

## BEYOND INCLUSION:

### *Canadian and Indigenous Sovereignties in Mainstream Museums*

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EARLY IN THE MORNING ON 24 August 2017, I boarded a Lufthansa flight from Munich to Sarajevo. Once settled, leafing through the pages of the airline's magazine, my attention was caught by the photograph of a face I recognized, that of Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun, who had recently been featured in the UBC Museum of Anthropology's retrospective exhibition of his work, *Unceded Territories*.<sup>1</sup> The article, "Balancing Past and Present in Vancouver: Ancient Culture, New Pride," discussed Yuxweluptun's work alongside that of Haida artist Corey Bulpitt and Indigenous DJ collective A Tribe Called Red, foregrounding these artists' critiques of colonization in the context of Canada's 150th anniversary celebrations. I was heartened to see this more critical image of Canada being presented in such a (literally) international setting. The article's conclusion, however, illustrated how the re-presentation of such oppositional perspectives is often contained within an overarching possessive discourse of the nation, Indigenous art and culture, and reconciliation. Yuxweluptun's work was contextualized as an invitation to reconciliation, and the current popularity of these artists taken as a sign that Vancouver – a proxy for the nation in this case – "with all its sounds and colors, will eventually find its way back to its roots."<sup>2</sup> The troubling implication of this statement is that Indigenous culture is the origin from which the city naturally grew – that it belongs to Vancouver and is thus part of Canada's national patrimony.

An in-flight magazine, seeking to promote Vancouver tourism and providing tips on where to go in the city to find First Nations culture, is perhaps not the place to look for a sustained unsettling of the settler-colonial nation-state and its tendency to appropriate Indigenous culture – even resistance – into its own legitimizing narrative.<sup>3</sup> Museums may

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<sup>1</sup> See Willard and Duffek, this volume.

<sup>2</sup> Katarina Kunath, "Ancient Culture, New Pride," *Lufthansa Magazine*, July 2017, 19–29.

<sup>3</sup> I use the terms "settler-colonial nation-state" and "settler-colonial nationalism" to refer to a particular kind of political organization and understanding that prioritizes the nation-state,

seem an even less likely site to look for such an oppositional discourse, given their origins in the context of European imperialism and emergent nationalisms and the ongoing perception that they remain bastions of authoritative knowledge;<sup>4</sup> but museums, even mainstream ones, are increasingly trying to voice – or provide space for others to voice – critical perspectives on the very things they are designed to celebrate, including the settler-colonial nation-state.

There are a number of reasons for this. Critiques at both local and global scales from various sectors, including those represented in museums and in their (potential) audiences, have urged museums to address some of the more negative legacies of their past, to be accountable to more diverse publics, and, even further, to promote equality and social justice and become instruments of social inclusion, community building, and reparation.<sup>5</sup> These pressures have coincided with a heightened emphasis

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acknowledging that they tend to gloss over a far more complex array of historical and ongoing relationships.

<sup>4</sup> The emergence of modern Western museums in relation to colonialism and nationalism and the nature of their authority and power is widely discussed in museum scholarship of the 1990s and early 2000s. See, for example, Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (London: Routledge, 1995); Tony Bennett, *Pasts beyond Memory: Evolution, Museums, Colonialism* (London: Routledge, 2004); Michael M. Ames, *Cannibal Tours and Glass Boxes: The Anthropology of Museums* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1992); Nicholas Thomas, *Entangled Objects: Exchange, Material Culture and Colonialism in the Pacific* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991); Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine, eds., *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991); and Timothy Luke, *Museum Politics: Power Plays at the Exhibition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002). More recently, the literature seems to focus more on how museums have responded to critiques of their authority and power, becoming more proactively open and inclusive and presenting a wider range of perspectives. This work significantly shows how the authority and power of museums have changed in recent decades; however, while the specific dynamics have altered, the fact that people still go to museums seeking truth and authenticity suggests that the power and authority of the institution of the museum have not diminished.

<sup>5</sup> Such critiques and resulting discussions have varied in different national contexts. In Canada, they have revolved mainly around the collection and representation of Indigenous culture but have also dealt with the limited and exclusionary nature of representations of Canadian history. For the former, see, for example, Deborah Doxtator, “The Implications of Canadian Nationalism for Aboriginal Cultural Autonomy,” in *Curatorship: Indigenous Perspectives in Postcolonial Societies*, Conference Proceedings, 56–76 (University of Victoria, 1996); Moira McLoughlin, *Museums and the Representation of Native Canadians: Negotiating the Borders of Culture* (New York: Garland, 1999); Lynda Jessup and Shannon Bagg, eds., *On Aboriginal Representation in the Gallery* (Hull, QC: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 2002); Ruth Phillips, “Dancing the Mask, Potlatching the Exhibition: Performing Art and Culture in a Global Museum World,” *THEMA: La revue des Musées de la civilisation* 3 (2015): 12–27; Ruth Phillips, *Museum Pieces: Toward the Indigenization of Canadian Museums* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2011); Annie E. Coombes and Ruth B. Phillips, *Museum Transformations* (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2015); Cara Krmpotich, Laura Peers, Members of the Haida Repatriation Committee, Staff of the Pitt Rivers Museum, and Staff of the British Museum, *This Is Our Life: Haida Material Heritage and Changing Museum Practice* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2013); Martha Black, “What the Treaty Means to

on self-reflexivity within museums and their associated disciplines, and, more recently, with a growing global discourse of reconciliation and concomitant desire to address – publicly – difficult and contested episodes of shared, often violent, pasts.<sup>6</sup> Yet the tendency of museums to challenge dominant narratives and established relations of power, even at the same time as they also reproduce them, is also a feature of their inherently contradictory character. As an institution, museums are both an authoritative form of representation and a (more or less) public space of performance, interaction, and dialogue, constituted by human actions and relationships.<sup>7</sup>

In this contradictory role, they often simultaneously uphold a hegemonic order and contest it, or at least provide space for it to be contested within an authoritative public forum. In doing so, they work to contain oppositional perspectives, but they also come to legitimize new norms, which, in turn, can serve as a place from which further contestation can occur. In settler-colonial nation-states, because the assertion of national sovereignty depends to an extent on the continuation of colonizing perceptions and practices regarding Indigenous peoples and territory, mainstream museums almost inevitably reproduce colonial narratives and relations of power. However, in response to changing relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples and,

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Us: Museums and Treaties in British Columbia,” in *Northwest Coast Representations: New Perspectives on History, Art, and Encounters*, ed. Andreas Etges, Viola König, Rainer Hatoum, and Tina Brüderlin, 125–44. Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung with support of Ethnologisches Museum, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag GmbH, 2015); and Martha Black, “Collaborations: A Historical Perspective,” in *Native Art of the Northwest Coast: A History of Changing Ideas*, ed. Charlotte Townsend-Gault, Jennifer Kramer, and Ki-ke-in, 785–827 (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2013).

