

On the Bottom of the Multicultural Totem Pole:  
A History of Cultural Assimilation, Appropriation, and Marginalization in Canada

by

Daniel Eric Oledzki

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Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Jessica Stites-Mor, Department of History

Author's Signature:

Date:

Supervisor's Signature:

Date:

Honours Chair's Signature:

Date:

Abstract: Canada's contemporary multiculturalism is unstably founded on an incomplete dominant historical narrative. The discrepancy between the actual narrative and Canadian historical consciousness is perpetuated by the federal government's production of a dominant historical narrative that serves a sense of a multicultural national identity, the success of immigration policies, and the security of a Canadian polity. By specifically studying totem poles, this thesis seeks to highlight the depth and complexity of culture that existed in pre-colonial Canada. This thesis will also highlight the historical cultural clash between Indigenous and colonial worldviews, appropriation of elements compatible with federal multiculturalism, and historiographical marginalization of those elements that proved problematic. This historical discussion concludes by presenting the resulting issues, as well as proactive solutions to help create a contemporary ethos of equality in Canada based on a solid historical foundation, both within and outside of the academic sphere.

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## Introduction

As Donna Haraway has argued, in order to understand “the world *effectively* [we] must take account of the structure of facts and artefacts, as well as language-mediated actors in the knowledge game.”<sup>1</sup> That is to say, that the history of the world we know has a history itself, written in certain historical contexts, by certain individuals. This thesis explores the influence of ideology on Canadian indigenous history, on not only the individuals writing the text, but the content of the historical narrative itself. It argues that it is necessary to separate ideological influence from the dominant narrative, not to undo or reduce the work of past historians, but to build a more solid, equitable, and complete foundation from which future historians, and indeed, all individuals, can progress. It examines the role of colonization and colonial ideological formation on the development of Canada’s national historical narrative. As a result of the unique historical context Canada was physically forming and creating a collective sense of nationalism within, Canada’s historical consciousness and national identity is actually more mono-cultural than genuinely multicultural.

I write this thesis from the theoretical vantage point of post-colonial feminist thought, thus it is important that I, as the researcher, situate my own individual position in relation to this historical study. As a Canadian student, I struggled with my own identity formation processes and felt that trying to understand Canadian history was much like attempting to put together a puzzle without the all the pieces. While stitching together

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<sup>1</sup> Donna Haraway, “Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective,” *Feminist Studies* 14, no. 3 (1988): 577, <http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0046-3663%28198823%2914%3A3%3C575%3ASKTSQI%3E2.0.CO%3B2-M>

portions may be possible, the big picture will simply not be complete without all the pieces present. Some of these critical pieces, I learned, had been marginalized in the narrative as a result of the influence of the dominant framework for understanding the colonizers and settlers brought with them to Canada. These cultural clashes were to an extent a result of the dominance of certain religious belief systems in structuring colonial society. For example, this can be seen in the deportation of 7,000 French speaking Roman Catholic Acadians when the English speaking Protestant British arrived in 1755 in what today is the Maritime Provinces.<sup>2</sup> Or the pivotal role First Nations women played in the Western fur trade until 1830, when missionaries and European women arrived and insisted the intermarriages that had been “*a la façon de la pays*” for so long were not only unlawful, but furthermore, immoral.<sup>3</sup> The major issue is that marginalized fragments of history do not typically enter mainstream historical consciousness. As a student who is passionate about Canadian history, planning a career in education, I was not prepared to enter a classroom to teach future generations of Canadians a historical narrative I knew to be incomplete; I was determined to find the missing pieces.

One particular piece of contemporary Canadian multiculturalism, totem poles, stood out in my mind, because although I had seen them physically all over Canada, I actually didn't know their history. After visiting the British Columbia Provincial Museum and Provincial Archives in Victoria, the University of British Columbia Museum of Anthropology in Vancouver, and several months of research, I began to learn why.

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<sup>2</sup> A.J.B. Johnson, “The Acadian Deportation in a Comparative Context: An Introduction,” *Journal of the Royal Nova Scotia Historical Society* 10 (2007): 114.  
<http://search.proquest.com/docview/1018537521>.

<sup>3</sup> Sylvia Van Kirk, “The Role of Native Women in the Fur Trade Society of Western Canada, 1670-1830,” *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, 7, no. 3 (1984): 9,  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3346234>

Totem poles were part of a rich and complex Indigenous cultural framework for understanding, one that threatened the colonial agenda and ultimate goal of a unified, Canadian nation. A prime historical example of this conflict took place at an International Exhibition in Chicago in 1893 in which Franz Boas, the German-American anthropologist, had reconstructed a Northwest Coast First Nations village that “featured Kwakwaka’wakw performers enacting traditional ceremonies, which attracted huge audiences and international publicity.”<sup>4</sup> The Canadian officials charged with representing Canada at the same exhibition were “outraged and embarrassed” because Boas’ presentation overshadowed their display of “Native children enacting their prescribed roles as model students within schools.”<sup>5</sup> These competing and conflicting representations on the historical international stage captured an important battle in Canada’s cultural historical narrative, not only the historical vision that was officially presented in the 1890s, but also the vision that persists today in many cultural heritage projects, public monuments and museums, publicly-funded media, and even history textbooks. Each of these sites of public memory creation are key to constructing historical consciousness for many Canadians, thus this project speaks to sources such as these and asks for an historical re-visioning of Canada’s multicultural past.

In her discussion on the influence of popular culture on collective memory and national identity in Canada, Emily West argues that in an effort to correct “Canadians’ lack of interest in their history and to bolster national identity” federal historical projects, such as the *Heritage Minutes* and the CBC documentary *Canada: A People’s History*, use

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<sup>4</sup> Leslie Dawn, “Cross-Border Trading: Mungo Martin Carves for the World of Tomorrow,” *BC Studies* 159, no. 169 (2008): 9. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/196898025>

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 9-10.

a “multicultural and multi-perspectival” angle to tell the story of Canada’s past.<sup>6</sup> While this is beneficial in theory, as West and others argue, this becomes problematic in the context of a changing nation, such as Canada, when “these events of the past are framed in terms of their contribution or relevance to the present shape of the nation-state.”<sup>7</sup> This is as a result of Canada’s unique and relatively short national historical narrative and the fact that Canada’s national identity was still in the construction stages during not only the physical formation process of the nation but also the initial production of a national historical narrative. This is not hard to understand, especially considering the 19<sup>th</sup> century nation-building context within which Canada was physically and ideologically in the process of formation. Canada’s historical foundation was not yet in place, having only very recently ended its colonial status, and thus not stable, when it became required to support a national identity and polity that could hold its own against other already established nations in a dynamically developing global capitalist framework. The fact that these established countries were contributing to growing local immigrant populations and cultures to Canada framed an increasingly narrow window for Indigenous culture to enter the multicultural picture.

This process of assimilating many immigrating cultures into one, unified nation was only further complicated as more diverse countries began contributing to Canada’s cultural melting pot. Robert F. Harney argues that before the 1960s, Canada’s immigrants came primarily from Britain, France, and the rest of Europe, but that after the 1960s, Canada’s immigration policy came to represent “an enormous and highly visible increase

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<sup>6</sup> Emily West, “Selling Canada to Canadians: Collective Memory, National Identity, and Popular Culture,” *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 19, no. 2 (2002): 2, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/07393180216556>

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

in the country's cultural diversity.”<sup>8</sup> Harney also highlights how the issues of identity construction, both collective and individual, are increasingly more complex in this type of context. That is to say, that the “survival of a Canadian polity,” one that would be distinct from surrounding and immigrant contributing nations, “becomes a reoccurring theme in public discourse.”<sup>9</sup> What this historical discussion is trying to emphasize is how problematic this type of unique, multicultural national identity construction process is when its future political aims overshadow the truth in the margins of the national historical narrative. It is crucial to excavate these marginalized historical narratives to not only build a better historical foundation for all Canadians, but furthermore, to pay some long overdue respect to the Indigenous cultural frameworks for understanding that have been systematically eradicated during the multicultural national identity construction process.

This paper will explore some elements of some of the alternative Indigenous frameworks for understanding that have been lost in the process of constructing a dominant historical narrative to support multicultural national identity and the sovereignty of a Canadian polity. I will narrate my research journey and highlight the individual elements I discovered and the connections between them. While each of the elements discussed could easily stand alone as its own thesis topic, I am placing the separate pieces into a larger historiographical picture to evidence not only the depth and complexity of culture that existed in pre-colonial Canada, but furthermore, the history of cultural conflict, appropriation and marginalization of certain elements depending how they supported or conflicted with federal multiculturalism as it took shape by the 1970s

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<sup>8</sup> Robert F. Harney, “So Great a Heritage as Ours: Immigration and the Survival of the Canadian Polity,” *Daedalus* 117, no. 4 (1988): 52, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20025197>

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*



and the 1980s. To exemplify these arguments, this historical discussion will begin with a focus on a more well known case, that of totem poles. Chapter 1 will briefly discuss the history of totem poles in Coastal British Columbia and present a historical overview of the cultural appropriation and assimilation practices related to them. To better understand the historical complexities influencing the regulation of identity in colonial Canada, chapter 2 will explore a more nuanced element, the historical cultural conflict between colonial nationalist and Indigenous historical ideological models of totem representations. In particular, this chapter will focus on the Sisiutl, or double-headed serpent figure, and early misinterpretations of its mythology. Chapter 3 will further explore the mythology behind the Sisiutl figure, its dualism, and the connections between those understandings and other alternative understandings, such as Two-Spirit individuals. This chapter will emphasize how although both colonial and Indigenous cultural frameworks held gender identity at the core of their societal structures, the understandings of gender identity were fundamentally different and irreconcilability of these divergent concepts proved to be an obstacle to cultural integration. Chapter 4 provides historiographic background of the assimilation of Canada's numerous and diverse First Nations into the amalgamated 'Indigenous' piece of Canada's multicultural national identity under more recent legislation. Chapter 5 concludes the historical discussion by emphasizing its contemporary importance: that at the expense of a marketable multicultural national identity, the majority of individual Canadians are forced to construct a sense of identity, both collective and individual, from an incomplete and unstable historical foundation.

