ROUNDTABLE - Canada at 150: Critical Historical Geographies

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Introduction - Canada at 150: Critical Historical Geographies

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At the 2017 Canadian Association of Geographers (CAG) annual meeting in Toronto, the CAG’s Historical Geography Specialty Group sponsored a set of four panel sessions titled Canada at 150: Critical Historical Geographies. Originally conceived as a workshop that would precede or follow the conference, the sessions were eventually folded into the meeting, which permitted an assortment of conference-goers to attend. As the title suggests, the 150th anniversary of the Canadian state provided an occasion to reflect on Canada as a collection of persistent, unfinished and, in many cases, unjust geographies—in contrast to the effervescent celebrations occurring elsewhere. The organizers encouraged participants to link their own projects and preoccupations to the various geographies associated with the sesquicentennial. They were also asked to limit their presentations to seven or eight minutes. This format kept the focus on wider themes and encouraged lively conversation across panels and between audience members and panelists.

A broad call for commentaries produced a roster that ranged from graduate students to retired faculty, affiliated with a pleasantly wide variety of academic institutions in Canada (and one in the United States). Methodological and analytical approaches were also diverse. As is so often the case, the panel organizers struggled to divide abstract submissions into sensible sessions. We decided to create two panels under the broad heading of the ‘settler state’, acknowledging the significance of recent scholarship and other interventions at the intersection of geography and Indigenous Studies. These sessions were distinct, however: one tilted toward social and cultural topics, while the other emphasized legal and environmental themes. Both panels were lively and substantial, even as several speakers began their comments with a version of “I’m not a historical geographer.” These genial (and partial) disavowals are intriguing, for those of us committed to the sub-field of historical geography. Is this ambivalence related to a long-standing perception of intellectual conservatism in North American historical geography – but also a recognition that it is at last fading?

This question, and the entanglements of geography and Indigenous Studies, carried into the third panel, which addressed the legacy and contemporary echoes of the three-volume Historical Atlas of Canada initiative (1987-1993). Discussion in this panel moved from criticism of the Atlas’s approach and absences – and defence of the project – to recent, digital updates and supplements, alternative carto-histories, and the need (or lack of need) for such historical atlases.
today. Finally, a fourth panel used the opportunity to detail some of the larger conceptual and methodological issues that preoccupy contemporary historical geography.

These commentaries provide an opportunity to reflect on what it means to be critical in critical historical geography. Historical geographers, along with or scholars working at the edges of historical geography, offer insight on the role of technologies of inscription in nation-building (e.g. maps, surveys), which enabled resource extraction, colonial settlement, and the dispossession of Indigenous peoples on their traditional lands across the country. This work helps to decolonize the 'geographic tradition' not only within our own discipline, but also within our own departments and universities.

The commentaries offered here represent nearly all of the conference presentations, converted into publishable format and lightly edited by organizers hesitant to meddle. Together, they stand as a collective if hardly exhaustive expression of confidence – in the role of historical geography for the critical consideration of Canada, and in historical geography tout court.

+++ With/out apologies: queering public conversations about redressive nationalisms

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On 11 August 2016, the Globe and Mail’s John Ibbitson published a piece noting that “Prime Minister Justin Trudeau will apologize on behalf of all Canadians to those who were imprisoned, fired from their jobs or otherwise persecuted in the past because of their sexuality.”¹ There was considerable excitement over this announcement, with some pinning on it the hope of recognition and redress. Helen Kennedy, the Executive Director of the national LGBT rights organization Egale, calls the forthcoming apology “a long-awaited moment and a very emotional moment,” adding: “If the government to recognize the damage that it caused, the harm that it caused, to thousands and thousands of Canadians is a historic moment for our communities.”²

Immediately after the Ibbitson article was released, the University of British Columbia Public Affairs reached out to me as one faculty expert on sexuality to prepare possible news media releases related to the forthcoming apology. I was asked to provide my thoughts on the following set of questions:

1. Why is it important for governments to address historic wrongs?
2. What impact do you think Prime Minister Trudeau’s formal apology will have?
3. Is an apology enough to make a difference in the everyday lives of LGBTQ people? What more can the government do to support LGBTQ communities?
4. Anything else that you would like to add?

As I do with most media requests, I viewed this specific invitation as an opportunity to participate in public pedagogy.³ That is, I am generally interested in extending the academic work of teaching beyond the confines of the university’s walls and my own classrooms. I understand
my work as a scholar to include a civic responsibility to offer my expertise towards broader public education about issues of social justice. In the specific case of the apology, my hope was to offer to the public some analytical resources for thinking about the limitations of the apology as an approach to redressing historical geographies of sexual exclusion. I drew these resources from the interdisciplinary body of work that has come to be called ‘queer of color theorizing.’ The works of queer of color theorists are useful because they insist that a diverse set of sexual communities, bodies, and practices have been rendered abnormal by the state sanctioning of heteronormativity in law and policymaking. They ask us to expand our analysis beyond the binary homosexual/heterosexual, which, they argue, has never been the sole operative factor in the production of sexual otherness. Cathy Cohen has, for example, insisted that the intense public demonization of the figure of the ‘welfare queen’, usually portrayed as a poor, often black, single mother, challenges simplistic conceptions of all heterosexualities as normative. In other words, queer of colour theorizing insists that thinking ‘queerly’ means thinking beyond sexual identity to consider how intersectionality shapes what counts as sexually normative.

A key question that informed my approach to the media engagement is this: What is the historical horizon being considered and redressed in acts of national apology such as that promised to “our communities,” to use Kennedy’s phrase? Queer of color theorizing demands asking critical questions about who constitutes “our communities” and which acts and moments of persecution are being redressed. In other words, queer of color theorizing offers critical tools for interrogating the subjects and histories being addressed by the promise of “redressive nationalisms.” Robert Diaz (2013) uses this term in another context to describe state practices that are “seemingly meant to enact reparation – monetary or otherwise – but in reality only further the consolidation of state power and the expansion of transnational capital.” Diaz thus extends the ambit of queer of color theorizing by also asking us to consider how such acts of redress might fold previously excluded (sexual) subjects into the nation, thus marking the project of inclusion as a nationalist one. Jasbir Puar (2007) has named such a process “homonationalism”; it is worth emphasizing here that Puar argues that such inclusions rely on the continued, even intensified, abjection of other (queer) subjects. Hence, following these scholars, it was crucial for me to make sure that my response to Question #4 invites the public to consider how apologies such as this one can be used to expand Canadian exceptionalism, premised as it already is on warm and fuzzy notions of tolerance, multiculturalism and increasingly, LGBT-friendliness. Bringing Canadian exceptionalism to the fold of the public conversation around the promised apology is crucial in order to refuse the possibility that such an apology will be used to reproduce a map of the world in which the equation of West/North=progress and East/South=backwardness is accomplished through redress around historical geographies of sexualities.

In my response to the questions posed by the UBC Office of Public Affairs, another matter that I hope to bring to the public conversation around the apology is that the redressive nationalism of the apology is premised on defining persecution as one based on sexual identity. Indeed, particular flashpoint moments are identified as key to the narrative of what needs to be apologized for: This includes the legal designation of male homosexuality as a crime in the Canadian Criminal Code since Confederation, which was then decriminalized in 1969. In addition, the purging of gays and lesbians from the civil service and the armed forces, especially during the Cold War and well into the 1980s and 1990s, has been identified as a specific state-sanctioned form of heteronormativity that necessitates redress. Such acts of exclusion rely on the socio-spatial construction of gays and lesbians not only as out of place from the nation-state’s apparatuses of governance and security, but perhaps more insidiously as actual threats to the nation-state’s safety in the face of foreign hostility. Gary Kinsman has noted how, during the Cold War era, “[h]omosexuals were designated a ‘national security threat’ because of their character
weakness’ which supposedly left gay men and lesbians open to blackmail by Soviet agents.”

At this time, the Canadian government invested all manners of financial, policy, research and personnel resources towards creating a knowledge production infrastructure around the problem of homosexuality, with the RCMP “collecting the names of thousands of possible homosexuals” and with research on the detection of homosexuality being funded as a priority at this time. Indeed, at the time, about $10,000 – equivalent to $80,000 today – was spent on the development and testing of equipment to detect homosexuality. While the scope of this piece prevents a full accounting of the extent of such government efforts, what is worth emphasizing is that anxieties about homosexuality translated into specific governmental programs of surveillance, research and policymaking. The linking of homosexuality with character weakness was a key plank of such actions, the corollary of which is that heterosexuality is normalcy of character and thus needs to be protected by the nation-state.

In this spirit, it is worth examining in what other ways and in what other historical moments heteronormativity has been identified as a concern of the Canadian state. It is also worth asking, following Cohen, how heteronormativity produces certain heterosexualities as non-normative, an approach that then enables us to ask in what ways state heteronormativity has gone beyond the targeting of LGBT people. What I want to suggest in my media engagement is that reducing “our communities” to LGBT people would disallow the promised apology from speaking to other forms of state-led productions of otherness in which particular sexual practices and sexual forms were targets, but for which (homo)sexual identity per se was not the main or sole mode of othering. I insist that thinking beyond especially ‘gay and lesbian’ would allow us to expand on what historical events and which sexual subjects need to be addressed and redressed. And yet, even in UBC Public Affairs’ invitation to engage in public pedagogy via media work, the only space where such an intervention is possible is in the last question, as the penultimate one already marks ‘LGBTQ’ as the primary subject of redress and apology. Indeed, the most recent version of the Q&A that I’ve seen scrubs question #4 and thus my answer to it. Nevertheless, this does not foreclose the possibility of bringing up these issues if and when media requests seek interviews with faculty experts on the apology. After all, part of the task that scholars, engaging in public pedagogy via media work, is to mine opportunities offered by such open-ended questions to broaden the scope of what public conversation might include.

Queer-inflected critical race and indigenous studies scholarship, such as the example drawn from Cohen above, already offers historical-geographic accounts of racial and colonial violence being meted out through the control of sexuality. I offered some of these examples in my answers to Question #4, and I expand on some of them here. In the Canadian settler colonial context, government efforts at preserving heterosexuality often took on particular racial contours, with certain migrant and indigenous communities being framed in law, policy and broader public discourse as racial-sexual threats to the national project of white hetero-futurity. For example, legal restrictions on migration into Canada, as in the financially prohibitive head tax, put urban Chinese bachelor communities under conditions of “compulsory deviance,” as these communities were forced into homosociality and restricted from state sanctioned heterosexual institutions of marriage and family formation. Such restrictions were accompanied by legal prohibitions on interracial relations between Chinese men and white women, which were premised on preserving heterosexualities that are based on racial purity. Moreover, in her research on Canadian government debates between 1910 and 1915 about South Asian women’s migration to Canada, Enakshi Dua (2000) notes that “South Asian women were seen as a threat to Canadian society because their presence would facilitate the permanent settlement of South Asian men, and thus the emergence of South Asian communities.” These examples illustrate that, during Canada’s relative youth as a settler colonial nation, racialized and interracial heterosexualities were sanctioned while white heterosexualities were celebrated, the latter having been a focus of
colonial efforts at white settlement since at least the mid 1600s when the *filles du roi* were brought to early French Canada to facilitate settler reproduction in the St. Lawrence region. State investments in European forms of heteropatriarchy also informed settler colonial efforts at subjugating and dispossessing indigenous communities. As Martin Cannon and Bonita Lawrence have both argued, heteropatriarchy constituted a key plank of the Indian Act, as Canadian efforts at civilizing indigenous communities included vilifying indigenous gender and sexual formations as non-normative and imposing on them the European binary system of gender and patrilineal forms of nuclear family. Sarah De Leeuw’s research also documents the ways that indigenous children were targeted for civilization in part through the imposition of binary gender norms and heterosexuality in curriculum and pedagogy in Indian residential schools. These examples show how indigenous people’s adherence to heteronormativity became institutionalized by the Canadian state to measure their proximity to civilization. Nevertheless, not all forms of indigenous adherence to heterosexuality were considered normative. Renisa Mawani’s work on race in early British Columbia documents governmental anxieties about so-called ‘half-breeds’, a newfound taxonomic category for people of mixed indigenous-white ancestry. She argues that such anxieties were, in part, due to the challenge ‘half-breeds’ posed to governmental efforts at delineating the spatial separation of indigenous reserve communities from settler communities. As with some of the examples above, then, these anxieties vividly illustrate the importance of state sexual controls for the socio-spatial production of the settler colonial nation.

Gordon Brent Ingram (2003) has noted that even straightforward legal restrictions on homosexuality were enforced unevenly along lines of race in the first half of the 1900s in British Columbia. He notes that, in the early 1910s, “more than half of the records of trials for consensual homosexuality before the end of World War I targeted Sikhs, sometimes identified in court documents as ‘Hindoos,’” even while the Sikh population numbered only a few thousand. This clearly disproportionate pattern makes clear the confluence of state racial control and state sexual control. The trial dossiers of Sikh men accused of ‘buggery,’ Ingram notes, reveals white anxieties about “the self-confidence of ‘oriental’ groups, especially at their assertion of sexualities divergent from the Victorian nexus.” Ingram’s research concerns a historical-geographic context that predates Cold War anxieties about queer threats to national safety. It also illustrates the racialized unevenness of the policing of homosexuality post-Confederation. As in the examples above about indigenous and Asian communities and the state’s concerns about their intimate and sexual lives, Ingram’s work provides an opportunity to expand our understanding of just what it was that had been understood as the threat posed by queerness. Along with their supposed psychological susceptibility to Soviet agents and thus as threats to national safety at a time of geopolitical conflict, the additional examples above testify to an early Canadian anxiousness around white reproductive futurity and miscegenation, which constructed migrant and indigenous communities as queer for the threat they posed to emergent settler colonial (sexual) orders.