<sup>6</sup> For discussion on a growing global discourse of reconciliation, see Jennifer Henderson and Pauline Wakeham, “Introduction,” in *Reconciling Canada: Critical Perspectives on the Culture of Redress*, ed. Jennifer Henderson and Pauline Wakeham, 3–30 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013). For discussion of the representation of difficult pasts in relation to museums’ proposed role as promoters of social justice, see, for example, Bernadette T. Lynch and Samuel J.M.M. Alberti, “Legacies of Prejudice: Racism, Co-production and Radical Trust in the Museum,” *Museum Management and Curatorship* 25, 1 (2010): 13–35; Jennifer Bonnell and Roger I. Simon, “Difficult Exhibitions and Intimate Encounters,” *Museum and Society* 5, 2 (2007): 65–85; and Roger I. Simon, *A Pedagogy of Witnessing: Curatorial Practice and the Pursuit of Social Justice* (New York: SUNY Press). Attempts to address difficult histories in museums range from small temporary exhibitions to interventions within large permanent galleries to entire institutions devoted to a particular history, such as the short-lived British Empire and Commonwealth Museum in Bristol, UK, and the Legacy Museum in Montgomery, Alabama.

<sup>7</sup> I have written more extensively on this character of museums elsewhere. See Caitlin Gordon-Walker, *Exhibiting Nation: Multicultural Nationalism (and Its Limits) in Canada’s Museums* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2016). See also Andrea Witcomb, *Re-Imagining the Museum: Beyond the Mausoleum* (London: Routledge, 2003); and James Clifford, “Museums as Contact Zones,” *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*, 188–219 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997).

more recently, discourses of reconciliation, again at both local and global scales, they have also increasingly sought to present perspectives that contest the authority of the settler-colonial nation-state, acting as sites for the assertion of Indigenous sovereignties. Ironically, given their common association with dominant forms of power, museums' acknowledgment of these oppositional perspectives can act as a way to contain them, especially when they are framed in relation to ideas of the nation, Indigenous art and culture, and reconciliation. On the other hand, and at the same time, the assertion of these perspectives within the authoritative space of the museum also recognizes *their* authority. An understanding of the limitations of the settler-colonial nation-state and of the ongoing sovereignty of Indigenous peoples becomes normalized within the mainstream. While the effects of this may seem small or slow to materialize, this new norm can serve as a place from which to work towards further change.

In this article, I examine this process within museums in British Columbia. In order to do so, I first consider some of the context for changing relationships between Indigenous peoples, non-Indigenous peoples, and museums in Canada – specifically, in British Columbia. I then use three cases – the Royal British Columbia Museum (RBCM), the Museum of Anthropology (MOA), and the Museum of Vancouver (MOV) – to show how these changing relationships are articulated within these institutions' public galleries.<sup>8</sup> While continuing to uphold dominant ideologies and the sovereignty of the settler-colonial nation-state and while containing oppositional perspectives within discourses of nationalism, Indigenous art and culture, and reconciliation, these museums also serve as places where that containment is contested and Indigenous sovereignties are proclaimed.

## RECONCILIATION AND SOVEREIGNTIES

Currently, Indigenous/settler-colonial relations in Canada are often articulated around the idea of reconciliation. While related to a broader global discourse, the idea of reconciliation in Canada developed in relation to the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), which focused on addressing the history and impact of Indian

<sup>8</sup> Although important, I do not consider here other aspects of the work performed by these museums, particularly that focused on collections. Ongoing efforts towards repatriation and Indigenizing the ways in which objects are documented and cared for are beyond the scope of this article but are discussed widely elsewhere, including in Collison and Levell and Weber in this volume.

residential schools. The TRC enabled valuable work to be completed, serving to witness the experiences of those who were and continue to be affected by the physical, psychological, and structural violence of these institutions and acknowledging Canada's guilt in imposing such violence. However, the extension of the language of reconciliation into wider discussions about how to rethink the relationships between Canada and Indigenous peoples can limit how these relationships are reimagined, in part because the origins of this language in the TRC focus public attention on a specific violence perpetuated in the past, and in part because of the ways in which reconciliation is often contextualized within a national discourse so that it does not disrupt the sovereignty of the Canadian nation-state.<sup>9</sup> This is evident in the government's public response to the TRC as articulated in its formal apology in 2008. The TRC was specifically intended to address the impact of residential schools; correspondingly, the state's official apology acknowledged its responsibility only for this specific violence, referring to it as "a sad chapter in our history" and obscuring the larger brutality of colonization through the appropriation of land, the decimation of populations, and the suppression of Indigenous political, economic, and cultural institutions.<sup>10</sup> The apology describes the TRC as

a positive step in forging a new relationship between Aboriginal peoples and other Canadians, a relationship based on the knowledge of our shared history, a respect for each other and a desire to move forward together with a renewed understanding that strong families, strong communities and vibrant cultures and traditions will contribute

<sup>9</sup> Arthur Manuel and Grand Chief Ronald Derrickson, *The Reconciliation Manifesto: Recovering the Land Rebuilding the Economy* (Toronto: James Lorimer, 2017); Gerald Taiaiake Alfred, "Restitution Is the Real Pathway to Justice for Indigenous Peoples," in *Response, Responsibility and Renewal: Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Journey*, ed. Gregory Younging, Jonathan Dewar, and Mike DeGagné, 179–90 (Ottawa: Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2009); Eva Mackey, *Unsettled Expectations: Uncertainty, Land and Settler Decolonization* (Halifax: Fernwood, 2016); Brieg Capitaine and Karine Vanthuyne, *Power through Testimony: Reframing Residential Schools in the Age of Reconciliation* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2017).

<sup>10</sup> Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* (Winnipeg: Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015), 369. Canada's formal apology for its part in administering Indian residential schools was delivered by then prime minister Stephen Harper, who, in different contexts, declared that Canada has no history of colonialism and repeatedly rejected calls for a national inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women, noting that it was not high on his government's radar. See David Ljunggren, "Every G20 Nation Wants to Be Canada, Insists PM," *Reuters*, 25 September 2009, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2009/09/26/columns-us-g20-canada-advantages-idUSTRE58Po5Z20090926>; CBC News, "Full Text of Peter Mansbridge's Interview with Stephen Harper," *CBC News*, 17 December 2014, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/full-text-of-peter-mansbridge-s-interview-with-stephen-harper-1.2876934>.

to a stronger Canada for all of us.

