

PERFORMING MUSQUEAM CULTURE AND HISTORY AT BRITISH COLUMBIA'S 1966 CENTENNIAL CELEBRATIONS¹

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THEY ARE MIXING some heap big “medicine” out at the Musqueam Indian Reserve. And they don’t want the whiteman mixing into the tom-tom beats, the chanting and other dances of a secret ancient Indian ritual society ... I went down to the smoke house on the banks of the Fraser. It is a cedar-siding building put up by the Indians themselves. It has the appearance of a community centre, but without windows ... As I approached the gloomy building, I began to hear the beat and chant. The rhythm was deep and quick. The voices were an animal sound in time with the drums – eerie. It kept going, reverberating through the wooden walls. The Beatles flashed through my mind. It was definitely psychedelic, but with a wilder, more sinister throb. On the river side I found a door. I knocked. The beat stopped. I opened the door. For a flashing instant I saw the dancers in the gloom inside. They stood transfixed. I couldn’t see their features, although every head was turned to the sudden light of the open doorway ... The door slammed. The dance scene was erased.²

So reported Ed Simons of the *Province* when he was denied access to the Musqueam smokehouse during the initiation of new spirit

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² *Province* (Vancouver), 23 February 1968, cited in Michael Kew, “Coast Salish Ceremonial Life: Status and Identity in a Modern Village” (PhD diss., University of Washington, 1970), 199.

dancers in the winter of 1968. Simons was investigating reports that a Musqueam man, who had filed a complaint with the Department of Indian Affairs, was to be initiated into the ritual society against his wishes: "He is afraid the society is going to shanghai him and beat him into becoming an Indian dancer." In characterizing this ceremonial practice as a dark and featureless remnant of pre-contact Aboriginal society, Simons described the scene with the usual discriminatory undertones that marked newspaper accounts of Indian reserve life. In fact, the winter spirit dance had long been (and remains) an important religious institution of Coast Salish life.³ During their initiation period, individuals went through a series of ritual procedures to acquire power from a non-human spiritual source. Initiates then performed this power during winter ceremonies conducted in smokehouses throughout Coast Salish country. The spirit dance's tremendous religious and cultural significance is described in the Musqueam's 1984 comprehensive land claim submission to the federal government:

This was the most personal and private experience a person could have; it was not revealed to others, nor talked about. Continued dreams and communication strengthened the gift and, with assistance from other persons with power, an individual learned to control and eventually was able to express the power in a performance of a personal song and dance. If managed in the proper way, this association gave strength and capabilities beyond those of simple human experience. If mismanaged, it could bring illness and death.⁴

Rarely did these personal religious experiences reach the non-Aboriginal world as a news story. Indeed, the non-Aboriginal public was quite unaware that this type of ceremonial activity occurred within the context of reserve communities.⁵ Above all, Simons' 1968

³ See Kew, "Coast Salish Ceremonial Life"; and "Central and Southern Coast Salish Ceremonies since 1900," in *Handbook of North American Indians*, vol. 7: *Northwest Coast*, ed. Wayne Suttles (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1990); Wayne Suttles, "Spirit Dancing and the Persistence of Native Culture among the Coast Salish," in *Coast Salish Essays*, ed. Wayne Suttles (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1987), 199-208; Pamela Amoss, *Coast Salish Spirit Dancing: The Survival of an Ancestral Religion* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1978); and Crisca Bierwert, *Brushed by Cedar, Living by the River: Coast Salish Figures of Power* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1999).

⁴ Musqueam Indian Band, *Musqueam Comprehensive Land Claim: Preliminary Report on Musqueam Land Use and Occupancy* (Vancouver: Musqueam Indian Band, 1984), 37. Located in Musqueam Indian Band Archives (hereafter MIBA).

⁵ The exception being, of course, during times of controversy. For example, see the newspaper article entitled "Chilliwack Inquest Finds Indian Died from Ceremonial Beating," in

account underscores the inaccessibility of this aspect of Musqueam culture to Vancouver's non-Coast Salish residents: "The dance scene was erased," as the news reporter put it.

In 1966, two years prior to the *Province's* account of Musqueam cultural practice, the Musqueam were invited to perform a traditional dance as part of the province's centennial commemoration of the uniting of the colonies of Vancouver Island and British Columbia. This project, known as the "Route of the Totems," involved the installation of a series of totem poles along the recently constructed Vancouver Island Highway and at the major ferry terminals. Delta's mayor, Clarence Taylor, asked local Indian bands to participate in the dedication ceremony for the pole raised at the entrance of the Tsawwassen ferry terminal. On the afternoon of 30 July 1966, a crowd of centennial celebrants gathered to watch the unveiling and the accompanying Aboriginal entertainment. Squamish chief Simon Baker, dressed in a "colourful, authentic Indian costume representing several bands," opened the show with a love song. His "medicine man," elder Dominic Charlie, who, it was reported, was almost ninety years old, performed a deer dance. The Squamish were joined by a delegation of Musqueam men, including elder James Point, Chief Dominic Point, Band Manager Willard Sparrow, Vincent Stogan, and Walker Stogan, who performed a warrior song and dance. In their vigorous physical routine, the dancers, with painted faces and armed with long wooden spears, mimicked warriors in pursuit of their enemies. Sparrow, James Point, and Dominic Point accompanied this dance with a song about the famous warrior qewəpəlenəx^w (Howard E. Grant, personal communication, 1999)⁶ (see Figure 1). The spectators were told that the song and dance re-enacted an

Musqueam newsclippings scrapbook, 1972, MIBA. In a more positive light, a remarkable 1966 episode of the CBC television series, *Cariboo Country*, depicted a re-enactment of a winter dance at the Cowichan smokehouse. The program, made in collaboration with Cowichan, Musqueam, and other Coast Salish individuals, included the disclaimer that no owned or personal songs were recorded for the broadcast. See "All Indian," screenplay by Paul St. Pierre, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 1966, V1990 36/25, British Columbia Archives and Records Service (hereafter BCARS).

⁶ Many Musqueam individuals consider qewəpəlenəx^w, a man who lived in the early 1800s, to be an important ancestor. Numerous community members derive their Musqueam ancestry and identity from this lineage, and, over the years, the reference to qewəpəlenəx^w has figured prominently in many public Musqueam displays. For a description of the warrior dance as it was publicly performed at Kitsilano Beach in the 1960s, see Kew, "Coast Salish Ceremonial Life," 295. The Tsawwassen event was described in a series of newspaper articles in the *Delta Optimist*, the *Vancouver Sun*, and the *Province*, some of which have been carefully preserved at Musqueam in a series of newspaper scrapbooks.



Figure 1: The warrior dance at the 1966 totem pole dedication ceremony. Willard Sparrow, Chief Dominic Point, and James Point accompany dancers including Vincent and Walker Stogan. Vancouver Public Library, Special Collections, No. 44647.

ancient ritual performed before going to war and that the choreographed warfare depicted Musqueam success in repelling northern warriors during their raids on villages on the Lower Fraser. In their performance, the Musqueam emerge as victorious; as Dominic Point told the audience, the dance means “we are strong men.”⁷ Later that evening, in the parking lot of the Tsawwassen shopping centre, the Aboriginal participants hosted a salmon barbecue during which they made Mayor Taylor an honorary chief of the Tsawwassen and gave him the ancestral name Kimit.⁸ The naming ceremony included a public performance of Musqueam s̓χʷayχʷəy mask dancers.⁹

These two scenarios – the initiation of the spirit dancer at the Musqueam smokehouse in 1968 as reported by the *Province*, and the public presentation of the warrior dance and the s̓χʷayχʷəy mask dance at the Tsawwassen centennial event in 1966 (also reported in the press and remembered by community members today) – highlight two very different settings for Musqueam dance performances. The spirit dance takes place within the Coast Salish community, within a ceremonial context and in the presence of Musqueam and other Coast Salish people along with their invited guests. It is a part of the presentation of personal identity, private knowledge, and spirituality within that Aboriginal community. In a similar vein, the s̓χʷayχʷəy mask dance is a hereditary privilege usually performed during community ceremonies, and, although it has moved in and out of public view during the twentieth century, it is rarely performed within non-Aboriginal contexts.

In contrast to these internal performances, Musqueam people occasionally produced dance routines in response to non-Aboriginal appeals. In the late 1930s Vancouver Folk Festival organizer Nellie McCay booked the Musqueam dance troupe for her shows, stressing that “the designs of our own Coast Indians differ greatly from those

⁷ *Delta Optimist*, 3 August 1966.

⁸ The *Delta Optimist* reported that Ricky Jacobs of Tsawwassen was the direct descendent of the “ancient Tsawwassen chief Kimit.”

⁹ Do these performances represent a coordinated Musqueam effort or are they the efforts of a few individuals? This is an important question when discussing nationalistic presentations. While certainly there would have been internal community debate about what to show, I am considering this component a Musqueam show because many families were involved either as planners, performers, or spectators; because the chief and the band manager attended, which suggests that there was an administrative decision to participate; and because the dancers identified themselves and were identified as Musqueam. As any nation, Musqueam consists of a diverse group of individuals holding multiple opinions, family connections, and histories who nonetheless are engaged in the ongoing articulation of a cohesive public identity.

of the Laird Indians” and erroneously claiming that “every stitch or pattern has a story to tell, if we have the eyes and the knowledge to read it” (see Figure 2).¹⁰ Musqueam individuals also organized a warrior performance for the 1939 royal tour of King George the Sixth and Queen Elizabeth.¹¹ For the 1958 centennial, marking the 100th anniversary of the formation of the colony of British Columbia, centennial events producer Gordon Hilknor attempted to recruit the Charles family, whom he identified as having “considerable stature amongst the ‘anti-feather-war-bonnet’ group,” to perform the qewəpəlenəxʷ song in his recreation of Simon Fraser’s 1808 journey down the Fraser River. At the Musqueam village, as the popular story goes, Fraser encountered “hostile Indians” who prevented him from reaching the sea.¹² Hilknor wrote that Christine Charles “knows the song which the great warrior Capilano sang to raise his armies to battle pitch. This was done, apparently, from a stage consisting of four canoes lashed together and covered with split cedar planking which traveled back and forth in front of the shore campfires.” Hilknor was pleased that Charles offered to weave bulrush mats for the canoe pullers so that they would be housed “in authentic fashion.”¹³

While the historical contexts surrounding these shows varied, it was for each of these public settings that the Musqueam mobilized the tradition of the staməx, or warrior, to construct a dance specifically for non-Aboriginal consumption. To be sure, the image of the Aboriginal warrior could meet the expectations of non-Aboriginal audiences who demanded that indigenous cultural traditions be limited to flamboyant costumes, drumming, singing, and dancing. “Whites preferred their Indians in feathers and warpaint,” writes historian Daniel Francis.¹⁴ Yet, at the same time, this warrior dance,

¹⁰ *Vancouver Sun*, 1 October 1938. The folk festivals celebrated the diverse ethnic heritage of “good citizens of Canada” with a program of folk dance performances and handicraft booths at the Hotel Vancouver. See Add MSS 61, Nellie McCay Fond, Vancouver City Archives.