These examples illustrate the need to pay attention both to the diverse historical geographies of sexual control in Canadian national formation and to the ways that state heteronormativity cannot be disentangled from the racial project of settler colonial nation state formation. What I want to do, in my role as a public interlocutor on the promised apology to “our communities,” is to ask us collectively to consider that gays and lesbians were not the sole targets of state repression and that settler colonial nation state formation have long made strong use of sexual prohibitions and regulations to advance white heteronormativity, with its targets exceeding strictly LGBT communities. The goal of such an intervention is less about asking the Canadian state to issue more apologies to more subjects for a greater number of repressions, though this
is arguably warranted. Instead, for me, bringing up these ‘other’ episodes of sexual control is a means to encourage more public conversations about the broader centrality of sexual control for Canadian nation building. When the promised apology eventually gets delivered, it will join other state apologies in Canada, among them to Chinese head tax payers and to indigenous former residential school students. While the former will inevitably be framed – as it already is – around sexual identity, the latter two are usually thought about in terms of race. My intervention is to refuse such discreteness, using political and analytical energies drawn from queer of color theorizing, which insists on thinking about these as thoroughly entangled with each other.

NOTES


2. Ibid. As of the last edit of this piece in November 2017, the apology remains forthcoming, with government officials noting that an apology will be delivered by the end of the calendar year. See John Ibbitson, “Formal apology for LGBTQ persecution could include compensation: sources,” *The Globe and Mail* (7 November 2017). Available online: https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/formal-apology-for-gay-persecution-could-include-compensation-sources/article36872982/.

3. Faculty experts’ solicited answers are typically compiled and edited into a Q&A-style media release, which ends with each expert’s contact information and media availability. In the case of this forthcoming apology, we have been informed that the media release will be made public, at least via the UBC website, on the day of the delivery of the apology itself. In early November 2017, we were given the opportunity to review our original answers from 2016 and make edits as we see fit.


8. Ibid.


**Canadian Urban Planning at 150**

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Observing celebrations of Canada’s 150th birthday is, among other things, an experience of vertigo. It produces this feeling because these celebrations partake in a form of nationalism, today’s multicultural nationalism, that is extremely foreign to earlier periods of this country’s history and that makes it very difficult to refer to this history without a certain awkwardness. In speech after speech, then, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau will find himself celebrating Canada’s “rich heritage” and “cultural diversity,” and then have to concede, at some point and as quickly as possible, that this heritage has sometimes involved great hostility toward the groups of people that presently signify the country’s “diversity.”¹ In most cases, this means recognizing Canada’s historical violence toward Indigenous people, but the message can be adapted, depending on the audience, to include other admissions of historical wrong.²

These strange performances highlight what critical scholars of Canada have often pointed out: that Canadian nationalism, in our time, requires a celebration of diversity that, in the end, it can’t quite endure.³ In this brief comment, I would like to trace how this tension between heritage and diversity has played out in the field that I have devoted most of my career to studying: urban planning. My comments will focus on two historical periods and the somewhat different forms of planning they entailed.

One hundred and fifty years ago, urban planning was beginning to adopt a series of objectives related to the condition of human life, a condition it would attempt to improve through spatial means. It was concerned, early on, with something called the “moral and physical health” of city residents; a little later, with something called “convenience”; and eventually, with a complex and cross-cutting objective called “efficiency.”⁴ In practice, these concerns with the condition of
human life reinforced and recalibrated existing racial disparities in the city. Efforts to improve moral and physical health, for example, led to the elimination of the last urban Indigenous reserves in cities like Vancouver and Victoria on the rationale that Indigenous-settler commingling was considered to be bad for the moral health of both groups.\(^5\) It also led to the transfer of health-impairing facilities like waste sites and noxious industries from white neighborhoods to black ones in cities like Montreal and Halifax.\(^6\)

These actions were not a mistake. Indeed, they very successfully improved moral and physical health according to the implicit, race-inflected conception of the latter. They improved *white* health – the only health that mattered at the time. Examining these effects, we can see that urban planning in this period was not just racist, but race-making. It helped to create a set of material differences in people’s lives that were indexed to race — race-specific differences in health, convenience, and efficiency.\(^7\) This race-making form of urban planning provided the dominant form of city-making in Canada for several decades, enduring without significant changes until the 1960s.

In the 1960s, planning was forced to change in response to the social movements of the time. These movements were very diverse. They included the Black United Front’s fight for self-determination in Nova Scotia,\(^8\) as well as the Kahnawake Mohawks’ struggle against the modernizing urban projects of Montreal.\(^9\) The movements with the greatest influence on urban planning in this period, however, were those, often associated with Jane Jacobs, that confronted planning on aesthetic or experiential grounds.\(^10\) Their legacy was a set of planning practices, from mixed-use zoning to urban design, that sought to enhance the pedestrian look and feel of the city. These practices have remained central to planning ever since.

These 1960s movements were seldom racist in the way that planning had been. Indeed, they were much more likely to celebrate cultural diversity, as Canada now does. And yet they ultimately preserved planning’s race-making operation by: (1) failing to call into question the race-specific material differences in people’s lives that had been created by planning; (2) treating white experiences of the city as a *universal* experience that planning was now expected to enhance; and (3) ignoring the various social practices, including racial discrimination in housing and racist policing, that impacted the urban experiences of racialized people and put certain places off-limits to them.\(^11\)

These failures shaped the form of planning that emerged in this period and prevails as the dominant form of planning into the present. These failures are perhaps most evident today in the planning of parks and public spaces, where a whole set of aesthetic issues (like the location of trees and benches) are the subject of wide-ranging, participatory deliberation, while the *policing* of parks (an issue most concerning to urban Indigenous people and people of colour) is scarcely discussable. The question of policing, rather than being discussed in a participatory forum, is entrusted instead to the most totalitarian institution in our society. This is just one of the ways that planning, through its omissions and its implicit racialization of concepts, continues to racialize the urban experience in Canada.

What this brief commentary shows, I hope, is something of the heritage we are supposed to be celebrating in 2017 and how a part of this heritage (urban planning) has operated to the detriment of Indigenous people and people of colour – even when the country’s diversity is embraced and celebrated. And so, if celebrations of Canada require a celebration of diversity, it might be worth seizing the opening provided. It might be worth asking what parts of Canada’s heritage, if any, are actually compatible with the multicultural society that these celebrations envision – and what to do with the elements that are not.
Two things seem clear to me. The first is that, as Sarah Ahmed has argued, whiteness is entirely incompatible with the ideals expressed in the language of diversity. The many practices that, like planning, continue to produce whiteness as a materially distinct form of life need to be eliminated. The second is that efforts to destroy whiteness in this specific sense have existed throughout this country’s history. I have mentioned just two of them (the Black United Front and the Mohawk Warriors), but there are obviously many more. This, too, is a kind of heritage, and one well worth celebrating.

NOTES


In December 2016, then-Vice President Joe Biden made his last official visit to Canada. He brought an unusual message. In the wake of the election of Donald Trump, Biden not only disagreed with the political positions of the Republican President-elect, but feared the deeper problem of Trump’s popular support, the larger consequences for the country, and the likely ripple effects in international relations. According to press reports of Biden’s visit:

“The world is going to spend a lot of time looking to you Mr. Prime Minister. Viva la Canada because we need you very, very badly,” Biden said during a Canadian state dinner held in his honor.

[...]

He also said that there are more challenges to the international liberal order now than there have ever been since the Second World War.

[...]

Biden urged Trudeau, and leaders like Merkel, to step up to the world stage and lead in facing challenges. “The progress is going to be made but it’s going to take men like you Mr. Prime Minister, who understand it has to fit within the context of a liberal economic order, a liberal international order, where there’s basic rules of the road,” he said.¹

A couple of months earlier, Jennifer Welsh, a Canadian and Métis scholar, professor of international relations and the United Nations Secretary-General’s Special Adviser on the Responsibility to Protect, gave the 2016 Massey lecture: “The Return of History: Conflict, Migration, and Geopolitics in the Twenty-First Century.”² As one might guess from the title, it was (in part) a challenge to Francis Fukuyama’s theory. She begins her argument with the observation that
although there have been many significant improvements around the world in health, reductions in poverty, a rise in democracy and human rights, the portions of the world that continue to struggle are facing the very worst circumstances we’ve seen, in terms of conflict and violence, deprivation, exclusion, and environmental damage. Welsh’s particular focus is recent refugee crises and our collective failure to address them adequately.

Welsh found, unexpectedly, that as she thought through these failures, she was left wondering if liberalism itself was failing. Liberal democracies, she observes, are becoming politically polarized and their economic inequality is deepening despite their prosperity. For Welsh, liberalism is fundamentally about “fairness,” and we have apparently lost or abandoned our consensus around what that means, and our commitment to enacting it. She calls on us to not take liberal democracies for granted and renew our efforts to maintain them.

I have no idea if Biden is familiar with Welsh’s lecture, which was published in book form, as the Massey lectures always are. But I think he would regard her analysis as resonant with his view of what is happening in and to the United States: the loss of the “basic rules of the road,” as he put it; the loss of common purpose with its allies.

Just in case anyone was missing the message, Heather Reisman, CEO of Indigo Books, edited a collection of stories and inspirational quotes from 100 Canadians, *The World Needs More Canada*, which was published in the summer of 2017. (You can also get the phrase on a mug or a beach towel, but you cannot get the book in French.) For both Biden and Welsh, the world needs more “Canada” – by which they mean the world needs more liberal democracy: strong democratic legislative institutions; greater tolerance of diversity and stronger civil rights; better redistribution of wealth directly tied to a stronger sense of common cause and common civic identity, at national and international scales. The unspoken assumption is that these liberal accomplishments are arrived at through our democratic institutions and practices.

It is said that if you want to understand political priorities, don’t listen to what politicians say; look at their budget. It is another way of saying, it’s not what you say; it’s what you actually do. Similarly, I want to argue that Canada’s values are not found in primarily in its constitutions or law, but in its historical geography. What Canada purports to stand for may be admirable, but what Canada actually is and does is much less so, and falls well short of the ideals of liberal democracy. An examination of its historical geography — that is, how Canada has made its sovereignty manifest in its territory and its political spaces (and/or spaces for politics) — demonstrates that not only was Canada built on dispossession of Indigenous peoples, but that it has always been aware of that fact. Manitoba in 1870 was a land claim settlement (or was supposed to be). Nunavut in 1999 was a land claim settlement (a process formally started in 1976). Given the absence of treaties for most of its claimed territory, the government of British Columbia lacks territorial sovereignty to this day. In the face of our history of land theft, Canadians take ethical refuge in the existence of treaties, past and future — but as Audra Simpson put it in a 2017 talk at York University, under what circumstances would Indigenous peoples ever give up their land? What are the ethics of those circumstances? Where is the “fairness”?

To this, we could add the seemingly endless list of states of exception in domestic policy and immigration law; the exclusion of women and racialized minorities from public space, political office and suffrage; and other carceral geographies of Indigenous peoples, black Canadians, disabled people, those specifically of German, Italian or Japanese ancestry, and so on. I hardly need to itemize further for readers of this journal the uneven, unequal, exploitative and oppressive geographies that constitute so much of Canada’s history of “nation-building.”

Chantal Mouffe has argued for “radical liberal democracy,” where difference and disagreement are understood as inevitable and thus explicitly accommodated, with no desire to resolve or unify them. She describes this as placing more emphasis on the democratic side of
liberal democracy. The liberal side, on the other hand, emphasizes order and stability – which she does not dismiss. She argues for what we might call a moderated democracy, recognizing and incorporating diversity but maintaining “peace” and “good government,” as Canadians like to say. In its recognition of order and stability, Mouffe’s observation resonates with James Scott’s argument that the more a state seeks to act like a state (even with the best of intentions), the more it tends towards authoritarianism or fascism, where order is prized and privileged even at the expense of liberty, equality and democracy.

Order remains at the heart of Canada’s formal democratic institutions and their understanding of what constitutes appropriate, acceptable politics: passionate but respectful debate, an exchange of ideas leading towards compromise and, ideally, mutual understanding and enlightenment. However, if we turn our focus on the experience of those who have been excluded from or exploited by Canada’s actual geographic and discursive nation-building practices, we begin to see that their resistance is not solely reactive, but productive. Many of their political practices and modes of engagement (and disengagement) stand outside of formal political institutions and acceptable practices.

The political scientist Cathy Cohen has worked towards a political theory “that is centred around the experiences of those who stand on the (out)side of state-sanctioned, normalized White, middle- and upper-class, male heterosexuality.” She frames her quest in terms of black feminist and queer theory and argues that “individuals with little power in society” and who “are reminded daily of their distance from the promise of full citizenship” consequently “engage in counter normative behaviors.” Theirs is a politics of deviance and disruption, rather than a civil debate within formal political institutions. It’s a fundamentally divergent understanding of politics and of justice, as ideas and in practice, as well as a refusal of the legitimacy Canada and other liberal democracies claim. Yet these individuals and communities have made a progressive impact which we need to integrate fully into our understanding of liberalism in practice.

Canada’s claims of territorial sovereignty reflect nothing of even liberalism’s better angels. But the legitimacy of its government is predicated on the maintenance of that territorial order and its moderated political spaces. One might argue that neither Biden nor Welsh would endorse the exclusions, the violence, or the theft of land, that that’s not what they mean by “more Canada.” However, that argument only works if we believe that all of the exclusions and violence were and are accidental, rather than integral to liberalism in practice. We must further hold that Canada actually intended to, for example, give the vote to women as well as men, or to Indigenous peoples without making them give up their “Indian” status. But that is not the case. We have to confront the reality of the intentionality of the political order and its institutionalization in specific geographies.

