Abstract

This dissertation examines everyday social relations in the settler colonial city of Vancouver. Its contemporary ethnographic focus updates and reworks historical and political analyses that currently comprise the growing body of scholarship on settler colonialism as a distinct socio-political phenomenon. I investigate how non-Aboriginal residents construct and relate to Aboriginal alterity. The study is situated in three ethnographic sites, united by their emphasis on “including” the Aboriginal Other: (1) the 2010 Winter Olympics, which featured high-profile forms of Aboriginal participation (and protest); (2) the Mount Pleasant public library branch, which displays a prominent Aboriginal collection and whose staff works closely with the urban Aboriginal community; and (3) BladeRunners, an inner-city construction program that trains and places Aboriginal street youth in the local construction industry. Participants in this research include non-Aboriginal “inclusion workers” as well as non-Aboriginal patrons at the library, construction workers on a BladeRunners construction placement site, and audiences at Aboriginal Olympic events. I explore how my participants’ affective knowledges shape and are shaped by spatial and racializing processes in the emergent settler colonial present. My analysis reveals how everyday encounters with Aboriginal alterity are produced and experienced through spectacular representations and spectral (or haunting) Aboriginal presence, absence, and possibility in the city. In relation to inclusion initiatives, I argue that discourses of Aboriginal inclusion work to manage and circumscribe Aboriginal difference even as they enable interaction across difference. Ultimately, I suggest that social projects aimed at addressing Aboriginal marginality and recognition must actively engage with and critique non-Aboriginal ideologies, discourses, and practices around racialization, meaning-making, and settler privilege, while working within and against a spectacular and spectralized milieu. This research demonstrates how critical ethnography can be leveraged productively to analyse settler participation in the reproduction and transformation of the colonial project.
Preface

This research was approved by the UBC Behavioural Research Ethics Board: Certificate Number H09-03044; Principal Investigator: Dr. Jennifer Kramer
Table of Contents

Abstract .................................................................................................................................................. ii
Preface ..................................................................................................................................................... iii
Table of Contents ................................................................................................................................... iv
List of Figures .......................................................................................................................................... vi
Acknowledgements ................................................................................................................................. vii
Dedication ................................................................................................................................................ xi

Chapter 1: Introduction ........................................................................................................................ 1

- Othering Aboriginality and Including the Aboriginal Other .......................................................... 5
- Unsettling Social Locations ................................................................................................................ 10
- Spectacle, Spectrality, and the Everyday ............................................................................................ 19
  - Spectacle .......................................................................................................................................... 20
  - Spectrality ........................................................................................................................................... 26
  - The “Everyday” ................................................................................................................................. 32

Chapter 2: Including Encounters – Fieldwork in the Interstices of Settler Colonial Vancouver .... 35

- Introduction ......................................................................................................................................... 35
- Ethnographic Influences: Site Selection and Methodological Practice ........................................ 36
- “The World’s Biggest Potlatch”: Spectacular Anthropology ............................................................ 38
- Working Relationships: BladeRunners ............................................................................................... 48
- Aboriginal Titles: Mount Pleasant Library and Urban Aboriginal Community Development .... 59
- Locally Multi-Sited Ethnography: Encounters and Discursive Practices in Settler Colonial Middle
  Grounds .................................................................................................................................................. 70
- Conclusion .......................................................................................................................................... 74

Chapter 3: Spectacular and Spectral Spaces ......................................................................................... 77

- Introduction ......................................................................................................................................... 77
- Stanley Park .......................................................................................................................................... 80
  - From Xwayxway to Stanley Park: Indigenous “Squatters” on Park Lands .................................... 86
  - Stanley Park’s Totem Poles: “Indigeneity Got from Elsewhere” ..................................................... 88
  - From Stanley Park to Xwayxway: Re-Indigenizing the Landscape .................................................. 92
  - The A/Effects of Renaming vs. “Just Colours” .............................................................................. 94
- The Downtown Eastside ....................................................................................................................... 100
  - A “Photogenic Spectacle”: Drive-by Encounters and Mechanisms of Marginalization ............ 103
  - Haunting Encounters ....................................................................................................................... 105
  - Resisting Representations and Other Processes of Reckoning ..................................................... 108
- Conclusion .......................................................................................................................................... 112

Chapter 4: Olympic (G)hosts .............................................................................................................. 115

- Introduction ......................................................................................................................................... 115
- Setting the Stage: Spectacles of Aboriginality, Spectres of Indigeneity ........................................ 116
- Four Host First Nations on Stolen Native Land ............................................................................... 118
- Olympic Aboriginalia .......................................................................................................................... 126
- Spectacles and Spectres within the Generalized Spectacle: Aboriginal Olympic Performances ... 135
- The 2010 Olympics Opening Ceremony: The Same Old Song and Dance? ............................... 140
- Conclusion .......................................................................................................................................... 157

Chapter 5: Inclusion at Work ............................................................................................................... 159

- Introduction ......................................................................................................................................... 159
List of Figures

Figure 1: Map of Downtown Vancouver, showing Aboriginal Pavilion location ......................................... 41
Figure 2: Map of Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside, showing BladeRunners office ................................. 49
Figure 3: Map of Northeast Burnaby, showing BladeRunners construction placement site .................. 53
Figure 4: Map of Mount Pleasant, showing Mount Pleasant library branch ......................................... 59
Figure 5: Composite map of my field sites .............................................................................................. 71
Figure 6: Map of Stanley Park, showing totem poles, Xwayxway/Lumberman’s Arch, and Klahowya Village .................................................................................................................. 83
Figure 7: Stanley Park totem poles ........................................................................................................ 84
Figure 8: Ilanaaq, official emblem of the 2010 Winter Olympics .............................................................. 128
Figure 9: Official mascots of the 2010 Winter Olympics ...................................................................... 129
Figure 10: Official silver medal of the 2010 Winter Olympics ............................................................... 132
Figure 11: Designers Stuart Iwasaki and Debra Sparrow with the official jersey of the Canadian Olympic hockey team, featuring Debra Sparrow’s design in the maple leaf .................................................. 133
Figure 12: Squamish Nation representatives during the Four Host First Nations welcome at the Opening Ceremony of Vancouver’s 2010 Winter Olympics ................................................................. 142
Figure 13: Aboriginal dancers performing during Vancouver’s Olympic Opening Ceremony ............... 143
Figure 14: Aboriginal dancers performing with Bryan Adams and Nelly Furtado during Vancouver’s Olympic Opening Ceremony ........................................................................................................ 143
Figure 15: Olympic speedskater and Canadian flagbearer Clara Hughes, Canadian athletes, and Aboriginal dancers in Vancouver’s Olympic Opening Ceremony ......................................................... 144
When I was eight years old, I wrote an expository essay for a school assignment about how to write and revise a story. After explaining how to prewrite, draft, and revise, I concluded, “Now for your last step – publish. Share your writing with people. Make a neat copy. And now your book is done.” Now, after years of education, researching, and writing, my “book” is done. I have made a neat copy and I am sharing my writing with people. It is exhilarating and a little scary. Thankfully, I have had many people’s support throughout this process of writing and they are here with me now as I take this last step. Thank you for your enduring faith in me and for your patience as I extol your virtues.

My supervisor, Dr. Jennifer Kramer, and my other committee members, Dr. Patrick Moore and Dr. Renisa Mawani, have encouraged me to persevere and think deeper throughout my entire process, from coursework to revisions. I hope they can see how they have helped me to grow as a writer and scholar, and I know I will continue to learn from them and their example after I complete my degree. Jennifer, your steadfast support and unwavering confidence in my work has sustained me over these many years. And your attention to detail is remarkable! Thank you. Renisa, your scholarship inspires me. I am so grateful for the ways you have challenged me to enhance my work. Pat, the important role you’ve played in my graduate education cannot be overstated. You have supported me from the very beginning. Your kindness, patience, and generosity with time and resources are truly awesome. It has been a privilege to have such a superb committee.

Many thanks also to my examining committee for their enthusiasm for my work and for their challenging questions: Dr. Daniel Heath Justice, Dr. Bruce Miller, Dr. Eva Mackey, and defence chair, Dr. Jean Barman. I look forward to future conversations with you.

Becoming an anthropologist in the UBC Department of Anthropology has also been a great privilege. Its rich tradition of ethnographic and archaeological work on the Northwest Coast and with Indigenous communities in British Columbia has motivated me to consider the political, ethical, and social implications of my research and teaching. I am especially grateful to Dr. Bruce Granville Miller for his contagious enthusiasm for the discipline and stimulating lunchroom chats. Attending the field school with Dr. Charles Menzies and Dr. Caroline Butler deeply enriched my learning and ethnographic sensibilities. My Masters supervisor, Dr. John Barker, continues to support me as I make my way in the heady world of academia. Thank you for your ongoing encouragement, John. I would also like to thank the department and university for their generous financial support during my graduate degrees.

My graduate colleagues… how can I thank you enough? When I moved to Vancouver in 2006, I found myself thrown in with you: a ragtag bunch of the most thoughtful and vibrant people I had ever met. How lucky! Ana Vivaldi, Rafa Wainer, Larry van der Est, Sandra Youssef, Tamar Scoggin McKee, Susan Hicks, Lina Gomez-Isaza (and Freddy), Adam Solomonian, Oralia Gomez-Ramirez, Jennifer Wolowic, Arianne Loranger-Saindon, and many more: thank you for your friendship. Marie-Eve Carrier-Moisan and Billy Flynn, you helped me keep the light at the end of the tunnel in sight; Chad and I really miss you. Marlee McGuire, Sara Komarnisky, and Molly Malone, you’re all brilliant, funny, and so, so loved. And to the ultimate problem solvers, Lainie Schultz, Emily Birky, Tal Nitsan, and
Solen Roth: you are each so dear to me. You are tremendous. You are wonderful. You are my family.

Thank you to the graduate and post-graduate students in other programs whose work and friendship have also inspired me: Bonar Buffam (sociology), Tonya K. Davidson (sociology), Stephen Hay (history), Jess Hallenbeck (geography), Dawn Hoogeveen (geography), Amie McLean (sociology), Jeannie Morgan (sociology), Tom Peotto (history), Jeff Schiffer (education), Eva Sierp (geography) among others. You help me to think about how anthropology and ethnography intersect with broader questions and ideas. I have been fortunate enough to work with these students, as well as many amazing educators outside of the UBC Department of Anthropology. A methods class with Dr. Dara Culhane at Simon Fraser University transformed how I think about anthropological research. Attending the Newberry Summer Institute in 2009 provided an early opportunity to examine the politics of spectacle; I am grateful to Dr. Scott M. Stevens, Dr. Jeani O’Brien, and the dynamic, gifted group of students in the Newberry Consortium in American Indian Studies for our time reading and talking together. A chance opportunity to act as a teaching assistant for Dr. Coll Thrush in the UBC Department of History has left lasting impressions; Coll, you are an incredible teacher-scholar.

I want to teach because I have had good teachers: diligent, caring, thought-provoking. From Mrs. Ingram at Russell Elementary to Mr. Grady at Shelby High School to the excellent instructors at UBC, I have learned that being a teacher involves passion, hard work, and courage. It also sometimes involves faith. At Eastern Michigan University, my undergraduate alma mater, Dr. Karen Sinclair saw a spark of anthropologist potential in me and took me under her wing. Her advice and tutelage helped me to prepare for graduate school, both personally and professionally. Thank you, Karen.

My extra-curricular employment during graduate school has also given me insight into the support teachers need to make learning fun and exciting. I am grateful for my colleagues at the UBC Centre for Community Engaged Learning, UBC Mix, and the UBC Centre for Teaching, Learning, and Technology. What great work you all do! I am especially thankful for Amy Perreault, Hanae Tsukada, Sarah Ling, Mali Bain, and Joseph Topornycky at CTLT and Allyson Rayner at CCEL: I look forward to further developing our friendships and professional connections.

Thank you also to my students, at both the University of British Columbia and the University of Fraser Valley, for challenging me to find new ways to foster excitement about anthropology in the classroom. I have learned from you in countless ways.

Conducting ethnographic research and analysis is tough and rewarding. I am indebted to the many people who generously participated in this project. I am especially grateful to Rebecca Jules, who introduced me to BladeRunners, and to the staff at the Mount Pleasant Library branch and the BladeRunners program, who were incredibly open-minded and receptive to my research. They opened doors – literally and figuratively – for this study. They talked with me in their offices and over coffee, sharing their time and experiences. They brought in newspaper clippings and noted stories to tell me later. Their good humour and genuine care and interest motivated me to complete this dissertation. I look forward to more conversations with all of you as this process continues!
In the expository essay I penned (well, pencilled) as a child, I wrote, “To revise you need to improve your writing. Read first draft, add more, remove ideas, and substitute. Then get a partner and have a peer conference – praise, question, propose.” I have had many peer conferences over the last two years of writing. I am thankful to all of you who read chapter drafts and fragments: Solen, Lainie, Tal, Sara, Molly, Marlee, Ana, Tonya, Bonar, Dawn, and Maura Pellettieri. Thank you all for praising, questioning, and proposing as you read my work; any errors are of course my own. I am also grateful to Joanne Keinholz and Alice Campbell who each pointed to Lee Maracle’s works at critical times in my writing process.

To focus on writing this dissertation, my husband Chad and I moved from the home we had made in Vancouver to Orcas Island: a beautiful place to live and write! On Orcas, we have made magnificent friends. Kelley and Matty, you’re the best and my time with you, Bruno, and Laurel, has kept me sane and happy while writing. I love you guys. Riana, Eleni, and Maura: you are missed! Cat, you’ve been my work-from-home companion and confidante and I can’t wait to go running and watch movies with you without the dissertation-elephant in the room. You, Wally, and Tom are such great friends and neighbours! Jonathan, I love hanging out and talking with you. Thank you for keeping Chad busy during the day while I write, write, write. Thank you also to Pam and Linda for supporting our family. My friends and colleagues at the Orcas Island Historical Museum and Orcas Island Library: thank you for welcoming me into your community, especially Karen for her kindness and Martin for his cheerful help locating all those interlibrary loans.

When I visit Vancouver from Orcas, many people give me warm shelter and hot meals. Anneli and Alastair, thank you for your generous hospitality and open-hearted friendship. Sandra, Steve, and Scarlet, you have been friends from the beginning and I am so glad our friendship continues beyond those colourful walls of Mainspace. Sarah, Colin, and Cedar, I always look forward to enjoying excellent conversation and terrific salmon tacos with you – thank you. Colleen, though you have not been in Vancouver for some time, I still miss getting cocktails and talking shop with you.

To my friends and family from the Midwest: thank you for understanding (or at least accepting) my westward journey. Moving from the lands of Iroquois and Algonquian peoples to Coast Salish territories has been a rewarding, emotional process. Jess and Tim, Kevin and Megan, I’m so glad our friendships have survived the distance and I can’t wait to celebrate with foreign travels! Trisha, I’m grateful for our long-time friendship, your mom’s strawberry pie, and all the fun we’ve shared. My big, wonderful family of grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins has kept in touch over time and space by phone, Facebook, and email, and I’m grateful for their many forms of support and care. My Aunt Joan and Uncle Joel have been especially encouraging and enthusiastic about my pursuit of higher education: thank you both. Joan, I am glad you are not only my aunt but also my friend. I look forward to many more adventures with you!

My in-laws, too, have been my resolute supporters from the get-go. Fred and Chris, thank you for sending Midwestern tomatoes and foxes, and for always asking how things are going. Becki and Perry, thank you for believing in Chad and me and rooting for us as we make a life for ourselves. Thank you also for giving me “Simon”, my computer, at the start of my degree – I type these words to you now on its well-worn keyboard.
My Granny and PawPaw have been my cheerleaders, nurturing my curiosity about the world through National Geographic subscriptions and great stories. My Gramps and Carolyn were always delighted to hear about my travels; while I am sad I won’t be able to tell my Gramps about this step in the journey, he always had faith I would meet my destination and I’m saluting him and my Grandma from here.

My parents, Ron and Susan Keiser, raised me in a home full of love and happiness. They indulged my love of reading, drawing, and writing, and knew I would eventually overcome my growing pains and set loose on the world. Thank you for giving me, Cami, and Jake so much – especially your dedicated attention and big-hearted love. Cami, you are gracious and beautiful. Jake, you are witty and thoughtful. It is a privilege to be your sister. I am so happy there are planes, trains, and automobiles to keep me connected to all of you.

Last but not least, thank you to my little family: Chad, Sandie, and Indie. Sandie, my cockatoo, kept me company on long writing days, and Indie, my dog, got me out of the house and into the woods. And my amazing, handsome, smart, creative, supportive husband, Chad… you are fantastic. You sustain me and our life together is a gift. I love you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.
For Gramps,

who loved people, family, and me
Chapter 1: Introduction

Historian Philip J. Deloria opens his book *Indian in Unexpected Places* (2004) with the photo “Red Cloud Woman in Beauty Shop, Denver 1941,” which depicts an Aboriginal woman in braids and buckskin sitting under a salon hairdryer, getting her nails done. He questions why this image often triggers a particular affect: a chuckle. He suggests that Red Cloud Woman surprises and elicits a chuckle because she is both marked as an Aboriginal woman – through her clothes and hair – and engaged in an ordinary, “modern” activity. She is an example of “uncanny alterity,” to use anthropologist Elizabeth Povinelli’s (2002) phrase; simultaneously same and different, she stretches non-Aboriginal expectations of Aboriginality. “Even in the wake of decades of stereotype busting,” Deloria observes, “a beaded buckskin dress and a pair of braids continue to evoke a broad set of cultural expectations about Indian people” – expectations that do not jive with the image’s context: the salon, hairdryer, and manicure (2004:3). From there, he builds his argument that Aboriginal people – or Indians in his United States account – are in fact embedded in modernity, not apart from it. “Unexpected” images and stories of modern Aboriginality, he suggests, reveal the continued relevance and force of stereotypic images and racialized expectations.

Like Deloria, I will begin my otherwise serious critical examination of settler colonial relations with a revealing story of a laugh. Midway through my fieldwork at one of my research sites, the Mount Pleasant public library branch in Vancouver, I sat interviewing a white woman close to my own age about her experiences learning about Aboriginality. At one point I asked, “So have you met or seen Aboriginal people?” I paused, then added, looking up from my notebook, “In the library? Or in Mount Pleasant?”

The woman laughed heartily, “I thought you meant ever!” then answered, “Yes. Yes,” still laughing.

Before prompting her to share more, I said, “Actually, where I grew up, I never met an Aboriginal person.”

She paused her laughter and looked at me in surprise. “Where did you grow up?”

“Ohio. In the States.” I replied.

“Okay!” she said, amused and perhaps a little suspicious.

“Not until I was… probably in college?” I said.
“Okay!” she said again, still somewhat disbelieving.

I briefly noted that history of settlement was different there than in British Columbia and Canada more generally, and that I had definitely met more Aboriginal people since moving to Canada. “It’s one of the reasons I’m doing the research I’m doing now,” I told her, abbreviating a longer story about my research process and motivations.

Although she found it nearly impossible to imagine never seeing or meeting an Aboriginal person, when the focus of conversation shifted back to her a moment later, she explained that she in fact knew very few Aboriginal people.

“I know some?” she said, “But I think that no, I don’t know many. Personally, within my social group, I would say no.”

“What about growing up?” I asked.

“Growing up? Growing up – no.”

For the remainder of our interview, she discussed her limited encounters with Aboriginal people and stories through school field trips, news stories, conversations with her social worker brother, and through her job as a childcare worker in a local elementary school.

While Red Cloud Woman elicited a chuckle because of her unexpected presence in regalia in modernity, it was the idea of total Aboriginal absence that prompted my participant’s laugh. Growing up in British Columbia, seeing Aboriginal people and signs of Aboriginality was and is commonplace for her – expected. However, where I am from, historical epidemics, colonial processes of dispossession and literal removal, and discursive forms of erasure have emptied much of the landscape around my American Midwestern hometown of Aboriginal presence.

Arriving in Vancouver in 2006, I was immediately struck by how very present Aboriginal people and imagery were in the city. The Native Education College, an impressive structure built in a longhouse style with a ceremonial totem pole entrance, stood a block from my apartment in Mount Pleasant. I regularly stood with students from the college as we waited for the #3, #8, and #19 busses at a nearby bus stop. I saw totem poles in public parks and in front of Native Housing buildings in my neighbourhood. Popular sites for visitors – the international wing of the Vancouver International Airport, Stanley Park, and Granville Island – featured poles and other monumental sculptures. By the mid-2000s, the city was preparing for the 2010 Winter Olympics and major news stories detailed the developing partnership between the Vancouver Olympic Committee
and local First Nations communities. As a new graduate student at the University of British Columbia, I quickly became aware that I had arrived not only in Vancouver, but also on the unceded territories of Coast Salish peoples; talks and events on campus often opened with a welcome by Musqueam elder Larry Grant or an acknowledgement of Musqueam territory.

Within a year of living in the city, I began to question how my initial impressions of spectacular and ordinary forms of Aboriginal presence intersected with the more complex stories and critical theories of colonialism, race, Canadian multiculturalism, and Indigeneity I was learning about in graduate school. I started to recognize how the same processes I was aware of in the Midwest – epidemics, dispossession and removal, and erasure – were also part of the colonial story of British Columbia and Canada. As I made friends outside of my academic cohort, many of them non-Aboriginal Canadians, I realized that they, like my library research participant who laughed, took Aboriginal presence in the city for granted. Yet, even amidst this normative presence, they had developed little knowledge of or interest in Aboriginal politics, local communities, or colonial processes.

Over time, examples of erasure become more apparent: the swift shift in city history narratives from a generalized pre-contact Native time replaced by European and immigrant settlement; seemingly benign comments that in fact reassert white hegemony and privilege; places significant to local First Nations paved over and renamed or given a Coast Salish name but emptied of other Coast Salish signifiers. Across from the Native Education College, for example, a plaque explains that a stream used to run along the trajectory of present-day Scotia Street, an important site for Coast Salish peoples who lived in the area 3,000 years ago. It is up to the observer to make the connection between this historical marker and the present-day realities of students entering the longhouse across the street: to reconcile physical presence with discursive absence through historicized Aboriginality.

I wanted to understand how non-Aboriginal people in Vancouver engage in making these connections – ultimately, to explore how they relate to Aboriginality while living in a settler colonial place. I developed this study to examine these multiple, complex processes. Although the idea of Aboriginal absence might elicit a disbelieving laugh, the disappearance of Indigeneity was and remains a goal of the settler colonial project in Canada, as anthropologist Patrick Wolfe (1999) and critical theorist Andrea
Smith (2012) have argued. In the absence of absence, Aboriginality is managed—circumscribed through policy, racialization, representational practice, and conditions of inequality.

I conceptualize this tension between colonial desires for absence with the realities of contemporary presence as a form of spectrality. Settler colonialism renders Aboriginality a spectre: simultaneously present and absent, Aboriginality haunts. The legacies of historical policies enacted to realize desires of elimination are also spectrally present, manifested in examples of Aboriginal marginality and the traumas of colonial oppression. Aboriginal spectrality is particularly uncanny in a city like Vancouver, where Aboriginal representations are so spectacularly present and celebrated. This dissertation thus examines ethnographically how non-Aboriginal people negotiate spectacular and spectral Aboriginality in their meaning-making processes about Otherness and place. It analyses the affective and structural conditions of everyday life in a settler colonial city. It also reflects on how Aboriginal inclusion, a recent set of discourses and practices designed to “correct” historical and contemporary Aboriginal exclusion, mediates these negotiations and encounters. I ask how inclusion produces new politics of settler coloniality at the same time as it reproduces its older forms.

In the remainder of my introduction, I first introduce Vancouver as a settler colonial place and briefly explain my selection of Aboriginal Olympics performance venues, a library branch, and a construction training program as my three ethnographic field sites (a more thorough methodological discussion is presented in Chapter 2; additional contextual descriptions of Vancouver are shared throughout this dissertation, especially in Chapter 3). I also explain my rationale for focusing on non-Aboriginal people as my primary research participants. I then critically evaluate what is involved in regarding my non-Aboriginal research participants as “settlers” on Indigenous territories, as well as discuss the terminological slippages around nominalizations like Indigeneity and Aboriginality. Finally, I describe how spectrality, spectacle, and the everyday operate conceptually as my tripartite explanatory framework in this dissertation, allowing me to examine contemporary processes that are reproducing and transforming the settler colonial project in Vancouver.
Processes of development and dispossession, migration and management, settlement and growth have produced the city of Vancouver and continue to shape everyday life for its residents. The city is a product of settler colonialism and its attendant political, social, racial, and spatial processes. These processes are ongoing and present: the city is a settler colonial, not a post-colonial, place. Starting from this understanding of the city, I developed a methodological and theoretical approach that examines an eclectic mix of field sites and phenomena to analyse contemporary settler colonial politics as experienced by the city’s non-Aboriginal residents.

Vancouver is situated on Coast Salish traditional territories. The Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh peoples have lived in the region since time immemorial, building their homes and cultural traditions along the Fraser River, False Creek, and Burrard Inlet. Spanish and British explorers arrived in the region in close succession, in 1791 and 1792, sparking further expeditions in the area. The British claimed the territory in 1858, and non-Coast Salish settlement began in earnest when a gold rush in the 1850s brought American and British prospectors to the area. New Westminster served as the colonial capital until 1871, when the province of British Columbia was established and Victoria was named its capital. In the 1880s, the Canadian Pacific Railway company chose the town of Granville (where the Gastown neighbourhood is now located) as its terminus. In 1886 the site was renamed Vancouver, the city was incorporated, and the non-Indigenous population began to grow quickly.

As settlement spread, colonial authorities worked to manage local Indigenous peoples. Municipal, provincial, and federal policies took over this work as the city of Vancouver, the province of British Columbia, and the government of Canada’s Department of Indian Affairs became formalized governing powers (Barman 2007; Harris 2002; McDonald 1996; Stanger-Ross 2008). Management of local Indigenous peoples entailed the establishment of Indian reserves and dispossession of Aboriginal lands; development of the Indian Act, which attempted to define Indian status and regulate Aboriginal lifeways; and the institution of the residential school system, which aimed to separate children from their Aboriginal communities to facilitate their assimilation into mainstream settler society. Unlike other parts of Canada, treaties were not established between Indigenous people and colonial and federal representatives in much of British
Columbia, including in the Lower Mainland around Vancouver. The lack of historical treaties has produced modern-day “uncertainty” about First Nations peoples’ rights to territory and resources in the province, as well as the terms of relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people settling on unceded lands.

These “settlers” are not all white, European, or Euro-Canadians from other parts of Canada. Chinese migrants moved to British Columbia beginning in the 1880s. Nearly a decade late in the 1970s, after a series of federal immigration policy changes, non-European immigration to Vancouver increased rapidly, with the majority of immigrants arriving from Hong Kong and mainland China, followed by the Punjab and other regions of India, the Philippines, and other Asian countries. Today, over 600,000 people live in the city of Vancouver and 2.3 million live in Metro Vancouver. Visible “minorities” have surpassed the white “majority,” reaching 51.8% of Vancouver’s population according to the 2011 census (Statistics Canada 2014). Approximately two percent of Vancouver’s population is Aboriginal, both in the city and its metro region (Metro Vancouver 2014; see also Environics Institute 2010). In addition to three main urban reserves occupied by Coast Salish people and their families (Musqueam, Capilano (Squamish), and Burrard (Tsleil-Waututh)), Aboriginal people have moved to Vancouver from other parts of BC and Canada. The urban Aboriginal population thus has diverse cultural origins, with many different culture and language groups now represented in the city.

The reserve, the Indian Act, and the residential school system, among other colonial policies, serve(d) to entrench social and spatial differences between Aboriginal people and the non-Aboriginal population settling in large numbers on their lands. Differences within and between Indigenous communities have been blurred through racialized politics and practices, despite persistent expressions of cultural, linguistic, and political distinctions. Aboriginal people have been excluded and marginalized through mutually constitutive processes of policy, social habits, and spatial development. Local Coast Salish groups have reacted to these processes, exercising and defending their Aboriginal rights, reclaiming their lands and their rights to self-determination, and mobilizing efforts toward landmark court cases, economic development enterprises, and other acts of recognition. At the same time, many urban Aboriginal organizations have

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1 The Capilano and Burrard reserves are situated along Burrard Inlet in North Vancouver, and Musqueam reserve is in Vancouver at the mouth of the Fraser River. The Hulitsum, Katzie, Kwantlen, Kwikwetlem, Matsqui, Qayqayt, Semiahmoo, Sto:lo, and Tsawwassen are also recognized as local First Nations and have reserves in the Metro Vancouver area.
developed to address the causes and effects of marginalization and inequality, tackling issues related to poverty, education, housing, addiction, employment, childcare, cultural empowerment, and more. Meanwhile, non-Aboriginal settler and migrant people continue to live in and move to Vancouver. How do they relate to Coast Salish land claims, Northwest coast art, Aboriginal inequalities, their Indigenous neighbours? How do they participate in, benefit from, and learn about histories of erasure, separation, dispossession, racialization, and other processes of settler colonialism?

A primary premise of my dissertation is that to study contemporary settler coloniality, it is necessary not only to explore Aboriginal people’s experiences, but also to understand how non-Aboriginal settlers and migrants relate to and construct Aboriginal alterity and participate in the socio-spatial and socio-political dynamics of ongoing settler colonial processes. As I describe below, Aboriginality in Vancouver has been simultaneously spectacularized and spectralized, with Northwest Coast art and culture celebrated and displayed even as Coast Salish connections to land, place, and resources have been systematically erased and displaced. This creates ambivalent conditions of both Indigenous presence and absence, expression and exclusion. I demonstrate through my ethnographic study that examining non-Aboriginal people’s experiences of these dynamics provides crucial insights into the dynamics of contemporary settler colonialism in ways that analyses focused solely on Aboriginal people, and/or the state, cannot. How are difference and relationality constructed in this context?

Because of my interest in non-Aboriginal people’s (dis)connections with the complex interplay between Aboriginal presence and absence, I do not locate my research in distinct sites of Aboriginality, such as local reserves. Nor do I position my work in sites of total absence, where dispossession and discourse seem to have removed all vestiges of historical and contemporary Aboriginality. Instead, my research occupies the spaces between: the interstices of settler colonial sociality. I anchor my study in sites of purposeful Aboriginal “inclusion”: projects that aim to recognize and involve Coast Salish and Aboriginal people in various institutions, events, and spaces that have historically excluded or marginalized them.

I have observed a proliferation of Aboriginal inclusion efforts since moving to the city in 2006, though they certainly have a longer history. I understand these projects to be related to increasing consciousness among settler peoples and governments around the persistent presence of Aboriginal people in the city, their ongoing demands for distinct
status and recognition (including Coast Salish claims to land and resource rights), and
evidence of their unequal social and material conditions. What forms of encounter do
inclusion projects enable and disable? At the interstices between government policy, on-
the-ground services, and everyday forms of life in the city, how do inclusion initiatives
address and broker shifting relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people and
make new forms of meaning-making possible?

Inclusion sites give me access to non-Aboriginal peoples engaged in or proximal
to inclusion work that attempts to bring Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people together in
time and space. My first field site, the Aboriginal Pavilion during Vancouver’s 2010
Winter Olympics, relates directly to my interest in the spectacularization of Aboriginality
and served as my anchoring point to study Olympic Aboriginal expression and non-
Aboriginal responses to it. My other sites, the Mount Pleasant library branch and the
BladeRunners construction training program, offered me long-term engagements with
“inclusion workers” and the everyday banalities of settler colonial life in these locations.

I conducted participant observation at the Aboriginal Pavilion, the library branch,
within the BladeRunners office and training location, and at a BladeRunners placement
site. I interviewed non-Aboriginal library staff and patrons, BladeRunners coordinators,
and workers on a BladeRunners placement site. These interviews inform my analyses of
sociality within these sites, as well as serve as a corpus of qualitative material to comment
more broadly on the spectral, spectacular, and everyday conditions of settler colonialism.
These inclusion sites are thus both the subject of my study as well as vantage points from
which I observed and analysed settler colonial phenomena, such as non-Aboriginal
attitudes toward Aboriginal histories, expressions of sovereignty, and responses to
colonial policies. I examined how non-Aboriginal people construct Aboriginal alterity
and participate in the reproduction and transformation of settler colonial conditions,
including racializing discourses, affective knowledge production, and negotiations around
reconciliation, recognition, and reckoning.

Duncan Campbell Scott, Deputy Superintendent of the Department of Indian
Affairs (1923-1932), famously called the conundrum of Aboriginal alterity and persistent
Aboriginal efforts toward sovereignty and distinct status, Canada’s “Indian problem.” In
some ways, inclusion efforts can be interpreted as yet another set of responses to the
seemingly intractable “Indian problem” – how to manage Aboriginal alterity –
 extermination, assimilation, integration, segregation, preservation, recognition, inclusion?
Insightful analyses continue to emerge about the causes, practices, and effects of policies associated with these philosophies, but recently some scholars are questioning the terms of discussion altogether. Instead of the “Indian problem,” historian Roger Epp (2008; 2012) and Paulette Regan (2010) advocate investigation into the “settler problem.” Epp (2012) writes, after locating himself as a Euro-Canadian settler living on Indigenous lands in the Prairies, that by reorienting the inquiry from the “Indian problem” to the “settler problem,” non-Aboriginal people – variously termed the colonizers, migrants, or settlers – “become the subject under scrutiny”:

The question is no longer about what “they” want – land, recognition, compensation – and therefore what “we” can live with. Instead, it is about what Taiaiake Alfred calls the “colonial mentality, moral indifference, and historical ignorance” that stand in the way of a different relationship. It is about the stories we tell ourselves. It is about the fears and emotions so close to the surface. (Epp 2012:121)

My analysis aims to investigate my participants’ settler colonial mentalities, the stories they tell themselves, and their fears and emotions and other affects. It is grounded in the understanding that colonialism affects not only Aboriginal people but structures contemporary realities for all settler state inhabitants, albeit in different ways. It is not intended to substitute or displace Aboriginal voices or stories of colonialism, but rather to complement them.

I am motivated to examine the “settler problem” as a non-Aboriginal person because such an orientation allows me to move from an anthropology of the Other to an anthropology of Othering as a process, as well as to examine settler colonialism as an ever-emergent set of structural conditions and how the role of the “settler” self is situated in these processes. It enables me to locate myself within the processes I analyse and critique, and to point to the ways other “settlers” are implicated – through complicity, complacency, ignorance, and privilege, and a range of practices to counteract these relations – in settler colonialism in Vancouver. In the next section, I explain why, despite my orientation toward the “settler problem” and contributions to settler colonial studies, I ambivalently choose not to label my participants “settlers.”
Unsettling Social Locations

When talking with the research participant at the library, the one who laughed, I explained that settlement happened differently in Ohio than in British Columbia. While this is true when one examines the details – the Indigenous communities and cultures involved, the national and regional policies, the contexts and temporalities of settlement and migration, the landscapes – it is also true that the United States and Canada, along with Australia and New Zealand, developed through similar processes and logics of settler colonialism. These four nations are often identified as settler states or white settler societies; their majority white populations outnumber, but do not displace altogether, Indigenous peoples on their own lands.

Recent scholarship by a range of interdisciplinary thinkers is increasingly examining the ways settler colonialism operates as a distinct socio-political formation historically and today. In contrast to franchise and metropolitan colonialism, settler states were formed as (primarily) white settlers moved onto traditional lands of diverse groups of Indigenous peoples and, through colonial policy and nation-building processes, developed legal regimes, land tenure systems, and forms of governance. These processes were predicated on displacement and dispossession of Indigenous peoples and territories, which continue to shape contemporary social life, politics, and space as more people immigrate and settle, and as Indigenous communities demand recognition, self-determination, and access to and ownership of their territories.

Racialization and racist ideologies sustained white settlement. In settler states, white settler majorities established political, legal, and social dominance on Indigenous lands and instituted a racial hierarchy that continues to support white supremacy (Smith 2012). As anthropologist Patrick Wolfe explains, “Settler colonies were (are) premised on the elimination of native societies. The split tensing reflects a determinate feature of settler colonization. The colonizers came to stay – invasion is a structure not an event” (1999:2). Critical theorist Andrea Smith further explicates that settler colonial logics necessitate that Indigenous disappearance enables “non-Indigenous peoples’ rightful claim to land” (2012:69). Thus, Indigenous elimination and disappearance simultaneously

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2 In other words, franchise and metropolitan colonialism do not generally involve sustained settlement. Rather, franchise colonialism is premised on exploitation of native labour; for example British colonialism in India. Metropolitan colonialism refers to management of distant colonies from metropoles like London or Paris.
produce and legitimate white settler society. Settler colonial theorist Lorenzo Veracini argues that settler colonialism is “a resilient formation that rarely ends” (2010), noting also that desires for elimination have been “incomplete” (2008).

I position my dissertation within these emerging debates around structural settler colonialism. I recognize Vancouver as a city built upon and sustained through settler colonial logics, which are contested by Indigenous groups and critical analysts. As I discuss in later chapters, especially Chapter 8, understanding Vancouver as a settler colonial place, versus the product of other colonial formations, also enables a more robust analysis of potential paths to decolonization. To settler colonial studies’ interdisciplinary conversations and critiques, I contribute an ethnographic perspective as well as an explicit analytical emphasis on non-Aboriginal, or “settler,” experiences.

I understand “settler” to refer broadly to non-Indigenous peoples who have migrated from elsewhere to “settle” on Indigenous territories. “Settler” connotes a conscious relation between non-Aboriginal people and Indigenous peoples and lands. Therein lays its heuristic and polemical power, and thus its appeal, I think, for some academic analysts and activists. It is certainly what appealed to me when I first embarked on this research project, and a functional binary between Indigenous/non-Indigenous continues to shape my thinking even as I recognize that it oversimplifies more complex relations. Despite the heuristic attraction of the term “settler,” I am troubled by the term as a descriptor for my non-Aboriginal research participants’ identities and/or political positions. While “non-Aboriginal” is no less awkward and is certainly unspecific, I continue to use it in my analysis because of the greater flexibility it allows when describing my participants’ relations with Aboriginality and because “settler” is not ethnographically resonant. For the remainder of this section, I discuss this uneasy representational decision.

A recent debate crystallizes some of the tensions around the label “settler.” In 2009, critical theorists Nandita Sharma and Cynthia Wright critiqued Bonita Lawrence and Enakshi Dua’s (2005) call to “decolonize antiracisms.” Lawrence and Dua suggest that people of colour are implicated in settler colonialism and that antiracist efforts must be reoriented toward a decolonizing framework that privileges Indigeneity and Indigenous sovereignty. Sharma and Wright ask “whether it is historically accurate or analytically precise to describe as settler colonialism the forced movements of enslaved Africans, the movement of unfree indentured Asians, or the subsequent Third World
displacements and migrations of people from across the globe, many of them indigenous peoples themselves” (2009:121). They also contest discourses of nationhood that support Indigenous claims to sovereignty, pointing out how nation-building and claims of autochthony have undermined human rights, supported capitalist exploitation, and deepened and naturalized racisms.

This debate has encouraged me and other settler colonial theorists to critically evaluate the explanatory power and analytic productivity of framing contemporary relations around a settler/Indigenous binary. It has also led some scholars to develop more nuanced labels for settler state peoples. Critical theorist Lorenzo Veracini (2011), for example, develops a triad to describe settler colonial relations: “settlers” (often, but not always, early white and/or European migrants and their descendants), “exogenous others” (racialized migrants and their descendants), and “indigenous others.” In an earlier work, political theorist David Pearson uses a similar triad and relates it to processes of citizenship and identity production. He identifies three identity formation processes in settler and “post-settler” states: “the aboriginalization (of aboriginal minorities), the ethnification (of immigrant minorities), and the indigenization (of settler majorities)” (2002:990). As with Veracini’s account, Pearson’s analysis forms a distinction among settlers between European/white settlers and non-white, non-European migrants.

While these debates have largely revolved around who counts as a settler analytically, there has been little discussion of who identifies as a settler ethnographically. Although analytical categories are important for delineating relations of power and structural conditions, an anthropological perspective can help to illuminate to what extent these categories are emically or etically relevant. The term “settler” is fascinating in this regard. Although it is increasingly used to mark a particular subject position within academic analyses, its wider social resonance is highly ambivalent. Who identifies as a settler?

Midway through my fieldwork, my supervisor asked what my non-Aboriginal participants were calling Aboriginal people. Indians? First Nations? Indigenous peoples? Aboriginals? Natives? Coast Salish? We discussed the ways generation, geography, and politics influences participants’ terminological choices and what these choices in turn

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3 In the push toward criticality, there is a danger in reifying colonial categories in ways that do not reflect contemporary ethnographic realities and may therefore stymie productive debate, reflection, and social action.
might reflect about social relations. At the time, neither of us interrogated what my participants called themselves. They never called themselves settlers.

To describe their relations to Aboriginal people, participants referenced their own racial and ethnic heritage, their parents’ and grandparents’ origins, their hometowns, their occupations and class, and other descriptors and narratives to characterize their self-ascribed identities. In more recent, post-fieldwork conversations with some participants, I have brought up the term “settler” to inquire about its resonance and relevance. While there were no objections to the label “non-Aboriginal,” used in my consent form and in interviews, “settler” proved problematic to my interlocutors. One Filipino Canadian participant found the term quite unsettling in fact. She explained that as a person from a colonized place, imagining herself as a settler is troubling. Furthermore, her family has developed close connections with a Sto:lo family and she feels she makes an effort to educate her mixed-race children about the Indigenous and colonial history of the places they live.

A white woman scrunched up her nose at the mention of “settler.” She said it made her think of pioneer days – covered wagons, homesteads. To her, the term is anachronistic. Another white woman suggested that the term is uncomfortable because she was born in Canada and has no other imagined homeland; even though she recognizes that she is on Indigenous territories and participates in ongoing processes of colonialism, she finds it challenging to conceptualize herself (only) as a settler.

These stories could easily be read as reasons to support the heuristic use of “settler” in critical analyses: to demonstrate how these women are implicated in the settler colonial project, even if it is in different ways; or to distinguish between “white settlers” and “exogenous others” or “migrants”; or to point out how naturalization does not absolve individuals of their “settler-ness”; or to emphasize that settler colonialism did not simply occur in the past but continues to structure present-day relations. Indeed, I think the dissonance of the term settler for these participants and other “settlers” can make it heuristically more powerful. Similar to writing with the pronouns “she/her” to contest the common equation of personhood with manhood, or to name whiteness rather than leave it.

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4 I discuss below my own terminological decisions in regards to naming Indigenous peoples.
unmarked and normative, the use of the term “settler” serves as a reminder of the continued conditions of settler colonialism.\(^5\)

However, I think my participants’ discomfort with the term warrants further attention. The Filipino Canadian woman’s difficulty identifying as a settler when she recognized herself as a racialized, colonized person (and a person engaging in decolonizing practices) links up with the debates and theorizing already mentioned (Lawrence and Dua 2005; Pearson 2002; Sharma and Wright 2009; Smith 2012; Veracini 2010). Her subject position within the power dynamics of empire and race is not fully captured in the label “settler.” The woman who considers herself a “native Canadian” living on Indigenous territories also raises important questions about identity in advanced settler states. Political theorist Pal Ahluwalia (2001), following postcolonial critic Mahmood Mamdani (1996; 2001) asks: “When does a settler become a native?” Pearson (2002) suggests that white settler majorities are indeed in the process of indigenizing, of becoming natives. As Wolfe (1999) and Smith (2012) argue, this is the desired goal of settler colonialism, premised on the elimination of the Aboriginal native to legitimate white settlement. The lived experience of indigenization for settler majorities and the sense of identity it creates can thus produce incongruence with the term “settler.”\(^6\) Having no alternative identity and no other homeland, settlers “indigenize” and become normative majorities, thereby moving from “settlers” to “Canadians.”

It is clear that this process is enabled through power dynamics related to racialization and colonialism. This is exemplified by anthropologist Eva Mackey’s (2002) analysis of the nation-building project that sustains “Canadian-Canadian-ness” – unmarked, normative whiteness – through subtle, flexible, and strategic management of minorities. The desire for “native-ness” can also affect racialized and ethnic groups and individuals, some of whom desire to transcend ethnification and other management strategies to become recognized as equal and significant parts of the Canadian nation.

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\(^5\) This seems to be the case with recent social movements, such as Idle No More (see Chapter 8), in which non-Indigenous peoples choose to name themselves settlers as a strategy of positioning, alliance, and colonial critique. In discussions on Facebook, Twitter, and other forms of social media, making the decision to call oneself a “settler” reflects a particular political orientation and acknowledgement of settler colonial processes.

\(^6\) Fiona Bateman and Lionel Pilkington write, “Even in the context of a growing awareness of the injustices of the past, there is still a struggle to meet the needs of those most damaged by the process – the indigenous, as well as another population now dealing with the consequences, the descendants of original settlers, who have inherited the blame, and possibly the guilt, but have no alternative identity, no other homeland” (2011: 3).
Again, however, we return to a point where “settler” is heuristically powerful but ethnographically dissonant.

The other participant’s complaint that “settler” has a historical connotation also deserves further consideration. As an agent noun, it names those who settle a land and, in the context of colonial settlement, displace or dispossess Indigenous inhabitants. In their recent edited volume on settler colonialism, Fiona Bateman and Lionel Pilkington describe its historical processes and discourses: “fortified by modernizing narratives and ideology, a population from the metropole moves to occupy a territory and fashion a new society in a space conceptualized as vacant and free: as available for the taking” (2011:1). Settler colonial histories have documented this process with nuance and care, discussing how ideas of Canada as terra nullius – or an empty land – underwrote the colonial and capitalist expropriation of Indigenous lands (cf. Blomley 2004; Edmonds 2010; Harris 2002; Harris 2004). Settler states and societies were formed through this process. But to what extent does this description apply to contemporary experiences of life in an “already-settled” place? Does Bateman and Pilkington’s statement describe an ongoing and contemporary process, the event of moving from the metropole and settling a new land?

As stated above, Wolfe emphasizes that settler colonialism is a structure, not an event. The term “settler” however implies events of moving and settling, rather than reflects the more complicated structural conditions that we live with and through today and the identities produced through these processes. I suggest that the historical connotation of the term “settler” is also reified through historical, political, and legal analyses within settler colonial studies that greatly outnumber ethnographic studies. My dissertation is an attempt to augment the academic field of settler colonial studies by bringing observations and analyses from the ethnographic field of a contemporary settler colonial place. My ethnographic lens ultimately makes the unilateral use of the term “settler” as a label for my participants untenable.

I choose to position my analysis in the field of settler colonial studies because I find its theoretical and descriptive frameworks productive and relevant for analysing the contemporary conditions I studied during my fieldwork. I hope that my analysis will demonstrate how non-Aboriginal people living in Vancouver today are participating in and relating to structural forms of settler colonialism and shifting expressions, definitions, and representations of Aboriginality. While pointing out the ways contemporary people
are complicit in the ongoing processes of settler colonialism is important, conflating an identity label with these processes is representationally problematic.\(^ \text{7}\)

I am therefore more interested in interrogating the tensions and politics that sustain a binary between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples than in labelling my participants “settlers” to make a point about their subjectivity and positionality. My decision to use the terms “non-Aboriginal” and “non-Indigenous” to categorize my participants relates, then, in part to their myriad and non-uniform practices of self-identification and in part to my research emphasis on how they learn about and relate to Aboriginal people within the context of settler colonialism. “Non-Aboriginal,” as clumsy and unspecific as it is, allows me to maintain my emphasis on my participants’ diverse relations to Aboriginality without adopting an ethnographically inappropriate term. Occasionally I use “settler” for emphasis and other times I qualify “non-Aboriginal” with additional descriptors and context.

Despite my representational rejection of “settler,” I maintain the Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal binary. Education scholars Brooke Madden and Heather McGregor state, citing anthropologist Sherry Ortner’s examination of Eurocentric binary constructions, that “one might posit that the construction of an Indigenous/non-Indigenous binary is a political process that seeks to centre Indigeneity in discussions of Indigenous research, education, sovereignty, and so on” (2013:380). This centring of Indigeneity enables a particular (and particularly attractive) political orientation and standpoint to critique colonial processes. But the Indigenous/non-Indigenous binary also silences and flattens. Madden and McGregor, echoing some of Sharma and Wright’s (2009) critiques, suggest that this binary often substitutes and elides the binary Indigenous/white European in ways that can obfuscate attention to white hegemony as well as ignore how peoples of colour are often differently and diversely positioned in relation to the colonial project and white settler supremacy and privilege.

Critical theorist Andrea Smith’s work (cf. 2012) also examines the analytical utility of the Indigenous/non-Indigenous binary. She acknowledges Sharma and Wright’s important interventions, but suggests that settler colonialism operates as one of three

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\(^ \text{7}\) Analysts of race, racialization, and racism, for example, describe how the race-privileged participate in racialized hierarchization and white hegemony without labelling participants in this process “racists.” Analysts recognize that racism is a structural process and cannot be reduced to individual identities or behaviours, just as settler colonialism is a structural process that cannot be reduced to the individual identities or set of behaviours associated with “settlers.”
mutually-sustaining logics that all support white supremacy in settler states, especially the United States; the other two logics are capitalism and war.8 “Slaveability” and anti-Black racism, she explains, “anchors capitalism,” orientalism “anchors war,” and genocide “anchors colonialism” (2012: 68). As a result, critical analysts must be cognizant of multiple, interpenetrating power relations and build this awareness into their methodological designs and theorizing. Critical Indigenous scholarship must account for the role of race in their analyses toward sovereignty, for example, and critical race theorists must account for colonialism in their anti-racist analyses.9

While it is beyond the scope of my current analysis to fully take up Smith’s charge to examine the triple logics of genocide/colonialism, racism/capitalism, and orientalism/war, her discussion serves as an important reminder of the work that remains to be done to connect these different yet entangled forms of oppression (cf. Young 2000). In this dissertation, I endeavour to contribute to these discussions by ethnographically examining how settler colonial logics function through the spectacularization and spectralization of Aboriginality in Vancouver. I bring a critical race theory sensibility to my analysis by focusing on processes that Other Aboriginal people and their stories through racial or cultural means; I also link this Othering to the marginalized status of many Aboriginal people living in Vancouver and Canada today. Furthermore, I aim to locate my analysis of racialization within a frame that privileges and acknowledges Indigeneity as a distinct socio-political relation to land and place that has been co-opted and managed by the settler state.

In my analysis, I do not claim that all social locations or contemporary relations can be analysed through the lens of settler colonial theorizing alone. Because of Smith’s and Sharma and Wright’s critiques, I recognize that the Indigenous/non-Indigenous

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8 While Smith’s analysis focuses on the United States, and she acknowledges its potential limitations when applied in other contexts, I find that her primary interventions in debates about settler colonialism pertain to Canada generally and British Columbia in particular. In her direct analysis of Sharma and Wright’s critique, Smith argues that they do not attend to the fact that it is actually capitalist conceptions of land as property that undergird a reading of migration as displacing and dispossessing. She problematizes the commoditization of land and suggests replacing a temporal framework of Indigenous land claims (based on prior occupancy and ownership) with a spatial framework that privileges a “radical relationality to the land” (2012:82–82). Smith also cites Indigenous scholars like Taiaiake Alfred, Jeffrey Corntassel, Glen Coulthard, and Indigenous organizations at the 2008 World Social Forum who advance decolonizing politics that think beyond Indigenous recognition from the colonial state, addressing Sharma and Wright’s critique of sovereignty as a nationalist project. Following Scott Lyons (2010) and Indigenous organizations at the forum, she also raises the possibility of thinking of Indigeneity as praxis rather than identity, founded on “liberation of all peoples that depends on dismantling the state” (84).

9 These orientations also necessitate attention to the role of the state, capitalist accumulation, and discourses that justify exclusion of and violence against various Others.
binary is only one axis of differentiation functioning to produce power imbalances, material inequalities, or differential access to justice and self-determination in Vancouver. By using Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal descriptors in my work, I do not wish to reify this binary, but rather to examine its production and meaning. Moreover, I challenge myself to understand and interpret my non-Aboriginal participants’ experiences in relation to Indigeneity and colonialism as a methodological, theoretical, political, and ethical project. Taking inspiration from education scholar Dwayne Donald (2012), I maintain a distinction between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people not because I think these divides are “natural and necessary,” but because to do so allows for exploration of “ethical relationality”: “an ecological understanding of human relationality that does not deny difference, but rather seeks to understand more deeply how our different histories and experiences position us in relation to each other” (93; 103). I am particularly interested in how settler colonialism has produced and influenced this relation.

A final point to make in regards to terminology is the use of the term “Aboriginal.” “Aboriginal” is used in Canada’s Constitution Act (1982) to recognize and acknowledge First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people collectively. The development of the term relates to the different ethnic, cultural, and national affiliations that were misrecognized or erased through the use of the colonial, racial, legal, and policy label “Indian.” While it can be argued that “Aboriginal” is a more inclusive term, Taiaiake Alfred and Jeffrey Corntassel (2005) suggest that its use in fact deflects attention from Indigeneity and Indigenous connections to land and efforts toward self-determination. This is an important critique that I continue to reflect on in my relation to my own work. I self-consciously and purposefully use both terms “Aboriginal” and “Indigenous.” Using “Aboriginal” is an acknowledgement of the intersections of political, racial, and cultural dynamics implied in the term, including the very relationship between Indigenous people and the Canadian nation-state that Alfred and Corntassel aim to critique. I also refer to the local peoples collectively as Coast Salish and specifically as Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh. For Indigenous peoples living in Vancouver who are not from these communities, I occasionally use the term “urban Aboriginal.”

I continue to critically interrogate my representational decision to use “Aboriginal”/“Indigenous” and “non-Aboriginal”/“non-Indigenous” throughout my analysis. By adopting a settler colonial theoretical framework while also electing to use these terms, despite their unspecific and problematic qualities, my hope is that I can
advance a more complicated narrative that simultaneously maintains descriptive
etnographic integrity while also building upon and reworking the critiques of
terminology, processes of identity formation, and polemical analyses I have outlined
above. I turn next to explain how my conceptual triad – spectrality, spectacle, and the
everyday – allow me to make these theoretical and ethnographic contributions.

Spectacle, Spectrality, and the Everyday

Spectacle and spectrality share a common root in different iterations of the Latin
verb *spectare*: to look at or to see. My use of these concepts interrogates what is seen,
unseen, and remains to be seen in the everyday lived experiences and politics of settler
colonial Vancouver. I ask what is made visible by the presence of colonial and
Indigenous ghosts and what is concealed by spectacles. My interest in spectacle is in
many ways fuelled by my interest in spectrality; I wonder what is hidden from view in the
bright light of spectacular events and in the shadows of spectacular sites. Spectacles catch
my eye and the ghosts that haunt them catch my attention. I am ultimately curious about
how my non-Aboriginal participants experience life in a city where Indigenous peoples,
histories, and places are simultaneously spectral and spectacularized, and how they relate
to the uncanny feeling of Indigenous presence and absence.

Time is “out of joint” in Vancouver (Derrida 1994): it is no longer simply a
colonial place, but neither is it yet postcolonial. Instead, it is a place haunted by an unjust
past of dispossession and displacement, an unequal present of marginality and
disconnection, and an uncertain future of recognition and reclamation. At the same time,
it is a place decorated with totem poles and Northwest Coast art. It is home to a
neighbourhood, the Downtown Eastside, where the city’s inequalities are on spectacular
display. This is a city where Aboriginality is simultaneously pushed to the margins and
front and centre, hidden from view and in plain sight (Gordon 2008; Robertson and
Culhane 2005). As Indigenous people, including the local Musqueam, Squamish, and
Tsleil-Waututh Nations, as well as (urban) Aboriginal social movements like Idle No
More, persist in their efforts toward sovereignty and equity, the “over-and-done-with” of
colonial history is continually revealed as ever-present, emergent, and shifting.

To speak of spectacle and spectrality in academic circles calls to mind two French
philosophers: Guy Debord and Jacques Derrida. Marxist critics and contemporaries,
Debord and Derrida rarely engaged in debates with one another. Rather, Debord’s *Society of the Spectacle* (1994) and Derrida’s *Specters of Marx* (1994) are both foundational texts that have generated considerable discussion and informed fascinating scholarly analyses, each with its own distinct trajectory. *Society of the Spectacle* significantly influenced subsequent studies of mass media, consumerism, alienation, and commodity fetishism, as well as inspired political action among Debord’s fellow members of the social movement Situationist International in the Paris Uprising in 1968. *Specters of Marx* began as a lecture in a symposium in 1991 entitled “Whither Marxism?” It built upon and sparked debates about the direction of Marxist analysis in the wake of the Soviet collapse and the relationship between deconstruction and Marxism.

The divergent paths of these debates, and the different presuppositions and central questions that characterize them, make it challenging to join them together in a meaningful and coherent conversation.\(^{10}\) I do not attempt to achieve this feat, nor do I aim to review each of the expansive bodies of scholarship their work has shaped. Instead, I introduce the concepts of spectacle and spectrality as I characterize them and as they relate to my ethnographic context, drawing in part on Debord and Derrida, but also on anthropological analyses of spectacle (Culhane 2003; MacAlloon 1984; Robertson 2005), local scholars’ interpretations of the politics of Indigenous performance and display (Cruikshank 1997; Roy 2002; Townsend-Gault 2004), socio-historical examinations of ghosts and affective haunting (Boyd and Thrush 2011; Gordon 2008; Mawani 2012a), and critical discussions of post-colonial ghost stories (Cameron 2008; Gelder and Jacobs 1998). This entails a theoretical eclecticism that enables a nuanced, critical analysis of settler colonial alterity and space as experienced in Vancouver.

**Spectacle**

“The spectacle is not a collection of images; rather, it is a social relationship between people that is mediated by images.”

- Guy Debord (1994:13)

When reviewing my interview transcripts, I used a separate code – “mediated encounter” – to identify the many times my participants recounted their experiences with Aboriginality through recollections of powwows, regalia, museums, totem poles and

\(^{10}\) Though philosopher Andrew Hussey (2001) has tried.
tourist sites, and other forms of observation and consumption (see Chapter 7). Although I initially understood these occasions as somewhat distinct from their ordinary, day-to-day lives, it became apparent that material culture, art, performance, and media play central roles in their constructions of Aboriginal alterity. As anthropologist Leslie Robertson observed in her ethnography, *Legend, Curse, and Spectacle in a Canadian Mining Town* (2005:161), “Non-Aboriginal people of every age group discuss their perceptions of Indigenous people through spectacle and ceremony, contexts where they are culturally visible. Spectacle provides a frame through which non-Indigenous people imagine Native Americans.”

I argue that spectacular cultural visibility through art, display, and performance is a constitutive feature of settler coloniality in Vancouver. Colourful and monumental Northwest Coast artwork decorates the city, particularly in its most touristic spaces like the international terminal of the airport, Stanley Park (see Chapter 3), and Granville Island. Works by Haida artist Bill Reid and Musqueam artist Susan Point are especially prominent. The Museum of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia, a popular destination and site of many fieldtrips for local schoolchildren, displays impressive totem poles in its grand Great Hall and outside on museum grounds. Additionally, Aboriginal performances are increasingly common, attracting broad audiences to popular annual events like the Talking Stick Festival and the Squamish Nation Powwow and other public events that feature Aboriginal singing and dance groups as opening acts. As I discuss in Chapter 4, Aboriginal art and performance were a central component of Vancouver’s 2010 Olympic Games – not only in the Opening Ceremony but also in the Vancouver Olympic bid, marketing, merchandise, and even forms of resistance and protest.

Local ethnographer Dara Culhane calls attention to another dynamic of spectacle in Vancouver: the fascinated gaze researchers, journalists, and the public cast on the Downtown Eastside neighbourhood’s poor and marginalized community, including its disproportionate number of Aboriginal residents. She writes, “[n]ational and international media as well as a surfeit of both well-intentioned and/or brashly self-promoting artists, writers, and researchers have been drawn as moths to flames to document, analyse, represent, treat, and market the dramatic and photogenic spectacle of social suffering in this neighbourhood” (2003:594). Their exotic portrayals of “drugs, sex, violence, and crime” reinforce morbid fascination with the neighbourhood, reproducing it as a site of
spectacle (594). The Downtown Eastside stands out in the socio-spatial imaginaries of my participants as one of the few parts of the city they easily recognize as a distinctly Aboriginalized space, and their impressions of the neighbourhood are largely shaped by the “spectacle of social suffering” on display there. I return to Culhane’s argument below to connect spectacle and spectrality, but first I examine spectacle and describe its defining features.

First, spectacles privilege sight above all other senses. Spectacles are sites and events that attract spectators who gather to watch, observe, and look. As anthropologist John MacAloon puts it, “they are things to be seen” (1984:243). Although other senses and affects may be activated by spectacle, visuality is primary and essential. Furthermore, sites and events must achieve a particular scale or visually impressive quality to be characterized as spectacles. As MacAloon points out, neither orchestral performances nor films are typically categorized as spectacles, unless they reach some kind of large-scale proportion and catch the viewer’s eye. This in part explains why totem poles are deemed spectacular by many while other examples of Northwest Coast material culture, such as baskets or spoons, are not (though the baskets and spoons may be ornate and beautiful). Similarly, powwow dancers in brightly coloured and expressive regalia are spectacular in a way that a storyteller in jeans and a t-shirt is not (though he or she may still captivate audiences).

Second, spectacles are mediated moments that must involve an audience of some kind. A large-scale site or event only becomes a spectacle if it attracts spectators. Because sight is such a critical dimension of spectacle, it logically follows that there must be viewers who see, watch, and look. The positioning of spectators in relation to spectacle implies a somewhat passive form of participation for audiences. Spectacles enable audience members to watch without getting otherwise involved, and a shift in positionality occurs when an audience member becomes an active part of the spectacle, participating as an actor or performer rather than an observer. The relationship between

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11 MacAloon is one of anthropology’s primary theorists of spectacle, along with Don Handelman (Beeman 1993). In contrast to Debord’s materialist perspective, both MacAloon and Handelmann focus on ritual, semiotics, and performance theory in their analyses of the symbolisms of spectacle. MacAloon’s anthropologies of spectacle and Olympic Games have analysed the philosophies of the modern Olympic movement’s founder, Pierre Coubertin; examined spectacle in relation to other forms of performance (e.g., festival, ritual, and games); and explored the methodological potential and limits of Olympic ethnographic study (MacAloon 1984; MacAloon 1999; MacAloon 2009).

12 The presence of spectators is more important than the size of the crowd, though crowd size may contribute to the scale and experience of spectacle.
spectacle and spectators produces many a/effects, and important social relations are constructed through spectacle and spectatorship. As Debord observes, “The spectacle is not a collection of images; rather, it is a social relationship between people that is mediated by images” (1994:13). Many of my non-Aboriginal research participants’ experiences with Aboriginality are with images of Aboriginal art, culture, and performance more than with Aboriginal people directly. This has profound effects on their expectations of Aboriginal alterity and their affective knowledges about their relations to Aboriginality (as I discuss below and in other chapters, especially Chapter 7).

Third, spectacles are often observed by spectators as cultural rather than political occasions, which in part explains spectators’ self-perceived role as observers rather than actors in spectacle. Cultural qualities of Indigenous spectacles – art, performance, display, and even social suffering, as Culhane has observed – are privileged by spectators over their political or social characteristics and effects. Debord argues that spectacle “bur[ies] history in culture” (1994:137). However, as anthropologists Julie Cruikshank (1997), Bruce Miller (2006), and historian Susan Roy (2002), and others (cf. Raibmon 2000; 2005; Townsend-Gault 2004; Stanley 1998) have argued, Aboriginal art and performance often cannot be isolated from historical context and socio-political issues related to land, decolonization, and sovereignty. Such performances regularly communicate political messages, even if non-Aboriginal audiences do not always understand them as such. As Roy suggests, “cultural performances directed to multi-ethnic audiences [should be treated as] ‘tangible forms of social action’ embedded in the larger fields of political, economic, and cultural production” (2002:62).

Furthermore, in Northwest Coast communities, audiences at potlatches and other public events are directly involved with the political work of such performances and activities: audience members are witnesses, not merely spectators, which changes their role and responsibilities from passive viewers to active participants. My categorization of Aboriginal art and performance as cultural spectacles is thus meant to draw attention to the ways that non-Aboriginal audiences often perceive them, rather than to reflect the intentions and goals of the artists and performers.

13 Roy uses examples of Musqueam performances in the 1960s to demonstrate how Musqueam dancers played off of non-Aboriginal audience’s expectations of Indigenous performance and repurposed these opportunities to articulate their own political attachments to land and history. She writes, “although non-Aboriginal audiences, who were steeped in a tradition that distinguishes between Aboriginal or folk cultural tradition and political activity, likely viewed Aboriginal performances as non-confrontational, even nostalgic, [the Musqueam’]s displays contained elements of promotion and protests that were only possible within such celebratory intercultural settings” (2002:67).
themselves. There are certainly politics involved in spectacle, as I hope my analysis will illustrate. However, readings of spectacle that privilege cultural interpretations and gloss over the political and social commentary embedded within them are pervasive, especially in relation to Aboriginal performance and display. Such readings reproduce non-Aboriginal people as spectators rather than actors and/or witnesses in socio-political processes that affect Aboriginal people.

This brings me to my fourth observation about spectacle: spectacles are inherently representational, and racial and cultural Others are often spectacularized in popular representations. The spectacularized Other is thus a common and significant part of viewers’ affective knowledges. As critical theorist Stuart Hall notes, “Representation is a complex business and, especially when dealing with ‘difference,’ it engages feelings, attitudes, and emotions and it mobilizes fears and anxieties in the viewer” (1997:226). While Hall’s analysis deals mostly with representations of blackness, including black athletes and criminals and binary constructions of black and white, representations of Indigenous Otherness have certainly been spectacularized in common national narratives (the frontier and the Wild West), epic films (especially westerns), museums and ethnographic displays (such as World’s Fairs and expositions), and contemporary media and journalism. This long history of spectacular representation forms a considerable archive of images and imaginaries that non-Aboriginal people can and do access in their constructions of Aboriginal alterity. Debord argues in the opening paragraph of *Society of the Spectacle* that “all that once was directly lived has become mere representation” (1994:12). Representations of Aboriginal alterity in art, display, performance, and media spectacles come to constitute experiences and knowledges about Aboriginality in general. Spectacular representations of Aboriginality in Vancouver often stand in for and shape direct, personal encounters with Aboriginal people in the city. From totem poles to Indigenous social suffering on the Downtown Eastside to powwow performances, Aboriginal spectacles are both eye-catching and expected in the city – both extraordinary and ordinary parts of Vancouver’s aesthetics and the lived experiences of its non-Aboriginal residents.

Finally, and on a related note, spectacles are often understood by spectators as distinct from everyday life even as they inform and constitute it. Spectacular sites and events offer discreet moments to see, watch, and observe something apart from the ordinary. Spectacles are eye-catching. Yet an accumulation of spectacles can also come to
comprise the ordinary and populate the everyday. Thus, the totem poles in Stanley Park, for example, remain distinct from everyday life – they are colourful, grand, and memorable, they represent a spectacularized Otherness, and they are a site to be visited on occasion – but they are also a familiar site/sight for city residents. Their familiarity does not cancel out their distinction or separation. They remain Other, outside of the everyday, just as other forms Indigenous art and performance are recognized and marked as distinct and different, outside the ordinary. The Downtown Eastside continues to fascinate and disturb passersby, even though its poverty, violence, and marginalization have become normalized features of the neighbourhood and city. While the neighbourhood’s residents are not performers, their lives lived outside on the street attract attention and spectators. This is what I aim to demonstrate in my analyses of spectacle that follow: that Indigenous spectacles and spectacularized Indigeneity, in both their distinction and ubiquity, significantly shape non-Aboriginal expectations and affective knowledges about Aboriginal alterity and encounter. These spectacles reproduce looking relations (Chapter 7), influence representations of place and nation (Chapter 4), and inform practices of inclusion (Chapters 4, 5, and 6). As I discuss below, spectacle has a considerable effect on how non-Aboriginal people experience space, sociality, and alterity in Vancouver.

Analysing spectacle opens opportunities to interrogate the politics of visibility and representation. Spectacles as distinctive features of city life variously reflect, distort, obscure, and occasionally transform everyday social processes. As anthropologist Don Handelman (1990) has observed, spectacles can function as either models or mirrors – they are sites and events that allow analysts and audiences to examine and sometimes critique ordinary conditions through comparison and contrast with spectacular representations. In Vancouver, paying critical attention to Indigenous spectacles allows me to ask questions like: How do spectacles distract from and/or illuminate historical injustices and material inequalities? How do non-Aboriginal audiences integrate Aboriginal art and display into their own sense of place and belonging in the city? How does familiarity with Aboriginal spectacle become synonymous with or different from familiarity with Indigenous history, culture, and social life? How do Aboriginal spectacles reproduce and intervene in processes and politics of settler colonialism? How does the banality of spectacle in the city limit or make possible Indigenous recognition and colonial reckoning?
Spectrality

“What is the time and what is the history of the spectre? Is there a present of the spectre? Are its comings and goings ordered according to the linear succession of a before and an after, between a present-past, a present-present, and present-future, between a ‘real time’ and a ‘deferred time’?”


Among settlers in contemporary Vancouver, there is much that goes unseen, unheard, and unsaid in relation to the ongoing colonial project. Open dialogue about race and racism is rare, for example, and anxieties about historical Coast Salish dispossession and future repossesson of unceded territories are only occasionally expressed. Always present but often hidden or repressed, concerns about an unjust past, unequal present, and an uncertain future haunt the everyday. Spectrality is a state or condition of haunting; spectre is another word for ghost or apparition. I argue that Aboriginal alterity and the unfinished and ever-emergent business of settler colonialism produce spectral effects that influence non-Aboriginal residents’ experiences, affective knowledges, and spatio-temporal imaginaries of their city. I also suggest that analytically attending to ghosts and hauntings opens opportunities to make visible what is often hidden from view, silenced, and/or revenant: disappearing and returning.

