as regenerative, innovative, and decolonial.

Indigenous feminist Dory Nason states “profound forms of love motivate Indigenous women everywhere to resist and protest, to teach and inspire, and to hold accountable both Indigenous and non-Indigenous allies to their responsibilities to protect the values and traditions that serve as the foundation for the survival of the land and Indigenous peoples” (Nason, 2013). Not only does she locate the resistances of Indigenous

¹¹⁷ (http://ctr.concordia.ca/2001-02/June_6/08-Myre/index.shtml) Retrieved July 9, 2015

women in the generative love, but she links these acts to land *and* families. “These movements are about the profound love that Indigenous women have for the future stability and health of their families, their land and their nations” (Nason, 2013). The work of Indigenous women in and for their communities has often placed them at the centre of settler colonial violence. Despite this, Indigenous women have continued acts of generative refusal, not only turning away from the colonial structures of the now, but also offering pathways towards new decolonial futures. The work done by women, beading, sewing, and singing generates good relationships. These profound acts of resistance counter the assumptions of what actions, and moreover which actors, can be considered political. Sometimes creation takes the form of beading a set of moccasins for a friend or relation, sometimes it comes in the form of the incredible work that inspired the world to dance and be in ceremony in support of Idle No More.

Chapter Summaries

When I started this research, I began with Foucault and Said, canonical thinkers and big critiques. But when it came to actually conducting the research, synthesizing the thoughts, it was the voices of women and men, the doers, the makers and the creators, from whom I learned the most and felt the most compelled to listen to and account for. While I use the tools of political theory to think through, critique and elucidate the structures of settler colonial domination, ultimately, it was learning in the realm of the empirical that I realized the need to push and shift my theoretical engagement. The “world” generated the theoretical contributions. This methodological orientation is seen most clearly in my engagement with Hegel. My critique of Hegel is generated not only with the flaws in the logic, but also in the way that Hegel, and those who take up the master/slave relationship, are limited because they are a) not considering a different set of social and political relationships on and with the land, and b) unable to actually consider the experiences of those who are doing the work.

This dissertation was organized in three parts: 1) theoretical grounding and establishing the topography of the dissertation, 2) critique of museological spaces and

practices as reproducing the colonial politics of recognition, 3) practices of Indigenous resurgence that engages with, and against the colonial politics.

The first two chapters of the dissertation were largely theoretical, and mapped the general theoretical interventions. The second chapter looked at three “logics” of settler colonialism: disappearance, appropriation and obfuscation. These logics were illustrated by examples drawn from material culture studies, art and museum studies. Chapter Three moved to the museum as a site of political analysis. Like the second chapter, this analysis was intended to give a general understanding of the theoretical basis for the remainder of the dissertation. Using the theoretical insights of Foucault and Said, and drawing largely on the logic of “obfuscation” developed in the second chapter, I argued that museums exemplify the problematic colonial nexus between power and knowledge. However, source communities have also chosen to use museums as resources to forward the political and cultural aims of Indigenous decolonial resurgence.

Between chapters Three and Four, the dissertation moved from a largely theoretical methodology illustrated by empirical examples, to an analysis of the case studies. Methodologically, “The Spirit Sings,” “The Scottish Project” and the “Gwich’in Caribou Skin Clothing Project” and “Spruce Root Basket Project” are all illustrative of the theoretical arguments made and offered a means to think through and develop theories around practices of Indigenous resurgence. To tell only one story of either domination or resistance reduces the complexity of both. Thus the following four chapters of the dissertation should be read as a conversation. Chapters Four and Five offered a critique of museological practices as a continuation of settler colonial domination, where Chapters Six and Seven traced the generative modes of Indigenous resistance.

Chapter Four began with a doubled narrowing in the trajectory of the dissertation. Methodologically, I narrowed the scope of empirical analysis to explore the first of three case studies, the 1988 exhibition “The Spirit Sings” held at the Glenbow Museum in Calgary Alberta during the Winter Olympics. The second narrowing is theoretical where I turned away from more general critiques of settler colonialism and towards the specificities of critiques of the colonial politics of recognition. I argued that the exhibition “The Spirit Sings” was a key event that represents a shift towards the more conciliatory

colonial politics of recognition within Canadian museum policy and practice, intending to accommodate Indigenous peoples' cultural claims within narrative inclusion and "recognition." Further, the colonial politics of recognition as it plays out in museological practices, obfuscates ongoing settler colonial violence by "restorying" and "eventing." This shifts the narratives of the settler colonial state to make the structures of domination difficult to see, critique or further dismantle.

With this turn toward the conciliatory colonial politics of recognition, Chapter Four concluded with an examination of three articles that explicitly take up the politics of recognition within the field of museum studies and the museum as site. Through these I argue that the politics of recognition as currently taking place in museums exemplify some of Coulthard's critiques of the *colonial* politics of recognition. Namely the colonial politics of recognition perpetuates settler colonial control and domination by a) transforming political claims into more conciliatory narratives of cultural accommodation b) maintaining the asymmetric structures of authority and c) privileging narrative change without accounting for structural and economic equality.

The critique offered in Chapter Four focuses primarily on the structural aspect of Coulthard's critique of the colonial politics of recognition. In Chapter Five I turn to the psycho-effective and intersubjective critique, and examine the ways in which *colonizer* subjects are formed in and through museological spaces. I also turn to the second, and most extensive, case study. Thus, a significant portion of this chapter was a narrative recounting of the "Scottish Project," a collaborative exhibition that took place in Yellowknife, Ottawa and Edinburgh. Using audience response books to the exhibition in Edinburgh and focusing especially on Canadian responses, I examined the limits of the politics of recognition as it has been advocated in critical museum studies. I found that the narrative changes are insufficient to effectively transform the nexus of material and narrative violence that underpins colonialism in Canada. In other words, changing the narratives in the museum spaces was insufficient to change the minds of many of the Canadian audience members who continue to iterate the narratives that inform and underpin settler colonial subjectivities.

