IN THE SPIRIT OF THE PIONEERS:
HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS, CULTURAL COLONIALISM AND
INDIAN/WHITE RELATIONS IN RURAL BRITISH COLUMBIA

by

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Abstract

This dissertation is an ethnography of the cultural politics of Indian/white relations in a small, interior British Columbia resource city at the height of land claims conflict and tensions. Drawing on the theoretical approaches of Nicholas Thomas (1994) and Raymond Williams (1977, 1980), I show how the power that reinforces the subordination of aboriginal peoples in Canada is exercised by ‘ordinary’ rural Euro-Canadians whose cultural attitudes and activities are forces in an ongoing, contemporary system of colonial domination. In approaching these issues through in-depth ethnographic research with both the Native and Euro-Canadian populations and in exploring the dynamics of cultural domination and resistance at the level of a local, rural community, this dissertation stands as a unique contribution to the ethnographic study of colonialism and Native/non-Native relations in Canada.

The dominant Euro-Canadian culture of the region is defined by a complex of understandings about history, society and identity that is thematically integrated through the idea of the frontier. At its heart, the frontier complex consists of an historical epistemology - a Canadian version of the American frontier myth (Slotkin 1992) - that celebrates the processes through which European explorers ‘discovered’ and ‘conquered’ North America and its aboriginal inhabitants. Central to this complex is the Indian/white dichotomy, a founding archetype in Euro-Canadians’ symbolic ordering of regional social relations and in their private and public constructions of collective identity. Also central is the Euro-Canadians’ self-image of benevolent paternalism, an identity that appears repeatedly in discourses of national history and Native/non-Native relations.

Facets of the frontier complex are expressed in diverse settings: casual conversations among Euro-Canadians, popular histories, museum displays, political
discourse, public debates about aboriginal land claims, and the town’s annual summer festival. In each setting, these practices contribute to the perpetuation of relations of inequality between Euro-Canadians and area Shuswap, Tsilhqot'in and Carrier peoples, and in each setting area Natives are engaging in diverse forms of resistance. The plurality of these strategies of resistance, rooted in different cultural identities, biographical experiences and political philosophies, reflects the creativity in which new forms of resistance are forged and tested in public contexts of Native/Euro-Canadian interaction.
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Chapter One:
Introduction

In the summer of 1995 the Gustafsen Lake blockade in the Cariboo region of British Columbia captured nationwide media attention and transfixed the viewing public with images of armed RCMP teams, helicopters, and camouflaged aboriginal men determined to protect the remote Sun Dance grounds from outside interference. The issues raised during the Gustafsen Lake standoff were complex, and the political alliances and rhetorical positions of those involved shifted almost on a daily basis. However, by the end of the summer various Native parties, including men and women behind the lines at Gustafsen Lake, the nearby Canoe Creek First Nation in whose traditional territory the grounds were situated, and Assembly of First Nations Grand Chief Ovide Mercredi all were publicly defining the issue as the inevitable consequence of the province’s historical failure to address aboriginal title claims. The non-Native public of the Cariboo, encouraged by mounting opposition to the province’s new treaty negotiation policy and by the federal Reform Party’s anti-land claims platform of “One law for all Canadians”, saw the armed occupation of private ranch land as an issue not of unresolved historical injustices, but of Native criminals receiving special treatment from RCMP officers who refused to storm the site and arrest its occupants.

The polarization of public opinion on the Gustafsen Lake issue was only one indication of the intense conflicts now playing out between Natives and non-Natives in resource-based communities throughout British Columbia. Although it captured much sensationalistic media attention, the Gustafsen Lake crisis was not an isolated incident. The Native blockades erected that spring and summer at Adams Lake and Douglas Lake to force government action on unresolved land claims incited equally heated tempers and rhetoric among local residents. In the
context of rising economic insecurity over the future of the forest industry, looming job layoffs, and the provincial government’s decision to negotiate aboriginal treaties; the confrontations at Gustafsen Lake, Adams Lake and Douglas Lake brought to full public view the critical, longstanding problems that many rural communities now face in coming to terms with the legacy of European colonialism, in addressing issues of land claims, aboriginal rights and self-government, and in defining the terms of a new, more equitable coexistence between the local Native and non-Native populations.

The Gustafsen Lake standoff was a microcosm of the broader process by which Native peoples across the country are attempting to confront the legacy of colonialism and to renegotiate their relationships with the Canadian state and Canadian society. A wealth of anthropological literature is documenting the challenges aboriginal peoples face as they attempt to secure greater political and cultural autonomy though changes in Indian Affairs administration and public policy (Speck 1987; Waldram 1988; Dyck 1991), through challenges to the Canadian justice system (Ridington 1982, 1992; Cruikshank 1992a; Miller 1992; Pryce 1992; Mills 1994-95), and through land claims and self-government agreements (Brody 1981; Feit 1982, 1985, 1995; Asch 1984; Salisbury 1986). There is increasing attention to how public opinion, as reflected in media reporting, serves as a critical resource in mobilizing public support for, or opposition to, aboriginal political interests (Armitage and Kennedy 1989; Skea 1993-94; Grenier 1994). These studies attest to the myriad ways in which Native communities are articulated with the institutions and agencies of the state, and the manner in which Native leaders must confront not only the structures of the Canadian state but the popular beliefs that rationalize state control and regulation of Native lives.

In contrast, relatively little anthropological attention has focused on how these political processes are occurring in the everyday dynamics of Native/non-
Native relations in the small cities and towns spread across rural Canada. In these settings one finds the greatest discrepancies in material wealth, social conditions, health and education between the Native and non-Native populations. One finds the greatest degree of separation of the two populations, a separation reinforced by the open, 'common-sense' racism of the non-Native public. And in British Columbia resource-based towns, one now finds the greatest fear among non-Native industry, municipal government, business and labour leaders that aboriginal treaties will bring about the shut down of the forest industry and the destruction of non-Native lifestyles and communities.

Native people in rural regions are not only confronting the legal, administrative, economic and political structures in which they are entangled. Power exists not only in the activities of the state, its agencies and institutions and their supporting bureaucratic ideologies. It is also deeply embedded in cultural forms and practices that frame 'common-sense' understandings of the world. In their ongoing political activity, Native people in rural communities are also confronting the very terms of Canadian culture itself: the heroic frontier histories celebrating the early white 'discoverers' of British Columbia, the widespread assumption of the historical inevitability - and desirability - of cultural assimilation, the liberal democratic myth of the self-made man, and the racist stereotypes of Natives that deny their individuality, humanity and integrity. The politics of decolonization in these rural settings are being fought out not just on legal or bureaucratic grounds, but on the cultural terrain of competing definitions of the nature of history, society, and identity.

This dissertation is an ethnography of the cultural politics of Indian/white relations in a small, interior B.C. resource city at the height of land claims conflict and tensions. I am primarily concerned with tracing the relationship between colonial power - the power that reinforces and maintains the subordinate position
of aboriginal peoples in Canada - and Canadian culture as experienced in the lives of small town Euro-Canadians. In the following chapters I explore different facets of the dominant Euro-Canadian culture of this region, and show how this culture exists as a set of widespread, 'common-sense' orientations to history and identity, a set of orientations that revolve around the idea and symbol of the frontier. These beliefs, values and attitudes are encountered in diverse settings from casual conversations, popular historical literature, museum displays, and community festivals to political discourse on aboriginal land claims. I assess how these assumptions about identity and history enhance relations of inequality between Euro-Canadians and area Shuswap, Tsilhqot’in and Carrier peoples. Finally, I show how area Native people are engaging in plural forms of resistance against this dominant culture, not only as strategies of collective empowerment but as part of their ongoing efforts to renegotiate their existing relationships with the regional Euro-Canadian society.

The Setting

Williams Lake is the largest city in the Cariboo region of British Columbia, and lies some 500 kilometers north of Vancouver on the main highway to the northern interior of the province. The Cariboo region is often referred to more generally as the Cariboo-Chilcotin, the Chilcotin being that area lying west of the Fraser River, and the Cariboo proper being the region lying to the east. The Cariboo-Chilcotin is part of the broad, dry interior plateau, an area of flat to rolling terrain covered by coniferous forests of fir, spruce and lodgepole pine and, in the wetter regions, deciduous forests of poplar and birch. The forests are interrupted by the broad, open grasslands that lie along the terraced benches of the Fraser River and that extend westward through the east Chilcotin. Cariboo-Chilcotin summers are typically short, warm and dry, punctuated occasionally by
sudden thunder and lightning storms that blow through the river and creek valleys in a matter of minutes. The first snow often falls in November, and by Christmas time there is a permanent blanket covering the ground. The snow usually disappears by late March in what bush workers call “spring break up”, when the ground thaws, turns to mud, and makes logging and hauling from the bush impossible.

Williams Lake is the main industrial, administrative and commercial center of the Cariboo. The economy is dominated by the forest industry, but ranching, mining, tourism and government employment are also important. As the principal government center for the Cariboo-Chilcotin, the public service has been a stabilizing factor in the city’s economy in recent years when both the forest and mining industries have undergone downturns. The city’s population is just under 11,000 residents. Although technically a city, in everyday conversation most residents refer to Williams Lake as a “town”, reflecting a prevalent attachment to populist imagery of social and community relations. The majority of city residents are of European ancestry: British, German, French and Dutch. There is a relatively large Sikh Indo-Canadian population, comprising 12 percent of local residents, while Native people make up at least 8 percent of city residents.\(^1\)

The actual number of people flowing through the city on any day, though, is higher. Many Cariboo residents place high value on the rural lifestyle that the region affords, and a significant number of those who work in the city live on small acreages or hobby farms in outlying areas. In addition, rural families from as far away as the west Chilcotin regularly travel to the city to buy groceries, clothing, hardware and livestock supplies and to obtain medical and government services. On Fridays and Saturdays dust-covered pickup trucks fill the parking lots of the

\(^1\) Based on 1991 Statistics Canada figures for those individuals (about half the population) reporting single ethnic origins.
Mall and the major grocery stores as people from rural areas do their weekly or monthly purchases. "Case lot" sales - bulk sales of huge quantities of canned food items - are a regular event at the city's grocery stores.

The regional population of the Cariboo-Chilcotin is estimated at between 40,000 and 60,000, depending on how one draws the region's boundaries. This figure includes individuals living in the expansive region from Horsefly and Likely, some 60 kilometers to the east, to Anahim Lake, over three hundred kilometers to the west across the Chilcotin plateau. This broader region includes fifteen Shuswap, Tsilhqot'in and Carrier First Nations reserve communities totaling about 6,000 registered band members. Native people therefore comprise at least ten to fifteen percent of the regional population. Non-Native settlement in the Chilcotin is very sparse, with families typically living on widely dispersed ranches. The Tsilhqot'in reserve community of Anaham, for example, with a resident population of about 600, is three times more populous than the nearby 'white' settlement of Alexis Creek. As is characteristic of the curious, selective invisibility of Natives in the geographical landscape, Anaham and other reserve communities often go unmarked on provincial road maps while smaller non-Native settlements such as Alexis Creek are highlighted.

Williams Lake shares the same characteristics of many other rural cities and towns, where the regional economies are based on natural resource extraction or agriculture, where the cities serve as a main service and commercial center for satellite reserve communities, and where the proportion of Natives in the population is relatively high as compared with urban settings. As in small rural cities and towns in Manitoba (Elias 1975; Lithman 1984), Saskatchewan (Braroe 1975), and northern Ontario (Stymeist 1975), Native people in the Cariboo-

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2 This figure does not include Natives who are not registered with one of the fifteen regional Indian Bands; nor does it include non-status Indians.
Chilcotin in the last four decades have been largely excluded from employment as the forest industry and infrastructure of businesses, services, and government agencies have grown and prospered. Native people are noticeably absent from employment positions in the mills or in the city’s restaurants, retail stores, banks, businesses or offices. Two First Nations educators are employed in the School District’s administration, and while the district in the past has hired Native teachers, at present there are no Natives teaching mainstream classes in any of the city’s schools. In short, as in other rural settings, Natives in the Cariboo-Chilcotin have been marginalized from the regional society and economy, a position maintained through dependency on welfare provisioning (Elias 1975; Paine 1977a) and the historic legacy of the Indian reserve system and the restrictive Indian Affairs bureaucratic regulations (Dyck 1991:98-104), and a position that is only now beginning to shift with the political and economic changes being introduced through pending land claims settlements.

The non-Native community of Williams Lake has prospered greatly from the expanding resource economy. The dominance of the forest industry in Williams Lake is evident in the visual landscape of the city. Four major sawmills, one plywood mill, and several secondary manufacturing industries are situated along the Williams Lake valley running through the city. Massive log storage yards and beehive burners are clearly visible from the downtown. On any day one can see a steady flow of loaded logging trucks arriving from the Chilcotin. The logging industry is literally imprinted on the city’s landscape in the deep ruts that heavily laden trucks have worn into the paved roads and thoroughfares. Many people are employed directly by the local mills as mill workers, truckers or contract loggers, or are employed indirectly through businesses such as machine repair shops and heavy equipment suppliers that provide the mills with goods and services.
The logging industry has imprinted itself on the local Euro-Canadian culture as well. The city has the distinct ethos of a “working town”, where physical labour in the mills or in the bush, and the entrepreneurialism of associated small businesses are the most symbolically valued forms of work. The emphasis on independence, hard work, and competitiveness captures an essential ‘frontier spirit’ of the city: it is a town where owning a gun and a chainsaw is a part of everyday life, and where the vehicle of preference is not a BMW or Mercedes, but a functional, heavy-duty four by four pickup truck. The impact of the forest industry is evident in everyday language, where phrases such as “beede kill”, “chip trucks” and “annual allowable cut” have meaning to virtually all residents. So symbolically important is the logging industry that it is celebrated in the city’s annual Loggers Sports Day. One school, Glendale elementary, recently became the first public school in Canada to abandon the traditional summer vacation period. Now students receive the month of April off to coincide with the spring break-up period and the annual lay-off time for loggers and truck drivers, allowing fathers and children to spend their vacation time together. In short, Williams Lake has accommodated the forest industry in many ways. It is not merely the economic base of the city, but is seen by local people to comprise a distinct lifestyle that is deeply valued and publicly, collectively celebrated.

The frontier spirit of Williams Lake is also heavily influenced by the city’s roots in the ranching industry. The Cariboo-Chilcotin region is widely known as “Cowboy Country”, and the city itself is widely known for its annual summer Stampede. During the four day rodeo and festival the city transforms itself into a mythological Wild West town, with storefronts and interiors decorated in motifs of cowboys, Indians and cattle. The Stampede is the most important ritual celebration of the city’s official public identity and “frontier” history, drawing thousands of visitors and putting the city on the map of international tourism.
There are fifteen First Nations communities in the Cariboo-Chilcotin: six Tsilhqot'in, four Carrier, and five Shuswap. Ten of the fifteen use Williams Lake as a major commercial center. The Shuswap reserve communities are situated east of the Fraser River, while the Tsilhqot'in are to the west, and the Carrier to the northwest. The Shuswap reserve of Sugar Cane, at the south end of the lake, is only 12 kilometers from the city, and is clearly visible from the main highway. In contrast, the closest Tsilhqot'in community is Toosey, some fifty kilometers distant. The Nemiah band is the most remote, tucked into the extreme southwest Chilcotin and hours away by rough road. With the exception of the Ulkatcho Carrier at Anahim Lake, Carrier people usually travel to the northern city of Quesnel for groceries, supplies and services.

Native people are a visible presence in the city. On any given day one can see Natives having meals in the fast-food outlets, socializing in the food court of the indoor mall, playing bingo at the downtown bingo hall, waiting in bank lineups, or shopping in the grocery stores of the city. At the same time, Native/non-Native relations in the city are marked by the same tensions found in other rural towns (Braroe 1975; Stymeist 1975; Brody 1981; Lithman 1984). The same tacit, invisible line separates the two populations into distinct and separate social groups.

This separation, however, is not absolute. Natives and non-Natives come into informal social contact in a number of settings. One of the most important area is the public school system. While many reserve communities now operate their own elementary schools, Native students make up between 15 and 20 percent of the secondary school population in the city. Recreational sports teams are another venue for informal contact. Ice hockey, ball hockey, soccer, and slow and fast pitch softball are popular activities among both Euro-Canadians and Natives. While Native-only sports teams and leagues run through the year, Native people are also participating on 'integrated' teams in the city.
Native and Euro-Canadian men and women do intermarry, and have been doing so since the first settlers arrived in the Cariboo-Chilcotin some 130 years ago. Over time, these intermarriages have created a significant group of people with mixed Native/Euro-Canadian heritage and with potential links to both communities. The ever-present reality of racism has long encouraged those of mixed ancestry to publicly deny their Native roots and to claim Euro-Canadian identity. Others may identify publicly as part Native under some circumstances. Still others now claim full Native identity and are seeking to reestablish ties to reserve families. Natives married to Euro-Canadians, and individuals of mixed ancestry, may be embedded in social networks that mediate the town’s Euro-Canadian population and the Native reserve communities. The ethnographic model of the absolute separation of rural Native and non-Native communities does not completely capture the reality of social relations in Williams Lake.

This model, however, does capture the ideal vision that Euro-Canadians hold of local Native/non-Native relations. The terms “Indian” and “white” are the most relevant categories for symbolically organizing social relations in the Cariboo-Chilcotin. Both Natives and Euro-Canadians use these categories freely to designate the Other; they use a variety of context-dependent terms to identify themselves. Through processes of socialization, non-Native newcomers to the

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3 Native people in the Cariboo-Chilcotin today use a variety of terms to identify themselves. In informal discussion many people prefer the designation of Native. In more formal political discourse with non-Natives the term First Nations is now becoming preferred, although Native and aboriginal are also frequently used. In addition, Native leaders occasionally use the term Indian in their formal political discussions with non-Native society. In such contexts, the term Indian is used in a positive sense as a symbol of pride and defiance of the negative connotations long conveyed through non-Native usage.

The terms Indian, aboriginal, First Nations and Native convey meanings that are highly context-dependent. I have attempted to stay within local convention by using the term Native as a general category. I occasionally use the term First Nations or aboriginal when referring to political leaders and political contexts of interaction. I use the term Indian to refer specifically to non-Native perspectives. This term refers not so much to a reality of Native people, but to the idea of the Other as created and perpetuated in non-Native (continued, p. 11)
city come to accept as common-sense the absolute ‘difference’, constructed in terms of morality and culture, between the Native and non-Native populations. While Natives and non-Natives may occupy the same public space - in the Mall, on the streets, in the civic arena, in the bars and pubs - in practice the two groups do not mix easily. Natives and Euro-Canadians are not often seen talking freely, but instead move and socialize in groups amongst themselves. The spontaneous, passing interchanges among strangers become more guarded as social distance declines in more confined settings of interaction. The reticence of individuals to talk ‘across the line’ is an implicit social convention that is actively maintained by many Euro-Canadians and Natives.

This idealized separation between Indian and white is reflected in the spatial segregation of the “Indian” bar and cafes in town, and in the isolation of the reserve communities from the non-Native settlements and towns in the Cariboo-Chilcotin. While Native people move freely between their reserves and the city, a

culture and discourse.

Although white remains the most common colloquial term used to designate non-Natives in Canada, alternate terms are emerging here also. Non-Native is occasionally used in both private and public discussions in the Cariboo-Chilcotin by individuals so designated. A more precise but cumbersome variant, Euro-Canadian, is rarely heard in popular discourse but is frequently used in formal academic settings to refer to the dominant segment of Canadian society. Here I have chosen to use the term Euro-Canadian when I wish to specify the dominant population of Williams Lake, and non-Native when I refer to the broader range of city residents (which includes a significant number of Indo-Canadians). I use the term white when I wish to evoke the colonial nature of the relationships between Natives and non-Native Canadians (which, in the local context, I gloss as Indian/white relations) and the colonial legacy of the dominant culture in which Euro-Canadians remain embedded.

The terms Native, non-Native, and even Euro-Canadian do not escape some of the problems associated with the labels of Indian and white. These terms bring together people of diverse nationalities and ethnic backgrounds into generic, homogeneous categories. There are many striking cultural differences between Shuswap, Tsilhqot’in and Carrier peoples; furthermore, Natives of other cultural backgrounds also reside in the city. The Euro-Canadian population could be described as being equally heterogeneous in terms of ethnic background, political orientation, occupation, socio-economic status and gender. While I recognize and occasionally discuss these internal differences, my main analytical focus is nevertheless to explore the relationship between two primary groups - Natives and Euro-Canadians - and to identify the broad features of the dominant culture and history in this social setting.
similar movement among Euro-Canadians does not occur. Few non-Natives have visited reserve communities, and many seem to be unaware of the names or locations of the different reserves. Many reserves are 'invisible' to Euro-Canadians except in the abstract: they are imagined as dangerous, foreign, and violent places where whites are not welcome. The cultural life of reserve communities also remains largely invisible to Euro-Canadians.

While the Shuswap, Tsilhqot’in and Carrier communities have existed on the peripheries of the regional economy, their degree of dependency and powerlessness due to absorption into the capitalist socio-economic system varies. Like other northern Native peoples, Cariboo-Chilcotin First Nations, to differing degrees, may also engage in “dual economy” (Asch 1995:274) in which hunting and fishing subsistence practices continue independently of the wage labour and welfare economies. Conventions of reciprocity and sharing of subsistence foods persist within extended family groups and among the elderly of the reserve village. These and other practices serve to strengthen traditional patterns of sociopolitical organization and the bonds of solidarity among extended families and band communities (Kew 1974; Dinwoodie 1996; Furniss 1996).

Tsilhqot’in continues to be spoken in reserve homes and band offices throughout the Chilcotin region. Carrier is regularly spoken in the more remote reserves of Nazko, Kluskus and Ulkatcho. Shuswap, Tsilhqot’in and Carrier peoples continue to make use of culturally distinct oral narrative traditions to express their world views and cultural identities, and to make sense of the current social changes their communities are undergoing (Palmer 1994; Dinwoodie 1996). Many Shuswap, Tsilhqot’in and Carrier leaders have a deep commitment to the collective future of their reserve communities. They see themselves as having unique histories and special rights that distinguish them from regional non-Native society, and they assert distinct identities rooted in their history and their
relationship with the landscape. These convictions fuel their current struggles to secure treaties acknowledging aboriginal rights to land and self-government.

The social problems, violence, suicide, alcohol abuse, poverty, and substandard living conditions that plague reserve communities across Canada (Frideres 1993) also exist in many Shuswap, Tsilhqot'in and Carrier reserves. These problems lend particular urgency to First Nations leaders’ efforts to resolve outstanding issues of aboriginal title. Treaties, many Native leaders believe, will provide reserve communities with the resources to address and overcome these social problems. In the last decade there has been an exponential growth in the political activity of area First Nations and the umbrella political organizations that represent the three nations. The Tsilhqot’in National Government (representing five Tsilhqot’in First Nations), the Carrier Chilcotin Tribal Council (representing four Carrier and one Tsilhqot’in First Nation) and the Cariboo Tribal Council (representing four of the five Shuswap First Nations) all have large offices in Williams Lake. These organizations are active on a number of political fronts, from lobbying for improved rental housing in the city to developing programs for assuming control of provincial child welfare services to coordinating treaty negotiation strategies.

Comparative Literature

Various mechanisms maintain the separation and marginalization of Cariboo-Chilcotin Native communities from the surrounding regional society. The expansion of agricultural and industrial capitalism to rural regions of Canada over the last two centuries has undermined the hunting and trapping subsistence base on which many Native societies have depended. Many Native people initially became involved in the expanding colonial economies, for example by working for wages and taking up small scale farming and ranching. After the turn of the
century, the increased mechanization and capital-intensive nature of these operations coupled with the difficulty Native people had in acquiring loans due to Indian Act restrictions led to a decline in the availability of wage labour and undercut the competitiveness of small Native-owned operations (Knight 1978; Dyck 1991:100). As the oil, gas, forestry and mining industries expanded in the post World War II period, the subsistence base upon which many rural Native communities continued to rely was undermined; at the same time, the expanding welfare state offered provisional means of subsistence in the form of welfare, old age security and family allowance payments. In many rural regions Native people began to settle into reserve villages adjacent to non-Native towns. There, largely excluded from the local labour force, many became reliant on government transfer payments, store bought foods and materials, and government services.

Economic colonialism has not destroyed aboriginal communities; indeed, ethnographers are documenting the various ways in which Native peoples are accommodating the realities of wage labour and welfare while both maintaining and transforming key aboriginal cultural values, identities, world views, oral traditions, patterns of social and political organization, and hunting economies (Tanner 1979; Brody 1981; Asch 1982, 1995; Feit 1982, 1985, 1995; Cruikshank et al. 1990; Ridington 1990). The expansion of the colonial economy, however, has created a set of circumstances that have defined the contexts for the encounter between Natives and non-Natives in many rural towns across Canada.

Administrative colonialism as exercised through the Canadian Indian Affairs bureaucracy has profoundly shaped rural Native/non-Native relations. The

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4 Robert Paine (1977a) has coined the term “welfare colonialism” to describe the Canadian government’s assertion of national sovereignty in the Arctic through the sudden extension of welfare, medical and educational services to the Inuit after World War II. Framed by the ideology of benevolent paternalism, this seems to be a quintessentially Canadian form of colonialism. The centrality of benevolent paternalism in constructions of Canadian national identity, and its role in rationalizing colonization, are themes developed in later chapters.
physical separation of Native peoples into reserve communities has been accompanied by the introduction of coercive, repressive forms of legal and bureaucratic controls that have sought to regulate virtually all aspects of Native life. Indian Affairs policies have imposed restrictive controls on the economic development of reserve lands, the forms and composition of Band governments, the membership and residency of reserve communities, and the content, process, and location of Native schooling. The web of Indian Act legislation, bureaucratic policies and ideological rationales continues to constrain and oppress rural Native communities. Several scholars have documented how the struggles of Native communities to take over the control of local health care services (Speck 1987) and education (Dyck 1991:119-138), or to become economically self-sufficient through agricultural programs (Carter 1990) or economic development projects (Driben and Trudeau 1983; Lithman 1983) have been thwarted by federal policies and bureaucratic attitudes that have perpetuated the dependency of reserve communities on governmental funding and paternalistic, coercive control.

These studies share a consistent focus on assessing how forms of economic and administrative colonialism have fostered the continued political and economic marginalization and dependency of rural Native communities. There is also a small ethnographic literature highlighting some of the more everyday cultural dimensions of power shaping rural Native/non-Native relations. Much of this literature, influenced by the 1970s popularity of transactional and instrumentalist theories of ethnicity, explores the social contexts in which Natives and non-Natives construct and manage their public identities (Braroe 1975; Stymeist 1975; Paine 1977b; Lithman 1984; Plaice 1990).

Many of these works emphasize how rural settlers and Natives creatively reformulate - or maintain - ethnic identity in various contexts of interaction. At times, settlers and Natives may overlook the polarization of the Indian/white
dichotomy and may collaborate in the construction of new, collective ‘community’ identities. Such was the case in Labrador in the 1970s, when Inuit and settler residents joined together (although not without political struggle) to incorporate their villages under a provincial registration system, making them eligible for governmental development grants and programs (Paine 1977c:255-257). While a collective identity was projected outward for the pursuit of political and financial rewards, within at least one of these Labrador settlements - and despite the increased residential integration of Inuit and settler families within the village - the two groups maintained strongly oppositional ethnic identities (Kennedy 1977), a division Kennedy argues is primarily due to contrasting interests and values.

In rural Native/non-Native communities elsewhere in Canada where social relations are much more stratified, these processes of identity management are more severely limited by relations of power. In these settings most Native/non-Native interactions occur in non-Native controlled contexts such as in grocery stores, government offices, or public schools. In controlling the provisioning of goods or services to Native clients, non-Natives may wield inordinate power to control the statuses ascribed to Natives in these interactive contexts (Lithman 1984). The harsh reality of small town racism, where Natives are ascribed identities as a morally and culturally inferior people and are subjected to intense forms of racial prejudice and discrimination, is well documented in Stymeist’s ethnography (1975) of ethnic relations in a northern Ontario town. In some circumstances, rural non-Native townspeople may assign Natives a public identity of non-existence, of invisibility: they may simply ignore the presence of Native people on city streets and in public places (Hawthorn, Jamieson and Belshaw 1960:65). Niels Braroe has shown how Native people in rural Saskatchewan, faced with their ongoing, continual condemnation by white townspeople, engage in a variety of
private and covert strategies of resistance in order to maintain morally defensible self-images (Braroe 1975).

Racism - the public, collective ascription of negative 'difference' to colonized peoples - has long served as a powerful cultural mechanism reinforcing relations of inequality between Natives and non-Natives. But racism, and struggle over the assignation of public identities more generally, represents only one aspect of how the processes of cultural colonialism operate. The complexity of these processes remains virtually unexplored in the ethnographic literature on rural Native/non-Native relations in Canada. In this dissertation I look beyond the processes of identity management to explore the many other ways in which small town Euro-Canadian cultural assumptions about identity, about the nature of history, and about the relationship between the individual and society all contribute to the subordination of Native peoples. I draw on a theoretical framework that envisions power as existing not just in the policies, practices, and ideologies of the state, and not just in the capitalist structure of socio-economic relations, but as reaching into the 'ordinary' lives of rural Canadians whose cultural attitudes and practices are constituting forces in an ongoing system of colonial domination.

Theoretical Framework

Canada has not transcended its colonial history through processes of decolonization similar to that of Third World regions, where colonial governments have withdrawn and political authority has been assumed by indigenous peoples. Instead, as a settler colony eventually granted Dominion status, Canada has evolved to an independent state that continues to exert authority over a subordinate minority indigenous population. As decolonization in the form of the

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5 The way in which colonialism influences and conditions everyday social relations and attitudes between indigenous people and non-Native colonizers has been explored among the Inuit and whites in the Canadian Arctic by Paine (1977b) and Brody (1991).
physical removal of non-aboriginal settlers will not occur in Canada, the political activity now underway reflects efforts of Native and non-Native peoples to arrive at alternate forms of post-colonial relationships that presume the continued coexistence of indigenous and immigrant Canadians.

Through the four centuries of European settlement in Canada, colonial power has not only been expressed in political, military, or economic exercises, but has infused the cultural beliefs, practices, texts, and ideologies of the settler populations. As Nicholas Thomas suggests, these cultural forms are not secondary, superstructural derivatives of political/economic practices, but are central to the colonial process, both expressing and creating colonial relationships (Thomas 1994:2). The cultures of modern Western societies, and settler cultures in particular, continue to be profoundly influenced by the legacy and the continuing practices of colonialism. Despite the prevalence of the term ‘post-colonial’ in the scholarly literature, in Canada there has been no radical break with the past: Canadian culture remains resolutely colonial in shape, content, meaning and practice.

The dominant Euro-Canadian culture of Williams Lake is an example of what Thomas calls a modern colonial culture (ibid.). Such a culture is marked in the ways in which indigenous/settler differences are constructed and contemplated. This is not simply a matter of the reification of the Native as Other discussed by Edward Said (1978, 1994): the Orientalist process by which indigenous peoples are defined as ‘different from’ colonizing peoples and are made objects of knowledge, power and control. Instead, contemporary cultural practices may also involve the situational diminishment, or denial, of indigenous/settler differences. Policies of assimilation or Christianization, which seek to incorporate indigenous peoples into the dominant social order, are only two examples. These alternating tendencies towards incorporation and exclusion, toward the assertion and denial of indigenous
difference, are a central dynamic within colonial discourses and practices (Sider 1987; Thomas 1994:142).

Modern colonial cultures may reify indigenous ‘difference’ through racial ideologies predicated on the assumption of inherent biological, cultural or moral inferiority that is taken as inherent, natural and permanent. Increasingly, racist discourses have been reformulated to conform to the ideals of multiculturalism and cultural pluralism. These new discourses, referred to by some as the “new racism” (Barker 1981; Miles 1989:62; Balibar 1991) or as “cultural fundamentalism” (Stolcke 1995), rest on assumptions of the inherent differences distinguishing cultural and ethnic groups, where “it is natural for people to prefer to live amongst ‘their own kind’ and therefore natural for people to discriminate against those not considered to be part of that common community” (Miles 1989:63). In yet other discourses, such as the romantic primitivism prevalent in North America, Native peoples and cultures are imagined to be inherently different from and superior to Western peoples and cultures. This orientation is prevalent among liberal segments of North American society - including many anthropologists - whose sympathy for aboriginal peoples is nevertheless conveyed through equally narrow and restrictive definitions of the essential ‘noble savage’ (Thomas 1994:170-195).

In short, a colonial culture is characterized not by any one particular set of practices or images of Native peoples, but by envisioning indigenous/settler differences alternately through “distancing, hierarchizing and incorporating” discourses (ibid.:142). Further, colonial cultures are heterogeneous, being shaped by local traditions, historical contingencies, and political and economic contexts. My object here is to explore how the colonial reality has shaped Canadian culture as it exists in the 1990s in the setting of a small resource city in British Columbia, a region with its own distinct traditions of imagining indigenous/settler ‘differences’, and a region now engaged in intense public debates over the legitimacy of past
colonial practices and the future relationships between the indigenous and settler populations.

To explore the relationship between culture and power I draw on the idea of a "dominant culture" as articulated by Raymond Williams (1977, 1980) and William Roseberry (1991). Williams states: "In any society, in any particular period, there is a central system of practices, meanings and values, which we can properly call dominant and effective" (1980:38). This dominant culture infuses many domains of everyday life, ranging from family life, schooling, the media, organized religion, to literature and the arts. Its dominance lies, in part, in its ability to saturate everyday life: it is continually affirmed in multiple dimensions of ordinary experience. Williams emphasizes this point:

It is a whole body of practices and expectations; our assignments of energy, our ordinary understanding of the nature of man and of his world. It is a set of meanings and values which as they are experienced as practices appear as reciprocally confirming. It thus constitutes a sense of reality for most people in the society, a sense of absolute because experienced reality beyond which it is very difficult for most members of the society to move, in most arenas of their lives (ibid.).

A dominant culture, in essence, is experienced as a set of common-sense, taken-for-granted truths about the nature of reality and the social world.

While a dominant culture infuses everyday life, its dominance is not complete. Not all non-Native, or Euro-Canadian, residents of the Cariboo-Chilcotin participate in the same way in the dominant culture. Individuals and groups - Euro-Canadians, Natives, Indo-Canadians, men, women, upper and lower-class families - are variously positioned within these fields of social and political power. As Roseberry notes (1991:48), the different life experiences of individuals, not only conditioned by individual biographies but by their varied positions within structures of inequality and domination, may give rise to different
perceptions of reality and may lead to challenges to the legitimacy of a dominant culture. A dominant culture, then, cannot capture the totality of lived experience (Williams 1977:126). Instead, it is a partial, selective world view that is continually being challenged by alternate, competing systems of meaning and belief. Its dominance lies not only in its ubiquity, but in its dynamic, flexible aspect: its ability to be continually revised and modified in order to deflect or incorporate challenges to its legitimacy.

It is here where differential access to power becomes critical. Power, in this sense, can be equated with epistemological power: the power to control the representation of cultural forms, symbols and meanings. But this power is also material, in that the production of culture is linked to the political and economic forces controlling public school education, the publishing industries, the media, the tourism industries, and so on. If, following Roseberry and Williams, a dominant culture is defined as a material social process of the production and representation of meaning, the question to be asked is: Who is controlling the production of culture, in what contexts, and for what purposes?

Native people, too, are positioned within the reaches of the dominant Euro-Canadian culture of the region. Their own autonomous cultural history, world views and traditions, and their subjection to various forms of colonial power ranging from Indian Act legislation, the Indian Affairs bureaucracy, Roman Catholic residential schools, and conventional racial discrimination and prejudice, have created a set of collective historical experiences that sharply distinguish them from the regional non-Native population. At the same time, the 'separate universes' model of Indian/white relations, emphasizing the cultural gulf and autonomy of the two populations, may overemphasize cultural difference at the expense of a full, complex understanding of the nature of contemporary cultural and political processes.
In many ways, Native people living in rural reserve communities are articulated with the regional dominant culture: they speak the English language, they watch T.V., they shop in local stores and malls, they attend public schools, and they read popular literature. I am not denying the cultural differences that divide Native and non-Native populations in the Cariboo-Chilcotin, but I am suggesting that there are important analytical insights to be gained by envisioning Native peoples as participants, however hesitant, reluctant and peripheral, in the dominant culture of the Cariboo-Chilcotin region.

As Williams suggests, the effective incorporation of individuals into a dominant culture is often achieved not through blind socialization, but by “a (resigned) recognition of the inevitable and the necessary” (1977:118); in the case of area Native people, a realization, but not necessarily acceptance, of divergence between Euro-Canadian and Native perceptions of reality. The ability of rural Native communities to maintain autonomous cultural world views and practices as they move between reserve communities and the non-Native cities and towns of the region is well known. But more and more frequently, these disjunctions between Native experiences and the dominant Euro-Canadian culture are the subject of overt, public challenge. The multiple forms in which the dominant culture is expressed in the everyday dimensions of life in Williams Lake is matched by the plural forms of resistance in which Native peoples are now engaging.

To appreciate the complexity of modes of resistance requires a consideration not only of the cultural autonomy of Native communities in the region, and what may be the distinctively Native modes of resistance, but also of how Native people are manipulating some key values, identities, and discursive genres of the regional Euro-Canadian culture to further their interests. Some modes of resistance may be rooted in distinctive Native traditions, such as in the way Native storytellers use traditional narrative genres to communicate with non-Native audiences (Dyck
But other modes of Native resistance reflect their strategic use of Euro-Canadian genres of discourse and the symbols of power that are embedded in the dominant culture. Native people are working within the terms of the dominant culture by highlighting its apparent contradictions, for example, by contrasting the ideals of egalitarianism and multiculturalism with their historical experience of racial discrimination and federal assimilation policies, in order to bring about changes in their relationships with government, industry and area non-Natives.

The Frontier Cultural Complex

The ‘frontier complex’ is the thematic framework I have developed for understanding the dominant culture of Williams Lake. The frontier complex consists of a set of values, beliefs, attitudes, identities, and understandings about society, history and Indian/white relations that appear repeatedly in multiple domains of Euro-Canadians’ everyday life, ranging from casual conversations to public history to political discourse on contentious issues. At its heart, the frontier complex consists of an historical epistemology - a set of assumptions that guides how individuals approach an understanding of the past - that is defined by the myth of the frontier. In developing this argument, I rely on Richard Slotkin’s

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6 This could also be called a form of historical consciousness. But in keeping with my use of Williams’s concept of a dominant culture, the term historical epistemology is preferable in that it approaches culture not as a static body of knowledge, but as a dynamic process of creating and assigning meaning to the world. Individuals are not trapped within a historical consciousness; rather, they actively draw on the key elements of a dominant historical epistemology to generate meaning in particular social, political and economic contexts of interaction and conflict. Nor do I mean to suggest that individuals are trapped in a particular frontier historical epistemology. I presume that there are other epistemological frameworks available through which individuals may approach an understanding of the past; indeed, although I have been enculturated into ‘small town’ Euro-Canadian culture myself I am here drawing on an anthropological ‘way of knowing’ about history that deviates somewhat from a frontier epistemology. I presume that multiple epistemologies may exist within Euro-Canadian culture (continued, p. 24).
comprehensive, three volume study of the frontier myth in American culture and politics (Slotkin 1973, 1986, 1992), which I describe shortly.

The frontier complex, though, is not just a way of understanding history. The idea of the frontier is also evident in the way Euro-Canadians construct a regional identity as a "small town" on the periphery of mainstream society, a town surrounded by a natural wilderness offering an unlimited abundance of natural resources that are unowned and "free" for the taking. The idea of the frontier is carried into Euro-Canadians' conceptualization of their relationship with area Native people, where the categories of Indian and white are mutually exclusive and oppositional, and where Euro-Canadian cultural superiority, material privileges and political authority are 'natural', unquestioned truths. Frontier imagery is most apparent in the city's annual summer festival, a ritual celebration of the town's imagined Wild West heritage. At its deepest level, the frontier complex provides a set of metaphysical assumptions about the nature of history, individual agency, and one's relationship with the social and natural world. The many ways in which the frontier complex is expressed in public and private contexts in the city will be explored in later chapters.

Richard Slotkin argues that the frontier myth is one of the most important cultural myths for understanding the history of European colonization and settlement in the United States. The frontier myth developed in the United States

But in the domains of public culture and discourse traced here, the frontier historical epistemology is overwhelmingly dominant.

Slotkin uses the term "myth" to refer to those aspects of cultural belief transmitted not through explicit, direct forms of political debate or argument, but through implicit, narrative genres that are rich in metaphorical imagery and symbolism, and that transmit complex sets of meaning through indirect, intuitive means rather than through explicit statements. Neither Slotkin nor I use the term 'myth' in the structuralist sense, as being comprised of objective, binary 'archetypes' that have an objective existence in language independent of human will or consciousness, and whose meaning can be 'read' by the privileged external observer independent of its ethnographic context. Instead, Slotkin writes: "Myth and ideology are created and recreated in the midst of historical contingency, through deliberate acts of human memory, intention, and labour ... myth has a human/historical rather (continued, p. 35)
over a period of three centuries, and can be identified in a variety of genres ranging from early settlers' narratives to nineteenth century dime novels and Wild West shows to contemporary Hollywood movies. The frontier myth, in essence, is the ultimate American origin myth. It celebrates the 'conquest' of North American aboriginal peoples and the wilderness; it provides a means of creating a national identity; and it serves to legitimate not only the subordination of aboriginal populations and the taking of aboriginal lands, but also current social and political institutions and the nation's domestic and foreign policies.

The frontier myth contains several standard themes. The story begins with the separation of the early colonists from their home countries, their journey to the wilderness, and their cultural, moral, and material regression to the more 'primitive' conditions encountered there. The frontier experience involves series of encounters with morally opposed forces, the most important being civilization and wilderness, man and nature, and whites and Indians, although there are many metaphorical variations. The themes of conflict and violence are central to these encounters as the protagonists struggle against the 'harsh', difficult environment and climate and the unknown and potentially hostile Native peoples. These struggles, taking place on the moral terrain of "good and evil", also involve a degree of ambiguity in that the protagonists move between these opposing worlds and temporarily mediate these dichotomies. These tensions are ultimately resolved through the settlers' 're-evolution', their separation and re-emergence from the conditions of the frontier - either through the establishment of homesteads or village settlements in the region or through their physical escape from the wilderness. Yet in their separation and

than a natural or transcendent source and is continually modified by human experience and agency" (1992:25). The frontier myth, while it exerts a conservative cultural force, is nevertheless subject to continual reworking through history and - in theory, at least - is capable of being transcended through critical self-reflection.
re-emergence settlers do not revert to their original form, but become transformed into new cultural and national identities: they become the new Americans.

History is distilled and condensed into a simple narrative structure of a protagonist’s encounter with opposing forces, and his eventual triumph through conflict, violence, and ‘conquest’. Slotkin argues that the theme of “regeneration through violence” - the moral imperative of violence and aggression as a means of achieving progress and civilization - have been fundamental in shaping past and present constructions of American national identity. The complexity of historical processes are further reduced to a series of what Fogelson (1984, 1989) has called “epitomizing events”, dramatic incidents that serve as convenient, easily grasped condensed symbols that represent more gradual and insidious forces of historical change. These epitomizing events typically deal with the heroic actions of individuals whose values, moral standards, character, motives for action and internal struggles define the public ideals of American culture: independence, self-sufficiency, freedom, courage, materialism, and advancement through hard work.

The reduction of history into a condensed narrative structure centered on epitomizing events renders invisible the broader and more complex conditions that enabled, and shaped, individual actions: European economic and administrative expansion in the colony, the relationships between the colony and the metropolitan governments, and the internal dynamics of class conflict and struggle. In its binary structure, the frontier myth diminishes the complexity of the historical interactions between different agents on the frontier, a complexity evident in the multiple identities, the multiple interests, and the ambiguities and incompleteness of colonial domination and aboriginal resistance highlighted now by

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8 Fogelson discusses the role of epitomizing events in Native historical narratives; these are also features of Western narratives of history also (see Cruikshank 1992b).

The frontier myth, however, is not history in the form of 'false consciousness'. Instead, it provides a highly flexible set of images, symbols, metaphors and narratives that can be used both to affirm and to contest existing structures of power as well as past practices of colonial expansion. Counter-hegemonic formulations, for example, typically romanticize the noble savage and lament his 'total destruction' by the forces of European expansion and settlement. The standard narrative structure, the binary encounter of opposites on the frontier, and the outcome of absolute conquest remain the same; the moral weighting of these agents and outcomes, however, is reversed. It is precisely this flexibility - the ability of the frontier myth to serve a variety of purposes and interests, both hegemonic and counter-hegemonic - that has enabled the frontier myth to survive as a dominant historical mode into the present.

To my knowledge, no ethnographic studies exist tracing the expression of the frontier myth in the Canadian context.¹ A primary goal in this dissertation is to explore the frontier complex as it exists in the Cariboo region, and the conditions under which residents draw upon this cultural complex to generate discourses and narratives of the past, of local and national identities, and of Native/non-Native relations.

At this point I would also like to emphasize some of the limitations of this dissertation. While it is a study of small town Euro-Canadian culture and social

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¹ There is, of course, a large literature in Canadian history contemplating the degree to which Frederick Jackson Turner's influential frontier thesis of American history is relevant to understanding the Canadian context (see Cross 1970 for a recent review). These discussions, however, are not ethnographic applications: they are not looking critically and self-reflexively at the idea of the frontier, but are using the idea of the frontier to 'explain' history much the same way as Chilcotin pioneers use the idea of the frontier to explain their personal biographies and life experiences.
relations between the Euro-Canadian and Native populations, I am primarily interested in tracing out the main features of the dominant culture: its core themes, its variations, and its prevalence within public and private settings. There are two ways in which a dominant culture might be identified: through the ubiquity of particular ideas, meanings, discourses, and practices in everyday life, and through case studies of particular instances in which aspects of a dominant culture are challenged and how these challenges are deflected or absorbed by the hegemonic culture. There are risks with the former approach, in that what is presented as ubiquitous may simply be dismissed as a selective construction on the part of the ethnographer. Further, the widespread appearance of certain ideas, beliefs and practices could represent either the overwhelming success of a dominant culture - to the extent that opposition is completely suppressed - or it could simply reflect the fact that everyone agrees; thus, there is no domination. On the other hand, presenting only case studies of multiple domains in which Natives and non-Natives struggle over public definitions of culture and history, while it would more effectively demonstrate processes of cultural domination, would also move us away from tracing the processes through which residents of Williams Lake are socialized into a particular dominant culture and world view. I trace some of these processes - informal conversational rituals, public school education, public history - in early chapters. These aspects of Euro-Canadian experience often take place the absence of Native people and Native protests, but are critical to the creation and maintenance of the dominant culture. Thus I have chosen instead to balance my analysis both through demonstrating the ubiquity of key aspects of the dominant culture in multiple domains of Euro-Canadian life and, in later chapters, by tracing instances in which these practices are subject to Native resistance.

As a result, however, I have not explored in any detail the diversity and complexity of social relations within the regional non-Native or Euro-Canadian
populations: the way these groups are divided according to socio-economic position, ethnicity, gender, age, or political orientation, and the manner in which these sectors are differently situated within, and privileged by, the dominant culture and structures of power and inequality. Given my theoretical approach - that culture exists as a social process of constructing and representing meaning - it is impossible to analytically separate culture from the individuals who create it. In later chapters I explore how politicians and Euro-Canadian community leaders draw on aspects of the dominant culture to oppose land claims and to control public definitions of identity and history that have their consequence of further entrenching the exclusion of Native peoples from power and resources. But in order to demonstrate the dominance-as-ubiquity of the frontier complex, at times I have had to overlook the important questions of how more diverse sectors of the Euro-Canadian society - and particularly the ‘non-elite’ of loggers, shop clerks, stay-at-home mothers, welfare recipients, and others - also actively contribute to (or at times, resist) these aspects of the dominant culture. I am not denying the agency, the responsibility, or the heterogeneity of these diverse sectors. But in order to keep this dissertation within reasonable limits, I have had to balance my interests in demonstrating the ubiquity of the frontier complex with illustrating how this cultural complex is activated in particular settings and its hegemonic consequences.

Another acknowledged limitation of this dissertation is the lack of attention to the complexity and diversity of the regional aboriginal cultures and forms of aboriginal historical consciousness. In the following chapters I trace Native resistance where it relates to my primary interests of following colonial cultural processes. I have not attempted to provide a full, detailed ethnographic study of
the regional Shuswap, Tsilhqot'in and Carrier cultures. Instead, I have attempted to analyze one aspect of Native experience: their cultural relationships with Euro-Canadian townspeople. While a juxtaposition of aboriginal and Euro-Canadian perspectives on history would enhance my argument of the partiality and subjectivity of Euro-Canadian historical epistemologies, it would also fill the space of this dissertation and draw attention away from my main argument, which traces the systematic way in which a dominant culture appears in many different domains of everyday life. To those who might suggest that the absence of a significant ‘Native voice’ in this dissertation is a critical flaw, I would argue conversely that a token inclusion of Native voices - in itself - is equally problematic if it leaves unanalyzed the way in which relations of power influence processes of cultural or historical representation. What is needed is not simply a postmodern recognition of the multiplicity of historical voices, as James Clifford suggests in his advocacy of “polyphonic” ethnographies (Clifford 1988:21-54), but, more importantly, a detailed analysis of the political, economic, social and cultural mechanisms of power that create and perpetuate these silences. These are the issues that I explore in this dissertation.

Methodology

A dominant culture, by definition, pervades the corners of everyday life, providing a set of ideas, images, values and assumptions that are taken as ‘common-sense’ truths. In the chapters that follow I examine five different contexts in which aspects of the frontier complex appear: in formal representations of history in public settings, in the political discourses of various individuals and

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10 These issues have been taken up elsewhere by Palmer (1994), Dinwoodie (1995) and myself (Furniss 1987, 1995a, 1996). Dinwoodie’s work focusses on historical consciousness among the Tsilhqot’in of Nemiah Valley.
11 See Cruikshank (1992b) for an effective use of such a strategy of juxtaposition.
groups opposing the actions of regional and provincial governments; in private, casual conversations of Euro-Canadians as they denigrate and 'joke' about Indians; in political debates surrounding aboriginal land claims and treaties; and in the ritual celebration of the town’s heritage during the annual Stampede festival. In each setting I investigate the representation of ideas about history and identity, and explore the varied ways in which Euro-Canadians imagine their relationships with area Native peoples through discourses of 'difference'. I also track some of the many ways in which area Native peoples are coping with and responding to these forms of cultural domination.

I use a variety of methodological tools, ranging from participant observation in informal contexts with both Euro-Canadian and Native peoples and interviews with Euro-Canadian and Native political leaders to analysis of documentary sources of information (newspapers, pamphlets, and published literature) and tape recordings of public meetings in which contentious issues were debated. This work also required that I move back and forth between the Native and Euro-Canadian 'worlds' which, as I have described, are to a certain degree segregated by implicit convention. Before discussing my methodology and outline of chapters in more detail I should describe my own personal and professional background and my experience working in area Native communities, conditions that have influenced my ability to gain entrée into both Native and Euro-Canadian communities and that have motivated me to ask the kinds of questions I do in this dissertation.

Background Issues: The Study Context

I have some personal competence in the small town, Euro-Canadian culture under study here. My parents were middle-class immigrant Canadians of English and Irish ancestry, and I was raised in a small, ethnically homogeneous town on
Vancouver Island with the same Canadian cultural fare of frontier history and Indian lore as can be found in Williams Lake and any other small town in rural Canada. My childhood home was on the oceanfront, and several aboriginal stone artifacts found in the course of construction graced our mantelpiece for years and sparked my own historical imagination. The cultural conditioning and the romantic, frontier vision of history that is the subject of this dissertation is a central part of my own experience; through the course of this research I have not transcended, but have become much more critically aware of the depths of my own cultural inheritance.

I first visited the Cariboo region in 1985, when I was part way through the Master's degree program in anthropology at the University of British Columbia. The Nazko Carrier in the north Cariboo region were in the midst of heated debates with government and non-profit groups over the development of the "Alexander Mackenzie Heritage Trail", a development that band leaders felt both ignored the Carrier history of the trail - the trail was an ancient trade route thousands of years old - and also celebrated the colonization of Canada and the Carriers' own loss of political and territorial sovereignty. I was hired by the Nazko band that summer to undertake cultural and historical research on the Native heritage of the trail, and to create a video for local high schools describing the archaeology, ethnohistory and contemporary cultural significance of the trail to the Carrier people.

Through the events of that summer, and through the negative reaction that the government sponsors had to the video I produced, I became aware of the intense commitment many Euro-Canadians have to frontier histories and culture heroes such as Mackenzie, and of the intense conflicts that arise when Native and official histories collide. My experience working with Nazko people introduced me also to the multifaceted aspects of Native life: the cultural traditions in which
Carrier people remain embedded, the politics of contemporary relations with government, and the racial discrimination that many experienced in their dealings with non-Natives in the nearby city of Quesnel.

I have since continued to work with Shuswap and Carrier peoples on a variety of ethnographic and applied research projects. In September 1985 I moved from Nazko to the Shuswap reserve community of Alkali Lake to begin three months of ethnographic research. The Alkali Lake “sobriety movement” - their recent revitalization into an alcohol-free community - became the subject of my Master’s thesis. In 1986 I again moved to Williams Lake to take up work with the Cariboo Tribal Council as a land claims researcher and aboriginal rights coordinator, where I remained for four years. Over time I came to know many of the Shuswap chiefs, leaders and reserve community members of the region, and became involved in a number of political and advocacy projects. At that time the abuse of Native children at St. Joseph’s mission, the Oblate-run residential school near Williams Lake, was the subject of much discussion within Shuswap communities. Through the stories people told me about their residential school experiences and their interactions with non-Native townspeople, I began to understand, in a fuller sense, what it meant to them to be an “Indian” in the context of a rural, right-wing Euro-Canadian town.

At the same time, as a resident of Williams Lake and through my own involvement in Euro-Canadian clubs and community groups, I began to be absorbed within social networks as a ‘young professional’ and began to be socialized into the Euro-Canadian culture of the town. One of my earliest memories of this socialization process is when two friends, both Euro-Canadian professional women, offered to introduce me, as a newcomer to town, to one of the local highlights: they invited me down to the Lakeview - the local Indian bar - to “watch the drunk Indians”. Through my time in the city I became aware of the
profound separation between the Native and non-Native worlds, evident in my own experience with the discomfort that arose when I spoke of my work in Native communities with Euro-Canadian friends, and in the awkwardness that was created when, on a couple of occasions, I invited both Native and Euro-Canadian friends to dinner gatherings.

In all, these experiences have brought me to appreciate how deeply colonial assumptions and relations of power are inscribed in the ‘common-sense’ culture of Williams Lake, and how deeply this culture, and its attendant social relations, have shaped the lives of Native people in the Cariboo region. These experiences have also enabled me to work with both the Native and Euro-Canadian communities with some ease.¹² My length of association and friendships with Native people in the region has enabled me to explore some of the more sensitive issues, particularly Native peoples’ experiences with interpersonal racism. In contrast, my Euro-Canadian identity has given me immediate access to the cultural world of other Euro-Canadian townspeople, where on many occasions I have found myself immediately drawn into a presumed shared universe of understanding in which both friends and strangers have freely voiced frank, hostile and derogatory opinions regarding Native people, land claims, and other contentious issues.