As geographer Emilie Cameron observes, spectrality has emerged as a “compelling metaphor” for critical scholars who “aim to trouble, uncover, and interrogate the play of the colonial past in this ongoing colonial present” (2008:383–384). Although Cameron critiques the spectral turn, she acknowledges that stories of ghosts enable analysts to unsettle and critique colonial conceptions of time and space, and to interrogate the “mismatch between the ideal and the real, the present and the absent” (383). Attention to ghosts allows critical scholars and social actors to consider and convey the traces, impacts, and effects of systemic processes and systems of power that are not always immediately tangible or blatantly visible. In her influential book Ghostly Matters (2008), sociologist Avery Gordon persuasively argues that attending to ghosts is a critical political project. She suggests that ghosts are part of material and social reality and have socio-political effects. For my analytical purposes, spectrality provides a critical frame to investigate how my non-Aboriginal research participants affectively relate to the spatio-temporalities of Indigenous visibility/erasure, presence/absence, and marginality/reinscription.
Theorizing Indigeneity as spectral also enables me to explain how Aboriginal alterity and Indigeneity function almost holographically: apparent and visible in some contexts, but erased or minimized in others. I am interested in how and why Aboriginal alterity – cultural, racial, and social difference – is sometimes emphasized and other times is ignored or mitigated. As well, I suggest that Indigeneity is revenant: it seems to disappear and return, thereby haunting contemporary social relations. For example, sometimes attention to Aboriginal racial alterity eclipses Indigenous political distinction, rendering Indigeneity invisible. Other times, efforts toward universalized, liberal forms of equality erase Aboriginal alterities and Indigenous distinctions. Sometimes Indigeneity is called forth and summoned – through spectacles of recognition, for instance – and then retreats from view as the event continues or attention switches to other concerns.

Narratives of city history offer another example: local Coast Salish people appear at the start of the story, then disappear as the focus turns to stories of the railways and ports and other processes of city development, only to return again in descriptions of the multicultural, colourful cultures represented in the city today. This revenant form of Indigenous spectrality is the enabling force fuelling both Aboriginal spectacle and marginality in Vancouver, thereby shaping the conditions of encounter for non-Aboriginal residents.

It is important to note that I evoke and articulate a very specific interpretation of spectrality in ways that sometimes do and sometimes do not correspond with beliefs about ghosts in local and regional Indigenous communities. For example, Musqueam people believe their ancestors are real, not ghosts; they have a contemporary presence that requires certain protocols. Maintaining the metaphor of “ghosts,” I also suggest that people and processes from the past are present in spaces of the city today, but I do not use the language or conception of ancestors, nor do I directly discuss protocols. I do, however, contend that we should acknowledge ghostliness in the city and, using Gordon’s language, be “hospitable” to spectres that haunt city spaces rather than exorcise or ignore them. I specifically draw on Gordon’s analysis of spectres to develop my own theorizing about the spectral qualities of settler colonial life in the city. In doing so, I do not significantly engage with other versions of spectrality and ghostliness as imagined, for example, in Indigenous communities on the Northwest Coast or in the “ghost stories” told

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14 I am grateful to Renisa Mawani for suggesting this imagery.
about “Indian graveyards” and other forms of North American haunting, as collected and
discussed in Colleen Boyd and Coll Thrush’s recent edited volume (2011). Instead, I
develop a distinct conceptual and critical analysis of haunting, not to repeat or interpret
others’ ghost stories but to consider how the city is haunted by the unfinished business of
colonialism and the ongoing production and management of alterity.  

Like spectacle, I suggest that spectrality involves sight and seeing; yet spectres
play tricks on sight and also activate other senses. I agree with Gordon when she explains
that “haunting is not about invisibility or unknowability per se”; instead, she argues,
haunting “refers us to what’s living and breathing in the place hidden from view: people,
places, histories, knowledge, memories, ways of life, ideas” (2011:3). To conjure up and
acknowledge ghosts involves making visible what has been repressed or concealed but
never fully banished or disappeared. It also involves examining the processes that repress
and conceal. For example, in 2012 a construction project in the Marpole neighbourhood
of Vancouver uncovered a Coast Salish burial site, part of the vast Marpole Midden, a
National Heritage Site on the Fraser River (see Chapter 8). The Musqueam community
mobilized to protest the construction project, reclaim the property, and lay their ancestors
to rest. It is not the dead and buried I consider as ghosts here, but the ways that
Musqueam claims to place and history were covered up (quite literally, by concrete and
tar) through colonial processes and urban development only to be made visible again
through the Musqueam community’s contemporary acts of resistance and remembering.
In my conceptual schema, the space became haunted not by the spirits of ancestors, but
by buried histories forgotten and unknown among the broader public.

Gordon argues that ghosts take up space. Exploring their spatialized existence is a
form of unmapping, which Sherene Razack (2002) advocates as a strategy to dislodge
naturalized racialization and spatialization processes to reveal the settler mythologies that
underpin them. This spatial project involves interrogating and contesting discursive
erasures and refusing to take absence for granted. As the Musqueam example above and
the case of Stanley Park in Chapter 3 illustrate, I understand Vancouver’s spaces to be
haunted, not necessarily by supernatural beings, but by processes of dispossession that
have displaced local Coast Salish peoples and their histories from common urban
narratives and imaginaries. When familiar places become haunted by unfamiliar stories,

15 In future analyses, I hope to explore how Coast Salish interpretations of ghosts and people and things
“hidden from view” intersect with the analysis of spectrality I present here.
spectrality can operate as a potentially generative or transformative process, creating new meanings and senses of place. In this way, spectrality can produce uncanny feelings, as Ken Gelder and Jane M. Jacobs argue: a strange sensation of seeing something or being somewhere familiar and unfamiliar at once (1998:23). The revenant quality of Indigenous spectrality can enhance this feeling of uncanniness. Unmapping familiar terrain to make space for the erased and marginalized – the ghosted – opens opportunities to experience the uncanny. Same spaces are made different, and sameness and difference are felt simultaneously.

Spectrality also enables insights into the spatial production of marginality and disconnection. Ghosts occupy spaces “hidden from view,” in some ways similar to what sociologist Rob Shields calls “places on the margins” (1991). Perceptions of these marginal spaces and their ghostly inhabitants can reveal how such spaces haunt those who occupy the centre. For example, many of my non-Aboriginal research participants in Mount Pleasant identified the Downtown Eastside as a distinctive site of Aboriginality in the city and simultaneously labelled the neighbourhood a space of danger and inequality – a marginalized space in the city that engenders fear and inspires avoidance – perceptions that reproduce spatial marginalization. Shields argues, “The manner in which spatialization is most visible is in spatial practices and in the connotations people associate with places and regions in everyday talk” (1991:47). As I explore in my extended discussion of the Downtown Eastside (Chapter 3), outsiders’ associations of crime, violence, and drug use in the neighbourhood can have a spectral effect, ghosting its residents and concealing structural processes that shape their experiences (Culhane 2003). To attend to this ghosting, then, is to make visible marginalization as an ever-emergent and constructed process.

In addition to spatial insights, spectral analysis also opens opportunities to explore time and temporality. In Spectres of Marx, Derrida regularly repeats a line from Hamlet to convey the ways ghosts affect our perception of time: “time is out of joint.” Sociologist Renisa Mawani writes, “specters, as apparitions, phantoms, ghosts, Derrida (1994:39) contends, are always of time and its interruption” (2012a:374). In her analysis of Indian migration in the 1910s, Mawani demonstrates how the spectral figure of Indigeneity emerged in surprising, sometimes contradictory ways in Indian satire, legal arguments,
and public debates at the time.\textsuperscript{16} By tracking the ghosts, Mawani contests colonial histories that suggest successive linearity of colonial time: Indigeneity \textit{then} European settlement \textit{then} non-European migration. Her discussion conveys much messier and more complex spatio-temporalities, with Indigenous spectral figures variously “shift[ing] across past, present, and future” (374). She draws on Derridean philosophy to consider the spectre as a revenant figure that arrives even as it returns, calling into question its temporal location.

Derrida asks, “Is there a present of the spectre? Are its comings and goings ordered according to the linear succession of a before and an after… between a ‘real time’ and a deferred time?’” (1994:39). Or, put another way, are ghosts of the past, present, or future? Is Indigeneity of the past, present, or future? Following Mawani and Gordon, I suggest all three. Spectrality can function to bring these temporal terms into alignment, making the past alive in the present and animating a yet-unseen future, or switch time around (“time is out of joint”). Indigeneity, when conceptualized through a frame of spectrality, can be understood as a political and social location that emerged in the colonial past, continues to persist in the present and take new shape, and engenders uncertainty around its expression and manifestation in the future. Indigeneity can be uncanny: simultaneously visible and invisible, as Gelder and Jacobs argue. It can also be revenant: minimized through colonial coercion, managed through policy, Indigeneity re-presents in the present and its oppression in the past haunts the future.

Although Gordon distances herself from Derrida’s formulations of spectrality, she too addresses the temporalities of haunting and suggests that ghosts are not simply of the past but rather constitute the present and even evoke a sense of “something-to-be-done” in the future: “one can say that futurity is imbricated or interwoven into the very scene of haunting itself” (2011: 3). Haunting is “at its core a contest over the future” (3). While the Indigenous spectral figures in Mawani’s account are circumscribed and instrumentalized, Gordon thinks that ghosts can serve a more hopeful and emancipatory purpose if they are given a hospitable welcome by social analysts and actors.\textsuperscript{17} By directly attending to

\textsuperscript{16} These commentaries addressed issues of legitimacy, access, authority, and racial superiority in contests over British-Indian migration and the Komagata Maru. She suggests that Indigenous spectral figures in these accounts function to reveal and critique British colonial “temporal logics.”

\textsuperscript{17} Mawani explains, “The political and legal work performed by indigeneity, as well as its deployment as a temporal logic and as a form of spectral governance, becomes palpable only when it is allowed to (re)emerge and return as a persistent presence that can interrupt colonial legal histories of subalternity” (2012a:400).
ghosts and the “trouble they represent and symptomize,” we can work to avoid a haunted future: “in the gracious but careful reckoning with the ghost… we [can] locate some elements of a practice for moving towards eliminating the conditions the produce the haunting in the first place” (2011:2, 17).

To further consider the temporalities of haunting, it is useful to compare spectrality to spectacle. While spectators recognize spectacles as discreet and distinct temporal moments and spatial sites (even if sites of spectacle become mundane), spectrality as a condition or state of haunting is difficult to delimit temporally. Although a feeling of haunting can be fleeting, ghosts often linger and can continue to haunt even after they have been acknowledged or exorcised. If their presence is a reminder or signal of something amiss or previously repressed, even if this is righted or otherwise addressed, ghosts can leave a mark – traces and residues of injustice and trauma. Seemingly apart and even otherworldly, spectres populate the spaces of the quotidian present. Spectrality is thus a constitutive feature of everyday life in the settler colonial city. It produces a “structure of feeling” in Vancouver, to borrow from Raymond Williams (1977).

Processes and policies of colonialism, for example, leave tangible traces on the built environment and contemporary materialities but also haunt in more subtle ways, shaping affective knowledges and personal encounters and disrupting illusions of post-coloniality: “the over and done with comes alive” (Gordon 2011:2). Haunting, writes Gordon, “alters the experience of being in linear time, alters the way we normally separate and sequence the past, the present, and the future” (2).

Long histories and embodied practices of silencing, management, erasure, and marginality can be illuminated and made visible through analyses that recognize these processes as spectrally present. Similarly, affects and emotions that influence action and perception but are “hidden from view” and seldom expressed can be brought into the open for discussion when understood as ghostly dimensions of everyday life. This can be especially useful when addressing issues of race, racialization, and racism, which continue to shape everyday encounters and material conditions even as historical and biological conceptions of race are increasingly recognized as defunct, inaccurate, and scientifically and morally wrong. Reflecting on the potentialities of affective analyses to enhance critical geographies and race studies, geographer Anoop Nayak writes, with spectral connotations, “Although race may be a ‘floating signifier,’ we must ask under what conditions it is summoned-to-life and allowed to materialise within time and place”
Race effects a spectral force on contemporary social relations in ways that only occasionally come into full view. Attention to haunting thus offers a theoretical and methodological tool to give voice, shape, and animacy to affects and other immaterialities that shape everyday conditions (see Chapter 7).

The “Everyday”

My analysis asks what kinds of knowledges and conditions of everyday life and encounter are produced in the tensions and gaps between Indigenous spectrality and spectacle. I am especially concerned with the linkages between these two processes and how they mutually constitute and define settler colonial relations in contemporary Vancouver. As discussed above, I locate my analysis in three sites of Aboriginal inclusion. My fieldwork at the Mount Pleasant library and with the BladeRunners program provides long-term analysis of quotidian sites of purposeful proximity, complementing my ethnographic examination of the Olympic spectacle. My fieldwork explores how the “real” is produced and experienced in the interstices of the surreal of spectrality and the hyper-real of spectacle. It is an ethnographic examination that accounts for the ways the ordinary and banal are shaped in the dialectic of structure and event (Koester 2005; Das 1995; Sahlins 1991).

I suggest that Aboriginal inclusion initiatives are mediating the ordinary of settler coloniality. They offer a set of discursive and conceptual sites of possibility for settlers to navigate their relations to Aboriginality because they enable encounter. These encounters are animated by the dynamics of spectrality and spectacle I describe, but they also offer alternative ways of being-together with Aboriginal people that are banal: building a housing frame at a construction site, reading beside one another at a library in a community centre. Because of their emphasis on Aboriginal inclusion, however, these banalities cannot be read simply as examples of a life in a diverse place. This form of the “everyday” is produced, engineered, and negotiated because conditions of settler colonialism otherwise make such encounters extraordinary or unavailable.

My thinking about these questions has been significantly influenced by local critical scholars, especially sociologist Renisa Mawani and anthropologist Dara Culhane, as well as historian Susan Roy, geographer Nicholas Blomley, and historian Jean Barman. Throughout my analysis, I combine their careful analyses with my own ethnographic materials and theoretical insights from scholars further afield.
These conditions are embedded in my analysis through participants’ reflections on their experiences and expectations of Aboriginality within and beyond my field sites. In Chapter 2, I describe my methodology in more detail; I introduce each field site with a narrative of arrival and conclude by discussing how my multi-sited approach is greater than the sum of its parts. Chapter 3 then takes a wider scope to provide contextual details about two distinctly Aboriginalized places in Vancouver: Stanley Park’s totem poles and the Downtown Eastside neighbourhood. I use these sites to further explain how Aboriginal spectacle and spectrality shape structures of feeling in the city, influencing everyday socio-spatial imaginaries of Aboriginality. The interpenetration of spectacularized and spectral Aboriginality is examined in my Chapter 4 analysis of the ultimate spectacle: Vancouver’s 2010 Winter Olympics. I describe the saturation of Aboriginal imagery – Olympic “Aboriginalia” and performance – during the Games, asking what the spectacle illuminated and what was hidden from view in regards to the ongoing everyday realities of settler colonialism for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal residents of the city.

Chapters 5 and 6 focus on respectively on my long-term field sites – the Mount Pleasant library and the BladeRunners program – and the discourse and practices of Aboriginal inclusion that operate within them. In Chapter 5, I examine how BladeRunners participants are discursively positioned in ways that highlight and minimize their alterities. I explore how a common saying around the office, “Once a BladeRunner, always a BladeRunner,” is transformed through the BladeRunner process that situates the new workers as “just one of the guys” on their construction placement sites. The deployment of these discourses reveals when, how, and why Aboriginal alterities are made visible and invisible, and how this shape-shifting influences non-Aboriginal impressions of their new coworkers and Indigeneity in the city and nation more generally. In Chapter 6, I chronicle the development of the library’s Working Together Project and Aboriginal collection. I suggest that different perspectives on managing the Aboriginal collection align with different approaches to addressing the “Indian problem” that are embedded in colonial history and contemporary policy, revealing the longstanding tensions around how best to recognize, resolve, or mitigate Aboriginal alterity. The holographic quality of Indigeneity is “on display,” enacted through library decisions about how to select Aboriginal materials, where to shelve them, and how to identify them for different uses by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal patrons.
In Chapter 7, I adopt a participant’s description of non-Aboriginal encounters with Aboriginality – “coffee table books, souvenirs, and a bit of guilt” – to analyse how looking relations, consumption and collection, and affective responses to Aboriginal alterity (marginality and Indigenous politics) form an archive of knowledges that shape their ideas about the unjust past, unequal present, and uncertain future of settler colonial relations. This chapter draws out participants’ varied forms of knowing and experiencing Aboriginality in a context of spectacle and spectrality.

In Chapter 8, I conclude that spectacular Aboriginality and Aboriginal inclusion can both function to deflect attention from non-Aboriginal people’s relationality to Aboriginal people and settler colonial processes. Spectral forms of Indigeneity – now you see it, now you don’t – perpetuate this deflection, enabling non-Aboriginal people to maintain distance from Aboriginal people and the colonial project. As efforts are made to include Aboriginal people in the city, non-Aboriginal people are not invited or encouraged to include themselves as active agents in decolonization. A focus on including the Aboriginal Other can thus entail excusing non-Aboriginal people from the important work of transforming settler colonial conditions in the city. Using stories from my three field sites, as well as recent events involving local Indigenous peoples, I demonstrate that an emphasis on Aboriginal issues can undermine public confrontation and transformation of settler colonial issues. This situation may ultimately reproduce settler logics and hegemony unless Aboriginal inclusion is more critically and creatively paired with active forms of settler decolonization.

I began this project with many questions, and I end it with many new ones. Settler colonialism is a structure, inherited and reproduced. The processes that sustain this complex structure are not self-evident, inevitable, simple, or unidirectional, and neither will be processes toward dismantling it. My dissertation aims to understand the spectacular, spectral, and everyday conditions of settler colonialism in Vancouver in order to better understand how these conditions can be reimagined.
Chapter 2: Including Encounters – Fieldwork in the Interstices of Settler Colonial Vancouver

Introduction

To understand the construction of difference in Western… thought requires an adjustable lens that can take a wide angle on the historical processes that have systematically sorted the world’s people according to differential categories that fit with imperial, colonial, and capitalist expansion at a global scale, as well as zoom in on the everyday practices through which difference is constituted among people in direct contact with one another. (De Leeuw, Kobayashi, and Cameron 2011:18)

Social analysts studying points of contact across difference explore how new and sustained encounters produce (new) knowledges and anxieties, (re)define alterities and power dynamics, and (re)configure relations between people and spaces. To speak of encounters across difference in contemporary times may seem anachronistic, given the historical time-depths of colonialism, human migration, and settlement. Furthermore, growing attention to hybridity and the slippery nature of human distinction suggest that we increasingly occupy diverse shared spaces and move in “flows,” even as differences continue to persist. At the same time, new encounters between strangers can happen daily, sometimes multiple times a day, especially in cities. Encounters are also impeded by spatial segregation and social distance.

In this chapter, I present my three field sites as sites of encounter and explain how together they allow me to simultaneously take a “wide angle” on settler colonial processes and “zoom in on the everyday practices” of contact and the construction of difference, to borrow a metaphor from human geographers Sarah de Leeuw, Audrey Kobayashi, and Emilie Cameron (2011: 18). Each site offers me a distinct vantage point to study the circulation and practices of discourses that sustain and redefine non-Aboriginal conceptions of Aboriginal alterity. While Vancouver’s Olympics presented a temporally and spatially condensed opportunity to study the production of spectacular Aboriginality, for example, my long-term fieldwork at the library and with BladeRunners enabled me to compare spectacular discourses and practices with the banalities, tensions,

19 Indeed, analyses of encounter constitute a wide range of social science projects today including, but not limited to, studies on migration, war, urban planning, globalization, production and consumption, and social movements.
and socio-politics of inclusion on a less spectacular scale. The library provided opportunities to examine the processes and challenges of emphasizing Aboriginal difference and community development, while BladeRunners gave me insights into what happens when Aboriginal marginality is acknowledged but minimized to facilitate integration and equality. Moving between these sites supports an analysis that accounts for broader discursive tropes and social patterns of settler colonial life, as well as attends to nuances between different approaches to Aboriginal inclusion. This three-sited approach made visible the complex interplay between the spectacular, spectral, and ordinary qualities of settler coloniality in Vancouver.

I begin by briefly describing the methodological and theoretical antecedents of this project as an ethnography of settler colonial encounters and discourses. I then narrate my own initial encounters in each site to reflect on ethical considerations of my research, my site selection rationale, participant profiles, interview techniques, and other methodological concerns. I conclude by considering my three sites together, highlighting the challenges and advantages of a locally multi-sited ethnography designed to allow for “wide-angle” and “zoomed-in” analyses of settler colonialism today.

Ethnographic Influences: Site Selection and Methodological Practice

Before, during, and after entering “the field,” my thinking about difference and encounter across difference has been influenced in countless ways by a diverse, interdisciplinary set of critical theorists, colonial historians, anthropologists in/of settler states, and human geographers of space and race. Rather than present an exhaustive review of the works that inform my own thinking, I discuss below some primary sources of inspiration for my methodological design. It is important to note, however, that many others, including scholars like feminist theorist bell hooks, anticolonial writer Frantz Fanon, and literary critic Edward Said, have over the years been present at strategic points of research to push me to think more deeply and sensitively about how difference is socially and discursively constructed, materially and spatially manifested, and potentially transformed through new ethical relations, social justice movements, and critical theory.20

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20 Furthermore, conceptual metaphors from postcolonial and critical scholarship have enabled me to reflect on how my field sites compare and contrast with different temporal and spatial social landscapes of empire, colonialism, and contemporary encounters across difference: middle ground (White 1991), contact zone
Most directly, my methodological design was inspired by anthropologist Eva Mackey’s *House of Difference* (2002) and political scientist Allaine Cerwonka’s ethnographic methodological and theoretical journey toward her dissertation and book *Native to the Nation* (2004), as discussed through a series of email exchanges with her committee member anthropologist Liisa Malkki published in their book *Improvising Theory* (2007).

Mackey’s book critically examines how discourses of tolerance and inclusion inform Canadian national identity and sustain white settler hegemony. She considers how “power and dominance function through more liberal, inclusionary, pluralistic, multiple and fragmented formulations and practices concerning culture and difference” (2002:5). Her ethnographic project, examining the subtleties of everyday forms of meaning-making and alterity production, was also multi-sited, “account[ing] for the fact that national identity is produced both in face-to-face encounters in multiple sites, as well as through representations, institutions, and policies” (6). Her study, like mine, began as event-centred; while I examine the Olympics and tensions around Olympic forms of Aboriginality, her study explores race, nationalism, and representation in relation to “Canada 125” celebrations in 1992. She conducted participant observation and interviews in small, mostly white, towns in Ontario in relation to festivals convened for the Canada 125 occasion. I hope my urban-based analysis of inclusion discourses and settler colonial relations will provide interesting complements and contrasts with her work on multiculturalism, nationalism, and “dominant society” in Canada.

In my research, I combine Mackey’s event-centred approach with Cerwonka’s long-term ethnography in Melbourne, Australia. Like Mackey, Cerwonka sought to examine nation-building, considering in particular the spatial construction of the Australian nation and settler imaginaries about migrants and Aboriginality. In *Improvising Theory*, her email exchanges with Liisa Malkki reveal how and why she decided to locate her ethnography in a police station and a gardening club in Melbourne. Cerwnoka and Malkki reflect on the partial nature of ethnographic knowledge production when situated in such specific sites, as well as the productive potential such an approach allows. Cerwonka comments, “In [one] exchange, Liisa challenged me to recognize that

(Pratt 2008), the Black Atlantic (Gilroy 1993), the edge of empire (Jacobs 1996), thirrdspace (Bhabha 1994; Bruyneel 2007), fort (Donald 2012), friction (Tsing 2005), orientalism (Said 1979), frontier (Furniss 1999), cosmopolitan canopy (Elijah Anderson 2011), and more. My engagement with these theoretical interventions forms the subtext of my methodological approach.
the only way to make defensible knowledge claims about my topic was to speak out of detailed, rich and, as she phrased it then, ‘sometimes ridiculously deep’ knowledge of a particular social location” (27). My ethnography of Olympic Aboriginality, the Mount Pleasant Library branch, and the BladeRunners program aims for this kind of located, deep knowledge and argumentation.

Cerwonka’s attention to race, space, affect, and informant and researcher positionality in both Improvising Theory (2007) and Native to the Nation (2004) greatly influenced my desire to choose somewhat disparate long-term field sites that would similarly provide me with rich, distinct (yet conversant), and nuanced insights into the everyday mechanisms of settler colonial sociality, knowledge production, and affective encounter in Vancouver.21

My research raised a number of interesting methodological challenges, such as the practice of conducting anthropology “at home” and in the city, ethics and responsibilities of studying colonialism as a white settler woman, overlaps between academic scholarship and activism, challenges of ethnography of spectacle, relationships with key “informants,” and the dialectical and emergent relationship between theory and method. Rather than address these issues one by one, I fold them into my discussion of my three sites here and in the chapters that follow. I turn next to describe how I constructed my field of study, beginning with the Aboriginal Pavilion and other sites of Olympic Aboriginality.

“The World’s Biggest Potlatch”: Spectacular Anthropology

Tewanee Joseph, chief executive officer of the Four Host First Nations Society and member of the Squamish Nation, called Vancouver’s Olympic Games the “world’s biggest potlatch.”22 Potlatches are ceremonies of social and material exchange and performance that communicate important messages to participants about the status and

21 After selecting the Mount Pleasant library branch and the construction training program and work site, my supervisor wryly noted that the library was my garden club, the construction workers my policemen, mirroring Cerwonka’s field site selection. Indeed, there are interesting parallels to be drawn, though it is beyond my scope here to consider them fully.

22 When referring to public figures, I use their full, real names. For my participants, I use first names only and all names are pseudonyms. Some participants gave me permission to use their real names, but I decided to use pseudonyms for consistency. I have, however, identified staff people in my field sites by their positions, a representational decision I discussed with them when they signed their consent forms.
interests of their hosts. They are sites of intense encounter and interaction, and witnesses play an important role; their presence and acknowledgement of the event’s happenings provide legitimacy and recognition to the hosts.

The spectacular quality of potlatches and their complex social dynamics have attracted and fascinated anthropologists since the early days of the discipline. The art and material culture that emerged from the Northwest Coast potlatch tradition provided a unique and memorable aesthetic that now adorns Vancouver and British Columbia, captivating non-Indigenous locals and tourists alike. Vancouver’s Olympics were hosted by local Coast Salish nations – the Four Host First Nations – and prominently featured Aboriginal and Aboriginal-inspired art and performance.

The Olympics were a time of performance, self-conscious representations, and choreographed and curated expressions of identity, nationhood, and culture. My study was not designed as an ethnography of the Olympics per se. Rather, my ethnographic research during the Games informs my analysis of non-Aboriginal knowledge production, Aboriginal alterities, and spatial dynamics of Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal relations in Vancouver. One of my organizing arguments in this dissertation is that spectacle plays a significant role in shaping non-Aboriginal experiences of Aboriginality in the city. As I describe in Chapter 4, Olympic Aboriginality – from front-and-centre performances and commodified culture to anti-colonial protests – saturated the representational landscape of Vancouver’s Games. This enabled spectacularized encounters between non-Aboriginal spectators and Aboriginal performers, dignitaries, artists, entrepreneurs, demonstrators, and Aboriginal art, display, and material culture. The Olympic spectacle recycled and produced new images of the Aboriginal Other that non-Aboriginal spectators could use to support or refresh their ideas of Aboriginal alterity. As I explain in Chapter 4, Aboriginal involvement in the Olympics also demonstrated how the spectacular present remains haunted by an unjust past and uncertain future. It also reproduced erasures and circumscriptions of Aboriginal identities and politics in ways that may further sustain non-Aboriginal experiences of Indigeneity as spectral: simultaneously of the past and present, of the here and not-here.

Anthropologist John MacAloon (1999) explains that mega-events like the Olympics challenge conventional definitions of anthropological fieldwork and that ethnographers can face great difficulty addressing the scale and complexity of mega-events. He states, “Nearly every person, and certainly every researcher, attending an
Olympic Games for the first time is a little awe-struck by how much more vast is the terrain of goings-on than had been imagined in advance” (1999:14). This definitely resonates with my experiences. During the Games, spectators attended sports and cultural events across the city and region and thousands gathered in downtown streets all day and into the night. As an ethnographer, decisions about where to be, for how long, and for what purpose, were magnified while immersed in the spectacle.

Focusing specifically on possible sites of encounter between non-Aboriginal spectators and Olympic forms of Aboriginality helped to establish some focus, but the Olympics offered a dizzying array of such sites. Tourist and locals could experience Aboriginal performance, resistance, and Aboriginalia at the Pan Pacific’s Klahowya Village, the carving shed at the Vancouver Art Gallery, the Canamade show at Woodward’s, the Hudson’s Bay Company, noon dance performances at Robson Square and the Square’s multiple daily Mascots on Ice show, the Talking Stick Festival (sponsored in part by the Cultural Olympiad), and protest events and occupation of a temporary tent city in the Downtown Eastside, among other places throughout the city. (See Chapter 4 for more descriptions of Olympic sites featuring Aboriginal performance and products.)

The Four Host First Nations’ Aboriginal Pavilion was arguably the Games’ primary (and certainly official) site of non-Aboriginal encounter with Aboriginal performance and representation, a locus of knowledge production in the midst of the Olympic spectacle. At the near-centre of Vancouver’s downtown, the Aboriginal Pavilion was erected on Queen Elizabeth Plaza, sharing an intersection at Hamilton and Georgia with the city’s largest post office, the Vancouver Public Library’s Central branch, and the CBC’s Broadcast Centre (see Figure 1). I visited the Pavilion daily – sometimes multiple times a day – during the Games to participate in and observe the myriad forms of representation designed for public knowledge production about Aboriginality. The Pavilion thus served as my ethnographic headquarters. I anchored my Olympic fieldwork there and moved from there out to other sites of interest, including the Aboriginal Artisan Village and Business Showcase, also managed by the Four Host First Nations and located a block north of the Pavilion. The Aboriginal Pavilion was one of many pavilions open to visitors during the Games. Other pavilions included BC Pavilion (located in the

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23 Incidentally, urban anthropologists also face methodological challenges related to scale, complexity, and intensity that have required methodological innovation (cf. Bourgois 2003; Hannerz 1980; Low 1996).
Vancouver Art Gallery), Canada’s Northern House, and PRIDE House; several of these pavilions also featured Aboriginal materials and information in their displays and events.

Figure 1: Map of Downtown Vancouver, showing Aboriginal Pavilion location
(Google Maps 2014a, reprinted with permission)

The Aboriginal Pavilion was a dynamic performance space. Over the two weeks of the Olympics, over 14,000 visitors lined up daily at the Pavilion to watch performances and presentations by Aboriginal singers, dancers, storytellers, and political leaders from across Canada. Attending these performances allowed me to observe in a relatively short time many different forms of Aboriginal self-representation specifically designed for public audiences. Through music, dance, film, stories, and speeches, I observed how Aboriginal participants chose to share with Pavilion visitors their histories and stories, their attachments to place, their cultural traditions, and their contemporary social and political concerns. Beginning in the late morning each day, Aboriginal nations and organizations across Canada guest-hosted four one-hour shows related to the day’s cultural focus (for example, Métis, Yukon First Nations, Abenaki). In the late afternoon, the Pavilion screened the made-for-the-Olympics film *We Are Here*, which introduced the territories and traditions of the four host First Nations and contested erasures of
Indigenous presence in the region. Each evening featured musical concerts with a range of Aboriginal artists and genres, from hip hop to country to blues.

As I discuss in Chapter 4, Olympic Aboriginality and Aboriginalia raised a number of tensions related to the “celebration” and commodification of Aboriginal cultures, appropriation of Aboriginal art and material culture, the politics of display and performance, the relationship between Aboriginality and performing the Canadian nation, persistent inequalities exacerbated by the Olympic spectacle, questions about land ownership and environmental stewardship (raised especially during construction of Olympic venues), and Olympic legacies for Aboriginal communities. By focusing my ethnographic attention at the Aboriginal Pavilion, I consciously located myself in the midst of “official” expressions of Olympic Aboriginality rather than in sites of anti-colonial protest. Yet, as I argue in Chapter 4, dichotomies between discourses of celebrated inclusion and appropriative window dressing were challenged regularly at the Pavilion, where individuals and groups used their performances and presentations to (re)define collective and national identities and to (re)position themselves in relation to the city and state.

I offer the following narrative to further introduce the Olympics as the setting, Olympic Aboriginality as the subject, and the Aboriginal Pavilion as the headquarters, of my ethnographic study during the Games. This brief story describes the first day of the Olympics, February 12, 2010, and provides insight into the hectic quality of ethnography in the zone of the spectacular and at home, as well as the high profile of Aboriginal participation and representation in Games celebration and protest.

On the morning of the Opening Ceremony of the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver, I took a bus from my apartment in Mount Pleasant to the University of British Columbia to attend a lecture as part of my teaching assistantship responsibilities. I returned home and took the elevator to the fifth floor of my apartment building, just in time to look down at the torch relay passing along the street. While at university, I had missed the torch relay that morning through Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside and past the Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre at Hastings and Commercial. I wrote in my fieldnotes, “First lesson of the Olympics: one can be in only one place at one time.”

I gathered my recorder, umbrella, and notebook and took the Skytrain to the Chinatown station. Yellow caution tape cordoned off the intersection of Georgia and Hamilton and its nearby blocks, and dozens of police and security guards kept watch. Thousands of spectators gathered in the light rain to see the final
torchbearer light the Olympic cauldron in advance of that evening’s official torchlighting at the Opening Ceremony; they climbed on planters and lightposts for a better view and faces looked down on the crowd from office windows above. The dome of the Aboriginal Pavilion at the Queen Elizabeth Plaza glowed white above the busy scene.

Below a large screen set up on Hamilton Street, Tewanee Joseph stood in regalia at a podium, bills of money pinned to his tunic. Dignitaries from the Four Host First Nations – the Lil’wat, Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh – lined the stage, also wearing regalia. Speakers amplified Joseph’s speech. “The Games are taking place within our traditional territories,” he said. “And we are proud partners and we’re here to welcome the world!” He beamed: “For the first time in history, Indigenous peoples are full partners in the Olympics and Paralympic Games!” He prepared the crowd for the last torchbearer, recalling the 106-day torch relay that traversed Canada’s vast territories, with torch celebrations in many Aboriginal communities. 24 “We believe Canada is at a time of transformation. And that the 21st century is a new time for all Canadians. A time where we focus on what we have in common, and celebrate and respect our unique differences.”

He pointed down the block to BC Place, where the official opening ceremony would take place hours later. “In our culture, we call this the world’s biggest potlatch! We’re sharing our cultures – First Nations, Inuit, Métis, and other cultures in this country – in Canada – with the world! We did it!” The Queen Elizabeth Plaza, where many Aboriginal people had gathered, erupted in cheers.

Joseph pointed behind him to the Aboriginal Pavilion. “We just came from a witnessing ceremony. Since time immemorial, our cultures have always passed on our celebrations and our teachings by calling witnesses and making sure that we practice our protocols and traditions… It’s our responsibility – all of our people that were in the Chief’s House [the Aboriginal Pavilion dome],” he peered out at the crowd, “And your responsibility is to remember all of these words that are shared, and the celebration that takes place. And when you go back home… share these stories, pass them onto your children and your families.” He again emphasized that the Games mark a new era of partnership, “We don’t want it to be the end here with these Games, but a very beginning of the new relationships that we have, the new partnerships that we’ve been making.” He acknowledged partnerships with Canada, the province of British Columbia, the city of Vancouver, the Vancouver Olympic Organizing Committee, and partners in Richmond and Whistler. “This is the spirit of partnership,” he said, looking around him. “This is the spirit of working together.”

The penultimate torchbearer came into view up the block on Georgia Street, touching his flame to the torch held by Malcolm Crawford, a young athlete from the Musqueam Nation. Drums beat out a tempo, and men and women on stage in

24 Torch relay events were also sites of protest, which Joseph did not mention.
the plaza started singing. Joseph narrated Crawford’s biography as he jogged through the crowd, emphasizing Crawford’s athletics, recent high school graduation with honours, and drug- and alcohol-free lifestyle. “Loud and proud everybody!” Joseph yelled as Crawford took the stage, and the crowd obliged. Crawford bounded up to the stage, standing beside celebrated Cree folk singer Buffy St. Marie. After a couple of false tries, they lit a small cauldron with the torch and the crowd cheered and whistled.

As a woman began a prayer on stage, people standing near me spoke in English, Spanish, Punjabi, and Mandarin, making their next set of plans and filing out of the intersection. This spectacle, for them, was over. I walked through the thinning crowd to the Pavilion at Queen Elizabeth Plaza. Performances had begun. I watched and listened to Métis jiggers, an Inuit breakdancing troupe, the Gitxsan Nation’s Dancers of Damelahamid, Lil’wat Nation hoop dancer Alex Wells, the Whitefish Bay Singers, a mixed-Nation a cappella group called Mahgirl, and barefoot cellist and electronica artist Cris Derksen. The small crowd was amazed by Alex Wells’ impressive performance. Mahgirl invited the crowd to sing along to a Canadian version of “This Land is My Land.”

I checked the time: almost 3pm, the start time for the No Olympics on Stolen Native Land protest at the Vancouver Art Gallery. I hurried up five blocks along Georgia Street. I passed the Hudson’s Bay Company, where Olympic Aboriginalia lined the shelves: inuksuit (Inuit rock sculptures) on keychains and hats and shirts, stuffed mascots, Cowichan and Cowichan-like sweaters, official Olympic gear bearing designs by Squamish artist Xwa Lack Tun. I passed a carving shed, where Musqueam carver Susan Point and her collaborators worked in public on a totem pole, and the Pacific Centre shopping mall, whose domed entrance had been reconfigured to resemble an igloo. Across the street, a 12-story tall Canadian flag adorned the façade of the boutique Hotel Georgia.

The protesters gathered in the art gallery’s plaza, then marched onto Georgia Street, a sea of green and black, carrying banners, flags, drums, and megaphones. A brass band played as protesters handed out fliers to a mix of confused and curious passers-by and chanted “No! Olympics! On Stolen Native Land!” I walked with them for a block and then stood on the sidewalk to watch their procession and gather handouts: “Why We Resist the 2010 Winter Olympics,” “No to the Militarization of Vancouver! Statement of the Community Party of Canada,” “Olympic Resistance Network,” “A Declaration of Rights of the People of British Columbia.”

Unsure of the protesters’ planned route and getting short on time, I left to secure my place at one of the many sites set up for live-streaming video of the Opening Ceremony. This decision cost me a potentially rich fieldwork moment: I later learned the protesters had marched along Georgia Street to BC Place, passing the Aboriginal Pavilion on the way.
Standing on a concrete barrier in Robson Square with fellow Olympics researcher Solen Roth and my partner Chad, I watched the CTV’s broadcast of the Opening Ceremony and the crowd, huddled under umbrellas for hours in the rain. (See Chapter 4 for further discussion and analysis of the ceremony.)

As this narrative demonstrates, in one day, I moved on foot and on transit between multiple locations: between Mount Pleasant and the university, to my rooftop, to the torch relay event downtown, up and down Georgia Street, to Robson Square, before finally arriving back home, exhausted, in Mount Pleasant. My senses were overloaded: I listened to speeches and music, overheard conversations, and amplified sound; I watched dance performances and crowd behaviour; I felt drum beats and bodies passing on the sidewalk; I held damp fliers and my notebook; I had to remind myself to stop and eat. I witnessed the sheer abundance and density of representations of Olympic Aboriginality and consumption of Aboriginalia. I saw and heard: Aboriginal dancers and singers at the Pavilion and on the opening ceremony broadcast; a Squamish man making a speech to greet a Musqueam torchbearer; protesters (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) chanting anti-Olympics slogans and songs related to Aboriginal claims and colonial oppression; consumers shopping for souvenirs with Aboriginal and Aboriginal-inspired designs at the HBC; and local First Nations dignitaries sitting with Canadian heads of state during the televised opening ceremony. And the Games had only just begun.

Initially, I acted as a spectator: a participant in the spectacle and an observer of its (re)presentations. It took several days to get acclimated to the pace of the Olympics, to get used to the crowds, lines, big screens, and noise. Over time, I began to pay closer attention to other spectators, to become an observer not just of the spectacle but of the spectators, too. Anthropologist Catherine Palmer argues that anthropologists can contribute to studies of mega-events through their attention to local responses to spectacle. Chronicling ethnographically the ways locals – in addition to or instead of tourists and performers – respond to content, display, and performance can add richness and nuance to spectacular analyses, going beyond textual accounts that describe and analyse the content of, for example, opening ceremonies (cf. Hogan 2003; Kalman-Lamb 2012). Anthropologists, Palmer suggests, can tap into the ways that audiences and agents mediate and negotiate their own meanings in and through spectacle.

Meaning-making in, through, and after spectacle is particularly slippery and ephemeral, always moving and taking new shape in response to new stimuli and formed
against a backdrop of accumulated knowledges. During the Games, my primary methodological approach was participant-observation of and amidst spectacle and Olympic Aboriginality. I did not interview Pavilion visitors or other spectators during the Games for both methodological and ethical reasons. I had tried without success to contact Pavilion organizers prior to the Games to secure permission to conduct interviews at the site during the Games. As soon as the Games began, however, I realized how difficult it would have been to systematize recruiting interview participants. The audience at the Pavilion was constantly changing, with many spectators coming for only one performance or even leaving before performances if the line took too long.25

None of the performances I attended provided an opportunity for visitors to engage directly with Aboriginal people, other than occasionally participating in sing-alongs or dance demonstrations.26 There were no question-and-answer periods or opportunities for dialogue. The Pavilion, as a performance space, offered spectators mini-spectacles to be consumed visually and audibly: musical performances, traditional dances in regalia, speeches, and stories. Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal visitors to the Pavilion were situated as audience members, sitting in folded chairs in front of a low stage, where Aboriginal people spoke, danced, sang, and played music. Instead of formal interviews with visitors, I engaged in casual conversation with people next to me in line or seated beside me in the Pavilion. I carefully observed performances and presentations, noting audience attendance, attention, and forms of engagement with the performers (e.g., clapping, use of cameras, facial expressions).

After the Olympics, I interviewed three Pavilion participants: host and emcee Wade Grant, a Musqueam Band councillor; communications manager Dallas Squire; and a Japanese-Dutch Canadian volunteer who I had spoken with a number of times during the Games. Speaking with these participants gave me insights into the hopes, expectations, and inner workings of the Aboriginal Pavilion. I also asked participants in my other two field sites, the Mount Pleasant library and the BladeRunners program – which I turn to next, about their engagement with the Olympics and its forms of Aboriginal participation, resistance, and display. While none of these participants visited

25 Furthermore, it was difficult to distinguish international and national visitors from locals, with whom I was most interested in talking.  
26 Visitors did engage with staff and volunteers, some of whom were Aboriginal, while standing in line or visiting the Trading Post, a shop where Four Host First Nations merchandise, Olympic merchandise, and hand-made goods were sold.
the Aboriginal Pavilion during the Games, many shared their perspectives on Olympic Aboriginality and Aboriginalia more generally. I include some of their observations and experiences in Chapter 4, and occasionally interweave their commentaries on the Games into other chapters as well.

Although studying spectacle is an inherently incomplete project, it is also productive and illuminating. The Olympics condensed, distorted, and amplified Aboriginal representations, creating a sometimes bewildering number of discourses and imagery to follow, track, and deconstruct, and offered a dynamic social landscape to explore contemporary settler colonial relations in the city and the nation. I chose to begin my ethnographic project in the zone of the spectacular in part because Aboriginal performance and display have been a significant, constitutive dimension of non-Aboriginal meaning-making about the Aboriginal Other (Stanley 1998). In my introduction, I situated my analysis in a conceptual triad of spectacle, spectrality, and the everyday and considered how this triad informs and shapes settler colonial knowledge production. The Olympics and the Aboriginal Pavilion helped me to experience and theorize spectacle: to discuss how it builds upon a history of spectacle in Vancouver, BC, and Canada, and how it both produces new knowledge and reproduces older forms of being-together in a settler colonial place.

I also chose to start my ethnography with the Olympics because Vancouver’s Games organizers emphasized Aboriginal “inclusion” as one of its defining characteristics. Aboriginal inclusion in the Games revealed and activated productive tensions (Simon-Kumar and Kingfisher 2011) – the extent and politics of Aboriginal alterity, representation, recognition, and participation, and how these relate to exclusions stemming from historical injustices and contemporary inequalities. On the first day of the Games, Tewanee Joseph emphasized the role of non-Aboriginal spectators as “witnesses” and called relationships between the Four Host First Nations and Vancouver, British Columbia, and Canada “partnerships.” The discourses, practices, processes, values, and tensions of inclusion – what Joseph calls “the spirit of working together” – is the thread that links my three field sites.

I turn next to introduce BladeRunners, where Aboriginal street youth are trained to “work together” with non-Aboriginal coworkers on construction sites. After that, I introduce the Mount Pleasant library and its “Working Together” project, an initiative developed to address how social exclusion operates within the library and more broadly
affects communities the library seeks to serve, including urban Aboriginal communities. My ethnographic research at the Aboriginal Pavilion provides a strong contextual foundation to position and critically analyse spectacular forms of Aboriginal inclusion and non-Aboriginal meaning-making. I build upon this foundation in my other two field sites to examine everyday, mundane forms of knowledge production, encounter, and sociality in settler colonial Vancouver.

**Working Relationships: BladeRunners**

The BladeRunners program trains street youth – more than 90% of them Aboriginal – to work in the city’s construction industry. Three staff coordinators – Bobby, Stephen, and Andy – place BladeRunners participants on construction sites and then regularly check in with them and their supervisors, offering 24/7 support to new and veteran BladeRunners working across the Lower Mainland. In a context of ongoing dispossession and contemporary treaty-making, persistent employment inequalities, and lingering “lazy Indian” stereotypes denigrating the work ethic and ability of Aboriginal people, the BladeRunners program and its placement sites work to mitigate the distinct challenges facing the Downtown Eastside’s street youth. The program facilitates mostly Aboriginal employment on mostly non-Aboriginal construction sites (located on unceded Coast Salish territories), creating conditions for encounter between peoples and between people and land. As such, it offers an ideal site, or set of sites, to examine how settler colonialism has historically shaped Aboriginal opportunities in a white settler place and how inclusion operates in the present to imagine a different future. In this section, I describe the program’s development, philosophies and practices, and funding structure, and explain how my BladeRunners fieldwork enables analysis of everyday settler coloniality produced in the tensions between spectacle and spectrality. I also narrate my entry onto a BladeRunners placement site to highlight some methodological concerns related to this fieldwork.

The BladeRunners main office is located at the corner of Main and Hastings, the epicentre of the Downtown Eastside, sometimes casually referred to as the “urban res(erve)” because Aboriginal people are over-represented there (see Figure 2; see also Chapters 3 and 5). Many BladeRunners live in the area; others commute to the program from Commercial Drive and other city neighbourhoods, or from Metro Vancouver’s
As discussed in my introduction and Chapter 3, the Downtown Eastside is often imagined by non-residents as a site of spectacular suffering, a place where the haunting consequences of exclusion are made visible on the streets and sidewalks through residents’ experiences with survival sex work, addiction, lack of affordable housing, and poverty.

Figure 2: Map of Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside, showing BladeRunners office  
(Google Maps 2014a, reprinted with permission)

In 1994 a group of local activists and community members founded BladeRunners. Many in the Downtown Eastside felt they had been displaced, evicted, and otherwise excluded by the World Exposition held along Vancouver’s False Creek in 1986 (Expo ’86). When plans for a new hockey stadium in the area emerged in the early 1990s (General Motors Place, now Rogers Arena), local residents demanded to be involved in its development. Controversial community advocate Jim Green led the effort, identifying labour needs in the construction industry and securing job placements for disadvantaged youth on the GM Place site. Early program participants received basic construction and

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27 Some are recent arrivals in Vancouver, moving from their Prairie communities or BC reserves with friends or joining cousins and other family who moved to the city before them.
28 Jim Green (1943-2012) was a city councillor in the early 2000s and helped to form Vision Vancouver, one of Vancouver’s current municipal political parties. He ran unsuccessfully for mayor in 2005. In 2012,
safety training. Many struggled with poverty, addiction, and other problems related to their marginalized social location. Coordinators developed the program’s trademark system of 24/7 support. “There are three sides to the BladeRunners program,” one staff member explained in an interview, “Job training, job placement, and ongoing support. You’ll find many programs that are one of the three. I’ve yet to hear any other program that does all of the three… That is how BladeRunners manages to work well within this community. It understands that it is a fluid situation.” The program has used this model to expand to serve other places in the province and sectors other than construction, such as media arts and building maintenance.

The program’s funding has come from a number of sources. Since 2008, the Canada-British Columbia Labour Market Agreement has funded the program. Through this agreement, the federal government provides the provincial government with $65.7 million annually (through March 31, 2014). These funds are then divided to support programs that target unemployed individuals, who are not receiving employment insurance, and low-skilled employed individuals, many of whom have low literacy, education, training, and essential skills levels (ACCESS 2012). The Agreement supports training initiatives in a number of categories that correspond with the BladeRunners program mission, and Agreement funds provide its primary form of support.

The Aboriginal Community Career Employment Services Society (ACCESS) is BladeRunners’ delivery agent. The agency acknowledges the distinct needs of off-reserve urban Aboriginal people and advocates for increasing funding and service provision to support this growing population. It coordinates training, counselling, and financial services – support mechanisms that are designed to “assist urban Aboriginal people to gain access to meaningful opportunities and employment. Programs and services are carefully positioned to empower Metro Vancouver urban Aboriginal people to achieve their individual aspirations of self-reliance” (ACCESS 2012:13). ACCESS links days before his death, he was awarded the Freedom of the City Award by Mayor Gregor Robertson. The press release reads, “Jim Green has made a profound impact on the city of Vancouver and he continues to be a passionate advocate for social justice, democracy, the arts and the shaping of an inclusive city for all residents… Through his work, Jim empowered the marginalized… Countless units of social and affordable housing are just part of his legacy. As a teacher, Jim Green brought the university to street level. Through the BladeRunners program and Humanities 101, he demonstrated the tremendous gains possible through investing in people, nurturing their humanity and affirming their ability to change both their own lives and the wider community” (City of Vancouver 2012).

Today coordinators share their cellphone numbers with each new cohort of participants, who are encouraged to get in touch if they experience problems that interfere with their ability to participate in training or to show up on their work placement sites.
employment with Aboriginal self-determination and capacity-building. Recently, the Metro Vancouver Urban Aboriginal Strategy (MVUAS) has also provided program funding.\(^{30}\) MVUAS administers funding locally with monies from the Government of Canada’s Urban Aboriginal Strategy, “a community-based initiative developed… to improve social and economic opportunities for Aboriginal people living in urban centres” (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada 2013).\(^{31}\) Through these connections, the program has developed a reputation as an Aboriginal program; its demographics also reinforce this perception. Yet, as I discuss in Chapter 5, BladeRunners staff insist that BladeRunners is not in fact an Aboriginal program, choosing instead to emphasize its focus on street-involved youth more generally.

Individuals sign up for the program by calling or stopping into the office in person to sign up for the next cohort training cycle, called an “intake.” Each intake is comprised of twelve individuals. Coordinators interview potential participants, determining whether an interested individual is appropriate and eligible. They inquire about the candidate’s housing situation, criminal record, addiction and substance use/abuse, work experience, and mental and physical health.\(^{32}\) In the program’s early years, there were only a few intakes per year. Recently, there has been pressure on staff to increase the number of intakes, and intake numbers are rising to more than one intake per month. The increasing numbers also indicate the popularity and good reputation of the program, which does not actively recruit its participants and is instead promoted through word-of-mouth.

Each intake receives two weeks of training in the Downtown Eastside office. They meet for breakfast at the Potluck Café and training begins at the office at 8:30am. They receive work safety and first aid training, as well as basic math lessons. For cohorts funded by MVUAS, participants also receive cultural and self-esteem workshops with Aboriginal facilitators (see Chapter 5). Participants also receive one additional week of hands-on carpentry training at the Squamish Nation Trades Centre; Aboriginal instructors supervise their carpentry practice in a large workroom filled with construction materials

\(^{30}\) Additionally, BladeRunners is supported through matched funding from the Vancouver Foundation and other local organizations.

\(^{31}\) For a critical review of the Urban Aboriginal Strategy, see Walker (2005).

\(^{32}\) Sometimes individuals are referred to other programs, employment agencies, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal service organizations, and occasionally drug rehabilitation and detox centres.
and tools. An additional week of forklift or traffic control training is occasionally offered to individuals who express interest in these lines of work.\textsuperscript{33}

Each BladeRunners coordinator has a network of contractors and foremen they contact when trying to find work for each participant. Putting a BladeRunner to work gives them a “stat”: a statistic is entered into their worksheets to convey the program’s efficacy in employing their participants.\textsuperscript{34} According to ACCESS’s website (2014), “Employers have discovered these at-risk youth ages 15-30 will succeed if given the opportunity. After two years, 80% remain in the construction trades with 30% continuing on to journeyperson status or entrepreneurship.” Coordinators also work with many past BladeRunners participants, conducting site visits to check in with them and their supervisors. The coordinator helps to support BladeRunners in keeping their jobs if their home lives destabilize or other issues impede their ability to maintain their work hours.\textsuperscript{35}

Initially, in my original methodological design, I intended to conduct long-term ethnographic research primarily on one or two BladeRunners placement sites, examining social and professional relationships between Aboriginal BladeRunners and their non-Aboriginal coworkers. Most site placements are composed of professional and temporary labourers, the majority of whom are non-Aboriginal workers with limited to no familiarity with BladeRunners and similar programs.\textsuperscript{36} I was interested to learn how BladeRunners’ non-Aboriginal coworkers and foremen experience the introduction of Aboriginal street youth into their work sites, as well as how construction workers relate to the Coast Salish territories they live and work on. Due to challenges related to site access and safety, and the movement of crews within and between construction sites, I ultimately gained access to a single construction site, a short-term BC Housing renovation project in northwest Burnaby (see Figure 3). I interviewed workers there and conducted participant-observation during lunch breaks from July to September 2010.

\textsuperscript{33} In the summer of 2011, BladeRunners trainees also practiced their newly developed carpentry skills at the UBC Farm, supporting an urban Aboriginal gardening initiative.
\textsuperscript{34} For a critical review of record keeping in diversity initiatives, see Ahmed (2012).
\textsuperscript{35} Coordinators call on their networks in the Downtown Eastside to support BladeRunners in times of duress, and occasionally use discretionary funds if a BladeRunner is in need. During my fieldwork in the office, coordinators regularly helped find shelter beds or housing alternatives; one coordinator took a BladeRunner grocery shopping, for example.
\textsuperscript{36} Occasionally new BladeRunners are placed on sites with veteran BladeRunners or individuals from other Aboriginal construction training programs.
To supplement this fieldwork, I also regularly visited the BladeRunners office at the corner of Main and Hastings Streets and its satellite training locations. I interviewed BladeRunners staff and trainees and observed two BladeRunners cohorts in their training (May 2010 and July 2011). BladeRunners staff, including three main coordinators and office manager, were helpful, accommodating, and encouraging throughout my research. They facilitated my interactions with their cohorts, introduced me to veteran BladeRunners visiting the office, and invited me to community events.

Stephen, one of the coordinators, introduced me to the BC Housing site’s foreman, Ed. A young Aboriginal man, Mike, had secured his job on Ed’s site and later received additional support from BladeRunners. Stephen thought the site might work for my project, so he set up a meeting on site in July 2010. The following narrative describes that meeting, introducing both Ed and Mike and my entry onto their worksite.

In a subsidized housing complex in Burnaby, Ed sat in an air-conditioned apartment, vacated for the project and serving as the site office. Stephen explained to Ed, a white man in his fifties with a friendly disposition, that I had a proposition for him, then promptly left for his next site visit.
I described my overall research objectives to Ed: to examine everyday encounters between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Vancouver, to consider how these encounters relate to processes of colonialism and racism. I explained that BladeRunners was facilitating my efforts by linking me up with his site, where Mike works with non-Aboriginal coworkers daily. I said I would like to observe the men at work and conduct interviews with them about their experiences learning about Aboriginal issues and working with Aboriginal coworker(s).

Ed expressed skepticism that the men on his site would tell me their truthful opinions about Aboriginal issues, suggesting they would tell me whatever it is they think I want to hear. I explained that I would elicit stories rather than generalized opinions, asking interviewees about their lives at and beyond work as well as about their impressions of current local events in the news relating to Aboriginal communities. Ed said he distinguishes between those wider societal issues and his interpersonal relations with people like Mike: “When I talk to Mike, I don’t think about those things.” When I explained that I could talk with the men about how they relate to individuals versus group or collective concerns and the interplay between, he seemed satisfied and intrigued. He inquired about my fieldwork schedule at the site, expressing a preference for my visits and interviews to coincide with the workers’ lunch hour.37

Ed asked one of his workers to find Mike. A few minutes later, Mike walked in wearing his hard hat, holding a Coke bottle filled with ice. He smiled shyly at me and waited for Ed to explain why he had been asked to come to the office. Ed asked me to tell Mike what I had told him about my research. I gave an abbreviated explanation, expressing concern about his comfort with my presence on the site and research questions.

Ed interjected, saying to Mike, “Maybe it doesn’t matter that you’re Native American [sic]. Maybe you don’t care at all. Maybe it matters to you but not Tim [Mike’s Aboriginal coworker]. What do you think, does it matter?”

In a low voice, Mike said simply, “Yes, it matters.”

“There you go!” Ed exclaimed and looked back at me.

I asked Mike, “Which nation are you from?”

“Haida.”

Ed asked which town.

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37 Ed also asked about my general career plans and my personal life – whether I was married or had children. I gave brief answers and then returned to my research agenda, aware of how my gendered identity might be perceived as problematic in an all-male environment. In some ways, being a woman on the site facilitated conversation as many of the men were willing to participate in my research as a gesture of gentlemanly behaviour.
“Masset.”

Ed asked Mike why he had come down to Vancouver. He explained that he had received training in audiovisual technologies and was interested in music recording and film.

“I didn’t know you were a BladeRunner,” Ed said.

“I wasn’t at first,” Mike replied. “I found out about it and learned I could get First Aid and safety training.”

“Ah, good on you!” said Ed.

Mike explained that he met Bobby from BladeRunners, who introduced him to Stephen.

“Stephen’s a good guy.” Ed replied. “He came and said he was from BladeRunners. I didn’t even know I had a BladeRunner! As I told you before, I didn’t care if you were Native, black, blue, white… I liked you and brought you on.”

“I remember you telling me that at the time,” Mike said.

“So what do you think about Natalie here being around?” Ed asked. “Because this is about you – she’ll be talking to the guys about you. So it’s up to you.”

I explained that I will be focusing on broader Aboriginal issues and his coworkers’ experiences with Aboriginal people more generally.

“– It’s also Tim… Tim’s Native too, right?” Ed interrupted.

“Yes,” Mike said.

I told Mike that I would like to talk with him further about my research and discuss whether or not he’s comfortable with it. Ed told Mike to think about it. I thanked them both and arranged to follow up the next week. Mike nodded, smiled at me, and walked back to his work station. As I left, I saw Tim; he wore a goose feather taped upright on the side of his hardhat, a simplified, urban, and humorous imitation of a headdress.

A week after this meeting, I called Ed and he said Mike gave me the “go-ahead” to conduct fieldwork at the site. He asked me to stop by over lunch hour to share my plan with the rest of the crew. I sat in a grassy courtyard with about a dozen men and explained my intentions. None of them except Mike and Tim had heard of BladeRunners, and one man said he had not considered the racial makeup of the crew before my arrival. A few men asked questions about me and my
research, and one man said he thought they should all help me out. When Ed asked if they agreed to let me conduct my study at the site, the men nodded and Ed smiled at me. They all returned to work and I began my fieldwork there within the week.

I share this narrative of my research entry onto this BladeRunners placement site because it illuminates several relevant methodological concerns: issues of field site access, consent and approval, reactions in the field to my research, ethical considerations around conducting research on non-Aboriginal people with Aboriginal people also on site, questions about ethnographic truths, and discursive strategies employed by me and my interlocutors to address issues of race, difference, shared spaces, and Aboriginality.

During my conversation with Ed and Mike, and indeed for the duration of my subsequent time on the site, I was acutely aware of how my research might affect Mike and Tim. I was concerned that my presence brought unwanted attention to them and their racialized identities. Although I tried to divert Ed’s remark to Mike – “because this is about you” – the reality was that I was indeed there in part because of Mike (and Tim): their presence opened a space for me to talk with their coworkers about Aboriginality in a more grounded and experiential way than if they were no Aboriginal men on site.

I ultimately conducted interviews with nine of their coworkers. Interestingly, I learned that three of the men have Aboriginal heritage and sometimes identify as Métis, demonstrating more complexities of racial identification and heterogeneity on the site than originally anticipated. The other men also had diverse backgrounds and ideological and political orientations. For example, Yves, a Quebecois man recovering from addiction, considers himself an anarchist and is a housing activist in the Downtown Eastside; Bill, Noah, and Anderson, all white men in their twenties and early thirties, grew up in the suburbs of Vancouver and each has developed quite different perspectives on race and racism based on their education and family experiences; Sam, from the Prairies, is reconciling his Métis heritage with stereotypes about the “Indians” he observed growing up.

In addition to these men, I also interviewed Mike and Tim and talked with them each day I was there. In interviews with their coworkers, I maintained my focus on their experiences with Aboriginal people, including but not limited to Mike and Tim. I asked about their own identities and backgrounds, their time in construction, racial demographics of their other job sites, their responses to Aboriginal-related news stories,
and their relationships with and impressions of Aboriginal people in their hometowns and current neighbourhoods. Their responses are embedded in chapters about spectacle, spectrality, place, alterity, and meaning-making that reach beyond their site or the BladeRunners program (Chapters 3, 4, and 7), as well as in the Chapter 5, which focuses specifically on BladeRunners.

Ed’s concern about the men telling me the truth about their thoughts on Aboriginal issues reveals the circulation and use of common discursive strategies that conceal, divert, sanitize, and desensitize issues of racial politics (cf. Furniss 1999). Others, including members of my supervising committee, voiced similar apprehensions about my research: “How will you encourage people to move beyond platitudes in your interviews?” Ethnographic truth-telling is not a new concern in anthropology (see, for example, the Meed-Freeman controversy (Freeman 1983)), nor is recognition of discursive strategies and performance in speaking about race (cf. Alim and Smitherman 2012; Furniss 1999; Hill 1998; Robertson 2005; van den Berg, Wetherell, and Houtkoop-Steenstra 2004). I do not claim that my ethnographic methods allow me to circumvent these concerns, and instead note that I work with and through the discourses articulated by my participants and elicited with the interview topics and narrative techniques I described to Ed. I do not endeavor to separate fact from fiction in my participants’ accounts; rather, I trace and examine how they characterize their meaning-making processes and how they grapple with (or sidestep) issues of Aboriginal identity, land, and belonging (see Chapters 7 and 8). Finally, it is important to note that few of my participants voiced explicitly racist statements. This partially confirms Ed’s concern that participants would not tell me the truth – that they might filter out sentiments they know to be racist. I analyze what they chose to tell me, revealing in the process spectral tensions that point to racially inscribed relations while also recognizing that some silences contain more than I will be able to fully decipher.

Ed claimed he doesn’t “think about those things” when he talks with people like Mike, meaning thinking and talking about political concerns of Aboriginal people or the legacies of colonialism that continue to shape the present. He told Mike that he didn’t care if Mike was “Native, black, blue, or white,” and even speculated that Mike’s cultural and racial identity might “not matter” to Mike himself. “Yes, it matters,” Mike said. It matters that Mike is Native, and not black, blue, or white. It matters that he is Haida. It matters for a range of reasons that I attempt to address throughout my analysis: politics,
culture, and race meaningfully shape people’s identities even (and sometimes especially) in places where differences “shouldn’t matter” for one reason or another.

Indeed, the denial that “it matters” is a discursive strategy in liberal settler states; it serves to ignore or diminish Indigeneity as a different socio-political location, to spectralize Aboriginal alterity. Aboriginal peoples continue to exist and make claims for space and recognition that unsettle any concept of a “settled” place or nation. Indeed, because these things still “matter,” BladeRunners exists: because of a history of racialized exclusion and colonial dispossession, initiatives like BladeRunners function to support Aboriginal “inclusion” to mitigate the harmful ideological and material effects of exclusion. That Ed doesn’t think or talk about “those things” is significant: it points to his privileged social location and to pervasive, paradoxical erasures and reinscriptions of Aboriginal alterity. It also provides an example of the spectral, holographic quality of Indigeneity in Canada: now you see it, now you don’t. I examine how this tension is reflected in BladeRunners program discourses that simultaneously position participants as “once a BladeRunner, always a BladeRunner” and “just one of the guys” on their placement sites (Chapter 5).

The BladeRunners program works to counteract historical exclusions in ways that are distinct from the spectacular forms of Aboriginal inclusion on display during the Olympics and from the community-led strategies of inclusion at the Mount Pleasant library, which I turn to next. The program’s tensions between recognizing and mitigating their participants’ Aboriginal alterities through work training, placement, and support, enable me to critically consider how Aboriginal inclusion can function to reify and transform ideas about Aboriginal difference. Examining the attitudes and stories of BladeRunners’ non-Aboriginal coworkers, I identify how quotidian social relations are not only shaped through these inclusionary tensions, but also produced through the complex interplay between spectacles like the Olympics or the Stanley Park renaming controversy (see Chapter 3) and spectralizing processes that serve to displace or de-emphasize Indigeneity even though “it (still) matters.”
Aboriginal Titles: Mount Pleasant Library and Urban Aboriginal Community Development

In late 2009, the Mount Pleasant library branch of the Vancouver Public Library moved from a small location in Kingsgate Mall to a bright modern space a block away. The library now shares the building at 1 Kingsway with the Mount Pleasant Community Centre, a daycare facility, a coffee shop, and eight storeys of market rental housing (See Figure 4).

Figure 4: Map of Mount Pleasant, showing Mount Pleasant library branch
(Google Maps 2014a, reprinted with permission)

38 The Kingsgate Mall location had been open since the 1970s. The branch closed to prepare for the move to the new location but construction issues there delayed the full move for years. Responding to the community’s expressed needs for the library’s services, the branch reopened temporary spaces in the mall until the completion of the new building.
On the afternoon of January 16, 2010, hundreds of people filled the lobby and
gymnasium of the Mount Pleasant Centre for its official opening ceremonies. I share the
following narrative of that afternoon to introduce the library as one of my field sites.

Residents of the neighbourhood sat in rows of folded chairs in the centre of the
gymnasium and stood around the room’s perimeter. As I entered the gym, Mount
Pleasant’s library branch manager Lisa waved and invited me to sit with her and
her colleagues for the ceremony. 39

At one o’clock, Ian Campbell, a hereditary chief of the Squamish Nation, entered
the gym with a hand drum, singing. The audience stood as he made his way to
the makeshift stage, wearing blue jeans and regalia: a headdress of feathers and
wool and a tunic adorned with small wooden paddles and Coast Salish designs.
Stephen Kuran, then acting manager of the Vancouver Board of Parks and
Recreation, introduced Campbell, commending his “Squamish aerobics moves,”
and invited the audience to sit.

Campbell smiled and began speaking in Skwxwu7mesh Snichim. “I just wanted
to say hello,” he joked before offering a full translation and short speech. He
welcomed the audience to the traditional territories of the Musqueam, Squamish,
and Tsleil-Waututh peoples, remarking, “We are invisible in our own land.” He
then began gesturing to the lands surrounding the centre, noting Squamish place-
names for nearby features and re-emplacing local Native villages, burial grounds,
freshwater springs now buried beneath city streets, indigenous plants and
animals, and his nation’s adaptations to the modern environment they now live
in.

“Our history is your history,” he told the audience, “Our stories are your
stories… Facilities like this facilitate unity.” He offered a prayer for strong minds
and good feelings, lifting his hands to the people gathered before him and giving
a blessing in Skwxwu7mesh Snichim. The audience applauded.

The emcees thanked Campbell and motioned to a woman standing along the
north wall: Amanda Nahanee, the Vancouver Public Library’s First Nations
Storyteller in Residence. She smiled and waved at the clapping crowd. The

39 In November 2009, I met with Lisa to discuss my research project at the branch. She gave me a tour of
the new Mount Pleasant Centre facility, weeks before it opened to the public. I met Lisa through a series of
interactions and meetings in the planning stages of my project. In mid-2009, I entered the temporary Mount
Pleasant library branch location in the Kingsgate Mall and spoke with the staff manager. I explained that I
hoped to conduct research at the new branch and asked who I should contact to discuss this prospect. He
gave me the contact information for Diana Guinn, Director of Neighbourhood and Youth Services at the
Central Library. In September 2009, I met with Diana in the upper levels of the Central branch. She asked
about my methods and I began explaining ethnography: interviews and participant observation. She
interrupted, smiled, and said the library is familiar with ethnography. After a brief discussion about my
research questions and timeline, she expressed her support for my project and suggested I next set up a
meeting with Anne, the branch manager.
emcees then introduced and thanked other officials, individuals, and organizations affiliated with the building’s development.

