

**Indigenizing the ‘white man’ and whitening the ‘red man’  
Processes and Discourses of Canadian Interwar Racial Imaging and Nation Building**

*“I am always amongst the white people and making an honest living  
and I have good reputation among the white people...”<sup>1</sup>*

*“...[he is] a better citizen than lots of white men...”<sup>2</sup>*

During Canada’s interwar period increasing numbers of First Nation individuals sought to become enfranchised- to renounce their Indian status and become fully legal Canadian citizens.<sup>3</sup> While the increase in numbers still amounted to a minority- the majority of First Nations choose to not become enfranchised, the few hundred applications that the Department of Indian Affairs received between 1918 and 1940 reveal something about Canadian national and racial imaging.<sup>4</sup> The main reason identified in applications usually centered on gaining access to the resources and opportunities that were denied to these individuals under Canada’s “Indian” status.<sup>5</sup> Accordingly, applicants sought to use enfranchisement as a way to better their lives and compete more equally with the “white men.”<sup>6</sup> In entering into this process, and ceasing to be “Indian,” First Nation applicants had to demonstrate their level of assimilation and integration into white society. Essentially, they had to prove their “whiteness,” and, thus, their lack of “Indianness.”<sup>7</sup> The process of proving a certain way of life and, thus, an eligibility for citizenship, were tied to the processes of nation building and national delineations of race, ethnicity and the citizen.<sup>8</sup> Through legal definitions and designations, citizenship is how a nation defines what and who it is. In turn, this determines who is, and who can be, entitled to full rights and access to national legal, political, social and economic resources and opportunities.<sup>9</sup>

In addition to delineating citizenship, the nation-state also has the task of defining and defending itself against other nations as a way to justify its existence, and as an exercise of power. Family, commonly being the first community to which an individual belongs or develops a sense of belonging, is a widely used metaphor for nations and nation building; the nation needs to make itself seem like a “natural” domestic unit worth being part of, and worth defending.<sup>10</sup> This involves creating a sense of common bonds which are built on the perception of shared histories, values, characteristics and aspirations. Ultimately, this requires a common identity which allows a nation, and its nationals, to

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas L. to Charles Cooke of DIA, 16 Nov. 1925, file 8022-9, vol. 7230, series B-3, RG 10, LAC in Robin J. Brownlie, “‘A Better Citizen than lots of White Men’: First Nations Enfranchisement- an Ontario Case Study, 1918-1940,” *The Canadian Historical Review* 87:1 (2006): 29.

<sup>2</sup> Alex A. to DIA, 5 Jan. 1920, file 8019-7, vol. 7224, series B-3, RG 10, LAC in *ibid.*, 36.

<sup>3</sup> Brownlie, “Better Citizen,” 29-30.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 30-31.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 35, 37.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>8</sup> Sunera Thobani, *Exalted Subjects: Studies in the Making of Race and Nation in Canada*, (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2007), 74.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 3, 5, 9-11.

<sup>10</sup> Daniel Coleman, “The National Allegory of Fraternity: Loyalist Literature and the Making of Canada’s White British Origins,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 36:3, 138. (2001): 132.

differentiate and align itself with, and against, others.<sup>11</sup> The human body thus becomes a biopolitical identity through which a nation can employ strategic correlations and binaries, leading to a sense of collective identity, and an ability to determine which bodies can come into the country, who can represent them in wars, where one can live, or even how one can reproduce.<sup>12</sup> For Canada, these processes have involved the construction of a primary identity which ultimately defines and exalts “whiteness.”<sup>13</sup> Settlers to Canada had to redefine who they were; they had to become nationals and not just settlers.<sup>14</sup> Stemming from its partially British roots, Canadian nation building has centered on a “whiteness,” which harmonizes and differentiates “Canadiannes” with “Britishness.”<sup>15</sup> However, in order to do this, nationals had to define what “Canadian” meant, and then justify “Canadian” access, and right to resources, land, and a state. The interwar period was a significant time for such Canadian nation building, and due to binary processes of nation building, it was also significant for First Nation racial imaging. Canada gained more independence from Britain and sought to create an image for itself, which in turn, incorporated a binary of progressivism and primitivism that ultimately sought to indigenize the “white man,” and assimilate or eliminate the “red man,” in an attempt to justify the state.