Perhaps because of my own liminal position in this constellation of social relations, I am interested in asking what analytical insights can be gained from approaching Native/non-Native relations both as constituting some sort of a community,

¹² In his study of Churchill Manitoba, Elias commented that positioning himself within the white, middle class sector of the community had the consequence of “alienating me for all time from the local Native peoples”, and that “as other social scientists working in the North have discovered, you are either a student of the whites or a student of the Natives, rarely both” (1975:i). This situation may have been true in the 1970s when Elias did his work. It may also continue to be relevant to those anthropologists limited to short research periods. But to suggest the inevitability of these limitations is only to reproduce the system of conventional segregation that small town Euro-Canadians continue to claim as natural.
however ill functioning, and as being encompassed within a dominating cultural system.  

This dissertation takes a more negative and critical perspective of Native/non-Native relations than I anticipate some Euro-Canadians of Williams Lake would probably prefer. At the same time, it presents a gentler and less critical analysis than might be preferred by some Native people. This work reflects my own attempt to deal with sensitive and controversial issues while walking the thin line between a critically responsible and a morally vacant cultural relativism. Anthropological knowledge, too, is embedded in a colonial culture, and is the product of historically specific social practices; my account offers an interpretive analysis as seen from the particular academic and personal vantage I have described.

The field research on which this dissertation is based has been undertaken over a period of some years. Between April and September of 1992, as an independent researcher, I carried out ethnographic research with both Shuswap people and Euro-Canadians on the topic of Native/non-Native relations. My period of formal research for this study occurred between April and November 1994, and in the month of March 1995. In an inversion of traditional ethnographic practice, during 1992, 1994 and 1995 I studied the culture of Euro-Canadians in Williams Lake while living some twenty kilometers from town at a home at Deep

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13 Throughout this dissertation I use the term ‘community’ frequently. The term is often heard in everyday conversation: Natives make reference to the various Native communities in the region as well as to the Cariboo-Chilcotin Native community in singular form; Euro-Canadians often refer to the ‘community’ of Williams Lake. There are many different definitions of the term in the social scientific literature (for a review see Bell and Newby 1971). My use of ‘community’ does not equate with some of the conventional sociological definitions of community as a group of individuals who live in close geographic proximity and who are connected through direct, face-to-face, interlocking social ties. Instead, I use the term in a largely colloquial sense to refer to a group of individuals among whom there exists a sense of shared interests and belonging.
Creek, one of the reserves of the Soda Creek First Nation. In the summer of 1996 I again moved to Williams Lake where, living in town, the final draft of this dissertation has been written.

I described my research project to local residents as a study of the relations between Natives and non-Natives in the Cariboo region, with an emphasis on exploring problems, such as racism and socio-economic disparities, that exist between the two populations. A key focus, I explained, is examining the different ways in which the Native and non-Native communities look at history, differences that are brought to the forefront in land claims debates. I have emphasized that my goal is to develop a better understanding of these issues so that more positive relationships might be created. I did not seek any official approval from any political group, such as the Williams Lake City Council or the area Tribal Councils, but I discussed my project and solicited feedback through the informal social networks in the Shuswap community and with local Native leaders. Informed consent was obtained before all interviews, and written informed consent was obtained before formal interviews with Euro-Canadian leaders.

Copies of this dissertation have been circulated to eleven Williams Lake area residents - friends, colleagues and 'key informants' - for comments and feedback. 14

14 The vast majority of readers, both Native and Euro-Canadian, responded positively, found this to be a worthwhile project, and felt that my depiction of Native/non-Native relations matched their experiences and perceptions closely. Some felt I had not been "hard" enough on the city of Williams Lake; others felt that the dissertation was "really brave" and one jokingly worried that I might be in danger of being shot should I return to the city (where I continue to stay part-time). One person commented "It's about time someone told the truth about our little town of Williams Lake". One reader, though, was unsure of my intentions. He was speaking from a context in which he has seen a flood of consultants, local businesses and corporations now soliciting relations with First Nations communities, essentially following the trail of money and political power that is flowing into First Nations communities in the wake of changing provincial policies and in advance of aboriginal land claims settlements. He has seen a flurry of educational workshops being held by corporate and business interests to teach non-Native organizations "how to do business with First Nations organizations". He initially read this dissertation as yet another document written by a non-Native for non-Native audiences, and was worried that the information could be used as yet another tool (continued, p. 37)
Nine of the individuals are Native, two are non-Native, and all can be considered ‘community leaders’ in their own spheres. Although many ethnographers who have undertaken studies of rural communities and local Native/non-Native relations have used pseudonyms for their research site, I have chosen to use the real name of the city, and of the surrounding reserves. I have done this, in part, due to the likelihood that the city would be readily identified anyway in my portrayal both of the three aboriginal nations of the region and of the city’s annual festival, for which the city is internationally known. In addition, all the local readers of the draft felt that it was an overly protective act to use a pseudonym for the city. Several Native readers pointed out the double standard of identifying area Native nations but not the city of Williams Lake. I have used pseudonyms (indicated by names in single quotation marks) when referring to specific individuals. In some cases, primarily when the identities of the individuals were a matter of public record, I have used their real names.

Methodology and Outline of Chapters

Chapter two presents a brief historical overview of the aboriginal cultures and the development of Native/non-Native relations in the Cariboo. I highlight the manner in which Native/non-Native relations have been shaped and constrained by powers exercised through economic forces and through the agencies of the Canadian state. This chapter is intended to provide an overview of the historical conditions that today have brought Natives and non-Natives of the Cariboo into contact, and to sketch out the economic, political and social contexts of current Native/non-Native cultural struggles.

In the following chapters I shift to examine how colonial power is expressed of manipulation and domination against First Nations interests. I hope for the opposite: that local non-Natives may realize their own perhaps unwitting complicity in relations of colonialism.
in the contemporary cultural practices of the Euro-Canadian population. In Chapter three I introduce the frontier myth as a historical epistemology and trace its appearance in public settings in the city. I examine formal representations of history in three settings: high school history textbooks, popular historical literature found on the shelves of city bookstores, and the displays of the city museum. The frontier myth provides a historical framework for constructing a variety of national, regional and local identities and histories. In contrast to the American master narrative of “regeneration through violence”, in the Cariboo region the dominant narrative of the frontier myth is one of ‘conquest through benevolence’, a typically Canadian version in which benevolent paternalism defines assertions of Canadian national identity. Native people appear only in highly circumscribed roles - noble savages, ‘hostile’ Natives - that serve as supporting characters in these histories celebrating the ‘conquest’ of the frontier. Histories that deviate from, or that challenge, the terms of the frontier myth are exceedingly scarce. The frontier myth thus exists as the dominant mode of history by virtue of its ubiquity in the public domains of the city.

In Chapter four I trace the appearance of the frontier myth in Euro-Canadian political discourse. The frontier myth provides more than a framework for explicit representations of the past. It provides a set of images, symbols and narratives that are part of the fabric of contemporary culture and identity in Williams Lake, and that are frequently drawn on by various parties to both rationalize and criticize government actions and public policies. In so doing, individuals construct idealized images of the past which are juxtaposed to the present to become forms of social and political critique.

My methodology for tracing these processes begins with one assumption: that much of contemporary political discourse in Canada takes the form of a “politics of embarrassment” (Dyck 1985:15; Paine 1985:214), through which
individuals and groups make appeals to widespread public values and ideals, and attempt to mobilize public support and embarrass their political opponents - and to bring about changes to government policy - by demonstrating how their conduct has deviated from these standards of morality and comportment. By definition, then, the currency of political rhetoric will be the values, ideals, and traditions that speakers deem to be the dominant ideals of the public.

In tracing political discourse in the Cariboo-Chilcotin setting, my first task is to determine the set of dominant values and identities upon which a local politics of embarrassment is derived. I do this through interviews I conducted with fifteen Euro-Canadian community leaders during March 1995. Through these interviews, community leaders discussed their understandings of the local culture, identity and prevalent values in the city, understandings which can be consolidated into a form of contemporary, small town frontier identity. I then trace two recent controversial events in which these values and identities formed the currency of political debates. Even more important, in these two cases, public values and identities were infused with even greater moral power by being historicized and equated with the pioneer traditions of the Cariboo.

The first case, which I reconstruct from local and provincial newspaper coverage and letters to the editor, involves the government-ordered demolition of a house in Wells, a small hamlet northeast of Williams Lake. The second case, which I reconstruct from local and provincial newspaper coverage and letters as well as pamphlets, promotional materials, and newsletters put out by various parties involved, concerns the response of Cariboo groups to the provincial government’s Commission on Resources and the Environment. In both instances, angry citizens challenged the actions of government by evoking the symbol of the pioneer and by construing government actions as a threat to the sacred pioneer spirit and legacy of the Cariboo-Chilcotin. The symbol of the pioneer is used in a creative and flexible
manner by various groups engaged in political struggles. At the same time, through its use as a symbol of power, each evocation implicitly reproduces a hegemonic historical tradition of imagining the past through the framework of the frontier myth.

In Chapter five I turn to examine the dynamics of everyday Native/non-Native relations. I trace how one aspect of the frontier complex is manifested in the way Euro-Canadians construct a collective identity in opposition to area Native peoples. The Indian/white dichotomy naturalized through frontier histories is found also in the common-sense racism that characterizes everyday Euro-Canadian conversations about Natives. My methodology involves participant observation in informal contexts with Euro-Canadian friends, acquaintances and strangers as I moved through the Euro-Canadian social world in the city. The ubiquity of these casual, offhand, and disparaging remarks about Native people attests to the taken-for-granted status of common-sense racism in the dominant culture of Williams Lake.

I then trace how these forms of common-sense racism becomes translated into forms of "status domination" (Scott 1990:198) during Native/non-Native interactions. The existence of racism, with rare exceptions, is largely excluded from formal public records and newspaper coverage. These experiences, however, comprise a common-sense reality for area Native peoples. I turn to interviews and conversations I have had with area Native people - and particularly Shuswap people - who described to me their own accumulated experiences with racial prejudice and discrimination in the city. Finally, both through these interviews and conversations, and through my own observations of everyday Native life, I discuss the multiple ways in which Native people are challenging these forms of status domination: through formal, organized public protest, through individual modes of
verbal and physical resistance, and through private modes of humorous joking and
dramatic parody in which stereotypes of Indianness are subverted.

Chapter six investigates current public debates over aboriginal treaties and
land claims. Here there is a conjunction of several themes that have been discussed
in earlier chapters. Racist images of Native inferiority, the Euro-Canadian national
self-image of benevolent paternalism, the 'self made man' myth of history, and the
prevalent assumption about the desirability of Native cultural assimilation into
mainstream society are aspects of the dominant culture drawn on by those Euro-
Canadians who publicly oppose aboriginal treaties.

I trace these discourses through a narrative account of a public forum on
land claims held in Williams Lake in March 1995. The forum was organized by the
federal Reform Party to rally public opposition to aboriginal treaty negotiations.
While the panel of speakers represented one political party, their views also
resonated with the prevalent attitudes and feelings of many other Euro-Canadians
in the city. I compare the formal presentations of speakers with the views put
forth in letters to the city newspaper and in interviews I conducted that month
with the fifteen Euro-Canadian community leaders on the general subject of
current issues facing Williams Lake and the Cariboo.

At the same time, the Reform public forum offered the opportunity for a
dialogue with the many First Nations people who also attended the meeting. At
the end of the chapter I describe the manner in which three Native speakers
responded to the Reform panelists, challenging their views of history, asserting
claims to aboriginal title and insisting on the importance of treaties. These
examples show how Natives, too, engage in a politics of embarrassment; they too
strategically manipulate the terms of the dominant culture, using varied genres of
discourse and drawing on dominant symbols of power and authority in order to
pursue their own political goals. These examples are testimony to the diversity of
interests, identities and political strategies that exist within the regional Native population.

In Chapter seven I explore the fifth context in which the frontier complex can be traced: in the city’s annual festival, the Williams Lake Stampede. Within this ritual complex Native people, as culturally exotic ‘Indians’, are incorporated into public definitions of community, existing as a mirror image to the collective identity of the non-Native townspeople. In this chapter I ask two questions. First, why are Natives, as Indians, symbolically important to the Stampede festival? This requires tracing the history of the Stampede’s ritual genre back to its roots in the Wild West performances in the United States in the late 1800s, and tracking the Stampede’s evolution through the early, mid and late 1900s. There is a core ritual complex here that has persisted despite the many changes that the festival has undergone over these seven decades.

Second, I ask: how do Stampede organizers and area Native leaders understand the benefits, the pitfalls, and the meanings that are communicated through “Indian” participation in the festival? Drawing on formal interviews with five past and present organizers of the Stampede and on informal conversations with Stampede volunteers, and on formal interviews with five area First Nations leaders who have had some past involvement with the festival, I contrast their perspectives on the importance of Native involvement and their understandings of the reasons for Natives’ reluctance to participate fully. In so doing, and drawing on recent approaches to cultural performance by Dirks (1994), Myers (1994), Holland and Skinner (1995) and Cruikshank (1997), I approach the Stampede as a cultural festival in which various groups are engaging in public struggles over the constitution of public identities and over the meanings of performances. Through these interviews, it becomes apparent that Stampede organizers and Native leaders interpret the significance of performance, and the meaning of symbols of identity,
through radically different epistemological frameworks. In conversation, Native leaders discuss their struggles to negotiate their way through issues of authenticity and the hegemony of noble savage stereotypes, and their pragmatic political strategy for using performance as a vehicle not only of resistance against Euro-Canadian stereotypes, but for the cultivation of new, positive identities among aboriginal peoples themselves.

Chapter eight, the concluding chapter, summarizes the major features of the frontier complex and of forms of aboriginal resistance, and discusses the implications for an understanding of the dynamics of Native/non-Native relations and current political debates regarding aboriginal land claims and self-government in British Columbia.
Chapter Two: The Historical Context

In this chapter I present a brief historical sketch of the aboriginal cultures of the Cariboo-Chilcotin, and describe how, over the last 200 years, the influx of non-Native settlers, the introduction of colonial economies, and the establishment of Canadian government authority have conditioned Native/non-Native relations through to the present. These historical circumstances have created the material conditions enabling the continuing reproduction of a dominant culture, have defined the contexts for the current encounter between Natives and non-Natives in the Cariboo region, have led to the varied modes of political, economic and cultural resistance Native people are now engaging against the dominant society.

Aboriginal Cultures of the Cariboo-Chilcotin

Aboriginal people have lived in the B.C. interior for a very long time. According to Ulkatcho Carrier oral traditions, Native people have lived in the west Chilcotin ever since three man-like beings - Kwakwosat, Yus and Nowakila - came up the Dean River, transforming the river, introducing salmon to it, and readying the territory for human life (Furniss 1993a:12). According to the oral traditions of the Nazko Carrier, people have lived in the Nazko area ever since the man-like giant Kebets’ih broke the huge dam on the Nazko River, emptying the water from the Nazko valley and opening it up to humans (ibid.:12-13). Shuswap oral traditions tell of how Old One and Coyote travelled the country, introducing salmon to the rivers, making the world fit for human occupation, and teaching people the skills and values they needed to survive (Teit 1975 [1909]). These origin stories, like those of other Interior Salish and northern Athapaskan peoples (for example, Ridington 1978; Robinson and Wickwire 1989, 1992; Cruikshank et al.,
1990) emphasize the themes of the ongoing interdependence among humans and animals and the centrality of the landscape to aboriginal identity and historical consciousness. Like Euro-Canadian histories, aboriginal oral traditions are living, dynamic epistemologies that are continually retold and reformulated to impose meaning on both the past and the present (Cruikshank et al. 1990; Cruikshank 1994).

Archaeologists, concerned with linear, temporal sequences of human activity, generally believe that the first peoples arrived in the B.C. Interior some 12,000 to 11,000 years ago, after the end of the last glaciation period (Fladmark 1986; Rousseau 1993). The earliest humans were highly nomadic hunters of the big game animals that thrived on the open grasslands. By 8,000 years ago, pine and fir forests were spreading across the grasslands, supporting the modern game animals - moose, mountain sheep, elk and deer - that became the new basis for Native subsistence. Although minor runs of salmon probably had become established in the Fraser River by this time (Rousseau 1993:168), it was not until about 4,000 years ago that salmon became prominent as a subsistence resource. From 4,000 years to the present, the interior cultures of the Fraser River area shared many of the features noted by the early ethnographers to the region. People lived in semi-subterranean pithouses in winter villages, and practiced a semi-sedentary lifestyle in which salmon was the primary source of subsistence, supplemented by deer, elk, small mammals and plants and roots (Richards and Rousseau 1987).

Thus by the early 1800s the Shuswap, Carrier and Tsilhqot'in peoples had long been established in the region. According to James Teit (1975), by this time the Tsilhqot'in controlled the western portion of the Chilcotin plateau, from Puntzi Lake to Anahim Lake in the west, and southward through the high, forested plateau region to the Coast Range. They were divided into three or four
bands with a total population of about 1600 (ibid.:760, 761). The Carrier, to the north of the Tsilhqot'in, occupied a broad territory from the Skeena and Bulkley Rivers in the west to the Rocky Mountains in the east. Five of the southernmost Carrier bands were present in the region now known as the Cariboo Chilcotin. Of these, three were situated along the Blackwater River drainage system, which runs eastward for over two hundred kilometers to empty into the Fraser River in the north Cariboo. A fourth band was centered at the Fraser River; a fifth was located in the Cariboo Mountains area (Furniss 1993a:5). At European contact there were approximately 18 Carrier bands with an estimated total population of 8500 (Tobey 1981:416). Shuswap territory ran from the grasslands about fifty kilometers west of the Fraser River across the thick forests of the interior plateau to the Rocky Mountains (Teit 1975:450).¹ The Shuswap nation, in 1840, consisted of about 30 bands with a total population of about 7200 (ibid.). There were fourteen northern Shuswap bands in the Cariboo region; they controlled the Fraser River area from above Lillooet to Soda Creek.

Both the Tsilhqot’in and Carrier languages belong to the northern Athapaskan language family. The Shuswap speak an Interior Salish language. Despite these differences, the three nations occupied a region that was generally similar in ecology, climate, terrain, and plant and animal resources, providing for a certain degree of cultural leveling. All three nations followed a hunting, fishing, and gathering lifestyle based upon regular movements between hunting grounds, fish camps, berry and root gathering places, and seasonal settlements. The Shuswap, Tsilhqot’in and southern Carrier bands were organized into bilaterally-defined extended family groups. Closely related families that occupied the same general region comprised a band, which was named after its geographical location.

¹ The Tsilhqot’in National Government now claims traditional ownership to all lands west of the Fraser River.
The northern Shuswap, controlling the salmon-rich Fraser River, by the 1800s had developed a more sedentary lifestyle as well as more hierarchical forms of socio-political and ceremonial organization (ibid.:575-583).

Relations between the three nations were forged and maintained through the linked activities of intermarriage and trade. In the early contact period the Tsilhqot'in and Carrier had particularly close trading relationships with the Nuxalk on the Pacific coast. A number of aboriginal trade routes stretched through Tsilhqot'in and Carrier territory across the interior plateau and down over the Coast Mountain range to the Bella Coola valley. The Fraser River Shuswap were linked in trade to the more southerly Lillooet, the Nlaka'pamux, and the southern Shuswap to the east. Occupying such a wide territory, those Shuswap bands occupying the extreme opposites of the region rarely met one another (ibid.:467). The northern Shuswap along the Fraser River had closer relations with the neighboring Tsilhqot'in and Carrier than they did with the Shuswap to the southeast or to the other Interior Salish groups (ibid.:468-9); this remains true in the 1990s.

The European Fur Trade

By the early 1800s the three nations were all well integrated into the European fur trade. The North West Company fur trader Alexander Mackenzie, during his journey through Carrier country in 1793, found the southern Carrier already well-engaged in the fur trade business, bringing beaver, bear, lynx, fox and marten pelts down to the coast to trade with the Nuxalk, who for the last decade had been acting as middlemen in the trade with European ships (Mackenzie 1970:319-320, 354-355). As a result of Mackenzie’s successful explorations, the North West Company quickly expanded into northern British Columbia. Four fur trade posts were built in the first decade of the 1800s: Fort McLeod in Sekani
country, and Fort St. James, Fort Fraser and Fort George in central Carrier territory (Morice 1978:54, 63, 68-69, 71). The Hudson’s Bay Company opened Fort Alexandria on the Fraser River in southern Carrier territory in 1821. To the south, Fort Kamloops had earlier been built in southern Shuswap territory in 1812.

Over the following decades Carrier, Shuswap and Tsilhqot’in peoples all became active in the European fur trade economy. The fact that the fur trade posts depended on a local food supply, particularly salmon, acquired through trade with aboriginal people or through direct harvest from the Fraser River using Native technology and labour; and the availability of other trade networks should trappers not receive the prices they wished for their furs, gave Native groups a certain amount of control over their relations with Europeans (McGillivray 1947:217; Furniss 1993b:28-29). At the same time, the introduction of the European fur trade into the interior of British Columbia brought with it some obvious changes to aboriginal culture and activities. The increased emphasis on trapping fur bearing animals, in some instances, led to the intensification of pressures on intertribal boundaries between the Carrier and Tsilhqot’in (McGillivray 1947: 213-214). It led also to changes in material culture. Guns, ammunition, kettles, blankets, cloth and clothing became standard equipment, and from that point on the three nations became inextricably linked with the capitalist economy.

Finally, with the new sources of wealth introduced through the fur trade, shifts began to take place in concepts of land tenure. Among both the southern Carrier and Shuswap different extended family groups began to exert ownership rights to specific trapping grounds (Goldman 1953; Teit 1975:583; Furniss 1995a). The tendency of extended family groups in other northern hunting societies to develop exclusive rights to specific trapping grounds in response to the European fur trade has been debated elsewhere (Speck 1915, 1927; Cooper 1939; Leacock 1954; Rogers 1963; Bishop 1970). In the case of the Shuswap, these shifts are
probably not a reflection of a unilineal development and absorption of capitalist notions of private property, but of ongoing, oscillating tensions that have long existed in Shuswap societies between the autonomy of extended family groups and the solidarity of the band collective (Furniss 1996).

The 1860s: Epidemics and the Gold Rush

The relatively balanced relations that existed between aboriginal groups and European fur traders were shattered in the 1860s. Two events precipitated this change: the near extinction of the Native populations through a smallpox epidemic, and the arrival of thousands of gold miners into the Cariboo region during the Cariboo Gold Rush. A variety of epidemics had swept through the upper Fraser River area in the early to mid 1800s, including whooping cough, measles, and smallpox (Furniss 1995a:238). The most devastating epidemic in the 19th century, though, was the smallpox epidemic of the winter of 1862-63. In a few short months, the Tsilhqot'in, Shuswap and southern Carrier bands were devastated by the disease. Up to two-thirds of the Shuswap population may have died during that winter (Teit 1975:463). By 1890, the overall population of the Carrier nation was reduced to less than a fifth of their former numbers (Tobey 1981:416).

Until 1850 European activities in British Columbia were focused on the fur trade. By the early 1850s reports began to filter out about the presence of gold on the lower Fraser and Thompson Rivers. In 1858 the Hudson’s Bay Company quietly began to build a post at the junction of the Thompson and Fraser Rivers for the sole purpose of collecting gold from Native miners (Fisher 1992:71). News of the discovery eventually leaked out, however, and a massive influx of prospectors to lower British Columbia began. By 1859 tens of thousands of
miners were working their way up the Fraser River. With the so-called 'discovery' that year of rich gold deposits on the Horsefly River, the Cariboo gold rush began.

The influx of miners brought with it a fundamental shift in attitude towards the Native populations. Native people had been an essential component of the fur trade economy. With the onset of the gold rush, they were perceived by American miners as both obstacles and competitors. Numerous instances of Native/non-Native violence erupted as prospectors made their way up through the Okanagan and Fraser River regions (ibid.:99).

The best known instance of Native resistance preserved in the folklore of British Columbian history is the so-called Chilcotin War. The incident was sparked by Alfred Waddington’s dream of constructing a highway from Bute Inlet on the Pacific Coast to the Cariboo gold fields. Yet Waddington had underestimated the degree of opposition he would encounter by Tsilhqot’ín people, through whose territory the planned road was to pass. In 1864, a crew of road surveyors arrived at Bute Inlet to explore this route. Tensions between the survey crew and the Tsilhqot’ín intensified. Triggered by the crew’s mistreatment of some of the Tsilhqot’ín women, the Tsilhqot’ín finally turned on the crew, killing thirteen men (Fisher 1992:107; Glavin 1992:88-112; Williams 1995).

The Tsilhqot’ín had been defending their territory from trespass in a conventional manner. The colonial government, under intense pressure from the colony’s settlers, interpreted these actions as unjustified murders. Two search parties were launched to arrest the men responsible for the killings. Eventually six men were arrested and tried in Quesnel. Five were sentenced to death and hanged (Morice 1978:320).

Despite these instances of Native resistance, the weight and power of colonial authority was increasingly being felt. The gold rushes in British Columbia brought with them not only a dramatic increase in the settler population but also
an expansion of government activity. In 1858 mainland British Columbia was officially made a British Colony, with James Douglas assuming the governorship of the new colony as well as that of Vancouver Island (Fisher 1992:96).

The Land Issue

Following British colonial policy, the colonial government on Vancouver Island had set about to free up Indian lands for non-Native settlement through signing treaties with the aboriginal nations. Fourteen treaties were signed on Vancouver Island prior to 1864 (Tennant 1990:19). After 1864, as non-Native settlement continued, the colonial government ignored aboriginal title and rescinded its treaty-making policy with various aboriginal groups. For the next century the issue of aboriginal title to the land remained unresolved, despite persistent efforts of B.C. aboriginal groups to press for government recognition of aboriginal rights (ibid.).

Colonial legislation specified the procedures by which settlers could acquire what was now considered Crown land. The 1870 Land Ordinance allowed any male British subject to pre-empt 320 acres of “unoccupied Crown land” east of the Coast Mountain range for a price of $1.00/acre (Cail 1974:252-257). Although Native village sites, graveyards, and cultivated fields and pastures theoretically were protected by law from pre-emption, there were several instances in the Cariboo in which people saw their fenced pastures, hay meadows, cultivated fields and burial places alienated. Not only was aboriginal title ignored, but Natives were expressly excluded from having rights of pre-emption except with the Governor’s special

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2 For the Canoe Creek Band: Elliott to Colonial Secretary, 15 July 1864. British Columbia Archives and Records Service (BCARS), C/AB 30.1J 6, letter no. 297. For the Soda Creek Band: McGuckin to Chief Commissioner of Lands and Works, 12 May 1868; Saunders to Trutch, 17 September 1868; and Trutch to Colonial Secretary, 28 September 1868, all in BCARS Colonial Correspondence File 1564.
permission (ibid.). This discriminatory legislation remained in place until the 1950s, although Native people were legally allowed to purchase land through private sale.

By the 1870s tensions between settlers and Natives were mounting in Shuswap territory, where non-Native settlement had been heavy. The principal villages of the northern Shuswap were situated on the Fraser River, or a few kilometers up small creeks that fed into the river. Being relatively low in altitude and on good water sources, these lands were among the best agricultural sites in the Cariboo. The winter villages of the Canoe Creek, Dog Creek, Alkali Lake, Williams Lake and Soda Creek Shuswap were all situated on some of the main routes by which miners were traveling to the gold fields. The northern Shuswap soon found their villages surrounded by road houses, hotels, and non-Native farms and ranches.

Under increasing pressure to address the land question, in 1876 a joint federal/provincial Joint Allotment Commission was struck to establish Indian reserves (ibid.:207). Its mandate, determined arbitrarily and with no input from the different aboriginal nations of the province, was not to recognize aboriginal title and establish treaties, but to allot parcels of reserved land for each band in the province. Many Native groups accepted the reserves that were so allotted. As these reserves provided a measure of protection from the encroachment of settlers, they served to temporarily relieve Indian-settler hostilities. Native leaders throughout the province, however, continued to lobby provincial, federal, and British governments to address the broader and still unresolved issue of aboriginal title.

It was not until the early 1880s that the first reserves in the Cariboo, those for the Shuswap and Carrier bands along the Fraser River, were allotted by the Indian Reserve Commission. By this time most of the good arable land in the region had been pre-empted by settlers. Indian reserves typically consisted of land
that was rocky and unproductive. The Indian Reserve Commissioner, upon allotting several reserves covering hay meadows at Alkali Lake in 1895, reported apologetically that the reserves were "not likely to interfere with the progress of the country, as there are no white settlers in the immediate neighborhood". By 1902 reserves had been established for all Shuswap, Carrier and Tsilhqot'in bands in the district.

Control through Legislation

By the early 1900s an infrastructure of government legislation and bureaucracy was in place to regulate the lives and activities of Native people. Federal Indian policy, and the federal Indian Act of 1876, were enforced by the Department of Indian Affairs. An Indian Agency had been established in the Williams Lake district by 1881. The Indian Agent assigned to the post began his paternalistic mandate to oversee the functioning of reserve communities and to enforce the terms of the Indian Act.

Other bodies of legislation interfered directly with traditional subsistence practices. In 1894 federal fisheries officers began attempts to regulate Native fishing practices by prohibiting the use of barricades, basket traps and nets for salmon fishing on rivers (Ware 1983). In the 1930s fisheries officers were attempting, with mixed success, to enforce the permit system. In this system Native fishermen were expected to take out a permit to fish for food, and to restrict their fishing to the declared open times using harvesting equipment approved by the Federal fisheries department (ibid.).

Similarly, by the 1920s provincial game legislation was in place to regulate Native hunting practices. Hunting for moose, caribou, elk or deer was prohibited

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3 O'Reilly to Chief Commissioner of Lands and Works, 20 September 1895. RG10, vol. 1279, p.70. British Columbia Archives and Records Service, Victoria, B.C.
except in open seasons determined by the Province. As in their response to fisheries regulations, Native people, especially those in the regions far from non-Native settlement, simply ignored these restrictions. Those in more heavily settled areas not only found their hunting practices curtailed by game wardens, but at times found themselves subject to the creative implementation of imaginary legislation. Such was the case with the Quesnel Carrier, who in 1914 reported to the Royal Commission on Indian Affairs that the local game warden had told them that all hunting was illegal, regardless of species or time of year.4

Shuswap, Carrier and Tsilhqot’in Life in the Early 1900s

By the early 1900s the three nations of the Cariboo-Chilcotin region had managed to arrive at a tenuous equilibrium in their relations with non-Native society. Native people constituted a marginalized and virtually powerless sector of the mainstream society. They were able to retain some degree of control over their lives by virtue of two facts: non-Natives rarely entered reserve communities, and there still remained some portions of the traditional territory in which settlers were absent.

Most Shuswap, Carrier and Tsilhqot’in families supported themselves primarily by hunting and fishing. Subsistence activities were supplemented with food grown from small vegetable gardens. Many families had begun to raise small herds of horses and cattle, and to cut wild hay meadows to provide the herds with winter feed. The annual round of activity involved regular movements between the reserve village and the hunting grounds, traplines, fishing stations, and summer gardens and hay meadows. Trapping, seasonal employment in packing, freighting,

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4 Evidence Heard Before the Royal Commission on Indian Affairs for the Province of B.C. Williams Lake Agency. Meeting with the Quesnel Indian Band, 27 July 1914. P. 166. Special Collections, University of British Columbia Library.
guiding, and farm and ranch labour, and the sale of buckskin handiwork provided Shuswap, Tsilhqot'in and Carrier families with a bit of cash income.

Non-native settlement in the Cariboo had brought with it some significant displacements of Native people from their territories. With the arrival of thousands of miners during the 1860s Cariboo Gold Rush, the southern Carrier and Shuswap had been displaced from the Cariboo Mountains that lay east of the Fraser River. The Quesnel Carrier, and the Fraser River Shuswap to the south were forced to accept the immediate presence of settlers in their territories. As more and more land was pre-empted by settlers, Native people found their access to hunting territories and fishing stations blocked by fences and "no trespassing" signs. Hunting and fishing became more difficult, and under these circumstances the importance of a mixed economy became even more critical.

In contrast, the forested plateau area lying west of the Fraser River had been untouched by gold prospectors. The southern Carrier along the Blackwater River were able to continue their hunting, fishing and trapping lifestyle with relatively little interference (Kew 1974). The south-eastern region of the Chilcotin plateau, and particularly the Fraser and Chilcotin river valleys, contained natural grasslands ideal for cattle ranching. By 1885 there were a handful of widely dispersed ranches in the east Chilcotin. The Tsilhqot'in by now were occupying all of the plateau area east to the Fraser River. For the most part, the Tsilhqot'in, like the southern Carrier, were able to accommodate the few settlers while maintaining control over much of their territory. Although non-Native settlement of the Chilcotin gradually increased through the early decades of the 1900s, it was considered remote territory, with few roads being built into the region.
Religious Colonization

In 1867, a Roman Catholic mission, operated by the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, was established in the heart of northern Shuswap country (Furniss 1995a). Missionaries immediately began to make regular visits to the nearby Shuswap and Carrier villages, seeking to convert people to the Roman Catholic faith, and launching intense campaigns to banish the aboriginal traditions of feasting, dancing, gambling, and shamanism.

The missionaries arrived shortly after the gold rush, the smallpox epidemic, and the gradual loss of aboriginal control over their lands and lives. Shuswap communities in particular were in a state of social and cultural crisis, making them vulnerable to the moral and symbolic authority that the Oblates wielded. By 1900, the nominal conversion of both the Shuswap and Carrier was complete (ibid.). In 1891 a residential school was established at the Mission site. During the next ninety years many Shuswap, Carrier and Tsilhqot'in children were taken to the school. There they were taught the English language, basic academic skills, domestic and industrial trades, Catholic morality and beliefs, and, implicitly, the meaning of what it was to be an Indian in Canadian society.

Williams Lake Settlement: 1860-1940

Williams Lake itself has a somewhat discontinuous history. The first non-Native settlers arrived in the valley during the early years of the gold rush. In 1859 an American settler took up land at the foot of the lake and built a roadhouse and a prosperous farm. Two years later, Gold Commissioner Philip Nind set up a government office here, and soon the new settlement of Williams Lake boasted a number of homes, a courthouse, and a jail. An English immigrant, who was employed by Nind as a constable, soon built his own stopping house, saloon and store and eventually came to own much of the Williams Lake valley (Stangoe
1994:10-12). This brief period of fluorescence ended with the transfer of
government offices to the booming gold town of Richfield (Skelton 1980:68).

By virtue of this settlement, the Williams Lake band found themselves
displaced from their territory in the valley. As early as 1861 Gold Commissioner
Nind had asked permission from the colonial government in Victoria to lay out a
reserve for the band; however, a reserve was not established until the 1880s. For
some years the people camped on their traditional lands that had nevertheless been
preempted and occupied by their Mission. The delay in establishing a reserve,
according to one Oblate, was the provincial government's form of punishing the
band collectively for the alleged murder of some miners by some Shuswap.\(^5\) In
1881 the Indian Reserve Commission finally allotted reserves for the band.

Through the latter half of the 1800s, non-Native settlement in the Williams
Lake district consisted of scattered homesteads and ranches. During the gold rush
era many immigrants had arrived in the Cariboo from such places as Ontario, the
United States, England, Ireland, Scotland, Germany, France and China. Generally
speaking, English immigrants often came from wealthy and educated backgrounds;
while the American immigrants arrived with little to their name, and hoping to
make their fortune through the gold rush (Bonner, Bliss and Litterick 1995). A
number of non-Natives, in the course of establishing their farms and ranches,
settled down with Native women and started families with them. The result was
the emergence of a significant population with ancestors in both Native and non-
Native communities. Indeed, many of the currently-identified pioneer families in
the Cariboo have Native ancestry, although this is not always openly
acknowledged.

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\(^5\) Father Francois Marie Thomas. Memoirs. Add MSS 567. British Columbia Archives and
Records Service, Victoria, B.C.
By 1901 the Williams Lake District census, one of five census divisions in the Cariboo region, recorded approximately 350 non-Natives in the region. Most had been born in Canada, although a significant number recently had immigrated from China and the United States. The census, displaying a race consciousness typical of the era, despite the existence of many individuals with mixed race backgrounds, nevertheless listed not only the “colour” of each individual (white, yellow, red) but the “racial or tribal origin” of the population. The dominant ethnic groups were Chinese, English, Irish, Scottish, French and German. The Chinese constituted about 20 percent of the settler population. Many were making a living by trapping, gold mining, and working as laborers on ranches and as cooks and waiters in hotels along the wagon road. The Shuswap people in the Williams Lake region, despite devastation by diseases and loss of land, remained the majority of the area population at about 500 (Teit 1975:464).

The railway boom of the first and second decade of the 1900s drew many new residents to the Cariboo. Men found work in the construction of roads and bridges and the laying of the rail lines. New merchants established stores where they catered to the needs of the laborers. A new wave of settlers arrived to take up land and establish small farms or ranches. With the arrival of the Pacific Great Eastern Railway at the foot of the lake in 1919, Williams Lake was reborn.

By the following year a village - complete with homes, hotels, restaurants, bars, a post office, a livery stable and feed store, a dance hall, a pool hall, and two banks - had grown up around the train station (Skelton 1980:205; Stangoe 1994:20, 34). By the end of the 1920s churches, government offices, a police station and a courthouse had been established, and the village of Williams Lake became incorporated officially as a municipality (Skelton 1980:205-206). The town

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was destined to become a principal nexus for transportation in the region. Cattle from ranches across the Cariboo and Chilcotin now were driven to Williams Lake, instead of the previous railhead at Ashcroft on the transcontinental Canadian Pacific Railway line, to be sold and shipped via rail to markets in the south.

From the 1860s to the 1940s, the main economic activities in the Cariboo region consisted of ranching, farming, mining, transportation, and small-scale logging and sawmilling. It was not until after the Second World War, with the dramatic expansion of the forest industry in British Columbia, that the economic and demographic patterns of the Cariboo would undergo significant change.

Land Tenure and Forest Industry Expansion

By the 1940s, the provincial government was exercising greater authority over activities on Crown land. At the time of B.C.'s entry into Confederation in 1871, the province had assumed ownership of all lands that had not already been pre-empted or purchased by settlers through colonial land legislation. Lands designated as Indian reserves later were transferred through legislation from the provincial to the federal government.

A most contentious set of regulations in the interior of B.C. concerned grazing and water rights. Agriculture was the backbone of the economy until the 1940s. Water was a critical resource, and many farms and ranches relied on water from the same creek for irrigating fields and garden crops. As early as the 1860s conflicts were arising between Natives and settlers as upstream water users diverted water flow into irrigation channels and ditches, essentially reducing or cutting off water access to downstream users.7

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7 Elliott to Colonial Secretary, 15 July 1864. Colonial Correspondence, File 515-26. British Columbia Archives and Records Service, Victoria, B.C.
The development of the Cariboo-Chilcotin ranching industry was shaped, in part, by the terms imposed by the provincial government's Land Act. In the early years of settlement, prospective ranchers could apply to pre-empt 320 acres of land. If the rancher made improvements to the land, and stayed in residence for four years, he could then obtain fee simple title for a sum of $1.00 per acre. No individual, however, could hold more than one pre-emption certificate (Cail 1974:255), although he could purchase additional lands from other owners. Since ranching depends on access to a large amount of range land (in contrast to farming, which uses a more intensive form of livestock feeding on smaller plots of land), this restriction tended to limit the ability of ranchers to establish large, profitable operations (Weir 1964).

A system of leasing pasture land had been implemented in the Cariboo region as early as 1865, but in the following years the enforcement of leases and the collection of rent had been sporadic (Thomas 1976:118). In less settled regions, ranchers wishing to build up their herd and who required more grazing land than their pre-emption provided practiced a system of open range stockraising. By mutual agreement, ranchers allowed their cattle to run freely over "unoccupied Crown land", rounding them up periodically for Branding and for fall sales (Thomson 1990).

In the Cariboo-Chilcotin region, the decline of the Cariboo gold rush led a number of settlers to abandon their pre-emptions and move out of the district. These pre-emptions were picked up for a low price by other prospective ranchers. As a result, by 1885 many of the prominent cattle ranches we now see in the Cariboo-Chilcotin region had been established (Weir 1964). In the late 1940s, most cattle ranches in the Cariboo-Chilcotin were family-based operations, running no more than 500 head of cattle (ibid.:70, 102).
By the end of the First World War there was little agricultural land available in the Cariboo-Chilcotin to new settlers to pre-empt, and with the majority of ranchers depending on access to Crown grazing land, competition and conflict over the use of grazing lands was intensifying. By the 1940s, the provincial government had instituted a lease/permit system to regulate access to these lands. In the 1960s about 60% of ranches in the Cariboo-Chilcotin relied on grazing leases (ibid.:100), which were competitively sought. Leases and permits were critical to the survival of Chilcotin ranches, where the ratio of leased to privately owned land was 3 to 1 (ibid.).

The diversification of government bureaucracies involved in Crown land management paralleled the emergence of the competing interests of the agriculture and forest industries by the 1950s. In a number of ways the ranching and forest industry were incompatible. Ranchers complained that the bush mills and logging practices were destroying fences, irrigation ditches, and roads. Roads were being built and portable mills were being set up in the middle of long-established grazing areas. The noise of the mills and the logging activities not only were destroying forage but were disturbing cattle, leading them to scatter into the bush and resulting in a loss in weight and consequently value (Sloan 1956). In other ways, however, the advance of logging into previously isolated regions meant that new Crown grazing lands were opened up for lease/permit holders (Weir 1964:65).

The growing conflicts among different Crown land users, and the concern that the interior forests were being overharvested, led to a change in provincial Crown land management policies by the late 1950s and an intensification of government regulation. In 1909 virtually no land in the Cariboo-Chilcotin region had been administratively designated as timber land by the provincial government (defined as land holding 5,000 feet of timber per acre) (Fulton 1910). Instead, logging activity in the province was concentrated in the lower Mainland and
Vancouver Island regions, where the timber quality was high and forests were easily accessible. By 1956, however, about 75% of Crown land in the Cariboo-Chilcotin now was designated for timber harvesting. Much of these lands overlapped not only grazing lands but traditional Shuswap, Carrier and Tsilhqot’in hunting, fishing, and trapping grounds (Sloan 1956).

As the forest industry expanded into the interior, small logging and sawmilling operations sprung up throughout the Cariboo region. Whereas the earlier logging and sawmilling operations had provided materials for local use only, now lumber was being exported for sale on regional and international markets. By the mid 1950s the majority of the small sawmills in the region were portable mills set up at the actual logging site, and which would remain on the site until the local timber supply had been depleted. The sawed lumber was shipped out from the bush mills by truck to the nearest point on the PGE rail line. Men flocked to the interior to take up work in the logging camps and in the associated construction jobs that arose during this period of economic prosperity.

In the late 1940s and 1950s the province introduced its new sustained yield forest management program (Marchak 1983:49). The Forest Branch determined what a sustainable annual allowable cut level was within the administrative unit, and then assigned each mill operating in the Cariboo-Chilcotin a relative percentage, or quota, of that cut, dependent on the mill’s previous output. The quota system, ostensibly, was created as a means whereby the provincial government could increase its regulation of the forest industry as well as mitigate conflict between competing land users. In practice, this system favoured established forest companies with the greatest productivity and made it difficult for new companies to secure timber licenses (ibid.:50).

Technological improvements in logging and milling operations between the 1950s and 1970s exponentially increased the productivity of those large companies
that could afford the highly capital-intensive equipment. The smaller companies, having poorer productivity and smaller annual allowable cut limits, began to be squeezed out of the industry. Larger forest companies bought out the small independent bush mills, acquiring their harvesting rights at the same time. Finally, as sawmilling became more automated and technologically sophisticated, it became more feasible for the larger companies to build large, highly automated sawmills in a central location, and to truck raw logs in to the mill for processing.

The end result, by the early 1970s, was the concentration of timber rights in the hands of a few interior forest companies, the rapid disappearance of small bush mills, and the establishment of major sawmills in the three major Cariboo settlements of Quesnel, Williams Lake and 100 Mile House (ibid.:40, 51-52). Overall, the number of sawmills operating in the interior of B.C. was reduced from 2,000 in the 1950s to only 330 in 1978 (ibid.:40). The few family-based bush mills that appeared in the Cariboo during 1950s and survived to become the dominant forest companies in the 1970s have for the most part have been taken over by multinational interests. The majority of lumber milled in the Cariboo region is sold to markets in the United States, making the Cariboo forest economy largely dependent on market factors beyond local control.

This period has also seen an increased utilization of Cariboo-Chilcotin forests for harvesting. As the larger trees were depleted, trees of different species and of a smaller diameter began to be cut. Forest companies operating large sawmills now are utilizing what previously would be considered waste wood. In the late 1960s, only 51% of a log processed by an interior sawmill became finished lumber, while the rest became sawdust, shavings or wood waste (Bernsohn 1981:108). In the 1990s, wood chips now are trucked out of the Cariboo-Chilcotin to interior pulp mills to be turned into paper. Wood waste, rather than being
burned in beehive burners, is now fuelling an electrical generating plant in Williams Lake.

New licenses are being granted to companies to harvest what two decades ago would be considered unmerchantable timber. In the late 1980s two pulpwood harvesting licenses were granted that assigned potential harvesting rights to timber in the Cariboo-Chilcotin too small to be utilized by sawmills. The inevitable disappearance of Cariboo forests is poignantly evident in the shift of vocabulary amongst forest industry spokespeople, who today speak not of ensuring their company's continued access to "trees" or "wood", but rather to "fibre flow".

The expansion of the forest industry brought with it an intensification of conflict between competing Crown land users: forest companies, independent ranchers, and Native hunters and trappers. It also changed the demographic structure of the non-Native communities of the Cariboo themselves, and introduced a new population of wage-workers who have greatly benefited from industrial expansion. The population of Williams Lake underwent rapid growth. In 1941 the town's population was 540; two decades later it had quadrupled to 2,120.8

With this new prosperity came a new wave of immigrants. In the early decades of the 1900s, the main social groups in the Cariboo town of Quesnel were the businessmen-merchants, the settlers/homesteaders engaged in farming and ranching, and a small component of wage-workers and trappers (Malzahn 1979). The businessmen constituted the dominant social group. They occupied the positions of political and civic leadership, became recognized as community leaders, and were strong supporters of the Conservative party. A similar social structure can be presumed for Williams Lake.

The rapid expansion of the forest industry upset this demographic balance

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8 Commission on Resources and the Environment, *Cariboo-Chilcotin Land Use Plan*, Appendix 1, p. 15.
by bringing with it a huge influx of wage-workers to the Cariboo. The influx of
workers and cash in the local economy brought greater prosperity to the local
merchants. A steady stream of businessmen and women arrived in the Cariboo.
Accompanying them were a new population young professionals, including
doctors, accountants, and teachers, who provided an infrastructure of services to
the growing population.

By the 1970s Williams Lake had become a government administrative center
for the Cariboo-Chilcotin region, and civil servants added to the social mix. A
large influx of Indo-Canadians in the 1970s, mainly from the Punjab region of
India, added a new ethnic component to the local population. In all, between 1961
and 1981 the population once again quadrupled to 8,362, and rose again by 1991 to
10,385, now outnumbering Quesnel's population of 8,179.⁹

Native/Non-Native Relations: 1940s to the Present

In contrast to the economic prosperity being enjoyed by non-Native
residents in the Cariboo, the period between 1940 and the present has been a time
of diminishing opportunities for the Shuswap, Tsilhqot'ín and Carrier people. The
most important destabilizing factor in this period has been the expansion of clear-
cut logging practices into hunting and trapping territories. To the extent that
independent ranchers depended on access to Crown grazing lands for their
survival, the expanding forest industry threatened the viability of the non-Native
ranching and the Native subsistence economies alike. However, the ultimate
impact had a much more devastating consequence for the Native communities,
due to the diminishing opportunities for alternate forms of economic survival.

⁹ Commission on Resources and the Environment, *Cariboo-Chilcotin Land Use Plan*, Appendix 1, p. 15.
By the 1920s Native people were finding it more difficult to find occasional work in the packing and freighting industry, as automobiles were replacing horse-drawn modes of transportation. By the 1950s, farm and ranch labor was the primary source of cash income for Cariboo-Chilcotin Natives (Hawthorn, Belshaw and Jamieson 1960:144). Many other families operated their own small scale farms or ranches, typically running no more than twenty head of cattle (ibid.). The expansion of non-Native farms and ranches in this period, and the introduction of highly mechanized and capital intensive operations, reduced Natives' opportunities for seasonal work (most notably haying contracts) on ranches (Weir 1964:103). Conflicts between Natives and non-Natives over grazing lands intensified (Hawthorn, Belshaw and Jamieson 1960:144).

The fluorescence of bush mills in remote regions of the Cariboo provided some employment for Cariboo-Chilcotin Native people (ibid.:78). Natives tended to prefer temporary work, staying on the job for perhaps a few days or weeks before moving on. As bush mills were replaced by larger mills in the regional centers, and as work in the mills became more competitively sought, Natives were increasingly excluded from the work force.

A final factor that destabilized the aboriginal economy was the introduction of a system of government transfer payments. In the 1950s and 1960s, government assistance programs, including old age pensions, family allowances, disability pensions and social assistance, were made more fully available to Natives (Hawthorn 1966:312-338). While these sources of income augmented rather than replaced hunting and trapping activities, they also began to undermine the bonds of mutual assistance and cooperation that had knit the communities together.

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10 Weir reported that in 1950 Indians comprised 70% of temporary ranch help in the Chilcotin, and 50% in the Cariboo. Most of this labour was for haying contracts. He states: "Many ranchers consider Indian help unreliable and are turning wherever possible to machines" (ibid.:103)
Increasingly alienated from their mixed subsistence pursuits of hunting, trapping, and agriculture, many families gradually became dependent on welfare and the cash economy. Trips to the nearby towns of Williams Lake and Quesnel became more frequent. Many Native people had been demoralized through their experience in the Indian residential school, having emerged from the school with an internalized sense of their own inferiority and marginality in the dominant society. Alcohol use became more prevalent after legislation prohibiting Indians from drinking in public establishments, and from possessing alcohol, was lifted in the 1950s and 1960s. By the early 1970s, the social fabric of many of the reserve communities was unraveling, with frequent incidents of alcohol abuse, violence, suicide, family breakdown, child neglect, and sexual abuse.

The 1970s also witnessed an new era of political activity among aboriginal people across Canada. Aboriginal leaders at the national and provincial levels were enjoying growing political strength and public support, and were successfully pressuring the federal government to address questions of aboriginal title and rights (Weaver 1981). At the reserve level this growing politicization was reflected in the emergence of a number of young, articulate, and educated leaders who were taking over the leadership of their bands, through the Indian Act’s system of elected, fixed-term Band Councils, from the older lifetime chiefs. As part of the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs policy to devolve centralized administration and bureaucratic responsibilities to Band Offices, these leaders began to assume responsibility for the administration and management of a number of band programs previously handled by department employees.

As well as assuming control of economic and governmental powers, a number of reserve communities began to address some of the social ills of their communities. While the success of the Alkali Lake Shuswap in addressing the
problem of alcohol abuse has received much publicity,\textsuperscript{11} many people in other reserve communities, on an individual basis, also began the process of “sobering up” and rebuilding their families and communities. By the 1980s the issue of land claims was again being publicly raised by First Nations leaders. They were not only openly challenging the status-quo of local Native/non-Native relations, but were also occasionally erecting road blockades that were effectively interfering with the logging industry and drawing much (unsympathetic) public attention.

The increasing political strength of aboriginal communities as they lobby for recognition of aboriginal rights is occurring in a time of intensifying non-Native fears over the future of the forest industry and forestry-based resource communities. Forest industry workers, both in the mills and in the bush, are struggling to hold on to their jobs as more and more positions are lost to advanced mechanization. The impact of technological advance is so great that a 33% increase in the volume of timber harvested in the Cariboo Forest Region between 1979 and 1993 resulted in no net job growth (Savage and Associates 1993). In the Williams Lake area, several hundred jobs would have been lost by 1994 if it had not been for the issuing of temporary licenses to harvest beetle-killed timber (ibid.).

With the eventual expiration of these temporary licenses, and with continuing modernization in the industry, job loss in the forest industry is inevitable. Coupled with a Cariboo-wide unemployment rate of 18.5% in 1992, and a near doubling between 1981 and 1992 of the percentage of employable people in Williams Lake collecting unemployment insurance, observers predict a looming crisis in the regional economy (ibid.). These economic conditions are by no means unique to the Cariboo. They are a plight experienced by virtually all

\textsuperscript{11} For example, the Reader's Digest story entitled “Saviours of the Shuswaps” (Reader's Digest 129(775) (November 1986):84-88).
hinterland resource communities that are dependent on an economy controlled by foreign capital and foreign markets (Marchak 1983).

In this climate of overall economic insecurity, the affluent lifestyle that non-Natives' have enjoyed over the last three to four decades is now beginning to wane. Forest sector workers and town merchants alike recognize their dependence on the forest industry and fear the potential impact of any further restriction of forest companies' access to timber resources. With the assertion of aboriginal land claims, the threat of forest companies' loss of access to timber resources in Native territories, and the actual interference in industry through the erection of logging road blockades, tensions between Natives and non-Natives in the Cariboo-Chilcotin today are running at high levels.

In conclusion, there are various historical themes that continue to define contemporary Native/non-Native relations in the Cariboo. The battle grounds being drawn between Natives and non-Natives are both economic and political. Issues of land ownership and the political autonomy of First Nations communities from the Canadian state are debated hotly. In the last decade there has been a fracturing of the relationship between the Shuswap communities and representatives of the Roman Catholic church, the latter who have been ministering to the Native population for over a century and who have until recently enjoyed positions of respect and prestige in Native communities.

Yet these tensions are not limited to political, economic, or religious matters. Native people are also challenging some of the fundamental tenets of the culture and world view of Canadian society as embodied and expressed in the lives of Euro-Canadians of the Cariboo. Natives are criticizing non-Native accounts of history, accounts embedded in popular histories and community festivals, which celebrate the discovery of the Cariboo region while either erasing Native peoples and questions of Native land ownership from history. Native people are
challenging their marginalization from the mainstream of Williams Lake economy and their continued exposure to the prejudicial attitudes expressed by Euro-Canadians.