## Chapter 1 – Totem Poles: Assimilation of Pacific North West Coast First Nations and Appropriation of their Culture

The history of cultural assimilation specifically on the Canadian Pacific North West Coast began in the 1800s with the Douglas Treaties. The Douglas Treaties, sometimes referred to as the Vancouver Island Treaties or the Fort Victoria Treaties, were a series of treaties between the colonial authorities of Vancouver Island and certain First Nations in regards to the issue of cohabiting the land.<sup>10</sup> Essentially, the treaties were 14 different land transaction deals between 14 different nations and the Governor of Fort Victoria, James Douglas, as well as the Hudson's Bay Company.<sup>11</sup> In total, approximately 350 square miles of land was sold for an approximate total of 560 pounds sterling.<sup>12</sup> While there are 14 different treaties, the wording maintains the same tone, outlining that while “the village sites and enclosed fields are to be kept safe for [their] own use,” “the land itself, with these small exceptions, becomes the entire property of the white people forever.”<sup>13</sup> In some cases, the physical villages were left somewhat intact, but the underlying push toward assimilation reflected in the colonizers efforts entirely dismantled the established cultural and societal structures of the First Nations.

Attempts at cultural assimilation are inherently problematic because they rely on the enforceability of basic power relations: one culture must be subordinate and assimilate their customs to fit the understandings of another, dominant culture. The socio-

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<sup>10</sup> “Douglas Treaties: Conveyance of Land to Hudson's Bay Company by Indian Tribes,” Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, accessed March 14, 2013, <http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100029052/1100100029053>

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

cultural framework of different First Nations did not flourish under the framework imposed by British empire building in Western Canada, and were thus understood as problematic to the construction of a colonized, civilized, and naturally Christian society.

To begin with, religious life on the Pacific North West coast prior to colonization was governed by an entirely different temporal rhythm and societal structure before European settlement. In particular, their year was divided into two halves, that “swings from an inactive to an active phase, summer and winter, near to the gods and far from them.”<sup>14</sup> The “‘civilized’ division into ‘Sunday’ and ‘everyday’,” for example, was completely foreign concept to the existing inhabitants of the land.<sup>15</sup> For them, the summer months consisted of primarily gathering food, with less social contact, whereas the winter months brought the return to the villages and “religious life suddenly comes into its own, and one festival follows close upon another,”<sup>16</sup> ordering and structuring everyday life in the region. One element of this religious life was the potlatch ceremony, which was a widespread custom practiced by several different nations on the Pacific North West Coast.<sup>17</sup> The potlatch was for many nations core to cultural frameworks, functioning as the equivalent to the colonial political, financial, and social systems.<sup>18</sup> The potlatch ceremony was understood by the colonial authorities to be core to the Indigenous cultural framework, and thus in direct conflict with the one they were trying to implement.

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<sup>14</sup> Stewart Crysedale and Les Wheatcroft, eds., *Religion in Canadian Society* (Toronto: Macmillan Company of Canada, 1976), 81.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> Edward Malin, *Totem Poles of the Pacific North West Coast* (Portland: Timber Press, 1986), 88.

<sup>18</sup> William M. Halliday, *Potlatch and Totem*, (Toronto: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1935), 3-8.

Reverend J.B. McCullagh, in addressing the Church Missionary Society's Annual Conference in Metlakatla, BC in 1899, read a particularly poignant paper addressing the problem that potlatch ceremony posed. In the paper, he states explicitly "the Indian Potlatch presents a most difficult problem, not only to solve for the betterment of the race, but even to understand."<sup>19</sup> While he admits he hadn't yet actually had the privilege of partaking in a ceremony, the reverend considered himself "qualified to speak on the subject" based on having "had the Potlatch under close observation for 16 years" and having "studied it on the spot, both in theory and in practice, as far as one may do so without actually making one."<sup>20</sup> Based on this, and even though he felt strongly that the whole issue seemed "to baffle all effort at investigation,"<sup>21</sup> Reverend McCullagh, like other colonial and religious authorities, stressed the need to eradicate the potlatch ceremony. In short, the potlatch was understood correctly not to merely be a custom or ceremony, but "a systematized form of tribal government" which the reverend argued "the thorough eradication of its principles from the Indian mind depends, humanly speaking, the permanency of the results of our work."<sup>22</sup> The potlatch ceremony was a highly complex social exchange, and was evidently understood by the colonial and religious authorities as crucial to the Indigenous political and socio-cultural frameworks. Or, in Reverend McCullagh's words, it was a necessity "to preserve the unity, distinctions and traditions of the [Indigenous] race."<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> J. B. McCullagh, *The Indian Potlatch: Substance of a Paper Read Before C.M.S. Annual Conference at Metlakatla, B.C., 1899*, (Toronto: Woman's Missionary Society of the Methodist Church, 1899), 1, Early Canadiana Online, <http://eco.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.15538/2?r=0&s=1>.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

Thus, as a direct result of its importance to the Indigenous cultural framework, the potlatch ceremony was officially outlawed with the amendments made to the Indian Act in 1885.<sup>24</sup> The potlatch was also the ceremony within which totem poles were traditionally created for and ceremonially erected. This history behind the significance of totem poles themselves is complex and extensive, warranting lengthy historical study. However, for the purposes of this thesis, I will be highlighting the cultural importance of totem poles to Indigenous frameworks, as well as the historical misinterpretation and appropriation of totem poles.

Firstly, a totem pole required a potlatch ceremony to stand its ground; otherwise, it held no cultural, political, or symbolic significance.<sup>25</sup> For the First Nations partaking, the carved characters were often representative of one family's ancestral history, or the pole in its entirety may represent a storytelling column.<sup>26</sup> Totem poles were capable of conveying a variety of different messages depending on a number of variable factors: including but not limited to the carver, the crests and symbols, its location, as well as the specific purpose for its raising.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, the clans "are not based on blood relationships but have a mythical origin,"<sup>28</sup> further signifying the importance of Totem poles to societal structures. That having been said, there is actually no stratified order from the top to the bottom, like those stratification orders that do exist within the cores of the Church and British colonial institutional structures, for example. Thus, even the

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<sup>24</sup> First Nations Studies Program at the University of British Columbia, "The Indian Act," accessed March 14, 2013, <http://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/home/government-policy/the-indian-act.html#potlatch>

<sup>25</sup> Malin, *Totem Poles*, 90.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 90-91.

<sup>28</sup> Werner Muller, "The Kwakiutl of British Columbia," in *Religion in Canadian Society*, Stewart Crysedale and Les Wheatcroft, eds., (Toronto: Macmillan Company of Canada, 1976), 81.

colloquial notion of being on the bottom of the totem pole as a metaphor for a negative position doesn't actually have its roots in Indigenous culture, but in colonial misinterpretations and misrepresentations of it. Most ironically and unfortunately, the bottom of the multicultural Canadian national identity totem pole is exactly where the Indigenous cultural frameworks have been relegated.

Even though they had outlawed the potlatch ceremony, and with it, the creation of totem poles, in 1885, the colonial authorities simply couldn't completely eradicate a societal structure as long standing or deeply embedded as that of the Pacific North West Coast First Nations. Once discovered, physical pieces of the unique culture, such as totem poles, were garnering a fair amount of international attention. During the late 1800s and through the 1900s, international anthropologists, such as the aforementioned Franz Boas, and others, were interested in the Indigenous art of the Pacific North West Coast.<sup>29</sup> This interest was reflective of the historical context in which increasing globalization had created an interest in other nations, their cultures, and histories. This international interest was also in direct contrast with the national Canadian cultural policy throughout the early 1900s, which was still one of assimilation. The potlatch ceremony was still officially illegal, as is evidenced by the fact a few individuals were even prosecuted for trying to practice it.<sup>30</sup> During this federal cultural assimilation period, it was much easier for international anthropologists as well as private collectors to appropriate the majority of totem poles.<sup>31</sup> After what Douglas Cole referred to as the scramble for Northwest Coast artefacts in that period, the provincial government of British Columbia finally took

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<sup>29</sup> Douglas Cole, *Captured Heritage: The Scramble for Northwest Coast Artifacts* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1995), 142-144, accessed March 14, 2013, <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/ubc/docDetail.action?docID=10135998>.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 249-250.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 250.

interest in collecting Indigenous artefacts for their own historical collections.<sup>32</sup> Shortly thereafter, the national interest took hold.

By 1927, Canadian Ethnologist Marius Barbeau attempted to include examples of the Northwest Coast First Nations' art within the National Museum in Ottawa.<sup>33</sup> Without any official support, the "initiative did not last long and was abandoned for over a decade."<sup>34</sup> The official support did come however, unfortunately though, in the form of legislation to appropriate pieces of Indigenous culture that served the construction of a multicultural national identity.

The renewed interest came specifically in 1938, with an amendment to the Indian Act, the same act that had initially outlawed the potlatch ceremony. This amendment, amongst other things, detailed the subsidization of "native handicrafts."<sup>35</sup> This was in accordance with the Indian Affairs Branch of Canada inclusion of the arts as one of its Welfare and Training Division programs in 1937.<sup>36</sup> The legislation to produce and package misrepresentations of Indigenous art, including totem poles, was enacted before any amendments were made to the Indian Act in regards to the potlatch ceremony. What all this legislation effectively meant was that misrepresentations of Indigenous art could be produced and sold as a means of supporting the livelihood of First Nations in fulfilling their role as the Indigenous piece of the multicultural puzzle; even when the cultural practices historically responsible for producing those same pieces of art were still illegal.

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 232.

<sup>33</sup> Dawn. "Cross Border Trading," 11.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> First Nations Studies Program at the University of British Columbia, "The Indian Act," accessed March 14, 2013, <http://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/home/government-policy/the-indian-act.html#potlatch>

<sup>36</sup> Ira Jacknis, *The Storage Box of Tradition: Kwakiutl Art, Anthropologists, and Museums, 1881-1981* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2002),

The official ban on the potlatch ceremony was not lifted until another amendment to the Indian Act in 1951.<sup>37</sup>

Even though some nations have fought back and continued to practice their culture, a study of a Kwakiutl village and school conducted in 1967, however, found that potlatches no longer held the same cultural significance or prominence they once had. Instead, “potlatches today do provide a means for validating group identity, for demonstrating commitment to the old ways, and for noting a socially significant event”<sup>38</sup> The study also found the majority of people in the village to be “uncertain of the legal status of potlatches today” and unsure how to engage in a cultural “activity which [had] been in violation of the law for most of their lives” and that now was being “officially encouraged.”<sup>39</sup> The official encouragement was only as a result of official, national multiculturalist policies, which would later be enshrined in the Canadian Multiculturalism Act, passed in 1988. This official multicultural act was the official legislation to reinforce a historical process of national identity construction that had long been underway in the formation of contemporary Canada.