The Indian Act of 1876 defined Canada’s indigenous people as “wards of the state,” and implemented the reserve system, thus legislating place making and racial imaging processes as part of white Canadian nation building. Indigenism binds groups of people to the land, which implicates certain rights and access to that land.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, in order to justify the state and non-indigenous access to the land, white nationals not only had to gain control of the land and its resources, they also had to maintain that control.<sup>17</sup> Thus, the colonization of indigenous populations had to be justified, and the land made accessible and adoptable to whites. In Canada, the reserve system legislated indigenous bodies to specific and often isolated tracts of land, thereby defining physical zones of designation, access and exclusion.<sup>18</sup> Through this system, First Nation access to the land was restricted, and their indigenous image could be deconstructed, and then reconstructed as one separate from the land. Reservations became sites for the cultural extinction and the re-creation of a Canadian state - a common theme in other nation building projects, which focused on the centrality of the land to Canadian nation building and ultimately sought to indigenize the white presence.

During the First World War an estimated 3500-4000 Aboriginal Canadians voluntarily enlisted and fought in the Canadian Expeditionary Core.<sup>19</sup> For many their wartime experience was one in which they were treated as equals: brothers and full participants in Canadian nationhood. The Canadian Expeditionary Core dressed and equipped all of its soldiers the same, and, as such, military participation, especially through the uniform, created an image of equality.<sup>20</sup> The equalizing aspect of the visible marker of the uniform would have contrasted to that of previous experiences of racialization wherein certain physical markers of the body (such as skin colour) would have been visible marks of

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<sup>11</sup> Thobani, *Exalted Subjects*, 19.

<sup>12</sup> Kim S. Rasmussen, “Foucault’s Genealogy of Racism,” *Theory, Culture & Society* 28:5 (2011): 36-37, 39, 40.

<sup>13</sup> Thobani, *Exalted Subjects*, 3,5; Coleman, “National Allegory,” page 132-138, 141, 146.

<sup>14</sup> Thobani, *Exalted Subjects*, 55.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

<sup>16</sup> Jyotimaya Tripathy, “Towards an essential Native American Identity,” *The Canadian Journal of Native Studies* XXVI 2(2006): 316.

<sup>17</sup> Thobani, *Exalted Subjects*, 48.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>19</sup> Robert J. Talbot, “‘It Would be Best to Leave Us Alone’: First Nations Responses to the Canadian War Effort, 1914-18,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 45:1 (Hiver 2011 Winter), 108, 109.

<sup>20</sup> Fred Gaffen, *Forgotten Soldiers* (Winnipeg: Canadian Defence Academy Press, 2008), 1.

“Indianness,” and, thus, markers of differentiation. One of the hopes of Aboriginal wartime experiences was that such equalization might be extended to Aboriginal peoples and communities on Canadian soil, so that the racial images and legislated discourses of racialization and restriction to land would be redefined in a way that reflected the part First Nation contributions to Canada’s war effort. However, at the War’s end, Canada gained new international recognition, in addition to experiencing new industrial economies and gender roles that developed from total war efforts, and, in consequence, the interwar period became a pivotal time in the development of Canadian nationalism. As in the pre-World War II period, white nationals continued to use access to land as one way to accomplish the construction of a national image of “whiteness.”

While some First Nations individuals were overseas fighting for the rights and freedoms of the Canadian state, Aboriginal leaders back home were waging their own war, using the wartime experiences and discourses to defend Aboriginal access and rights to citizenship and land. Aboriginal overseas contributions were being recognized and celebrated in national newspapers as part of wartime discourses of the First World War, yet, interwar nation building discourses did not facilitate successful campaigns for these leaders. Canada had fought to defend overseas borders, and, accordingly, also partially fought to establish its relation to the British Empire and the Canadian territory itself. Land was a contentious issue, and the very lands set aside as sites of exclusion once again became battlefields over legal designation to land access. The Canadian state fought to set aside parts of certain reserve lands exclusively for white war veterans.<sup>21</sup> Despite celebrated contributions to the war effort, and experiencing relative equality overseas, Aboriginal veterans were not afforded the same rewards and recognition as their white brothers in arms.<sup>22</sup> In the overseas wartime front Canada represented itself as a racially diverse nation of relative equals. However, within Canada’s own borders and boundaries- on its “own” land- “Indians” were still “wards of the state” that had to be kept from the land. Aboriginal veterans were thus accordingly managed under the Department of Indian Affairs, and not by the federal state responsible for citizens- those white nationals of “exemplary” pioneer qualities at the core of the nation building pioneer mythology.<sup>23</sup>