It ends with the statement: “God bless all of you. God bless our land.”<sup>11</sup> In promoting the idea of reconciliation to a broader public, the TRC website also highlights the benefits of reconciliation for Canada, stating: “Reconciliation is the goal. It is a goal that will take the commitment of multiple generations but when it is achieved, when we have reconciliation – it will make for a better, stronger Canada.”<sup>12</sup>

The work accomplished through the TRC – the testimonies, the commission’s report, and the ninety-four calls to action that were produced – contextualize the specific violence of residential schools within the wider and ongoing violence of settler-colonialism and address the need for broad structural changes in Canadian society and in the state’s relationships with Indigenous peoples. However, while the government can be held to account to address the calls to action, the general Canadian public is largely able to remain comfortable with the current hegemony of settler-colonial nationalism, even as it sympathizes with individual experiences of past abuse. Moreover, if Canadian sovereignty is left uncontested and Indigenous sovereignties ignored, it is difficult to imagine new forms of relationship other than those that require Indigenous peoples to reconcile themselves to the superior authority of the Canadian nation-state.<sup>13</sup>

Because of its limitations, some have strongly opposed the idea of reconciliation as a language and as a model;<sup>14</sup> others have adopted the language but, in using it, articulate more transformative interpretations of what reconciliation means, or must mean, going forward. These interpretations refuse the dominance and domination of Canada, demanding recognition of Indigenous rights and sovereignty. As with reconciliation, Canadian discussions about Indigenous rights and sovereignty have been influenced by a broader global discourse, including the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, but they are also shaped by local histories and politics. Historically, throughout much of Canada, Indigenous sovereignty was recognized through the signing

<sup>11</sup> Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Honouring the Truth*, 371.

<sup>12</sup> Truth and Reconciliation of Canada, “Reconciliation ... Towards a New Relationship,” <http://www.trc.ca/websites/reconciliation/index.php?p=312>.

<sup>13</sup> Although the government’s implementation of measures to address the TRC’s calls to action are slow and partial, its formal commitment to address these, as well as its ratification of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, at least offers a foundation on which pressure can be applied. The CBC’s “Beyond 94” monitors the progress of response to the calls to action. See <https://newsinteractives.cbc.ca/longform-single/beyond-94?&ccta=1>.

<sup>14</sup> See, for example, Gerald Taiaiake Alfred, “Reconciliation as Recolonization Talk,” Concordia University Television Montreal, 20 September 2016, <http://cutvmontreal.com/videogallery/reconciliation-as-recolonization-talk/>.

of treaties. Reconciliation and the forging of new relationships that account for Indigenous sovereignty require that these historical treaties be honoured and that they be interpreted in ways that acknowledge that, for Indigenous peoples, they did not signify the ceding of land that was and is understood as inalienable.

In British Columbia, where, with the exception of Treaty 8 in the northeast and the Douglas Treaties on Vancouver Island, the colonial government historically neglected to sign treaties, Indigenous sovereignty has been recognized more recently through the courts and through the negotiation of modern-day treaties, beginning with the Nisga'a Final Agreement signed in 2000. Within the Canadian legal system, Indigenous peoples have asserted their sovereignty by demonstrating their ongoing connections with and on the land within their ancestral territories. The 1973 Supreme Court decision in the *Calder* case confirmed that Aboriginal title existed prior to the imposition of colonial law.<sup>15</sup> This case established a foundation for the negotiation of the Nisga'a Final Agreement and other modern-day treaties and influenced later land claims cases. In 1997, the Supreme Court ruling in the *Delgamuukw* case strengthened the acknowledgment of Aboriginal title, finding that, because the 1763 Royal Proclamation applies in British Columbia, Aboriginal title was never extinguished throughout most of the province, even according to Canada's interpretation of the law.<sup>16</sup> More recently, in the *Tsilhqot'in* case, the court found that the Tsilhqot'in Nation had established title on a territorial, rather than only on a site-specific, basis.<sup>17</sup>

These cases and others have affected Indigenous/non-Indigenous relations in British Columbia, a point that is especially visible in confrontations over environmentally destructive development projects and environmental stewardship. Increasingly, Canada has been forced to acknowledge its duty to consult before allowing development in Indigenous territories and, with *Tsilhqot'in*, its need to obtain consent.<sup>18</sup> These new relationships require engagement with – rather than only acknowledgment of – Indigenous sovereignties. They require ongoing and sometimes difficult interaction and conversation, involving

<sup>15</sup> *Calder et al. v. Attorney-General of British Columbia*, [1973] S.C.R. 313.

<sup>16</sup> *Delgamuukw v. British Columbia*, [1997] 3 S.C.R. 1010; Christopher F. Roth, "Without Treaty, without Conquest: Indigenous Sovereignty in Post-Delgamuukw British Columbia," *Wicazo Sa Review* 17, 2 (2002): 143–65, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1353/wic.2002.0020>.

<sup>17</sup> *Tsilhqot'in Nation v. British Columbia*, 2014 SCC 44, [2014] 2 S.C.R. 256; Bruce McIvor and Kate Gunn, "Stepping into Canada's Shoes: Tsilhqot'in, Grassy Narrows and the Division of Powers," *University of New Brunswick Law Journal* 67 (2016): 146–66, <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2837136>.

<sup>18</sup> *Tsilhqot'in Nation v. British Columbia*.

Indigenous and non-Indigenous people on all sides, as well as other national and multinational organizations. The idea of a better shared future is frequently articulated by various participants, but it is clear that there is not a single interpretation of what this might mean (and the idea of the Canadian nation is not always at the centre). In this context, if these relationships are considered in relation to the idea of reconciliation, then reconciliation is clearly seen to be about more than just incorporating Indigenous peoples and perspectives into a better, more inclusive Canada: it is about reconciling (with) these co-existing, and at times competing, sovereignties.

Relationships between Indigenous peoples and Canadian museums have paralleled the trajectories of relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada more widely, but they have also been shaped by more specific histories within the museum world as a whole and within particular institutions. Historically, museums served as the receptacles of Indigenous objects and took on the role of representing Indigenous peoples and cultures. Yet, even in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, in contexts of extreme oppression and inequality, these relationships were not straightforward, and Indigenous peoples' agency during this time and the roles they played in shaping museums' collections and representations of Indigenous culture must be acknowledged. While museums and anthropologists were presented as authorities or experts on Indigenous culture, Indigenous people were also involved as active participants.