The Parks Board commissioners noted that the “bright and spacious” building is “welcoming and friendly” and emphasized that it is a space of partnership and shared resources. They cited the Mount Pleasant community’s “long and colourful history,” and asserted that the new centre is intended as a second home for the neighbourhood’s residents to “learn, celebrate, connect, and put down roots.” They pointed to the busy and bustling lobby as a sign of the sense of community already in place.

Joan Anderson, chair of the Library Board, extolled the virtues of the new Mount Pleasant library branch. “Library users are loving it!” she said, pointing out that the new location is bigger and nicer than the older Kingsgate mall location and offers a wider selection. More than one thousand patrons are entering the new branch each day, a seventy percent increase from Kingsgate Mall. She too emphasized partnership: with the Parks Board, the Community Centre, the daycare unit, and with Aboriginal community members.

The new Aboriginal Collection, she explained, was developed in consultation with elders and youth at the Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre, the Broadway Youth Resource Centre, and the Native Education College, and is a more relevant and updated collection as a result. She acknowledged Mount Pleasant Library’s children’s librarian commending his work in daycare units, his storytimes at the Kingsgate Mall, and other community engagements. “Libraries can make a difference,” she concluded.

To close the event, the emcees invited the representatives of supporting organizations to the stage for a ribbon-cutting photo opportunity. The Deputy Mayor waved to Chief Ian Campbell, inviting him to join them and he approached, drumming. He and the other representatives stood in a row, cutting a red ribbon as cameras flashed. The crowd applauded and began to disband. For the rest of the day, the centre’s open house had a festive atmosphere, with face painting, building tours, and storytelling activities.

I offer this narrative as another entry point into my fieldwork in the city: a small scale spectacle celebrating the opening of a new community space in one of Vancouver’s oldest neighbourhoods.

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40 Those acknowledged included the Deputy mayor (Mayor Gregor Robertson was home sick) and city councillors, the building’s architects (Busby and Associates), the building’s contractor (VanBots), Parks Board commissioners, the chair of the Library Board, and the Mount Pleasant Community Centre Board president. The emcees also highlighted the building’s LEED Gold status, as well as the amenities included in the building, especially the city-owned market rental units rising above in the building’s tower.
The Mount Pleasant Community Centre is located at the corner of Main and Kingsway. Kingsway’s route was first forged as a Coast Salish trail through the area, connecting the Fraser River with False Creek and English Bay. In the early days of European settlement, a wagon road was established along the trail. It later became Westminster Road, cutting diagonally across the landscape and connecting the colonial district’s capital in New Westminster with Gastown on Burrard Inlet. Today, Kingsway runs across Burnaby and Vancouver, and Main Street divides the city of Vancouver between east and west, running south from the waterfront on Burrard Inlet through the Downtown Eastside and its Strathcona and Chinatown areas, past the rail and Skytrain terminals, up a hill to Broadway, past many new locally-owned shops and restaurants, and through residential blocks from King Edward to Marine Drive, including a small area known by some as “Little India” between 41st and 49th. The Mount Pleasant neighbourhood spreads out around the triangle formed between Kingsway, Broadway, and Main Street, bracketed by Cambie Drive to the west, Clark Drive to the east, Great Northern Way to the north, and 16th Avenue to the south.

More than 50,000 people live in the neighbourhood, and this number is growing as neighbourhood demographics change. Approximately 44 percent of the neighbourhood is defined as “visible minorities,” with people of Chinese, Filipino, and Southwest Asian descent forming the highest percentages within this category. Whiteness – the apparent “invisible majority” – is not explicitly counted and is instead left unmarked in the general category “not a visible minority.”

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41 The City of Vancouver recently commissioned a public art project by Ligwilda’xw artist Sonny Assu to create signmarkers commemorating this “shared history” as part of Vancouver’s 125th anniversary celebrations. Major Gregor Robertson unveiled Assu’s design on National Aboriginal Day in June 2012 (Public Art Program 2012).
42 In actuality, Ontario Street, two blocks west of Main, is the city’s dividing line according to the street addresses, but Main Street is a more prominent corridor and commonly considered the meeting point of east and west.
43 The demographic figures used in this paragraph come from the British Columbia Provincial Electoral District Profile (2008), based on figures from the 2006 census. It is challenging to locate recent demographic statistics for the Mount Pleasant neighbourhood (as well as the Downtown Eastside (see Chapters 3 and 5)). The neighbourhood is a municipal designation and is composed of multiple census tracts. The Provincial Electoral District Profile report does not list which census tracts were used in their reporting. Furthermore, census documentation practices changed between the 2006 and 2011 census years, with the long form census form replaced by the National Household Survey (NHS); NHS results were released throughout 2013; reports comparing 2006 and 2011 are beginning to become available, but so far a synthesis of census tracts and neighbourhoods has not been realized by the city or province.
44 Aboriginal people are not included in the visible minority category. The number of people of Chinese descent is higher than the provincial average, but lower than the Vancouver and Metro Vancouver averages.
Aboriginal people make up seven percent of the neighbourhood’s population, compared with five percent of the province as a whole and two percent of the city. While this number is higher than many neighbourhoods in western parts of Vancouver, it is consistent with other neighbourhoods in east Vancouver and lower than the areas with the greatest concentration of Aboriginal people, particularly along Hastings Street in the Downtown Eastside, Commercial Drive, and on and around the Musqueam reserve in the Dunbar area.

Chief Ian Campbell’s participation in the Mount Pleasant Centre opening ceremony is an increasingly common form of recognition of Aboriginal heritage in the city. It signals organizers’ acknowledgement of local First Nations and their Coast Salish protocols of acknowledgement of territory. Chief Campbell from the Squamish Nation is a regular speaker for such appearances; the Musqueam often send Larry Grant, Wade Grant, or Victor Guerin to perform this role. At the Mount Pleasant Centre opening, Campbell linked the centre and surrounding neighbourhood with his nation’s historical use of the area. Although he did not explicitly address the urban Aboriginal population in Mount Pleasant and Vancouver’s eastside, he expressed his hopes that the centre would “facilitate unity,” alluding to a period or context of disunity.

“Our history is your history. Our stories are your stories,” Campbell said, encouraging an interpretation of Coast Salish histories and stories as actively present and co-constitutive with the rest of the neighbourhood’s histories and stories. Yet, he notes that Coast Salish people are invisible on their own lands. His sentiments, along with Campbell’s attention to place and locality, are a cornerstone of my methodological and theoretical orientation. Through my fieldwork, I put non-Aboriginality in conversation with Aboriginality and work against invisibilizing narratives. Through interviews I ask non-Aboriginal people, including staff and patrons at the library, to reflect on their relationships with Aboriginal people and how they have developed their knowledge and ideas about Aboriginal alterity and history. As I explained in my introduction, I do not think that colonialism is the domain of Aboriginal people alone; the stories of colonialism are all of our stories – settlers, migrants, and Aboriginal peoples. I am interested in places like the library, which aim to “facilitate unity” by facilitating encounters in shared space across social distance. My research there allowed me to examine how the Aboriginal Collection is viewed as part of and apart from the general collection, to explore how Aboriginal “inclusion” projects at the library are redefining the Mount Pleasant
community and shifting the demographics of the library, and to analyse the library as a generative site for social learning as well as a site of access to knowledge resources.

One way the Mount Pleasant library is facilitating encounters is by actively inviting local urban Aboriginal people to participate in the life of the library. Chief Ian Campbell’s presentation at the Mount Pleasant Centre opening ceremony reflects the library’s increasing attention to its Aboriginal patron base. The Working Together project has been a major catalyst for these efforts. In 2004 Vancouver Public Library launched this multi-city, federally- and municipally-funded project to examine community development approaches to mitigating barriers to library use among low-income and other “socially excluded” groups. The Working Together project critically examined the self-conception held by many library staff that public libraries are inclusive and neutral institutions. Community development librarians working on the project endeavoured to better understand social exclusion in order to create recommendations for more inclusive library practices and policies (see Chapter 6).

In Vancouver, the public library chose to locate the Working Together project at the Mount Pleasant branch. A number of its recommendations have been implemented at the location, including an overall ethic of “working together” – the spirit of inclusion and community Tewanee Joseph mentioned in his speech at the Olympic torch event. This makes the branch an ideal location for my research: a site of inclusion that promotes proximity between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal patrons through library efforts to encourage Aboriginal use of the branch and its resources. Like BladeRunners, the library acknowledges Aboriginal alterities and works to reduce correlations between Aboriginality and marginality, but it does so through an emphasis on recognizing Aboriginal distinction through its Aboriginal Collection, community development, and Aboriginal programming.

According to the Working Together project’s *Community-Led Libraries Toolkit* (2008:12), “Mount Pleasant is characterized by a higher-than-average level of poverty, with the most recent census data suggesting that just over one-third of the community are low-income households… In Mount Pleasant, poverty creates the exclusion that defines

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45 The other cities involved were Halifax, Toronto, and Regina. The project was renamed after its first phase – from *Libraries in Marginal Communities* to *Working Together: Library - Community Connections* – because community development librarians involved in the project “understood that the [first] name implied a one way relationship and not the mutual and reciprocal relationship our philosophy encouraged” (Working Together Project 2008:5).
many community members’ lives. The neighbourhood is also undergoing rapid change as parts of the community gentrify.” Community development librarians adopted a “community-led approach” to build relationships with socially excluded communities in Mount Pleasant. They worked closely with street-involved youth (many of them Aboriginal) at the Broadway Youth Resource Centre, with recently released prisoners at a halfway house run by the John Howard Society, and with Aboriginal community members at the Native Education College.

Around the same time as the Working Together project, the library received a private donation to purchase books to enhance the branch’s Aboriginal Collection. The community librarian in charge of developing the collection used tools and techniques from the Working Together toolkit to consult with Aboriginal people at the Native Education College, the Broadway Youth Resource Centre, and the Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre. Other examples of the public library’s efforts to enhance their Aboriginal community development and programming include the First Nations Storyteller-in-Residence program and National Aboriginal Day events (see Chapter 8), as well as the ongoing development of the Aboriginal Collection (see Chapter 6).

These myriad efforts toward Aboriginal “inclusion” thus ground my decision to conduct participant observation and interviews with staff and patrons at the Mount Pleasant Library. I was interested in the library as a site of both conventional and social learning. I aimed to explore how non-Aboriginal participants experienced the increasing attention to Aboriginal participation in the social life of the library, as well as how they perceived and used the additional Aboriginal informational resources. Did patrons use the Aboriginal Collection? Did they meet or encounter Aboriginal people at the library? Did staff learn about Aboriginal people in the neighbourhood through the branch’s community development efforts? I wanted to know if Joan Andersen’s comment “libraries can make a difference” applied to issues of settler colonialism and challenging relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples. What role did the library play in providing access to written and human resources for learning about Aboriginality? What role did it play as a meeting ground for non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal community members?

The library’s location in the Mount Pleasant neighbourhood, with a higher proportion of Aboriginal residents than many other parts of the city, also contributed to my decision to locate my study there. Furthermore, as I mentioned in the introduction, I
lived in Mount Pleasant and endeavoured to situate myself in the processes I intended to
analyse; indeed, many of my research interests and questions emerged through my daily
interactions with people and place in the neighbourhood.

Throughout my fieldwork (April 2010-August 2011), I regularly visited the
library to conduct participant observation in the stacks, sitting in the quiet study spaces
along the west windows, beside the fireplace in a small seating area, or near the bays of
computers in both the east and west wings of the library. I attended special events,
particularly events with Aboriginal guests, such as Jackie Timothy and Henry Charles’
First Nations Storyteller-in-Residence story times. I participated in regular staff meetings,
read the security incident report log, and observed community bulletin boards, displays,
and interactions in the library.

In addition to numerous informal conversations, especially with staff, I conducted
semi-structured interviews with eight staff and eleven librarians.46 I inquired about both
their personal and professional experiences with Aboriginality and Aboriginal community
work.47 Interviews with staff involved in the Working Together project, the First Nations
Storyteller-in-Residence program, and Aboriginal community development work were
especially illuminating.

In addition to interacting regularly with staff, in Fall 2010 I also interviewed 27
patrons. I invited patrons to participate in interviews by sitting near the library’s entrance
with a small sign, a stack of consent forms, and printed handouts that briefly explained
my project. Many individuals read the flier and were encouraging, even when deciding
not to sit for an interview for various reasons. Those who did decide to participate
included, among others, a locally recognized contemporary artist, two young Pakeha
(white) women from New Zealand (one is now a permanent resident, the other has since
left Canada), a Polish-Canadian woman who grew up as a Displaced Person during and
after World War II, a Malaysian-Chinese-Canadian working in computer programming, a
white medical researcher who played soccer as a youth for the Sechelt Nation, and a
social worker from the Vancouver School Board.

46 Librarians typically have a Masters in Library Science and work at the library’s reference desk. Staff
work at the circulation desk and in other areas of the library.
47 Some participants were auxiliary staff while others were full-time managers. There is frequent movement
between managerial positions and auxiliary staff, with shifts taking place all across the library network. I
interviewed some individuals who had worked in the Vancouver Public Library system for many years and
offered insights based on their experiences at other branches to augment their reflections on Mount Pleasant
Library.
The neighbourhood and library’s population’s ethnic, racial, and linguistic diversity are not fully represented among these patron participants; the profile of my patron participants is disproportionately white and English-speaking. While this is unfortunate, it is not altogether surprising. I invited participants and conducted interviews in English; I had no resources for translation services. I also believe that the content of my study was offputting for some recent immigrants, and even long-time Canadians, who felt they had no direct experience with Aboriginal people to share with me. Despite my reassurances that any reflections – even on their lack of experiences – were welcome and encouraged, several patrons declined to participate, stating in various ways, “I don’t have anything to say about that” or “I would like to help you, but I don’t know anything.” Their denials of knowledge convey the extent of erasure and distance in Vancouver, as well as provide an example of “denial[s] of relationality” as Dwayne Donald (2012:91) has noted (see Chapter 8).

One patron – a white, British woman in her thirties – declined to participate for another reason altogether. My encounter with her and her expressed uneasiness with my project opens up questions about the ethics and design of my study. She walked by my interview station one evening. I smiled and handed her my flier, asking if she would be interested in participating in an interview. She read the flier quickly then looked at me with hard eyes and said my project sounded “weird.” She noted that my emphasis on how non-Aboriginal people learn about Aboriginal people implies that Aboriginal people are simply objects and that “learning about them” is an objectifying concept. I tried to explain that I am interested in relations between people – how non-Aboriginal people understand Aboriginal issues and concerns through interaction, social distance, and other sources of knowledge, including personal experience.

“I don’t learn about Native people. They’re my friends,” she retorted.

I reiterated that I use the word “learn” in an expansive way, including social forms of learning: “I learn about all sorts of things from my friends and through personal interactions with them.” She looked at me with scepticism and hostility. I continued to explain that I came to Vancouver from elsewhere and that I had a lot to learn as I tried to understand Aboriginal social issues and the effects of colonialism in new ways. My own process of learning made me curious about how others learn. She said she had moved to Vancouver from England. Knowing that Aboriginal people are “so over-researched,” she chose to be an activist.
I wanted to hear more about her activism, but she did not share. I explained that I think studying relations between people can be a form of action. Because of colonial policies and practices, including spatial segregation, many non-Aboriginal people do not encounter Aboriginal people regularly and there is a lot of misunderstanding about their concerns and socio-political position. Through my study, I explained, I am interested in learning how others learn in and through this context of disconnection and misunderstanding. I argued that studying this topic provides an avenue for social commentary and political critique.

She remained unconvinced. I asked her how I could reword my flier to avoid future offense. She didn’t know. She pointed to the blank space beside me where she felt an Aboriginal person should be sitting, and suggested that my study is invalidated by the fact that I am working alone and not in collaboration with an Aboriginal researcher. Before I could respond, she said she would not be participating in my research and walked away, uneasy and indignant.

This woman’s concerns about the ethical dimensions of my project link up with many critiques of Western studies of Indigenous peoples (cf. Asad 1979; Fabian 1983; Linda Tuhiwai Smith 1999). Her emphasis on activism and collaborative research, as alternatives to research about and on Indigenous communities by outside researchers, reflects efforts in and beyond the academy to avoid exploitative research in favour of community-driven, relevant, and critical projects with a social justice agenda. These efforts are taken up in recognition of the ways social science and other research disciplines have served the interests of those in power and were/are complicit in colonial regimes that produced Indigenous alterities and Western hegemonies.

I designed my project in response to these cogent critiques. I chose to shift my attention from “Other” to “Self” by studying non-Aboriginal people’s positions in settler colonialism and their participation in the production of Aboriginal alterities. This is a reflexive endeavour; I locate myself in the processes I seek to analyse. While this orientation does not liberate me from association with colonial anthropology, my hope is that I can put to use the tools and ethics of critical anthropology by examining settler colonialism and its forms of power, knowledge, and difference (Edmonds 2010; Pels 1997; 2008). I share the woman’s concern that to ask non-Aboriginal people to share their feelings, experiences, and reflections on Aboriginal alterity might serve to objectify and essentialize Aboriginality. It risks reproducing colonial dynamics involving speaking over
and about Aboriginal people rather than hearing their voices directly (Spivak 1988). Nonetheless, I believe it is productive and important to ask settler and immigrant peoples to reflect on the settler colonial process and their participation in the production of Aboriginal alterity. This is different than asking them to simply share their impressions of Aboriginal people: it emphasizes the processes, not only products, of meaning-making and requires self-reflection and analysis. It also involves recognition that settler colonialism is not an “Indian problem” but a relational dynamic and social structure.

To further respond to the woman’s concerns, although I recognize the merits of collaborative research, I chose to develop relationships with individuals in my field sites without adopting a collaborative model. Working with an Aboriginal researcher, as the woman at the library suggested, could have opened up additional avenues for discussion and analysis, but my social identity as a non-Aboriginal person also had its advantages, given my project’s aims. As anthropologist Elizabeth Furniss (1999) notes, the presence of Aboriginal people may affect and even silence what non-Aboriginal people are willing to openly share about Aboriginal people and issues. Some of my participants expressed discomfort speaking about Aboriginality at all (see Chapter 7). While settler colonial relations do – and perhaps should – create feelings of discomfort, working with an Aboriginal co-researcher may have exacerbated this discomfort in unproductive ways – for both non-Aboriginal participants and for the hypothetical Aboriginal co-researcher.

Additionally, though I sought to identify ways to make my research reciprocal, such as sharing research results and consulting with library and BladeRunners staff about their work, my status as an independent researcher in each of my field sites allows me to advance critiques and offer feedback in ways that a collaborative model may have disabled or limited. I am not claiming objectivity; rather, I am suggesting that by working independently rather than collaboratively, I developed a critical perspective and voice that creates opportunities for frank discussion. I hope the analyses and critiques I offer can be taken up within and beyond these sites of “inclusion” as inclusion agents and participants examine their values, principles, and practices and reconsider how inclusion work can adapt to productively engage in altering settler colonial conditions toward greater social justice, equity, and meaningful recognition of Aboriginal needs and rights.

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48 I experienced the challenges and rewards of collaborative research during a short-term project with the Gitxaała Nation during an ethnographic field school with Charles Menzies and Caroline Butler in 2007 (Baloy 2011).
Locally Multi-Sited Ethnography: Encounters and Discursive Practices in Settler Colonial Middle Grounds

In the mid-1990s, anthropologist George Marcus observed that multi-sited ethnographies were emerging to challenge methodological conventions and constraints in anthropology. Multi-sited accounts contributed to broader paradigm shifts happening in the discipline as a result of postmodernist and poststructuralist critiques in the 1980s. As critical anthropologists distanced themselves from ethnographies of bounded small-scale communities in the colonized global south, they moved first toward situating these sites in world systems of state formation, capitalist development, and colonialism, and later toward examining the nuanced, uneven, and power-laden interconnections between sites in a globalizing (and always-already global) world (Marcus 1995:97–98). Multi-sited ethnographies follow people, things, metaphors, biographies, and conflicts to better theorize chains, migrations, and cultural influences. The focus in anthropology shifted from The Nuer to networks, from the Sioux to systems.

Marcus (1995:99) writes that multi-sited ethnography “claims that any ethnography of a cultural formation in the world system is also an ethnography of the system, and therefore cannot be understood only in terms of the conventional single-site mise-en-scene of ethnographic research.” In my own work, I understood that to study non-Aboriginal people’s encounters with Aboriginal people would entail studying the discourses, culture, history, and practices of modern-day settler colonialism. These processes are not concentrated in any single site, but are produced through the court system, schools, media, laws, and other broader social circuits and spaces. I thus decided to study settler colonial processes by focusing on the emergent discourses of Aboriginal inclusion. To study these discourses ethnographically, I selected the three sites of inclusion I described above. Marcus (1995:111) notes that, in strategically situated ethnographic sites, “the crucial issue concerns the detectable system-awareness in the everyday consciousness and actions of subjects’ lives.” By “strategically situating” my fieldwork in multiple sites, I was equipped with a wide-angle lens to analyse settler colonialism through discourses of inclusion, and zoom in on how these discourses are grounded in specific ethnographic sites (Marcus 1995; de Leeuw, Kobayashi, and Cameron 2011). My sites allowed me to explore how my non-Aboriginal participants understood and enacted settler colonial social relations and constructed Aboriginal alterity.
within and beyond the Aboriginal Pavilion, library, and construction program and placement site (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: Composite map of my field sites
(Google Maps 2014a, reprinted with permission)

Studying any of these three sites in isolation would have risked reifying the social relations within them or generalizing settler colonial conditions that are in fact site-specific. Instead, by taking a locally multi-sited approach, I can produce an analysis that is greater than the sum of its parts. I can trace how spectacular Aboriginality informs post-Olympic-spectacular, quotidian interactions. For example, aware of his participation in the powwow circuit, one of Tim’s co-workers asked him to perform a rain-dance to keep the rain away one afternoon but never asked what it was like for him to grow up on reserve or to raise his young son on a different territory than his own. The spectacular images of dancers mediated this interaction and others. At the library, a staff person told me she watched Vancouver’s Olympic Opening Ceremony but learned little about the dancers or their lives. “We like to see them dance,” another patron commented. Like the observer reading the plaque on Scotia Street (see Chapter 1), these observers of spectacle must reconcile on their own the link between dancing, performing Aboriginal people and the Aboriginal patrons who frequent the library. To study only the spectacular Aboriginal

49 These are also risked of qualitative analysis more generally, but single-site analyses are especially vulnerable.
performer, or reactions of non-Aboriginal people to his or her performance, misses the nuanced interplay between how the gaze upon spectacular Aboriginality mediates and is mediated through ordinary (in)visibility of Aboriginal co-workers and neighbours.

By emphasizing Aboriginal inclusion as a unifying theme of my multi-sited method, I was also able to track how different discursive practices differently informed the inclusionary projects in my three sites. Was Indigeneity and Indigenous sovereignty acknowledged, for example? Meaning, was the distinct political position of culturally different Aboriginal people in relation to their territories and to the settler colonial state recognized? In the case of the Olympics, yes and no; in the library, sometimes; and at BladeRunners, very rarely. This difference allowed me to theorize Indigenous spectrality using ethnographic examples. To take another example, were non-Aboriginal people encouraged to be self-reflexive about their relationships to Indigeneity and Aboriginal marginality? In all three cases, the answer is sometimes yes, sometimes no. At the Aboriginal Pavilion, for example, non-Aboriginal audiences were regularly reminded that they were on the unceded territories of Coast Salish territories, occasionally invited to reflect on how their settlement had disrupted the lives of generations of Aboriginal people, and other times encouraged to passively observe singers and dancers perform culturally-significant songs. While the Aboriginal Pavilion regularly offered moments to actively contemplate the effects of colonialism, such moments were rare in my fieldwork at the library and through BladeRunners. Because colonial legacies were couched in other discourses or obfuscated altogether at the library and through BladeRunners, my role as analyst shifted in these sites, moving sometimes between detective, provocateur, or semiotician.

The extent and quality of interaction between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people also differed between my field sites. At the Aboriginal Pavilion, non-Aboriginal people were constantly engaging with Aboriginal people – most frequently as audiences of their performances, but also through conversations with Aboriginal volunteers and vendors. At the library, however, such engagements were limited. During Aboriginal-themed events, such as First Nations Storyteller-in-Residence storytimes or National Aboriginal Day performances (see Chapter 8), library staff and patrons assumed the role of audience members. In the day-to-day life of the library, staff might occasionally help an Aboriginal patron check out or find a book. Among patrons, conversations beyond polite greetings or glances are rare. Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people regularly sat
beside one another at the computers or window seats, or passed one another in the aisle; in these ways, they were brought together in proximity, not interaction. At the construction site, on the other hand, interactions between Mike, Tim, and the coworkers happened daily, work and non-work related. Within the BladeRunners program itself, Aboriginal participants outnumbered non-Aboriginal participants by a large margin, creating yet another opportunity to witness interactions of other kinds: jokes over breakfast or lunch, smoke breaks, camaraderie and tensions within the training classroom, Aboriginal voices heard in more abundance than non-Aboriginal voices.

These inter-site differences enabled me to recognize that Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal interactions operate on a continuum from intimate and familiar to mediated to disconnected altogether; not all points along the continuum are equally probable, however, within or beyond these sites. Conditions of connection are shaped by social conventions within the site itself (e.g. the library is typically more quiet than the line at the Aboriginal Pavilion; work-related conversation takes precedent over informal chitchat at the construction site) and beyond (non-Aboriginal encounters with Aboriginal people are more common in the Downtown Eastside than many other parts of the city; few non-Aboriginal people have visited reserves, thereby limiting potential encounters in those spatial sites).

In their introduction to *Culture, Power, Place* (1997), anthropologists Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson argued, like Marcus, for ethnographies that account for the interconnections between places. I do not suggest that my sites are interconnected in a direct way – I was the only actor that moved between the three sites and linked them together. My construction of my field of study, however, points to the ways that all three sites overlap through their distinctive efforts to mitigate Aboriginal exclusion and their spatial effects of making propinquity between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people possible and even encouraged. My three field sites are linked not because I can follow people, things, or biographies by moving between the three spaces, but because I can trace how discourses that produce Aboriginal alterity are circulated, negotiated, and transformed within, between, and beyond these sites. I thus use the three sites to examine what Gupta and Ferguson call the “processes of production of difference,” responding to their encouragement to foreground power relations and history rather than simply assume pre-existing differences brought together through encounter (1997:43).
Conclusion

Individually my field sites in some ways function as contemporary contact zones (Pratt 2008) or middle grounds (White 1991) in the broader contact zones of Vancouver and Canada: places where Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people encounter one another and negotiate their shared existence. Yet my sites are not examples of fresh colonial encounter like those described by Pratt or White; instead, they have been produced out of conditions of sustained contact and difference-making. Since the early days of colonial contact zones – “the space and time where subjects previously separated by geography and history are co-present, the point at which their trajectories intersect” (2008:9) – colonial policies and practices produced spatial separations and racial hierarchies through an articulatory politics that continues to shape social relations in the present. As settler colonial theorist Edward Cavanagh observes, “Space and race [have]… made a world – or even several worlds – of difference in the settler colonial scheme of things” (2011:154). My analysis thus examines not the contact zones of the early colonial era, but the contemporary worlds of differences those historical meeting-places produced. Historian Richard White (1991) writes:

The history of Indian-white relations has not usually produced complex stories. Indians are the rock, European peoples are the sea, and history seems a constant storm. There have been but two outcomes: The sea wears down and dissolves the rock; or the sea erodes the rock but cannot finally absorb its battered remnant, which endures. The first outcome produces stories of conquest and assimilation; the second produces stories of cultural persistence. The tellers of such stories do not lie. Some Indian groups did disappear; others did persist. But the tellers of such stories miss a larger process and a larger truth. The meeting of sea and continent, like the meeting of whites and Indians, creates as well as destroys. Contact was not a battle of primal forces in which only one could survive. Something new could appear. (White 1991:ix)

My ethnography endeavours to produce a more complex history: a history of present conditions of encounter between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, shaped through complex historical relations. Vancouver is a place where colonial hierarchies and knowledges are sedimented but not cemented, a city not only where accumulated ideas about racial and political difference play out through everyday interactions and discursive practices, but also occasionally shift as new ideas and forms of connection take shape.
“Something new could appear” – and it has, and it will. My analysis aims to account for the ways the past shapes the present while also demonstrating that my research participants and field sites are dynamic. The processes I describe are simultaneously historical and emergent.

When layered together, for example, the myriad staff and patron opinions about the contents and purpose of the Mount Pleasant library’s Aboriginal Collection demonstrate that different periods of political thought around the “Indian question” continue to exert a force on contemporary ideas about where Aboriginal people (and library resources) belong (see Chapter 6). These ideas are shared in a context where non-Aboriginal library staff are taking direction from Aboriginal community members about how to represent their histories, voices, and concerns, creating opportunities for new “best practices” to emerge and take hold, and perhaps later to be revised according to new ideas from Aboriginal interlocutors and other stakeholders. My research with BladeRunners also demonstrates how historical approaches to managing Aboriginal alterity meet new ones. As I describe in Chapter 6, the program directly acknowledges the structural inequalities participants experience as a result of their marginal social positions, at times directly acknowledging that the Aboriginal profile of participants reflects the structural effects of colonialism on contemporary inequalities. Once on their construction sites, however, their Aboriginal alterities are de-emphasized as they become absorbed into their crews as “just one of the guys.” Aboriginality: now you see it, now you don’t. Examining these processes enables a spectral analysis and, put in conversation with analyses of Olympic spectacle and events like Chief Ian Campbell’s speech or the First Nations Storyteller-in-Residence program at the library (see Chapter 8), support a rich, ethnographic account of how everyday non-Aboriginal meaning-making are produced in the interstices between: multiply-located, layered sites of Aboriginal inclusion and the dynamic processes that sustain and transform the settler colonial project.

A final point to make is that I not only position my field sites as middle grounds – sites of interstitial encounter and sites produced in the interstices of spectacle and spectrality – but I also consider my methodological and theoretical approach to occupy a middle ground between theory and practice, between academic scholarship and advocacy for social change, and between macro and micro spatial and temporal analyses. Anthropologist Bruce M. Knauff (2006) suggests that contemporary anthropology is a “post-paradigmatic” discipline whose practitioners position themselves in these interstitial
locations. He states that polarizing theoretical and methodological debates of mid-century anthropology have given way in recent years to sophisticated studies that “pursue mid-level connections by linking individual facets of large-scale theories, topics, and methods to particular but not entirely local objects of study” (411). He contends that contemporary anthropologists, using a robust and diverse theoretical and methodological toolkit, acts as bricoleurs who creatively and critically braid together “different approaches or perspectives like strands of a rope configured specially for a new topic, issue, or critical intervention” (408). My multi-sited methodological design, critical analytical approach, and conceptual framework resemble Knauft’s characterization of contemporary ethnography, as I bring together an eclectic mix of field sites and theoretical orientations to examine contemporary socio-politics of settler colonialism.
Chapter 3: Spectacular and Spectral Spaces

Introduction

In this goodbye we will remember Snauq before the draining of False Creek. We will honour the dead: the stanchions of fir, spruce, cedar and the gardens of Snauq. We will dream of the new False Creek, the dry lands, the new parks and the acres of grass and houses. We will accept what Granville Island has become and honour Patty Rivard, the First Nations woman who was the first to forge a successful business in the heart of it. We will struggle to appreciate the little ferries that cross the creek. We will salute – Chief George – Chipkaym and Khatsahlanogh who embraced the vision of this burgeoning new nation. I will pray for my personal inability to fully commit to that vision.

- Lee Maracle (2008:124)

In Sto:lo writer Lee Maracle’s story “Goodbye, Snauq,” her narrating character grieves for the former Squamish village site on Vancouver’s False Creek and subject of a $92.5 million settlement between the Squamish Nation and the federal government in the early 2000s. Coast Salish people, especially the Musqueam, had fished and gathered in False Creek’s waters and tidal flats for generations prior to European settlement. In the mid-1800s, the Squamish established a permanent settlement on False Creek’s shores, near where the southern base of Burrard Bridge now stands. They fished from the sandbar at what is now called Granville Island. When colonial officials set up reserves in the area, they designated the Squamish settlement of Snauq “Indian Reserve 6 (the Kitsilano Reserve).”

In the late 1800s, the Canadian Pacific Railway expropriated some of the lands there and nearby, and later province and city officials pressured the Squamish to “unsettle” the Kitsilano Reserve altogether (Stanger-Ross 2008; Barman 2007). In 1913 remaining families at Snauq loaded their possessions onto a barge that took them to the Capilano reserve on the northern shore of Burrard Inlet. From the late 1970s until the early 2000s, the Squamish Nation pursued legal and court action to reclaim the Kitsilano Reserve from the Canadian Pacific Railway and the federal government. They successfully brokered a monetary and land settlement outside of court and the Kitsilano Reserve once again belongs to them. The Squamish Nation has since erected digital billboards on the land and is exploring other economic development opportunities there.
The story of Snauq, especially as told in Maracle’s elegiac story, is a tale that disrupts settler spatio-temporalities and remaps the present and future of the city. In “Goodbye Snauq,” Maracle’s character is haunted by the eyes of her ancestors, who first looked upon False Creek and searched it for sustenance, and later watched as it was dredged and reshaped for polluting industries, reworked again through gentrified residential development at Granville Island and Yaletown and the Olympic Athlete’s Village, and lined with the Seawall and parks. But the story does not end there. The narrator’s ancestors continue their vigilance and their modern-day descendants find ways, like the ancestors once did, to resist erasure and removal, sometimes using the tools of the colonizer to do so: the courts, the law, expressions of nationhood.

The ancestors return, in archival documents filed with the courts, to support reclamation of Snauq. Maracle lets them speak in her story – August ‘Jack’ Khatshlahno, Chief George (Chipkaym), and her Ta’ah; they describe the shifts they witnessed in the social order of their homeland and the transformations of their landscape. The latest shift, the Squamish settlement, is also not the end of the story; though the nations have “settled” the land, the ancestors are not laid to rest. They are increasingly present, returning to watch the next transformation of the land: the billboards the nation erects, the outcry that ensues from city residents who do not understand this spectacular expression of sovereignty, the outline of plans for further development. Though Maracle’s narrator says goodbye to Snauq in her story, she also greets an uncertain future and blurs any sense of linearity or closure implied in stories of “settlement.” “Although today, I must say goodbye, tomorrow I may just buy one of the townhouses slated for completion in 2010,” she says, “Today, I am entitled to dream. Khatshlahno dreamed of being buried at Snauq. I dream of living there” (2008:125).

Snauq is part of a complex Indigenous geography in Metro Vancouver that continues to emerge in the push and pull of Indigenous emplacement, colonial displacement, and revenant Indigeneity and reclamation in Vancouver. For many non-Aboriginal residents, the details and histories of this past, present, and future geography are only partially visible and often unfamiliar. In its place, they construct and experience spatial imaginaries that circumscribe Aboriginality to particular spatio-temporalities in the city. In this chapter, I argue that Stanley Park’s totem poles and the Downtown Eastside function as primary sites of Aboriginality in these imaginaries. I further suggest that these imaginaries exemplify how the interplay between spectacle and spectrality
shapes non-Aboriginal people’s ideas about Aboriginal people and place in Vancouver within and beyond my field sites.

Stanley Park and the Downtown Eastside are, like Snauq, places of Indigenous emplacement, displacement, and reclamation in Vancouver. While, unlike Snauq, they are recognized and known widely by non-Aboriginal people as iconic sites of Aboriginality in the city, they too are haunted by histories of dispossession and injustice resulting from colonial power dynamics. For non-Aboriginal spectators, the spectacles of particular forms of Aboriginality “on display” in these places conceal such spectres, but only partially. The totem poles enable non-Aboriginal admiration of sanitized Aboriginal art and culture in ways that ignore or obscure the violent, racialized dispossession of Coast Salish people of that territory and the life they made there. The disproportionate number and perceived dysfunction of Aboriginal people in the Downtown Eastside are interpreted by non-Aboriginal people living outside the neighbourhood as part of a spectacular culture of poverty on display there. But in the case of Stanley Park, a recent renaming proposal raised the spectre of past dispossession and future repossession: in 2010, local elders suggested renaming the park Xwayxway to reflect the name of a former village site there. In the Downtown Eastside, increasing public attention to the neighbourhood’s missing and murdered women, many of them Aboriginal, serves as a haunting reminder of the living legacies of colonial injustice and the living Indigenous people who contest it. Like the Squamish Nation’s recent settlement of Snauq lands, these events temporarily unsettle non-Aboriginal spatio-temporal imaginaries of the city, revealing that the past is alive, the living are haunted, and familiar places are the homes of unfamiliar stories.

The Stanley Park renaming proposal and the annual February 14th Women’s Memorial March in the Downtown Eastside represent revenant Indigenous efforts toward redress and recognition in a structural context of ongoing erasure, marginalization, and circumscription of Aboriginal people and place. In my Stanley Park analysis, I describe historical displacement of Coast Salish and mixed-race residents at Lumberman’s Arch and Brockton Point and the emplacement of totem poles on the site and, more recently, the Klahowya Village, an Aboriginal Tourism BC theme park. I then discuss the media controversy over the renaming proposal and how participants’ responses at the library and the construction site reveal anxieties about the past, present, and future of settler colonialism in the city. In the case of the Downtown Eastside, I analyse how non-Aboriginal non-residents of the neighbourhood construct it as an extraordinary and
ordinary site of urban Aboriginality and dysfunction. I describe walking the 
neighbourhood’s streets with a BladeRunners staff member for the February 14th Annual 
Women’s Memorial March in 2012. Her experiences reveal how non-Aboriginal people 
like her participate in marginalizing the neighbourhood and its inhabitants by 
spectacularizing it, as well as how acknowledging its ghosts can offer new perspectives. 

Together, these two cases allow me to convey how spectacle and spectrality 
mutually constitute non-Aboriginal knowledges of Aboriginality in Vancouver. The 
purpose of this chapter and its argument is to take a wide-angle view of Vancouver’s 
spectacular and spectral geographies, and to zoom in on how my non-Aboriginal 
participants navigate them as they relate to Aboriginality and construct Aboriginal 
alterities as extraordinary and ordinary in the city. It also presents an opportunity to 
engage with local historical and ethnographic scholarship to provide some important 
background information about the city’s settler colonial history and spaces; as I hope my 
discussion will show, this spatio-history animates the city’s present and future. “There is 
so much more to history than meets the eye,” Maracle says in her essay, addressing in her 
narrative her class of students at UBC. “We need to know what happened, and what 
happened has nothing to do with the dates, the events and the gentlemen involved; it has 
to do with impact” (2008:123). This chapter has to do with impact. I share an invisibilized 
history to explain the present, and to convey that there is much more to the story than 
meets the eye in a spectacular place.

**Stanley Park**

“To come across the culture… [it’s] really hard to access for someone. Unless they go 
and look at the totem poles in Stanley Park. I don’t really see [them]… and I haven’t met 
a lot of Indigenous people either.”

– Cam, library patron

During my interview with Cam, a Pakeha woman from New Zealand and recent 
immigrant to Canada, she held her baby daughter and reflected on her experiences with 
Aboriginal people in Vancouver so far.50 She and her husband had lived in the Downtown 

50 Cam’s self-identification ‘Pakeha’ does not have a commonplace equivalent in Canada. Pakeha is the 
term used to identify white settler New Zealanders by Maori, white settlers, and migrants alike. Cam’s
Eastside when they first arrived. When their daughter was born, they moved to Mount Pleasant and now live in the tower of rental units above the library. Cam compared her experiences with Aboriginality in Vancouver with her encounters with Maori people and culture in her home country. “It’s quite different from here,” she reflected. In New Zealand, “The [Maori] language and culture is much more a part of everyday life… It’s not such a separation.”

Despite Cam’s experience living in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside, whose population is one-third Aboriginal, and in Mount Pleasant, which also has a sizable Aboriginal population, she suggested that Aboriginality in Vancouver is more visible in tourist sites like Stanley Park’s totem poles and Gastown, which features many souvenir shops and Aboriginal art galleries.

Many research participants, like Cam, spoke of their relationship with Aboriginal people with reference to material culture and performance: Aboriginal spectacle (see also Chapters 4 and 7). Participants who grew up in British Columbia recalled learning about Aboriginal people in school units on their art, architecture, and cultural traditions, as well as on European encounters with Native peoples; as one man put it, “mostly Haida culture… Totem poles and Emily Carr and all that… very very little about First Nations culture that existed right around us.”

In Leslie Robertson’s ethnography of Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal relations in Fernie, BC, she recounts seeing a grade 5 social studies test in the late 1990s. The test asked students to define “heritage, history, ancestor, totem pole, Haida, tipi, igloo, culture, belief” (2005:166). Students were also asked to write a story using the words chant, courage, harpoon, pride, ritual, shaman, and soul. Robertson questions the absence of politically relevant words like “‘land’ or ‘treaties’ or ‘colonialism’ or ‘racism,’” and states, “[i]t is not surprising that many in the youngest generation recognize these people only at powwows.”

Robertson notes that under the word “Ktunaxa,” the name of the local First Nations people in the area, the test asked students to write comments under the headings

family had lived in New Zealand for four generations. Her husband is also Pakeha. When I asked how she would characterize her daughter’s identity (“Your daughter as well? Pakeha?”), she replied easily, “She’s Canadian.” She and her husband have lived in Canada for three years.

Cam’s characterization of New Zealand in many ways reflects the country’s efforts toward binationalism and biculturalism, a different national approach to Indigenous recognition than Canada’s. Various critics, social analysts, and Indigenous scholars continue to debate the merits, challenges, and possibilities of these different strategies.

Emily Carr is a well-known non-Aboriginal artist who visited and painted Aboriginal villages on Vancouver Island and the north coast, documenting what she felt were the important art forms of a vanishing race.
“What I know about them” and “What I want to know.” She asks, “How are these children supposed to ‘know’ ‘them’ given the actual contexts within which Aboriginal people are made visible?” (166). Aboriginal visibility often takes the form of monumental art and ceremonial culture, as reified in the grade 5 test. In Vancouver, this is exemplified by Stanley Park’s famous totem poles, perhaps the most memorable and recognizable sites of Aboriginal art in the city.

Stanley Park is a place of tremendous significance for local residents. The park occupies a large peninsula attached to Vancouver’s downtown and West End neighbourhood (see Figure 6). The Lions Gate Bridge branches out from the northwest end, connecting Vancouver with its north shore neighbours, West Vancouver and North Vancouver. A paved path, the Seawall, rings the park’s perimeter along the shores of False Creek, English Bay, and Burrard Inlet. The interior of the park is mostly forested, traversed by trails and dotted with sites like the Malkin Bowl concert arena, the Vancouver Aquarium, and lawn bowling fields. Aboriginal Tourism BC’s Klahowya Village, which I discuss below, was constructed near the Aquarium in 2010. The south and west sides of the park feature three popular public beaches, while the north side facing Burrard Inlet hosts a number of amenities and attractions, including (from west to east) a lookout point and restaurant, a small water park, a largely grassy area called Lumberman’s Arch, a cricket field, and the totem poles and lighthouse at Brockton Point. Rounding the point to the east and south, park-goers encounter an unloaded cannon that fires every night at 9 p.m., a military base on Deadman’s Island, tidal flats and the Coal Harbour Marina, a rowing club, and the “Lost Lagoon,” a pond that is the only present reminder of the marshlands that once existed there before a drainage project firmed up the land around it.
The totem poles at Brockton Point are one of the city’s most popular tourist attractions and landmark for locals, too (see Figure 7). Eight poles stand clustered together in front of a backdrop of cedar and fir, most of them brightly painted and featuring stylized animals and figures in the formline designs of Haida, Nuu-Chah-nulth, and Kwakwaka’wakw artists. As Cam’s reflections indicate, the poles offer a point of reference for accessing Aboriginality for non-Aboriginal tourists and residents. They are the epitome of spectacle as I define it in Chapter 1. They are looked at and admired for their impressive size, bright colours, and distinctive design. (They are cordoned off from other sensory experiences, including touch, by a fence and moat of rocks.) They attract a sizeable audience on a regular basis. Importantly, these spectators view them as cultural,

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83 Geographer Eva Sierp (2010) notes that commentaries on Stanley Park’s totem poles, including those of her local research participants, often framed the poles in relation to Vancouver’s tourists. In fact, the totem poles are also significant for local Vancouver residents and shape their ideas about Aboriginal alterity, as I demonstrate in this chapter.
not political, objects and their location, too, seems apolitical and unworthy of specific attention or engagement. As such, spectators experience the totem poles as representations of a generalized Aboriginal culture and art aesthetic: exotic, timeless, and extraordinary. They are distinct from everyday life even as familiar icons in the city. This spectacle is built upon a more complicated history of Indigeneity in the park that is not so visible and therefore cannot be understood through spectatorship and art appreciation.

On Canada Day in 2010, the front page of the Province newspaper featured a photo of Stanley Park imprinted with question “Xwayxway Park?” In the accompanying story, journalist Suzanne Fournier (2010) explains that a pair of First Nations elders suggested changing the park’s name during an opening event at the new Klahowya Village attraction constructed by Aboriginal Tourism BC. According to the article, Xwayxway (pronounced “kwhy-kway”) was a permanent Coast Salish village located at a place now called Lumberman’s Arch in the park. Squamish elder Emily Baker is quoted

\[\text{Figure 7: Stanley Park totem poles}\]

Note: One of Susan Point’s houseposts is visible in the background to the left
(McAdams 2011, reprinted with permission)

\[\text{54 Xwayxway is also called or spelled Whoi Whoi, Why-why, Qoiquo, xw’ayxway, and xwáýxway (Barman 2005).}\]
saying, “Where that nine o’clock gun is, that is where my grandfather was buried. We had a village at Lumberman’s Arch, we lived all through here and the name should reflect our people.”

Klahowya Village was constructed in the forest nearby Brockton Point and Lumberman’s Arch, at the former site of a petting zoo. Musqueam band councillor Wade Grant states in Fournier’s article that Stanley Park is “a perfect place” for the Village, noting that the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh peoples had lived in the area for millennia. “For far too long, this place has been void of drums. Now the trees, our ancestors, will remember. They’ll hear those drums and welcome us back.”

The article closed with basic details about Stanley Park: “a 404.9 hectare urban park, opened in 1888 in the name of Lord Stanley of Preston, the governor-general of Canada. It attracts about eight million visitors every year.”

Baker and Grant, in their stories of buried relatives and ancestors, bring attention to a fact well-known in their communities but unfamiliar to many Vancouver residents: the land and waters of Vancouver’s beloved Stanley Park were part of a rich Coast Salish network of residence and resource sites that has been significantly altered through processes of colonial dispossession and settlement. Although Cam identifies the totem poles in the park as a significant site of Aboriginality, I suggest that this popular site of Aboriginal spectacle is in fact premised on the invisibility of local Coast Salish communities and their historic and local connections to place. I further explore how this duality of presence and absence shapes non-Aboriginal impressions of Aboriginality in the city, using the recent controversy over renaming Stanley Park to explore affective tensions that emerge when a familiar spectacle and space becomes haunted by an unfamiliar history. The renaming debate opened (and effectively closed) a few months after the Olympics, around the time I began my fieldwork at the library and construction site, allowing me to elicit research participants’ responses. Their commentaries reflect the ambiguities, discomfort, and anxieties of everyday life for settlers in a colonized city. Before examining their responses, however, it is necessary to understand the park’s spectralized genealogy and geographies.

55 Grant, who helped manage the Four Host First Nations’ Aboriginal Pavilion during the Olympics, did not comment on the name change in the article.
From Xwayxway to Stanley Park: Indigenous “Squatters” on Park Lands

Sociologist Renisa Mawani and historian Jean Barman have each analysed the history of Coast Salish dispossession and contemporary discursive representations of nature and Aboriginality in Stanley Park (Mawani 2003; 2004; 2005; Barman 2005; 2007). In Barman’s book Stanley Park’s Secret: The Forgotten Families of Whoi Whoi, Kanaka Ranch, and Brockton Point (2005), she details how Indigenous, mixed-race, and settler people were evicted from park lands between 1888, when Stanley Park officially opened, and 1958, when the last remaining resident died. The establishment of Stanley Park, she explains, was part of a centuries-long colonial project, with European and Euro-Canadian officials dispossessing Indigenous people not only of their lands but of their very presence in the storylines of the places they inhabit(ed): “The plan was a success, so much so that rarely if ever do we consider the possibility of other histories. Yet other histories exist” (13).

Prior to and after early European settlement, the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh people relied on the land and resources on the peninsula now called Stanley Park, as well as its surrounding waters: False Creek, English Bay, and Burrard Inlet. Shellfish, cedar trees, and clay, among other materials, were harvested from the shorelines and forests. Seven village or occupation sites have been identified through the archaeological record, the most populated of which was Xwayxway, the subject of the Stanley Park renaming controversy. Xwayxway is translated as “a place for making masks,” indicating its spiritual importance for its residents (Barman 2005). Deadman’s Island, located off the peninsula’s northeastern shore, was a site to lay to rest residents’ dead relatives.

As Mawani explains, this sacred territory has been carefully produced as a “natural,” “wild,” and “empty” park through imperial imposition, using colonial techniques of mapping and law (2003). Through these processes, the park was transformed from an Indigenous lived place to a spectacular “public space” accessible to all and reinscribed with new meanings that significantly informed local settler senses of place. However, as Mawani explains, this transformation project has been both partial and ambivalent.

In 1876, prior to the park’s establishment, the Joint Reserve Commission, a provincial-federal initiative tasked with fixing reserve boundaries, counted fifty
“Skwamish” people living in the area around Xwayxway (Barman 2007). They did not allocate a reserve because the land had been previously identified in 1858 as government land, a military defence site to protect against American invasion and expansion. “By appropriating the area for military purposes,” Mawani explains, “the various levels of government sealed the fate of local Aboriginal and mixed-race inhabitants as ‘illegal occupiers of the land,’ a fate although contested by many, would eventually lead to their eviction in the years to come” (Mawani 2003:107).

On early maps of the park, Coast Salish presence was sometimes indicated through references to villages or individual dwellings. Other maps feature blank spaces, effectively erasing places identified with Aboriginal place-names or inhabitants. Mawani links this ambivalent practice with the uneven application of the doctrine of *terra nullius*, a “series of colonial logics and practices that rendered the land empty and its original inhabitants in/visible,” making way for and legitimizing Euro-Canadian settlement on the land (2003:105). The creation of “spatial vacancies” operated as a legal and cartographic technology that enabled the dispossession of Indigenous peoples and the reterritorialization of the settler colony. There was also a temporal dimension to this spatial project: Aboriginal occupation and land use was sometimes described as temporary or seasonal, ignoring long-term and intensive emplacement.

Municipal, provincial, and dominion government officials, as well as the Imperial office in London, participated in debates over the city’s application for a park. As Mawani argues, city officials encouraged the development of Stanley Park to foster civic community and establish settler identity and belonging in the young city of Vancouver. It quickly became an “imperial icon,” central to settler colonial identities. Soon after the Dominion government leased the land to the city, pressure mounted to relocate the park’s residents to established Indian reserves nearby and in other parts of the city. 56 The (un)mapping of Indigenous people and related spatial narratives informed the city’s legal arguments. Reinscribed as “squatters” and “illegal” residents on the landscape, they were asked to leave their homes near Brockton Point. They refused.

The spectre of the land’s (re)dispossession was very upsetting to city officials, and racial ambiguities and anxieties fuelled their concerns. In 1923 the city and the Attorney General of Canada filed lawsuits against eight families for trespassing on park lands. As

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56 See also Stanger-Ross (2008), Harris (2002), and Blomley (2004) for discussions of these processes elsewhere in Vancouver and BC.
the case moved through the appellate system to the Supreme Court of Canada, the veracity and reliability of oral testimony was debated, along with the long-standing question of extinguishment of Native title (Mawani 2005). Mawani (2003; 2005) demonstrates that the city’s case against the “squatters” centred on debates about the racial identities of nine mixed-race individuals and families and how their identities related to their property rights or lack thereof. “Aunt Sally,” a Squamish woman, was the only one recognized as a “full-blooded Indian” who met a legal requirement of sixty years of continued occupancy. Her claim was proven by an 1863 map that marked her home as an “Indian house.” The rest of the families were subjected to questions about their nationalities and racial affiliations. Some had Portuguese heritage, which positioned them outside the category of British colonial (and even white) identity. Some of the men had married and had children with Indigenous woman, further complicating any attempts at neat racial ascription.

The “squatters’” use of land and property – indeed their civility – were also under scrutiny, bound up in British expectations of Lockean improvements on the land and legal documentation the families did not possess. Their ambiguous position meant they were designated neither as (properly or the right kind of) European or as Indigenous. The families used maps and other legal means to defend themselves and support their claims to space, “evoking competing conceptions of property and… exploiting legal ambiguities about exactly who owned the land” (2005:332). Their case was ultimately unsuccessful, however, and the Supreme Court of Canada ruled against them in 1925. The city allowed them to stay until 1931, when they were finally served official eviction notices. After the families moved into other parts of the city and elsewhere; again, like at Snaauq, their homes were burned to the ground.57

Stanley Park’s Totem Poles: “Indigeneity Got from Elsewhere”

At the very same time that city officials actively displaced and erased Coast Salish presence in Stanley Park, they were supporting efforts to erect the park’s now famous totem poles. The poles were part of a broader plan to build a Native village, slated for construction on the Xwayxway site. As Barman (2007) argues, this apparent paradox is in

57 Except for Timothy and Agnes Cummings, who were inexplicably allowed to remain in their Brockton Point home until their deaths in 1958 and 1953, respectively (Mawani 2005: 333-334).
fact part of a broader colonial strategy of erasure designed to replace Coast Salish “indigenous Indigeneity” with “a sanitized Indigeneity got from elsewhere.” Her discussion reveals the dual purposes displacement and emplacement served: to make room for colonial settlement and expansion and to “create the illusion that Vancouver was Indigenous-friendly, even as it rid itself of the real thing” (4). Examining the Stanley Park evictions and totem pole display together helps us to understand how Northwest Coast material culture is ubiquitous and prominent in Vancouver – indeed spectacular – at the same time that Coast Salish and other Aboriginal people and their histories are marginalized in the city. When interpreted critically against a history of colonialism and contemporary discourses of multiculturalism and tolerance, the spectacle of the totem poles becomes animated with the ghosts of an unjust past and spectres of a re-Indigenized landscape.

As Coast Salish people were increasingly restricted to designated Indian reserves and simultaneously encouraged to assimilate, members of the white settler public were developing their fascination with romanticized Aboriginality. Anthropological interest in Northwest Coast stories and material culture contributed to anxious efforts to “preserve” Aboriginal artifacts, especially totem poles (Barman 2007; Dawn 2006; Hawker 2003; Mawani 2004). The Art, Historical, and Scientific Association of Vancouver (AHSAV) participated actively in totem pole preservation campaigns. In the early 1920s, AHSAV proposed the establishment of a Kwakwaka’wakw village in Stanley Park to preserve the material culture of the Kwakiutl and Haida peoples, who AHSAV considered to be the most advanced and intelligent tribes on the coast. At the same time, Coast Salish and mixed-race families were actively defending their right to continue residing in the park. In 1924 two totem poles and two house posts, collected from Alert Bay, were erected at Lumberman’s Arch, the site of the proposed village and the former village site of Xwayxway (Sierp 2010).

Soon after the arrival of the totem poles, AHSAV determined that there were insufficient funds to construct the Indian Village. Geographer Eva Sierp (2010) and Mawani (2003) note that members of the Squamish Nation vocalized their displeasure.

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58 In addition to chronicling the eviction of Stanley Park’s residents, Barman also details the emptying of the Kitsilano Reserve on south False Creek in the 1910s and the erection of totem poles from BC’s north coast in the park (see also Maracle 2008).

59 Anthropologist Susan Roy (2002) and art historian Ronald Hawker (2003) discuss how northern pole design and artistic styles contributed to the invisibilizing of Coast Salish peoples, who carved houseposts that differed in style and scale from Kwakwaka’wakw, Tsimshian, and Haida poles (see also Dawn 2006).
with the village plans, suggesting that it was an affront to their territorial rights. While the village was never constructed, the totem poles remained and the collection has since expanded to include Haida, Nisga’a, and Nuu-chah-nulth totem poles, some of which were commissioned or acquired for public events like Vancouver’s Golden Jubilee and Expo ’86. In the early 1960s, the totem poles were moved from Lumberman’s Arch/Xwayxway to Brockton Point, the other major site of Aboriginal residency, by then emptied forcibly by colonial orders. The totem poles still stand there today. As Barman observes, “The Squamish presence at Whoi Whoi [Xwayxway] and Brockton Point was overlaid with the material culture of a wholly different people who lived a safe distance from Vancouver. [Shortly after] the initial victory over indigenous Indigeneity, its counterpart got from elsewhere was in place” (2007:27; Mawani 2004).

Mawani (2004) documents the urge to preserve, describing the campaigns to “save” totem poles from deteriorating conditions and relocate them to museums and other institutions. She links this desire with the totem pole’s touristic popularity and its role as a symbol of heritage and antiquity for the young Canadian nation. “Visible markers of Otherness,” she explains, “were a necessary reminder to tourists and travellers that while Canada no longer had an ‘Indian problem’ it did indeed have an ‘ancient past’” (44). In this way, the totem poles in Stanley Park align with Patrick Wolfe’s (1999) observation that settler colonialism operates through an elimination/preservation logic. Settler colonies sought to eliminate Indigeneity to make room for and legitimize settlement while also maintaining elements of Indigenous culture or status to enhance colonial place identities and establish their locales as distinct from the imperial metropole. This place-making strategy continues to shape contemporary notions of identity, place, history, and belonging. Thus, as Mawani argues, the totem pole display in Stanley Park reflects its settler colonial construction and meaning more than Aboriginal peoples and the original cultural meanings embedded in the poles. They are “an iconic yet shifting symbol of colonial alterity” (2004:32).

In recent years, the city’s parks board has supported the construction of an interpretive centre and installation of commissioned poles and house posts by Coast Salish carvers Robert Yelton (Squamish) and Susan Point (Musqueam). At the new

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60 Some of the poles have been removed for conservation off-site and replaced with replicas.
61 Other scholars have also described how totem poles became symbols of Vancouver, British Columbia, and Canadian identity through various twentieth-century tourism and conservation campaigns (Dawn 2006; Dawson 2004; Hawker 2003; Jonaitis 1991; Jonaitis and Glass 2010; Mawani 2004; Roy 2002; Wall 2005).
interpretive centre and gift shop at Brockton Point, developed in consultation with local Coast Salish nations, three storyboards depict in text and images local technologies and traditions, historical use of Stanley Park’s lands and resources, and the adaptation of modern Coast Salish people to contemporary life, highlighting First Nations-owned fisheries and tourism enterprises. The site provides more details about the totem poles, including some selective contextual information about the removal of poles from Aboriginal communities, but there is no information about the dispossession and displacement of the park’s former inhabitants (Mawani 2004). The spectacle’s ghosts remain hidden from view.

At a pole-raising ceremony in 2009, Yelton dedicated his unpainted totem pole to his mother, Rose, one of the last residents of Stanley Park (Sierp 2010). Susan Point’s three welcome “portals” were inspired by Coast Salish slanted-roof architecture. After years of collaboration, they were erected in 2008 at Brockton Point. At the ceremony, elder Larry Grant said, “We are finally being acknowledged as the Salish people of this territory. The rain you see coming down is very much like the tears of our ancestors who inhabited this land many years ago prior to the city making this into a park” (quoted in Hern 2010:38). Mawani (2004) argues that the site’s increased attention to local Coast Salish people is wrapped in discourses of multiculturalism, signalling aspirations toward a more inclusive future that does not fully address the site’s colonial past. Citing geographer Jane M. Jacobs (1996) and anthropologist Elizabeth Povinelli (2002), she suggests that this discursive move is part of a broader strategy of nation-building that seeks redemption for an unjust colonial past through the establishment of a more tolerant, multicultural identity and the politics of recognition. It is an attempt to rid the site of its colonial haunting that does not fully contend with the traumas of dispossession and the spectre of Indigenous sovereignty, both of which continue to haunt the site. These spectres, already present, returned to visibility in 2010 after the opening ceremony of the Klahowya Village, when, as mentioned above, Coast Salish elders suggested renaming Stanley Park to reflect its former village site, Xwayxway.

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62 Yelton’s pole is the second Squamish totem pole to be erected in Stanley Park. In 1936 the City of Vancouver commissioned Chief Joe Mathias to carve a pole, requesting that his artwork commemorate the meeting of the Squamish people and Captain George Vancouver in 1792. The pole was raised at Prospect Point, near the Lions Gate Bridge (Mawani 2004).

63 The project was supported by Coast Salish Arts, Vancouver Storyscapes, the three local First Nations, and the Vancouver Parks Board (City of Vancouver 2008).
From Stanley Park to Xwayxway: Re-Indigenizing the Landscape

In Suzanne Fournier’s *Province* article that launched the renaming controversy, she quotes two government officials who express openness to a name change to Xwayxway. Kevin Krueger, provincial Minister of Tourism, Culture, and Arts, “enthusiastically endorsed the idea” of a name change: “We have the Salish Sea, we have Haida Gwaii, and I look forward to talking to you about what your people called this place.” City councillor Ellen Woodsworth agreed. Representing Mayor Gregor Robertson, she said that when the local First Nations officially propose the name change, she and the council will “enthusiastically follow up” and consult the public. She pointed out that First Nations homes were destroyed or removed from the park, so “an Aboriginal name would honour the land’s history.”

These officials’ “enthusiasm” was not widely shared. By the end of the day, the online version of the *Province* story had over one hundred comments, the majority of them negative and even openly racist. Other news outlets picked up the story, politicians spoke out publically for and against a name change, and more online commentary and

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64 Krueger is referring to recent projects to rename the Georgia Strait area and the Queen Charlotte Islands to reflect local Indigenous peoples and territories.

65 Although it is beyond the scope of my discussion to analyse the online commentary, the posts nevertheless provide fascinating insight into the anxiety, anger, and frustration the name change proposal provoked. Below is a selection of comments (spelling, grammar, and capitalization changed for readability) (Fournier 2010):

- “Sure, good idea! And while they’re at it, let’s just change the names of pretty much everything in North America; change the name of Balboa Park and Central Park and Yellowstone Park and Banff National Park and Woodland Park, because I’m sure someone may have lived there too thousands of years ago! Pfffttt!”
- “Next they will want to change the name of the Province to some unpronounceable name that means nothing to the majority who live here. Enough is enough.”
- “To answer Jeffries’ question about why Stanley Park has a ‘White man’s name.’ We (The White Man) came, we saw, we kicked your butts and took the lands. It’s ours now, and we like the name ‘Stanley Park’. Read a history book to learn more about it...”
- “No more indulging the Natives. Sure, we took their land. But in return, they got the wheel, the horse, the alphabet.”
- “I am truly appalled by the lack of awareness shown by many of the posts on here. First Nations culture is beautiful in how it is built around love and respect for our earth, our air, our water, life and humour. It is a culture we would all learn from embracing. I fully support changing the name of Stanley Park to Xwayxway.”
- “The Canucks logo is Native, the 2010 Olympics were a total saturation of Native culture. The opening and closing ceremonies were a disgrace. Has anyone been to YVR airport lately? Nothing but Native art. Enough.”
- “It’s hard to pronounce the name… maybe you need to slur to make it sound right?”
- “Perhaps it’s time for the Province to do a story on hatred toward First Nations in Vancouver. They can use some of these posts as examples in the story.”
offline discussion ensued for several days. Mayor Gregor Robertson said that he recalled hearing the name Xwayxway as a boy growing up in Vancouver. Squamish hereditary chief and band councillor Ian Campbell announced that he would develop an official proposal to change the park’s name. Tourism officials weighed the merits and costs for the park’s publicity and marketing if it became Xwayxway.

On July 5, James Moore, Canadian Minister of Heritage and Official Languages, stated on his website that the Conservative government did not support a name change. On the same day, president of the Treasury Board, Stockwell Day, held a press conference in front of Lord Stanley’s statue in the park to declare that the name would remain Stanley Park:

Stanley Park is a park that’s rich in history, and rich in heritage… It was designated as a park well over a hundred years ago by the governor-general of the day, Lord Stanley. And it is our intention to maintain the name as Stanley Park, respecting and reflecting on a wonderful heritage going back for hundreds and hundreds of years – our Aboriginal peoples and those immigrants who settled here later and have continued to enjoy the park. – Stockwell Day (quoted in Stueck 2010)

Day’s speech deftly acknowledged Aboriginal people while also reproducing the status quo by blocking the possibility of a name change before an official proposal had even been filed. The quick timing of his press release event, staged only days after the Province article, indicates the level of anxiety the name change provoked among the city’s non-Aboriginal residents and government officials. Once again, like the legal claims of residency and land rights put forth by the park’s Coast Salish and mixed-race families in the 1920s, the spectre of an Indigenized landscape was too much to bear and had to be exorcised. And again, revenant Indigeneity at the site was only temporarily acknowledged, and substantive recognition and retribution further postponed. While the art and display of the totem poles and the Klahowya Village were uncontroversial and even celebrated, redress and re-emplacement of local Coast Salish Indigeneity presented a form of incommensurable alterity that was too uncomfortable and challenging to

66 Interestingly, the local hockey stadium GM Place was renamed Rogers Arena within weeks of the Stanley Park renaming proposal, as one of my participants observed. By comparison, the arena name change received much less attention and public outcry than the prospect of the Stanley Park name change. Corporate naming practices are increasingly commonplace, and despite some resistance to this practice, rarely are emotions evoked to the same extent as in the Stanley Park renaming controversy.

67 Ian Campbell is a strong proponent of recognizing Squamish place-names and histories in Vancouver. I describe his welcoming address at the Mount Pleasant Community Centre in 2009 in Chapter 2.
accommodate by politicians and many Vancouverites. The familiar became unfamiliar, producing uncanny and uncomfortable a/effects.

The Klahowya Village, unlike Xwayxway village and stories of its dispossession, presented a familiar spectacle that was easily accommodated by visitors and locals alike. It was designed and read as an apolitical tourist attraction, with Aboriginal tour guides and regularly scheduled dance and storytelling performances. Unlike the ATSAV village proposed in the 1920s, which aimed to replicate a Kwakwaka’wakw village, the Klahowya Village presented different elements of historical and contemporary Indigenous cultures of the Northwest Coast, including Coast Salish communities. Repurposing a part of Stanley Park for an Aboriginally-owned and operated attraction was acceptable and even welcomed, but the prospect of renaming the Park as a form of addressing the colonization of its landscape was and remains a haunting prospect indeed.

Furthermore, the media spectacle around the renaming limited rather than opened up opportunities for thoughtful discussion about the park’s Indigenous and colonial history. Although the name change proposal emerged from local community members’ interest in recognizing this past, news stories offered no details of the eviction of park residents and subsequent burning of their homes, just like the interpretative placards at the totem poles. Instead, news stories variously noted that an “ancient Native village” was once located at the current site of Lumberman’s Arch, suggesting a temporal break between an ancient past and a modern present. This discursive move (consciously or not) positioned the name change as, at best, incomprehensible and spurious and, at worst, quarrelsome and politically-motivated (“the Natives are at it again”). The optic politics and volume of the controversy, replete with municipal, provincial, and federal politicians and members of the private sector voicing their opinions, reproduced the colonization of space and histories that erased and silenced Indigenous presence in the park in the first place. The media spectacle ghosted these stories again.

The A/Effects of Renaming vs. “Just Colours”

Conducting fieldwork at the time of the name change controversy enabled me to ask research participants to share their thoughts on the proposal and, as a result, how they relate to Coast Salish Indigeneity, land, and colonial history. It also reminded me that issues and events happening in the city beyond the socio-spatial “boundaries” of my field
sites affected sociality and my ethnographic relationships within those sites. In the days after the *Province* article came out, staff members at the library shared their reactions to the story and its aftermath in casual conversations in the staffroom and on break, and sometimes later in our semi-structured interviews. While sitting with a few construction workers at lunch, the name change controversy came up and one of the Aboriginal men said no one would call the park *Xwayxway* anyway, even if the name was officially changed. The other men agreed.

Participants’ responses to the name change were communicated through personal narrative, reflection, and affective attachments. Two white female staff working at the library felt troubled by the proposal. One of the women considers herself progressive and sympathetic to First Nations and their historical and political concerns, yet in our interview, she said, “The thought of changing Stanley Park’s name came up a month ago… I don’t want them to do *that*. But it’s – it’s… I guess for me it’s also like… it’s just in relation to *my* life. I grew up with Stanley Park. It’s what I know and it’s just – but really, my opinion – it doesn’t matter – because that’s not *my* land over there.” The park is important to *her* life and experience – her sense of place – but she feels it is not *her* land – she recognizes it as unceded territory of the local First Nations. Her (in)ability to speak about her affective response to the name change – concern, anxiety, uneasiness – is bound up in her desire to convey her knowledge of and respect for Indigenous connections to the land and the unsettled (and unsettling) nature of their claims. Navigating the media spectacle and the park’s spectres, which she did not fully understood, was uncomfortable for her.

Others were also uneasy, but for different reasons. During an interview with a white construction worker, I recalled that he had expressed frustration with the prospect of a Stanley Park name change. In an earlier lunchtime conversation, he had shaken his head with disgust and disbelief at the idea.

“You were saying that you didn’t think the name should change. Right?” I confirmed, “Is that what your position was?”

He nodded. “That’s what it’s known as. Just doesn’t matter what the sign says, you’re still going to call it Stanley Park.”