The pioneer mythology of Canadian nation building effectively conveyed a binary between British and Indian ways of relating to the land, environment and ideas of progress. Discourses on early arctic exploration, especially the Franklin expeditions, not only serve as an example of how Canada defined itself in terms of environment and a pioneer mythology, but also the way this mythology served interwar nation building purposes. Sir John Franklin was a nineteenth century British naval officer and arctic explorer. In 1845 he set sail with the intension of sailing through the Northwest Passage. No one from his crew survived. Yet, despite the failure of the expedition, from 1900 – 1970, Franklin was seen as an ideal example of commendable Britishness in facing the environment- an exemplar of a certain type of national character.<sup>24</sup>

The appeal of the Franklin expeditions lies in what could be said about land, character, and nation building.<sup>25</sup> In the early twentieth century, the scholar Vilhjalmur Stefansson argued that the explorers demonstrated the “stubbornness” of the “English mind... unwilling to learn from savages.”<sup>26</sup> This became a more common view in the 1970s

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<sup>21</sup> Sarah Carter, “‘An Infamous Proposal’: Prairie Indian Reserve Land and Soldier Settlement after World War I,” *Manitoba History* 37 (Spring 1999): 9-20.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 14-15.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>24</sup> Janice Cavell, “Comparing Mythologies: Twentieth-Century Canadian Constructions of Sir John Franklin,” in Norman Hillmer and Adam Chapnick, eds, *Canada’s of the Mind: the Making and Unmaking of Canadian Nationalisms in the Twentieth Century* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2007), 15, 20-21.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 23

<sup>26</sup> Quoted in *Ibid.*, 23.

with anti-American sentiments and a related questioning of Canada's relationship with Britain which was growing in the nation, but the pioneer discourse was popular in the interwar period.<sup>27</sup> These interwar discourses presented Canada's "pioneering" explorers as determined and enterprising men who worked and suffered to make a new nation<sup>28</sup> could be important and inspirational for a nation struggling during and after war, perhaps in need of finding pride in the sacrifices made. The Inuit, having survived in the arctic climates, were a glaring example of successful adaptation to the environment that did not lead to death. Yet, that was largely ignored in the construction of British "heroes." It was the task of the pioneer to conquer the frontier and civilize it, and Franklin was a hero because of his attempts to do so.<sup>29</sup> Thus, the Franklin discourses were linked to ideas of land, land use and land designation. Franklin was of a national character who endured and attempted to conquer the land. Because they did not "conquer", the Inuit were seen as obstacles to "progress" and thus removed from the pioneer discourse, and by association, the land.

Canada has often looked to technology as a national building scheme, a way to bring a diverse and vast land together from one sea to the other, and "conquer" the land.<sup>30</sup> This began with McDonald's National Policy and the Canadian Pacific Railroad of John A. McDonald, and continued to into the interwar years with the telephone. In 1927, historic broadcasts of Canada's Diamond Jubilee speeches were broadcast "not only from Ottawa but from across the nation," in the first ever "attempt at globe-circling broadcasting," which "united" Canadians as never before.<sup>31</sup> Such technologies were also used in 1939 to send messages from Canadians to the British King and Queen. In this broadcast the expanse of the land was featured between each speaker to emphasize the unifying capability of the technology which could bring messages from "the province of Nova Scotia on the shores of the Atlantic" to "800 miles westward to the province of Quebec," to "300 miles southwest to Toronto" to "600 miles westward to a farmhouse in Saskatchewan" to "500 miles northwest to Edmonton," and finally "800 miles across the Rocky Mountains to the province of British Columbia... in Vancouver on the shores of the Pacific."<sup>32</sup> However, this focus on technology also had a divisive impact as it contributed to a binary of white nation building and the making of primitive Aboriginals.