Despite the fact that the historic origins of totem poles belong to a few First Nations on the Pacific North West Coast, they have come to be a part of the amalgamated piece of Indigenous culture within the larger picture of Canadian multicultural national identity. Today, the Canadian Museum of Civilization in Hull, Quebec, boasts the world’s largest indoor collection of totem poles. There are also totem poles waiting to

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<sup>37</sup> First Nations Studies Program at the University of British Columbia, “The Indian Act,” accessed March 14, 2013, <http://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/home/government-policy/the-indian-act.html#potlatch>

<sup>38</sup> Harry F. Wolcott, *A Kwakiutl Village and School*, in “Case Studies in Education and Culture,” George and Louise Spindler, eds., (Toronto: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1967), 56.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.



welcome guests in the Vancouver International Airport and in the British Columbia Ferry Terminals. And when Canada hosted the world in Vancouver during the 2010 Winter Olympics, there were traditional welcome poles used in the opening ceremony. A picture of those particular poles is currently serving as the cover photo for “PM and his wife Laureen attend the Opening Ceremony of the Vancouver 2010 Olympic Winter Games,” in Prime Minister Stephen Harper’s press release portion of his website.<sup>40</sup>

In contradiction to the apparent prominent status of totem poles in contemporary multicultural Canadian society, the history of totem poles has been relegated to the margins of the dominant narrative. This is inherently problematic in relation to the formation of individual as well as collective identity. Furthermore, if there is so much more to the narrative in regards to one type of Indigenous artefact, belonging to select First Nations, how much else has been lost in cultural translation or gone missing in the historical margins?

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<sup>40</sup> Prime Minister of Canada Stephen Harper, “PM and his wife Laureen attend the Opening Ceremony of the Vancouver 2010 Olympic Winter Games,” accessed March 14, 2013, [http://www.pm.gc.ca/eng/media\\_gallery.asp?media\\_category\\_id=680&media\\_category\\_typ\\_id=3](http://www.pm.gc.ca/eng/media_gallery.asp?media_category_id=680&media_category_typ_id=3)

## Chapter 2 – Kwakiutl Sisiutl Figure: Cultural Conflict Between Indigenous and Colonial Frameworks for Understanding

Before the construction of a multicultural national identity and corresponding historical narrative, before the historical cultural appropriation, and before the cultural assimilation processes, there was cultural misinterpretation. Within Canada's historical narrative, and specifically, on the Pacific North West Coast, there is primary source evidence of the cultural conflict between the colonizers' interpretation of historical events and the Kwakiutl Indigenous framework for understanding. Both the colonizers and Kwakiutl nation were coming from fundamentally different backgrounds, with completely different worldviews. In an effort to evidence just how conflicting these frameworks for understanding were, this chapter will explore the Kwakiutl nation's Sisiutl, or double-headed serpent figure, its history, symbolism, and contemporary representations. The reason this thesis is focusing particularly on the Sisiutl figure is as a result of its prominence in Kwakiutl culture, but also, because the double-headed serpent when considered in comparison to the snake in Christian theology, makes the complexities of the cultural conflict become more clear.

John Maclean, an early Canadian ethnologist, as well as correspondent with and contemporary of Franz Boas, produced a number of influential publications during his work with colonizers and First Nations in Western Canada in the late 1800s.<sup>41</sup> One of his better-known works, *Canadian Savage Folk: The Native Tribes of Canada*, exemplifies the inherent issues of attempting to assimilate one culture into another without making

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<sup>41</sup> Susan Gray, "Maclean, John," Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online, accessed March 14, 2013, <http://www.biographi.ca/009004-119.01-e.php?BioId=42395>.

any effort at understanding each other. The first chapter of Maclean's book discusses several different nations he interacted with and translates portions of the different languages into English terminology; summarizing his experiences with these people by titling the chapter "Some Queer Folk."<sup>42</sup> Even more significant to this discussion is Maclean's final chapter, "Native Religions", in which every term, symbol, ritual, ceremony, and belief system is processed through a colonial religious framework for understanding. To the extent that even though he notes that the "Great Spirit of the Indians is not the same as the Creator of the white race," this discussion takes place in the subsection the "Indian Names of God".<sup>43</sup> These textual misinterpretations exemplify the ideological influence on colonial interpretations of Indigenous culture. Maclean continues to make connections between the different First Nations' cultures in regards to his own situated cultural perspective throughout the text. While Maclean was specifically a Methodist missionary, he was not unique in his historical roles of religious leader, cultural expert, and colonizer; these multifaceted roles further complicated the historical documentation of Indigenous culture.

With contemporary postmodern theory, scholars now have a better understanding of the processes involved in the historical construction of cultural understandings. Michel Foucault discussed the historical complexities behind the development of contemporary understandings of religion, culture, sexuality and power. While Foucault's philosophical work spans over various areas of inquiry, he primarily underscores developments in 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century Western thought and the shift from religious authority to authoritative

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<sup>42</sup> John Maclean, *Canadian Savage Folk: The Native Tribes of Canada* (Toronto: W. Briggs; Montreal: C.W. Coates, 1896), 10-189, Early Canadiana Online, accessed March 14, 2013, <http://eco.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.15558/5?r=0&s=1>.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 433.

knowledge production in the modern nation state.<sup>44</sup> In explaining why he undertook a history of sexuality, Foucault argues that a double standard developed in 19<sup>th</sup> century Western thought in which individual understandings of identity became increasingly subordinate to societal standards.<sup>45</sup> This development in 19<sup>th</sup> century Western thought is inherently problematic for a number of reasons, and a number of individuals, as discussed at length by many feminist scholars, including Donna Haraway.

In discussing “Situated Knowledges,” Haraway explains how the authoritative knowledge production systems that were a product of the 19<sup>th</sup> century paradigm shift in Western thought were based on scientific truth that is not historically objective. That is to say, that in an effort to achieve a more objective source of authority than religious doctrine, scientific truth, based on reason and rationalism, actually became that authority and a new dominant ideological framework. Thus rendering individual scientific experts the voice of reason in regards to how each individual body should live in relation to other bodies. These processes were further complicated by the development of the modern nation state, increasing globalization, and a new emphasis and focus on capitalism. All of these changes effectively created a framework for understanding with a subjective and authoritative knowledge production system. Furthermore, Foucault highlights how “the subject’s misunderstanding of his own sexuality and the over-knowledge of sexuality in society are not contradictory. They effectively co-exist.”<sup>46</sup> This emphasis on reason and rationality also created a focus on the individual, and prioritizing the psychoanalysis of what is wrong with the subject instead of taking “seriously the problem of the production

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<sup>44</sup> Michel Foucault, *Religion and Culture*, Jeremy R. Carrette, ed., (New York: Routledge, 2009), 118.

<sup>45</sup> Foucault, *Religion and Culture*, 117.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 117.

of those theories in Western society.”<sup>47</sup> This became even more problematic when combined with Christian morality, exported in the form of racism and heteronormativity, by colonizers who believed they knew and were doing what was best for all people based on this scientific truth.

The fact that the majority of colonial authority figures charged with civilizing the First Nations’ were religious missionaries is crucial to examine in regards to Canada’s dominant historical narrative and subsequent identity formation. As a result, ‘uncivilized’ in the context of colonization meant belief systems that were not Christian, or cultural practices that were not Western.

In discussing the issue of cultural superiority in her book, *Subject Matter: Technology, the Body, and Science on the Anglo-American Frontier, 1500-1676*, Joyce Chaplin makes the argument that the “problem for the historian is that the Indians who were in contact with the English were not able, before the 1660s, to generate written records of their commentary on the argument; although the English often quoted Indians, they hardly ever did so with the intention of giving their quotations with greatest accuracy.”<sup>48</sup> That is to say that numerous individuals and various groups were involved in the historical colonization processes, but only some were involved in the production of that historical narrative. The worldview of the colonizers influenced the documentation of the first historical accounts of colonial contact, and as a result, some pieces have been lost in cultural translation and subsequently, historically marginalized.

A prime example of this process can be seen within the interpretations of the Kwakiutl Sisiutl, or double headed serpent, figure. Dr. G. W. Locher, an early

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 118.

<sup>48</sup> Joyce Chaplin, *Subject Matter: Technology, the Body, and Science on the Anglo-American Frontier, 1500-1676*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 3.

anthropologist, discusses the Sisiutl in his book *The Serpent in Kwakiutl Religion: A Study in Primitive Culture* published in 1932. Locher is analyzing the myths enacted through ceremonies associated to the potlatch ceremony, and he also notes the importance of the potlatch to the community structures<sup>49</sup>. Locher describes the form of the Sisiutl, with two heads and a human head in the middle, as “already suggestive of a certain duality in this figure.”<sup>50</sup> Most of Lochner’s analysis pertains to the role of the Sisiutl figure in the sea and underworld<sup>51</sup>, and how that relates to the Kwakiutl understanding of night and day<sup>52</sup>, light and dark, and life and death<sup>53</sup>.

Locher discusses a myth about the Sisiutl, as ruler of the sea and underworld, and how his daughter becomes the wife of Oomqomgila, “a name which here indicates the raven.”<sup>54</sup> He highlights that the daughter “emits a strong smell of copper,”<sup>55</sup> and that the serpent is referred to as “Copper-maker,”<sup>56</sup> which is important because copper was considered a sign of wealth in Kwakiutl culture, as noted by Lochner and others.<sup>57</sup> So while Sisiutl is considered a god of the underworld, symbolic of night, darkness, it is also representative of wealth, and is dualistic in its connections to raven of the upper world.<sup>58</sup>

Lochner notes that “there are many more data which suggest that among these Kwakiutl the cosmological dualism was in former times connected with a social

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<sup>49</sup> G.W. Locher, *The Serpent in Kwakiutl Religion: A Study in Primitive Culture* (Leyden: E.J. Brill Publishers and Printers, 1932), 41-42.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 17-18.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 76. See also Dr. Martha Black of the Royal BC Museum’s “An Introduction to Totem Poles,” accessed March 14, 2013, [http://www.royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/content\\_files/files/totempoles.pdf](http://www.royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/content_files/files/totempoles.pdf).

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

dualism.”<sup>59</sup> This dualism is expressed explicitly in the dual gender of the double-headed serpent. Lochner explains how in various myths both female and male characters can be represented by Sisiutl figure through the “female and male aspects of the serpent, which is really bisexual.”<sup>60</sup> Lochner also draws connections between the serpent and the mythological hermaphrodite and bisexual dwarves that according to Kwakiutl tradition, “lead the travellers to perdition.”<sup>61</sup> This is important to note the use of language such as ‘perdition,’ as it evidences the influence of ideology. Even the work of an anthropologist such as Dr. Lochner was subject to the influence of his perspective being situated within a colonial religious intellectual framework for understanding, such as that of the religious missionaries sent to colonize, or the Canadian officials sent to govern. Even though the Sisiutl was connected to copper and wealth, it was documented by Lochner as more strongly associated with the underworld. This is arguably because the dualistic nature of the serpent figure was difficult to conceptualize and understand within Lochner’s dichotomous framework for understanding. Furthermore, according to the Christian theology influencing Lochner’s situated perspective, the snake is associated with the original sin and the fall of man.<sup>62</sup> All of these factors help to explain the historical interpretation and documentation of complex figures such as the Sisiutl.