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68 In fact, recent renaming initiatives suggest that new names can be taken up widely and quickly; examples include Haida Gwaii (formerly Queen Charlotte Islands), Nunavut (the recently-formed political territory in Canada), the Salish Sea (formerly the Georgia Strait and other bodies of water), and Denali in Alaska
Another white construction worker got angry thinking about the controversy, several weeks after Stockwell Day had announced that the name would remain Stanley Park.

“Why change the name?” he asked rhetorically. “It’s been this way forever. It’s been that name forever. What’s the point of changing it now? Just so we can say, ‘Hey, it’s got another name.’”

Even as these men dismissed the significance of the name change, and the idea that anyone would even use the new name, the anger and consternation the renaming proposal provoked suggests a deeper anxiety. If no one will use the name, then what is the problem with renaming it? The problem is in fact a much bigger one, related to the limits and possibilities of Aboriginal recognition and the extent of reckoning with a colonial past. These spectres continue to haunt. In her discussion of the totem pole interpretive centre at Stanley Park, Mawani suggests that a teleological reading of the nation’s evolution from colonialism to multiculturalism, accomplished through circumscribed recognition of Aboriginality can “facilitate new resentments about Aboriginal peoples… ‘wanting too much’ and… having ‘too many rights’” (2004:52). Resentments like these are reinforced by unthreatening and familiar cultural spectacle, as Leslie Robertson suggests in her description of the grade 5 test that emphasizes totem poles and powwows rather than treaties and colonialism. Spectatorship is comfortable while political reckoning is not.

I talked more with the construction worker who insisted that “it’s been this way forever.” He was unable to recall the proposed name.

“Xwayxway,” I said.

“See,” he replied, “the way it usually rolls off the tongue is ‘Stanley Park.’”

I offered to play devil’s advocate, saying that some proponents of the name change suggest that, in fact, the land had “always been” Xwayxway before it become Stanley Park. That is why they argue it should be renamed, to reflect its original name.

“Oh, is that what happened?” he asked.

(formerly Mount McKinley). Furthermore, many Indigenous place-names have been adopted in Anglicized form and are commonplace throughout Canada (which incidentally was adopted from an Iroquoian language).

Xwayxway in fact refers to one village in what is now Stanley Park; there are other Coast Salish place-names for other parts of the park.
“It used to be called that, yeah,” I said, referring to the village site. “So what do you think of that argument?”

“Well, if that’s the case, then rename it back. I don’t care! Do your thing, but make it known to the public that that’s what’s going on. Don’t just say you want to change the name of the park! Because I had no idea [and] I read the paper. I didn’t know it was previously named this and they want to change it back. Like I just thought they were taking Stanley Park and changing the name because, ‘Hey, Native land, here we go!’ Well, no, that’s awesome. Go for it.”

His actual comfort level with the name change upon learning new information—that Stanley Park had been previously occupied and named prior to European settlement by local nations—is debatable, but his explanation for his initial discomfort communicates the deeper anxiety he attached to the name change: that Aboriginal people will simply rename this land just because they can, and in doing so, will repossess lands he (and others) considered long ago settled. Earlier in our interview, he had been surprised to learn that the Indigenous people who stood up in welcome at the beginning of the Olympics ceremony were local Coast Salish representatives (see Chapter 4). He thought they were from “up north somewhere.” He was unfamiliar with any local communities and did not realize the extent of their claims to the Lower Mainland and deep history in the area. To re-Indigenize and rename feels threatening and/or nonsensical in part because the proposal seems like it “comes out of nowhere” rather than out of a history of colonialism—a history he knows little about. The spectre of what he thought was past or elsewhere—Indigenous claims to land and the business of colonization—returns to trouble the here and now, as well as the future (Kabesh 2011).

The renaming controversy took many by surprise—their mental maps of the city had to be reimagined to make room for previously unconsidered possibilities of Indigenous presence. Indigenized Indigeneity had been successfully erased enough through colonial removals at Snauq and Xwayxway and replaced with familiar cultural spectacles to make Coast Salish claims uncanny.

A library staff member missed the Province news story and subsequent media discussion. He learned about it later from friends who commented not on the proposal itself, but on Mayor Robertson’s recollection of hearing the Park called Xwayxway as a child. “[T]he mayor pretended he was familiar with the name – Skway-skway Park. My friends at least were like, ‘No way he knew that name – nobody heard that name before.
He’s pretending he did because he wants to [get] in better.” The Coast Salish name of the former village in the park was so foreign to his friends that the mayor’s comments appeared disingenuous and pandering. I asked him if he had heard the name before.

“No, never. I had no idea that there was another name for it other than Stanley Park.”

“Did you know that there had been Aboriginal people living in Stanley Park, or what is now Stanley Park?” I asked.

“No, I didn’t actually. Never crossed my mind.”

“What about Kitsilano?” I asked, referring to the neighbourhood where he grew up. “Do you know anything about the Aboriginal history of that place – who lived there, or…?”

“No, I have no idea.”

“Have you ever been to the Musqueam reserve?” I pressed, thinking perhaps he knew of the reserve geography of the city more than its pre-settler or early colonial history. “The one out by Dunbar?”

“No, I didn’t even know it was there.”

At the end of the interview, he reflected, “After talking to you now, I’m realizing even though I’ve [lived here] my whole life, I realize how little I know about Aboriginal experience and culture. I mean the images are around, I think, there is artwork in most places, but… it doesn’t really inform you about anything. Just colours, you know?” His reflection communicates how the complex Indigenous geography at the time of Snauq and Xwayxway has been replaced with a socio-spatial imaginary empty of Aboriginal people yet full of their images and colourful artwork. Even their reserves are invisible. He and his friends not only did not know of Xwayxway, they had never really considered the spaces that Coast Salish people inhabit(ed) generally in their city. Familiar with Northwest Coast artwork, they are wholly unfamiliar with and unaware of other forms of Indigenous emplacement. Confronted with the name change proposal, then, they were surprised to learn about the spectres that haunt their familiar spectacle.

Another library staff member remembered learning at age twenty that Stanley Park’s familiar, colourful totem poles originated in north coast communities and were not local Coast Salish art forms. Now in her thirties, she still feels frustrated. “Like what the hell!” she exclaimed, “I mean, why are we putting totems up everywhere? I do find them beautiful, but it was – it is really confusing when you find out… like I thought our First
Nations [were] Haida!” Her confusion further demonstrates how cultural spectacle has spectralized Coast Salish people and the processes that dispossessed them of their lands. Mawani observes:

From the time the first Kwakwaka’wakw pole was erected at Lumberman’s Arch – at the former village of Whoi Whoi – the poles became a spectacle of Otherness that was highly visible to city residents and travellers… while the totem poles display could be read as a presence – a symbol of Aboriginality – the poles could also and perhaps more accurately be seen as an absence; one which tells us nothing about the local Coast Salish, their histories, culture, and most importantly, their struggles against the state’s colonial legal practices of displacement and dispossession. (Mawani 2004:38)

The spectacular presence of Stanley Park’s totem poles thus elides and precludes other kinds of Indigenous presence and encounter in the city, creating a spectral effect. Although colonial efforts to erase Coast Salish Indigenous presence from the park were largely successful, the renaming controversy reveals the unfinished business of settler colonialism. For a short time, the proposal made partially visible what had been previously hidden from view in the shadows of the totem poles: Coast Salish settlement, emplacement, attachment to land, and their removal and dispossession (Gordon 2008).

The emplacement of Coast Salish poles in the Park and the opening of Aboriginal Tourism BC’s Klahowya Village also suggest a shift in attention to local peoples, but this recognition remains packaged in a familiarly spectacular form.

Responses to the spectre of Xwayxway – the “place of the masks” – help us to understand how non-Aboriginal experiences with local Indigeneity are shaped by what is made visible and invisible in ongoing processes of settler colonial place-making and Indigenous resistance. Non-Aboriginal locals’ varied affective responses to the name change proposal and its media coverage reveal the ambivalence and tensions around colonial reckoning that are regularly felt but seldom expressed – another dynamic of presence and absence at work in the city. Knowledge about Aboriginal Others is mutually constituted through both spectacle and spectrality, informed by what is familiar and unfamiliar, available for sightseeing and under the surface or hidden from view. Finally, stories of the “forgotten” families of Stanley Park reveal how “forgetting” is in fact a process supported by and through the colonial process, and how remembering, renaming, and remapping can create new spaces and opportunities to encounter and animate the
ghosted, marginalized, and erased – if they are given a chance and not simply reburied only to return again and again. I turn now to another space of settler colonial spectrality and spectacle to further explore these themes: Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside.

The Downtown Eastside

In Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside, the spectral forces of colonialism and racism simultaneously produce and are obscured by the spectacle of poverty in the neighbourhood. Aboriginal people and other residents are “in plain sight” on its streets and “hidden from view” through processes that marginalize them (Robertson and Culhane 2005; Gordon 2011). Many of my research participants at the library and construction site identified the Downtown Eastside as a site of visible Aboriginality, but it is also an avoided place: visibility is made invisible through aversion. Complexities are flattened by spectacular narratives, sometimes reproducing the neighbourhood’s spectral stories. Residents’ lives are shaped in this push and pull, as are impressions of their lives formed by people who drive through or avoid the place. The exceptionalism of the Downtown Eastside has become an ordinary dimension of settler colonial sociality: a spectacle of suffering that occasionally haunts the city. In this section, I present a narrative analysis of these processes. I describe participating in the February 14th Annual Women’s Memorial March with Theresa, a young white university-educated woman from Alberta who was working as the office manager at BladeRunners during my fieldwork there. The march and Theresa’s reflections allow me to comment on how the case of missing and murdered women reveals pervasive dynamics of Aboriginal spectacle and spectrality in the neighbourhood. The missing women’s living friends and relatives resist these conditions as they grieve and strive for justice.

In the late morning on Valentine’s Day in 2012, I took the #3 Main Street bus north along Main Street from Mount Pleasant to the Downtown Eastside, from the Mount Pleasant library to the BladeRunners office. I texted Theresa to ask if she was ready to meet me for the 21st annual march. Dozens of people had already begun to gather on the sidewalk. Theresa buzzed me in when I arrived in the basement of ACCESS’s building. I chatted with one of the program coordinators to join us for the march, but she had to stay for a cultural awareness session with her intakes. I was surprised they were not participating in the march as part of their session, but she had to return to her work before
we could discuss why. Theresa put on a long coat with matching gloves and we left for
the march.

We joined my friends from the university who had gathered at the street corner:
three other young women, one Quebecois, one Franco-Canadian, and one Israeli – an
example of the diversity of non-Aboriginal participants attending the march. We stood in
the crowd, composed of people with various motivations for participating and with close
and distant connections to the women the march commemorates. We were all there to
recognize and remember the women – many of them Aboriginal – who have been
murdered or disappeared from the Downtown Eastside for decades, to resist what
ethnographer Dara Culhane calls a “regime of disappearance” that contributed to the
delayed investigation into reports of the missing women. Women in the neighbourhood
were reported missing beginning in the early 1980s, but a serious investigation did not
ensue until the late 1990s, after the women’s families joined with journalists and
community advocates to demand attention to the growing number of the missing; public
pressure mounted as this number continued to rise in the early 2000s.

Finally, in 2007, pig farmer Robert Pickton was convicted of second-degree
murder of six women: Sereena Abotsway, Andrea Joesbury, Marnie Le Frey, Georgina
Faith Papin, Mona Lee Wilson, and Brenda Ann Wolfe. Convicted to serve consecutive
life sentences, the court did not try Pickton for his remaining charges. Geographer David
Hugill (2010) argues that media coverage of the trial perpetuated social processes that
invisibilize women in the neighborhood, not only by erasing and minimizing the
disproportionately Aboriginal profile of the victims, but also by failing to address and
critique the structural, social, and colonial conditions that marginalized them. He
contends, “This series of tragic events offered a rare and vital opportunity to inform
particular publics about the existence and persistence of certain core modes of
subjugation which, in spite of their prevalence, are not always visible to mainstream
society” (2010: 97). The Feb. 14th Women’s Memorial March aims to ensure that these

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70 According to Culhane, urban anthropologists Judith Goode and Jeff Maskovsky (2001) coined the term
“regime of disappearance” in their analysis of poverty in the United States to examine “a neo-liberal mode
of governance that selectively marginalizes and/or erases categories of people through strategies of
representation that include silences, blind spots, and displacements that have both material and symbolic
effects” (Culhane 2003:595).
71 He had confessed to killing over four dozen women in total and was charged with twenty counts of
murder.
women and their present and living counterparts can “emerge into visibility” (Culhane 2003).

Culhane’s (2003) description of the march is consistent with the marches I attended in my years living in Vancouver, including the 2012 march I discuss here. She emphasizes that the march resists invisibility and marginalization as organizers and participants work to construct their own representations of the community and the missing and murdered women. To begin the event, community members gather inside the Carnegie Community Centre for a ceremony with smudging, prayers, and speeches about patriarchy, poverty, violence, and local service provision. Family members and friends share expressions of grief, concern, anger, and hope. In 2012, I waited outside the Centre with Theresa and my friends, part of the growing crowd beginning to spill onto the street as police blocked off traffic. Aboriginal women wearing regalia led a processional out of the Centre, drumming and singing. The crowd formed a large circle around the intersection of Main and Hastings and quilted banners were unfolded around the circle. Members of the crowd stood shoulder to shoulder, clutching quilt squares decorated for each missing woman. Others held posters and banners from local organizations. Together, everyone sang the Lil’wat Women Warriors’ song and began marching.

We walked along Main, Hastings, and other streets through Gastown. Periodically, a group of women stopped to smudge. Each year, privacy is requested; no photographs are allowed. They stop where women’s bodies have been found – in alleys, outside of bars, and in parking lots. They read the women’s names, say how they died, and link the women with their relatives, as Culhane explains: “mother of ____, sister of ____, daughter of ____, friend of ____.” “In this way,” she says, “they inscribed these women’s lives on land, and in place. It is appropriate that there is so much emphasis on mourning and death. Perpetual, repetitive, relentless experiences of tragic loss permeate the lives of individuals and families in this community” (2003:602). The reinscription of these disappeared women on the landscape is an act of claiming space for them and bringing them into view (Teelucksingh 2006; Gordon 2008). This is an act that haunts, an act in which a “repressed or unresolved social violence is making itself known” (Gordon 2011:2).
A “Photogenic Spectacle”: Drive-by Encounters and Mechanisms of Marginalization

In a 2010 article, New York Times reporter Greg Bishop located the Downtown Eastside in the “shadows” of Vancouver’s spectacular North Shore mountains and the 2010 Winter Olympic Games, repeating a variation on a common theme in his journalistic depiction of the neighbourhood’s poverty, addiction, and depravity:

At the corner of Main and Hastings, residents of the poorest postal code in Canada passed a recent Tuesday afternoon. One man lighted a crack pipe, inhaling deeply. Another urinated on a wall. Another burned a book of matches, muttering at the flame. Two men started fighting. One brandished a bicycle seat, the other a salad that spilled onto the sidewalk. “All that over drugs,” a passer-by said. “Welcome to the Downtown Eastside.” (Bishop 2010)

The political dynamics that sustain the discursive and spatial separation of the Downtown Eastside and other inner-city neighbourhoods are invisibilized, Culhane contends, through sensational discourses like Bishop’s. She describes how journalists like Bishop, along with researchers and artists, produce images and narratives that mediate how non-residents experience the neighbourhood as spectators, how they are produced as apart from the turmoil on display there.

The Aboriginal profile of the neighbourhood is also spectacularly visible but is rarely directly acknowledged in such accounts. Culhane notes, “Anyone passing through inner-city Vancouver on foot, on a bus, or in a car cannot help but SEE, in a literal sense, the concentration of Aboriginal people here” (595, emphasis in original). Approximately 17,000 residents live in the Downtown Eastside, a neighbourhood located roughly between Cambie Street and Clark Drive to the west and east, and the waterfront and Venables to the north and south (see Figure 2). Between one-seventh and one-third of these residents are Aboriginal, compared with two percent in Vancouver as a whole (Brethour 2009; Culhane 2003). According to Culhane, sensational and invisibilizing discourses are bound up in the practice of “race blindness” that fails to address the “burden of social suffering carried by Aboriginal people in this neighbourhood- and in Canada as a whole” (594). Consistent with my definition of spectacle, instead of recognizing this burden and situating it in broader historical and political processes, non-Aboriginal spectators observe Aboriginality in the neighbourhood as a taken-for-granted part of the “culture of poverty” on display there.
Mediated representations facilitate this perspective. Exotic stories of addiction, sex work, crime and violence are emphasized over the “ordinary and mundane brutality of everyday poverty” and the structural legacies of colonial injustice that have contributed to the disproportionate number of Aboriginal residents in the neighbourhood (594). This representational spectacle has a disappearing effect as such discourses ignore forms of resistance and social change advanced by neighbourhood residents, as well as the long-term structural violence and neoliberal governance processes that have contributed to the neighbourhood’s abjection (Hugill 2010; see also Sommers and Blomley 2002).

The neighbourhood is produced through looking relations: a sight/site to behold but not to inhabit or engage with. In their edited volume of personal narratives of Downtown Eastside women, Leslie Robertson and Dara Culhane begin their introduction with a quote from a woman named Laurie: “You’re looking at me but you’re not looking at me. You’re not seeing me… We’re here but you can’t see us. You can’t see the real us… See, the buses come and go down here and you see people looking but they don’t see nothing. All they see is dope” (2005:7). Some of my research participants’ experiences are a testament to Laurie’s analysis. One white woman, Anna, originally from Ontario, recalled her early encounters with the Downtown Eastside as a university student.

I remember often having to take… you know, the Hastings bus. I was living on campus at SFU and then [I would go] down to the downtown campus, so that was a bit of a harsh reality for me… the Downtown Eastside… being whisked through it on the shuttle bus – observing it all. I’ve grown more comfortable with it – you know, I’ll go to the pubs down there. It’s not an issue anymore. But being a smalltown girl, coming to that environment… is a bit shocking and really quite sad for me. Well, for most people I think. Some pretty harsh realities… yeah. – Anna

Theresa’s first experience in the neighbourhood was quite similar:

My second week [living in Vancouver], my friend picked me up and gave me a driving tour of Vancouver and the North Shore, and she drove me down Main and Hastings. And she said, ‘This is the Downtown Eastside.’ And I was horrified. I was just… blown away by the… the fact that it existed and that… a city, a Westernized city, a Westernized city in my country, could not only allow it to happen but could ignore it. I was just

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72 I met Anna at the Mount Pleasant Library. She shared this story in her reflections on where and when she has encountered Aboriginal people in the city.
heartbroken and so aghast at Vancouver because I really didn’t know it was that extreme. And all you have to do is drive down the street… The recycling place – just the sheer amount of people… they were dirty, clearly mental issues, and drug use, and no concept of where they were, and what was going on… just filthy. – Theresa

From the windows of the bus and car, Anna and Theresa were spectators, gazing out at the spectacular poverty and addiction on display: “all you have to do is drive down the street.” They look but they do not understand the lives of the people there. As Laurie reflects, “The buses come and go down here and you see people looking but they don’t see nothing.” Theresa was appalled that Vancouver and Canada allowed the suffering in the neighbourhood to happen, but she remained removed as a spectator with the privilege of looking and looking away.

It took Anna and Theresa many years of living in Vancouver to gain more familiarity with the Downtown Eastside and to begin to situate it in their broader conceptions of the city. In our conversations, both reflected on how their perspectives on the neighbourhood have shifted over time – the “harsh realities” that once shocked them became less shocking over time but not less spectacular. The spectacle became absorbed into their everyday socio-spatial imaginaries, a normalized place distinctly apart from the rest of the city. Though Theresa’s experience with the Downtown Eastside deepened significantly years after her first drive-through encounter when she began working at BladeRunners, she continued to think of the neighbourhood as a distinct, wholly different place than the rest of Vancouver: “a separate functioning society – socially, politically, economically, their own sense of justice.” This distinction is reproduced from without and within, she thinks, with outsiders unaware of what’s going on “inside” and insiders participating in a somewhat bizarre and insular community, with capacity for both compassion and dysfunction. This separation is another distinctive feature of spectacle: to observe without feeling implicated. Even when she became more involved in the neighbourhood through her work at BladeRunners, Theresa often talked about it as an observer, not a participant.

**Haunting Encounters**

The February 14th Women’s Memorial March offered an opportunity for Theresa and me to reflect on our experiences in the neighbourhood. Throughout her one and a half
year tenure at BladeRunners, we had many conversations about her reasons for taking the job in the organization, her steep learning curve as she participated in the professional and social dynamics of the program, and her impressions of the neighbourhood and its residents’ struggles. Her stories provide some insight into how non-Aboriginal people like her form their impressions of the Downtown Eastside community through personal, affective experiences with the neighbourhood’s spectacles and spectres. Her stories also demonstrate how personal events can reveal and conceal broader structures of power, inequality, race, and marginality.

As we marched toward Gastown, pausing occasionally as the group of women smudged where murdered women’s bodies were found, Theresa updated me on BladeRunners office politics and her upcoming plans to leave Vancouver to return to Calgary. She had given her two weeks’ notice and spoke excitedly about getting out of the Downtown Eastside. Her enthusiasm was fuelled by her frustration with the persistent social problems she witnessed in the community and the constraints she had observed in efforts toward meaningful intervention. Theresa’s process of learning about the neighbourhood from within was sometimes painful and challenging. She commented once that she wanted to retreat back into her privilege, to feel comfortable at a safe distance from the neighbourhood and its problems. Essentially, she wanted to resume her role as a spectator, with the attendant ability to look away. Injustice and marginalization haunt the privileged when they no longer remain hidden from view, when they disrupt the cultural spectacle with their revenant politics, accusations, and suggestion of culpability and implication.

She had initially taken a job in the neighbourhood to confront its ghosts. She worked as a temp at BladeRunners before signing on as permanent staff. “Basically I’d spent two years saying, ‘Oh, the Downtown Eastside’s terrible and somebody should do something about it,’” she recalled, “And here was my opportunity to learn… maybe I would learn something.” She also hoped to become part of the solutions in the community rather than the problems by getting involved, but this proved much more difficult than she had imagined.

During the march, she recalled bitterly an encounter with a city councillor at a public hearing she attended on the municipal budget. At the meeting, Theresa stood up and compared the Downtown Eastside to a “Third World country” – a common analogy meant to highlight and critique the impoverished conditions in the neighbourhood.
Afterward, the councillor spoke with her privately and suggested that she be cautious about the language she uses to describe the community; labelling it as “Third World” further marginalizes and “others” its inhabitants, she explained. Although the councillor was likely trying to explain the dynamics of spectacle and spectrality I have been describing, Theresa felt chastised by her remark and took it personally. While feminists have persuasively argued that “the personal is political,” in this case, the political became personal for Theresa. She tried to identify how individuals like her could make a difference there and why it was so difficult to do so.

In our interview in August 2011, Theresa included the incident with the city councillor in a list of “big moments” in her process of learning about the neighbourhood and Aboriginality. Another “big moment” was an encounter with a young woman in the BladeRunners office. The retelling of the story choked her up; her nose grew red and her eyes brimmed with tears. “A girl walked in and she was… upset. And she reached out to shake my hand… and her hands – I have very tiny hands, and her hand was the same size as mine. And it was dirty, and cold. And it was just… heartbreaking… because this was the first time that I really saw one of them as being like me.” The pedagogical impact of that visit continued to reverberate and take new shape for Theresa. In our interview, as she continued her reflection, her voice steadied and she spoke quietly.

And then she came in the next week, and then she came in the week after that. And you realize that it was a pattern. And that is the difficult part – the first time it’s heartbreaking. By the third time, the fourth time, I don’t know what after that? … It’s difficult because… what do you do in the face of a patterned behaviour? She was one of the ones that helped me… helped me see the pattern. But the pattern is even more heartbreaking because you realize that it is so vast in terms of a problem… that the issues are so vast, and so ongoing, and so engrained.

This encounter haunts Theresa on a number of levels. A woman she had previously been unable to see as similar to herself, a woman she had participated in ghosting through disconnection and dislocation, became real through the act of touch: a corporeal connection gave up the ghost, shifting a persistent form of dehumanization. Her encounter and reflection reveals microprocesses of marginalization, providing a cast of two characters that personifies a pervasive structural dynamic. A woman Theresa situated on the margins came into view and her return opened a space to reflect on more insidious
forms of haunting: normalized processes of privilege and penalty, structural inequalities, disempowerment, and misrecognition (Dhamoon 2009). She began to see socio-political and personal patterns of behaviour and struggled to make sense of it all, and her helplessness upon seeing produced a different kind of gaze.

Avery Gordon argues that adequately attending to the politics of ghosts involves not only being hospitable and respectful, but also ensuring that the ghost is “not ghosted or abandoned or disappeared again in the act of dealing with the haunting” (2011:3). In the Downtown Eastside, people like Theresa who feel like outsiders in the community risk reproducing the politics of both spectacle and spectrality in the neighbourhood in their personal experiences and representations of the Others they encounter there. When Theresa first moved to Vancouver and later began working in the community, she was caught up in the spectacle, shocked and titillated by the blatant drug use on the sidewalk and the sex workers she saw on the corners. She regularly called her mother and friends to share new stories of surprise and incredulity.

Through a series of “big moments” and small revelations, she grew more accustomed and able to look deeper into these spectacular instances to see processes of exploitation (by johns, drug dealers, and others), forms of community building and care, and resignation and resistance. Working in the neighbourhood challenged her to witness dynamics of marginality and relate to them differently, on personal, affective, and analytical levels. This involved deconstructing the spectacle that continued to fascinate her and acknowledging the ghosted who remained in the neighbourhood when she left for elsewhere each afternoon.

Resisting Representations and Other Processes of Reckoning

In her essay “Haunted Spaces” (2002), art historian Denise Blake Oleksijczuk links artist Stan Douglas’s photograph *Every Building on 100 West Hastings* to the then-emerging case of missing women in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside. In the carefully engineered panoramic photograph, Douglas captured and stitched together images of each building on the block. The usually busy street is emptied of its inhabitants – an allusion, Oleksijczuk notes, that points to both the neglect precipitating the neighbourhood’s decline and the dozens of women disappeared through violent acts and structural violence. She suggests that Douglas’s photograph “resists viewers’ attempts to incorporate only ideal images of the city” and invites an active, not passive, form of
looking upon, and for, an absence (97). Emphasizing the dehumanization of the neighbourhood’s women, and the social boundaries and spatial systems of power that isolate and marginalize the Downtown Eastside and its residents, she argues that the photograph encourages “spectators to cross both social and psychic boundaries not simply to feel empathy by putting themselves in these women’s shoes, but to consciously and corporally implicate themselves in that which is disavowed” (100).

The Missing Women Commission of Inquiry, a provincial initiative, formed in 2011 to investigate delayed police response and other factors that may have contributed to years of inattention to cases of missing women in the Downtown Eastside. In 2011 and 2012, the Vancouver Rape Relief and Women’s Shelter released a series of broadsheets called Sisters Outsiders. The authors of the broadsheets were local activists, advocates, and residents who critiqued the Missing Women Commission for its failure to include and account for the voices of neighbourhood women and women’s organizations in its investigation. In the third issue of Sisters Outsiders, Lee Lakeman (2011) considered the passive and disconnected language often used to describe women in the Downtown Eastside: “‘Marginalized.’ Over and over that is how the women are referred to at the Mission Women Commission of Inquiry. ‘Marginalized women.’ Those using the term may mean to be respectful but they are missing the point. The point is: Who creates the ‘main stream’? Who sets its margins? Who controls its centre? And who did the marginalizing?” Her questions refuse an interpretation of the Downtown Eastside as separate from broader socio-political, historical, and spatial contexts. She resists the tendency to cast a fascinated gaze on victimhood without searching for perpetrators, whether they are individuals or institutions or structural conditions. She and the other Sisters Outsiders demand that these questions be considered by actively listening to the women who live in the neighbourhood rather than perpetuate their silencing (Sisters Outsiders 2012; Oppal 2012). Their aim is not empathy per se, but rather that to encourage observers, like those who view Stan Douglas’s photograph, to refuse their role as passive spectators and become listeners, implicated in the processes the women describe.

In December 2012, the Rape Relief and Women’s Shelter hosted a roundtable on the Missing Women Commission, just before the public release of the final report. Excerpts of the roundtable were published in the Sisters Outsiders issue that month (Sisters Outsiders 2012). While the Inquiry report ultimately demonstrated that racism permeated
the police department and contributed to the delayed and flawed investigation into the missing women’s cases, many women’s and advocacy groups felt that the Inquiry’s process failed to sufficiently address other structural dimensions of injustice. At the roundtable, for example, Cherry Smiley (Nlaka’pamux (Thompson)) and Dine’ (Navajo), co-founder of Indigenous Women Against the Sex Industry, suggested the Inquiry missed an important opportunity to locate the Downtown Eastside and its social problems in a context of systemic male violence and colonialism. The women argued that without hearing the voices of living, breathing women in the Downtown Eastside, justice for the missing and dead women is still missing. In their attempt to address the haunting spectres of police mismanagement and systemic neglect, the Inquiry re-ghosted the women it meant to reveal, acknowledge, make visible, and respect (Gordon 2008; Gordon 2011). Again, even under the glare of public, official, and media attention, the women themselves remained unheard and unseen.

The February 14th Women’s Memorial March is presents an annual opportunity for them to be heard and seen. As Culhane’s (2003) analysis demonstrates, Aboriginal women join together with their allies at the march to resist spectacular images and narratives of their neighbourhood and demand recognition on their own terms. They return year after year to challenge media spectacles of drugs, sex, and violence and enact their own politics of representation, repoliticizing their space and bringing to the centre what is systematically pushed to the margins. The march brings pain and mourning out into the open – but in ways that differ from the open suffering visible on the street and captured by accounts like Bishop’s. The march, while spectacular in scale, is not intended to entertain or to please others. It is both a memorial and a call to action around circumstances that continue to haunt. Haunting, Gordon reminds us, is not only about the past but also about the future. It can produce a “something-to-be-done” (2011:3). Unlike the Downtown Eastside media spectacle Culhane and Hugill critique, or drive-by

73 Other participants highlighted neoliberal policies that exacerbated vulnerability among the neighbourhood’s already vulnerable women, policy and law enforcement emphasis on criminalizing women prostitutes instead of the men who participate in and profit from prostitution, and the state’s failed responsibility to adequately care for the needs and rights of women to prevent their precarity.

74 This is a challenge I also face in writing this chapter. My interest here is to illuminate discourses and practices that construct the Downtown Eastside as a place of spectacle and spectrality and to examine how this construction influences everyday perspectives on the neighbourhood among those who live outside the neighbourhood in other parts of the city. This focus in some ways reproduces the silencing Lee Lakeman and her colleagues resist, but in fact my intention is to demonstrate how and why this silencing occurs. It is my hope that this analysis will encourage more attention to the women and their voices, not to distract from them.
spectatorship as experienced by Anna and Theresa, the march commands, again and again, attention to the shadows and the places, people, and processes less often seen and heard.

As hundreds of women marched along Hastings Street, I told Theresa I was somewhat surprised that she came out for the march, given her complicated feelings about the neighbourhood and her upcoming departure. I had asked her the year before if she planned to attend the march and she declined. During the year, however, the Missing Women’s Commission brought greater attention and scrutiny to the neighbourhood and the missing and murdered women. While Theresa thought the Inquiry report was “a joke and an embarrassment,” and though her feelings about the neighbourhood continued to trouble her, she was unequivocal in her assessment of the conditions that enabled the women’s disappearance and delayed the investigation. “This is different,” she said, glancing around at the women at the march and the photos of the missing women. “This was wrong.”

“In haunting,” Gordon argues, “organized forces and systemic structures that appear removed from us make their impact felt in everyday life in a way that confounds our analytic separations and confounds our social separations themselves” (2008:19). Walking along West Hastings Street and other “haunted spaces” of the city, it was clear that crossing the social and psychic boundaries of the neighbourhood had disabled Theresa’s ability, for a time, to remain removed and unmoved. The social problems the march highlighted in 2012 were remarkably consistent and persistent over its twenty year history. Theresa, attending the march for the first time, felt different, informed by her affective encounters with spectacle and spectrality in the neighbourhood and confronted with the banalities of marginality she witnessed. Moving through the streets with hundreds of other women, Theresa continued her journey of recognizing and reckoning with the ghosts, a process that confounded her social separations and challenged her to feel the impacts of systemic inequalities and situate herself in relation to them.

75 Theresa was also suspicious of protest as a meaningful form of action, preferring other democratic processes of representative government, election, and policymaking as pathways to change. 76 In fact, she felt them so much that she felt compelled to leave (see Chapter 7 for other participants’ comments about “feeling too much” in relation to Indigenous suffering). Yet, her experiences in the Downtown Eastside continue to affect her and how she relates to poverty and marginalization. Now living in Calgary, she works in an emergency homeless shelter.
Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that Stanley Park’s totem poles and the Downtown Eastside function as primary sites of spectacular Aboriginality in non-Aboriginal people’s socio-spatial imaginaries of the city. In Vancouver, spectacles of Aboriginal alterity – from monumental Northwest Coast material culture to blatant material inequalities on display in the Downtown Eastside – reproduce non-Aboriginal spectators’ ideas about difference and distance. Yet these sights/sites are also haunted by spectres of historical injustice and contemporary inequality that refuse to remain fully hidden even as they invisibilized and marginalized.

Spectacles are visual, mediated, cultural, and representational experiences that spectators understand as distinct from their ordinary lives. The Stanley Park totem poles and the Downtown Eastside are counterpoints on a spectrum of spectacular Aboriginality in the city. As such, they are reified as exemplars of visible Aboriginal alterity. Even though the library patron, Cam, has lived in neighbourhoods with significant populations of Aboriginal people, she suggests that the totem poles and tourist shops in Gastown are the places one should go to see Aboriginal people and culture. For others, the Downtown Eastside is the primary place because of the disproportionate number of Aboriginal people living there and the mediated, “photogenic spectacle” of poverty on its streets. Leslie Robertson asks, after describing the grade 5 test for students in Fernie, BC, “How are these children supposed to ‘know’ ‘them’ given the actual contexts within which Aboriginal people are made visible?” (2005:166). In Vancouver Aboriginality is “made visible” in Stanley Park and the Downtown Eastside, but as I have demonstrated, this visibility is circumscribed and marginalizes other forms of presence.

The Stanley Park totem poles present a static, apolitical emplacement of Aboriginality that obscures historical emplacement in village sites there, colonial dispossession of these sites, and contemporary claims by Coast Salish people to the land. The totem poles are a spectacle that distracts even as it enthrals. They attract attention to Aboriginality but in circumscribed ways that make other claims on the land uncanny. Reimagining spatialized sites of spectacle in the city, including its beloved Stanley Park, produces uneasy feelings and tensions – anxiety, confusion, frustration. “Time is out of joint” as the “over-and-done-with” of colonial politics are found alive in the present, haunting an imagined future of peaceful settlement and managed difference.
The Downtown Eastside, for outside spectators, presents a different spectacle of Aboriginality. It is produced, through media and drive-by encounters, as a place where a distinctly separate culture of poverty is on display, in shameful view. Exotic images of drugs, sex work, and addiction compose this picture, a picture that reifies the neighbourhood’s spatio-temporal exclusion: it is imagined as a space and time unto itself, apart from the rest of the city, and so are its inhabitants, many of them Aboriginal. It sits in the “shadows” of the North Shore Mountains and glowing reviews of Vancouver as one of the best places to live in the world. As a site of spectacle, its separation is normalized and its alterities are taken for granted. Residents resist this marginalization, this distinction and display, as they “emerge into visibility” through community organization and efforts toward self-representation. The February 14th Women’s Memorial March offers an annual occasion to reorient stories of their neighbourhood, to call attention to what is too often hidden from view in the spotlights on the neighbourhood: to missing and murdered women and the socio-political, socio-spatial processes that dehumanize them, as well as the voices and agency of neighbourhood residents.

Processes of erasure and marginalization play tricks on the eye for non-Aboriginal spectators. Aboriginal peoples, histories, and past, present, and future claims slide in and out of view. Haunting encounters disrupt non-Aboriginal people’s familiar understandings of time and space, understandings shaped significantly through their experiences with spectacle. Their everyday, ordinary forms of encounter with Aboriginal “Others” are thus produced in the tensions between ubiquitous spectacular Aboriginality and occasional glimpses of spectres who return again and again to reveal an unjust past, unequal present, and uncertain future.

The Downtown Eastside and Stanley Park are the “hot spots” of non-Aboriginal people’s geographies and histories of Aboriginality in the city. As my discussion demonstrates, however, these geographies and histories primarily reveal Aboriginal spectacles and conceal other emplacements: Snaaq and Xwayxway, parts of East Vancouver where Aboriginal people live beside non-Aboriginal people, the reserve geographies of the city, the everyday realities of Aboriginal people’s lives in the Downtown Eastside. Hyperreal and surreal spectacles simultaneously obscure and produce the real. The real becomes holographic: Aboriginality is visible in some ways and in some places sometimes, and sometimes invisible, hidden from view, or forgotten.
When spectacular geographies shift to make visible their spectres, when the hologram is in-between or simultaneously visible and visible, the a/effect is uncanny and unsettling. In my next chapter, I examine the ultimate spectacle of Indigeneity in recent Vancouver history, the 2010 Winter Olympic Games. I look in the shadows of the Olympic spotlight and attend to its spectres. The Olympics, I argue, offered a time and space to simultaneously witness Aboriginal spectacles and spectres at once, depending on one’s perspective and orientation.
Chapter 4: Olympic (G)hosts

Introduction


For Blackhawk, recent Olympic Aboriginality offers a significant example of shifts in settler colonial relations, a meeting of spectacle and spectres. In this chapter, I argue that spectrality animated Vancouver’s Olympic spectacle, revealing ongoing tensions between generalized Aboriginality and local, place-based Indigeneity, between transformation and reproduction of the settler colonial project. I deconstruct different elements of Olympic Aboriginality to examine these tensions: the unprecedented partnership between local Indigenous peoples and Games organizers, anti-colonial anti-Olympic resistance, Olympic Aboriginal art and merchandise, Indigenous performance, and the Opening Ceremony.

My analysis demonstrates how the Olympic spectacle, saturated by Aboriginality and Aboriginalia, conveyed anxieties, ambivalences, and aspirations in relation to Indigeneity and settler colonialism in the city. I explore the myriad and complex forms of Aboriginal engagement in Olympic art, performance, and protest to open questions about the spatio-temporal place of Indigeneity in a city that spectacularizes generalized Aboriginality. Drawing on ethnographic observations during and after the Games, I argue that the spectacle(s) of Olympic Aboriginality simultaneously made visible and reinvvisibilized colonial spectres, particularly the spectre of local Indigenous sovereignty. In my final section on the Opening Ceremony, I include responses to Olympic Aboriginality shared by participants at the library and construction site to reflect on how
they interpreted tensions between place-based Indigeneity and generalized Aboriginality, between spectacle and spectrality, that emerged during the Games.

**Setting the Stage: Spectacles of Aboriginality, Spectres of Indigeneity**

Aboriginal art and performance in mega-events, like Vancouver’s Olympics, are not novel and neither is the use of Aboriginal motifs in the branding and promotion of place and nation. From “living exhibits” to themed concessions to choreographed performances, Aboriginal people have been on display for non-Aboriginal audiences at World’s Fairs and Olympic Games since the 1700s, with “ethnographic showcases” reaching a peak at the turn of the 20th century (Corbey 1993; O’Bonsawin 2006a; Raibmon 2000; 2005). Exhibits and performances at that time were deeply implicated in colonial politics and policies, with displays intended to contrast Indigenous exoticism with European/White modernity or designed to feature the progressive successes of colonial institutions, such as reservations or boarding schools. As philosopher Raymond Corbey (1993) has argued, these spectacular displays offered ways for emerging nation-states to deal with the Others of their empires and naturalize Western hegemony through narratives of cultural evolution, classification, and racialized difference. These spectacles taught Western people to gaze upon Others and overlook the politics of their circumstances; to become voyeurs of an imperial world order.

Ethnographic exhibitions have ostensibly fallen out of favour, but Indigenous Otherness continues to fascinate Western audiences, accessible now through cultural performances and art (Stanley 1998). Stanley Park’s totem poles are a case in point (see Chapter 3). Cultural difference is now an attractive means for contemporary cities and nation-states to showcase their multicultural tolerance and unique forms of diversity. As Indigenous scholar Darren Godwell explains in his critical analysis of Aboriginal inclusion in the 2000 Sydney Olympics, hosts of Olympics and other hallmark events must repackage the same product (e.g., international sports events, industrial exhibitions) yet make theirs distinct and memorable. Aboriginal people, he argues, offer an ideal way to distinguish one place from another, particularly by emphasizing pre-contact, anachronistic forms of Indigenous cultures and art (2000:246; see also McCallum, Spencer, and Wyly 2005). Thus, though the modern Olympic movement emerged when
ethnographic shows reached peak popularity, Indigenous people have continued to play a significant role in the presentations of Olympic hosts in settler states.\footnote{Today the International Olympic Committee (IOC) actively encourages hosts to include Indigenous peoples when designing Olympic venues and planning events. The IOC formalized its expectations for Indigenous inclusion as part of its environmental and social sustainability policy, Agenda 21. Some scholars have analysed Olympic forms of Aboriginal inclusion in relation to IOC policy or the expressed values of the Olympic movement’s founder Pierre de Coubertin (cf. Devitt 2011; O’Bonsawin 2008; Schantz 2008), while others have analysed Canadian inclusion of Indigenous peoples in relation to Canadian policy and the formation of the nation-state (cf. Adese 2012; Ellis 2012; Forsyth 2002; O’Bonsawin 2010). Other analysts have also focused on how the Vancouver Olympics, including Indigenous participation, were influenced by civic policy and neoliberal and capitalist projects (Surborg, VanWynsberghe, and Wyly 2008; VanWynsberghe, Surborg, and Wyly 2012), tourism strategies (McKenna 2010), and corporate and spatial politics (Boykoff 2011a; Boykoff 2011b).}

The spectacle of Olympic Aboriginality in Vancouver is not only premised on long-standing traditions of Aboriginal performance in Olympic Games or the display of Aboriginal art as a symbol of multicultural diversity, however. As geographers Jennifer Silver, Zoe Meletis, and Priya Vadi (2012) note, Aboriginal representation and participation in Vancouver’s Games must also be situated in a specifically regional political context. They argue that Vancouver’s hosting relationship with local First Nations “emerged from a complex and place-specific history that engendered political and legal uncertainties” in British Columbia (296-297). Most of the province, including all of the Lower Mainland, does not have historical treaties to guide contemporary land use decisions.\footnote{The Tsawwassen First Nation signed a modern treaty in 2009 under the BC Treaty Commission process.} As a result, Vancouver and other Olympic venue sites rest on unceded lands, and the Crown and government representatives have a duty to consult appropriate First Nations communities for development and land use projects. Local First Nations leaders therefore expect to be consulted and recognized as active participants, hosts, and benefactors in the planning and staging of such a large-scale event on their territories.

In their analysis of Vancouver’s Games, anthropologists Karen-Marie Perry and Helen Kang (2012) demonstrate that Aboriginal people in Vancouver held different perspectives about whether and how to participate in forms of Olympic Aboriginality on offer. They argue that “the complexity of Aboriginal political, social, and economic perspectives, and the diversity of First Nations communities themselves were buried under the veneer of celebration, cultural exchange, and commodified nationalism” (586). I suggest, however, that the burial they contest was only a partial one. The No Olympics on Stolen Native Land movement, part of the Olympics Resistance Network, also rallied against the Games for obscuring the spectres of dispossession and colonial harm. But
colonial spectres and Indigenous complexity, I argue, were bound up in the spectacle of Aboriginality in Vancouver’s Games, fuelling and shaping it. First Nations acted as partners and hosts, opening opportunities, however circumscribed, to confront past injustices and imagine a different future.

Examining the relationship between Aboriginal inclusion in Vancouver’s Games and ongoing discourses and practices of settler colonialism in the city involves acknowledging longer histories of spectacular Aboriginality on display in Vancouver, ongoing inequalities urban Aboriginal people face in the city, and the unfinished business of colonialism that continues to haunt (see Chapter 3). I suggest that the Vancouver Olympics showcased local First Nations and distinctively local place-based Indigeneity even as it reified familiar forms of generalized spectacular Aboriginality. It thus built on familiar tensions in the city between Coast Salish emplacement/displacement and generalized Aboriginal spectacle. For non-Aboriginal spectators, the tensions between place-based Indigeneity and generalized Aboriginality were not easy to navigate. The weight of their past experiences with generalized Aboriginality informed their gaze, perhaps limiting the pedagogical impact of place-based Indigeneity performed during the Games and further contributing to processes that spectralize indigenous Indigeneity (Barman 2007). Nonetheless, the Olympics offered distinctive opportunities to witness expressions of Aboriginality that did not wholly bury or conceal Indigenous diversity, issues related to colonial dispossession, or efforts toward self-determination.

Four Host First Nations on Stolen Native Land

When we first conceived of this partnership, we were determined that this wouldn’t be just beads and feathers. We were determined, as representatives of the traditional lands on which the Games would take place, to assume our rightful place front and centre. And we have!”

– Chief Gibby Jacobs (VANOC 2010)

In this quote, Chief Gibby Jacobs celebrates the Four Host First Nations partnership that, for him and other official host partners, went beyond superficially spectacular Aboriginality (“beads and feathers”) and entered the realm of substantive political recognition. Emerging from the margins of their territory, the Four Host First Nations reclaimed their “rightful place front and centre” on their own territories.
Members of the Olympics Resistance Network felt differently. Through their anti-colonial protest mantra, “No Olympics on Stolen Native Land,” they argued that the Four Host First Nations partnership was indeed simply “beads and feathers” and that official Olympic forms of Aboriginal recognition were ceremonial displays without political consequence: a pageant performed by the city and nation that failed to sufficiently address ongoing contestation over Indigenous claims to rights and lands. In Chief Jacobs’ story, the Four Host First Nations partnership finally exorcised the ghosts of colonialism by affirming the traditional territories and rights to self-determination of local First Nations. In the Olympic protestors’ story, the partnership was a wolf in sheep’s clothing, a recapitulation of colonial manipulation of Aboriginal people and their lands in the service of the settler state.

These stories bear remarkable similarity to two theoretical streams in analyses of inclusion, as identified by feminist scholar Rachel Simon-Kumar and anthropologist Catherine Kingfisher (2011): the social justice story and the story of regulation. Proponents of the social justice story champion inclusionary initiatives as a transformational approach to mitigating inequalities, repairing damages of injustice, and reordered power relations. Proponents of the regulation story emphasize how inclusion works to manage and assimilate Others: poor, marginalized, racialized, and/or migrant peoples. Echoing Simon-Kumar and Kingfisher, I suggest that neither story is complete or sufficient, and that in fact a more effective analysis identifies the “productive tensions” between transformation and control. The Olympic spectacle did not banish, once and for all, the spectres of colonial dispossession, but neither did it ignore them altogether.

The 2010 Winter Olympic Games were held on the unceded territories of the Lil’wat, Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh First Nations. While each nation currently manages a small portion of reserve lands, their overlapping claims to ancestral territory stretch across the Lower Mainland and out into the newly renamed Salish Sea (see Figure 8). Since the early days of colonial settlement, each community has taken various approaches to exercising sovereignty and contesting colonial dispossession and displacement. Out of this political climate, the planning of Vancouver’s Olympics Games took shape and its “unprecedented” forms of Aboriginal partnership and

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79 Each nation has participated in a range of political and economic sectors, such as the British Columbia Treaty Commission, private and corporate economic development, court cases over Aboriginal rights and title, and environmental impact assessments for development projects on their lands and waters.
representation emerged. Through a series of negotiations and meetings, representatives from Lil’wat, Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh First Nations collaborated to develop the Four Host First Nations Society (FHFNS). Through protocol agreements with each other and the Vancouver Olympic Committee, the FHFNS guided decisions around representations and expressions of Aboriginality, art, and culture during the Games, as well as negotiated agreements with local municipalities, the province, and the federal government over land and Olympic legacies funding (Dunn 2007; Silver, Meletis, and Vadi 2012).

In the late 1990s, representatives from the Squamish and Lil’wat Nations connected with local entrepreneurs and boosters preparing Vancouver’s bid for the 2010 Winter Olympic Games (Dunn 2007; Jeff Lee 2008). They reminded Olympic bid officials that, if the bid was successful, the Games would take place on their unceded territorial lands. They aimed to ensure that Aboriginal and land rights were to be respected and recognized in the planning and staging of the Games. This set in motion the next steps of negotiation and transactional relationship-building. The Squamish and Lil’wat nations negotiated with the Bid Corporation and the province to develop a multi-million dollar Shared Legacies Agreement that included 300 acres of land in the Callahan Valley, the construction of a joint cultural centre in Whistler, and other forms of economic development support.

In 2003 the Bid Corporation began consultations with the Musqueam and Tsleil-Waututh. Their representatives signed a Memorandum of Understanding on July 1, 2003, the day before the International Olympic Committee announced that the Games were awarded to Vancouver. One year later, elected chiefs from the four nations joined with VANOC to sign another protocol and principles agreement, setting up relations between the organizations, assigning responsibilities, determining communications plans, outlining dispute resolution processes, and detailing legal obligations. The Musqueam Indian Band and Tsleil-Waututh Nation also developed legacies agreements, primarily in the form of

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80 The Bid Corporation developed a comprehensive bid book, which emphasized Vancouver’s scenic natural environment, local culture and arts, and multicultural communities, highlighting First Nations art and support for the Games (McCallum, Spencer, and Wyly 2005).
81 The Squamish Nation, for example, further (re)asserted their connection to place through the implementation of the Sea-to-Sky Cultural Journey, which features a series of informational kiosks about Squamish people and lands along the highway corridor from Vancouver to Whistler. The project also involved erecting highway signage identifying place-names in the Squamish language (Townsend-Gault 2011). The anchor of the Sea-to-Sky Cultural Journey is the Squamish-Lil’wat Cultural Centre, which was built with Olympic funding from the provincial and federal governments.
economic development and funding support. Throughout the planning and staging of the Games, Chief Gibby Jacob (Squamish Nation) served as a member of the VANOC Board of Directors.

Through these processes, the FHFN became official co-hosts of the XXI Winter Olympic Games. These agreements, I suggest, are indicative of the contemporary political climate in British Columbia in relation to Indigenous peoples and claims. If bid and government officials were not already intending to consult with local First Nations, local representatives from Lil’wat and Squamish arrived to not only make consultation certain, but also to ensure they would be recognized as hosts on their own territories. The spectres of dispossession would not go unheeded.

The local nations’ expectations around hosting also relate to cultural traditions, including the potlatch. As discussed in Chapter 2, the CEO of the FHFNS, Tewanee Joseph, regularly called the Games “the world’s biggest potlatch.” Potlatches are feasts and ceremonies hosted by high-status individuals, families, and sometimes communities. Gifts are distributed among guests, redistributing wealth and resources in exchange for greater prestige, status, and recognition. Oral narratives and verbal claims to land and resources are voiced, with participants in the potlatch accepting the responsibility to bear witness and affirm these claims. Spectacular performances also play a central role in potlatching, with elaborate stories performed by masked dancers. These cultural performances serve a political function in recognizing rights of access and ownership of not only land and resources, but also songs, dances, materialized crests, and other forms of intellectual property.

Potlatching was banned in an amendment to the Indian Act that lasted from 1884 to 1951. Colonial officials banned the potlatch because they viewed it as an uncivilized and potentially harmful practice, antithetical to Christian, capitalist, and assimilationist ideologies and values. Potlatching now continues along the coast, with new adaptations integrated with old traditions, gaining an additional layer of significance as an expression of survivance (Vizenor 2008). During the Vancouver Olympics’ Opening Ceremony and repeatedly at events at the FHFN’s Aboriginal Pavilion, elements of potlatching were

82 The FHFN also signed Memorandum of Understanding with the Assembly of First Nations, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, and Métis National Council, as well as Memoranda of Intent with many provincial Aboriginal groups across Canada and tribal councils and Statements of Cooperation with Aboriginal organizations such as Aboriginal Tourism BC and the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (VANOC 2010). These memoranda and statements, along with the establishment of the Aboriginal Licensing and Merchandising Program in 2008, also guided official representations of Aboriginality during the Games (Roth 2013).
infused into performances and emcee statements and speeches. Enacting protocols of potlatching, FHFN officials and performers contested invisibility and colonial limitations within the arena of Olympic spectacle, building on cultural forms of spectacular performance in the process. A formerly banned practice had now, at least metaphorically and representationally, reached a spectacular scale; no longer prohibited, it was officially sanctioned and even celebrated by officials of the settler state.  

Far from an apolitical cultural spectacle, then, the Four Host First Nations understood their partnership in the Games as a powerful moment of recognition and redress. The moment is key here: temporal dynamics are important for understanding the difference in interpretation of colonial spectres for FHFN officials and the members of the Olympic Resistance Network (ORN). Both the FHFNS and the ORN emphasized land, calling attention to the fact that lands remain unsettled in the Lower Mainland: “unceded” in the language of the local First Nations, “stolen” in the language of the ORN. As geographer Jules Boykoff notes, “the spectre of dispossession haunted the Olympics” (2011a:48). Four Host First Nations rhetoric implies that this spectre was directly acknowledged through land and legacies agreements, recognition of traditional territories, protocols and expressions of potlatching, and host rights and responsibilities. This was one moment among many in efforts toward recognition of rights and territory. For representatives of the ORN, this single moment was not worthy of celebration, in large part because they viewed it as temporary.

The ORN frequently referred to the Olympics as a “two-week party.” For them, time during the Olympics was “out of joint” (Derrida 1994). Long-term systemic problems, including harmful legacies of colonialism and persistent disregard of Indigenous claims, were not resolved during the two weeks of the Games, only suspended. They argued that the Olympics disrupted and distracted from real issues at stake in local, regional, and national politics. For them, the Four Host First Nations partnership marked an event, not a structural shift. Before, during, and after the Games, the land would remain “stolen” despite temporary acknowledgements of claims and celebrated partnership. This fact will return again and again to haunt, their rhetoric.

It is important to note that a direct comparison between the Olympics and potlatching has limitations. For one thing, potlatch hosts traditionally pay for their guests and their gifts as an expression of their prestige. The Four Host First Nations were paid, in land settlements and legacies funding, as partners. Furthermore, they were recognized as hosts of their territories through official agreements, but certainly not all Olympics spectators played witness to their Indigenous hosts and therefore did not significantly engage in the politics of potlatching.
suggests, despite temporary conciliatory offers from the state. Some anti-Olympics resistors also suggested that it was band council representatives, not hereditary chiefs, who negotiated protocol and legacies agreements with VANOC and multiple levels of government; interpreted as elected officials of a still-colonial state, their actions were rejected as legitimate and authentic political acts on behalf of their communities.84

Another spectre critics emphasized was the spectre of protest itself. Some argued that the Four Host First Nations partnership was a politically vacuous attempt by the still-colonial state to protect against Indigenous insurrection. The strength and influence of this spectral force could be witnessed briefly when the Four Host First Nations chiefs were late to take their seats as heads of state during the Opening Ceremony (described later in this chapter). If they failed to show up, an elaborate performance of the progressive, tolerant nation was at stake and an anxious energy developed in the stadium, communicated by televised broadcasts that regularly panned to the dignitaries’ box to check on their status. Reports variously stated that their bus driver got lost or that protesters at BC Place prevented their timely arrival. In the end, they only missed the national anthem but the fact that their temporary absence precipitated anxiety about a possible decision to communicate the illegitimacy of the Canadian state through an act of defiant, last-minute resistance demonstrates that the presence and absence of Indigenous people is a significant spectre indeed.85

In addition to their message of colonial theft, the ORN also advanced a broad range of critiques related to the harms of corporate capitalism, gentrification, surveillance and securitization, and environmental degradation, which they felt the Olympics exacerbated. In 2006 anti-Olympics protesters Betty Krawczyk and Harriet Nahanee were

84 The institution of band councils through the Indian Act and other colonial policies is a great matter of contention. As legal analyst Steven Gunn explains, quoting Ralph W. Johnson, “under the Indian Act, originally passed in 1876, ‘traditional Indian governments were replaced by band councils that function as agents of the federal government, exercising a limited range of delegated powers under close federal supervisions.’ Band councils may pass laws concerning local matters, but these laws must be consistent with the Indian Act and federal regulations” (Gunn 2005; Borrows 2005). Chief Joe Mathias and lawyer Gary Yabsley similarly argue, “The band council system was introduced through the Indian Act and functioned on European perceptions of what constituted proper government,” thereby limiting the jurisdictional scope of Indigenous political participation (1991). Interestingly, Vancouver Sun’s Jeff Lee (2008) reports that it was Chief Joe Mathias who approached local entrepreneurs in the early stages of Vancouver’s Olympic bid to remind them that the Games would be held on the unceded territories of the Squamish Nation, and that local bands would therefore need to be consulted and included in Games planning. His early involvement eventually led to the establishment of the FHFN. In his lifetime (1943-2000), Mathias was both a hereditary chief and an elected official in his community.

85 Note, however, that the ceremony did start without them. Their belated appearance also activated some racist stereotypes about “Indian time” – the idea that Aboriginal people are notoriously late and eschew strict time schedules.
convicted of contempt after attempting to disrupt construction at Eagleridge Bluffs in West Vancouver. Nahanee, a Squamish woman, died of pneumonia soon after her release from a 9-day jail stay, prompting outrage among her fellow anti-Olympics protesters. Weeks after her death, the Native Warrior Society cut down the Olympic flag from Vancouver’s City Hall. They released a photo of three figures in black and balaclavas, holding a photo of Nahanee, raising their fists in front of a Kahnawake Mohawk flag. In their accompanying statement, they expressed their angry grief over Nahanee, “our elder-warrior, who was given a death sentence by the BC courts for her courageous stand in defence of Mother Earth,” ending their statement with the words, “No Olympics on Stolen Native Land” (Fournier 2007).

More protests and other forms of action developed prior to and during the Games. On the afternoon before the opening ceremony, protesters marched down Georgia Street, waving the Kahnawake Mohawk flag and posters with Indigenous anti-Olympic artwork (see Chapter 2). The next day, the ORN staged a “Heart Attack” march to “clog the arteries of capitalism.” A contingent of “black bloc” protesters smashed windows of the Hudson Bay Company and TD Bank downtown, provoking riot police intervention. The HBC was reportedly targeted because of its role in colonizing Canada. The protest prompted numerous discussions among activists over the rationale and effects of a diversity of demonstration tactics.

For the ORN, celebratory images of Aboriginal recognition were superficial window dressing at best, and managerial and exploitative manipulation at worst. If the Olympic spectacle cast a bright spotlight on Aboriginality, Olympic resisters felt it created shadows. They aimed to shine their own light, to illuminate those shadows, by emphasizing the unresolved and haunting theft of Indigenous lands. They printed “No Olympics on Stolen Native Land” stickers; quickly these stickers adorned bus stop shelters, street signs, and benches across the city. Tewanee Joseph (FHFNS CEO) responded to their critiques by reiterating the unprecedented involvement of local Indigenous peoples in the planning and hosting of the Games, arguing that their partnership with VANOC, BC, and Canada demonstrated an exercise of their rights to self-determination as distinct nations. For the ORN, the FHFNS collaboration with developers and the state was not an expression of self-determination but an act of “selling out” for profit.
The “social justice story” propagated by the Four Host First Nations conveys their hopefulness for a different future, while the “regulation” story emphasized by the Olympics Resistance Network communicates their weariness that the future will simply be more of the same: hegemonic dismissal of Aboriginal rights and territories (Simon-Kumar and Kingfisher 2011). I argue that a more compelling story emerges in the tensions between these two perspectives, which I have sought to describe in this section. The tensions between these two groups, each of which has significant internal diversity, are demonstrative of broader debates around recognition by and beyond the state, authority in First Nations communities, and appropriate approaches to decolonization and inclusion in the context of a settler society. The Olympics certainly did not, and perhaps could not, manage to absolve Vancouver and the settler state of its colonial injustices or altogether redefine the future of Indigenous-state relations. But ceremonial and substantive forms of recognition of local Coast Salish peoples and their lands and cultures reveal broader shifts toward increasing public and state attention to Indigenous rights and territories. The Olympics, through official and resistance discourses, brought to the surface spatio-temporal conflicts about local Indigenous sovereignty, bringing into relief local Indigenous emplacement against ongoing displacement and erasure. The spectres the Games raised indicate that the past is not “over-and-done-with” and there remains “something-to-be-done”, not only in the moment of celebration but also moving forward into a future still haunted by uncertainty (Gordon 2008; 2011).

The Four Host First Nations and the Olympics Resistance both “semiotically drenched” Vancouver’s Games in place-based Coast Salish Indigeneity and references to land, demonstrating that settler colonial tensions continue to play out in the present (Franklin 2010:196). For non-Aboriginal spectators, the association between Vancouver’s Games and Aboriginality could not be avoided. I turn next to describe the art and imagery of the Games. I argue that emphasis on Coast Salish art, people, lands were also part of the iconography of Vancouver’s Olympics, but that this focus became blurred by prominent examples of generalized Aboriginality such as the official emblem and mascots. This blurring exemplifies another persistent tension in settler colonial

These stories are also emerging in scholarly analyses of Olympic Aboriginality. For example, Robin Sidsworth’s (2010) Masters thesis in law presents an optimistic view in his analysis of the FHFN in relation to Canadian jurisprudence around Aboriginal rights. Indigenous Studies scholars Christine O’Bonsawin (2010) and Jennifer Adese (2012) are more critical, both suggesting that the Olympic spectacle failed to directly address ongoing contestation over land and colonial legacies in meaningful ways.
Vancouver and its Aboriginal spectacles between “indigenous Indigeneity” and sanitized and/or appropriative Indigeneity “got from elsewhere” (Barman 2007; see Chapter 3).

**Olympic Aboriginalia**

Vancouver’s Olympics featured a broad suite of Aboriginal art and Aboriginal-inspired designs in its branding and marketing campaigns. From the official logo to mascots to official Olympic paraphernalia (and even unofficial anti-Olympics protest art), Aboriginal designs saturated Vancouver’s Games. I adopt Australian art historian Adrian Franklin’s term “Aboriginalia” to describe these designs and objects (Franklin 2010). While Franklin examines objects produced in Australia in the 1940s-1980s, mostly by non-Aboriginal artists sympathetic to and intrigued by Aboriginality, I find that the term has contemporary and local relevance in Vancouver. Franklin defines Aboriginalia as “decorative objects depicting Aboriginal people and/or culture and motifs that were predominantly designed for, sold to, and produced by non-Aboriginal Australians” (203). This genre of design is inspired by Aboriginal cultural motifs, already featured on a wide range of special and quotidian objects. In Vancouver, for example, Northwest Coast formline art decorates scarves, coffee mugs, magnets, and other household objects and clothing, as well as public banners, manhole covers, and other features of the cityscape. These objects are intended for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal consumption, use, display, collection, and marketing (Roth 2013).

The visibility and circulation of Aboriginalia, I argue, can create a homogenizing effect. Even when Aboriginal artists are involved in production and design (which is not always the case), the specificity of designs particular to Indigenous art traditions, people, and places often become generalized as objects that are (re)imagined as “Aboriginal” or “Native” art and design in a broad, generic sense. Thus “Native art” seems to be everywhere in Vancouver, an effect produced through the accumulation of familiar art by Bill Reid, Susan Point, and other renowned Aboriginal artists, as well as the prevalence of Aboriginal giftware produced by Native Northwest, BOMA, and other companies. For non-Aboriginal locals and tourists, generalized Aboriginal art in Vancouver is spectacular – cultural, mediated, distinctive – but not specific to people or place, much like the totem poles in Stanley Park (Chapter 3).
Beyond mere souvenirs, these objects and their social lives therefore reflect ambivalent conditions related to Indigeneity. Their spectacular promotion, circulation, and consumption coincide with ongoing uncertainty related to the place, role, and political recognition of Aboriginal people in the city, province, and nation. Franklin argues that, in Australian households, Aboriginalia such as boomerangs and tea towels function as “repositories of recognition of what was often entirely absent, denied, or undermined in the everyday political and policy spheres” (203). Similarly in Vancouver, Aboriginal designs are a familiar and recognizable art form in non-Aboriginal people’s homes and across public space in the city even as Aboriginal people and Indigenous politics remain socially distant, silenced, or unfamiliar. To demonstrate this tension, I describe below the many forms of Aboriginalia the 2010 Winter Olympics featured at every turn: the logo, mascots, medals, Canadian hockey team jerseys, official merchandise, and venue art.

In 2005 representatives from the Four Host First Nations participated in the launch event for the official emblem, Ilanaaq, a stylized inukshuk or Inuit rock figure (see Figure 9). Inuksuit (plural of inukshuk) were traditionally erected as landmarks in the Canadian Arctic. Presented with over a thousand submissions, an international panel of judges selected Ilanaaq, designed by Latino designers Elena Rivera MacGregory and Gonzalo Alatorre of the Rivera Design Group. The name “Ilanaaq” means “friend” in Inuktitut. The design was inspired by an inukshuk built by Inuit artist Alvin Kanak for Vancouver’s Expo ’86 (Ruhl 2008; Sierp 2010). According to geographer Eva Sierp, who interviewed the designers, Aboriginal groups were not consulted in the design process, an example of appropriation and production of generalized Aboriginality.
Upon Ilanaaq’s selection, a brief public controversy swelled, with some local Coast Salish representatives contesting the branding of their territory with a symbol of a distant population. Others debated the merits of the logo’s design and questioned its relevance as a symbol of Vancouver. Some observers arguing that the Vancouver Olympics were in fact Canada’s Games, not just Vancouver’s; a symbol from the far north, when resituated in this nationalized context, seemed to make more sense for them. Abenaki scholar Christine O’Bonsawin (2006b) analyses the “conundrum of Ilanaaq,” arguing that the choice of the logo is problematic: its Arctic origins, traditional place-specific use, and non-Indigenous designers counter Olympic organizers’ efforts to recognize local nations from the host region.

Critics like O’Bonsawin (2006b; 2010) and Perry and Kang (2012) read the logo’s selection against Indigenous politics and a history of Aboriginal art appropriation in the service of the nation; their critiques express concern about mixed messaging, superficial partnership, and objectification. While Four Host First Nations Society representatives defended the logo, I agree with Perry and Kang (2012), who suggest that the choice of Ilanaaq was reductive and homogenized Aboriginal cultures. The most ubiquitous example of Olympic Aboriginalia, Ilanaaq essentially branded Vancouver’s Games; it was printed on nearly all Olympic paraphernalia and featured on telecasts,
advertisements, billboards, and storefronts. Combined with other examples of Olympic Aboriginalia, discussed below, Ilanaaq significantly contributed to the Aboriginalizing of Vancouver’s Games. In doing so, it reified familiar forms of generalized Aboriginal spectacle in the city that do not significantly represent or inform the public about Indigenous peoples, lands, politics, or art. Coast Salish Indigeneity, then, was displaced even as it was beginning to emerge into view.

The official Olympic mascots are another example of Aboriginalized spectacle. Unveiled in 2007, the four figures were especially designed to capture the imaginations of children (see Figure 10). Non-Aboriginal designers Vicki Wong and Michael Murphy, of the Vancouver and Los Angeles-based firm Meomi, gave the figures names, personalities, and storylines: Miga, a sea bear, who likes to surf and snowboard; the environmentalist and alpine skier Sumi, a composite figure and guardian spirit with wings of a bird, the hat of an orca, and feet of a bear; Quatchi, a sasquatch who aspires to be a hockey goalie; and their sidekick, Mukmuk, a marmot.87

Figure 9: Official mascots of the 2010 Winter Olympics
Quatchi and Miga, official mascots for the 2010 Winter Olympic Games; Sumi, official mascot for the 2010 Paralympic Games
(Connect2Canada 2009, reprinted with permission)

87 Sumi is the official Paralympic mascot; all of the mascots were introduced at the same time.
The mascots were sold as stuffed animals and keychains in many sizes, and their images were printed on many Olympic decorations. During the Games, thousands watched the popular daily Mascots on Ice shows at Robson Square in the centre of Vancouver’s downtown. The show emphasized their connections to sport and their mythological storylines, based loosely on coastal First Nations stories. The mascots’ stories and personalities implied Aboriginality and culture without asking consumers to engage substantively in thinking about Indigenous peoples, history, or contemporary politics. In this way, as symbols for children, the mascots serve as another example of how Aboriginality is often spectacularized through circumscribed expressions of material culture and timeless myths and stories.

While few critics engaged in debates around the pedagogical possibilities of the mascots, at the time of their unveiling, there was considerable discussion about their anime, or “Asian,” aesthetic. Some observers thought this aesthetic was appropriate, given Vancouver’s significant Asian population, while others argued that their anime design features reflected neither coastal First Nations art nor Canada. Again, as with Ilanaaq, the mascots embody tensions around how to represent the city and nation, local peoples and politics. These tensions were only briefly discussed in the public arena before the mascots were absorbed into the familiar sites and imagery of Vancouver’s Games and spectacular Aboriginality.

In addition to stuffed animals and keychains, other forms of Aboriginalia were available for purchase at the Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC), the official purveyor of Olympic merchandise. VANOC commissioned Squamish and Kwakiutl artist Xwalacktun (Rick Harry) to produce core graphics for visual branding and for a line of Olympic products, serving as the foundation for the Vancouver 2010 Aboriginal Licensing and Merchandising Program (VANOC 2008; Roth 2013). The program was intended to showcase Aboriginal arts and culture, with a percentage of royalties supporting an Aboriginal Youth Legacy Fund. At the launch of the program in 2008, Tewanee Joseph said, “When you look at Olympic and Paralympic products in stores, you’ll see an

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88 I have heard anecdotally that the “Asian” aesthetic was intentional – that the designers combined Aboriginal stories with Asian design to reflect Vancouver’s ethnic and racial diversity. Although I have been unable to corroborate this with statements from VANOC or the designers, the Aboriginal-Asian syncretism of the mascots is worthy of further attention.