¹¹ Apparently the Musqueam made preparations for the royal visit, but their show was cancelled at the last moment (the late Dominic Point, personal communication, 1997).

¹² In 1950 the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada erected a historical plaque on Southwest Marine Drive overlooking the mouth of the Fraser River to commemorate Fraser’s journey to the sea. The plaque notes that the “hostility” of the Indians prevented Fraser from completing his journey. Considered an important historical artefact, this plaque (which was replaced with a revised bilingual plaque in the 1970s), is now in the collection of the Musqueam Indian Band, formally on loan from Parks Canada.

¹³ Gordon Hilknor, Special Projects Producer, to L.J. Wallace, Chairman, BC Centennial Committee, 29 August 1957, GR 1448, box 15, BCARS.

¹⁴ Daniel Francis, *The Imaginary Indian: The Image of the Indian in Canadian Culture* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 1992), 102; See also Wayne Suttles, “The Recognition of Coast Salish Art,” paper presented to the Northwest Coast Art Symposium, Otsego



Figure 2: Dancers pose for the Vancouver Folk Festival Committee's publicity shots. From left to right: Aleck Peters, Bob Roberts, Walker Stogan, Basil Point, Chief Jack Stogan, Edna Grant, Mary Grant, Nelson Dan, Dominic Point, Mabel Point, Sylvester Campbell, and Seymour Grant. Royal BC Museum PN10545 and published in the *Vancouver Sun*, 1 October 1938.

with its distinctive Salish costumes and links to regional tradition and history, offered a local variation on the warrior theme, countering the popularized, stereotypical “feather-war-bonnet” Indian that, in 1958, centennial event producer Gordon Hilkner had tried so hard to avoid. According to Musqueam people today, the warrior dance was rarely, if ever, performed in the longhouse setting within the Musqueam community.

Anthropologists Fred Myers and Julie Cruikshank have argued that to better understand cultural performances directed to multi-ethnic audiences, we should treat them not as isolated cultural texts but, rather, as “tangible forms of social action” embedded in the larger fields of political, economic, and cultural production. While much scholarship emphasizes how intercultural events serve the interests of dominant society, commentators should not lose sight of the fact that Aboriginal peoples autonomously “confer meaning on the circumstances that confront them.”¹⁵ Similarly, in relation to a 1941 competition between the University of Washington’s rowing team and the Swinomish’s Indian racing canoes, anthropologist Bruce Miller shows that cultural (in this case, athletic) display was a part of a media performance to publicize the Swinomish’s economic vitality and political independence. For the Swinomish, intercultural performance contributed to the development and maintenance of positive economic relations with non-Aboriginal neighbours; it strengthened tribal autonomy and identity and advanced political recognition in the non-Aboriginal world. Miller reveals that coordinating and participating in local public events was a diplomatic strategy often employed by Coast Salish leaders during the mid-

Institute for Native American Art History, Cooperstown, New York, August 1998. Suttles vividly illustrates this theme: “And while we profess a distaste for warfare and violence, we still admire the warrior. So we may be thrilled by the image of the haughty Northern chief leading a great canoe filled with warriors far to the south to raid the poor naked Salish for slaves and returning to put on his tall hat and his Chilkat blanket for a magnificent potlatch.” Regarding the non-Aboriginal assumption that Aboriginal men would make excellent soldiers because of their warrior heritage, see Keith Thor Carlson, “Stó:lō Soldiers, Stó:lō Veterans,” in *You Are Asked to Witness: The Stó:lō in Canada’s Pacific Coast History*, ed. Keith Thor Carlson (Chilliwack: Stó:lō Heritage Trust, 1997), 133. The gendered nature of these Aboriginal self-presentations deserves further examination. On the relationship between gender and non-Aboriginal nation-building, see Colin M. Coates and Cecilia Morgan, *Heroines and History: Representations of Madeleine de Verchères and Laura Secord* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001).

¹⁵ Fred R. Myers, “Culture-Making: Performing Aboriginality at the Asian Society Gallery,” *American Ethnologist* 21, 4 (1994): 679-99; and Julie Cruikshank, “Negotiating with Narrative: Establishing Cultural Identity at the Yukon International Storytelling Festival,” *American Anthropologist* 99, 1 (1997): 56-69.

twentieth century. These seemingly small public dramas are a part of a larger representational strategy towards, and dialogue with, non-Aboriginal society.¹⁶

Similarly, on British Columbia's centennial stage participation in state-organized celebrations offered Aboriginal people the opportunity to appropriate and to reshape representations of dominant history for their own purposes, enabling them to "upgrade" their Aboriginal identity in the public's eye.¹⁷ For Aboriginal peoples, a part of the motivation to participate in commemorative events related to the political necessity to present themselves as "authentic" and "historic." Spectators could come to understand the Musqueam through their cultural presentations. And, as Julie Cruikshank tells us, "The stakes for effective translation ... become higher in a world where culture is a marker of authenticity in political negotiations and where conflicting folk models of culture operate simultaneously."¹⁸ To be sure, in the eyes of the dominant society, "distinctiveness" and "authenticity" have become prerequisites of BC First Nations political, and even legal, legitimacy. It seems to be increasingly the case that, in order to be acknowledged, descriptions of traditional territories need to be fixed according to Western legal notions of occupation and exclusivity. During the provincial centennial, Aboriginal peoples presented themselves in ways that ensured public acknowledgment and that responded to demands that Aboriginal culture be both visibly local and rooted in a pre-contact past. Centennial presenters were certainly interested in involvement from *local* Aboriginal groups displaying *local* cultural traditions. However, as we will see, Aboriginal peoples and provincial organizers held different views with regard to

¹⁶ Bruce G. Miller, "The Great Race of 1941: A Coast Salish Public Relations Coup," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 89, 3 (Summer 1998): 127-35. For additional Northwest Coast studies, see Elizabeth Furniss, "Re-creating the Wild West: Negotiating Indianness in the Williams Lake Stampede," chap. in *The Burden of History: Colonialism and the Frontier Myth in a Rural Canadian Community* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1999); Judith Ostrowitz, "Making Dance History: Kwakwaka'wakw Performance Art at the American Museum of Natural History," chap. in *Privileging the Past: Reconstructing History in Northwest Coast Art* (Seattle: University of Washington Press and Vancouver: UBC Press, 1999); and Paige Raibmon, "Theatres of Contact: The Kwakwaka'wakw Meet Colonialism in British Columbia and at the Chicago's World Fair," *Canadian Historical Review* 81, 2 (June 2000): 157-90. On the Six Nations participating in commemorations of Loyalist history in order to further their own political goals, see Norman Knowles, *Inventing the Loyalists: The Ontario Loyalist Tradition and the Creation of Usable Pasts* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997).

¹⁷ John Dewhirst, "Coast Salish Summer Festivals: Rituals for Upgrading Social Identity," *Anthropologica* 18 (1975): 231-73.

¹⁸ Cruikshank, "Negotiating with Narrative," 65.

what constituted British Columbia's identity and history as well as with regard to what constituted cultural authenticity and distinctiveness.

To look more carefully at the role of performance in constructing a public identity for First Nations in British Columbia in general, and for the Musqueam in particular, I will discuss the general context of the centennial celebrations organized between 1958 and 1971 and then go on to explore how both the state and Aboriginal peoples negotiated their respective histories at these events. I will then focus on the province's "Route of the Totem" project and the Musqueam's response to the installation of a totem pole at Tsawwassen and to the story it told. Finally, I will further explore the relationship between culture, politics, and identity by examining how the Musqueam drew upon different kinds of performative traditions in order to produce their show. Historian James Clifford reminds us that "throughout the world indigenous populations have had to reckon with the forces of 'progress' and 'national' unification ... Many traditions, languages, cosmologies, and values are lost, some literally murdered; but much has simultaneously been invented and revived in complex, oppositional contexts."¹⁹ This case study attempts to show that the production and performance of a public identity was shaped both by internal cultural protocol and by an interest in creating a public image amenable to pursuing a resolution to Aboriginal land claims. Since contact with European societies the Musqueam and other First Nations in British Columbia have been reminding non-Aboriginals that they have lived here "from time immemorial."²⁰ Musqueam's theatrical performance at British Columbia's centennial celebrations in 1966 was, in its simplest form, one of those "reminders."

THE BRITISH COLUMBIA CENTENNIAL PROJECTS: A CENTURY OF PEACE AND PROGRESS

In the late 1950s the province began to plan for its upcoming centennials commemorating the establishment of the colony of British Columbia in 1858, the union of the colonies of British Columbia and Vancouver Island in 1866, Canadian Confederation in 1867, and the entry of British Columbia into Confederation in 1871. Many centennial projects emphasized the theme of 100 years of peace and

¹⁹ James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 16.