By taking pride in technological advancements, nation building discourses presented whites as continuing to conquer the land, they were becoming part of it and the vastness of the Canadian territory was becoming less of a barrier national unity and identity.<sup>33</sup> Like Franklin, whites were presented as the inventors, movers and shakers, the progressives. The work done by those considered to be outside of the nation, like the Chinese railroad workers, or Aboriginal veterans, were ignored in the discourses by a lack of acknowledgment and/or being physically removed from the land. Ideas of progress in relation to land also came into play in discourses of folklore, Canadian art and crafts, summer camps, and marketing. These however, were also coupled with a paradoxical nostalgia for a past "golden age," which

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 15, 38-39.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 24, 35.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 23-24.

<sup>30</sup> MacDougall, "The All-Red Dream," 46.

<sup>31</sup> Canadian Broadcast Corporation. "CBC Digital Archives: 1927: Diamond Jubilee broadcast links Canadians." Access date: April 09, 2012.  
<http://www.cbc.ca/archives/categories/society/celebrations/celebrations-general/diamond-jubilee-broadcast-links-canadians.html>.

<sup>32</sup> Canadian Broadcast Corporation. "CBC Digital Archives: Canada Calling the British Empire." Access date: April 09, 2012.  
<http://www.cbc.ca/archives/categories/society/celebrations/celebrations-general/canada-calling-the-british-empire.html>

<sup>33</sup> MacDougall, "The All-Red Dream," 46, 51.

contributed to the process of making whites appear indigenous and First Nations primitive, part of the past, not part of the developing and unifying future.

The First World War encouraged a rapid industrialization of Canadian society, and a corresponding insecurity over the new industrial order made its way into the white Canadian psyche, thereby producing interwar nation building discourses of “folk.” The “folk” was related to ideas of a past golden age, and of an essential cultural identity rooted in the purity of tradition.<sup>34</sup> The CPR publicity agent, and author of the influential *Canadian Mosaic* (1938), J. Murray Gordon, was an important proponent of this idea, which was a central reason behind his creation of the CPR Folk festivals. These festivals, which occurred between 1927-1931, celebrated the “folk” of Canada- the essential cultural expressions and identities of those (European) cultures which made up Canada. Like the telephone, folk, to Gibbon, enabled communication and was thus a unifying force. He believed that at their core, the folk of each culture was essentially the same, therefore in celebrating the different folks, the similarities of each could be recognized, and a Canadian identity based on plurality could be created.<sup>35</sup> John Buchan, or Lord Tweedsmuir, shared a similar opinion.

John Buchan was Canada’s Governor General from 1935 to 1940, who, as argued by Peter Henshaw, was one of the earliest proponents of multiculturalism.<sup>36</sup> According to Buchan, the development of a Canadian folk helped maintain ties with the Empire while also creating a pluralist Canadian identity. In both Buchan’s and Gibbon’s folk narratives, the past was romanticised; yet, these discourses also became a way through which progress could be measured, and racial images of “modern” whites and “primitive” First Nations were reproduced. In Buchan’s vision, First Nations were part of a primitive, traditional folk and they were of a past which informed the present. In Gibbon’s view, First Nations were literally written off the land.<sup>37</sup> Folk narratives also had an industrial component in that they made culture a commodity, something that could be performed, enjoyed and bought within modern economic and capitalist structures. This paradox was present in similar anti-modern discourses, which placed the folk, and ultimately Canada’s “Indians,” as the nostalgic people of the past.

Partially as a result of industrial advancements which facilitated production, but also resulting from concerns over industrialism, Canadian artists adopted the pioneer mythology during the interwar years.<sup>38</sup> Painters like Emily Carr and the Group of Seven became prominent, well-known artists, known for their ability to paint “distinctive” Canadian art. In accordance with contemporary nation building narratives, their art focused on the landscape and relations to the land. The Canadian landscape was perceived to be unique and distinctive, and was featured prominently in Canadian art. Thus, Canadian art became another way that the land became a central part of white Canadian conceptions of self. Yet, if artists and Canadians were to take such pride in the environment around them, creating an

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<sup>34</sup> Stuart Henderson, “While There is Still Time: J. Murray Gibbon and the Spectacle of Difference in Three CPR Folk Festivals, 1928-1931,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 39 (2005): 141; Coleman, “National Allegory,” page

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 142.