While Native/non-Native relations today are profoundly influenced by political and economic contexts, it is the cultural dimension of these struggles that I am concerned with here. The colonization of Canada and the subordination of Native peoples have been enabled by a colonial culture that has remained dynamic and adaptive to different historical contexts and changing social, economic and political forces. The legacy of colonialism continues to define Canadian culture in profound ways. The insidious nature of this legacy, as reflected in the culture, the identities, and the histories celebrated by small-town Euro-Canadian residents, is explored in the following chapters.
Chapter Three:  
Public Histories and the Myth of the Frontier

Historical images infuse the public landscape of Williams Lake. Downtown streets are named after early settlers and politicians who were prominent in village life in the 1920s. Images of cattle, cowboys and the Cariboo gold rush adorn the walls of the City Hall's Council chambers, the public library, and downtown businesses. Tourism brochures promote the Cariboo-Chilcotin as the last vestige of the Canadian Wild West, a frontier still rich in historical traditions where the wilderness remains "untamed" and "untouched". History - Euro-Canadian history - is highlighted in the summer newspaper supplements featuring the region's pioneer families, and even in restaurant placemats that pay tribute to the "settlers who came to Canada's West [and] made this magnificent land their own". While the average resident of Williams Lake may profess a lack of interest in history, their everyday world is permeated by the values and identities of a selective historical tradition that celebrates European expansion, settlement, and industry.

A selective tradition, Raymond Williams argues, is one of the most vital aspects of a dominant culture. A selective tradition consists of the 'official' history of a society, a history produced and communicated in the most significant of public domains ranging from public schools, national museums, and ceremonies of the state. A selective tradition is not just a static representation of the past; rather, it is an ongoing, dynamic process of representation, one that connects and integrates many disparate aspects of social experience into a rationale both for the past and for current political and social relationships (Williams 1977:116).

In this chapter, I explore the contours of the most pervasive and influential selective historical traditions evident in the Cariboo region. This selective tradition is the myth of the frontier, a historical epistemology consisting of a set of
narratives, themes, metaphors and symbols that has emerged within the context of North American colonization, that continues to define the dominant modes of historical consciousness among the general public, and that various individuals draw upon to construct understandings of the past and present, of contemporary identities, and of relationships with aboriginal peoples.

In the following pages I explore how the frontier myth appears in those domains of public history that are among the most authoritative and influential sites of historical knowledge, and that play an important role in socializing townspeople into particular understandings of the past. I examine three settings: public school curriculum, popular historical literature available in local bookstores, and the city museum. From the vast array of events that occurred in the Cariboo's past, and from the vast range of historical experiences of different sectors of the population - men, women, European, Chinese, and South Asian immigrants, aboriginal peoples, wealthy and working class people - whose histories are selected as relevant? How do these histories compare with the academic history presented in the previous chapter? What aspects of history are absent, are collectively forgotten? Who controls the representation of history?

On the one hand, the political, economic and ideological forces bearing down to shape the histories produced in each of these settings are quite different. Each of these sites focuses on different levels of history: national, regional, local and personal. As I show in the following pages, however, there is a remarkable similarity in the histories that are produced. Euro-Canadians regularly draw upon the frontier myth when they write about history, when they construct museum displays, when they reflect back on their lives, and when they discuss contentious historical events and issues.

Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983) have shown how historical traditions have been creatively 'invented' by colonial governments as a means of creating an
imagined, shared history among diverse populations lacking a shared past. These 'invented' traditions weave connections between the present and the past, rationalizing the legitimacy of colonial authority and creating an idealized image of a homogeneous national identity that masks ongoing struggles by indigenous peoples against European colonizers. The histories I trace here, though, are not just traditions consciously, deliberately invented by colonial officials to justify European authority. Rather, they reflect how certain colonial traditions of imagining history, and certain ways of constructing knowledge, have come to dominate 'common-sense', taken-for-granted understandings among small town Euro-Canadians.

By virtue of their ubiquity, these frontier histories constitute the dominant historical discourse in the city, a discourse that bears down to influence and constrain how local residents understand the past, the present, and their relationships with one another. The exercise of power relies on knowledge, and these habitual modes of knowing about the past, in both what they say and what they do not say, have significant implications for the continued material and ideological domination of aboriginal peoples of the Cariboo-Chilcotin.

The frontier myth exists as a highly flexible set of metaphors, images, symbols, and narratives through which a variety of historical perspectives and experiences can be voiced. As I show here, it is more appropriate to speak of frontier histories in the plural. In the city there exist an array of frontier histories: national histories, local histories, histories written by men and by women, by professional writers and first-time, self-published authors, by urban residents and by Chilcotin pioneers. Many of these are variations on the frontier myth theme, each, in different ways, celebrating the 'discovery' of the 'empty' land, the arrival of settlers, and the establishment of colonial society.
Buried within the bulk of public history are a few alternate histories. Some of the counter-hegemonic histories produced by First Nations and Euro-Canadian writers are also put forth within the symbolic language and themes of the frontier myth. They seek to challenge the legitimacy of colonization by retaining the narrative structure of history as contact, conflict and conquest, but providing a critique of colonialism by inverting the moral weighting of the historical agents and the ultimate outcomes. Others attempt to step outside of the framework of the frontier myth, challenging the notions of discovery and conquest and the binary narrative structure of the frontier experience, and attempting to highlight the coexistence of multiple histories and experiences. Finally, there are the life histories and oral traditions of First Nations people - exceedingly scarce in the public domain - in which the past is conveyed through historical narratives emerging from aboriginal epistemologies and traditions.

My intent here is not to trace instances of conflict over public history, but rather to survey major sites of formal public history to sketch the dominant themes and variations of frontier histories as they appear in the context of a small city in rural Canada in the 1990s. I present a quick inventory of the histories encountered in the most important and authoritative domains. In later chapters I take a closer look at the specific historical, social and economic contexts that shape these productions, and the manner in which individuals and groups today are drawing on the frontier myth to render new circumstances comprehensible, to legitimate varied political interests, and to counter aboriginal efforts to reformulate their relationships with Canadian society.

**Public School Curriculum**

Public schools in Canada are controlled by the state; the operation and management of schools, including the control over curriculum, is assigned to the
provincial governments. Public schools have a powerful role in the socialization of young people into the dominant beliefs, values, and identities of Canadian society. This socialization process is also a process of domination, through which selective understandings of history, society and identity that serve to further the material interests of dominant sectors of society are presented as authoritative, objective, and taken-for-granted truths. Public schooling, as a cultural practice, encourages the passive acceptance of a dominant culture, directs students from varied cultural and class backgrounds into different positions in the social hierarchy, and facilitates the reproduction of social relations of inequality (Wotherspoon 1987).

At the same time, public schools are also the sites of resistance and struggle over the structure of the educational system, the methods of teaching, and the content of curriculum. In the last two decades one important site of debate has been the teaching of Canadian history. Standard history textbooks have long portrayed Canadian history through the actions of the two ‘founding’ nations, the British and the French. The story of Canada’s past has been a monological one that has highlighted the heroic actions of white, male elites while ignoring the different historical experiences of other groups - women, working-classes, other immigrant minorities - and the roles played by capitalist expansion, class conflicts, and aboriginal/state struggles. Instead, history textbooks have celebrated the processes of territorial expansion and dispossession while rendering aboriginal peoples either invisible or grossly caricatured in negative, demeaning stereotypes or noble savage imagery (Walker 1971).

Since the 1970s, the adoption of the federal government’s official policy of multiculturalism, the rise in public interest in aboriginal issues, and the intensifying critiques of First Nations politicians and educators have brought critical attention to the need to revise public school curricula to reflect the diversity of perspectives and values of different cultural groups in Canada (Barman, Hebert and McCaskill
1987; Mazurek 1987; Barman and Battiste 1995). It is in this context that the two Canadian history textbooks that are now assigned as standard curriculum to all British Columbia schools were written.

Although instruction on Canadian and British Columbia history may be woven into the elementary school curriculum at various points between grades one and seven, it is not until grade nine that British Columbia students are given comprehensive instruction on Canadian history. In grade nine the curriculum focuses on Canadian history to 1812; in grade ten it discusses developments in nineteenth century Canada. In grade 11, students are taught Canadian history from 1905 to the present. Units on Native culture and history may be introduced in the course of teaching these three phases of history, or at various points within the elementary curriculum.

In the following pages I examine the grade nine and ten textbooks, the first written in 1979, the second in 1987. I trace how the past is remembered in these textbooks, how aboriginal peoples are portrayed, and how Canadian national identity is constructed. Following this I turn to a brief discussion of the discretionary influences - the creation of locally-produced curricula funded and controlled by School Districts, and the implementation of curricula by classroom teachers - that may potentially modify the impact of these standard textbooks.

Highschool History Textbooks

One of the most common criticisms of Canadian historiography concerns the lack of attention to Natives' roles in shaping Canadian history. Bruce Trigger suggests that "Canadian historical studies as a whole have suffered from the chronic failure of historians and anthropologists to regard native peoples as an integral part of Canadian society" (1985:4). This marginalization of Native peoples from Canadian history has been practiced and reinforced not only by early writers
of British and French Canadian historical literature but also by the developing academic disciplines of archaeology and anthropology in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (ibid., 1986). Images of Native people have shifted according to changes in climate of aboriginal/settler relations and the dominant intellectual approaches to understanding the diversity of human populations and societies. But several themes continue to appear.

Native cultures are often presented as static, and thus lacking history, prior to European contact. Colonial and Native societies continue to be treated as separate spheres, and the role of Native peoples in facilitating, shaping and hindering the course of colonial expansion has been ignored. When incorporated into Canadian histories, Native peoples continue to be presented as only passively responding to the forces of change, of being secondary and largely irrelevant to the course of history, and having lost their culture following European expansion.

The manner in which Natives have been portrayed have, in various ways, affirmed the colonial assumption of Natives’ inherent inferiority and have legitimated European expansion and domination. Yet the hegemonic potential of these histories is a product not just in the way Natives are portrayed, but in the more general genre of colonial history in which these images are embedded. In national histories, this genre is framed by a series of “epitomizing events” (Fogelson 1984) captured through the heroic deeds of courageous male figures. History is told through the individual experiences of the explorers like Champlain and Cartier who ‘discovered’ Canada; of the missionaries like Brebeuf and Lalemant who were martyred in their struggle to bring Christianity to aboriginal peoples; and in the accomplishments of colonial officials, such as James Douglas and Matthew Baille Begbie in British Columbia, who brought ‘civilized’ society, law and order to the wilderness. These individuals are celebrated as heroes, as symbols
of national pride and identity, as the founding ancestors of the contemporary nation.

These themes are central in the two secondary textbooks now assigned to British Columbia classrooms. The two textbooks represent the official, state-sanctioned history of Canada: they are explicitly nationalistic and celebrate European colonization. This fact is evident in the titles alone: *Exploration Canada* (Collins and Sheffe 1979) and *Our Land: Building the West* (Bowers and Garrod 1987). The first covers a time period from first human arrival in the New World to 1812. The second text begins with the British conquest of New France and ends with comprehensive chapters on the contemporary industrial economies of Canada and British Columbia.

Both textbooks use morally-laden adjectives to describe European colonization. The theme is one of heroic triumph over adversity. In the first, the Arctic environment is described as “hostile”. Missionaries eagerly accepted the “dangerous, difficult, and uncomfortable life of the wilderness” (Collins and Sheffe 1979:95). Settlers are recognized for their “courage” in leaving their homelands (ibid.:245). The Ohio valley is an area that has “scarcely been touched”, where Indians “had lived quietly in its forests and its streams” (ibid.:134).

The second textbook describes the ‘triumph’ of the Hudson’s Bay Company. In British Columbia, colonial governor James Douglas is described as “a stout, powerful, active man of good conduct and respectable abilities” (Bowers and Garrod 1987:161). The building of the Cariboo Wagon Road through the Fraser Canyon was the Royal Engineers’ “greatest accomplishment” (ibid.:171). All of these images directly evoke the frontier myth, where nature is something to be feared and endured, where (white) man encounters and eventually conquers the wilderness, where the territory is unoccupied, “untouched” and thus free for the
taking, where Indians live a “quiet” life as noble savages (Collins and Sheffe 1979:134).

In general, aboriginal people remain a marginal presence in both textbooks. In the grade nine textbook there is some attempt to recognize the Native presence through the insertion of chapters at the beginning of the text. The first five of its thirty two chapters describe the cultures of Native Canadians (the Inuit, Haida, Blackfoot, Iroquois, Beothuk and Micmac). One chapter presents a contemporary Inuit woman’s reminiscences on Inuit culture. These chapters, however, are not described in a historical context; rather, in using the past tense in a timeless manner, a Native history is denied. After these brief discussions, the Native presence soon fades as the ‘real’ process of history is presented to the readers in chapters describing the first Europeans to arrive in the New World, the development of the fur trade, and the struggles between the British and the French to control the area later known as Canada.

The portrayal of Natives in the grade ten text includes some starkly negative images. The first substantial discussion of Native people comes with the reasons behind the extinction of the great plains buffalo herds. It reinforces the widespread notion of the ‘primitiveness’ of Native cultures through reference to the “stone-age” Native cultures of Plains. Once Europeans introduced horses and guns to the Native tribes, however, bison hunting intensified, and over-hunting by Native people then led to the “near extinction of the bison” (Bowers and Garrod 1987:111). There is no discussion of the widespread slaughter of buffalo by white sports hunters and hide collectors, nor is there mention of the deliberate slaughter of buffalo herds as a strategy for destroying the subsistence base of the Plains nations in order to bring about their subjugation to American authorities (Prucha 1986:179-180).
An inordinate amount of attention is given to the relationship between Natives and alcohol. In the first major heading mentioning Native people: “The Fur Trade and Native People”, the book suggests that the fur trade brought about the destruction of Native cultures (Bowers and Garrod 1987:126-128). Natives became “dependent on the brandy or rum forced upon them by traders” (ibid.:127). Weakened by alcohol, dependent on trade goods, they then succumbed to European diseases and often died, “even though the sickness was not fatal to Europeans”.

The most vitriolic expression of the Indian-alcohol relationship is found in the section headed “The Whiskey Trade”. There the reader is told “For bottles of cheap rotgut”, Natives were trading “valuable buffalo robes, furs, horses, food, and some even their wives and daughters” (ibid.:187). “Many deaths and murders had followed drinking sessions in the Native camps” it concludes (ibid.). Again, disease and malnutrition are explained, not by dislocation from traditional territories, but due to the fact that “alcoholism interfered with traditional Native hunting and food-gathering activities” (ibid.). In an effort to address the whiskey trade problem, the North West Mounted Police was formed, heroically marching the 2,000 kilometers in the hot summer sun to the western Prairies and beginning a legacy of imposing law and order on the Canadian frontier (ibid.:188).

These writers engage in a prevalent myth of colonization: that Native peoples were inherently weak and incapable of controlling their impulsive thirst for alcohol. Alcohol is viewed as the cause of the decline of Native societies rather than a symptom of wider and more complex set of forces, among them territorial dispossession and the disappearance of the subsistence base, brought about by European expansion. The actions of colonial society are conveniently excluded from the explanation.
In both textbooks there is little mention of aboriginal claims to the land, of treaties, or of the need for the colonizers to acquire aboriginal lands through formal processes. The second textbook states that Native people had no concept of individual land ownership, nor fixed boundaries to their territories (ibid.:190). “The idea of buying or selling land was totally foreign to these Native hunters. The land was theirs - but they did not own it” (ibid.:190). Canadian Natives, the book states, willingly signed the treaties offered the Canadian government. In so doing, Canadian Natives acknowledged and benefited from the benevolent paternalism of government officials, enjoying a relationship not available to their Native “brothers” in the American West who were the targets of “warfare” launched against Natives by settlers and the U.S. Army. Apart from this brief mention, there is a resounding silence elsewhere in the text about Native/non-Native land conflicts.

There are some differences between the two books. The grade nine text is both a political and a social history of Canada. Through its vignettes of life on a pioneer farm and on a seigneury in New France, and through highlighting several female historical figures and discussing their role in European settlement, the book attempts to integrate varying experiences of both class and gender. In contrast, the grade ten text presents a political history of the foundation of Canada and a contemporary study of the Canadian and British Columbian industrial economy.

Despite these differences, both textbooks provide official views of the history of Canada in which images of heroic courage and benevolent paternalism define Canadian colonial practices. Nationalist histories present what could be called the ‘big man’ theory of history, in which history is made by the heroic actions of elite, European male figures. These figures then become condensed symbols of national identity; in their actions are embedded the ideal values of contemporary Canadian society. Native peoples are slotted into these dramas as
supporting characters to a larger historical script through which (Euro-Canadian) national identities are being constructed. Pluralism, alternate identities, contrasting value orientations, and competing perspectives on history - issues hinted at in the grade nine text - are suppressed in the more overtly nationalistic histories.

This celebratory view of colonial history both omits some of the more brutal aspects of the past, and at the same time, evokes this brutality in the racist stereotypes of Native peoples. These stereotypes of the drunken Indian, the Indian squaw, the lazy, irresponsible and immoral Indian, all resonate with prevailing attitudes towards Native people in Williams Lake and many other small cities and towns in rural Canada. These images are all the more surprising given the grade ten textbook’s recent publication date: 1987. That these images persist in state-sanctioned official histories is testimony to the widespread and purportedly uncontroversial nature of anti-Native racism in Canada.

The limitations imposed by the frontier history genre are evident in the strategies that have arisen, since the 1970s, to accommodate the multicultural and anti-racist critiques. In his review of popular and academic histories produced during the 1970s, Walker (1983) found that historians responded to a growing awareness of the inadequacies of earlier works by simply removing any mention of Native peoples. “Measured in column inches of print, histories written in the 1970s pay less attention to Indians than ever before” (ibid.:346). This is only one manifestation of the hegemonic role of the ‘invisible Indian’: the tendency to render aboriginal people invisible as a means of absorbing challenges to aspects of the dominant culture. Similarly, the strategy of adding preliminary chapters on Native cultures presented in ahistorical contexts gives a surface appearance of pluralism while retaining the central narrative themes of heroic individualism, discovery and conquest.
These are the official histories of Canada that are funded, produced and sanctioned by the state. These histories constitute central components of the dominant culture. They provide comfortable, non-controversial accounts of the past and encourage students to accept the legitimacy of state authority, the myths of conquest, and the theories of aboriginal inferiority that rationalize colonialism. Yet these official, textbook histories contrast sharply with current practices of other agencies of the state; not the least of which being the initiatives, underway for the last two decades, to negotiate outstanding aboriginal title claims with Canadian aboriginal peoples. Official state discourses of history themselves are plural and divergent. Highschool textbooks reflect the most conservative and archaic of the official nationalist histories in the public landscape.

Discretionary Influences

School Districts, operating under provincial legislation, have some discretionary powers over the supplementary curriculum used in public school education. In the last decade the Williams Lake School District has hired two First Nations educators whose task, in part, has been the development of locally-produced curriculum materials on Native cultures and histories. The School District has funded these projects in recognition of the overwhelming absence of information on local First Nations cultures available to students. In conjunction with other regional school districts, a series of curriculum kits and written booklets on Shuswap and Carrier culture and history have been produced by local First Nations writers and researchers (Boyd 1989, 1990a, 1990b) and by consultants working with First Nations organizations (Coffey et al. 1990; Birchwater 1991, 1993; Furniss 1993a, 1993b). These writers and researchers have had considerable freedom in producing these materials, and some of the works explicitly challenge dominant histories and images of Natives that prevail in mainstream textbooks.
Teachers may exercise significant discretion in the use of assigned textbooks, in the introduction of supplementary materials, and in the interpretation and translation of curriculum materials to their audiences. The teacher's own training in critical approaches to history, and his or her cultural or ethnic background, are highly relevant to these processes. The question is, then, who teaches history in public schools in Williams Lake?

Each of the two junior high schools has one or two full-time social studies teachers. Nevertheless, social studies (history and geography) is considered a subject that “anyone can teach”. Teachers with expertise in other areas, such as math or physical education, may be given a social studies course to teach. Common-sense beliefs about history, beliefs that resonate with the official Canadian histories of textbooks, are easily reproduced in these settings. This is furthered by the fact that there are at present no First Nations teachers employed to teach mainstream subjects in any school in the district. Under such conditions, it is questionable to what extent mainstream textbooks are being critically examined, or to what extent supplementary curriculum materials are actually entering the lesson plans of social studies teachers. Local curriculum materials are, however, being used in the Native language courses that run as electives, and that are primarily attended by Native students.

In 1995 the provincial government announced the creation of a province-wide, grade twelve elective course: B.C. First Nations studies. One of the stated objectives is:

To provide students with an alternative to the ethnocentric histories traditionally taught. Students require a more balanced perspective of the history of relations between colonizing powers or incoming settlers and B.C. First Nations. The resistance and resilience of First Nations people in response to imperialism and colonialism should be affirmed (Province of British Columbia 1995:16).
That such a curriculum was deemed necessary for British Columbia is undoubtedly a reflection of the growing prominence of First Nations issues in the media and in the courts, and the rising tensions between aboriginal and non-Native peoples over impending treaty settlements. What is significant, however, is the fact that such challenges to the dominant nationalist histories of textbooks are being introduced on the fringes of the educational system: in supplementary curriculum rather than official textbooks, and in optional electives rather than in standard academic subjects.

**Popular Historical Literature**

The shelves of the two major bookstores in Williams Lake are filled with popular histories recounting the romantic past of British Columbia and the Cariboo. Within the last decade the general rise in public interest in heritage issues and heritage tourism has resulted in an exponential increase in the number of regional and local histories available to the public. These books are being bought not only by summer tourists, but by local residents interested in the region’s past and searching for gifts for distant relatives and friends. These popular histories become not only standard historical reference books, but also become emblematic of all that is distinct and unique about the Cariboo region.

A different set of political and economic forces influences what books are available to the general public, and, consequently, whose histories are aired in these settings. Publishing houses cater to a presumed market for historical information and entertainment; the histories that are published are less determined by the need to inculcate students with official state histories than publishing executives’ assessment of what will sell to the public. While large national publishing houses have a competitive edge in producing and marketing books, a
variety of provincial and regional publishers have now taken the lead role in producing popular histories with a local focus.

This opening up of the industry in part is linked to the technological advances in desk-top publishing systems, through which small publishing houses, First Nations organizations, School Districts and even self-publishing authors have been able to produce and sell their works to regional bookstores. Government subsidization and funding has been central to the production of many of the curriculum books produced by School District and First Nations organizations, and which have also been marketed to city bookstores. Finally, the owners and buyers of the city's bookstores may screen what books make their way onto the local shelves, alternately turning away books judged to be controversial or enthusiastically supporting those written by local authors or describing local histories and Native cultures.

There are well over fifty regional and local histories now available in city stores. Despite the varied factors of production and distribution discussed above, the popular histories now available to the general public are overwhelmingly written within the romantic frontier history genre. Regional histories, written both by non-local and local authors, recount key events in the non-Native settlement, and focus heavily on the 'discovery' of gold and the Cariboo gold rush. Local histories, often written by Cariboo residents themselves, typically tell the story of the achievements of early white settlers and pioneer families. In different ways, both regional and local histories provide celebratory rather than critical perspectives on history. The vast majority of these works are written by non-Natives; history is presented as a positive series of events, as a progressive, linear process of development.

While popular histories, in generating specific local identities and perspectives on history, do have a potential to highlight issues of inequality and
conflict, and to be used as forms of opposition to constructions of national identity and official state versions of the past, the works surveyed here suggest the opposite. Popular histories are fully compatible with the nationalist histories of highschool textbooks. These histories are equally enmeshed in the imagery, symbols, and narrative forms of the frontier myth. They are equally engaged in a commemoration of European colonization, now writ small in the lives of individual men and women on the Cariboo frontier.

Regional Histories

Among the most prolific publishers of popular history is Heritage House, a small British Columbia company that specializes in brief, inexpensive paperbacks. Their regional history collection is prominently displayed on “Western Canadiana” bookracks in stores across the province. A main focus of interest in this collection is police history: the bringing of law and order to the western Canadian frontier. Among the titles are a three volume set of Outlaws and Lawmen of Western Canada (n.a. 1983a, 1983b, 1987a), Off Patrol: Memories of BC Provincial Policemen (B.C. Provincial Police Veteran’s Association 1991), B.C. Provincial Police Stories in three volumes (Clark 1986, 1989, 1993), and March of the Mounties, by Sir Cecil E. Denny (1994), which recounts the formation of the North West Mounted Police. Its front cover reads:

Despite their impressive red coats and white gauntlets, virtually all of the new policemen were inexperienced... despite these handicaps, their Commanding Officer reported that they “performed one of the most extraordinary marches on record”.

The heroic individualism of regional histories is no longer centered on elite figures - missionaries, explorers, colonial officials - but on the figures of law and order: the Mountie, the British Columbia provincial police.
The Canadian version of the frontier myth has distinct themes. Just as the hero of many American frontier histories is the Indian fighter, and just as "regeneration through violence" is a central narrative theme of many American versions of the frontier myth (Slotkin 1986, 1992), in Canada a dominant heroic figure is the Mountie, and a dominant narrative theme is what could be called 'conquest through benevolence'. The Canadian heroes do not inflict violence; instead they impose peace, order and good government on Indians and Euro-Canadians alike. Yet the Mounties, too, encounter forces of opposition. They too must engage in conflict in order to triumph. These forces of opposition are not hostile Indian tribes, but lawless, renegade criminals, both Native and non-Native. These criminals play key roles in these historical dramas: they are the dark forces of lawlessness and immorality against which the hero protagonists must struggle for the advance of 'civilization' and 'progress'.

This narrative of conquest through benevolence - the definition of the Canadian spirit, and of Canadian national identity, through the continual assertion of history as a narrative of paternalistic domination of aboriginal peoples - is a theme that weaves in and out of Canadian literature, popular histories and academic historiographies. As discussed earlier, the conviction that in Canada 'we have treated our aboriginal people well' is central to highschool history textbooks. Pierre Berton, Canada's foremost popular historian, has characterized the Canadian frontier as a series of benevolent, paternalistic extensions of British authority (Berton 1978, 1982). The North West Mounted Police were really "civil servants and social workers" (1982:31). "The Indians called [the Mountie] 'father' to his face, but it was not only the Indians who appreciated his paternalistic qualities" (ibid.: 28-29). Berton celebrates what he sees as the absence of violence on the Canadian frontier: "The Indian fighter is as foreign to our experience as the fighting Indian" (ibid.:30).
British Columbia historiographers have also proudly contrasted the peaceful and law-abiding settlements in British Columbia with settlements on the American frontier (Smith 1980:75; Pritchard 1992). Bruce Trigger has traced this myth of benevolent paternalism to nineteenth century Canadian historians, who “relished comparing the brutal treatment of native people by the Americans with the ‘generous’ treatment they had received from Euro-Canadians” (1986:321). These varied writers are constructing an oppositional national identity in the shadow of American cultural and economic imperialism. These histories both detract attention from the realities of Canada’s equally repressive treatment of Native peoples, and cloak forms of domination and power as paternalistic expressions of good will and benevolence. As I show in later chapters, the theme of benevolent paternalism continues as one of the defining assumptions through which Euro-Canadians in the Cariboo understand history, local identities, and their relationships with Native peoples.

In a number of regional histories Natives do emerge as the central symbolic counterpart to settlers and the advancement of Euro-Canadian ‘civilization’. At times, Natives are portrayed as bloodthirsty, violent and irrational savages. One example is in McKelvie’s *Tales of Conflict: Indian-White Murders and Massacres in Pioneer British Columbia* (1985), which announces on its cover:

*The Indians were an extremely proud people, fierce warriors quick to avenge a real or imagined wrong. Indian justice did not require that retaliation be made upon the persons who committed the wrong, only that blood be spilled. This form of justice resulted in the murder of settlers and the massacre of crews on several sailing ships.*

Likewise, Rothenberger’s *The Chilcotin War* (1978) describes the conflict that arose when a crew of Euro-Canadian surveyors were murdered in the course of their attempts to build a road through Tsilhqot’in territory in 1864. The book depicts
on its cover an attack by savage-looking Natives on a camp of sleeping whites. The cover claims the book is about “the true story of a defiant chief’s fight to save his land from white civilization”. Their defeat, it is suggested, is inevitable.

These accounts reduce the complexity of Native/non-Native conflicts to simple narrative structures that, through the imagined ‘savagery’ of Natives, then justify the use of violence as a natural and inevitable processes in the expansion of ‘civilized’ European societies. Rothenberger’s story of the Chilcotin War, in fact, has become the subject of intense public criticisms by leaders of the Tsilhqot’in nation. While there is as of yet no written history providing a Tsilhqot’in perspective on these events available to the public,¹ the subject is occasionally debated in letters to the editor of the city newspaper. In November 1994 Tsilhqot’in leaders participated in a public panel discussion on the Chilcotin War of 1864 held at the University of British Columbia, where they provided sharply contrasting accounts of these events. The public hanging of the Tsilhqot’in men, in the name of colonial justice, continues to be a source of great bitterness among many Tsilhqot’in people today.²

Books on the discovery of gold in the Cariboo are popular and numerous. These books play upon the romance of riches to be found in the ‘untouched wilderness’, luring destitute men into the region with the hope of prosperity and redemption. Such books, emphasizing the abundance of valuable natural resources essentially free for the taking, represent yet another version of the frontier myth. In Cariboo Gold Rush (n.a. 1987b), for example:

¹ The narratives contained in Glavin’s Nemiah: The Unconquered Country (1993) are an exception.
² In an effort to acknowledge these discrepant historical experiences and perspectives, the Cariboo Chilcotin Justice Inquiry (Sarich 1993) recommended that these men be given an official pardon and that a monument be erected to honor their efforts to protect Tsilhqot’in territories.
In 1858 some 30,000 Gold seekers stampeded to the Fraser River. Scores drowned in the tumultuous rapids or were killed by Indians. But survivors pressed upstream. In a land called Cariboo they found nuggets by the ton, their discovery resulted in today's province of British Columbia.

The gold rush is a story of conflict between the principal oppositional elements of the frontier myth: man vs. nature, whites vs. Indians. Those with the courage to attempt the challenge and the luck to survive found their fortune in the abundant nuggets that were free for the taking. The province of British Columbia, it is suggested, was built on such heroic accomplishments.

These narratives focus on a different set of epitomizing events than nationalist histories. In contrast, the focus is the ‘discovery’ of untapped riches by heroic individuals. These individual protagonists embody the cultural ideals of Canadian society: individualism, courage, the quest for material wealth, the ability of individuals to prosper through hard work, determination, and ingenuity. As Cruikshank notes in Klondike gold rush narratives (1992), this theme of discovery condenses what in reality was a slow historical process of the emerging knowledge of gold among Euro-Canadians.

In fact, by the early 1850s colonial officials in Victoria were receiving reports of gold in the interior of British Columbia, and by 1857 Native people in the interior were trading gold to the Hudson's Bay Company (Fisher 1992:71). Even before the gold strike in the Cariboo, Natives in the Thomspson River and Okanagan regions were asserting ownership of the gold resources. In 1857 there were violent confrontations as Natives sought to fend off the flood of non-Native prospectors entering aboriginal territories (ibid.:70). Yet, in popular histories, the onset of the Cariboo Gold Rush is associated with a specific event: the ‘discovery’ by a group of American prospectors, assisted by a Native guide, of gold on the Horsefly River. Natives are thus portrayed as helping in the process of non-Native
economic expansion and settlement; aboriginal perspectives on these events remain largely excluded from the official, written histories available to the general public.  

Local Histories: Pioneer Stories

Pioneer stories of the Cariboo-Chilcotin region have always been popular with wider Canadian audiences (Marriott 1966; Lavington 1982; Collier 1991 [1959]; Hobson 1993 [1951]; ). The last five years has seen a tremendous growth in the number of books discussing Cariboo and Chilcotin pioneer history. Many of these have been written by contemporary Cariboo-Chilcotin residents themselves, such as Todd and Eldon Lee, Chilco Choate, Irene Stangoe, Diana French, Branwen Patenaude, and others. Several of these authors are now writing their second and third books.

Nevertheless, the best known and most frequently requested books on Cariboo history are two autobiographical books written and published originally in the 1950s: Eric Collier's *Three Against the Wilderness* (1991 [1959]), and Rich Hobson's *Grass Beyond the Mountains* (1993 [1951]). These books have been published by major publishing companies, and are still promoted by local bookstores as the classic stories of the Cariboo. Collier's book, first published in 1959, has been an international best-seller, has been condensed in a Readers Digest version, and continues to be described on its cover as “the classic Canadian wilderness tale”. These two books, one by a British immigrant and the other by an American, indicate how both men, despite their different cultural origins, have drawn on the frontier myth to narrate the story of their arrival and establishment in

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3 Cruikshank's article contrasting written and oral accounts of the Klondike Gold Rush, however, has been included in her *Reading Voices* (1991), a textbook on Yukon history now used in the territory's public schools.
the Cariboo-Chilcotin. These two books also reflect the ways in which the frontier narrative is differently formulated by writers of British and American origins.

Eric Collier, the son of a wealthy English businessman, immigrated to Canada in the 1920s. With his “quarter-breed” wife, the family established a homestead in the Meldrum Creek area in the north-eastern Chilcotin plateau. For the next thirty years they raised a family and made a living by trapping and hunting. The Collier family’s achievement, indeed, is remarkable. He tells of felling trees and building a log cabin by hand, of fencing acres of meadowland, of surviving long, bitterly cold Chilcotin winters, and of re-seeding beaver into Meldrum Creek to eventually establish thriving beaver colonies all along the creek’s length. What makes this the story of a Euro-Canadian settler, rather than of a Native family, many of whom were living successfully under similar conditions, is the way Collier frames his experience.

Collier’s book is the story of conflict and struggle against dark forces. These forces are conceptualized both in terms of the elements (“summer’s searing heat and winter’s penetrating hostility” [Collier 1991:3]), and nature (“our only neighbours [were] the moose, bears, timber wolves and other wild life of the muskegs and forest; some of whom seemed ever ready to dispute our right to be there at all” [ibid.:3]). Nature is something to be feared and respected, to be constantly vigilant against. Collier, in fact, summarizes the heroic quality of his life in the book’s title, Three Against the Wilderness.

Margaret Atwood has identified this constant, chronic fear of nature as a defining feature of Canadian literature generally (Atwood 1972). Whereas Natives have played a central oppositional role in literary depictions of American history, she suggests that in Canadian literature it is the wilderness that is the dark force against which settlers continually struggle. While in American literature these frontier struggles are eventually resolved through conquest, in Canadian literature
the battle with nature is ongoing, domination only partial and transitory, and the struggle for survival is never ending. These generalizations capture some of the central themes of Collier’s story.

Yet the narrative theme of conquest through benevolence is also highlighted. Native people do enter Collier’s account, only to provide a colourful, exotic, and at times threatening presence that adds to the spectre of his own heroism. Native people are rarely presented as individuals with their own personalities; rather, their Indianness is emphasized, and often in negative terms. “Redstone Johnny had often dropped in at our cabin to share a meal or a cup of tea with us, and tell of his woes - as Indians ever will if they can strike a sympathetic audience” (ibid.:127). Paradoxically, a Native laborer he hires is described as a man “sparing of words as so many primitive Indians are” (ibid.:139). His book includes a grossly demeaning depiction of a Native woman he encounters in a Chilcotin store (ibid.:80).

Conflict over possession of the land is a central tension in the book. Collier arrived in the region on the wave of post-war immigrants seeking to pre-empt land and homestead in the Chilcotin region. Their search for “free land” was enabled by the apparatus of colonial authority and bureaucracy that, by this time, had been in place for sixty years. Nevertheless, non-Native settlement was still minimal in the Chilcotin, and Tsilhqot’in people continued to hunt, fish, and trap in their original territories with relatively little interference. The issue of aboriginal title became a subject of conflict only in the intermittent encounters with settlers, encounters that were now intensifying as post-war settlement increased. These broader contexts enabling Collier’s immigration to the region, however, are not part of his story. He presumes the land is ‘empty’ and that Native people have no legitimate claims to it.
Collier describes how he “expected trouble from our Indian neighbours” (ibid.:104), worrying constantly that they would “poach” on his trapline. When he finally does find a group of Native people trapping on the land he now claims is his, Collier finds that he cannot become angry with them, “any more than I would hold a grudge against a little child who climbs up on a stool and helps himself to the cookies” (ibid.:108). Instead, he reprimands them in a stern, paternalistic fashion, and teaches them a lesson in the importance of managing the beaver populations, during which the Indians stare at the ground. In gratitude to his benevolence, the Indians become his friends (ibid.:111-112). In short, the inevitable land conflicts, and encounters with Native people, become part of the romance and the natural danger of his homesteading experience. These tensions are resolved through paternalistic domination; the morality of non-Native settlement and the superiority of Euro-Canadian civilization is affirmed.

A similar set of narrative themes and images, with some interesting variations, are found in Grass Beyond the Mountains. The book describes how New York city real estate salesman Rich Hobson decided to abandon city life after the stockmarket crash of 1929 and move west to pursue his childhood dream of becoming a cowboy. While working on a Wyoming ranch he met up with fellow cowpuncher Pan Phillips. Phillips planted seeds in Hobson’s imagination of a vast, undiscovered grassland lying beyond the mountains in the northern Chilcotin plateau. “Yeah - that’s my gold mine. Grass! Free grass reachin’ north into unknown country. Land - lots of it - untouched - just waitin’ for hungry cows, and some buckaroos that can ride and have guts enough to put her over” Pan reportedly said (ibid.:16). The two immediately decided to tackle the unknown country and headed to the Chilcotin.

There the two found “a new frontier - a frontier as tough, as wild and as remote as the West of the early days. This unconquered barrier stands out, unique
in this day and age, for it is the last great cattle frontier on the North American continent” (ibid.:9). There Hobson also ‘discovered’ Carrier Indians: “Back in its jackpine forests there are Indians who have never seen a white man” (ibid.). A few become his friends, whom he refers to by name and who become characters in his adventures; other Natives resent his intrusion into their territories. In scenes replete with sixshooters and ominous Indian “tom tom” drums, he describes how he had to physically fight his Indian protagonist, and win, in order to earn their respect (ibid.:165-173). In the end, Hobson and Phillips succeed in setting up a string of ranches and homesteads in the Blackwater River area, in doing so becoming renowned as the region’s first, and perhaps most colourful, white settlers.

This novel contains all of the central ingredients of the frontier myth: the promise of abundant resources free for the taking, the challenge of the heroic trek into an uncharted and untouched wilderness, the thrill and danger of discovering Indians who had never seen a white man. With its images of sixshooters, tom-tom drums, and hand-to-hand combat with a fierce Indian around a blazing campfire, and in its narrative of conquest through violence, the book reflects a typically American expression of the frontier myth genre. The settling by whites of the Chilcotin is reduced to a cliché of the Wild West.

Once again, conflict over the land is not only naturalized, but is an essential ingredient in Hobson’s heroic epic of adventure. As in Collier’s novel, there are notable silences in Hobson’s story. Hobson, too, assumes that the land is free for the taking and that the Carrier have no legitimate rights to it. What the reader does not learn is that the territory had been ‘discovered’ thousands of years earlier by aboriginal peoples. Further, for several decades Carrier families themselves had been running herds of cattle, had been fencing off meadows, had been putting up large amounts of hay for winter feed, and had been building roads through the country to bring their cattle to market, all within the territory Hobson portrayed as
unused and unoccupied. Technically, the range was 'free' not only because of the government’s failure to address aboriginal title, but also because Native people were legally prohibited from pre-empting land.

The image of the 'Indian who had never seen a white man' was also a figment of Hobson's literary imagination. When Hobson arrived in the Chilcotin region in 1934, not only had the Carrier along the Blackwater River area been in contact with white men since the opening of Fort Alexandria some 113 years ago, but one group, the Ulkatcho Carrier, were about to receive their first resident anthropologist. Irving Goldman’s ethnography paints a dramatically different picture of Carrier life than presented by Hobson (Goldman 1953).

These silences are characteristic features of frontier histories. Their hegemonic potential lies not only in the facts that are excluded from the story, and not only in the way Native/settler conflict is naturalized, but in the way settler and Native identities are constructed. The subtle images of the paternalistic benevolence of the colonizers and settlers, and the savage primitiveness or childishness of Natives, implicitly affirm the legitimacy of European expansion and settlement. While the 'facts' of history may be debated, these understandings of

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4 For example, by 1915 a Carrier family at Trout Lake in Nazko country was running a herd of 16 cattle and had built thirty kilometer sleigh road through the bush to bring their cattle to market (Government of Canada, Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs 1912:261). In 1915 at Ulkatcho, two brothers, Old Cahoose and Capoose, owned almost 200 horses; one brother had recently sold his stock of 60 cattle. The two had set up trading stores in the region and had built a 60 kilometer road to haul freight in and out of their territory, which itself eventually facilitated the opening up the country for non-Native settlement (Evidence Heard Before the Royal Commission on Indian Affairs for the Province of B.C. Bella Coola Agency. Meeting with the Ulkatcho Band, Victoria, August 3, 1915. Pp.132-140. Special Collections, University of British Columbia Library).

5 One Ulkatcho man, Capoose, had dealt with this dilemma by asking a local white settler to "lend" his name and preempt the land on which Capoose was living, and on which he had built a house, barns, and several miles of fencing. The settler did so, but then refused to sell the deed to Capoose. Capoose raised this issue with the Commissioners during the 1912-1916 Royal Commission on Indian Affairs; the Commission refused to intervene in the matter (ibid.).
colonial and Native identities persist at a level of implicit, 'taken-for-granted' beliefs that reflect deeply-held convictions of the morality of the colonial process.

These identities persist in the popular pioneer histories now on the shelves of Cariboo bookstores. Despite the passage of four decades since these classic autobiographies were published, pioneer stories continue to be written through the historical framework of the frontier myth. These authors engage in a form of salvage history: they seek to record the experiences and contributions of the early pioneers before their voices are lost to the public record. The most recent and comprehensive book is the 432 page *Chilcotin: Preserving Pioneer Memories* (Bonner, Bliss and Litterick 1995). The book, written by the granddaughters of one of the founding Chilcotin pioneer families, recount the array of settlers who have arrived in Chilcotin country over the last two centuries. Its introduction encapsulates the motive of this recent crop of books:

There is a vast storehouse of romantic history connected with the opening and settlement of the Chilcotin country of British Columbia. Yet much will be lost if it is not preserved in writing... This new book is dedicated to preserving the memory of the early pioneers whose courage and spirit of adventure brought them into this country. With these writings, we hope to bring some of these hardy characters to life to share with the reader the unique magic of the Chilcotin we love (1995:8).

In contrast to the elitism of nationalist histories, local pioneer stories have an egalitarian orientation. They celebrate the lives of the 'ordinary people', both men and women, and highlight their contributions to the 'building' of the
Canadian nation. These stories are aimed at recovering silences in the historical record that nevertheless complement rather than challenge nationalist constructions of the past. In so doing, the pioneer becomes a localized, populist symbol of nationalist pride and identity. The idea that it is the pioneers who have ‘built’ the country is commonplace in the Cariboo today, where the pioneer exists as something of a sacred symbol. The success of the colonial endeavour, it is suggested, is due to their personal qualities of courage, determination, and drive, while the broader political and economic contexts that enabled the pioneers’ success, and that functioned to suppress aboriginal resistance to settlers and their taking of Native lands, go unmentioned. Instead, we have the simple narrative structure of contact, conflict, and conquest as relayed through the personal experiences of the settler’s encounter on the frontier.

Native people remain secondary to the narrative of settlement. Although the virulently negative images as found in 1950s accounts are encountered less often, the ‘savage’ Indian still appears. In *Chilcotin: Preserving Pioneer Memories*, Natives continue to be portrayed alternately as “wild”, “hostile” and “war-like” (ibid.: 10, 12, 15, 275) and as colourful characters who accept white encroachment on their lands meekly and who are “loyal” and “faithful” to their new neighbours (ibid.: 12, 112, 113, 136). That settlement is a worthy moral project is ultimately affirmed by the “loyalty” of the aboriginal peoples whose territory the settlers take over. Native people’s presumed admiration for the new settlers is but a reflection of the settlers’ own self-image, a reflection of the deeply ingrained assumption of superiority that characterizes the colonial mentality (Memmi 1965), and that has been continually

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6 Women are a present, visible, and central force in many pioneer histories. They are portrayed in a number of activities: sawing and splitting wood, driving teams of horses, building cabins, herding cattle, cooking meals and raising children. The prominence of pioneer women in local histories contrasts sharply with the silences regarding women’s roles that in the past have characterized scholarly histories of the west (Armitage 1985; Van Kirk 1992; Creese and Strong-Boag 1995).
reinforced by nationalist identities heralding paternalistic benevolence as a
Canadian tradition.

Some writers of popular history in the Cariboo are concerned with the
problems of negative stereotyping and are critical of the derogatory portraits of
Natives in earlier pioneer stories. One local writer recently discussed these issues
with me. In his own recent book he addressed this dilemma by choosing not to
include significant mention of the Native presence in the region, stating “I didn’t
feel I had the right to tell that story”. The dilemma of sympathetic writers is not
resolved by simply erasing the existence of Natives from the landscape, however.
The “invisible Indian” is an effective means of deflecting challenges to official,
hegemonic historical traditions while histories continue to be written in a
framework defined by the themes of discovery, contact, conflict, and triumph of
settlement.

Local Histories: Alternate Perspectives

Local histories that deviate from the celebratory themes of the frontier myth
are scarce, although their numbers have now begun to grow (Speare 1977; Tatla
Lake School Project 1986-93; Birchwater 1991, 1993; Glavin 1992; Furniss 1993a,
1993b; Mack 1993, 1994). Vancouver journalist Terry Glavin’s Ne-miah: The
Unconquered Country (1992) presents stories of history told by Tsilhqot’in elders of
the Nemiah First Nation. While the title is explicitly counter-hegemonic, morally
inverting the terms of the frontier myth, the content is a weaving of the historical
reminiscences of Tsilhqot’in elders with the author’s narrative of major events in
the European settlement of British Columbia. Speare’s The Days of Augusta (1992),
compiled by a local Euro-Canadian resident and wife of an ex-Cariboo Social
Credit M.L.A., presents an elderly Shuswap woman’s reflections on her life. The
book is a remarkable precursor of experimental ethnographies that take a poetic
textual approach to Native American discourse as verbal art. These stories reflect the Shuswap tradition of recounting history through the genre of personal narrative (Palmer 1994).

Within this category are a few recent publications by area First Nations, produced through grants provided from government agencies or from the curriculum development division of the local school district (Birchwater 1993; Furniss 1993a, 1993b). In directly challenging the images of Natives and the celebration of European conquest contained in frontier histories, these books constitute the only available histories that directly confront the terms of the frontier myth as historical epistemology.

A good example is *Ulkatcho: Stories of the Grease Trail* (Birchwater 1993). Drawing on stories told by Ulkatcho elders, the author aims to provide “a native point of view” of that trail’s significance in the culture and history of the Carrier people. He attempts to recover the silences created through the trail’s official history, which celebrates Alexander Mackenzie’s heroic voyage down the trail and his ‘discovery’ of the Pacific Ocean. It explicitly challenges the invisibility and irrelevance of Native people in dominant histories, and the assumption that “somehow [Native people] weren’t really there until [whites] came along and found you. Or if you were there, what you were doing beforehand, simply didn’t matter very much” (ibid.: vii). The book challenges pioneer histories by arguing that “a story can be told from many points of view” (ibid.).

The few recent publications on local Native cultures and history that explicitly challenge the objectivity of histories presented through the frontier myth remain exceptions to the historical accounts available to the general public on the bookstore shelves or in the public school system. The dominant historical discourse remains relentlessly that of the European settlers and nationalists. There is a smooth fit between the nationally produced books on Canadian history used in
the public school system, the books on Western Canadiana produced by the small provincially-based publishing house, and the histories written by Cariboo pioneers. These books are united by their common framework of the frontier myth. They focus almost exclusively on non-Native history and the challenges and triumphs of pioneers and colonial systems. Natives are either invisible in these histories, or they are scripted as supporting characters in images that are alternately negative, quaint, childlike or passive. These books, by their sheer volume, constitute a dominant historical discourse that cannot but pervade the consciousness of the general population.

The City Museum

A third institution representing public history is the city museum. Small town museums are controlled not by the state, nor by more general corporate or business interests. Instead, small town museums are run through relatively democratic processes. They are typically operated by a local historical society, a non-profit volunteer association which exerts a primary force in controlling what history is to be represented. In Williams Lake, the city museum presents a regional history that is purportedly produced by 'the community' and that is reflected back for community consumption. The city museum occupies a privileged space in public history: it is the only institution devoted to the collection, representation, and celebration of the region's past.

Despite its democratic appearance, the museum presents an image of regional history that is partial, selective, and influenced by several forces. An organized historical society has been in existence in the city since the 1950s, but the current Museum and Historical Society has been operating only since 1988. Although a makeshift museum was created in 1967 as a Canada centennial project, it deteriorated over the years due to lack of interest and attention. The current city
museum opened in 1991 under the leadership of the new society. Although theoretically open to any interested individuals, the society's active members do not reflect a diversity of regional residents. Rather, all are Euro-Canadian, and a significant number are middle-class retired women. The museum’s construction of regional history reflects the specific interests and perspectives of this particular sector of the community.

The museum is firmly entrenched in the social structure of the city. It relies heavily on local donations from industry and small businesses, and depends on the political support of the municipal government, which owns the current museum building. The museum directors work to maintain positive working relationships with these groups, at times expressing frustration that the importance of their facility is not recognized or appreciated by all community leaders. To what degree these delicate political and economic relationships shape the manner in which history is represented varies according to the particular individuals involved in the creation of displays. On the one hand, it is implicitly expected that the city museum should promote a positive image of the region in order to enhance the city's potential for business and industrial investment, to attract new residents, and to impress passing tourists. As is true of local histories generally (Hale and Barman 1991, Kohl 1990), the past is implicitly expected to be a celebratory rather than a critical one, where the themes of collective harmony and history-as-progress are highlighted.

On the other hand, the individuals involved in the creation of the museum's displays and interpretive texts report no feeling of coercion or creative hampering bearing down from civic or corporate sponsors. The general historical themes to be displayed in the museum were decided upon in the society's early stages of planning. However, the final shape of the displays and interpretive texts emerged largely under the influence of the museum's volunteer curator. The curator arrived
in the region in the 1950s to work as a schoolteacher. She has no formal training in museology, but is a talented storyteller and is keenly interested in the people and history of the Cariboo-Chilcotin. The museum now highlights two themes: the region’s ranching heritage and the Williams Lake Stampede. These themes were chosen in part to tap into the city’s existing international image as a “Stampede Capital” - a strategy that reflects the constraining power of selective traditions - and in part to distinguish the museum from other regional museums. Community museums across the province compete with one another to capture tourist interest, and many do so by specializing in one aspect of history, whether it be mining, forestry, ranching, the gold rush, and so forth. The specialized focus of the city museum is a product of these competitive interests.

Displays on the Williams Lake Stampede are prominently positioned. Walking up the steps to the main floor of the museum the visitor faces a series of large photographs of the Stampede in the 1920s. The scenes depict cowboys on horseback, a gathering of Natives watching and laughing while leaning on a fence, and a scene of the Stampede grounds with the many white canvas tents. A striking photograph is of the Roman Race, in which men, each standing astride two horses, race against each other. The caption reads: “Alkali Lake contestants: Joe Dick, Patrick Chelsea, and Pierre Squinahan”.

The displays include such items as old trophies, an old Stampede Queen’s crown, and a replica of the infamous Squaw Hall. Squaw Hall was built in the 1950s as an Indian dance hall, but eventually became frequented by non-Natives also. To the latter, it was known as “a place to let down your hair, drink your refreshments and do almost anything that your morals will permit you to do”. The Stampede collection includes a photograph showing several Native men and women in headdresses, with a man kneeling and playing a hand drum. The picture
is captioned: “Sugar Cane residents at Williams Lake Stampede in the 1920s” and includes the names of the individuals.

The rest of the museum presents an eclectic display of artifacts and miscellaneous themes. There is a brief section of Native artifacts, with no interpretive commentary, followed by a section on communications: an old switchboard, an old printing press. The side wall of the room is devoted to the story of the B.C. provincial police. The display includes a mannequin in police uniform, a photograph of William Pinchbeck who was “appointed Justice of the Peace at first settlement of Williams Lake in 1860 and maintained Law and Order in the Valley”, and a photographic display and brief biographies of the thirteen local policemen who served in the area between 1910 and 1950.

Off the main room are several side rooms reconstructed as a bedroom, parlour, kitchen, blacksmith’s shop, a Chinese store, and trapping display. A set of cast iron frying pans hang on the wall: “Frying pans and grill used by the Tom Mikkelsen family while travelling from Ashcroft to Horsefly in 1910. Donated by Jean Mikkelsen”. One of the side rooms portrays the history of Williams Lake, with photographs of the town in the 1920s and important local personalities of the time, including one prominent woman: “Jessie Pidgeon... while legend has it that the Cariboo was the land where ‘men are men’ and the women were proud of it, women have been prominent on many fronts”. Small displays on ranching equipment, the Williams Lake stockyards, and cattle brands follow, along with photographs and brief stories about many of the well-known settler families in the Chilcotin.

Despite the eclectic nature of the museum, the displays are tied together by a central theme. The curator admits to being more interested in people than in material objects, and she has used the historical artifacts as vehicles for telling stories about the lives of the pioneers from whose homes the objects originated.
In short, despite its ranching and Stampede focus, the history presented in museum displays is the history of the 'ordinary people' of the Cariboo-Chilcotin.

For example, a pair of scruffy riding boots are mounted as a display, and are used to tell the life story of the woman who owned them, Josephine Robson. Above the boots is a picture of Josephine, a smiling young woman with a child on her back. The boots themselves are captioned by a headline: "Josephine Robson's boots were burned in a campfire. She resoled them herself." In the interpretive text, Josephine's life story is summarized: "Josephine was born 'under a jackpine in the Itcha Mountains' says her stepson, George Robson... her parents were Rosalie Sandyman and Antone Capoose; they only came out of the mountains twice a year". The story continues to tell of Josephine's life as a rancher, hunter and trapper, and how she continued this lifestyle well into her elderly years.

The curator has intentionally structured the exhibits to make them relevant to the local public, and in representing the 'ordinary people' she has drawn extensively on her knowledge not only of many of the Cariboo-Chilcotin pioneers, but, as a Euro-Canadian, her uncharacteristic familiarity and friendships with members of the regional Shuswap, Tsilhqot'in and Carrier communities. Rather than presenting anonymous images of noble savages, the Native people featured in the museum are named: they are presented in their full individuality.

However, at the same time, there are notable silences which reverse the typical flaws in Euro-Canadian representations of Natives. Specifically, in many of these displays the 'Indianess' of these individuals goes unmentioned. For example, the three Alkali Lake Roman racers are Shuswap Indians. Josephine Grambush, the woman who married one of the instigators of the Williams Lake Stampede in the 1920s, and whose children became prominent in the local rodeo circuit, is Tsilhqot'in. Josephine Robson is a Carrier Indian, a fact hinted only at the end of her biography: "Josephine never new [sic] what a welfare cheque was."
She made her living trapping and tanning hides. She also pitied people who drank liquor, saying it makes people poor and sick”.

With Natives not explicitly identified as such, the museum displays present histories that, in significant ways, are alternate to the dominant discourse. The displays do not directly challenge the conceptual opposition of Indian and white that is central to frontier conceptions of history, and that defines the social order of Williams Lake. While Natives are encountered in (almost) their full individuality, their ethnicity - and their potential stigma - remain invisible. The visitor may leave museum without ever realizing that the individuals honored - Alkali Lake roman riders, Josephine Grambush, and Josephine Robson - are Native. The conceptual oppositions between Indian and white, and the stereotypes that define public perceptions of Natives in the present and in history, persist in the absence of challenge.