²⁰ Musqueam Indian Band, *Musqueam Declaration*, 10 June 1976, MIBA.

progress, and they highlighted historical events deemed important to this master narrative of state formation and achievement. While provincial events often celebrated popular regional history, local stories were understood in relation to the larger provincial history, just as, on the national stage, provincial history was linked to a larger nationalist discourse. At the heart of the centennials was the imagining of British Columbia as a singular place with a unified past. Regardless of their lasting impact on the public psyche, the centennials left the province with a trail of commemorative plaques, neighbourhood improvement projects, libraries, community centres, and totem poles.

Early on, centennial organizers wanted to include Aboriginal peoples and their traditions because, for many Canadians, indigenous culture signified national antiquity and heritage. The “modern” and “progressive” state claimed its historic roots in an Aboriginal past.²¹ Often, programming incorporated Aboriginal peoples in ways that emphasized a violent pre-contact past followed by a century of harmonious relations between First Nations and newcomers. Yet, at the same time, federal and provincial bureaucrats began to give more room to Aboriginal peoples to direct and control publicly funded representations of their own history and culture. For example, British Columbia established the Indian Participation Committee, including prominent Aboriginal individuals in the planning phase of the province’s centennial celebrations.²² Similarly, the federal government organized an Indian Advisory Council to develop the storyline and content for Expo ’67’s Indians of Canada Pavilion.²³ Although these developments seem to indicate increased state consultation with Aboriginal peoples in this pre-White Paper era, government bureaucrats did maintain close scrutiny over projects and, at least on the provincial level, a major goal was simply to ensure that Aboriginal peoples would participate in the celebrations, thus ensuring increased tourist dollars. As L.H. McCance, secretary for the Centennial Committee, explained: “We are most anxious to have the Indian

²¹ Ann Katherine Morrison, “Canadian Art and Cultural Appropriation: Emily Carr and the 1927 Exhibition of Canadian West Coast Art – Native and Modern,” (MA thesis, University of British Columbia, 1991). Morrison shows that the display of Emily Carr’s paintings juxtaposed with Northwest Coast artefacts in the 1927 National Gallery exhibit was born of the idea that Canada had a national art that had developed from a “primitive” past.

²² Gertrude Guerin, a prominent leader from Musqueam and, significantly, the first elected female chief in Canada, was a corresponding member of the committee.

²³ Ruth B. Phillips and Sherry Brydon, “Arrow of Truth: The Indians of Canada Pavilion at Expo ’67,” forthcoming *Canadian Studies Review*.

People of the Province participate in the Celebrations, so that they may express their art and culture to the rest of the population of British Columbia, as well as the many guests and tourists who will be with us on this occasion.”²⁴

It was within this context that the province’s Committee on Promotions, Displays, and Pageants opened its doors for proposals, many of which emphasized the centrality of Aboriginal history and culture to the province’s beginnings. Mildred Valley Thornton, artist and popular lecturer on Northwest Coast cultures, reminded the committee that “we should not forget that there is much native talent in other places along the coast. Colourful Indian dances in full ceremonial costumes should definitely be planned for.”²⁵ Marjorie Talbot, who was also interested in Aboriginal folklore, proposed a historical pageant in which the people from the reserves in North Vancouver would act out the Coast Salish legend of the flood, courting and marriage customs, and rituals relating to infant death. She also envisioned a scene featuring Aboriginal people from Harrison Lake talking and dancing around their campfire; she stressed that, because of the elders’ impressive oratory skills, there would be little need for extensive rehearsals.²⁶ For many submissions, interactions with Aboriginal people on the centennial stage were limited by the paradigm of an Aboriginal authenticity located in a historic, unchanging past.

Although many proposals came from non-Aboriginal individuals who were often White middle-class women engaged in reproducing the idea of a folkloric indigenous present,²⁷ Aboriginal people did intervene in the planning discussions. Sohane Vulture of Vancouver strongly opposed the Centennial Committee’s tendency to promote non-Aboriginal interests: “On your board of people about the Centennial – Who is representing Indian people? – persons of Indian blood or some silly emotional whiteskin biddy?” Employing sexist and ageist language, he continued, “I find it sort of crazy that Government people call on some mixed up old ladies, when it comes

²⁴ L.H. McCance, Executive Secretary, BC Centennial Committee, to Sohane Vulture, 13 February 1957, GR 1448, box 7, BCARS.

²⁵ “Minutes of the Second Meeting of the Committee on Promotions, Displays and Pageants, British Columbia Centennial Committee, Vancouver, BC,” 22 June 1956, GR 1448, box 7, BCARS.

²⁶ Marjorie Talbot to L.H. McCance, BC Centennial Committee, 30 November 1956, GR 1448, box 7, BCARS.

²⁷ See Ian McKay, *The Quest of the Folk: Antimodernism and Cultural Selection in Twentieth-Century Nova Scotia* (Montreal/Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1994). McKay found that middle-class White women were central to the folklorization of Nova Scotians.

to our wants instead of calling on us Indians who know what we want.”²⁸ The portrayal of Aboriginal tradition as restricted to the artistic and historic realm faced a gentler critique in more public discourses. An episode of the CBC dramatic television series *Cariboo Country* featured well-known actor Chief Dan George as Chilcotin elder Ol’ Antoine. Antoine was meant to represent “all Canadian Indians” and sing an ancient tribal song for a live national broadcast marking Dominion Day. Yet his reluctant, ambivalent performance (he was preoccupied with a slahal gambling game) poked fun at the absurdity of expecting Aboriginal people to embrace roles rooted in Canadian society’s stereotypical “Indian” as well as the ease with which Aboriginal people could accommodate such expectations.²⁹

While some challenged the organizational process of the centennial celebrations and criticized the limited nature of Aboriginal consultation, during this period many Aboriginal people viewed the centennial program as an opportunity to organize their own public presentations. In 1958 William Scow, president of the Native Brotherhood of British Columbia, suggested that the committee take on the history of the province as portrayed through the eyes of Aboriginal people themselves. Scow’s proposed historical pageant included the reconstruction of a traditional longhouse to show how “the Natives lived and were happy” prior to contact, a re-enactment of one of the early meetings with the colonial government, and an emphasis on how some Aboriginal people had made “progress” while others were unable “to recover some of their Historical Pride after the peaceful penetration.” Scow argued:

This centennial year can mean a lot to the Native people and to the citizens. This is a great opportunity to portray to the public (what the Native people are – The Aboriginal Natives of this great province of ours). I don’t mean just on a tail end of a parade with a few feathers where the Americans and foreign visitors to the Centennial Ceremony will point out and say interesting Indians. After all One Hundred years of association with white men and the former governments...? Victoria has some vacant lands where it could be portrayed.³⁰

²⁸ Sohaney Vulture, to the Centennial Committee, “Indian Time,” 16 January 1957, GR 1448, box 7, BCARS.

²⁹ “Under the Blanket,” *Cariboo Country*, screenplay by Paul St. Pierre, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 1960, V1990: 36/12, BCARS.

³⁰ William D. Scow to Lyle Wicks, Minister of Labour, 12 January 1958, GR 1448, box 7, BCARS.

In his appeal to the centennial organizers, Scow characterized British imperial expansion, colonial settlement, and state assimilationist policies as “peaceful,” and he presented a nostalgic and conflict-free representation of pre-contact times.³¹ While provincial bureaucrats concurred that Aboriginal peoples “have a place in the development of our Province,”³² Scow emphasized their relevance to the present and future of British Columbia – a claim that challenged containing “authentic” Aboriginal life within an unchanging past and/or a folkloric present.

Like Scow’s proposal, submissions from many Aboriginal communities played to the centennial theme: a century of peace and progress. The Nanaimo Indian Band proposed to host a “Coal Tye Day Festival of Peace,” “commemorating a century of peaceful living between our West Coast tribes and also between Indian and non-Indian.” Their proposal notes that “in the earlier years of our civilization our Indian brothers came to raid and make war. They still come in their canoes but today we race each other in friendly rivalry.”³³ Similarly, the Route of the Totems dedication ceremony at Tsawwassen, with its emphasis on the antiquity of intertribal warfare, pointed to a more recent, post-contact peace between Aboriginal groups. While First Nations self-presentations drew upon the mainstream convention that European settlement brought tribal peace, and although they emphasized harmonious relations between Aboriginal communities and settler society, they should not be read narrowly as an absolute concession to that view. And, although non-Aboriginal audiences, who were steeped in a tradition that distinguishes between Aboriginal or folk cultural tradition and political activity, likely viewed Aboriginal performance as non-confrontational, even nostalgic, these displays contained elements of promotion and protest that were only possible within such celebratory intercultural settings. To highlight their contemporary presence, Aboriginal peoples could recast dominant interpretations of the past in light of their own historical traditions. Non-Aboriginal spectators may not have considered such performances to be directly about land, but, for Aboriginal peoples in British Columbia, it was difficult to side-step reference to territorial dispossession when discussing colonial history within any context,

³¹ See Phillips and Brydon, “Arrow of Truth,” 26-7. They found that the Indians of Canada Pavilion at Expo ’67 invoked a romanticized view of pre-contact times, drawing upon but inverting a long-standing anthropological convention.

³² L. J. Wallace, General Chairman to Lyle Wicks, 10 February 1958, GR 1448, box 7, BCARS.

³³ Nanaimo Indian Band, “Coal Tye Day Festival of Peace,” 1967, GR 1598, file 2, BCARS.

especially during the commemoration of the establishment of British Columbia as a formal British colony.