<sup>36</sup> Peter Henshaw, “John Buchan and the British Imperial Origins of Canadian Multiculturalism,” in ,” in Norman Hillmer and Adam Chapnick, eds, *Canada’s of the Mind: the Making and Unmaking of Canadian Nationalisms in the Twentieth Century* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2007), 191-208.

<sup>37</sup> First nations, for example, were not featured in any of the CPR folk festivals, Henderson, “While There is Still Time,” 154; Henshaw, “John Buchan,” 193, 198, 203.

<sup>38</sup> Sandra Campbell, “The Real Discoverers and Master-Builders of This Nation”: Lorne Pierce of Ryerson Press and Nationalism in Canadian Art, 1920-1950,” in Norman Hillmer and Adam Chapnick, eds, *Canada’s of the Mind: the Making and Unmaking of Canadian Nationalisms in the Twentieth Century* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2007), 177-178.

image or sense of belonging to that land was also important, and the land could not feel foreign. Claiming the land for the “white” was done partially through the work of salvage ethnographers and was based on theories of First Nation extinction.

Prior to the First World War a popular discourse that surrounded Canada’s Aboriginal population was that of an unfortunate extinction due to the inevitable processes of national progress. A branch of anthropology developed, based on this belief for the need to preserve cultures, known as salvage ethnography. First Nations were made subjects to be recorded and exoticized, and the collection, and/ or painting of Aboriginal artefacts was also part of this process. In the artistic expressions of salvage ethnography, some artists focused solely on Aboriginal portraits, while those who experienced the most contemporary acclaim, including Emily Carr and the Group of Seven, made them part of the background, an impersonal, and thus inhuman part of a past land and time.<sup>39</sup> Carr did paint some portraits, but, interestingly, they were of women and children- the Indians who, by the Indian Act, could lose their status, and those who were being assimilated through the Residential schools.<sup>40</sup> Accordingly, Carr’s art added to discourses of the vanishing traditional Indian by presenting the traditional as an impersonal part of a past, or by people who can, and were, being assimilated. Edmund Morris painted elders, but he focused on those individual Indians about to die, thus adding to extinction discourses.<sup>41</sup> Ultimately, the presence of “Indians,” whether it was a portrait or as part of the landscape, in Canadian art added an allure and exoticism which helped Canada to differentiate itself from the motherland. In exoticising Canada, Canadians were, by association, exoticised, and seen as a people separate from Britain.<sup>42</sup> As expressed by Canadian art, Canadians were becoming increasingly indigenous to the land, set to replace the people of the past- now relics to be captured in art, but who, according to the discourses, could not, and were not, participating in modern society, unless it was in an assimilative role. An example of this process can be seen in the Jubilee celebrations of Vancouver where Vancouver’s First nations and Chinese featured prominently.

In 1936 the city of Vancouver was 50 years old, and its Jubilee celebrations were a defining moment for the city to show the world who they were, both within the Empire and Canada. Songs were composed in which land, travel and technology were frequently mentioned, thus creating a sense of incorporation of land, technology and settlement into Vancouver’s development, which paralleled the national discourses.<sup>43</sup> Pavilions were also created, one for Vancouver’s Chinese population, and one for its First Nation population.<sup>44</sup> Showcasing Aboriginal imagery made sense as, through the works of Emily Carr, west coast native art was becoming increasingly popular and familiar in the Vancouver landscape. Ironically, however, in reality Aboriginal peoples were often in isolated reserve areas of the province, and thus, not familiar to Vancouver. Initiatives were thus made to make Aboriginal imagery more accessible for the expected visitors and tourists coming to Vancouver, with

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<sup>39</sup> Daniel Francis, “Ch.2: Vanishing Canadian,” in *The Imaginary Indian: The Image of the Indian in Canadian Culture* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2004): 25; LiLynn Wan, “‘Out of Many Kindreds and Tongues’: Racial Identity and Rights Activism in Vancouver, 1919-1939” (PhD diss., Dalhousie University, 2011) 93.