How history is represented is as significant as what is left out. For example, there is no discussion of the long aboriginal history prior to European arrival. There is no mention of the more general political context of colonial settlement that enabled pioneers and settlers to arrive, or of the forms of political and economic domination of Native populations that worked to suppress aboriginal resistance. There are silences over changing roles, and the gradual exclusion, of women competitors in the Stampede that might be linked to shifts in political/economic structure of gender relations in Canadian society.

In this sense, while the focus on ‘ordinary people’ stands as a recovery of voices that are often left out of regional histories, the ‘ordinary people’ are presented as existing outside of any political/economic context. As Bennett notes in his critique of populist museums, here the first settlers, pioneers and Natives are
presented as "a people without politics" (1995:112). Such populist histories, he suggests, are seductive as selective historical traditions. While these histories may honor the lives of individuals, and may celebrate their qualities of courage, determination and independence, at the same time they assimilate the varied values and experiences of diverse subordinate classes and groups - experiences that included conflict, inequality, and struggle against forms of domination - into comfortable middle-class notions of the past.

This is not to say that early pioneers and settlers should not be publicly honored; only that such histories as are presented in the city museum reflect partial historical traditions that, in encoding certain silences about the past, have hegemonic implications that are only amplified by the lack of competing historical perspectives in the public domain.

Conclusion

Public histories in Williams Lake reflect the prevalence of the frontier myth as a historical epistemology. The histories generated are selective traditions. In contrast to academic histories such as presented in the previous chapter, and which are equally the product of a selective tradition and epistemology, the histories encountered in public places in Williams Lake render irrelevant aboriginal histories, aboriginal communities, and the complexities of the relationships that developed between aboriginal and settler societies. Instead, frontier histories highlight the courageous actions of individual Europeans and assimilate history

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There is one notable exception. A display on the "Cariboo's First Japanese Family" discusses the extensive racial discrimination this family suffered at the hands of local townspeople during World War II. Given the powerful forces that bear down on city museums to represent history as harmonious and progressive, this display constitutes a very significant movement into areas of history in which there usually are considerable silences. In contrast, there is virtually no reference of the racial discrimination that Native people historically experienced, and continue to experience on a daily basis in Williams Lake.
into a conventional narrative structure of the contact of opposites, the heroic struggle for domination, and the eventual triumph of European colonialists. In these narratives Natives are assigned secondary, supporting roles that reflect and enhance the identities of the colonizers as paternalistic benefactors while commemorating colonization as the positive, progressive development of Western civilization.

At the same time, the frontier myth is capable of accommodating a variety of voices and a variety of histories, ranging from national histories produced by the state to the individual autobiographies of Cariboo pioneers. The degree to which this selective historical tradition has been adopted by local pioneers, settlers and ‘ordinary people’ to organize their experience, to frame their life stories, and to account for their collective past indicates the depth to which this tradition, as a component of the dominant culture, operates in the realm of lived experience.

To this end, the distinction between the official histories of the state and the popular memory of the ‘ordinary people’, a distinction prevalent in current studies of the exercise of power in colonial and post-colonial settings (Bommes and Wright 1982; Alonso 1988; Bodnar 1992; Cohen 1994), is not immediately relevant here. Instead, pioneer stories and nationalist histories are fully compatible within the same mythic framework, and are fully compatible with celebrations of European colonization. This is not to say, however, that the symbol of the pioneer, and local historical traditions, may not be used for oppositional purposes. In the next chapter I trace exactly these processes: how certain sectors use local histories as a vehicle for mobilizing public resistance against the actions of governments.

The frontier myth encodes a systematic forgetting of contentious issues of the past, a forgetting that has significant implications for Native/non-Native relations in the Cariboo. Aboriginal title to the lands of Canada, the obligation of
colonial governments to acquire lands by due process, and the failure of
governments to sign treaties or otherwise honor aboriginal title in British Columbia
go unmentioned. The creation of the Indian reserve system, the Indian Affairs
bureaucracy, and the residential school system, events that have had a profound
impact on a large proportion of the regional population, are not discussed. The
very existence of Native communities with organized social structures, with
complex modes of subsistence, and with independent historical traditions and
religious systems is not mentioned. Apart from their highly stylized appearances in
frontier accounts, the existence of Native people and communities is rendered
invisible in history. In their struggles to untangle themselves from the various
threads of colonial domination, Native people in the Cariboo-Chilcotin today are
struggling against a dominant historical tradition which has virtually erased them
and their history from the public landscape.

At the same time, the hegemonic potential of frontier histories - their use in
affirming the current structure of relationships between Native peoples and non-
Native society and its institutions - lies not only in what is omitted, but in how
history is presented. History, we are told, is the product of individual actions: the
themes of heroic individualism, survival of the fittest, and the 'self made man'
define a particular understanding of history, society and the individual. Frontier
histories provide Euro-Canadians with a sense of collective identity constructed in
opposition to aboriginal peoples, where the nature of aboriginal/settler relations is
construed as one of paternalistic benevolence and natural superiority. These
frontier histories tell their readers that colonization has been in Native peoples’
best interests and that Native peoples have been treated well by Canadians. In the
following chapters I show how these implicit themes define some of the dominant
elements of historical consciousness among Euro-Canadians, and how these
themes are engaged to render invalid aboriginal challenges to the status quo of Native/non-Native relations.
Chapter Four: 
Regional Identities, Pioneer Traditions, and 
the Frontier Myth in Political Discourse

"Cariboo-Chilcotin has long had the reputation of being one of the last frontiers", proclaimed newly-elected Reform M.P. Phillip Mayfield in his inaugural speech to the Ottawa House of Commons in 1993. Championing the pioneer spirit of independence, hard work, and stubborn resistance to government regulation for which Cariboo residents are renowned, Mayfield portrayed his riding as one of the last vestiges of the mythological Canadian Wild West. "The entire riding remembers our pioneers and celebrates the way of life these pioneers left for us to continue" he announced. "Today the lumber industry has taken the economic lead. However the independent attitude, self-reliance and earthy frankness which characterize relations among Cariboo-Chilcotin people still continue and may it always be so."

The frontier myth exerts a powerful cultural force in shaping popular conceptions of both the past and present. As the above quote suggests, its influence is not limited to the popular histories, textbooks and museum displays that communicate 'official' histories to the public of Williams Lake. Instead, its force is much more pervasive: it provides a historical epistemology, and a set of cultural symbols, that individuals in the Cariboo continually draw upon to construct collective identities, to affirm public values, and to promote certain political interests.

In this chapter I explore how Euro-Canadians use the language of the frontier myth in political discourse: how they make recourse to ideas such as pioneer values and frontier traditions when promoting political agendas and

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criticizing the actions of politicians and governments. This, of course, was Mayfield's strategy: he used the idea of the Cariboo pioneer spirit as a convenient point for launching his own Reform Party critique of the federal government's excessive taxation, irresponsible spending policies, and intrusive legislation. In the previous chapter I emphasized the conservative role of the frontier myth in shaping formal representations of the past. Here I emphasize how individuals use the frontier myth in a creative, dynamic fashion to metaphorically render current events and practices congruent with an imagined frontier past. While this process does involve the conservative use of a set of well established cultural categories to render new circumstance comprehensible, with each metaphorical association new pasts at the same time are being created in juxtaposition with the present. In each case such conventional symbols as the 'pioneer' and the 'frontier' take on new dimensions of significance and meaning.

The frontier myth's images and symbols are imbued with such a degree of sacredness and moral power that they become an ideal currency for claiming legitimacy for varied political interests. Much of the oppositional political discourse in Western liberal democratic societies aligns along the contradictions between public morality and actual social and political practices. Groups engaged in political opposition attempt to promote their agendas by making appeals to widespread public values such as democracy, individualism, equality, and multiculturalism, and by demonstrating how government officials, agencies, corporations, or other groups have failed to adhere to these ideal standards. In launching these attacks, subordinate groups attempt to blemish the public standing and morality of their opponents and to generate sufficient public sympathy to embarrass governments or corporations into changing their policies and practices.

Aboriginal peoples in Canada and other Fourth World settings have become adept at using the "politics of embarrassment" (Dyck 1985:15; Paine 1985:214) to
rally public support for their political struggles against governments. This political strategy - the manipulation of widespread public morality and values in order to publicly embarrass one’s political opponents - is used not just by aboriginal peoples, but by virtually all groups engaged in forms of political opposition and struggle, whether they be ethnic minorities, feminist organizations, gay rights activists or environmental groups. The politics of embarrassment are also a central feature of news media reporting (Vidich 1990). The news media assumes the role of society’s “moral watchdog” (ibid.:18), scrutinizing the activities of politicians and governments, and creating ‘news’ when their actions appear to deviate from public norms.²

In tracing how the frontier myth infuses political discourse, the first task is to identify the terrain of public values and morality in the Cariboo region upon which the localized politics of embarrassment is derived. I begin by exploring how Williams Lake community leaders define the prevalent public values and identities of the Cariboo. I draw on interviews I conducted with Euro-Canadian community leaders representing local and regional governments, the forest industry, the local media, and small business interests. As community leaders, these individuals are especially active in promoting Williams Lake as a positive place for new residents and for industrial and business investment. They market images of the Cariboo on a daily basis, and have an important influence in the public forums in which regional values and identities are represented.

Community leaders are not a homogeneous group. There is no consensus among them regarding public values, political philosophies, or the best strategies for addressing current social and economic crises facing their region. Nevertheless, there were striking similarities, key themes and emphases, that appeared repeatedly.

² In the context of the American media, Vidich defines this idealized public morality as a “watered down” version of 19th century small-town populist norms.
in my discussions with them. In particular, many of the community leaders interviewed come from the small business sector. Their vision of Williams Lake and the Cariboo reflects a right-of-center, free enterprise philosophy that, while not shared by all community leaders, nevertheless is highly influential in regional politics. These individuals present a clear statement of some of the most important public values and identities that appear in political discourse in other contexts.

I then examine how various non-Native individuals and groups use these public identities and values as a symbolic currency in their oppositional struggles against government policies and practices. Even more significantly, in some contexts these political actors historicize contemporary values and identities by associating them with pioneer legacies and frontier traditions of the Cariboo. The mapping of present values onto past traditions greatly enhances the moral and symbolic power of oppositional political rhetoric. No longer are politicians and governments merely violating public values, they are now violating the very spirit and tradition of the pioneers. It is at this juncture that the conservative and the creative potential of the frontier myth becomes apparent.

Regional Identities and Small Town Values

The public face of Williams Lake has undergone some significant changes over the last decade. The regional economy is prospering. Land prices have risen dramatically in the last five years, and there has been an explosion of condominiums, townhouses and new subdivisions. The area population is growing, enhanced by the arrival of many individuals and families from the lower Mainland disillusioned with city life and seeking a quieter, rural lifestyle.

The urban influence is evident not only in population growth, but in the impact of urban culture and consumer habits. While the city achieved its first
indoor mall some 20 years ago, urban cultural trends have only recently appeared in the city's downtown. Several cappuchino shops (one in 1994 called the Vancouver Cafe) and restaurants offering vegetarian meals have sprung up. Stores such as the Shaman Shop selling third world tribal arts and clothing, a Healing Center, and the Earth Right store providing environmentally-safe products, Birkenstock sandals and self-help psychology books have appeared. Appealing to middle-class, left wing consumers interested in environmentalism, New Age spiritualism and romantic primitivism, these stores add a cultural dimension that clashes with the more conventional features of working-class, resource town culture epitomized by dusty pickup trucks, cowboy hats, anti-Native racism and right wing politics.

Concepts of regional culture and identity, and understandings of the relationship between the city and the urban metropolis of Vancouver/Victoria, are in a state of flux. Many people describe the city as "half urban, half rural" (see Watkins 1990). As one person commented: "We have the best of both worlds. Vancouver is only a tankful of gas away, but in half an hour we can be out in the wilderness". In the last twenty years improved transportation links and the creeping urban influence have brought about a shift northward of the conceptual line marking the beginning of northern British Columbia. Whereas twenty years ago locals considered Williams Lake to be a northern town, today there is no consensus. Although a three hour drive to the University of Northern British Columbia, the Cariboo is formally considered to be in the central interior of the province.

Despite this dynamic context and the diversity of the area's inhabitants, a distinctive set of themes appears repeatedly in public discussions about Cariboo identity and values. In interview settings, community leaders describe the city of Williams Lake as a "small town" whose culture and social relations are defined by the qualities of friendliness, hospitality, social harmony, egalitarianism, informality,
and a commitment to family. These values are reflected in tourism brochures that promise a “hearty Cariboo welcome” to visitors. Many other residents echo the views of community leaders, identifying neighborliness, cooperation and mutual trust as primary characteristics of the Cariboo lifestyle. Community leaders link the friendly informality and trusting attitude among one another as rooted in the closeness of social relations: the Cariboo is a place where “everyone knows everyone” and where “people watch out for one another”.

One member of a Cariboo pioneer family, for example, described this cooperative, trusting spirit as reflecting the “small town attitude”:

I had a guy come up from Kamloops on Tuesday morning, and his car broke down just outside of 100 Mile House. So he thought, what do I do? So he decided to put his thumb out, and the first person who came along picked him up. And he thought “Wow”. That was the last thing he would have expected... we trust people. Because we know them. And in the city we don’t trust them, because we don’t know them.

Another community leader, who lives in a prestigious subdivision, stated with some pride that he never locked the doors to his house. The values of helpfulness and trust that bind the local community are contrasted to the anomie of “big city” life, where individuals are isolated from one another, moving through their daily routines without talking to their neighbours or acknowledging one another’s presence.

These values are not unique to the Cariboo, but resonant with the images of small town life that prevail in rural cities and towns elsewhere in North America (Vidich and Bensman 1969; Stymeist 1975; Nadel 1983; Dunk 1991), that are reproduced in romantic Canadian travel literature (Neering 1991; McLean 1992), and that are ritually portrayed in small town festivals celebrating egalitarianism.

3 Commission on Resources and the Environment, Cariboo-Chilcotin Land Use Plan, Appendix Three, p.10.
social harmony, and community togetherness (Farber 1983; Errington 1987; Lavenda 1992). In short, the “myth of the moral superiority of the small town” (Vidich 1990:17) is a widespread phenomenon and continues to shape public constructions of small town identity in powerful ways.

Many community leaders draw upon rural/urban distinctions to characterize the culture of Williams Lake. One dimension of difference is lifestyle: the relaxed, “laid back” lifestyle of the Cariboo is contrasted with the rushed, stress-ridden lives of urban residents. One man referred to the relaxed attitude towards punctuality as being on “Cariboo time”. Another man born and raised in the Cariboo referred to Williams Lake as the home of the ninety second minute: “What I value the most, the fact that it is a rural lifestyle, the fact that... the pressures, perceived or otherwise, aren’t there. It can be summed up by saying that Williams Lake has minutes that are ninety seconds long... the slower pace of life.”

Rural communities have long been portrayed as existing out of time, as frozen in history, as epitomizing the traditional, harmonious cultures of the past from which contemporary urban societies have long since evolved. Such portraits are prevalent in Canadian travel writing (McLean 1992), in centuries of British literature (Williams 1973) and in anthropological studies of British rural communities (Nadel-Klein 1995). Agricultural towns in rural areas are especially prone to being relegated to a pre-industrial past. Thus both rural communities and indigenous peoples are subjected to a “denial of coevalness” (Fabian 1983) with respect to modern society; they are both the subject of “imperialist nostalgia” (Rosaldo 1989:69) in which the destruction of their traditional cultures is lamented as the regrettable but inevitable result of Western progress and civilization.

In contrast, community leaders see Williams Lake, although having a slower pace of life, as being a fully modern, progressive resource city on the leading edge of industrial development and expansion in Canada. Community leaders, especially
those of the small business class, have a particular understanding of the nature of progress that is captured in the image of the ‘self made man’, which they draw upon to distinguish small town values and ethics from those in urban centers. The idea of progress and the myth of the self made man are prominent not only in small town settings, but are widespread in rural and urban regions of Canada and comprise key elements of the dominant Canadian ideology (Marchak 1988).

This dominant ideology, or “conventional wisdom”, is framed on a series of assumptions about the relationship between the individual, society and the economy. Canadian society is ideally seen as continually progressing along a path of increasing wealth and prosperity. The motor of progress is believed to be the free-market economy, an autonomous and self-regulating system operating according to its own internal logic. All individuals are seen to have equal opportunity for advancement in society, competing with one another in the marketplace and achieving status, wealth and prestige in proportion to their ambition, determination and inherent talent. In this system government, democratically elected as the voice of ‘the people’, has a responsibility to oversee the smooth functioning of society and its institutions, intervening in the economy only to ensure the principles of fairness and equal access.

Central to this ideal vision of society are the values of individualism, equality, democracy, and freedom, and the faith that progress, material prosperity, and advancement can be achieved through an individual’s determination, hard work and self-sacrifice. This vision of society resonates with the frontier histories that celebrate heroic individualism as the driving force in the development of the Canadian nation. Historical consciousness and understandings of the relationship between the individual and society are closely intertwined and mutually informing.

The myth of the self-made man takes on a particular significance when transposed to the setting of a resource industry city in the Canadian hinterland.
The self-made man is not necessarily a millionaire or a mill owner. Rather, he is the individual who succeeds on the local scale of values. The anti-intellectualism, the value of manual over mental labour, and the general suspicion and hostility towards academics, bureaucrats and professionals that Dunk (1991) described among working class men in a northern Ontario resource town are threads that weave in and out of the dominant culture in Williams Lake. Dunk’s “working class” cultural values are championed by many of the civic leaders I spoke with.

In their view, the self-made man is the individual who takes entrepreneurial risks to establish his own business, or who works long hours as a labourer in the mining or forest industry. He is the man who runs a logging contracting firm, who operates a well established small business, or who has a well-paying job in the sawmill. The self made man in certain contexts may be the single mother who has managed to pull herself off welfare by opening her own daycare business. These are the people who are “doing something”, who are taking risks, working hard, and are actively contributing to the capitalist economy.

Civic leaders identify the commitment to a strong work ethic, whether as a self-employed entrepreneur or a wage worker, as one of the defining features of the “small town attitude”. This ethic is one of the main features distinguishing rural communities from urban centers:

Anyone who wants to get out and grasp an opportunity... perhaps they’re not as plentiful as they were in [the 1950s and 1960s], but the opportunities are still there if you can change with the times... People sitting in an urban center would say “The world owes me a living, why don’t you give me a job?”. That’s one of the unique things about Williams Lake or the Cariboo, that I know now, I’m sure most small rural towns are much the same... that people are far more independent, much more self-esteem that gives them the initiative to get out and create their own job.
One young community leader celebrated the values of individualism and self-sufficiency through the symbol of the redneck: “I’m proud to say that I’m a redneck. A redneck to me is a person whose neck has become red because he’s put in long hours out in the field, in the bush, mining, building roads, making infrastructure that makes this country great. And that’s to me what a redneck is.”

The values of independence, self-sufficiency, personal responsibility, and materialism take their meaning from the context of a late twentieth century resource city. These values are defined in terms of the ability of individuals to create their own small business where they enjoy the freedom of self-employment and the burden of responsibility for their success or failure. These values are realized by the ability of workers to find employment in the forest industry and its related businesses, where they can earn high salaries and can exercise the freedom to spend their income as they choose. These values are not created in, nor are they dependent upon, a specific set of ‘objective’ economic conditions. As Bakke (1940a, 1940b) has shown in his study of unemployed workers during the 1930s American Depression, individuals show a remarkable ability to redefine the practical meaning of independence and self-sufficiency, and to maintain a commitment to the ideal of the self-made man, despite long term unemployment. In Williams Lake, these ideals are upheld as fundamental public values. At the same time, individuals continually struggle to adapt and modify the practical meaning of these ideals in accordance with their changing socioeconomic circumstances.

Finally, community leaders’ sense of regional identity is strongly influenced by a sense of geographical and political marginalization from the mainstream of Canadian society. In the local idiom, Williams Lake is “up here” as opposed to

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4 Clearly these values are associated in general with the rise of industrial capitalism and, as Weber (1958) argued, with the rise of ascetic Protestantism, which transformed the individual’s pursuit of wealth through continuous labour into a sacred duty.
"down there" in the urbanized lower Mainland. As in the northern Ontario resource towns studied by David Stymeist (1975) and Thomas Dunk (1991), in Williams Lake there is a strong and widespread feeling of resentment towards urban governments and politicians, who are often seen as “outside” intruders on local affairs. Many civic leaders complain that local concerns are frequently overlooked and ignored by the provincial government, which arbitrarily imposes decisions informed by urban values. Many feel strongly that rural communities receive a disproportionately small percentage of government services and programs. One community leader proclaimed that the adage “There’s no hope beyond Hope” circulated frequently among her colleagues. This, she said, referred to the futility of expecting fair, equitable treatment on the part of government to extend beyond the town of Hope on the fringe of the lower Mainland.

This sense of political marginalization is paralleled by a strong sense of existing on a geographic periphery, a frontier, of settlement. People describe their city as being surrounded by an “unoccupied”, natural wilderness. The closeness of the wilderness, in fact, is a main factor drawing new residents and tourists to the region. More importantly, this “unoccupied” wilderness is seen as being rich in natural resources - whether conceived as timber, minerals, or tourism opportunities - that are free for the taking and that have yet to be fully exploited. “It’s a thriving community... [we have] huge tracts of land with resources all around us, to the east, to the west, and we’re right in the center of it!” Another leader commented:

The ranching, mining, forest industry, tourism... each industry is holding its own if not growing. We’ve got so much land here that’s not even being used. Like the lower Mainland, it’s just nooks and crannies. Where Williams Lake has a bright future, because there’s so much land that’s not being utilized.
These references to the Cariboo wilderness as a vast region of empty land with resources free for the taking are striking examples of the pervasiveness of the frontier myth. The empty land image clearly contradicts the vociferous aboriginal claims being put forth by Cariboo-Chilcotin Native leaders, themselves significant inhabitants of this presumed empty land.

While community leaders do not always use the term frontier to describe their city, their understandings of the regional culture and identity, and their orientation to both the urban world and the surrounding wilderness can be considered expressions of a contemporary frontier identity. The central features include the values of individualism and self-sufficiency, the faith in the idea of the self-made man, a sense of existing on a periphery of urban society and being surrounded by a wilderness rich in resources free for the taking, and a resistance to outside (urban) controls and regulations. The city's official motto, "Prosperity, Courage and Opportunity", encapsulates the public myth of Williams Lake: it is a modern resource city perpetuating the legacy of the pioneers in its friendly, small-town ambiance, in the courageous, competitive spirit of the men and women labouring in the resource industries and small businesses, and in the material wealth that awaits individuals with sufficient drive and ambition to succeed.

These expressions of collective identity are themselves historically contingent: they emerge from within a specific climate of mounting economic insecurity, unemployment and intensifying land use conflicts. They arise within a context of increasing provincial government efforts to regulate the Cariboo-Chilcotin forest industry to ensure its sustainability over the long term, efforts that are translated as moves to reduce timber harvesting allocations and that are premised on the assumption of a dwindling resource supply. In celebrating small town culture, in proclaiming the abundance of the region's natural resources, and in denouncing urban life, community leaders are also resisting what they see as the
threat of political and cultural domination of the city and region by urban values and provincial governments.\(^5\)

**Public Values as Symbolic Currency: Evoking the Symbol of the Pioneer**

Individualism, self-sufficiency, autonomy, freedom from external constraint: these values appear repeatedly in political discourse as defining characteristics of Cariboo culture. On occasion, these public values and identities are mapped onto a historical terrain, becoming associated with the traditions of Cariboo-Chilcotin pioneers. In so doing, various groups mobilize the frontier myth to create idealized images of the past, to defend their particular interests in the present, and to criticize the actions of politicians and governments. In these various debates, the symbol of the pioneer takes its moral power from the unquestioned legitimacy of the frontier historical tradition. At the same time, the symbol of the pioneer takes on different meanings through its creative application to a variety of contexts of conflict.

Two recent controversies will demonstrate these processes. The first is a rather bizarre case of a government-ordered bulldozing of the home of a retired Wells resident, Rick Mooney. The second is the bitter conflict that arose surrounding the creation of a regional land use plan by the provincial government’s Commission on Resources and the Environment (CORE), and the struggle of pro-

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\(^5\) Nadel-Klein (1991), in her ethnography of a rural fishing village in Scotland, describes how various parties - outside filmmakers and playwrights, old time villagers, and upper class residents - construct different versions of local identity, portraying villagers as a romantic, tradition-bound people, as backward and unprogressive, or as a marginalized community struggling against external state/corporate powers. Expressions of “localism”, Nadel-Klein argues, are constructed in specific political and economic contexts, and serve as weapons of political struggle. Similar complexities in the construction of localism - identities tied to place - can undoubtedly be found in the Cariboo. In the following pages I trace only two contexts in which such identities arise.
industry interests in the Cariboo to oppose the province's efforts to restrict industry access to forest lands.

*The Demolition of Rick Mooney's House*

In 1989 Rick Mooney, a resident of the small hamlet of Wells some 80 kilometers east of Quesnel, built a new house that was to be the retirement home for himself and his wife. In the spirit of past generations of Cariboo residents, the retired mill and construction worker built his home in his own fashion, ignoring the building code standards that had recently been put in place by the Cariboo Regional District (CRD). Regional districts are a relatively recent form of government in the province, being created in the late 1960s to regulate zoning and activities in the rural regions beyond municipal boundaries. With the creation of the Cariboo Regional District, the many remote regions of the Cariboo-Chilcotin with a long tradition of independence suddenly became subject to the scrutiny and regulation of government. One aspect of this regulation was the creation of building code bylaws.

In 1990 a CRD building inspector discovered that Mooney's house was in violation of the building code: its foundation and floors were structurally deficient, it was build with untreated lumber, and it had an unsafe chimney and wood stove. For the next two years the regional district posted stop work orders on the house, sent letters to Mooney demanding his compliance, and finally took the issue to court. Mooney at times agreed to comply. At other times he ignored the CRD's demands. In 1991, the regional district took the matter to the Supreme Court of British Columbia, which authorized the house's demolition.

"On the night of November 30, 1991, Big Brother came from Williams Lake with his hired goons, and crunched to kindling a $60,000 new home and took it to
the dump.” So wrote Rick Mooney to the Williams Lake Tribune, echoing the widespread public condemnation that followed the bulldozing of his home. Even before the bulldozing, Mooney had garnered a groundswell of public support in the north Cariboo. Local residents, contractors and tradespeople had formed a volunteer group to go in and upgrade the house. The regional district, unable to find a local bulldozer operator to take on the job of destroying Mooney’s house, was forced to hire outside the region. On hearing of the house’s imminent destruction, Wells contractors vowed to blockade the path of any bulldozer that came near the home. With a provincial election upcoming in October, all four candidates running for the Cariboo North riding pledged their support for Mooney. When N.D.P. candidate Frank Garden was elected, he intervened and attempted to negotiate a resolution with the CRD, later accusing the regional district of bulldozing the house “in the dark to avoid press coverage”.

Protests continued over the following months. Angry residents from Wells, Quesnel and Williams Lake confronted the regional district directors at a January board meeting, demanding a complete investigation into the Mooney affair. The group circulated petitions in support of Mooney, a war veteran, in Royal Canadian Legion Branches across the province. Mooney, who in more than one media report was described as “cantankerous”, carried on his battle for over three years. He sued the regional district for damages and later built a replica of his house on the same site. Faced with yet another embarrassing political situation - Mooney had once again refused to comply with building codes - the CRD in 1995 resolved the crisis by excluding the district of Wells from the regional district’s building code bylaws and inspection services.

Rick Mooney’s letter to the *Tribune* reflected the standard frame used by local letter writers to condemn the regional district’s actions. The event was portrayed as a classic David and Goliath encounter between the “little guy” and the “state”. In so doing, Mooney and his supporters engaged in a powerful form of symbolic politics that could be called the ‘politics of victimization’, in which discrepancies of power are symbolically highlighted, and where political, economic or cultural powerlessness of a particular groups is transformed into moral power.

Robert Paine traces these processes among Saami aboriginal peoples of Norway, and describes how Saami political activists staged “ethnodramas”, public protests that took the form of staged displays of the cultural domination and victimization of small aboriginal minorities by state governments and bureaucracies (Paine 1985:190-191). Similar political rhetoric, however, can be found not only in Canadian aboriginal politics (Armitage and Kennedy 1989) but also in North America and Britain in the struggles of rural settler communities to protest the intrusions of urban governments and/or the expansion of resource industries (see Broady 1975; Nadel 1983; Landsman 1987:108; Nadel-Klein 1995). I show later how rural/urban dichotomies and ‘David versus Goliath’ symbolic rhetoric is central to the politics of victimization engaged in by resource communities protesting the imposition of provincial authority (and protecting the privileges of forest companies) in rural regions. In this political rhetoric, powerlessness and vulnerability are equated with virtuosity and the struggle between the powerless and the powerful is presented as a heroic crusade.

The politics of victimization were central to the public defense of Mr. Mooney. A variety of criticisms were voiced in the opinion columns and letters in the Williams Lake *Tribune* and Quesnel *Cariboo Observer*. Letter writers condemned the regional district for overreacting to the problem, for misusing its bureaucratic
power, for wasting taxpayers’ money, and for not considering other more reasonable means for resolving the problem. Many letter writers called for the resignation of the CRD board and administrator. The Vancouver media picked up the story, running sympathetic coverage of Mooney and his plight and causing intense embarrassment to CRD officials. Both urban and local media coverage of the Mooney affair both celebrated Mooney as the ‘little guy’ confronting a big, impersonal bureaucracy.

In local debates, though, the public values being appealed to in defense of Mooney - the values of individualism, democracy, and freedom - were not just articulated in the abstract. Instead, in some instances they were associated with place, with a contemporary regional identity, and with a local historical tradition of settlement. For example, Paul St. Pierre, a regular Tribune columnist and well-known writer of Cariboo Chilcotin fiction, portrayed the event as a warning to all citizens concerned with protecting their individual rights and freedoms:

By now most of us who remember freedom and Lord State Almighty will have heard about Rick Mooney and his fight to prevent his government from wrecking his house. The case is not clear cut. Cases usually aren’t. But whatever the details, most who read it feel somebody walking on their grave.9

He applauded Mooney’s independence and stubbornness in refusing to conform to mindless government regulations as emblematic of Cariboo values and identity: “Conforming is just not what Cariboo people are good at”. To St. Pierre, who has made a living creating bizarre and humorous stories of the region’s fictional inhabitants (for example, St. Pierre 1984, 1985), the Mooney affair was simply another example of the odd characters who populate the Cariboo.

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8 A Quesnel resident likened the CRD’s actions to those typical of Nazi Germany.
In contrast, an older woman, herself a member of a prominent pioneer family and an author of a recently-published popular history, saw the affair in a deeper historical context. She viewed the matter as not only a violation of contemporary Cariboo values but, more importantly, as a violation of the pioneer tradition of Canada. She denounced the destruction of Mooney's home, writing: "It was a cruel and un-Canadian thing to do. The pioneers of this country always tried to help people instead of hurting them."¹⁰ She concluded, "Years ago I read a story, fiction, in a magazine about a family's home in a far off country like Russia, that was demolished because it didn't comply with government regulations somehow. I thought, how terrible, nothing like that could ever happen in Canada. But it could and did. How times are changing."

A Quesnel man wrote a stinging letter to the Cariboo Observer, condemning the "spiteful and dastardly deed by governmental big shots who took such a vicious and heartless attitude" against an impoverished "courageous, elderly old age pensioner".¹¹ He demanded the firing of the regional district's administrator and cited the CRD's actions as a gross violation of democratic principles. This letter writer, too, drew on historical narratives and metaphors to further support his opinions:

This is Canada - the country built by pioneers who had to live with what they had available and could afford. There were no C.R.D.'s and little or no regulations - only the rule of God and the belief in, and the will, to build this beautiful country for the betterment of future generations. I am sure this type of action by governmental employees and C.R.D. bosses is not what our pioneers had in mind.

¹⁰ "Gook is correct, bulldozing cruel", Williams Lake Tribune, 4 February 1992, A5.

Both letter writers weave myths of frontier history and heroic individualism with contemporary public values and identities. The symbol of the pioneer is metaphorically extended to frame Rick Mooney. These letter writers see in his actions the pioneer qualities of independence, courage, self-sufficiency, thrift, and personal responsibility. His struggles against government bureaucracy are equated with the determination of pioneers to stand up for the principles of individualism, democracy and freedom. In embodying the character and spirit of the pioneers who ‘built’ the Canadian nation, Mooney is transformed into a symbol of national pride and identity. With Mooney shrouded in these sacred symbols, the CRD’s actions become tantamount to a public burning of the Canadian flag.\footnote{The public responses of regional district officials were extremely weak in the face of such powerful symbolic rhetoric. The regional district chairman fell back on the image of paternalistic government: the regional district, he said, was responsible for ensuring the safety of public. It was merely protecting itself - and thus “saving” taxpayers money - from a potential civil lawsuit should an occupant or tenant have been hurt. “CRD enforcing the law in Rick Mooney case - Reeves”, Quesnel Cariboo Observer, 30 October 1991, A5; “Mooney loses house to bulldozer”, Williams Lake Tribune, 5 December 1991, A2.}

The symbol of the pioneer is what Richard Slotkin refers to as a “mythic icon”, a condensed symbol of “tremendous economy and compression and a mnemonic device capable of evoking a complex system of historical associations by a single image or phrase” (1992:6). In these letters, the symbol of the pioneer evokes an entire historical scenario based on the populist version of frontier history. It suggests the idea that history has been the product of the heroic characteristics and actions of individual, unnamed men and women on the frontier rather than of complex economic and political forces. It suggests that the expansion of European settlement, and the colonial project itself, has been less a political and economic project than a moral campaign; even more, a sacred Christian endeavour sanctified by the “rule of God”.

At the same time, these letter writers evoke a particular narrative of frontier
history that deviates somewhat from those discussed in the previous chapter. Here the historical scenario suggested is one in which the frontier experience, while marked by the encounter and struggle between opposing moral forces, is not an encounter between whites and Indians, or man and nature. Instead, the encounter is marked by the struggle of the settler to escape the shackles of metropolitan governments, traditions and regulations that would seek to constrain his behaviour and destroy his spirit: his stubborn independence, his commitment to freedom, his determination to be self-sufficient. The dark, evil force to be opposed and conquered on the frontier is that of the metropolitan government committed not to the principles of democracy and freedom, but to the total regulation and control over the human body and spirit. The birth of the Canadian nation, it is suggested, depended precisely on the triumph of the settler over these totalitarian forces.

Populist versions of the frontier myth, pitting the small, virtuous pioneer against the dark, menacing powers of urban government, have been one of the major vehicles of social criticism in twentieth century America (Slotkin 1992). Slotkin identifies two opposing ideological versions of the frontier myth that have dominated the popular culture and entertainment industries. "Progressivist" versions of the frontier myth celebrate American history in terms of the continual development of industrial capitalism, the expansion of corporate monopolies, and the development of centralized national political institutions. In contrast, "populist" versions envision twentieth century industrial and corporate expansion as leading to a breakdown in democracy and an increase in political and material inequalities, processes that have led American society away from the social relations of equality idealized in the agrarian past (ibid.:23). The central heroes of populist myths are the "social bandit" figures - the Western outlaw, the outlaw/detective - who have stood on the margins of society to fight industrial development, the expansion of the railroads, the large ranching conglomerates, and the big city
financiers and banks. In this way, the producers of dime novels and popular Westerns employed the frontier myth as forms of "lower-class resistance" (ibid.:151) - at least, as forms of lower class resistance imagined and expressed by the publishing industries.

In a similar way, these Cariboo letter writers are engaging populist versions of the frontier myth to construct a historically contingent and selective vision of the past that they use to oppose and criticize the actions of contemporary governments. These letter writers suggest certain lessons learned from the past need to be heeded today: the importance of protecting the individual's rights to autonomy, independence, and freedom from regulation, the very qualities that enabled the Canadian nation to grow and prosper. Implicitly, they are suggesting that the present course of history is deviating from this ideal past, and are attempting to realign social practices and values in conformity with idealized past traditions.

In the course of mobilizing the images of the pioneer and the frontier legacy for their own political interests, these Euro-Canadians are creatively reformulating the past to suit their interests in the present. The symbol of the pioneer is often used to evoke a variety of imagined pasts, all variations of the frontier myth theme. Yet in so doing Euro-Canadians are affirming not only the veracity of the frontier myth as a historical epistemology, but the morality of the colonial endeavour itself. It is simply assumed that an association with early pioneers is a positive quality; that the acts of the early pioneers, and European colonization, are to be celebrated. It is this balance - the ability of the frontier myth to serve as a language of diverse (and sometimes competing) political interests while reinforcing a highly selective historical vision - that enables it to persist as a hegemonic cultural complex. It is this selective historical tradition that justifies the very social arrangements that
aboriginal people are attempting to challenge in quite different domains of political conflict.

The particular version of the past put forth by these letter writers equates the 'pioneer' with 'freedom'. The meaning of freedom is relational rather than absolute: it refers to the relative freedom that early settlers and pioneers had to build their own homes as they choose, rights now denied to Mr. Mooney. In their selective association of pioneers with freedom, letter writers are constructing an idealized image of the past designed to suit their agendas of critiquing the actions of the CRD as an unreasonable intrusion of government into the present lives of ordinary residents. Yet this association of pioneers and freedom detracts attention from a more complex historical scenario in which government forms of power, domination and regulation were central to the course of history.

The pioneers' success did not simply depend on the absence of government regulation. Rather, their ability to take up land, to farm, and to fend off attempts of area Native peoples to protest their settlement on aboriginal lands depended on an apparatus of colonial authority that included missionaries, Indian Agents and the Indian Affairs bureaucracy, federal and provincial legislation, justices of the peace and the colonial court system. In different ways, each of these colonial groups sought to control the aboriginal populations and to make the Cariboo safe for settlement. While the early settlers may have enjoyed comparative freedom, they did not live in the absence of government regulation. On the contrary, Cariboo-Chilcotin settlers themselves made extensive use of the colonial court system to resolve interpersonal conflicts and business disputes (Loo 1994).

Furthermore, the establishment of homesteads, farms and ranches was supported by an expanding capitalist economy encouraged by the colonial governments, an economy that created a market for local products - furs, minerals, agricultural products, beef cattle, and later, lumber - and that eventually transformed the
Cariboo into an exploited hinterland of metropolitan Canada, Britain and the United States (Innis 1962; Marchak 1983). To celebrate the pioneer as the builder of Canada renders invisible these overarching structures of colonial power, and erases from history the acts of coercion, violence and brutality against aboriginal peoples that were central to the settlement of Canada.

These letter writers creatively extend the symbol of the pioneer to embrace Rick Mooney and his actions. The term pioneer is frequently used in the Cariboo in a number of contexts. According to Webster's dictionary, a pioneer is "a person or group that originates or helps open up a new line of thought or activity or a new method or technical development; one of the first to settle in a territory". This is often, but not always, the sense in which this term is used in local discourse in the Cariboo.

For example, the term pioneer is frequently found in tourism brochures, in popular histories, and in newspaper stories. A brochure advertising the Museum of the Cariboo Chilcotin advises the tourist: "Gold lured settlers to the Cariboo - the green grass meadows kept them here. The Museum of the Cariboo Chilcotin tells the story of these early pioneers who found a way of life, if not their fortunes, in cattle ranching." A pamphlet advertising guest ranches in British Columbia announced: "Since the days of the pioneers, the lure of the West has held an irresistible attraction for anyone with a longing for adventure and wide open spaces". A pioneer, thus, is someone who arrived from somewhere else, who braved the unknown to eventually settle and put down roots in a new land, who succeeded in creating a new life for himself and a new society for his fellow men.

The term pioneer is not restricted to these early settlers. In actual use, the term is an honorary one, the equivalent of the Native term 'elder'. It refers more generally to any non-Native who is a respected member of the community, who can demonstrate at least some length of residence in the area, and who is
recognized to have contributed in some significant way to the development of the community. At times, there may be debates about the length of time required for a person to be designated a pioneer. In one instance, an individual who arrived in the Cariboo-Chilcotin in the 1950s was honored as a pioneer, but not without private discussions about the validity of this designation. In 1996, the term pioneer was extended to honor an elderly Tsilhqot'in woman who was chosen the Pioneer of the Year at the annual Pioneer Days celebration held in the small Chilcotin town of Alexis Creek. The meaning of the term pioneer is capable of a great degree of creative extension and play; the degree to which these processes of metaphorical extension succeed depends on public response.

In the case of Rick Mooney, there was no public challenge to his pioneer status, despite the fact that Mooney had lived in the Cariboo region only since 1978. To these letter writers, however, Mooney embodies the spirit of Canadian pioneers from all corners of the country, those individuals celebrated in frontier histories for risking their lives to venture into the wilderness where they carved out homesteads, endured poverty and hardship, and helped one another in times of crisis.

It is important to trace not only how Euro-Canadians use the term pioneer, but also the many contexts in which this term does not enter the language of political debate. There are many instances in which individual efforts to resist government intrusion are not publicly defended through championing frontier histories and the pioneers' right to freedom and autonomy. The efforts of Native people to be independent and self-sufficient, as their ancestors were, by hunting and fishing on Crown land, by cutting firewood and house timbers on Crown land, or by building homes or cabins on Crown land are not only not publicly defended by Euro-Canadians, but are subject to intense public criticism. The equally

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13 "Wells's sharpest thorn awaits his day in court", Vancouver Sun, 15 September 1993, A15.
extensive intrusion of governments into the lives of aboriginal people has proceeded with virtually no public commentary.

There is here a selective application of the concept of freedom and the illegitimacy of government regulation that exclusively favours forms of Euro-Canadian resistance. The symbol of the pioneer is not extended to defend Native peoples’ resistance to colonial intrusion; rather, Native people are positioned on the opposite side of the symbolic divide in the frontier myth’s narrative structure of history. Instead, their ‘conquest’ and submission to colonial authorities are a necessary component of the triumph of the settlers and the ‘building’ of the Canadian nation.

The CORE Protest

Frontier legacies and pioneer traditions are evoked not only to construct nationalist identities and to defend the rights of individuals struggling against unyielding, domineering bureaucracies. There are also instances in which this imagery is drawn upon to construct homogeneous regional identities that distinguish the Cariboo-Chilcotin from the surrounding national society, and that are used by local interest groups as a vehicle for resisting the intrusive policies and practices of the state. A clear example can be found in the debates that arose surrounding the Cariboo-Chilcotin CORE land use process.

In 1992 the provincial New Democratic government created the Commission on Resources and the Environment (CORE). The Commission was struck in a political climate of increasing conflicts between environmental groups, forestry and mining companies and First Nations regarding ownership and control of the province’s resources. The CORE’s mandate was to create regional land use plans that would mediate the demands of environmental protection and continued access to timber resources and employment by industry, labor groups, and
resource-based municipalities. The issue of aboriginal claims was addressed in a separate policy shift, in which the provincial government resolved to negotiate outstanding aboriginal title claims with First Nations.

The CORE process began in four regions of high land use conflict: Cariboo-Chilcotin, Vancouver Island, West Kootenay-Boundary, and East Kootenay. In an attempt to devolve centralized decision-making processes to regional communities, in each region negotiating tables were established consisting of local residents representing the various ‘stakeholders’ in regional Crown Lands, including the forest and mining industries, labour, local government, business, agriculture, recreation, tourism, and environmental groups. First Nations groups also were ‘invited’ to participate. Not surprisingly, many boycotted the CORE process, arguing that aboriginal title claims had to be resolved before any long-term decisions could be made over the use of Crown Lands by secondary user groups. Through the CORE process, twelve percent of each region was to be protected to preserve the region’s wildlife and ecological diversity. Each table was expected to collectively designate these protected areas and create a regional zoning system to balance industrial, agricultural, tourism and recreational uses of Crown Lands.

Forestry-dependent communities throughout the province immediately began to voice opposition to CORE. Many pro-industry sectors interpreted the CORE process, with its “protected areas” strategy and its explicit goal of ensuring the “sustainability” of the forest industry, to foreshadow a significant reduction in the forest companies’ access to timber resources. As the CORE tables were struck in each of the four regions, intense conflicts began to arise between pro-industry and pro-environmental sectors. These struggles were nowhere as apparent as at the Cariboo-Chilcotin CORE table.

Conflicts between environmental and industry/labour groups in the Cariboo-Chilcotin were already raging at the time the CORE table was struck. By
the early 1990s a coalition of local, provincial and national environmental groups had formed under the banner of the Cariboo Mountains Wilderness Coalition to protect the watersheds and wetlands of the eastern Cariboo. Forest industry workers and their supporters in Williams Lake had formed the Save Our Jobs Committee and the Share the Cariboo-Chilcotin Resources Committee, and were lobbying for public support to protect the industry’s long-term access to timber resources. At the CORE table, individuals representing these different sectors faced the daunting task of negotiating a mutually acceptable solution to these and other land use crises.

The CORE process began in the Cariboo region in the summer of 1992. After a series of public meetings, various individuals and organizations formed into sectors, each represented by two individuals who sat at the CORE negotiating table. By March 1993 twenty-four sectors were participating, representing agriculture, mining, forestry, recreation, local government, tourism, labour, small business and conservation groups. After over a year of negotiations, though, the Cariboo-Chilcotin CORE table collapsed over the failure of the different parties, now polarized as “browns” and “greens”, to reach consensus on the lands to be designated as protected areas.

The failure of the CORE process sparked one of the most intense public controversies in the recent history of the Cariboo-Chilcotin. Various sectors accused one another of negotiating in bad faith and lacking a commitment to a regional, consensual planning process. From the start, a coalition of forest company, labour and business interests in the Cariboo had expressed opposition to the CORE process, perceiving it as a threat to the status-quo of forest companies’ privileged control over timber resources and thus to the employment base and survival of small interior communities. Williams Lake resident and International Woodworkers of America vice-president Harvey Arcand later boasted of how the
coalition of pro-logging interests at the CORE table had deliberately sabotaged the CORE process by manipulating procedural rules, by stacking the table with pro-industry sectors, and by refusing to move from their original position during the fifteen months of negotiations.¹⁴

Bitter debates went on for months about the legitimacy of the CORE process and about the appropriateness of the conduct of key individuals at the table. In letters to the city newspaper, these debates degenerated into personal attacks and criticisms of the representatives of the environmental and pro-industry movements, including the city’s mayor who played a lead role as anti-CORE spokesperson after the CORE failure.

These debates intensified after CORE Commissioner Stephen Owen, in the absence of a regional consensus, released his own recommendations for a Cariboo-Chilcotin land use plan in July 1994. By this time, two groups in the Cariboo had formed to represent the competing environmental and industry interests in the region; both had created their own regional land use plans and were lobbying for government acceptance of their recommendations.

Environmental interests were represented by the Cariboo-Chilcotin Conservation Council, headed by a west Chilcotin conservationist. Pro-industry interests were represented by the Cariboo Communities Coalition, an alliance of 14 of the 24 original sectors at the CORE table and including forest and mining companies, agriculture, backcountry tourism, chambers of commerce, local government and labour. With its headquarters in City Hall and the mayor as its spokesperson, the Coalition became the voice of the most powerful sectors of the regional society.

The Conservation Council and the Cariboo Communities Coalition each sought to sway public support for their platforms by demonstrating their solutions were in the best interests of the regional community as a whole. Both groups made use of a political rhetoric of victimization and made appeals to the need to protect the region’s natural resources legacy for future generations. Yet their political rhetoric differed radically in their use of symbols of history, of identity, and of public values.

Public opposition to CORE by forest industries and resource communities, from the outset, was rhetorically framed by images of honest, hard-working small town people struggling to resist the intrusive and oppressive actions of urban governmental forces and environmental activists. At a massive demonstration on the grounds of the Provincial legislature in March, the mayor of Port McNeill roused the crowd by proclaiming that “Loggers, farmers and miners... carry this country on their backs”. He condemned the CORE report as the creation of “academics and backroom boys who have never had rain in their lunch buckets and who don’t have to live with the consequences of their theory”.  

International Woodworkers of America representative Jack Munroe was widely quoted in the media in his condemnation of “cappuchino-sucking, concrete condo-dwelling, granola-eating city slickers” attempting to impose urban environmentalist ethics and interfering in the lives and livelihoods of rural resource communities.

In portraying resource communities as the David against the Goliath of urban governments, speakers were engaging a set of powerful cultural symbols and identities to rouse public support. The celebration of the small town work ethic and of physical labour, the dismissal of intellectual and bureaucratic knowledge, and the antagonism towards urban society and governments resonated not only

15 “Premier fails to provide forestry workers with assurance he will reject land-use plan”, Vancouver Sun, 22 March 1994, A-3.
16 “15,000 forest workers drown out premier”, Vancouver Sun, 22 March 1994, A-1.
with the perceptions of civic leaders of Williams Lake, but with attitudes that are widespread in northern resource communities across Canada. Speakers demanded recognition for the vital role of resource industry in the national economy and insisted that resource industry workers had a moral right to have their jobs and lifestyles protected. Resource industries, and their workers, were transformed into symbols of nationalism deserving of special reverence and protection.

This oppositional rhetoric underwent some important modifications when the anti-CORE protest was transported to the context of the Cariboo-Chilcotin. Once again, a politics of embarrassment was engaged that took its shape from considerations of place, regional identities and historical traditions.

The Cariboo Communities Coalition hired a Vancouver public relations consultant and launched an expensive local and provincial radio, newspaper and television advertising campaign in which it claimed to speak for “the people” of the Cariboo-Chilcotin. A distinct regional identity was put forth and used as a vehicle for claiming the right of “the people”, not urban governments, to control the land and resources of the region. This regional identity was a populist one with a heavy emphasis on families and family values. Typical phrases included “Please... Listen to the People!”; typical images showed ‘ordinary’ millworkers, ranchers and tourism operators with their families.

In the politics of victimization, hardworking families and their values were pitted against the might of urban government: “CORE has put our families, or workers, our communities at risk”, “We need to protect families”, “We believe that we need to protect the social and economic well-being of our families”. This populist construction, appealing to the central public values that define the uniqueness of the Cariboo people, culture and lifestyle, rendered invisible the diversity of regional groups and interests, the very diversity that had precluded the original success of the regional CORE process.
The Cariboo-Chilcotin regional identity was also defined by the length of (settler) occupation and activity in the Cariboo-Chilcotin and by the special attachment residents felt towards the land. A newsletter stated: “Many of us have lived here for generations, working the land as ranchers, farmers, miners, foresters, loggers, guides, outfitters and contractors”. It continued: “Our forefathers developed the Cariboo-Chilcotin. They - and we - have helped strengthen the social and economic fabric of the province. And we’re proud of that”. The Coalition argued that Cariboo-Chilcotin people, by virtue of their residence in the area, had political and moral rights to control the region’s destiny, and that the “local voice” had been denied in the CORE process. “We need a Made in the Cariboo solution!” and “We deserve a say in our destiny” were typical slogans.

These demands were backed by notions of the superiority of practical knowledge of local residents over the theoretical knowledge of outside academics and bureaucrats: “This kind of balance [between social, environmental and economic interests] can only truly be recognized by people who live, work and play in the area - people who are IN the Cariboo Chilcotin - people who know the Cariboo Chilcotin.” Finally, the right of local people to direct future land use practices also was a moral one, stemming from their commitment to future generations and to stewardship of the land. “We feel we have a right and an obligation to have a direct say in the future development of our area - for the sake [of] our children and grandchildren.”

These assertions of quasi-indigenous localized identities - identities rooted in the special, unique relationship that rural non-Natives have to the land - are not unique to the Cariboo-Chilcotin nor Canada, but have been described in other settler colonies such as New Zealand (Dominy 1993, 1995) as well as rural regions of Great Britain (Nadel-Klein 1991, 1995). Many of the rural areas of settler colonies by now have been occupied by four, five, or more generations of
European settlers: farmers, pastoralists, and ranchers. Over time, these groups have developed their own distinctive cultural traditions and identities that are centered on their relationship to the landscape. As processes of decolonization proceed - to the extent that outstanding aboriginal land claims are being discussed and negotiated - rural settler communities are faced with parallel claims to territories by aboriginal peoples also asserting indigenous identities. Rural non-Natives are also faced with the increasing efforts of national/state governments and transnational corporations to control, regulate and exploit the resources of rural areas. In these contexts, rural peoples are creating localized identities as a vehicle for asserting political rights to self-determination and regional autonomy.

The particular shape of rural constructions of identity is highly influenced by the political context and the tenuous balance of power in which rural settlers, aboriginal peoples, and centralized state governments are enmeshed. This becomes apparent when contrasting the processes of identity construction in the Cariboo-Chilcotin with that occurring among rural, high country sheep farmers in New Zealand (Dominy 1995). In both cases, rural settler communities are parties to competing claims to lands and resources (whether the competitors are other rural non-Natives or aboriginal groups), claims that are to be mediated by agents of established national/provincial governments. In both cases, groups are making claims to political autonomy on the grounds of the many generations of residency in the area, and their commitment to local political control, to families and future generations, and to a responsible stewardship of the land.

Yet in the New Zealand case, settler families in the South Island high country were struggling against competing claims put forth by the Maori to lands assigned to them through the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi. At the Waitangi Tribunal hearings, high country families asserted their rights to these pastoral lands by virtue of their distinct cultural identity that emerges from their close relationship with the
land, the significance of the land to their way of life, their many generations of occupancy of the region, and to their commitment to act as custodians or caretakers of the land. In asserting the importance of the land to their identity and lifestyle, high country farmers were explicitly claiming an indigenous status. They are claiming to be ‘like’ Maori, and thus their claims should have equal validity (ibid.:363).

In the context of a Tribunal that eventually proved highly sympathetic to Maori claims, settlers were forced into a defensive stance. While Dominy argues that high country farmers were not making political claims based on “an appropriation of Ngai Tahu symbology” (ibid.:369), her evidence suggests that, at the minimum, they were making claims based on explicit efforts to make features of their cultural identity analogous to that of the Maori claimants in a political climate that ultimately favoured Maori interests.

In contrast, the regional cultural identity put forth by the Coalition was not framed by claims of indigenous status similar to aboriginal peoples. In fact, First Nations and the question of aboriginal title - issues at the forefront of provincial politics - were invisible through much of the local CORE debate. The political struggle was not against aboriginal peoples, but against local environmentalists and provincial governments. In this context, the indigenous status the Coalition claimed was one that emerged from the traditions and legacy of Cariboo-Chilcotin pioneers. References to Cariboo-Chilcotin pioneers, and to Cariboo values and identities, were scattered through the publicity materials:

The Cariboo Chilcotin and this province were founded on the entrepreneurial spirit and self-reliance. Our forefathers worked hard to eke out an existence from the land, and we continue to do so - at the same time ensuring that we protect the land from being wasted.
We believe that we have a lot to be proud of in the Cariboo Chilcotin - of how our forefathers established the area - of how our ranchers have managed the range - of how our small businesses and tourism industry took major entrepreneurial risks to build our local service economy.