Beginning in the 1950s, particularly in British Columbia, with amendments to the Indian Act that repealed the ban on potlatching, Indigenous people became more actively and visibly involved in museums, especially artists and other cultural producers.<sup>19</sup> In addition to ongoing collaboration between Indigenous people and others working in museums, beginning in the 1970s, Indigenous people's critiques of museums' histories and practices also began to become more prominent. Successful efforts towards repatriating objects that had been acquired by museums led to the establishment of local Indigenous museums or cultural centres.<sup>20</sup> In mainstream museums, a pivotal moment occurred in the late 1980s, catalyzed by the exhibition entitled *The Spirit*

<sup>19</sup> See, for example, Clifford, *Routes*; Charlotte Townsend-Gault, Jennifer Kramer, and Ki-ke-in, eds., *Native Art of the Northwest Coast: A History of Changing Ideas* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2013).

<sup>20</sup> For example, the return of material initially taken from participants in a 1921 potlatch hosted by Dan Cranmer led to the establishment of U'mista and the Kwakiutl Museum (now the Nuyumbalees Cultural Centre). See James Clifford, "Four Northwest Coast Museums," in *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, ed. Ivan Karp and Stephen D.



*Sings*, which was held at the Glenbow Museum in Calgary for the 1988 Olympic Games. Sponsored in part by Shell Oil, which was then drilling on Lubicon Cree land, the exhibition became the focal point of a wider protest. The Lubicon initiated a boycott and the exhibition became embroiled in controversy.<sup>21</sup> As a result of this, the Assembly of First Nations and Canadian Museums Association established the Task Force on Museums and First Peoples, which published a series of recommendations that, while not legally binding, have significantly informed museum practice.<sup>22</sup> Since then, museums have continued to work towards building and recognizing more equal relationships, moving beyond inclusion and consultation towards repatriation, collaboration, and ongoing partnerships, so that Canadian museums have increasingly become places that not only tell Canadian narratives and uphold Canadian sovereignty but also voice contesting narratives, including those that critique settler-colonial nationalism, and acknowledge Indigenous sovereignties.

More recently, the language of reconciliation has also been incorporated into reframing relationships between Canadian museums and Indigenous peoples. While this may be a helpful way of thinking about these relationships moving forward, the above discussion about reconciliation provides a caution. Because museums remain associated with a dominant power regime, addressing perspectives critical of colonialism within mainstream museums in a settler-colonial nation-state can function as a way to contain them. If assertions of Indigenous sovereignty within the museum are interpreted as needing to fit within the existing political dynamics of settler-colonial nationalism, or if they are seen as merely cultural expressions rather than as acts of cultural and political self-determination, then their opposition can be subsumed within an understanding of reconciliation that does nothing to undermine established inequalities.

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Lavine, 212–54 (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press); and Marie Mauzé, “Two Kwakwaka’wakw Museums: Heritage and Politics,” *Ethnohistory* 50, 3 (2003): 503–22.

<sup>21</sup> This exhibition is widely discussed elsewhere and I don’t intend to revisit these discussions here. See, for example, Julia Harrison and Bruce Trigger, “‘The Spirit Sings’ and the Future of Anthropology,” *Anthropology Today* 4, 6 (1988): 6–10; Julia Harrison, “Completing a Circle: The Spirit Sings,” in *Anthropology, Public Policy and Native Peoples in Canada*, ed. Noel Dyck and Jim Waldram, 334–57 (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1993); Kelsey R. Wrightson, “The Limits of Recognition: The Spirit Sings, Canadian Museums and the Colonial Politics of Recognition,” *Museum Anthropology* 40, 1 (2017): 36–51, <https://doi.org/10.1111/muan.12129>.

<sup>22</sup> Task Force on Museums and First Peoples, *Turning the Page: Forging New Partnerships between Museums and First Peoples* (Ottawa: Canadian Museums Association and Assembly of First Nations, 1994).

CONTAINING CONTESTATION IN MAINSTREAM  
BRITISH COLUMBIA MUSEUMS

Three museums in British Columbia – the Royal BC Museum, the Museum of Anthropology, and the Museum of Vancouver – illustrate the above dangers. The Royal BC Museum in the provincial capital most obviously contains anti-colonial critique within and through a possessive national discourse. The RBCM was established in 1886 with a mandate to preserve the natural and Indigenous history of the province. In 1968, its mandate was expanded to also include the province's European history, and a new purpose-built structure (completed during the late 1960s and 1970s) was erected to house the museum and its new exhibitions. These new exhibitions reflected how Indigenous/settler-colonial relationships had changed over the previous century. Significant floor space was devoted to the description of Indigenous cultures and the promotion of Indigenous art. Although non-Indigenous interpretations were foregrounded, especially those based in anthropology and Western aesthetic appreciation, the museum sought input from over twenty Indigenous consultants.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, the paradigm of salvage anthropology, based on the belief that Indigenous cultures would disappear, was challenged by the museum's focus on showing and supporting the perpetuation and resurgence of cultural production by Northwest Coast artists, as it had done since the 1953 construction of Wawadit'la, Mungo Martin's house in Thunderbird Park next to the future museum, where Martin and others presented their culture to the public in proximity to the provincial Legislature. Less obviously, but more significantly in the context of this discussion, the museum recognized the continuation not just of Indigenous culture through the production of art but also, at least implicitly, of Indigenous law, with curator of anthropology Wilson Duff acknowledging at its opening that Wawadit'la was "more than just an authentic Kwakiutl house ... It is Mungo Martin's house and bears on its house-posts hereditary crests of his family."<sup>24</sup> Similar acknowledgment was given to Jonathan Hunt (Chief Kwakwabalasami) and his descendants' ownership of the house in the new exhibition that

<sup>23</sup> Allan Hoover, "A Response to Gloria Frank 'That's My Dinner on Display': A First Nations Reflection on Museum Culture," *BC Studies* 128 (Spring/Summer 2000): 163–78, *BC Studies* 128 (2001): 65–70.

<sup>24</sup> Royal BC Museum, "Wawadit'la, The Mungo Martin House: Kwakwaka'wakw (Kwagu'ł), 1953," Thunderbird Park, Place of Cultural Sharing, <https://royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/exhibits/third-park/html/present/exo7/exo7.htm>. More extensive acknowledgment of the continuity of Indigenous law was given in the RBCM's 1959 publication *Histories, Territories and Laws of the Kitwancool*, created at the request of the Gitanyow (formerly known as Kitwancool) and through a partnership between them and Wilson Duff at the museum.

opened inside the museum in 1977, while larger contestations over land rights were addressed through a display on treaties, land claims, and Indigenous protest.