The major misunderstanding in this case stemmed from the dualistic nature of the Sisiutl. The Sisiutl could be both night and day, male and female, good and evil. Situated in the Catholic or Protestant cultural perspective, which holds oppositional and fixed

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 70-71.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 74.

<sup>62</sup> Manfred Lurker, “Snakes,” *Encyclopedia of Religion*, vol. 12, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Lindsay Jones, ed., (Detroit: Macmillan Reference, 2005): 8456, accessed March 14, 2013, <http://go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?action=interpret&id=GALE%7CCX3424502880&v=2.1&u=ucolumbia&it=r&p=GVRL&sw=w&authCount=1>

dichotomies, Dr. Lochner was influenced to over emphasize the negative half of the Sisiutl. Just as fixed gender and sexual roles of colonial thought determined the interpretation of Sisiutl gender and sexuality as deviant.

In regards to the larger, ongoing cultural conflict, the odds were consistently in the favour of the colonizers. In discussing the historical relation between the Kwakiutl nation and colonial religious authorities, a village case study shows that the Kwakiutl were “a tremendously over-served population” and that even “[o]ccasionally representatives of several different services arrive in a tiny village on the same day and literally outnumber the population they have come to serve.”<sup>63</sup> This helps to understand the sense of dominance colonial authorities were attempting to assert in their assimilation efforts.

Lochner’s work is not unique in being influenced by the colonial religious framework for understanding, as evidenced by the other influential historical figures highlighted in this essay, but his text discusses an Indigenous figure so fundamentally opposed to colonial frameworks for understanding that I chose to highlight it to exemplify the extremity of the historical cultural conflict. The Sisiutl further emphasizes the fundamentally different nature of each culture as even though gender identity was at the core of each, it was understood by the Indigenous culture dualistic, and colonial culture as dichotomous. Arguably, the Sisiutl’s historical marginalization is as a result of its complex, dualistic, hermaphroditic and bisexual nature being in direct conflict with the colonial religious thought, which posited gender as dichotomous and snakes as symbolic of the original sin. The sexual politics of colonial Canada were inherently complex, convoluted with misunderstandings of Indigenous gender identity and fears of

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<sup>63</sup> Wolcott, *Kwakiutl Village and School*, 60.



miscegenation. The threat felt by colonial religious authorities at the idea of miscegenation had already been evidenced in central Canada with the abolition of marriages between First Nations women and fur traders. What is important to note for this thesis is the effect this fear had on colonial interpretations of Indigenous frameworks for understanding gender and sexual identity. While the Sisiutl figure is physically still around in various representations, its rich mythology has been marginalized. The raven, on the other hand, is a well-known figure in Canadian indigenous mythology, even though it, like the Sisiutl, is also a dualistic figure known for both good and evil, “representing both the cultural hero and the trickster.”<sup>64</sup>

This is evidenced by such contemporary representations as the collection of totem poles and houses in the Grand Hall of the Canadian Museum of Civilization being referred to as *Raven’s Village* in a book published in the same name by Nancy Ruddell and the Museum.<sup>65</sup> Furthermore, Raven is even the name of one of the Canadian Government’s Aboriginal Youth Forces, along with Bold Eagle and Black Bear.<sup>66</sup> This is not to suggest that the raven is a problematic figure in anyway, but to highlight the contemporary cultural emphasis put on some Indigenous cultural pieces, and the historical marginalization of others, depending on how they fit within the Canadian polity and Canadian multiculturalism.

Scholars in other areas of the world have highlighted this practice by colonial and successive governments to systematically appropriate the pieces of Indigenous cultures that fit the national agendas while simultaneously eradicating the pieces that proved

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<sup>64</sup> Lochner, *Serpent in Kwakiutl Religion*, 63.

<sup>65</sup> “Grand Hall Tour: Raven’s Village,” Canadian Museum of Civilization, accessed March 14, 2013, <http://www.civilization.ca/cmc/exhibitions/aborig/grand/gh03eng.shtml>.

<sup>66</sup> “Aboriginal Programs,” Canadian Forces, accessed March 14, 2013, <http://www.forces.ca/en/page/aboriginals-93#programs-1>.

problematic to those agendas. As previously mentioned, Joyce Chaplin discusses the history of this in America, but Rebecca Earle also discusses the history of appropriation in 19<sup>th</sup> century Spanish America and the construction of an “indianesque nationalism.”<sup>67</sup> Furthermore, indigenous scholars are also finally able to make these same arguments themselves. Bonita Lawrence discusses the ways in which Canadian native identity as legally defined has been regulated to fit the purposes of overarching agendas.<sup>68</sup> Also, Andrea Smith argues the dominance of heteropatriarchy is upheld by the “Three Pillars of White Supremacy” which she defines as: slavery as it relates to capitalism, genocide as it relates to colonialism, and war as it relates to orientalism, which is “defined by Edward Said as the process of the West defining itself as superior civilization by constructing itself in opposition to an “exotic” but inferior “Orient.”<sup>69</sup> Finally, Waziyatawin Angela Wilson argues the importance of Indigenous knowledge recovery as not only a form of Indigenous empowerment, but as a way to engage “in the academy and in communities, both on individual and collective levels” to issue a challenge to “the powerful institutions of colonization that have routinely dismissed alternative sources of knowledge and ways of being as irrelevant to the modern world.”<sup>70</sup>

Indigenous knowledge recovery is important specifically because of the depth and complexity of culture that has been lost in the historical cultural conflict. The Indigenous

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<sup>67</sup> Rebecca Earle, *The Return of the Native: Indians and Myth-Making in Spanish America, 1810-1930* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 47.

<sup>68</sup> Bonita Lawrence, “Gender, Race and the Regulation of Native Identity in Canada and the United States: An Overview,” *Hypatia*, 18, no. 2 (2003): 3, accessed March 14, 2013, <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/hypatia/v018/18.2lawrence.html>

<sup>69</sup> Andrea Smith, “Hetero Patriarchy and the Three Pillars of White Supremacy,” in *The Colour of Violence: The Incite! Anthology*, ed. Incite! (Cambridge, Mass.: South End Press, 2006): 67-68, accessed March 14, 2013, <http://loveharder.files.wordpress.com/2009/08/andrea-smith.pdf>

<sup>70</sup> Waziyatawin Angela Wilson, “Introduction: Indigenous Knowledge Recovery is Indigenous Empowerment,” *The American Indian Quarterly*, 28, no. ¾ (2004): 359, accessed March 14, 2013, [http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/American\\_indian\\_quarterly/v028/28.3wilson.html](http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/American_indian_quarterly/v028/28.3wilson.html)

Sisiutl figure, for example, cannot be completely understood within the existing historical narrative that has been processed through the colonial framework for understanding before initial documentation and subsequent study. This discussion of the Sisiutl figure exemplifies the larger argument that pieces of Indigenous culture were either appropriated or marginalized depending how they fit (or didn't fit) into the developing big picture of Canadian multicultural national identity. Specifically, because the physical representations of the Sisiutl figure on totem poles were appropriated and the complex understandings the carvings represented were marginalized.

Chapter 3 – Two-Spirits:  
Marginalized Histories of Alternative Understandings of Gender and Sexuality

The marginalization of alternative understandings of gender and sexuality is neither a new discovery nor restricted to any one historical context. Anthropologists have recorded the existence of alternative ways of understanding gender and sexual identity all over the world: Thailand, the DR Congo, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, Brazil, as well as North America.<sup>71</sup> Will Roscoe explains how since the Spanish conquest “Europeans have been encountering “berdaches” – as third and fourth gender people have come to be called in the anthropological literature.”<sup>72</sup> The idea of third and fourth genders stems from the specific cultural understanding that there are only two gender categories for individuals to fall into, male and female. ‘Berdaches’ came to be the term used by anthropologists to designate all of the various and complex alternative Indigenous understandings of gender identity that existed prior to globalization and colonization. Specifically, in North America, Roscoe argues that the social structures and frameworks for understanding of “native North America was nowhere more at odds with that of Europe and Anglo-America that in its diverse gender roles.”<sup>73</sup> Furthermore, Roscoe argues that

the ground American society occupies once may have been the queerest continent on the planet. The original peoples of North America, whose principles are just as

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<sup>71</sup> Andrew P. Lyons and Harriet D. Lyons, eds., *Sexualities in Anthropology: A Reader* (UK: Blackwell Publishing, 2011), 265-269.

<sup>72</sup> Will Roscoe, *Changing Ones: Third and Fourth Genders in Native North America* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1998), 4.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

ancient as those of Judeo-Christian culture, saw no threat in homosexuality or gender variance. Indeed, they believed individuals with these traits made unique contributions to their communities.<sup>74</sup>

In *The Mythology of Sex*, Sarah Denning highlights how in the Western world, it was the development of Judaism in 4000-2000 BC that “most profoundly influenced the development of attitudes to sexuality” as a “highly patriarchal religion which, subsequently, gave birth to both Christianity and Islam.”<sup>75</sup> As religion developed and spread, obedience to law by all individuals was always paramount to avoid transgressing God’s laws and bringing his wrath upon the community, and the “laws concerning sexual behaviour were no exception.”<sup>76</sup> This meant, according to scripture, society would have a patriarchal structure, marriage was a religious obligation, valid only between a man and woman, as well as the only acceptable instance to engage in sexual intercourse, and finally, that homosexuality “merited the death penalty, while transvestism was considered insulting to God.”<sup>77</sup> This influenced the colonial agenda of cultural assimilation as the authorities could not understand the “estimated four hundred tribal groups in North America” nor their “diverse array of environmental adaptations, subsistence strategies, social organization, family structures, languages, and religions.”<sup>78</sup> In Western European cultural laws, “oppositional dualism” is core to the social structure, and thus “humans must fall into a bimodal set, that is, male and female.”<sup>79</sup> This dualism was not the same as Indigenous conceptions of dualism, and its oppositional nature makes it dichotomous.

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Sarah Denning, *The Mythology of Sex* (New York: Macmillan, 1996), 127

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 127-128.