In the 1960s there was a renewed effort on the part of Aboriginal peoples throughout British Columbia to have both federal and provincial governments address the land dispute. As political scientist Paul Tennant has shown, during this period Aboriginal groups became increasingly organized along tribal lines and more vocal in their pursuit of a resolution to the land dispute.³⁴ In 1966 the Musqueam joined the newly formed Confederation of Native Indians of British Columbia (CNIBC), a largely Salish-based organization established to coordinate land claims across the province. Shortly thereafter, the Musqueam, Squamish, and Sechelt formed the Alliance of British Columbia Indian Bands (known as the Salish Tribal Alliance) to promote land claims and economic development in their communities. Also in 1966 the Musqueam Band Council considered “the Musqueam land question” and discussed a separate and distinct Aboriginal title claim.³⁵

Clearly, as struggles for recognition of Aboriginal rights and title gained force during this period, the notion that Aboriginal culture should be relegated to the artistic or historical realm was seriously challenged. Frank Calder, president of the Nisga’a Tribal Council, pointed to the wide gap between the government’s categorization of Aboriginal cultural unity and Aboriginal political activity. In writing to the National Centennial Commission he questioned the granting of funds to the CNIBC, arguing that “the non-treaty Indians in this province, through their respective officially recognized organizations, advocate unity, based upon their own initiative and finances, for the express purpose of settling their unsurrendered Indian lands, and they cannot perceive why they should accept government grants for unity when they may have to confront the governments in court over the B.C. Indian Land Claims issue.”³⁶ Calder revealed that the government’s distinction between Aboriginal culture and politics had little meaning for the Nisga’a, who were preparing for a court battle over their territory in the Nass Valley. It made little sense that the state offered financial support for the promotion of culture but did not recognize the importance of that culture in establishing and defining Aboriginal ownership of territory. For the Nisga’a, oral

³⁴ Paul Tennant, *Aboriginal People and Politics: The Indian Land Question in British Columbia 1849-1989* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1990).

³⁵ Musqueam Band Council Minutes, May 1966, MIBA.

³⁶ Frank Calder to National Centennial Commission, 21 November 1967, GR 1598, file 2, BCARS.

tradition – the songs, crests, and names owned by families – expressed the histories of their ownership of specific territories.

Provincial bureaucrats also failed to acknowledge that commemorative projects were a part of the Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal dialogue about land claims and cultural/political autonomy. As George Sweeney, the provincial representative who organized celebrations surrounding the 1978 bicentenary of Captain Cook's voyage to the Northwest Coast, indicated in his response to demands made by the West Coast District Council of Chiefs in exchange for their participation in a historical reenactment: "I can't argue all the old arguments with them. They're asking us for the impossible, things that should be discussed with government – not a bicentennial committee that is trying to organize festivities to commemorate an historic event."³⁷ The provincial government viewed history (or culture) and politics (or land claims) as distinct and separate areas of involvement.³⁸

In the end, the committee approved funding for some projects organized by local Aboriginal groups (e.g., canoe races, powwows, and Indian Day celebrations).³⁹ For many Aboriginal peoples, showing non-Aboriginals their art and culture in order to facilitate greater appreciation and understanding was important, but they also thought that commemorative events should be "more than a show for tourists." As the Sioux of Fort Qu'Appelle reported to Canada's centennial committee, potentially these events could be used "to encourage our own people to retain the beliefs, customs, and legends which have been an essential part of our heritage."⁴⁰ Performing for non-Aboriginal others strengthened one's own cultural traditions and

³⁷ "Nootkas make it un-Friendly Cove," 13 January 1978, newspaper article reproduced in the *Musqueam Community Newsletter*, April 1978, MIBA. The council's requests centred on its attempts to repopulate and rebuild the First Nations community at Friendly Cove.

³⁸ This separation between Aboriginal culture and Aboriginal politics was more recently challenged during the Glenbow Museum's 1988 exhibit, "The Spirit Sings: Artistic Traditions of Canada's First Peoples," which opened during the Calgary Winter Olympics. In order to direct international attention to their unresolved land claim, the Lubicon Cree called for a boycott of the exhibit. See Julia D. Harrison, "Completing a Circle: The Spirit Sings," in *Anthropology, Public Policy, and Native Peoples in Canada*, ed. Noel Dyck and James B. Waldram (Montreal/Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993): 334-57.

³⁹ Some projects were not well supported by the public. For example, the Cowichan's proposal to construct a community hall received especially mean-spirited commentary: "There is no general evidence... from current condition of the Native Indian surroundings in the Duncan area... that dump in of a quarter of a million dollars for some fancy great hall would result in anything more than a quarter of a million dollar pig.stye! [sic]" D. Batey, "Transcript of Radio CJVI, Victoria," 15 November 1965, GR 1598, file 2, BCARS.

⁴⁰ As cited in C. Clyde Batten, National Publicity Coordinator to L.J. Wallace, Canadian Confederation Centennial Committee of British Columbia, 24 July 1967, GR 1598, file 2, BCARS.

sharpened local Aboriginal identity. And certainly, in the hands of prominent Aboriginal politicians such as William Scow and Frank Calder, participation in the centennial celebrations could be a form of social action that conveyed politicized messages about cultural and economic vitality, colonial history, and Aboriginal identity. Aboriginal peoples did not leave dominant histories uncontested; rather, centennial events were a potential (though limited) site of public debate about history. As historian David Cohen confirms, “Commemorations are socially constructed events in which struggles for the control of knowledge may break out into the open, yet may also be regulated and contained.”⁴¹

THE 1966 CENTENNIAL PROJECT:
“THE ROUTE OF THE TOTEMS”

The Indian Participation Committee resolved that the major project for the 1966 centennial would be the installation of totem poles at scenic locations on the Vancouver Island Highway and at the ferry terminals. Anthropologist Wilson Duff, who acted in a supervisory role for the project, decided that the poles should be a uniform twelve-foot high and that the grizzly bear should be the prominent character.⁴² The remainder of the design was left to each artist, although Duff encouraged the artists to depict a legend from the local area in which the pole was to be erected and to carve in their own tribal style. Duff wanted the poles to represent the post-contact trading routes of the Haida from the Queen Charlotte Islands to Victoria. Because the ferry terminals at Skidegate and Victoria marked the beginning and the end of these Haida journeys, the ferries, decorated with Haida carvings, could be interpreted as modern-day equivalents of the traditional Haida canoe, thus imposing Aboriginal

⁴¹ David William Cohen, *The Combining of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 246, cited in Edward Labenski, “We Begin This Work to Call Together Witnesses: The Memory of Second World War in Stó:lō Communities, 1993-1995” (MA thesis, University of British Columbia, 1995). See Labenski for a discussion of the Stó:lō’s 1993 commemorative houseposts, whose purpose was to honour Stó:lō war veterans. He sees the erection of these houseposts not so much as a matter of contesting spaces as a matter of a focusing upon the community’s collective responsibility to remember and to understand the past.

⁴² For a reproduction of a postcard depicting the pole installed at Sydney, see John O’Brian, “Shaping World Culture: Postwar Postcards in British Columbia,” *BC Studies* 131 (Autumn 2001): 98, 107. In relation to such images, O’Brian points out that “Aboriginal objects may serve the interests of tourism and nationalism ... but the First Nations may not serve their own interests by being visible or vocal (i.e., by being modern).”

origins on the modern transportation system.⁴³ Similarly, David Price, the Tsawwassen ferry terminal manager, compared “the present day ‘friendly canoes’ traveling hourly to and from Vancouver Island to those that plied the same waters hundreds of years ago.”⁴⁴ However, during the planning phase of the project, Duff noted that “the modern ‘Haida Route’ (Victoria - Port Hardy - Prince Rupert) does not touch Haida territory. It passes through Coast Salish, Kwakiutl, and Tsimshian territories. Each of these distinct peoples has a history of strife with the Haida, and possesses an art style of its own, so that it would not be appropriate to have markers of Haida style in their territories.”⁴⁵

Despite Wilson Duff’s concern over reproducing the distinctive artistic styles of separate Aboriginal nations, he struggled to find an appropriate Salish carver for the poles to be placed at the sites within Coast Salish territory, those to be placed between Qualicum and Victoria, and the pole to be placed at Tsawwassen. In reference to Salish carving, he reported: “In the past this was not an area where the totem carver’s art was highly developed, and there are very few carvers now whose work is of the required quality. Perhaps the most promising is Simon Charlie of Duncan. Jimmy Johns of Nanaimo (actually a Nootka) is also a good carver who has been selling his work for many years. An alternative would be for Henry Hunt to produce carvings, copying the Salish style.”⁴⁶ In the end, Sam Henderson created the pole for Tsawwassen, and, as Duff reported, he carved in an “authentic modern Kwakiutl style,”⁴⁷ suggesting little reference to Coast Salish artistic traditions. Furthermore, despite Duff’s regard for geographical and national specificity, the Musqueam and other Central Coast Salish peoples did not have a long-standing tradition of totem pole carving. While the northern Northwest Coast peoples carved totem poles to depict family or clan history, associated stories, crests, and other prerogatives, Coast Salish artists carved houseposts to depict ancestors and animal or spirit powers associated with family history. Houseposts were either a part of the structure of traditional cedar-plank longhouses or they were decorative boards within their interiors.⁴⁸ Although Salish

⁴³ Wilson Duff, “Marking the Haida Route,” 26 February 1965, GR 1598, file 4, BCARS.

⁴⁴ *Delta Optimist*, 3 August 1966.

⁴⁵ Wilson Duff, “Marking the Haida Route.”

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Wilson Duff to Rod McInnis, Director, Indian Advisory Act, Provincial Secretary, 16 May 1966, GR 1598, file 4, BCARS.