Despite these acknowledgments, the museum's representations operated, of course, within the established political orders of their time. According to today's standards, where four additional decades of struggle have *begun* to make Canada more widely aware of the continuation of Indigenous law, governance, and title, the initial galleries can seem limited and limiting. Yet more recent changes and additions to the First Peoples exhibitions continue to reflect ongoing changes in relationships between Indigenous peoples, museums, and Canada. Consultation and, more deeply, collaboration and partnership with contemporary Indigenous peoples is now acknowledged more explicitly in the galleries. The largest new long-term addition is an exhibition on the Nisga'a Final Agreement, opened in 2002. Created in partnership with the Nisga'a Lisims government, this exhibition discusses the Nisga'a Nation's legal struggle to demonstrate title in its ancestral lands as well as themes of Nisga'a self-government, social and legal principles, cultural values, and repatriation. A recent short-term curatorial intervention in the First Peoples galleries posted some of the TRC's calls to action throughout the exhibitions, focusing on those that specifically address the work of museums and archives and thus acknowledging the need for real structural changes within these institutions. Other interventions, both temporary and long-term, completed and forthcoming, focus on Indigenous peoples' continued presence in British Columbia and assert their capacity for self-representation; for example, a small temporary display of Indigenous students' poetry that emerged from an educational program, a multimedia installation in which noted Tsimshian weaver Willy White (Tsamiianbann) discusses his work to produce new dance aprons included in the exhibition, and a reinterpretation of the model of the Haida village of Skedans. Meanwhile, Indigenous peoples' ongoing presence and capacity for self-representation are also clear in *Our Living Languages* (a temporary exhibition created in partnership with the First Peoples Cultural Council that currently dominates the central foyer linking the First Peoples galleries to those addressing the province's non-Indigenous history), as well as in the museum's extensive engagement in repatriation and in its inclusion of Indigenous individuals in its full-time staff.

While providing more critical perspectives on the settler-colonial nation-state, however, the critiques offered in the museum's more recent projects are again contained within current political norms.

As it is the provincial museum, the overarching frame of the galleries is the province of British Columbia and, by extension, the Canadian nation-state. Canadian sovereignty is therefore taken for granted. The continued influence of settler-colonial nationalism is evident in some of the language used to discuss the museum's plans for the future: in a recent interim planning document describing how the museum might appear in 2040, it is explained that a potential new gallery will allow visitors to "experience the centrepiece of our evolving understanding of our relations to First Nations peoples," suggesting the possibility that these relationships might be transformed. The document continues, however, by stating that "the magnificent Pacific Worlds gallery connects us all to *our* First Nations roots and to our wider region – earth, sky and water."<sup>25</sup> Addressed specifically to a non-Indigenous audience, this claim re-enacts an erasure of historical and ongoing conflict and rearticulates a claim over Indigenous culture and territory on behalf of the province and the nation, thus refusing the possibility of imagining that non-Indigenous/Indigenous relations might become anything other than proprietary and hierarchical. While this promotional document does not necessarily reflect the views and intentions of the museum's directors and staff, its wording is a symptom of the entrenchment of this perspective within Canada's national public discourse.

The RBCM is a provincial institution: its mandate is focused on celebrating and upholding the province and, by extension, the nation. Expecting it to serve only as a site to foreground contemporary Indigenous sovereignties and to undermine Canadian sovereignty would be to ignore its wider purpose. The Museum of Anthropology, contextualized as an academic institution by its place within the University of British Columbia (UBC) in Vancouver, is perhaps freer to interrogate the legitimacy of the settler-colonial nation-state. As a public teaching and research museum, it has the liberty and the resources to hold exhibitions, such as *Unceded Territories*, that explicitly question the province's and nation's authority and territorial assumptions. It widely proclaims its acknowledgment that, like the university more broadly, it occupies part of the ancestral and unceded land of the Musqueam people: it does this on its website, in the public space of its exhibitions, and at all of its major events. While enabling the museum to adopt a more oppositional stance to the established political norms of settler-colonial nationalism, however,

<sup>25</sup> Royal BC Museum, *Treasures for Generations* (Victoria: Royal BC Museum, 2016), 12, 14, emphasis added, [https://royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/sites/default/files/sites/default/files/images/FINAL\\_RBCM\\_Capital\\_Campaign\\_FOLDER.pdf](https://royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/sites/default/files/sites/default/files/images/FINAL_RBCM_Capital_Campaign_FOLDER.pdf).

MOA's existence as an academic institution at UBC – and, specifically, one linked to the study of anthropology and Indigenous art – imposes different limits on the conversations the museum can provoke regarding contemporary Indigenous/non-Indigenous relations in Canadian society.

Initially housed in the basement of the university's main library, MOA was founded in 1949 on the basis of the university's anthropology collections. In 1971, plans were initiated for a much larger purpose-built museum. Designed by renowned architect Arthur Erickson to reflect traditional Indigenous architectural forms through a modernist style executed in concrete and glass, the new facility opened in 1976, displaying the museum's expanded collections. The Great Hall showcased large items like carved poles, house posts, feast dishes, and bentwood boxes, while the bulk of the collections were kept in another gallery in visible storage, allowing the museum to provide relatively extensive access to the objects it held.<sup>26</sup> Like those of the RBCM, MOA's new galleries foregrounded non-Indigenous perspectives, exhibiting objects within the frameworks of ethnographic classification and the aesthetic appreciation of artistic forms. The museum also similarly played a role in fostering appreciation for Indigenous art and supporting the work of contemporary Indigenous artists.<sup>27</sup> While Michael Ames, director of MOA from 1974 to 1997, remarked that people were often uncomfortable when traditional anthropological approaches and aesthetic approaches were adopted outside their appropriate disciplinary contexts, MOA was able to combine both approaches within the same institution.<sup>28</sup>

Over time, MOA has maintained its dual focus on cultural context and artistic form, with current director Anthony Shelton describing the museum on its newly redesigned website as “a place of world arts and cultures with a special emphasis on the First Nations peoples and other cultural communities of British Columbia, Canada.”<sup>29</sup> The museum's collections in visible storage, now housed in the redesigned Multiversity Galleries, are supplemented with interactive technologies that allow visitors to explore objects' cultural context through the museum's online catalogue. Its focus on art, meanwhile, is evident in its continued aesthetic display of objects (including many that are intentionally created as

<sup>26</sup> Michael Ames, *Cannibal Tours and Glass Boxes: The Anthropology of Museums* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1992).