<sup>78</sup> Roescoe, *Changing Ones*, 6.

<sup>79</sup> Alice B. Kehoe, “On the Incommensurability of Gender Categories,” in *Two-Spirit People: Native American Gender Identity, Sexuality, and Spirituality*, Sue-Ellen Jacobs, Wesley Thomas, and Sabine Lang, eds., (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 266.

This dichotomous understanding underlies cultural misinterpretations and misunderstandings of Indigenous gender roles in colonial Canada.

The colonial authorities believed in a dichotomous gender identity stratification system, in which there are two options, at once fundamentally opposed and attracted to each other, whereas the Indigenous framework for understanding gender identity was not transgressing these two categories, because they believed in a spectrum of identity that existed far beyond those two dichotomous categories. The category, and negative connotations associated with homosexuality, didn't even exist in Indigenous ideology because gender identity existed along a spectrum of possibilities. This was in keeping with other facets of the Kwakiutl, and other First Nations', cultures belief system, which tended "towards individualization, not generalization."<sup>80</sup>

The fact that ancient Judeo-Christian religious authority figures dictated scripture outlawing alternative gender and sexual identities evidences the constructed nature of the 'naturally' Christian hetero-normative standards, as those alternative identities must have existed to have been outlawed in the first place. Furthermore, the plethora of alternative understandings of gender and sexuality the world over prior to colonization and globalization ultimately evidences the constructed nature of Western Judeo-Christian societal standards for understanding and forming individual identity.

Roscoe also refers to the cultural construction and enforcement of dichotomous gender identities in saying that "these assumptions are called into question by the example of native multiple genders" and furthermore that "North American multiple genders emerge as roles with great historical depth and continuity, with parallels in

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<sup>80</sup> Diamond Jenness, "Canadian Indian Religion," in *Religion in Canadian Society*, Stewart Crysedale and Les Wheatcroft, eds.. (Toronto: Macmillan Company of Canada, 1976), 79.

societies worldwide.”<sup>81</sup> This all collectively emphasizes the constructed nature of the ‘natural’ social order that was imposed upon Indigenous populations. The reason for the marginalization stemmed from the misunderstandings and miscommunications involved in the cultural clash of Indigenous and colonial religious ideologies, and the fact that one had to be seamlessly assimilated into the other in order for the colonial agenda to be enacted.

In her book tracing the existence of transgender individuals throughout history, Leslie Feinberg argues that “the language used by the colonizers to describe the acceptance of sex/gender diversity, and of same-sex love, most accurately described the viewer, not the viewed. And these sensational reports about Two-Spirit people were used to further “justify” genocide, the theft of Native land and resources, and destruction of their cultures and religions.”<sup>82</sup> This is in keeping with Joyce Chaplin’s arguments about the issue of cultural superiority in the writing of the historical narrative. Some scholars have highlighted how this type of language in the historical narrative (which serves as foundational for other disciplines) only perpetuates more problems. Scholars, such as Will Roscoe, Walter Williams, and Gilbert Herdt have even argued that “Berdachism”, as a more recent anthropological category, is a form of continued social assimilation in “the reduction of a whole person to a categorical sex act.”<sup>83</sup> That is to say, because Two Spirit individuals were often held in positions of high esteem in Indigenous societies, the reduction of that diversity to a comprehensible category within a narrow, dichotomous,

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<sup>81</sup> Roscoe, *Changing Ones*, 5

<sup>82</sup> Leslie Feinberg, *Transgender Warriors: Making History from Joan of Arc to RuPaul* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996), 22

<sup>83</sup> Gilbert Herdt, “The Dilemmas of Desire: From Berdache to Two-Spirit,” in *Two-Spirit People: Native American Gender Identity, Sexuality, and Spirituality*, Sue-Ellen Jacobs, Wesley Thomas, and Sabine Lang, eds., (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 277.

Western understanding of gender and sexuality is only further marginalizing these histories.

To better explain the respected position Two Spirit individuals held, Williams explains it as a reflection of the spiritual, and that if “a person is different from the average individual, this means the spirits must have taken particular care in creating this person [...] by this reasoning, such an individual must be especially close to the spirits.”<sup>84</sup> Roscoe discusses the variety of pivotal roles Two Spirit individuals may have assumed in the community, such as men becoming “artists, innovators, ambassadors, and religious leaders” and women becoming “warriors, hunters, and chiefs.”<sup>85</sup> This diversity of gender identity is a continuation of the diversity and depth of spiritual beliefs and cultural understandings both within the various First Nations as well as between the many different nations.

A study of religion in Canada found that “the basic patterns become more and more complex, from both a linguistic and a religious point of view, so that village becomes set apart from the next by widening cultural differences. This tendency to split, which gives primitive cultures their immense richness and complexity, was brutally cut short by the European invasion of North America.”<sup>86</sup> These arguments that relate to the culturally constructed nature of societal categories that limit individual identity and agency are not just abstract and irrelevant, there is evidence of alternative understandings of gender and sexuality in the margins of the Canadian historical narrative.

In Leslie Spier’s ethnological study of Klamath First Nation in Oregon, published

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<sup>84</sup> Walter Williams, *The Spirit and The Flesh: Sexual Diversity in American Indian Culture* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), 32

<sup>85</sup> Roscoe, *Changing Ones*, 4

<sup>86</sup> Muller, “Kwakiutl of British Columbia,” 79.



in 1930, she found that “tranvestites or berdaches are found among the Klamath as in all probability among all other North American tribes.”<sup>87</sup> Although marginalized and hard to find, there is primary source evidence of Two Spirit individuals in the Canadian historical narrative. David Thompson was a British-Canadian fur trader, explorer and mapmaker, and in his *Narrative of his Explorations in Western America 1784-1812*, dated July 28, he discusses encountering “apparently a young man” and “in the Man [he] recognized the Woman who three years ago was the wife of Boisverd.”<sup>88</sup> John Franklin, in his *Narrative of a Second Expedition to the Shores of the Polar Seas, in the Years 1825, 1826, and 1827*, discusses a similar story in greater detail:

“While living at the N.W. Company's Post, on the Columbia River, as the wife of one of the Canadian servants, she formed a sudden resolution of becoming a warrior; and throwing aside her female dress, she clothed herself in a suitable manner. Having procured a gun, a bow and arrows, and a horse, she sallied forth to join a party of her countrymen then going to war; and, in her first essay, displayed so much courage as to attract general regard, which was so much heightened by her subsequent feats of bravery, that many young men put themselves under her command. Their example was soon generally followed, and, at length she became the principal leader of the tribe, under the designation of the "Manlike Woman." Being young, and of a delicate frame, her followers attributed her exploits to the possession of supernatural power, and, therefore, received whatever she said with implicit faith.”<sup>89</sup>

While both these explorers were working within the Columbia River region, there is also evidence of continuities in alternative understandings of gender and sexuality within the Kwakiutl nation. Historian Will Roscoe highlights the existence of Two Spirit

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<sup>87</sup> Leslie Spier, *Klamath Ethnography* (Berkeley; University of California Press, 1930), 51, accessed March 14, 2013, <http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=wu.89058372939;seq=13;view=1up>

<sup>88</sup> *David Thompson's Narrative*, (New York: Greenwood Press Publishers, 1968), 512, accessed March 14, 2013, [http://archive.org/stream/davidthompsonsna00thom/davidthompsonsna00thom\\_djvu.txt](http://archive.org/stream/davidthompsonsna00thom/davidthompsonsna00thom_djvu.txt)

<sup>89</sup> Sir John Franklin, *Narrative of a Second Expedition to the Shores of the Polar Seas, in the Years 1825, 1826, and 1827*, 252 (London: J. Murray, 1828), “April,” accessed March 14, 2013, <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/33467/33467.txt>.

individuals specifically in the history of the Kwakiutl nation.<sup>90</sup> Walter Williams also discusses a Kwakiutl Two Spirit individual in his “Berdaches as Family Members, Teachers, and Parents” section<sup>91</sup> of his study as well as when discussing the “social as well as sexual impact” the missionaries and colonial authorities had on the berdache.<sup>92</sup> This specific historical example further emphasizes the depth, complexity, and consistencies within the Indigenous frameworks for understanding. The Kwakiutl nation was one that engaged not only in the practice of carving totem poles, but carved specific figures such as the dualistic Sisiutl that represented alternative frameworks for understanding, that are further evidenced by the existence of two-spirit individuals throughout the margins of the historical narrative. These accounts evidence the continuities within the diverse and complex alternative ways of understanding that existed in pre-colonial Canada that were culturally assimilated and historically marginalized.

Canada’s First Nations, had diverse, complex, and well-established social structures and frameworks for understanding. The seasonal organization and potlatch ceremonies, uses and symbolism of totem poles, depth of mythological and religious beliefs, representations, and stories, as well as alternative understandings of gender and sexual identity, are all evidence of distinct cultures within pre-colonial Canada. However, these differences would be incompatible with the formation of a Canadian nation, despite its appeal to multiculturalism. Feinberg has argued that these histories of First Nations are often more reflective of the individuals writing them than the individuals stories they

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<sup>90</sup> Roscoe, *Changing Ones*, 9-10

<sup>91</sup> Williams, *Spirit and the Flesh*, 55

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 180-181

narrate. The monolithic system of knowledge production that has constructed a multicultural narrative of Canadian history, by overlooking the nuances of these complex varieties, erases this history, just as the assimilation process attempts to erase native culture.

As previously discussed with the potlatch ceremony, totem poles, and Sisiutl figure, there is historical evidence of alternative cultural frameworks and ways of understanding and that portions were eradicated or assimilated depending on how they related to the colonizing agenda. This is problematic in regards to the construction of a multicultural national identity as well as how that cultural agenda influences the writing and teaching of history and individual identity formation today. Untangling the politics and ideologies from the historiography behind the dominant historical narrative is no small task, but doing so illuminates realities of the past that contribute a much deeper understanding of Indigenous societies than have otherwise been recorded.

Chapter 4 – Canada’s Cultural Heritage:  
The Influence of State Multiculturalism on Both Canadian History and Historiography

The history of cultural misinterpretation, assimilation and appropriation has been discussed in this paper, but what is equally important to explore is the educational nature of the historical assimilation agendas enacted within Canada. In discussing *Queer Settler Colonialism and Indigenous Decolonization*, Scott Lauria Morgensen asserts how assimilative practices were different in British and French North America than elsewhere, specifically, because instruction and discipline were used as colonial tools instead of only violence.<sup>93</sup> This is echoed by Stewart Crysdale and Les Wheatcroft in their collection of essays on *Religion in Canadian Society*, in noting that throughout Canadian history “Churches have often legitimated the existing order and acted as partners with governments in the provision of education, health care, and other social services.”<sup>94</sup> This was the beginning of the influence of colonial religious thought on the structure of Canadian socio-cultural frameworks for understanding, as well as the most intense phase of cultural assimilation geared specifically towards the fundamentally different First Nations occupying the land required to physically develop Canadian societal frameworks. This is probably evidenced most horrifically with the history of Residential Schools.