The Cariboo Chilcotin pioneer spirit of self-sufficiency and looking after our neighbours has remained a key value in the area. We believe that we have the strength, the commitment, the experience and the heart to continue to preserve the values of the Cariboo Chilcotin.

B.C. should never ignore the fact that the foundation of this province was built on the families who immigrated to the province from other parts of the world. This is what made our province prosperous.

Once again, collective identities were forged through populist expressions of the frontier myth of history. The pioneer is no longer the individual heroically battling the wilderness on his own, but the families of the Cariboo-Chilcotin who, through their hard work, drive and determination, have built the province of B.C. The concept of the pioneer is metaphorically extended further to the small businesses and tourism ventures that have taken "major entrepreneurial risks" to "build" the economy. Cariboo-Chilcotin families, the values of independence, self-sufficiency, neighborliness and the entrepreneurial spirit, and the resource industries themselves are thus historicized as reflecting the spirit of the pioneers; through this historical association they are deserving of respect, honor and protection.

This populist construction of the past also served to warn of the dangers of implementing government policies that would lead society away from the values and traditions that had been instrumental in the 'building' of the Canadian nation. By creating parks and thus restricting the forest companies' access to timber, Owen's CORE report was seen as disrupting the regional economy: forest industry employment would decline and have a serious impact on the survival of Cariboo families, their value systems, and the very cultural tradition and legacy of the
pioneers. Through this metaphorical equation, Owen's CORE report was construed as an assault against the sacred pioneer tradition of Canada.

The Coalition's populist rhetoric effectively overshadowed and silenced the voices of dissenting local groups. Claiming to speak for "the people" of the Cariboo, and claiming to uphold the pioneer legacy of the region, the Coalition instead spoke only for those groups in the region that were committed to preserving the status-quo of industry access to forest resources. This silencing of competing voices was enabled by the Coalition's strategy of drawing on the most sacred symbols of the regional culture to frame its concerns. The Coalition was able to bombard the public through radio, television and newspaper advertisements with a message that was apocalyptic in tone: if the CORE report was implemented, the regional culture, lifestyle, and pioneer legacy would be destroyed.

In contrast, the Cariboo Chilcotin Conservation Council, with a relatively low key and low budget media campaign, also engaged in a politics of victimization which emphasized the exploitation of hinterland communities by transnational resource corporations. But their symbolic rhetoric had little strength in the context of a regional culture dominated a frontier tradition of history-as-progress, by a popular ideal of the self-made man, and by a pervasive faith in the unlimited

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17 For example, a Williams Lake Advocate newspaper advertisement (August 3, 1994) argued that 98% of job losses in the forest industry were due to mechanization; only 2% were due to the establishment of parks. "Mechanized sawmills are laying off workers and consuming more and more wood - their appetites are insatiable" the ad read. In a Tribune advertisement (July 14, 1994) stated "[The Cariboo Communities Coalition] campaign is backed by groups financed by big forest companies. These are the same companies that have been laying off workers and replacing them with machines. They are racing to cut as much wood as they can before the saw logs disappear".
abundance of natural resources.\textsuperscript{18}

Issues of aboriginal title were remarkably absent during the course of public discussions of CORE, discussions that ostensibly were to lead to greater "certainty" over land tenure and the resolution of regional land use conflicts. While industry, business, tourism, labour, recreation and environmental groups debated the future of Cariboo lands, the very right of the state and various sectors of non-Native Canadian society to be claiming rights to Crown lands prior to addressing the issue of aboriginal title was directly challenged by First Nations in the Cariboo-Chilcotin, who refused to participate in the CORE discussions. The use of frontier myth metaphors and imagery in the CORE debates - imagery that enhanced the stereotype of the 'invisible Indian' by rendering aboriginal people absent from the landscape of the past - facilitated the public's ability to ideologically separate these two domains of political activity, and to temporarily forget about the overriding issue of aboriginal title.

As an epilogue, there is one final example showing the creative use of the image of the pioneer in public discussions about contentious events. At the height of conflict over the CORE process, a woman who had recently immigrated from Europe wrote a letter to the Williams Lake \textit{Tribune} criticizing the "outbreak of hatred" between different sectors in the controversy. Appealing to the values of tolerance for alternate lifestyles and political opinions, she called on the public to rally behind the spirit of the pioneers to weather the difficult period of change the

\footnote{This conflict was finally resolved in October 1994 when the Cariboo Communities Coalition, the Cariboo Chilcotin Conservation Council and the provincial government negotiated an agreement over a new land use plan. Park lands were designated and other regions were cleared for future logging activity. A year later, the chief forester announced that the five year annual allowable cut for the Williams Lake timber supply region would remain unchanged from the pre-CORE levels, suggesting that the CORE report, now passed into legislation, had little impact on forest company harvest levels. Debates continue in Williams Lake over the implementation of the CORE plan, over the provisions for protected areas, and over the sustainability of current harvest levels.}
community was undergoing:

We shouldn't forget that hatred consumes energy whereas understanding and goodwill create the strength to go through rough times. This is how this country has been built and it takes the spirit of the pioneers now and again to go into a changing world and to overcome the fear of change. The new frontier is our inventiveness - let's work together.\(^\text{19}\)

The symbol of the pioneer has the potential to serve a variety of competing political interests and to carry a variety of meanings. The spirit of the pioneers - the imagined courage, goodwill and community spirit demonstrated by the early settlers - is here evoked not to justify public conflict, but to mediate it. That frontier imagery is so quickly adopted by an individual who has only recently immigrated to Canada is testimony to the dominance of the frontier myth of history in the collective Euro-Canadian imagination.

Conclusion

In evoking pioneer values and traditions, Euro-Canadians are making claims to a continuity between the present and the past. They are creating public identities that are founded on the presumption of a set of unchanging cultural values and traditions that unite old-time settlers and contemporary residents in one cultural community. In reality, the population and cultural composition of the region has undergone dramatic change over the last century. Between 1950 and 1990 the population of the main Cariboo cities quadrupled, largely due to the massive influx of newcomers arriving to take advantage of the booming industrial economy. The majority of Cariboo residents can not claim lengthy ancestral roots in the region. A significant proportion can not claim lengthy histories in Canada.

\(^{19}\) "Worried about recent hatred", Williams Lake *Tribune*, 4 August 1994.
Given the 'newness' of the population, it is remarkable that the symbol of the pioneer has attained such a powerful sacred status.

The symbol of the pioneer is ideally suited to addressing a central problematic of the regional culture: how a sense of collective identity can be constructed to embrace a diverse group of residents lacking a shared past. The power of the symbol of the pioneer lies in its flexibility: it can be extended to embrace a variety of individuals, situations and circumstances. Euro-Canadians use the term not to indicate length of residence in the region, but to refer to adherence to a certain set of contemporary values, morals, and ideals that they equate with pioneer traditions. While Euro-Canadians in the Cariboo may not share a common past, they do share their common participation in a mythic conception of history. The frontier myth provides a sense of identity, a sense of morality, and a sense of belonging for old-time families and recent immigrants alike, who enthusiastically identify with the heroic processes of colonization and who freely draw on its symbols and metaphors to define their imagined collective histories.

In these formulations, non-Natives in the Cariboo achieve a sense of connection to the landscape, a regional, place-centered identity, not through the process of "indigenization" as suggested by Terry Goldie (1989), in which non-Natives identify with Canadian aboriginal peoples as a medium for identifying with place. Nor do non-Native Canadians construct their identity in terms of their direct relationship with the landscape, as Dominy suggests for New Zealand rural settlers. Instead, Cariboo non-Natives achieve an indigenization through history; specifically, through the medium of the 'pioneer', an icon of the frontier myth.

In celebrating the symbol of the pioneer, Euro-Canadians are putting forth a vision of history that is presumed to be natural, common sense, and shared by all Canadians. Indeed, the moral power of the symbol of the pioneer, when used in the politics of embarrassment, depends on the widespread acceptance of this
dominant historical tradition. The frontier myth infuses these symbolic politics, reproducing a selective vision of history less through direct polemics, but through understandings that are indirect, implicit and conveyed through metaphorical images and associations. Its power as a dominant cultural mode of seeing the past is evident in the subtle ways in which it infiltrates a range of political discourses on a variety of subjects.

At the same time, the frontier myth is capable of serving a variety of political interests. Pro-logging interests, individuals protesting the application of everyday government regulations, and citizens criticizing the conduct of local leaders all manipulate the terms of the frontier myth for their own purposes. In each evocation of the idea of the pioneer, an imagined past is juxtaposed with the present as a form of cultural critique. In drawing on frontier myth imagery, these groups are staking moral claims to the legitimacy of their struggle. They are using public values and identities as a symbolic currency that validates diverse and often opposing interests. In so doing, they nevertheless are all participating in and reproducing a mythic language that has emerged from the colonial experience and that continues to function in both material as well as cultural - and metaphorical - capacities.
Chapter Five.
Frontier Identities: Indians and Whites

Frontier histories in North America describe the encounter and inevitable conflict between Indians and settlers on the historical frontier. These histories reduce the complexity and diversity within and between both aboriginal and colonial societies to two homogeneous and 'natural' categories: Indian and white. These 'naturalized' categories - Indian and white - are not just a feature of historical myth. Instead, they constitute the most important categories in the symbolic ordering of contemporary social relations in Williams Lake.

This chapter is concerned with tracing the ethnographic reality of the social categories of Indian and white, and with demonstrating how these categories operate in reinforcing relations of power between the Native and non-Native populations.¹ Historical myths and contemporary understandings of Native/non-Native relations are fully congruent: both are central components of the frontier cultural complex that frames the dominant culture of Williams Lake.

The public values of friendliness, hospitality, and neighborliness stand in stark contrast to the reality of contemporary Native/non-Native relations in the city. Williams Lake, like many other small cities and towns across rural Canada, is a harsh place for Native people to live. There is chronic tension between the Native and non-Native populations. Racial prejudice and discrimination against Natives is

¹ Gillian Cowlishaw (1988), in her ethnography of small town aboriginal/white relations in rural Australia, demonstrates clearly the inadequacy of the categories of 'black' and 'white' as analytical constructs to account for the complexities of social relations in a rural town. It is critical to demonstrate not only the analytical inadequacy, but the ethnographic reality of the categories of Indian and white, to explore how these categories are embedded in a deeper set of ideological and epistemological frameworks, and how these categories operate in reinforcing relations of power. My strategy in this chapter is not to deconstruct the categories of Indian and white, but to demonstrate one way in which these categories are regularly reproduced.
commonplace in both subtle gestures and in overt racial insults. Native people are
alternately subjected to intense public scrutiny and criticism, or are simply ignored
and rendered invisible in the landscape. By tacit convention an invisible line ideally
divides the Native and Euro-Canadian populations into separate social universes.

At the same time, relationships between Euro-Canadians and Natives are
also in a state of flux. Native people are now challenging their subordinate position
within mainstream society on a variety of legal, political and bureaucratic fronts.
The Tsilhqot'in chiefs have declared sovereignty from the Canadian state, the
Shuswap First Nations are participating in aboriginal treaty talks, and all First
Nations organizations are involved in negotiations with government agencies to
increase Native control over the administration of justice, education, and social
services in reserve communities. Euro-Canadians are becoming more and more
aware of the Native presence in the region. The city newspaper now carries regular
stories on Native political activities and even the occasional feature on social events
in reserve communities. These developments have brought questions of the past
and future roles of Native people in the regional society and economy to the
forefront of public discourse.

In this dynamic context of change and transition, Euro-Canadians engage in
a plurality of discourses that contemplate the nature of Natives and Native/non-
Native relations. At times, Euro-Canadians express admiration for Native cultures
and traditions and construct 'difference' in terms of romantic, exoticized images of
the noble savage. At other times, particularly in the context of opposition to land
claims, Euro-Canadians deny the existence of differences between Euro-Canadian
and aboriginal peoples. No one set of images captures the complexity of Euro-
Canadian attitudes. Rather, Euro-Canadian discourses often generate conflicting
and contradictory images of Native people. What is important to trace is not the
images themselves, but how various conceptions of Native/Euro-Canadian
‘difference’ are enacted in specific contexts, and what impact these ideas and images have on maintaining relations of inequality.

In this chapter I trace one of the dominant Euro-Canadian genres of discourse about Native people, that encountered in the everyday conversations that occur in casual, relaxed settings over the dinner table, at the backyard barbeque, and in the pubs and restaurants around town. This genre is dominated by the conventional racist image of the inferior Native Other. In the following pages, I begin by presenting a selective account of the casual remarks I encountered as I moved through the aural landscape of the Euro-Canadian social world, both in interview settings and in informal contexts. I show how Euro-Canadians discuss Indian-white differences, engaging in conversational rituals of solidarity that condemn Natives as a morally and culturally inferior people and that create a sense of socialized belonging that celebrates Euro-Canadian frontier values.

I then turn to a series of discussions with area Native people who describe their relationships and experiences with Euro-Canadians in the city. These voices contrast sharply with the official public accounts celebrating the friendliness and social harmony of small town life. Instead, Native perspectives reflect their accumulated historical experiences of racial discrimination, and show how Euro-Canadians have exercised the power to ascribe negative identities in situations of everyday, informal Native/Euro-Canadian contact. These processes constitute forms of “status domination” (Scott 1990:198), modes of interpersonal violence that effectively contribute to the personal and political disempowerment of the Native population.

Native accounts of their experiences in the city also reveal the various forms of resistance they are enacting to challenge racist practices. Withdrawal, verbal and physical challenge, collective political opposition, and humourous parody are all
part of the repertoire of Native oppositional practices that comprise a private and at times public culture of resistance.

The Dimensions of Difference: Indians in Euro-Canadian Conversational Discourse

Euro-Canadians frequently talk about the current land claims treaty process and its potential impact on the Williams Lake community. Distinct from these serious discussions of the political and historical legitimacy of aboriginal claims are the everyday, routine conversations through which Euro-Canadians discuss Indian-white differences. A distinguishing feature of this discourse is its moral focus and lighthearted tone: Natives are criticized and ridiculed for a variety of perceived moral deficiencies, and often through the medium of jokes or humorous comments. Indeed, 'joking about Indians' is so common among Euro-Canadians that it could be considered a recreational activity.

Similar patterns of discourse have been discussed among working class white men in northern Ontario. Thomas Dunk writes:

The image of the Indian which appears most frequently [in young working-class men’s discourse] is generally derogatory. In jokes, offhand comments, and general banter and gossip, the Indian stands for negative personality traits... the idea of the Indian as the living embodiment of pathological behavioural characteristics is never far from the surface of the mind or the tip of the tongue (1991:107).

In the Cariboo these conversational patterns are not limited to the working class, but are engaged in by people from many different sectors: loggers, mill workers, middle class professionals, business people, politicians, housewives and store clerks. Disparaging remarks about Natives can be heard between friends and acquaintances in the privacy of individual homes, in the workplace, and in the radio
airwaves of late night truckers hauling logs out of the Chilcotin. These remarks can occasionally be overheard in public domains: the business offices, coffee-shops and bars around town. In short, negative beliefs and attitudes about Natives constitute socially constructed 'truths' that pervade the conversational landscape. They are central part of the dominant culture of Williams Lake, existing as a form of 'common-sense' racism.

The drama, humour, and intense feeling that discussion of Natives engender suggest that these discussions are not merely intellectual exchanges of information. In another northwestern Ontario town David Stymeist similarly noted that discussions of Natives often took on “ritualistic” qualities. The litany of complaints voiced by Euro-Canadians about Natives created an implicit tone of “us against them”, with the complaints being put forth in a very “theatrical” manner (Stymeist 1975:75-76). These insights suggest a central feature of Euro-Canadians’ casual discourse about Natives: they are the conversational equivalent of community rituals in which public values, morals, and identities are enacted and affirmed.

These conversational rituals play an important role in the construction of local Euro-Canadian identity and in the socialization of newcomers into the community. In the absence of extensive and permanent lines of communication between the Euro-Canadian and Native reserve communities, these informal conversations among Euro-Canadians are among the most important vehicles through which ‘information’ about Natives is shared and circulated. Through these ritualized interchanges, newcomers are informed that to be a resident of Williams Lake is to belong to a small town community on the fringes of Canadian society, and to be a member of a close knit community held together in moral opposition to Natives.
Interview Talk and Everyday Conversation

One of the most common images that appears in Euro-Canadian discourse is that of the 'drunken Indian'. Alcohol problems are not limited to the Native population, but are widespread in the Cariboo region generally. Community health surveys have repeatedly identified alcohol abuse as one of the major health concerns in the Cariboo. Teenage drinking parties, involving up to 200 youth, occasionally occur in the outlying areas and are a source of much public criticism. In the spring of 1994 a large gathering of youth on the Stampede grounds erupted in violence, requiring RCMP intervention. While these instances of drinking and lawlessness occasionally are given treatment as public problems, they do not compare to the massive amount of attention and public energy assigned to discussing and moralizing about the problem of 'drunken Indians'.

A small group of Native people, known locally as the Troopers, are often seen on the streets of town. They are recognized by their dishevelled appearance, their public inebriation, and their habit of collecting bottles in the city's garbage cans or along the highway. The Troopers have existed as a social category in the city since the early 1970s. To many Williams Lake residents they are a source of embarrassment, and are seen as stains on the city's public image. Although the Troopers represent only a minority of the Native people visible on the streets of town on any given day, and although not all Troopers are Native, to many Euro-Canadians the Troopers are a frequent reference point for more general criticisms of 'drunken Indians': the Troopers are drawn upon as evidence for the moral degradation of the Native population as a whole. The very name 'Trooper' is spoken in an affectionately patronizing term that has a vicious, derogatory edge.

Despite the frequent discussions and jokes about the Troopers, Euro-Canadians know little about these individuals. Euro-Canadians are unsure of who the Troopers are, how many of them there are, where they go at night, or how
long these individuals have been living on the streets. Some theories have the Troopers circulating between reserve communities and the city streets, staying in town for only a few days or a few weeks. Other Euro-Canadians believe that the Troopers are permanently homeless fixture of the city. These questions, though, do not occupy a great deal of Euro-Canadian attention or interest. Instead, Euro-Canadians view the Troopers as a nameless and faceless group of Indian alcoholics.

In sharp contrast is the way the Troopers are viewed by area Native people. In reality, the Troopers are integrated into the extensive kinship networks that link the Cariboo Chilcotin Native community. Native people know the Troopers by name, by family relation, and by personal history. They know them as individuals who have fallen on hard times, as having come from difficult family situations or as having suffered extremes of abuse in the residential school system. They are not ostracized from the Native communities of the region; rather than being homeless, many Troopers have relatives in reserve communities with whom they could stay if they chose. In fact, a number live on the Sugar Cane reserve in their own individual homes, and merely spend their days in the town of Williams Lake.

To Euro-Canadians, these intricacies of individuality and personal history are invisible. Not only are the Troopers an anonymous collective, but in many instances the area Native communities are also rendered invisible. Both are relegated to the peripheral zones of the social world of Euro-Canadians, becoming the subjects of interest only in discussions that reify their difference from the Euro-Canadian townspeople.

Jokes about 'drunken Indians' are not limited to the Troopers, but are extended to Natives in general. It is an assumed truth that most Natives have drinking problems. In Euro-Canadians' joking discourse and banter there is little discussion as to why these differences may exist. Instead, it is assumed that
drinking is simply an inherent part of Native culture, and/or that Natives are biologically predisposed to alcoholism. This naturalization of the ‘drunken Indian’ stereotype was suggested by one older woman. She explained the presumed prevalence of drunkenness among Natives on biological grounds: Natives have a natural thirst for alcohol.

I think the Troopers evolved out of the high alcohol problem with the Natives when they were allowed into the beer parlours. Because, from what I understand - and you’d have to talk to them, or talk to doctors or whatever - but they have an insatiable thirst for anything sweet. If you’ve ever watched them drink juice or pop... we had the highest wine sales in B.C. at one time [laughs]!

The colonial gaze of the local Euro-Canadians transforms Natives into natural spectacles to be watched while drinking pop or engaged in other behavior in public. This is only one example of the way in which Native people are subjected to a form of hyper-visibility through Euro-Canadian scrutiny. Through this public surveillance, the most mundane acts of Native people are transformed into highly meaningful events constituting proof of Euro-Canadian assumptions of Native ‘difference’.

This theme of Natives as public spectacles was echoed by a woman who, recounting memories of growing up in Williams Lake in the 1950s and 1960s, described Native people as sexually immoral drunks. Native ‘difference’ is not seen in a historical context; rather, past and present are blurred as she draws on her memories from forty years ago to portray the contemporary reality of Native people:

There was the Famous Cafe that all of us kids went to when we were teenagers... I mean, we went there, all the time. And probably five nights out of every week, or at least every weekend, there’d be an Indian man
and woman sittin' outside, and half the time they'd be making love, or
he'd have his hands up her pants, or her pants would be off or
whatever. I mean, it was just... we just walked around them and went in.
That's what they were... when they were sober they were great people.
But that wild juice did things to them! [laughs] But they used to work for
my dad, and they were excellent. Some of the nicest people I know are
Indian people. But when they're into the bottle, they're not nice. They're
different than we are. And they are different.

The belief that sexual immorality and violence are natural, inherent features
of Native life is commonly heard in Euro-Canadian talk. While the sexual abuse of
Native students at St. Joseph's Mission residential school has received national
media attention, many local Euro-Canadians believe that sexual abuse has long
been a widespread problem in reserve communities. As one man stated, "they
can't blame the Catholic schools for that". A harsher version was expressed by one
community leader:

I think that there are real problems in the reserves. I don't think its any
secret by people who are aware of the way things are that the abuse of
women is... much more common than we'd like to see it in the
aboriginal communities. I was talking to a [health care professional]... he
was saying that he believes that a large number of people, maybe 90% of
aboriginal females, are sexually abused, penetrated, by the time they are
ten years old.

He was "absolutely convinced" that these perceived social problems are not a
recent historical phenomenon, nor a manifestation of social crisis and breakdown,
but have been an inherent part of Native culture since before Europeans' arrival.

Images of Natives as drunken, sexually immoral and violent are frequent
currency in these ritualized conversations and joking remarks. These images are
not unique to Williams Lake, but are prevalent attitudes voiced by Euro-Canadians
in many other small town settings in Canada (Braroe 1975:4-5, 87-120; Stymeist
1975:75-76; Dunk 1991:109-114). These images are common themes that have
filled the pages of Canadian history textbooks, popular literature, pioneer autobiographies and fur trade journals for centuries. They are part of the national tradition in Canada of “imagining” Indians (Francis 1992). These images, however, are not just inert, textual expressions of a colonial ideology. When they circulate in small-town talk in regions such as Williams Lake, they exert a profound influence in shaping Euro-Canadian understandings and attitudes and have devastating and destructive consequences to the lives and experiences of Native people.

Another set of images frequently drawn on to describe Native differences are more closely related to the cultural setting of Williams Lake, and to the values and morals that define local Euro-Canadian identities. These images relate to the perceived special status that Natives enjoy by virtue of their relationship with the federal government. There are several common criticisms, many of them founded on misconceptions: that Natives enjoy a “tax free” status, that they are given “free houses” and “free” university education, and that they enjoy a wealth of government payments that flow into reserve communities to support highly paid Band staff and unrealistic economic development projects that are doomed to fail through mismanagement. This image of the ‘wealthy, undeserving Indian’, for example, is circulated in the frequent jokes about how most Natives are now driving new, expensive trucks “that even I can’t afford”. There is a strong resentment that Natives enjoy privileges that are not available to Euro-Canadians; that they get things “for free” while Euro-Canadians have to work hard to afford these luxuries. Thus Natives’ purported laziness, irresponsibility and alcohol dependence are supported by their special relationship with government. Again, Braroe (1975), Stymeist (1975) and Dunk (1990), whose work spans three decades, have described virtually identical attitudes among Euro-Canadians in other rural Canadian towns.
These sentiments were captured in condensed form in an interview with a retired man, who vigorously condemned Native people:

I've been in every Indian house in the Cariboo. I have yet to see one Indian house with one vegetable garden. If you look at our vegetable garden up here, it's a quarter of an acre, we produce enough to keep us going right through... the winter. I have yet to see an Indian get out with a pick and shovel and dig the ground, and sweat. They're just not made that way... I have yet to see an Indian working who's an apprentice for a plumber or an electrician or a carpenter. The Indians want new houses at Sugar Cane, they get a white man to build them, and then they start to wreck them.  

In portraying Natives through these varied images, Euro-Canadians are simultaneously expressing an ideal adherence to a set of values, morals and standards central to the frontier complex: of sobriety, of respect for the law, of self-sufficiency and personal responsibility, of punctuality, of sexual discretion and propriety, of materialism and acquisitiveness, and of the capitalist work ethic. These public values emerge from a vision of history captured by the myth of the self-made man. They reflect deeply held convictions in the potential for prosperity and advancement through hard work. These are the values that guide the practical activities of many Euro-Canadian men and women, who (like some Native people) work for years to pay off high mortgages, to afford new vehicles, to buy

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2 These comments, I should point out, are inaccurate in many respects. For example, many Native homes have productive vegetable gardens; there are many Native men who have successfully completed carpentry apprenticeships. Most homes on reserves are now constructed using Native labour. The Dene Development Corporation is a collective of four southern Carrier First Nations that both trains Native people in the construction trades and operates a very successful business building homes on reserves. The Soda Creek First Nation has recently opened a log home construction company. It purchases its logs from the band's logging company, Xatsu'll Logging, and employs a number of Native workers to construct prefabricated log homes that are now being shipped throughout the province.
recreational property, and to enable their lifestyles of weekend camping, hunting and fishing, and occasional shopping trips to Vancouver.

While these ritualized conversations reinforce a sense of belonging and ideal adherence to public values, they do so at the expense of Native people. Natives are perceived to share none of these public values. They are condemned for “living off government money”, for being “given” free homes and then “wrecking them”, and for being granted tax free status, all of which are perceived as benefits that unfairly privilege certain “special interest groups” and that undermine the principles of the equality of all Canadians. Natives are seen as the epitome of people who “live off the system”, who by their very existence undermine the central values of personal responsibility, thrift, materialism, equality, hard work and self-sacrifice. These casual, offhand remarks and the humourous frame in which they are frequently communicated, are vicious expressions that deny the human dignity of Native people, that naturalize social problems and violence in a chilling fashion, and that perpetuate assumptions of the special treatment of Native communities by government that only furthers Euro-Canadian antagonism.

Not all Euro-Canadians are as forthright in their moral condemnation of Native people. However, it is significant that many of the above remarks were made in the context of formal, taped interviews with middle-class individuals who hold respected positions in the local society. Their’s is not the marginalized voice of the oppressed working class. Their evocation of common-sense racism can not be explained as an epiphenomenon of their own marginalization in the mode of production, as Dunk suggests (1991). Rather, these are the individuals who potentially wield significant influence in the shaping of public policy and community affairs. As respected citizens, they are among the opinion leaders whose ideas and attitudes are given attention by their peers, by the media, and by the public at large. In this context, their very willingness to speak about Natives ‘on
the record' to a visiting anthropologist suggests both the widespread, common-sense status of these beliefs and the role of these discussions as socializing mechanisms orienting newcomers to the 'reality' of Natives and Indian-white differences.

These conversational practices are not limited to interview settings. Similar images circulate in everyday conversations, in humorous anecdotes and in casual, offhand comments. Some images are fleeting. One example was a conversation I had with a professional woman who lived in town. At the time I was living in a house on a nearby Indian reserve. I remarked about the herd of horses, owned by band members, who had the free run of the valley. "Do they feed them?" she asked, somewhat sarcastically. Euro-Canadians frequently criticize Native people, who "get all kinds of government money", for not taking "proper" care of their livestock.

In some conversations Native people are praised for living up to Euro-Canadian standards of domestic materialism; implicitly, others are judged for failing to do so. I was visiting 'Bob' and 'Raylene'. Raylene works as a clerk in a local store, and as a part of her work, she goes to people's homes to assist with the installation of the goods she sells. She has recently been to a number of houses on Indian reserves. She knows that the money Native people get for a new house comes from the Department of Indian Affairs, and that the DIA's budget restricts people to a mediocre quality of goods that they can get for their house. She discussed how some Native people now are putting in their own money to upgrade the quality of their homes. I mentioned that the reserve home I'm living in was recently renovated - with new kitchen cabinets, carpeting, and a wide open living area. "It's good to see Native people fixing up their houses like that" she said approvingly.
The speakers take for granted the superiority of their Euro-Canadian value system. The underlying assumption of such subtly patronizing remarks is that Natives are inadequate as they are, that their comportment is somehow immoral and unacceptable, and that they should be striving to live according to the ideal values and standards of Euro-Canadian society. However well-meaning and sympathetic they are, their remarks reveal a form of insidious assimilationist thinking that is widespread among ordinary small town Euro-Canadians who single out Native people as a whole for critical scrutiny and patronizing attention. These are localized, small-town forms of what is a long-standing Canadian tradition of manufacturing and discussing the "Indian problem" (Dyck 1991).

Not all constructions of Euro-Canadian/Native difference are negative. For example, at times I have heard Euro-Canadians observing that Natives seem to wear layers of clothing even on extremely hot days. They contemplate their observations, suggesting that Natives must have a "different biological tolerance to heat". Alternate explanations - that these are simply individual peculiarities, or that there may be different standards of modesty in public - generally do not arise in conversation. Instead, the observations of specific instances are rapidly translated into theories of inherent biological difference.

At other times, Euro-Canadians speak about Natives in a manner that shows an oscillation between fascination for their cultural differences and disdain for their manner of living. Difference, in the same conversation, is marked by a movement between noble and ignoble imagery. The romantic primitive, the exotic Indian, eventually is transformed to the degraded savage. The following is an edited account from my fieldnotes:

I was visiting some friends last night. The topic of Natives came up a few times. Jeff was remarking on how, when he recently was in Alexis Creek, it was like "being in a different country" because he heard people
around him, in the little Japanese store he was in, speaking the Tsilhqot'in language. "It was neat" he said, "And I could sort of understand what they were saying". He went on to explain how an older couple were there in the store. The man went to the self-serve cooler and brought out a bottle of wine. The woman said something to him and he went back for a second bottle. She again spoke to him, and he returned for a third. "I sort of knew she was telling him to get more wine" he laughed. "Of course, it was Stampede time - they needed three bottles to see them through the weekend!" The others laughed.

Similar movements between noble and degraded imagery are evident in the gendered discourse of Euro-Canadian men, in which Native women are discussed as objects alternately of sexual attraction and disgust. This is evident in an anecdote that followed Jeff's story:

'David' [Jeff's friend] then recalled a scene he had witnessed on the curb in town. There were three Native people, two adults and a teenage girl. "And she didn't look that bad", David said, making reference to her attractiveness. "They were standing on the curb, and she leaned over and spat out this long stream from a wad of smokeless tobacco. What is it called? Snoose. Right there on the curb!" he laughed. Jeff said, with disdain, "Oh, she was probably put there by the Chamber of Commerce, for tourists to see!"

These two stories are striking in the manner that both men found themselves initially attracted to Natives: one appreciated the "neat" language of the Tsilhqot'in people, one saw a Native girl who "didn't look that bad". Despite their initial attraction, in the end, in their stories both men eventually returned to the status quo where the defiled nature of Natives is reinforced. These stories are stark examples of the tendencies of "fear and temptation" that characterize Euro-Canadian orientations to Indians in Canadian literature (Goldie 1989). In these stories the two men play on the Native/Euro-Canadian boundaries, describing difference through extremes of attraction and repulsion.
At times the celebration of Native inferiority takes on an even broader ritualistic quality that, I suggest, is intricately bound up with the public image of Williams Lake as a rough and ready Wild West town, an image celebrated annually in the Stampede rodeo and festival. The city is promoted as a modern western frontier town where the frontier lifestyle can still be witnessed in the mingling of cowboys and Indians on the streets, in the aggressive conquest of the wilderness by the resource industry, and in the heroic actions of individual workers who through their hard work, drive, independence, and quest for material wealth affirm the myth of the self-made man.

In this context, Natives become part of the ‘colour’ of the local setting. Thus in the above story, Jeff shows an ironic awareness for the role of Natives as spectacles of tourist interest. He disdains the imaginary staged display in town but engages in his own objectification of Natives, transforming an observed act of purchasing wine into a humourous account of Natives’ degradation. The spectacle of Native people’s presumed degradation is part of the local folklore of Williams Lake. It is part of an unofficial public discourse promoting the city to visiting tourists and socializing newcomers into a comfortable sense of frontier identity and belonging.

Cautious Discourse

In the Cariboo expressions of common-sense racism coexist with an ideology of ethnic tolerance and equality. Television and radio stations carry advertisements condemning racism. Anti-racism editorials, columns and news stories appear occasionally in the city newspaper. In the city, public service workers may attend periodic cross cultural workshops. An annual (although poorly attended) First Nations Awareness Days is sponsored by the school district and
facilitated by local Native leaders. Ethnic tolerance and equality are key public values, in the Cariboo as in Canada generally.

In the contemporary climate of multiculturalism that bears down on Williams Lake from urban society, there is a widespread awareness among Euro-Canadians about the theoretical issues of ethnic and racial discrimination. As one store clerk mentioned to me, somewhat defensively, “That’s all you hear about these days, who’s discriminating [against who]...”. Many Euro-Canadians are aware that some of their attitudes towards Natives may be construed as racist, are aware of the pressures of politically correct speech, and resent being branded as racists by outsiders or by First Nations people.

Many Euro-Canadians deflect urban criticisms by claiming special insight into the ‘nature’ of Native people by virtue of their long-term, personal experience. They claim that urban residents “don’t know the Indians up here like we do”. They manipulate concepts of aboriginal/non-Native difference by refining and localizing their attitudes towards Cariboo-Chilcotin Natives. These Euro-Canadians argue that there are “significant differences” between various Native groups in Canada. As one woman commented, “the Coast Natives are an industrious bunch, and the Prairie Natives are an industrious bunch...” but Cariboo-Chilcotin Natives were not. In so doing, Euro-Canadians are expressing a contemporary feature of their “colonial privilege” (Memmi 1965): the privilege of colonizers - those who claim first hand knowledge of the colonized - to have special insight into the nature of the colonized and thus to defend their racism against outside critics “who have never even been to the Cariboo”.

Another defensive strategy is that of cautious discourse. One technique involves careful editing of potentially controversial remarks. As one person commented to me, “She’s part Native, you have to be careful what you say around her...” In contexts in which the listener may react with charges of racism,
representations of Natives may take more indirect and ambiguous forms. One of the simplest ways of protecting the status of the speaker from charges of racism is to qualify the statement: "It’s an awful thing to say, but...", or "I know Indians really well, and have some Indian friends, but..."

A more complex mechanism for communicating negative views about Natives is through use of a restricted code. This code - a form of colloquial shorthand - can be easily grasped by locals but is more ambiguous to people less familiar with the local culture. For example, a recent newspaper column discussing the problem of ‘drunken Indians’ injuring themselves and wasting taxpayers’ money by having to be attended by an ambulance crew communicated these condemnations without making direct reference to Natives or Indians. Another discussed the “problem” of empty wine bottles left in Boitanio Park. While no explicit mention was given to Natives or Indians, the editorial concluded with an admonition that the public should also recognize and take action on the problem of the drinking habits of those individuals responsible for the litter.3

Critical, joking, and patronizing remarks about Natives are part of the conversational landscape through which Euro-Canadians move on a daily basis. These remarks are casually expressed in conversations that easily flow through the topics of recreational sports, work, weekend plans, the weather, and gossip about family and friends. The casualness in which Euro-Canadians denounce Native people, and the ease at which they deny Native people their full dignity, humanity, social worth and individuality, is one of the most chilling indicators of how fully racist beliefs and practices have infiltrated the common-sense, ‘lived’ reality of the non-Native population.

While these conversational patterns are ubiquitous, this does not mean that

all Euro-Canadians share these views or participate in these ritual ‘joking’
conventions. A few prominent citizens openly support Native people and their
aspirations, and they are openly critical of anti-Native racism. Others quietly
challenge the remarks and jokes of their friends and relatives. One man, a
professional who had arrived from Vancouver several months previous and who
was now employed by a Native organization, remarked to me about his struggle
against the local tradition of ‘joking about Indians’:

I’m totally shocked about how people talk about Indians. I go to the
gym all the time - and people know who I am, they know my job. Yet
they tell me all these things about Indians, and I’m like, come on! These
are people I work with every day, who I have a working relationship
with, and who I respect! But it doesn’t matter - they just assume that
because I’m white, it’s OK to say these things to me, that I’ll agree with
them.

An older small businessman commented on the frustration he felt when
encountering the ‘drunken Indian’ stereotype:

We had the liquor store in [the mall], and always I heard “We’ve got to
get the drunken Indians out of here”. And I said, “Just back off. We’ve
got to get the drunks out of here, but they’re not all Indians”. And I
really get mad, because I said, “We’re labeling people that we shouldn’t
be”. Because there are probably less Natives now that drink than there
are whites, percentage wise. And I said, “We shouldn’t be labeling them
drunken Indians. It should be drunks, period.”

These two men have taken the strategy of verbal resistance - one pointing
out that the presumed lines of solidarity were misplaced, and that the remarks were
offensive to him, the other drawing attention to evidence that contradicts the
validity of the ‘drunken Indian’ stereotype. These individuals, and others like them,
though, are aware that they are in the minority, and that they are speaking against a cacophonous dominant culture.

These conversational practices, through their ritualized repetition, function to naturalize the category of Indian as a mirror for the construction of a collective self identity. As a focus for anecdotes, jokes, and disparaging rants, the Indian/white cultural and moral dichotomy becomes a taken-for-granted and unquestioned reality. In the process, these conversational practices render invisible the significant cultural diversity that exists not only between the Shuswap, Tsilhqot’in and Carrier nations, and not only between different reserve communities of the region, but also between Native individuals. In the process, the categories of Indian and white become the most powerful in the symbolic organization of social relations.

So powerful are the categories of Indian and white that, despite generations of Native/non-Native intermarriage, no third, mediating social category (such as métis) has been developed locally - either by Natives or Euro-Canadians - to describe the significant mixed heritage population in the Cariboo. This is also the case in some other rural towns in Canada, such as in the Inuit/settler communities in Labrador (Ben-Dor 1977; Brantenberg 1977; Paine 1977c). Even in communities where Euro-Canadians may openly acknowledge some Native ancestry in the regular course of claiming a public identity (Plaice 1990), these processes involve a playing on Indian/white oppositions rather than a creation of a third, mediating social category. In fact, in the Cariboo individuals of mixed ancestry often strategically manipulate claims to both Native and white heritage in different contexts. They may identify themselves as “part Native” when they wish

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4 I discuss in the next chapter how one strain of public opposition to land claims attempts to invalidate the existence of a claimant group by arguing that there are no “full blood” Indians in existence anymore.
to join all-Indian rodeo competitions or hockey tournaments, but may publicly identify as white in the more highly-charged, political contexts in which land claims are discussed and racist views are being voiced.

These conversational rituals have both an affective and a cognitive function. Joking remarks are often conveyed with lighthearted laughter, while derogatory criticisms are frequently expressed with an intense anger. The enthusiasm in which people participate in these conversations, and their affective function, perhaps in part accounts for what Braroe has called the “perceptual blindness” (1975:184) of small town whites to evidence that contradicts their assumptions about Native people.

When challenged, local Euro-Canadians defend their views not as examples of racism, but as valid sociological generalizations. The recent rash of stolen vehicles recovered on Tsilhqot’in reserves supports the image of the Indian criminal, while the Troopers are drawn on to legitimate the ‘drunken Indian’ stereotype. In practice, these concepts of aboriginal difference are social constructions generated through a process of selective perception of reality, where the perceived actions or attributes of one, or a small number, of Native people are generalized to characterize the Native population as a whole.

In contrast, Euro-Canadians do not discuss the numerous First Nations chiefs, community leaders, and ordinary people who have been sober for ten or more years, nor the many law abiding Natives who are themselves concerned about social disorganization and dysfunction in their communities. Many Native people of the region have achieved success as measured by Euro-Canadian standards, having obtained university degrees and become lawyers, teachers, social workers or artists. In the 1980s a Shuswap woman from Alkali Lake, Phyllis Chelsea, was awarded an Order of Canada for her work in family and community development. More recently, a Tsilhqot’in woman, Joan Gentles, was honored
with an Order of B.C. for her advocacy of Native people in the justice system. Yet these accomplishments are not discussed by Euro-Canadians. These facts may not be widely known within Euro-Canadian circles, perhaps due to the communicative isolation of the two populations. It may also reflect the selective processes by which information consistent with Euro-Canadian attitudes is publicly remembered, while contradictory information is forgotten.

Finally, in these ritual conversations the historical context that has generated alcohol abuse, family breakdown, and violence in Native communities is not discussed. Instead, these traits are presented as essential, 'natural' characteristics of either culture or biology. As various people commented to me, "They're just not made that way", "That's part of their nature", "Their culture is different". There is a selective process of dehistoricization occurring here. While the past is of vital importance in the construction of contemporary public identities and in the defense of the material interests of particular local elites, as described in the previous chapter, it is rendered irrelevant in the everyday conversational rituals through which Euro-Canadians discuss their relationships with Native communities. Indian/white differences are presented as ahistorical, as static, as natural. So irrelevant is a historical context that one woman draws on her observations from thirty years ago to represent current differences between the two populations.

In this way these discourses conform to Miles's (1989:79) definition of racism as an ideology that distinguishes one group of people as being inherently different from others based on phenotypical characteristics; and that assigns certain negatively evaluated characteristics, abilities or behaviours, whether biological or cultural, as definitive and natural qualities of this group as a whole. As an ideology of hierarchical difference, racism is not a static set of beliefs; rather, there "have been many significantly different racisms - each historically specific and articulated
in a different way with the societies in which they appear” (Hall [1978:26], cited in Miles [1989:82]).

In Williams Lake in the 1990s, racism is articulated against the backdrop of a dominant set of public values, identities and material interests. It both emerges from within and reproduces key aspects of the dominant culture. This cultural matrix does not explain the existence of negative stereotypes or racism. It does, however, provide the pool of symbols, themes, and values from which a historically specific, geographically localized form of common sense racism is generated.

While racist discourses, as defined above, prevail among Euro-Canadians, they do not capture the complexity of patterns of discussion. Some constructed differences, such as the idea of the inherent ability of Natives to tolerate extremes of heat, are neutral in the context of their expression, and there is no value judgement associated. Other differences are of the romantic or exotic type. In yet other conversations speakers play on the markers of difference, moving between noble and degraded imagery. Discourses of difference are thus fluid and complex processes that defy simplistic characterization. They are conditioned both by contemporary material struggles over land and resources, and, to some extent, by the contemporary ‘burden’ of multicultural ideals. In this way, these conversational rituals, while purportedly representing ahistorical differences, are themselves historically contingent: they reflect “strategic reformulations and revaluations of prior discourses” (Thomas 1994:171) rather than static concepts of Us/Other.

What remains consistent, and emblematic of a contemporary colonial practice, is the focus on discussing, reproducing and naturalizing the differences between the colonizing and colonized populations. The Euro-Canadian/Native opposition is a central device in the construction of collective, public identities of Williams Lake residents, of encouraging a sense of belonging to a community
united in its moral and cultural superiority over Natives. As I discuss below, these discursive practices are not just innocuous expressions of identity but have an ongoing impact on the management of relations of inequality and in the continued disempowerment of the Native population.

Status Domination and Resistance in Native/non-Native Interactions

Racism against Natives is a common feature of life in rural cities and towns across Canada. Niels Braroe (1975), Yngve Lithman (1984) and David Stymeist (1975) have explored different facets of the dynamics of small town Native/non-Native relations in Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Ontario respectively. In these settings, the separation of the two populations into distinct social universes is perpetuated, in part, by openly racist beliefs and practices. Braroe describes how Natives in a small ranching town in Saskatchewan suffered the “continual condemnation of their White neighbours in nearly all spheres of human activity” (ibid.:3-4). Stymeist, writing of a northern Ontario town in the 1970s, discusses how Native people were “open targets for abuse by non-Indians. Such abuse ranged from the arched brows and sneering condescension of a [Hudson’s] Bay clerk to open mockery and derision or the drunken assaults of a group of white men” (1975:6). In such circumstances, where Native people were routinely denied respect and dignity in their interactions with Euro-Canadians, the dominant coping mechanism employed by Natives was withdrawal and social isolation coupled with a private culture of indirect symbolic resistance (Schwimmer 1972; Braroe 1975).

These interactions constitute forms of status domination, practices that involve “humiliation, disprivilege, insults, assaults on dignity” (Scott 1991:198). Status domination is one of the most insidious and effective modes of colonial power. Power is expressed not so much in material or ideological modes of domination, but through the habitual gestures, the casual remarks and the fleeting
glances that continually impose on Native people an inferior and degraded public status. The grinding, everyday, continuous denial of human worth and dignity, in extreme cases, becomes naturalized as internalized racism and self-directed violence among colonized peoples (Fanon 1963; Memmi 1965), a process that cripples the potential for forceful, public acts of resistance against colonial domination.

The ethnographies of Braroe, Lithman and Stymeist were carried out in rural communities in the late 1960s and 1970s, when racism was as blatant and unquestioned as the 'No Indians Allowed' signs posted on small town cafe windows and hotel lobbies (Braroe 1975:42). In the last twenty years there have been significant changes in the political, legal and administrative relationships between aboriginal peoples and Canadian society. There has been an increased public sympathy and concern for aboriginal issues, and the multiculturalist ideal has become a symbol of Canadian national identity. Yet despite the public ideals of equality and multiculturalism, racist discourses of difference continue to dominate small town culture in the Cariboo. Despite the absence of public signs, Native people continue to be sensitive to the implicit and subtle gestures that communicate that they are unwelcome in certain establishments in town. Indeed, subtle mechanisms of exclusion have long been the more effective modes of social segregation in Canadian small towns (Braroe 1975:42-43, 105-107; Stymeist 1975:68-69). The dynamics of racism have been reformulated, but not abolished, in the context of 1990s multiculturalism.

The question that remains is: To what extent are these negative beliefs and assumptions about Natives made relevant in the context of everyday interactions? How, and to what extent, do racist beliefs and practices work to maintain relations of unequal power between the Native and Euro-Canadian populations? What forms of resistance are enacted by area Native people?
The degree to which racism persists in Williams Lake is hotly debated. The majority of the Euro-Canadian community leaders I spoke with argued that there was no racism against Natives in town. If some racist attitudes and practices persisted, they claimed, these were limited to marginalized pockets of the community. Phrases such as "we all get along pretty well", and "its the white lawyers and band managers who cause the problems" were the typical responses. These, of course, are the official responses of prominent individuals speaking "on the record"; but they also echo the prevalent views of many of the other Euro-Canadian residents with whom I spoke.

In contrast, Native people state that racism is a pervasive element in their relationships with Euro-Canadians. Accounts of being treated rudely by cashiers, of being followed by store clerks who suspect them of shoplifting, of being subjected to verbal insults are part of the taken-for-granted reality of Native life. Native women throughout the region are familiar with the social consequences of the 'Indian squaw' stereotype: of having to deal with Euro-Canadian men who automatically assume sexual passes will be accepted, and who may resort to violence if their advances are turned down. These attitudes and practices towards Native women continue to be found in rural regions of Canada (see Hamilton and Sinclair 1991; Dunk 1991:108-109, 114). As Janice Acoose (1995) points out, the highly publicized death of Helen Betty Osborne in La Pas, Manitoba, is only one instance of the chronic abuse that Native women have experienced and that has

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5 These different perspectives on racism were clearly evident in a recent assessment of the needs of Native students in the Cariboo Chilcotin School District (Gleadow 1992). An educational consultant surveyed Native students, their families, District education staff, principals, teachers, and counselors. Native students and their families reported that racial prejudice and discrimination - ranging in expression from direct racial taunts to more subtle forms of being excluded or being expected to be low achievers - were among the most important problems that Native students faced. In contrast, very few of the teachers, and none of the administrators, identified racial discrimination even as an issue facing Native students (ibid.:5).
been encouraged by the ‘Indian squaw’ stereotype.

On occasion, a particular incident draws media coverage and public attention to the pervasiveness of racism in the Cariboo. The 1992-1993 Cariboo Chilcotin Justice Inquiry, one of a series of recent task forces and public inquiries into aboriginal justice in Canada (Hickman, Poitras and Evans 1989; Alberta Task Force 1991; Hamilton and Sinclair 1991), documented widespread “attitude problems” among area police officers in their dealings with Native people (Sarich 1993). The Shuswap, Tsilhqot’in and Carrier people who testified at the inquiry told of RCMP assaults in jail cells, of widespread instances of RCMP abuses of authority, and of being threatened with or apprehended and taken to the city ‘drunk tank’ while sober. Various stereotypes legitimate these practices. The idea of the ‘Indian criminal’ underlies the chronic overpolicing and harassment of law-abiding Natives throughout the Cariboo-Chilcotin. The ‘drunken Indian’ stereotype supports the RCMP’s apparent abuse of authority in using the city drunk tank as an unofficial means of social control.

Many Native people, intimidated by the adversarial nature of the inquiry forum that allowed RCMP lawyers to cross-examine Native complainants, did not participate. Incidents now forming part of the written records of the Inquiry reflect only a small portion of the accounts of discrimination, unfair and demeaning treatment, and brutality that comprise the ‘common-sense’ experience of Natives throughout the region. For the most part, the accounts of everyday racism that circulate freely in the Native community are excluded from the official, public record of Williams Lake.

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6 Transcripts, Cariboo Chilcotin Justice Inquiry, Nenqai Yaheltig Law Center, Anaham Reserve.
7 For example, the substantive issues of R.C.M.P. abuse and brutality, and the differential treatment of Native people by agents of the provincial court system, went virtually unreported in the city newspaper, despite receiving prominent coverage in the Vancouver Sun.
In the remaining pages I turn to these private contexts in which Natives describe their experiences of dealing with Euro-Canadians. This is only a brief and cursory discussion of the diversity of forms of status domination that impinge on Native lives. These accounts also suggest the variety of ways in which Native people are struggling to resist their demeaning treatment. These accounts were relayed to me by individuals, most of whom were Shuswap, who were in the thirty to seventy year age range and who have been longtime residents of reserves. As reserve residents, they bear a particular stigma in the eyes of Euro-Canadians who use the phrase “reserve Indian” as a most demeaning insult. Many of these individuals have attended the residential school at the Mission, in which they received a powerful indoctrination into notions of cultural and moral inferiority. It is from this particular constellation of life experiences that they speak.

Examples

One of the most common sites of Native/Euro-Canadian interaction occurs in the stores, businesses and cafes around town, where Natives are consumers of goods and services controlled by Euro-Canadian providers. Most Euro-Canadians have little informal social contact with Natives. They ‘know’ about Natives through the anecdotes and jokes exchanged during conversational rituals, but usually do not know Native people through personal relationships as unique individuals. As a result, when a Native person enters a store, the customer’s Indianness may precede and predetermine the manner in which the clerk relates to her customer.

Many Native people have had the experience of being rudely treated at store counters or of being treated as suspected shoplifters. One man in his fifties recounted his experiences:
You see that often when a Native person walks into a store. You watch them, the clerk will be just watching you, following you around. Or right away, as soon as you get in there, they’ll come up to you and say “Can I help you?”. One time, this lady was watching me, following me wherever I went. Then she came up to me and said, “Can I help you?”. I told her, “If I’m going to steal something I don’t need your help!” After that she never did bother me. She’d just say “Hi” when she saw me come in, that was all.

Another middle-aged woman commented:

Look at when you go to the mall to go shopping at Saan’s, or Woolco. They follow you around in there. It’s like, it pisses me off. I tell one of those women, “What’s your problem?” and she’ll look at me and say, “Oh, I don’t have a problem” and she’ll walk away. But... you go in there to buy clothes and all you do is get followed around. It kind of pisses me off.

A Native woman in her forties described an incident in which she was in line at a local department store waiting to purchase some items. She waited for five minutes while the clerk carried on a pleasant, friendly conversation with the white woman ahead of her who had just finished buying some goods. The clerk finally turned to her, her smile vanishing and a coldness appearing. Offering no apology for having made her wait for so long, the clerk then took her money and threw it down on the counter. Her Native customer angrily slammed down the goods on the counter and snatched her money back, stormed out saying “If that’s the way you’re going to treat me I’ll keep my money!” To her, this was just another example of the way Native customers are frequently treated in stores around town.

Being suspected of shoplifting, of being ignored or receiving poor service in stores and restaurants, of being subjected to the icy stares of store clerks are typical experiences of Native peoples in many rural communities in Canada and have been documented in other small town ethnographies (Braroe 1975:105-107; Stymeist
1975:68-69). The ability of non-Native store clerks to control the public status of their customers during the interchange is enabled by the imbalance in power: in order to purchase food, clothing, and other necessities, Native people must interact with Euro-Canadian clerks and cashiers, even if only briefly (Lithman 1984). Native people's vulnerability in such circumstances only adds to their sense of frustration. In these stories, people described their individual means for coping: by making angry retorts or by challenging the clerks for their disrespectful treatment. In some cases, resistance is expressed through angry response and withdrawal.

A second context of interaction occurs in the public spaces around the city: on the streets, in the park, in the shopping mall, in the bars and cafes. Going to town, whether to play bingo, to drink, to shop, or simply to spend time socializing, is an enjoyable activity for many people. Most Native people, however, do not see the city as neutral territory; rather it is a space controlled by Euro-Canadians and a place where Natives remain on guard for potential acts of disrespect and abuse. While Natives and Euro-Canadians share the same public space in town, by implicit social convention there is limited informal, personal contact between the two groups. Instead, Natives and Euro-Canadians often move and socialize in separate clusters.

The city's indoor shopping mall is one of the most popular gathering places, where people mingle in the corridors, on the benches, or at the tables in the food court. It is also one of the best barometers of Native/Euro-Canadian tensions. During the two month armed confrontation between Natives and the RCMP at Gustafsen Lake in 1995, relations between Natives and Euro-Canadians across the Cariboo were tense: Natives in 100 Mile House were refused service in local restaurants, and T-shirts with anti-Native slogans were reportedly selling "like
hotcakes” at one rural cafe. These tensions spilled over into interactions at the Williams Lake mall. One mother told me of the trouble experienced by her teenage daughter who, sick of the stares and hostile glances of a group of Euro-Canadian adults seated nearby, finally turned and said angrily, “Yes, I am from Gustafsen Lake!” She was proud that her daughter had defended her dignity in this manner.

More blatant acts of harassment occurred when the Cariboo Chilcotin Justice Inquiry hearings were in session. Native customers in the mall reported they were being singled out for selective harassment by security guards, who were walking through the mall videotaping Native customers and evicting some (including one prominent Tsilhqot’in chief) for purportedly loitering with no purpose. These tensions intensified due to allegations raised to the Inquiry, allegations that received provincial news headlines, that a mall security guard had on several occasions used excessive force and had physically assaulted Native patrons. In response to growing complaints, area First Nations leaders met privately with the mall manager. They pointed out the economic importance of Native shoppers to the mall and threatened a boycott unless the harassment ended. Subsequently, new security guards were hired.