89 Lawyer, entrepreneur, and artist Shain Jackson issued strong critiques of the licensing and merchandising program. Jackson, owner of Aboriginal art company Spirit Works and member of the Sechelt First Nation, contested the use of the word “authentic” to label materials with Aboriginal designs that were produced overseas, ad also expressed other concerns about the intent, values, and implementation of the program.
Aboriginal look to them” (Inwood 2008). Xwa lack’s designs provided this “look” on a range of products, including brightly coloured hooded sweatshirts that were highly popular among Olympic spectators.

The significance of a local Coast Salish artist selected to brand Vancouver’s Games and its merchandise is in some ways eclipsed by this emphasis on a generalized “Aboriginal look.” Furthermore, the joining of an Aboriginal artist, the Hudson’s Bay Company, and the Vancouver Olympics is an interesting example of how colonial history can be spectralized in spectacle. The HBC’s early settlements and forts across Canada were the progenitors of British settler colonialism. The company explored Indigenous territories to set up its (in)famous trading posts and thereby set down the stakes of empire for Britain, including in what is now called British Columbia. The trading economy they established mapped over Indigenous economies and trading patterns. Its colonial history, including the epidemic spread of fatal diseases in Native communities through its blankets, continues to haunt today. Its ghosts are managed, however, through narratives that construct the company as an unproblematic and even glorified part of Canadian history. The partnership between the HBC and VANOC, and especially the sale and production of materials with an “Aboriginal look” during the Games, contribute to these narratives. In some ways a partnership with an Aboriginal designer may appear to rid the narrative of alternative stories that haunt, but in fact it mostly manages them rather than eliminates them altogether by redirecting people’s attention to spectacle over spectres.

A popular item at HBC during the Olympics was a thick-knit sweater with designs reminiscent of Cowichan sweaters. Canadian athletes wore the HBC sweaters for the Closing Ceremonies and thousands were sold during the Games. Cowichan sweaters typically feature horizontal patterns, including depictions of animals like eagles or killer whales, in white, black, grey, or brown yarn. The HBC-designed sweaters were grey, white, black, and red with reindeer and geometric patterns, similar in style to Cowichan designs. They were unveiled in late 2009 along with the rest of the HBC line and prompted heavy criticism from members and officials of the Cowichan Tribes on Vancouver Island, who accused the HBC of appropriating their designs and denying their knitters the right to sell their own sweaters for the official line. After negotiations, the HBC and Cowichan Tribes reached a deal that involved the introduction of Cowichan-made Cowichan sweaters for sale alongside the HBC-designed sweaters at the HBC’s flagship store in downtown Vancouver and at the Four Host First Nations’ Aboriginal
Pavilion Trading Post. Though the HBC continued to deny that their sweaters were inspired by Cowichan designs, both the HBC and Cowichan-made sweaters circulated as visible examples of Olympic Aboriginalia before, during, and after the Games. The controversy around the HBC sweaters communicates the extent to which Aboriginal designs, including Cowichan sweaters, have been integrated into Canadian imaginaries of self and nation. It also served as a reminder of the ways that Indigenous communities, like the Cowichan Tribes, continue to maintain and express their distinct identities, nationhood, and intellectual property, refusing to be absorbed fully as an indiscriminate part of the body politic of the Canadian nation while also participating in its economic circuits.

The official Olympic athlete medals also resulted from a collaborative partnership between an Aboriginal artist and non-Aboriginal designer (see Figure 11). Komuyue/Tlingit designer Corinne Hunt created the images of an orca and raven for the Olympic and Paralympic medals, respectively, while industrial designer Omer Arbel designed the shape and metal production process for the medals. Produced by the Royal Canadian Mint, the medals were each unique, stamped from larger pieces of metal imprinted with Hunt’s design, and attracted over 100,000 spectators at the Mint’s Pavilion, another example of spectacular Aboriginality on display during the Games (Royal Canadian Mint 2010).90

![Figure 10: Official silver medal of the 2010 Winter Olympics (Selihpxe8 2010, reprinted with permission)](image)

90 Hunt wrote a book about her motivations and experiences co-designing the medals: *Olaka Iku Da Nala: It Is a Good Day* (2012).
The Canadian hockey team’s jerseys provide a contrasting example that stands out amongst Olympic Aboriginalia. Nike designer Stuart Iwasaki collaborated with Musqueam artist Debra Sparrow to design the jerseys, which included a large maple leaf filled with Musqueam, Coast Salish, and Canadian iconography (see Figure 12). In this example, a primary symbol of the Canadian nation – the hockey team, a source of great pride in Canada – was imbued with local First Nations symbolism. Its designers and designs did not emphasize the jersey’s “Aboriginal look”; rather, the jersey explicitly featured Musqueam and Coast Salish designs and therefore conveyed a locally place-based aesthetic. Because of all the other forms of Aboriginalia available to Olympic spectators, however, it largely became absorbed into the generalized Aboriginal spectacle of Vancouver’s Games. Furthermore, the design was nearly camouflaged in the jersey: its shades of red blended into the red jersey. This made it difficult to see it unless one looked closely – an interesting demonstration of the politics of Indigenous visibility during the Games.

Figure 11: Designers Stuart Iwasaki and Debra Sparrow with the official jersey of the Canadian Olympic hockey team, featuring Debra Sparrow’s design in the maple leaf

(Jeffrey 2009, reprinted with permission)
A final form of Aboriginal art contributing to these tensions of spectacle was venue art produced through the 2010 Venues Aboriginal Arts Program. Funding from VANOC and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada supported the display of art pieces from Aboriginal artists and artist organizations across Canada at all Olympic venues in Whistler, Richmond, and Vancouver. Some of the pieces are permanent installations, while others were sold to art enthusiasts and collectors to benefit the Aboriginal Youth Legacy Fund. The pieces were photographed for a commemorative book, *O Siyam: Aboriginal Art Inspired by the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Games* (VANOC 2009).

Michael Nicoll Yahgulanaas, a Haida artist who combines formline design with Japanese manga graphics, participated in the venues program by developing a copper bird at UBC’s Thunderbird Arena. He also worked with urban Aboriginal youth on Indigenous art projects. In a news article about the project, he states, “Specifically for Indigenous peoples in the Canadian experience, the production of art remains one of the few areas where culture has not been fully assaulted by foreign interventions” (Moffatt 2009). His comments allude to colonial policies and other pressures to assimilate, and point to the ways that Aboriginal art is a primary form of cultural expression and public recognition. As I have argued in this section, the display of Aboriginal art during the Games did significantly help to bring public attention to Aboriginality – there was no way to avoid it because it was everywhere. However, the accumulative effect of specific and generalized Aboriginal artistic spectacle in many ways spectralized local, place-based Indigenous people and community as well as complex histories of colonialism in Vancouver and Canada.

As Franklin (2010) suggests, Aboriginalia function as “repositories of recognition” – objects that index Aboriginality in ways that are otherwise limited or absent in everyday life and contemporary politics. While recognition of Indigenous sovereignty, colonial injustice, and contemporary inequalities remains uneven and for many communities, elusive, Aboriginal art and material culture is instantly recognizable and familiar, especially on the Northwest Coast. The circulation of Aboriginalia during the 2010 Winter Olympic Games is thus a particularly spectacular example of the possibilities and circumscriptions of Aboriginal visibility and recognition in settler colonial Vancouver. In the next section, I discuss Aboriginal Olympic performances and Cultural Olympiad displays of art and culture to further address the tensions between the politics of Indigeneity and the production of generalized Aboriginal spectacle.
Spectacles and Spectres within the Generalized Spectacle: Aboriginal Olympic Performances

Anthropologists Perry and Kang (2012) argue that Olympic-sanctioned forms of Aboriginal participation, like the development of the Four Host First Nations and performances in the Cultural Olympiad, limited and effectively delegitimized anti-Olympic and anti-colonial political expression and action (see also Boykoff 2011a; Boykoff 2011b). I demonstrate in this section, however, that some Aboriginal performers in fact embedded anti-colonial messages in their Olympic art and performance. I have argued that the accumulative effect of generalized Aboriginality at Vancouver’s Games dulled the potential impact of more politicized recognition of Coast Salish people and effects of colonialism on them and their lands, and the ubiquity of Aboriginal performance certainly contributed to this effect. But, as I will explain, it is also important to call attention to the ways Aboriginal artists navigated and manipulated this spectacle to advance political messages of critique and emphasize Indigenous people’s territories and rights to self-determination.

There were many venues for Aboriginal performance during Vancouver’s Olympics. The Aboriginal Tourism Association of British Columbia staged the Klahowya Village in the Pan Pacific Hotel on Burrard Inlet. There, the organization distributed a flier highlighting all of the Aboriginal performance spaces in Downtown during the Games. The list included the Robson Square plaza, where singing and dance groups performed each day at noon and sometimes in the evenings; the carving shed at the corner of Georgia and Howe Streets, where Susan Point and other artists demonstrated cedar pole carving; the BC Pavilion in the Art Gallery, which featured hours of Aboriginal programming each day; and the Four Host First Nations Aboriginal Pavilion and Artisan Village and Business Showcase. Visitors could also watch Aboriginal performances and demonstrations at the Northern House pavilion and at numerous Cultural Olympiad events across the city, including the Talking Stick Festival.

The Pan Pacific Klahowya Village featured multiple daily performances of Aboriginal singers and dancers, as well as basket-weaving demonstration and a small curated space for Aboriginal artifacts. Stanchions and banners informed visitors about

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91 The Klahowya Village at the Pan Pacific was the prequel to Aboriginal Tourism BC’s Stanley Park installation, also called the Klahowya Village (see Chapter 3).
First Nations economic ventures in the province, including cultural and eco-tourism companies. The hotel’s lobby displayed a large carved canoe and other monumental cedar artworks, and its Café Pacifica and Cascade Lounge sold Aboriginal- and Olympic-themed sushi rolls during the Games, including the “Aboriginal Roll” (teriyaki muskox) and the “Nunavut Roll” (sea urchin and arctic char). While the Aboriginal-themed rolls played up the Games’ Aboriginalized spectacle in a particularly surreal way, performers at the hotel often used their time on stage to educate their audiences about their communities, arts, and traditions. They also regularly acknowledged unceded Coast Salish territories and thanked their local hosts.

Throughout performances at other Aboriginal performance venues, I observed many singers, dance groups, storytellers, and community representatives and public figures also emphasizing land and territory as well as issues of intellectual property, colonial trauma, problematic government policies, and poor conditions on and off reserve for Indigenous peoples. The Cultural Olympiad offered myriad opportunities to present these concerns in a variety of genres. Artists and performers participated in a series of three festivals under the Cultural Olympiad umbrella, held in the first few months of 2008, 2009, and 2010. The Cultural Olympiad sponsored hundreds of theatre, dance, film, media, and music performances and dozens of visual art exhibits and installations.

The 2010 Olympiad featured Nlaka’pamux playwright Kevin Loring’s award-winning play, *Where the Blood Mixes* (2009), which dramatically portrayed the damaging psychological effects of the Sixties Scoop on an Aboriginal family (Fournier and Crey 1997). The 2010 Cultural Olympiad also sponsored the Talking Stick Festival, an annual series of performing arts organized by Full Circle First Nations Performance, as well as the inaugural exhibition in Simon Fraser University’s Audain Gallery in the Woodwards building, *First Nations / Second Nature*. The exhibition interrogated connections between power, nationhood, colonialism, territory, and place. Located on Hastings Street in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside, the gallery displayed in its front window Rebecca Belmore’s striking photograph *sister* beside a bright green lightbox by American artist Sam Durant. Durant’s piece magnified an Indigenous rights protest sign; in large, bold print, it read: “You Are on Indian Land, Show Some Respect.” Loring’s play and the *First Nations / Second Nature* exhibition countered examples of politically

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92 The Sixties Scoop refers to a time of increasing apprehension of Aboriginal children, mostly by white foster parents and adopters.
sanitized expressions of Aboriginality to critique the harmful effects of colonialism and highlight the struggles and resilience of Indigenous peoples.

In addition to Belmore and Durant, other critical artists such as Sonny Assu participated in Cultural Olympiad events and Olympic commissions, and also offered socio-political commentary through their work (Roth 2013; Townsend-Gault 2011). In an internet interview, Assu discussed his ambivalence about participating in the Cultural Olympiad, and described the inspiration and development of his painting, *Authentic Aboriginal* (the longer working title was a tongue-in-cheek critique of the process: *Authentic Aboriginal 2010 Olympic Commission*). Reflecting on the piece, he states, “All in all, it was a commentary on how the Games promoted the stereotype of the Indian, the stereotype of the crafts-person over artist. Parading Canada’s Aboriginal people out, exploiting their culture, yet ignoring all the problems of colonization” (Baxley and Assu 2011). His statement succinctly communicates the tensions between Olympic spectacle and spectrality, and between Aboriginal art, culture, and politics, that I have been illuminating in this chapter.

The Four Host First Nations’ Aboriginal Pavilion was the primary official venue for Aboriginal cultural and political expression during the Games. Its temporary spatial position on Queen Elizabeth Plaza was a uniquely settler colonial juxtaposition: an Aboriginal-run performance space occupying a site in the heart of the city that commemorates a key imperial figure. Averaging 14,000 visitors daily, the Pavilion was a popular stop on the pavilion circuit and often had lines over an hour long (Four Host First Nations 2010). Over its two-week stint at the Queen Elizabeth Plaza, it featured a wide range of performances. Each day began with four back-to-back hour-long shows, hosted by different Aboriginal communities across Canada; one day was reserved for international Indigenous performing artists from Australia, New Zealand, and Scandinavia. In the late afternoon each day, the Pavilion screened the short film *We Are Here*, produced specifically for the Pavilion by the local Four Host First Nations. In the evenings there were music concerts; one night they showed films by Indigenous filmmakers.

If visitors attended multiple shows, as I did, they would have witnessed representations of the great diversity of Indigeneity in Canada. However, most visitors only came for one show and their opinion of the Aboriginal Pavilion largely depended on how well they liked that particular event’s expressions of Aboriginality. Overtly
politicized performances seemed to receive mixed reviews, judging by audience members’ countenance and decisions whether to stay or leave during shows. In my definition of spectacle in Chapter 1, I describe how spectacles are often experienced as cultural, not political, events by spectators. In conversations I had with Olympic spectators in line at the Aboriginal Pavilion (and in comments I overheard), non-Aboriginal visitors expressed their anticipation for watching Aboriginal performers sing, dance, and drum in what they understood as “traditional” styles. Some expected to see a sort of curated space in the Pavilion, with museum-like displays and storyboards. Presentations that emphasized land reclamation or haunting stories of colonialism caught some spectators by surprise. For example, after watching the Wabanaki Showcase show at the Pavilion, I overheard a couple of white women complaining to one another about the documentary about land dispossession the Wabanaki had chosen to show. “I didn’t really need to hear about that,” one of the women said, frustrated with the organizers for using the Pavilion as a political platform. The Wabanaki, however, clearly felt it was an appropriate venue to communicate their historical grievances and contemporary efforts toward redress.

As Cruikshank (1997) and Roy (2002) have explained, some Indigenous performers present political and social commentaries in ways that non-Aboriginal audiences may not perceive as overtly political. Such performances seem to fulfil and conform to expectations of apolitical cultural tradition and decorum even as they advance political critiques. Roy (2002) suggests that non-Aboriginal audiences may miss political messages because of a perceived divide among Westerners between culture and politics that bears little relevance for Indigenous peoples and performance traditions historically or today. At the Pavilion, many “cultural” performances were prefaced with recognition of unceded Coast Salish territories, couched in stories of resilience and revitalization that alluded to assimilation and colonial policies, and loaded with references to treaties and rights. Such performances worked through the medium of spectacle to reveal spectres that continue to haunt their communities and the broader social landscape of a settler colonial city and nation.

Expectations of authenticity and difference also influenced non-Aboriginal audiences’ reception of Aboriginal performances. During many performances at the Aboriginal Pavilion, I observed non-Aboriginal audience members snapping photos and clapping along to powwow dancers and songs sung in Indigenous languages, and leaving
during hip hop, rock, and country music performances. Not all non-Aboriginal audiences left of course; some were delighted and intrigued. After a hip hop performance began, a woman sitting near me caught my eye, smiled, and said, “Well, I wasn’t expecting that!” She stayed for the show. Partway through the Games, Pavilion volunteers began telling visitors that the Pavilion was a performance, not exhibit, space, and letting them know whether that day’s performances were “traditional” or “contemporary.”

Enthusiasm for “traditional” performances conveys non-Aboriginal spectators’ persistent desires to watch Aboriginal people perform their difference in familiarly spectacular ways (Stanley 1998; Povinelli 2002). Many people waited in line, sometimes for over an hour, and shows were always full. Some spectators, however, were unwilling to wait for familiar spectacles, the ordinary extraordinary. One couple, unsure of what to expect, talked with one of the volunteers about that day’s performances. The Aboriginal volunteer explained that a drum group would be performing. The man looked at his partner and asked, “Do you really want to wait in line to see some Indians drumming?” “Not really,” she admitted, laughing, and they left. To encourage people to stay, Pavilion organizers erected a food tent part way through the Games that sold moose stew, and people stood in line with bowls of hot soup. Occasionally, a man wearing Coast Salish regalia walked around, talking with visitors and posing for pictures with them.

The culminating event at the Pavilion was a presentation by the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) on February 27th. As audience members entered the dome, they found a booklet on their seats: a full-text copy of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, which Canada had not yet endorsed. Meanwhile, an AFN film played examining colonial policies and contemporary reconciliation. At the end of the film, AFN National Chief Shawn Atleo (Nuu-chah-nulth) told a story: his grandfather had a vision of trying to turn a heavy page in a book – so heavy that he realized everyone would need to work together to turn the page toward reconciliation. After the film finished, Atleo delivered a speech in person. He acknowledged the local nations and the International Olympic Committee for recognizing Aboriginal people as partners in the Games, and called on audience members and state officials to help turn another page – to support Canada’s signing of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Canada had voted against endorsing the declaration in 2007, along with Australia, New Zealand, and the United States; the rest of the United Nations members voted to endorse it. On March 3rd, days after the AFN’s show, the Government of Canada announced that steps would be
taken toward endorsing the declaration. On November 12, 2010, Canada issued a conditional statement of endorsement.

The AFN’s show is an example of the “productive tensions” that emerged in and through official forms of Aboriginal inclusion in the Olympics (Simon-Kumar and Kingfisher 2011). Aboriginal participation through performance in official Olympic venues was neither wholly transformative, nor wholly a hegemonic reproduction of the status quo. As these examples convey, Cultural Olympiad and Pavilion performers used their performances and presentations to (re)define collective and national identities and to (re)position themselves in relation to the city and state. Others voiced their critiques of historical and contemporary government policies and living conditions for Indigenous peoples in Canada. They demanded recognition as contemporaries (Fabian 1983), as communities with distinct cultural heritage, claims to land, and rights to self-determination. Together, the performances produced a complex spectacle, or set of spectacles, that occasionally included and/or further concealed the spectres of settler colonialism that continue to haunt. I turn next to the Opening Ceremony, the ultimate spectacle of Aboriginal performance during Vancouver’s Games, to further explore these themes.

**The 2010 Olympics Opening Ceremony: The Same Old Song and Dance?**

Produced by Australian David Adkins, the Opening Ceremony of Vancouver’s Olympic Games blended mandated Olympic symbols and rituals with dramatic expressions of Canadian nationhood (Adkins 2010). Drawing on critical scholarship and my research participants’ reactions to the ceremony, I suggest that Coast Salish-specific presence and performance in the ceremony is an example of the infusion of politics and spectres into the spectacle. More abstract representations of Aboriginality (and whiteness) in the ceremony, however, performed a re-ghosting: creating confusion and ambiguity.

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93 To offer a further example of state expressions toward a “new relationship,” at the nearby Artisan Village during the Games, the BC Treaty Commission set up an information booth – an example of the state’s Aboriginal policies shaping the representational spaces of Aboriginal Olympic sites.

94 I watched the Opening Ceremony in the pouring rain in downtown Vancouver at Robson Square, where it was projected onto the side of the Sears building (see Chapter 2). I watched it several times more online and talked with research participants at the library and construction site to develop my analysis presented here.
and perhaps limiting the potential pedagogical impact of place-specific, high-profile, and ceremonial recognition the ceremony otherwise offered.

On the evening of February 12, 2010, thousands of people watched the XXI Winter Olympic Opening Ceremony in person in Vancouver’s BC Place, with thousands more, including me, watching it on live-streaming big screens in public viewing stations like Robson Square and Yaletown’s David Lam Park in the city. Millions more watched the televised screening across the world. The ceremony began with a solemn dedication to Nodar Kumritashvili, a Georgian luger who died earlier that morning in practice. Then, on a large screen, Johnny Lyall snowboarded down a snowy mountain in a dramatic video before bursting into the stadium wearing a prominent Coastal First Nations design on his jacket. After jazz singer Nikki Yanofsky performed the Canadian national anthem in English and French, representatives from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police escorted the Canadian flag into the stadium.

The scene on the floor of the stadium changed: a projection of Squamish artist Jody Broomfield’s red, black, and white FHFN logo covered the floor. Youth and elder representatives from each of the Four Host First Nations walked into the stadium wearing ceremonial regalia. Four giant ice totems – welcome poles – rose from the floor facing the four directions and extended their hydraulic arms in a gesture of welcome. Youth representatives from each nation welcomed the world to their territories and the Games, speaking first in their Indigenous languages and then repeating their statements in English. Raising their hands, they each exclaimed in turn, “Welcome! Bienvenue!” (See Figure 13).
After their traditional welcome, the FHFN representatives pounded on a large drum that emerged from the stadium floor. Announcers introduced “the Aboriginal peoples of Canada,” calling out groups of young dancers by a mix of geographic, ethnic, and national markers: “The First Nations of the Northwest,” “The Métis Nation,” “The Inuit,” “The First Nations of the Prairies,” and “The First Nations of the East.” The dancers filled the arena, group by group, wearing full traditional regalia and dancing in distinct styles from their respective communities (see Figures 14 and 15). After several minutes of energetic dancing, the announcer declared, “On behalf of all Canadians, the Aboriginal peoples of Canada welcome the athletes of the 21st Winter Games!” The Parade of Nations began and each country’s fleet of athletes entered the arena in their official uniforms, flying their nation’s flag, and smiling and waving for the audience and cameras. Around this time, the Four Host First Nations chiefs took their seats in the dignitaries’ box.
Figure 13: Aboriginal dancers performing during Vancouver’s Olympic Opening Ceremony
(Curtis 2010b, reprinted with permission)

Figure 14: Aboriginal dancers performing with Bryan Adams and Nelly Furtado during Vancouver’s Olympic Opening Ceremony
(Hipps 2010, reprinted with permission)
The Indigenous performers continued to dance in the centre of the stadium beneath the icy poles for over an hour as the athletes’ progression circled around them. Meanwhile, non-Indigenous ceremony participants positioned themselves along the perimeter of the arena, dancing in all-white outfits. When Canada was announced, the crowd cheered. The Canadian flagbearer, redhead speedskater Clara Hughes, entered first, wearing a Four Host First Nations toque – a gift from local Native leaders – and a Hudson’s Bay Company scarf: another uniquely settler colonial moment in the Olympic spectacle (see Figure 16). The rest of Team Canada followed. After the Parade ended, pop artists Nelly Furtado and Bryan Adams sang “Bang the Drum” on a raised stage as the Aboriginal performers danced beneath them. The crowd in the stadium banged on cardboard drums bearing the Four Host First Nations insignia. The elected chiefs of the Lil’wat, Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh nations looked down on the scene from the dignitaries’ box, seated beside other heads of state, including Prime Minister Harper and the Governor-General of Canada, Michelle Jean.

![Figure 15: Olympic speedskater and Canadian flagbearer Clara Hughes, Canadian athletes, and Aboriginal dancers in Vancouver’s Olympic Opening Ceremony](Hughes 2012, reprinted with permission)

The dancers cleared the arena as the “Landscape of a Dream” sequence began. A shaman-like figure of unidentified cultural origin entered the centre of the arena, holding
a large staff. The “landscape” changed to an Arctic scene. The figure hit his staff on the
ground, causing ripples of blue light. Constellations of an eagle, bear, wolf, and buffalo
appeared as a 3-D spirit (or Kermode) bear floated up from the floor. The floor of ice
soon transformed into an ocean occupied by orcas composed of formline designs.
Changing from ocean to forest, giant totem poles projected on fabric streamers became
spawning salmon and then Douglas firs, inspired by the artwork of painter Emily Carr.
Actor Donald Sutherland read a quote from Tsleil-Waututh actor Chief Dan George: “The
beauty of the trees, the softness of the air, the fragrance of the grass, speaks to me. And
my heart soars.”

Distinctly Aboriginal individuals and cultural references became gradually less
visible as other dimensions of the ceremony’s narrative developed (Adese 2012; Ellis
2012). In subsequent scenes, performances featured the Alberta Ballet Company, L’Ecole
nationale de cirque, and East Vancouver slam poet Shane Koyczan. There were recorded
and live performances of songs by Canadian musicians Sarah McLachlan, Ashley
MacIsaac, Joni Mitchell, Leonard Cohen, k.d. lang, and Garou, among others. During the
“Peaks of Endeavour” sequence, which showcased the Canadian Rockies and winter
sports, Sutherland quoted George Vancouver: “A lifetime is not enough to explore this
country, a man is too small to feel its size, the poet has not been born to sing its song, nor
the painter to picture it” (Adkins 2010).

The transition from quoting a local Tsleil-Waututh man to quoting a prominent
figure of imperial exploration signalled a distinctive shift in focus away from Aboriginal
people and history and toward a presentation of Canada as an ethnically and racially
homogeneous nation-state (Thobani 2007). For the remainder of the ceremony, whiteness
prevailed (Kalman-Lamb 2012). International Olympic Committee president Jacques
Rogge and Vancouver Olympic Committee chair John Furlong each gave speeches in
French and English, the official languages of both Canada and the Olympics. Eight
Canadians carried the Olympic flag into the arena – Romeo Dallaire, Betty Fox, Anne
Murray, Bobby Orr, Julie Payette, Barbara Ann Scott, Donald Sutherland, and Jacques
Villeneuve – and Rick Hansen delivered the Olympic flame to four final torchbearers:
Catriona LeMay Doan, Steve Nash, Nancy Greene Raine, and Wayne Gretzky. After an
equipment malfunction, they all lit the indoor cauldron. Gretzky, carrying another torch,
exited the stadium and rode in the bed of a truck through Vancouver’s crowded rainy
downtown to light the outdoor cauldron at the Jack Poole Plaza on the waterfront.
Instantaneous reviews of the ceremony’s program were available on Twitter and other social media sites, with conventional news media following with televised broadcasts and printed reviews in newspapers and online. Friends and family shared their reactions, while virtual strangers debated its merits and low points in the comment fields of online newspapers and other online forums. While it is beyond the scope of my analysis to fully attend to the media coverage and public responses to the ceremony, I focus instead on how my research participants experienced this mediated engagement with Olympic Aboriginality. I put their observations in conversation with critical academic analyses published so far about Indigenous representation in the ceremony (Adese 2012; Ellis 2012; Kalman-Lamb 2012). A small selection of excerpts from my interviews conveys the diversity of responses from my participants:

“We like to see them dance around.”

“I didn’t know where these people were coming from. I guess they were coming from the northern tribes? I don’t know who they are.”

“Look [at the ceremony], we can have a situation where cultures can come together.”

“It makes me feel awkward.”

“They’re totally invisible, so… [to] bring that to the front and acknowledge it to the world… They’re a real important, unique part of our society.”

“If I was from another country… I would just think, Okay, well, Canada is a bunch of Indian guys with sweet headdresses dancing around.”

Most participants were critical of the ceremony, though the terms of their critiques varied, as these excerpts demonstrate. Their responses are a reminder that the ceremony produced multiple meanings for public audiences; there is not a singular, dominant message or interpretation. Furthermore, the multiple meanings the ceremony produced are predicated on affects and knowledges accumulated through everyday life in a settler colonial place (see Chapter 7).

Critical analysts Jennifer Adese (2012), Nathan Kalman-Lamb (2012), and Cath Ellis (2012) all articulated their critiques of Aboriginality in Vancouver’s Opening Ceremony through examinations of whiteness, multiculturalism, and the state. None addressed spectators’ impressions, however, so my analysis seeks to combine their critical insights with the critical interpretations of my participants to convey the
complexities and nuances of the Opening Ceremony in relation to settler colonial relations in Vancouver.

In her analysis, Cree-Métis scholar Jennifer Adese (2012) critiques what she views as co-optation of Aboriginal symbols in the service of the Canadian nation. Despite some progressive gains in Canadian Olympic representations of Aboriginality between Montreal’s Games in 1976 and Vancouver’s Games in 2010, she suggests that the participation of Aboriginal people in the 2010 Opening Ceremony worked to affirm, not transform, existing state policies and attitudes toward Indigenous people. The rhetoric and performance of multicultural tolerance in the ceremony, she argues, is not about recognizing Indigenous sovereignty so much as maintaining the position of whiteness at the centre of Canada’s national imaginary while recasting it as urbane and cosmopolitan.

Media theorist Cath Ellis (2012) also mobilized a comparative analysis to reflect on Vancouver’s Opening Ceremony, placing the Vancouver Olympics alongside other settler state Olympic Games to examine how Indigeneity has figured in the ceremonial national narratives. Like Adese, Ellis allows that progressive changes in Canadian Olympic ceremonies reflect shifting attitudes and state policies vis-à-vis Indigenous peoples, yet maintains that settler state ceremonies generally reproduce a “settler-invader possessive logic” that limits recognition of originary Indigenous sovereignty.

In another critique of the ceremony’s racial politics, political analyst Nathan Kalman-Lamb (2012) interrogates the absence of non-white, non-Indigenous Canadians in Vancouver’s Opening Ceremony, arguing that the circumscribed inclusion of Aboriginal people in the ceremony served as a foil for the continued hegemony of white Canadian nationhood and identity (or, as Eva Mackey calls it, Canadian-Canadianness (2002)). This hegemonic whiteness maintains its core position even as the nation is redefined as tolerant of diversity. Adese suggests that this symbolic display is an anemic form of reconciliation that “offers ways for the nation to continue marketing its multicultural national identity” while continuing to “[den[y] the ongoing and real impacts of colonialism on Indigenous people’s lives” (2012:496-497).

95 In Sara Ahmed’s recent book On Being Included (2012), she argues that diversity work and policies in universities are increasingly premised on the discourses of diversity rather than on achieving fundamental change in relation to social justice, recognition, and equity. Adese’s critique of the Games is similar: the act of ceremonial partnership between Aboriginal peoples and the nation during the Games offered an inadequate substitute for long-term reckoning with Canada’s colonial past and present by the Canadian state.
Together, these three scholarly analyses offer important insights and ways of thinking about the colonial dynamics spectacularized and spectralized in the ceremony, opening space to consider what was made visible in the ceremony and what remained invisible, unspoken, or unheard. Research participants responded to both the ceremony’s narrative and silences. A Métis library patron spoke with sarcasm and frustration about the ceremony, “If I were someone coming from another country and I were watching this… I’d think Oh my god, these people are so lucky. They live in such a great country, and they’re treated so well, and they have high respect. Bullshit.” His personal experiences and observations tell another story, a story of racial discrimination, unequal treatment, dispossession, and cultural alienation. These are stories that haunt the celebratory depiction of Aboriginality in the ceremony. Stories like these, familiar to some viewers, render the ceremony’s narrative disingenuous and inaccurate.

Adese’s article opens with an epigraph from Cheyenne and Hodulgee Muscogee writer Suzan Shown Harjo’s critique of the Salt Lake City Opening Ceremony:

After the Indians had their moment in the spotlight, they danced back into history, making way for miners, cowboys and settlers of all races to do-se do together (as if that ever happened in that place and time). Only the Indians were missing from the hoedown in Salt Lake… But these are just symbols, you say? Well, yeah. Mega-bucks worth of symbols. Symbology that reaches millions of people around the world and leaves a lasting impression in the place of reality. (Adese 2012:479)

Harjo’s quote is a reminder that symbols and representations, especially at the scale of spectacle, matter. They inform spectators’ ideas about the people, places, and stories on display. A library staff person, a young white woman, expressed similar scepticism about Vancouver’s ceremony, stating, “We’re willing to sort of make it all flowery during the Olympics and when it comes down to really valuing them…” She trailed off. Her concern reveals her knowledge of realities and spectral processes the spectacle failed to address, such as the missing and murdered women in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside (see Chapter 3). “Of course I respect [that the Games are] very tourist-oriented [but] they just want to package it as some idyllic picturation.” She alluded to appropriation of Aboriginal art – “just taking the symbols” – and admitted, “It makes me feel awkward.” The celebratory qualities of Olympic Aboriginality for these participants glossed over issues that continue to haunt the city and nation.
Ellis (2012) notes that haunting truths of injustice and dispossession are often painful and difficult to acknowledge openly in the celebratory national narratives that characterize Olympic opening ceremonies. Yet, she suggests, settler state national narratives have been increasingly adjusted to accommodate the persistent and increasingly politicized presence of Indigenous populations that disallows any straightforward story of national settlement. Indigenous peoples return again and again to remind their colonizers that they have not been successfully disappeared. While public spectacles of the nation like Olympic opening ceremonies consistently minimize or conceal histories of violence in favour of representations of tolerance and harmony, it is increasingly common and expected that Indigenous peoples will play prominent roles in representations of national stories, even if their visibility is heavily circumscribed. “By the time of the Sydney [2000 Summer Olympics] ceremony,” she explains, “it had become unthinkable not to include some kind of acknowledgement of Indigenous sovereignty” (118). She suggests that recent enactments of Indigenous sovereignty during Salt Lake City’s and Vancouver’s Olympics are the result of Indigenous activism and expresses careful and measured optimism about the future.66

Adese (2012), Kalman-Lamb (2012), and some research participants are more cynical, suggesting that Indigenous performance and expressions of sovereignty are circumscribed by the state’s expectations of authenticity and superficial desire to “look good” on the international stage. “We like to see them dance around,” a white library patron observed. Like Adese, he viewed the Opening Ceremony as a reflection of the Canadian state’s colonial policies and hegemonic control, rather than an opportunity to recognize Indigeneity in a substantive and genuine way. “They’re only visible through the lens of what the government says,” he argued. From his perspective, Olympic Aboriginality signifies “an inherent contradiction” between the occasional hypervisibility of Aboriginal people and his own lack of knowledge about them, their cultures, and their histories.

In his day-to-day life in the city, he thinks Aboriginal people are largely “culturally invisible,” which enables a pervasive cultural and political ignorance. The Opening Ceremony concealed this reality. “I mean, here I am – a British Columbian who was raised in the BC education system to be ignorant, essentially, about Natives,” he

66 Failing to acknowledge this can work to further withhold agency from Indigenous participants, even when the intention is to point out their structural, settler colonial constraints.
reflected, “but [if] there’s a cultural presentation, we like to see them dance around, maybe for the Olympics or an event like that, so we [can] pretend that Native cultures are still alive. So that we can pretend we’re a bicultural society. But we’re not.” His analysis is reminiscent of anthropologist Elizabeth Povinelli’s critique of Australian state discourses of recognition in her book *The Cunning of Recognition* (2002). Povinelli argues that Indigenous alterity is managed and conditioned to serve national interests. She states, “indigenous subjects are called upon to perform an authentic difference in exchange for the good feelings of the nation and the reparative legislation of the state” (2002:6). National spectacles, such as Olympic opening ceremonies, serve as prime opportunities to express these political sentiments.

Adese (2012) interrogates the inclusion of Indigenous people “dancing around” in ceremonial regalia during the Opening Ceremony, critiquing their performance of “authentic difference.” Her discussion helps to explain why some of my research participants emphasized the ceremony’s Aboriginal elements as cultural and historical rather than as contemporary and political representations of Indigeneity in Canada, another indicator that often “time is out of joint” in spectacles of Aboriginality (Derrida 1994). Adese explains that, prior to the Games, Aboriginal dancers who performed in the Opening Ceremony applied to participate in an Indigenous Youth Gathering scheduled to run concurrently with the Olympics. Successful applicants found out the specifics of their participation in the ceremony at the Gathering in Squamish, only a week before the ceremony. The performers’ application form requested that applicants submit colour photographs of themselves wearing traditional clothing. The application also “encourage[d] youth to ‘where applicable,’ incorporate accessories such as roaches/masks, hair ornaments, face or body paint, earrings/pendants, arm or leg bracelets or bands, skins/furs/bark, footwear, and instruments or drums and rattles,” and discouraged “non-traditional” clothing in the application photos (2012: 479-480).

While Adese acknowledges participants’ myriad and complex reasons for accepting these conditions and participating in the Games, she remains concerned about the circumscription of Indigenous cultural expressions Games organizers enacted. She suggests that Games discourses replaced sincere attention to the specificities and modernity of distinct nations with a “language that posited First Nations as a singular entity and as a wilful partner in the establishment of the nation… [a] narrative that
derides histories of colonial oppression and genocidal nation building [in the performance of] an ‘Aboriginalized’ Canadian national identity” (495, emphasis in original).

Adese further notes that Indigenous recognition in the ceremony, including the seating of the Four Host First Nations chiefs as heads of state, was temporary and event-specific. She states, “we should be wary of believing that ceremonial partnership marks more than a business transaction” (496). She suggests that this “business transaction” and the concomitant “Aboriginalization” of Canada’s national narrative is driven by a desire to alleviate settler anxieties about the legitimacy of the Canadian nation-state (see also Mackey 2002; Wolfe 1999). A library patron agrees: “I don’t know if you remember,” she said, “[First Nations] were actually in the ceremony, welcoming people on behalf of the band… They wouldn’t have done it if there was no Olympics.” Her interpretation and reminder – “I don’t know if you remember” – conveys a reading of Olympic Aboriginal recognition as ephemeral and event-specific, in contrast to long-lasting engagement in substantive recognition, reckoning, and reconciliation. She also suggested that inclusion of Aboriginal people in the ceremony was a pre-emptive move to placate Native people and avoid protest. These anxieties relate to increasing recognition of colonial spectres: the harm caused by dispossession and assimilationist policies and ongoing disputes over the legality of settlement. In British Columbia especially, Indigenous people’s continued claims to land and expressions of sovereignty create uneasiness regarding present conditions of settlement and uncertainty around future development on unceded territories (Blackburn 2007; Wood and Rossiter 2011).

Interpretations of Aboriginal performance in the Opening Ceremony reveal not only the holographic quality of Indigenous visibility and spectres in Vancouver – now you see it, now you don’t – but also the importance of perspective and prior knowledge involved in forming those interpretations – how you see it, how you don’t. Some participants were keen to celebrate what they viewed as a progressive move that atoned for a shameful past. One library patron, a young white man, understood this event-specific form of recognition as an aspirational step toward better relations in the future. He compared Aboriginal inclusion in the Games to the election of President Barack Obama in the United States. Just as President Obama’s election did not solve or absolve racial tensions in the United States, neither did the Four Host First Nations partnership solve or absolve racial and colonial tensions in Canada. He nonetheless felt that both events signal shifts in attitude and open new doors to different ways of being together.
“Look, we can… have a situation where cultures can come together,” he said, talking about both examples. “Here’s the benchmark, here’s the starting point. Look, we’ve got some involvement, let’s take that next step – maybe [toward] more cooperation in the future.” For him, the high-profile inclusion and celebration of Aboriginality in the ceremony’s national story is a model for the future, not a mirror of contemporary relations (Handelman 1990). A Japanese-Canadian participant also appreciated the visibility of Aboriginal people in the ceremony, expressing an “it’s about time!” attitude. She felt it was important to feature Indigenous people prominently, especially because their ethnic heritage is indigenous to Canada, unlike other groups, like the Chinese. Aboriginalizing the ceremony was appropriate, she said, because “they’re totally invisible [otherwise]… you [need to] bring that to the front and acknowledge it to the world. They’re a real important, unique part of our society.” These statements convey hope for an optimistic future of harmonious recognition, a departure from a spectral past.

For some, this future stretches the limits of tolerance and goes too far. Two construction workers, for example, were unhappy with what they viewed as an embellishment of the centrality of Aboriginal people in contemporary society. “They tried to say it was all Native,” one said, “It was too high. They tried to say that that’s all that Canada was. And it’s not… It’s a really small part of Canada these days.” He preferred representations of Canada offered in Molson Canadian’s “Made in Canada” Olympic advertisements, which featured images of the rugged and expansive Canadian wilderness, outdoors adventure, and hockey. The other man also felt the emphasis on Aboriginal seemed skewed: “Canada’s way more than Native tribes. And it kinda upset me that they were just focusing on that and that’s it.” Both acknowledged that Aboriginal people may have been historically important in the development of Canada. Their emphasis on the past, however, communicates their disconnection with Aboriginal people in the present, an example of settler colonial desires to enconce Native people in the over-and-done-with past despite revenant Indigenous efforts to be recognized in the present. “In the past, I’m sure it was a huge part of Canada,” one of the men said, “but I mean, that was over a hundred years ago.” The other conceded, “I’m not saying they should avoid the Native side altogether, ‘cause that’s our background.”

One of the men added, somewhat sarcastically, “I realised [after watching the ceremony] that there was a bigger… Native background… here than I thought. Just with all those different tribes kinda opening up, doing their thing – when they stood up that
kinda statue thing and there were all those different tribes and through the whole speech thing. And I didn’t know where these people were coming from. I guess they were coming from the northern tribes?” Not only did he dislocate the Four Host First Nations from the temporal present, but he spatially dislocated them as well, failing or refusing to recognize their local Indigeneity. I explained that the people who spoke at the beginning, raising their arms in welcome, were from local nations. “Like around Vancouver?” he asked. I nodded. “Okay, see, I didn’t even know that. I couldn’t tell you any of the groups anywhere – what they were called.” The Four Host First Nations, not only in the ceremony but in other Olympic contexts, expended significant efforts to be seen, heard, and recognized as distinct nations and host partners. For these construction workers and many other viewers, however, expressions of place-based Indigeneity during the ceremony were dissonant in a context where generalized Aboriginality is common but indigenous Indigeneity is emptied from familiar landscapes and present time.

A library staff person suggested that the recognition and emplacement of the local Four Host First Nations was diluted by the ceremony’s presentation of Aboriginal dancers from across Canada. Again, generalized spectacular Aboriginality spectralized localized Indigeneity even as it appeared in full view. The patron recalled when the announcer called out groups of dancers: “The Aboriginal peoples of Canada: The First Nations of the Northwest! The Métis Nation! The Inuit! The First Nations of the Prairies! And the First Nations of the East!” “[It] sort of lump[ed] everybody together,” she said, “into these [general geographic] categories – here you go! And that’s all… that’s all you know.” All you know is generalized spectacle: “These people are from here, and these people are from there, and that’s it. You know, they’re all dancing.” Although each of these dancers wore ceremonial regalia specific to their community and danced in “traditional” styles, the effect of them all dancing together distracted from their distinctions and (re)presents them as a generalized Aboriginal Other.

Interestingly, this “lumping-together” of distinct Indigenous nations is a more accurate reflection of Canadian policy and practice than the official welcome and ceremonial recognition of the local First Nations. Through the Indian Act and other policies, Canada has consistently tried to deal with Indigenous groups through homogenizing laws rather than honouring nation-to-nation relationships. This has produced contemporary overlaps between (and confusions about) racialized Aboriginal identities and specific, ethno-national Indigenous identities and polities. When interpreted
against this history, then, the Aboriginal dance performance in the ceremony thus
presented a familiar spectacle of generalized, historicized, and ceremonial Aboriginality,
and undermined an opportunity to substantively recognize local sovereign nations.

A conversation between two construction workers further illuminates several of
these tensions. Months after the Olympics ended, I sat with Noah and Sam at a pizza shop
after work. They had both watched the Opening Ceremony on television.

“I didn’t care for it,” Noah said.

Sam and I waited for him to continue.

Noah hesitated, then asked, “Okay, the opening ceremonies – were they trying to
present what Canada is? I’m just saying – me, if I was from another country – if I was
wherever and watched that, I would just think, Okay, well, Canada is a bunch of Indian
guys with sweet headdresses dancing around… I can’t help but think, I’m not a Native
Indian! To me, [they’re] saying Canada is all these Native people.”

For Noah, the ceremony did not resonate with his impressions of Canada. He
preferred the Closing Ceremony, which depicted familiar symbols like the Royal
Canadian Mounted Police, beavers, and the maple leaf and virtually no references to
Aboriginal people at all. He remembered the Aboriginal dimensions of the Opening
Ceremony as the most visible part of the event, and evaluated their part in the
performance as overdone. His characterization of the ceremony as “a bunch of Indian
guys with sweet headdresses dancing around” suggests that he, like some participants
quoted above, failed to distinguish between different Indigenous performers, lumping
them together as a homogenous group of stereotypically spectacular Aboriginal Others.

Sam interjected, “But in a country as diverse as Canada? I think you have to focus
on history. And that is Canada’s history. It may not have been the history of your
ancestors, but it was Canadian history. That’s how I kind of perceive it.” Again,
Aboriginality is historicized, over-and-done-with and situated in the past. Kalman-Lamb
suggests that the ceremony interpretations of Indigeneity as historically articulated (or
rendered essentially timeless) in the sequencing of the ceremony’s narrative, with the
ceremony beginning with a celebration of colourful Aboriginal culture and ending with a
nearly all-white cast of Canadian celebrities. Sam emphasizes Aboriginality as the history

97 See Mackey (2002), Francis (1992), and Francis (2011) for analyses of these national symbols in the
context of Canadian colonialism and nationalism.
of a contemporary, diverse Canada. He is comfortable with the ceremony’s representation of this national truth and does not elaborate on its whiteness.

After a few moments of talking about Olympic sports and the role of the opening ceremony, Noah interjected to reframe his earlier disparaging comments. “I guess the point of what I just said – we didn’t really learn a lot about… say, history, in high school, elementary school, basically started at settlement. How Canada [became a country].” His admission reflects how prior knowledge of Indigeneity, or its absence, can influence interpretation. “For me,” he said, “I don’t really know much about it. For me, the totem pole is not the greatest thing I’ve ever seen in the world. Indian art? Don’t get it. Don’t think it’s attractive. I wouldn’t put it up in my house. The whole – when people die they become an animal – I don’t get it… It’s not my thing.” He collapses a diversity of Indigenous art forms and spirituality into descriptions of totem poles and animism, stereotypical expressions of generalized Aboriginality. For Noah, the Opening Ceremony featured a bewildering array of generic Native iconography and performance – totem poles, headdresses, dancing around – that resonated with his personal experience only insofar that it reinforced familiarly spectacular Aboriginality – what he only/already knew about Indigenous peoples.

I asked Noah and Sam if they remembered the Four Host First Nations welcome at the start of the ceremony. “They had people come from the four groups and raise their hands in welcome? Did you see that part?”

“Uh, I vaguely remember it,” Noah said, “But again, I was like, Okay, who are these people?” Their presentation was baffling for him, primarily because place-based Indigeneity is not part of his spatio-temporal imaginary of Aboriginality, Vancouver, or Canada.

“See I don’t have any problem with that,” Sam said. “And that’s not because that’s somewhat my background [Sam has Métis heritage on his mother’s side]. Like the First Nation aspect of the Opening Ceremony was obviously BC First Nation. Various BC Aboriginals…. I remember the dignitaries – Squamish, Cowichan – I wouldn’t remember any of the smaller ones because they’re [not] in my head.”

They are not in his head because of invisibilizing processes I have been detailing in this dissertation so far. They are simultaneously familiar and unfamiliar, uncanny.

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98 The Cowichan people live on Vancouver Island and were not part of the Four Host First Nations.
He paused and looked at Noah. “This used to be their land! This is where everything began for their history!”

“I guess so,” Noah replied.

“And it’s so far gone now,” Sam continued, further emphasizing the temporally circumscribed importance of Indigenous people in the history of Canada and the Lower Mainland. “I mean, everything’s so developed. It’s been such a long time… If you owned a plot of land for 400 years and somebody rolled in and said, ‘You know what? This is the way it’s going to be now,’ you’re going to want to hold on to what’s yours. Even if it’s just through culture… because the Olympics were held here, that’s a part of this area – especially in the Lower Mainland – that’s the history here. That’s what it used to be… before the boom, before industry. I mean, before everything. I can totally understand why they would want to make light of that [sic]. Have the people who actually have ancestors who lived in that way celebrated. Like I have no problem with that.”

Noah listened, but did not reply.

Sam was more sympathetic than Noah to the Opening Ceremony’s representations of Canada and Indigeneity, and recognized its place-specific history, including colonial dispossession, which he did not dwell on. His positioning of the Coast Salish component as historical, however, leaves little room to accommodate contemporary presence and political efforts toward recognition and redress. Watching the Opening Ceremony, Sam saw cultural, historicized spectacle; an apolitical performance and benign homage to the region’s past – “that’s the history here, that’s what it used to be.” He had “no problem with that” in part because Indigeneity was comfortably situated in the past when/where it could not haunt the present and future.

Interestingly, none of my research participants, including Sam and Noah, mentioned No Olympics on Stolen Native Land in their reflections on Aboriginal representation during the Games and the Opening Ceremony. The official spectacle of generalized Aboriginality partially eclipsed official and resistant expressions of place-based Indigeneity. But, as my analysis demonstrates, Coast Salish emplacement and recognition was altogether missing or misappropriated. It was spectacularly present and spectralized at the same time: now you see it, now you don’t. Audiences interpreted Aboriginal performance in the Opening Ceremony by comparing and contrasting the spectacle to their everyday lives and sense of place and history, by talking with one another about different impressions, and by mapping accumulated ideas and knowledges
onto the event. How you see it, how you don’t depended on prior knowledge and dispositions. The spectacle thus did not produce a singular meaning or effect. These varied impressions of the ceremony reflect persistent and emergent tensions related to the contemporary place of Indigeneity in Vancouver and Canada, spatially and temporally, and the powerful influence of spectacular, generalized Aboriginality on expression and reception.

Conclusion

In Darren Godwell’s critique of Olympic Aboriginal representation in Sydney, he contends that power relations are eclipsed by spectacle. Assumptions about Aboriginal people, he suggests, are “left unchallenged by simplistic characterizations of artistic expression [packaged and sold to Olympic audiences] and marginalization of political demands” (2000:256; see also Waitt 1999). I have argued in this chapter that power relations and settler colonial political tensions are in fact bound up in the production, presentation, and reception of spectacular Olympic Aboriginality. Olympic Aboriginality is more complex than an analysis focused only on harm, appropriation, or hegemony can communicate (Ellis 2012). Politics around Indigenous recognition and sovereignty shaped both official relationships with local First Nations as well as vocal critiques of their participation. However, the accumulative effect of generalized Aboriginality in the Games functioned to distract spectators from expressions of place-based Indigeneity and local Indigenous lands and sovereignty.

While Vancouver’s Olympics continued a long-established tradition of relying on Aboriginal people and symbols to represent place and nation, the involvement of local Aboriginal people – in official partnerships and through anti-Olympics resistance – also reflects tensions between spectacular Aboriginality and spectralized Indigeneity. Through examination of the dialectics between spectacle and spectrality, I have demonstrated how the Olympics crystallized and added new dimensionality to challenging political issues around Indigenous land, marginalization, appropriation, and visibility. Olympic Aboriginality was embedded in and revealed settler colonial dynamics: challenges over Aboriginal authority and recognition that stem from the implementation of colonial policies in Indigenous communities, contemporary responses to historical land dispossession, the possibilities and limits of state recognition of Indigenous sovereignty,
and the management of Aboriginal identities and cultural expression. The spectacle simultaneously emplaced and displaced local Coast Salish Indigeneity and constructed Aboriginalized narratives of the city and nation. High-profile forms of Aboriginal recognition and inclusion can both respond to and reproduce processes of erasure, dispossession, and marginalization. Tensions and debates over these matters signify the ever-emergent effects of the colonial project; they are the spectres that haunt both the Games and the city.

My analysis in this chapter has focused specifically on how Olympic spectacles of Aboriginality were animated by the spectres of Indigenous politics over land and the unfinished business of colonialism. It is important to note, however, that neither the spectacle of place-based Indigeneity nor generalized Aboriginality significantly addressed Aboriginal marginality in the city. In geographer Gordon Waitt’s (1999) analysis of the Sydney Olympic Games, he contrasts the “glossy image of spectacle” with the experiences of the city’s disadvantaged populations. Citing Henri Lefebvre, he makes visible what is excluded in Olympic representations of space, as a city is “remade to fit a promotional Olympic image” (1059). “Sydney as a site of Olympic ‘spectacle’,” he explains, “diverts attention from the economic malaise and conflict and inequalities within the city, and projects an image of successful city amenities and services, and a beautiful natural environment, and combines with de Coubertin’s vision of togetherness, friendship, safety, pleasure, and social harmony” (1064). In Vancouver too, the Olympics and Olympic Aboriginality overshadowed attention to the disproportionate inequalities that urban Aboriginal people in the city experience.99 In my next chapter, I describe how the BladeRunners program works to address these structural inequalities and, in the process, shifts focus from Indigeneity and spectacular Aboriginality to Aboriginal marginality.

99 The Olympics Resistance Network tried to call attention to homelessness in the Downtown Eastside, but even their message of No Olympics on Stolen Native Land did not fully communicate how colonial harm corresponds with contemporary inequality and systemic racism.
Chapter 5: Inclusion at Work

Introduction

In this chapter and Chapter 6, I turn my attention from the ultimate spectacle of Aboriginality to everyday inclusion initiatives and the spectres of colonialism that animate them. This chapter focuses on BladeRunners and Chapter 6 on the library. In both chapters I highlight spectral settler colonial tensions that are simultaneously made visible and invisible through inclusionary discourses and practices in each site. These are not tensions that can or even should be resolved necessarily; rather, these tensions convey dissonances that arise in the recognition of difference and amelioration of inequalities. Instead of focusing on reconciling these tensions, I suggest that they must first be acknowledged and brought into view. It is important to note that the critiques I present are not intended to denigrate the hard work of inclusion workers at BladeRunners and the library. Without exception, staff at both sites are diligent, thoughtful individuals who care deeply about the people and communities they support by providing their important services. My critiques are instead aimed at the ways settler colonial processes continue to exert a (sometimes spectral) force on everyday relations and efforts to “include” Aboriginal Others.

I highlight three spectral tensions within the BladeRunners program. In the first section, I describe how the program simultaneously acknowledges structural conditions that adversely affect their participants, the majority of whom are Aboriginal, while also insisting that BladeRunners is not an Aboriginal program, thereby spectralizing the unique effects of colonial conditions on Aboriginal BladeRunners’ lives today. I provide a brief history of Aboriginal labour exclusion, drawing on the work of historian John Sutton Lutz (2008), to situate the program in its broader socio-historical, socio-political context and to better understand how this context informs the program’s aims and its denial of an “Aboriginal program” label.

In the second section, I examine the program’s discursive emphasis on individual choice and change in a context of acknowledged structural “barriers to employment.” I suggest that BladeRunners aims to transform rugged individuals – marginalized, street-involved, mostly Aboriginal youth – into “rugged individuals” responsible for their own fate. This neoliberal discursive strategy spectralizes the support necessary to mediate
BladeRunners’ marginal circumstances (“all the other bullshit”) in the drive toward individuation, even though that support is in fact the cornerstone of the program.

As BladeRunners are transformed from rugged individuals into “rugged individuals,” they are placed on construction sites, where they are expected to become “just one of the guys” – an undifferentiated part of their workforce. However, the program’s commitment to ongoing support – encapsulated in the program mantra “Once a BladeRunner, always a BladeRunner” – demonstrates that their experiences with marginality may continue to haunt them as they try to make work work. I suggest in the third section that the tension between discourses like “Once a BladeRunner, always a BladeRunner” and “just one of the guys” reflects broader settler colonial tensions between revenant forms of Aboriginal marginality and goals of integration. While the Olympics spectacle conveyed tensions between place-based Indigeneity and generalized Aboriginality, the BladeRunners program reveals persistent spectral tensions between Aboriginal alterities and structural inequalities in settler colonial Vancouver.

Laying the Foundation

BladeRunners staff repeatedly emphasized how important it is to recognize that an individual’s success on a work site is dependent on how he manages “all the other bullshit” that he experiences outside the workplace. “All the other bullshit” discursively signifies life conditions related to marginalization that create structural “barriers to employment”: homelessness, substance misuse, physical and emotional health problems, low literary and numeracy skills, single parenthood, and criminal records. Precarious social conditions like these can impinge on an individual’s ability to find and maintain a steady job.

According to ACCESS’s 2012 Annual Report, 144 BladeRunners went through the program in 2012. Nineteen percent of participants were homeless at the start of their program, 48% were experiencing substance misuse, 16% had physical health problems, 42% had emotional health problems, 30% had difficulty with literacy and numeracy, 20% were single parents, and 25% had a criminal record. Also, of the 144 individuals, 16 were white (all male), 8 were visible minorities (6 males, 2 females), and 120 were Aboriginal (76 male, 44 female). At 83% the ratio of Aboriginal participants that year was slightly
lower the program’s 90% average, but nonetheless demonstrated the consistently high rate of Aboriginal participation in the ACCESS BladeRunners program.

In my interview with the BladeRunners Lower Mainland director, Mitch, he demonstrated a sophisticated understanding of the linkages between an individual’s social location and his or her life chances and opportunities. Like other staff, he cited the structural barriers participants would face if they tried to enter the construction workforce without BladeRunners support. However, when I asked Mitch and other BladeRunners staff to comment on links between marginalization and the program’s high Aboriginal participation rate, they were hesitant to make an explicit or direct connection. Mitch said he had studied how Aboriginal people had been gradually excluded from the provincial economy. He suggested that the stereotype of the “lazy Indian” had been a colonial strategy to demonize Aboriginal people to legitimate colonial dispossession. He could see how BladeRunners might play a role in reintroducing Aboriginal people into the labour force. Yet, when I asked him if the program actively attempts to address the harmful effects of racism and colonization, he said he would “debate me on that.” BladeRunners, he insisted, “isn’t an Aboriginal program… it’s been adopted by Aboriginal people.” Furthermore, he and other staff explained, the Aboriginal profile of the ACCESS BladeRunners program reflects the demographics of the Downtown Eastside, which incidentally has a high population of Aboriginal people (see Chapter 3).

In this section, I situate BladeRunners in the broader socio-historical context of Aboriginal labour exclusion and racism that Mitch mentioned. I suggest that this history directly contributes to marginal life conditions BladeRunners face today. I also situate Mitch’s denial that BladeRunners is an Aboriginal program in this context. As I explain later in the section, Mitch differentiates BladeRunners from programs designed to “help” Aboriginal people. His denial that BladeRunners is an Aboriginal program thus reflects a desire to distance the program from paternalistic colonial policies. I argue that the program and this denial/desire simultaneously acknowledges and disregards socio-historical, socio-political, and structural conditions of Aboriginal marginalization that shape the majority of BladeRunners’ lives. This history is hauntingly present, implicitly

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100 Since the BladeRunners program was founded in 1994, it has expanded and diversified. BladeRunners programs are now in operation in other parts of the Lower Mainland and the province, including Vancouver Island, and provide training in other industries than construction alone. ACCESS BladeRunners refers to the original Downtown Eastside office. While some recent ACCESS BladeRunners cohorts have been trained in building maintenance, tourism, and gas industries, the Downtown Eastside office maintains its primary focus on the construction trades.
understood but not directly acknowledged: now you see it, now you don’t. This reflects a spectral tension around how best to intervene in structural processes that disproportionately affect Aboriginal people: by dismantling structural barriers and/or providing tools and support to confront and negotiate those barriers.

To provide historical context, I rely on the work of historian John Sutton Lutz, whose book *Makúk* (2008) examines participation and perception of Aboriginal people in wage work in British Columbia. While other analysts have contributed important research on the intersections between Aboriginal workers and the province’s resource extraction industry (cf. Knight 1996; Menzies and Butler 2008; Parnaby 2006), I find Lutz’s treatment of these issues to be most relevant for analysing the historical factors that contribute to contemporary employment programs like BladeRunners.

I am especially interested in how Aboriginal labour and labourers have been included, excluded, and restricted over time, which Lutz succinctly addresses, and how factors like these influence the range of choices available to potential BladeRunners participants. I also appreciate Lutz’s attention to Indigenous people’s expressions of agency when faced with increasingly constrained choices and, like him, do not want to imply that Aboriginal people are helpless victims of structural circumstance. Rather, Lutz’s history demonstrates how histories of capitalism and colonialism in the province, combined with Indigenous economies, have shaped Aboriginal people’s participation in wage work over time.

In *Makúk* (2008), Lutz describes how Aboriginal and Euro-Canadians’ distinct histories merged at and after contact to create a dialogic history – albeit with power asymmetries. Through a comparison between Tsilhgot’in and Lekwungen peoples, and analysis of colonial policies and socio-economic conditions, he carefully builds his argument that Aboriginal people in British Columbia have developed a “moditional” economy – both modern and traditional and distinct in relation to capitalist modes of production. “Aboriginal British Columbians,” he explains, now “have an economy that combines wage labour, capitalist investment, prestige, subsistence, and welfare” (281).

Lutz explains that early settlers’ racialized constructions of “Indians” produced a sense of incommensurability between Aboriginal people and work. He demonstrates how

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101 It is also important to note that while Aboriginal unemployment rates are consistently higher than non-Aboriginal unemployment rates, the majority of Aboriginal people do participate in wage work in Vancouver and British Columbia, as Todd (2000) makes clear.
this process of “lazifying” became normalized, tracing the emergence of this characterization to European conceptions of race in the era of exploration, including the Linnaean classification of different racial groups and attributes. Europeans, from Captain Cook and other explorers to fur traders and eventual settlers, took these classifications and “common-sense” understandings with them in their journeys. According to Lutz, “early visitors to the Northwest Coast were unanimous in their condemnation of Indians as indolent and lazy… Lazy, it seems, was part of the imperial definition of the ‘other,’ and Aboriginal peoples were certainly other” (33). He uses the example of the “lazy Indian” to explore how race and difference were constructed through settler colonial relations, and the ideological and material effects of this process. He states, “defining race is about making boundaries, drawing lines, erecting fences, and then declaring what is on the other side of the fence to be ‘beyond the pale.’ Racial boundaries, like fences, need to be maintained, and so ideas of race and racial characteristics are constantly being updated, reinforced, and redefined” (36).

Eurocentric notions of industriousness became a boundary-making device. Lutz reveals the fallibility of the “lazy Indian” construction and suggests that it created a teleological justification for dispossession that relied on Lockean principles of “improving the land through agriculture and other European-defined forms of labour” (34; see also Mawani 2004; Blomley 2004). Furthermore, Aboriginal people were in fact deeply involved in many forms of “work” in their own economies, from seasonal hunting, fishing, and gathering to spiritual and social practices imbricated with resource collection and distribution.

In the early years after capitalist work began in British Columbia, Aboriginal people worked in skilled jobs and continued to support a potlatch and subsistence economy. Their options were largely reduced to low-wage seasonal employment in the twentieth century, however. A number of factors contributed to this shift: the government banned the potlatch, limiting Aboriginal people’s “cultural reasons for working” in wage work; residential schools offered training primarily for low-skill jobs; Aboriginal people were deemed wards of the state at the same time as the welfare state expanded; land dispossession limited access to subsistence work; and primary industries for Aboriginal workers, from canneries to logging operations to hop fields, were most prone to obsolescence due to mechanization (Lutz 2008:285–286). As Lutz explains, “Aboriginal people in Canada found themselves squeezed between the racist notion that they were a
public charge [and pervasive stereotypes that they were lazy], declining employment opportunities, and a shrinking subsistence economy” (288).

Lutz identifies the year 1970 as a turning point for Aboriginal peoples. Galvanized by frustration with the White Paper and assimilationist policies (see Chapter 6), and building on the momentum of the civil rights movement, they participated in political resistance and spoke out against injustice and inequality. The potlatch ban had been lifted (1951), laws against discriminatory hiring practices were passed, many residential schools closed (the last closed in 1996), and landmark court cases began making preliminary steps to support First Nations’ efforts toward sovereignty and recognition of territorial rights. Meanwhile, Aboriginal people were increasingly moving to cities in search of further employment and education opportunities, as Evelyn Peters (2002; Peters and Anderson 2013) and Roy Todd (2000) have demonstrated. As a result of these cumulative changes, Aboriginal people are increasingly finding employment in their band offices and other government sectors, in museums and cultural centres in their communities, and – though Lutz does not specify this – through programs aiming to support and train Aboriginal workers to enter a diverse range of workforces.

The development of employment programs like BladeRunners in recent years, I suggest, reflects the fact that, despite many progressive gains, Aboriginal people continue to be un- and underemployed at higher rates than other Canadians. Furthermore, for some, their experiences with poverty, welfare, racism, and other legacies and structures of the settler colonial project, as outlined by Lutz, continue to exacerbate other challenges in finding work. Those who go to BladeRunners for support are often among the most vulnerable, with life conditions that include addiction, homelessness, crime, and other issues related to poverty and marginalization. As sociologist Marie-Anik Gagne (1998) and other scholars have explained, colonialism-generated traumas are a spectral force that continue to affect Aboriginal individuals, families, and communities today in diverse and uneven ways. Criminologist Carol LaPrairie (1997), for example, explains the over-

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103 Other highly vulnerable populations include Aboriginal sex workers. Aboriginal women experience high rates of violence across Canada, in addition to other precarious conditions. Although more Aboriginal women are enrolling in BladeRunners, there are still more men than women – both in the program, and certainly in the construction industry more generally. While it is beyond the scope of my analysis to fully attend to the intersection of racial and gender inequalities, it is important to note that this intersection
representation of Aboriginal people in Canada’s criminal justice system by detailing the effects of colonization, the establishment of reserve communities, and unequal distribution of resources among Aboriginal youth and adults. She suggests that when the most marginalized within already-marginalized Aboriginal communities leave reserves, “they have few tools for survival or for gaining status or integration into mainstream society. In the urban setting, the lack of education, employment skills, coupled with substance abuse problems and histories of family violence and dysfunction, lead to negative peer associations and the adoption of antisocial and pro-criminal attitudes” (50).

LaPrairie’s depiction closely matches the experiences of many of the BladeRunners I met at the Downtown Eastside office. The BladeRunners program attempts to mitigate these challenging circumstances through their flexible system of training, placement, and ongoing support. BladeRunners receive support to address and change their living conditions, and coordinators act as buffers between the BladeRunners and their construction sites, mediating problems and dealing with “all the other bullshit,” as I discuss in more detail in the next section. The colonial foundations of this work, however, are rarely acknowledged. While BladeRunners recognizes the distinct challenges faced by Aboriginal youth, it does not directly address or discuss how they are shaped by historical and ongoing settler colonial processes. Furthermore, as already discussed (see Chapter 2), BladeRunners staff explain that the program developed in response to particular circumstances in the Downtown Eastside in the 1990s. Its focus on street-involved youth and its high number of Aboriginal participants is explained as a matter of geography related to this pivotal moment. Because Aboriginal people are over-represented in the neighbourhood, the logic goes that the program is going to have more Aboriginal participants. The program is also promoted through word-of-mouth referrals in the urban Aboriginal community, reinforcing its Aboriginal profile. Staff thus explain that the program is Aboriginally constituted because of its geographic location but do not directly address the broader socio-economic and socio-spatial processes that link the Downtown Eastside, Aboriginality, and marginalization historically and today. These discourses of disavowal, I suggest, spectralize the very socio-historical structural conditions the program aims to mitigate.

profoundly affects the lives of Aboriginal women in the Downtown Eastside and throughout Canada (see also Chapter 3).

104 For discussion of one of these rare occasions, see Chapter 8.
Another spectral tension relates to the program’s desire to distance itself from “politics.” Because Aboriginal participants come from many different cultural groups, staff emphasize that the program is not affiliated with any particular band. It also does not explicitly address that the program functions on the unceded territories of local Coast Salish peoples, and certainly not the fact that successful Aboriginal BladeRunners are employed by companies that develop their lands. In our interview, Mitch suggested that to align with a specific band, or with Indigenous politics, would signal political affiliation, which the program avoids. “You have to try and stay as apolitical as you can,” he says. “If we get into political… aspects – topics? Well, then we’re not [serving] our clients… That’s who we’re really in the business to serve is the clients and the individuals… to try to get some kids off the streets.”

To address Indigenous politics is political, it seems, while mitigating street-involvement and poverty is not. Furthermore, though BladeRunners is delivered by an urban Aboriginal organization, ACCESS, and now receives some funding earmarked for Aboriginal-specific training, Mitch and other staff insist that the program is designed to support street-involved youth, many of whom are Aboriginal, rather than to support Aboriginal street-involved youth.

This distinction also relates to politics. BladeRunners targets people occupying a particular social location – street-involved youth with barriers to employment – rather than people who possess a particular socio-political identity – Aboriginality. This emphasis enables the program to distance itself from politically-motivated, state-funded projects designed to “help” Aboriginal people that reflect paternalistic colonial attitudes. “When you look at the programs that have been designed [for Aboriginal people],” Mitch said, “by people probably in Ottawa and slammed down the throats of, say, a small band on the west coast of Vancouver Island? And why they don’t work? BladeRunners isn’t

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105 The BladeRunners program is, however, increasingly providing cultural training to support Aboriginal BladeRunners, which I discuss in the next section.