The issue of Residential Schools in Canada has garnered attention in the historical narrative, and even warranted a recent federal apology. While not enough can be said, or done, Celia Haig-Brown’s *Resistance and Renewal* represents a progressive step in including First Nations perspective in the historical discussion and subsequent narrative.

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<sup>93</sup> Scott Lauria Morgensen, *Spaces Between Us: Queer Settler Colonialism and Indigenous Decolonization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 38-39

<sup>94</sup> Crysdale and Wheatcroft, *Religion in Canadian Society*, 3.

The colonial thought that influenced the assimilation agendas, and programs like the residential schools, also influenced the societal structures, and education programs, of the settlers and immigrants of colonial Canada. The problem colonial, and subsequent Canadian authorities were facing, was how to assimilate these various groups and cultures into one, cohesive, productive nation – undeniably a difficult task in the same historical context as the formation of the nation itself. The problem now, however, is that as a result of colonial power structures, during the early development of a new multicultural nation, everybody was being assimilated into one, dominant cultural framework for understanding, this process is what Rinaldo Walcott calls state multiculturalism. This state multiculturalism directly influenced the initial documentation and subsequent study of Canadian history.

Rinaldo Walcott explains the difference between multiculturalism and state multiculturalism in Canada in that state multiculturalism “borrows from the idea of multiculturalism and redirects it as a tool of the state.”<sup>95</sup> So that in the context of Canada, with its relatively short historical period of formation, the influence of other established and powerful nations, plus the pressure to consolidate various cultures to engage effectively in global markets as a collective nation, meant multiculturalism became a tool of the state “invested with the power to manage a range of differences that might prove potentially troubling in a hegemonic state’s bid to retain its exclusive authorizing

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<sup>95</sup> Rinaldo Walcott, “Disgraceful: Intellectual Dishonesty, White Anxieties, and Multicultural Critique Thirty-Six Years Later,” in *Home and Native Land: Unsettling Multiculturalism in Canada*, May Chazan, Lisa Helps, Anna Stanley, and Sonali Thakker, eds., (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2011), 18.

powers.”<sup>96</sup> The need for these authorizing powers was made even more pressing in the Canadian nation-forming context of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Benedict Anderson addresses the complexities of nationalism in his book *Imagined Communities*, specifically, that in order to understand nationalisms, it is important to “carefully consider how they came into historical being, in what ways their meanings have changed over time, and why, today, they command such profound emotional legitimacy.”<sup>97</sup> Anderson explains how it is human nature to desire and create a sense of community, and prior to the scientific revolution and age of reason, religion had been the dominant form of community as well as social hierarchy. Anderson argues, “nationalism has to be understood by aligning it, not with self-consciously held political ideologies, but with the large cultural systems that preceded it.”<sup>98</sup> That is to say, that a successful contemporary sense of national identity and community will rely heavily on a historical common ground.

Anderson highlights eighteenth century Europe and the development of the book and print-capitalism as catalysts as for nationalism by providing “the technical means for ‘re-presenting’ the kind of imagined community that is the nation.”<sup>99</sup> Anderson argues that most commodities, measured in amounts, remain quantities. Whereas a book as “a distinct, self-contained object, exactly reproduced on a large scale” can be considered the “first modern-style mass-produced commodity.”<sup>100</sup> It is a through a consistent saturation

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<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>97</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1983), 4.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

of society in these types of representations that a sense of nationalism, or “the imagined world is rooted in everyday life.”<sup>101</sup>

While this collective creation of a sense of national community was not unique to Canada, the historical context it took place in was somewhat unique. In comparison to countries like Britain, or France, who were creating collective senses of nationalism with hundreds of years of historical foundation to build from, Canada was creating a collective sense of nationalism while simultaneously forming as a nation. This was only further complicated by the cultural assimilation practices that were enacted historically, and that today, are not represented in the national, multicultural historical consciousness. Both of Anderson’s arguments, that nationalism is influenced by large cultural systems preceding it, and perpetuated through print-capitalism, are important when critically considering the writing and production of Canadian historical texts and historical consciousness.

Walcott also notes that multiculturalism is not inherently problematic in itself, but can potentially create a problem-space with interlocking forms of oppression “from which new kinds of questions must emerge so that different kinds of answers and, more importantly, different kinds of desires might surface.”<sup>102</sup> Walcott argues that the hierarchical nature of Canadian multiculturalism stems from “uncritical discourses that position rationality as fundamental to Euro-American political philosophy” that leads to an imposition of “an order on their own irrationality in terms of racial difference, while at the same time, grappling with certain kinds of economic rationalities that complicate those ideational myths and practices.”<sup>103</sup> That is to say that Canada’s state multiculturalism has continued to suppress First Nations in favour of producing a

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 35-36.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 29-30.

historical narrative and multicultural national identity that is cohesive with the dominant frameworks for understanding.

The influence of colonial thought and Canada's multicultural national agenda on the historical policies enacted towards Canada's First Nations has already been discussed in relation to the outlawing of the Potlatch ceremony, erasure of belief systems, and appropriation of totem poles. However, these issues of ideological influence become increasingly more complex and problematic for individual and national identity formation processes when they permeate the academic sphere and become indoctrinated in all levels of education.

There has been progress made in the study of social history and Indigenous history in the post-secondary sphere as a partial result of feminist contributions, which again, like all histories, is not exempt from being indicative of the context it was written in. In discussing the development of women's history and history of gender in Canada, Gail Cuthbert Brandt traces how second wave feminism brought about new perspectives to existing areas of historical study. By examining the liminal space in between the public and private sphere feminist historians were able to broaden the definition of political organization to include not only parties, but also community groups that were dominated by women. Another example of a development was to consider the family as micro-economic unit of production and the household economy a factor in larger social history debates.<sup>104</sup> These different perspectives led to different understandings and different discussions, such as Joy Parr's arguments for the socially constructed nature of sex

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<sup>104</sup> Gail Cuthbert Brandt, "Postmodern Patchwork: Some Recent Trends in the Writing of Women's History in Canada," *The Canadian Historical Review* 72, no. 4 (1991), 446-450, accessed March 14, 2013, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=4691400&site=ehost-live>



segregation by task or skill in her “Study of Two Towns.”<sup>105</sup> It wasn’t until third wave feminism, however, that the feminism of privilege argument was considered in the writing of the historical narrative. That is to say, that based on who had been conducting the initial feminist scholarship, the majority of it had focused on white women already of some means, which was ignorant of the fact that there are intersecting forms of oppression. Feminism’s gains are still valuable to recovering First Nations’ history, especially when combined with other disciplines, such as archaeology, anthropology, sociology, law, demography, and environmental history, for example, to conduct intersectional analysis on alternative historical sources, such as objects, artefacts, and oral narratives.

While feminism has helped in the development of Indigenous Studies, there is still much work to be done, including injecting the dominant historical narrative with the Indigenous voice. This is absolutely necessary within the contemporary Canadian context as a result of the influence of colonial thought on the dominant Canadian historical narrative. As a result of the influence of the dominant religious and political ideology in both French and English Canadian historical studies, as well competing efforts at establishing nationalisms, “there was very little interest into the relations between religion and politics.”<sup>106</sup> In regards to the study of Indigenous religions in Canadian history, Werner Müller notes that they have been discussed only from an anthropological standpoint “in both French and English” and that some similarities have been highlighted,

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<sup>105</sup> Joy Parr, *The Gender of Breadwinners: Women, Men and Change in Two Industrial Towns, 1880-1950* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), accessed March 14, 2013, <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/ubc/docDetail.action?docID=10200931>

<sup>106</sup> Crysdale and Wheatcroft, *Religion in Canadian Society*, 42-43.

however, he argues, “the similarities should not obscure the diversities.”<sup>107</sup> When the focus of the historical narrative shifted from competing nationalism to collective multiculturalism, Indigenous religions, cultures, and frameworks for understanding were still exempt. As previously mentioned, Roscoe highlighted how there were some 400 different nations in North America prior to colonial contact, as well as the depth and diversity among them. Roscoe and other scholars, such as Scott Lauria Morgensen, explain how the common academic term ‘berdache’ and issues of ‘berdachism’ evidences the persistence of colonial heteropatriarchy by generalizing Indigenous understandings of gender and sexuality and positioning them as separate and inferior to dominant understandings.<sup>108</sup>

When discussing *Native American Representations: First encounters, Distorted Images, and Literary Appropriations* Louis Owens argues that “[w]hile Native American literature is gradually finding a niche within academia, one discovers predominantly an absence of Native American voices in works by major cultural theorists and respected writers.”<sup>109</sup> David Murray also argues the need for First Nations to be accurately represented in the historical narrative in echoing some of Anderson’s arguments on the importance of literary representations to formations of identities. Specifically, that “[r]epresentations are what we all live by and with, not only as scholars but also as citizens and members of communities, but the dangers involved in the control of representation are as great, if not always as evident, as the need for the representation

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>108</sup> Morgensen, *Spaces Between Us*, 55.

<sup>109</sup> Louis Owens, “As if an Indian were Really an Indian: Native American Voices and Postcolonial Theory,” in *Native American Representations: First Encounters, Distorted Images, and Literary Appropriations*, Gretchen M. Bataille, ed. (Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), 13.

itself.”<sup>110</sup> Murray, like Linda Alcoff, emphasizes the problems associated with speaking for others, especially when it comes to trying to represent “a complex of ideas,”<sup>111</sup> as is the case with Canada’s First Nations and the history of cultural appropriation, assimilation, and misrepresentation enacted towards them.

Morgensen also discusses the development of Two-Spirit as a positive term, as one that indicates the existence of both female and male spirits in one body. Morgensen explains how the term originated at the annual International Gathering of American Indian and First Nations Gays and Lesbians in Winnipeg in 1990 and “quickly spread as a new term to describe Native queer identities, communities, and activism.”<sup>112</sup> It is this type of decolonization that needs to take place in the academic sphere, looking to First Nations to inject their own cultural understandings into the multicultural historical narrative. These types of developments in Canadian history help to separate the influence of state multiculturalism from the historical narrative.