If we look at the means by which liberal democracies have come close to being actually existing, practicing liberal democracies, we will notice that it looks more like Cohen’s politics, that it is through two institutions – broadly speaking – that are neither liberal nor democratic (in terms of representational or even deliberative democracy). The politics of “everybody else” are achieved (a) through public protest of all kinds, much of it randomly and spontaneously disruptive, and (b) through the courts. The first is often considered the actions of a “mob” – that is to say, senseless and irrational action (it is certainly not grounded in the idea of the individual as “the organizing social role” in Siedentop’s formulation); and the second is the least democratic institution we have. Courts have “fair practices” embedded in their deliberations but they are not representative nor participatory political institutions. Their democratic basis is their obligation to adhere to the law and the constitution, which are established by democratic legislatures. But the more important part of this argument is that in the history of expanding civil rights, legislatures have followed the pressure of protest and the courts, not the other way round.
To understand what the liberal democracy of Canada actually has been, in practice, we continue to need critical historical geographies of both its territorial claims and political spaces. Canada as a liberal democracy is as politically precarious as any other nation, its sovereignty every bit as tenuous (if not more so) as every other nation-state born directly of imperialism, with its violent conquest of land and its colonizing and divisive hierarchies of “citizens.” Liberal democracy, in its commitment to order, stands in tension with its alleged commitment to equality and rights; this is no less true in Canada as elsewhere. To address the injustice of its history is to undo the geographical and political order it rests upon. The paradox is that, even if it were truly a liberal democracy, it is not clear that it can remain one and simultaneously achieve what it claims to stand for. It may be that Canada can remain a “liberal democracy” only insofar as it practices no such thing; at both national and international scales, it can only appease, compromise, and confess its sincerest intentions, rather than enact justice and “fairness.”

NOTES


Trapped by Geography in the BC-Yukon Borderlands

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Since Confederation, the Canadian government has devoted a great amount of energy to bringing indigenous communities under the administrative control of the state. These efforts to administratively control indigenous communities have resulted in the production of a great amount of documentation. Much of this documentation is the result of efforts to spatially circumscribe indigenous land use while simultaneously opening up new tracts of land for Euro-
Canadians. However, records produced in one context can take on new meanings in another context. While once representative of efforts to bring Indigenous peoples under government administration, many spatially-oriented records produced by government agents – such as the Department of Indian Affairs – now represent opportunities for Indigenous groups to assert sovereignty over their traditional territories. However, even as these records represent new opportunities for demonstrating Aboriginal title, questions must be raised regarding their abilities to render customary land use patterns in a manner legible to the state.\(^1\)

The questionable nature of colonial understandings of land use is particularly true of ‘frontier’ regions of these regimes. In these cases, it is important to recognize that renderings of land use which have had and in some cases continue to have administrative and legal functions were produced based on inchoate geographical knowledge – to say nothing of extant Indigenous land tenure practices – and represented geographical or cartographical fictions. An example of these fictions can be seen in the implementation of trapline registration in the British Columbia-Yukon borderlands.

Trapline registration in northern British Columbia and the Yukon Territory represented state efforts to rationalize northern land use. These regulations also resulted in debates between governmental agencies as they sought to bring Indigenous trapping under the state apparatus (although state agencies, and particularly the Department of Indian Affairs and the BC Government were far from united on how to go about bringing Indigenous peoples under administration). As these efforts circumscribed Indigenous land use decades after trapline implementation, they also provided means for Indigenous peoples to advance their rights to Aboriginal title.\(^2\)

The example of trapline registration in the Yukon-BC borderlands illustrates the complex and contradictory nature of colonial mapping projects with implications for the broader significance of colonial mapping projects. In *Maps and Memes*, Gwilym Eades argues that Indigenous peoples can appropriate colonial maps as a means of advancing their rights. According to Meads, this process involved “using the ‘tools of the master’s house’.”\(^3\) As trapline registration spread through northern British Columbia, it held complex and contradictory implications for Kaska trappers. Traplines served to limit the mobility of Indigenous trappers and opened up space for Euro-Canadian trappers within their traditional territories. However, for the tracts of land that Kaska trappers were successful in registering, the policy of trapline registration served to safeguard these lands from further encroachment. As land claim negotiations commenced during the 1970s and 1980s, the records produced by trapline registration took on a new life as they served to reinforce Kaska Aboriginal title.\(^4\)

However, as the Kaska and other Indigenous groups have advanced their land claims, the process was more complicated than simply adopting colonial cartographical knowledge and using it against colonizers. The advancement of Aboriginal title has also challenged the legitimacy of state representations of Indigenous land use. Kaska claims to Aboriginal title undermined authority of the records by noting geographical errors in government agents’ attempts to describe land use, thereby challenging their authority. Government agents and the records they left, rather than being regarded as arbiters of land use, provided supporting evidence to pre-existing Indigenous understandings of land use.\(^5\)

Even as colonial records, such as trapline maps and correspondence, can serve as sources for asserting Aboriginal title, these documents can also be used to challenge Aboriginal title. These records are replete with misrepresentations and distortions of Indigenous land use, as government agents from both Indian Affairs and the Game Branch sought to advance ideas of Indigenous land use in order to serve their own interests. These misrepresentations included
advancing a diluted notion of *terra nullius* in order to rationalize appropriating Indigenous lands for Euro-Canadian trapping.\textsuperscript{6}

While Indigenous groups such as the Kaska have been able to challenge the authority of government renderings of their land use, these records nevertheless contribute greatly to circumscribing and simplifying debates around land use. For instance, the process of rendering trapping grounds to single areas delineated on maps or a list of latitudinal and longitudinal coordinates, serves to reify boundaries between Indigenous groups.\textsuperscript{7} The anthropologist Paul Nadasdy has observed that comprehensive land claim and self-government agreements served to create different layers of land rights between Indigenous and non-Indigenous residents in the Yukon, as well as among Indigenous residents. In particular, these different layers of land rights among Indigenous peoples were set in place between individual bands or nations. According to Nadasdy, the settlement of these agreements was part of a process called territoriality.\textsuperscript{8}

The premise of territoriality can also be applied to understanding how trapline and other colonial records can be employed to advance Aboriginal title in the absence of a land claim agreement. Moreover, these documents demonstrate early colonial efforts to impose the process of territoriality on Indigenous communities. As geographer Robert David Sack was written in his efforts to define territoriality, “territoriality involves the attempt by an individual or group to influence or affect the actions of others including non-humans.”\textsuperscript{9} Building upon this conceptualization, trapline registration represents an effort to control the spatial relationship between humans and animals. Trapline registration also represents an attempt to spatially regulate the relationships among trappers. The divisions created between Indigenous communities through trapline registration and other colonial efforts to spatially organize Indigenous peoples have since been reified.

If historical geographers and other scholars are to effectively challenge the state simplifications and processes of territoriality that is supported and perpetuated by state-produced government documents, it may be useful to turn to the field of archival studies. By engaging with scholarship which seeks to elucidate the provenance of records, it is possible to ask more probing questions of materials such as trapline maps. In writing about the North Saanich Treaty (one of the 1950-54 Douglas Treaties signed on Vancouver Island), archival scholar Raymond Frogner suggested that the treaty was a legal fiction in which the document purported to provide “evidence of mutual expressions of rights and title where none existed.”\textsuperscript{10} Frogner raised questions regarding various assumptions related to the production of the North Saanich Treaty:

Looking beyond the rhetoric, by describing these documents, in an archival sense, as Aboriginal treaties, archivists elide several traditional assumptions. First, in a traditional archival view, a treaty is a dispositive document – meaning the document is the embodiment of a completed transaction involving wilful participants. The document should be perceived and understood within the social worldview of the participants. Titling such documents as “treaties” is an elision of the native participation. Second, archival documents acquire evidential values within the interpretive context of a uniform jurisdictional system, a system not found on the colonial frontier.\textsuperscript{11}

From the perspective of historical geography, the second point is particularly instructive. While trapline registration in the Yukon-BC borderlands did not occur in a colonial frontier in the same sense that the North Saanich Treaty took place, it nevertheless occurred within a frontier of effective state knowledge of the region. Although the Canadian government had extended their authority to the region and created boundaries between territorial and provincial officials, the further extension of this authority through the rationalization of trapping activities represented government agents’ efforts to render both the physical and social geography of this region knowable and mappable. These administrative frontiers can be extended to many other
regions in northern Canada and should consequently raise questions concerning the production of spatial knowledge in these regions. When discussing the rationalization and circumscription of Indigenous land use in ways that are legible to the state, it is also it is also important to highlight geographical fictions.

Thus, on the occasion of Canada’s sesquicentennial, as we consider government-produced geographical knowledge, it is important to consider both its restrictive and emancipatory effects. Maps and other forms of geographical knowledge are powerful tools for asserting land rights. But as colonial tools, they can also stifle more complicated understandings of land use and occupancy. Without disregarding the legacy of the myriad of records created to rationalize trapping activities in the Canadian North, it is important to engage these materials in a manner that seriously considers the subjective nature of their creation.

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2. Records describing this process are housed in the following collections: British Columbia Archives, British Columbia, Fish and Wildlife Branch, GR-1085; Library and Archives Canada (LAC), Indian Affairs, RG 10; and Yukon Archives (YA), Records of the Yukon Government, YRG1, Series 1 and Series 9.


5. An example of the challenging of state geographical authority is provided in Elias, Kaska Dena Land Use and Occupancy in the Yukon, 30-31.


7. For instance YA, Records of the Yukon Government, YRG1, Series 9, GOV 2154, File 12, J.R. Gilholme letter to NCO in charge of Watson Lake Detachment, Fort Liard, NWT, 10 March 1966 is just one correspondence in a series of many that elucidated the extent of Acho Dene Koe (historically referred to as the Fort Liard Salve) trapping activities in the southeastern corner of the Yukon. These correspondence, accompanied by maps, served to solidify the line against which the Acho Dene Koe and Liard First Nation (members of the broader Kaska Nation) abutted each other.


10. Raymond Frogner, “‘Innocent Legal Fictions’: Archival Convention and the North Saanich Treaty of 1852,” Archivaria 70 (Fall 2010), 47.

11. Frogner, “‘Innocent Legal Fictions’,” 48-49.
Since at least the writings of Harold Innis, Canadian geographers have recognized resource development as central to the historical-geographical shaping of early Canada. Innis’s insights about the importance of staple trades, though rooted in his analyses of the fur trade and cod fisheries, extended to extractive industries, particularly mining. While Innis highlighted how the “cyclonic” effects of booms and rushes associated with precious metals typified the instability and unpredictability of the industry in its early stages, he was ultimately sanguine about the potential for extractive development to implant modern industrialism in the Canadian hinterland.¹

The generation of critics that followed were less optimistic. For instance, in his studies of the iron ore developments in the Quebec-Labrador borderlands, economic geographer John Bradbury explored the failure of mining towns in Canada’s resource hinterland to overcome the problems of “isolation, community impermanence, instability, labor migrations, demographic distortions, and economic dependency.”² More recent work on the historical geography of Northern resource development similarly highlights the vulnerability of remote mines and communities to downturns in the commodity cycle, price shocks that can produce abandoned mines, settlements, and infrastructure rather than fostering broad-scale economic development.³

Near the end of his tragically shortened career Bradbury increasingly rooted his critique in a historically informed understanding of the colonial nature of these processes in what he referred to as the Fourth Empire of the St. Lawrence.⁴ Yet, although the work of Bradbury and other staples critics contained an anti-colonial edge, until relatively recently few observers drew critical attention to the role of extractivism (a socioeconomic ideal based on primary resource production and export) in processes of settler colonial dispossession. However, seen through the lens of recent scholarly work on settler colonialism, mineral and hydrocarbon extraction appears fundamental to processes of settler colonial reterritorialization in Canada—and, remains so, albeit under rapidly changing legal and historical circumstances.⁵ In this short reflection, we outline some approaches to the linkages between extractive development and settler colonialism in Canada as the nation’s 150th anniversary celebrations draw to a close. We emphasise how the (attempted) erasure of Indigenous territoriality was made durable and material through ahistorical, futuristic representations of national (extractive) spaces. Ideas about what the nation was, and ought to be in the future, have been continually fostered by synoptic, hubristic resource development visions that positioned extraction as a force for liberal democratic progress. Gavin Bridge has argued that resources are always in a state of becoming; in Canada, this becoming produced a form of citizenship that produced the environment as a set of national economic resources, available to all at the expense of some.
How, to paraphrase Cole Harris, did extractivism dispossess? First, as Glen Coulthard and other scholars of settler colonialism assert, central to the “colonial relation” in settler colonies is the history and experience of territorial dispossession, rather than the exploitation of Indigenous labour. In early Canada, mineral exploration and development contributed directly to the dispossession of Indigenous land and territorial sovereignty on the extractive frontier. Time and again mineral developments precipitated waves of settler invasion that rapidly displaced Indigenous communities. In many instances, such invasions precipitated Indigenous resistance.

Typically, the discovery of valuable mineral resources prompted hasty treaty-making by the settler colonial state, a process designed to sever Indigenous people from their lands and territories, in order to gain access to the subsurface.

The technologies of dispossession employed in this process were familiar ones: the map (in this case, both geographical and geological), the survey, and the legal geographies of property, backed by the violent authority of the settler colonial state. As Bruce Braun and Suzanne Zeller point out, geological exploration entailed a reimagining of the subsurface that brought underground resources into colonial/national imaginary as “a new frontier for capital, as the relentless search for profit seized upon the nation’s newly intelligible domains.” Explorer-geologists in service of the colonial state, such as Logan, Dawson, Tyrell, Low, Isbister, and Bell, filled the blank spaces on maps with geological assessments of territory. In their footsteps followed prospectors and capital, which superimposed cadastral grids of property and access rights over pre-existing social and ecological relations.

Such practices helped facilitate the exploitation of what were otherwise regarded as remote territories, such as the Canadian Shield, Cordillera, and far North, considered unsuited for European, agricultural societies. As Traci Brynne Voyles discusses in the context of the American southwest, settler colonial territorializations discursively and materially reconfigured Indigenous lands as at once empty “wastelands” and as resource frontiers amenable to modern industrial exploitation. In the Canadian context, these imagined geographies intersected with discourses of emptiness and extremity associated with Northern frontiers that at once emptied them of Indigenous presence while projecting onto them aspects of national character and destiny.

The wasteland discourse was further materialized in the reckless destruction and pollution of Indigenous territories by mines and mills, and the long-term legacies of environmental degradation and shattered communities they often left behind. The environmental changes induced by extraction and its related infrastructures are themselves material and embodied manifestations of dispossession.