<sup>27</sup> Ames, *Cannibal Tours and Glass Boxes*; Clifford, *Routes*; Carol Mayer and Anthony A. Shelton, *The Museum of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 2010).

<sup>28</sup> Ames, *Cannibal Tours and Glass Boxes*.

<sup>29</sup> Anthony Shelton, “Director's Welcome Message,” Museum of Anthropology, accessed 31 March 2017, <https://moa.ubc.ca/welcome/>.

art) in long-term and temporary exhibitions and in its ongoing support for the work of contemporary artists. The scope of art it exhibits has also expanded, straying from the confines of restrictive definitions of traditional Indigenous art and clearly expressing art's political potential. The retrospective of Yuxweluptun's work is one example; others include the exhibition of works from Michael Nicol Yaghulanaas's *Coppers from the Hood* series in the *Meddling in the Museum* temporary exhibition (2007) and of his Haida manga *Bone Box* in the Great Hall, as well as the installation of works by John Powell, Marianne Nicholson, and others in the Multiversity Galleries, all of which disrupt the museum's contextualization of its collections within non-Indigenous frameworks.<sup>30</sup>

Projects such as these have been possible in part because of the long-term relationships MOA has built with Indigenous communities and individuals and its sustained commitment to collaborative work. Like the RBCM, MOA has made its collaborative partnerships more visible in recent years. Such partnerships have enabled the museum to increasingly facilitate the incorporation of Indigenous perspectives into its galleries, acknowledging Indigenous peoples' ability and right to represent themselves in the museum, an objective that Ames advocated in the early 1990s.<sup>31</sup> MOA's segment of *c̓asnaʔəm, the city before the city*, a collaborative multi-site exhibition project involving MOA, the Museum of Vancouver, the Musqueam Cultural Centre, and the University of Waterloo, as well as the new Gallery of Northwest Coast Masterworks and temporary exhibitions like *The Fabric of Our Land* and *Culture at the Centre*, exemplify the growing realization of this goal. *The Fabric of Our Land* was a partnership project initiated by Coast Salish weavers who approached MOA with the goal of bringing historical woven blankets back home, even if only temporarily, from institutions in which they are held in the United States and Europe. *Culture at the Centre* is a partnership between five Indigenous cultural centres representing the Musqueam, Squamish, Lil'wat, Heiltsuk, Haida, and Nisga'a Nations as well as MOA, using the latter to make their work visible to a larger audience.

Again, however, despite the unsettling potential of these projects, their encasement within the UBC Museum of Anthropology can limit

<sup>30</sup> Nicola Levell, "Coppers from the Hood: Haida Manga Interventions and Performative Acts," *Museum Anthropology* 36, 2 (2013): 113–27, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/muan.12027>; Jennifer Kramer, "Figurative Repatriation: First Nations 'Artist-Warriors' Recover, Reclaim, and Return Cultural Property through Self Definition," *Journal of Material Culture* 9, 2 (2004): 161–82, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1359183504044370>.

<sup>31</sup> Ames, *Cannibal Tours and Glass Boxes*.

their disruptive power. On a practical level, while MOA is a major tourist destination, it does not attract nearly as many visitors as does the RBCM, nor, I imagine, as wide a diversity of individuals, appealing mainly to people who already have some interest in non-Western arts and cultures.<sup>32</sup> While many of these visitors are likely very knowledgeable about the historical and political contexts related to the museum and its exhibitions, others might interpret MOA's overarching narrative of art and culture as representing the resilience and vibrancy of Indigenous cultures without being required to simultaneously acknowledge Indigenous cultural and political sovereignty. In a nation popularly known for its celebratory multiculturalism, Indigenous cultures are often seen to be part of a harmonious national mosaic. In this framework, even the acknowledgment that the museum sits on unceded Musqueam lands can be read as a sign that reconciliation is already well under way and that Canada is welcome to continue in its current form of occupation.

The Museum of Vancouver (MOV) has the potential to engage a more diverse audience than does MOA, especially from the Vancouver area, as a result of its more accessible location near downtown, its multi-disciplinary focus, and its role as a civic museum intended to represent the city of Vancouver. As a civic institution with a mandate that is explicitly both historical and political, it is also well situated to foreground historical and contemporary politics, including those related to colonization and contemporary Indigenous/non-Indigenous relations. However, as with MOA and the RBCM, the way in which MOV is able to structure conversations about how such relationships might be reimagined is limited. Most obviously, in the context of representing a city that has, since 8 July 2014, designated itself a City of Reconciliation, MOV can reproduce the limits contained within the idea of reconciliation discussed above.<sup>33</sup> In this respect, the museum's recognition of historical violence, including that in which it is implicated, in conjunction with its representation of atonement in the present, can enact what Glen Coulthard identifies as a colonial politics of recognition.<sup>34</sup> As with MOA, MOV's acknowl-

<sup>32</sup> Although MOA does have European objects, including a large number of ceramics, on display, this is not what the museum is known for. Based on numbers provided in each museum's annual reports, MOA's visitor numbers seem to be about one-quarter of those for the RBCM. See Museum of Anthropology, *Museum of Anthropology Annual Report, 2016–2017*, <http://online.fliphtml5.com/qoit/npqk/>; Royal BC Museum, *2016/17 Annual Service Plan Report*, [http://www.bcbudget.gov.bc.ca/Annual\\_Reports/2016\\_2017/pdf/agency/rbcm.pdf](http://www.bcbudget.gov.bc.ca/Annual_Reports/2016_2017/pdf/agency/rbcm.pdf).

<sup>33</sup> City of Vancouver, "City of Reconciliation," City of Vancouver, <http://vancouver.ca/people-programs/city-of-reconciliation.aspx>.

<sup>34</sup> Glen Sean Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014).

edgment of its residence on unceded Indigenous land – in its case that of the Musqueam, Skwxwú7mesh, and Tsleil-Waututh – can thus also be seen as a gesture that legitimizes ongoing colonial occupation through a discourse of gratitude and within an understanding of reconciliation that fails to radically unsettle colonial power relations.