What is still most problematic however, is the persistent discrepancies between the post-secondary academic sphere and mainstream Canadian historical consciousness. Foucault, for example, was writing on the regulation of gender and sexual identity in his *History of Sexuality* in the mid-twentieth century. As Donna Haraway argued (in 1988) “we need the power of modern critical theories of how meanings and bodies get made, not in order to deny meanings and bodies, but in order to build meanings and bodies that have a chance for life.”<sup>113</sup> We also need those modern critical theories to be accessible to every body.

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 80.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 80.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 81.

<sup>113</sup> Haraway, “Situated Knowledges,” 580.

Within Canada, it is important to rectify the historical consciousness to reflect the truly multicultural nature of the historical narrative, and the primary place to start is at the primary and secondary levels. When discussing the vast amount of differences to account for in Canada, Reg Whitaker states that “Canada has always been divided into two national communities,” French and English, that have influenced the political historical narrative.<sup>114</sup> Furthermore, Doug Owsam argues that studies intellectual history in Canada reflect “the all-pervasive problems of Canadian history – including a gulf between French and English writing, an obsession with Canadian nationalism, and a fear that we may be nothing more than a branch plant of the United States.”<sup>115</sup> Other Canadian historians have also highlighted the impact of the two competing nationalisms, the influence of the cultural histories of France, Britain and the United States, as well as other countries on the writing of the Canadian historical narrative. J. L. Granatstein further emphasizes how what is most problematic in regards to Canadian history is that it is still being taught in the same manner it was written.

Granatstein highlights how until the 1960s, the history taught in Canadian schools was actually the narrative of other countries (primarily that of Britain, France and America) and that the shift to teaching Canadian history proved problematic in determining what exactly that was, specifically, because of a lack of unifying, national, identity.<sup>116</sup> This historiographical issue of the lack of a unifying, national identity was the same issue faced by the colonizers initially responsible for the regulation of identity in Canada, as previously discussed by Bonita Lawrence. Another parallel between the

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<sup>114</sup> John Schultz, *Writing About Canada: A Handbook for Modern Canadian History*, John Schultz, ed., (Scarborough: Prentice-Hall Canada, 1990), 2.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>116</sup> J.L. Granatstein, *Who Killed Canadian History?* (Toronto: Harper Perennial, 2007), 72.

history and historiography is the use of state multiculturalism by federal authorities to further regulate identity, or in Walcott's words, to manage a range of differences. This took the form of mainstream federal historical projects such as the aforementioned *Heritage Minutes* and the CBC documentary *Canada: A People's History*. Furthermore, the top two projects currently listed on the Government of Canada's Canadian History website are *A Scattering of Seeds: The Creation of Canada*, a "companion Web site to the 13 part television series exploring the history and stories behind thirteen family immigration sagas", and *Aboriginal Canadians' Contribution During Wartime*, "Aboriginal peoples from every region of Canada served in the armed forces during the Second World War, fighting in every major battle and campaign of the conflict. Learn more about these men and women, and read their stories of courage and sacrifice."<sup>117</sup> What these two titles and their summaries represent is the dominant trend in mainstream Canadian historical consciousness: the contribution of immigrants to multiculturalism and the contribution of Indigenous populations to the nation. What is required is the cultural heritage recognition of Canada's First Nations, historically and contemporaneously.

The issue is not that Indigenous history doesn't exist, nor that it isn't being engaged with in the education of Canadian history, the issue is that Indigenous history is still being understood from within the margins of the dominant Canadian historical narrative. What is required then is the Indigenous knowledge recovery, as discussed by Wilson, to understand the alternative cultural understandings that existed historically.

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<sup>117</sup> Government of Canada, *Canadian History*, <http://www.canada.gc.ca/aboutcanada-ausujetcanada/hist/canada-eng.html>, accessed April 20, 2013.

Without this type of cultural heritage recognition, Canada's national identity cannot be truly multicultural.

Granetstein also stresses that the historic and contemporary problems in Canadian society are only perpetuated through the continued dilution of the historical narrative by the multicultural agenda and a desire to highlight triumphs and victories while ignoring, or marginalizing, past atrocities. An example of this took place recently with the federal government's War of 1812 celebrations. Again, the issue here is not about pointing fingers for historical wrongs, but to make an effort at righting them now by writing and teaching a complete, holistic, and inclusive historical narrative, and encouraging critical engagement with that narrative at all levels of education and in the mainstream historical consciousness.

## Chapter 5 – Changing History: Abstract Arguments and Pressing Problems

Identity formation processes, both individual and collective, are inherently complex. The major conflicts associated with identity formation within the Canadian context stem from a multiplicity of cultures having their histories processed through one framework for understanding in an effort to create a cohesive nation and to produce a marketable multicultural national identity. Human beings are not naturally categorical, however, even when subject to rational, reason, and scientific truth. Historically, rationalism, as one framework for understanding, became the dominant framework for understanding under the auspices of a Canadian national identity formation in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This process led to a naturalization of the notions that all Canadians shared a common belief in Christianity, that Canadian society conformed to hetero-normative standards, and that participation in patriarchal and capitalist systems was universally valued. This framework for understanding is not necessarily problematic for every individual body within Canada's diverse population, but when divergent histories are cleansed from historical consciousness, to the extent that it becomes naturalized, then historical reckoning becomes extremely problematic. As a result of the influence of colonial frameworks for understanding on the historical cultural assimilation and further influence of state multiculturalism on the history itself, the Canadian public is invited to participate in a shared historical identity crafted from an incomplete and unstable historical base. In Canada, this is crucial to resolve to create and contribute to a legitimate sense of multiculturalism.

As Crysedale and Wheatcroft argue in their introduction to *Religion in Canadian Society*, the historical limitations for diversity set by dominant ideologies have caused contemporary consequences. That is,

“scientific rationalism, when extended to social and cultural behaviour (present-day positivism), holds in its thrall many opinion-leaders and decision-makers in education, the mass media, the arts, business, engineering, and advertising, as well as many successful politicians, who rely on expediency rather than principle in order to gain or hold power. The consequences of the conformity exacted by economic and scientific rationalism are everywhere apparent in the banalities of contemporary culture and the mediocrity of bureaucratic performance.”<sup>118</sup>

These negative consequences are not just abstract academic theories. Statistics Canada’s 2009 report on hate crimes stated that in that year, the number of hate crimes that were motivated by sexual orientation was 188, an 18% increase from 2008. 74% of those hate crimes motivated by sexual orientation were violent in nature, “this percentage was higher than the proportion of violent incidents motivated by race/ethnicity (39%) or religion (21%).”<sup>119</sup> It should be noted, that race, ethnicity and religion were the second highest categories, which brings into focus the issue of intersecting forms of oppression that First Nations Two-Spirit individuals face.

Scott Lauria Morgensen argues “Native queer cultures and politics critique colonial heteropatriarchy by asserting Indigenous methods of survival, traditional renewal, and decolonization, including within Two-Spirit identity.”<sup>120</sup> However, this is a process that must engage with First Nations and non First Nations Canadians, both within and outside of the academic sphere. Furthermore, while First Nations and non First Nations Canadians are negatively impacted by limited information available for identity

<sup>118</sup> Crysedale and Wheatcroft, *Religion in Canadian Society*, 5-6.

<sup>119</sup> Statistics Canada, “Gay Pride... by the Numbers,” updated July 8, 2011, accessed March 14, 2013, [http://www42.statcan.ca/smr08/2011/smr08\\_158\\_2011-eng.htm](http://www42.statcan.ca/smr08/2011/smr08_158_2011-eng.htm)

<sup>120</sup> Morgensen, *Spaces Between Us*, 3.



formation, it is important to note that there are differences, and that First Nations are still further marginalized, in both the historical narrative and contemporary society.

The Indian Act of 1885, which beyond outlining land transactions and assimilative practices, outlawed the Potlatch Ceremony that was core to Pacific Northwest Coast First Nations societal structures. Following international anthropological interest in North American Indigenous cultures in the early twentieth century, the Indian Act was amended in 1938 to allow for the subsidization of ‘native handicrafts’ to be sold on the market. This meant that Canada could sell its representations of totem poles before the First Nations were allowed to engaged in the cultural practices that originated them. That legislation wasn’t passed until another amendment to the Indian Act in 1951. This all happened shortly before the official legislation behind Canada’s multicultural national identity, with the Multicultural Act being announced in 1971 and ratified in 1988. At the time of the Multicultural Act, a hundred years of colonial assimilation, marginalization and oppression towards Canada’s First Nations had taken a very serious toll.

A statistics Canada report on the Geographical Patterns of Socio-Economic Well-being of First Nations Communities in Canada analyzing the differences between studies conducted in 1986 and 1996 found that the more informed the general population became on First Nations issues, the better the results got. That being said, still, in 1996 “the First Nations communities with the best of socio-economic circumstances compare only with the poorest regions of non-aboriginal Canada.”<sup>121</sup> Another Statistics Canada report, this one conducted by the Multiculturalism Branch in 1997, on the intergenerational

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<sup>121</sup> Statistics Canada, “The Geographical Patterns of Socio-Economic Well-Being of First Nations Communities,” *Agriculture and Rural Working Paper Series*, accessed March 14, 2013, 22.

transmission of education and socio economic status, found that if parents had received higher education, then their children were more likely to as well. Furthermore, that better schooling increased “their children’s chances of favourable economic attainment.”<sup>122</sup> However, this study also found that “[n]ot all population subgroups are able to convert their higher schooling attainments into occupational achievements and monetary rewards.” Specifically that “[s]ignificant blockages are present in the transmission process for Canadian and foreign-born visible minority daughters as well as Aboriginal sons and daughters.”<sup>123</sup> Another, more recent study (2008-2010), published on the Canadian government’s website, states that in regards to how Canada’s Multiculturalism act is supposed to support immigration policies, it has been working very well since its ratification.<sup>124</sup>

The local case study of a Kwakiutl village and school already mentioned in this paper exemplifies what these issues really look like with the study’s conclusion of a functional assessment of educational needs. It shows

In our zeal to find ways in which ethnically or socially different people may participate more fully in the dominant society, there is a tendency to extol the virtues of formal education. But education in the ways that villagers think of it is far from “the answer.” At a time when the completion of grade ten in British Columbia is a prerequisite for literally any specialized training program and for many jobs, the village child who is encouraged to stay in elementary school to complete an extra year or two because of the advantages of “getting an education” is accepting an educational promise that is more likely to lead to disappointment and frustration than to opportunity. Formal education programs that are not accompanied by real economic and social opportunities are headstarts to nowhere.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Citizenship and Immigration Canada, “The Current State of Multiculturalism in Canada and Research Themes on Canadian Multiculturalism 2008-2010,” updated January 1, 2012, accessed March 14, 2013, <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/publications/multi-state/section1.asp>

<sup>125</sup> Wolcott, *Kwakiutl Village and School*, 126.