Indeed, in the years after the Second World War, these wastelands or empty spaces on the map assumed prominence in a new wave of visualizations of Canada’s industrial future. This is particularly the case when considering competing visions for the colonization and development Canada’s sparsely populated northern reaches. The 1950s brought a series of audacious attempts to reimagine northern space as productive and to implant Canadians within a fundamentally northern nature. This was the era of the high modern, transformational megaproject. Many of these proposals bore distinct, and multi-scalar local effects: the mines and mining towns that dot the northern landscape (and the hundreds more surveyed, designated or proposed). Others projected regional transformations: the Yukon River Diversion schemes would reverse the Yukon River so that it flowed into the Pacific Ocean instead of the Arctic, forcing it underneath the Coast Mountains in the process, all to build an aluminum economy. Still more fantastic proposals involved the complete re-engineering of continental hydrology: the US Army Corps of Engineers’ North American Water and Power Alliance (NAWAPA) would have seen much of Canada’s northern and western water, and not incidentally much of the Yukon River, flow through a series
Just as Harris points to the map as one of the signal technologies of dispossession in the creation of the Canadian nation-state, we point to two maps that articulate northern development dreams to illustrate how the discourse of extractivism performed dispossession on behalf of the settler colonial state in the Canadian north. These plans, and scores like them, positioned Canada as an “empty-yet-full” resource space. Development dreams – both public and private – show the persistence of these discourses of waste, emptiness, and projected possibility from mid-century to post-millennial representations of extractive frontiers, particularly those that produced northern visions of industrial futures. These maps not only articulated resource-laden constructions of a prosperous modern nationhood, they helped to produce extractive subjects in Canada, a settler colonial formation that internalized the idea that the hinterland space of the north was empty and ready for use, a kind of extractive terra nullius.

In 1955 the Department of Citizenship and Immigration produced an extraordinary map (Figure 1) meant to teach Canadians about Canada’s future but also to inculcate newcomers. Canada is represented as a resource space, a country whose economic, social, and political organization is determined by spatial distribution of extractive activities. The north here is
still mostly empty space, where resource development has only just begun. Northern resource mobilization highlighted on the map was connected to extractive or military activity: shipping on the northern coast of Labrador, nuclear power generation at Aklavik, nickel at Kluane Lake, asbestos at Cassiar, base metals at Pine Point, uranium at Beaverlodge, ore at Belcher Islands. Northern peoples are on the map in soft focus, as though disappearing icons of a bygone era, shortly to be replaced by the advent of industrial modernity. We can see the colonial markings of an imagined dispossession, acts that were ongoing when this publicity map was published. The map and its projection of potential resource wealth presaged John Diefenbaker’s ‘Roads to Resource’ program (1958-62), a time when the idea that resource production was at the heart of Canadian identity congealed and was brought into being.

The goal of these development dreamers was always to bring the north into an imagined industrial future. Some plans succeeded while many others did not, but no integrated northern

Figure 2. “Mid-Canada Corridor, 2014” from John Van Nostrand, “If We Build It, They Will Stay,” The Walrus, 8 September 2014. Cartography by Chris Brackley.
development ever really appeared, and many of the extractive developments turned out to be ephemeral and unstable. But such dreams never die completely, as this recent The Walrus magazine illustration (Figure 2) attached to a story entitled, “If We Build It, They Will Stay,” attests. This “Field of Dreams” narrative has always had a seductive appeal in thinking about what the North could become. The author and illustrator are making a contemporary reference to Major-General Richard Rohmer’s 1967 modest proposal for a “Mid-Canada Corridor” to develop Canada’s boreal forest and subarctic regions as extractive and population centres. In this reckoning—harkening back to Innis’s more positive take on staples—Canada was destined to be a world leader in resource exploitation, and our collective, extractive future was tied to that endeavour. The Mid-Canada Corridor of Rohmer’s dreams needed infrastructure (roads, electricity, ports); mineral, metals, oil and gas development and a robust timber economy would follow in its wake.

Rohmer’s ambitions are nothing if not persistent. The Conference Board of Canada, for instance, plans for “mapping the economic potential of Canada’s North” among other interventions. In the early months of 2016, researchers at the University of Calgary School of Public Policy made headlines with a proposal for a Northern Corridor—a linked transportation network designed to “open up” the north. Even more recently, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau proposed the $360 million Yukon Resource Gateway Project, merging Rohmer’s vision with Diefenbaker’s transportation infrastructure goals by promoting resource road construction to mineral rich areas.

Resources have always been central to the production of the north as settler colonial space. We want to suggest here that the visionary optics of contemporary northern development dreams must be seen alongside past visions of northern futures, especially in light of the ongoing colonial relations between southern and northern Canada. Many contemporary visions still pitch the north as a place of possibility, though one slightly modified by the incursions of modernity. The Churchill Marine Observatory will study arctic oil spill cleanup, several companies are now offering “last chance” cruises through the ice-free the Northwest Passage, while former Prime Minister Stephen Harper’s northern visits asserted a vaguely chauvinistic notion of Arctic sovereignty. We might juxtapose these northern visions, and those that preceded them, against some of the more pernicious aspects of Canada’s northern interventions: High Arctic Relocations, Shell’s troubled drilling history in the Arctic, developments around the Mary River Iron mine, the legacy of zombie mines in places like Pine Point, YK (or Port Radium, or Rankin Inlet) uncovered in the ‘abandoned mines’ projects, or Emile Cameron’s deconstruction of the story of the Bloody Falls Massacre near Kugluktuk. This is all to say that the stories we tell about Canada’s extractivist modality, and about northern resource potential in particular, matter. They produce certainty, opportunity, ambiguity, dislocation, and conflict in equal measure. They produce extractivism as obvious, logical and correct. They reify the place of extractivism at the heart of the Canadian project, producing the extractive subject as a fundamentally Canadian character. The northern visions that we catalogue in this piece are important reminders that extractivism and colonial relations have often been powerfully paired in Canada’s 150 years.

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**Revisiting the *Historical Atlas of Canada***

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A historical atlas, although aimed at visualizing past eras and past places, is always a product of the time in which it was created. So any assessment of the *Historical Atlas of Canada* needs to be aware that it was a product of the 1970s and 1980s. Although it might be interesting to imagine what a Volume IV might look like – the half century from the 1967 Centennial to the Sesquicentennial, perhaps – that consideration would undoubtedly want to look back further in time, and both refresh and reframe how we got to now. It would do this because of at least three things, I suggest: new scholarship in academia that frame different questions than were the case four decades ago, some prompted by current debates in Canadian society; new data that is now available due to the fruits of new research areas; and newer ways of visualizing that data in the era of digital humanities scholarship, including Historical GIS. These three intertwined factors – context, evidence, visualization – invariably also color the lenses of a retrospective assessment of the first three volumes.

For example, the *Atlas* would now likely want to grapple with visualizing the 150,000 indigenous children who were removed and separated from their families and communities to attend residential schools in over 139 Canadian locations. There were 80 such schools operating in 1931, and 72 in 1948. In Volume III, we mapped enrolment in one province, Alberta, in one year, 1911, and added a small pie-chart map of religious affiliation of Indian Residential Schools nationally in 1920. We wrote less than 90 words, but at least they were about “the scars of cultural conflict.” Now, I suspect, an entire plate could and would be done.

I have always been proud of the fact that we made indigenous views of space and place a part of Plate 2 on Canadian territorial evolution; Bob Galois’s portrayal of the contrast between the view of land in the Gitskan and Wet’suwet’en territories and those on a government pre-emptor’s map in 1920 was a harbinger of the later published work by a cohort of scholars in British Columbia. But back then, it was an edgy elbowing to force it onto a plate seemingly about neutral representation of territorial evolution. Today you can judge it as too small a vignette, an
insufficient illumination of land rights compared to the vast amount of material now available, and not just on BC; but back then, like the one small map of Alberta Indian Schools, that presence offered a challenge to more conventional historical atlases.

A further example of new evidence would include the three million individual entries of data compiled in 2005 by a team of seven SSHRC-funded researchers on the Chinese Head Tax Register. A very small part of that work is evident in the Hermansen and Yu chapter in the Bonnell and Fortin edited volume, *Historical GIS Research in Canada*, to illustrate the migration of Chinese communities to 460 distinct locations across Canada. On Plate 27 of Volume III, we only included a small graph and 60 words of text, but noted the racist sentiments in BC that helped initiate those head taxes. On a plate that centrally considered the migration streams of 1.4 million people from Europe, together with a quarter of a million from the United States, and the third of a million that moved west from central Canada between 1891 and 1914, then the space devoted to those 34,000 from China, Japan and India was in a certain proportional balance, perhaps? But not likely today.

We were mapping a period of national growth, between when Canada was a British imperial outpost and a post-Second World War world where the dominant U.S. role on the world stage had arrived. We looked at how the National Policy and many government institutions developed to tie a country together east and west (with railroads, roads, radio and TV networks), as counters to the many north-south links between Canadian regions and the United States. Though we were trying to avoid portraying Canada as ‘not the United States on the continent,’ we were aware of the American fact in culture and economy. We mapped many aspects of the American presence, but only at the last did we see firms as multinational rather than simply American corporations. But we were not yet seeing things as part of a wider ‘globalization.’ That word, with all the good and bad associated with it today, was not part of the lexicon when this *Atlas* was being made, although you might well argue that the broad embrace of Harold Innes, and staples, and metropolitan dominance across all three volumes did indeed consider some vital aspects of historical globalization. I suspect that a Volume IV would likely see it as a central theme.

We were doing this work in the 1980s, a time when the divisive Canadian-American Free Trade Agreement was being negotiated (NAFTA was a good seven years on, in 1994). We were also working in a period when regional tensions with Quebec were part of daily debate (the 1980 referendum was history, but the sentiments of the far closer second referendum of 1995 were already in the air). Other regions were seeking a voice as well, especially in the West, with the Reform Party formed in 1987. We tried hard to see a Canada nationwide, even if we were in Toronto. In the Volume III coach house editorial office, we worked most mornings listening to Peter Gzowski’s *Morningside* on CBC Radio, with its regular diet of stimulating regional discussion, and as historical geographers we genuinely believed in pursuing place-centered analysis. Mapping the dead and wounded from St. John’s, Newfoundland, was a way to portray the horrors of the First World War through the home front, as opposed to a conventional map of European battlefield positions. Class and ethnicity in Montreal was vividly visualized through housing styles. Corporate boardrooms that controlled many parts of Canada were explored through office building tenancies in Toronto. Colorful wooden grain elevators along branch lines in dozens of Prairie small towns framed graphs that sought to show the shifting balance of American and farmer-centered marketing cooperative. (The recent disappearance of those wooden landmarks would now likely mystify a younger reader of those plates who traveled across the Canadian prairies.)
The insistence on a presence for the ordinary and the everyday, rather than conventional histories and 50,000-foot mapping of aggregate data, was a reflection of emerging ideas in academia: family history, labor history, and feminist thought were being channeled into various plates. On a personal note, I interviewed Nelson Thibault in Winnipeg, who had ridden the rails during the 1930s before becoming a labor organizer in Sudbury after the war. We mapped his geography, the 35 different stages of a restless journey to survive the Depression: he only would talk to me, and let me record that data, after I was able to persuade him, through draft plates we had already sketched, that we were crafting what he saw as a “progressive” view of the country.

Cartographic editor Geoff Matthews, along with co-panelist Byron Moldofsky, supervised painstaking hand-scribed, peel-coat production work by over a dozen cartographers, and the editorial research team constantly got on-the-job cartography training about what could – and more importantly could not – be delivered in terms of data symbols and color shades, given the production technology of the days. We had to prune back interval categories for data from 7 to 5 to 3, use a smaller set of symbols for a simpler legend, often on larger maps. We used this information to interact with plate authors, to help translate vastly ambitious ideas from researchers all across the country working in several distinct disciplines into do-able plates of the Atlas. It took time – 30 full days to meticulously scribe a plate, and so we needed to be sure we had it right before that final process was started – but one benefit of that slow editorial pace was that the overall balance of plates, sections, and the entire volume could be subtly adjusted. Back then, in Hobbit time, before emails, there were no pdfs of maps to send, no Word documents to be circulated, no ArcGIS explorations of massive Excel datasets to quickly whip up an array of visualization options. But the bottom line was always solid evidence and accuracy of mapping.

Face-to-face discussions on long road trips by the editorial team kept researchers in touch with the emerging shape of the volume, and the overall product was also guided by editorial board meetings twice a year. It was a multi-year, multi-disciplinary effort by 140 research assistants and associates, and many plate authors, working on a tight budget and an urgent need to get a product out. Even set against the changing contexts and capacities of today, it was a worthwhile achievement.

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2. Indeed, co-panelist John Warkentin proposed an entire Atlas devoted to Indigenous geographies past and present (see Warkentin in this special issue), and there would likely be many places where the insights from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission would find mapped expression.
5. This plate might stand as a poster child for “settler colonialism,” the dominant negative refrain across these roundtable sessions. For a different take on that term, see S. Max Edelson, The New Map of Empire: How Britain Imagined American Before Independence (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2017).

6. Co-editor Don Kerr, still teaching his courses on Canadian regionalism, had his office in the Geography Department further up St. George Street in Sidney Smith Hall. He came down to the Coach House for regular meetings with myself, assistant editor Susan Laskin and research associate Murdo MacPherson.

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Mapping Indigenous Canada

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I propose that it would be useful to produce an Indigenous historical reference atlas of Canada, or at least select historical maps reference maps of Indigenous Canada. By an historical reference atlas I mean an atlas that has maps on demography, economic geography, and transportation that provide basic background information on the Indigenous population of Canada since Confederation. The time period is somewhat arbitrary, but basically it covers the period when substantial census information across Canada becomes available, although the information will vary in quality. I start with two examples from outside Canada of how such maps might be useful.