In this way, area First Nations are transforming their individual economic power as consumers into public, collective forms of political resistance. Despite the growing recognition by local businesses of the importance of Native consumer dollars to the city’s economy, Native patrons at the mall continue to describe instances of harassment. Recently a Native woman has taken the strategy of writing to the city newspaper to complain of such discriminatory treatment. In so doing, these challenges are increasingly entering public forums of debate.

8 One T-shirt had enscribed on it: Gustafsen Lake, ’95, and pictured an Indian status card imprinted with the Monopoly board game phrase “Get out of jail free”.

9 Williams Lake Tribune, 28 February 1995.
Status domination occurs through the forcible ascription of negative identities. One of the most common of these imposed identities is that of the 'drunken Indian'. So pervasive is this stereotype that on occasion, Native people showing no outward, apparent signs of inebriation are perceived by Euro-Canadians as drunks. The prevalence of the 'drunken Indian' stereotype in Williams Lake is particularly remarkable given that one nearby Shuswap community, Alkali Lake, has become internationally known for successfully dealing with the problem of alcoholism. An older Native man spoke of his frustration with this stereotype:

A lot of places I went - I haven't had a drink for 15 years, and... that's what they keep saying, "You're this", no matter who you are. If you seen me walk through the door, there, a lot of places I go, the first thing you think of is "Well, here comes another one of them drunken Indians off the street". And this is the kind of thing that goes before us, a lot of the times, "Another stupid Indian coming along, drunk". This is what we have to pack. That's why, a lot of times, a person walks in the room, he either wants to walk out he's so scared, or he's going to fight.

The weight of stereotypes are felt as a physical burden, as something that Native people have to "pack" around, as an image that precedes them in their interactions with non-Natives. So powerful are these images in the Euro-Canadian imagination that Natives such as this man feel that effective forms of resistance are limited to two strategies: withdrawal or physical violence.

Status domination also plays out as struggles over the control of public space. The tensions that exist among Natives and Euro-Canadians in the mall, in cafes, and in bars raise the issue of Native peoples' right to be treated with the same respect and dignity as other citizens occupying public space. In the face of disparaging treatment, a common Native response is withdrawal. Some Natives may frequent only those stores and restaurants in which they are treated
respectfully. There are some public spaces - the bars at the foot of Oliver street, the Chinese cafe downtown - that are known as Indian places. This form of informal spatial segregation of Native and non-Native establishments, perhaps in a more extreme form, has been described for other rural Canadian towns as well (Braroe 1975:42-43, 105-107; Stymeist 1975:70).

These struggles over the control of public space also occur in more mundane contexts such as city sidewalks. Forty years ago it was conventional for Euro-Canadian townspeople to expect Natives to step off the sidewalks when they approached. An elderly Shuswap woman once described her experience as a young woman when, one day, she refused to yield to some approaching white women. They angrily pushed her and her friend aside, shouting "Get off the sidewalk you dirty squaws!" These extreme forms of domination and public deferral to white authority are no longer conventional expectations among all Euro-Canadians. However, city streets continue to be sites of struggle.10 ‘Bob’, a man in his thirties, and ‘Andrea’, a woman in her forties, described what for them were the commonsense realities of being Native in Williams Lake:

Bob: Its not always an out and out thing... it’s just the looks you get, or being cut off in traffic, or being made to step aside. It’s there.

Andrea: Walking down the street - [they] expect you to get off the road. I used to do that before, but I won’t anymore.

Bob: Now I’m getting so I’ll walk into their chest if I have to. Because they wouldn't do that for anyone else - they see someone else coming along, their own colour, its “Oh, excuse me!” But if they see you coming, they won’t look you in the eyes or anything, they keep on

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10 I experienced this myself in the 1990s, when an elderly Native man and woman gave way to me while we were still very distant on a narrow trail on the Stampede grounds. At the time I thought only that it was a very curious and overly-polite reaction.
talking or whatever. But they know they’re going to walk into you unless you move.

Here domination translates not into forms of hyper-visibility in public places, as describe earlier, but its opposite: the hyper-invisibility of Native people in the public landscape. This invisibility brings with it a form of enforced physical subservience. Through the avoidance of eye contact Euro-Canadians negate the very existence of Natives as human beings occupying physical space. In response, both these individuals now enact physical forms of resistance, refusing to yield even if it means a physical collision.

This enforced invisibility is a pervasive mode of domination in Native/non-Native relations. Many Native people I spoke with described their relationship with the Euro-Canadian community as “non existent”: Euro-Canadian townspeople simply ignore their presence in numerous ways. This rendering of Natives as irrelevant and non-existent has long been one of the most peculiar features of small town Indian/white relations (Hawthorn, Jamieson and Belshaw 1960:65; Braroe 1975:115-118). As Albert Memmi (1965) has argued, the rendering invisible of colonized populations is a characteristic feature of all colonial relationships. It denies the injustice of relations of inequality and domination through negating the existence of the dominated. In the process, power is both exercised and rendered invisible.

In summary, status domination operates through the shaming, the humiliation, and the denial of worth communicated in a variety of subtle, habitual practices: the glances, the passing remarks, the turned backs, and the verbal insults. These interpersonal modes of power and violence, when practiced over a long term against a population already made vulnerable through other modes of domination, have a profoundly demoralizing impact. Certainly, not all Euro-Canadians engage in these practices. On any day one can observe instances of
friendliness and politeness in the interchanges between Natives customers and Euro-Canadian clerks. Yet there are, and have been in the past, enough instances of negative, dehumanizing treatment that Native people now guard and limit their interactions with Euro-Canadians. These practices in part account for the fact that many Native people prefer to remain living in reserve communities rather than moving in to town or to other Euro-Canadian cities (Lithman 1984). It is against this legacy of continual denial of moral worth and dignity that many Native people in the Cariboo are now struggling.

Plural Forms of Native Resistance

These accounts also indicate the various forms of emerging resistance: of Native people's refusal to give way, either physically or morally, to Euro-Canadian domination. There are increasing instances in which Natives are directly challenging subtle slights and overt racial slurs. Indeed, in the very telling of these experiences, Native people are celebrating their own acts of resistance. Some of these triumphs, to be sure, are relatively minor: the store clerk who, after being challenged by the Native man, would say "Hi" to him but nothing more, or the Native woman's explosion at the clerk who treated her rudely. Perhaps what makes this instances significant to the tellers is that they represent what Scott (1990:206) refers to as the "political electricity", the sense of release, elation and personal satisfaction, that comes from the first public challenge to long-standing systems of domination.

Other forms of resistance are more powerful. Native leaders are mobilizing their economic power as consumers to collectively challenge forms of demeaning treatment in the city's stores. At the political level, after years of lobbying Tsilhqot'in leaders were finally successful in convincing the province to strike the Cariboo Chilcotin Justice Inquiry to investigate allegations of racial brutality and
abuse by RCMP and agents of the provincial justice system. These forms of resistance to everyday, interpersonal modes of status domination parallel the political efforts of First Nations leaders to redress other historical injustices: the government’s long standing denial of aboriginal rights and title, and the legacy of sexual, physical and emotional abuses suffered by Native children at St. Joseph’s Mission residential school.

These multiple modes of resistance contrast significantly with the limited and circumscribed forms of opposition enacted by Natives in the small Saskatchewan ranching community studied by Braroe (1975) in the late 1960s. The primary modes of opposition then were “covering” - attempts to hide one’s Native identity - and social withdrawal from Euro-Canadian contact. Braroe also describes what he calls forms of “exploitation”, in which Natives take advantage of Euro-Canadians in small business deals - such as borrowing money without repaying it - but in so doing only reinforce dominant assumptions about Natives’ untrustworthy, lazy, and duplicitous character.

Natives may also defiantly engage in public behaviours that contravene Euro-Canadian morals precisely because they do contravene Euro-Canadian standards (Schwimmer 1972): they are defiant, defensive acts of symbolic opposition to Euro-Canadian moral domination. Aggressive public drunkenness is one of the best examples. Through these acts, Native people are effectively stating: “I am an Indian, I am drunk, and what will you do about it?” In a similar vein, Nancy Lurie (1971) has described Native public drunkenness as “the world’s longest on-going protest demonstration”.

As Schwimmer points out, these forms of symbolic opposition, which only confirm dominant negative stereotypes of Indians, are a reflection of the extreme powerlessness of a dominated population and of the limited resources available for direct resistance. In contrast, the various modes of resistance now evident in the
Cariboo setting are testimony to the increasing empowerment of Native peoples in many small town settings across Canada.

At the same time, forms of direct, organized political resistance are matched by a continuation of these symbolic modes of resistance. This rich, dramatic, and playful culture of resistance is largely invisible, and unappreciated, by Euro-Canadians. This is essentially a culture of humour in which Natives play with dominant stereotypes, defusing their power through inversion, through parody, and through rendering meaning ambiguous.

One mode is through joking. Indian jokes are widespread in the Cariboo Native community. Some jokes play on the failure of modern Natives to live up to Euro-Canadians’ expectations of noble savagery. In one example, a young girl was searching her home for some matches. Her older sister joked with her: “Rub two sticks together! What kind of Indian are you, anyway?” Another example occurred one time when I was a passenger in a carload of Native people. It was an early fall afternoon. As we drove through a residential district of the city, passing many homes in which newly cut wood was stacked for winter use, the driver, a Native man in his forties, turned to us and said: “How do Indians know it will be a hard winter?” When none of us replied, he said “White man make a lot of wood!” His shift to the broken Indian-speak of Hollywood movies (Stedman 1982) added a particularly humorous edge to his parody of Euro-Canadian expectations of the noble savage.11

Many other jokes play on the negative stereotypes that surround Natives’ public identity in Williams Lake, particularly that of the ‘drunken Indian’ and the

11 Certainly, too, there are contexts in which Natives exploit these stereotypes, just as there are instances in which Euro-Canadians challenge them. For example, romantic noble savage images are being promoted by the Soda Creek First Nation which, in partnership with a German couple, has recently constructed a “Heritage Village” and is offering international tourists the opportunity to experience authentic Shuswap culture and traditions.
‘Indian criminal’. These jokes twist the stereotypes into a form of self-parody that is also a form of defiant symbolic opposition. One example is a joke once told to a roomful of Native people in a reserve home where I was staying. The joke, told by a Native person and received with much laughter, went: “What did the little Indian boy get for his birthday? The neighbour’s bike!”

Occasionally, these jokes are not only spoken, but dramatically enacted. I recall one such occasion some years ago. It was late in the evening, and some Native friends - ‘Joe’, his wife, and three other adults - and I were just leaving the Friendship Center in town after a powwow. Drumming and singing could still be heard in the background. As we began to cross the street to Joe’s pickup, he called out “Hey” to the others to get their attention, and started staggering across the street, acting like a drunk. He, his wife, and his friends began laughing at his antics. We got into the truck and drove off. Joe is a prominent member of the reserve community, and at that time was the leader of the reserve’s Alcoholics Anonymous group and had been sober for nine years.

In their attempts to renegotiate their public identities as Indians, Joe and other sober members of his community must struggle against the prevalent assumption among Euro-Canadian townspeople that “all Indians are drunks”. ‘Playing drunk’, particularly in the context of city streets, is a dangerous activity: not only was Joe acting like a drunk, he was likely to be perceived as one by Euro-Canadian onlookers. In facing the continual possibility of being labeled a ‘drunk Indian’, his dramatic performance carved out a private space of resistance: his playful self-parody was humorous precisely because he and his audience knew he is now sober. In this way, ‘playing drunk’ continues the long tradition of staging public drunkenness as a defiant mode of symbolic opposition to Euro-Canadian domination noted by Schwimmer and Lurie some twenty years ago. But the
language of opposition - framed on the 'drunken Indian' stereotype - is now reformulated into the current context of a community of sober Native people.

In voicing Indian jokes in private, and in performing jokes in Euro-Canadian contexts, Native people are enacting forms of indirect resistance against the pervasive colonial discourse they encounter in Williams Lake. Through ambiguity, humour and parody, these joke tellers and performers are subverting the concepts of difference that prevail in Euro-Canadian constructions. It is the frame of humour that enables this process. Because acts of joking convey meanings that are presumed to differ from the meanings conveyed when the acts are performed seriously (Basso 1979:37), Native forms of 'joking about Indians' make the literal truth of stereotypes problematic: they encourage audiences to question them. If they are not to be taken literally, what is their meaning? It is precisely the ambiguity of these joking practices - the fact that meaning is left hanging in the air, undefined - that momentarily suspends the power of a colonial discourse. Epistemological power is defused and meaning dissolves into fragments of possibility.

Conclusion

The everyday Euro-Canadian discourses of difference and the various modes of Native resistance to forms of interpersonal domination are processes occurring simultaneous to more general political and economic challenges in relations between First Nations organizations, local and provincial governments, and regional forestry and mining companies. What I have presented is essentially a momentary snapshot of how Natives and Euro-Canadians, in the dimension of interpersonal relations, are attempting to comprehend, to maintain, or to reconfigure their relations with one another. These mundane, everyday dynamics of Native/non-Native relations are an important but frequently overlooked dimension of colonial domination and resistance.
Two recent works have provided ethnographic portraits of localized Euro-Canadian racism against Natives. Thomas Dunk, in an ethnography of male working class culture in northern Ontario, accounts for anti-Native racism as a form of false consciousness, a scapegoating ideology that blinds workers to the reality of their own domination and exploitation within the capitalist system (Dunk 1991). Charles Menzies examines racist discourses among Euro-Canadian fishermen in Prince Rupert, portraying them as understandable reactions rooted in fishermen's fears of losing their livelihoods should land claims settlements involve a transfer of fisheries resources to First Nations (1994:778).

While documenting the existence of everyday, common-sense racism, the cost of their theoretical rationalization of sympathetically portraying Euro-Canadian workers as victims of the larger capitalist system is a significant lack of attention not only to First Nations' accounts of their own experiences as the victims of chronic, long-term racism, but also to ordinary Euro-Canadians' ongoing complicity as powerful, localized agents in a system of colonial domination. While racism becomes more intense and overt in times of economic crisis, it is not caused by economic competition. Rather, racism has been a defining characteristic of Canadian culture, and of small town social relations, for over a century. These analyses restrict "real" power to corporate boardrooms and metropolitan government offices (Menzies 1994:784). In so doing, they detract attention from the complexity of colonial practices and deny what Foucault (1980:39) would call the diffuse, "capillary" forms in which colonial power is exercised in Canada. At worst, these analyses could be read as offering a structural rationale and apology for racism, inadvertently contributing to the very hegemonic colonial system they would seek to challenge.

Racism, and constructions of aboriginal difference more generally, are central ingredients of Euro-Canadian small town cultural traditions.
conventional forms of racist beliefs and practices have served as effective modes of power that over the long term have maintained the subordinated position of Native peoples. It is this more general set of taken-for-granted cultural assumptions from which other dominant discourses, which indeed become more public in times of economic conflict, emerge. In the next chapter I turn to examine current public conflicts over aboriginal land claims, how certain discourses are mobilized to defend Euro-Canadian interests, and how First Nations leaders are adopting a variety of strategies to challenge these dominant discourses.
Chapter Six:
The Land Claims Forum.

In 1990 the provincial Social Credit government announced its intention to cooperate with the federal government in the negotiation of outstanding aboriginal land claims. Months later the newly-elected New Democratic government affirmed this commitment. In 1992 the tripartite B.C. Treaty Commission was established to oversee the treaty negotiation process. These developments signified a historic shift in a provincial policy that had denied aboriginal title for 120 years. They also marked the beginning of a new stage in regional struggles between aboriginal people and non-Natives in the Cariboo-Chilcotin that have been ongoing since the arrival of the first non-Native settlers over a century ago. First Nations’ claims to land, resources and self-government call into question not only the presumed right of governments, industries, and individual non-Native users to control the lands and resources of the region. They also call into question the cultural apparatus that has been used to legitimate the subordination of aboriginal peoples: the official histories celebrating ‘discovery’ and ‘conquest’, the public identities of Euro-Canadian benevolent paternalism and Native cultural/racial inferiority, and the liberal democratic myth of the ‘self-made man’. These competing visions of history, of society, and of Native/non-Native relations are at the center of public debates on aboriginal land claims in the Cariboo.

In this chapter I explore how Euro-Canadians and First Nations people, in public forums and debates, are discussing the issues of land claims and aboriginal treaties. These issues are presented through an account of one public forum on land claims held in Williams Lake in March, 1995. The forum was organized by the federal Reform Party and was one of eight “Town Hall” meetings held across the province in the spring of 1995 to rally public opposition to the aboriginal treaty
process. The discussions that took place at the Reform town hall meeting echoed the prevalent views that I encountered during interviews with civic leaders, at other public land claims forums, and in letters to the city newspaper, views that I weave into this narrative account.

In tracing public discourses on land claims I am not attempting to assess the strategic logic of Euro-Canadian opposition to land claims, analyzing how accurately Euro-Canadians assess their economic predicaments or how reasonable their responses may be within their own economic circumstances. Instead, my goal is to provide a deeper interpretation of the conceptual structure of Euro-Canadian oppositional discourse. I show, first, how Euro-Canadian opposition to land claims draws upon key assumptions of the local dominant culture: public values, regional identities, beliefs about Natives, and theories of society and history. Second, in engaging in the politics of embarrassment, Euro-Canadians are drawing attention to perceived contradictions in the dominant culture in order to reveal inconsistencies in government ideology and practice and to pressure governments to abandon (or modify) their treaty negotiation policies.

One of the central arguments of this chapter is that racism, as an ideology of hierarchical difference, in itself is inadequate to account for the mechanisms of power that maintain the subordination of aboriginal populations in British Columbia. Euro-Canadian discourses opposing land claims, while they obviously attempt to deny aboriginal rights and title and perpetuate the existing relations of power, can not be simply characterized as expressions of racism. These discourses are not all centered on the continual assertion of aboriginal /Euro-Canadian 'difference'; they do not all involve a reification of the inferior Native Other. However, Euro-Canadian oppositional discourses do not simply reflect the opposite: the promotion of an assimilationist solution to the 'Indian problem' by denying aboriginal 'difference'. The hegemonic workings of the dominant culture
involve much more complex processes of the situational manipulation of concepts of similarity and difference in order to defend existing Euro-Canadian material privileges. The exercise of power involves, as its central feature, the ability of dominant groups to control public definitions of identities, of historical relationships, and of contemporary conflicts.

Just as Euro-Canadian oppositional discourses on land claims are varied, so are the discourses engaged in by First Nations leaders who seek to garner public support for aboriginal treaties. When speaking to Euro-Canadians in public forums, First Nations leaders are attempting to challenge the official histories that have rendered aboriginal people invisible from the landscape, and the negative and demeaning public identities they have been ascribed by local Euro-Canadians. As one recent commentator noted, much of aboriginal politics in Canada is concerned with the continued assertion of cultural difference (Kulchyski 1995:61). This is especially true in the context of court challenges, where aboriginal leaders must demonstrate the perpetuation of aboriginal rights and title via the survival of distinct aboriginal cultural practices. However, in other contexts of confrontation Native speakers engage in much more complex strategies to communicate with Euro-Canadian audiences.

I trace some of these strategies in the final pages of this chapter. While Native leaders are soliciting Euro-Canadian recognition of aboriginal peoples’ right to practice distinct cultures and to live in self-governing communities, their strategies for securing public support involve more than just a juxtaposition of aboriginal and Euro-Canadian world views, cultural values and histories. They involve more than a reification of ‘difference’. Instead, aboriginal speakers are also speaking from within the dominant culture, are using dominant genres of discourse, and are making appeals to Euro-Canadian cultural values and symbols of power as they attempt to make the terms of the dominant culture ‘work’ for their specific
purposes. Native discourses on land claims reflect the plurality of aboriginal voices and identities and the varied degrees in which First Nations cultures, at times, are strategically articulated with that of mainstream society.

Background

In 1993 the B.C. Treaty Commission, comprising representatives from the federal and provincial governments and B.C. First Nations Summit, began the process of overseeing negotiations with the 69% of First Nations in the province that have agreed to participate in the process. In 1995 the Nisga’a—negotiating since 1976 under the federal government’s comprehensive claims process—signed an agreement in principle with the federal and provincial governments, marking one more step towards the signing of the first modern treaty in the province. The speed at which the current treaty negotiations are proceeding is paralleled by intensifying public opposition and resistance to treaties among Euro-Canadians in rural resource communities.

Unlike most other regions in Canada that have been the site of recent treaties, in British Columbia, and the Cariboo region especially, virtually all of the traditional aboriginal territories—those portions that are called “unoccupied” Crown lands—are tied up in parks, forest licenses, grazing leases and mining tenures. The transfer of blocks of Crown land to aboriginal organizations through the treaty process will necessarily involve a reallocation of lands, resources and rights. To what extent this will involve economic disruptions to industry, employment, and related businesses in small towns across the interior is debatable. But there exists a growing common-sense belief in resource communities that

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1 Treaty negotiations were proceeding rapidly in the period of writing - 1993-1995 - but in 1996 have significantly slowed down. Some First Nations leaders believe the province is informally rescinding its policy of treaty negotiation by deliberately stalling the negotiation processes.
aboriginal treaties pose a serious threat to the survival of resource-dependent jobs, industry and communities.

Not all Euro-Canadians in Williams Lake are opposed to the treaty process, and some individuals and sectors fully support aboriginal peoples and their struggles. Varying perspectives on the land claims process are voiced in the city newspaper, in public forums and meetings, and in homes and workplaces across the city. Even forest companies, strongly encouraged by provincial government policies, are anticipating a future in which area First Nations are significant resource holders, and are establishing formal relationships and joint forestry ventures with area First Nations.

On the political front, though, there is a groundswell of opposition to the treaty process among forest industry, business, and some local government leaders. Williams Lake community leaders have described aboriginal treaties as the “single most important issue” facing the region, as the greatest “threat” to the Cariboo-Chilcotin forest companies, and as having the “greatest socio-economic impact on the next generation”. As treaty negotiations proceed, and as First Nations leaders are becoming increasingly politically assertive, private attitudes of racism are hardening and intensifying against First Nations people.

The last four years have seen a marked shift in the way Euro-Canadians publicly discuss aboriginal land claims. More and more Euro-Canadian residents and civic leaders are unwilling to go “on the record” to voice their opposition to the treaty process. In the context of what is perceived as a growing trend towards political correctness emanating from urban society, more Euro-Canadians are leery of publicly opposing land claims for fear of being branded as “racist”. In this climate, the Reform Party has emerged to champion the cause of the “average citizen” who opposes land claims. Reform representatives have developed a rhetoric designed to weather the politically correct climate of the 1990s while
espousing an assimilationist policy towards aboriginal people. This political rhetoric, and particularly the Reform Party’s call for “cash only” settlements, is one of the dominant discourses drawn upon by Euro-Canadians speaking out publicly against land claims settlements.

The Party’s critique of aboriginal treaties is based on two basic principles, which are variously elaborated and interpreted in localized discourses. The first and most powerful ideological critique is that aboriginal treaties and their self-government provisions contravene the Canadian ideals of equality, democracy and individualism by perpetuating a division of Canadians along racial lines by setting up racially-based territorial enclaves and by granting special rights and status to Indian people. The second critique draws on the public value of participatory democracy and the Reform Party’s own emphasis on grassroots populism. Reformers claim that the federal and provincial governments do not have the mandate to settle land claims without consulting the general public. The Reform party criticizes negotiations for going on “behind closed doors” and is demanding that any land claims agreements be put to a general public referendum for approval.

Debates about the legitimacy of the current B.C. Treaty Commission forum for negotiating aboriginal treaties are also occurring within First Nations communities across the province. Not all First Nations in the Cariboo-Chilcotin support the B.C. Treaty Commission. The five northern Shuswap First Nations and one southern Carrier First Nation are currently participating in the treaty

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The Reform Party’s influence is not limited to the Cariboo. In the 1993 federal election the Reform Party won 52 seats, replacing the previous Conservative M.P.s when that party fell to its crushing defeat. The vast majority of those seats were in Alberta and British Columbia. In B.C. the Reform party swept the province, electing candidates in 24 of the province’s 32 ridings (Eagles et al. 1995). The Reform Party has consistently opposed the settlement of aboriginal land claims not only in British Columbia, most recently the Nisga’a agreement in principle, but also the previous land claims settlements in the Western Arctic and Yukon.
negotiation process. In contrast, the six Tsilhqot’in and three southern Carrier First Nations are not. Like the James Bay Cree (Grand Council of the Crees 1995), the Kanawake Mohawk (Alfred 1995) and the Labrador Innu (Tanner 1993), they are asserting a sovereigntist political stance with respect to Canada. The Tsilhqot’in and southern Carrier First Nations argue that treaties are to be negotiated only on a nation to nation basis with the federal government and are openly criticizing the B.C. Treaty Commission for including the province of B.C. at the negotiating table. Whether the current treaty process is the most appropriate, whether or not First Nations should participate, and what the outcomes of these processes will be are topics of much discussion, and at times heated debate, within all Shuswap, Carrier and Tsilhqot’in communities.

These competing political views and interests came to a head in the Reform Party’s town hall meeting. The intensity of feeling surrounding the land claims issue was readily apparent. By the end of the meeting there were over 100 people, Native and non-Native, packed into the hall. The debates that occurred that evening were not merely intellectual clashes of competing world views, but at times were highly charged emotional confrontations that are typical of public challenges to long-standing systems of power and domination.

The Reform Town Hall Meeting

The town hall meeting was held on a blustery March evening at the Elks Hall, a downtown building owned by one of the most prominent service organizations in the city. By the start of the meeting eighty people have filed into the hall. Their spatial arrangement in the room reproduces the conventional social hierarchy: Euro-Canadians, many in the fifty to seventy age range, have taken seats

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3 Shuswap First Nations also strongly resisted the participation of the province and third party interests (municipal governments) at the negotiating table, but chose to proceed with this format nevertheless.
towards the front of the room, while clusters of Native people have gathered at the
sides and the back, some seated, others standing. Several First Nations chiefs and
community leaders are present. A number of Euro-Canadian civic leaders are there:
the mayor, a city councillor, regional district representatives (known as Reform
supporters), and the local figure who is representing the Council of Forest
Industries at the Nisga'a negotiating table. The city newspaper reporter and the
NDP M.L.A.'s executive assistant are there to tape record the event. In short,
Native leaders and at least some Euro-Canadian political leaders, particularly those
openly opposed to the current aboriginal treaty process, have deemed the town hall
meeting as an event of significant importance.

The meeting is called to order. The evening's moderator is a Euro-Canadian
man and former RCMP assistant commissioner. He announces: "We're here to
address the issues that rank number one on the minds of at least 50% of the
people in this province. Of course, I'm speaking of Indian land claims and self
government". The panel of speakers is introduced: Cariboo-Chilcotin M.P. Phillip
Mayfield, North Island-Powell River M.P. John Duncan, and the Skeena M.P.
Mike Scott, all Reform Party members. The fourth panel member is Mel Smith, an
elderly lawyer, career bureaucrat and former B.C. deputy minister in the Social
Credit government who "is recognized throughout Canada, I believe, as an
authority on constitutional matters pertaining to the aboriginal scene".

The ominous weight of the topic emerges almost immediately. The
moderator reassures us that the town hall meeting is a public forum, designed for
"two way communication". Paradoxically, to enable this, the chair informs us that
he will exercise "benevolent dictatorship" in regulating comments. The meeting is
to proceed with speeches from the local M.P., the lawyer, the two other M.P.s.
After this time the meeting is to be opened up for "questions to the panel",
facilitated by two roving men with microphones. Questioners are asked to line up
in an orderly fashion. “I encourage every one of you please to be respectful to one another. We Canadians have a reputation for tolerance in the face of disagreement - perhaps there will be some disagreement here”. His evocation of Canadian benevolence and the ideal values of fairness, equality, tolerance and freedom of speech are in sharp contrast to the angry, tense air that is emanating from the panelists, who, stiff and frowning, are staring out at the crowd.

Over the next hour the panelists present their reasons for opposing aboriginal treaties and land claims. Lawyer Mel Smith outlines his critique of the legal and historical basis for aboriginal land claims, a critique he has recently published (Smith 1995). Much of his argument is based on a creative, unconventional, and misleading interpretation of legal and historical facts. For example, he states that there is no legal basis for supporting aboriginal title claims and argues that aboriginal rights to the land were extinguished over a century ago when British colonial authority was established. His argument, however, relies on a selective reading of the legal record, drawing on the 1991 B.C. Supreme Court decision in the Delgamuukw case (McEachern 1991) but ignoring the 1993 B.C. Court of Appeal’s later conclusion that unextinguished aboriginal rights and interests in the land continue today.

Smith tells the audience that it is a “myth” that the province has never properly acquired Indian lands. Instead, in B.C. governments “proceeded in a different way” by establishing Indian reserves. B.C., he suggests, has been extremely generous in this regard: “Do you know, as a result... 70% of the reserves in Canada are in British Columbia! It is a myth to say the government has not met

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4 The B.C. Court of Appeal dismissed the Gitksan and Wet’suwet’en’s claim to ownership and jurisdiction, but found that aboriginal rights with respect to the land continue today and that the Crown’s title to the land is subject to these continuing aboriginal “interests”. The court ruled that the nature of these interests could only be determined through negotiated treaty settlements or through subsequent court cases (British Columbia Court of Appeal 1993:68-69).
its obligations to the Indians!” Many of the reserves in British Columbia, in contrast with the large prairie treaty lands, are only a few acres in size, established to cover small fishing stations, burial grounds, hay meadows or village sites. This fact, however, is obscured in Smith’s rhetoric of generosity. He continues, suggesting there is no legal reason for treaties to involve the transfer of lands. Instead, they can be settled through cash payments. He criticizes the treaty settlements in the Canadian north, which, in his words, “have virtually sacrificed our northern inheritance to a very very few Native people!” Finally, Smith argues that the idea of the inherent right to aboriginal self-government has no foundation in the law. The concept of aboriginal self-government, now recognized and supported by the federal government, “causes all sorts of problems, because it raises expectations, it causes the Native people, the leadership, to feel that they have their own rights”.

The images of history, of identity and of the nature of Indian/white relations that flow through Smith’s argument all resonate with dominant assumptions of the local Euro-Canadian culture. Frontier histories are evoked through negating aboriginal title and evoking the legitimacy of European ‘conquest’. The land of Canada is seen as being acquired through an “inheritance”, a term that suggests the legitimate, rightful transfer of wealth and equates the Canadian nation with a “family” in which all members share equally the national patrimony. This rhetoric erases the fundamental historical fact that the lands of Canada were appropriated from aboriginal peoples through coercion and force. By asserting the image of the homogeneous Canadian nation, this rhetoric erases the principle of aboriginal rights: that aboriginal peoples, by virtue of their original occupancy, have rights that distinguish them from immigrant Canadians. These lands, Smith suggests, are being “sacrificed” and “given away” to Native groups - terms that presuppose the rightful ownership by the Crown - rather than being
transferred back to aboriginal groups in recognition of the need to redress historical wrongs.

Weaving through Smith’s rhetoric is the self-image of benevolent paternalism: the persistent assumption, central to Canadian national identity and myths of history, that in Canada ‘we have treated our aboriginal people well’. The Euro-Canadian self-image of paternalism is matched by the stereotype of the ‘wealthy, ungrateful Indian’ who is unfairly benefiting from outlandish government generosity, and the passive, childlike Indian who is being misled into false “expectations” of their aboriginal rights by sympathetic governments. Aboriginal political activity is dismissed as the influence of outside agitators. Over and above these images is the very paternalistic assumption of superiority that enables Smith’s own critique: he dismisses aboriginal politicians as incapable of responsible decision-making, and he reaffirms the burden of Euro-Canadians, by virtue of their privileged vision, to direct aboriginal lives.

The Moral Discourse of Equality

The following speakers develop and articulate the ideological critique of aboriginal land claims as violations of the Canadian public ideals of participatory democracy and equality. John Duncan criticizes governments for negotiating with the Nisga’a nation without consulting the general public. He extends this critique of lack of representivity to political processes within the aboriginal communities. Ethnocentrically presuming that the Canadian ideals of democratic decision-making are also universal in aboriginal cultures in British Columbia, he claims that the aboriginal leadership is out of touch with the “grassroots” Native population. He cites a survey by Statistics Canada in which aboriginal people were asked what steps could be taken to resolve “problems in Indian reserves”. The most common response was “more policing” and “family counseling”, while “self-government”
was “way down near the bottom of the list”. He announces, “I have believed quite
firmly for some time that the Indian led leadership which views self government as
an answer for everything is thinking very differently from the membership”.

The most forceful critique of the evening is launched by the Skeena Reform
M.P. Mike Scott begins by warning the crowd that he will not be adhering to ideas
of “politically correct speech”. “As you’ve probably noticed, some non-Indians
think it’s respectful never to tell Indians anything that they think they aren’t
prepared to hear. I don’t agree!”. Framing his own critique in the comfortable
language of paternalistic benevolence, he begins by suggesting that land claims are
not in the best interests of Native people. The province’s resource economy will
be destroyed by land claims settlements, he tells the audience. Thus, “as the least
well off British Columbians, Indians more than anyone will be harmed if the
government makes deals that help destroy the economy”.

The central theme of his argument is that aboriginal land claims and treaties
violate the fundamental Canadian principle of the equality of all citizens. He states:
“We should all be equal before the law... we should all be subject to the same laws
in the same way. This is a fundamental principle of democracy. Anyone who draws
distinctions on the basis of race, regardless of whether they have good intentions
or not, is a racist by definition.” The problems that Native peoples now face, he
claims, are due to the fact that they have not been granted equality before the law
in the past:

A lot of people, strangely enough, believe that the solution to these
problems is to do more of what caused them in the first place. They
think that what we need is laws that give Indians special privileges, status
and rights. Why would anyone think that this would work when it has
failed so miserably to this point in time... this would be bad for Indians
as well. ... this is .. not a pitched battle between those who want to help
Indians and those who want to hurt them... but a battle between those
who believe in individual rights and those who believe in group rights.
Scott's rhetoric of equality, however, involves more than an upholding of Canadian principles. His argument is explicitly framed on an evolutionist theory of history that presumes that aboriginal cultures will, and must, assimilate into the modern capitalist society and economy that encompasses them. Equality, in this second sense, is the natural historical imperative of cultural assimilation of 'primitive' cultures into more complex, 'civilized' societies. This implicit theory of history is one of the defining characteristics of colonial ideologies. In Canada this assumption has long been a central feature of Canadian Indian policy, and in the 1940s and 1950s was central to the 'acculturationist' approach to aboriginal cultures (Murphy and Steward 1956; Steward 1960), an approach that has since been refuted by anthropological studies documenting the viability and persistence of hunting societies and cultures despite their encompassment within industrial capitalism (for example, Asch 1982; Feit 1982).

Nevertheless, these ideas of cultural evolution and the incompatibility of aboriginal and Western cultures are widespread among the Canadian public. Scott's rhetoric draws upon these 'common-sense' assumptions. Aboriginal treaties, he argues, are invalid because aboriginal political leaders are trying to "recreate a way of life that never existed!" He continues: "It is something of a scam to say that they could recreate traditional life" today with the added luxuries of Western technology. "That way of life is gone. And it isn't coming back". Culture is defined as material technology rather than the more intangible and

\[^{5}\text{In sharp contrast are the anti-assimilationist ideologies now emerging in post-colonial contexts in Europe in response to increased Third World immigration. The political rhetoric of right-wing groups opposing immigration is framed not on the assumption of the inevitability of assimilation, but the opposite: the incompatibility of different cultures, and the 'natural' tendency of cultural groups to avoid communication and contact and to maintain separate cultural traditions. Immigration, thus, threatens the nation's presumed homogeneous integrity and will 'inevitably' lead to violence (Stolcke 1995).}\]
encompassing modes of social organization, values and world views. From within this narrow perspective, Scott denies the very feasibility of continued ‘difference’ of aboriginal groups within contemporary Canadian society.

Public opposition to land claims through the assertion of the value of equality is occasionally expressed by other groups and individuals opposed to land claims. Recently a group calling itself the B.C. Foundation for Individual Rights and Equality has formed to oppose the New Democratic Party’s policy of negotiating aboriginal title settlements. A Williams Lake area community leader is one of the group’s directors. He recently wrote to the city newspaper, voicing opposition to aboriginal treaties through a similar rhetoric. The target of his criticism, once again, is not the Native leadership but the federal and provincial governments. There is a similar denial of difference and of historical rights, and a similar image of the naive, childlike aboriginal person who is being misled by government:

This summer we are witnessing a flood of disputes over native assertions of their so-called “aboriginal rights”... The real villains [sic] in all this are the federal and provincial governments and their bureaucrats. Since 1982, these culprits have been leading the native people to expect that their wish lists would be fulfilled, that indeed Canada’s native people have a right to expect preferential treatment. The fact is, these “rights” exist only in government policies... Our governments - and the Indians - had better get the message: there is one law for all Canadians. The people in this country will never tolerate any policies or actions that disregard our equality and individual rights... [Natives] have no rights beyond what every other citizen has... The time has come to put an end to governments, bureaucracies and policies that have headed too far down a road that will lead this country to ruin.6

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6 “Only one law for Canadian people”, Williams Lake Tribune, 1 August, 1995, A5.
Discourses such as these engage in a selective organization of history, and of knowledge, in which the ideal of equality is situationally mobilized to protect the power and privilege of members of the dominant society. These speakers protect themselves from accusations of racism by avoiding criticizing land claims through a rhetoric of aboriginal difference, particularly notions of difference constructed as cultural backwardness or moral inferiority. Instead, they turn the tables, and argue that the very mention of 'difference' constitutes expressions of racism.

In championing equality and denouncing aboriginal treaties as furthering racism, these discourses are among the most powerful oppositional forms now circulating around land claims discussions. In constructing their political rhetoric, these speakers are highlighting apparent contradictions between Canadian ideals and government practice. Yet these are not just 'invented' issues: this rhetoric is enabled by the tensions between the Canadian egalitarian ethic and the many forms of discrimination and differentiation that can be found in legislation, government policy, and popular cultural practices.

One example is the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms itself, which simultaneously protects the right of all citizens to be treated equally before the law while also acknowledging and preserving the "multicultural" heritage of Canadians (Bayefsky and Eberts 1985:599-607). It can be interpreted as affirming both individual rights and the collective rights of distinct ethnic groups.

Further, the Charter's equality clause is not interpreted by legal scholars to mean that all individuals must be treated the same before the law (Bayefsky 1985; Weiler and Elliot 1986; Beckton 1987; Hudson 1987; Sanders 1987). Differential treatment based on such varied factors as level of income, physical capability, and religion are all acknowledged as necessary to ensure 'just' and fair treatment. This does not mean that these tensions between equality and differentiation are not debated within the legal discipline. One scholar, for example, has argued that any
law can be defended and attacked on the basis of equality (Gold 1986:88). Reform Party opponents to land claims are not alone in drawing attention to perceived contradictions and manipulating the ideal of equality for their own particular political interests. Their rallying cry of “One law for all Canadians”, though, does not reflect the reality of how the legal system operates. Nor does it reflect the Canadian Constitution itself, which recognizes and affirms that aboriginal peoples have distinct rights that are not shared by non-Native Canadians.

Alternate orientations between equality and difference, between assimilation and segregation, have permeated the history of Canadian Indian policy and its implementation. The federal government’s formal policy of assimilation has been empowered by a federal Indian Act that has defined Native people as legally distinct from all other Canadians, and has been implemented by an Indian Affairs bureaucracy that presumes Native people are inherently incapable of directing their own lives (Tobias 1983; Dyck 1991). The creation of the Indian reserve system and the ongoing management of Indian peoples by a distinct federal bureaucracy has not only contributed to the ongoing marginalization of Native peoples from Canadian society but has fostered the general belief among the general public that Native peoples are ‘different’ from non-Native Canadians.

The Reform Party’s denial of aboriginal/non-Native difference also runs counter to the vast cultural apparatus that has been developed over the four centuries of colonial occupation of Canada, in which Natives, in literature, in popular culture, in the arts, and in academic work, have been portrayed as inherently different from mainstream society. The distinctiveness of aboriginal peoples is symbolized in the totem poles, tipis, and headdressed Indian chiefs. These images have become central symbols in the construction of Canadian national identity found in museums, in tourism commodities, and in national public ceremonies and festivities.
In short, it has become conventional to argue that the construction of aboriginal peoples as Other has long been one of the mechanisms for reproducing colonial authority (Said 1978, 1994). What public discourses opposing land claims reveal, though, is that the exercise of colonial power - and aboriginal resistance to it, as I will discuss later - involves a more complex process of the manipulation of notions of similarity and difference. Gerald Sider has identified these conflicting tendencies in colonial relations in North America. He argues that both are essential to the continued domination of indigenous peoples:

If the expansion and consolidation of state power simply undermined, homogenized, and ultimately destroyed the distinctive societies and ethnic groups in its grasp, as various acculturation or melting-pot theories would have it, the world would long ago have run out of its supply of diverse ways of life... To the contrary, state power must not only destroy but also generate cultural differentiation, and to do so not only between different nation states... but in the center of its grasp as well (1987:3).

This does not mean that colonial states should be credited with a collective, systematic intelligence. Instead, these alternate orientations, at times denying ‘difference’ and incorporating aboriginal people into the national fold, at other times reifying aboriginal ‘difference’ through concepts of collective inferiority, through images of cultural exoticism, or through romantic notions of aboriginal superiority to Western culture, are a reflection of the uncoordinated and heterogeneous ideals and interests that various colonial groups - government bureaucrats, missionaries, settlers, contemporary New Age believers and tourism operators - have brought to their relationships with aboriginal peoples.

The most significant consequence of these diverse relationships and practices, for this discussion, is that over time they have created a cultural matrix - a pool of symbols, images, values, and ideals, such as that of equality, of
multiculturalism, of individualism, of aboriginal exoticism - that can be drawn upon in specific circumstances to manipulate concepts of aboriginal/non-Native similarity and difference for the purpose of affirming or challenging relations of power. These are the processes that are occurring in Euro-Canadian discourses opposing aboriginal land claims. The hegemonic potential of these discourses, as I will continue to argue in the following pages, exists not only in efforts to deny difference or to present assimilation as the natural, inevitable course of history. Nor does it lie in the ability of groups simply to impose stigmatized identities of inferiority on Native peoples. Instead, power lies in the more general ability of groups to control the public definition of identities, of histories, and the nature of aboriginal/Euro-Canadian conflicts.\(^7\)

Other Discourses: Naturalizing Conquest and Denying Aboriginality

Some Euro-Canadians oppose land claims by relativizing the brutalities of history. They argue that the “conquest” of one group by another, while perhaps tragic and regrettable, has long been a natural feature of Western history. If aboriginal groups are to be compensated for their loss of land, other groups, with equally valid claims for compensation, will also have to be recompensed. In one recent letter, an area resident asked “How far back do we have to go?”, suggesting that if aboriginal claims are to be accepted, the British should also be compensated for the invasion by the Romans. In so doing, these individuals detach the issue of aboriginal rights from the context of colonialism and render it a ‘natural’ feature of

\(^{7}\) Labrador settlers also engage in similar discourses of similarity and difference in their everyday discussions of Indian land claims. Here the focus of discussion is not Indian identity, but settler identity. As Plaice (1990:102) describes, settlers often reinforce the concept of Indian/settler difference when they wish to oppose and denounce land claims. In the same conversations, they may also play upon the subtleties of the settler/Indian divide, distinguishing Inuit from Indians, and claiming a ‘native’ status through their Inuit heritage. In this way settlers strive to avoid being disenfranchised from land claims settlements.
world history. These arguments both deny the specificity of aboriginal rights and also the responsibility of contemporary society to address past practices. Instead, opponents suggest that "the past should be forgotten". They defend the silences of official history and reject First Nations leaders efforts to recover these silences.

The denial of aboriginality is another rhetorical strategy frequently heard in opposition to land claims. One occasionally hears Euro-Canadians remark "There are no real Indians around anymore". They suggest, consequently, that Native peoples have no valid claims to aboriginal rights. Indianness, in these contexts, is constructed according to blood quantum. Euro-Canadians argue that there has been such a degree of intermarriage over the last two centuries that "full blooded Indians" no longer exist. So absolute are the categories of Indian and white in local discourse that any hint of white ancestry is taken, under these circumstances, to invalidate "true" aboriginality. This appropriation of the power to confer authentic Indian identity, and to render invisible aboriginal people who do not conform to imposed standards, has long been a feature of the practices of various segments of colonial society, including Euro-Canadian politicians, Indian Affairs administrators, artists, journalists, writers and anthropologists. In discourses surrounding land claims, these struggles over the authenticity of aboriginal identity continue to be central to the processes of power.

Moral Discourses of Native Inferiority

Euro-Canadians, despite concerns with being branded as racists, also engage in moral discourses of Native inferiority to oppose aboriginal land claims. These discourses are evident not only in public meetings and forums, but in letters to the

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8 In very different contexts Native peoples too may discuss and debate Indian identity based on the degree of Indian 'blood'. These discussions have intensified as many First Nations in the Cariboo have developed a formal system of Band membership eligibility based on blood quantum criteria.
city newspaper and in the interviews I conducted with community leaders. Many Euro-Canadians, in unabashed paternalistic fashion, argue that Native people "are not ready" for treaties or self-government, and that treaties, in fostering the segregation of Native people from mainstream society, would be a "disaster" for Natives. The prevalence of these attitudes reflects how deeply the images of Euro-Canadian superiority and paternalistic benevolence are ingrained as common-sense assumptions among Euro-Canadians.

Many Euro-Canadians define the 'problems' aboriginal people face not in terms of government oppression or racial prejudice and discrimination - actions in which Euro-Canadian society is implicated - but in terms of social ills: unemployment, poverty, alcoholism, and poor living conditions. In the eyes of many Euro-Canadians, the solution to these perceived problems is relatively simple: Native people must develop the drive, ambition, and will to go out and find work. Thus, the social, economic and historical inequalities that divide the Native and Euro-Canadian populations are comprehended within the framework of the self-made man vision of history, where Native people are blamed for the difficulties they now face. These problems can only be solved, these Euro-Canadians argue, if Native people adopt the appropriate set of values of the dominant culture.

There is little room for cultural pluralism in this scenario. Many community leaders feel that Canadian society, despite its multicultural fabric, offers little potential for aboriginal people to pursue successful yet distinctively aboriginal economic and social lifestyles. Instead, Euro-Canadians propose that Natives become economically assimilated while retaining only surface cultural traits such as Native powwow dancing and crafts. Negative difference is lost; in its place remains the exoticized and innocuous difference celebrated in such events as the
Stampede and easily accommodated within hegemonic constructions of official multiculturalism.

This common-sense assimilationist view is accompanied by an overwhelmingly negative image of reserve life. The majority of Euro-Canadians in the city have not been to an Indian reserve or visited with Native people in their reserve homes. Few Euro-Canadians know the names, or the locations, of the area's fifteen reserves. Instead, they know of reserve life through the anecdotes exchanged second and third hand among friends and acquaintances, through reading about incidents of crime reported in the city newspaper, and through passing the more visible reserves, such as Sugar Cane, Soda Creek, and Anaham, on the highways. The image of reserve life that prevails among Euro-Canadians is bleak: run-down housing, strewn garbage, broken-down cars, violence, alcoholism and social pathology.

While the negative features of reserve life are also debated by Native people, the positive and redeeming values remain invisible to Euro-Canadians: the strong bonds within families, the sense of belonging to a community, of commitment to the land, to cultural traditions, and to their collective future. Passing these same reserves, Euro-Canadians do not 'see' the well kept homes, the thriving businesses, the homes where family life is happy and harmonious. Lacking any sense of these positive aspects, many Euro-Canadians judge reserve life through the ethnocentric screens of Euro-Canadian values, morality and stereotypes.

These assumptions easily find their way into public discussions of land claims. Many critics oppose land claims as yet another massive government "giveaway" to Natives. Treaties, if they perpetuate the "segregation" of Natives onto reserves, will only exacerbate the problems of unemployment, poverty, poor social conditions, apathy, dependency and alcoholism. A typical expression of
these beliefs, founded on the image of the ‘wealthy, undeserving Indian’, was provided in one woman’s recent letter to the editor:

Everyone agrees that land claims should be settled, but how? How many years have we been pouring funds into this abyss [reserve communities]? It apparently has done the natives on the reserves no good at all... Where has this money gone? The native people of Canada should be the best dressed, the best housed, the best educated people in the world! The people on the reserves seem to be desperate and hopeless.9

Others argue that land claims settlements will not solve the problems Natives now face because of the incapacity of Natives to manage their own lives:

A note to negotiators for their lack of foresight on First Nations credibility. Does no one understand that giving people who have proved themselves incapable of management will create a catastrophe... we give them millions of dollars for programs and enterprises; most of which have been mismanaged and failed.10

Yet others argue that land claims are invalid because Native people already have land that they do not use. These Euro-Canadians criticize Natives for not cultivating their hay fields, for littering their reserves with old cars, and for allowing their houses to become run down. Euro-Canadian standards are again imposed on Native communities; their failure to live up to these ideals is used as evidence for the inappropriateness of land claims settlements to resolve the ‘real’ problem.


10 Williams Lake Tribune, 19 December 1995, A5
Moral Inferiority Historicized

The land claims issue has brought First Nations and Euro-Canadian leaders of the Cariboo-Chilcotin into unprecedented formal contact. In public forums and private meetings, First Nations leaders have been drawing attention to some of the hidden aspects of their historical experience: the negative impact of the residential school system, the coercive relationship with the Indian Affairs bureaucracy, the limitations imposed on them by the Indian Act. In drawing attention to these aspects of history, First Nations leaders are attempting to accomplish two things. First, they are challenging Euro-Canadian assumptions that the social ills, violence, alcohol abuse and chronic unemployment in reserve communities are innate aspects of being Indian. Instead, these problems are presented as a consequence of historical forces - the Indian Act, the residential school system - that have created Native marginalization and dependency. Second, First Nations leaders are pointing to the settlement of land claims as a means of resolving social problems and creating thriving, self-sufficient communities.

Just as First Nations leaders are attempting to historicize notions of aboriginal difference in order to combat the essentialist negative stereotypes that prevail in Euro-Canadian understandings, so Euro-Canadians are now articulating notions of aboriginal difference not based on inherent features, but due to learned cultural behaviours and habits. While their interpretation of the cause of social ills is now historical, their solution remains the same: assimilation.

The problem that Caucasians have had over the years, we’ve always felt we were superior... “We’re far superior, we have better weapons, we suppress those people and live happily ever after” kind of attitude... the problems that we have nowadays is because of that suppression. I don’t think the culture of the Natives is as proud as they once were. You can’t keep people dumb and uneducated on a specific little parcel, and expect them to grow as the rest of the community has grown. So when they do try to integrate - I mean, when I worked at the mill, they hired Natives.
They'd show up three days, and would be gone. That was the way they were brought up. They had no responsibilities. There was food on the table, they could get it from somewhere without having to work... I know for myself, my father worked his tail off. That's what I saw, so I knew in order for me to make it I had to work my tail off. And I hope my son's getting the same education... Where I think that same thing's happening in the Native community. They see their dad drinking, staying home and sleeping in, abusing the mother. It becomes acceptable, I guess.

This man draws on negative stereotypes to characterize the regional Native population as a whole. He sees these negative cultural traits less as the product of a history of oppression than as the product of a history of flawed government policy. As a result of government benevolence and protection, Natives became dependent and irresponsible, values that became embedded in their cultural system. Native people have been held back by their culture of dependency; in contrast, Euro-Canadians, pursuing the ideal of the self made man, have advanced. Similar views were voiced by another community leader:

Well, I think a big part of the problem is our history. When I talked to the Natives, anyway, a big part was the restrictions that was put on them through the federal, what do you call it? The Indian Act, yeah... When other people came from Europe, they gave them, if they went and homesteaded they got certain pieces of land. And that was theirs as long as they did certain things... I guess that's one of the things that went wrong. They were stuck on that piece of [reserve] land, they weren't told "You have to do this to be able to keep it". And they put them there, they basically made them a welfare state because they didn't force the issue, and make them, "OK, you've got to do this, you've got to do this". But they started building houses for them, they did this and that. And they became dependent on the government. And everything they did had to be approved by the government. Instead of setting themselves up like any other community. I mean, that's how Williams Lake started. There's no reason why these reserves couldn't have grown if they were allowed the same jurisdiction that everybody else had.
The current difficulties being faced by Native reserve communities reflect the failure of the Canadian government both to ensure aboriginal equality and to enact firm measures of control over the aboriginal population.

In each of the above quotations, community leaders constructed a sense of aboriginal difference in terms of negative qualities. Where difference is perceived as a matter of learned factors, the solution remains assimilation: the erasure of difference. As First Nations leaders continue to draw attention to the reality of ongoing colonial relations in the Cariboo-Chilcotin, Euro-Canadians defend their privilege by evoking ideas of frontier history, of individualism, of the self-made man. They argue that if Natives had been allowed the same 'freedom' as the pioneers, they would not be in their current plight.

In short, the confrontations between Natives and Euro-Canadians occurring in land claims debates are not just characterized by struggles to recover historical silences. Euro-Canadian responses do not just reflect a historical amnesia, but are deeply rooted and conditioned by a historical sensibility in which power is rendered invisible, where every 'man' is responsible for his own fate, and where Natives are to blame for their current predicament.

The Audience’s Response

By the end of the panel’s presentation the atmosphere in the room is tense. Now is time for questions from the audience. In the events that followed, the tight control that the moderator had attempted to wield over the public forum began to slip. His efforts to constrain the public response to posing questions to the panel - actions which would implicitly affirm the authority and credibility of those seated on the stage, elevated before the audience - ultimately failed. Speaker after speaker challenged the panelists, accusing them of distorting legal and
historical facts, and condemning them for their lack of support for aboriginal treaties. The moderator had successfully cut off the first speaker after two minutes; but subsequent audience members refused to submit, and the moderator eventually gave up his attempts to cut off their responses. Under the force of this vociferous opposition, other audience members, if they had agreed with the presentation, were silent in their support. The two audience members who did speak up to quietly question the panelists were outnumbered by eight others who condemned the presentation. The majority of those who spoke out were Native; others were non-Natives employed by and known to be sympathetic to aboriginal peoples and causes.

Among those who spoke were three First Nations chiefs and leaders. Their responses indicate the complex and diverse strategies Native people are enacting to appeal for public support, and the manner in which they are strategically using public values and a variety of discursive modes to press their interests.

The first audience member to speak to the panel was Chief Ervin Charleyboy, the elected chief of the Alexis Creek First Nation. While not participating in the B.C. Treaty Commission process, many Tsilhqot’in leaders continue to be active in lobbying for wider recognition of aboriginal rights. Chief Charleyboy is becoming well known in the regional non-Native community. He gained some notoriety a few years ago when, on behalf of his band, he asserted aboriginal title by expanding the official boundaries of the reserve to incorporate a parcel of Crown Land where the band planned to build a trailer park. He has since been featured, without apparent irony, in the “Friends and Neighbours” section of the city newspaper. The chief is an imposing figure, tall and with a strong voice, and he is shaking with rage as he stands up to speak. In forceful and uncompromising terms he loudly condemns the panel for voicing racist views:
I want to comment on some of the things [the lawyer] has said... I think some of the things that he said is based on racism... We were shoved onto these god damned reserves without our consent! The Indian Act was pushed on us without our consent! That's unconstitutional! And you guys talk about equality - that's bullshit! There is no equality in this country!