⁴⁸ Michael Kew, *Sculpture and Engraving of the Central Coast Salish, Museum Note No. 9* (Vancouver: Museum of Anthropology, UBC, 1980).

peoples have carved totem poles in a northern style for sale or installation throughout Coast Salish country,⁴⁹ by the 1960s the number of such poles appearing in highly visible, civic sites throughout the Lower Mainland became a concern to Coast Salish peoples, who were experiencing a revitalization of their traditional arts and culture. As Dominic Point joked in relation to the Tsawwassen pole raising, “It would be a shame for another white man to start up the wars again by misplacing his totem poles.”⁵⁰

By the 1960s the totem pole had long been a popular symbol of British Columbia. Vancouver’s Totem Land Society promoted the slogan “Totem Land: a great place to live, work, and play”; it also promoted a design based on a thunderbird totem as the insignia of the province.⁵¹ Furthermore, the totem pole has had a lengthy history as a marker of Canadian heritage. “Every city and town in Canada should have one,” proposed Thomas Deasy, the Indian agent for the Queen Charlotte Islands in 1916.⁵² The totem pole came to signify a region and was generally considered to be the product of an imagined “Northwest Coast Indian” rather than the tradition of a specific group or the creative product of an individual artist. Art historian Aldona Jonaitis explains: “The subtleties among Tlingit, Haida, Tsimshian, Salish, Nuu-chah-nulth, and Kwakiutl are lost in this homogenization of cultures in which totem poles become representations of an area rather than artworks made by specific peoples.”⁵³

While Jonaitis and other commentators rightly point out that such over-simplification functions to disembodify tradition and to contain or to domesticate culture, few historians have examined the ways in which Aboriginal peoples themselves were implicated in reproducing this discourse of homogenization. In 1958 the province commissioned Kwakwaka’wakw master carvers Mungo Martin and Henry Hunt to

⁴⁹ For example, in 1932 Nanaimo carver Wilkes James, supported by members of Tsawwassen and Musqueam, presented to the Delta municipality a totem pole that narrated a legend about the first Aboriginal settler in the area. See photograph entitled “Totem Pole Dedication Ceremony,” 1 July 1932, MSS De1983-164-9, Delta Municipal Museum and Archives.

⁵⁰ *Province*, 28 July 1966.

⁵¹ “Totem Land Society,” 1954, Add MSS 336, file 398, Vancouver City Archives. Regarding the commodification of the totem pole, see Aldona Jonaitis, “Northwest Coast Totem Poles,” in *Unpacking Culture: Art and Commodity in Colonial and Postcolonial Worlds*, ed. Ruth B. Phillips and Christopher B. Steiner (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 104-21.

⁵² Thomas Deasy to D.C. Scott, 2 March 1916, RG10, vol. 7918, file 41203-1, National Archives of Canada (NAC).

⁵³ Aldona Jonaitis, “Totem Poles and The Indian New Deal,” *Canadian Journal of Native Studies* 9, 2 (1989): 247.

create a monumental totem pole to be presented to Queen Elizabeth on the occasion of British Columbia's centenary. At the pole departure ceremony in Victoria, Mungo Martin began his speech as follows:

Today I am a proud chief. This totem pole was a great challenge to me, and for a while I doubted I could carry it through. Now today here lies my work. Never before has there been such a totem pole as this. It represents the native Indians of British Columbia. It represents British Columbia itself. Here is a story that will never be forgotten. The Centennial Committee has done well to commemorate the history of the last century. We the people of British Columbia have good reason to be proud. Let us join together. Indians and white people together, to celebrate the Centennial year.⁵⁴

Here, Martin accommodated the popular convention linking totem poles with British Columbia's identity. He went on to explain that the figures on the pole represented "the ten tribes ... of my people." The centennial pole incorporated Tsimshian, Haida, and Kwakiutl figures as well as the Thunderbird.⁵⁵ Martin made no specific reference to the Salish groups of the south and ignored many other Aboriginal groups (e.g., several Athapaskan nations, the Tlingit, and the Nuuchah-nulth). What he did was to identify certain northern tribes, thus emphasizing the northern coastal traditions with which his audience would have been most familiar. In the 1950s and 1960s non-Aboriginal audiences had limited familiarity with the great diversity of Aboriginal cultures in British Columbia, even though this period witnessed an increased emphasis on local histories and an increased academic interest in the Coast Salish.⁵⁶

The homogenization of Northwest Coast culture was an evolutionary formulation that promoted and privileged northern coastal forms over

⁵⁴ Speech of Mungo Martin, [7 May, 1958], 1448, box 21, BCARS. I do not intend to disregard Martin and Hunt's tremendous artistic accomplishments but, rather, to highlight the pervasiveness of the totem pole/British Columbia equation. For more on Mungo Martin, see Wilson Duff, "Mungo Martin, Carver of the Century," in *The World is as Sharp as a Knife: An Anthology in Honour of Wilson Duff*, ed. Donald Abbott (Victoria: British Columbia Provincial Museum, 1981), 37-9.

⁵⁵ "Minutes of the Second Meeting of the Committee on Promotions, Displays and Pageants, British Columbia Centennial Committee, Vancouver, BC," 22 June 1956, GR 1448, box 7, BCARS.

⁵⁶ For example, see Homer Barnett, *The Coast Salish of British Columbia* (Eugene: University of Oregon Press, 1955); Wilson Duff, *The Upper Stalo Indians of the Fraser Valley, British Columbia* (Victoria: British Columbia Provincial Museum, 1952); Diamond Jenness, *The Faith of a Coast Salish Indian* (Victoria: British Columbia Provincial Museum, 1955); Wayne Suttles, *Katzie Ethnographic Notes* (Victoria: British Columbia Provincial Museum, 1955); and Suttles, *Coast Salish Essays*. See also Suttles, "The Recognition of Coast Salish Art," regarding the unfamiliarity with the Coast Salish.

Salish ones and that contributed to the diminution of Salish visibility well into the twentieth century.⁵⁷ It was derived from anthropological theorizing about the movement of cultural change from the simple to the complex or, in the case of art, from the south to the north. As Wilson Duff commented, “one of my assumptions is that some of the roots of Northwest Coast art are in the south.”⁵⁸ Yet Aboriginal peoples also reproduced this discourse of northern superiority, a theme that would obviously appeal more to northern Aboriginals than to people from the south. In 1957 Haida artist Bill Reid offered his creative services to the BC Centennial Committee, noting: “I believe I can be of some service in assuring a high standard of native designs used during the centennial, as the arts of the coast, particularly of the north coast where the culture was the richest, has been a life long study of mine, and in fact, I am one of the last practitioners of that art.”⁵⁹

Within this historical context, it is not surprising that the province adopted the totem pole as its main symbol for the 1966 centennial. For the organizers, the Route of the Totems was a reasonable endeavour that would both encourage non-Aboriginal appreciation of the province’s Aboriginal heritage and “would help the local Indians to revive and perpetuate their native customs.”⁶⁰ Wilson Duff and the Indian Participation Committee had worked hard to commission talented carvers to produce first-class poles, and they tried to pay attention to local sensibilities. Duff and Nuuchah-nulth artist George Clutesi judged the final submissions, either approving their inclusion in the project (and final payment to the artist) or recommending alterations if the poles did not meet their standards.⁶¹

⁵⁷ Marius Barbeau wanted to show the superiority of northern carving styles in his 1927 National Gallery of Canada exhibit, “Canadian West Coast Art: Native and Modern.” See Morrison, “Canadian Art and Cultural Appropriation,” 37.

⁵⁸ Wilson Duff, “The World is as Sharp as a Knife: Meaning in Northern Northwest Coast Art,” in *The World is as Sharp as a Knife*, ed. Donald Abbott, 213. Here, Duff did not mean that northern is better, just that Salish is older. See also Douglas Cole and Christine Mullins, “Haida Ida’: The Musical World of Ida Halpern,” *BC Studies* 97 (Spring 1993): 3-37; Suttles, “The Recognition of Coast Salish Art;” and Bierwert, *Brushed by Cedar*, 15-8.

⁵⁹ W. R. Reid to Larry McCance, Executive Secretary, BC Centennial Committee, 5 February 1957, GR 1448, box 7, BCARS.

⁶⁰ *Delta Optimist*, 3 August 1966.

⁶¹ For example, in relation to a pole carved by William Jeffrey at Prince Rupert, Duff wrote: “If the circumstances were different, I would not recommend that the pole be accepted. The carving is very poor, showing no comprehension of the sculptural style of the older poles of the area. The painting is garish and untasteful. I would not recommend that Jeffrey’s work be placed on display in any other location; however, since there is a lot of work on exhibit in Prince Rupert, and the local people seem to accept it as good, I cannot see that

But were these poles the appropriate vehicle for displaying the culture of all involved? The press warned that “Chief Dominic Point of the Musqueam Indians will lead a war party to Tsawwassen Saturday to protest the extension of the Haida Route into his territory. The Musqueams, traditional enemies of the Haidas, will express their disapproval with a war dance.”⁶²

While Musqueam participated within the framework of the pole’s dedication ceremony, their media performance challenged the popular meanings produced by the event. Band Manager Willard Sparrow told the press that, “if the government is going to use totems, it should use full-size ones” not the twelve-foot poles marking the Haida route. Sparrow went on to claim that “the historians greatly overrated the prowess of the Haidas as warriors. You just have to take a look at the stooped and hunched figures on their carvings to see that there was nothing to fear from them.”⁶³ For Sparrow, this particular Haida pole, as it came to be known, was not real. It was too short. By conflating carving styles with fighting capabilities, Sparrow toyed with what he believed were misguided criteria for determining authenticity. He played with the assumption that a totem pole could stand for both an imagined British Columbia and local Aboriginal identities at the same time. His use of irony, however, suggests that he was not rejecting cultural production for tourism per se; clearly the Musqueam themselves were capitalizing on the touristic gaze with their “publicity stunt.”⁶⁴ Yet his critique pointed to the project’s failure to publicly distinguish the boundaries between culture as practised and understood within the Coast Salish community and culture as produced specifically for commercial purposes.⁶⁵ Participating in the dedication ceremony was a way to invert the non-Aboriginal privileging of northern coastal narratives in order to obtain Musqueam publicity. In this way, Musqueam involvement moved from participation to protest.

this additional example will do much more harm to the reputation of Indian Art.” Wilson Duff to Rod McInnis, Director, Indian Advisory Act, Provincial Secretary, 7 May 1966, GR 1598, file 5, BCARS.

⁶² *Province*, 28 July 1966.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ Kew, “Coast Salish Ceremonial Life,” 295.

⁶⁵ The boundary between material or expressive culture produced within communities and that produced for outside consumption is not always so easily demarcated, and, of course, in some cases can be quite blurred. For example, people produce some objects (e.g., Coast Salish woven blankets) for sale to both non-Aboriginals and for use in ceremonial settings. On the other hand, I have heard many Musqueam people make a clear distinction between private and public cultural practices. On the Western dichotomy between culture and commodity, or art and artefact, see Phillips and Steiner, eds., *Unpacking Culture*.