106 Another concern with “politics” relates to sustaining the program’s funding structure. Jim Green, BladeRunners founder, was affiliated with the New Democratic Party, which supported the program in its early years. With changes in provincial power, including the Liberal Party takeovers in the late 1990s and early 2000s, BladeRunners funding was cut. ACCESS, its current delivery agent, offered to support it. When the program eventually regained its government funding through the Canada-BC Labour Market Agreement, ACCESS continued to deliver the program in its Downtown Eastside office. Program staff now try to avoid affiliation with a particular political party or agenda to maintain its current relatively stable finances supplied by the province. They emphasize that relationships and partnerships are central to the success of the program, and if partisan politics gets in the way, it can destabilize the program and its forms of support.

107 Further tensions are reflected here in relation to who the program ultimately serves: employers and/or BladeRunners. I address this tension more in the remaining sections of this chapter.
This distinction implies that BladeRunners (also state-funded) is a program that can be taken up by Aboriginal people by choice rather than imposed on them. The structural circumstances that might lead Aboriginal street-youth in particular to choose to participate in BladeRunners are eluded yet alluded to by program discourses like these and practices like its 24/7 support system. The structural link between BladeRunners’ Aboriginal alterities and marginalized status has become a spectral tension that animates the program’s inclusionary aims yet remains hidden from view. I turn next to discuss how the ghosting of these dynamics plays into another spectral tension around the relationship between individual change and transformation of structural conditions. This emphasis on individual choice and change, I suggest, spectralizes the important role support programs like BladeRunners play in mitigating structural (and colonial) inequalities, a symptom of neoliberal processes.

Rugged Individuals

According to geographer David Harvey (2005:2), “Neoliberalism is… a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong property rights, free markets, and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve the institutional framework appropriate to such practices.” It is beyond the scope of my analysis to position BladeRunners and Vancouver’s construction industry in a wider web of capitalist expansion and political economic practices, or to fully consider how contemporary Canadian politics participates in further a neoliberal project. Instead, I focus my discussion here on how the BladeRunners program relates to one tenet of Harvey’s argument about the a/effects of neoliberalism: his emphasis on increasing expectations of individual responsibility and accountability and diminishing attention to or appreciation of systemic factors that influence individuals’ range of choices and actions, and corollary to this, diminishing attention to the support needed to mediate these systemic factors. “[E]ach individual is held responsible and accountable for his or her own actions and well-being,” he explains. “This principle extends into the realms of welfare, education, health care, and even pensions. Individual success or failure are interpreted in terms of entrepreneurial virtues of personal failings (such as not investing significantly enough in one’s own human
capital through education) rather than being attributed to any systemic property” (2005:66).

The BladeRunners program regularly emphasizes the individual needs of BladeRunners participants. Their philosophy and practice of 24/7 support is designed to ensure that coordinators are available to assist individual BladeRunners in times of duress. BladeRunners coordinators are on-call all the time and can assist BladeRunners participants who need help finding temporary or long-term shelter, assistance with groceries between paycheques, referral rehabilitation services, and more. The hope is that the coordinator can help the individual BladeRunner in need to deal with “all the other bullshit” so that he can make it to work on time and put in a full work day.

Bobby, one of the BladeRunners coordinators, likes to give BladeRunners “tough talk” when “all the other bullshit” starts to interfere with their training or their work on their placement sites. When they are having a hard time, he likes to remind them how far they have come and why they should keep persevering. “Bobby, I fucked up. Sorry man,” they say. Bobby replies, “You’re kicking your own ass, you ain’t kicking mine! My paycheque’s going to be here this week.” Then, he lays it on them: “Go back to when… you first come in. You were homeless. You had no work experience. You had court. You had no visitation rights. We’ve corrected all of these. And you did it. We just helped you. You’re the one getting up and going to work in this weather. You’ve taken all these good steps. Now you’ve taken a bit of a half-step backwards. But we can still correct that. Let’s get it going again… Come back and take a look… Let’s go for a walk through the 100 block of [Hastings Street], this is what you want back?” He uses the threat of their own marginality to inspire them to work harder. It is a strategy that often works.

“They want a hand up, not a hand out,” Bobby explains to me, and probably to potential employers and supporters of the program. “Fuck, people need help. We’re here to help. They want to help themselves.” The BladeRunners model is built on this premise: that participants are able and willing to help themselves, to make an individual choice to improve their life conditions. One staff member explained, “A key part of our program is teaching [participants], ‘You are an individual… How you reflect yourself as an individual will affect how people will treat you.’” According to this logic and principle, individualizing BladeRunners’ experiences helps them to become responsible people who demonstrate a reliable work ethic. This perspective aligns with the concept of “rugged individualism,” according to which individuals are responsible for their choices and
ultimately, for changing their circumstances. It comes through in the directive to “pull yourself up by your bootstraps,” which suggests that each person has the ability, willingness, and resources to regroup and move on to a better place through intrinsic motivation, perseverance, and grit. The missing link in their exercise of individual agency and fortitude is support, which the program aims to provide. The program’s mandate is thus to transform rugged individuals – rough street-involved youth facing a host of social challenges – into “rugged individuals” capable of earning an “honest living” and transcending their marginal circumstances. The help the program offers only matters if individuals take the necessary steps to improve their life situations through personal responsibility and recognition of the consequences they might suffer if they do not keep up the work.

And you did it, Bobby tells them, we just helped you.

The tension between individual choice and significant program support, I suggest, reflects a persistent settler colonial and neoliberal desire to rid the present of haunting structural and colonial inequalities through individuated reform. Support programs make this imaginary a reality; they deal with “all the other bullshit” so that no one else has to. As a result of their efforts, the reformed individual can emerge, congratulated simultaneously for taking responsibility for their life circumstances and shedding their marginal status. They are then free to join the rest of society, unencumbered now by their troubling presence.

At BladeRunners, this transition is facilitated by the coordinator. Employers can call the coordinators if the BladeRunner fails to show up or is not performing well. This process is meant to gradually shape the BladeRunner into a hardworking, reliable worker. His life conditions are mediated until he is able to support himself by bringing in a reliable paycheque. Coordinators thus run interference until the BladeRunner has “pulled himself up by his bootstraps.”

Mitch expresses sympathy with employers who have financial considerations to make when deciding whether or not to hire a BladeRunner, and emphasizes that their goal is to serve the customer – in this case, the employer – by providing a “good product” or service. As Mitch explains, “We’re looking at the same thing they’re looking at – we’re

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108 Over the years, the program has augmented their initial training structure to make their BladeRunners more attractive to potential employers. They have added traffic control, forklift, and hands-on carpentry
looking at the bottom line. And they don’t want to have this program affecting their bottom line, right? If it’s costing them to have this individual on their site, well, then it’s not going to work.” He admits, “The employer’s taking a chance.” The program aims to lessen the risks of this chance by providing solid workers and coordinator support:

“We’re providing a service to our customers. Our customer is the employer… [And we] make sure that we’re supplying a good quality product… We’re trying to sell this kid. And sell this kid to [an employer who] isn’t all that interested in being, you know, the social conscience of [the] city… have them buy into that, as well as realize that they’re actually going to get a quality employee out of this. You know, we’ve trained them! We’ve made them safe to work on whatever site you’re working on.”

He explains that the good reputation of the BladeRunners program and its support services has to be vigilantly protected. “It happens! We put a kid on the site and it happens! And they don’t work out, and then all of a sudden, a good reputation can [start going bad].” If a new employer agrees to take on a new BladeRunner and a coordinator senses the possibility of a long-term partnership, Mitch says, “you pick the best kid out of your class – you put him on that site! So you’re making sure that they get from the get-go a good feeling about the program.” Later, once rapport and trust has been established, “You can go up to them and say, ‘You know what, I’ve given you a couple of good guys. We’ve got this other kid, he’s dealing with a number of different issues – ADD, whatever it might be – any chance you can take him up awhile? See if we can get this kid [to] move beyond what he’s dealing with right now?’” The challenges the BladeRunner is facing are thus positioned as temporary and solvable through individual initiative and a sympathetic hand-up from the employer.

Mitch says that long-term employer partners “learn all the time” about the challenges BladeRunners face and “get it along the way.” Coordinators often explain to site supervisors what kinds of problems a BladeRunner is facing, but the key “selling point” for the program for employers remains the ongoing support coordinators provide. “So if there’s ever an issue on the job site?” Mitch explains, simulating a conversation with an employer, “You don’t have to deal with that! That’s what we’ve got coordinators for!”

training, in addition to the core curriculum on first aid and safety. According to one of the coordinators, “[It] makes them more appealing, more competitive, for the employer… to give them more skills.”
Coordinators act as buffers between tough supervisors and rough BladeRunners, rugged but not yet “rugged individuals” capable of holding down steady work. The focus on the individual and his challenges precludes conversations about broader socio-historical processes that directly and indirectly affect many Aboriginal BladeRunners: residential school legacies, lack of access to resources and education on and off reserves, experiences with poverty and addiction, over-representation of Aboriginal people in Canada’s correctional institutions, and so on. Instead, supervisors participate in shaping individual BladeRunners to work hard according to the norms of the construction industry and expectations of their job sites. As Bobby’s strategy demonstrates, sometimes tough love is a necessary part of BladeRunners’ transition to becoming responsible individuals. “We tell employers, if he screws up, and constantly screws up, can his ass! Just like you would any other employee!” Mitch says. Referring to the coordinators, he explains, “Bobby’s said this, and Stephen as well… can his ass, ‘cause he has to learn the lesson. And we’ll go out and we’ll find him another job at some point. But if that’s what part of their learning is… they need that [call] to action? … Some of them really do have to learn the [hard] way. Telling them is not enough.”

Racism is also discursively configured as an individual problem that can be solved by individuals changing their behaviour. Andy, one of the Aboriginal coordinators, says that there are “definitely some good and some bad” non-Aboriginal co-workers on BladeRunners placement sites. He says that if a BladeRunner comes to him “feeling uncomfortable with something, and they feel it’s racially biased,” he encourages them to “feel out the situation, get to know the person.” He reminds them that they “have that ability to address it or to call that person on their bullshit.” If they do not feel comfortable doing so, Andy will talk with the supervisor on their behalf. But, he says, “it doesn’t happen too often… where someone will come to me and say, ‘This guy is calling me a Chug, or he’s being racist.’”

Although overtly racist incidents like this are relatively rare, the program continues to tell participants that they may experience racism and that personal strength and self-esteem are important weapons of protection when facing discriminatory attitudes. “We do try and teach the kids [BladeRunners] what to expect… ‘You will face discrimination from some people… and this is how to deal with it.’” The recently introduced cultural and spiritual workshops help, he says, as does employing coordinators and instructors who can relate to their experiences. With cultural training, Andy suggests,
BladeRunners are better prepared to go onto their job sites. “It’s not about us versus them, it’s about taking care of yourself, and understanding who you are and understanding that we all have a right to be here, whether we’re Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal,” he says. “It’s about building healthy relationships with yourself… It helps to make things a bit easier for them to have a bit better understanding of who they are.”

Mitch admits that “it would be great if we could actually go and educate the employers,” but, he says, “companies are made up of individuals, and so all we can do is just prepare our participants for what to expect.” This places responsibility for knowledge and social change on individual BladeRunners, again reducing broader social concerns to issues that the BladeRunner must face and work through on a personal level. It also reproduces a common understanding that racism and discrimination can and should be overcome through individual initiative. Racism is understood as a problem that is located in individuals, not systemically reproduced more broadly. In this view, racists can overcome their prejudice through education, awareness, increased contact with people of

109 Andy also uses his own personal experiences to demonstrate the capacity for individuals to make a better life for themselves and overcome their hardships. Often considered a role model by BladeRunners staff, participants, and members of the urban Aboriginal community, his experiences of beating drug and alcohol addiction provide an example of how an individual can change his life. He grew up, he says, “in an environment that was dysfunctional… you know, alcohol and drug-based, violence in the home.” Even at a young age, he says, he “understood that everything that was going on wasn’t right, and it was something I didn’t want to be a part of my life.” Eventually, he “fell into the cracks… That’s what I knew was normal for me.” He grew up with others who experienced similar circumstances, and as a teenager and young adult, he and his friends abused drugs and alcohol and were in and out of jail. “Fortunately,” he says, “I was able to pull myself out of it.” At age nineteen, he and his father enrolled in a recovery program. He spent eight months there, and resolved to change his life: “I didn’t want to be involved with the same environment… I didn’t want to continue to involve myself in doing what I was doing ‘cause I wasn’t happy and I didn’t have any stability, didn’t have any structure. I was living out on the street. I was in and out of the institutions… So I took it upon myself to take in what I was being taught to help myself and take care of myself.” Andy has been sober since his release, and he credits his support network for helping him make changes in his life, including Aboriginal organizations and trusted friends and mentors. After leaving the recovery house, he reconnected with his old friends but quickly realized their lifestyles were now incompatible. “I honestly believe that it was two different worlds… One world was the drugs and alcohol and everything that came with it. And the other world was being clean and sober and doing something positive and good for myself… Eventually, I knew that I had to pull myself completely away from my friends.” Finding stable employment was a central part of this process. Andy has worked with BladeRunners for nearly ten years, and he uses his experiences to connect meaningfully with BladeRunners participants and to encourage them to make good choices for themselves: “We face many different challenges and experiences, generation to generation, that get passed onto generation to generation… I think probably over the last fifteen, twenty years… the resources have been put in place to help individuals to work through those challenges. And those pasts… To work through those challenges and see that there’s a better way of life [than] living in those hardships, you know? So I don’t think there’s any excuse for anybody to say, ‘Well, my family’s gone through this or my family’s gone through that, or I’ve gone through this, I’ve gone through that, so this is why I am where I am…’ Certainly we have to look at it and decide, okay, well, this is not the way we want to live our lives, so it’s time… to change, right?” Andy, like other BladeRunners staff, notes the social challenges BladeRunners face but maintains the belief that individuals have to decide to change their lives through work and self-discipline.
other races, and learning that race is a social, not biological product. Victims of racism can defend themselves against racists and racism by increasing their self-esteem, developing feelings of self-worth and legitimacy, and demonstrating through their life choices that they do not embody racist stereotypes. Combating racism thus involves combating prejudice among racists and minimizing behaviours that induce prejudices among victims of racism. For example, combating the “lazy Indian” stereotype involves Aboriginal BladeRunners demonstrating their work ethic and resourcefulness and non-Aboriginal people recognizing by observing their example that the “lazy” stereotype is false.

As noted above, Aboriginal people in Canada persistently experience higher rates of poverty, incarceration, addiction, suicide, and violence than other Canadians, and these experiences have been linked to colonial traumas. These are not problems that can be solved or even adequately addressed solely by combating prejudice and building self-esteem, or by people resolving to tolerate or “not judge” the life choices of Aboriginal people. There are unequal material conditions that affect the everyday lives and “life chances” of Aboriginal people across Canada, including the range of “choices” they make. As a government-funded and community supported program, BladeRunners is attempting to shift structural inequalities by reducing barriers to employment that reproduce poverty, homelessness, and other precarious conditions. Through its discourses, however, structural inequalities and racism are reduced to matters of individual choice, irrespective of the support an individual needs to make necessary choices to change his circumstances.

The program’s discourses are consistent with neoliberal discourses that, as Harvey (2005) explains, emphasize individual initiative and accountability. Neoliberal state support services are geared toward enhancing individual responsibility and minimizing dependency on the state. Social support mechanisms are designed to promote individual participation in free markets and trade, and state resources are redirected to support capital and corporate interests. One coordinator explained that it is less expensive for the state to fund bridging programs like BladeRunners than to support marginalized individuals through the welfare or prison systems. Government representatives may be willing to continually invest in the program because in theory it alleviates their fiscal responsibilities in the long-run. Supervisors are willing to hire BladeRunners because, once coordinators will deal with “all the other bullshit,” they will get an individual with
the tools and training necessary to work, who is willing and able to support himself. As a result of participating in the program, a BladeRunner transitions from a rugged individual facing marginalized circumstances to a “rugged individual” “held responsible and accountable for his or her actions and well-being” (Harvey 2005:66). Alterities and marginalities relating to systemic forces are minimized, through the work of the coordinators, as individuals are reconditioned to be fit for an individuated, meritocratic wage-work economy.

My conversation with Alice, a BladeRunners instructor, captures how emphasis on individual choice can spectralize structural conditions and the support necessary to navigate them. Alice’s mother has First Nations heritage, but she says she “wasn’t raised in that kind of lifestyle or heritage” and does not really identify herself as an Aboriginal person. She has worked in the construction industry for nearly two decades, and has been an instructor at BladeRunners for several years. Through her work, she has met many Aboriginal construction workers and BladeRunners trainees. Although she says she has observed supervisors and foremen hesitate to hire Native workers (because of an unfounded but pervasive belief in their “track record of unreliability and substance abuse problems”), she thinks the primary way to eradicate such forms of discrimination is for Aboriginal people to recondition themselves to be successful in their lives and work:

_Alice_: There’s been a lot of suppression on Natives – whether from outside sources or on themselves. And more often than not, it’s from themselves – “Somebody else thinks I can’t do something? So I can’t do it… Somebody told my mother [she] was no good, so that must mean I’m no good.” – That kind of thing.

_Natalie_: How do you think that, like, chain of disempowerment can be broken?

_Alice_: Um… training? … Programs like this [BladeRunners]. And… just mental training. Uh, conditioning? It took a long time to think that way. And problems that face Native people, or have in the past, like residential

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I asked if other people identify her as Aboriginal and she said the only time it really comes up is in bars. She’s not a big drinker and she’s “spent a whole lot of time in bars drinking pop and coffee.” Men approach her and offer to buy her drink. When she responds with a request for a Sprite or another soda, they would insist on buying her an alcoholic beverage. (“You know, they just want you to get drunk.”) If in conversation her Aboriginal background came up, they would say knowingly, “Oh, you’re part Native! That’s why you don’t drink! You have a problem!” She shakes her head, laughing, recalling these scenes. “It’s amazing how many times I’ve heard that… I tell ‘em to fuck off!”
schools – even more discrimination than is evident today – [it] can be taken in two ways. It can be used as a tombstone people carry around their necks, dragging them down and they’re never going to get anywhere? Or it can be the platform they stand on to get themselves out of it, and raise themselves to a better situation.

She implies that it is up to the BladeRunner to interpret their marginality as a tombstone or a platform. Once they have chosen the platform, the BladeRunners program will help them as they raise “themselves” to a better situation. To break free from cycles of oppression and the harms of discrimination, it is up to marginalized individuals to make different choices for their lives. And you did it, we just helped you. In the next section, I discuss how, once BladeRunners have been transformed from rugged individuals to “rugged individuals,” they are encouraged to become “just one of the guys” on their placement sites. Yet they continue to receive additional support, so they are always BladeRunners according to a mantra in the program: “Once a BladeRunner, always a BladeRunner.” I suggest that this discursive shift reveals revenant settler colonial tensions between recognizing Aboriginal alterities/marginalities and aspirations toward integration.

**Always a BladeRunner and/or Just One of the Guys**

Early in my fieldwork with BladeRunners, I stood in the Squamish Nation Trades Centre lunchroom with a carpentry instructor and Stephen, a white BladeRunners coordinator. Dennis, the carpentry instructor, is an Aboriginal man who completed the BladeRunners program years ago and continues to be involved as an instructor and role model. Stephen and Dennis observed the small group of BladeRunner trainees putting on their hardhats and safety goggles and made comments to one another about attendance and work ethic. The day before, one of the young men was late and Stephen gave him a lecture about showing up early for work, a lecture I later heard him repeat to many BladeRunners: “Your supervisor isn’t going to care if your alarm didn’t go off or your bus is late. He’s going to care if you don’t show up. So set your alarm early, get the early bus…” – or – “You had to be here this morning at 8:30am. Some construction gigs start at
6am. If you’re late for 8:30am training, I’m concerned about you getting to your future worksite on time. Get here early.”

Dennis reported that BladeRunner who was late the day before had learned his lesson: he arrived early that morning. After Dennis headed into the workroom, loud now with hammers and saws, Stephen explained to me that the BladeRunners are getting practice so when they make it onto a site, they will “actually know what they’re doing a little.” He encouraged me to talk with Dennis, lowering his voice to share that Dennis had been in jail for a number of years before completing the BladeRunners program: “He’s been a contributing member of society ever since.” He commended Dennis’s ongoing work with BladeRunners, invoking a frequently repeated phrase in the program: “Once a BladeRunner, always a BladeRunner.”

This moment condenses a number of common practices and discourses around the BladeRunners program, as well as recent changes. BladeRunners build rapport with their fellow intakes, coordinators, and instructors intakes are trained in hard and “soft” skills, like showing up on time and communicating respectfully. To better serve Aboriginal BladeRunners, the program is increasingly acknowledging its Aboriginal profile by introducing cultural programming, employing Aboriginal coordinators and training, and participating in Aboriginal community events. With help from Metro Vancouver Urban Aboriginal Strategy funding, BladeRunners also brings in Aboriginal elders, cultural guides, and urban Aboriginal motivational speakers (see Chapter 8). They have also hired Aboriginal construction workers and former BladeRunners like Dennis to train new intakes of BladeRunners in work safety and carpentry skills. These individuals, along with Aboriginal coordinators, serve as “role models” for new participants. While staff continue to emphasize that it is not an Aboriginal program, and that it is not affiliated with any particular band, they are making efforts to work on building relationships with local bands. For example, BladeRunners are trained at the Squamish Nation Trades Centre in North Vancouver. These changes reflect increasing efforts within the program to address Aboriginal BladeRunners’ distinct needs. Again, even as the program emphasizes individuation and personal choice, it also recognizes that a level playing field does not exist for its participants, that additional forms of support may be needed. Finally, Stephen’s comments about Dennis exemplify a common narrative: His criminal record

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111 Recent efforts have also been made to offer BladeRunners training cycles to young adults on the Tsleil-Waututh and Musqueam reserves.
presented a significant barrier to employment, but through BladeRunners training, he was able to find secure work and become a “contributing member of society.” The program continues to support him by employing him as an instructor and he is recognized as a Senior BladeRunner and a “success story”: a role model who reformed himself through stable work, with assistance from BladeRunners when needed.

The phrase “Once a BladeRunner, always a BladeRunner” conveys the program’s system of ongoing support, even years after completion of the program, as well as the development of cohorts and community among trainees and coordinators. At the same time, as one staff member explained, “This program is a bridging program, and we are trying to integrate them into society at large.” She elaborated with a familiar metaphor: falling off the wagon. “The proverbial wagon could be anything from drugs and alcohol to getting fired to getting kicked out… you know, there are many wagons to fall off of.” She paused and laughed, amused by the colonial tenor of her metaphor choice.112 “The idea is not to keep you from falling off the wagon. The idea is to keep you from falling off the wagon with less frequency [sic]… That is how BladeRunners manages to work well within this community. It understands that it is a fluid situation.” She implies that the program recognizes that participants may continue to face adversity in their transition toward becoming “rugged individuals.” But their inclusion on their work sites is predicated on a model of integration that minimizes and manages their alterities. As reformed hardworking, reliable, and responsible individuals, they can fit and integrate into the collective construction workforce. They are trained to become “just one of the guys” on their placement sites.

Once they make it through their training, BladeRunners are placed on sites composed of mostly experienced, non-Aboriginal construction workers, almost none of whom are fellow BladeRunners. The next set of trials then begins: Will they make it? Will they fit in with their new work rhythm and keep up their end of the deal? Will they show up and shut up, like the other workers? Ultimately, have they been reformed from “street youth” to dependable crew members, exercising newly learned skills and demonstrating a solid work ethic? From the program’s point of view and through the

112 Many Euro-American and Euro-Canadian “pioneers,” especially in the American West, travelled into Indigenous territories by wagon to settle on their lands and set up their homesteads. A somewhat anachronistic racial slur for Indigenous peoples in the Prairies is “wagonburner,” which suggests retaliatory violence committed against settlers during this period of settlement in response to dispossession and encroachment.
work of the coordinator, BladeRunners placed on sites remain BladeRunners, deserving of ongoing support if needed. For their supervisors and coworkers, however, they are expected to become an undifferentiated part of a functioning work crew. “Once a BladeRunner, always a BladeRunner” thus shifts to “just one of the guys” once on site. This shift is less an articulated or planned process and more of an unspoken strategy that encourages integration.

“We tell the employers that they are just part of the workforce,” Mitch explains, “We don’t want them to [give] them any special treatment.” He pauses, admits: “Obviously, they’re BladeRunners so they do get special treatment – they just got hired as a result of being a BladeRunner, so… [But] do we ask the employers to treat them differently? No, not at all. We tell them… [treat them] the same as everyone else.” The support they receive, as I discuss in the previous section, is minimized to facilitate their individuation. BladeRunners’ life circumstances are recognized during training and through BladeRunners’ model of support, but on the site, employers and co-workers are expected to treat them as “just part of the workforce.” Special treatment on the job would signal a differential status that is antithetical to the goal of BladeRunners integrating into their crews and earning an honest living through a hard day’s work. It is also, in part, an effort to protect the BladeRunners from discriminatory treatment, to minimize their difference from other workers so they will be accepted into their crews without incident. These tensions reflect broader tensions around Aboriginal people’s special status and/or special circumstances. To call attention to their special status denies them equality and equal treatment, while to treat them as “just one of the guys” denies the realities of their marginal life circumstances and social location in a broader socio-political, socio-historical context.

Like other workers, new BladeRunners hires are typically not announced on their work sites. Their foremen hire them and then place them with other crew-members on the part of the site where their work is needed (and where their still-developing skills can be utilized). The other workers do not know their new crew-member is a BladeRunner unless he talks about the program. Andy says that sometimes crew-members learn about the program through coordinators’ site visits. “If they see me or Stephen on the site, they’ll kinda question, ‘Well, who’s that? And who are you?’” Other times, BladeRunners will wear t-shirts from the program or put BladeRunners stickers on their hardhats, and their coworkers will ask about it. Otherwise, “once a BladeRunner, always a BladeRunner”
does not resonate on the worksite. On the BC Housing site where I conducted fieldwork, none of the crew-members knew Mike was a BladeRunner, or knew about the program at all. When I first visited the site, I explained the connection between my research and BladeRunners. A month later, I interviewed one of Mike’s coworkers. When I mentioned the program, he said, “BladeRunners, what are they? Are they a company?” The BladeRunners program, the structural barriers to employment the program helps to mitigate, and ultimately a BladeRunner’s alterity and marginality are invisibilized as they become “just one of the guys.”

This invisibilizing is partial, however. While at the BC Housing site, for example, one crew member told me that when he found out (through my research) that Mike was a BladeRunner and Aboriginal, he struck up conversation with him about his life. He asked him more about his life on Haida Gwaii, his reasons for moving to Vancouver, and the ways that Indian status affected him. Another Aboriginal worker on the site, Tim, was not a BladeRunner but had been trained with VanASEP, an Aboriginal construction training program in the city. One of Mike and Tim’s coworkers, Sam, reflected on his experiences of working with the two men: “If you can hold your own, and you have the desire to learn and work and you’re reliable, I don’t think it [Aboriginal difference] matters. For a guy like Mike or Tim – I know Tim’s got his personal stuff that he deals with, and he’s got a lot going on – but he’s still coming to work, he’s still asking questions… Tim probably had it a hell of a lot tougher than I did, and he’s still… making a good effort.” Sam recapitulates the stance that individual initiative prevails over adversity, but he also recognizes that adversity exists and that he himself is relatively privileged for being raised in a context without significant adversity. He places conditions on Tim – he must hold his own, have a desire to learn, and be reliable – but he also acknowledges how Tim’s life circumstances have created hardship and presented a set of challenges that he – Sam – has not endured.

If a BladeRunner’s experiences with adversity become too much and he exhibits inappropriate behaviour on site, however, the coordinator is called in. This again reveals the BladeRunner’s “special status”; the coordinator mediates until the BladeRunner can once again return to work as usual. For example, Bobby recalls getting a phone call from a site supervisor about one of his BladeRunners placements. “He’s a good fuckin’ worker,” the supervisor said, “but every time we’re by the site and he sees the police, he puts his head down!” This odd behaviour was distracting and troubling. Bobby spoke
with the BladeRunner and learned that he had an outstanding warrant. Bobby convinced him to turn himself in, and then went to court with him for his sentencing hearing. He had to serve a week in jail and perform sixteen months of community service. “The Crown [judge] came out,” Bobby remembers, “And [she] said… ‘We think this kid’s changed his life.’ It was an Indo-Canadian lady, and she shook my hand and said, ‘BladeRunners is a good program.’”

After the sentencing, Bobby called the BladeRunner’s boss to update him on the situation. “He says, ‘Bobby, his job’s safe.’” Now, Bobby says, the BladeRunner thanks him, “He said, ‘I’m glad I got it over with.’” This individual, in the eyes of the judge and his supervisor, was rehabilitated through his work placement and had made a choice to lead a better life. By working with the supervisor, Bobby maintained the BladeRunner’s job so he could deal with “all the other bullshit” and return to work. He no longer puts his head down; he keeps it held high like the other workers. In this example, the BladeRunner was “always a BladeRunner,” which ultimately ensured that he could once again become “just one of the guys.”

As I discussed in Chapter 4, inclusion raises tensions between transformation and regulation of Others and their marginalities (Simon-Kumar and Kingfisher 2011). Shifts between “Once a BladeRunner, always a BladeRunner” and “just one of the guys” discourses and practices convey this tension at BladeRunners. BladeRunners’ experiences and expressions of marginality are mediated and also minimized through coordinators’ interventions and efforts to individuate them. Through their training and work, they can “transform” how they relate to their life circumstances, choosing to stand on a platform of work ethic and support to overcome adversities. When I asked Mitch to describe the program’s “success stories,” he said:

They’re becoming upstanding members of their communities. They’re moving out of the area where they were in most trouble, and moving into… suburbia… ‘Now I’m living in Surrey or Burnaby, in a quiet neighbourhood… We even have a dog.’ So that kind of stuff. So we’re actually helping to build families, and keep families together… It’s helping [our guys]… move beyond where he was… He’s moving up in whatever company he’s working for. He’s probably got an apprenticeship at this point.

In this vision of a “success story,” the BladeRunner’s alterity has been successfully minimized through program support; he has become not only “just one of the
guys” but also a “contributing member of society.” While this implies that his marginality is now over, in the past, the “Once a BladeRunner, always a BladeRunner” suggests that what is “over-and-done-with” may return again: the “rugged individual” may become rugged again, so ongoing support needs to be available just in case. The BladeRunner is neither “always a BladeRunner” nor “just one of the guys” but both. The spectre of persistent, revenant marginality continues to haunt. The BladeRunners program exists to manage this ghost.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I demonstrated how spectral settler colonial tensions animate the BladeRunners program: tensions between historical and contemporary Aboriginal marginality and current forms of (Aboriginal) program support; between individual choice and structural conditions; between integration and recognition of alterity. For BladeRunners’ non-Aboriginal interlocutors – their supervisors and coworkers – these tensions are mediated through the program’s coordinators and their 24/7 support mechanisms. As a result, haunting conditions of Aboriginal marginality are largely kept hidden from view.

Supervisors “don’t have to deal with” BladeRunners’ problems, many of which stem from systemic inequalities and colonial traumas, because coordinators are available to intervene and mediate. Workers on site see their BladeRunners coworkers as “just one of the guys” because the support the program provides transforms them into “rugged individuals.” Their marginalized circumstances are minimized, as is the role of the coordinator, so that coworkers see only a reformed individual, removing himself from his life of adversity through personal choice.

Together, these processes have a spectral effect on perceptions of marginalization, and connections between marginalization and Aboriginality: now you see it, now you don’t. In my next chapter, I further explore tensions around “dealing with” Aboriginal difference in another everyday site of inclusion in the settler colonial city: the Mount Pleasant library branch. I suggest that staff and patrons’ ideas about how to engage with the local urban Aboriginal community and display Aboriginal materials reflects ongoing, spectral tensions around consultation with Aboriginal people and categorizing Indigenous difference.
Chapter 6: Aboriginal Alterity and its (Dis)contents

Introduction

In this chapter, I explore the “nuanced micro-politics and complexities of including the marginal ‘other’” at the Mount Pleasant library (Simon-Kumar and Kingfisher 2011:272). In particular, I examine settler colonial tensions that are spectrally present in deliberations over how best to consult and serve local Aboriginal people, how to define Aboriginal materials, and where to shelve books, CDs, and DVDs with Aboriginal content. I argue that national policy debates about the nature, extent, and expression of Aboriginal alterity emerge in discussions about mundane processes of library collection and community service, demonstrating that different historical forms of “dealing with” difference and representing Aboriginal Others continue to shape everyday spaces and practices of inclusion.

In recent years, Mount Pleasant library staff have worked to reduce barriers to library use for marginalized individuals living in the community. The Working Together project, which I describe below, aimed to address a host of spectral issues: historical and contemporary forms of exclusion, marginality, appropriation, improper consultation, and disregard of Aboriginal communities and their distinctive needs and interests. Library staff worked to ameliorate exclusion through shifts in library philosophy, discourse, and practice. To develop relationships with the local Aboriginal community and to better understand their needs, community librarians regularly visited – and continue to visit – urban Aboriginal organizations to foster connections within and beyond the library. They also created a new, expanded Aboriginal collection to convey the branch’s commitment to recognizing Aboriginal people as a distinct and important part of the neighbourhood and city.

Designing the Aboriginal collection and consulting with Aboriginal community members involves grappling with how best to communicate with and represent Aboriginal people in the library. This work has raised challenging questions related to defining Aboriginality that correspond in interesting ways with questions posed at the national level about defining and managing Aboriginal alterity. In particular, debates in the late 1960s and 1970s, as exemplified in the White and Red Papers, continue to resonate today, materializing in ideas, shared by staff and patrons in interviews, about
how to select, label, and place Aboriginal materials in the collection. After providing a selective history of relevant national policy, I suggest that decisions about consultation and collection in the library microcosmically reflect revenant tensions about how Aboriginality should fit in society more generally. The everyday workings of inclusion at the library, I argue, are animated by the spectres of settler colonial policymaking and revenant expressions of Aboriginal alterity.

**Uncanny Alterity in a Settler Colonial Nation**

In her book *The Cunning of Recognition* (2002), anthropologist Elizabeth Povinelli argues that too much or too little Aboriginal difference haunts settler colonial nations like Australia, where her research is based, as well as Canada, the United States, and New Zealand. “Uncanny” or “radical” alterity refers to expressions of Aboriginal cultural difference that stretch the limits of liberal multicultural tolerance, as well as expressions of Indigenous political difference that are not accompanied by sufficiently alterior cultural difference.\(^{113}\) Through law and public and political discourse, Povinelli argues, Indigenous peoples are expected to “Be (not) Real; Be (Not) Alterior.” Authentic difference is thus simultaneously desired (“be real, be alterior”) and disavowed (be the same as “us,” disappear your difference). As Australian anthropologist Gillian Cowlishaw points out, uncanny alterity can refer to Aboriginal marginality as well as Indigenous peoples’ rage against colonial hegemony and systemic inequalities. She writes, “To accord legitimacy to difference that is characterized by poverty and marginality without any exotic cultural distinctiveness demands more of the national imaginary” (2004:244).

Settler nations are increasingly attempting to exorcise the spectres of their shameful past through acts of recognition and reparation. However, “national pageants of shameful repentance and celebrations of a new recognition of subaltern worth remain inflected by the conditional,” she argues (2002:17). Aboriginal people are invited to perform their cultural difference, as witnessed during the Vancouver and Sydney Olympics, as long as their performance does not unsettle national foundations and social

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\(^{113}\) In particular, Povinelli examines the tension between Australian legal decisions that require Aboriginal people to perform sufficiently distinctive cultural difference and the ways some of these cultural practices, such as ritual sex, are deemed “repugnant” by indices of multicultural liberal tolerance.
order. Furthermore, state recognition of Aboriginal difference, Indigenous land claims, and rights to self-determination can be granted as long the settler state remains intact.

In Canada, Aboriginal alterity and Indigenous political claims have challenged politicians, legislators, philosophers, and political theorists since the early days of settlement. These tensions continue to play out today in debates over governmental jurisdiction of Indigenous issues, economic development, treaty negotiations, and appropriate forms of reparation for past injustices and present inequalities. Aboriginal alterity has historically been defined, conditioned, and managed through colonial policies like the Indian Act, the residential school system, and the establishment of reserves, all of which continue to shape the present and future of Indigenous relations in the country. Events like Stephen Harper’s 2008 Residential School Apology and the launch of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, as well as ongoing modern treaty negotiations and court cases over Indigenous rights, are the most recent iteration of Canadian attempts to grapple with Aboriginal alterity and legacies of colonial attempts to grapple with (and eliminate) Aboriginal alterity.

The White and Red Papers of the late 1960s and early 1970s crystallized many of these tensions. During Pierre Trudeau’s tenure as Canadian Prime Minister, his Minister of Indian Affairs Jean Chrétien released a “white paper,” or policy document. The 1969 White Paper interpreted “Indian” policy through Trudeau’s aspirational view of a “just society.” The White Paper recommended the elimination of legislation that differentiated Canadian citizens as an attempt to promote equality “for all.” The paper proposed abolishing the Indian Act (and thereby eliminating distinct Indian status), dismantling the Department of Indian Affairs, transferring reserve lands to private property, and allocating responsibility for Aboriginal people to the provinces (with the eventual goal of total integration with other citizens), among other issues related to land, treaties, and economic development. The White Paper was essentially a political manifestation of settler colonial desires to eliminate Aboriginal alterity altogether, couched in discourses of equality and justice.

Cree political leader Harold Cardinal responded to Trudeau’s “just society” ideology with his polemic *An Unjust Society* (Cardinal 1999(1969)), now a classic text. The Indian Association of Alberta, led by Cardinal, issued a recapitulation of Cardinal’s arguments in their response, which became colloquially known as the Red Paper (Indian Chiefs of Alberta 2011(1970)). While the “Red Paper” moniker highlighted the
controversy’s racialized dynamics, the document’s official title was “Citizens Plus,” a term borrowed from the Hawthorn Report.

In the 1960s, anthropologist Harry Hawthorn was commissioned by the federal government to examine Aboriginal inequalities. He and his team of analysts produced a two-volume report, demonstrating that Aboriginal people were disadvantaged in the realms of education, economy, and politics in Canadian society. The report blamed residential schools and other assimilationist government policies that neither recognized Aboriginal rights and treaties, nor prepared Aboriginal people for fully integrated and democratic citizenship (Hawthorn 1966). Hawthorn offered a series of recommendations to mitigate Aboriginal inequalities while also maintaining the distinct cultural and political status of Aboriginal people. In particular, the Hawthorn report recommended policy based on the idea that Aboriginal people are “Citizens Plus”: entitled to the same rights and privileges as other Canadians, as well as recognition of their distinct status and rights as Indigenous peoples.

Thus, the Indian Association of Alberta opened their Red Paper with a quote from the report: “Indians should be regarded as ‘Citizens Plus.’ In addition to the rights and duties of citizenship, Indians possess certain additional rights as charter members of the Canadian community” (Indian Chiefs of Alberta 2011:189). The Red Paper then rebutted the government’s White Paper point by point, focusing especially on treaties and land and resource rights. They suggested that the Indian Act is a complicated document that both subjects Aboriginal peoples to unjust treatment and provides a legal framework for addressing their unique needs and rights. While they acknowledged that the Act should be reviewed, they also asserted, “The recognition of Indian status is essential for justice” (192).

Acknowledging Indigenous people’s cultural differences or material inequalities without recognizing their distinct political status has long been a point of contention for Indigenous activists. Similarly problematic are practices and ideologies that place temporal boundaries around expressions of Indigenous difference through discourses that emphasize either past cultural traditions or hopes of “eventual integration” for Aboriginal people. In the Red Paper, Cardinal and his colleagues wrote: “The White Paper Policy said, ‘that there should be positive recognition by everyone of the unique contribution of Indian culture to Canadian life.’ We say that these are nice sounding words, which are intended to mislead everybody. The only way to maintain our culture is for us to remain
as Indians. To preserve our culture is necessary to preserve our status, rights, lands, and traditions. Our treaties are the bases of our rights” (194).

Efforts toward cultural (not political) recognition and eventual integration thus run counter to affirmations and expectations of the perennially distinct status of Indigenous peoples. Aboriginal alterity is not solely based on racial distinctions or an unfortunate history that can be mediated and eventually abandoned through education and awareness – now you see it, now you don’t. Instead, Indigenous and critical race scholars like Taiaiake Alfred, Bonita Lawrence, and Renisa Mawani have demonstrated that Indigeneity has emerged through complex historical and political processes, including but not limited to racialization and colonialism, that produced distinct political status for Indigenous peoples. For advocates of Indigenous rights and sovereignty, Aboriginality is not meant to “eventually integrate” with mainstream society or the nation, but to remain distinct through political recognition, acknowledgment of the unique histories, cultures, and territories of Indigenous communities, and exercises of self-determination.

Another point of contention for Cardinal and the Indian Chiefs of Alberta was the government’s failure to appropriately consult Aboriginal people ahead of the White Paper release. Though Aboriginal representatives had been consulted, the White Paper did not reflect their concerns, demands, or opinions. It focused solely on equality without attention to equity or recognition of distinctive Indigenous rights.

“In his White Paper, the Minister said, ‘This review was a response to things said by Indian people at the consultation meetings which began a year ago and culminated in a meeting in Ottawa in April.’ Yet, what Indians asked for land ownership that would result in Provincial taxation of our reserves? What Indians asked that the Canadian Constitution be changed to remove any reference to Indians or Indian lands? What Indians asked that Treaties be brought to an end? What group of Indians asked that aboriginal rights not be recognized? What group of Indians asked for a Commissioner whose purview would exclude half of the Indian population in Canada? The answer is no Treaty Indians asked for any of these things and yet through his concept of “consultation,” the Minister said that his White Paper was in response to things said by Indians.” (190)

As a result of the Red Paper and widespread opposition from Aboriginal groups, the White Paper and its tenets were officially retracted. A decade later, however, when Trudeau and Chrétien began their efforts to repatriate Canada’s constitution, Aboriginal
people were initially not consulted (Hansen 2013). After significant Aboriginal political mobilization, Aboriginal rights were officially recognized and affirmed in Section 35 of the Constitution Act:

35(1) The existing aboriginal and treaty rights of the aboriginal peoples of Canada are hereby recognized and affirmed.
(2) In this Act, “Aboriginal Peoples of Canada” includes the Indian, Inuit, and Métis peoples of Canada.
(3) For greater certainty, in subsection (1) “treaty rights” includes rights that now exist by way of land claims agreements or may be so acquired.
(4) Notwithstanding any other provisions of this Act, the aboriginal and treaty rights referred to in subsection (1) are guaranteed equally to male and female persons.  

Section 35 has since been interpreted judicially to mandate a duty to consult with Aboriginal people in matters that relate to their lands and traditional rights. Determining how best to practically implement “Citizens Plus” and affirm constitutionalized Aboriginal rights, however, continues to be a matter of debate in the courts, Indigenous communities, and all levels of government. These debates relate to the nature, extent, and expression of Aboriginal cultural and political alterity.

Multicultural ideologies and policies have provided one approach to “dealing with” Aboriginal difference, but critics of multiculturalism suggest that it cannot adequately address Indigenous people’s distinct political status and expression of self-determination. Eva Mackey (2002), for instance, argues that the mosaic model of Canadian multiculturalism (especially espoused by Trudeau) advances a nation-building project that works to manage immigrant difference and minimize political distinction and rights of ethnic minorities, including Aboriginal peoples. By “celebrating” and “accommodating” Indigenous and immigrant difference, she contends that multiculturalism sustains white hegemony and a colonial status quo. Issues of culture and politics are at issue here, which Mackey clarifies in her critique of Trudeau’s Official Multiculturalism Act: “The multiculturalism policy, by clearly locating the inclusion and recognition of cultural politics (the state will help them overcome ‘cultural’ barriers), attempted to prevent a situation in which realpolitik could break the country” (2002: 66).

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114 As Erin Hansen (2013) explains, clauses (3) and (4) were added later, as a result of consultations in 1983 and women’s groups campaigns for recognition and inclusion in constitutional language.
In other words, uncanny political alterity continues to haunt the nation even as cultural alterity is managed through multicultural policy.

In this chapter, I argue that these challenges and debates are not only matters at the state level, but are also spectrally present in everyday forms of meaning-making and inclusionary efforts. I demonstrate how the spectrum of positions between the Red and White papers, as well as complex relationships between Aboriginality/multiculturalism and Aboriginality/marginality (see Chapter 5), are rearticulated as Mount Pleasant library staff and patrons express their views on the library’s Aboriginal collection and consultation with the Aboriginal community. The Aboriginal collection is a section of “Native Resources” – books, DVDs, and CDs – that have been separated out from the general collection for display and reference.

In interviews, staff and patrons shared their explanations about why and what kind of Aboriginal materials should be shelved in a separate Aboriginal collection, interfiled with the general collection, or both, communicating deep-seated dilemmas around Indigenous recognition and alterity. The materials they suggest should be labelled “Native Resources,” I argue, are demonstrative of how they think about and define Aboriginal difference. Where these materials should be located reveals broader tensions about the figurative and literal place(s) for Aboriginal people in settler colonial society and spaces. Circumscription of Aboriginal material reflects how Aboriginal alterity has been circumscribed through Canadian policy over time.

Next, I describe the development of the Working Together project and implementation of its recommendations and values in the branch. This initiative, designed to explore and ameliorate exclusionary library policies, set the tone and the stage for consultations with the local urban Aboriginal community and development of the library’s newly expanded Aboriginal collection. Spectres of institutionalized exclusion emerged through this process, encouraging staff to reconsider how they define and manage their relationships with Aboriginal people and other marginalized communities.

**Defining Relationships**

To the majority of socially-excluded people, we are a club and they do not feel welcome. Our atmosphere is oppressive, our rules and codes are alienating, and often, we ourselves are unapproachable and/or intimidating.

The Mount Pleasant Library serves over a thousand patrons a day. It is a busy and important public place in the neighbourhood, providing and connecting patrons with a range of services. In addition to access to books and other media materials, patrons visit the branch for its free internet and bank of computers, dependable staff assistance and reference support, children’s storytimes, language instruction and tutoring, and regular programming and events. Situated in the diverse Mount Pleasant neighbourhood, the library serves patrons from various class, ethnic, linguistic, and racial backgrounds.

In the mid-2000s, a group of librarians at the branch participated in a project to critically examine library policies and culture in relation to social exclusion. The Working Together project was a federally-funded, multi-city library effort to rethink the idea, as the project’s founding director put it, that “libraries serve the whole population and are open to all who choose to use it” (2008:4). Project librarians worked to identify systemic barriers within library policy, as well as to consider how systemic inequalities affect library users and use. They developed a Community-Led Libraries Toolkit, which now serves as the cornerstone of inclusion policy and practice at the branch, hereafter referred to as the Toolkit.

During the project, Mount Pleasant librarians worked with members of the local Aboriginal community to understand their experiences in and outside the library and their barriers to library use. They continue to develop relationships with this segment of the population, a community that library staff feels has not been served well in the past. Toward the end of the Working Together project, funding became available to develop the Mount Pleasant library branch’s Aboriginal collection. Community development librarians used tools from the Working Together Toolkit to build the collection and further establish relationships in the Aboriginal community, as I discuss in the next section.

I began my fieldwork at the branch after the Working Together project ended and the new Aboriginal collection was mostly established. I was therefore able to observe and inquire about the implementation of the Working Together project’s principles and the

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115 The Working Together Project (2005-2008) began as a demonstration project, “The Libraries in Marginal Communities Demonstration Project” (2004-2006). Funded by the Office of Learning Technologies of Human Resources and Social Development Canada, the project focused on four urban public library systems in Halifax, Regina, Toronto, and Vancouver, with the Vancouver Public Library serving as the project’s anchoring library. The project’s national director, Sandra Singh, is now the Chief Librarian of Vancouver Public Library.
purpose, content, use, and ongoing development of the Aboriginal collection. Several of the community development librarians initially involved in Working Together were by then at different branches and in different positions, but the Mount Pleasant branch had two community librarian positions in place as a result of the project. During my research, Rachel held one of these positions while the other was held first by Lina, then Samantha, and later by one of the Working Together’s original community development librarians, Justin.\footnote{Others have since held the community librarian position. There is considerable movement between librarian positions at the Vancouver Public Library, with individuals filling in while others are on leave or serving as interim replacements if someone is promoted to a management position.}

In addition to interviewing these individuals, I also spoke with the branch’s manager and assistant manager at the time, as well as the staff manager and several of his circulation and shelving employees.\footnote{The library is divided in two workforces – librarians and staff. Librarians hold Masters degrees in library sciences and work at the reference desk and in library programming and community service provision. Staff work at the circulation desk and manage shelving, book requests, checking people in and out, and other administrative duties. Both groups meet together for joint staff meetings and regularly interact throughout their workdays.} Additionally, I met with another Working Together community development librarian, now at the library’s Central Branch in downtown Vancouver. Together, these interviews and observations, along with the Working Together Toolkit, inform my analysis below.\footnote{The processes I describe continue to be in flux. My observations reflect what was happening in the library from roughly April 2010-August 2011, with some insights developed through meetings and informal conversation with librarians and staff since then. Though recent, this fieldwork is in some ways now historical, describing policies and practices that may no longer be in place or enacted now or in the future.} In later sections, I also include excerpts from interviews conducted with 27 library patrons.

The Working Together project’s community development librarians worked in each city’s designated project neighbourhood (Mount Pleasant in Vancouver), visiting local service providers outside the library, attending community events, and talking with a range of “socially-excluded people”: Aboriginal peoples, non-English speakers, the elderly and disabled, marginalized youth, people living in poverty, and previously incarcerated persons. To build relationships with socially-excluded constituencies, librarians eschewed typical outreach and consultation activities, which respectively take the library and its messages out into the community and ask established users to provide feedback on existing library practices. Instead, they adopted community development approaches that emphasize listening to community members’ needs and taking direction from them rather than assuming expertise about the community. (“We need to ensure that...
we develop relationships with those people who are excluded from community life so that our services reflect their expressed needs and not our or other service providers’ interpretation of their needs. Perhaps most importantly, we need to do this with them and not for them” (Working Together Project 2007.)

The Working Together project’s Mount Pleasant librarians worked primarily with the Broadway Youth Resource Centre to connect with marginalized youth, a halfway house called Guy Richmond Place to meet previously incarcerated men, Coast Mental Health Clubhouse to interact with individuals recovering from mental illness, and several local Aboriginal organizations to reach members of the urban Aboriginal community. Additionally, they conducted mapping exercises in the Kingsgate Mall, “walkabouts” in the neighbourhood, and other community development activities to identify how patrons imagine and interact with their community and its resources. In their efforts to develop relationships with local Aboriginal people, Working Together community development librarians and later branch community librarians regularly visited the Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre, the Native Education College, the Urban Native Youth Association, and the Broadway Youth Resource Centre.

The Working Together project’s philosophy and approach to substantive consultation reflects, on a municipal service scale, a rejection of the limited forms of government consultation witnessed historically in the lead-up to the White Paper and the Constitutional Act, which Aboriginal leaders and activists flatly condemned. The project’s emphasis on collaboration and relationship-building over imposition of policy indicates local shifts in Aboriginal community engagement since then as well as growing attention to duties to consult. Library policy has little bearing on Aboriginal rights and title, but community librarians’ efforts to consult local Aboriginal community

119 Through their work with local Aboriginal organizations, librarians are increasingly aware of internal diversity within that community. Composed of many voices and perspectives, the urban Aboriginal community includes members of local First Nations, Aboriginal youth raised by non-Aboriginal families, residents who have recently relocated to the city from reserves elsewhere in the province or other provinces, as well as long-term Indigenous residents who are not Coast Salish but Cree, Anishinaabe, Métis, or even Mayan from Central America. Given this diversity, who has the authority to speak about and on behalf of Aboriginal people, within and beyond the library? How can Aboriginality be defined and redefined as the community and its various needs and interests shift? These questions contribute to arguments like Lina’s, discussed below, that emphasize flexibility in managing the collection.

120 In many ways, the Working Together project was conducted like a small-scale, locally multi-sited ethnography, with strategically selected locations and implementation of qualitative methods like participant observation and interviews.

121 In our interview, Lina explained that library use was often a low priority for community members who were struggling with low incomes, family problems, and health concerns. I address tensions between community development and library priorities in later sections.
representatives and incorporate their views in library culture and practice signifies broader socio-political shifts in recent decades toward recognition of Aboriginal needs and concerns.

Every Wednesday for several months, Lina went to the Friendship Centre for a regular Elders Lunch. She served food and chatted with elders and Friendship Centre staff. She shared books from various publishers, issued library cards, and removed library fines to encourage library patronage. At the Native Education College, she brought a laptop and helped students with their research questions, emphasizing that the library’s services went beyond books and did not have to be delivered “in house.” Through work with the Urban Native Youth Association and the Broadway Youth Resource Centre, and at a local public high school, community librarians including Lina identified topics of interest for youth, including video games, graphic novels, and vampire stories. Lina also ran a pilot project between the Friendship Centre and the Urban Native Youth Association, pairing youth with elders as they learned to use computers.

Other community librarians developed connections at places like Ravensong, a community health centre, or Vancouver Aboriginal Family and Child Support Services. The Kingsgate Mall also continued to be an important place for storytimes for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children and families, even after the library moved to its location in the nearby community centre. When Rachel began working in the community librarian position, she continued to cultivate some of these relationships and also built new ones. She regularly attended a sewing circle at the Friendship Centre, for example, and eventually commissioned the group to design and sew a blanket for display in the library. She made special efforts to work with youth as well, including Aboriginal teens.122

For librarians with short-term or interim placements in the community librarian position, community development proved challenging as they balanced building personal relationships with establishing connections between the community and the library as an institution. Nevertheless, the relationships librarians worked to build during and after the Working Together project proved instrumental in designing and defining the branch’s Aboriginal collection, which I discuss in detail below.

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122 Many of these activities were ongoing throughout my fieldwork. Although I was interested in accompanying Rachel to observe her community development work, my presence may have complicated her ability to meaningfully engage in these emerging relationships so I did not join her. Instead, I maintained my focus on culture and sociality within the library.
Through their work with Aboriginal organizations and community members, as well as with other socially-excluded peoples, Working Together librarians discovered that overdue fines, a lack of diverse staff, emphasis on procedures or staff safety over service, staff and patron attitudes about smells or sleeping library users, suspicion and mistrust of institutional environments, and many other issues create barriers to library use. Library “business-as-usual” policy and practice regulates the social life of the library and disciplines conformity to particular norms and behaviours that in fact represent a particular subset of library users: often economically-advantaged, already-literate, English-speaking members of dominant society.

To change this regulatory and socially-specific culture, Mount Pleasant librarians and staff have worked to implement suggestions from the Working Together Toolkit, such as deepening partnerships with local service providers and their clients, offering computer training to a wide range of users, and changing staff attitudes around customer service. Changing staff attitudes involves encouraging staff to rethink “problem patron” labels, work on stress management, engage in contextual and active listening, demonstrate empathy, and develop critical thinking and self-awareness around their personal biases and perceptions of marginalized Others in their communities (2008:116).

Most staff I spoke with were strong advocates of the Working Together model, emphasizing their belief in community-led libraries. They favoured this “community values-based” customer service model over a more traditionally prescriptive, rules-based approach. For example, staff waived fines for patrons who might stop visiting the library only because of their outstanding fines; many staff had fond memories of waiving fines for someone and seeing their delight and relief as they welcomed them back to the library. To take another example, staff first ask patrons drinking alcohol in the library to pour out their drink rather than immediately call the police (it is illegal to drink in public). Instead of waking a sleeping patron by brusquely stating that sleeping is not allowed in the library, staff explain that they ask patrons to stay awake in the library so they know everyone is safe and healthy. These examples demonstrate shifts in library culture more than shifts in policy (alcohol and sleeping are still not allowed, for example, and fines are still applied to late materials). These shifts reflect concerted attempts to accommodate alterities, to reconsider responses when norms of appropriate behaviour are transgressed; indeed, the boundaries of public norms are reconsidered with fresh perspective of those who feel excluded by such boundaries.
None of these shifts or accommodations are specific to Aboriginal inclusion, but they do touch on expressions of marginality that intersect with Aboriginal marginalities and systemic social exclusion in the neighbourhood and the city of Vancouver more broadly. A more direct example of an Aboriginal-specific inclusionary effort is librarians’ direct attention to the spectral effects of residential school and colonial policy on Aboriginal people’s perceptions of public and state-funded institutions. The Toolkit reminds library practitioners to take into consideration institutional discrimination when beginning to work with socially-excluded communities: “Many socially excluded people have had negative experiences with institutions such as schools, police forces, healthcare systems, and government agencies. Such experiences may impact a person’s willingness and ability to trust the library, another institution” (2008:48).

Another way that library staff have developed strategies toward Aboriginal inclusion is through cultural sensitivity training. Prior to my fieldwork at the library, Lina attended a cultural sensitivity workshop and shared her experiences and lessons at a staff meeting. Additionally, when Aboriginal patrons visit the library, especially new patrons, circulation desk staff and reference desk librarians sometimes extend a personal welcome and try to convey that the library is a friendly place for them to visit. The hope is that Aboriginal and other socially-excluded persons will feel “at home” in the library, just as other established library users do. In the Working Together Toolkit, a Vancouver librarian explains, “[T]he shift to this service model often begins with a shift in thinking. In Vancouver, many staff members have ‘gotten it’ not through customised training, or by reading a manual, but by actively engaging with the philosophy and practice of the service model” (2008:32).

“Getting it” implies conversion to a new approach, and many of the staff I spoke with in Mount Pleasant indeed “get it.” They indicate their conversion both through demonstrations in practice but also through stories of other libraries and library staff who do not yet “get it.” For example, they contrast the rules-bound library culture at the Kitsilano or Oakridge branches with the values-based approach in Mount Pleasant. They report that when staff who usually work at those branches fill in at Mount Pleasant, they are sometimes surprised by the flexibility around circulation policy or more apt to explain things in “policy language” to patrons, such as the matter-of-fact statement, “Sorry, but that’s our policy” (2008:128). “Some community-led interactions do not lend themselves well to ‘policy,’” a Vancouver librarian explains in the Toolkit, “because the existence of
policies suggests preconceived limits and ideas as to the direction the community can take with the library. Sometimes the best policy may be no policy” (128). Mount Pleasant staff indicate that staff from “unconverted” branches may express misgivings about this approach, but regular branch staff are largely on board. Aware that some policies have negatively affected Aboriginal and other marginalized people in the past, they try to take a more flexible approach to avoid reproducing past harms.

There is one issue related to accommodating alterities, however, that causes considerable tension among staff in regards to values-based service: staff and patron safety. With the “inclusion” of some socially-excluded peoples, some behavioural problems have emerged. There have been violent interactions between patrons over computers. Staff have been subjected to verbal assaults. Alcohol consumption in the library increased. Many have had to file “incident reports” about patron outbursts or altercations, with some of these incidents requiring police intervention. Though this is not purely a result of Working Together principles, some library staff have admitted that when they moved to the new branch at 1 Kingsway, early efforts to be maximally inclusive to all resulted in too much tolerance of inappropriate behaviours. One of the managers said they need to continue to re-evaluate inclusionary practice to think critically about how to set boundaries and expectations without reproducing an exclusionary library culture.

After finishing fieldwork, while writing my dissertation, I occasionally visited the branch and attended staff meetings. During one of these visits, I learned that staff had requested that the Central Library hire a security guard for the branch. When they learned at one of the meetings that a guard had been hired, they expressed visible relief. This was initially a surprise to me; in earlier conversations with staff, many had suggested that the new 1 Kingsway location was an improvement over the mall location because mall security there had deterred library use for patrons with negative experiences with security and law enforcement.

Their perspectives on mall security reflected information coming out of the Working Together projects about barriers to library use, including the use of security gates, which made street involved youth and previously incarcerated men feel uncomfortable. Other low-income people thought that security gates might alert staff

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123 In the toolkit, a librarian explains, “Discussion with some street involved youth and with some men recently released from federal prison revealed that the security gates were a significant barrier to using the
that they were entering the library and had unpaid fines. The re-installation of a security
guard at the new location, they had thought, would only exacerbate these concerns. But
without a security guard present, some patrons acted out in violent ways or engaged in
illegal activities, such as watching pornography on the computers, without much concern
about getting in trouble or kicked out. Though they were certainly asked to stop their
behaviour or to leave if staff observed violent or illegal acts, they did not self-police
themselves in ways they had when security personnel were visible, sometimes causing
considerable duress for staff and other patrons.

Again, issues around security and safety are certainly not specific to Aboriginal
inclusion. Rather, they are a reflection of general tensions that arise when normative
values of library business-as-usual are stretched and redefined to accommodate
alternative ways of being in and using the library. Sometimes newly “included”
Aboriginal patrons are involved in these tensions, sometimes not. A developing
relationship between some library staff and a group of street-involved Aboriginal youth
provides one example of the intersection of Aboriginal marginalities and the tensions of
inclusionary philosophies and practice.

A group of Aboriginal youth increasingly frequented the library, logging onto
Facebook and congregating in library spaces for social time together. One of the
managers and some other staff worked to get to know them, learning their names and
greeting them, trying in general to make them feel welcome in this public space. But
some challenges emerged over time: a young man came in drunk; a couple engaged in a
loud argument and other patrons complained; the internet was used for purposes deemed
inappropriate by staff. Another staff person learned that another group of young people
stopped coming to the library, in part because they feel uncomfortable around the other
group.

The manager who formed relationships with the street-involved youth was
conflicted. How can he address problematic behaviour without making them feel
unwelcome to return? How can he balance his regard for other patrons’ comfort when it is
being tested by a group of people the library is taking great efforts to invite and support?
Here, the limits of liberal tolerance are tested, as anthropologists Povinelli (2002) and

library… People talked about being embarrassed if the gates went off and worse, they wanted to know if
they would be searched. If so, will staff find the joint in the back pocket resulting in an arrest for
possession? All these questions and concerns about the security gates made the library seem like a risky
place” (2008:20).
Cowlishaw (2004) demonstrate in their analyses of uncanny alterity. The tensions raised through inclusion require the manager and library staff to explore on a deeper level why and how they are encouraging marginalized youth, including these Aboriginal individuals, to participate in the social life of the library. This is not a tension easily resolved.

Regular patrons also experience these tensions. “Regular” here means both long-time library users as well as those whose behaviour is unmarked but understood as synonymous with conventional norms and appropriateness. Some “regular” patrons are frustrated simply by people talking in the library, a behaviour that seems inappropriate and rude when interpreted against expectations of libraries as quiet, even silent, places. Yet, as the Mount Pleasant library attempts to resituate itself as a shared community space for a broader range of constituent groups, noise in the library – especially in the children’s section – can be understood as a sign of vibrancy and robust community use. How is being with now-included “Others” supposed to work here? What is acceptable behaviour, who decides, and how is it managed in a context of sensitivities to exclusion and marginality, especially when that coincides with racialization? Who does the work of social change in this context?

The answers to these questions are still emerging. When I spoke with patrons in 2010 and 2011, the branch was still quite new and most of my interviewees did not know about or notice increasing efforts to encourage socially-excluded people, including local Aboriginal people, to feel included in the library. Some did not know Aboriginal people visited the library at all or that they even lived in the neighbourhood, an example of spectral presence/absence I discuss in earlier chapters. Their perceptions may change as a more diverse range of patrons, such as street-involved Aboriginal youth, begin to visit the library more frequently.

In their efforts to include, library staff face these and other tensions as they attempt to make space for all in a heavily used shared place. Though the staff is increasingly racially diverse, staff diversity does not yet match the demographics of the community, and may never fully align as the neighbourhood continues to change. English is the dominant language spoken and in text. The presence of the security guard may function to deter those whose alterity pushes the limits of tolerance. At the same time, the Working Together project has effectively raised questions about how to mediate regulatory standard library culture through its tools to promote inclusion among socially-
excluded people. In the process of implementing the project’s principles, staff are thinking critically about the library, its policies, and its meaning for Aboriginal and other socially-excluded peoples.

A major part of their efforts toward including Aboriginal people has been the expansion of the branch’s Aboriginal collection. The collection was developed collaboratively between community librarians and Aboriginal community members at local Aboriginal organizations. Next, I discuss the development of the collection and further examine spectral tensions related to recognizing, managing, and defining Aboriginal alterity.

**Collecting Difference**

Collaborative collection development may ultimately be one of the best ways to ensure that community members see themselves reflected in the library. When people actually choose items that will go in the collection, they get to see themselves reflected on the shelf. They get to say, ‘I chose that item for the library. It’s my library.’

– Vancouver Community Development Librarian, Working Together Toolkit (2008:105)

As the Working Together project neared its end in 2008, as project staff compiled reports and designed the Toolkit, funding from a private donor and the Vancouver Public Library Foundation became available to buy more materials for Mount Pleasant’s Aboriginal collection. Prior to this, Aboriginal materials at the Mount Pleasant branch were limited to one bay of bookshelves in the mall location, many of them out-of-date or about First Nations arts, consistent with familiar spectacular representations of timeless Aboriginality on display in the city (see Chapters 1 and 3).

Community development librarians approached their contacts at the Native Education College, a few blocks from the library, and proposed hosting a buying event there. (“We felt that instead of us doing it, the community engagement process would be to have them select the books,” one librarian explained.) They brought publisher representatives, booksellers, and boxes of books; they ordered food and invited...

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124 The collection’s funding was a point of confusion for some of the library staff I interviewed. Funding may have come from several sources. After the initial purchase of materials with earmarked funds for the collection, there is no longer a designated fund to support the ongoing growth of the collection. New materials are now purchased through the general collections budget.
community members. Students, faculty, and invited guests at the College sorted the materials, picking out items they wanted.

Community librarians followed this consultation event with smaller, more informal meetings with contacts at the Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre, the Broadway Youth Resource Centre, and Vancouver Aboriginal Family and Child Support Services. At the advice of some Aboriginal contacts, librarians called local First Nations band offices to ask if their members were interested in participating, but ultimately local urban Aboriginal organizations supplied the staging grounds and participants for consultation meetings and conversations about the collection.

The Public Library Services Branch, a provincial agency of the Ministry of Education, also provided a grant to support Aboriginal youth consultation on collection development and programming. The library partnered with the Vancouver School Board to develop this process, called the Aboriginal Learning Project, supporting both organizations’ literacy goals. Approximately one hundred Aboriginal teens enrolled in Vancouver’s public schools participated in material selection meetings and librarians ordered around $10,000 of books, DVDs, CDs, and games based on their suggestions.125

From the beginning of collection development, librarians working with the Aboriginal community insisted on taking a community-led approach. Lina, for example, felt strongly that Aboriginal people, not librarians, should make decisions about what to include in the Aboriginal collection. She resisted writing up a profile for the collection, suggesting this would “fix” or make rigid a more fluid, ongoing process, and stifle the creative, community-directed nature of collection development. It would confine an emergent process. During the community-led process and book selection meetings, Lina and other librarians relied on Aboriginal participants and representatives of urban Aboriginal organizations to guide them and to help answer questions about what should and should not be included in the collection, especially what should be labelled “NAT RES” – “Native Resources.”

The NAT RES collection code helps shelvers, reference librarians, and patrons identify which materials are located in the Aboriginal collection. Many questions came out through consultation about the scope of a “Native Resources” collection. Should the

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125 Six students also received summer work placements at Vancouver Public Library. This project happened before my fieldwork began, so I did not get to meet the placements students or conduct participant-observation during the selection process.
NAT RES code be reserved only for works by Indigenous authors? Should outdated (and sometimes ethnocentric) ethnographies be included in the Aboriginal collection for historical reference, or omitted in favour of more contemporary representations? Should books that interest Aboriginal people but are not directly about Aboriginal issues be filed there too (e.g. books on diabetes or hip hop albums)? Answering these questions through community-led processes and extensive consultations was an effort to hand over control, and ultimately the right to self-determine the contents of the collection, to the local Aboriginal community. Relationship-building and collaborative collections development worked to break from past policies and practices that involved librarians and other government and service representatives making decisions and speaking on behalf of a community they barely knew.

Lina argues that questions around collection development and management should remain open to interpretation and that managing the collection should be an ongoing process, not just a one-time event resulting in clearly defined rules and guidelines. Rather than a one-time designation, she advocates for flexibility to recognize shifting interests and concerns in the dynamic Aboriginal community. However, since the initial collection development fund was spent, and the bulk of the Aboriginal collection was established, ongoing collaboration and consultation has become a more diffuse process. Furthermore, collections management is not always a high priority for community members, even as it remains an important task for librarians. Community librarians continue to engage with local Aboriginal organizations, but, in keeping with Working Together principles, they emphasize relationships over library needs, policy, and practice. Community librarians seek to serve this constituent population rather than ask them to serve the library.

A corollary effect of respecting community priorities is that day-to-day decisions about the Aboriginal collections once again become the responsibility of librarians who have resisted rigidly defining the collection. This reveals an ongoing tension in inclusion work: how to balance and accommodate community needs within and beyond institutional practices and policies, especially institutions driven by impulses to categorize and taxonomize? This quandary resembles broader socio-political tensions around government impulses to define, once and for all, the nature and extent of Aboriginal alterity in the context of the nation. As the White and Red Paper debate demonstrated, historical processes of differentiation cannot be simply cast off in favour of a once-size-fits-all policy. This history must instead be acknowledged and folded into developing
policies and practice. How to do this properly, however, continues to haunt even well-intentioned efforts toward recognition.