After a minute the moderator interrupts him, deflecting his speech. Frustrated, Chief Charleyboy concludes: "The Reform Party is a racist party, and that's all I have to say!"

In making recourse to the sanctity of equality and the legitimacy of the Canadian constitution - and in pointing out how past actions of governments have violated these principles - the chief is speaking from within the terms of the dominant culture, attempting to draw attention to apparent contradictions in the dominant culture and the historical injustices that are only glossed over by the Reform speakers. His moral weapons are identical to those of the Reform party: equality, the Constitution, the evils of racism. But these terms have vastly different meanings when used by individuals who are positioned on different sides of the divide of power and who are rooted in vastly different cultural and historical experiences.

To Native people of the Cariboo-Chilcotin, to whom racial prejudice, marginalization, and unequal treatment have been a feature of everyday life for over four generations, the Reform Party's appeals to 'equality' are highly offensive if not infuriating. In public forums such as these, Native speakers are attempting to convey to non-Native audiences precisely this reality: that Native peoples have been subjected to a variety of legal, bureaucratic and ideological modes of domination that have been based on the concept of their 'difference' from other Canadians, and that it is these inequalities that must be addressed and rectified through aboriginal treaties.
Yet Native leaders, in asserting their political rights, also make recourse to a rhetoric that alternately highlights aboriginal peoples’ similarity to, and difference from, other Canadians. First Nations in British Columbia and Canada are demanding not only equality - the right to be treated with dignity, respect, and fairness - but also recognition of their differences based on the legal and political rights flowing from their distinct historical status as indigenous peoples. In response, non-Native opponents once again selectively apply key features of the dominant culture - the ideal of equality - to affirm existing relations of power. The impasse created by these confrontational rhetorics are evident as waves of tension pass through the audience in the wake of the chief’s speech.

Following several more responses, a second Native man standing at the back of the room takes the microphone. He is ‘Frank Peters’, a leader in his 30s from the Ulkatcho Carrier community in the west Chilcotin. Like the Tsilhqot’in, the Ulkatcho First Nation is not participating in treaty talks, but their leaders too are struggling to renegotiate relationships with non-Native society. In contrast to the Tsilhqot’in chief, who relies on standard public values and who uses a forceful, confrontational rhetoric, Frank Peters takes a more moderate and personal approach. He appeals to the audience’s common humanity, their love of family, and their commitment to living in harmony with their Native neighbours; in short, the key public values by which Euro-Canadians, in other, quite different contexts, have defended their own notions of Cariboo identity.

Peters’s appeal for public understanding draws on another mainstream discourse, that of the popular psychology ‘healing’ movement that was first introduced to Cariboo-Chilcotin Native communities in the guise of Alcoholics Anonymous groups some twenty years ago. Since this time a variety of personal growth training programs, including offshoots of the California-based EST human potential training, have been held in many reserve communities. Individuals from
one Shuswap community, Alkali Lake, now run their own personal training company, New Directions, and are frequently contracted to run sessions around western Canada. The local, Native-run Nenqayni Treatment Center and many other centers for treating Native alcohol and drug abuse, such as Round Lake in Vernon, Kakawis on Vancouver Island, and the Nechi Institute in Edmonton, have developed a healing philosophy that blends popular psychology with Native cultural revitalization. Many Native adults, as the first step in “sobering up”, attend one of these residential treatment centers for four to six weeks. “Going for treatment” is a common phrase and commonplace event in reserve communities, one with no shame attached. It is not unusual for a person struggling with sobriety to attend a treatment center several times through the years.

Over the last twenty years, Native people in the Cariboo-Chilcotin have both accepted this discourse of Western popular psychology and have adapted it to their own circumstances and meanings. The creativity with which Native people are using this discourse is evident in Frank Peters’s address to the audience. He likens Indian-white relations to those of a dysfunctional family, and uses this metaphor to appeal for reason and understanding:

We all know about this dysfunctional... I was going through treatment, and personally realized, everything that’s happened, I’m seeing it, everything that I find out about myself, this is how society is. A lot of injustices have happened to our people - people refusing to admit to it. Its like, society is stuck in denial. And the government is like an alcoholic father, and we’re kind of Indians stuck on the reserve. And we want to protect our parent, by being quiet, or staying in our place so he doesn’t get angry at us, cut off our funding, or whatever. So in order to... by being quiet we agree to this suppression. And become codependents... And imagine you guys going home and feeling that you have to stay on the reserve, and fight amongst each other for who’s going to get a house next year! It’s like that every year!
His speech is interrupted by a Euro-Canadian man in his fifties, who has been sitting by himself in the middle of the room. With his back to the speaker, he yells out loudly, to no one in particular, a condensed assertion of the self-made man myth of history: “Go to work for once! Like we do! Asshole! Enough of this shit!” He stands up and storms out of the hall as his words reverberate among the shocked audience - shocked not just by his rudeness, but that he has dared to publicly state what many consider to be common-sense ‘truths’. Frank Peters, however, continues to speak:

These are all things that Canadian society has to be reminded of. I think the more people understand how our situation is, I think there would be more compassion. Our kids are going to grow up together... Our children, your children. To find a better place to live. We love the non-Native society, but we love ourselves too. We love ourselves enough to keep fighting these injustices that keep happening to our people.

Such healing discourse is a regular part of public discussions in many Native communities, where the psychodynamics of alcoholic families, and the problems of alcoholism, violence and child abuse, have been recognized and discussed for years. In speaking to a potentially hostile non-Native audience in a public, political forum, Frank Peters’s speech, in its personal emotionality, its appeal for compassion, its use of concepts of “codependency” and “dysfunction”, challenges some deeper norms of Euro-Canadian culture. His speech violates a widespread Euro-Canadian cultural norm that marks public expressions of personal issues and emotions - and, indeed, the public acknowledgment of one’s identity as an alcoholic - as inappropriate, shameful and a sign of personal weakness. Further, the language of popular psychology, and the concepts of dysfunctional relationships and alcoholic family dynamics, are not commonplace among Euro-Canadians in the Cariboo. His stretching of the metaphor of the dysfunctional family to
comprehend Native/Euro-Canadian relations is creative and compelling; yet to an audience of older, conservative Euro-Canadians, these metaphors are not rooted in a context of shared cultural experience and meaning. Frank Peters offers the audience a bridge to understanding that requires listeners to actively set aside their own cultural assumptions in order to comprehend Native peoples’ experiences and their common humanity.

The last audience member to speak is ‘Jason Blackstone’. Blackstone is fairly well known in Euro-Canadian business circles. For many years he was the chief of one of the Shuswap reserve communities close to the city. As chief, Blackstone developed a variety of contacts with small businesses and municipal officials, in part due to the need to negotiate terms of the many leases and rights of way through the band’s reserves. Blackstone stands up from his seat at the side of the room, and as he takes the microphone the moderator recognizes him and acknowledges him by name. Blackstone, in contrast, speaks to the non-Native audience in their own idiom. As he proceeds, something of a calm settles over the audience. Many of those seated turn to face Blackstone as he speaks:

Some of the comments I heard tonight regarding the way government is handling land claims... like some of the fear that has been felt by people, I think - anybody that has been involved in business, logging business, or department store business, knows that at certain times there needs to be negotiations. And as a worker, you’re going to ask for 100% of what you think you should make, and your employers or government are going to offer you the minimum amount that they want to give. My feeling, at this time, is that the Reform Party is offering 2%... but that doesn’t mean anything, because in the end we’re going to end up somewhere in the middle. The province of B.C. is not going to be given away, and hopefully the standard of living for Indian people is going to be a lot better than it is, has been in the past. And that’s all we’re looking for, a better way of life for ourselves.
Blackstone, like Frank Peters, also makes use of a powerful metaphor to appeal for public understanding for the land claims process. But his metaphor, in contrast, is rooted in the culture of small town, right wing entrepreneurialism. By extending the concept of labour-management negotiations to the land claims process, Blackstone not only offers Euro-Canadians a conceptual framework to understand these processes, but also implicitly acknowledges and affirms the central values of the dominant Euro-Canadian culture: the importance of the resource industries and small businesses and the value of the capitalist work ethic. In asking the audience to accept this analogy, Blackstone is indirectly appealing to the public values that Euro-Canadians hold as central to the regional lifestyle and culture.

Blackstone continues to address some of the main stereotypes used to oppose the land claims process. He struggles to bridge the gulf created by negative stereotypes of the ‘wealthy undeserving Indian’, the ‘lazy Indian living off government money’. Instead, he affirms the many similarities in values between Natives and Euro-Canadians. Native people, he insists, do not want to be on social assistance. They want to be self-supporting, a goal that is presently blocked by the difficulties of initiating economic development projects on reserve land controlled by Indian Act legislation and Indian Affairs regulations.

All we want is land that’s not improved a lot. And people... we’re tired of it. And I think the people of Canada are tired of the arguing that they’re giving us welfare money for Native people. And we’re tired of getting welfare money. Our people want to work, they want to pay taxes, they want to pay for everything they can get. But we have to create the opportunities. And that’s why we need to get the resources, and that’s how we’re going to get them, is through negotiations.
Blackstone's comments mark the end of audience responses. The meeting is concluded, and there is little lingering as Natives and Euro-Canadians quickly file out of the hall into the darkness.

**Conclusion**

In various ways, First Nations leaders in the Cariboo-Chilcotin are drawing the symbols, the values, and the emblems of the dominant culture in order to appeal for public support for aboriginal land claims. In so doing, they are attempting to negotiate the terms of a new coexistence between the Native and Euro-Canadian populations that will include a respect for the right of Native peoples to live in their own communities, to be self-sufficient and self-governing, and to practice distinct cultural lifestyles. In these public forums, individuals like Frank Peters are pointing out "things that Canadians need to be reminded of", the ways in which the historical experiences of Native people have differed from the experiences of Euro-Canadians, and the injustices and inequalities imposed on Native communities through Indian Affairs policies, federal legislation, residential schools and racial prejudice and discrimination.

Yet First Nations leaders are not only attempting to recover the silenced components of history. Their efforts to show the differences in Native and Euro-Canadian historical experiences are accompanied by efforts to draw similarities between the two populations, to bridge the symbolic divide between Indian and white, and to demonstrate a commitment to a common future. Through the use of creative analogies, Native leaders are appealing to common values they claim are shared by both populations: the ideals of family harmony, neighborliness, independence, self-sufficiency, and pride through hard work. In so doing, Native leaders are attempting to show how treaties will bring about a realization of these mutual values and goals. Thus Native discourses on land claims are fueled not
only by assertions of cultural difference, but by claims to a similarity with members of the mainstream society. These strategies for communicating with non-Native audiences, although they make use of the dominant values and symbols of Euro-Canadian culture, do not necessarily reflect an acquiescence to Euro-Canadian hegemony. Rather, they make use of a rhetorical strategy defined by the metaphorical presentation of 'strategic equivalences' between the Native and non-Native worlds.

Native discourses about land claims are highly influenced by context; in this case, by virtue of the format of this public forum, Native speakers were reacting defensively against a dominant discourse opposing treaties presented to an audience comprised mainly of older, conservative Euro-Canadians. A more forceful political rhetoric, emphasizing historical rights, aboriginal title and sovereignty, can be heard in other forums. In yet other contexts, in which aboriginal leaders are invited to speak to Euro-Canadian audiences, a more gentle and indirect style of discourse may be used (Dyck 1986).  

Furthermore, the discourses presented here are only one component of a complex and multi-layered process through which First Nations are resisting and challenging Euro-Canadian authority over land and resources - challenges being enacted in the courts, on road blockades, in formal meetings with government officials, and in public forums.

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11 Chief Charleyboy, in fact, used a different strategy to reach non-Native audiences during a public meeting in the city in December 1996. The meeting had been called by the RCMP to discuss the epidemic of vehicle thefts in Williams Lake, and to elicit public feedback on how this problem could be addressed. The RCMP believe that the thefts are being carried out by a group of 40 to 50 young teenagers, most of whom are from one of the Tsilhqot'in reserves. While the moderator insisted that the meeting was called not to point blame to any particular groups but to discuss solutions, the specter of the Indian criminal stereotype hovered over the room. Chief Charleyboy used the occasion to lobby for support for his initiative to create a Tsilhqot'in controlled and run youth detention center. In arguing that the Young Offenders Act was "a joke", and that a Tsilhqot'in-run youth detention center would "save taxpayer's money", he drew on some of the key rhetorical slogans and political concerns of the local non-Native right-wing public. Speaking the language of the largely non-Native, right-wing audience, Charleyboy ultimately received overwhelming support for his proposal.
officials and industry executives, and in the open defiance of Euro-Canadian laws through the public assertion of aboriginal rights.

Even within this public forum, the varied responses of the Native speakers reflects the diversity of discourses among Native peoples themselves, discourses shaped by the varying influences of one’s age, gender, cultural heritage, reserve community, and position and experience within local and regional politics. A central characteristic of these discourses is their creativity. Despite the historical and ongoing forms of domination that continue to press down on aboriginal lives - as captured by the violent verbal outburst by the Euro-Canadian audience member - Native responses reflect an inventive energy through which new identities and new metaphors of Indian/white relations are continually being forged, attempted, and tested in public contexts as speakers attempt to manoeuvre around plural forms of domination. Finally, these discourses suggest that the competing views on the land claims issue are best characterized not as a simple dialectic of domination and resistance, but as being situated in what Kaplan and Kelly (1994:129, cited in Ortner 1995) have called “zones of transcourse”, where multiple discourses and multiple identities are voiced by individuals variously positioned within the fields of power that comprise colonial relations.

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12 Since the mid 1970s, with the closure of the District Department of Indian Affairs office and the assumption by Band Councils of a variety of administrative powers over education, welfare, housing and community infrastructure, Shuswap bands have been propelled into new and intense bureaucratic relationships with various provincial and federal government agencies. Through this experience, Blackstone has learned, in his words, “how to talk to politicians at high levels”. This strategy is not the confrontational, angry style of discourse, but is a reasoned and calm approach that attempts to identify common interests among both parties engaged in negotiation while, at the same time, advancing one’s own particular interests. As he mentioned to me in a later discussion, he consciously adopted this discursive strategy at the Reform Party meeting: he was speaking directly to the Reform panelists and to white audience members he recognized. The efforts of aboriginal leaders to develop specific discursive styles for negotiating with government officials is also described by Beckett (1985) for Torres Strait Islanders, whose representatives must “know how to talk to white people” (ibid.:104).
Euro-Canadian discourses on land claims are equally complex; here I have limited my discussion to oppositional discourses which, in the Cariboo region, are shared by the most powerful of civic leaders, and are frequently voiced in public forums and in everyday conversations among Euro-Canadians. These forms of opposition draw on multiple strands of a colonial culture - common-sense assumptions of history, of identity, of society - that facilitate the continued subordination of the Native populations. The idea of the inherent moral inferiority of Native people - whether due to race, culture, or historical circumstance - underlies the widespread conviction among many Euro-Canadians that Native peoples simply do not ‘deserve’ treaty settlements. It underlies the conventional, common-sense assimilationist view of small town Euro-Canadians who see the proper solution of the land question to be the abolition of reserves, the abandonment of most aspects of Native culture, and the blending of Native people into the Euro-Canadian society and economy.

Opposition to land claims, however, is more generally grounded in a historical consciousness defined by the myth of the frontier. This encodes a set of assumptions about the ‘nature’ of Canadian history. Canadian history is seen as the product of the courageous actions of heroic individuals, and, by extension, that any individual with sufficient courage, drive and ambition can advance, prosper, and create success in life today. The myth of the frontier, as articulated in the Cariboo, encompasses both a celebration of the ideal of equality and a rationale for the collective inequalities experienced by aboriginal peoples. Thus the apparent contradictions perceived by some scholars between egalitarianism and racist ideology in Canada (Henry and Tator 1994) are not contradictions experienced in the everyday lives of Euro-Canadians in the Cariboo. Euro-Canadians in the Cariboo do not perceive or experience any inherent “fundamental dissonance” (ibid.:1) in espousing racist views and upholding egalitarian ideals, although they are
frequently criticized by others for these perceived disjunctions between ideal and actual conduct. Rather, racism and egalitarianism are fully compatible with their most fundamental of cultural assumptions about the nature of history, the individual and society.

The frontier myth, in its celebration of the self made man, provides not only an explanation of the past but a map for future relationships between Natives and Euro-Canadians. When Natives point out the injustice of colonial domination and the unresolved issue of aboriginal title, Euro-Canadians respond by rendering 'conquest' as a natural, universal and inevitable process of Western history. History is reduced to the axiom of "survival of the fittest", one of the central themes of the frontier myth. When Natives point to the historical forms of state domination that have resulted in poverty, marginalization and social ills in reserve communities, Euro-Canadians blame Native people for their dependency, their laziness, and their lack of work ethic: structural inequalities are reduced to individual failings. While the surface 'facts' of history may be debated between Natives and Euro-Canadians, it is the underlying historical epistemology that serves to orient discourses opposing land claims, and that continues to exert a conservative, and hegemonic, force in these debates.
Chapter Seven:
Ritual Celebrations: The Williams Lake Stampede

No aspect of public culture captures the frontier ethos of the Cariboo region more fully than the annual Williams Lake Stampede. During the four-day festival the town transforms itself into an imaginary Wild West frontier settlement. Billed as a tribute to the region’s ranching and rodeo heritage, the festival consists of a professional rodeo, “Barn Dances”, pancake breakfasts, a parade and a Stampede Queen contest. Local businesses and stores remodel their interiors into make-believe Western frontier saloons, hotels, and gold mines, while images of cowboys, cattle, horses and hay bales fill the downtown store windows. Local residents, too, are encouraged to “dress Western” to get in to the spirit of the festival. It is within this symbolic field of Western frontier mythos that Native people, as Indians emerge as an important component of the ritual process.

In no other context do area Native people, as Indians, become as visible and as positively valued by Euro-Canadians than in the ritual festivities of the Stampede. Native people occasionally participate in the parade wearing buckskin, powwow regalia, and headdresses and performing drum songs and dances before the crowd. Indian arts and crafts booths might be set up outside the rodeo grandstand, and in the past Indian tipis have been displayed on the Stampede grounds. These romantic and exotic images of Indianness stand as a counterpoint to the Western identity being represented through the Stampede festivities. The dichotomy of Indian and white found elsewhere in frontier histories and in everyday Euro-Canadian conversations is reproduced here in a ritual context. Indian and white are dual, opposite, and mutually interdependent identities; both are required for completing the scripts of identity and history being performed during the Stampede.
In this chapter I assess how public identities are represented and contested within the context of the Williams Lake Stampede. I ask two questions: Given the many other domains in which Native people are rendered invisible and insignificant in the public landscape, why do the Stampede organizers deem Indian participation in the event to be important for its success? To explore this question I review the origin and historical development of the Stampede. This historical analysis is critical for revealing the core symbols and events of this ritual complex. Although the Stampede has undergone some significant changes over time - new events have been added, while old ones have been dropped or modified - there is a consistent core of symbolic associations and events that have their roots in the Wild West performances of the late nineteenth century. These performances later were incorporated into small-town stampedes and rodeos that were popular throughout Canada and the United States, and that, in turn, later evolved into professional rodeo. Throughout this evolution there has remained a consistent emphasis on the dramatic performance of frontier identities and of the binary contrasts between Indian and white. It is this ritual tradition that underlies the desire of the Stampede’s Euro-Canadian organizers to encourage Native participation as Indians, and their disappointment at Native people’s reluctance to fully join into the festivities.

Second, I ask: How do Stampede organizers and area Native leaders understand the meanings and implications of Indian participation in the festival? After a brief overview of the organization and events of the contemporary Stampede, I describe how Stampede organizers and area Native leaders understand the issue of Indian participation through radically different cultural frameworks. Area Native leaders are highly ambivalent about staging cultural displays and

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1 When I speak of Indian participation, I mean the participation of Native people in forms emphasizing their cultural identity and heritage. Native people, like non-Natives, participate in many of the events as 'ordinary people'.

performances during the Stampede. Yet their willingness to consider setting up mock Indian villages, powwow performances and arts and crafts displays does not reflect an unwitting capitulation to hegemonic symbols and identities. Rather, these leaders are critically aware of the hegemonic implications of presenting their cultural identity in terms that could be assimilated into stereotypical images of 'noble savages', and of the potential for the public to misinterpret the full meaning of Native cultural practices. These leaders are not struggling over the symbols, images, or the roles they have been assigned within the ritual script, but over the power to control the overarching contexts in which cultural identities are being performed. Their willingness to consider participating in the Stampede should be considered a case of strategic essentialism (Spivak 1990:11-12): a form of political action through which symbols of Indianness - or Otherness - are carefully, deliberately mobilized to bring about specific political effects. In the case of the Stampede, Native leaders' choices for action reflect their considerations of the pragmatic political effects that performances of cultural identity may have to two distinct audiences: non-Native spectators, and area Native peoples.

The Origin and Development of the Stampede

The village of Williams Lake was 'born' in 1919 with the arrival of the Pacific Great Eastern railway from the lower Mainland. That same year marks the beginning of the Williams Lake Stampede. The event was initiated by two local cowboys and several village merchants, who decided to host a small rodeo to gather townspeople, regional residents and tourists alike to celebrate the birth of the new settlement.

By the 1920s the Stampede had become a regular annual celebration. Town businessmen and area ranchers organized the event, while the Roman Catholic priest from St. Joseph's Mission, the local Indian Agent, and the area M.P and
M.L.A. were the judges and honorary presidents. From the outset, the Stampede was organized and run by the elite of the regional society. Native people, however, were enthusiastic participants and spectators, and the Stampede soon became the most important annual gathering of Native peoples from across the Cariboo-Chilcotin.

The 1920s Stampedes consisted of several events now commonly associated with rodeo: roping competitions and bull and bronc riding events. Horse races were also featured. There were several novelty races. The most popular were the Roman race, in which a rider stood astride two horses and galloped down the track; and the Mountain race, where challengers raced down a sheer mountainside opposite the Stampede grounds. The early Stampedes were widely known as occasions for celebration and drinking, where the participants "were a thirsty bunch and later even a little tipsy" (Graham 1991:25). The drunkenness and wild abandon of the Stampedes was symbolically associated with the imagined Western frontier culture. The association between alcohol and the Western cowboy (Slatta 1990:148-154) was captured in one novelty event, the Drunken Ride, in which a well-known cowboy feigned drunkenness and ended his performance with one leg over the saddle and his head hanging inches from the ground (Flieger 1991:34-35).

By the 1920s Native peoples of the Cariboo-Chilcotin had become integrated in the regional ranching lifestyle. They were working as cowboys and laborers on non-Native ranches and farms, and were raising their own small herds of cattle and horses. Through this process a number of Native men and women became skilled and proficient riders. Native men actively competed in the Stampede events, and certain renowned Native cowboys dominated the Roman and Mountain races. At the same time, Native people's participation as culturally exotic Indians was even more symbolically important to the ritual festivities. To
understand why this was so requires tracing the ritual genre of the Stampede back to its roots in the American Wild West exhibitions of the late 1800s.

Buffalo Bill Cody is credited with developing the first Wild West exhibitions. Themselves an outgrowth of traveling circuses, menageries and vaudeville shows that were popular in the early 1800s, the Wild West exhibitions, first performed in 1882, continued this tradition of entertainment spectacle. What they presented to the public, however, were dramatizations of purportedly authentic events of American history; specifically, the settlement and 'conquest' of the Western frontier. This commitment to educating the American (and later, the European) public about the real events of American history is evident in Cody's refusal to have the Wild West spectacles billed as "shows". In fact, the Wild West exhibitions and performances enjoyed tremendous popularity, at times playing to audiences of forty thousand (Russell 1970:14). Between 1883 and 1916 Buffalo Bill's Wild West toured every major American city and performed throughout Canada and Europe (ibid.). These events became the most important vehicle for shaping American and Canadian public's understandings of the history of the American frontier (Slotkin 1992).

The Wild West exhibitions featured demonstrations of cowboy skills of roping and trick riding. But it was their dramatic reenactments of scenarios from the history of the Western frontier that captured the audience's attention and enthusiasm. These reenactments included displays of pre-contact Indian life, such as the setting up of mock Indian camps and the performance of Indian dancing. The most exciting reenactments were scenes of the Pony Express rides, buffalo hunts, and Indian attacks on stagecoaches and settlers' cabins. The authenticity of these events was dramatically enhanced by the participation of actual historical figures such as Sitting Bull, Geronimo, and Buffalo Bill Cody himself (Slotkin 1992:68).
The commodification of Native people as public spectacles was occurring elsewhere at this time: in the Chicago world exposition of 1893 (Hinsley 1991) and in the Indian Congresses (Russell 1970:64, 69) of the 1890s and first decade of 1900. These processes paralleled the depiction of the noble savage in museum displays and in artists' renditions of the American west. In the Wild West exhibitions, however, Native people were presented not static, exotic curiosities, but were incorporated into dramatic scripts of history constructed through the epistemological framework of the frontier myth. Native people, as Indians, were critical to this colonial script: their exotic cultures represented the 'primitiveness' of the early inhabitants that would naturally give way to European 'civilization'; their resistance to the settlers was essential for the affirmation of a narrative of history as heroic conquest.

These ritual genres soon spread to festivals and fairs across both Canada and the United States. The most prominent public festival in Canada became the Calgary Exhibition and Stampede. Originating in 1923, the annual event featured a rodeo and displays of Indians and Indian culture. As in the later Williams Lake stampedes, the downtown stores in Calgary erected false fronts to give the appearance of a Western frontier town, and residents were encouraged to dress in Western clothing to add to the festive air (Gray 1985).

This ritual complex also provided the symbolic forms for small settler communities to represent and celebrate regional identities and histories (LeCompte 1985). While gatherings for horse racing, roping and riding competitions had been popular activities through the 1800s, these events now became overlaid with Wild West- influenced dramatic reenactments and displays of Indian culture. In the prairie region Native people were encouraged to attend small town fairs, agricultural exhibitions and rodeos, where they set up camps and performed songs and dances to appreciative audiences (Pettipas 1994:147-148).
The involvement of Native people in both the large city Stampedes in Calgary (Burgess 1992), Banff (Whyte 1985) and Winnipeg as well as the small town fairs was not universally welcomed (Regular 1986; Pettipas 1994). Christian missionaries, Indian Agents and government officials in Ottawa saw this as encouraging Native people to resist the assimilation policy, as taking Natives away from their farming and fanning the “excitement of celebrations” (cited in Pettipas 1994:149). In 1914 the Indian Act was amended to prohibit Native people in Western Canada from participating in “any show, exhibition, performance, stampede or pageant in aboriginal costume” without government permission. The groundswell of public support for Indian participation was so great that by 1920 the law had become ineffectual (ibid.:149, 163).

In Williams Lake, this ritual genre laid the foundation for the early Stampedes. Rodeo contests were the central events. In addition, through the 1920s there were a series of dramatic performances and contests that highlighted frontier themes and Indian/white contrasts. Some novelty races were for Indians only. The Indian Race of 1924 required participants to wear “war bonnets”. When Natives refused to participate, whites dressed as Indians to play their part. The Squaw Race of 1923 featured two white women, one wearing a wig made from a horse’s tail that “streamed around her shoulders like a squaw’s hair would” (Graham 1991:25). Spectators were treated to displays of “Indians dancing in their old-time costumes accompanied by the tom-toms and other implements of torture” during the 1926 Stampede. The most obvious import from the Wild West exhibitions was the 1924 dramatic performance of “a spectacular stage coach holdup and attack on a Hudson’s Bay fort” enacted by “real Indians, Cowboys and Pioneers”.

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2 1926 Stampede Program.
3 1924 Stampede Program.
Here the symbols of the American Wild West exhibitions were adapted to the local setting of the Cariboo. The famous Wild West scene of the Indian attack on the Deadwood Stage coach was Canadianized: it became an attack on a Hudson’s Bay fort. But while the symbols were adapted to the Cariboo context, the frontier history dramatized during the early Stampedes had a distinctively American flavour. The master narrative portrayed history as a narrative of regeneration through violence rather than the narrative of conquest through benevolence that would later emerge as dominant in Canadian versions.

The early Stampedes reflected the performative components of the hegemonic culture-as-history. They communicated public myths of identity and history that celebrated the arrival of European settlers and the subordination of the Native population, and that relegated conflict over the land and resistance to colonial authority to the comfortable domain of the distant past. Yet the history portrayed was a stylized one. In the Cariboo-Chilcotin there is no record of a Native attack on a Hudson’s Bay fort, nor is there any reality to “tom-tom” drums being used as implements of torture. In contrast to these dramatizations of Indian/white conflict, through the 1800s and early 1900s relations between aboriginal peoples and settlers in the Cariboo had been relatively free of violence. What these scenes communicated was a historical fantasy constructed through the framework of the American version of the frontier myth, now popularized through ritual performance.

In the decades that followed, the Stampede continued to be the most popular annual gathering both for townspeople and regional residents. Over time, some events were modified, and new ones added. Changing images of women were evident in the creation in 1933 of the Stampede Queen contest. Women had been active competitors in the 1920s Stampedes; now, in the Queen contests, women were represented in demure, passive roles that stood in sharp contrast to
the masculine images of the rodeo cowboys. These changing roles of women in rodeo paralleled developments elsewhere in North America as rodeo began to be professionalized in the late 1920s and early 1930s. The gradual exclusion of female competitors from professional rodeo occurred simultaneously to the appearance of “sponsor girls” contests - the precursor of rodeo Queen competitions - in which women were selected on the criteria of appearance, dress and basic horsemanship to represent their communities at regional rodeos (Stoeltje 1988; LeCompte 1993).

By the 1950s the dramatic performance of frontier historical scenarios was no longer a part of the Stampede program. The displays of Indian culture, Indian people, and the Indian/white dichotomy, though, were still central symbolic themes. In the post-war context of a booming economy and a rapid influx of newcomers to the region, organizers of the Stampede sought to rejuvenate their festival. The atrocities of the Nazi Holocaust had raised issues of racial prejudice and violence to the forefront of public concern. At the same time, Native people were becoming increasingly visible in romantic, noble savage stereotypes in popular culture, from the tremendous resurgence of Hollywood western movies\(^4\) to the Hobbyist movements in which non-Natives formed recreational clubs to learn the dress, arts and crafts, and dances of Native Americans (Powers 1988).

In this context, the Stampedes of the 1950s enacted new rituals of community identity through which Indians and whites were represented as existing in a balanced, harmonious relationship. The colonial categories of Indian and white were elevated to new heights of reification with the modification of the Stampede Queen contest to include both an Indian and a White Queen. At the coronation ceremonies, the Indian and White Queens sat on matched thrones, the Indian Queen in decorated buckskin and feathered headband, the White Queen in a long

white satin gown, tiara and gloves. Natives, as Indians, were viewed as an essential component of the Stampede festivities. As a newspaper editor of the times said, Indians added "colour and variety" to the event; they were spectacles of curiosity, of exotic interest, that enhanced and completed the town's festive portrait of Western identity and culture.5

The 1960s and early 1970s are widely known as the heyday of the Williams Lake Stampede. The economy was prospering, the population was growing, and tourists from across Canada and the United States flocked to the annual July celebration to watch the rodeo, to drink alcohol and party, and to attend the all-night dances at Squaw Hall, the open-air dance hall on the Stampede grounds. In the 1960s climate of civil rights protests and increased movements towards racial integration, organizers of the Stampede decided to amalgamate the Indian and White Queen contests into one. But the duality of Indian/white identities was preserved in other aspects. Native people, dressed in buckskin and regalia, continued to enter in the parade. Shuswap, Carrier and Tsilhqot'in families from all across the Cariboo-Chilcotin traveled to the Stampede in horse-drawn wagons and vehicles, setting up their canvas tents on the Stampede grounds where they remained for the week visiting with friends and family. The "Indian Camp", as it was known to non-Natives, became a spectacle of tourist interest and curiosity, and was preserved in tourists' snapshots, artists' paintings, and souvenir postcards.

The decision of Stampede organizers to charge fees for camping, and the availability of automobiles for transportation to and from reserve communities, eventually brought about an end to the Indian Camp at the Stampede grounds. In the 1970s and 1980s the increased politicization of the Native communities, and their struggles to address the many dimensions of political, economic, and bureaucratic domination they experienced, led inevitably to public debates about

5 "A success is recorded", Williams Lake Tribune, 15 June 1950, p.2.
the role of Native people in the Williams Lake Stampede. Native people had long
had their own motives for gathering during Stampede time; indeed, by the 1950s
the Stampede had become the most important annual occasion for Shuswap,
Tsilhqot’in and Carrier people to gather and celebrate an intertribal community
that largely excluded Euro-Canadian townspeople. With camping no longer
allowed on the grounds, other dimensions of ‘token’ Indian participation were
undergoing scrutiny. Native people expressed resentment over being assigned the
roles of noble savages and being economically exploited as tourist attractions. For
the first time both Natives and non-Natives were beginning to publicly criticize the
derogatory image of Native women contained in the name of Squaw Hall. These
criticisms intensified following the publicity and extremely lenient court sentences
given to two white men implicated in the 1967 sexual assault and murder of an area
Shuswap woman, Rose Roper.

At the same time, area Native peoples were also undergoing a cultural
revitalization that involved not only a revival of Shuswap, Carrier or Tsilhqot’in
traditions but also an incorporation of significant components of “Pan-Indian”
cultural traditions of powwows, drumming, dancing, and sweatlodge ceremonies.
These cultural traditions increasingly served as a currency for Native people to
communicate to themselves, and to non-Native audiences, the distinctiveness of
Native cultural and political identities. In short, symbols of culture that had long
been a part of the ritual complex of the Stampede, as well as part of the symbolic
language of identity within the regional Native communities, now became
invigorated as symbols of political power. The political contest ultimately was not
over the symbols themselves - feathered headbands, decorated buckskin, and
Indian dances - but over their significance and meaning, and over how these

6 For discussion of the role of powwows in cultural revitalization and politics among other
Native North Americans see, for example, Howard (1955, 1976), Corrigan (1970), Dyck (1979,
symbols of cultural identity were to be read and comprehended by the general public.

For eight decades the Stampede has served as the major occasion for the ritual performance of Williams Lake's collective identity as a frontier town, an identity performed not only for local residents but for tourists and visiting dignitaries including Princess Margaret and Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau. Throughout its history there is a consistent ritual core to the event. What began as historical reenactments of the imagined confrontation of Indians and settlers on the frontier evolved into symbolic displays of the Indian/white dichotomy, a dichotomy still rooted in frontier mythology. Native people were represented as Indians in highly stylized and restricted roles: as exotic, noble, natural, 'colourful' figures. These images fulfilled non-Native expectations of authenticity that were created and reinforced through other popular cultural representations in movies, literature, and Hobbyist movements. In the context of a town's annual celebration, the Indian/white juxtaposition became a core element, an archetype, in the construction of the town's public identity and history. This archetype, and the frontier myth of history in which it is embedded, continue to provide the major symbols of public identification in the city today.

Theoretical Frame: Negotiating Identity through Performance

A critical question emerging from this historical overview is: Why have Native people willingly participated in the Stampede? Why have they demonstrated an apparent willingness to adopt the roles of 'noble savages' and, in Rayna Green's words, "play Indian" (Green 1988) in Euro-Canadian ritual performances?

The Stampede, like all small town festivals, can be read as a narrative performance of the town's myths of history and public ideology (Farber 1983,
Errington 1987). There is a wealth of anthropological literature on cultural performances, in which the symbolism and ritual structure of such varied events as rodeo (Stoeltje 1981; Lawrence 1982; Errington 1990), parades (Farber 1983; Lawrence 1987) and small town festivals (Lavenda 1983; Errington 1987) can be approached as texts encoding implicit cultural meanings and dramatizing contradictions in the cultural and social order. In that an overriding theme of small town festivals is one of community solidarity and harmony, these events can serve to perpetuate public myths that mask social conflict, domination and inequality. They can be read as rituals of the dominant where the participation of subordinate groups only symbolizes their compliance with, and acceptance of, the system of inequalities that have rendered them powerless and marginalized. From this analytical approach, though, agency is underemphasized, and the participation of subordinate groups can be read as evidence of how fully the hegemonic culture has infiltrated their consciousness and practices.

Some anthropologists are now shifting attention away from a textual reading of cultural performances to exploring how subordinate groups are using rituals and festivals as occasions for challenging the dominant ideologies and structures of power in which they are enmeshed (Dirks 1994; Myers 1994; Holland and Skinner 1995; Cruikshank 1997; also Grimes 1976 for an early example). Meaning is not approached as a disembodied text, but as construed through social action, becoming the subject of struggle and contestation by different groups within the context of the ritual itself. For example, Holland and Skinner show how the participation of Nepalese women in Tij festivals provides a rare opportunity for women to generate and express new, politicized identities concerning their subordinated position within the patriarchal family and structures of the state. Myers, analyzing the performance of Australian aboriginal sand-painting ritual in a New York art gallery, discusses how the aboriginal artists sought to capitalize on
Western fascination with aboriginal exoticism while at the same time subverting static colonial stereotypes through the *performance* of multiple constructions of aboriginality. Cruikshank identifies similar processes at a Yukon aboriginal storytelling festival. In the context of recent land claims settlements and shifting political relationships between the aboriginal and non-Native populations of the territory, aboriginal storytellers challenged the Euro-Canadian audience’s notions of static, traditional culture by using stories to assert a variety of contemporary aboriginal identities and to comment upon, and critique, the past and present state of aboriginal/non-Native relations.

In short, what may appear to be a submission to colonial stereotypes, and what may appear to be instances of Native people “playing Indian”, emerges from a lack of appreciation for the multiple meanings at play in ritual contexts, and the way in which aboriginal people are using modes of cultural performance not only to express aboriginal meanings and identities, but also to subvert and challenge dominant colonialist stereotypes. Ritual performance itself may constitute a mode of resistance to the dominant culture.

In the remaining pages I present a brief overview of the Williams Lake Stampede today: its organization, its major events, and the domains in which Native people participate as Indians. Following this, I turn to a series of interviews I conducted both with Stampede organizers and area First Nations leaders regarding Native participation. I show how Euro-Canadian organizers of the Stampede and area First Nations leaders understand the implications of Native participation, especially under the rubric of culturally exotic displays, through radically different frameworks of meaning and signification. I show how Native people are attempting to negotiate their way through the minefield of hegemonic symbols in order to carve out their own space for the expression of their own
identities and concerns, and to promote positive images of Indianness to both Native and Euro-Canadian audiences.

The Stampede Today: Organization, Events, and Native Involvement

The Stampede continues as the most important annual celebration in Williams Lake. Stampede pictures and murals are displayed in the local library, in the museum, and in city Hall. The city promotes itself as the Stampede Capital; its official mascot is a humorous cowboy figure that represents the city in other regional summer festivals and parades. Not only is the Stampede a major source of symbols of community identity, but it is a major economic event. Virtually every motel and hotel room is booked for the four-day period in early July. One retailer referred to the Stampede period as a “Cowboy Christmas”, the second most important time of the year for retail sales. The Chamber of Commerce unofficially estimates that the Stampede brings in almost one million dollars to the city’s economy.

The festival itself is run by a non-profit society, the Stampede Association. The society is led by a board of directors who are elected to two year terms. In 1994 almost half the board had some background in ranching or rodeo, about a third were small business owners, and the majority were relative newcomers to the Association. The Stampede Association, in fact, has for decades had very strong ties to the city’s business community, which has financially supported the festival both through loans and annual donations and sponsorships.

The Stampede Association’s political relationship with the municipal government, in contrast, is very delicate. In the past the Stampede Association has criticized City Council for not providing more financial and political support, given that the Stampede is a major economic boon to the city and that the event is organized entirely by volunteer labour. Apart from one city councillor who
represents the city on the Stampede board of directors, there is no overlap in personnel.

Finally, despite the active involvement of many Native people in the regional rodeo circuit, the Stampede Association is overwhelmingly a non-Native organization. No Native people are on the board of directors. Of the 92 volunteers recognized in the city newspaper in 1994, none were publicly recognized to be Native, although eight were privately known to have mixed ancestry.

In short, a small sector of the regional society is responsible for controlling the public culture presented through the Stampede festivities. An equally important factor in shaping the Stampede is the weight of its ritual legacy. While the directors may introduce a certain amount of change and innovation - new peripheral events may be added, while old ones may be modified slightly - there is a consistent core. The same events are found in many other small festivals across Canada and the United States (Farber 1983; Lavenda 1983, 1992; Smith 1984). Local service groups hold pancake breakfasts and steak dinners in the grocery store parking lots. Midway rides and games of chance are set up outside the rodeo grounds. Street sales, children's amusements and musical entertainment fill the downtown streets. In the evening a variety of dances are held, from the relatively quiet Kiwanis Club's Klondike Dance to the rowdy Barn Dances in the civic arena. Finally, there is the Stampede Queen contest and the parade, the latter which typically draws huge crowds.

The centerpiece of the Stampede, though, is the three day professional rodeo. The rodeo is on the Canadian Professional Rodeo Association circuit and draws competitors from across Canada and the United States to enter such events as saddle bronc riding, bareback riding, bull riding, calf roping, steer wrestling, and ladies barrel racing. Although hometown riders may enter the Stampede on a
“local” card, the high quality of the competition has dissuaded many from competing, and for the most part the rodeo has lost its earlier local flavour.

Contemporary rodeo has evolved from the turn of the century Wild West exhibitions and the small-town rodeo competitions (LeCompte 1985; 1993), and what the Stampede rodeo has retained to the present is the symbolic legacy of earlier dramatizations of frontier history. Elizabeth Atwood Lawrence, in her symbolic analysis of rodeo, finds that the contests between man and wild animals - bulls and bucking broncs - are performative representations of America’s imagined past. These events symbolize man’s conquest over nature, and the bringing of the wild into the domain of civilization:

Rodeo embodies the frontier spirit as manifested through the aggressive and exploitative conquest of the West, and deals with nature and the reordering of nature according to the dictates of this ethos. It supports the value of subjugating nature, and reenacts the ‘taming’ process whereby the wild is brought under control (Lawrence 1982:7).

The persistence of frontier imagery in contemporary professional rodeos is apparent in the mock Indian villages that continue to be set up at the Calgary Stampede as well as the major rodeos at Omak, Washington and Pendleton, Oregon. Stampede organizers, aware of the Indian presence in these other rodeos, continue to encourage Native participation in the Williams Lake Stampede as part of what organizers define as the rodeo tradition.

Native people, though, do participate in the Stampede’s events. Native riders enter the rodeo events and are highly competitive. On rare occasions a Native woman will enter the Stampede Queen contest. Natives and Euro-Canadians alike fill the rodeo grandstands and line the streets to watch the Stampede parade.
The parade itself typically includes several Native entries. In 1994 there were two Native country rock bands. One float carried the Alkali Lake reserve’s girls soccer team, which had done very well in a city soccer league. There was an entry representing the Native-run Nenqayni Alcohol and Drug Treatment Centre, carrying old-time fiddlers and assorted men, women, children and elders. Some wore regular dress, while others wore buckskin or powwow regalia. One young teenager carried a hand drum.

In 1994 two Native entries drew on explicitly cultural themes to present themselves to the audience. The Anaham First Nation’s float presented a potpourri of cultural images. Children, adults and elders, some in regular dress and others in powwow regalia or buckskin clothing, were seated or stood on the back of a flatbed truck. A banner announced “The Anaham Band proudly presents the Chilcotin Dancers”. Two lahal teams were seated facing each other, one side singing and playing hand drums. One man wore a headdress of bright red, orange and yellow feathers. There was a small tipi draped in an orange and blue plastic covering. In the midst of this was a small baby swinging in a cradle suspended between two uprights.

The second Native entry presented to the audience two young Native women: the Miss Chief Anaham Princess, and the runner up to the Miss First Nations Awareness Days contest of 1994. The women wore ribboned powwow dresses and moccasins, and sat on the hood of a pickup truck, waving to the crowd as they passed.7

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7 Indian princess competitions have been held in the Cariboo-Chilcotin only since the early 1990s. By 1994 these competitions had been held in conjunction with powwows in two Shuswap and two Tsilhqot’in reserve communities. A pageant was also held during the annual First Nations Awareness Days, organized by a First Nations educator with the Cariboo-Chilcotin School District. Pan-Indian style powwows have been held in Shuswap communities since the early 1980s. Only since 1991 have invitational powwows been held in Tsilhqot’in communities. Both powwows and princess competitions are becoming increasingly popular. The Miss Chief Anaham Princess is chosen at the annual Chief (continued, p. 247)
In short, Native participation in the Stampede occurs in a variety of contexts: as spectators, as competitors, and as performers. In that parades can be considered symbolic representations of community (Warner 1959), by presenting themselves to the public in this forum Native people are publicly demanding the right to be acknowledged as visible and respectable members of the regional society. Their participation in the parade under the banner of various symbols - musical bands, sports teams, and distinct cultural groups - reflects the diverse ways in which Native people construct their identity in various social contexts of everyday life, and the diverse ways in which they are attempting to negotiate their visibility to Euro-Canadian society.

The cultural entries, however, entail the greatest risk. In a regional society rife with anti-Native racism, the Native cultural groups are claiming the right to be publicly recognized, and respected, as Indians. Given this context, it is somewhat ironic that the Native princess entry consistently drew the loudest and most enthusiastic applause of all the parade's floats. The image of the Indian princess, of course, is a key stereotype of North American culture. The Indian princess stereotype has long been evoked to symbolize the receptivity of Native North America to European colonizers (Green 1975; Montrose 1991). In the Pocahontas myth, the Indian princess intervenes to save the life of her European male captor, becoming the ultimate goodwill ambassador and an ideal model of Indian/white relations (Green 1975). The 'good Indian' stereotype has long played a role in hegemonic constructions of colonial history. In the contemporary setting of the

Anaham Powwow, held each spring since 1991 at the Anaham Tsilhqot'in reserve. Contestants are judged on a combination of poise, speech, powwow regalia and dancing ability.

4 One woman that I spoke with from the Anaham First Nation float, when I asked why her group had entered the parade, expressed this risk: “It’s like we’re finally getting brave enough to do these kind of things”. She hoped that by portraying Tsilhqot’in culture and people in a positive light, the Euro-Canadian public would “get to know us a bit better”, and that the racial tensions encountered by Native children in the school system might be diminished.

9 This was my observation in both the 1994 and 1995 Stampede parades.
Cariboo, ideological space continues to be allotted to this stereotype. The complexities of power relations extend well beyond simple processes of racism.

The symbolic currency that Native people use to represent their identities to non-Native audiences includes images that resonate with the stereotypes found in mainstream popular culture - tipis, artificial feathered headdresses, Indian princesses - to images of hand drumming, lahal, and baby swaddling, common practices in reserve communities. It makes little sense, though, to attempt to analytically distinguish the 'authentic' from the 'invented' cultural symbols. For over seven decades images from North American popular culture have been incorporated in the ritual symbolism of the Stampede. For over seven decades, and probably longer, Native peoples in the region have been presenting themselves to the non-Native public in formal regalia of headdresses and buckskin. To chase the origins of these ritual symbols - whether they are 'traditional' to the Shuswap, Tsilhqot'in and Carrier, or whether they are 'invented' traditions adopted from Euro-Canadian culture - is largely irrelevant. What is critical to appreciate is how symbols and images of identity evolve in the context of historical relationships between the Native and non-Native populations, how the meaning of these symbols is subject to varying interpretations and becomes transformed over time, and how today these symbols continue to provide a currency for the ongoing negotiation of identities.

Not only do area Natives and Euro-Canadians have different understandings of the significance of these symbols of cultural identity. There is also debate within Native communities regarding the meaning of these symbols. As among the Euro-Canadian public, the notion of a traditional, static Indian culture prevails also in Native societies, where the focus of these debates is often the question of authenticity. In Shuswap communities, a small minority, including those who may identify themselves as traditionalists, feel that culture and
spirituality are private matters, and that some of the more explicitly spiritual ceremonies should not be presented to outside Euro-Canadian audiences. They are acutely aware of the way in which Native culture has been misunderstood and exploited by non-Natives. At the other extreme are individuals who dismiss sweatlodge ceremonies, yuwipi ceremonies, Sun Dances and other recently-popular practices as inauthentic, "imported culture". They argue that these practices are not traditional to the Shuswap. They see these ceremonies as carrying no meaning, and they worry that those who engage in them are being misled by spiritual leaders of dubious integrity.

Mediating these positions are some Native leaders - mostly Shuswap - who are willing to act as cultural bridges, and who on occasion do coordinate Native cultural performances and displays for non-Native audiences. In the last few years First Nations leaders have coordinated many "cross cultural training" workshops to introduce R.C.M.P, court workers, judges, social services workers and school teachers to Native cultural beliefs, values and spiritual practices such as pipe ceremonies and sweatlodge ceremonies. These leaders believe in the potential for such cultural performances to bridge the gap in understanding between the Native and non-Native populations, and to improve the tenor of Native/non-Native relations in the city. Yet they have ambivalent attitudes towards participating in the Stampede festivities as adjunct sideshows to the larger ritual and where they lack the full control over the terms of their participation.

Performing Indianness in the Stampede: Euro-Canadian and Native Perspectives

Stampede Organizers' Perspectives

The organizers of the Williams Lake Stampede that I spoke with have a unanimous desire to have area Native peoples set up tipi villages, Native craft displays, and drumming/dancing performances on the Stampede grounds. In
recent years the Stampede has been declining in popularity. As part of their project to encourage public participation, Stampede organizers are attempting to rejuvenate the festival to bring back the local emphasis that characterized the Stampedes of the 1960s and early 1970s. Native people, organizers claim, have always been a part of the Stampede tradition. In particular, many organizers referred to the way Native people would arrive at the Stampede in horse-drawn wagons to camp out on the grounds for the week. The Indian Camp was the focal point of Native participation, and current organizers would like to see parallel displays of Native culture in the present. Organizers realize that displays of Native culture would be of major economic benefit to the Williams Lake Stampede, and would draw tourists and tourist ‘dollars’ as do the Indian displays at the Omak and Pendleton rodeos.

Significantly, Stampede organizers feel strongly that Native people themselves would benefit from displaying their culture during the Stampede. As one organizer commented:

We approached the Native community to participate, like they do at Omak and Pendleton, where they set up tipi villages. It gives them an opportunity to display their heritage, to sell and market arts and crafts, displays of Native dancing. Unfortunately, nothing happened on that. They were part of it before and should be a part... the whole Native thing is a touchy situation. We have put invitations out, we will help them financially. We’ve put the ball in their court. They have all the opportunity to display their culture.

Organizers see the advantages of Native involvement through the lens of small town entrepreneurial values: it would give Natives an opportunity to “market” their culture to non-Native consumers and to engage in the capitalist economy. Stampede organizers feel Natives are “missing a chance” to display their heritage. They know that non-Native audiences would be highly appreciative, and they see
nothing problematic about Natives representing identity through exotic cultural
displays. They presume a congruence of values, and interests, between the Native
and Euro-Canadian populations.

When Natives conform to Euro-Canadian expectations of comportment they are praised; when they resist, they are criticized. While Stampede organizers recognize that local Native/Euro-Canadians are “touchy”, they express a lack of understanding for the reluctance of Native people to become involved. In their frustration over Native ambivalence, some organizers, in conversation with me, slipped into moral judgements that echo negative stereotypes. One organizer mentioned that in 1993 a Native man from the Chilcotin had offered to organize a powwow during the Stampede, but “two months before the Stampede he came back and said it couldn’t be done”. She continued, “We’d love to have something Native on the grounds, but they can’t seem to get it organized”.10 Here the actions of one individual are taken as representative of Natives as a whole; this incident is assimilated into a the prevalent ‘Othering’ discourse that contemplates generic differences between ‘Us’ and ‘Them’. Another commented:

We tried [to get Natives involved]. They just weren’t interested. They… it’s an awful thing to say, and I don’t know how to word it any other way… lazy. I hate to say that, but basically that’s what it boiled down to, when we were trying. None of them wanted to come in and do it…

These responses reflect a classical Canadian tradition in which non-Natives - often with the best of intentions, and couching their efforts in paternalistic good will - have persistently sought to mold Native people into various ideals of dress and comportment; and have responded with collective condemnations of Native

10 This comment should be contrasted with the ability of Native people in the Cariboo-Chilcotin to organize funeral feasts for over a hundred people on a mere four or five days notice.
peoples when they have resisted non-Native forms of control. It is the EuroCanadian's colonial privilege to have a strong opinion on what Native peoples should do and how they should live their lives; Native people typically are excluded from these dialogues and debates. When Native people refuse to participate in ritual scripts created and controlled by non-Natives, their resistance is comprehended only as evidence for Native inferiority - their laziness, their lack of organizational skills - and their inability to know what is in their own best interests.

It is not only these traditions that contribute to the lack of communication between the Stampede organizers and area Native leaders, but the very structure of local Indian/white relations in which the Native and non-Native populations inhabit separate social universes. Stampede organizers have made tentative, hesitant overtures to First Nations leaders through informal networks: they contact those few Native individuals they know through the rodeo circuit, or with whom they have had dealings in the past. Informal social networks, however, are minimal. Organizers, as far as I know, have not approached Native communities through formal channels by contacting the official political leaders of area reserves or Tribal Councils, although one individual hoped that in the following year a person on the board would be explicitly designated to solicit Native input and involvement. Further, the 'touchiness' of Native/non-Native relations is mutual; Native leaders are equally reluctant to enter into these discussions. Their reluctance, however, is not due to laziness or a lack of incentive, but to their concern with the more complex issues of power, relations of inequality, and symbolic modes of domination.

First Nations Perspectives

The five First Nations leaders I spoke with - all of whom have been cultural mediators in other settings - nevertheless had highly ambivalent attitudes towards
staging cultural performances during the Stampede. All felt that the Stampede Association, and the Williams Lake community generally, take the Native presence for granted, misinterpret Native cultural performances, and benefit economically from displays of Native heritage while returning little to the Native communities.

Leaders are concerned with being spatially marginalized during the Stampede festivities: of being sequestered into a small space and being forced into secondary roles that diminish the importance of Native culture. One leader commented, with some frustration:

There isn’t a place in the Stampede grounds big enough for [his Band] to do anything during Stampede. If we’re going to put up ten or twelve tipis, as well as a place to sell arts and crafts, and what we need for Native awareness - bannock, jarred fruit - also big enough to hold a powwow and lahal games, we’re going to need lots of space. [The Stampede organizers] said “Great!”. But we said, “No: there’s no place big enough during Stampede week!”.

Native leaders expressed a widespread anger of being exploited as “displays for white audiences”. They are acutely aware of the economic potential of cultural tourism, and they are increasingly demanding that Native communities be the primary beneficiaries. The same leader commented:

What I want to know is: what is Williams Lake willing to put in? Let’s talk money! The Stampede has been commercialized now. It’s a money-making thing. We want to benefit too... The town of Williams Lake doesn’t do nothing for [our] Band. We spend between $100,000 and $120,000 every month in town, in the local businesses... and the town doesn’t do nothing for us!