As noted, this protest was not really about debating the merits of totem pole carving. The Musqueam were reacting to the accuracy of the history that was being told by the placement of a totem pole at Tsawwassen – a history that implied that the Haida had made successful pre-contact raiding excursions at that particular site. “Never in our long history of wars with the Haidas and the Yucultas did one of them get through to Tsawwassen,” Willard Sparrow proclaimed to the press, adding: “The extension of the Route of the Haidas to Tsawwassen has no foundation in history.”⁶⁶ And while there is little documentary evidence that the Haida raided villages on the Fraser River in the 1800s or before, the Lekwiltok, or “Yucutlas” (a division of the Kwakwaka-speaking people living at Queen Charlotte Strait and, by the 1840s, at Cape Mudge and Campbell River), are known to have raided along the lower Fraser in the early nineteenth century.⁶⁷ Sparrow countered the Haida-centred narrative with a story of a retaliatory raid, stressing that the Musqueam were brave warriors and “strong men:”

One of the great wars between the Musqueams and the Indians from the north coast was touched off when the Yucultas attacked a longhouse near Chemainus and killed all the occupants. This was during the time of our great warrior Kaiyaplanok (Capilano, a name borrowed by the Squamish Indians of North Vancouver and never returned)⁶⁸ and an attack like this had to be answered with total war. Within a few days Nanoose Bay (north of Nanaimo) literally overflowed with war canoes and preparations began for the great attack. The Yucultas were found potlatching at Cape Mudge (on Quadra Island off Campbell River) and the attack was launched just

⁶⁶ *Province*, 28 July 1966.

⁶⁷ Wayne Suttles, “The Ethnographic Significance of the Fort Langley Journals,” in *The Fort Langley Journals: 1827-30*, ed. Morag Maclachlan (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1998), 174-5.

⁶⁸ Here, Sparrow refers to an ongoing point of controversy between the Musqueam and the Squamish. According to Musqueam tradition, Chief Johnny $\chi^w\text{əy}\chi^w\text{əy}\text{ə}\text{ləq}$ lent the name qewəpələnəx^w to Squamish leader Mathias Joe to carry while he was a part of the 1906 Salish delegation to petition the British Crown for recognition of land rights. This was so that, in keeping with diplomatic engagement, Joe would have an appropriate ancestral name. Because Joe was not connected to the qewəpələnəx^w lineage, upon his return from England he was to repatriate the name to the Musqueam family but failed to do so. Specific reference to this alleged breach of protocol suggests the issue was an underlying concern for the Musqueam at the time of the Tsawwassen event. For additional references see Chief Tsemllano, James Point, Casimier Johnny, and Aleck Peter to the Inspector of Indian Affairs, 29 August 1927, RG10, no. 74-75/79, box 21, file 33-14, pt 3, NAC; Diamond Jenness, “Saanich and other Coast Salish Notes and Myths,” 1936, B39, file 1, Canadian Museum of Civilization Archives; and Major J.S. Matthews, *Conversations with Khabtsablano, 1932-1954* (Vancouver: City Hall, 1955), 104, 108, 205, and 220.

after midnight. Not one of them escaped. I can't remember whether it was 13 or 25 war canoes we filled with their heads.⁶⁹

Such thrilling, local dramas of pre-contact raiding and violence added a spectacle of cultural difference to the unveiling ceremony. It is likely, however, that Coast Salish peoples understood the reference to warriors quite differently from their non-Aboriginal counterparts. In traditional times there was a well-defined category of people, the members of which were specially trained as *stəmtaməx*. Generally considered anti-social and aggressive, *stəmtaməx* operated outside the realm of acceptable behaviour and normal authority systems. "They weren't doing something that was sanctioned by Musqueam people; they did what they wanted to do," elder Dominic Point explained in 1996 (personal communication).⁷⁰ While many people, both men and women, protected Musqueam villages from Lekwiltok raiders or entered into retaliatory excursions into other territories, *stəmtaməx* had extraordinary fighting capabilities that were derived from their connection to sources of spirit power. And, while the members of the 1960s dance troupe were certainly not *stəmtaməx* in a traditional, spiritual sense, their dance evoked the power of the warrior and of a time past: it spoke of tradition. For non-Aboriginal spectators, the dance was meant to be a forceful visual reminder that Musqueam had retained knowledge about the past, connections to spirit power, and unbroken ties to their ancestors. Furthermore, because the Musqueam's warrior dance described stories that referred to specific sites – the places where wars took place, where Lekwiltok raiders were repelled, and so forth – the performance linked the dancers to a particular territory; that is, it re-inscribed an indigenous presence on the site – something that was important in the increasingly politicized days of the 1960s.⁷¹

In their performance, the Musqueam were asserting their independence and distinctiveness without breaching solidarity with

⁶⁹ *Province*, 28 July 1966.

⁷⁰ On warriors in Coast Salish society, see William Elmendorf, *Twana Narratives: Native Historical Accounts of a Coast Salish Culture* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1993); and Carlson, "Stó:lō Soldiers, Stó:lō Veterans," 133.

⁷¹ In his opening address at the pole unveiling, Art Swenson, vice-chairman of the Delta Centennial Committee, outlined an Aboriginal history of the area, stressing that the site *was* an important fishing place not so much for local Aboriginal peoples as for people "who came from many areas to make their salmon catches and hold potlatches." See *Delta Optimist*, 3 August 1966. Today, the local museum histories emphasizing this seasonal travel by other, unnamed Aboriginal people continue to downplay the Tsawwassen's historic occupation of the area.

other Aboriginal communities. Numerous commentators have considered secular festivals (such as summer powwows and canoe races) as public stages for the exhibition of pride in being Aboriginal. Yet this centennial performance suggests that Aboriginal peoples also projected public identities more in line with local Indian band affiliations. At the centennial show, the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsawwassen representatives distinguished between themselves as separate Aboriginal communities, and, with their unique performances, they signalled a common Salish heritage that stood in contrast to that of northern coastal peoples. But the articulation of one's identity as Musqueam, Squamish, or Tsawwassen did not discount the possibility of expressing, on one hand, a pan-Indian alliance and, on the other, affiliations with particular families.⁷² Clearly, Aboriginal identity does not fit snugly into anthropological or legal categories as Aboriginal peoples have kin ties across the classificatory and membership boundaries of Indian bands.⁷³ Marking one's identity as simultaneously "Musqueam" and "Indian" was especially important in the late 1960s, when Aboriginal groups were attempting to create a unified political front to address Aboriginal rights and title. As art historian Tom Hill notes: "Somehow, during this period of consciousness, energy, and determination, Native Americans [and First Nations in Canada] found a way to move toward seemingly contradictory objectives: they developed a pan-Indian identity that emphasized intertribal unity ... and, at the same time, they reaffirmed traditions unique to their own tribes and nations."⁷⁴ Public performances such as the 1966 centennial event dramatized both a historically based nationhood and contemporary political unity. By signalling the lengthy history of various distinct First Nations, the performances helped to build and reinforce those very entities.

For the Musqueam dancers involvement in the centennial was more than an amusing Saturday afternoon: it was a way to redefine the site

⁷² For example, the performance of the qewəpəlenəxʷ warrior song highlighted for Aboriginal spectators, and perhaps most forcefully for Squamish participants (who may have held different understandings of this history), the spiritual, genealogical, and historic importance of the qewəpəlenəxʷ song and dance for the Musqueam. See footnotes Nos. 6 and 68 regarding the importance of the qewəpəlenəxʷ name and lineage to the Musqueam people.

⁷³ For an excellent analysis of the transforming category of "Indian" as expressed at the intersections of public policy, law, and tribal communities in western Washington, see Alexandra Harmon, *Indians in the Making: Ethnic Relations and Indian Identities in and around Puget Sound* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

⁷⁴ Tom Hill, "Introduction: A Backward Glimpse through the Museum Door," in *Creation's Journey: Native American Identity and Belief*, eds. Tom Hill and Richard W. Hill Sr. (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institute Press, 1994), 17.



Figure 3: Chief Dominic Point “breaks symbolic spear.” *Vancouver Sun*, 1 August 1966.

as Coast Salish, to reinstate local territorial and cultural identities that had been dispossessed through the colonial processes of reserve creation, land alienation, and the discursive formulation of northern coastal cultures as representative of British Columbia. It did not matter that the pole had been carved by a skilled Aboriginal artist or that Aboriginal people participated in the planning of the project. By 1966 totem poles could not be erected in Coast Salish country as a symbol of the province without local intervention. But, at the same time, the Musqueam did not challenge the celebratory atmosphere of the Tsawwassen event. They did not demand that the pole be removed. And although Sparrow told the press that he would make a formal complaint to the provincial government, the dance was described as “mock-disapproval.” “We are all one people now.... The dance was just to add a little ceremony,” reassured Sparrow.⁷⁵ To complete the narrative, Chief Point broke his wooden spear and placed it at the base of the pole, thus signifying that the tribal wars were a part of the past (see Figure 3).

⁷⁵ *Vancouver Sun*, 1 August 1966.

Deciding how to make themselves visible in a way that was culturally appropriate was an ongoing challenge for the Musqueam community. Not everything within the culture was up for grabs. Because much of Coast Salish cultural expression occurred in private or ceremonial contexts not considered appropriate for display to outsiders, the staging of a public performance was the result of careful intracommunity negotiation about protocol. Such debates, though largely invisible to outsiders (myself, as an academic researcher, included), reveal that strategies of resistance are shaped by culture. The Musqueam made distinctions between what aspects of their culture could be displayed to outsiders and what aspects could not. Musqueam political expression, then, was bounded by cultural protocol – a protocol, of course, that could be flexible and responsive to the changing needs of the community.