Susan Schulten in her excellent book on U.S. mapping in the nineteenth century, describes a painting of 1864 that hangs in the U.S. Senate. Titled, “Final Reading of Emancipation Proclamation,” it depicts Abraham Lincoln and seven members of his cabinet. In the lower right hand corner of the painting is a map propped against a chair. It can clearly be identified as a map produced by the US Coast Guard Survey (the foremost US mapping agency of the time) in 1861, “Distribution of Slave Population.” It is an elegant choropleth map of the U.S. South, showing by county the proportion of blacks to a county’s total population. The higher the proportion the darker the tint. The map becomes particularly compelling when you see that in some counties over 85% of the population was slave. Schulten discusses how it is known that Lincoln used the map to follow the progress of his armies, and she also emphasizes the moral and symbolic power of the map. The map provided a deeper understanding of human circumstances underlying the great emancipation struggle. Schulten also makes the important point that “The map not only conveyed the extent of slavery, but also translated the vast data of the census into a compelling and comprehensive picture.”

Last January (2017), Rosa Orblinski, our map librarian at York University, showed me a small, full-color atlas of Syria produced in 2015. At first sight, I thought it was a United Nations atlas, but it turned out that a relatively small country, Austria, had decided to invest in this atlas to show the recent mass migrations of refugee Syrians into Europe. The library’s version is published in English. There are 14 full-page maps showing distribution of religious, ethnic, and linguistic groups in Syria, camps by country for Syrian refugees in Europe and Turkey, and location of Syrians in European countries. In their Forewords, the ministers of two Austrian government departments explain why the atlas was produced. I will extract only three
quotations: “The explicitly selected combination of subject maps helps us to better understand the circumstances of the Syria crisis, the outcome of which greatly will influence our everyday lives in terms of economy, politics and security.”; “Geo-related information, such as this Atlas, is at the core of every decision-making process at both the strategic and interdisciplinary levels....”; and “The Atlas in combination with other supporting products provides the crucial background information about Syria for the decision makers.”

In these two examples we see the practical importance of maps in helping comprehend the reality of human circumstances and to provide essential background information for making policy decisions. Effective maps can convincingly convey the magnitude of a problem, instill an awareness that something must be done to bring change, and even provide justification to take action.

I now turn to Canada and the need for an indigenous historical reference atlas, or, as a minimum, selected indigenous historical reference maps. There is much to be learned through analytical historical mapping of Indigenous Canada. Such maps: (i) bring spatial order to much dispersed data; (ii) provide background information on what happened; (iii) lead to an understanding of processes; and (iv) assist in sound policy making. Demographic, social, economic and transportation data should be mapped. Concerning population, it is especially important to map changing Indigenous populations decade by decade since Confederation right across Canada. Once the data has been collected, it can be mapped in various ways: by province, ecological unit, Indigenous groups, and any other category and scale as needed. As well, Indigenous urbanization over the same period across the country should be mapped. Many other demographic aspects can be mapped. It will be more difficult to get economic and transportation data over long time periods than demographic data. Regarding economic matters, the relationship of reserves and other Indigenous communities to resource development over time as Canada industrialized is important. Innovative mapping in transportation is needed, taking into account the location of reserves and other communities, and changing modes and costs of travel of travel in different parts of the country over time. The possibilities in analytical historical mapping are endless, but time and money are always limited so it is essential to scrutinize very critically what is worth mapping.

How can a project like this be implemented? My hope is that there are Canadian geographers who will be interested in investigating the need for Indigenous mapping, and are prepared to investigate the practicality of doing this. They will have to believe in this project, and convince others that it has value. One geographer with this strong vision and some knowledge of cartography has to take the lead, and find two or three colleagues to work with her/him. These scholars can be in other disciplines than geography, and definitely at least one member of this exploratory group must be Indigenous.

All mapping takes talent, money, and time. The initiating committee will have to confer widely to explain the value of the project and find expertise and funding. They will have to recruit a cartographer with appropriate skills and imagination. Obviously, right from the beginning, and continuing through the project, Indigenous groups have to be consulted. New ideas are needed, and it is important that the venture be multi-disciplinary, both in deciding what is important to map and to enlist expertise in obtaining data and analysis. Every atlas is an intellectual adventure and there is an innate interest in finding out about ourselves through carefully conceived maps.

I think that a project such as this is part of the awakening of non-Indigenous Canada in the last quarter century to the rightful place of the Indigenous population in Canada. The new realization is exemplified in political scientist Peter Russell’s fine new book, Canada’s Odyssey: A Country Based on Incomplete Conquests, where he focuses on three vital pillars in our country’s
development: Indigenous, French, and English Canada. This project will help in planning the way ahead. Change in Canada will require broad public knowledge and support. Maps help clarify thinking. An atlas such as this, clearly presented and accessible as a public document, will help in planning the way ahead.

I conclude with a heartening note. On June 9, 2017, just after this symposium was held, the Royal Canadian Geographical Society announced a new educational project, The Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada. The atlas content will be produced by the RCGS in partnership with the Assembly of First Nations, the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, the Métis National Council, the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, and Indspire. The atlas and accompanying educational resource material will be funded by the Government of Canada to mark Canada’s 150th anniversary of Confederation, and will be available in 2018 to all Indigenous schools and to over 19,000 Canadian Geographic Education members, and to the general public. This cooperative project should offer some useful leads on how to proceed.

NOTES
1. Susan Schulten, Mapping the Nation, History and Cartography in Nineteenth-Century America (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2012), 120.

Thirty Years After: Some Unsettled Business on the Academic Frontier of Historical Georaphy in Canada

Frank Tough
Department of Native Studies
University of Alberta

“We have not yet realized that the Indian and his culture were fundamental to the growth of Canadian institutions” (Harold A. Innis, 1930).

The three volumes of the Historical Atlas of Canada (HAC) are a remarkable scholarly feat. Accordingly, this atlas received much international recognition and praise; in Alan Baker’s appraisal: “The Historical Atlas of Canada stands as one the major achievements of Western historical geography during the twentieth century.” Similarly, D.W. Meinig positively assessed the first volume: “The work is breathtaking: in the care and beauty of its production, the range and detail of its coverage, the depth of its scholarship.” A broader assessment of the atlas was provided by Anne B. Piternick:

The Atlas was a pioneering research project in two senses. It was pioneering in its multidisciplinary scope and in the number of people involved from across the country. But it was also pioneering in that the results of their research were
presented in non-traditional cartographic form. Presentation in this form made the results of scholarly research accessible to a wide audience, provided new material for teaching purposes, and made many people aware of the value of thinking in spatial terms.4

Both the process and product were exhaustive outcomes of a bold, enthusiastic plan. For a history of the project, in particular the day-to-day and structural challenges, as well as, some careful metrics of the atlas’ contents, Piternick’s work should be consulted.5

By and large, the atlas captured several dynamic dimensions of the scholarly productivity of the 1970s and 1980s, but the formal dedication to Harold Adams Innis and Andrew Hill Clarke in volume 1 reflected uniquely Canadian intellectual history and thought. The atlas, as we would imagine any atlas should be, is overwhelmingly empirical. Massive amounts of facts are coherently presented as maps, diagrams and statistical graphs. Close examination of all corners of a typical plate is bound to reveal data nuggets divulging some little-known aspect of our past.

In my view, the enduring strengths include:
1. well-developed frameworks that paid respect to foundations laid by Innis and Clarke;
2. strong, coherent cartographic presentation based on tradition and skills;
3. innovative and flexible design engaging multiple scales (national + local);
4. predominance of primary, empirically-based, research;
5. an appropriate mix of qualitative and quantitative data sources;
6. regional balances (center:periphery; urban:rural), and
7. diverse disciplinary expertise and content.

Because HAC provides a scholarly interpretation of the development of the country, one that I think is still valid in most respects, the atlas is more than a reliable reference source. Still, it conveys the sort of basic information that might be sought from a traditional atlas. Space does not permit elaborating upon these qualities; instead my comments will focus on: (1) some select observations as an historical geographer; and (2) the Aboriginal content based on experience gained in Native Studies.

Overall, the atlas falls short on considering an enduring contradiction facing Canadian society: contemporary Aboriginal peoples contending with colonial structures that evolved and deepened overtime. This contradiction is often expressed in terms of land and resources. In other words, the HAC failed to sense what was occurring at the time and to anticipate the future significance. Until most recently, Aboriginal Canada has been something of an intellectual terra incognita for the field of geography, but this complacent innocence means that this tabula rasa can still be filled with out, in part, by avoiding the mistakes that characterized other disciplines, but more importantly, by offering specifically geographical expertise.6

We need not reiterate critiques concerning the role of national atlases as heroic expressions of nation-building, Finland and Canada being the first to attempt to fill such a need. The broad intent of the project was nicely stated in volume 1 by William G. Dean: “The Historical Atlas of Canada offers a deliberately moulded visual approach to the Canadian past, with emphasis on the processes of social and economic change.”7 For those that spend any time in the archives, Dominion Archivist Jean-Pierre Wallow’s introductory remark in volume 1: “As matter of fact the lacunae in our knowledge and sources have been enormous,” is a proven understatement.8

The atlas afforded an opportunity to engage more intensely and extensively with a variety of archival records, and in fact, a necessary quantitative approach to the records produced exciting contrasts to established history based on narrow range of official sources. As such, the HAC is not an expression of some one-dimensional national chauvinism. With strong social historical foundations, especially in volume 3, many of the crude narrative views, that tend to serve elite interests, are negated. In fact, the elites that emerge from this national building process come
under some exposure. To illustrate, by pinpointing Toronto law offices and bank headquarters, Gunter Gad and Deryck Holdsworth revealed the emergence of an urban corporate land use at a discernable scale that anyone could appreciate (volume 3, plate 15). A perusal of the three volumes could not leave the impression that the triumphs of the ruling economic, political and legal Canadian elites have been recognized. In fact, many groups outside of the usual centres of authority (e.g., workers, primary producers, immigrants, etc.) really emerge forcefully onto the landscape through the atlas findings. Discussions concerning nation-building should demonstrate empirically that such processes have cultural, social, and economic costs. The content of the HAC can be seen as a reality check on banal social-political discourse associated with national identity claims.

Unlike many previous Canadian atlases with a single base map and a regimented static appearance, the atlas design showed a nice mixture of base maps that ranged from a close-up view of urban neighborhoods to the entire nation. Such scale flexibility created a content balance between urban and rural, centre and periphery. As an undergraduate, I was taught that cartography is both an art and science, and this atlas captures both dimensions of effective map communication extremely well. Few commentators on the HAC have not failed to notice its cartography demonstrated extremely effective design that overcame challenges of vast data sets, new concepts, and multiple authors. This solid cartographic design succeeded at promoting a convergence of desperate academic traditions (archaeology, history, demography, economics and geography) into a coherent representation. The disciplinary pluralism provides both depth and breadth. On the whole, the HAC pragmatically addressed the often elusive quest for interdisciplinary activity.

The project emerged at a time when dealing with large data sets could be approached by the earliest “desk top” spreadsheets, but thankfully, before the mechanical dominance of soulless GIS products. In the HAC, demographic data is not just large aggregate generalizations, but specific insights concerning particular social groups are offered. For example, changes in Montreal population density between 1842-1901 realistically demonstrates urbanization (volume 2, plate 49). Daniel J. Hiebert’s “Winnipeg: A Divided City” maps out variables of ethnicity and class following the 1919 strike; but what caught my eye was a small inset map displaying “Deaths from Pneumonia and Influenza November 1918.” Vastly different outcomes depended upon the neighborhood you resided in (volume 3, plate 31). As someone from the peripheral prairies, I remain fascinated by what lies to the east of the center: the plates on Acadians (volume 1, plates 29 and 30), the Atlantic fisheries (volume 2, plate 37), or the seigneurial system (volume 1, plate 53; volume 2, plate 13). Where else can readers visualize strike and lockouts, union membership, unemployment relief camps, or what actually constituted welfare during the Depression? Fortunately, what might seem like random, particularistic micro-social histories are nested within the overall patterns of economic structures and demographic change. This capacity separates an atlas from a set of maps, and it reveals what is missed by the information fragments of cyberspace.

While the HAC reflected the existing strengths of Canadian historical geography, and it significantly augmented the existing published research, some important gaps are plainly evident. Prairie historical geography has long focused on multiculturalism and some spatial characteristics of agrarian settlement. Today, a plate on the prairies titled “Peopling the Land” would spark censure because the grasslands and parklands had long been peopled before the Dominion Lands Act regime. “Peopling the Land” therefore has a colonial ring to it. More fundamentally however, geographers should venture beyond the sudden appearance of homestead regulations by considering questionable surrenders of Indian reserve lands or the fraudulent use of Métis scrip to obtain homestead patents. How did land markets develop where none had previously existed? Similarly, a plate depicting “Land development in Edmonton” provides an inset map of
the Garneau neighborhood (adjacent to the University of Alberta). It is not a surprise that only a few of those that have long lived or worked in this university community are aware that Laurent Garneau was a Métis man who had come under state scrutiny in 1885 and had once possessed an Edmonton river lot (volume 3, plate 20). What is of interest here is that toponymy preserved Garneau as person through an official, recognized neighborhood name while simultaneously removing him from memory.

In the post fur-trade era, Aboriginal engagement with seasonal labour markets required by frontier resource capitalism constituted a continuing contribution to our economic history. For example, First Nation women supplied much needed skilled labour for British Columbia’s salmon canning industry. It seems the Aboriginal content problem manifests in at least two forms: (1) themes and plates that inadvertently marginalize Aboriginal Canada; and (2) a marked absence of plates with focused Aboriginal content.