These concerns with being spatially marginalized and economically exploited exist against a backdrop of more comprehensive concerns raised by First Nations
leaders: the historical and ongoing forces of power, inequality and domination that define Native/Euro-Canadian relations in the Cariboo-Chilcotin.

This is the key issue: that these power imbalances have historically privileged Euro-Canadian society in its ability to control the terms under which the existence of Native people in the region would be publicly recognized. The Stampede has long been one of the few occasions in which Euro-Canadians have publicly recognized and positively valued Native people as being a part of the regional society. Yet the terms for Native people’s involvement have long been controlled by Euro-Canadian expectations: Natives become ‘visible’ in the highly circumscribed roles of noble savagery.

One leader suggested that the history of Native involvement in the Stampede is a history in which Euro-Canadians have controlled the terms of Native participation, including and excluding Native people when convenient:

In the beginning stages, Native people were the rodeo. And then the white people came in and they took control over it. And then they had their dances, and First Nations people weren’t allowed to go there, so they built this other hall [Squaw Hall] that the people were having so much fun at, then that place was taken over!

The most controversial event, and one still resented today by those area Native people who remember the earlier Stampedes, was the Stampede Association’s decision in the 1970s to charge Native people for camping on the grounds. In earlier times, the fact that Native people camped on the grounds and were allowed into the rodeo for free was taken as a sign of Euro-Canadian recognition that the Stampede grounds were located on Native traditional territory. With the policy shifts of the 1970s, Natives were “pushed out” of the Stampede and their traditional rights were denied.
Given this historical context, Native leaders see the current tensions between Stampede organizers and area First Nations as rooted in issues of control:

I don’t think they want to see First Nations people empowering themselves. They want to keep control… Our people have always responded to them when they tell our people what to do. But now our people are becoming empowered, so [Native people] don’t [respond]… We do speak up. I think people are very uncomfortable about that.

Native and Euro-Canadian conflicts over the issue of representation in the Stampede are rooted in two drastically different conceptions of history. To Native leaders, their increasing struggle to control the terms in which Native cultural identity is publicly defined is part of a broader process in which they are challenging the multiple dimensions of more concrete forms of economic and political domination by the Indian Affairs bureaucracy, the Canadian justice system, the provincial agencies managing Crown lands, or the forestry and mining companies exploiting natural resources. The negative identities that Euro-Canadians have ascribed Natives have only reinforced these relations of inequality.

But noble savage imagery, many Native leaders feel, is equally limiting. The frustration and powerlessness many Native people feel in being offered public, positive visibility only through romantic stereotypes was captured in a comment by one Native leader, who angrily retorted: “There’s room for Native people as tourist attractions, but when we want to be human, the door is shut”.

In contrast, many Euro-Canadians approach these issues from a historical perspective in which relations of power and domination have become so naturalized as to become invisible. Many do not acknowledge racism to exist in the Cariboo; they do not question the legitimacy of the self-made man myth of history that they read in history textbooks and pioneer autobiographies; and they do not consider their own ‘common sense’ beliefs about Indians - whether racist
stereotypes or noble savage images - to have any bearing on relations of power. In fact, the very existence of relations of power, and their own implication in these relations, is denied.

Festivals and celebrations such as the Williams Lake Stampede are widely promoted as lighthearted forms of family entertainment, as occasions for residents to gather, to have fun, and to socialize with one another (Lavenda 1983; 1988; Manning 1983). Festivals and celebrations are generally not construed by the public to be serious events communicating core ideological beliefs about the society. In fact, festival organizers often vigorously deny the ideological and political content of the rituals (Grimes 1976). Even in festivals that symbolically reenact colonial conquest of North America, such as in the Santa Fe public dramas studied by Grimes, the festival organizers promote the events as celebrations of history and intercultural harmony. As Grimes notes, “the rhetoric of complete harmony and mutual appreciation, however, stands in contrast to the symbols of conflict” (ibid.:171). When subordinate groups use festival performances as a vehicle for raising political issues and for challenging dominant structures of inequality, these actions are often seen as inappropriate introduction of contentious issues that have no place in the festival context (Wright 1992; Cruikshank 1997). In short, the very ideal of the festival as an apolitical event encourages Stampede organizers to dismiss Native concerns with the politics of cultural representation.

To comprehend the concerns of area First Nations leaders, non-Natives would need to look beyond the narrow festival context and to critically reflect on their fundamental assumptions about their own identity, their history, and Indian/white relations. These critical processes, to be sure, are occurring among some sectors of the non-Native population. But the overwhelming weight of the dominant culture, the lack of incentive to be self-critical among those who benefit from established systems of domination, and the presumed apolitical nature of
community festivals exert a conservative force that favours the cultural and material status-quo. Instead, what remains is a sense of confusion and frustration among organizers who do not understand why Native people are reluctant to participate in an event that represents Williams Lake's public identity as a balanced duality between Indian and white, and that construes Native/non-Native relations to be defined by the ideals of egalitarianism, togetherness, and social harmony.

The Strategies of Performance: Native Rationales

Despite their concerns, most of the First Nations leaders did express an interest in participating in the Stampede under certain conditions. These leaders did express a willingness to represent Native cultural identity through a variety of symbols of Indianness: through putting up tipis, setting up booths selling bannock, jarred fruit, and crafts, and staging lahal games, powwows and drumming performances. These leaders are not unconcerned with the potential for non-Native audiences to misconstrue the meaning of Native cultural performances. Their willingness to use these symbols of cultural identity to communicate with non-Native audiences must be understood in the terms of the broader constraints that bear down on their overall ability to negotiate identity in the Cariboo, and given these limitations, their pragmatic political intentions and their strategic considerations of the dual audiences to whom they are directing their displays and performances.

The hegemony of colonial stereotypes lies not in the symbols themselves, but in the epistemological power exercised by dominant groups to control the meaning of these symbols. As Patrick Wolfe has argued, "to acquire a hegemonic language is to submit to a framework in which local meanings can take on unpredictable significance in relation to oppositions or associations whose determination is independent of local factors" (1991:198). Colonial stereotypes of
noble savagery have vastly different connotations to non-Native audiences reared on Hollywood movies and pulp Western novels than to members of Native communities to whom dancing, drumming, and sweatlodge ceremonies have now become the forums for expressing deeply rooted feelings about identity, spirituality, and belonging.

When Native people engage in these practices within the context of reserve communities, the meaning of these performances is contained within the local field of understandings (although these fields, too, may be heterogeneous). When they perform to non-Native audiences, as Wolfe notes, colonial symbols take on "unpredictable significance". The use of these symbols of identity, so easily absorbed into hegemonic constructs of exotic Otherness, does not necessarily contribute to the subjugation and powerlessness of the Native population. What it does mean is that public performances of aboriginality are sites defined by the confrontation of multiple epistemologies variously privileged by social fields of power.

Native people of the Cariboo-Chilcotin are acutely sensitive to the epistemological power of the dominant society: the ability of non-Natives to misconstrue Native behaviours and utterances as evidence for the 'drunken Indian' or the 'Indian criminal' stereotypes; the ability of non-Native politicians and lawyers to misconstrue the history of British Columbia so as to deflect and deny aboriginal rights claims. They are also sensitive to the hegemonic potential of noble savage imagery. Euro-Canadians, one leader pointed out, frequently overlook the way in which powwows, dancing and drumming embody the most central values of Native societies, treating these performances like a show, an entertainment spectacle, "like the Shrine Circus". He continued:

They don't see the importance of our spiritual and cultural values that are exercised through powwows and drumming. The drummers are into
their own spirituality for the drum, eh, and the dancers are also into their own spirituality for honoring the great spirit and mother earth. It’s not just a cultural show, but there is spirituality involved.

The risk is not only that Euro-Canadian audiences will misinterpret Native performances. There is also the risk that these performances will be dismissed as inauthentic by some Native people themselves. Native leaders, thus, must also negotiate their way through the plural interpretations of cultural performances that may exist among both the regional Euro-Canadian and Native populations.

These charges of inauthenticity are distressing to Native leaders to whom powwows, drumming, and dance performances are deeply personal and spiritual experiences. Nevertheless, the leaders I spoke with were not overly concerned with tracing the authenticity of these practices. Instead, they responded by adopting a model of culture remarkably similar to those now advocated by contemporary anthropologists, through which notions of a static, bounded, traditional culture have been deconstructed and replaced by a model that highlights the dynamic, creative, and fluid nature of cultural systems. This very fluidity, one Shuswap leader claimed, constitutes Native tradition:

All people from the past have learned to borrow. There has been a lot of borrowing. It's a continuation of that trend from the past. What it does is build on the model, the model style... If you look at some of our elders, when they dance - that's a borrowed thing. That's been going on for years. See, the other thing too is that we lost a lot of our cultural traditions. It's not what it is today. Yet that's part of... our people are searching for identity. And that's what we're taking back from the earth. That's who we're becoming. We're slowly becoming this style. We use whatever it is. We're still following our traditions.

A similar understanding of tradition was voiced by another Shuswap leader:
What else can we do? We’ve lost everything. We don’t have any memory of what we did before... I think sometimes you get fooled into thinking the only way we can be a true Indian is to live how people did 100 years ago... Tradition evolves. It’s ongoing every day. It’s not something that happened 100 years ago. People start traditions today, and people do, everyday... And if it doesn’t work it disappears. If it does, it gets lodged as tradition... and that’s what we’re doing now, saying that some of the things we did then aren’t good for us now... we don’t have to keep going as they did.

When engaging in cultural performances, then, First Nations leaders are aware that they are not only entering into fields of conflicting epistemologies, but fields of competing definitions of the very nature of aboriginal culture and tradition. Despite these endemic risks, most of the leaders I spoke with were willing to consider organizing cultural displays and performances in the overarching context of Stampede festivities. Their motivations had to do with their own pragmatic political concerns, and their assessment of their potential audiences. Further, they were willing to become involved only if they could exercise total control over the terms, conditions, and processes through which these performances would be held.

When directed to non-Native audiences, these leaders felt that cultural performances of Native culture could only raise the positive public profile of Native people of the region. These leaders are explicitly attempting to counter not only the negative stereotypes of Indianness but the widespread invisibility of Native people to the regional non-Native society. Thus, one leader felt that to not participate would be only to further Natives’ invisibility to Euro-Canadians. “[Native culture] gets most misunderstood when you don’t see anything”, he commented. Another leader felt that participating in the Stampede would counteract Euro-Canadian tendencies to only ‘see’ Native people who conform to their preconceived stereotypes of the ‘drunken Indian’, as epitomized by the
category of the Troopers. Native cultural displays “would be an eye opener for the people of Williams Lake”, as people would realize that “the [Natives] they see on the streets aren’t the only ones around”. To argue, as Patrick Wolfe (1991) does regarding Australian aborigines, that these strategies reflect the degree to which the dominant culture has restricted Native modes of resistance - that Natives have to submit to images of cultural exoticism to capture ‘positive’ Euro-Canadian attention - is to overlook how Native agency has nevertheless survived, and how these decisions are being taken with an eye to their practical implications: positive images of Indianness may afford some temporary relief to the continual denial of worth to which Native people are subjected through many forms of everyday racism.

Furthermore, such performances may create a context for Native peoples also to create and renew positive cultural identities amongst themselves (see Holland and Skinner 1995 for a discussion of this point). Native leaders felt strongly that these positive, public assertions of Indianness within the context of the Stampede festivities would also be of great benefit to area Native people in boosting their own cultural pride and self-esteem. As one leader remarked:

I think, all of these types of activities [tipis, lahal, fish barbecues, arts and crafts booths] will... make our young people, and even our older people, be proud of who we are. We need to be very visible. In a positive way.

The fact that these performances would be enacted in the risky setting of a Euro-Canadian festival only enhances their political significance: rather than undermining Native meanings, the public, Euro-Canadian festival context transforms these performances into defiant assertions of moral worth and integrity. From this perspective, it becomes irrelevant how these events are understood by non-Native audience members. When these performances are directed at Native
audiences, the collision of different epistemologies is not problematic, but creates the context for oppositional identities to be publicly represented. It is the very juxtaposition of dominant and subordinate constructions of the meaning of Native culture that would empower these performances as modes of resistance to the dominant Euro-Canadian culture.

Conclusion

In order to negotiate issues of identity and history with non-Native audiences, Native leaders of the Cariboo-Chilcotin must first of all develop a means to command non-Native attention. They must develop a means of counteracting the widespread invisibility that Native people are frequently assigned in the social landscape of the region. Previous chapters have described how Natives are mobilizing their economic power as consumers, their political strength in current provincial treaty policies, and their moral power as victims of racism in order to challenge various aspects of local Native/non-Native relations. In the ritual context of the Williams Lake Stampede, Native leaders are contemplating manipulating the power inherent in the public’s fascination with ‘Indian culture’, and the centrality of Indians in the Stampede’s ritual script, in order to draw attention to issues of cultural pride, power, and racism in local social relations. Native leaders are making use of the unwitting power they can draw from the ‘colonial gaze’ in order to begin this process of renegotiating the meaning of aboriginality.

As James Carrier (1992) points out, there are dangers inherent with “ethno-Orientalisms”, essentialist representations of aboriginality by aboriginal people themselves. These constructions can “mislead and have unfortunate consequences if they are applied unreflectively in novel situations” (ibid.:198). The danger of these homogeneous representations of Otherness, however, lies not in the
representations themselves, but in how these representations are used and their social, political, and economic consequences. Further, the Native leaders I interviewed here are not unreflective or naïve, but are experienced and intelligent players in the contemporary politics of identity. As Spivak (1990), Coombes (1994), Parry (1994), Thomas (1994) and others have argued, strategic essentialisms may be extremely powerful representational strategies for both mobilizing indigenous peoples into collective political action and for advancing their collective political interests in particular historical and political contexts. But Native leaders in the Cariboo-Chilcotin are no more “rhetorically committed” to these essentialisms than are feminist literary critics such as Spivak (1990:11). In many other contexts, as I have discussed, Native people are deconstructing essentialist stereotypes and/or are making claims to equality and similarity with other non-Native Canadians through a rhetoric based on drawing ‘strategic equivalences’ with their non-Native audiences. In the ritual context, however, by virtue of the power engendered in the colonial category of the Indian, engaging in cultural displays and performances of Indianness is a powerful counter-hegemonic strategy.

The manner in which Native performers themselves contemplate the problematics of representing cultural identity has been only indirectly explored in current analyses of the performance of aboriginality in festival contexts (Myers 1994; Cruikshank 1997). As I show here, Native leaders, like anthropologists, at times are concerned with the issues of tradition, authenticity, and the hegemony of colonial symbols. In private settings, powwow songs, dancing, sweatlodge ceremonies and other religious events are providing the means for expressing and experiencing unique Native identities. Increasingly, these practices and performances are being used as a language to express identity to non-Native audiences.
Native leaders are concerned with the difficulties of cross-cultural translation, and the potential for non-Native audiences to misinterpret cultural performances. The risks of miscommunication, though, are outweighed by the pragmatic political potential that these performances may bring to the enhancement of Native self-pride and the improvement in the state of local Indian/white relations. While neither Native leaders nor anthropologists can predict with certainty the outcomes of their representations, it is the intentionality of those agents, and the considerations and forces that guide and constrain their choices of action, that are critical to trace for understanding the continuing, determined efforts of Natives to use 'old' symbols to negotiate new identities and relationships with non-Native audiences.
Chapter Eight: Summary and Implications

The dominant culture of the city of Williams Lake and the surrounding area is strongly marked by the region’s economic dependence on the extractive resource industries. As a northern resource town, Williams Lake has a distinctly ‘working class’ ethos, where manual labour, small business entrepreneurialism, competitiveness, materialism and right-wing populist egalitarianism are primary public values, and where there exists a strong sense of marginalization, powerlessness, and resentment of urban governmental forms of regulation and control. Yet the culture is not just an outgrowth of the economic structures and relationships common to hinterland resource communities. The regional culture is rooted in a much deeper complex of understandings about history, society and identity, a complex that can be thematically ordered by the idea of the frontier. To unravel the threads of this cultural complex is to reveal how deeply imprinted it is by Canada’s colonial legacy.

I have followed some of the more important threads of this dominant culture through vignettes of different domains of cultural representation and practice. Similar cultural processes could have been followed in different arenas of Native/non-Native encounter: in debates over heritage tourism developments such as the Alexander Mackenzie Grease Trail; in the public discourse surrounding the Cariboo Chilcotin Justice Inquiry of 1992-93; in the more confrontational rhetorics of history that are arising in land claims public meetings; or in the daily struggles that occur between the chiefs, councillors and staff of First Nations’ Band Offices and the officers of the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, where the
culture of paternalistic control and power takes an extreme form.¹ My goal has been to draw out the connections between these different aspects of ordinary life; in particular, to draw together the cultural themes and processes that link explicit histories, historical consciousness and everyday practice among Euro-Canadians. More concretely, my goal has been to identify how a modern colonial culture 'works' at the level of everyday life through not only the manipulation of concepts of aboriginal/settler difference, but also through the control of public identities, histories, and present realities; through aligning experience within a contemporary historical epistemology profoundly shaped by the colonial context; and through attempts to counter competing definitions of history, identity and experience put forth by aboriginal peoples.

In this final chapter I summarize some of the main features of the frontier complex. I conclude by suggesting some of the ways in which this local cultural complex corresponds to cultural traditions found in Canada more generally, and what implications this study has for understanding the current political debates regarding aboriginal land claims and self-government in British Columbia.

The Frontier Complex as Historical Epistemology

At its most immediate level, the frontier complex is framed by a particular historical epistemology, that of the myth of the frontier. This historical epistemology celebrates the 'discovery' of a rich, 'empty' land by non-Native explorers and settlers, describes the process of settlement through the encounter, conflict, and conquest of aboriginal peoples - and nature - by heroic figures, and champions colonization as the natural course of progress of a superior civilization over primitive, inferior peoples. Vignettes of the conquest of the wilderness and

¹ I have discussed the politics of identity and history in some of these settings elsewhere (Furniss 1992, 1993c).
the subjugation of aboriginal peoples become epitomizing events in Canadian national histories and are a continual source of symbols for the creation and recreation of Canadian national identity.

In contrast to the narrative theme of regeneration through violence that dominates American versions of the frontier myth (Slotkin 1973, 1986, 1992), in the public histories that prevail in the Cariboo-Chilcotin region 'conquest' was achieved not only through violence, but also through benevolence: through aboriginal peoples' purported acknowledgment and childlike submission to the benevolent paternalism and superiority of the colonizing settlers, missionaries, and government agents. The rhetoric of benevolence as a justification for colonization, of course, is not unique to Canadian popular histories or to Canadian Indian Affairs policies. What is significant is the degree to which the idea of benevolence has come to dominate contemporary assertions of Canadian national identity. Despite the centrality of the rhetoric of benevolence in the development of Indian policy in the United States (Prucha 1986), in Canada benevolence has been transformed into an icon of national identity, serving as a founding concept by which non-Natives represent and understand their relationships with aboriginal peoples.

The frontier myth is ubiquitous in public settings: its symbols and rhetoric are encountered in bookstores, in tourism pamphlets, in museum displays, in restaurant placemats, in advertising slogans, and in public festivals. The frontier myth, with its symbols, images, and narrative themes, provides a structured way of looking at history that nevertheless can serve a variety of interests and express a variety of identities. Canadian national histories and small town pioneer autobiographies are similarly framed by the frontier myth. The degree to which this historical epistemology is drawn upon by local residents to structure their life histories is testimony to the degree to which a selective historical tradition so
clearly rooted in the colonial experience has become lodged in everyday cultural practices.

The hegemonic potential of these histories lies not only in the way that they rationalize colonialism and the suppression of aboriginal societies. It also lies in their sheer bulk. Non-Native Canadians, for the most part, have privileged access to the material forces that control the production of public history, and frontier histories dominate the most important domains of public history in the city. Native perspectives on history are almost completely absent in the public record. History, we are told, began with European arrival in the Cariboo-Chilcotin. The complex and diverse ways in which aboriginal peoples adapted to shifting ecological conditions and, after European arrival, to the intrusion of settlers; the failure of colonial governments to acknowledge aboriginal title and rights and to acquire Indian lands by due process; and the repressive modes of legal and bureaucratic control that were exercised over Native communities in the Cariboo-Chilcotin go virtually unmentioned. In contrast to the highly stylized, scripted appearance of ‘Indians’ as hostile warriors, noble childlike savages, squaws or drunks, the existence of aboriginal peoples with complex cultures and histories that extend back far beyond the recent arrival of Europeans is rendered invisible.

In struggling to gain public recognition for aboriginal title and rights, and to gain a respected place as autonomous and self-governing communities within the context of non-Native regional society, area Native leaders must struggle against a selective historical tradition that exists not merely in textual forms of representation. More critically, this selective tradition exists at a much deeper level, as a historical epistemology that provides a conceptual framework and a symbolic language for understanding both the past and the present, and that has deeply infiltrated and shaped the individual consciousness of many members of the general public.
The depth to which the frontier myth has infused the cultural understandings and practices of the general public is evident in domains other than public history. The frontier myth weaves through implicit understandings of Euro-Canadian collective identity and public values, and is occasionally the source of powerful symbols that form the rhetoric of Euro-Canadian political discourse.

The clearest example of this process is in the way Euro-Canadians use the symbol of the pioneer to defend their varied political interests. Speakers are creating populist versions of a frontier history that they juxtapose to the reality of the present as a form of social and political critique. The language of the frontier myth may be drawn upon to create local identities and histories that alternately resonate with Canadian nationalist histories, or that distinguish Cariboo residents from the surrounding mainstream society. Yet the very use of the term 'pioneer' in political discourse implicitly affirms the unquestioned legitimacy and morality of the process of colonization. Once again, the degree to which the symbolic imagery of the frontier myth enters into everyday language and political discourse demonstrates how fully a selective historical tradition that has emerged within the context of colonialism has come to define the common sense cultural assumptions and views of small town Euro-Canadians.

Public Values, Regional Identities and the Indian/White Dichotomy

The frontier complex involves more than the myth of the frontier. Other aspects of this complex can be identified in the way Euro-Canadians construct understandings of public values and regional identities. At times, a collective sense of belonging is framed by an imagined adherence to historical traditions: the symbol of the pioneer stands for a set of values, attitudes, and beliefs that purportedly unify all regional residents. But at other times collective identities are forged not through historical tradition, but through associations with place. Euro-
Canadian community leaders have a strong sense of existing on the periphery of mainstream society, and of having to continually fend off the intrusive, domineering powers of urban governments. They have a strong sense of being closely associated with a natural wilderness that is 'unoccupied' and rich in resources free for the taking. While local leaders do not often speak of their region as a frontier, their spatialized identities, the binary contrasts between urban and rural, between centralized governments and individual freedom on the periphery, and the image of an untouched, empty wilderness rich in resources all reflect the continuing legacy of a frontier mythos.

Finally, collective identities are closely associated with a set of public values - of independence, autonomy, freedom, self-sufficiency, competitiveness, materialism, and equality - that can be summarized within the ideal of the 'self made man': that all individuals have equal opportunities in life, and that any individual with sufficient drive, ambition, and determination can succeed and prosper. This ideal is fully resonant with frontier histories that celebrate heroic individualism as the motor of history, that equate colonialism with progress, and that explain the collective disempowerment, marginalization and poverty of Native peoples as a consequence of their own failure to recognize the superiority of the capitalist system and to adopt the values, beliefs, and goals appropriate to succeed in modern Euro-Canadian society.

One of the most important components of the frontier complex is the continuous division of the heterogeneous regional population into two ideal, separate, and mutually exclusive categories: Indian and white. The irreducibility of the Indian/white dichotomy found in frontier histories is repeated both in the everyday conversations of Euro-Canadians who engage in private rituals of solidarity by collectively denigrating and condemning area Native peoples, and in the public rituals of solidarity within the Williams Lake Stampede, where the
Indian/white dichotomy has become an archetype for the construction and celebration of regional identity. The anti-Native racism of everyday conversations and the romantic, 'positive' evaluation of Indians in the Stampede are not contradictory processes, but are variations on the standard colonial theme of inherent Indian/white 'difference'.

Beyond Racism: Power and the Control of Public Identities

Anti-Native racism, particularly as expressed within the field of interpersonal relations, has long served as a powerful local mechanism for maintaining the subordinate position of Native peoples in the Cariboo-Chilcotin. The common-sense racism of Euro-Canadians translates into practices of status domination that continually deny the worth, the integrity and the humanity of Native peoples. These are forces that area Natives must endure and confront on a regular basis. But racism, by itself, does not capture the complexity of relations of power that exist between the Euro-Canadian and Native populations. Rather, power is exercised in the ability of privileged groups to control the public definitions of identities, of historical realities, and current issues and events.

In the realm of public identities, one of the most profound ways in which power is exercised over the aboriginal population is not through the manipulation of dimensions of difference - through portraying Native peoples as inferior, as quaint and culturally exotic, or as romantic noble savages - but through the simple denial of Native existence. Euro-Canadians exercise power by rendering Native people invisible in the public domain: by avoiding acknowledgment of Natives they pass on the streets, by failing to register the names and locations of area reserve communities, by filtering out knowledge of the achievements of area Natives who defy the negative stereotypes, and by rendering inaudible the attempts of Native people to draw public attention to the issues of racism and historical injustice,
issues that would require Euro-Canadians to be self-reflexive and critical of the subjectivity of their own assumptions about the world. These filtering processes are matched by the selective invisibility of Native peoples in frontier histories, where Natives appear as 'Indians' only to enhance the specter of heroic colonial conquest. It is this pervasive invisibility of Native peoples, more precisely, the ability of townspeople to control the terms and contexts in which the existence of Native peoples will be publicly acknowledged, that lies at the heart of current struggles between the Native and Euro-Canadian populations.

The inadequacy of racism as an analytical framework for interpreting power relations is brought to the fore in my examination of public discourses now circulating on the issue of aboriginal land claims. Reform Party members oppose aboriginal treaties by drawing not on racist ideologies of hierarchical difference, but on the public ideal of equality. They deny the historical and legal grounds on which aboriginal leaders argue their difference from non-Native Canadians, and argue for the desirability and inevitability of Native peoples’ political and cultural assimilation into Canadian society. Local Euro-Canadians oppose aboriginal treaties by denying the existence of ‘authentic’ Indians; thus aboriginal claims are invalid. Yet other opponents draw on a moral discourse predicated on the notion of Native peoples’ inferiority, whether construed as an innate laziness and incompetence, or as the historical consequence of government paternalism and learned dependence.

Whether Native/non-Native difference is denied, rendered culturally innate or historically determined, the proposed solution remains the same. Drawing on the popular, common-sense theory of cultural evolution and on the self made man vision of history, land claims opponents argue that there is only one solution. Natives must abandon their own cultural traditions, values and orientations and assimilate into the capitalist economy and society.
A similar dynamic of power operates in the Canadian legal system, where notions of aboriginal similarity to and difference from non-Native Canadians are manipulated in order to maintain relations of inequality and Native dependence on the Canadian state (Macklem 1993). I agree with Macklem’s conclusion that “the law’s logic of justification… identifies and uses similarities and differences between Native and non-Native people to perpetuate hierarchical relationships between First Nations and the Canadian state” (ibid.:13). But to refer to this “logic” as an expression of racism (ibid.: 12) because it perpetuates inequality is to distort the reality of the complex processes by which power is exercised not simply through the identification of difference but through the control of public identities. There is a danger here in that the analytical concept of racism (which I have defined as an ideology of hierarchical difference) may become “conceptually inflated”, as Miles (1989:51) argues, to the point that any practice can be construed as racist. Racism, as Miles points out, is:

An integral component of a wider, historical process of racialisation which is interlinked with exclusionary practices and with the expression of other forms of exclusionary ideology. In a social context structured by historical change and, in a post-colonial and post-Fascist era, by a desire to obscure intentionality, our conceptual framework warrants a greater degree of complexity and sophistication than is allowed by those who employ the concept of racism in a loose or undefined manner (1989:98).

Particularly in the present context in which multiculturalist and pluralist ideals have caused a reformulation of exclusionary ideological practices - racist ideologies are no longer acceptable, but equally hegemonic and exclusionary ideologies continue to operate - it is critical that racist ideologies and hegemonic practices be analytically distinguished: the former is only one expression of the latter.
Racism, Egalitarianism and the Problem of Ideological Contradiction

Common-sense racism - belief in the inherent difference and collective cultural/moral inferiority of Native peoples - and the public value of egalitarianism - the belief in the fundamental equality of all citizens - are central features of the dominant Euro-Canadian culture of the Cariboo region. These apparently contradictory orientations (Henry and Tator 1994), however, seem to pose no cognitive dissonance to local residents who express these views simultaneously or alternately in various contexts of interaction. Instead, anti-Native racism and egalitarianism are fully compatible with their cultural assumptions about the nature of history, the individual and society.

For example, those who oppose aboriginal treaties proclaim history as the outcome of heroic individualism, of 'survival of the fittest'. They proclaim that all individuals have equal opportunity to succeed in life, and that those who adopt the values of the capitalist work ethic, who have drive, determination and initiative, will succeed, while those who do not share these qualities or talents will not. Collective inequalities between Native and non-Native populations (or between other ethnic groups, between men and women, between socio-economic classes) are not explained as the outcome of structural inequalities, or forms of colonial, class or gender domination or oppression, but as the result of individual failings (see Marchak 1988). In the case of Native peoples, their marginalized position is explained at times as an inherent failure to adapt, or as the historical consequence of discriminatory legislation and policy. Regardless, the solution remains a matter of individual agency, through which Natives must 'choose' to become equal and assimilate into mainstream society. Thus individuals draw on the terms of the frontier complex to both champion the principle of equality and to rationalize the existence of collective inequalities and inherent 'differences' between populations.
The academic charge of “ideological contradiction” is often based on the presumption that culture and cultural processes are, or should be, coherent, congruent systems of thought and action (for example, in Gramsci’s [1971] concept of a divided consciousness). This is only one theoretical approach to culture, however. In contrast, Alfred Schutz (1971: 207-259) argues for the existence of multiple realities in everyday life, suggesting that individuals regularly move through different ways of knowing - daydreams, fiction, scientific theory - without generating confusion or conflict. This movement is enabled by the fact that multiple realities are not static, bounded and discrete entities or programs of truth. Instead, they are integrated mental states that exist within the same consciousness. The knowledge, opinions and perspectives generated from these different realities can be expressed in the same ordinary language of everyday life.

One means for understanding this integration, I am suggesting, lies in appreciating the various cultural dimensions of the frontier complex. This complex should not be considered as a coherent cultural ‘system’, nor an ideological ‘whole’. Instead, following Raymond Williams’s vision of a hegemonic culture, it is best described as a complex of various assumptions of history, society and identity that are at once disparate and integrated.

This is not to say that Cariboo-Chilcotin residents are not frequently criticized for holding apparently contradictory beliefs. I have shown throughout these chapters that one of the most common modes of political struggle is the politics of embarrassment, through which subordinate groups attack opponents for holding apparently contradictory beliefs and for engaging in practices that are contrary to public values and morality. Key features of the frontier complex - public values and morals, historical symbols - regularly are drawn upon by competing groups to protect or challenge existing relations of power. This is clearly evident in the way that both Reform Party advocates and aboriginal leaders
use the concept of equality to denounce or promote aboriginal treaties and rights. The idea of ideological contradiction is one of the most powerful political weapons framing much of contemporary political discourse. The ethnographic problem to trace is not the existence of 'objective' ideological contradictions identifiable only by the privileged outside scholar, but rather the conditions in which different groups working 'on the ground' selectively perceive apparent contradictions, why, and for what purpose.

Benevolent Paternalism and Euro-Canadian Identity

The assumption of benevolence is not limited to public histories celebrating Canadian national history or pioneer triumphs in the wilderness. Instead, it frames the very way small town Euro-Canadians speak about Native issues. Many Euro-Canadians, regardless of their personal experience with or knowledge about Native peoples and communities, claim competence to know what is in the best interests of the regional Native community. From the shop clerk who patronizingly approved of Native customers adopting Euro-Canadian standards of domestic materialism to the land claims opponents who insist, despite obvious disagreement of Native leaders throughout the province, that treaty settlements are not in Natives' best interests, these speakers engage in a specific style of discourse premised on the key assumption of Native incapacity and Euro-Canadian superiority. These speakers assume that Native people are relatively childlike and naive, are incapable of managing their own affairs and forming effective strategies for the future, and that they should submit to the superiority of their Euro-Canadian 'tutors' who only have their best interests at heart. These discourses exist as conversational rituals that repeatedly celebrate a colonial self-identity of superiority and benevolence; these discourses have a momentum and dynamic of their own, and exists completely independently of what aboriginal people in
Canada say or do. There is no room in these discussions for dialogue or reasoned exchange with aboriginal peoples, who can only look on as their character, humanity, and fate is contemplated and decided by their colonizers.

These are precisely the dynamics that Dyck (1991) describes as a style of discourse in which non-Natives, be they Indian Affairs officials or small town Canadians, contemplate the "Indian problem". A key indicator of this style of discourse is the manner in which Native resistance is understood. Speakers rationalize their efforts to control and direct Native lives through a self-image of benevolence and paternalism. When Native people resist, these acts are interpreted as evidence for the very inferiority on which these styles of discourse are predicated: Natives who refuse to join in the Stampede festivities are "lazy"; Natives who are given "free" houses by the government then turn around and "wreck them".

The critical issue is not whether these ideals are the best course of action. Various sectors of non-Native society may have different ideas about what Native peoples "should do": Natives should leave the reserves and assimilate, they should become active Christians, they should join the environmentalist or the feminist movement, they should learn their language and be "traditional" Indians. The critical issue is the way presumptions of benevolence and superiority have authorized non-Native Canadians to hold an opinion on, to speak about, and to intervene in Native issues. At its barest, this style of discourse is a reflection of what Memmi has called the colonial privilege: it is a culturally conditioned assumption of taken-for-granted superiority that is inherent to the privilege of being a member of the colonizing society.
Modes of Resistance

Native people encounter aspects of this dominant culture as a regular part of their experience in Williams Lake: in their interactions with Euro-Canadians in the public school system, in local stores and businesses, in government agencies. They encounter expressions of the dominant culture in the city newspaper, in the books filling the downtown library, in public school curriculum, in the rhetoric of non-Native politicians, and in the very way the city is geographically divided into a grid of streets bearing the names of early white pioneers and politicians. Many area Native peoples, whether they live on-reserve or in town, feel strongly that Williams Lake is not neutral territory; rather, that in town they are outsiders in a society that they (and their ancestors) have watched develop and grow up around them, and that now exercises unwieldy control over their everyday lives.

Individuals cope with these pressures and forces in a variety of ways. The most immediate experience of domination is that of interpersonal racism, or status domination. Native people may respond in a variety of ways. They may withdraw as much as possible from interaction with Euro-Canadians, or may attempt to cover their Indianness and pass as non-Native. They may engage in private forms of resistance, pursuing avenues to gain public recognition, status and respect within the context of the reserve community. They may engage in public forms of symbolic resistance to Euro-Canadian condemnation by defiantly asserting profane status in town: by either playing drunk or being drunk on city streets. Some individuals with the strength, confidence and fortitude required may simply ignore their encounters with common-sense racism. Many others, to different degrees, have internalized these dominant assumptions of Native inferiority. The self-loathing of internalized racism described by other writers of colonial situations such as Fanon (1963) and Memmi (1965) has become expressed through the
violence, the suicides and the slow-suicides of alcoholism that have prevailed in many Shuswap, Tsilhqot'in and Carrier communities since the 1950s.

The changing political, economic and social contexts of Canadian society in the last two decades have brought new resources for Cariboo-Chilcotin Natives to use in struggling against these and other dominating practices. The most important barrier Native people face to bringing about change in their relationships with regional non-Native society - whether these relationships be with the non-Natives who control the public school system, the government agencies, the services and stores, the civic government, the resource industries, and so on - is the task of overcoming their prescribed invisibility to the non-Native population. Native leaders must develop a means to capture the attention of the regional public. They must confront the pervasive stereotype of the ‘invisible Indian’ that has rendered them situationally non-existent and inaudible to the general public.

With the rise of multiculturalism in federal nationalist policy in the 1970s, and the increasing urban concerns with issues of racism, equality, and the plurality of identities and histories in the so-called ‘post-colonial’ era of the 1990s, the moral power of Native critiques of racism have been immensely strengthened. Area Natives regularly exercise a form of moral power by manipulating the terms of the dominant culture - the ideals of equality, multiculturalism, and justice - in their attempt to highlight critical problems in their relationships with government agencies, corporations, and city residents. In large part, these moral politics work because of the intense scrutiny local Euro-Canadians feel bearing down upon them from urban society. Accusations of racism may be ignored when they occur in private contexts, or when they are limited to quiet public discussions in the Cariboo-Chilcotin; when brought to the attention of the provincial public they gain increasing strength. For example, it was only when Cariboo-Chilcotin Native peoples’ charges that they were being subjected racial prejudice and discrimination
from RCMP officers were echoed by a Provincial Court judge and picked up by the provincial media that the provincial government agreed to strike the Cariboo-Chilcotin Justice Inquiry in 1992.

Natives leaders employ the politics of embarrassment not only to address interpersonal racism, but to secure changes in government policy and to win public support for aboriginal rights and treaties. The Tsilhqot'in chief's defense of aboriginal rights through appealing to the principles of equality and the Canadian constitution does not necessarily indicate an acceptance of or capitulation to Canadian sovereignty, authority, or culture. Instead, these are momentary, strategic actions through which Native leaders use the symbols of power embedded in the dominant culture in order to garner non-Native public support and shift the balance of power.

Changes in government policies concerning aboriginal treaties, Crown land management and forestry regulations, and the increasing 'subcontracting' of government responsibilities to First Nations and Tribal Council organizations and with this, the burgeoning administrative budgets within which these organizations operate, have resulted in an increasing recognition on the part of non-Native politicians, business people, and industry executives of the potential political and economic power of Cariboo-Chilcotin Natives. Native people are transforming this potential political and economic power into strategies to challenge a variety of modes of domination. At one level, Native leaders have successfully countered instances of disrespectful treatment and harassment in local stores by threatening an economic boycott.

Even more important, the aboriginal treaty process and the potential transfer of lands and resources to aboriginal communities is motivating various sectors of the non-Native public, ranging from forest companies and local governments to Chambers of Commerce, to enter into discussions with area
Native leaders over their future economic relationships. Williams Lake civic leaders and business representatives are now sitting down with area First Nations leaders in face-to-face meetings in Indian reserve community halls to discuss their mutual futures. These events are unprecedented in the history of Native/non-Native relations in the Cariboo-Chilcotin. They reflect not only how these relations may be driven by external - that is, non-local - policy directives and political/economic forces, but also how these relations are shaped by the inherent contingency of the dominant culture of the region.

This contingency should be emphasized. In tracing the various dimensions of the frontier complex, my intent has not been to offer an argument of cultural determinism: that these beliefs and assumptions determine the current state of Indian/white relations, or that common-sense racism is inevitable and unchangeable. Rather, what is important to trace is how a certain set of beliefs and assumptions exist as common-sense truths, and how some Euro-Canadians regularly not only draw on these assumed truths but engage culturally specific modes of arriving at truth in order to defend existing relations of power. In other contexts and given sufficient incentive, the same Euro-Canadians may show a willingness to overcome their cultural habits and to enter into more balanced and respectful relationships with Native peoples. These ways of partitioning cultural beliefs and practices to different arenas of social life - for example, as some Euro-Canadians move from conducting formal business meetings with Native Band representatives to engaging in casual conversational rituals denigrating Natives - are again suggestive of Alfred Schutz’s concept of the coexistence of multiple realities and multiple systems of relevances. The critical factor to consider is that current arrangements of political and economic power, for the most part, still privilege non-Natives with the ability to decide when these shifts in relevances will occur.
In the meantime, area Natives, from youths in public schools to formally-
elected Band chiefs, are regularly challenging the dominant identities and histories
of the region in a variety of ways. In struggling against forms of everyday racism
that deny Native peoples’ worth and integrity, Native people are attempting to
demonstrate the essential similarities between Native and non-Native Canadians,
and Native peoples’ right to be treated with the same dignity and respect as other
citizens. In contrast, in engaging in private ‘joking’ behaviour, Native people are
not directly confronting but are epistemologically defusing dominant stereotypes
into ambiguous illusions of meaning. These forms of resistance-through-humour
have also been documented in everyday Native conversational practices (Deloria
1969) and in the work of Native artists (Ryan 1992). In yet other strategies,
notably their displays and performances of cultural identity, Natives strive
implicitly to overcome the barriers of racism by replacing negative with positive
notions of the distinctiveness of aboriginal cultures from those of non-Natives.
Aboriginal modes of resistance, like dominant discourses, make use of alternating
concepts of Native similarity with and difference from mainstream society.

This raises the issue of the ‘cultural’ power that Native people are drawing
from the Canadian public’s long-standing fascination with Native cultural
exotism (Francis 1992). In engaging in strategic essentialisms to communicate
with non-Native audiences, Natives are making use of the power of the ‘colonial
gaze’. They are drawing on the symbols of power and traditions of representation
that prevail among the dominant society. These strategies could be read as a
reflection of how extensively relations of power have restricted other opportunities
for communication. But when viewed in the broader context, cultural reifications
through symbols that could be interpreted as hegemonic noble savage stereotypes
constitute only one aspect of a diverse repertoire of projects of cultural and
political resistance.
Not all Native peoples speak from identical perspectives and social positions. Shuswap, Carrier and Tsilhqot'in teenagers, reserve residents, single mothers raising families in town, elected Band chiefs, and elders not only may experience domination differently, but they may enact different forms of both resistance and accommodation to the dominant structures that impinge on their lives. This diversity has been hinted at in my discussion of the different strategies individuals are using to communicate with non-Native audiences. Not all of these strategies are confrontational. Not all involve the politics of embarrassment. As evident in the discussions that took place during the land claims public forum, some Native speakers at times make use of more indirect discursive strategies in which they employ strategic equivalences: they juxtapose Native and non-Native values and apply creative metaphors to bridge the gulf in understanding that separates the Native and non-Native worlds. For example, when one Shuswap leader likens land claims negotiations to labour/management talks, he offers non-Natives a way of understanding treaty negotiations that acknowledges their own cultural values of right-wing entrepreneurialism. The Shuswap leader’s approach reflects his own personal history as a Band leader, his own style of conciliatory politics, and his own carefully-developed discursive strategy for “talking to politicians”.

In this dissertation I have generally restricted my discussion to a brief overview of the ways in which Cariboo-Chilcotin Native people are resisting the dominant culture of the region. A more complete study of current aboriginal resistance would also take into account the ways in which different sectors of the Native population, to different degrees, have also collaborated with and benefited from colonial systems of domination (Ortner 1995). It would also explore the internal politics, and internal processes of domination and resistance, within the Shuswap, Carrier and Tsilhqot’in communities themselves. I have not explored
these issues here - not out of a sense of trepidation of dealing with difficult topics, but simply because they are not the subject of this dissertation.

In the same article Ortner has raised a second cautionary note concerning resistance studies: that there is often a tendency to construe all resistance as a reactionary response to forces of domination rather than being rooted in autonomous and ongoing cultural orientations and commitments. Gerald Alfred (1995) also discusses this point in his study of Kahnawake Mohawk nationalism. Alfred warns of the hegemonic consequences of construing Native politics as being determined by the context of Euro-Canadian colonialism, and argues that a traditional Mohawk nationalist ideology has survived, albeit in modified forms, independently of the colonial context.

The alternative, to construe forms of resistance as rooted in inherently “Native” cultural world views, is equally problematic in that it too perpetuates the image of the essential cultural boundedness of aboriginal peoples and communities. Similarly, the concept of the “hybridity” of colonial discourses, while it has been applied ethnographically to convey the complexity of symbolic practices between aboriginal and colonial groups (Hanks 1986), only reproduces the implicit assumption of the naturalness of colonial dualisms. The issues to trace, instead, are how both colonial and indigenous symbols become detached from their original context of meaning through the colonial encounter to be recontextualized and redefined through the evolving social relationships linking varied aboriginal groups with varied sectors of colonial society (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991). Through these processes the very meaning of the categories of ‘Native’ and ‘white’ becomes transformed through an ongoing historical dialogue and symbolic exchange.

These are the processes that have occurred through history in the incorporation of Native symbolism, displays and performances in the Williams
Lake Stampede. A full understanding of these processes would require a close examination of the history of the festival and the shifting political and economic contexts in which the festival has been staged. But by the 1990s it is apparent that Native and settler symbols of identity have become intricately meshed. Both natives and non-Natives are collectively constructing public identities based on the same symbolic features, ranging from Indian princesses and feathered headdresses to buckskin regalia. To Natives these are symbols of self-identity; to non-Natives, they are symbols of the Other that refract a public identity for the city of Williams Lake. The same epistemological struggles that are found in the history of colonial encounters - what the Comaroff’s refer to as symbolic practice - continue to define the politics of representation in the Stampede, where the hegemony of cultural practices is rooted not in the symbols people choose to represent themselves, but in the power of privileged groups to control which meanings will be elevated as dominant.

Conclusion: The Frontier Complex in Comparative Perspective

One of the remaining questions is: to what extent is this frontier culture a specifically local cultural complex, and to what extent does it contain features common to other regions of Canada? Given the plurality of localized, historically-specific forms of colonial cultures and the varying political, economic and social contexts that condition Indian/white relations in other regions of Canada, a comparative perspective at this point will be only tentative. But a survey of the ethnographic literature shows that aspects of the frontier complex have been described elsewhere in Canada. What has not been previously shown is that these processes together comprise a coherent, integrated and diverse complex of culture and power.
My discussion of benevolent paternalism in Euro-Canadian identity and practice mirrors that contained in Robert Paine’s study (1977b) of colonial relations in the Canadian Arctic. The colonial experience in the Arctic has not been primarily one of sudden economic intrusion. Rather, as the Canadian Arctic became a strategic military region in the Cold War era and an increasingly attractive region for oil and gas resource industry expansion, it brought, for the Inuit, an “epoch of colonialism infused with concepts of social welfare” (Paine 1977a:12). Paine has described this process as “welfare colonialism”: the sudden expansion of governmental authority and administration to the north through which the Inuit were transformed into a client population dependent on the provision of government welfare, health, and educational services.

It is in this context that Paine developed the concept of “tutelage” to critically assess the nature of colonial relationships in the north (1977d). White policy makers and service providers became ‘tutors’ to the Inuit, rationalizing the imposition of services as in the Inuit’s best interests, and ultimately seeking to transform Inuit cultures into the ideals of southern, middle-class Euro-Canadian society. The cost of accepting tutelage, however, whether in the form of educational, medical, or welfare provisions, is that the Inuit were required to submit to a status of children who needed the ongoing guidance of white bureaucrats and institutions. The Inuit became caught in the grip of institutional and ideological practices that worked to maintain governmental hegemony in the north. Contributors to Paine’s edited volume trace the specific way in which relations of tutelage have developed through considering the context of Inuit/white relationships and Inuit and white social values, behavioural norms and cultural ideals.

Since this study, Noel Dyck (1991) has elaborated the concept of “coercive tutelage” in his analysis of the development of federal Indian Affairs policy in
Canada. He has shown that the specific patterns of tutelage in Inuit/white relations in the Arctic are not isolated forms, but reflect key assumptions defining colonial relationships in Canada since first European arrival. Benevolent paternalism, thus, can be considered both a specific feature of localized colonial projects and a general theme of Canadian cultural orientations towards aboriginal people. As I have shown here, in the local setting of Williams Lake this assumption extends well beyond government policy and Euro-Canadian attitudes, providing a framework for a colonial historical epistemology and for ongoing assertions of both local and national identity.

Braroe, Stymeist and Lithman have explored the practices and impacts of common sense racism and status domination in Native/non-Native relations in other rural towns. Both Hall (1980) and Plaice (1990) have suggested that rural white attitudes towards Natives vary according to the variables of generation, historical experience, and social and economic contexts of interaction. Describing white racism in the west Chilcotin region, Hall (1980:186) suggests that the long history of Native employment on white ranches has created a context in which white ranchers may defend Natives against the charges of “laziness” levelled by white businessmen who see Natives in no other context but as welfare recipients and consumers of goods and services.

Plaice (1990), applying a transactionalist approach to ethnicity, explores the diversity of rural settler identities and attitudes towards Natives in her study of a Labrador settler community. Ethnicity, she finds, is a fluid construct continually being reformed in different social contexts of interaction. Further, attitudes towards Natives vary according to the manner in which settlers imagine their own identity. At times, the distinction between Indian and settler is central; at other times, settlers construct an identity as “oldtimers” in which they relate their long history of association with bush life and Native peoples. In yet other
circumstances, notably to avoid being excluded from land claims settlements, settlers may claim Native status by tracing their Inuit heritage.

These works reveal important complexities in the dynamics of local Native/non-Native relations. A similar diversity in attitudes and contexts of relations could be found in the Williams Lake area, a diversity shaped not only by the various contexts in which different Euro-Canadians encounter Natives but also by the various contexts in which representations of identity are put forth. There may be a different focus to the conversational rituals engaged in by Euro-Canadian men and women, by working class and business people. Indeed, I have shown that Euro-Canadian discourses of difference vary tremendously according to context: private in-home conversations, land claims forums, and ritual festivities. In each setting Euro-Canadians manipulate the terms by which they understand their identity and their relationships with Natives. Like Labrador settlers, Euro-Canadians in Williams Lake alternately highlight and erase their differences from area Native peoples.

The critical point that I have addressed is that these processes are not merely reflective of the shifting, fluid nature of public identity, but more centrally they are processes of power. They comprise a more or less integrated complex of colonial processes in which privileged Euro-Canadians continually struggle to maintain their access to the power to determine what identities, what definitions of history, and what understandings of current conflicts will gain dominance in public contexts.

These conclusions have important implications for understanding current debates in British Columbia regarding aboriginal claims to land and self-government. The rhetoric of public opposition mirrors many of the themes, assumptions, and values I have traced among rural Euro-Canadians. One recent example is a prominent article that ran on the 'Opinion' page of the Vancouver
Sun on the 21 December, 1995. Written by a Simon Fraser University economist, the article provided what appeared to be a reasoned, scholarly argument opposing aboriginal self-government and treaty settlements. There were two basic arguments. First, explicitly drawing on the popular, common-sense belief in cultural evolution presented as anthropological theory, the writer argued that "traditional aboriginal culture" is unfit for survival in the contemporary Western industrial society. Aboriginal people, he suggested, must abandon their cultural orientation and adopt the values of materialism, thrift, individualism and private property if they are to overcome their current ‘problems’ of poverty and socio-economic inequality. Second, drawing on the myth of the self-made man and the stereotype of the ‘wealthy, undeserving Indian’, the writer argued that "welfare dependency" is only encouraging aboriginal poverty and social problems. Governments have been too generous in providing programs to aboriginal peoples. The solution, he suggests, is to encourage aboriginal assimilation into the capitalist economy and culture.

This opinion article was not simply the argument of one individual misappropriating anthropological concepts and projecting partisan Reform-style assimilationist rhetoric. What is critical to recognize is that such a view is fully supported by main threads of the dominant culture not only of the Cariboo region, but of many rural and urban settings in British Columbia. The opinions expressed in the article are supported by the frontier historical epistemology and by the prevalent values, attitudes and identities encountered in public school curricula, in popular histories and in everyday conversation as well as in the rhetoric of provincial politicians who denounce aboriginal treaties.

Another example concerns the much-discussed B.C. Supreme Court decision on the Gitksan-Wet’suwet’en land claims case (McEachern 1991). Chief Justice Allan McEachern’s report has been widely condemned by scholars and First
Nations critics for being grounded in a colonial ideology, in an outdated, 19th century anthropological theory of cultural evolution, and in a fundamentally racist orientation to aboriginal peoples (Cassidy 1992; Miller 1992b; Waldram, Berringer and Warry 1992; Daly and Mills 1993). What has not been fully appreciated is that McEachern’s judgement is not an isolated occurrence, and is not the product of one individual’s ‘false consciousness’ or ideology, but is fundamentally rooted in common sense orientations to society, history and aboriginal peoples, orientations that prevail among the mainstream public. His judgement is not only rooted in a 19th century colonial ideology (Pridington 1992) but in the ideology of contemporary 20th century colonialism that is alive and well in small town British Columbia and beyond.²

Political scientist Paul Tennant has suggested that McEachern’s judgement reflects “traditional white views” of history. He notes that “What is significant today is that an increasing number of non-aboriginal British Columbians are willing to put the old views in historical perspective and, in so doing, to create a new understanding of British Columbia history”, one framed on the principles of the moral equality of Native and non-Native cultures, the distinctiveness of Native identities, and the recognition and acceptance of the legitimacy of aboriginal rights and claims (Tennant 1992:80-81).

Creating a new understanding of British Columbia history has certainly been one of my intentions in writing this dissertation. However, it is important to ask whether this new movement - whether in academia or in popular culture and discourse - truly represents a new vision of history, or whether it is a counter-hegemonic reformulation of the frontier myth in which Natives appear in romantic terms as victims of the dark forces of colonialism. For example, many new cultural

² I have discussed elsewhere (Furniss 1994) how the frontier myth makes its appearance in the Delgamuukw decision and other reports of the Canadian justice system.
trends, such as New Age spirituality, environmentalism, and cultural heritage tourism, are being mobilized in support of aboriginal issues. But in different ways these cultural trends reformulate aspects of the colonial culture - in their exoticization and romanticization of aboriginal ‘difference’ - rather than moving beyond the terms and symbols supplied by the frontier culture and consciousness I have described here.

Nor is it to diminish the importance of sensitivity and respect as guiding principles in academic analyses of First Nations culture and history. But sensitivity and good intentions alone do not raise anthropologists above our colonial disciplinary heritage, and it is critical to remain self-reflexive and vigilant over the assumptions and attitudes we bring to academic analyses of colonial relations. If there is any lesson to be learned from history, it is to beware of the rhetoric of benevolent paternalism, regardless of by whom this identity is claimed.

While there may be a “new understanding of history” emerging in British Columbia, we must ask to what degree it is truly ‘new’, and to what degree this reflects a radical break with the colonial cultural past. What I have demonstrated here is that contemporary Canadian culture is deeply imprinted by the legacy and ongoing dynamics of colonialism. The polarization of public opinion around the Gustafsen Lake standoff, the negative public responses to the recently-signed Nisga’a land claims treaty, or the continued denial of the courts of the legitimacy of aboriginal title and sovereignty cannot be simply dismissed as expressions of ignorance, of racism, of redneckism, or of outdated colonial ideology. A proper understanding of these public crises requires an appreciation of the systematic way in which a dominant colonial culture operates in multiple dimensions of ordinary

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3 I am not presuming that the analysis I have presented here is in any way above, or removed from, these colonial influences - a position which would refute all that I have argued in previous chapters. I am simply prescribing that a healthy, self-critical skepticism accompany all academic work focusing on First Nations and colonialism in Canada.
life, and how public attitudes are rooted in a complex, sophisticated, and partial vision of the world that is profoundly shaped and conditioned by the past and present colonial experience.
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