MAYOR CLARENCE TAYLOR BECOMES A WARRIOR AND A CHIEF

Because an Indian must be a warrior before he can ascribe to becoming a chief, the first part of the ritual was to initiate the reeve into the brotherhood of warriors. This was accomplished by a warrior dance performed by the Musqueam Band and the placing of a head band on the reeve's head. He was also given a spear denoting that now a warrior he would be expected to go hunting. Other symbolic dances performed were the "giving of the name dance," and the SquiSqui or Mask dance. This latter expressed the acceptance of the new leader by the rest of the band and the performing of the dance on Saturday night was only the second time it has ever been done for white people. Ricky Jacobs, direct descendant of the ancient Tsawwassen chief Kimit, removed the one feather headband, and placed the larger chief's headdress on the reeve's head. This headdress is made up of eagle feathers, eider and duck feathers. The 28 eagle feathers are symbolic of outstanding deeds accomplished by the warrior before he becomes a chief.⁷⁶

A reporter from Delta's community newspaper described the events surrounding the evening portion of the centennial program, the granting of an honorary Tsawwassen chieftanship to Mayor Taylor in an elaborate naming ceremony at the town's shopping mall. The large crowd were told that they would witness a rare performance of

⁷⁶ *Delta Optimist*, 3 August 1966.

the sɣ^wayɣ^wəy mask dance, which had been performed only once before for White people. The non-Aboriginal spectators were to be included in an ancient naming ritual “identical to those performed years ago.”⁷⁷ Yet what they saw was a carefully staged display that was very different from a naming ceremony as it would have been conducted within the Musqueam community in the late 1960s or before.⁷⁸ For example, a naming ceremony includes the payment of witnesses, a public recounting of the genealogy of the particular name to be given, and sometimes the performance of hereditary privileges such as the sɣ^wayɣ^wəy mask dance. The mayor’s naming ceremony drew from both Coast Salish tradition and other “invented,” or imported, elements, such as the placing of a feather headdress on the mayor’s head.

Together, the Tsawwassen and the Musqueam participants named Taylor a “chief,” knowing that the title of chief was a colonial invention introduced by “the arrival of the whiteman.”⁷⁹ People did not receive chieftanships in formal ceremonies; rather, respected individuals became important family leaders because of their behaviour, knowledge, prestige, and status. Furthermore, while a person was meant to distinguish him or herself prior to receiving an ancestral name, there was no prerequisite about being a warrior or performing “outstanding deeds”; rather, a person’s name was an important marker of family heritage. Howard E. Grant (qewəpələnəx^w) compares the naming ceremony to a “historical journal” used to corroborate the bloodline of the individual receiving an ancestral name: “When you went to a ceremony [it was] to present factual evidence to support why the individual would be given a name ... validating your privilege to carry a name.”⁸⁰ The Coast Salish naming ceremony was (and remains) an important institution for asserting and verifying genealogical history. Most important, it was (and is) a public affirmation of family connections, authority, and privilege – connections that the Delta mayor, being without Coast Salish genealogy, would obviously not possess.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ See Kew, “Coast Salish Ceremonial Life,” 173–80.

⁷⁹ Dominic Point, Testimony for *Mathias v. the Queen* in the Federal Court of Canada, Vancouver, 4 December 1996, 53. For a recent academic debate regarding the existence of formal chiefs in Coast Salish society, see Bruce G. Miller and Daniel L. Boxberger, “Creating Chiefdoms: The Puget Sound Case,” *Ethnohistory* 41(1994): 267–93; Miller and Boxberger, “Evolution or History? A Response to Tollefson,” *Ethnohistory* 44 (1997): 135–7; and Kenneth D. Tollefson, “In Defense of a Snoqualmie Political Chiefdom Model,” *Ethnohistory* 43 (1996): 145–71.

⁸⁰ Howard E. Grant, Testimony for *Mathias v. the Queen* in the Federal Court of Canada, Vancouver, 21 January 1997, 75.

Why would the Musqueam and Tsawwassen orchestrate a naming ceremony for a White politician? By the 1960s the presenting of Aboriginal names or titles to dignitaries, government officials, or sympathetic Whites was a well-established practice in Canada. For example, in 1938, during an elaborate ceremony on the shores of Harrison Lake, representatives of the Chehalis Band gave A. Wells Gray, the provincial minister of lands, an honorary chieftanship in recognition of his role as “preserver of the forests.” Similarly, in 1946, at the Diamond Jubilee celebrations in Vancouver, Native Brotherhood president William Scow bestowed upon Viscount Alexander, the governor general of Canada, “a full chieftanship of British Columbia’s Indians” and gave him the distinguished Kwakiutl name “Chief Nakapunkim.”⁸¹ By declaring Taylor both a warrior and a chief, the Musqueam and Tsawwassen played with White expectations of tradition. Perhaps making White dignitaries “Indian” was a way to symbolically incorporate non-Aboriginals into the Aboriginal community, transforming White politicians into pseudo-kin or inter-villagers with certain obligations and responsibilities. During this period, as before, government bureaucrats and Aboriginal politicians did not always see eye-to-eye with regard to Aboriginal struggles for self-determination. For example, in 1966, on the Vancouver civic scene, the Musqueam challenged the city’s right to tax leased property on their reserve. However, on the “cultural” stage such ceremonies could be viewed as symbolic acts of inclusion or as acts of public relations for both the Aboriginal participants and the state. They were diplomatic gestures. Cultural performance facilitated positive relations with state representatives in a way that the non-Aboriginal community could perceive as “authentic,” or “traditional,” but that did not challenge government protocol as it was practised within the Aboriginal community.

But what is especially striking about this particular show was that, during Taylor’s naming ceremony, Musqueam dancers performed the *sχ^wayχ^wəy* mask dance. In Coast Salish tradition, much cultural and historical knowledge is of a private nature. It is related to one’s personal relationship to the ritual world and is therefore not disclosed or talked about.⁸² Similarly, not all performance traditions or dance paraphernalia are suitable for display to outsiders. The *sχ^wayχ^wəy* is not owned by all Coast Salish people but is a family prerogative performed as a cleansing device “to ‘wash’ persons undergoing life

⁸¹ *Vancouver Sun*, 25 May 1938; and *Native Voice*, December 1946.

⁸² Leona M. Sparrow, “Work Histories of a Coast Salish Couple” (MA thesis, University of British Columbia, 1976), 1.

crises, changes in status, or removal of some source of shame.”⁸³ The s̄χ^wayχ^wəy performance requires an audience because it is important in reaffirming and maintaining one’s social status within the community. But, in the 1960s, the necessity of performing before an audience did not mean that the s̄χ^wayχ^wəy dance could be performed before a centennial-event crowd. Clearly, today Musqueam families generally consider this particular mask dance to be inappropriate for display or use outside of the ritual context. Explaining the absence of Coast Salish s̄χ^wayχ^wəy masks in the Vancouver Art Gallery’s 1998 exhibit *Down from the Shimmering Sky: Masks of the Northwest Coast*, Musqueam elder Andrew C. Charles proclaimed to the opening-night guests:

From our beginnings, the S̄χweyχwi masks were used for blessing and cleansing persons who are born into the right of its use. S̄χweyχwi is used for naming, marriage, funerals, memorials, and young girls at the age of puberty ... Of course the change room for donning of the S̄χweyχwi regalia is strictly out of bounds for everyone, except for the performers. For those of us who belong to the S̄χweyχwi, we hold its importance most sacredly and refuse to publicly display it as an art form.⁸⁴

Despite this contemporary restriction on public disclosure, Coast Salish people have, at least since the late nineteenth century, occasionally performed the dance with large numbers of non-Aboriginals in attendance.⁸⁵ Yet with the revival of longhouse practices in the 1950s and 1960s came increased community criticism, and new restrictions were placed upon what non-Aboriginal audiences could see.⁸⁶ Today at Musqueam the s̄χ^wayχ^wəy mask dance is performed almost exclusively within a ceremonial context, for a person’s naming ceremony or funeral, and only if that person has a hereditary right to

⁸³ Wayne Suttles, “The Halkomelem Sxwayxwey,” *American Indian Art Magazine*, Winter, 1982, 59.

⁸⁴ Andrew C. Charles, “Spiritual S̄χweyχwi Masks,” speaking notes in the author’s possession, August 1998.

⁸⁵ A 1895 photograph depicts a s̄χ^wayχ^wəy ceremony on the Songhees Reserve attended by a large crowd of non-Aboriginal spectators. See Douglas Cole and Ira Chaikin, *An Iron Hand upon the People: The Law against the Potlatch on the Northwest Coast* (Vancouver and Toronto: Douglas and McIntyre, 1990), 42.

⁸⁶ Bierwert, *Brushed by Cedar*, 165–70. A recent exception to the rule of non-disclosure occurred in 1991 when the s̄χ^wayχ^wəy mask dance was performed during the signing ceremonies marking the establishment of the BC treaty process. Considerable thought, discussion, and elder guidance preceded the decision to use this tradition outside of its usual ceremonial setting. Wendy John, interview with author, 24 September 1998, Vancouver.

the mask. Its absence from public view, as Charles was well aware, more forcefully makes the point that the Musqueam have something sacred and powerful than would be the case if it were disclosed to the public during events such as an art exhibit.⁸⁷

Yet back in 1966 at Tsawwassen, the Musqueam sɣ^wayɣ^wəy dancers decided to use the mask dance to show both non-Aboriginal spectators and other Aboriginal participants that they had something strong and powerful. The Musqueam drew upon tradition to reveal themselves to non-Aboriginal others whom they felt knew little about their distinctive cultural practices.⁸⁸ Additionally, it was hoped that such self-presentations would counter the negative images of urban Aboriginal people that were circulating in mainstream society, images such as the *Province*'s depiction of Musqueam spiritual practices (cited at the beginning of this article) as "gloomy" and "eerie" (Howard Grant, personal communication, 1999). The sɣ^wayɣ^wəy mask dance, with its stunning costumes and mesmerizing movement, would have offered a striking contrast to more familiar Aboriginal performance traditions (e.g., Prairie style powwow dancing). Anthropologist Crisca Bierwert describes the visual spectacle with a sense of wonder: "Not only do four or more masked dancers dance simultaneously ... but they wear spectacular regalia, a composite of multiple images and textures, including rattles, protruding wands and strands, and bright colours. The dancing also creates a soft flurry of down that swirls from the headgear, a gentle visual sign suffusing what is otherwise a clamouring of dramatic sight and sound."⁸⁹ Mayor Taylor's naming ceremony was the result of a careful selection of cultural elements designed to convey a number of different messages to diverse audiences. Although it is difficult to know exactly how audiences read the message, it is possible that non-Aboriginal spectators viewed it as an authentic and rich display of local "Indianness"; that other First Nations viewed it as a demonstration of traditional knowledge, power, and hereditary privilege; and that a local politician viewed it as his

⁸⁷ At the request of Musqueam dancers, curatorial staff at UBC's Museum of Anthropology (MOA) have recently removed Musqueam sɣ^wayɣ^wəy masks from public display. Similarly, the removal of spirit dance regalia from the 1980 MOA exhibit of Salish art, "Visions of Power," produced a more profound statement of cultural power than would have been the case had the regalia remained on display. See Bierwert, *Brushed by Cedar*, 170.