For example, to return to the corollary processes at the library, librarians are hesitant to trim items from the collection, even if no one is using them, because they know the materials were selected by community members. One librarian explained, “Most collections, we would go through and weed out materials all the time, but with this collection, there’s a lot of historically collected material, or just really specific… that we can’t weed out or put in the regular [general] collection.” The tempo and temporalities of consultation are out of sync with the ongoing needs of the library, making it difficult to manage the collection by culling materials or adding them; “time is out of joint” (Derrida 1994).

Uncomfortable with open questions about how to manage the collection, several librarians suggested establishing an Aboriginal advisory committee so that Aboriginal community representatives can continue to guide non-Aboriginal staff in defining the parameters of the collection. Others suggested that the library needs to make greater efforts to hire Aboriginal librarians, or to promote the library profession within Aboriginal communities so the next generation of librarians will have more Aboriginal representation. Despite Lina’s hopes for fluidity and openness, based on Working Together principles, some librarians are now expressing interest in better defining the collection to alleviate challenges and tensions around maintaining it. “It would be [great],” one librarian stated, “To have somebody from the First Nations community really look at and set up some type of collection profile statement.” So far, a community representative position, an advisory committee, or a collection profile, has not been established, leaving responsibility for the collection largely in non-Aboriginal librarians’ hands. Decisions about whether or not to place new materials in the Aboriginal collection or the general collection thus involves librarians recurrently defining Aboriginality.

To make matters more complicated, materials on Aboriginal topics can be difficult to sensitively assess and designating appropriate content can be slippery. (One librarian quipped, “We can’t look at our publishers’ catalogues and say, ‘Oh look, we’ll buy it – it’s from Band Council Press!’”) As another librarian explains, “Because there’s no process in place, just the act of trying to make [an order for the collection] is so daunting a task! … There is no real formal committee, there is no budget. It’s really a bit of a mess. There’s no ordering done from a particular budget dedicated to Aboriginal material. It just
gets ordered in the process of doing other collection work. If somebody notices [an Aboriginal-specific item], they plop a sticker on it [to designate it NAT RES].” Despite ongoing relationship-building, collection consultation has been temporally circumscribed to specific buying events and tied to occasional events to use funds earmarked for Aboriginal materials. The Aboriginal collection, and Aboriginal alterity, again and again comes into conflict with efforts to conduct business-as-usual.

While consultation meetings and casual conversations helped to establish, diversify, and broaden the Aboriginal collection to reflect different age groups and interests, decisions about whether or not to label new materials NAT RES involves librarians continually participating in defining Aboriginality. This is complicated by the fact that, during consultations, Aboriginal community members consistently (and unsurprisingly) elected materials that were not only about Aboriginal-specific issues. One community librarian explains, “I’ve talked to so many people… They want heavy metal [for example]. I’m like, ‘Well, that’d be cool to have in the Aboriginal collection, but…”’ His trailing off reflects ambivalence that emerges when confronting uncanny alterity. What does a CD featuring non-Aboriginal people performing heavy metal music have to do with Aboriginality? If it were labelled NAT RES, what would that label itself mean?

This ambivalence also relates to who the Aboriginal collection – and indeed definitions of Aboriginality – are for and for what purpose. The expanded collection, as initially imagined, was designed to serve as a resource for Aboriginal patrons. Furthermore, librarians wanted this socially-excluded population to see themselves and their concerns represented on the library’s bookshelves. Citing library philosophies of service, one librarian explained, “[One] thing we try to do is to acknowledge… our communities. And one way to do that with the Aboriginal community is to say, ‘Hey, we have a special collection recognizing Aboriginal culture and we developed it in consultation with Aboriginal people.’” As such, a heavy metal CD would be congruent with that aim and would belong in a collection designed by and for Aboriginal people. But, as the librarian’s quote also demonstrates, the collection was also intended to demonstrate the library’s recognition of Aboriginal people and culture as an important part of the neighbourhood, city, and nation. Where does a heavy metal CD fit in with this objective? Another Working Together community librarian used the metaphorical example of the heavy metal CD to express this tension: “As librarians, we fall into the trap of thinking, ‘Well, our collection is for Aboriginal people – it has to be about
Aboriginal issues.’ Well, no, they might… want some heavy metal music. Or they might want to get a humorous DVD… They might have interests beyond issues!’

In the end, it was decided through consultation that the Aboriginal collection should be limited to books, CDs, and DVDs with Aboriginal-specific content. Funding originally intended for the Aboriginal collection was re-allocated to purchase items selected by Aboriginal community members for the general collection. Part of the rationale behind this decision is the fact that even though the collection was defined for and by Aboriginal patrons, the reality is that all patrons will be able to see and access the “Aboriginal” collection. Standard library practice involves clearly delineating sections in the library for patrons to browse and find books and other materials under specific subject headings. Materials with Aboriginal content or authorship (which I discuss below) can perhaps be unambiguously filed in the Aboriginal collection, but what about the books about automotive repair, hip hop albums, and young adult novels that community members selected? How will non-Aboriginal patrons know that the collection was established collaboratively and reflects the diverse interests (“interests beyond issues!”) of the local Aboriginal community? How will they make sense of a heavy metal CD by a non-Aboriginal artist filed in a section labelled “Aboriginal Resources”?

Patrons browsing the collection will thus find fiction by Aboriginal authors, histories of treaties and dispossession, and arts and culture, but not a broader set of materials that reflect the more diverse kinds of materials that interest the local Aboriginal community. While this decision eliminated potential confusion about how to explain a heavy metal CD in the Aboriginal collection, it also means that the collection is now not only for and by Aboriginal people; it now also about Aboriginality specifically. As such, it has become a representation of Aboriginal difference. In some ways it reifies circumscribed definitions of what it means to be Aboriginal. Yet to not have an Aboriginal section at all would reify processes that absorb Aboriginality as part of a generalized whole, like the White Paper. And to have an Aboriginal section composed of a mix of Aboriginal-specific and Aboriginal-selected content may have conveyed diversity, but it could have also risked circumscribing Aboriginal use of the library to the Aboriginal collection alone, rather than demonstrating that they are welcome in all parts of the library.

Looking at the community-developed, Aboriginal-specific collection, one can see that librarians and community members selected a wide range of materials to include.
There are books on local Indigenous languages, including the Squamish Nation’s recently released dictionary of Squamish words and phrases; fiction by Indigenous authors like Eden Robinson and Tomson Highway; books about Aboriginal art traditions, including basketry and carving; documentaries about treaties and Indigenous activists; socio-cultural analyses of colonial trauma; histories of dispossession and residential schools; manifestos on pathways toward decolonization; biographies of important historical and political figures from Aboriginal communities across Canada; and more.

When talking with non-Aboriginal patrons, I asked, “What should be included in the library’s Aboriginal collection?” Comparing their answers to the collection developed by local Aboriginal people reveals how Aboriginality is defined and delimited more broadly. For example, some patrons’ answers reflect an “appreciative” multicultural stance that articulates Aboriginal alterity in terms of cultural difference, similar to Eva Mackey’s (2002) observation that multiculturalism limits definitions of alterity to cultural not political difference. They emphasize ritual, art, and spirituality, avoiding contentious topics like material inequalities or political status. They explicated cultural topics and themes in general terms: ceremony, traditions, and language. As Mackey explains, “In the multicultural model of culture, [folkloric and culinary] cultural fragments become conceptually divorced from politics and economics, and become commodified cultural possession” (66). Benign forms of cultural difference, such as art or legends, are more easily acknowledged and accepted while social or political difference is ignored or unexplored.

One man answered that he did not know what would be in an Aboriginal collection other than art and history books. History was a recurrent theme in patron’s responses. While I have demonstrated that historical processes are a significant dimension in meaningful articulations of Indigenous alterity, as addressed in the Red Paper, patrons’ emphasis on history to the exclusion of current social realities suggests temporal delimitations on Indigenous difference: Aboriginality is positioned in the past, not the present. One patron said, “Other than the vast amount of history and the cultural aspects? I’m not sure what else I would find there.”

“I would expect to find something on art,” another woman began. “And I’d expect to find something on culture… and something on Native Indian legends. And I would expect to find something historical. And there might be something on spiritualism.” She paused, thinking. “Or there might be some sociological stuff?” While she is at ease
identifying culture, legends, history, and spirituality as distinctly Aboriginal, her pause and question mark after mentioning “sociological stuff” conveys her unfamiliarity with Indigenous people’s social position and uncertainty as to whether or not books about their social conditions exist and/or should be shelved in the collection.

Many patrons, however, were more comfortable identifying social and political issues as core parts of an updated, expanded Aboriginal collection, alongside materials about art, culture, history, and folklore. Some expected Indigenous authorship to be a primary criterion. Others emphasized that Aboriginal people should determine the collection’s contents, and were pleased to find out that they were indeed involved. A more challenging question than defining NAT RES Aboriginal-specific materials was where to put them. I asked, “Should Aboriginal/NAT RES materials be shelved in their own special collection, as they are now, or should they be interfiled with the rest of the collection, and why?” Staff and patrons’ answers to these questions are even more revealing of spectral tensions around Aboriginal alterity, as I discuss next.

Shelving Aboriginality

Materials designated NAT RES in the Vancouver Public Library system are all marked with a bright green label on the spine that reads “Aboriginal Resources,” but not all branches have a special Aboriginal collection. The Kitsilano and Dunbar branches, for example, interfile all NAT RES materials with the rest of their collection; books on Aboriginal histories, for instance, are shelved alongside all other history books. The branches with special Aboriginal collections roughly correspond with neighbourhoods with the most Aboriginal people living in them: East Area branches like Mount Pleasant, Carnegie (Downtown Eastside), and Britannia (Commercial Drive).

For the Mount Pleasant branch, the question of whether to have a separate Aboriginal collection or to interfile Aboriginal materials was settled during community

126 Several librarians noted that the label used to be a red dot and eventually changed to a green dot to be more culturally appropriate and to remove the racialized colour. Text was finally added in the last couple of years because a long-time librarian working in the Mount Pleasant and Kensington branches insisted that colour-coding books is not a transparent or intuitive process for patrons, especially new patrons unfamiliar with library policies and practice.

127 The Dunbar branch, located near the Musqueam reserve, has been making recent efforts to engage with the Musqueam community. Their practices in relation to Aboriginal materials and programming are therefore in flux. A small Aboriginal collection is also separated out at Kensington.
consultations between Mount Pleasant librarians and their Aboriginal community interlocutors. One community librarian recalls that opinions were mixed: “They didn’t want it to stick out because they wanted to be part of the… the whole collection. But at the same time, it was something that they personally invested time and effort into, so they wanted to be acknowledged for that. So that was why eventually – it was from them – that we decided to have a separate Aboriginal collection.” Another remembered this decision-making process: “Does it make more sense to interfile it? Should it be labelled at all? … The decisions that were coming back were definitely decisions that were reached through the community and lots of consultations.” It was ultimately determined that there should indeed be a special Aboriginal collection; children’s materials, however, were to be interfiled.128

Staff and patrons also had mixed opinions on the issue of separate versus interfiled NAT RES materials. Their myriad explanations, ranging between ideological and functional rationales, bear remarkable similarity to the range of positions articulated in debates around the White and Red Papers. Advocates for a separate collection articulated their position based on, variably, their appreciation of unique Aboriginal cultures, their recognition of Aboriginal people’s distinct political status, their knowledge of specific needs and concerns among the Aboriginal community, and their interest in being able to easily find and identify Aboriginal materials. Those who argue for interfiling, on the other hand, discuss the perils of “ghettoization” and segregation, lost opportunities for serendipitous encounters with Aboriginal materials, and the importance of equal and standardized treatment for all library materials. Some staff and patrons argue for a combination of both, suggesting that some materials should be separated while others should be interfiled, or that a separate collection is a temporary solution that should eventually lead to an interfiled collection. These perspectives also reflect ideas about how Indigeneity is or should be spatio-temporally demarcated, revealing other settler colonial spectral tensions.

128 The rationale for different policies for adult and children’s materials was never fully clear. A children’s librarian explained that he had personally talked with Aboriginal families while working at Britannia and decided to interfile them based on their feedback. “The ones they want about culture and art and stuff are generally grouped together in kids anyways,” he explained. Another librarian implied that children’s materials were interfiled because difference should not be emphasized for young readers. A librarian from the Kensington library, temporarily working at Mount Pleasant, told me that children’s Aboriginal materials at that branch are shelved with adult Aboriginal materials.
Some staff and patrons who argued for a separate Aboriginal collection directly emphasized Indigenous people’s political status. For them, a separate collection signifies acknowledgement of the distinct position of Indigenous peoples in Canada and the importance of maintaining this distinction through ongoing forms of recognition. Some who advocated a separate collection on the grounds of recognition and political distinction raised the spectre of assimilationist regimes in their responses. “Having that visual presence,” one librarian stated, “that this is a valued collection is so key… a good solid presence. I wonder if it were integrated… it might get a bit lost.”

Operational arguments for a separate collection expressed a similar sentiment: to interfile Aboriginal materials into the general collection would make it difficult to identify and recognize them. “It’s just hit and miss in the rest of the stack,” one patron noted, “I think they should be organized together.” Another commented, “It actually occupies a space that’s noticeable. If integrated, you might pass it by.” There are shades of the Red Paper in these statements. To abandon distinct Indian status, the Red Paper argued, would risk annihilating Aboriginal people altogether; it would be tantamount to cultural genocide. Maintaining distinction is important because full integration implies absorption and ultimately loss.

In contrast, some patrons argued that a separate collection is actually easier or more likely to be missed, passed by, or ignored altogether. Their comments suggest that patrons browsing at the library might not notice or peruse an Aboriginal collection at all. One patron explained, “If you put it in one area, and I’m looking in – spirituality, say, or religion – and the materials are not there, I’m not going to pick it up and look at it. And I’m not going to think to walk over there [to the Aboriginal collection].” From this perspective, a separate Aboriginal collection is marginalized, hidden from view even if in plain sight (see Chapter 3). If interfiled, non-Aboriginal people might be more likely to see and discover Aboriginal authors and books with Aboriginal content. If integrated, the logic follows, non-Aboriginal people might be more likely to interact with Aboriginal people and learn about their lives and interests. (See below for further analysis of the spatial implications of these views.)

One patron suggested that having an Aboriginal collection would help to showcase their cultural differences so that non-Aboriginal patrons would better appreciate Aboriginal peoples and their cultures. This would be a step toward equality and better understanding and treatment of Aboriginal peoples. She said, “Maybe someday they can
be all integrated? But right now I think, we don’t know enough about them, we don’t pay
enough attention to them, and we don’t value their contribution [enough].”

Other patrons also shared the hope of “eventual integration,” acknowledging unequal social conditions that Aboriginal people currently experience. One man likened the Aboriginal collection to an exercise in affirmative action. “I’d say leave it in its own section for now because… it’s like the whole theory of affirmative action. I’m not big on it, but I understand the reasoning for it. And there might be some reasons for promotion of a group, in order to get it to more of an equal standing.” Another patron explained, “I think the goal would be to have it integrated eventually… I think it’s early right now. I think we have a long way to go before that happens.”

These expressions define Aboriginal alterity as an unfortunate legacy of an unjust and racist past that can and should be remediated through education, awareness, and acceptance. This sentiment contains hints of Trudeau’s Just Society ideology and the settler colonial desire to rid the nation of its spectres: not only its shameful past but also uncanny and troubling alterity (Povinelli 2002). An alternative hope is that once the citizenry is educated and adopts a cosmopolitan acceptance of difference, problems of racial discrimination and devaluation will go away (for a critique of this perspective, see Mawani 2012b). Similarly, once library patrons familiarize themselves with the plight of Aboriginal peoples, as well as learn to respect their cultural differences, a separate Aboriginal collection will cease to be necessary or relevant.

As explained above, the idea of “eventual integration” is antithetical to Indigenous people’s efforts toward recognition of their permanently distinctive status and, relatedly, their rights to land and self-determination. “Eventual integration” ideologies, both at the library and more broadly, circumscribe Indigeneity to a past that should be overcome. Yet, as I have demonstrated elsewhere in this chapter and dissertation, Indigenous histories and claims on the future return again and again to haunt this vision.

Unlike either/or perspectives or temporally delimited solutions, many patrons and staff advocated for an intermediary position: some NAT RES materials should be in a separate collection while others should be interfiled. The parallels to the Hawthorn report (1966) and the Red Paper’s Citizens Plus argument are striking. Aboriginal content should be shelved in the same ways as other library materials are – in their respective subject headings, such as history or cookbooks, just as Aboriginal people should have the same rights, privileges, and opportunities to all other Canadian citizens. At the same time,
a distinct Aboriginal collection of a subset of materials ensures that their special political status, unique histories, ties to lands and territories, and cultural identities are recognized, just as distinct Aboriginal status ensures the protection and exercise of Aboriginal rights to land, self-determination, and sovereignty. Distinctly Aboriginal materials (and status) are acknowledged without emptying the other sections of the library (society) of Aboriginal presence, content, and voices.

Biographies of Aboriginal people, fiction by Aboriginal authors, and general histories that include Aboriginal people should be in the general collection because these works should be treated like the rest of the library’s materials, in a similar way that Aboriginal people’s individual experiences, works of art, and role in broader historical processes can and should be understood and equally integrated and appreciated parts of the Mount Pleasant neighbourhood, the city of Vancouver, and the Canadian nation and not separated out and ignored. On the other hand, histories about Aboriginal land and treaty rights, ethnographies of Aboriginal cultures, and other items that discuss the distinct qualities of collective Indigenous experiences, politics, and history should go in their own collection for recognition, acknowledgement, and ease of reference. One patron said, “I think the [Aboriginal] biographies should be woven into the main biographies… But the rest, I think Native Indians? They deserve their own section because… they’re facing problems of their own that are different.” Another said, “Fiction, I can’t see any reason why you’d want to segregate out the fiction, unless you want to promote it, which I could see.”

A couple of participants suggested eliminating the separate collection but maintaining the “Aboriginal Resources” decal on Aboriginal content. That way, Aboriginal materials would be easily identifiable for those who are looking for them, but they can also be kept side-by-side with the rest of the collection. To make an analogy to broader social issues here raises questions about racialized and visible forms of difference and the “mosaic” model of multiculturalism. In addition to his formalized Citizens Plus arguments, Harold Cardinal advocated that Aboriginal people should occupy a “red tile” in the Canadian mosaic. Resisting efforts to assimilate Aboriginality through the absorption of Indigenous people into the undifferentiated body politic of Canada, he combined the symbolic imagery of the mosaic with racial shorthand: the red tile and the Red Paper. Aboriginal people, he suggests, should be identifiable and distinct even as
they exist side-by-side with the rest of the country’s citizens. But how does racialization correspond with recognition?

Unlike library materials, which can be marked with a bright-green sticker indicating Aboriginal content, Aboriginality is more ambiguously “marked” on the bodies of Indigenous people. As critical Indigenous scholar Bonita Lawrence (2004) has demonstrated, the Indian Act instituted racialized legal categories of Indigeneity that construct a grammar that is embedded in Aboriginal people’s conceptions of self. She advocates disentangling colonial and racialized conceptions of Indianness to advance a more inclusive definition of Indigenous nationhood and political empowerment. While Aboriginal materials can be visibly marked with a decal in the library, recognizing Indigeneity in settler colonial Canada may necessitate developing new ways of seeing and identifying Indigenous peoples. This will involve finding ways to address the realities of racialized identity and expression without reproducing historical and contemporary racist exclusion and colonial linkages between race and Indigenous identity (cf. Goldberg 1993).

A final spectral settler colonial tension apparent in expressed ideas about an integrated versus separate collection relates to socio-spatial and visual articulations of difference. One patron said, “Oh, I think a bit of both [materials in both the Aboriginal and general collection] would be good because you don’t want to ghettoize the works – it’s a big mistake to do that. I think it’s useful to have a section, but there’s no reason why certain books… can’t be integrated… so [they] can be seen in other contexts.” The patron correlating spatial positioning to visibility; ghettoization is a spatial process of removal and separation. For him and others, spatial placement of Aboriginal materials affected possibilities of encounter.

Many patrons and library staff emphasized the serendipity of browsing in articulating their opinions. Some suggested that if all Aboriginal materials were separated out, people browsing in the general collection would find no Aboriginal authors or content. This would be unfortunate, they explain, because it further invisibilize Aboriginal peoples, histories, and stories. Two patrons used the metaphor of “stumbling upon” Aboriginal materials to communicate their points:

[Aboriginal materials should] probably [have their] own section… People go and look for particular things [and it makes] it easier. Although I suppose if it was mixed, people might stumble on it more.
I can see why they separate it – it’d be very easy to find what you need. But in another way, if they were integrated, you’re much more likely to stumble across something that you’d want to read… I think there’s benefits to both.

The Aboriginal collection, and Indigenous identity, is perhaps easier to find and identify if spatially circumscribed. A separate space signifies a distinct and designated zone of Aboriginality. But this zone of Aboriginality can be overlooked or ignored; Aboriginal materials, like Aboriginal people, will be invisible or marginalized if they are not interfiled in the general collection, or integrated in wider society. One librarian regularly expressed concern that if all Aboriginal content is in the Aboriginal collection, the rest of the general collection is drained of any Aboriginal presence or representation, creating a problematic absence of Aboriginal histories from the Canadian history section, for instance, or a lack of Aboriginal people among the biographies.

Analogies can be made here between the Aboriginal collection and designated reserve communities. Reserves, especially in British Columbia, are politically complex spaces. They establish (or “reserve”) space specifically for Aboriginal people. In doing so, they create important grounds for sustaining Aboriginal ties to land and the maintenance of distinct communities. They also signify the processes of colonialism that dispossessed Aboriginal communities of their wider territories. Colonial reserve policies served simultaneously to contain Aboriginal people and land ownership, and to “protect” them from non-Aboriginal encroachment. In relation to settlers, reserves produced a system of socio-spatial segregation across Canada (cf. Harris 2002; Stanger-Ross 2008). The process attempted to empty non-reserve space of Aboriginal people, opening room for settlement (as demonstrated in the cases of Snaaq and Xwayxway discussed in Chapter 3). As a result, reserve spatiality increasingly reduced opportunities for non-Aboriginal people to encounter Aboriginal people except in highly circumscribed ways (see also Chapter 3). Additionally, reserves have been blamed for not only spatially marginalizing Aboriginal people, but also for exacerbating material conditions of poverty.

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129 Of course, like many other aspects of the settler colonial project, this was a partial, incomplete process, to the extent that many Aboriginal people have lived off reserve or moved back and forth between reserve and non-reserve communities.
Returning to the library’s Aboriginal collection, advocates of a separate collection argue that it is an important way to maintain Indigenous people’s unique position and identity (as reserves support land-based connection and community), while those against a separate collection expressed concern that if all the materials were in one place and not represented elsewhere in the collection, that it might create a “ghetto” (as reserves can be sites of marginality and poverty). A few patrons’ comments suggest that if the Aboriginal collection is perceived to be an Aboriginal-specific space (a collection for Aboriginal people), like reserves (a space for Aboriginal people), they might be dissuaded from visiting it. This feeling might result from their own aversions, from disinterest, or from respect for the fact the collection is for use by Aboriginal patrons; or, they might just not know it is there.

By containing Aboriginal materials in one space (or Aboriginal people in reserve spaces), thereby minimizing encounters, the opportunity to find, encounter, and learn from Aboriginal materials (or people) is reduced; therefore, Aboriginal contributions to knowledge and knowledge about Aboriginal people are both limited. One librarian said, “We won’t see a huge amount of circulation increase [of Aboriginal materials] unless [they’re] integrated,” linking low circulation numbers to non-Aboriginal patrons missing or ignoring the Aboriginal collection.

Among patrons who knew of the Aboriginal collection before talking with me (about two-thirds of patron participants), several admitted they had not looked at the collection closely or were only vaguely aware of it. “I saw it… but you know what? I haven’t looked at it,” one woman said, “When I said I’ve read all the books in the library that I’m interested in… it shows that I kind of self-selected out of it. I haven’t even looked at it!” Another said simply, “I’ll be honest… I’ve never really looked into it.” There were also patrons who did not know the collection existed, despite passing by it several times. Likewise, when I asked patrons if they had visited a reserve, many had never been on one or had just passed by while driving through. Some were surprised to learn about the Musqueam reserve near Dunbar or the Squamish Nation’s Capilano reserve under the Lions Gate Bridge. When I walked with one regular library patron to

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130 We discussed trying to set up an experiment to test this supposition by using catalogue databases and software, but there were several challenges in doing so. For one, it would take considerable time to identify titles that are both integrated and shelved in the Aboriginal collection and to track their movement on and off the shelves and librarians already have too many tasks to complete in their regular schedules to permit time for this.
see the Aboriginal collection, he exclaimed, “Wow! That’s nice! This whole thing? Wow. I’m surprised.” The collection was located then next to a long line of windows, a place this patron regularly walked through on his way to the newspapers or sat to do his reading. “You know, people walk by here, and they’re totally ignorant,” he said. “Yeah, ignorance is bliss. They blissfully walk by! … I had no idea!” (As I discuss elsewhere, including in my next chapter, several participants admitted that they did not know or notice local urban reserves of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh peoples.)

A small minority of participants – indeed only one – suggested that Aboriginal materials should neither be separated nor marked as distinct from other items in the general collection at the Mount Pleasant library. Adopting a White Paper-like, colour-blind perspective (see Chapter 7), he said, “Should there be a corner of the library that’s all Aboriginal materials? And it’s separated from other materials in the library? No… and that should apply to [all] library resources, up and down, [in terms of] race.” This same patron expressed concerns about reserves and First Nations communities, arguing that their division from the rest of Canadian society harmed Aboriginal youth and limited their educational success and chances of upward mobility.

His ideas about Aboriginal alterity in general clearly corresponded with his ideas about Aboriginal materials in the library. The other perspectives I have shared in this section demonstrate similar parallels between library practice and settler colonial sociopolitics and perspectives on Aboriginality. By detailing participants’ various perspectives on Aboriginal materials, I have tried to communicate the ways that national debates around Indigeneity, race, and recognition are spectrally present in everyday dilemmas around including Aboriginal Others (Simon-Kumar and Kingfisher 2011). Decisions in the library about how to “deal with” Aboriginal materials, or how to build relationships with the local Aboriginal population using community development techniques, reveal and reflect ambiguous and dynamic tensions related to the place of Aboriginal people in citizenship, policy, and society.

**Conclusion**

“I guess it goes back and forth during different times, right?” one library staff member mused, “Is it inclusion or separation? Do you want it more homogenized? Or do you want it to be separate? To be identifiable? Is that a positive? Is that where stereotypes
go? … It’s sort of a tough thing.” Indeed, these questions are tough and challenging, and continue to return again and again to haunt efforts toward inclusion trying to learn from the past. Yet learning from the past involves contending with its unresolved – and perhaps unresolvable – tensions.

These tensions reflect outstanding socio-political questions about defining and recognizing Aboriginality as distinct from and/or part of the wider social whole in Vancouver and Canada: Are displays of Aboriginality acts of political recognition, multicultural celebrations of diversity, or problematic forms of Othering and segregation? How does recognizing Aboriginal status and alterity link up with efforts to support Aboriginal rights to self-determination and minimize Aboriginal exclusion? Are Aboriginal people simply one part of a multicultural society or is their alterity distinct because of their unique historical and political position vis-à-vis the colonial nation-state? Certainly an Aboriginal collection in a city library branch cannot hope to resolve these questions, but as I have demonstrated, through the Working Together project and Aboriginal collection development and management, librarians and patrons do participate in the ongoing negotiation of these issues. The everyday is haunted by spectres that come “back and forth at different times” to demonstrate that the past is in the present and the present is a contest to imagine a better future (Derrida 1994; Gordon 2011).

In my next chapter, I shift from an institutional to individual focus to examine how spectacle and spectrality influence everyday forms of meaning-making about Aboriginality for my participants. I present a layered account of the stories, experiences, and affects my participants carry as they make sense of Aboriginality in spaces and times beyond the Olympics, library, and construction site. Using a participant’s observation that relations with Aboriginal people are like “coffee table books, souvenirs, and a bit of guilt,” I critically examine how Aboriginality is constructed through looking relations, consumption, and complex affective attachments, narrated through childhood stories or moments of encounter that leave impressions that convey the fraught and anxious conditions of settler colonialism today.
Chapter 7: Coffee Table Books, Souvenirs, and a Bit of Guilt

Introduction

In 1899 poet Rudyard Kipling encouraged imperial powers and their citizens to “take up the White Man’s burden”: to engage in the “noble enterprise” of “civilizing” subjects of empire through colonial campaigns of assimilation, charity, and land and resource development (Kipling 1899). Nearly a century later, anti-racist educator Peggy McIntosh encouraged white people to take stock of privileges accumulated through processes of empire and structural racism. She advocated unpacking “invisible weightless knapsacks of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, tools, and blank checks” (1990:1). For Kipling and McIntosh, colonizers and the race-privileged carry affective, ideological, and material bundles, wrapped up in discourses of power and filled with accumulated meanings about how to relate to one’s self and racial and colonial “Others.”

In this chapter, I unpack and inventory affective bundles carried by my research participants, describing how their stories, reflections, and memories inform their processes of meaning-making and relating to Aboriginal alterity. This layered account evokes contemporary conditions of settler coloniality and knowledge production in Vancouver, providing texture, context, and depth to my analytic study of spectacular, spectral, and everyday encounters in the city. The stories and observations presented here do not pertain to any one of my field sites; instead, they represent the varied ways my participants relate to Aboriginality more generally in the city. Themes I have been addressing throughout this dissertation emerge in the ordinary recollections I collect here in this chapter, coalescing to convey the complexities of affective experience in a settler colonial space.

To develop this layered portrait of affective bundles, I take inspiration from fiction writer Tim O’Brien’s classic short story, “The Things They Carried” (1990), a compelling narrative about American soldiers in the Vietnam War. O’Brien details the exact and abstract weights of the soldiers’ equipment and emotional burdens, presenting a personal and poignant account of the men and their distinct and shared struggles. He writes:
They carried the land itself – Vietnam, the place, the soil – a powdery orange-red dust that covered their boots and fatigues and faces. They carried the sky… They carried all the emotional baggage of men who might die. Grief, terror, love, longing – these were intangibles, but the intangibles had their own mass and specific gravity, they had tangible weight. They carried shameful memories… They carried their reputations. They carried the soldier’s greatest fear, which was the fear of blushing. (O’Brien 1990:15, 21)

I find O’Brien’s inventory method productive for thinking about how people carry memories and materials into everyday life as affective resources that they use to make meaning and sense of what is going on around them. O’Brien’s story is powerful because the narrator evokes a time, place, and an array of emotions through his accumulative narrative of the material and immaterial dimensions of everyday conditions for young men enlisted in a spectacular and spectral war. His account has a cumulative, layered effect that ultimately produces an intimate picture of war that is greater than the sum of its individual parts. The story restores a sense of humanity and dimensionality that is often missing in political and theoretical analyses of war. It is gritty and textured – an almost ethnographic story that “make[s] the stomach believe” what it’s like for this group of soldiers (O’Brien 1990:75).

I do not wish to directly compare soldiers’ experiences of the Vietnam War with non-Aboriginal experiences of settler knowledge production, and the differences between O’Brien’s fiction and my ethnographic account should be apparent. Instead, I take inspiration from his writing and ability to evoke affects by deploying narrative devices of inventorying and unpacking. O’Brien’s account, like mine, is partial, one-sided, and simultaneously homogenizing and nuanced. O’Brien does not compare the things the soldiers carry to the things Vietnamese citizens or soldiers carry. This is not meant to obscure or devalue Vietnamese realities, to reproduce them as spectres of war; instead, it recognizes the challenges and limits of a balanced account and works to give depth to the soldiers’ perspectives and observations about the Vietnamese people and landscape. This account can then supplement other descriptions and analyses of the war and its different participants and victims.

Likewise, my emphasis on non-Aboriginal people’s experiences is not meant to obscure or devalue the significant things Aboriginal people carry in the settler colonial present: stories of dispossession, unequal treatment and misrecognition, traditions and
cultural practices, colonial trauma, efforts toward justice and self-determination, and much more. There are profound stories and analyses available on these perspectives from many Indigenous authors and storytellers that must be read and heard alongside the stories I share below.\textsuperscript{131}

Like O’Brien’s soldiers, my participants carry a range of material and immaterial things; they use these things to explain and interpret their relations to Aboriginality and settler coloniality. One participant, reflecting on how non-Aboriginal people think about Aboriginal people, said, “It might be as little as driving down Main and Hastings… Flipping the channels… A lot of it is just like coffee table books and souvenirs. And a bit of guilt.” I adopt his characterization as a conceptual framework to explore different forms of knowledge production and social relations interpreted and experienced by my participants: looking relations (“coffee table books”); consumption, collection, and adornment (“souvenirs”); and affective responses about race, racism, and legacies of colonialism (“a bit of guilt”). Organized this way, I explore these different kinds of “carried things” to compose a portrait of urban settler conceptions of Aboriginal alterity, revealing what Renato Rosaldo calls their “complex understandings of ever-changing, multifaceted social realities” (1993:129). The sections on coffee table books and souvenirs further develop a core argument in this dissertation: that spectacular Aboriginality significantly influences non-Aboriginal people’s imaginaries of Aboriginal alterity. The spectres of past colonial injustice, inequalities in the present, and uncertain futures on Indigenous lands animate a range of affects, as I examine in the section “a bit of guilt.”

While I provide analytic commentary throughout my discussion, I privilege my participants’ interpretations and engage in what Matti Bunzl (2004) calls “writing histories of the present.” “From Boas’s perspective,” Bunzl writes, “neither anthropologist nor informant had immediate access to the history he [sic] hoped to construct” (2004:438). Bunzl suggests adopting a neo-Boasian approach, with inflections of Foucault’s genealogical method, to write anthropological texts that combine research participants’ explanations of social phenomena with the ethnographer’s analytic

My inventory of the things my participants carry thus operates as an ethnography of their explanations, a partial history of the settler colonial present derived from my non-Aboriginal research participants cumulative affects and acts of meaning-making. In ethnographic interviews, I asked my non-Aboriginal research participants, “How have you learned about Aboriginal people? How do you relate to Aboriginal peoples in your everyday encounters at the library, or the construction site, or elsewhere in the city, or elsewhere in your personal history?” Many admitted they had not given these questions extensive thought before. Their answers therefore represent partial and preliminary attempts to theorize and explain their relations to social phenomena they experience but rarely discuss. Their answers also demonstrate the extent to which conditions of spectacle and spectrality influence their everyday knowledges.

Through this inventory of stories, I demonstrate that knowledge and meaning are produced dialectically with affect and affective experience. Affect is similar to emotion or feeling, but affect specifically refers to non- or sub-conscious “intensities” experienced corporeally. As affect theorist Eric Shouse (2005) explains, “A feeling is a sensation that has been checked against previous experiences and labelled… An emotion is the project/display of a feeling… An affect is an experience of intensity… of unformed and unstructured potential.” I do not uphold a rigorous distinction between feeling/emotion/aff ect like some affect theorists; rather, I find affect useful for my study of non-Aboriginal people’s meaning-making about Aboriginality and settler colonialism because it allows me to attend to moments in interviews when “emotion” and “feeling” seemed to be present but not fully or quite articulated as such. In many ways the stories and fragments I present in this chapter are most like “feelings” in Shouse’s definition because of their biographical and personal nature, but they are not always or even often labelled by my participants, nor are they projected or displayed as emotions. Instead, these “feelings” are more like spectres: present but hidden from view, influencing thought and behaviour but indirectly.

Accessing, observing, and articulating affect and “the ordinary” is methodologically challenging. Anthropologist Kathleen Stewart’s Ordinary Affects and literary critic Lauren Berlant’s Cruel Optimism (2011) offer stimulating models, their respective participant-observation of “scenes” and literary critical descriptions of

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132 Bunzl argues that anthropologists employing Foucauldian analysis often fail to account for contemporary conditions in their emphasis on history and genealogy.
“genres” do not provide significant guidance about how to use qualitative interview material to convey affective relations. Some affect theorists argue that affect is pre-linguistic; it cannot be expressed verbally at all, only felt. In this chapter, however, I suggest that my participants’ articulations can and do communicate settler colonial affects. I demonstrate that the affective register is spectrally present in participants’ talk about themselves and Others. I interpret participants’ pregnant pauses, shrugs, trailing off, and other bodily gestures and verbal disruptions to indicate affective states that are present but not made manifest. The stories I share are (mostly) not emotional or filled with feelings that can be easily labelled as such. But in their banalities, they are full of affective significance. Affect and its “unformed and unstructured potential” haunts as participants try to explain the memory of a paper headdress, or communicate the emotional impact of witnessing a racist act, or dodge the discomfort of talking about race. Affects are the spectral “things carried” that influence meaning-making despite their intangible or immaterial composition.

Enlivened debate about the relationship between meaning and affect, is emerging in the burgeoning interdisciplinary body of scholarship on affect theory in the social sciences and humanities (Leys 2011; see also Figlerowicz 2012; Gregg and Seigworth 2010). I posit that meaning and affect are dialectically intertwined and I layer fragments of stories to produce an affective account of non-Aboriginal people’s “public feelings” in settler colonialism.

Throughout O’Brien’s story and throughout this chapter, the pronoun “they” is used repeatedly alongside idiosyncratic and highly-personalized details. This juxtaposition between personal stories and the plural noun “they” is intended to evoke the development of collective affective experiences, or “public feelings,” as anthropologist Kathleen Stewart has called them (2007:2). Not all of the narratives, reflections, or affects described in my account are shared or common, but they are all examples of settler experience in Vancouver today and combine to express the range, overlaps, and gaps in knowledge production processes about alterity and colonialism.

Included in the accounts below are voices of recent and established immigrants from Eastern Asia, Europe, the Middle East, and the South Pacific, as well as people whose families have lived in North America for generations. Although most of my research participants are white, many are not. Education levels range from high school graduates to graduate degrees, and socio-economic class ranges from the working poor to
upper middle class. Men and women are almost equally represented. My use of the plural noun “they” in many ways glosses over differences between participants, but the specificities of their lives are also addressed when appropriate.

By bringing diverse participants together into a collective account, I hope to avoid oversimplified conflations between their social locations and their experiences and ideas about Aboriginality, as well as to suggest that there are cumulative and collective a/effects despite their differences. Furthermore, talking about my participants as “they” and “them” is also a rhetorical device that mirrors how participants, analysts, and public discourse collectivizes Aboriginal experiences. Talking about Aboriginal people as “they” and “them” can homogenize and other them, but can also convey their shared experiences and common histories (see Chapter 8).

My aim is to create a narrative that, like O’Brien’s, is greater than the sum of its parts – to evoke the uncertain, shifting, and dynamic qualities of a settler colonial place. This chapter is an inventory of the things they carry into the library’s stacks and staffroom, the construction site, and the BladeRunners office; the things they carried into our interviews, in coffee shops or on park benches. The collection of observations and commentaries presented here represents the bits and pieces of experience they chose to share that do not directly relate or refer to what happens inside my field sites. These things are about what happened before or beyond these sites; things that nevertheless shape how they experience and interpret what happens within them (see also Chapter 3). They provide affective context in recognition of the fact that my field sites are not bound or distinct, but composed of people in movement and their myriad histories, ideas, and ways of knowing and feeling. Writing a history of the emergent present in space and time involves attending to meanings and sensibilities in the making. It is not only about what is on display and in view – the spectacle – but also what is present and powerful but often hidden from view – the spectres. The stories, ideas, memories, and affects I inventory here are the things carried that exert a haunting force on contemporary settler colonial relations, influencing encounters and space and shaping experience.

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133 For example, I wish to avoid classifying all of my construction worker participants as racist – a common stereotype I often encountered when talking about my research with other academics – based on an utterance from one of the men. I also wish to avoid characterizing non-Aboriginal people of colour as automatic allies or adversaries of Aboriginal people based on shared and differentiated processes of racialization.
Coffee Table Books

As anthropologist Charlotte Townsend-Gault observes, “the whole omnipresent spectacle [of Northwest Coast art and regalia] deflects attention from anything like an historically accurate picture of the native societies of the region” (2004: 189). Citing Debord (1994) and Michael Taussig (1999), she contrasts the public spectacle of Native art with 20th century practices of keeping Native people and politics out of public view: “In [this]insulated, but highly valued, visual domain, conflicted political relations were subsumed into looking relations” (189; see also Chapter 3). In this section, I layer together participants’ reflections on looking relations: their experiences of Aboriginality as seen on a screen or stage, on the pages of a book, or in a museum exhibit or school lesson.

In my research participant’s phrase “coffee table books, souvenirs, and a bit of guilt,” coffee table books serve as a gloss for myriad forms of superficial perusal of Aboriginal culture available to him and other non-Aboriginal people in Vancouver. Designed to be aesthetically pleasing, coffee table books typically privilege images over text, leaving little room for contextual information, substantive analysis, critical insight, or discussion. They are meant to be seen and flipped through, not read and studied. Similarly, looking relations describes settler colonial conditions of looking at Indigenous people, art, and material culture and not seeing the whole picture: imagery detached from its social, cultural, political, and historical context. In short, coffee table books signify the conditions of spectacle I have described throughout this dissertation and looking relations operationalize them.

The examples and observations I share here communicate the banalities of social life in a spectacular place, where learning-by-looking is a primary form of knowledge production about Aboriginal alterity. As I have explained, spectacles are cultural, mediated representations experienced through sight. Such mediated encounters and forms of knowledge cannot be trivialized or dismissed as simply superficial anecdotes. Although experienced as distinct from everyday life, spectacles in fact constitute it. Through looking relations, non-Aboriginal people develop a significant set of affective

134 While looking relations and spectacle circumscribe settler impressions of colonial history and politics, Townsend-Gault argues that this context can also work to protect cultural practices and continue traditions beyond the gaze of settler enquiry, a fascinating argument beyond the scope of my research.
and informational resources that they use to interpret Aboriginality in the city. The images they carry are linked to memories from the past and inform expectations and evaluations in the present. These images come from Hollywood, school textbooks, scenes observed from the window of a car, the Museum of Anthropology. They are recalled to describe what Aboriginality looks like and, as I discuss at the end of this section, they shape what is seen/unseen and spoken/unspoken in looking at and talking about race, colonialism, and Aboriginal difference.

Mediated encounters are especially important in the absence of other kinds of presence and interaction. Although many participants argued that mediated experiences alone are not enough to make sense of their social worlds and the lives of others, few carry substantive memories of intimate or sustained experience with Aboriginal people. “To hear a story being told and in context,” one librarian says, “[is] just very different from trying to learn about a culture by taking a book out [of the library].” A construction worker declares, “You gotta know somebody. You can’t read about somebody in a book. You gotta actually meet him and talk to him.” I ask if he thinks many non-Aboriginal people do meet and talk to Aboriginal people. “I think there are a lot of them that know somebody who’s Native,” he replied, “but I think actually to be friends with somebody – to actually go out with them personally? To have a relationship with them? I’d say a majority of ‘em [don’t].”

And the majority of my participants indeed do not interact with Aboriginal people on a personal basis or have relationships with them. I asked them, “Do you know many Aboriginal people?” They answered:

“No, not really. I haven’t had a lot of exposure, no.”
“You know what? I don’t think I know any. Isn’t it gross?”
“Here and there. No… it doesn’t happen a lot in my life.”
“No, because there weren’t too many Aboriginals in the neighbourhoods I lived in.”
“There isn’t a lot of interaction. There aren’t a lot of opportunities.”
“I know a handful. I wouldn’t say that I’ve had opportunities to interact on a day-to-day [basis].”
“What’s many? Um, I know some? But I think that – no, I don’t know many. Personally. Within my social group, I would say no. Growing up? Growing up, no.”
“You know, nobody I know really knows Natives. They’re not really integrated into anybody’s social life. I would say in Vancouver I know none.”

Some participants think back and comment on their largely monochromatic childhoods, their elementary and high schools that had no Aboriginal students.

“At my school? Predominantly white. Very rarely anyone of… sort of ethnic origin. Very rare. It was a rural town. I kind of resent it now a bit,” one woman sighs.

“There were just white people where I grew up,” reflects another man, “There was, like, one Chinese person in our school.”

“I don’t even know if I grew up knowing any – any Native kids. It was a pretty white neighbourhood,” another participant remembers. Aside from a few Indo-Canadian and Asian Canadian families, “everybody else was pretty damn white.”

I return to issues of race and whiteness later in this chapter. What interests me here is the absence of direct encounter with Aboriginal people in childhood and contemporary adult lives for my participants. This absence puts added significance on looking relations. Without Aboriginal neighbours or friends, knowledge about Aboriginal alterity is produced through media, school lessons, and sometimes drive-by encounters, a base form of learning-by-looking. “How have I learned about Aboriginal people?” one participant asks, echoing my question. “Most of my information is from driving through Native reserves… which isn’t really in-depth information… just looking at the houses and the cars and that sort of thing.” Drive-bys, like coffee table books, involve scanning the surface, engaging in casual perusal (see Chapter 3). It is unidirectional, monologic. Participants carry memories of staring, glancing at, trying not to look, watching, and having nowhere to look but books and movies. They carry memories of spectacle.

“I distinctly remember when I came to Canada [in the 1960s],” a white woman recalls, “I saw someone who was Native and [I asked my stepfather], ‘Am I in any danger here? Of him?’ He said, ‘No! It’s not like that. It’s not John Wayne vs. the Indians!’” She smiles sheepishly now at her girlhood naiveté. Moving from California to Canada as a girl, she carried only a repository of westerns to make sense of the Indigenous population she saw in person for the first time in her new home on the Sunshine Coast. For her and other members of her generation, Hollywood films depicting the Wild West and its “Indian Wars” produced a vast corpus of memorable images of Native warriors riding on horseback and terrorizing white cowboys and frontier towns.
A woman from the Maritimes thought all Aboriginal people were killed by John Wayne (or real-life cowboys) until she went to university in the 1970s. “It’s true!” she said, smiling, “And then… I discovered that there are Aboriginal communities in the Maritimes, mostly the Mikmaqs.” She had never seriously considered that Native people existed contemporaneously with her. Several other participants recall playing “Cowboys and Indians” in backyards and on playgrounds. “I grew up in an era where the western was the big thing on television, okay?” one man says, “Steve McQueen, Wanted Dead or Alive, Gunsmoke… And then, of course, the Lone Ranger and Tonto.”

Each of these participants acknowledged that westerns offered fictional, sensationalized, and even racist representations of Indigenous people and of settler/Indigenous relations. Nonetheless, westerns form an archive of spectacular Aboriginality – headdresses, past violence, radical alterity – that continues to influence their imaginaries today, a haunting presence of past mediated encounters. As Comanche author and curator Paul Chaat Smith wryly observes, “If you live in North America, westerns are the Book of Genesis, the story of our lives. Attention must be paid” (2009:45). In his chapter, “The Big Movie,” he details the genealogy of the western genre and critiques its teleological narratives and placement of Indians in the past, always on the frontier, and on the losing end of binaries like “wilderness versus civilization, the individual versus community, savagery versus humanity” (49). The force of this genre and the image-meanings it produced continue to reverberate, in people’s memories and in more recent Hollywood films like the 2013 resurrection of The Lone Ranger and Tonto.

The spectacular Other depicted in westerns returns again and again. In addition to westerns, various participants have also seen Dances with Wolves (Costner 1990), the independent film Smoke Signals (Eyre 1998), and Little Big Man (Penn 2003), starring Chief Dan George of the local Tsleil-Waututh Nation. They have watched The Last of the Mohicans (Mann 2007), Black Robe (Beresford 1998), Nanook of the North (Flaherty 1999), Apocalypto (Gibson 2006), In the Land of the War Canoes (Curtis 1914) and the television show North of 60 and programs on the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network. They have listened to CBC radio documentaries and attended plays like Where the Blood Mixes (Loring 2009) and The Ecstasy of Rita Joe (Ryga 1971). They name feature films and documentaries as sites of encounter with representations of Aboriginality.
They cite books too: Vine J. Deloria’s *God is Red* (1994) and geographer Jared Diamond’s *Guns, Germs, and Steel* (1999). They have read W.P. Kinsella’s *Dance Me Outside* (1977); anthropologist Lewis Henry Morgan’s (2000) tale of cultural evolution, *Ancient Society*, starring the Iroquois; a memoir of violence and incarceration, *Stolen Life: A Journey of a Cree Woman* (Wiebe and Johnson 1999); children’s books like *The Indian in the Cupboard* (Banks 1980) and *I Heard the Owl Call My Name* (Craven 1973); books by Sherman Alexie and books on the Chilkoot Trail, on residential schools, and political organization; and an actual coffee table book featuring the art of Roy Henry Vickers (Bouchard and Vickers 1990). They pull these books off their figurative shelves as examples of their sources of knowledge, memories of Aboriginality on the pages of novels and history books.

They recall textbooks and school lessons, too, often with some degree of effort, to articulate processes of learning (or lack of learning) about Aboriginal peoples, histories, cultures, and politics. Even participants in their twenties have to reach back more than a decade to their Grade 4 units on tipis, totem poles, the Inuit, and Emily Carr’s famous paintings of empty landscapes dotted with remnants of Aboriginal material culture, to recall formal education about Aboriginality. They describe their school lessons on Indigenous people as scarce, abstract, depoliticized, impersonal, and detached from contemporary issues.

Three white men who grew up in Vancouver, now all in their thirties, shared distinct memories of school encounters with Aboriginality. One of the men, a library patron and clerical worker for Statistics Canada, compared learning about Aboriginal people in school as similar to “picking up a book and reading about China.” The topic had little resonance with his own experiences or connections to local issues and sense of place; it seemed foreign and distant. Another, a construction worker from Surrey, recounts a time in elementary school when he and his classmates were encouraged to bring traditional and family foods. An Aboriginal girl in his class, one of the few Aboriginal people at his school, brought salmon; he remembers thinking, “How typical,” but cannot recall anything else about the girl, the lesson, or other units with Aboriginal content.

The third man, a library patron now returning to school at a nearby college, remembers his enthusiasm when learning about a First Nations community for a Grade 4 project in an East Vancouver school. “It seemed like I was getting into something really,
really cool and worth learning about... And that was the last time that anything to do with Native showed up in my educational experience in any way that was... interesting or alive. The subject just went away.” He describes his formal education on Indigenous people as “criminally absent.” Formal education for these men and for other participants was variously foreign, forgettable, or absent. In a city of spectacular Aboriginality, they learned little about the real experiences of Aboriginal people. A recent graduate from an East Vancouver high school, located in an area with one of the highest concentrations of Aboriginal residents, gave me a blank smile when I mentioned the names of the three local First Nations. “I’ve only heard of, like, the Iroquois,” she admitted. She was surprised to learn that the traditional territories of the three communities include urban spaces.

A few participants mentioned museums as sites of mediated and passive encounter with Aboriginal material culture. They have seen totem poles, Aboriginal art, baskets, and architectural structures at the Luxton Museum in Banff, the Royal BC Museum in Victoria, the Royal Ontario Museum, and in Vancouver, the Bill Reid Gallery, the Museum of Vancouver, and the Museum of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia. One woman, now in her thirties, remembers visiting the Glenbow Museum in Calgary as a child. “They had a Canadian floor – the Mountie uniform with shiny brass buttons – and then it had a tipi! And it was part of the same floor and the same history, so you knew there’d been Indians in the Prairies and they’d interacted with the Mounties, but... it was a historical thing with no modern presence.” The historical narrative the museum presented failed to resonate, leaving only the memory of the tipi and the uniform and nothing to connect the dots historically or in present time.

Another participant recalls going to the Kamloops Museum as a boy in the 1970s. “[It] had a dugout canoe. I was fascinated by it as a kid! They also had on display a skeleton.” In the years since this early encounter, he has taken courses on First Nations history and culture, worked closely with Aboriginal communities in his capacity as a children’s librarian, and married a First Nations woman who is trying to ensure their children are rooted in their cultural traditions. Still, he carries that early experience of gazing at the canoe and the skeleton. “A real skeleton that had been on city property of an Aboriginal person. They had on display artifacts that had been sort of like... stolen... Yeah. Basically, stolen and on display and that’s how I learned about First Nations culture.” He later attached new meanings to the skeleton and the canoe that he did not
develop merely in the act of looking as a boy. Now these objects are symbols he carries not (only) of First Nations culture, but also of colonialism, theft, and problematic representations of Aboriginality. For him the museum display represents an example of pervasive racism and poor ethical engagement between non-Aboriginal institutions and Indigenous communities. For others, museum objects remain in the museums, not in their memories; they can only recall visiting the museum, not what they learned, saw, or experienced in their acts of looking. The impressions of these visits are faint and mentioned in interviews with a shrug.

A library staff member recounts what she calls her “steep learning curve” after getting involved with an Aboriginal project at the library. Before the project, she reflects, “I knew about [Aboriginal issues]… the way you might hear about, you know, earthquakes, hurricanes, whatever!” She articulates a sentiment that hovered beneath the surface in other interviews and research interactions I had. Non-Aboriginal patrons at the library or men at the construction site stared at me blankly at first when I brought up Aboriginal issues and asked about their processes of learning. Like earthquakes or hurricanes, or astronomy, the global markets, or AIDS in Africa, Aboriginal issues are for them something that comes up occasionally on the news or at school. Aboriginality is performed and on display. It is an abstraction, or a topic that can be picked up in conversation and set aside (an issue I return to in the section “A Bit of Guilt”). “You hear about things and you’re aware of them,” the librarian observes, “But if it’s not anybody you know, you’re not personally connected, then it’s abstract… I don’t know how many conversations I’d ever had with a First Nations person in my life. Two? In my life! Very limited… I had seen them perform, which may have informed some of my ideas, right?” Cultural performance informed her ideas of Aboriginality more than personal encounters because performance was simply more common; looking relations were her primary form of relating to Aboriginality at all.

Her experience is not unique. Other participants recall spectacles too: going to powwows and watching Expo ’86 performances with Aboriginal dancers. One woman linked Vancouver’s Opening Ceremony with the Calgary Stampede and Stanley Park’s Klahowya Village, labelling all three “shows”: “That is a show. It is not a one-on-one… no personal connection. It is the same as going and watching any other culture – a Bollywood movie… it’s based on observation, not interaction.” As Leslie Robertson (2005) notes, cultural performances are one of the few ways cultural Aboriginality is
made visible—both in the absence of interpersonal encounters but also when Indigenous people are present and proximate. Even for participants with Aboriginal friends, neighbours, or coworkers, cultural performances offer memorable and recognizable moments of marked cultural alterity.

For some participants, commenting on cultural expression offers an appropriate way to communicate and remark upon Aboriginal difference. Regalia, dancing, drumming, and other elements of performance and ceremony are easily identified as distinctly Aboriginal—an uncontested domain of cultural alterity. Other commentaries are often freighted with politics, racial undertones, or even racist stereotypes, creating discomfort for participants who associate talk about race and politics as impolite, ignorant, or otherwise inappropriate. In a context where looking relations reign supreme, and where race significantly shapes historical and contemporary policy and experiences, it is interesting that overt markers of cultural expression are emphasized over differentiation based on race and phenotype. Acknowledgement of race difference is something that is either disavowed or carried secretly, tucked away in a pocket, while acknowledgement of cultural difference can be brought into the open and discussed without harm or fear of judgment. Cultural spectacle provides a useful tool to avoid talking about spectres of historical and ongoing forms of racism.

Race thus becomes a phantom in talk about difference. Participants try to acknowledge Aboriginal difference, unable or unwilling to articulate that difference in racialized terms. This is simultaneously a no-go zone and a central feature of looking relations. Talking about books, movies, museums, school lessons, and drive-bys produces mediated images that, like images in coffee table books, are acceptable for show and tell and easily remembered. They are versions of spectacle: cultural not political, mediated not directly encountered, passively looked upon. Talking about race and politics, on the other hand, triggers a range of affective responses, memories, and reflections; these carried things are delicate and often hidden from view, spectral. I examine these things in the section, “A Bit of Guilt.” But first I examine spectacle further, turning my attention next to its material products: souvenirs, the most tangible things participants carry in settler coloniality.
Souvenirs

In Canada federally recognized Aboriginal people carry “status cards.” These cards confirm distinct “Indian status,” as defined in the Indian Act, and its attendant legal functions. Status cards reflect ongoing tensions between distinct Indigenous identity and racialized dimensions of colonial policy (cf. Lawrence 2003). Non-Aboriginal people do not carry status cards marked “settler,” “white,” or “immigrant.” The only tangible, material things they carry that are suggestive of colonial relations are souvenirs they have acquired, collected, or purchased from Aboriginal people or that feature their designs. Collected and consumed materials – gifted or store-bought, factory- or hand-made, touched, worn, and remembered – these objects signify a particular set of affective relations with Aboriginality in settler colonial Vancouver. Souvenirs made their way into my conversations with research participants and my fieldnotes as examples of the things non-Aboriginal people literally carry in their processes of learning, knowing, and experiencing Aboriginality in the city.

In Vancouver, souvenirs with Northwest Coast designs or other Aboriginal motifs are ubiquitous (see Chapter 4). The production and consumption of Aboriginalized souvenirs is bound up in histories of collection/theft and appropriation of Indigenous art, tensions around authenticity and artistic control and profit, colonial power relations, and questions about how to represent place and nation for tourists and residents (Phillips 1998:cf.; Roth 2013; Susan Stewart 1993; Thomas 1991). A thorough review of these issues is beyond the scope of this section. I describe instead how souvenirs carry affective attachments and storied associations for those who possess them, including my research participants. These stories convey the social lives of souvenirs and how possessing Aboriginalia can become a form of knowing and remembering encounters with Aboriginality. Souvenirs can also communicate a presence in a context of absence; for some participants, Aboriginalized objects carry meanings that have little to do directly with Aboriginal people or their relationships with them. Aboriginalia can therefore function as repositories of recognition, as art historian Adrian Franklin suggests, indexing

135 Sometimes souvenirs with Aboriginal designs are not produced with any Aboriginal involvement. For a discussion of Aboriginal-themed objects and the industry that produces them in Vancouver, see Roth (2013). Roth also details how Aboriginal people participate as consumers in the souvenir and artware market.
Aboriginality as present and familiar when otherwise it remains unseen or unheard, hidden from view (Franklin 2010; Gordon 2008).

My purpose here is not to denigrate souvenirs as vacuous objects of thoughtless tourism, but rather to consider their symbolic potentialities and limits for those who collect them. They are things with social lives and histories (Appadurai 1988). Souvenirs can operate as material memories. Anthropologist Solen Roth notes that the French noun “souvenir” refers to both an object and an “intangible ‘memory’ of something past” (2013:40). She cites Susan Stewart’s definition of souvenirs as objects “arising out of the necessarily insatiable demands of nostalgia,” rather than objects acquired out of need or use value (1993:135). Souvenirs are not simply objects, but objects with stories. They are keepsakes of childhood, reminders of place and time, sometimes kitschy but also sometimes beautiful and treasured. While often tokens of touristic experiences, souvenirs are not always from the past or a once-travelled place. Some are objects of the here-and-now, recently acquired and suggestive of home. Memories and meaning adhere to souvenirs. For some of my participants, Aboriginalized souvenirs offer material forms of Aboriginality to recall and describe as they attempt to articulate their (dis)connections to Aboriginal people. Their materiality can work against the abstraction of relations, creating meaning against negative space.

The souvenirs participants recall range from the quotidian and mass-produced – mugs, magnets – to the handmade and intricate, to the bizarre. One young library patron grew up in New Zealand and occasionally received gifts from her grandmother’s pen pal in Ontario: “like little Indian toys. One year, she sent a canoe – an inflatable canoe? In the pool? Like an Indian canoe.” These curious mementos indexed Canada and were her primary introduction to Canada’s Aboriginal people before arriving in person years later. Despite their seeming triviality, they piqued an early interest; on her first trip to the Mount Pleasant library, she checked out a tall stack of books from the Aboriginal collection. After living in Vancouver for six months, she could not recall meeting an Aboriginal person. Her childhood souvenirs and stack of library books served as her foundation for learning and knowing about Aboriginality. They took up space in the absence of human connection.

A Scots-Canadian man recalls visits to museums and his collection of what he calls “ephemera” to articulate his knowledge of Aboriginality. Some of his ephemera address local Indigenous archaeological sites, such as the Great Fraser Midden (see
Chapter 8), or artwork, such as Stanley Park’s totem poles (see Chapter 3). “Do you know who [the totem poles] belong to?” he asked me, rhetorically. “They belong to the Vancouver Arts and Historical Society.” Though he also notes that he has some Aboriginal friends and has attended cultural events, he especially emphasizes his collection of ephemera to communicate his processes of learning about Aboriginality: “I have a lot of background knowledge from reading those.” They make tangible what is otherwise intangible, unremarkable, or familiarly spectacle.

For two non-Aboriginal artist participants, Aboriginal art has served as an inspiration in their own artistic practice and they both express deep admiration for Aboriginal artists and their encounters with them have been deeply moving. They collect art and objects that remind them of these experiences. One participant has a collection of pottery from the American Southwest as well as other Aboriginal artworks. He has developed many connections with high-profile Canadian Aboriginal artists in Vancouver. He is proud of both his collection and connections. I ask how he got interested in Aboriginal art. “I’ve just always been attracted [to it]. I remember when I was a little boy in Victoria, I used to go watch Mungo Martin carving totem poles. I used to go down and watch him – I was fascinated by that.” Early looking relations inspired a lifetime of more looking and collecting.

The other artist used to work at the Museum of Northern British Columbia in Prince Rupert. There, she learned about Aboriginal art, carving, and stories from museum professionals and Tsimshian carvers. She was asked by the museum to illustrate a book of stories her friend heard from Tsimshian elders, and was pleased when Tsimshian women approved of her drawings. She also carved miniature longhouses for an education program and conducted considerable personal research to make sure they were accurate representations. “I got little pieces of cedar shake, and I carved them out and put them together. And one of my friends is a carver… and he gave me the first knife he ever had to carve that with.” She beamed, flushed with pride. “It was a like a curved knife… and he made it, and it was the first knife he had. I still got it… I’ve still got [his] first knife.” Wrapped up in the carver’s gift, she carries her memories of Prince Rupert, her artistic development, and her personal relationships with people she met there through her museum work. For these two artists, art and souvenirs signify entry points into deeper

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136 Mungo Martin was a famous Kw’ak̓wala’kw artist.
kinds of encounter – friendships and professional networks – than the pervasive sociality of looking relations allows.

For others, Aboriginal designs simply feature aesthetics they appreciate and admire. They talk about their souvenirs as a reflection of their personal taste. They evoke associations that have little to do with the Aboriginal artists that made them or their cultural traditions, but that nonetheless carry significant meaning in their lives. “It’s a seawolf,” a librarian explains, showing me her wedding ring. “My husband and I chose it because it’s a symbol of family.” She cannot immediately recall the artist’s name and she emails me later, embarrassed that she had forgotten. Another librarian also wears a Northwest Coast-style wedding band. Neither the librarians nor their spouses are Aboriginal, but their wedding ring designs are important symbols for them. Their adoption of Aboriginal symbols to reflect their values and relationships is enabled by the spectacularization of Aboriginal art in Vancouver: distinctive yet familiar, cultural not political, generalized and abstract not place-based and specific.

Jewelry and clothing with Northwest Coast designs are popular among tourists and locals alike, and are often given as gifts. An Irish construction worker remembers an expensive jacket with Aboriginal designs hanging in a show window; it makes him think of his mother. He wanted to buy it for her but could not afford it. “Oh I like Native art, yeah,” he says. “I’ve sent a lot of it back to my little niece, my godchild. Like a lot of earrings, bracelets.” He thinks Native art is pretty and he looks for pieces to share with his family to show them his affection. Another participant arrived for our interview wearing a red and black coat that was clearly inspired by button blankets of the north coast. When I commented on it, she looked down at herself and said, “I did that completely unintentionally! My sister got this for me for Christmas one year… It is nice! She bought it in Calgary.” Before retiring, the woman taught English as a second language and used to wear the coat on the day she taught a unit about different words for animals. The memories attached to her coat are of her sister and teaching; its Aboriginal-inspired design is secondary to the other associations the souvenir now represents.

While some souvenirs circulate as gifts, creating affective connections between giver and receiver, others are objects of nostalgia and childhood. One participant remembers how, as a boy growing up in Edmonton, he looked forward to the Klondike Days, a festival that celebrated the Gold Rush. The local radio station gave away paper headdresses. “Like with big headdress feathers? Right on! That was like a prized
“possession!” He smiles at this simple pleasure, recalling how he and his friends would make a point each year to get their headdresses and how festival-goers would dress up as cowboys and gold-diggers. Though his best friend growing up was Aboriginal, the headdress sticks out in his mind as a memorable symbol of Indianness, a symbol he now recognizes as stereotypical but nonetheless evocative of childhood fun, spectacle materially memorialized.

Another library patron moved to Canada from Europe as a girl in the 1950s. “I don’t know why, but there was this curiosity,” she remembers about her early experiences with Aboriginal people and material culture. She recalls a basket she purchased from an Aboriginal woman on a family car trip, a cherished possession. “Whenever we went [on vacation], we’d stop at Peterborough [Ontario]… There were craftworks done by Aboriginals… I was only about twelve when I saw this beautiful birchbark container – like a basket, done out of birchbark, and all finished in porcupine quills… The [seam] was done with sweetgrass. [It] just astounded me. And I bought it as this, you know, little girl going to town, and loving this work and craftwork.” She purchased this souvenir because she appreciated its beauty and the skill of the craftswoman who made it. She recalls the basket more than the woman, the act of buying the basket and her feelings of awe more than her encounter with its maker. “I think it was at a gas station or a diner. You know, [we] stopped for a break or a snack.”

She shared this memory in a list of souvenirs, art, and cultural tourism experiences she enumerated to chronicle her interactions with Aboriginal people in her long life. This list represents her closest encounters with Aboriginality and therefore also communicates her distance from Aboriginal people in her everyday life. Her encounters are mediated, discrete experiences that are out of the ordinary, and objectified through art and collection. For her and many others, souvenirs, art, and tourism register as primary forms of encounter that take on increased significance in the absence of opportunities for other kinds of relations. Another man recalls a basket he used for years as a letter tray. He purchased it from an Aboriginal woman on his way to Whistler; he remembers that she sat on the porch with newspapers tucked into her socks to keep away the flies.

Around Vancouver it is common to see people carrying Native Northwest brand mugs or wearing Xwa Lack Tun hoodies (see Chapter 4). Some people even carry formline designs on their bodies: tattoos of thunderbirds, orcas, and eagles. I invited a library patron to talk with me about his impressions of Aboriginality. He said he would
have little to contribute, as he’s from Mexico and is only in Vancouver periodically. But he proudly showed me his Olympic watch with its inukshuk logo and rolled up his sleeve to display his Northwest Coast-inspired tattoo. “Who’s the artist?” I asked. “A guy down on Granville,” he replied, crediting a non-Aboriginal tattoo artist for an anonymized Aboriginal artist’s work. “I printed it off the internet and he did it up for me.”

The ubiquity of Aboriginal imagery, souvenirs, and public art in Vancouver has an accumulative effect of signalling Indigenous presence and visibility when there is in fact little substantive social connection, another example of spectacular Aboriginality haunted by spectres. Not only in my research interactions, but also in casual conversations with friends, family, and personal acquaintances, stories about Aboriginal materiality, like stories about Aboriginal performance, become familiar substitutes for stories about social interactions: the social lives of things, not people, are circulated and remembered. A collection of arrowheads sit on my friend’s father’s windowsill, collected from a nearby beach and midden site. While he cannot recall the name of local Indigenous peoples, he can identify an arrowhead amidst other rocks. Friends buy their children Native Northwest counting and alphabet books and take them to the Klahowya Village, but have few if any friendships with Aboriginal families in nearby neighbourhoods. Dreamcatchers hang on walls and from rearview mirrors.

Aboriginalized souvenirs are held close amidst social distance; they are concrete and tangible while other forms of settler colonial relations seem abstract and ambiguous – spectral. Souvenirs make Aboriginality palatable, recognizable, memorable, and consumable. Sometimes consumption is recalled as a form of responsible consumerism and support (of Aboriginal artists, for example, or the Indigenous art market), while other times souvenirs are purchased because they are imbued with cultural and spiritual meanings that are of relevance to the consumer. Sometimes the stories attached to Aboriginalia are not about Aboriginal people or culture at all, serving instead as reminders of events or moments that are significant for the consumer or collector apart from Aboriginalized associations.

Souvenirs function as “repositories of recognition” that circulate images of Aboriginality around the city and that participants use to re-collect something, anything, or a range of things about their experiences with Aboriginality. They are kept and carried because of their aesthetic, symbolic, sensory, and memorial qualities. They were carried into interviews as mnemonic devices, as material examples of knowledge production.
Ephemera, jewelry, arrowheads, clothing, pots, baskets, a carving knife, an inflatable canoe: these objects operate as touchstones of memory and markers of place, time, and connection at the same time as they signal distance and even absence (Morgan and Pritchard 2005).