Not only is the contemporary education system in Canada of no real benefit to First Nations individuals, the incomplete and ideologically skewed historical narrative that every body engages with has only perpetuated heteropatriarchal power structures, hetero-normative standards of identity, as well as historical and societal marginalization.

The process of creating a collective sense of community, as discussed by Anderson, is complicated in the context of the modern nation state. Specifically in the context of Canada, Walcott's idea of state multiculturalism as a tool is used to reinforce what Brian Osborne refers to as the institutionalized memory of a collective multicultural national identity. Osborne further argues that the association between this collective consciousness and knowledge of the nation's history is drawn together through mainstream representations, such as the televised 'Heritage Minutes'.<sup>126</sup> What is required, as Peter Seixas, Canada Research Chair in the Department of Curriculum and Pedagogy at the University of British Columbia and founding Director of the Centre for the Study of Historical Consciousness, argues, is not to produce more historical myths, nor to decide which ones to use, or how to make them interesting, but to conceive of the process of engaging with history in a fundamentally different way.

In discussing "The Purposes of Teaching Canadian History," Peter Seixas further argues it is necessary to advance, rather than intensify, historical consciousness, or common historical knowledge. Specifically, that within a "rapidly changing, fractured, mobile, multicultural, globalizing society" it is not enough to merely re-tell students "one

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<sup>126</sup> Brian S. Osborne, "Landscapes, Memory, Monuments, and Commemoration: Putting Identity in its Place," *Department of Canadian Heritage for the Ethnocultural, Racial, Religious, and Linguistic Diversity and Identity Seminar* (2001): 26, accessed March 14, 2013, <http://canada.metropolis.net/events/ethnocultural/publications/putinden.pdf>

coherent story as ‘what happened’ in the past.”<sup>127</sup> Nor is it sufficient to “simplistically condemn” historical wrongs and legislate contemporary apologies. It is necessary to have students at all levels of education engaging with critical histories “that acknowledge complexity and attempt to come to grips with the problem of looking across the chasm of time.”<sup>128</sup> Seixas’ arguments, like the arguments put forth by Indigenous and feminist scholars already engaged with in this historical discussion, that challenge the inequality perpetuated by the dominant knowledge production system, are quickly becoming history themselves. This is precisely why the gap between academic and mainstream spheres needs to be bridged.

At present, the mainstream historical representations responsible for mediating these two spheres are in keeping with the multicultural national agenda and “arouse interest, involvement, and imagination by propagating myth and heritage.”<sup>129</sup> As Robert Rosentone argues, these misrepresentations reduce the richness and complexities of the historical narrative by “telling a single, linear story with, essentially, a single interpretation.”<sup>130</sup> This is problematic in the context of contemporary Canadian society, not only as a result of the multicultural national identity, but furthermore as a result of the saturation of society in mainstream media representations. The responsibilities of historians today look very different “in a world deluged with images, one in which people increasingly receive their ideas about the past from motion pictures and television, from

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<sup>127</sup> Peter Seixas, “The Purposes of Teaching Canadian History,” *Address at "Giving the Future a Past" Conference, Association for Canadian Studies, Winnipeg, October 20, 2001, Canadian Social Studies*, 36, no. 2 (2002), accessed March 14, 2013,

[http://www.educ.ualberta.ca/css/Css\\_36\\_2/ARpurposes\\_teaching\\_canadian\\_history.htm](http://www.educ.ualberta.ca/css/Css_36_2/ARpurposes_teaching_canadian_history.htm)

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> Robert A. Rosenstone, “History in Images/History in Words: Reflections on the Possibility of Really Putting History onto Film,” *American Historical Review*, 93, no. 5 (1988), 1174, accessed March 14, 2013, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1873532>.

feature films, docudramas, mini-series, and network documentaries.”<sup>131</sup> In order to communicate histories that are situated “meaningfully in a value-laden world. Stories that matter to people outside our profession. Stories that matter to people inside the profession. Stories that matter at all,”<sup>132</sup> today’s historians must be a part of history in the making, by reconstituting frameworks for conceptualizing the past and producing accessible means for every body to engage with and think critically about the past.

The challenges that face today’s historians are indeed great, but arguably, it has never been an easy task to document where humanity is coming from in an effort to better understand where humanity is going. History, however, does belong to all of humanity. It is every body’s story and it is time that story was in the hands of every body. That is why I, as a feminist Canadian historian, have also produced a graphic novel version of my history honours thesis along with the traditional academic written text, in an effort to disseminate it outside of the academic sphere.

Scott Lauria Morgensen also makes note that Indigenous queer studies are different from non-Indigenous queer studies<sup>133</sup> and the collaborative authors of *Queer Indigenous Studies* argue that even “decolonization processes can become colonial in their implementation.”<sup>134</sup> This historical study is in no way an attempt to represent the Indigenous voice, nor communicate the Indigenous historical narrative or cultural frameworks for understanding; I am not in a position to. I make these arguments as a Canadian, student of history, and hopefully, future teacher. I argue that there is a fine line, and a big difference, between ignorance and unawareness; ignorance is perpetuated,

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Morgensen, *Spaces Between Us*, 52.

<sup>134</sup> Qwo-Li Driskill, *Queer Indigenous Studies: Critical Interventions in Theory, Politics, and Literature* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2011), 52.

whereas unawareness can be solved. The solution is to promote knowledge, to strive for liberation through education, in an effort to establish an ethos of equality for all Canadians to develop their individual and collective identity within.

## Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis is to not only evidence the depth and complexity of culture and alternative frameworks for understanding that existed in pre-colonial and 19<sup>th</sup> century Canada, but further, to argue for the dissemination of that knowledge. Many Canadians are already aware of some of the individual pieces discussed or have harboured lingering suspicions about these notions of national identity of their own, but the vast majority of public history works and sites of crafting national historical identity are bereft of these divergent visions of multiple pasts. What I found most striking, was how much I thought I knew about totem poles, and how much I learned that I didn't know about the alternative frameworks for understanding what their carvings represented. This contemporary ethos of hetero-normativity and limited "multiculturalism" embraced by the federal government is problematic to any body who doesn't fit that narrow mould. Furthermore, as a result of the intersections of oppression that hetero-normativity, patriarchy, and Euro-centrism create, First Nations individuals are faced with the majority of resulting contemporary problems. It is not enough to place totem poles in museums, or to simply legislate federal apologies. What is required is an ethos of equality within which genuine multiculturalism and respect for the land and all peoples within it can flourish.

To achieve this, Canadian citizens need to be engaging critically with the complete historical narrative at all levels of education. To achieve that, every body needs to be encouraged to think critically about information and knowledge instead of being

told to consume it. And to achieve any of this, the influence of overarching political aims must be separate from knowledge production.

It was through an engagement with feminist theory that I found the missing marginalized pieces of the historical narrative I was looking for, which is why I have taken a non-traditional approach to this historical study, to change history, to do it differently. Feminism, as bell hooks argued, is for every body. Feminism argues for a “world where there is no domination, where females and males are not alike or even always equal, but where a vision of mutuality is the ethos shaping our interaction. Imagine living in a world where we can all be who we are, a world of peace and possibility.”<sup>135</sup> Feminism alone will not create this change, but it can contribute in a very positive and fundamentally different way, as it has to this study.

Acknowledging my situated perspective as a researcher, exploring the margins of the dominant historical narrative, a focus on social justice and issues of inequality, and an emphasis on dissemination outside of the academic sphere, are all facets of feminist theory. Also, a result of studying alternative historical frameworks for understanding, finding an alternative means of contemporarily communicating those understandings was a necessity. It is becoming increasingly necessary to change history; the way it is studied, the way it is communicated, the way it is used. It should not be used to promote any one story, it is every body’s story, and the dominant historical narrative should be representative of that fact.

This is particularly pressing in the context of contemporary Canadian society and as a result of the influence of colonial thought on the historical narrative, which

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<sup>135</sup> bell hooks, *Feminism is for Everybody: Passionate Politics* (Cambridge: South End Press, 2000), x



subsequently became the basis for Canada's multicultural national identity. Further evidence of the contemporary consequences associated with an ideologically skewed historical consciousness is in the recent establishment of the federal government's Office of Religious Freedom:

“The Office – which is now operational – will build on Canada's proud tradition of defending fundamental human rights, including freedom of religion and freedom of conscience, and promoting respect for religious pluralism as an inextricable cornerstone of democratic development. It will focus on advocacy, analysis, policy development and programming relating to: protecting and advocating on behalf of religious minorities under threat; opposing religious hatred and intolerance; and, promoting Canadian values of pluralism and tolerance abroad.”<sup>136</sup>

Canada's value of pluralism needs to be practiced at home before it can be promoted abroad. The influence of the dominant religious ideology during colonization continued to impact the writing of the historical narrative and structuring of Canadian society. This happened as a result of the particularities of the historical context, but history needs to be changed now.

The specific elements of Indigenous ideology highlighted in this study are only some of the cultural, social, and religious pieces that have been historically marginalized. The historical narrative of assimilation, appropriation, and marginalization in Canada was not unique to the Pacific North West Coast or any one nation. I highlighted these particular elements to explain my research trajectory and conclusions, to evidence the complexities, consistencies, and depth of the numerous First Nations that existed in pre-colonial Canada, as well as to highlight the ways in which the federal government has

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<sup>136</sup> Prime Minister of Canada Stephen Harper, “Canada's Office of Religious Freedom,” updated February 19, 2013, accessed March 14, 2013, <http://www.pm.gc.ca/eng/media.asp?id=5307>

systematically appropriated or marginalized Indigenous cultural elements depending how they fit into Canadian multiculturalism.

Pieces that were core to Indigenous societal frameworks, such as the Potlatch ceremony, or in opposition to colonial religious thought, such as the Sisiutl figure or Two Spirit individuals, were problematic to assimilative agendas, and thus systematically eradicated. Whereas pieces that had potential within the amalgamated Indigenous piece of Canadian multiculturalism, such as totem poles, were appropriated. This is obviously inherently problematic. What is even more consequential is the fact that the narrative of this historical, systemic, multicultural national identity construction process is not part of the mainstream Canadian historical consciousness. The reasons behind the marginalization are as complex as the historical narrative itself, which is exactly why every body needs to be engaging with history more critically, to provide every body with a solid foundation for individual and collective identity formation processes. It is time to change history in Canada.

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