Clearly, the content that would be of interest to Aboriginal readers declines precipitously. Volume 1 contributes to the historical geography of Aboriginal Canada in three important ways: (1) years of archaeology field work were synthesized into national and regional maps; (2) a vast Hudson’s Bay Company archival record was deployed to illustrate the fur trade in a new manner; and (3) Conrad Heidenreich’s (and the occasional co-author) reconstruction of the inland (French) expansion into the Great Lakes Basin (volume 1, plates 34-41). His multiple temporal cross sections (1615 to 1755) allow the reader to understand the spatial interconnections of trade, disease, war, and migration. This set of plates is an account of European expansion built upon disruptions and dislocation to the numerous First Nations around the Great Lakes at the heart of Turtle Island. It represents an empirical project that attempted, with the highest degree of possible accuracy, to discern the location of specific villages/bands and nations in order to trace their circumstances and interactions over a century and a half. Volume 1 closes with a most significant, but easily overlooked, dramatic historical cross section: “Native Canada, ca. 1820,” by Heidenreich and Galois, which depicts populations, seasonal movements, linguistic families, and the extent of economic disruption ensuing from contact with Europe (volume 1, plate 69). This plate should have served as a model for an account of Native Canada at other points in time and for periods in which data sources were far more robust. In terms of the Aboriginal and fur trade content, volume 1 reflects closely the available scholarly expertise that could tackle the pre-1891 period: the ethnohistorian Bruce Trigger, and historical geographers Harris, Heidenreich, Kaye, Moodie, Ray, Ruggles, and the young Victor Lytwyn. In many respects, their plates filled gaps left, but understood by Harold Innis.

Unfortunately, what was a solid start based on intense primary research and proven expertise did not set a trend, unintentionally the atlas replicates the “Disappearing Indian” narrative (Table 1). Meinig’s review of volume 3 correctly observed: “Indians and Inuit seem to disappear from view ...” Volume 2 is not entirely devoid of important Aboriginal content, yet one cannot help but think that First Nations and the Métis are marginal and irrelevant, non-participants. Only two plates bring the fur trade into the 19th century. Désy and Castel painstakingly complied information concerning “Native” reserves in Eastern and Western Canada. Reserves depicted to scale on regional maps (volume 2, plates 32, 33 and 34). While these plates remain a useful reference source, the vital issues of treaty negotiations and reserve surrenders could not but get a mention. In a certain sense, plates 32-34 unintentionally communicate an error of the reserve as a residual of a long-concluded treaty process, a deal now complete. Many cartographic possibilities exist if the northern and prairie treaties of the old Hudson’s Bay Company territory are conceived as something more than the establishment of good title for the settler, but rather, a continuing relationship with the Crown and ongoing interest in lands.

Contrary to this deficiency, plates dedicated to the Métis (“the forgotten people”) are welcomed. In a packed plate, Kaye, Moodie, and Sprague captured the explosive demography
Table 1: Aboriginal Content of the *Historical Atlas of Canada*, Volume 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aboriginal Related Content, Volume 1</th>
<th>Plate Number</th>
<th>Amount of Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Last Ice Sheets, 18000-10000 BC</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Fluted Point People, 9500-8200 BC</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Ontario, 8600 BC</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Change After 9000 BC</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Plano People, 8500-6000 BC</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Sequences, 8000-4000 BC</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Sequences, 4000-1000 BC</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cultural Sequences, 1000 BC - AD 500</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Sequences, AD 500-European Contact</td>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bison Hunters of the Plains</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peopling the Arctic</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iroquoian Agricultural Settlement</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Coast Tsimshian, ca 1750</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prehistoric Trade</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cosmology</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population and Subsistence</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Atlantic Realm</td>
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<tr>
<td>The St. Lawrence Valley, 16th Century</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Settlements and Missionaries, 1615-1650</td>
<td>34</td>
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<td>The Great Lakes Basin, 1600-1653</td>
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<td>Re-Establishment of Trade, 1654-1666</td>
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<td>Expansion of French Trade, 1667-1696</td>
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<td>Trade and Empire, 1697-1739</td>
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<td>France Secures the Interior, 1740-1755</td>
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<td>Indian War and American Invasion</td>
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<td>Native Resettlement, 1635-1800</td>
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<td>Rupert’s Lane</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indian Maps</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bayside Trade, 1720-1780</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>Competition and Consolidation, 1760-1825</td>
<td>61</td>
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<td>Trading Posts, 1774-1821</td>
<td>62</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transportation in the Petit Nord</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fur Trade Settlements</td>
<td>64</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peoples of the Boreal Forest and Parkland</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>New Caledonia and Columbia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eastern Canada in 1800</td>
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<td>Native Canada, ca. 1820</td>
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Table 2: Aboriginal Content of the *Historical Atlas of Canada*, Volume 2

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<th>Aboriginal Related Content, Volume 2</th>
<th>Plate Number</th>
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<td>Eastern Canada, ca. 1800</td>
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<td>Canada in 1891*</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Coming of the Loyalists</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Fur Trade to the Northwest to 1870</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Red River Settlement</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Fur Trade in the Cordillera to 1857</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Reserves of Eastern Canada to 1900</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Reserves: Names and Descriptions</td>
<td>33</td>
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<tr>
<td>Native Reserves of Western Canada to 1900</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dispersal of the Manitoba Métis and the Northern Western Rebellion, 1870-1885</td>
<td>35</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Gold Rushes in British Columbia, 1858-1881</td>
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<td>Defining sacred space</td>
<td>53</td>
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*identical plates

Table 3: Aboriginal Content of the *Historical Atlas of Canada*, Volume 3

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<td>Canada in 1891*</td>
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<td>Territorial Evolution</td>
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<td>Population Composition</td>
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<td>Resource Communities in British Columbia</td>
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<td>Schooling and Social Structure</td>
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<td>Societies and Economies in the North</td>
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<td><strong>Aboriginal Content as a Percentage of Total Plates, Volume 3</strong></td>
<td><strong>3.18%</strong></td>
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*identical plates

and mixed land uses of “The Red River Settlement,” a predominantly Métis society (volume 2, plate 18). The plate reconstructs a seasonal round of activities and maps indicate a variety of land uses (hunting trails, agriculture, fishing, goose hunting, and sugaring). By challenging empirically an outdated narrative concerning Canada’s implementation of a land grant intended for the Manitoba Métis, social historian Sprague’s corrective to Canadian history is a contribution that is seldom appreciated. Yet he gave these Métis claims an intellectual and empirical credibility. Sadly, this material has been overlooked. To illustrate, a long-running and complicated legal action on behalf of the Métis of Manitoba, which sought a declaration concerning the failure of the Crown to implement the large grant provided by Section 31 of the *Manitoba Act, 1870*, was
finally settled by the Supreme Court of Canada (The Manitoba Metis Federation Inc. v. Canada [Attorney General]) in 2013. An important cornerstone of the plaintiffs’ case required establishing “Indian Title” for the Métis. Comfortable with the “Indian Title” reference in the plain text of Section 31, the plaintiffs declined to provide cogent evidence or any expertise in court that the Métis of the Red River Country used and occupied land in what became the Province of Manitoba. In contrast, the Crown’s experts effectively created a sense of individualistic land use (long river lots) by the Métis. However, plate 18 by Kaye, Moodie, and Sprague provides considerable evidence of near exclusive Métis occupancy and use of land and resources (Indian title by possession). In other words, the deficiency in the case underscored by the Supreme Court was not a problem of historical fact. It would seem then, that the plaintiffs failed to establish a valid claim to “Indian Title” which in turn eroded the case for a neglected fiduciary responsibility by the federal government.

So our understanding of the land transformed is incomplete and future efforts will need to acknowledge, with empirical precision, that transforming the land entailed displacement of the original populations, notwithstanding their engagement with the commercial impulses of Europe. Nonetheless, I am forced to ponder, how is it that so many distinct “marginal” populations were rescued from the obscurity of official history, while at the same time, the original peoples remained largely unnoticed.

As a Winnipegger, I cannot help but think that the emerging Native land struggles of the 1970s (e.g., Nisga’a assertion of Indian title [R. v. Calder], the Dene Nation’s resolute opposition to extractive industrial development and the ensuing Mackenzie Valley Pipeline commission of inquiry by Justice Berger, and the James Bay Cree’s successful out maneuvering of the overly confident Quebec state, along with political agitation for constitutionally recognized rights) were momentous events that were congruent with the planning of the atlas project, but yet too remote from the Toronto annex. These struggles, a national geographical crisis, illustrate wonderfully that resistance and change originate in the periphery. The centre could not anticipate the demands for a geographical reset. Nevertheless, the post-HAC historical geography of Aboriginal Canada has been encouraging.

Looking at Daniel Hiebert’s Winnipeg, I must ask: would the vastly different impacts of the 1918 influenza epidemic for Winnipeg neighborhoods have occurred with a secure access to medical treatment and better living standards? The atlas affords many Canadians the prospect of looking back to appreciate what has been achieved, what needs to be protected, but also, what yet needed to be discovered. If looking back through the lens of the Historical Atlas of Canada is not convincing, then try looking south.

NOTES
Roundtable: Canada at 150


11. This portrayal was done before the release of census data, and it would be a valid exercise to re-map the divided city with 1921 census data.

12. The configuration of Canada in 1891 does check metropolitan biases by indicating Inuit land use areas, and ceded and unceded Indian lands, see volume 3, plate 1.


Two Cheers for Historical Geography after Postmodernism: An Ironic Assessment

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One of the great [liberal] heroes was the English novelist and essayist, E.M. Forster, who wrote a book called, Two Cheers for Democracy. He couldn’t summon a third.¹

One hundred and fifty years into the project of Canada, historical geography matters. Having been weaned on postmodernist theory and methods as an English major in the late 1980s and early 1990s, I find this surprising, because the “history matters” proposition threatened to fracture at the height of the postmodern revolution. There were good reasons for postmodern skepticism, the principal being a growing disavowal of historiographical ‘objectivity,’ authorial ‘neutrality,’ and especially historical ‘fact’—historical truth—in the wake of the deconstruction of the foundations of Western philosophy and epistemology. Without objective truths or facts, why would anyone write history at all?
Postmodernists deconstructed both research and the positions of researchers, especially history writers’ defective historiographical premises: their “commitment to the reality of the past,” to “truth as correspondence of that reality,” and their “sharp separation between the knower and the known, between fact and value ... between history and fiction.” Postmodernism reduced the professional writer of histories to creator of historical fictions. Hayden White maintained history writing was “manifestly ... a verbal structure in the form of narrative prose discourse,” the historiographer performing “an essentially poetic act, in which he [sic] prefigures the historical field and constitutes it as a domain upon which to bring to bear the specific theories he will use to explain ‘what is really happening’ in it.” Historiographers reproduced past structures and processes by “explaining what they were by representing them,” an act Erich Auerbach called “the representation of reality.” Frank Ankersmit believed historiography’s problem persisted in the history writer’s perceptions of historical reality. “Reality reflects the knowledge we have of it,” he posited. “Epistemological fixation thus stimulates ontological fixation—in this case the [false] notion of a past reality, constant and existing independently of the historian, which can be studied as an object.” Here lay the historiographers’ objectivity-problem laid out by Hans Georg Gadamer, who contended over 50 years ago that “historical research does not endeavour to grasp the concrete phenomenon as an instance of a universal rule.” In other words, not only is historical narrative incapable of reproducing truths about historical phenomena, it is not a truth-method. Even Peter Novick, in his study of objectivity and history, approved of “the arguments” of the critics of historical objectivity, while remaining “unimpressed by the arguments of its defenders.” Conservative historian C. Vann Woodward, witnessing the decline of academic “History” in the 1980s, warned that “[d]eafness or indifference toward criticism of the guild, whether it comes from artists, scientists, or philosophers, would appear to be singularly perilous at this time.” At its most “perilous,” then, the postmodern critique of history transmogrified historiography into “a discourse about, but categorically different from, the past.”

How did objective history become discursive fiction? For a start, scholars undermined primary sources. They suspected archives, impugned their contents, including photographs, and labelled them social constructions privileging a tendentious and ultimately untenable historicist conception of the past. To be fair, this was not exactly a postmodern view. R.G. Collingwood’s *The Idea of History* (1946) questioned how historians know, how they apprehended the past, and what it was about past events “that makes it possible for historians to know them?” Especially germane was Collingwood’s contention that “the past has vanished and our ideas about it can never be verified as we verify our scientific [and theoretical] hypotheses.” In the 1961 Trevelyan Lectures at the University of Cambridge, E. H. Carr scolded historiographers for their unveiled belief in a past vouchsafed through their “fetishism of documents,” an idea he linked with historiographers’ concomitant “fetishism of facts”—which sounds much like Bruno Latour’s critique of facts but decades earlier. More recently, in this journal, Richard Schein recited a litany of primary source challenges that included:

- **Elision**: the frequent truncation of subaltern voices from public records;
- **Collection**: constructions of the archive;
- **Categorization**: constituting similarity/difference in organizing/collection materials;
- **Periodization**: the politics of representing continuity/change in narratives;
- **Obscuration**: regarding concealing the identities of vulnerable informants;
- **Relation**: dynamics between disempowered communities and scholarly/historical praxis;
- **Misprision**: defining and practicing graft as situated public professionals;
- **Representation**: strategies regarding “recovering” voices in the past; [and]
- **Persuasion**: institutional contexts vis-à-vis “evidence.”
Or, as David Livingstone asserted in a landmark historical geography text, there “is no history on the mortuary table. The facts do not simply ‘speak for themselves;’ the historian stage-manages their performance on the contemporary scene.”

This approach to the past swept up a principle primary source of my own discipline (urban historical geography): the newspaper. As historical “fact,” the newspaper waxed irredeemably inadequate, as the hardly radical Donald Harman Akenson explained in 1997:

Take the average newspaper. It is a jumble of simultaneous stories, some of which are verifiable, others of which are not; a mélange of magical and superstitious statements that imply faith in the causal power of invisible forces … There are found, often on the very same page, reports of serious scientific advances, ideas for “folk” medicine, and, at least on the sports pages, predictions of the future, expressed in terms of what teams will beat the point spread; royalty and presidents are chronicled, but so too are births and deaths of historical nobodies … The newspaper inevitably has an underlying ideology (which varies according to country, region, and who the owner is). Such present-day newspapers are history and consciously claim to be, but … they [cannot] be said to be “history in the modern sense of the word” … [because] “history in the modern sense of the word” is bogus.