<sup>40</sup> See her works “Indian Baby”(n.d), “Mrs. Douse, Chieftainess of Kitwancool”(1928), “Louisa” (1928), “Old Mrs. Green, Lousia’s Mother, Queen Charolette Island” (1928), and “Possibly Susan Dan” (n.d), from B.C. Archives. “Contact Sheet Two.” Access date: April 09, 2012. <http://bcheritage.ca/emilycarrhomework/gallery/bccon2.htm>.

<sup>41</sup> Francis, “Imaginary Indian,” 28-29.

<sup>42</sup> Coleman, “National Allegory, 145.

<sup>43</sup> See, for example, the song submission by A.G. Bowie, J. Booth, “Cockney Version” by Edith Neelands and “Vancouver’s Jubilee” by Les Crane, George Rex, “British Columbia Sheet Music,” Access date: April 10, 2012, <http://www.library.ubc.ca/music/bcmusic/htmlpages/vancouverjubilee.html>.

<sup>44</sup> Wan, “‘Out of Many Kindreds and Tongues,’” 165-166.

such token representations of Aboriginal cultures like totems poles. The number of totem poles in Vancouver's Stanley Park increased as the days got closer to Jubilee celebrations.<sup>45</sup> This was a white directed initiative, as was the Aboriginal pavilion.

Unlike the Chinese who had control over how to present themselves, white Vancouver elites controlled the presentation of Vancouver's First Nations.<sup>46</sup> In the Jubilee exhibition, aboriginals were presented through three main events: an Indian canoe regatta, Indian Exhibit Building, and a Totem Pole exhibit, all of which featured First Nation "relics." While an active celebration of sport, the presence of a canoe contributed to discourses of primitive Aboriginals through portraying them in a historic item- the canoe had precedence as being displayed as an artefact in national and international museums.<sup>47</sup> The advertising of the regatta also employed exotic language which removed the Aboriginal "contestants" from the current settings, claiming they were from "many distance parts." In the Totem Pole Exhibit, the traditional totem pole artefact was on display, and in the Indian Exhibit building, both Indian arts and crafts as well as Indian themselves were on display. Here, First Nation artisans sold their arts and crafts, which were presented as commodities rather than artefacts.<sup>48</sup> However, given the discourses of nostalgia that surrounded contemporary arts and crafts, this participation was part of a process of racialization which designated Aboriginals as primitive peoples, selling things from a "golden era" of anti-modern, unindustrialized production.<sup>49</sup> This also presented the First Nations participants as being part of the modern economy, and two discourses were simultaneously at work. First Nations were portrayed and seen as an anti-modern, primitive and part of the past, but they were also modern, assimilated capitalists. It was a paradoxical celebration of the past and a present assimilation. It also made First Nations culture purchasable to whites, made it a commodity which whites could admire, purchase and take home. First Nations images were also more directly used to sell products, and more subversively in summer camps.

Consumer culture is a process by which nation building occurs in the home and every day life.<sup>50</sup> In this interwar national branding process, First Nations images conveyed various messages, including aforementioned images of anti-modernism and non-industrial purity, and invoking a sense of history. For example, the Chippewa Brand of red raspberries used the image of an Indian to convey a sense that their raspberries were "natural," untouched by the rapidly developing, and concerning, industrial world. Images of farmer were used in similar ways.<sup>51</sup> Like the images of a farmer, images of the French were also used to convey a sense of nationalist progress rooted in a history tied to the land.<sup>52</sup> The presence of these images made this nationalist discourse Canadian in a concrete way that helped to create a common sense of a shared history. These discourses contrasted the primitive with the industrial, again adding to a sense of continuity and ownership to the land, where progress reigned and traditionalism (or "Indians") were of a nostalgic past that could be consumed.