**A Bit of Guilt**

In an essay on First Nations in his book *Vancouver Special*, local stand-up comedian Charles Demers writes about his “nervousness about getting it wrong”: “There has been no greater satire of white liberal (or, in this case, white radical) guilt-paranoia than my prepping to write this essay. What if I spelled something wrong, marking me as a racist?” He jokes, “If the people can’t count on a 2,500-word essay by a white stand-up comedian to sum up thousands of years of Coast Salish history and centuries of European colonial-settlerism [sic], then what can they count on?” (2009:119). Like my participant’s third phrase in his description of settler colonial relations – “coffee table books, souvenirs, and a bit of guilt” – Demers references white guilt, an imprecise and incomplete gloss often used to describe settler feelings of self-reproach and blame for historical mistreatment of Aboriginal people in the colonial era. In fact, a much broader and more complex range of affective relations are carried by non-Aboriginal people in settler coloniality: discomfort, confusion, frustration, anxiety, hope, ambivalence, defensiveness, bewilderment, indifference, weariness. Each of these descriptors, too, like guilt, is an imprecise label that only partially captures what is going on affectively in the emergent present of Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal relations.

Kathleen Stewart writes, “Ordinary affects are public feelings that begin and end in broad circulation, but they’re also the stuff that seemingly intimate lives are made of…. The question they beg is not what they might mean in an order of representations, or whether they are good or bad in an overarching scheme of things, but where they might go and what potential modes of knowing, relating, and attending to things are already somehow present in them in a state of potentiality and resonance” (2007:2–3). I layer together participants’ observations and commentaries, not to construct an exhaustive review, but to offer a series of glimpses into affective experience and reflection. I offer some analytic commentary throughout but avoid specifically categorizing participants’ myriad experiences by labels or classes of affects or emotions. While I recognize
limitations of this approach, my hope is that these bits of conversations will convey the “potential modes of knowing, relating, and attending to things” that are spectrally present in a context of spectacle: emergent, ordinary affective processes of meaning-making about Aboriginal politics, race, and colonial relations in Vancouver today. More than “a bit of guilt” surfaces, revealing a diverse set of affective resources participants carry as they make sense of Aboriginal alterity and settler colonialism.

Like Demers, many of my participants express discomfort in talking about their impressions of Aboriginality in Vancouver. Worried about misrepresenting a complex history and politically-charged present, concerned about saying the “wrong thing” or something unintentionally racist, they hold their breath, hold their tongue, hold their judgment. Not only white liberals or radicals carry this discomfort. A moderately conservative construction worker apologizes to his co-worker with Métis heritage for disliking coastal First Nations art, then falls silent. “Just say it man!” his friend insists, amicably, “You’re not going to offend me! … Don’t worry!” But he hesitates and stays silent – he does worry, concerned that his preferences will mark him as ignorant or insensitive. Another man admits, “I mean, I’m nervous myself, even talking [now]… because I realize some of my opinions – what if they’re taken the wrong way?”

Once they do get talking, they begin to share stories of formative experiences, tentative reflections on their own and others’ behaviours or thoughts, comments on difference and sameness. Sometimes they get talking and then stop themselves. They refrain from discussing challenging topics – residential schools, land claims, poverty on reserves – sometimes because they fear they might reproduce colonial attitudes of knowing what’s best for Indigenous people. “A lot of shitty stuff happened,” one woman says. “There’s a lot with, like Native self-government and all that stuff… and I feel like, okay, I have no say in that whatsoever because it’s so not about me… They have to find a way to make things right with the government I guess… My opinion of what I think should be a good way to deal with things… doesn’t matter.” So she withholds her opinion, or tries not to form one at all (see Chapter 8). Another woman, a childcare worker in a Mount Pleasant school, begins to reflect on what she perceives to be cultural divides between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal forms of childrearing. She attributes these differences to residential schools, and stops herself from expressing further judgment. “Because of what… as a society… for the most part… White folks! – let’s just say [it]! – did to their families… We can’t go there anymore.” Her basic knowledge of
harmful white intervention in the lives of Indigenous families gives her pause as she sees herself in its pattern; she draws a line and refuses to “go there” beyond it. The idea haunts her and limits any desire to speak further.

Others also struggle to relate a history of harmful colonial relations and locate themselves within and beyond it, to acknowledge shared histories seemingly separated by space, race, policy, and time. Spoken from (sometimes acknowledged) positions of relative privilege, they are able to engage in reflection on the traumas of colonialism, and withdraw from them on their own terms. “You can feel it too much,” one participant says, commenting on a museum exhibit that used sound and photos to evoke the experience of language loss in a northern community. He left the exhibit, not unmoved but largely unphased. The experience affected him, but he prefers to push this aside instead of feeling “too much.” Another participant recalls reading a memoir of an Aboriginal woman that details her child sexual abuse, adult alcoholism, her grandmother’s spiritual teachings, and her participation in murdering a man and subsequent trial and imprisonment. “Don’t read it unless you’re feeling strong,” my participant advises me, a white woman warning another white woman about the pain a Native woman’s pain might cause. They carry these things, but at arm’s length, not too close to the heart for it might hurt too much.

Talking about Aboriginality, race, and colonialism pushes them outside of their comfort zones. “They make it difficult,” one woman says quietly when I ask how Aboriginal people fit into her conceptions of self, history, and place. They make it difficult because they return again and again with their claims on land and stories of injustice, unsettling her otherwise good feelings about Canada; her beliefs in equality, justice, and the promise of democracy; and her own sense of self as a product of a good family and collegiate education, rather than a product of impersonal structural relations and class and race privilege. When looking relations turn inward, into self-reflection, it can be disorienting, upsetting, or surprising. Several participants shared after our interviews that they had never given much thought or consideration to their experiences with Aboriginal people or ideas about Aboriginality before. They understood our conversations as a starting point and a messy assemblage of emergent reflections, not a neat summary of all their accumulated memories, stories, and thoughts: meaning in the making rather than fully formed, present but below the surface, spectral.

“I meet people. I don’t meet their race. I don’t meet their background,” a white construction worker asserts in an interview at the site, “In fact, if this whole [research
project] never happened or you coming by, I probably wouldn’t even have known Mike and Tim were Native.” He pauses, smiles, then admits, “Well, I would [have], but I don’t think about it, right?” My research called attention to racial knowledges that he is keen to downplay or not think about. Our conversation brought things up that he would rather not discuss, things he has not fully articulated before. He, like several other participants, prefers to not see – or to see and not say or think about – race difference, exhibiting a racial ideology sociologist Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2003) calls “colour-blind racism.”

“They’re just other Canadian people,” one man claims.

“I wouldn’t even say he looked Aboriginal because honestly I didn’t really know what they looked like,” another woman says, recalling a university classmate, “He looked like a Canadian, the way all Canadians look different.”

Expressions of colour-blindness and generalizable racial diversity suggest uneasiness around recognizing race difference. For several white participants, colour-blindness and other forms of minimizing racial difference is an appropriate response to living in a racially diverse place. They claim to embrace difference by way of indifference, to banish spectres of historical racism by imagining they have disappeared leaving “just other Canadian people” in their place. Some note that you’re not always able to “tell” if someone is Aboriginal or not, recounting stories of discovering a blue-eyed co-worker is Aboriginal after years of working together or suggesting that racial difference is subsidiary to other ways of identifying Aboriginality.

The woman who said, “He looked Canadian, the way all Canadians look different,” further explained: “I’m not good at telling people apart because I was never taught to focus on that?” Not only was she never taught to focus on “that” – phenotypic difference – she was also taught to never focus on that, to avoid actively acknowledging racial difference, even when difference is visible and is attached to a range of racialized expectations. Whiteness in fact enables disavowals of racialized recognition. Participants can deny that race is significant or even real in part because they associate recognizing race with racism and in part because it causes discomfort, or because they do not identify themselves in racialized terms. Like the participants above who put aside heavy feelings, they put aside race difference because they do not know what to do with it. It haunts them: now you see it, now you don’t, but it’s still there. “In this interview, you’ve heard

me reference white people and being a white girl,” the woman quoted above continued, “And I have cringed every time I’ve said it because I hate doing that… because I don’t think about myself like that. And I don’t enjoy thinking about myself like that.” Colour-blindness, then, offers a pathway out of discomfort, a form of meaning-making and looking relations that reduces cognitive dissonance and confusing feelings.

But colour-blindness has its limits. In a frank moment, she says, “The only reason you would notice somebody as distinctly Aboriginal is if they were being the drunk Indian on the bus. Because, um… physically? Unless there’s something that’s really distinguishing them, an Aboriginal looks just like any other Canadian… unless they self-identify through something. You know, perhaps their hair.” In his analysis of colour-blind racism, Bonilla-Silva explores how white people “talk nasty” about blacks while simultaneously deploying discursive strategies to disavow the existence of race difference (2002). Talking about the proverbial “drunk Indian on the bus” reproduces a deep racial stereotype in the very act of denying phenotypic distinction. Public drunkenness and hairstyle mark difference in social behaviour and style, replacing now widely unpopular notions of biological race difference or politically incorrect talk about skin colour.

Another man also uses drunkenness to describe Aboriginal alterity, again distancing himself from racist expression even as he participates in it, “Well, I see them. Most of them are drunk, but they’re quite nice people. I don’t want to be one of those white guys who says ‘all Native people are drunk’ – and they don’t all drink – but many of the ones I’ve met do.” Anthropologist Elizabeth Furniss (1999) examines the trope of the drunk Indian in conversations among white middle-class people in Williams Lake, British Columbia. She suggests that casual or joking comments about Native drunkenness are examples of conversational discourses that transform “mundane acts… into highly meaningful events constituting proof of Euro-Canadian assumptions of Aboriginal ‘difference’” (108-109).

Another way the spectre of race difference is acknowledged is through recounted stories of witnessed racism, a narrative strategy that acknowledges race as relevant and real while also labelling mistreatment based on race as unjust, immoral, or otherwise inappropriate. Participants implicitly contrast their own racial knowledges and expressions with stories of friends, family, and acquaintances. A white participant expresses frustration with her mother’s habit of marking race difference in banal stories, such as talking about a black man in line at Safeway when his race has no bearing on the
rest of her story. Another remembers her father talking about “half-breeds” at his workplace in the 1950s: “It sounds like… not the right word to use,” she recalls, uncomfortably.

Another man explains, “A family friend might make comments… or… you hear in the news… I come from a family with some fairly traditional values [and they] have racist undertones, either explicit or implicit. Kind of disparaging comments based on observation… I mean, unfortunately our experiences with a lot of Aboriginal cultures is… people focus on what stands out, what’s negative.” He pauses, deciding how to continue. “You’ll notice someone [Aboriginal] in front of a liquor store,” he says, coming up with a hypothetical example. “A family member – a father, whatever – will say something like, ‘Oh, why can’t you just get a job?’ ‘They lost the war a long time ago.’ … I’ve always been a very open-minded individual, but early information and those early opinions from family go a really long way – to really pushing you towards that.” He pauses again. “And then you grow up and you realize, hey, wait a minute. There’s a larger story here.” But those comments and opinions of others stick around – they haunt even as they morph into cautionary tales of casual racism, causing uneasiness.

A few stories of witnessed acts of racism involve the police. A Filipino-Canadian woman’s son found an Aboriginal woman’s ID card around the time that news of serial killer Robert Pickton came out (see Chapter 3). She turned the card into police, who showed little interest. She asked, “Don’t you want to know where I found it?” A police representative replied, “Ah, these Native women, they’re always losing their ID cards.” Appalled, she demanded that they follow up on it.138 “Who knows if those investigations into the missing women were handled in the way they were because of attitudes like that?” she asked, reflecting on the incident. “It made me really sick… It’s systemic.” In this story, she omits any discussion of how she knew the woman pictured on the ID was Aboriginal, and uses police indifference to express her knowledge and disapproval of systemic forms of racism. The spectre of race is uncanny, present even as it is disavowed.

In another story, a man recalls a time he and a friend were driving on Hastings Street and saw two men fighting. The men were near the street and he and his friend were worried their fight would spill over into oncoming traffic. They called 9-1-1. The operator on the phone said, “Oh, are they Aboriginal?” They were, but he and his friend were

138 The police followed up with her weeks later to tell her they had returned the ID card to its owner.
surprised by the question. “Like why is that relevant? … We said, ‘I don’t know what they are.’ I mean we knew they were. Thinking back, perhaps they had another call, they were making sure it was the same incident. It’s possible. [But] … what’s it matter? They’re throwing each other into traffic? Are you going to come save them?” This incident highlights ambiguities involved in recognizing and naming race difference. “I don’t know what they are” in this instance is not so much an expression of colour-blindness (“We knew they were”); rather it is a statement that, given the context, it shouldn’t matter – the men are in danger and regardless of their race, emergency personnel should intervene. The situation raises the question, “What’s it matter?” In this instance, my participant suggests the men’s race shouldn’t matter, but the spectre that it might – that naming the men’s Aboriginality might affect the operator’s actions and prevent him or her from sending someone to help – keeps him and his friend from speaking of difference. The question reverberates in his memory and comes to mind when I ask him to reflect on his encounters with Aboriginal people.

The question “What’s it matter?” is a fraught one. In fact, Aboriginal alterity matters on a number of social, political, and economic levels. Aboriginal difference is made manifest in different material conditions and access to resources; rates of incarceration, education, and poverty; health and wellness statistics; and risk of violence. Aboriginality matters according to these measures even if it should not according to metrics of morality, justice, or human rights or ideological belief in equality. Distinctive Aboriginal identity also matters for Indigenous communities striving to maintain cultural and political distinction. It matters significantly in their struggles to assert fishing, hunting, and other resource rights, in their exercises of sovereignty and self-governance, and their efforts toward restitution, reconciliation, and recognition. These are the contexts where difference is desired and defended, though Indigenous people emphasize their political, not racial, distinction. To say “they’re just other Canadian people” in response to these struggles works to avoid, obfuscate, or even deny serious consideration of political difference. In vanishing the spectres of racism by denying difference altogether, Indigenous identity can also be made to disappear, only to reappear again, revenant.

Aboriginal people’s desired and defended difference can be especially disconcerting when participants try to position themselves relationally and to question their role and responsibilities. One participant asks, “Is there a social responsibility on my part to learn more? Maybe there is… Do we inherit the problems that come down?” He
sits quietly with the question. Another participant echoes his sentiments: “As a white Canadian with ancestors who’ve been here in some cases a very long time, what is my responsibility?” She finds the temporalities of injustice and inequality challenging: how does she fit in historically and today? What role did her family play in processes of dispossession? “I wasn’t born yet,” she says. “And my ancestors were busy starving on a farm in Ontario. Was that farm originally Aboriginal land? Who knows.” “Time is out of joint” so she carries the uncanny feeling of historical and social distance amid linked histories and a sense of abstract, familial culpability (Derrida 1994; see Chapter 8).

Indigenous rights to land and cultural practices are also haunting, raising again and again uncomfortable questions. How can the government appropriately address historical dispossession after generations of non-Aboriginal settlement? How can traditional rights be enacted in the present? Can contemporary equipment be used for hunting or are rights frozen in pre-contact practices? Can resource distribution be regulated and enforced on reserve to avoid inequalities there? How does this work when resources are distributed unevenly among the general population? How does recent economic development affect communities that have endured generations of poverty? How can self-governance be effectively achieved while also adhering to national and provincial laws? Participants hold few clear answers to these questions; some have never considered them before. They trail off, play devil’s advocate, ask more questions, and fold their hands in resignation.

They fill this spectral space with personal stories of gaps in knowledge and experience, or of formative encounters that shaped them and their ideas. “So I can tell you that in my 20s, I didn’t know anything,” one woman, now in her 40s, states. She occasionally heard news stories about fishing rights or land claims. “And I used to get very upset because I thought, well, if the government… lets the Native people have the right to the land, where’s everybody going to move to?” She found the issue frustrating and unsettling. “Everybody would have to move out of the cities and go live in a different country!” She began working as a reporter, traveling to northern reserve communities in Manitoba. She vividly remembers a tense encounter with an Aboriginal law student. “[He] got really angry at me when I said, ‘Well, where’s everybody going to move? … He grew up knowing… learning about what the issues were at a very young age, on a much bigger level… He couldn’t believe that nobody knew all of this. And I was coming from a position of, ‘What’s it all about?’” This story helps her to articulate her gap in
knowledge about Aboriginality, a gap she only discovered as an adult and had not
previously known to exist: the moment a ghost made itself known. Her encounter with the
law student condenses and signifies the limits and possibilities of knowing in settler
coloniality, the chasm that she feels must be bridged as or before substantive
conversations and social change occurs.

Sometimes these gaps are constituted and experienced spatially. “There were
reserves outside of Calgary,” one participant recalls, “I never consciously, as a child or
even really as a young adult, associated the piece of land with having people on it.
Obviously I knew that, but… it was outside of the city limits and you just didn’t go there!
The road went around it. And not even in a big mysterious way… No, it was a reserve, it
was there, we didn’t go there, that was it! There was nothing.” Gaps like these –
revelations of “nothings” – can be instructive, if made visible. One man remembers a
childhood friend, a Native boy, who seemed to always be around in the summer but did
not attend his local neighbourhood school. He recalls him as part of the gang, playing
baseball and running around with the rest of his buddies. Decades later, after learning
about the residential school system for the first time, he began to speculate that the boy
was sent away each year to one of the schools. The thought offers him a critical glimpse
into the workings of privilege, and its haunts him. While he enjoys memories of a happy
childhood, his friend may have had experiences of an altogether different sort. Stories of
residential school abuses and neglect, heretofore spectral and abstract, become more
personal and more deeply troubling as he remembers the boy. He carries dark questions
about what happened to him as his own carefree boyhood is recast in a sinister light.

Sometimes it is not gaps but overlaps that provide insights about difference. For
some participants of colour, a form of relating to Aboriginal difference comes through as
a kind of multicultural or racialized empathy, informed by common experiences of
discrimination, ethnic trauma, or community solidarity. A Filipino-Canadian librarian and
a Kurdish-Canadian university student each expressed feelings of connection with
Aboriginal people because of their mutual heritage based in colonization. “I just feel a
kinship,” one reflects.

An Indo-Canadian woman grew up with a close Aboriginal friend and later
befriended an Aboriginal neighbour as an adult. They related to one another as girls and
women of colour in an increasingly multiracial city, and she relayed memories of them
while describing the immigrant children and families in her neighbourhood. “Immigrant
children did tend to kind of stick together.” A Jewish-Canadian man recalls the anger and frustration Aboriginal activists expressed when he was working in a Downtown Eastside non-profit organization, which he understood: “Some Jewish people can only talk about the Holocaust and Jewish suffering… it is overwhelming.” While these examples illustrate feelings of “kinship” through shared experiences, stories of empathic connection were not universally shared by non-white participants. Some did not comment on their own racialized identities in relation to Aboriginality at all. Others emphasized distinction from Aboriginal people because of immigration and other social processes. Others said they knew “nothing” about Aboriginal people at all.

Many participants’ commentaries demonstrate critical thought about Aboriginality. Even when their ideas about Aboriginal alterity are largely shaped through looking relations, they are reflexive and mobilize stories, memories, and observations to articulate their experiences. Aboriginality is refracted through their various lenses and perspectives. They recall specific events to distill the complex everyday semiotics of race and colonialism.

For example, a white participant recalls how, as a boy, he occasionally met Aboriginal men in prison while accompanying his grandfather, an Anglican minister, on trips there. Although he had few other opportunities for encounter, a particularly profound experience on a family camping trip affected him deeply and opened an opportunity for critical reflection. While sleeping alone in a tent on his family’s campsite in northern BC, he was robbed at knifepoint by an Aboriginal man. The police arrived, and then local elders, who sent the police away saying they did not know who the perpetrator could be. They then explained to his parents, “We know who this is. We’re going to take care of it our way.” An elder approached him and said, “I’m so sorry. I don’t want this to make you scared of or to hate Native people – this is not Native people. We know who this troubled person is and we’re going to help him.” He took the elders words to heart. “[I]t made me determined… to sort of look at my prejudices and biases. And try to… make sure things are balanced.” The haunting experience stays with him, returning again to remind him how to think and act in the present and future.

In interviews participants discussed how they know, feel, interpret, and think about Aboriginality and their relations to Aboriginal people. Our conversations opened opportunities for insight into their interiorities, the things – stories, memories, ideas, questions – they carry but only occasionally express: things about race and racism,
colonialism and its contemporary reverberations, personal encounters and what happens outside or beyond their view. Of course there are many things they did not – or cannot – explicitly express: an unformed question, a nagging feeling, a forgotten encounter, a whole series of banalities that shape their experiences and ways of knowing without notice or reflection; these are spectres too. Spectres also animate silences: silences based on other silences and gaps in knowing, stories and things unknown; silences shaped by ideas of what can/cannot or should/should not be said; uncomfortable silences; unwitting silences.

Their articulated sentiments combined with silences and unexpressed or suppressed affects form the repository of resources they use and activate in their ongoing processes of meaning-making. The interview excerpts I have collected in this section present an incomplete picture of the “potential modes of knowing, relating, and attending to things” my participants shared to describe their relations to Aboriginality (Stewart 2007:2). This accumulative account conveys the ambivalent, affective conditions of the settler colonial present in Vancouver, and how these conditions are shaped through spectral memories of past encounters, impressions of race and racism, and gaps, overlaps, and silences. Settlers carry not just “a bit of guilt,” but also confusion, uneasiness, curiosity, and discomfort. Their affective bundles are part and parcel of their experiences and explanatory efforts.

Conclusion

Using a participant’s conceptual frame of “coffee table books, souvenirs, and a bit of guilt,” this chapter has been an attempt to write analysis that “rhetorically enable[s] intimacy” (Goodall, 2000:14) and “enact[s] the density, texture, and force of a lived cultural poetics” (Kathleen Stewart 1996:3). It has been exercise in giving my subjects and subject matter dimensionality and form, employing what Renato Rosaldo has called “double vision”: an analytical perspective that evolves through the oscillation between “the viewpoint of a social analyst and that of his or her subjects” (1993:128). I have offered an inventory of the things my participants carry in settler coloniality, a history of the emergent present told through their affective explanations (Bunzl 2004).

Rosaldo states, “Each viewpoint is arguably incomplete – a mix of thought and blindness, reach and limitations, impartiality and bias – and taken together they achieve
neither omniscience nor a unified master narrative but complex understandings of ever-changing, multifaceted social realities” (1993:129). Rather than incorporating social actors’ narratives as “ornamental, a dab of colour,” Rosaldo advocates privileging participants’ ideas and interpretations, acknowledging the important ways in which they shape our own forms of anthropological knowledge (see also Reed-Danahay 1993; Bashkow 2006). It helps ensure that our anthropological interpretations freshly and authentically reflect contemporary social realities rather than wrap them in stale or ill-fitting theoretical analyses (Thomas 1997; Mills and Gibb 2001).

Inventories of privilege and inequalities are valuable, as are deconstructions of the legacy of Kipling’s White Man’s Burden, but this chapter has presented a different kind of unpacking: a contemporary settler colonial update on McIntosh’s invisible knapsack that suggests that non-Aboriginal participants carry an array of perspectives and affective attachments to Aboriginality (McIntosh 1990). Their experiences with looking relations, enabled by contexts of spectacle and symbolized by the coffee table book, demonstrate forms of social distance and mediated encounter they contend with in forming their ideas of Aboriginality. Their stories of looking relations suggest a need to further explore how they participate in the production of social distance and to attend to the formative events that go beyond looking.

Souvenirs are material connections to Aboriginality, worn, displayed, collected, and remembered in ways that reflect and deflect the complexities of social relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal members of society. Their use and collection conveys both aesthetic appreciation of Aboriginal art and material culture and consumptive and appropriative desires. As material objects, souvenirs distill encounters and produce feelings of familiarity amidst spectacle and disconnection.

Beneath “a bit of guilt” surges a range of affective associations produced through non-Aboriginal conceptions of racism, racialization, colonialism, and inequality. These affective bundles, spectrally present, significantly influence potential pathways toward understanding, decolonizing, reconciling, and reckoning, and must be further explored sensitively and openly in thinking critically about settler colonialism. Recognizing that many participants have limited personal encounters with Aboriginal people means that places of proximity and contact may need additional attention to identify how encounters
are avoided, facilitated, and made meaningful, as I have tried to do in my analyses of the library and construction site (Chapters 5 and 6).  

As anthropologists, we continually unpack the things our participants carry into a range of social contexts, exploring how they respond to and create change. In order to analyse the history of the settler colonial present and approach a decolonizing future, we need to explore the things settlers carry in addition to the things carried by the colonized and marginalized, as I have demonstrated throughout this dissertation and emphasize in my next chapter. In this chapter, I unpacked and inventoried participants’ affective bundles to convey how settler knowledge production about Aboriginal alterity is wrapped up in memory, performance, hearsay, collected items, art, weariness, formative experiences, racialized gazes, and self-reflection.

The American soldiers in Tim O’Brien’s fictional account of the Vietnam War carried equipment, fear, good luck charms, the earth, and longing, all of which they mobilized to make sense of a complex conflict and their place within it. To make sense of a settler colonial place and Aboriginal alterity, my participants carry birchbark baskets, awkward silences, the Calgary Stampede, vacant school lessons. They carry stories of drive-by and intimate encounters, museum visits, Aboriginal friends and acquaintances, and monochromatic childhoods. They carry colour-blind attitudes, recollections of racist incidents and casual conversation, and questions about racial and cultural difference. They carry diverse things produced in spectacle and spectral things that are difficult to articulate. They carry a collection of southwestern pots, the Lone Ranger and Tonto, feelings of familiar unfamiliarity, concern, indifference, weariness, and discomfort. Individually, these fragments of stories and materials may seem trivial, insignificant, or idiosyncratic. Joined together, however, a new account is formed that is greater than the sum of these parts, a narrative that reveals the multidimensional quality of meaning-making in a spectacular and spectral settler colonial time and place.

139 Sites of knowledge production in the absence of personal encounter, such as school lessons, media, museums, and performance spaces, also offer valuable opportunities to continue to reassess the affective effects of representational practices.
Chapter 8: Conclusion

In this dissertation, I have examined how non-Aboriginal people construct and relate to Aboriginality in the city. I have demonstrated that spectacular representations of Aboriginal art, performance, and inequality combine with the haunting, revenant presence of unsettled land claims and racialized/spatialized colonial legacies to shape non-Aboriginal people’s everyday forms of meaning-making. I have also shown that spectral tensions emerge in spectacular efforts to include Aboriginal Others, as witnessed during the 2010 Winter Olympic Games, as well as in ordinary inclusion initiatives like the BladeRunners program and the Mount Pleasant library branch.

The purposes of this conclusion are two-fold: to summarize the limitations, strengths, and primary contributions of this dissertation and to consider its broader implications for decolonization in a settler colonial place. In particular, I show that efforts toward Aboriginal inclusion that involve non-Aboriginal participation would benefit from critical attention to the ways non-Aboriginal people can meaningfully and appropriately engage in decolonization, collaboration, and corrective efforts to historical exclusion without co-opting processes of Aboriginal exercises of self-determination.

In line with Paulette Regan’s argument in Unsettling the Settler Within (2010), I contend that non-Aboriginal people can contribute to the decolonization process by adopting a reflexive and self-critical approach in relation or parallel to efforts toward Aboriginal inclusion. I ask how to avoid reproducing an “Indian problem” approach, which places the onus of responsibility of social change, equity, and recognition on Aboriginal peoples themselves. How does such an approach absolve non-Aboriginal people from responsibility for shifting settler colonial conditions? What is entailed in directing focus to the “settler problem” (Epp 2012; Regan 2010)? What is possible in a shift toward a dialogic approach that emphasizes relationality as well as difference (Donald 2012)? And how can this orientation mediate, and potentially transform, conditions of spectacle and spectrality in the settler colonial city of Vancouver?

Spectacle, Spectrality, and the Everyday: Strengths and Contributions

In this dissertation I have argued that dialectic conditions of spectacle and spectrality shape how non-Aboriginal people relate to Aboriginal people and Indigeneity
in Vancouver. I have examined how my participants construct difference in an uncanny time and place: when/where Aboriginality is simultaneously visible and invisible, present and past, revenant. The spectral colonial past and uncertain future makes time feel “out of joint” in the city (Derrida 1994). This “structure of feeling” (Williams 1977) involves anxious affects (Chapter 7) and desires to reconcile persistent, uncanny tensions between Aboriginal sameness and difference (Chapters 5 and 6), celebratory recognition and marginality (Chapters 3, 4, and 5), and place-based Indigeneity and generalized Aboriginality (Chapter 4).

In Vancouver, Aboriginal spectacle, in the form of Stanley Park’s totem poles (Chapter 3), Olympic performance (Chapters 2 and 4), and inequalities in open view in the Downtown Eastside (Chapter 3), makes it impossible to forget or ignore Aboriginality altogether. Spectacle privileges sight above all other senses, enabling looking relations more than other forms of meaningful encounter (Chapters 1 and 7). As a result, non-Aboriginal people’s everyday experiences with Aboriginal people are mediated by spectacular representations. The extraordinariness of spectacle becomes ordinary; separation and cultural display are normalized, informing everyday expectations. These ordinary spectacles are often understood as evidence of cultural distinction rather than the product of political and historical processes (Chapters 3, 4, and 5).

Conditions of spectacle enable non-Aboriginal people to act as spectators who understand themselves to be passive observers of Aboriginal performance and suffering. Spectacle also circumscribes Aboriginality, shaping the contexts in which Aboriginal people, connections to place, and histories are made visible and invisible in the city. It is a mechanism that produces a holographic effect for non-Aboriginal residents: now you see Aboriginality, now you don’t. From some angles, Aboriginal alterities – marginalized lives, place-based expressions of recognition, cultural performance – are spectacularly visible; from others, Aboriginality is erased from view, assigned to the past, or disconnected from place and territory.

When expressions of Indigeneity disrupt familiar spaces and narratives, the effect is uncanny, haunting. The “over-and-done-with” of colonialism returns and animates the present, even though it was there all along, hidden from view (Gordon 2011). Indigenous claims on the present and future refuse efforts to relegate their stories of colonial dispossession and cultural genocide to the past. “We Are Here” the Four Host First Nations assert in their Olympic video (Chapter 4). It *does* matter who I am and where I
am from, Mike tells his boss (Chapter 2). We are distinct and uphold our rights to our lands, Harold Cardinal and the Indian Chiefs of Alberta assert in their Red Paper (Chapter 6). The present tense and locatedness of these statements refuse circumscribed spatio-temporalities in the city, province, and nation. In Vancouver, Aboriginality is not reducible to Stanley Park’s totem poles or the corner of Main and Hastings. The settlements at Snauq and Xwayxway are not erased but revenant, appearing again through contemporary court settlements and renaming proposals (Chapter 3).

Spectral contests over defining and managing difference materialize in decisions about where to shelve Aboriginal books at the library (Chapter 6) and how to ensure that BladeRunners become “just one of the guys” (Chapter 5). Non-Aboriginal people carry souvenirs and spectral affective stories to explain their connections and disconnections with Aboriginality in a context where looking relations prevail (Chapter 7). Spectres of colonial injustice and Indigenous reclamation unmap and remap familiar territory for them, causing discomfort and anxiety (Chapters 3 and 7). As my ethnography of settler colonial Vancouver has demonstrated, these spectres can be ignored only temporarily; they return again and again in everyday and spectacular ways.

This dissertation has shown that “settler” experiences should be examined in relation to Indigenous people’s experiences and the settler colonial project. Studying settler experiences is a necessary part of theorizing and transforming colonialism. I hope it is clear, however, that I do not think non-Aboriginal people’s experiences in settler colonialism, or analysis of them, should displace Aboriginal people’s experiences or analysis. On the contrary, this dissertation has demonstrated that “settler” experiences should be examined in relation to Indigenous people. As such, it is a complementary project, not a replacement. My ethnographic focus on non-Aboriginal people and settler colonial processes in Vancouver therefore complements varied efforts in critical Indigenous studies to explicate historical, contemporary, and future possibilities toward Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination (cf. Alfred 1999; Alfred and Corntassel 2005; Bruyneel 2007; Coulthard 2007; Lawrence 2004).

My emphasis on contemporary conditions of settler colonialism also represents an important contribution to the emergent field of settler colonial studies, currently dominated by historical (cf. Edmonds 2010; Harris 2004; Mawani 2009), legal (cf. Bhandar 2011; Goldberg-Hiller 2011; Kauanui 2008), and political theory analyses (cf. Barker 2009; Bell 2008; Coulthard 2007). Moreover, many analyses of Indigeneity and
colonialism, especially in political theory, focus on Indigenous peoples, histories, and struggles with the state without giving serious consideration to how settler peoples relate to these processes or how they can meaningfully participate in supporting Indigenous efforts (cf. Bruyneel 2007; Coulthard 2007). My ethnography aims to address this lacuna, alongside other important regional ethnographies like Elizabeth Furniss’s (1999) *Burden of History* and Leslie Robertson’s (2005) *Imagining Difference*. Unlike their rural focus, however, my research joins recent, rich, and interdisciplinary scholarship on urban dynamics of settler colonialism, especially in Vancouver (cf. Barman 2007; Blomley 2004; Culhane 2003; Mawani 2005; Robertson and Culhane 2005; Stanger-Ross 2008).

Finally, by specifically situating my study in settler colonialism and theorizing, I refresh foundational ethnographies like Eva Mackey’s *House of Difference* (2002) and Elizabeth Povinelli’s *Cunning of Recognition* (2002), which emphasized discourse and policies related to multiculturalism in the settler states of Canada and Australia, respectively.

In addition to these strengths and contributions, however, this dissertation also has limitations. By deliberately choosing to focus on how non-Aboriginal people construct and relate to Aboriginal alterity, I was unable to adequately address the myriad ways Aboriginal people experienced conditions of spectacle and spectrality or encounters in my field sites. Furthermore, as discussed in my introduction, although employing an Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal binary enabled me to consider how this binary is constructed and maintained, it also limited my ability to fully attend to the ways this binary is cross-cut by other socio-political realities and identities. Additionally, using this binary risks reifying it in unproductive ways, though I have attempted to mitigate this by emphasizing its flexible construction and uneven deployment.

My focus on Vancouver as a settler colonial city locates my analysis on the urban territories of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh First Nations and in a broader milieu of Northwest Coast Aboriginal cultures. My qualitative emphasis necessarily limits the scope of my analysis within this context to particular sites of inclusion and to specific examples of Indigenous spectacle and spectrality. It is thus not an all-encompassing analysis of Vancouver as a whole, nor can its theoretical insights be generalized to all settler colonial cities. Comparative work is therefore needed to account for the particularities of my field sites and the Vancouver context.¹⁴⁰

¹⁴⁰ For example, for my next project, I intend to examine settler colonial dynamics in another Northwest Coast city in Coast Salish territories: Seattle. This urban comparison will allow me to compare and contrast
In Vancouver, too, additional analysis is needed to flesh out how inclusion discourses are emerging and morphing in other sites of purposeful proximity. For instance, analyses of places where – contrary to my field sites – encounter is not facilitated would yield productive insights into how separation is sustained and encouraged. Conversely, places of more intimate or intensive encounter would illuminate circumstances that enable deeper connections.

In this dissertation, I have described processes that position Aboriginality in the interstices of the spectacular and spectral, shaping everyday encounters through expectations of apolitical performance and display and revenant Indigeneity that seems to shape-shift – now you see it, now you don’t. These conditions limit other possible ways of being-together in difference and relation and enable non-Aboriginal people to disengage altogether. Further examination of the quotidian dynamics of settler coloniality today may help to denaturalize the politics of spectacle and spectrality I have described in this dissertation and to point to new ways people are or could be living together, making meaning, or relating to one another.

In the remainder of this chapter, I share three final vignettes from my field sites to pose a question central to this dissertation: If social projects are present enactments of envisioned futures, how might social projects of inclusion be reimagined? In particular, how can current discourses and practices designed to include the Aboriginal Other be reimagined to include everyone in a decolonized future? Echoing Dwayne Donald (2012), I argue that a shift from the exclusive terms of “us and them” to an “inclusive we” is an important starting point for more ethical relations. Such a shift can help to avoid the pitfalls of spectacular and spectral Aboriginality, creating new kinds of encounter and ways of being together. This shift can also bring non-Aboriginal people more fully into the view, to recognize them not as spectators or heroes but as actors and participants in settler colonialism – and not only its reproduction, but also its transformation.

how national and regional histories, policies, laws, and discourses influence the spectacular and spectral expression of settler colonial tensions.
Shifting the Gaze: “Them” and/or “Us”?

In this dissertation, I have demonstrated how non-Aboriginal people are enabled to act as spectators of settler colonial processes. Aboriginality in Vancouver is made visible through spectacular art and performance, which encourages passive “looking relations,” as does spectacular marginality on display yet discursively divorced from socio-political contexts. In this section, I again shift the blinking gaze of “looking relations” onto the observers and the haunted: the non-Aboriginal people who deny, ignore, or simply enact their privilege not to think about how they too are implicated in settler colonialism, constructions of Aboriginality, and limitations on Indigenous expressions of self-determination and claims to territory.

I present three ethnographic stories that convey tensions that emerge when non-Aboriginal people are invited or encouraged to participate in self-reflexivity about their relations to Indigeneity and the settler colonial project. In contrast to the examples of Aboriginal inclusion I have heretofore examined—which aim to correct historical exclusions of mainstream society and institutions—these stories represent attempts to include non-Aboriginal people in learning about, critiquing, and transforming settler colonial relations.

I call the reader’s attention to the ways “we” and “our” are used differently by non-Aboriginal people in these stories to signal how they understand themselves as apart from or a part of ongoing colonial relations. English lacks a distinction between exclusive and inclusive first person plural pronouns. In some languages, different versions of “we/our/us” can mean “she and I, not you/them” or “she and I and you/them.” In the first case, “we” is used exclusively; in the second, “we” is used inclusively. In some of the stories below, some non-Aboriginal people use “we/our/us” to talk about non-Aboriginal people collectively in contrast to non-Aboriginal people (exclusive); in other cases “we/our/us” refers to all people, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal (inclusive). The difference in orientation makes all the difference, I argue, in how settler colonialism and Aboriginality are imagined in the past, present, and future.

141 For example, if Amy, Max, Bill, and Beth are in a room together, Amy and Max might say “we are going to the party now,” meaning Amy and Max are going, and leaving Bill and Beth. Or Amy and Max might say “we are going to the party now,” meaning it is time for everyone to leave for the party together. The first case is exclusive; the second is inclusive.
“Our Homes on Native Land?”

Days after the Olympics began, I attended Kinnie Starr’s lively concert at Robson Square. Starr is a hip hop and rock singer with Mohawk heritage. She occasionally blends political commentary about Aboriginal issues into her performances. In a hip hop adaptation of the anthem, Starr converted the first line, “O Canada, our home and native land,” inviting the crowd to participate through call and response by chanting “our home ON Native land.” She repeated the line several times, emphasizing the substituted preposition and pointing at the ground in an exaggerated manner for greater effect.

A couple hundred people gathered for Starr’s concert, and many clapped and sang along during Starr’s “anthem.” A small group of non-Aboriginal teenagers sitting near me were not so enthusiastic. One of the teenagers said to her friends, “Wait a second. I don’t like this – do you hear what she’s trying to make us do?” Another listened for a moment and said with disgust, “Our homes aren’t on Native land.” A third chimed in, “It’s because she’s Native.” The teens listened for a moment and decided to leave, refusing to accept or participate in Starr’s political statement.

Several days later, Starr performed an evening show at the Aboriginal Pavilion, crowded with fans and Olympic spectators. She repeated her adapted anthem and the crowd loved it. Starr moved around the floor of the dome as she sang. She stopped next to a white audience member, asking her to sing along with her into the microphone. She obliged, singing “our home ON Native land” with gusto and verve, smiling with Starr over this simple but powerful turn of phrase.

Starr’s performance shifts conventions of spectacular Aboriginality and spectral Indigeneity. She uses her time in the spotlight to reverse the gaze on Aboriginal spectacle to implicate her spectators in the politics of colonial dispossession. She reminds her audience that Indigeneity is present, not past: our homes are on Native land today. The land beneath Vancouver’s streets and skyscrapers has still not been ceded by its original inhabitants through formal agreement or treaty. Indigeneity returns to haunt, this time during the Olympic celebration of Canadian nationhood. The Canada imagined in “O Canada,” performed at the opening ceremonies and each time a Canadian received a medal, is made uncanny in Starr’s reinterpretation. The idea of settlement and being
native to Canada – “our home and native land” – is haunted by the reality of unceded lands – “our homes on native land” – and the unfinished business of the colonial project.

The teenagers, uncomfortable with this shift from their typical role as passive observers of cultural spectacle to invited participants in a political act, refuse to be implicated. “Because she’s Native,” the teenagers feel empowered to disregard Starr and her politics, to deny her inclusive “we” of settler colonialism in favour of an exclusive and exclusionary interpretation. Disregarding Olympic expressions of place-based Indigeneity (see Chapter 4), these teenagers construct their own relationship to land as settled, theirs. Waves of non-Indigenous settlement since European colonization, combined with processes of dispossession and displacement, have allowed them and their parents to claim the land as their own home and to discount prior claims “because they’re Native.” They are able to walk away, but they are not able to walk off Native land. The conditions I have described in my dissertation that spectralize Indigeneity – now you see it, now you don’t – enable this move and its constraints, their capacity for denial even in the context of persistent presence and increasing recognition. In my next story, I describe a cultural empowerment workshop at BladeRunners, one of the few times I witnessed direct confrontation of how colonialism affects BladeRunners’ lives in Vancouver and Canada. This opportunity for critical engagement was disrupted, however, through non-Aboriginal expressions of denial.

"We're not Aboriginal!"

The July 2011 BladeRunners intake began with a cultural empowerment workshop led by a Cree motivational speaker. Twelve new BladeRunners – three women, nine men; nine Aboriginal, three non-Aboriginal – sat around a set of tables in the program’s basement classroom. Some listened earnestly, intrigued, as the workshop leader discussed his experience with “Nehiyaw [Cree] psychology,” sweatlodges, and diversity training initiatives. Suddenly he exclaimed, “I’m going to talk about colonization! You know – genocide!” The BladeRunners stared at him. He explained that politicians and policymakers were not in touch with their feelings when they designed programs to strip Aboriginal people of their culture and roots.

For the rest of the day, the workshop leader took the participants on a wide-ranging tour of philosophy, history, psychology, and anti-
colonial thought. He encouraged the BladeRunners to get in touch with their feelings: to heal by taking long walks, smudging, and getting up early to put in a hard day’s work. “Indian people were never lazy! Work is part of our culture! … All our BladeRunners who pick up our cultural tools will have work.” In the afternoon, we all walked together to the shores of Burrard Inlet, a few blocks north of Main and Hastings. We stood in CRAB Park, the site of a historic Native settlement. Standing together in a pavilion dedicated to local First Nations, near large boulders commemorating the missing and murdered women of Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside, the workshop leader reminded the BladeRunners that they are standing on Coast Salish territory.

The next day, for the final cultural empowerment activity, he rolled in a large television on wheels and screened *Once Were Warriors* (Tamahori 1994). It is a terribly violent and raw film. The parents of an urban Maori family abuse alcohol at home and in pubs; the father erupts in fits of rage, beating his wife. Their teenage daughter tends the house and younger children, reading them stories she has written; one of her brothers gets involved in a street gang and another is removed to foster care. In the face of poverty, addiction, abuse, rape, and disconnection, the characters struggle to find hope and redemption.

During an early pub fight scene, several BladeRunners hooted and hollered, appreciating the father’s toughness and attitude. When he beat his wife, however, they shifted uncomfortably and whistled through their teeth. They were captivated, but uncomfortable and tense. The room fell silent during scenes of sexual abuse and suicide. After the film ended, the workshop leader turned on the lights and asked everyone to share how they could relate to the characters and the story. One young man said he could relate to all of it: his mom also got beat up, his dad went on drunks, his friends committed suicide, he experienced sexual abuse, and he knew many in gangs in the cities near his reserve in the Prairies. Another BladeRunner empathized with the youngest kids; growing up, the three numbers he knew were 9-1-1. One said that while she grew up in a relatively stable home, she witnessed similar events in her best friend’s family. Several others repeated similar stories or nodded when others spoke.

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142 Originally called Portside Park, CRAB Park was named after a group that petitioned to open the park under the motto “Create a Real Available Beach.”

143 See Martens (2007) for analysis of controversy in New Zealand around the film’s representations of Maori people.
One of the white BladeRunners commented that his parents partied too, laughing about drinking their leftover beer. Another declared that he could not relate to the story at all: “I’m glad it’s just a movie!” he stated, bewildered and oblivious to the real stories just shared by his fellow participants.

As the participants were leaving, I chatted with the BladeRunners office manager, a young white woman and personal friend, and told her about the film. “That’s refreshing!” she replied sarcastically before casually checking Facebook. The next day, I talked with a close librarian friend, another young non-Aboriginal woman. I mentioned the film and she said it’s too violent for her to watch. I recalled my own horror watching it for the first time years ago; I had to leave when my professor showed it in class because I found it so disturbing.

A couple of weeks after the Cultural Empowerment workshop, after the BladeRunners had their first aid and carpentry training, they participated in a trial collaboration with an Aboriginal garden program at UBC Farm. The workshop leader came with them to the farm and continued to provide Aboriginal spiritual teaching and guidance. A couple of the BladeRunners were resistant and rebellious, sneaking away to smoke and disregarding their instructions. One day, I drove three of them back to East Vancouver. While their Aboriginal co-participant remained silent, the two non-Aboriginal men in the car complained about the “Native stuff” they were being asked to do, exclaiming in frustration, “We’re not Aboriginal!”

The workshop leader’s teachings covered substantial terrain, from psychological trauma to emplacement on Coast Salish territories to preliminary exploration of “fourth-world” dynamics experienced by BladeRunners and characters on *Once Were Warriors*. He argued that all Canadians should learn about the history and effects of colonialism, not just Aboriginal people. He explained that all BladeRunners and all Vancouverites – Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal – stand on the unceded territories of Coast Salish peoples. At CRAB Park, he and the BladeRunners stood on the site of a historic settlement and a memorial for Vancouver’s Missing and Murdered Women – a reminder of the double violence of erasure through dispossession and disappearance.

When faced with these settler colonial realities, the non-Aboriginal participants chose to respond by discounting these spectral processes – “I’m glad it’s just a movie” – and discounting their involvement in them – “We’re not Aboriginal!” Furthermore, my
white friends’ ability to ignore or avoid the intensities of *Once Were Warriors*, as well as my own past decision to walk away instead of watch the film, reflect our historically contingent capacity to remove ourselves from the pain and trauma of structural, colonial violence.\(^{144}\) We are able to discount “all the other bullshit” that Aboriginal BladeRunners face, to hide these realities from view. Through dynamics that spectacularize and spectralize Indigeneity and marginality, we are enabled and even encouraged to distance ourselves from acknowledging, addressing, and transforming how colonialism and racialized inequality play out in the present and future.

Even when given the opportunity, as the young white BladeRunners participants were in the July intake, to witness, empathize/sympathize, or contemplate their relation to Aboriginal people and territory, the gaze shifts to Aboriginal people rather than prompt self-reflection. The onus of decolonization and “healing” is thus placed on Aboriginal people who cannot turn off the “movie” of colonization. “We’re not Aboriginal” becomes synonymous with “we shouldn’t have to deal with this.” Colonialism and its legacies becomes *their* problem rather than *our* problem.\(^{145}\) This denial of relationality (Donald 2012) absolves non-Aboriginal people from responsibilities of confronting their socio-political and historically contingent relations with Aboriginal people, Indigeneity, and the moral and ethical questions of what it means, for example, to reside on unceded lands.

I further address issues of responsibility in my third story, which centres on the library’s First Nations Storyteller-in-Residence program, developed out of recognition that “we [Europeans and other migrants] came and built libraries on First Nations land.” As the librarians involved discuss the program’s purpose and intended audience, they raise broader questions of who will participate in refashioning a different future and how.

“For some rich white family, or for Aboriginal people themselves?”

For its First Nations Storyteller-in-Residence program, the Vancouver Public Library hired three First Nations storytellers for successive six-month residencies in 2010-2011: Amanda Nahanee (Squamish), Jackie

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\(^{144}\) This does not mean, however, that we are not aware of other forms of structural power dynamics or the intersectionality of contemporary inequities. In fact, my white women friends and I are all alert to patriarchy, corporate power, and other structural forces that shape our lives and each of us is engaged in various efforts to curtail their effects.

\(^{145}\) See my discussion after the third story about inclusive versus exclusive plural pronouns.
During their residencies, Amanda, Jackie, and Henry toured the library system’s branches to share biographical stories, inherited stories about myth and history from their families and communities, and new and traditional songs.

Due to funding constraints, the program developed on an accelerated timeline. Allison, a part-time librarian previously involved in the Working Together project (see Chapters 2 and 6), was asked to take on the project only one month before the first storyteller’s scheduled residency. She successfully delayed the launch to make time for consultation with local Aboriginal community members. Some of her contacts were initially hesitant about the program, “probably,” she says, “because they wanted to make sure the library wasn’t looking for Tonto the Token Indian with a feather headdress.” She understood their concerns and, because of her Working Together experience, was aware of exploitative relations and lack of institutional trust.

She developed a working job description for the storytellers, reconsidering terms like “perform” that implied objectification, as well as learning about issues around intellectual property. Some contacts raised concerns about her interchanging use of “First Nations” and “Aboriginal.” When pressed for clarity, she decided to limit the program to First Nations: “Let’s start with the fundamental thing, which is, we came and built libraries on First Nations land.”

In my interview with her, Allison recalled her “steep learning curve” during this time. She learned that in local communities, storytelling can involve singing, drumming, or praying. Stories can affirm ties to place and lineage. As the project took shape, Allison says she had a

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146 Amanda was among the Squamish youth standing with elders during the welcoming sequence in the Olympic Opening Ceremony (see Chapter 4), and her tenure as Storyteller overlapped with the Olympics. Jackie is a hereditary chief from the Sliammon First Nation on Vancouver Island and former student at the Sechelt Indian Residential School. Henry, selected by the Community Relations and Marketing department after Allison moved to a different project, is among the last of the Musqueam people to have lived in what is now called the UBC Endowment Lands, near the Musqueam reserve.

147 A librarian at the Central Branch had applied for a grant from the Vancouver Foundation to launch the storyteller program, but retired before funding was allocated and the project got started. Allison was an auxiliary staff member when she got involved; there were no full-time staff available to work on the program at the time because they were engaged in other projects, including preparing for the library’s Olympic programming.

148 A Musqueam elder asked how the librarians would recognize an appropriate storyteller. “He told me things I didn’t even know I would want to ask!” She learned about protocol and appropriate permissions. If someone told a story without proper permission, it could “cause all kinds of dissension,” she explained. “It’s a severe breach of protocol. Does the library want to have anything to do with that? I would think not!” When the elder likened this concern to issues around copyright, Allison understood more fully.
quick succession of “Aha!” moments that made her increasingly mindful of her own ignorance. She took a humble pleasure in the process. “It’s always kind of… fun when you realize how stupid [you are]… I just learned something that’s been under my nose, and I could’ve known this at any point and I did not know these things.” She says her interactions with the storytellers also allowed her to see “how really really built-in colonialism is in every way we think and what we say.”

Although Allison emphasized how much she learned from the storytellers and her community contacts, she said the Storyteller-in-Residence program was not intentionally designed to facilitate similar interactions and learning for non-Aboriginal patrons. Instead, she explained, it was designed for the Aboriginal community to make the library “more relevant and responsive to them and their needs.”

When I inquired if non-Aboriginal patrons were a targeted audience for the program, she said, “It didn’t matter to us if non-First Nations people got to think outside of the box in the same way.” However, she learned that it did matter to the storytellers: “They thought it was equally important to reach the non-Aboriginal [public].” Despite Allison’s realization, some library staff continued to understand storyteller events as opportunities primarily oriented toward Aboriginal patrons.

The Mount Pleasant Library branch hosted all three storytellers, and I attended Jackie’s and Henry’s presentations. Both were held in the Multipurpose Room of the library on weekday evenings and garnered small audiences of about a dozen people, almost all of them non-Aboriginal: retirees, young parents and their children, and solitary adults. Amanda introduced Jackie for his inaugural event at the branch in April 2010, speaking partly in English and partly in her Squamish language. She acknowledged her own nation and her Coast Salish and described the Mount Pleasant area as a former elk-hunting site. As she sang a prayer song, a woman in the audience cried quietly, moved to hear an Indigenous language spoken by a young person. During his storytelling later, Jackie looked at Amanda and said, “So nice to hear you speak your language, Amanda. If you’d done that in my time, you would have been beaten – harshly. So good to hear it now… For me to speak my language now is very difficult… it’s coming back slowly.” After a series of stories, he asked everyone to close their eyes and

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149 See also Chief Ian Campbell’s speech, described in Chapter 2.
imagine this place a long time ago. “Imagine False Creek. Imagine longhouses. Go inside – people telling stories there. There would be a fire there. I can smell the fire. I can envision it.”

Henry’s storytelling presentation at Mount Pleasant coincided with a series of National Aboriginal Day events there in June 2011. In his storytelling, Henry emphasized loss and dispossession as well as the longevity and resilience of the Musqueam people. Partway through his stories, a young father raised his hand, said he was sorry to interrupt, but he and his wife had to leave to pick up their daughters from ballet. They would be back, he promised. They returned during the question/answer period, in which Henry engaged in a wide-ranging discussion of the history of local land contestation; “Ever heard of the Guerin or Sparrow case?” he asked. (These Supreme Court cases involving Musqueam people have been highly significant in setting precedents for Indigenous fishing and resource rights. No one in the audience nodded or showed signs of recognition or awareness.)

After the event, the manager said next time they will need to change their promotional approach to attract the young Aboriginal guys in the library who need guidance. Later, I also spoke with a community librarian who felt frustrated with the event. “What is the storyteller for?” she asked. “For some rich white family who happens to be there to take their kids to ballet? Or for Aboriginal people themselves?”

In their analysis of inclusion, Simon-Kumar and Kingfisher observe that often “the bulk of agency entailed [in inclusion] rests… with the excluded, who have to do the work of including themselves by whatever structures and processes of doing so are on

150 This ambivalence also emerged during the National Aboriginal Day events a couple of weeks later. In May the library had hired Lauren, a UBC co-op library sciences student, to plan community events at East Area branches over the summer, including Mount Pleasant’s National Aboriginal Day programming. She arranged for two performances on June 21st: Christie Lee, Henry Charles’ daughter and a local hip hop artist, and Tzo’kam, a Stl’atl’imx (Lil’wat) family singing group. Lauren did not have enough lead-time to develop strong community connections like Allison’s or Mount Pleasant’s community librarians’, so she built upon their connections to reach out to potential performers. When I asked her about the goals and expectations of the events, Lauren explained that she did not really know what to expect. Some of her library interlocutors had expressed a general interest in engaging the younger Aboriginal people living in the neighbourhood. She laughed, “Which I don’t think really happened at all.” The promotional material was not targeted enough and she emphasized that that kind of turnout would likely result from ongoing relationship-building rather than a one-time event featuring Aboriginal performers. Most of the Aboriginal people in the small audiences for each performance were friends of the Christie Lee or the Wallace family members that make up Tzo’kam. The rest of the audience members resembled those who attended Henry Charles’ and Jackie Timothy’s storytelling engagements: young families and a couple of adults who heard the announcement in the library and decided to listen in for awhile. “If the original goal was to reach Aboriginal youth, that was not really achieved at all,” Lauren said, “But… it definitely reached some people… so it was still worthwhile.”
offer” (2011:277). Through the Storyteller program, the library offered Aboriginal patrons the opportunity to include themselves as storytellers and by attending First Nations storytelling events. When a significant Aboriginal audience did not materialize, some librarians were frustrated, concerned that a program intended to include them had once again served people the library already “served well”: rich white families and other non-Aboriginal people. Is this a moment in which settler colonial conditions are transformed or reproduced?

Spectres of spectacular Aboriginality manifest in this story. Allison, her consultants, and the storytellers themselves refuse to perform as “Tonto the token Indian” and put on a familiar cultural show. Exercising their agency, they used their storytelling opportunities, like Kinnie Starr, to redefine the familiar terms of looking relations by engaging in encounters that emphasized listening, truth-telling, and dialogue. They interwove cultural stories with biographical stories of residential schools, dispossession, and political struggles toward self-determination in their communities. They showed up for their events in blue jeans and vests featuring designs from their nations' artists. They did not seem disappointed when no Aboriginal people showed up; instead, the program offered them an opportunity to engage in conversation with the library’s diverse publics, to be heard and recognized by non-Aboriginal people in the city – not as spectacles or spectres, but as dynamic storytellers conveying their contemporary and historical connections to land and community.

In doing so, they played with and disrupted non-Aboriginal imaginaries that erase Indigenous stories and presence. Jackie played tricks on sight and reordered familiar spatio-temporalities by asking his non-Aboriginal listeners to close their eyes, to imagine and experience with all their senses a Coast Salish settlement on the nearby banks of False Creek. This is an act of unmapping familiar terrain that reveals what has been present all along but hidden from view: long histories of Indigenous emplacement and the living, breathing people that once occupied the land – and still do. He and the other storytellers repopulate Mount Pleasant and Vancouver with Aboriginal people and stories; they conjure up a different vision. Through their stories, they narrate colonial dispossession and harm while also repossessing the present by emphasizing resilience and revitalization. Jackie and Amanda’s language is “coming back” – returning again, revenant. Henry talks about how court cases reaffirm and refresh cultural practices of sustenance and self-determination. “Time is out of joint” (Derrida 1994).
Just as Alison “learn[ed] something that’s been under [her] nose,” the storytellers’ audiences are alerted to what has been there all along: Coast Salish people and their attachments to place, colonialism and its legacies, and the effects of their own settlement on burying this past and present only to see it unearthed again and again. So what is a storyteller for? For the Aboriginal people themselves – the storytellers and their communities? Or for the rich white family who returns after ballet class for more stories? For “them” or for “us (exclusive)” or for “us (inclusive)”?

I suggest in my next section that a central implication of my research is that moving from an exclusive us/them or either/or construction may open new and productive opportunities to reinvent how we (all) relate to one another. It is not only the “Aboriginal people themselves” who are affected by settler colonialism, but also the “rich white family” and other non-Aboriginal people who could perhaps use more opportunities to critically reflect on what it means to live on unceded Coast Salish territories. Adopting a critical “us (inclusive)” approach may allow “us” to be together in space and time in ways that neither spectralize or spectacularize Aboriginality, nor disregard how non-Aboriginal people participate in colonialism and its a/effects.

**Implications and Taking Turns**

It is Canada’s turn. Look for your complicit silence, look for inequity between yourself and others. Search out the meaning of colonial robbery and figure out how you are going to undo it all. Don’t come to us saying “What can we do to help?” and expect us not to laugh heartily. You need help. You need each and every white person in this country to commend those lone people of colour sticking their necks out and opposing racism where it rears its ugly head. You need to challenge your friends, your family, whenever they utter inhuman sentiments about some other race of people. We – I – We will take on the struggle for self-determination and lay the foundation… But so long as your own home needs cleaning, don’t come to mine, broom in hand. Don’t wait for me to jump up, put my back to the plough, whenever racism shows itself. You need to get out there and object, all by yourself. We have worked hard enough for you.

– Lee Maracle (1990:241)

The three final stories from my ethnographic fieldwork point to the “something-to-be-done” in reimagining settler colonial relations in Vancouver. Avery Gordon writes that we can work to avoid a haunted future: “in the gracious but careful reckoning with the ghost… we [can] locate some elements of a practice for moving towards eliminating
the conditions that produce the haunting in the first place” (2011:17). Directing inclusion or decolonization efforts toward only Aboriginal people can (re)create conditions that absolve non-Aboriginal people from taking responsibility for their own positions in relation to colonialism. It does not fully reckon with settler colonial processes that Other and exclude, through spectacle and spectrality, Indigenous people and their experiences. In education scholar Dwayne Donald’s terms, it continues to deny or obscure relationality, rather than recognize or examine it.

In these stories, Aboriginal people invite non-Aboriginal people to participate in recognizing themselves in the inclusive-we of settler colonialism. The workshop leader tells the BladeRunners that they all stand on Coast Salish territory. Kinnie Starr’s interactive performance points, literally, to this same relation. The storytellers, too, emphasize emplacement on Coast Salish lands, not just through stories of their own attachments to place but also by inviting their non-Aboriginal audiences to close their eyes to imagine Coast Salish settlement and open their eyes to witness the active presence and resilience of contemporary Coast Salish and urban Aboriginal people. Some of their interlocutors want to close their eyes again – “We’re not Aboriginal!”; “I’m glad it’s just a movie!”; “Our homes aren’t on Native land” – and their privilege in relation to Aboriginality largely allows them to do so, but not for long and certainly not forever. Indigeneity and the legacies of colonialism will continue to return to haunt them, stymieing their attempts – figurative and literal – to rid their “home and/on native land” of its Natives and the “Indian problem.” These tensions will also not be (re)solved by occasionally celebrating Aboriginal people on a spectacular scale if they are made to retreat from view back to hidden spaces and forgotten times.

Donald argues that denials of relationality are perpetuated by the “pedagogy of the fort,” taught in Canadian schools (2009; 2012). He explains that narratives of Canadian history emphasize a “cultural ditch” that separates Aboriginal from Canadian and insinuates that such a divide is “natural and necessary” (2012:92–93). It produces and reproduces the settler-Native binary I discussed in Chapter 1. I have maintained a separation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in my account, not because I think this is a natural or necessary division, but because it is a construction that continues to shape contemporary social relations and material realities. It is also a politically relevant distinction, as Indigenous peoples have distinct claims to rights and lands in
Canada. Furthermore, like Donald, I emphasize the relation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal rather than only their separation.

Donald states, “The challenge here is to imagine how we are simultaneously different and related. A further challenge is to hold this paradox in tension without the need to resolve it and, in doing so, resist the logic of assimilation and elimination” (2012:104–105). If settler colonialism sought to eliminate the Native to allow for and legitimate settlement (Wolfe 1999), resisting settler colonialism entails recognizing Indigenous rights and territories, examining past injustices and present inequalities, and creating a different future that simultaneously acknowledges difference and relation.

From colonial era epidemics, the residential school system, and processes of land dispossession and modern treaty-making, to contemporary inequalities and struggles toward self-determination, Aboriginal people have been grappling with the legacies of colonialism in Vancouver, British Columbia, and Canada for generations. They continue to reckon with this past and present in their diverse efforts toward a more equitable future. Non-Aboriginal people, however, have different relationships with these processes. Some have been active perpetrators of injustice, others have themselves been treated unequally by the state and their fellow residents, some have participated in inclusionary and/or anticolonial endeavours, and many more have been passively complicit and complacent in the ongoing settler colonial project. When faced with the structural complexities of (post)coloniality, they might not see themselves in them, exclaiming “I’m not aboriginal!” or simply turning their attention to things that seem more immediately interesting, pressing, or relevant. As Donald (2012) suggests, these denials of relationality can be countered through practices that encourage and enable “ethical relationality.” This involves not denying difference but “understand[ing] more deeply how our different histories and experiences position us in relation to each other… [it] requires attentiveness to the responsibilities that come with a declaration of being in relation” (103-105).

In her injunction above, Indigenous writer and critic Lee Maracle calls on non-Aboriginal people to take responsibility for colonial and racial inequities and injustice, rather than ask Aboriginal people over and again to do it alone. She does not suggest that non-Aboriginal people do it alone either, despite her suggestion to “get out there and object, all by yourself.” She states that Aboriginal people will lay the foundation through self-determination and community-based struggle. Non-Aboriginal people will then do
the “work” of decolonization and social justice, not by asking Aboriginal people “how can we help?” but by engaging in critical, self-reflexive efforts to “clean their own houses”: looking within their own communities for discourses and practices that sustain settler privilege rather than critique it, reproduce prejudice rather than act against it, Other rather than connect.

In this dissertation, I have endeavoured to respond to both Donald’s and Maracle’s challenges. I have asked how non-Aboriginal people participate in processes that construct Aboriginal alterity and marginality while denying Indigenous political claims and their own relationality to the settler colonial project. I have demonstrated how difference is produced and relation elided in Vancouver through my analysis of spectrality and spectacle that limit the conditions under which Indigeneity is made visible and invisible. Non-Aboriginal people’s everyday knowledges are constructed in the dialectic between these processes, which enable them to distance themselves from relating to Aboriginal people in the past, present, and future or to critically reflect on how they are implicated in the colonial processes that reproduce their positions as haunted spectators. Both spectacular and spectral Aboriginality disallow and disavow engagement in ethical relationality, producing everyday conditions that further postpone a more just future.

Aboriginal inclusion efforts, too, are shaped in this push and pull of spectacle and spectrality and also represent efforts to transcend this tension. How can the library incorporate First Nations stories without reproducing images of “Tonto the token Indian”? How can BladeRunners become “just one of the guys” when alterities and “all the other bullshit” related to marginalization matter, when colonial traumas are present not past? How can government representatives enter into partnerships with local sovereign First Nations when their sovereignty is only partially, if at all, recognized in practice? What is the role of inclusion initiatives like these for reimagining relationality between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in the city? If the focus remains on including the Aboriginal Other, will non-Aboriginal people have the opportunity to substantively engage in relating to Aboriginal people not as spectacles or spectres, but as present-day members of politically distinct and diverse communities with legitimate claims to rights and territory?

These are outstanding questions. The processes I describe in this dissertation are ongoing. They will inevitably take new forms, which will necessitate new approaches and
conceptual tools. Some recent events already suggest new directions and possibilities for settler colonial relations. For example, in the summer of 2012, Musqueam community members launched an intensive protest against a construction project in the Marpole neighbourhood. Construction workers unearthed Musqueam ancestors at Ces’naum, an ancient village site along the Fraser River, raising questions about archaeological and construction permitting processes (as mentioned in Chapter 1). Largely unknown among many non-Aboriginal residents, Ces’naum is well-known to archaeologists and anthropologists as the Marpole Midden, a designated National Historic site, and an important place for Musqueam people. The development of the site under the Arthur Laing Bridge disrupted not only burials, but also business-as-usual in regards to Aboriginal recognition and consultation.

After months of demonstrations and vigils at the site, appeals to Premier Christy Clark, and other methods of protest, the Musqueam successfully won their fight to protect the site, and later to purchase it with band funds. The ancestors were reburied. Political wrangling over ownership and stewardship of the site opens debate about how the land will continue to tell stories of Indigenous presence, how contemporary local Indigenous peoples will continue to exert their rights to use and protect their territories, and how jurisdictional disputes between First Nations, private developers, and municipal, provincial, and federal government officials will continue to yield new actions and precedents.

In some ways the ignorance of many Vancouverites regarding the Marpole National Heritage site and contemporary Musqueam attachment to it suggests the partial “success” of settler colonial processes of erasure; however, the Musqueam’s escalating protest, including blocking the highway, conveys the limits and reach of spectres of First Nations sovereignty and land uncertainty that resulted from the ambivalent imposition of policy (Stanger-Ross 2008; Wolfe 1999). This is not a case of the dead and buried haunting the city and province and then being removed or re-forgotten, but of the alive and well successfully demanding recognition, remembrance, and reckoning. This is especially important in sites of current and planned resource extraction and infrastructure, such as the Enbridge Pipeline project, which has instigated private-public partnerships, negotiations with First Nations communities, and fierce opposition by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people alike. What will the future hold if First Nations people are successful in blocking Enbridge, like the Musqueam were successful in reclaiming the
Marpole construction site? What new spatial and political arrangements and alliances will this make possible? How will it affect discourses and practices that ignore Indigenous claims only to see them return again, more forcefully, and with new allies and tactics?

The Idle No More campaign in the winter of 2012-2013 also renewed public attention to Canada’s spectres. In fall 2012 Prime Minister Stephen Harper and his Conservative government introduced Omnibus Bill C-45 to Parliament, a massive piece of legislation that proposed a suite of amendments and changes to taxation and fee structures, environmental policy, and the federal budget. Changes to the Navigable Waters Protection Act and lack of parliamentary consultation with affected First Nations communities prompted a group of Indigenous and non-Indigenous women in Saskatchewan to organize events to educate their community members about the bill’s potential harmful effects on treaty rights and lands. Soon after, chief of the Attawapiskat First Nation, Theresa Spence, began a six-week long hunger strike to protest the bill and the government’s mishandling of an ongoing housing crisis in her community. These women’s actions prompted a wave of Indigenous movement across the country as people took to social media sites to organize “Days of Action”: marches, teach-ins, and flash-mob round-dances. Online and on the streets, in malls and academic conferences, Indigenous people reminded the government and non-Aboriginal Canadians of their existing treaty rights or, in the case of British Columbia, their ongoing struggle for self-determination and rights to territory and resources in the absence of historical treaties.

An interesting dimension of this movement – one that resonates with the issues discussed in this dissertation – is its concerted attention to settler people’s roles in the enactment of colonialism, the privileges they have accrued from its politics and policies, and their potential place as supporters of Aboriginal people’s decolonization efforts. The movement reiterated and made visible the fact that the Canadian nation is haunted by the realities of inequality, dispossession, erasure, inattention, and neglect. Indigenous people, never really idle to begin with (Coulthard 2012), will continue to contest these past and present realities in their efforts to create a future in which they are recognized as self-determining people living on their own lands. “We” settlers were and are invited to be “idle no more”: to stop denying our relations to Indigenous peoples, land, and the colonial processes that continue to invisibilize and marginalize them.

There are more and more opportunities for “us” to imagine together a different future, to stop closing our eyes and saying “We’re not Aboriginal!” and open them to
new ways of being-together in difference based out of the reality of shared legacies. We can work to clean our homes on Native land not only through “inclusion,” but by listening to Indigenous storytellers and supporting their communities’ efforts to self-determination. This does not need to be a spectacular gesture, nor motivated by a desire to simply rid our homes of their ghosts. Instead, it will come through the hard but important work of reorienting ourselves ethically to each other and the land we all live on.
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