Not objective representations of a past awaiting historiographic plunder, newspapers were instead the material and ideational tool of interested agents-of-change who used their substantial influence to advance—in and through newspapers—their economic position in the urban growth machine. The early twentieth-century critic Walter Lippmann thought a prime motivation for journalism and journalists was the creation of pictures in the heads of readers—fictions of an environment too complex for readers to apprehend on their own. Such a view of newspapers, and primary sources generally, compelled Akenson to aver: “save perhaps the odd eccentric,” no historian “believes that there is such a thing as objective historical truth.” So, in such a milieu of postmodern skepticism, of messy deconstruction, you may understand why I am surprised and relieved that historical geography not only still matters, but also that it survived at all.

But not unscathed. If postmodernism taught us anything, it is that our historical geographies can never be the same again. How could they? If our histories are heuristic fictions, the literary consequence of inadequate, perhaps even false but at the very least ironic, sources, what should we call historical geography after one hundred and fifty years? My suggestion: a contradiction.

This conclusion, of history and historiography as contradiction, is one I recently drew in my own work on the influence of Toronto’s newspapers in the production of Toronto’s public space at the turn of the twentieth century, specifically its surface infrastructure. The research for Newspaper City drew heavily on Toronto’s liberal newspapers, the Globe and Daily Star. I spent a good deal of time undermining the veracity of newspapers as a primary source, because contemporaneous critics insisted that newspapers and journalism were inherently untrustworthy due to their links with capitalism, advertising, politics, and subscription. I used those critics to question historical journalists’ predilections for self-interest, for overstatement, for intentionally creating unreliable pictures in the heads of newspaper readers. Yet I equally occupy my time justifying and defending newspapers for their urban reform efforts, for their advancement of women and women’s causes, and for their ability and desire to render in print as accurately and faithfully as newspapers could the social geography of Toronto. They did this simultaneously.
In the end, I conclude, “why not newspapers?” They substantiate our own deftly imagined and researched cities. I cannot tell you what philosophical and professional respite that insight gave me. I had partially resolved my own longstanding dilemma: a queasy recognition that a past contrived from primary historical documents shares no space with truth or fact. Instead, historiography must be contradiction, because there is no escaping the torsions of a multivalent present and a fragmented past embodied in paradoxical primary sources. Urban historical geography after postmodernism, then, is not fictitious. It may not be truth-telling, but it is rich and meaningful. I do, however, warn my readers that the Toronto they will read about in Newspaper City is a Toronto, not the Toronto.

At the close of Canada’s one hundred and fiftieth year, a century and a half that saw history posed simultaneously as unimpeachable, objectively verifiable fact and self-serving, self-deluded fiction, acknowledging historical geography as contradiction seems as good enough reason to celebrate as any.

NOTES
5. Ankersmit, History and Tropology, 128.


13. Schein, “Practicing Historical Geography,” 8 (de-emphasis added).


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**Swearing Allegiance to No Crown: Thoughts on the Lost Histories of Municipal Radical Politics**

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The arrival of the 150th anniversary of Confederation presents scholars of Canada with an opportunity. This opportunity comes in the form of a temporal ‘trail marker’, affording us an arbitrary point, imbued with state- and culturally-created meaning, at which we may look back, look around, and look forward.

From my position, at the intersections of political science, geography, and history, I choose to critically examine the past so as to optimistically consider the future. In doing so, I am brought back to an issue that has followed me through my nascent academic career: that of lost or obscured histories. It is truly difficult to critically examine the past when one is examining selective fragments. Those fragments may only exist because they aligned with previously accepted dominant cultural narratives or may simply be arranged in a way that neatly fits the aims of those who organized them as such. Possessing only historical fragments is similar to holding a book with selected paragraphs redacted.

My interest in lost histories originated during my undergraduate final research project on the role of women in Hamilton, Ontario’s municipal government. In subsequent conversations on
the subject, I always begin with an anecdote about Agnes Sharpe, the first woman elected to public office in Hamilton. To conduct my research, I relied heavily on reports in the *Hamilton Spectator*, the city’s daily newspaper that remains in print. Official records from the City of Hamilton are limited, and one municipal official informed me that provincial legislation does not require any municipal elections information to be retained. As such, when space at Hamilton City Hall becomes more scarce, older materials are simply destroyed to make way for new materials. Mills Memorial Library at McMaster University retains physical copies of the minutes of city council proceedings, but these are short summaries and provide little information outside which motions were brought to council on which days and whether they were approved or not. Regardless, I was able to uncover a considerable amount of information on Sharpe’s political career and Hamilton’s political history with the resources available.

At the time of Sharpe’s initial foray into municipal politics, Hamilton was a deeply industrial city, built around the steel manufacturing industry, governed by a traditionalist, Conservative Party-affiliated city council. The local city council, which dealt with the day-to-day planning and maintenance of the growing city, was selected yearly by electors in the city, who regularly returned strong Conservative majorities to council. According to one article in the *Hamilton Spectator*, after the 1935 municipal election, “Hamilton is still Tory Hamilton if the political affiliations of the new City Council may be taken as a criterion.” While representatives of labor and the political left used overt labels, most notably that of the Independent Labour Party (ILP) prior to 1933, right-leaning councillors and candidates would obscure their affiliations, campaigning as independents dedicated to sound civic administration. As Hamilton’s first labor-affiliated mayor, Sam Lawrence, noted in a 1946 mayoral debate, the members of the right-wing faction on council, when campaigning as independents, were merely “disguising themselves, but when elected to office they react to their own political ideologies.”

Sharpe was elected as a labor-affiliated independent public school board trustee for Ward 8 in the city’s working class north-east in the early 1930. Her initial election occurred a year before the founding of the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF), which, for a year, cooperated with the local branch of the ILP, before a rift occurred that would severely damage labor’s electoral prospects for decades. Sharpe was able to avoid becoming embroiled in the internal schism and, after a year absent from public office, Sharpe was elected to city council as a CCF alderman for Ward 8 in 1934.

A dedicated partisan and pacifist, Sharpe’s legislative focus was on challenging militarism and nationalism, passions that did not earn her considerable support from her fellow trustees or her decidedly right-leaning council colleagues. In an act of open rebellion against the traditions of British colonial rule, Sharpe even refused to swear allegiance to the crown when taking the oath of office required of newly-elected aldermen. Despite her radical politics and lack of support on council, Sharpe’s personal popularity remained high and she was soundly re-elected as the CCF alderman until 1939.

After the outbreak of World War II, Sharpe was omitted from the *Hamilton Spectator’s* election coverage. She was replaced as the CCF candidate in Ward 8 and, prior to the election in December of that year, her name was left off the official council roll available in the published minutes. That, coupled with vague language in the autobiography of Ellen Fairclough, the first female cabinet minister in Canada who got her political start on Hamilton City Council, led me to believe that Sharpe had been killed while on the passenger ship, the S.S. Athenia, which was torpedoed by a German U-Boat on September 3, 1939.

As there existed no other information on Sharpe, I reiterated this assumption in the final research project I completed during my graduate work at McMaster, and moved on. Only later, after revisiting the records I had on Sharpe and Hamilton’s local politics, did I realize Sharpe had not died. Rather, she had been traumatized by the events and, unwilling to make the journey back
to Canada during the war, remained in the United Kingdom, sending Hamilton’s clerk a letter announcing her resignation from city council.\(^9\)

Sharpe’s tenure on Hamilton City Council faded into history unceremoniously. Her radical politics, partisan affiliations, and great strides made to advance the role of women in politics were forgotten just months later, as her name and legacy were not mentioned in the entirety of the Hamilton Spectator’s municipal election coverage throughout December of 1939.\(^10\) This is not accidental; through the entirety of her time in local politics, Sharpe’s radical politics earned the ire of the city’s dominant newspaper. At the time, the Hamilton Spectator was a deeply conservative newspaper that often advised electors to avoid candidates affiliated with the CCF.\(^11\)

Sharpe’s contributions to local government in Hamilton did not fit into the dominant narrative’s preferred role for women who held political office. For all of Sharpe’s tenure on Hamilton City Council, she was joined by Nora Frances Henderson, a right-leaning member of the city’s executive Board of Control. Henderson was lauded by local media for her good work maintaining the established order. In 1940, Henderson joined an attempt by council members to remove Labour-Progressive Party-affiliated alderman Harry Hunter from council for his political affiliation.\(^12\) In November of that year, Henderson was asked by the Spectator about her political ambitions. She replied, rather simply, that “a woman mayor would, for many reasons, be unsuitable for an industrial city like Hamilton.”\(^13\)

Sharpe’s contributions, and the contributions of so many queer people, racialized communities, women, and indigenous Canadians who have struggled for change at the local level are lost in historical purgatory. Radical, pacifist, critical, and left politics have been key elements of local elections and government in Canada. As Stefan Epp-Koop notes, “...we should try to understand municipal politics as we study the history of the political left in Canada, because it was at the municipal level that the left experienced political success...”\(^14\) Forces on the left recognized the power in the city and the productive forces inherent in urbanization, an early acknowledgement of theories articulated by David Harvey decades later.\(^15\) Noting this, movements on the left organized to contest local elections to implement change and progressive policies at the local level.

The urbanist Jane Jacobs observed that, “Cities are an immense laboratory of trial and error, failure and success in city building and city design.”\(^16\) Progressives of the early and mid-20\(^{th}\) century knew that it was the working people engaged in city building, experiencing the design of cities, and producing the value of the city who had a right to, if not the city itself, then, at the very least, to shape the production of places to better suit all. They aimed to become involved in the laboratory of the city and shape the results of the grand urban trials to benefit working people.

I have used the temporal trail marker of Canada’s sesquicentennial to look back at the important contributions of radical political actors at the local level and re-assemble the scattered fragments of their legacies. It is on their foundations that we will build a critical politics for the future.

NOTES
Methodological Approaches to Studying the State

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For the purposes of this forum, I focus on two main threads in my work: methodological approaches to studying the state and observations from my professional work for First Nations communities in Canada. One of my primary research interests is the toxic legacy of the state and the relationship between the state, power, and dispossession in chronically contaminated communities. Critical research of the Canadian state has gathered momentum in recent years and seems likely to remain a significant subject of inquiry. In reflecting on my work and on the state-led ‘Canada 150’ campaign, I note how studying the state continues to present particular methodological challenges that also merit critical reflection.

Methodological approaches

In my work, I find it instructive to keep in mind: What are the stakes underpinning the positions of the state? How does the state secure its own legitimacy during, and in spite of, contestation? Answering these and related questions necessitates historical specificity with attention to fine detail and thick description.

As many historical and critical geographers know, studying ‘The State’ can seem a daunting task. One approach that I find useful is to research events over a longer period of time than might initially seem necessary. As one example, in my work on the political economy of the Eldorado uranium refinery, and in order to understand a significant event in 1975, I pieced together a fine-detailed geographic history starting from the corporation’s origins in 1932, and ended up tracing...
the contestation to the present day. While time consuming and laborious, research covering eight
decades helped me to better understand the social relations and political, economic, and legal
conditions of the 1975 event and how they underpinned ongoing contestations. In taking a longer
view than I originally intended, I added empirical and theoretical weight to my conclusions on
state-corporate tactics and strategies and how uneven power relations are incrementally produced
over time in multiple ways.¹

Researching the state further necessitates a mixed-methods and multi-scalar, lateral
methodological and analytic approach. While state archives are often an essential resource for
documents pertaining to the state (one that I focus on here), they are not the only way to approach
the state.² State archives often do not exist in one cohesive collection; rather, they must be
disinterred by piecing together and triangulating fragments across numerous archives, libraries,
media, persons, and government departments located in multiple locations.

Research in state archives and courts, however, is a lengthy process. State documents in state,
public and private collections have varying restrictions and permissions on access and use. While
redactions are common, I found most, if not all, legal opinions to be closed or severely redacted.
Instead, court records, such as Memorandums of Fact and Law, affidavits, court decisions, and
dissenting judge opinions shed insight into internal state positions. However, not all government
departments and archives redact the same way. By cross-referencing across multiple archives, it
may be possible to access materials that are redacted in one location, but not another. For example,
correspondence sent by the Atomic Energy Control Board to the Ontario Ministry of Environment
may be redacted in the Atomic Energy Control Board Fonds, located at Library and Archives
Canada, but whole versions may sometimes be found in their correspondence to the Ministry of
Environment, whose files are located at Archives Ontario. It’s painstaking work, but incredibly
rewarding to access information through backdoor records. Access to Information and Freedom
of Information requests may also allow researchers to access formerly unseen documents, thereby
lifting access restrictions for researchers to come.

Lengthy timeframes, delays, redactions, omissions, and bureaucratic obstacles are part
of researching the state, yet it is more fruitful to turn these rather frustrating aspects of studying
the state into an entry point or subject of research, rather than a limit, or barrier. State archives
are neither cohesive, nor complete bodies of records, nor are they purposeful transcriptions
of state authority.³ While archives may be these things in certain places and at certain times, I
found it rewarding to keep in mind Ann Laura Stoler’s (2010) observations on state archives,
and to read the archive for what was not necessarily intentional, to follow an iterative process,
and remain open to contradictions, inconsistencies, and uncertainties. While explicitly framed
in the context of the Dutch colonial archive, her insights are relevant to the methodological and
theoretical engagement with state archives in other contexts. As with the state itself, state archives
are not monolithic. I looked for clues into fragmentation within state institutions, evidence that I
suspected was much more difficult to obtain than evidence of dissent from without. This line of
inquiry also benefited from examining state-to-state correspondence.

While it is tempting to want to find a “silver bullet” (I started out looking for one),
studying the state may not reveal such a tangible piece of evidence, an infallible “Aha!” moment
that confirms such and such state complicity. Rather, I have come to follow an iterative process,
paying attention to the complexities and differentiations within the state. The resultant puzzle
that ends up being pieced together is far more telling.

Reflections from professional practice
I also have 15 years experience working for Indigenous communities in northern Canada
on negotiations regarding lands, resources and Indigenous self-governance. On a team led by
Georges Erasmus, former leader of the Assembly of First Nations, this work included negotiating terms to protect culturally and ecologically sensitive lands and working on legal challenges against extractive industries on First Nations territories. These experiences also guide my approach to research and teaching and inform my interests in the state, power, and dispossession. Reflecting on this work in the context of the Government of Canada’s recent “Canada 150” campaign – a campaign of state legitimacy – I share a few observations from my professional experience, while reflecting on related themes in the literature.