Children's summer camps were popular as a way of meditating this age of industrialization. Social movements of the time stressed the need for children to gain a sense of connection to the Canadian landscapes being ever popularized in artistic, festive and consumer images of Canada. "Indian" summer camps were a popular answer to this,

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<sup>45</sup> Vancouver Park Board. "Stanley Park: Totem Poles." Access date: April 10, 2012. <http://vancouver.ca/parks/parks/stanley/landmarks.htm>

<sup>46</sup> Wan, "Many Kindreds," 166.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 170.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 94-96, 109-110.

<sup>50</sup> Paula Hastings, "Branding Canada: Consumer Culture and the Development of Popular Nationalism in the Early Twentieth Century," in Norman Hillmer and Adam Chapnick, eds, *Canada's of the Mind: the Making and Unmaking of Canadian Nationalisms in the Twentieth Century* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007), 135.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 136.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 136-137.

especially for children in Ontario.<sup>53</sup> At these camps, white children not only spent time in nature, but through division into tribes, ceremonies and the receiving of “Indian” names, they adopted, for a time, an Indian image. However, the authenticity of this image was not always of primary concern. A camp in Bolton, for example, featured the tepees of the Plains Indians, next to the totem poles of the West Coast tribes.<sup>54</sup> This suggests that what was really important was not reality, but the perpetuation of a certain image that fit in certain stereotypes, and thus, worked in accordance with national rhetoric of nationhood and racialization. If the over arching ideas were not challenged, then the image was lent a sense of authenticity. In which case, whether whites were designing and running the Indian camps, or organizing the Jubilee presentations of First Nations, the displays of indigenous peoples were controlled in a way that they were not challenging to the popular narratives, so they seemed correct. The underlying processes of indigenism added to the authoritativeness, as did the token “real” Indian camp workers and artisans. This also shows a certain fluidity to racial designations, where whites could adopt the image of Indian, which made “Indian” more of a image than a reality.

While white children were playing Indian in summer camps, Indian children were removed from their families, communities and lands, and were sent to residential schools, places of exclusion and cultural re-appropriation. Here Indian children were taught to be white, and the residential schools had a threefold effect of dismantling Indian families, cultures and their connection (and thus right) to the land. Residential schools of the interwar period became even more potent vehicles of cultural dismantling when, in 1923, the federal government ceased to distinguish between the smaller, less ambitious, and more local boarding schools, and the larger, more pervasive, isolated industrial schools. From 1923 onward, “residential school” referred to the industrial type of school,<sup>55</sup> a change which had overarching impacts on the discourses and realities of nation building and racial imaging.

With First Nation children removed, and white children being taught to be connected to the land through Indian images, white children received a message about what rights they had to the land, and of “Indianness” being a temporary thing, a play thing of the past, not a real, enduring status. This made it easier, in some very tangible ways, for whites to control the land. Removing First Nation children from their families into isolated industrial residential schools, not only had the physical effects of removing them from their land and cultural teachers, but also the psychological effects of saying that the Indian family is defective.<sup>56</sup> This lent creditability to social purity movements focused on the creation and preservation of the western-European patriarchal, nuclear family, and made it seem necessary / possible to correct aboriginal family structures and, subsequently, to de-empower Aboriginal women.

The Indian Act made it possible for Indian women to lose their Indian Status through marriage. This was part of an overarching process to de-empower First Nation women. Matriarchies were a threat to the patriarchal family structures and gender roles desired for Canada. These family structures and gender roles granted power to men and regulated women to the home, not to the positions of power which were traditionally available to First Nation women in tribes. Moreover, women can also control the reproduction of a nation, which is one primary reason why the state thought it important to de-empower First Nation women and regulate female status.<sup>57</sup> If the woman ceased to be an

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<sup>53</sup> Sharon, Wall, “Totem Poles, Teepees, and Token Traditions: ‘Playing Indian’ at Ontario Summer Camps, 1920-1955,” *The Canadian Historical Review* 86:3 (2005): 513-544.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 524.

<sup>55</sup> J.R. Miller, “Troubled Legacy: A History of Native Residential Schools,” *Saskatchewan Law Review* 66 Part 2 (2003): 363-364.

<sup>56</sup> Thobani, *Exalted Subjects*, 109,119-120, 124, 128.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 49, 119-120.