The first incarnation of MOV, the Art, Historical, and Scientific Association, was established in 1884 with a broad mandate, typical at the time, to collect and exhibit curiosities from around the world. In 1903, its collection was transferred to the city, and in 1905 it acquired its first long-term facility in the Carnegie Library, located at Main and Hastings in what is now the city's Downtown Eastside. The museum has been at its current location in Kitsilano on the ancestral village site of *Señákw* since 1968, when it became the Centennial Museum, housed in a new purpose-built facility constructed for Canada's Centennial celebrations. The building, designed by well-known architect Gerald Hamilton, like MOA, combines both Indigenous and modernist forms, with its domed top suggestive of a Northwest Coast woven basket hat. In 1981, the Centennial Museum became the Vancouver Museum, and since then its mandate has become increasingly focused on the city. Between 2002 and 2006, the museum created a series of new History Galleries, documenting Vancouver's history from 1900 to the 1970s. After a recent revisioning project, and now renamed as the Museum of Vancouver, it reaffirmed its purpose: "We began with a goal of showcasing the curiosities of the world to enlighten Vancouverites; however, in 2009 we shifted our goal towards showcasing the City of Vancouver to the world."<sup>35</sup>

Until recently, MOV's story of Vancouver largely excluded reference to Indigenous peoples. To an extent, the History Galleries reproduce a standard narrative of the Canadian nation, one of increasing inclusivity and of increasing recognition and regret for some of the more violent episodes in the nation's past, specifically those related to Chinese, Japanese, and South Asian Canadian communities.<sup>36</sup> Other long- and short-term exhibitions, such as *Neon Vancouver/Ugly Vancouver* (1999

<sup>35</sup> Museum of Vancouver, "Museum History," Museum of Vancouver, <https://museumofvancouver.ca/about-mov>; Museum of Vancouver, "Collection," Museum of Vancouver, <https://museumofvancouver.ca/museum-collection-and-openmov>. For an in-depth examination of MOV's revisioning project and its outcomes, see Rachel Roy, "An Ethnography of the Museum of Vancouver: A Critical Analysis of Institutional Change, 2006–2016" (PhD diss., University of British Columbia, forthcoming).

<sup>36</sup> Although a city can be represented as a proxy for a nation, city museums can generally do more than national or regional museums to engage with the complexities of intercultural interactions as they occur on a local (and sometimes also global) level rather than reproducing established national mythologies. MOV's vision illustrates this objective: "To inspire a socially connected, civically engaged city." See Museum of Vancouver, "Museum History."



and ongoing), *Velo-City: Vancouver and the Bicycle Revolution* (2009), and *Your Future Home: Creating the New Vancouver* (2016), address some of the lighter stories of the city's past and possible futures. Large-scale recognition of Indigenous people in the museum's public galleries began with the opening of *c̓əsnaʔəm, the city before the city* in 2015.

The MOV component of this multi-site collaborative exhibition project focuses on objects in the museum's collection, acquired mainly through archaeological excavations in the 1920s and 1930s at *c̓əsnaʔəm*, known also as the Eburne Midden, Great Fraser Midden, Marpole Midden, and DhRs-1. The museum describes the reason for this focus as follows:

The curatorial premise of this project is simple: the bone, stone, and shell objects from *c̓əsnaʔəm*, which have survived thousands of years, are great catalysts for conversations about the relationship between Indigenous and settler societies in the City of Vancouver. They are reminders of the connections between the history of colonialism, and the continuum of Musqueam culture.<sup>37</sup>

The first part of the exhibition critiques not only the history of the museum's historical appropriation and display of the objects without concern for Musqueam perspectives but also ideas of scientific racism and beliefs about the immanent extinction of Indigenous peoples. Alongside this recognition, the exhibition emphasizes the idea that beliefs and practices that disrespect and disregard Indigenous viewpoints are no longer accepted. One text panel is headlined with a 2014 quotation from Wayne "Smoky" Point: "Anthropologists today don't work like this anymore. They have evolved." Another panel, which starts with the question "How did settlers claim Vancouver as their home and these belongings as their property?" ends with the assertion: "Today museums acknowledge the devastating impact of these past practices. The Museum of Vancouver is actively developing curatorial practices informed by Indigenous perspectives." As an example, following the decision of Musqueam participants, the objects in the exhibition are now explicitly recontextualized as "belongings" rather than as "artifacts," foregrounding the fact that they were personal possessions and that they remain significant for Musqueam people today. The message is driven home in another panel with the heading "Vancouver moving forward: a reconciliation process," which states that the "museum hopes this exhibition will contribute to

<sup>37</sup> Museum of Vancouver, "*c̓əsnaʔəm, the city before the city*," Museum of Vancouver, <https://museumofvancouver.ca/csnam-the-city-before-the-city/>.

the larger conversation about reconciliation between Aboriginal and settler communities in Canada.”

The museum’s narration of its contemporary innocence through recognition of its historic guilt, as well as its contextualization of atonement in regard to reconciliation, runs the risk of constraining the conversation it seeks to evoke.<sup>38</sup> However, the conclusion of the panel, after inviting “Vancouverites, British Columbians, and Canadians to engage in this process,” emphasizes that “reconciliation requires more than conversation. It includes the return of land, shared responsibility for the management of lands and resources and the revitalization of Indigenous languages.” Moreover, the museum’s voice is not the only – or even primary – one evident in the exhibition. Like the Nisga’a exhibition and *Our Living Languages* at the RBCM, and *The Fabric of Our Land* and *Culture at the Centre* at MOA, the dominant voices in this exhibition are those of Indigenous people. Preceding the above panel’s headline is a quotation from Larry Grant, a Musqueam cultural advisor who worked with the museum, that explains that the exhibition “aims at ‘righting history’ by creating a space for Musqueam to share their knowledge, culture, and history and by highlighting the community’s role in shaping the city of Vancouver.”

#### CONTESTING CONTAINMENT

The prominence of Indigenous voices in the public spaces of the RBCM, MOA, and MOV is reflective of changing relations between Indigenous peoples, museums, and Canada more broadly, and of the increasing visibility in public culture institutions in Canada of Indigenous peoples’ assertions of their authority to own and represent their histories and cultures, especially over the last thirty years.<sup>39</sup> In 1996, Mohawk curator and scholar Deborah Doxtator spoke about the importance for Indigenous people of owning “the responsibility of who you are and what you belong to.”<sup>40</sup> She contextualized this claim in relation to the ways in which both the government and museums had assumed responsibility for defining Indigenous cultures, and the necessity of repatriation not just in terms of the return of objects but also in terms

<sup>38</sup> For further discussion on the power of a discourse of innocence in the museum context, drawing on the work of Shelby Steele, see Julia Harrison, “Completing a Circle: The Spirit Sings,” in *Anthropology, Public Policy and Native Peoples in Canada*, ed. Noel Dyck and James Waldram, 334–57 (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 1993).

<sup>39</sup> Task Force on Museums and First Peoples, *Turning the Page*.