It remains essential to assess actual practices of the state. In my experience, regardless of the incumbent political party, or the rotating cast in government—Prime Ministers, ministers, middle managers, negotiators, and staff with responsibilities for Indigenous issues—and, regardless of any changes to government statements or public policy for Indigenous rights and interests, I have not seen any mandate change that would result in a material change to Indigenous self-governance and rights pertaining to lands and resources. The core triad of sovereignty is unchanged; that is the Government of Canada’s primary interests remain: i) territorial sovereignty; ii) ultimate jurisdiction over lands and resources; and, iii) unfettered decision-making power. These are the core interests of states from which further political and economic power and wealth arise.

A second observation is that the state benefits in multiple ways from conflicts of constitutionality amongst civil society, and thus prefers to leave the roots of such contestations in place. Competing rights over lands and resources is a hallmark of nation-building. A notable example in Canada are the numerous conflicts arising from Indigenous rights (inherent rights and those set out in the Constitution and the Charter) and the legal primacy of third parties to secure unfettered rights to subsurface resources, for example, as set out in the archaic Canada Mining Regulations and similar provincial legislation. The Government of Canada routinely and systematically assigns third parties the “right” to extract resources, develop, and pollute the lands and waters of Indigenous territories, while at the same time purports to negotiate with Indigenous communities over these same lands and resources. This is a strategic form of dispossession.

Instead of conflict between Indigenous peoples and the state, or between industry and the state, however, Indigenous peoples often have to assert legal challenges against industry or quasi-judicial regulatory bodies, a lengthy and costly endeavor. In my observations, the state prefers to distance itself from such legal claims, unless their decision-making powers may be fettered, in which case they intervene to protect their sovereignty. These practices are also strategic and purposeful: they have the effect of deflecting conflict away from the state, while ensuring that structural and systemic inequities remain entrenched. To return to the opening questions, it seems that the state secures its own legitimacy, in part, through contestation, not just in spite of it. Indeed, contestation is an opportunity for the state to cement its own power.

Conflicts of constitutionality and the assignment of third-party rights and interests to Indigenous lands are productive to state power: they are extra-economic means of dispossession. Marx rightly noted how law became the means by which “the people’s land is stolen,” and law continues to underpin state-led and state-sanctioned dispossessions. The goal in Canada, however, is not necessarily to separate Indigenous peoples from the “means of production but rather to grab wealth directly via privatization.” Separation of people from the means of production is consequent to the core triad of sovereignty and capital accumulation.

It should come as no surprise that there are discrepancies between internal state positions and those conveyed to the public, and gulfs between state rhetoric and practice – these are also hallmarks of liberal democracies and neoliberal states. Still, ‘the state’ is not monolithic, but complex and differentiated, and there is often much more at stake than the obvious motivators. Approaching analysis of the state with historical-geographic specificity helps to reveal internal
tactics, strategies, and, sometimes, inconsistencies and failures, and doing so helps to show how power is secured over long periods of time. In studying the state, and in reflecting on the motivations for the Canada 150 campaign, it remains as important as ever to consider: What are the stakes underpinning the positions of the state? How is state power secured and legitimated in practice, to what ends, and to whose benefit?

NOTES


6. See, for example, Nahanni Butte Dene Band v. Canadian Zinc Corporation, 2005 FC 1724.


Earwitnessing: Critical reflections on sonic historical geographies

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Boasting an impressive array of maps, statistics, and graphics, the Historical Atlas of Canada has undoubtedly contributed to a broadened portrayal of Canadian geographies. Like many cartographic materials of its time and place, however, the Atlas was a silent — and silencing — text. Nearly a quarter of a century since its first publication, it is useful to consider what could be learned about cultural, historical, environmental, and political landscapes of Canada if we shift the focus towards sound. What might sonic methods and knowledge contribute to historical-geographical scholarship, and what challenges might be posed by a renewed emphasis on listening? Our position is that greater attunement to the soundworld, as part of new or “re-positioned” methodologies, can produce polyphonic understandings of past, present, and future worlds. We caution, however, against unreflexive calls for listening that may reproduce settler colonialism or other forms of oppression.

Critical listening is by no means a new endeavour. Sonic ways of knowing have been particularly central to and enlivened by diverse indigenous cultural practices of past and present. Likewise, oral history and phonography have increasingly held a place in social science research. Scholars have long championed the importance of listening to diverse knowledge bearers, training early researchers to ask open-ended questions that encourage rich oral accounts full of emotion, history, and meaning. And we have now lived twenty years with the Delgamuukw ruling that oral evidence can be admitted as proof of a bond between people and territory. Yet sonic imaginations remain relatively under-flexed within geographical scholarship. What kind of openings might sound waves provide for understanding historical-geographical change?

Advocating for sonic methodologies in historical research requires more careful consideration of seemingly mundane questions like what sound is, what attending to the soundworld involves, and what kind of work listening does. When we speak of the need for a “re-positioning” of listening, four ways come to mind. First, we encourage geographers to move sonic ways of knowing out of the methodological margins, designing research projects that are rooted in listening and making sound. Importantly, this must include more concerted attempts to engage with the materialities of sound and listening. Thinking of properties of sound as
vibrational relationships expands conceptions of space, time, and rhythm, and creates openings for interdisciplinary collaboration. Second, recognizing that listening is active and embodied, a greater “spatial auditory awareness” may involve bodily re-positioning to hear in more nuanced ways. At times this involves moving to willfully interact with or make sound waves; other circumstances may require carving out spaces of stillness or silence to hear otherwise imperceptible sounds. Third, critical sonic geographies might also encourage the re-positioning of existing geographical techniques, instruments, and auditory technologies to listen in more inclusive and ethical ways. Finally, as we discuss later, it is important to consider the role of listening in decolonizing processes, which includes thinking about how listening itself might be decolonised.

The ephemeral, slippery qualities of sound provide unique challenges especially for hearing the past. Indeed, decay is a key property of most sound events; without equipment, it is difficult to hear or recall certain sounds, especially those that have dissipated beyond earshot. Yet we must not be too quick to dismiss bodily, institutional, and inter-generational memories of sound. Despite the admitted challenges of listening, sonic methods invite questions about how even fleeting or decayed sounds might be revived or made audible through material objects, digital technologies, and spaces of playback. These are challenging tasks in a field relatively new to sonic methods, but could lead to enhanced ways of listening to (and for) the past, present, and future. In what follows, we draw on our own ongoing research projects to show examples of sonic methods informing historical-geographical scholarship.

(Histories of) field recording

Matt Rogalsky and Laura Cameron’s research on sonic field technologies and techniques of the early Canadian sound recordist, William W.H. Gunn, showcases the potential for historical geographers to explore more technically how equipment, recording styles, mixing practices, and spatialities of playback have shaped (predominantly settler) conceptualisations of nature-culture, nationalism, and migration. Their outdoor sound installation, “Into the Middle of Things,” was part of group exhibition entitled “SOUNDWORK” held at Fieldwork, a rural art space near Perth, Ontario. As the title suggests, they wanted to put the listener right “into the middle of things”: spatially (the middle of a proposed trail and the largest indigenous land claim in Ontario), temporally (raising questions about the role of future, current and buried geographies), and ethically (critically addressing settler perception through the use of historical field recordings). The piece incorporates Gunn’s 1954 recordings of the white-throated sparrow, a bird frequently heard as strongly symbolic of Canada. Conveying a spatial distinction between birds recorded in Algonquin Park and those captured in the Adirondacks, Rogalsky and Cameron fed the Algonquin sparrow recordings through the right ear and the Adirondack calls through the left. A microphone is also present in the field, on a stand, picking up live ambient sounds and mixing them in listeners’ ears with the songs of the sparrows. Such an installation thus invites listeners to bear witness to more-than-human sounds of past and silenced geographies while also becoming active performers in the moment.

Rogalsky and Cameron’s work helps identify at least three distinct approaches to sound-based inquiry in historical-geographical research: using sonic methods to inform broader historical inquiry, undertaking historical analyses of sonic field recording practice, and exploring the life geographies of early recordists and sound studies scholars. Each of these routes can incorporate sonic and non-sonic methods to stitch together geographies of past and present.
Impulse responses: Recording carceral space

In addition to working with historical sound recordings, Matt Rogalsky experiments with impulse responses to fuse together more-than-human lives, places, and times. Impulse response techniques involve activating a space acoustically by creating an impulse (such as popping a balloon) and recording to the result as an “acoustic snapshot” that can then be used to digitally recreate the reverberation of the space. Katie Hemsworth, for instance, used impulse recordings Rogalsky collected from the now-closed Kingston Penitentiary (1835-2013) to further exemplify her writing on the acoustic spatialities of prisons. As an accompaniment to her written text, she recorded herself reading her abstract and later processed the audio through Rogalsky’s recordings of different areas of the prison, demonstrating the changing aural architecture and affective soundscapes of the historic penitentiary as if she was taking the reader-listener on a tour of the penitentiary. Demonstrating their versatility, Rogalsky used the same impulse responses for reverberation on drums and vocals in his production of a rock music album, weaving together the acoustics of the 19th century penitentiary with contemporary performances of the band PS I Love You, from their 2012 album *Death Dreams*. We highlight these examples to show the flexible uses of such recording techniques; both projects created an opportunity to represent and re-imagine the penitentiary through acoustic space. Future research might consider how or whether impulse response techniques provide less intrusive engagement with restricted, abandoned, or endangered environments through sonic simulation.

Expanding the (sound) archive

Biodiversity change is often heard before it can be seen. Reflecting on A.E. Douglass’s notion of “talkative trees,” historical geographers might ask: what kinds of sonic histories do trees, birds, and other living entities tell, and how might we re-position our research practices to better hear (or feel) such histories without inflicting environmental harm? Such questions, investigated by Katie Hemsworth, are part of a broader “critical dendro-provenancing” project led by Kirsten Greer on the histories of the British North Atlantic timber trade. Greer, Hemsworth, and several co-researchers are creating a multi-sensory GIS story map that reconstructs the “socio-biophysical landscapes” of the British North Atlantic timber trade. Part of this research trajectory involves the creation of a more-than-human sound archive of Bermuda to reflect changes in soundscape over the past two centuries. Historical recordings of now-extinct, endangered, or revitalised species (including recordings from the aforementioned William W.H. Gunn’s library) helps the otherwise visual story map come alive sonically. The story map provides a launching point toward the application of sound art to communicate scientific and historical findings related to climate change, energy transition, and imperial trade. Such a project is inspired by existing art-science collaborations that sonify climate change data through music, drawing connections between sonic, digital, scientific, and arts-based methods. Through this project, Greer and Hemsworth will show how sonic information creates openings for mobilizing and expanding the archive.

Decolonising listening?

Calls for listening as part of reconciliation have re-centred orality and aurality in the telling of more inclusive histories of Canada and Turtle Island (music to these sonic geographers’ ears!). Part of a reflexive approach to sonic methods, however, must involve critical recognition that sonic environments tell their own stories of the effects of settler colonialism. It is well documented that place names are potent examples of re-writing place as techniques of colonial power, yet rarely is settler colonialism conceptualised as re-tuning or even un-hearing place.
Sonic methods offer exciting potential for producing polyvocal teachings of the past. Scholars also have a responsibility, however, to think critically about how sonic methods might (unintentionally) reproduce auditory violence and related effects of settler colonialism. When settler-recordist William Gunn asked children to “listen with all their might” in an exercise called “Nature Music,” it presented a different and exciting way of engaging the world, one that invited deeper connections with sonic environments. It is worth asking, however, if such a call might also be interpreted as acquisitive, disciplinary, or competitive listening, bearing traces of colonialism through acts of silencing and non-consensual earwitnessing. Silence can be a powerful form of resistance and survival in specific contexts, but as Jason Ryle states in his introduction to the sound installation, *Noodaagun. Beacons.*, “the history of colonisation is also one of silence and oppression.” Sonic methods and field practice thus raise critical questions about enforced silence and other forms of acoustic violence, recognizing the physical force of sound as well as the affective potential for sound and recording equipment to elicit fear. In addition to these cautions, a critical exploration of sonic sovereignty has yet to be effectively studied. Part of this will involve making concerted efforts to understand the dynamic ethics of consent, reciprocity, and ownership. Historical geographers might also consider the role they play in helping return auditory stories to the people and places from where they were taken. The sound-based practices discussed in this brief intervention, which might be part of a broader project of decolonizing listening, are best done in careful consultation with non-academic communities and with a keen ear for more-than-human well-being.

Critical engagement with listening as a way of knowing means recognizing the cultural histories of making and listening to sound, but also, importantly, forming deeper knowledges of acoustics, vibrations, and materialities that shape sonic experience. If historical geographies shift to re-position sonic ways of knowing more centrally, questions about what is (and is not) heard must be expanded to reflect the notion that critical listening takes *time* as well as *place.*

NOTES

9. Recordings provided by Cornell Lab of Ornithology’s Macaulay Library.


16. Examples of attempts to colonize soundworlds include but are not limited to: “tone-deaf” treaties and visual cartographies, silence as a form of oppression or “cleansing,” dominant settler voices of media, and education as institutional(ised) listening. Notably, testimonial events at Canada’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission often featured audience members seated in rows with attention focused on one voice, reflecting (at times) a settler-colonial style of aurality.


20. Indeed, future experimentations with impulse responses, which require the creation of a loud impulse (such as firing a starter gun or popping a balloon), should also consider how such impulses might affect the surrounding environment. See Steve Goodman, Sonic Warfare: Sound, Affect, and the Ecology of Fear (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010).

21. For an outdoor sound installation titled “Octet,” featuring Gunn’s bird recordings fed through microphones repurposed as tiny loudspeakers, Rogalsky reduced audio speed to 80 percent. This achieved a desired artistic effect while serving as an ethical measure to avoid disrupting flight paths of birds in the area. See Matt Rogalsky, Octet (Accessed 14 November 2017) https://mattrogalsky.bandcamp.com/track/octet.