Indian under a white husband, then, by Anglo-Saxon approaches to family lineage, her children would legally be white and Indians could be legally bred out. It was also a process by which family structures could be corrected. Here women went from being Indian “wards of the state,” under state control, to being under the control of her husband, as was “proper” according to gender purity movements. All this, however, also suggests that racial identities were fluid.<sup>58</sup>

Contemporary scientific discourses argued that race was a fixed identity that determined certain characteristics, yet popular and legal discourses simultaneously implied that race could change. Indian women could become legally white, Indian men could be enfranchised and become legally white, Indian children could be assimilated, and even whites kids could play Indian and become Indian. Yet, while racial identities were thus artificial, they had very real consequences. Several aspects of the “Indian” image worked within a binary of industrial, enterprising, modern white man and the backward, traditional, and primitive. Through nation making processes, aspects of this binary became a reality, which only encouraged its development and proclamation. By restricting First Nation economic activities to those available on the reserves and as traditional artisans, the Canadian state did make it so that, in terms of economic production, First Nations did have fewer opportunities to be enterprising, and modern. Franchise applications show that several First Nations sought to become legally white in order to achieve greater access to economic opportunities, suggesting that their Indian status was a very real source of limitation. Erasing First Nations from other discourses related to the land, and/or making them an adoptable character, also made indigenous rights and relations to the land seem less valid, as white discourses were beginning to claim a historic relation to the land for themselves, or if not an indigenous right, then a noble and moral justification of colonialization of the primitive, which was now being displayed, in some aspects, as modern, assimilated participants. In all this however, First Nations were not without agency.

As evidenced in on the ground war time experiences, First Nation leaders mobilized to agitate for greater legal recognition for indigenous rights and claims to land. Such processes of asserting rights within the context of collective indigenous rights continued and further developed in the interwar period as First nations were slowly being given a more participatory, and central role in the Canadian economy and national image processes.<sup>59</sup> Ironically, it was the way in which the pioneer mythology and its inherent homogenizing binaries shaped the interwar “Indian” image that facilitated a greater creation of a collective sense of indigenous rights and an ability to fight for those rights.<sup>60</sup> Despite their diversity, all First Nations had been colonized, displaced, dislocated and subjected to all sorts of restrictions and discriminations, common experiences which, in this period, were increasingly leading to senses of a shared experience and identity.<sup>61</sup> Indigenism also tied First Nations to the land, and in the interwar discourses of land and primitivism, this element of a shared experience and history was also beginning to manifest into a foundation for race based rights-activism.<sup>62</sup>

The master narrative of Canada has been one of an enduring, persistent pioneer who overcame obstacles, and thus, the environment and ideas of indigenism have been central to Canadian processes of nationhood, as well as the formation of what is now referred to as the “pioneer mythology” or a “national fraternity of whiteness.” Conquering the harsh Canadian environment, the pioneers were seen as adventurous and enterprising. The overcoming of the environment and the climate were seen as factors that brought the nation together. Yet, having overcome the land, pioneers also had to justify their right to the land, in which case,

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 50

<sup>59</sup> Wan, “Many Kindreds,” 9, 10, 23, 56-57

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.; Tripathy, “An Essential Native American Identity,” 314.

<sup>62</sup> Wan, “Many Kindreds,” 10, 23,

Canadian nation builders had to ennoble pioneer actions and explain the indigenous populations. A binary was created between First Nations and the developing Canadians, where, as the nationals, white bodies were made the personification of a lawful, modern enterprise, where as, as the “other,” and First Nations as unlawful and primitive, and thus, in need of European guidance. The Indian Act was developed to regulate Indian bodies, and First Nations were institutionalized as the opposite of the Canadian national. Going into the interwar years, Canadian nation building discourses took on several threads: anti-modernism, progressivism, social purity, autonomy from Britain as well as a connection to it, all of which sometimes occurred in the same images of white and the Indian, as the Indian was used to define whiteness. Canadian interwar nation building also built from previous discourses, especially in relation to the land and senses of indigenism, removing the “redman” in order to indigenize the “white man,” creating and justifying the Canadian state.

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