However, the deficiency to transform the settler colonizer was not the end of my analysis of "The Scottish Project." The last two chapters argued that Indigenous peoples'

interjections into museum spaces should be read as actively contesting the colonial politics of recognition specifically, and the logics of settler colonial domination more generally. I traced two “modes” of resistance that has already been taking place. Taking up the work of Métis artist David Garneau and his concept of “spaces of Aboriginal irreconcilability,” the first mode of resistance found Tłıchǫ histories that are *exogenous* to the narratives of settler colonialism. Though “The Scottish Project” was insufficient to fully transform the narratives of settler colonialism in Canada as exemplified by audience responses, this deficiency was not the only story. Indeed, using interview, historic and discourse analysis, I argued that some individuals understand their relationships to museums in a manner that exceeds the colonial politics of recognition. Though analysis of the particular object histories of a set of stone pipes and a willow bark net, I argue that the material histories, and the relationship between the Tłıchǫ and their own material culture histories exemplified in the school outreach program, exceeds settler colonial attempts to narratively and materially disappear, appropriate, and obfuscate their presence.

Chapter Seven then turned to the second mode of resistance, which I have termed “labour against recognition.” In contrast to the previous two chapters, which emphasized the narrative forms of the politics of recognition (telling better/more accurate stories about the self and other), this chapter returned to the generative theory of the politics of recognition, the Hegelian master/slave dialectic. I argued that not only did Hegel underestimate the role of labour as an avenue for emancipatory self-recognition, but when put in conversation with the growing body of literature on Indigenous resurgence, labour is generative of social and political relationships formed on, and informed by, relationships to land. These webs of social relations means that labour, and the process of labour is not *inherently* linked to the colonial politics of recognition. Instead, and against the logics of settler colonial appropriation and obfuscation, labour in the form of making and remaking objects, is not necessarily and always appropriated into the colonial logics of domination and thus presents an alternative mode of engagement. This chapter focuses on my final case study, the Gwich’in Caribou Skin Clothing Project, which is an example of a growing number of collaborative projects that use museum storerooms for “knowledge repatriation” projects.

Future Directions: To be Continued

If this is the time for recommendations, the first was and remains that those in power must learn to listen. Learn to listen in a way that does not extract knowledge from the “other,” but recognizes and acknowledges “irreconcilable spaces of Aboriginality” (Garneau, 2012). From this, support the work being done in communities and around kitchen tables. To those who work in museums this might mean opening storerooms for individuals and groups to come and learn from the collections, sing to them, be in ceremony with them. Sometimes this might mean others watch, sometimes it will mean allowing people to be present with pieces outside the view and purview of the museum.

For practical considerations within museums, the recommendations are numerous and coming from many disparate voices. Honouring and entertaining requests for repatriation could be a significant step towards further improving relationships with source communities. Changing the narratives and stories told, both by and about settlers and Indigenous peoples in the national histories could significantly shift some of the narratives that underpin settler colonial violence, including the process of “eventing” and “restorying” colonialism to obfuscate its ongoing effects. However, this dissertation has highlighted the deficiencies of taking up the politics of recognition within museum studies. Though the museum as a space of authority charged with educating the public on national histories may seem to be an ideal location for political self-representation, without the significant transformative changes to the structures of settler colonial violence caution is needed. Museums may be sites for the perpetuation of colonialism in its conciliatory forms. This is not to say that critical curation should not take place, or that exhibitions that robustly centre the voices and perspectives of Indigenous peoples should not be presented. Rather, I found the danger in assuming that more effective representation is the only necessary site of change.

The last phases of research only indicated more research questions on the role of transformative labour against the conciliatory violence of the colonial politics of recognition. Further research could examine the political role of community-based cultural resurgence, the role of craft in anti-capitalist economies, and centering the labour of women. However, the question that I would like to further examine most is the role of craft in creating and practicing and building further relationships of “grounded

normativity” (Coulthard, 2014). My interviews with Karen Wright-Fraser made it clear that the work of women beading and sewing the caribou skin clothing would not be possible without relationships to tanners, hunters and other people who know and work on the land. Understanding the ways in which these relationships can be understood as fostering healthy political communities, inspired and motivated by women’s work, would open up further avenues of research into gendered governance and alternative forms of inclusive political participation. Other lines of research could develop a more robust understanding of settler engagement with these practices of resurgent resistance, including the role of settler audiences in public art and representations. How can allies and supporters most robustly engage with resurgence and refusal in a way that will deeply transform the colonial politics of recognition and the ongoing structures the condition and support settler colonialism in Canada?

Ultimately, this dissertation owes a huge debt to the work that has been done in communities, especially by women, and the gifts that people offered in the form of stories, food, knowledge and care. I have been incredibly thankful for the invitations that I have received to begin speaking about what I have learned. I hope that this dissertation provides further avenues for the critique of the colonial politics of recognition and settler colonialism more broadly, and that these chapters reflect and uphold the incredible work being done in and by communities most affected. I centred my research on the importance of ensuring that objects do not continue to be static museums pieces, but active members of communities, even when in storage or display cases. This impetus is not just about preservation behind glass, but also the relationship between museums and every day acts of resurgence and resistance that continue to build Indigenous peoples’ relationships on and with land. When grandmothers gather to bead, speak Tł̓ch̓q or Gwich’in, and share with their grandchildren, they are transforming their relationship to the museum storerooms and against settler colonialism. The cultural has always been political.

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