<sup>40</sup> Doxtator, “Implications of Canadian Nationalism,” 56.

of this broader sense of ownership. She critiqued the limited manner in which both the government and museums had begun to acknowledge Indigenous peoples' ownership of their cultures, including the way in which Indigenous peoples had "become recognized as nations, but only under the umbrella of the overarching coordination of the Canadian Crown," and how the recommendations of the Task Force on Museums and First Peoples, although calling for equal partnerships between the two groups, generally assigned "most of the responsibility – and the position of power – to non-native museums."<sup>41</sup>

To some extent, mainstream museums continue to maintain control and care of Indigenous objects and representations of Indigenous cultures. As authoritative institutions they also work to contain Indigenous culture – even resistance – inside the restrictive frameworks of settler-colonial nationalism, Indigenous art and culture, and reconciliation. But things have also significantly changed, throughout Canada and, specifically, in British Columbia. To some extent, mainstream museums have been decentred. There are now a large number of locally situated Indigenous museums and cultural centres as well as local repositories for objects collected through recent archaeological mitigation, where Indigenous ownership of culture is asserted within ancestral territories. In British Columbia, these include the Haida Gwaii Museum, the Nisga'a Museum, the Squamish-Lil'wat Cultural Centre, the Musqueam Cultural Centre, the Heiltsuk Cultural Education Centre, the Secwepemc Museum and Heritage Park, the Nuyumbalees Cultural Centre, and the U'mista Cultural Centre, to name just a few. In these institutions, and in collaborative exhibitions such as those discussed above, representations of Indigenous cultures refuse containment within a national Canadian discourse.

In some instances, they articulate the importance of nation-to-nation relationships, including those between First Nations and those between First Nations and the Canadian government. In *Culture at the Centre*, nation-to-nation relationships are specifically affirmed between Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh and between Squamish and Lil'wat Nations. The Declaration of the Nisga'a Nation is also included in the exhibition. In this context, a text panel that defines repatriation and reconciliation as "calls to action: steps toward changing the relationships between Indigenous people and museums, and the communities museums serve," demands that these reimagined relationships not simply reproduce existing inequalities.

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 62, 63.

Many of these exhibitions also foreground connections to land and ancestral territories. More recent exhibitions – including *Culture at the Centre*, *The Fabric of Our Land*, *Our Living Languages*, and the section of *c̓əsnaʔəm* at MOV – demonstrate these connections in part through the use of maps, at times oriented to reflect Indigenous rather than Western conceptions of land. The map at the beginning of *The Fabric of Our Land*, for instance, has no cardinal orientation and no national borders. Exhibitions such as these also deny visitors the ability to see Indigenous people only in terms of art and culture, showing how art and culture are entwined with history and contemporary politics.

Art and culture are brought into contact with history and contemporary politics in other ways as well. In an intentionally untypical guided tour of the *Unceded Territories* exhibition, Eh-Cho Dene and Dunne-Za lawyer and activist Caleb Behn spoke from his own experience about the distinction between non-treaty and treaty territories, particularly his own in northeastern British Columbia, which is covered by Treaty 8. While Canada typically interprets historical treaties as legal proof of its right to Indigenous territory, Behn made the point that treaties do not lessen Indigenous peoples' connections to ancestral lands.<sup>42</sup> Events and programs held at MOA, as well as contemporary art displayed in its exhibitions, often demonstrate similar understandings of such connections. At the opening of *Culture at the Centre*, these connections were asserted in very different ways: for example, Heiltsuk participants emphasized their nation's stewardship of herring and other resources in their territory, while Haida participants related a history of their occupation of Haida Gwaii going back to the last ice age, supported by both recent Western scientific and traditional Haida knowledge. At another event, "Night Shift: Untamed," the members of Indigenous burlesque troupe Virago Nation brought life and comedy into the Great Hall, asserting their right to self-determination as Indigenous women, including in regard to their own sexuality.<sup>43</sup> At the end of the show, the evening's host, Sparkle Plenty, acknowledged the unceded territories of Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh in which the troupe often performs. Her call for the audience to never forget whose land this is resonated both pride and warning.<sup>44</sup> In the Multiversity Gallery,

<sup>42</sup> Caleb Behn, "Unceded Territories: Not Your Average Tour," talk delivered at UBC Museum of Anthropology, 31 May 2016.

<sup>43</sup> Virago Nation, "Night Shift: Untamed," performed at UBC Museum of Anthropology, 15 February 2018.

<sup>44</sup> For more on the importance of performance in museums, see Phillips, "Dancing the Mask"; and Miqu'el Dangeli, "Dancing Our Stone Mask Out of Confinement: A Twenty-First Century Tsimshian Epistemology," in *Objects of Exchange: Social and Material Transformation*

Haitzaqv (Heiltsuk) artist Nusi's (Ian Reid's) carving of 'Yágis (chief of the undersea kingdom) destroying a supertanker in its jaws is more subtle but no less determined. Based on a logo representing Heiltsuk opposition to Enbridge, it demonstrates not just a connection to the land but also the right to determine how that land is used.

These are just a few examples, which I have witnessed over the past few months, of how Indigenous people are engaging with and within museums to articulate and demand action towards reimagining relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in British Columbia that go beyond restrictive interpretations of what reconciliation must mean. In a video produced for the exhibition *Haida Now*, currently at the Museum of Vancouver, Corey Bulpitt talks about how Indigenous/non-Indigenous relations in Canada both have and have not changed: he talks about how his own son can grow up proud of being Haida but also discusses the ongoing prevalence of racism. Part of the film is shot in the Downtown Eastside, where the negative impacts of the colonial appropriation of Indigenous land are especially visible. For many Indigenous residents in this neighbourhood, non-Indigenous acknowledgment that we are residing on unceded Indigenous land does nothing to change the material experience of their lives.

To some extent, the importance of self-representation, of owning one's own culture in the sense that Doxtator describes it, has little to do with non-Indigenous audiences. The right to own and represent one's own culture does not bring with it an obligation to represent that culture for the benefit of anyone else. At times, however, Indigenous peoples' assertions of their right to self-determination are directed at a non-Indigenous audience and in an explicit attempt to challenge the existing state of Indigenous/settler-colonial relations. When these are articulated in the authoritative space of museums, they come to be legitimized as the new norm. While this can work to contain their oppositional force, it also establishes a new standard from which to enact further demands for change.

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on the *Late Nineteenth-Century Northwest Coast*, ed. Aaron Glass (New Haven, CN: Bard Graduate Centre and Yale University Press, 2011).