⁸⁸ Similarly, Chief Andy Frank of Comox used the sɣ^wayɣ^wəy mask when radio personality Stan Francis was made an honorary member of the Native Brotherhood of British Columbia in order "to show to Brother Stanley Francis the greatest honour in his power." See *Native Voice*, June 1950.

⁸⁹ Bierwert, *Brushed by Cedar*, 166.

civic obligation. For the Musqueam, the ceremony was an exercise in nation building, diplomatic exchange, and publicity.

Some academics have argued that the incorporation of indigenous expressive culture and history into mainstream cultural events has decontextualized and erased cultural meaning. It has become another way of silencing Aboriginal peoples. Art historian Marcia Crosby suggests that the incorporation of indigenous visual imagery into constructions of dominant culture obscures the intricate meanings encoded in ritual, regalia, and other forms of expressive culture.⁹⁰ Similarly, Crisca Bierwert proposes that the absence of spiritual meanings in publicly performed dance “created a surface representation and left spectators incapable of seeing the depths of religious practice.”⁹¹ This may be true. But it is possible that some Aboriginal peoples in past times did not consider it important that outsiders understand *all* of the ritual or cultural significance of their displays. Alternatively, for some communities or families, much of that cultural knowledge has been carefully guarded. How Aboriginal peoples have utilized public events to fashion representations of themselves and their history, while keeping other aspects of their culture silent (or inaccessible to Whites) has been little examined within the Canadian context.⁹² A strategy of remaining silent or invisible on one front allowed the Musqueam to keep sacred or private cultural practices away from public attention. Exposing aspects of the culture, such as the Musqueam warrior dance, on another front redirected the White gaze to something secular. As anthropologist Michael Kew clearly explains: “The secular dancing also acts as a buffer for the sacred, for it fills the expectations of the larger society and allows the sacred dancing to remain inviolate. Thus the sometimes ‘phoney’ summer dancing is part of the total ‘front’ of identity which, like many subordinate groups, the Indians present in order to remain themselves.”⁹³

During British Columbia’s 1966 centennial, the Musqueam employed their own cultural traditions while acknowledging the more popular constructions of Aboriginality in order to send several

⁹⁰ Marcia Crosby, “Construction of the Imaginary Indian,” in *Vancouver Anthology: The Institutional Politics of Art*, ed. Stan Douglas (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1991): 279. See also Morrison, “Canadian Art and Cultural Appropriation,” iii.

⁹¹ Bierwert, *Brushed by Cedar*, 166.

⁹² For a discussion on the role of silence as a form of resistance, see Cohen, *The Combining of History*, 248; and James Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990).

⁹³ Kew, “Coast Salish Ceremonial Life,” 296-7.

political messages. However, it is important not to amplify this activity as the product of a continuous, diligent political strategy. Over the years, Musqueam dancers most certainly approached requests for performances with discrimination and hesitancy (the late Dominic Point and Fran Guerin, personal communications, 1997). A 1978 community notice outlined a number of issues regarding participation in the bicentenary celebrations of Captain Cook's voyages to the Northwest Coast, asking, "What is your opinion? How do you feel about such an event? Is it possible to take advantage of such events for the benefit of our people? For recognition of our rights and customs? Or do you feel that participation would have the effect of repeating history?"⁹⁴ Evidently community members were faced with the dilemma of representing historical events within a colonialist framework or using such events for their own publicity purposes. Performers have long recognized (as did Crosby and Bierwert) the limitations of cultural expression, questioning whether putting their culture on show is worth the trouble because White audiences do not always "get it." According to Howard E. Grant, in post-performance discussions at Musqueam the centennial audience's failure to understand the profound cultural significance of the *sχ^wayχ^wəy* was one of the reasons why the dance was withdrawn from the public realm and partially accounts for the persistence of the warrior dancers as Musqueam's principal performance troupe today. This persistence, however, leaves contemporary performers open to community criticism regarding the authenticity of their shows. As one individual commented when asked about the warrior dance's origins, "I didn't even know about it until recently. It's not real Musqueam dance, just what we do in the malls for *x^wənitən* [newcomers]."

The appropriate public presentation of Aboriginal culture, which was so closely connected to family ownership, personal expression, and community protocol, was often tricky business for many Coast Salish communities. The community restrictions that said that dances such as the spirit dance or the *sχ^wayχ^wəy* should not be performed in non-Coast Salish contexts magnified the problem of visibility and contributed to erasing the Coast Salish from the Canadian cultural map. That, along with the unrelenting inundation of Vancouver's landscape with northern art forms (most notably, the totem pole), meant that the Musqueam and other local Aboriginal groups became difficult to see. Instead of risking being ignored, however, the

⁹⁴ Musqueam Indian Band, "Musqueam Community Newsletter," April 1978, MIBA.

Musqueam have responded creatively to this potential erasure by constructing a public identity that pays careful attention to both internal cultural protocol and White expectations of Aboriginality.

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Today, the Musqueam warrior dance troupe is in great demand – performing, for example, at UBC’s Museum of Anthropology, for the opening of rock concerts, at festivals, and during the opening dedication of the newly renovated Vancouver International Airport. At the outset of the twenty-first century, it seems that the Musqueam’s message of historical continuity has entered the mainstream. Perhaps Musqueam’s presentations of history and culture over the past century have helped many people understand that Canadian society has somehow assumed control over much of Musqueam territory. However, it is less certain how successful these same performances have been at linking the colonial acquisition of land with contemporary legal claims for Aboriginal rights and title.⁹⁵ As Julie Cruikshank points out in relation to a perceived intrusion of “politics” at a Yukon storytelling festival in the mid-1990s: “If narrators use explicitly nonindigenous forms to address political issues, they risk censure. If they use more implicit forms, they may be heard only by those who share local cultural knowledge.”⁹⁶ Because these performances do not directly engage in politics, people may not recognize them as political statements. During the 1989 protest over the transfer of the University Endowment Lands from provincial jurisdiction to the Greater Vancouver Regional District, a newspaper photograph depicts the warrior dancers performing alongside Musqueam band members holding placards reading, “Musqueam Title is Alive and Well in UEL” and “No Apartheid in Canada” (see Figure 4).⁹⁷ There would have been little misunderstanding regarding the politicized meanings of the warrior dance at this event. This photograph highlights the flexibility of cultural display – a dance can be employed to protest in the most forthright manner, but it can also be used to protest in a way that does not challenge mainstream expectations with regard to displays of Aboriginal culture and history.

⁹⁵ This contradiction is pointed out in Chris Roine, “The Squamish Aboriginal Economy, 1860–1940,” (MA thesis, Simon Fraser University, 1996), 1.

⁹⁶ Cruikshank, “Negotiating with Narrative,” 58.

⁹⁷ The Musqueam were successful in having the courts place a condition on the transfer so that it was made without prejudice to Aboriginal title.



Figure 4: Protesting the official opening of the Pacific Spirit Park. Dancers in the foreground are Arthur Stogan and Ronny Stogan. At back include Chief Ernest Campbell, David Joe, Louise Point, and Vincent Stogan. *Vancouver Province*, 24 April 1989.

The struggle for the recognition of Aboriginal rights and title has been waged on several fronts and has included both formal political activities and cultural presentations. I have examined the latter type of struggle, but have tried to keep in mind its close relationship to the first type, arguing, following Cruikshank, Miller, and Myers, for a closer examination of the long-standing Western dichotomy between Aboriginal culture and Aboriginal politics. It is obvious that petition writing, for example, is a kind of political activity designed to resolve perceived injustices; yet, if we understand politics to encompass the strategies employed by Aboriginal communities to further their existence, visibility, and recognition as nations, then other activities (such as the display of expressive culture) can also be understood as political strategies and not simply as “texts or representations standing outside the real activity of participants.”⁹⁸ Politics, protest, and publicity appear to be at the heart of many performances of culture, and new forms of diplomacy – whether a totem pole raising, a canoe race, or a naming ceremony for a White politician – are formed at the intersection of Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal understandings of the authentic.

I do not argue that cultural protest has toppled colonialism; rather, I argue that some cultural presentations appear to draw from the concepts and symbols that support colonialism. Yes, non-Aboriginal spectators may have simply seen in the Musqueam’s dance a story that highlighted past strife and present unity, a narrative that fit the centennial’s theme of 100 years of peace and progress. But publics are not always so incapable of seeing complex and diverse messages, and Aboriginal performers “take their audiences extremely seriously as witnesses.”⁹⁹ Some audience members may have noted cultural richness, power, and the meaningful connections between history, people, and place. For the Musqueam, however, self-presentations of culture and history have been important in their effort to remain visible in the major urban metropolis of Vancouver and the Lower Mainland. Cultural performance makes the connection between people and place visible, tangible, and, it is hoped, memorable. In performing a dance during the 1966 British Columbia centennial, Musqueam people presented a nationalistic image of their community that is deeply rooted in the past yet very much situated in contemporary political and cultural life – an image that is in accord with the ongoing battle for political and cultural autonomy.

⁹⁸ Cruikshank, “Negotiating with Narrative,” 56.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 65.